

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

THE POWER OF GODLINESS

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Is there such a thing as the power of Godliness? Did God ever mean to give any one in this world power to live after His own image? Are the commandments of God, that we should “be holy,” “love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength,” walk before Him and be perfect, mere flights of beautiful poetry; or did God intend to enable men to do as He told them? We are again and again told to “be sober,” the immutable truth and reality of everything told us in the Bible is continually declared therein in the most solemn manner, and yet Christian teachers on every hand vie with each other now-a-days in a hopeless attempt to make it appear that God never did expect His poor fallen creatures to live a pure life. How utterly this view of human life is in opposition to the truth will, we think, appear clearly enough from the consideration of a few plain and evident facts.

I. —MEN ARE GOD’S ONLY VISIBLE AGENTS IN THE WORLD.

What angel ministers may be doing around us, we cannot tell; and however blessed it may be to feel that there are here, as well as in heaven, bright and pure spirits who are always acting in accordance with the Father’s will, we cannot for a moment suppose that the prayer—“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” was intended to refer to these angelic beings, who invariably, everywhere, perform their duty with the same perfect regularity and obedience.

The movements of the physical world, so terrible in the majesty of their force, so unerring in the precision of their order, so lovely in the harmony of all their varieties, are constantly ascribed in Scripture directly to the hand of God Himself. But the outer world, with all its forms of grandeur and beauty, can only be a system of *physical* agencies of the Almighty. The earth has no heart to love any one. The seas can feel no pity. the trees and flowers can make no distinction between the true and the false. The beasts and birds can do nothing

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to oppose the evil and to establish the good, which are alike unknown to their brutish consciousness.

If the great and true God is to be represented here below, if the feelings He entertains are to be understood, expressed, and acted upon, if His thoughts and purposes respecting men's souls are to be declared and accomplished—all this must be done by men, for there are no other beings on earth by whom it can be done!

II. —GOD HAS TOLD US PLAINLY WHAT HIS WILL IS.

From the very commencement of man's existence on the earth, God has always kept before him in the clearest possible way the fact that he was created to do as God pleased, and that any act of his contrary to the will of God would forfeit his title to live at all. This constant and universal obligation, instead of being set aside by the first act of disobedience, was only made more awfully and everlastingly prominent by the consequences of that act. Dearth, weakness, corruption, pain, instead of proclaiming an universal excuse for want of obedience to God, are continually thundering in the ears of all mankind, that it is sin and fatal madness to transgress the will of God on any occasion.

God has never changed His mind. His orders to us to-day are as clear and definite as to Adam in Eden:—"Resist the devil and he will flee from you." "I have written unto you, that ye sin not." "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

III. —IF GOD'S WILL IS NOT DONE ON EARTH BY MEN, IT WILL NOT BE DONE ON EARTH AT ALL.

The devil is determined it shall not. He always was. In order to accomplish his hellish purpose, he has always striven to turn men aside from serving God; and when unable to persuade them entirely to turn their backs upon Him, he has always endeavored to *limit their service* to the greatest extent in his power.

And just in proportion as Satan has turned men aside from God, so has God's will been frustrated. Whenever an entire body of men are found in opposition to God, there we find God repenting of the creation of men, and expressing in



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some emphatic manner His wrath at the failure of all His plans, and His mourning over the folly of those who might have prevented the ruinous consequences of sin.

Thus we see the folly of much that is very popular in some quarters, about what God might do without us, and so forth. It has pleased God in His wisdom to make the realization of His will on earth entirely dependent upon man, and we may be certain that man will be held, to the fullest extent, responsible for the grand trust confided to him.

“Oh, may it all our powers engage,
To do our Mater’s will!”

IV. —IF MEN CANNOT DO GOD’S WILL ON EARTH, THEN GOD IS NOT SUPREME THERE.

See the helpless position to which many Christian notions reduce the Almighty. We are told that it is impossible for men to live in this world exactly as God would have them live. Then, the only agents God has—God’s only agents in the world, are incapable of doing His bidding—His will cannot be done on earth, though Satan’s can.

Those who represent the best possible Christians as only able to look and strive after a desirable, but unattainable something, surely forget that the position of God’s only agents must be the position of God Himself. Does God long for the performance of duty by man, and feel that He cannot possibly be obeyed?

Away with such monstrous absurdity! God is in earnest, He always was; He always has been and He is able to accomplish that which He has determined upon; and when He saw mankind so fallen as to be naturally incapable of pleasing Him, He instantly filled the terrible gap, in the person of His own Son. The great task of doing the will of God was too heavy for fallen man; but help was laid on One who was mighty, and by faith in Him we can be enabled to do the impossible. God commands us to live holily and righteously. We can do so; if we live otherwise, it is because we are unfaithful to our God.

The question before the Lord’s people is as simple as it was when Elijah propounded it to the multitude on Carmel. Let us choose whom we will serve.



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God has chosen that we should serve Him in newness of life. Instead of comfortably assuring ourselves that we cannot do all our duty, let us awake and arise, to hear and obey the voice of our King and our God. We can follow Him, we can please Him, and if we do so, we shall reign with Him for ever.