

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT FAILURES

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How many there are—alas, God only knows! If the truth were to be made visible in this world, how many beautiful buildings which every eye admires, and which are honored now with the name of “church,” or “chapel,” “sanctuary,” “house of prayer,” or “house of God,” would have to be branded over their portals, their pulpits, and their seats, with the word *Failure!*

If professedly Christian minds were considerate, and professedly Christian hearts were tender, how terribly would the sense of failure impress those who must know that they are never successful from year's end to year's end in winning souls for Christ! When bankruptcy comes upon an honest man his life becomes almost an intolerable burden to him, and if a Christian life which fails to secure the demands of God's law, and Christian labour which fails to secure men's salvation, is not an intolerable burden to any one, it is simply because the individual is neither honest with God, nor with his neighbor, nor with his own conscience.

BUT WHAT IS A FAILURE?

There are many supposed Christians who never fail, and never can fail until they die, for they never attempt anything, and never intend anything in this world. They are for getting to heaven, and nothing more. In that they will certainly fail, and fail terribly, for God's Word says nothing of a crown for any except those who have borne the cross after Jesus.

There cannot be failure unless there is—

1. *A definite aim intelligently undertaken.* Diseases have been called incurable because the doctors knew nothing of their origin or nature, and consequently could apply no remedy. But once the seat of the malady has been discovered,



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

and the mode in which it saps life understood, the physician can estimate the force which he has to resist, and can resolve upon some mode of treatment.

Those who wander about the world wishing, hoping, aspiring, "to do good," but never understanding the awful disease with which the whole race has been infected, nor the mode in which alone a sin-sick soul can be made whole, never fail—of course not.

But once a man has made up his mind to aim at some one object, it becomes possible for him to fail. Let no one pronounce his endeavor a failure, however, until—

2. *The aim has been permanently and irremediably missed.* We know a poor woman that was praying and laboring for many years for the conversion of her drunken, ruffianly husband. Her prayers seemed to fail time after time, and so did all her loving words and actions, but at length the devil was driven away, the prey was rescued, and now husband and wife together rejoice in the grand success which once seemed so impossible.

But we also knew a man who preached and prayed for many years for the benefit of a certain congregation. He is dead and gone, and nobody can say that they ever knew a single soul brought to Christ by his instrumentality. Let us not be prevented by any absurd notion of pretended charity from saying that man's labors were an utter failure.

Alas, alas! how these failures abound! How hell must have rung again and again with fiendish cheers as one after another, and thousand and thousand, of the poor auditors of such ministry have sunk in the waves of eternal burning!

HERE ARE SOME FAILURES.

A god-fearing morality has always failed utterly to satisfy either God or man.

One of the first of the race of sturdy, honest farmers of the "John Bull" type was a conspicuous instance of this kind of failure. His morality was faultless, and he endeavored to "do his best," not only towards man, but towards God; but in the terrible hour when he felt, for the first time, that his life and his offerings were not



50 Articles of War

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acceptable to God, his morality broken down with a terrible crash; and the blood of Abel cries from the earth for ever that morality fails.

The worship of any god but the One fails. The Lord's people at one time feeling that their own God did not do all they wished Him to do for them (because they had neglected and disobeyed Him), turned to other gods, and tried whether they would bless them. They wearied themselves with pilgrimages, and sacrifices, and prayers; but it was all of no avail, for their gods were only idols, and their services were only freaks of folly.

But, strange to say, the vast majority of the Lord's people still run after strange gods. The altars of taste, and fashion, and wealth, are in the very temples of the worship of the one true God. Idolatry is rampant amongst us, and not less ridiculous are the modern idolators than their earliest forerunners. Wearied, and sickened, and killed, with their devotions to false gods, the professed people of God lose incessantly and gain never by their sinful wanderings.

Mere formal service of God fails as utterly to secure any benefit to the worshippers.

When it was the fashion to pray at street corners, wear outward signs of devotion, and give tithes of mint, rue, anise, and cumin, Pharisees went down to their houses unjustified, and went down to hell uncleaned; and now that times are changed, and fashion demands that the giving shall be done in guineas, and the praying performed quietly amid cushions, and that everything in dress that could be supposed to indicate regard for God shall be utterly put away, the result of formal service is just the same. The "worshippers" fail utterly to win God's favor, they go from the devil's parlors on earth to the devil's dungeons in hell for ever.

Half-hearted service to God fails.

The Samaritans tried it, because, in their ignorance, they feared fetishes as well as God. The heavenly bodies and the idols of wood and stone, which their foolish terrors made gods of, could not hear their cry, and God summed up their religion in the awful words, "Ye worship ye know not what."

50 Articles of War

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The languid Christians of the nineteenth century, undecided whether to fear God or man most, try to please both, and fail as terribly and utterly as the Samaritans did before them—for God only cares for the love and service of those who know Him and who understand that His favor is better than life, and who consequently court His smile and fear no frown but His. Oh my brethren, let us beware of the leaven of Herod, as well as of the leaven of the Pharisees! The mean Jews, who were ready to pander to the tastes and wishes of the Roman king, while trying to preserve their relationship to the God of Israel, passed away from a degraded life of bespangled slavery to an eternal death of fire and brimstone; and if we save ourselves from the reproach of men by relinquishing our colors, and ceasing to be “a peculiar people,” we shall fail to gain anything but dishonor amongst men, and we shall fail to gain the crown, which only cross-bearers win.

Mere formal labour for the salvation of souls invariably fail.

Millions of children are taught every Sunday in the schools, millions of tracts are distributed every year, and thousands of open-air services are held every “season,” from which no result can be shown even to please men. “Oh, but,” people say, “how dare you declare any effort fruitless? How do you know that the bread cast upon the waters shall not be found after many days?”

Unfortunately for the objection, there has been so much “bread,” as it is indiscriminately called, cast upon the waters for many years past, that by this time the water would have been invisible altogether if the “bread” had been such material as would be found again.

Spaniards fire at one another for hours, and after the battle no one is found dead or wounded. “Who knows whether some of the bullets have not wounded, or ever killed, some who have been carried off the field?”—it might be objected. Certainly, the wounded might escape from the field, but then they would be heard of very soon, and the ranks would grow thinner and thinner. If Christian labour for the salvation of souls does not result in conversion, that labour is a failure. If the wounded under the Word are really permanently affected, they must come to the light ere long; the ranks of the enemy must grow weaker, and the efforts of the true and righteous must become easier. If this be not the case, let us not deceive ourselves with silly, flimsy platitudes.



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Labors which do not result in success in the course of weeks, and months, and years, are failures.

WHY CHRISTIANS FAIL

The power of God never fails, for He creates and destroys at pleasure. The love of God never fails, for centuries of rebellion and abominable wickedness leave it unbounded still. The blood of Christ never fails, for the fountain still cleanses every stain of every believing soul. The Gospel of Christ never fails, for it is still the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth. The power of God, the love of God, the blood of Christ, the gospel of Christ—all are ours through faith!—and yet we fail. Why? Through unbelief, and unbelief is the damning sin.

Away with every cursed refuge of lies—every excuse that would cover the retreat of the beaten armies, who, while professing to fight for God, leave his foes unscathed and jubilant.

The churches, the societies, the organizations, the agencies, the efforts, the labors, the professing Christians of our day, through the vast majority of their number, and amongst the loftiest, and loudest, and most honorable of their ranks—**THEY ARE FAILURES**—great, patent, staring, horrible failures—over which devils laugh, and men smile, and God and angels weep. They are failures because sin and lies and treachery are mixed with love and truth and honorable service continually among them. And because they are failures, sin is rampant, and souls are being befouled and damned, and God is cursed and set at nought.

For the sake of God and souls, for the sake of purity and truth, for the sake of the blood that was shed for us, and the love that guards us, for the love of the light that has gladdened us, and the heaven that awaits us—let us be “men of God.”

MEN OF GOD NEVER FAIL

They never did—they never can, for God is with them. When flesh and heart fail them, God is the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever. When all the elements fail, and heaven and earth are gone, these men, every one, shall



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appear triumphant before God in Zion, Let us make part of that glorious company! God help us! Amen.