

HOME TRUTHS.

BY THE LATE

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SOLDIERS AND TRUMPETERS.

“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”—1 Cor. xiv. 8.

THE text which stands before your eyes is a proverbial saying, drawn from a subject with which the writer was probably very familiar. In the boyhood of St. Paul, when he lived at Tarsus, I suspect he had often seen Roman legions marching through Cilicia, or encamped on the banks of the Cydnus. In the days of his youth, when he was studying at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, he must have constantly watched the drill and exercise of the Roman garrison which occupied the Castle of Antonia. When he spoke of the trumpet giving an “uncertain sound,” he spoke of things which he had heard with his own ears, and seen with his own eyes.

Now I wish to apply this proverbial saying to the condition of the Church of Christ in these latter days. It strikes me that it is eminently a text for the times. It contains a word in season for all Christian ministers. It is the neglect of the principle of the text which, in my opinion, lies at the root of many of the evils which trouble the Church of England at this very hour, and cause “present distress.” That we are surrounded by many and great dangers, all men agree. But who is to blame? Hear what the text says: “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” If ministers do not do their duty, and do not preach clear and distinct doctrine, the Church cannot war a successful warfare. Three thoughts arise before my mind as I read this text, to which I now invite attention.

I. In the first place, *true Christianity is a fight and a warfare*. If we would be saved and go to heaven when we die, let us all distinctly understand that while we live we must do battle.

True Christianity! Mind that word “true.” Let there be no mistake about my meaning. There is a vast quantity of religion current in the world which is not true, genuine Christianity. It passes muster; it satisfies sleepy consciences; but it is not good money. It is not the real thing which was called Christianity eighteen hundred years ago. There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday, and call themselves

Christians. Their names are in the baptismal register. They are reckoned Christians while they live. They are married with a Christian marriage service. They are buried as Christians when they die. But you never see any “fight” about their religion! Of spiritual strife, and exertion, and conflict, and self-denial, and watching, and warring, they know literally nothing at all. Such Christianity may satisfy man; and those who say anything against it may be thought very hard and uncharitable; but it certainly is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded, and His apostles preached. True Christianity is “a fight and a battle.”

The true Christian is called to be *a soldier*, and must behave as such from the day of his conversion to the day of his death. He is not meant to live a life of religious ease, indolence, and security. He must never imagine for a moment that he can sleep and doze along the way to heaven, like one travelling in an easy carriage. If he takes his standard of Christianity from the children of this world he may be content with such notions; but he will find no countenance for them in the Word of God. If the Bible is the rule of his faith and practice, he will find his lines laid down very plainly in this matter. He must “fight and do battle.”

With whom is the Christian soldier meant to fight? Not with other Christians. Wretched indeed is that man’s idea of religion who fancies that it consists in perpetual controversy. He who is never satisfied unless he is engaged in some strife between church and church, chapel and chapel, sect and sect, party and party, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. Never is the cause of sin so helped as when Christians waste their strength in quarrelling with one another, and spend their time in petty squabbles.

No, indeed! The principal fight of the Christian is with the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are his never-dying foes. These are the three chief enemies against whom he must wage war. Unless he gets the victory over these three, all other victories are useless and vain. If he had a nature like an angel, and were not a fallen creature, the warfare would not be so essential. But with a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world, he must either “fight” or be lost.

Some reader of this paper, perhaps, thinks these statements too strong. You fancy that I am going too far, and laying on the colours too thickly. You are secretly saying to yourself, that men and women in England may surely get to heaven without all this trouble, and warfare, and fighting. Listen to me for a few minutes and I will show you that I have something to say on God’s behalf. Remember the maxim of the wisest general that ever lived in England,—“In time of war it is the worst mistake to underrate your

enemy, and try to make a little war.” This Christian warfare is no light matter. Give me your attention and consider what I say.

What saith the Scripture?—“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.”—“Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”—“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”—“Strive to enter in at the strait gate,”—“Labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life.”—“Think not that I came to send peace, but a sword.” “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”—“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”—“War a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience.” (1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 3; Ephes. vi. 11-13; Luke xiii. 24; John vi. 27; Matt. x. 24; Luke xxii. 36; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Tim. i. 18, 19). Words such as these appear to me clear, plain, and unmistakable. They all teach one and the same great lesson, if we are willing to receive it. That lesson is, that true Christianity is a struggle, a fight, and a warfare.

What says the baptismal service of the Church of England? No doubt that service is uninspired, and like every uninspired composition, it has its defects; but to the millions of people all over the globe who profess and call themselves English Churchmen, its voice ought to speak with some weight. And what does it say? It tells us that over every new member who is admitted into the Church of England the following words are used,—“I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”—“I sign this child with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.” Of course we all know that in myriads of cases baptism is a mere form, and that parents bring their children to the font without faith, or prayer, or thought, and therefore receive no blessing. But one thing, at any rate, is very certain. Every baptized churchman is by his profession a “soldier of Jesus Christ,” and is pledged “to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil.”

Whether, however, a man is a churchman or not, one thing is very certain, this Christian warfare is a subject of vast importance. It is not a matter like church government and ceremonial, about which men may differ and yet reach heaven at last. It is a point of cardinal moment. It is one of the es-

amentals of saving religion. Necessity is laid upon us. There are no promises in the Lord Jesus Christ's Epistles to the Seven Churches, except to those who fight and "overcome."

It is a fight of *absolute necessity*. Think not that in this war you can remain neutral and sit still. Such a line of action may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference,—the "masterly inactivity" which pleases so many statesmen,—the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone,—all this will never do in the Christian warfare. Here, at any rate, no one can escape under the plea that he is "a man of peace." To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We have no choice or option. We must either "fight" or be lost.

It is a fight of *universal necessity*. No rank, or class, or age, can plead exemption, or escape the battle. Ministers and people, preachers and hearers, old and young, high and low, rich and poor, gentle and simple, kings and subjects, landlords and tenants, learned and unlearned,—all alike must carry arms and go to war. All have by nature a *heart* full of pride, unbelief, sloth, worldliness, and sin. All are living in a *world* beset with snares, traps, and pitfalls for the soul. All have near them a busy, restless, malicious *devil*. All, from the queen in her palace down to the pauper in the workhouse, all must "fight" if they would be saved.

It is a fight of *perpetual necessity*. It admits of no breathing time, no armistice, no truce. On weekdays as well as on Sundays,—in private as well as in public,—at home by the family fireside as well as abroad,—in little things like management of tongue and temper, as well as in great ones like the government of kingdoms,—the Christian's warfare must unceasingly go on. The foe we have to do with keeps no holidays, never slumbers, and never sleeps. So long as we have breath in our bodies we must keep on our armour, and remember we are on enemy's ground. "Even on the brink of Jordan," said a dying saint, "I find Satan nibbling at my heels." We must "fight" till we die.

Reader, consider well what I have been saying. Take care that your own personal religion is real, genuine, and true. The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity. They eat, they drink, they dress, they work, they amuse themselves, they get money, they spend money, they go through a scanty round of formal religious services once every week. But of the great spiritual warfare,—its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties,

its battles and contests,—of all this they appear to know nothing at all. Take care that this case is not your own. The worst state of soul is when the “strong man armed keepeth his palace,” and “his goods are in peace,”—when he leads men and women “captive at his will,” and they make no resistance. The worst chains are those which are neither felt nor seen by the prisoner. (Luke xi. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 26).

Reader, take comfort about your soul, if you know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is not everything, I am well aware, but it is something. Do you find in your heart of hearts a spiritual struggle? Do you feel anything of the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that you cannot do the things you would? (Gal. v. 17). Are you conscious of two principles within you, contending for the mastery? Do you see anything of war in your inward man? Well, thank God for it! It is a good sign. It is evidence not to be despised. Anything is better than apathy, stagnation, deadness, and indifference. You are in a better state than many. The most part of so-called Christians have no feeling at all. You are evidently no friend of Satan. Like the kings of this world, he wars not against his own subjects. The very fact that he assaults you should fill your mind with hope. Reader, I say again, take comfort. The child of God has two great marks about him, and of these two you have one. HE MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS INWARD WARFARE, AS WELL AS BY HIS INWARD PEACE.

After all, we must never forget that this branch of my subject does not apply to individual believers only. Warfare, constant warfare, is the normal condition of things which we must expect to see in every pure branch of Christ’s visible church, so long as the world stands. Corrupt churches, which keep back God’s truth, or bury it under man-made additions, may enjoy great apparent peace and quietness. Sound churches, which have the Scriptures, encourage free thought, and exalt Christ, will never be without warfare without and within. They must be content to be militant, and not triumphant, until the Lord comes. So long as there is a devil, so long that old enemy will never cease to war against every regiment in Christ’s army. So long as professing churches are made up of fallen men and contain evil as well as good members, so long they will find that truth cannot be maintained, or kept healthy, without a struggle. That morbid craving after perfect peace and unity at any price, of which we hear so much in these days, exhibits a strange ignorance of human nature. No doubt we shall have abundance of peace and unity one day, but not until the Prince of Peace comes. Till that day we must not be surprised at battle after battle, controversy after controversy, fight after fight. Let no Christian’s heart fail because his lot is

cast in a day of constant strife and conflict. Let us rather gird up the loins of our minds, and be always ready to do battle. Let us remember there is nothing new and strange in the state of things we see around us. Our fathers did battle for the truth, and handed it down to us undefiled, by sheer, hard fighting. Let us do as they did, and fight. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." But the day has not come yet; and till it does come our "Zion in her anguish with Babylon must cope."

II. The second thought which strikes me in our text is this: *In the great battle which Christ's Church has to fight, the Christian minister is to do the work of a trumpeter.*

The figure before us is found in several places in the Old Testament. What says the Lord to Isaiah? "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sins" (Isaiah lviii. 1). What says the prophet Joel? "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain" (Joel ii. 1) And especially what says the prophet Ezekiel?" When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman; if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; . . . his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him; but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from Me" (Ezek. xxxiii. 2-7).

The figure, no doubt, is nowhere directly used in the New Testament. But a little reflection and examination will soon show us that a better illustration of the position and duty of the Christian minister than that of a trumpeter could hardly be found.

Does the trumpet sound the alarm, and awaken the soldier to meet danger? In time of war "Saul blew the trumpet, . . . saying, Let the Hebrews hear" (1 Sam. xiii. 3). So must the minister endeavour continually to arouse, to awaken, and to stir careless souls.

Does the trumpeter sound a peculiar note to show the soldier the duty required? It was in this way that the tribes in the wilderness were directed.

(Numb. x. 1-6). So must the minister try to guide souls, and show them the way they must go.

Does the trumpeter sound the recall when the troops are going in a wrong direction, and need to be halted? (2 Sam. ii. 28). So must the minister try to stop souls when they are going astray.

Does the trumpeter sound a rousing blast when the soldier is ordered to charge? It was thus that Gideon stirred his little band against the Midianites, when he told them to blow their trumpets and cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (Judges vii. 20). So must the minister try to cheer and encourage souls, and say, "Fear not: quit you like men, be strong."

Does the trumpeter sound a gathering note, to call the soldiers together and unite them in one band? It was thus that Nehemiah acted when the feeble Jews were building the wall of Jerusalem: "In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us (Nehem. iv. 20). So must the minister try to unite Christians, and make them one body, and helpful to one another.

Last, but not least, does the trumpeter stand by the commanding officer, and take his orders from him? So it was with Nehemiah: "He that sounded the trumpet was by me" (Nehem. iv. 18). So it should be with the minister. He must try to keep close to the Captain, Jesus Christ, and to act and teach entirely at His command.

In short, the office of the trumpeter is an important and honourable one, and the figure is one of which the Christian minister has no cause to be ashamed. To preach the Word of God, to proclaim the everlasting Gospel, to teach continually in the pulpit, and from house to house, the noble lesson which Christ has given us,—all this may seem contemptible to some. The men of Jericho, no doubt, despised the blowing of trumpets around their city. But when the seventh day arrived and their walls fell down flat, they found, to their cost, that the things which were despised were mighty to pull down strongholds.

Let me take occasion to urge on all who read this paper, the immense importance of maintaining right and sound views of the ministerial office. Let us distinctly understand, firmly hold, and constantly teach, that the first, foremost, and principal work of the minister is to be a preacher of God's Word, and that in no sense is he a sacrificing priest.

I say this emphatically, because of the time in which we live, and the peculiar dangers of the Christian warfare in our own land. I believe that the pretended "sacerdotalism" of ministers is one of the oldest and most mischievous errors which has ever plagued Christendom. Partly from an igno-

rant hankering after the priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation, which passed away when Christ died,—partly from the love of power and dignity which is natural to ministers as much as to other men,—partly from the preference of unconverted worshippers for a supposed priest and mediator whom they can see, rather than one in heaven whom they cannot see,—partly from the general ignorance of mankind before the Bible was printed and circulated,—partly from one cause, and partly from another, there has been an incessant tendency throughout the last eighteen centuries to exalt ministers to an unscriptural position, and to regard them as priests and mediators between God and man.

In saying all this, I trust that no one will misunderstand my meaning. If any one supposes that I think lightly of the office of a Christian minister, he is totally mistaken. I regard it as an honourable office, instituted by Christ Himself, and of general necessity for carrying on the work of Christ's Gospel. I look on ministers as preachers of God's Word, God's ambassadors, God's messengers, God's servants, God's shepherds, God's stewards, God's overseers, and labourers in God's vineyard. But I cannot look on them as sacrificing priests, because I cannot find a single text in the New Testament in which they are so called.

The plain truth is, that *there can be no priest without a sacrifice*; and for any sacrifice, except that of praise and thanksgiving, which all Christians can offer up, there is no place left under the Gospel. To use the words of the Thirty-first Article, "The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone." It cannot be added to or repeated in the Lord's Supper. There is not a tittle of proof that this blessed Sacrament was regarded as a *sacrifice* by our Lord or His Apostles. Not once is it called a sacrifice in the Acts or Epistles of God's Word written, not once in the Articles of our Church, not once in the communion service of the Prayer-book, not once in the Church Catechism. In the face of such crushing facts as these, they are not to be heard who say that clergymen are *sacrificing priests*. A man cannot be literally a priest when he has no sacrifice to offer. Let us take our stand firmly on this principle. Let us be content with the standard of our text. The best and truest idea of a minister is that of a trumpeter in God's army, and a preacher of God's Word.

Before I leave this branch of my subject, I feel it a plain duty to offer a word of caution for the times. I wish to warn all who read this paper against the growing disposition to underrate God's ordinance of *preaching*.

No man of ordinary observation, I think, can fail to notice the increased importance which is attached to the administration of the Lord's Supper, and the reading of daily services, and the diminished importance which is attached to the sermon. The communion table and the reading desk are being exalted to such a position that they are comparatively overshadowing the pulpit. Hundreds of sincere, devoted, earnest, hard-working clergymen give such an extravagant amount of time to the public reading of prayers, and the administration of the Lord's Supper, that they leave themselves no leisure for pulpit preparation, and are obliged to content their congregations with short, shallow, hastily-composed sermons, devoid alike of matter, power, fire, or effectiveness. In saying this, I know that I tread on delicate ground. But I must speak what I think. In right and due reverence for the Lord's Supper I trust I yield to none. But I plead for Scriptural proportion in our estimate of means of grace; and when sacraments and liturgical prayers are made everything in public worship, and preaching the Word is made little of, or thrust into a corner, I assert that Scriptural proportion is disregarded.

What warrant have we in the Bible for making the Lord's Supper the first, foremost, principal, and most important thing in public worship, and making comparatively little of preaching? There are at most but five books in the whole canon of the New Testament in which the Lord's Supper is even mentioned. About grace, faith, and redemption,—about the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and the love of the Father,—about man's ruin, weakness, and spiritual poverty,—about justification, sanctification, and holy living,—about all these mighty subjects we find the inspired writers giving us line upon line, and precept upon precept. About the Lord's Supper, on the contrary, we may observe in the great bulk of the New Testament a speaking silence. Even the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, containing much instruction about a minister's duties, do not contain a word about it. This fact alone surely speaks volumes! To thrust the Lord's Supper forward, till it towers over and overrides everything else in religion, is giving it a position for which there is no authority in God's Word.

What, on the other hand, is the witness of the New Testament about the value of preaching? I find that our Lord Jesus during the whole period of His earthly ministry was continually and everywhere a preacher. I find that His last command to the Apostles was to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). I find that the whole company of His Apostles and Disciples were continually teaching and preaching the Word. I can find no record of Church assemblies in the New Testament in

which preaching and teaching orally does not occupy a most prominent position. It appears to me to be the chief instrument by which the Holy Ghost not only awakens sinners, but also leads on and establishes saints. I observe that in the very last words that St. Paul wrote to Timothy, as a young minister, he especially enjoins on him to “preach the Word” (2 Tim. iv. 2). I cannot therefore believe that any system of worship in which the sermon is made little of, or thrust into a corner, can be a Scriptural system, or one likely to have the blessing of God. I hold firmly with Bishop Latimer that it is one of Satan’s great aims to exalt ceremonies and put down preaching. “Ye shall call on this child to hear sermons,” is the first charge which our baptismal service gives to god-fathers and god-mothers. There is a deep meaning in the words, “Despise not prophesyings” (1 Thess. v. 20). A contempt for sermons is a pretty sure mark of a decline in spiritual religion.

What may we learn from Church history in every age about the importance of preaching? It is certain that the brightest days of the primitive church were the days when men like Chrysostom and Augustine were constantly expounding God’s Word, and swaying multitudes by their sermons. It is equally certain that the darkest era in the annals of Christendom was the time before the Reformation, when the pulpit was silent and Christianity seemed nothing more than a huge lump of forms and ceremonies. It was the preaching of men like Luther and Zwingli on the Continent, and Latimer and Hooper in our own land, which opened the eyes of the laity and broke the chains of Rome. It was the preaching of Whitfield, and the Wesleys, and Grimshaw, and Berridge, and Romaine, and Venn in the eighteenth century, which awoke our sleeping forefathers, saved the Church of England from ruin, and delivered this kingdom from a worse than French revolution.

Reader, I charge you this day to remember these facts and consider them well. Stand fast on old principles. Do not forsake the old paths. Let nothing tempt you to believe that multiplication of forms and ceremonies, constant reading of liturgical services, or frequent communions, will ever do so much good to souls as the powerful, fiery, fervent preaching of God’s Word. Daily services without sermons may gratify and edify a few handfuls of believers, but they will never reach, draw, attract, or arrest the great mass of mankind. If men want to do good to the multitude, if they want to reach their hearts and consciences, they must walk in the steps of Whitfield, Latimer, Luther, Chrysostom, and St. Paul; they must attack them through their ears. They must blow the trumpet of the everlasting Gospel loud and long. They must preach the Word.

III. The last thought which strikes me in the text is this: *In the Christian warfare, he that holds the office of the trumpeter must take heed that his trumpet gives no uncertain sound.*

In military matters, common sense points out that the trumpeter of a regiment is perfectly useless if he does not know how to use the instrument which is placed in his hands. He may be duly entered on the muster roll, and occupy a conspicuous position, and wear a splendid uniform; but if he does not know how to carry out the orders of his commanding officer, if he can neither give the sound to advance or retreat, to charge, to halt, or to retire, he is more likely to do harm than good. In fact, he is likely, in the day of battle, to throw the whole force into confusion.

Now, in the great campaign of the Church of Christ, it is just the same with the ministers of the everlasting Gospel. A man may be duly ordained and commissioned by those who have authority, and placed in charge of a congregation; but if he does not know what to preach, so as to do good to souls, if his message is so uncertain, confused, and indistinct, that his hearers cannot understand what he wishes them to believe, to be, or to do, it is absurd to suppose that he will help anyone to heaven. In spite of orders, licence, and commission, such a minister is as useless as the ignorant regimental trumpeter. The blessing of the Holy Ghost is not promised to any and every kind of sermon, but to sermons which contain distinct Scriptural truth.

I say with sorrow, but I feel obliged to say it, that the absence of “a certain sound,” the want of sharply cut, well-defined doctrine in sermons is one of the worst and most dangerous symptoms of the present day. It is a growing evil, I am afraid, and one that requires looking in the face. I hear on all sides that old and experienced Christians complain that a vast quantity of modern preaching is so foggy, and hazy, and dim, and indistinct, and hesitating, and timid, and cautious, and fenced with doubts, that the preacher does not seem to know what he believes himself. Of course, his hearers cannot be expected to believe anything at all! I do not hear so often that men preach honest, out-spoken Romanism or scepticism, as that they ingeniously fill up their pulpit half-hour with colourless, pointless homilies containing *nothing at all*. And I do hear it constantly said, that throughout the land there is a deplorable scarcity of a “certain sound” from the lips of Christian ministers.

We have hundreds of ministers, I fear, both inside and outside the Church of England, who seem not to have a single bone in their body of divinity. They have no definite opinions; they belong to no school or party; they are

so afraid of “extreme views” that they have no views at all. We have thousands of sermons preached every year which are without an edge, or a point, or a corner, smooth as ivory balls, awakening no sinner, and edifying no saint. We have scores of young men annually sent into holy orders from our Universities, armed with a few scraps of second-hand philosophy, who think it a mark of cleverness and intellect to have no decided opinions about anything in religion, and to be utterly unable to make up their minds as to what is Christian truth. They think everybody is right and nobody wrong, everything is true and nothing is false, all sermons are good and none are bad, every earnest clergyman is sound and no clergyman unsound. They are “tossed to and fro, like children, by every wind of doctrine;” often carried away by some new excitement and sensational movement; ever ready for new things, because they have no firm grasp on the old; and utterly unable to “render a reason of the hope that is in them.”

What excuse any English clergyman can allege for undecided and indistinct teaching, and an “uncertain sound” in his pulpit, I am utterly at a loss to discover. He is a minister of a Church which has declared her mind about doctrine most distinctly in that noble confession of faith, the Thirty-nine Articles. I ask any impartial man to read those Articles, and to mark the strong and decided language which they use in speaking of *things which are essential to salvation*. I say, without hesitation, that, concerning the nature of God and the Holy Trinity,—concerning the sufficiency and authority of Scripture,—concerning the sinfulness and helplessness of natural man,—concerning justification by faith alone,—concerning the place and value of good works,—concerning salvation only by the name of Christ; concerning all these grand foundations of the Christian religion, and about the errors of the Church of Rome, it is hard to conceive language more decided, clear, distinct, ringing and trumpet-toned than that of the Thirty-nine Articles.

But this is not all. The Church of England requires every person who is ordained to declare his assent to the Thirty-nine Articles at the very beginning of his ministry. And, as if to make assurance doubly sure, the Church requires every clergyman, instituted to any living, at this very day, when he begins to officiate in his church, “publicly and openly, in the presence of his congregation, to read the whole Thirty-nine Articles, and immediately after reading to make the declaration of assent to them,” saying, “*I believe the doctrine of the Church of England, as therein set forth, to be agreeable to the Word of God.*” These are indisputable facts, which cannot be explained away. In the face of these facts I cannot understand how any clergyman can

be content to preach such indistinct and uncertain sermons that no man can possibly learn from them what he must do to be saved.

Reader, I speak strongly because I feel deeply. The condition of the Church of England demands “great plainness of speech.” When the ship is among breakers the officer of the watch cannot afford to polish his language, and use circumlocution. The ship of the Church of England is in danger, and all her sons must do their duty. Let me, therefore, before I conclude, mention a few leading points about which a distinct, certain sound is much wanted just now in all our pulpits.

(a) We want a more certain sound about the *inspiration, sufficiency, and supremacy of Holy Scripture*. There is a growing inclination to depreciate the blessed volume, as a respectable old book and nothing more, containing a great deal of truth, but truth mixed up with error and fables. There is a hasty readiness to assume that whenever the conclusions of so-called science conflict with the Bible, the Bible must be wrong and science right, it being coolly forgotten that perhaps we do not rightly interpret the Book. Away with all this! Let us boldly place the Bible on the pedestal where our forefathers placed it, and maintain, like them, that, however imperfectly we may understand it, the old Book is perfect, and is an infallible rule of faith and practice.

(b) We want a more certain sound about *the sinfulness, guilt, and corruption of human nature*. There is a wide-spread disposition to speak of man as a pitiable creature, but not as deserving of God’s wrath and condemnation, as one who is weak and unstable, but not as one who has no power to turn himself, do good, and continue right before God. Let us return to the old paths, and unhesitatingly declare man’s utter vileness, and danger, and his pressing need of a new birth, and an entire change of heart. Whether men know it or not, I believe there is a vast amount of Pelagianism around us.

(c) We want a more certain sound about the work and offices of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. Men now-a-days will dwell exclusively on His prophetic office, the beauty of His personal character, the splendid example of His kindness, patience, condescension, purity, and self-denial. All this, however true, is only half the truth, and by far the least important half too. The main thing about Christ, of which this age never hears enough, is the atonement He made by His death, His vicarious sacrifice on the Cross, the redemption He obtained for man by His blood, His victory over the grave by His resurrection, His active life of intercession at God’s right hand, the absolute necessity of simple faith in Him. These blessed truths are seldom made enough of

in this day. They are either judiciously dropped as offensive, or coolly left in the background as old fossils, unsuited to the nineteenth century. If there is not a vast amount of veiled Socinianism around us I am greatly mistaken.

(d) We want a more certain sound about *the work of the Holy Ghost*. There is a great quantity of teaching, I am afraid, in which there is no place left for the Third Person of the Trinity. His presence in the hearts of professing Christians is taken for granted. They have Him as a matter of course, because they are baptized, or because they belong to the Church, or because they are communicants! In short, many congregations might say, like one of old, "We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Ghost." But surely this is not Apostolic teaching. People need to be told now as much as they were told eighteen centuries ago, that the fruits of the Spirit are the only evidence of having the Spirit, and that those fruits must be seen,—that we must be born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and feel the operations of the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). There is far more of the Macedonian heresy existing in the nineteenth century than most people suppose.

(e) We want a more certain sound about *personal holiness*. I fear the standard of daily life is lower just now than it has been for many years. People seem unable to realize that there is anything inconsistent with baptismal vows in ball-going, theatre-going, gambling, card-playing, excessive dressing, novel-reading, Sabbath-breaking, and an incessant round of gaiety and amusements. The border-line between the Church and the world seems completely effaced and forgotten. A crucified life of self-denial and close walk with God, a life of real devotedness and zeal to do good, is hardly ever to be seen! Yet surely our Lord meant something when He spoke of taking up the cross, and St. Paul meant something when he said, "Come out . . . and be separate."—"Be not conformed to this world."—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (2 Cor. vi. 17; Rom. xii. 2; Heb. xii. 14). If Christ returns the second time in this generation, we shall find His words about the days of Noah and Lot fully verified. Those days are upon us.

(f) We want a more certain sound about *the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Thousands of people seem to live and die in the secret belief that they were "born again," and received the grace of the Spirit, in baptism, though from their infancy they have known nothing of what the Church Catechism calls "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." They are not "dead to sin," but actually live in it; and yet, forsooth, they think they are born again! Multitudes more are continually receiving

the Lord's Supper under the belief that somehow or other it *must do them good*, though they are utterly destitute of the Catechism standard, and neither "repent of sin, nor purpose to lead a new life, nor have a lively faith in God's mercy in Christ, nor a thankful remembrance of His death, nor live in charity with all men." They seem, in short, to have imbibed the idea that the Lord's Supper can give grace to the graceless, and is a means of conversion and justification! And all this time the Scripture says expressly, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 29). And again: "Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)" (1 Peter iii. 21). And again: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. xi. 29).

Now to these extravagant views of the effect of the sacraments I unhesitatingly assert that the Church of England gives no countenance at all, and her clergy ought to give a "certain sound" about them. The Twenty-fifth Article declares plainly about both sacraments, that "in such *only* as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation." The Twenty-eighth Article says: "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ." The Twenty-ninth Article says: "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."

(g) Last, but not least, we want everywhere a more certain sound about the *state after death*. There is a growing disposition in this day to give up the old doctrine of the judgment of the wicked, and the eternal misery of all who die impenitent and unbelieving. Men are gradually being indoctrinated with the notion that there is *hope for all* beyond the grave, and that at any rate there is nothing to fear, and no punishment after death, no matter how we live or die. I regard such teaching as most mischievous and likely to promote carelessness and immorality. Yet in hundreds of pulpits I suspect the subject is either carefully avoided, or else handled in a most unsatisfactory manner. Let us beware of being wise above that which is written, and

of ignoring, shirking, or strangling plain texts of Scripture. I cannot feel surprised when I am told that abandoned women in the streets of London have been heard to say, "Come along: who's afraid? Some of the parsons say there is no hell."

Such are the seven points about which I declare my belief that a "certain sound" is greatly wanted in this day. I recommend them to the thought, and reflection, and prayers of all who read this paper. I lay no claim to infallibility. I may be greatly mistaken. But it is my deliberate conviction that the parishes in which these seven points are most distinctly preached in the pulpit, and afterwards boldly and lovingly taught from house to house, are precisely those parishes in which the congregations are largest, the communicants most numerous, and the power of godliness in daily life most conspicuous among the worshippers. I assert boldly that if there was more "certain sound" in the pulpit on those seven points, there would soon be far more vital religion in the land, and a very different census of religious worship. Oh! that we could pray more constantly," Lord, send forth more labourers into Thy harvest. Revive Thy work in England. Give us more trumpeters of the Gospel."

And now let me conclude all with a few words of practical application to all into whose hands this paper may fall.

(1) It may be that I address some *who are struggling hard for the rewards of this world*. Perhaps you are straining every nerve to obtain money, or place, or power, or pleasure. Reader, if that be your case, take care. You are sowing seed which will bear a crop of bitter disappointment. Unless you mind what you are about, your latter end will be to lie down in sorrow.

Thousands have trodden the path you are pursuing, and have awoke too late, to find it end in misery and eternal ruin. They have fought hard for wealth, and honour, and office, and promotion, and turned their backs on God, and Christ, and heaven, and the world to come. And what has their end been? Often, far too often, they have found out that their whole life has been a grand mistake. They have tasted by bitter experience the feelings of the dying statesman who cried aloud in his last hours, "The battle is fought; the battle is fought: but the victory is not won."

Brother or sister, for your own happiness' sake, resolve this day to join the Lord's side. Shake off your past carelessness and unbelief. Come out from the ways of a thoughtless, unreasoning world. Take up the cross, and become a good soldier of Christ. Fight the good fight of faith, that you may be happy as well as safe.

Think what the children of this world will often do for liberty, without any religious principle. Remember how Greeks, and Romans, and Swiss, and Tyrolese, have endured the loss of all things, and even life itself, rather than bend their necks to a foreign yoke. Let their example provoke you to emulation. If men can do so much for a corruptible crown, how much more should you do for one which is incorruptible! Awake to a sense of the misery of being a slave. For life, and happiness, and liberty, arise and fight.

Fear not to begin and enlist under Christ's banner. The great Captain of your salvation rejects none that come to Him. Like David in the cave of Adullam, He is ready to receive all who come to Him, however unworthy they may feel themselves. None who repent and believe are too bad to be enrolled in the ranks of Christ's army. All who come to Him by faith are admitted, clothed, armed, trained, and finally led on to complete victory. Reader, fear not to begin this very day. There is yet room for you.

Fear not to go on fighting, if you once enlist. The more thorough and whole-hearted you are as a soldier, the more comfortable you will find your warfare. No doubt you will often meet with trouble, fatigue, and hard fighting, before your warfare is accomplished. But let none of these things move you. Greater is He that is for you than all they that be against you. Everlasting liberty or everlasting captivity are the alternatives before you. Choose liberty, and fight to the last.

(2) *It may be that I address some who know something of the Christian warfare, and are tried and proved soldiers already. If that be your case, accept a parting word of advice and encouragement from a fellow-soldier. Let me speak to myself as well as to you. Let us stir up our minds by way of remembrance. There are some things which we cannot remember too well.*

Let us remember that if we would fight successfully we must put on the whole armour of God, and never lay it aside till we die. Not a single piece of the armour can be dispensed with. The girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of hope,—each and all are needful. Not a single day can we dispense with any part of this armour. Well says an old veteran in Christ's army, who died 200 years ago, "In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But here our arms are to be worn night and day. We must walk, work, sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ." (Gurnall's "Christian Armour").

Let us remember the solemn words of an old warrior, who went to his rest over 1800 years ago: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the

affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. ii. 4). May we never forget that saying!

Let us remember that some have seemed good soldiers for a little season, and talked loudly of what they would do, and yet turned back disgracefully in the day of battle. Let us never forget Balaam, and Judas, and Demas, and Lot’s wife. Whatever we are, and however weak, let us be real, genuine, true, and sincere.

Let us remember that the eye of our loving Saviour is upon us morning, noon, and night. He will never suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He suffered, Himself being tempted. He knows what battles and conflicts are, for He Himself was assaulted by the prince of this world. Having such a “High Priest, . . . Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Heb. iv. 14).

Let us remember that thousands of soldiers before us have fought the same battle that we are fighting, and come off more than conquerors through Him that loved them. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb; and so also may we. Christ’s arm is quite as strong as ever, and Christ’s heart is just as loving as ever. He that saved men and women before us is One who never changes. He is able to save to the uttermost both you and me, and all who come unto God by Him. Then let us cast doubts and fears away. Let us follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, and are waiting for us to join them.

Finally, let us remember that the time is short, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. A few more battles and the last trumpet shall sound, and the Prince of Peace shall come to reign on a renewed earth. A few more struggles and conflicts, and then we shall bid an eternal good-bye to sin and sorrow and death. Then let us fight on to the last, and never surrender. Thus saith the Captain of our salvation,—“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Rev. xxi. 7).