

HOLINESS.

ITS NATURE, HINDRANCES, DIFFICULTIES, AND ROOTS.

BEING

A SERIES OF PAPERS ON THE SUBJECT.

BY

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL;

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.

WITH PREFACE, INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, AND SUPPLEMENTARY EXTRACTS
FROM OLD WRITERS.

Third Enlarged Edition.

LONDON:
WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,
12 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1887.

PREFACE TO ENLARGED EDITION.

THE volume now in the reader's hands is an enlarged edition of a small work which appeared several years ago, and has been kindly received by the Christian public. The present volume contains so much additional matter, that it is double the size of its predecessor. In fact, the work is half new.

I venture to think that the papers contained in this volume will be found helpful by all who take interest in the subject of Scriptural holiness. I am much mistaken if they do not throw broad light on the real nature of holiness, and the temptations and difficulties which all must expect who follow it. Above all, I hope they will help to bring forward the grand truth that union with Christ is the root of holiness, and will show young believers what immense encouragement Jesus Christ holds out to all who strive to be holy.

Concerning the present position of the whole subject of holiness among English Christians, I have little to add to the introductory essay which appeared in the original edition, and now follows this preface. The older I grow the more I am convinced that real practical holiness does not receive the attention it deserves, and that there is a most painfully low standard of living among many high professors of religion in the land. But, at the same time, I am increasingly convinced that the zealous efforts of some well-meaning persons to promote a higher standard of spiritual life are often not "according to knowledge," and are really calculated to do more harm than good. Let me explain what I mean.

It is easy to get crowds together for what are called "Higher life" and "Consecration" meetings. Any one knows that, who has watched human nature, and read descriptions of American camp-meetings, and studied the curious phenomena of the "Religious affections."¹ Sensational and exciting addresses by strange preachers or by women, loud singing, hot rooms, crowded tents, the constant sight of strong semi-religious feeling in the faces of all around you for several days, late hours, long protracted meetings, public profession of experience,—all this kind of thing is very interesting at the time, and seems to do good. But is the good real, deeply-rooted, solid, lasting? That is the point And I should like to ask a few questions about it

Do those who attend these meetings become more holy, meek, unselfish, kind, good tempered, self-denying, and Christ-like at home? Do they become more content with their position in life, and more free from restless craving after something different from that which God has given them? Do fathers, mothers, husbands, and other relatives and friends, find them more pleasant and easy to live with? Can they enjoy a quiet Sunday and quiet means of grace without noise, heat, and excitement? Above all, do they grow in charity, and especially in charity towards those who do not agree with them in every jot and tittle of their religion?

These are serious and searching questions, and deserve serious consideration. I hope I am as anxious to promote real practical holiness in the land as any one. I admire and willingly acknowledge the zeal and earnestness of many with whom I cannot co-operate who are trying to promote it. But I cannot withhold a growing

¹ See the work of President Edwards on this subject.

suspicion that the great “mass-meetings” of the present day, for the ostensible object of promoting spiritual life, do not tend to promote private home religion, private Bible-reading, private prayer, private usefulness, and private walking with God. If they are of any real value, they ought to make people better husbands, and wives, and fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters, and brothers, and sisters, and masters, and mistresses, and servants. But I should like to have clear proofs that they do. I only know it is far easier to be a Christian among singing, praying, sympathizing Christians in a public room, than to be a consistent Christian in a quiet, retired, out-of-the-way, uncongenial home. The first position is one in which there is a deal of *nature* to help us: the second is one which can not be well filled without *grace*. But, alas, many talk now-a-days about “*Consecration*,” who seem to be ignorant of the “first principles of the oracles of God” about “*Conversion*.”

I close this preface with the sorrowful feeling that probably some who read it will not agree with me. To the young especially I can see that the great gatherings of the so-called “spiritual life” movement are sure to be attractive. They naturally like zeal, and stir, and enthusiasm, and they say, “Where is the harm?” Be it so: we must agree to differ. When I was as young as they are, perhaps I should have thought as they do. When they are as old as I am, they will very likely agree with me.

To each and all of my readers, I say in conclusion, let us exercise charity in our judgments of one another. Towards those who think holiness is to be promoted by the modern, so-called “spiritual life” movement, I feel nothing but charity. If they do good, I am thankful. Towards myself and those who agree with me, I ask them to feel charity in return. The last day will show who is right and who is wrong. In the meantime, I am quite certain that to exhibit bitterness and coldness toward those who cannot conscientiously work with us, is to prove ourselves very ignorant of real holiness.

J. C. RYLE.

THE CHURCH WHICH CHRIST BUILDS

“Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—MATT. xvi. 18.

Do we belong to the Church which is built upon a rock? Are we members of the only Church in which our souls can be saved?—These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. I ask the attention of all who read this paper, while I try to show the one true, holy, Catholic Church, and to guide men’s feet into the only safe fold. “What is this Church? What is it like? What are its marks? Where is it to be found?” On all these points I have something to say. I am going to unfold the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, which stand at the head of this page. He declares, “Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

There are five things in these famous words which demand our attention:—

I. *A Building*: “My Church.”

II. *A Builder*: Christ says, “I will build my Church.”

III. *A Foundation*: “Upon this rock I will build my Church.”

IV. *Perils Implied*: “The gates of hell.”

V. *Security Asserted*: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The whole subject demands special attention in the present day. Holiness, we must never forget, is the prominent characteristic of all who belong to the one true Church.

I. We have, firstly, a *Building* mentioned in the text. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of “my Church.”

Now what is this Church? Few inquiries can be made of more importance than this. For want of due attention to this subject, the errors that have crept into the world are neither few nor small.

The Church of our text is no material building. It is no temple made with hands of wood, or brick, or stone, or marble. It is a company of men and women.—It is no particular visible Church on earth. It is not the Eastern Church or the Western Church. It is not the Church of England or the Church of Scotland.—Above all, it certainly is not the Church of Rome. The Church of our text is one that makes far less show than any visible Church in the eyes of man, but is of far more importance in the eyes of God.

The Church of our text is made up of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, of all who are really holy and converted people. It comprehends all who have repented of sin, and fled to Christ by faith, and been made new creatures in Him. It comprises all God’s elect, all who have received God’s

grace, all who have been washed in Christ's blood, all who have been clothed in Christ's righteousness, all who have been born again and sanctified by Christ's Spirit. All such, of every name, and rank, and nation, and people, and tongue, compose the Church of our text. This is the body of Christ. This is the flock of Christ. This is the bride. This is the Lamb's wife. This is "the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. This is "the blessed company of all faithful people," spoken of in the Communion Service of the Church of England. This is "THE CHURCH ON THE ROCK."

The members of this Church do not all worship God in the same way, or use the same form of government. Some of them are governed by bishops and some of them by elders. Some of them use a prayer-book when they meet for public worship and some of them use none. The thirty-fourth Article of the Church of England most wisely declares, "It is not necessary that ceremonies should be in all places one and alike." But the members of this Church all come to one throne of grace. They all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit. They are all really and truly *holy*. They can all say "Alleluia," and they can all reply, "Amen."

This is that Church to which all visible churches on earth are servants and handmaidens. Whether they are Episcopalian, Independent, or Presbyterian, they all serve the interests of the one true Church. They are the scaffolding behind which the great building is carried on. They are the husk under which the living kernel grows. They have their various degrees of usefulness. The best and worthiest of them is that which trains up most members for Christ's true Church. But no visible church has any right to say, "We are the only True Church. We are the men, and wisdom shall die with us." No visible Church should ever dare to say, "We shall stand for ever. The gates of hell shall not prevail against me."

This is that Church to which belong the Lord's gracious promises of preservation, continuance, protection, and final glory.—"Whatsoever," says Hooker, "we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and saving mercy which God showeth towards His Churches, the only proper subject thereof is this Church, which we properly term the mystical body of Christ."—Small and despised as the true Church may be in this world, it is precious and honourable in the sight of God. The temple of Solomon in all its glory was mean and contemptible in comparison with that Church which is built upon a rock.

I trust the things I have just been saying will sink down into the minds of all who read this paper. See that you hold sound doctrine upon the subject of "the Church." A mistake here may lead on to dangerous and soul-ruining errors. The Church which is made up of true believers is the Church for which we, who are ministers, are specially ordained to preach. The Church which comprises all who repent and believe the Gospel is the Church to

which we desire you to belong. Our work is not done, and our hearts are not satisfied until you are made a new creature, and are a member of the one true Church. Outside of the Church which is “built on the rock” there can be NO SALVATION.

II. I pass on to the second point to which I propose to invite your attention. Our text contains not merely a building, but a *Builder*. The Lord Jesus Christ declares, “I will build my Church.”

The true Church of Christ is tenderly cared for by all the three Persons in the blessed Trinity. In the plan of salvation revealed in the Bible, beyond doubt God the Father chooses, God the Son redeems, and God the Holy Ghost sanctifies every member of Christ’s mystical body. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, co-operate for the salvation of every saved soul. This is truth, which ought never to be forgotten. Nevertheless, there is a peculiar sense in which the help of the Church is laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is peculiarly and pre-eminently the Redeemer and Saviour of the Church. Therefore it is that we find Him saying in our text, “I will build—the work of building is my special work.”

It is Christ who calls the members of the Church in due time. They are “the called of Jesus Christ.” (Rom. i. 6.) It is Christ who quickens them. “The Son quickeneth whom He will.” (John v. 21.) It is Christ who washes away their sins. He “has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Rev. i. 5.) It is Christ who gives them peace. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” (John xiv. 27.) It is Christ who gives them eternal life. “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” (John x. 28.) It is Christ who grants them repentance. “Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance.” (Acts v. 31.) It is Christ who enables them to become God’s children. “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” (John i. 12.) It is Christ who carries on the work within them when it is begun “Because I live, ye shall live also.” (John xiv. 19.) In short, it has “pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell.” (Coloss. i. 19.) He is the author and finisher of faith. He is the life. He is the head. From Him every joint and member of the mystical body of Christians is supplied. Through Him they are kept from falling. He shall preserve them to the end, and present them faultless before the Father’s throne with exceeding great joy. He is all things in all believers.

The mighty agent by whom the Lord Jesus Christ carries out this work in the members of His Church is without doubt the Holy Ghost. He it is who is ever renewing, awakening, convincing, leading to the cross, transforming, taking out of the world stone after stone, and adding to the mystical building. But the great chief Builder, who has undertaken to execute the work of redemption and bring it to completion, is the Son of God, the “Word who was

made flesh.” It is Jesus Christ who “builds.”

In building the true Church, the Lord Jesus condescends to use many subordinate instruments. The ministry of the Gospel, the circulation of the Scriptures, the friendly rebuke, the word spoken in season, the drawing influence of afflictions—all, all are means and appliances by which His work is carried on, and the Spirit conveys life to souls. But Christ is the great superintending Architect, ordering, guiding, directing all that is done. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. (1 Cor. iii.6.) Ministers may preach and writers may write, but the Lord Jesus Christ alone can build. And except He builds, the work stands still.

Great is the *wisdom* wherewith the Lord Jesus Christ builds His Church! All is done at the right time, and in the right way. Each stone in its turn is put in its right place. Sometimes He chooses great stones, and sometimes He chooses small stones. Sometimes the work goes on fast, and sometimes it goes on slowly. Man is frequently impatient and thinks that nothing is doing. But man’s time is not God’s time. A thousand years in His sight are but as a single day. The great Builder makes no mistakes. He knows what He is doing. He sees the end from the beginning. He works by a perfect, unalterable, and certain plan. The mightiest conceptions of architects, like Michelangelo and Wren, are mere trifling and child’s play in comparison with Christ’s wise counsels respecting His Church.

Great is the *condescension and mercy* which Christ exhibits in building His Church! He often chooses the most unlikely and roughest stones, and fits them into a most excellent work. He despises none, and rejects none, on account of former sins and past transgressions. He often makes Pharisees and Publicans become pillars of His house. He delights to show mercy. He often takes the most thoughtless and ungodly, and transforms them into polished corners of His spiritual temple.

Great is the *power* which Christ displays in building His Church! He carries on His work in spite of opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In storm, in tempest, through troublous times, silently, quietly, without noise, without stir, without excitement, the building progresses, like Solomon’s temple. “I will work,” He declares, “and who shall let it?” (Isaiah xliii. 13.)

The children of this world take little or no interest in the building of this Church. They care nothing for the conversion of souls. What are broken spirits and penitent hearts to them? What is conviction of sin, or faith in the Lord Jesus to them? It is all “foolishness” in their eyes. But while the children of this world care nothing, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. For the preserving of the true Church, the laws of nature have oftentimes been suspended. For the good of that Church, all the providential dealings of God in this world are ordered and arranged. For the elect’s sake, wars are brought

to an end, and peace is given to a nation. Statesmen, rulers, emperors, kings, presidents, heads of governments, have their schemes and plans, and think them of vast importance. But there is another work going on of infinitely greater moment, for which they are only the “axes and saws” in God’s hands. (Isai. x. 15.) That work is the erection of Christ’s spiritual temple, the gathering in of living stones into the one true Church.

We ought to feel deeply thankful that the building of the true Church is laid on the shoulders of One that is mighty. If the work depended on man, it would soon stand still. But, blessed be God, the work is in the hands of a Builder who never fails to accomplish His designs! Christ is the almighty Builder. He will carry on His work, though nations and visible Churches may not know their duty. Christ will never fail. That which He has undertaken He will certainly accomplish.

III.—I pass on to the third point which I propose to consider—The *foundation* upon which this Church is built. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us, “Upon this rock will I build my Church.”

What did the Lord Jesus Christ mean when He spoke of this foundation? Did He mean the Apostle Peter, to whom He was speaking? I think assuredly not. I can see no reason, if He meant Peter, why He did not say, “Upon thee” will I build my Church. If He had meant Peter, He would surely have said, I will build my Church on thee, as plainly as He said, “to thee will I give the keys.”—No, it was not the person of the Apostle Peter, but the good confession which the Apostle had just made! It was not Peter, the erring, unstable man, but the mighty truth which the Father had revealed to Peter. It was the truth concerning Jesus Christ Himself which was the rock. It was Christ’s Mediatorship, and Christ’s Messiahship. It was the blessed truth that Jesus was the promised Saviour, the true Surety, the real Intercessor between God and man. This was the rock, and this the foundation, upon which the Church of Christ was to be built.

The foundation of the true Church was laid at a mighty cost. It needed that the Son of God should take our nature upon Him, and in that nature live, suffer, and die, not for His own sins, but for ours. It needed that in that nature Christ should go to the grave, and rise again. It needed that in that nature Christ should go up to heaven, to sit at the right hand of God, having obtained eternal redemption for all His people. No other foundation could have met the necessities of lost, guilty, corrupt, weak, helpless sinners.

That foundation, once obtained, is very strong. It can bear the weight of the sins of all the world. It has borne the weight of all the sins of all the believers who have built on it. Sins of thought, sins of the imagination, sins of the heart, sins of the head, sins which everyone has seen, and sins which no man knows, sins against God, and sins against man, sins of all kinds and

descriptions—that mighty rock can bear the weight of all these sins, and not give way. The mediatorial office of Christ is a remedy sufficient for all the sins of all the world.

To this one foundation every member of Christ’s true Church is joined. In many things believers are disunited and disagreed. In the matter of their soul’s foundation they are all of one mind. Whether Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Baptists or Methodists, believers all meet at one point. They are all built on the rock. Ask where they get their peace, and hope, and joyful expectation of good things to come. You will find that all flows from that one mighty source, Christ the Mediator between God and man, and the office that Christ holds, as the High Priest and Surety of sinners.

Look to your foundation, if you would know whether or not you are a member of the one true Church. It is a point that may be known to yourself. Your public worship we can see; but we cannot see whether you are personally built upon the rock. Your attendance at the Lord’s table we can see; but we cannot see whether you are joined to Christ, and one with Christ, and Christ in you. Take heed that you make no mistake about your own personal salvation. See that your own soul is upon the rock. Without this, all else is nothing. Without this, you will never stand in the day of judgment. Better a thousand times in that day to be found in a cottage “upon the rock,” than in a palace upon the sand!

IV. I proceed in the fourth place to speak of the *Implied Trials* of the Church, to which our text refers. There is mention made of “the gates of hell.” By that expression we are meant to understand the power of the prince of hell, even the devil. (Compare Psalm ix. 13; cvii. 18; Isa. xxxviii. 10.)

The history of Christ’s true Church has always been one of conflict and war. It has been constantly assailed by a deadly enemy, Satan, the prince of this world. The devil hates the true Church of Christ with an undying hatred. He is ever stirring up opposition against all its members. He is ever urging the children of this world to do his will, and to injure and harass the people of God. If he cannot bruise the head, he will bruise the heel. If he cannot rob the believers of heaven, he will vex them by the way.

Warfare with the powers of hell has been the experience of the whole body of Christ for six thousand years. It has always been a bush burning, though not consumed—a woman fleeing into the wilderness, but not swallowed up. (Exod. iii. 2; Rev. xii. 6, 16.) The visible Churches have their times of prosperity and seasons of peace, but never has there been a time of peace for the true Church. Its conflict is perpetual. Its battle never ends.

Warfare with the powers of hell is the experience of every individual member of the true Church. Each has to fight. What are the lives of all the saints, but records of battles? What were such men as Paul, and James, and

Peter, and John, and Polycarp, and Chrysostom, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Latimer, and Baxter, but soldiers engaged in a constant warfare? Sometimes the persons of the saints have been assailed, and sometimes their property. Sometimes they have been harassed by calumnies and slanders, and sometimes by open persecution. But in one way or another the devil has been continually warring against the Church. The “gates of hell” have been continually assaulting the people of Christ.

We who preach the Gospel can hold out to all who come to Christ, “exceeding great and precious promises.” (2 Pet. i. 4.) We can offer boldly to you, in our Master’s name, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Mercy, free grace, and full salvation, are offered to every one who will come to Christ, and believe on Him. But we promise you no peace with the world, or with the devil. We warn you, on the contrary, that there must be warfare so long as you are in the body. We would not keep you back, or deter you from Christ’s service. But we would have you “count the cost,” and fully understand what Christ’s service entails. (Luke xiv. 28.)

(a) *Marvel not* at the enmity of the gates of hell. “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.” (John xv. 19.) So long as the world is the world, and the devil the devil, so long there must be warfare, and believers in Christ must be soldiers. The world hated Christ, and the world will hate true Christians, as long as the earth stands. As the great reformer, Luther, said, “Cain will go on murdering Abel so long as the Church is on earth.”

(b) *Be prepared* for the enmity of the gates of hell. Put on the whole armour of God. The tower of David contains a thousand bucklers, all ready for the use of God’s people. The weapons of our warfare have been tried by millions of poor sinners like ourselves, and have never been found to fail.

(c) *Be patient* under the enmity of the gates of hell. It is all working together for your good. It tends to sanctify. It will keep you awake. It will make you humble. It will drive you nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ. It will wean you from the world. It will help to make you pray more. Above all, it will make you long for heaven. It will teach you to say with heart as well as lips, “Come, Lord Jesus. Thy kingdom come.”

(d) *Be not cast down* by the enmity of hell. The warfare of the true child of God is as much a mark of grace as the inward peace which he enjoys. No cross, no crown! No conflict, no saving Christianity! “Blessed are ye,” said our Lord Jesus Christ, “when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” If you are never persecuted for religion’s sake, and all men speak well of you, you may well doubt whether you belong to “the Church on the rock.” (Matt. v. 11; Luke vi. 26.)

V. There remains one thing more to be considered—the *Security* of the true Church of Christ. There is a glorious promise given by the Builder, “The gates of hell shall not prevail.”

He who cannot lie has pledged His word that all the powers of hell shall never overthrow His Church. It shall continue, and stand, in spite of every assault. It shall never be overcome. All other created things perish and pass away, but not the Church which is built on the rock.

Empires have risen and fallen in rapid succession. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Tyre, Carthage, Rome, Greece, Venice.—Where are all these now? They were all the creations of man’s hand, and have passed away. But the true Church of Christ lives on.

The mightiest cities have become heaps of ruins. The broad walls of Babylon have sunk to the ground. The palaces of Nineveh are covered with mounds of dust. The hundred gates of Thebes are only matters of history. Tyre is a place where fishermen hang their nets. Carthage is a desolation. Yet all this time the true Church stands. The gates of hell do not prevail against it.

The earliest visible Churches have in many cases decayed and perished. Where is the Church of Ephesus and the Church of Antioch? Where is the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Constantinople? Where are the Corinthian, and Philippian, and Thessalonian Churches? Where, indeed, are they all? They departed from the Word of God. They were proud of their bishops, and synods, and ceremonies, and learning, and antiquity. They did not glory in the true cross of Christ. They did not hold fast the Gospel. They did not give the Lord Jesus His rightful office, or faith its rightful place. They are now among the things that have been. Their candlestick has been taken away. But all this time the true Church has lived on.

Has the true Church been oppressed in one country? It has fled to another.—Has it been trampled on and oppressed in one soil? It has taken root and flourished in some other climate.—Fire, sword, prisons, fines, penalties, have never been able to destroy its vitality. Its persecutors have died and gone to their own place, but the Word of God has lived, and grown, and multiplied. Weak as this true Church may appear to the eye of man, it is an anvil which has broken many a hammer in times past, and perhaps will break many more before the end. “He that lays hands on it, is touching the apple of his eye.” (Zech. ii. 8.)

The promise of our text is true of the *whole body* of the true Church. Christ will never be without witness in the world. He has had a people in the worst of times. He had seven thousand in Israel even in the days of Ahab. There are some now, I believe, in dark places of the Roman and Greek Churches, who, in spite of much weakness, are serving Christ. The devil may rage horribly. The Church in some countries may be brought exceedingly

low. But the gates of hell shall never entirely “prevail.”

The promise of our text is true of *every individual* member of the Church. Some of God’s people have been so much cast down and disquieted, that they have despaired of their safety. Some have fallen sadly, as David and Peter did. Some have departed from the faith for a time, like Cranmer and Jewell. Many have been tried by cruel doubts and fears. But all have got safe home at last, the youngest as well as the oldest, the weakest as well as the strongest.—And so it will be to the end. Can you prevent tomorrow’s sun from rising? Can you prevent the tide in the Bristol Channel from ebbing and flowing? Can you prevent the planets moving in their respective orbits? Then, and then alone, can you prevent the salvation of any believer, however feeble—the final safety of any living stone in that Church which is built upon the rock, however small or insignificant that stone may appear.

The true Church is Christ’s body. Not one bone in that mystical body shall ever be broken.—The true Church is Christ’s bride. Those whom God has joined in everlasting covenant, shall never be put asunder.—The true Church is Christ’s flock. When the lion came and took a lamb out of David’s flock, David arose and delivered the lamb from his mouth. Christ will do the same. He is David’s greater son. Not a single sick lamb in Christ’s flock shall perish. He will say to His Father in the last day, “Of them which Thou gavest Me I have lost none.” (John xviii. 9.)—The true Church is the wheat of the earth. It may be sifted, winnowed, buffeted, tossed to and fro. But not one grain shall be lost. The tares and chaff shall be burned. The wheat shall be gathered into the barn.—The true Church is Christ’s army. The Captain of our salvation loses none of His soldiers. His plans are never defeated. His supplies never fail. His muster-roll is the same at the end as it was at the beginning. Of the men that marched gallantly out of England many years ago in the Crimean war, how many ever came back! Regiments that went forth, strong and cheerful, with bands playing and banners flying, laid their bones in a foreign land and never returned to their native country. But it is not so with Christ’s army. Not one of His soldiers shall be missing at last. He Himself declares, “They shall never perish.” (John x. 28.)

The devil may cast some of the members of the true Church into prison. He may kill, and burn, and torture, and hang. But after he has killed the body, there is nothing more that he can do. He cannot hurt the soul. When the French troops took Rome years ago, they found on the walls of a prison cell, under the Inquisition, the words of a prisoner. Who he was, we know not. But his words are worthy of remembrance. “Though dead, he yet speaketh.” He had written on the walls, very likely after an unjust trial and a still more unjust excommunication, the following striking words:—“Blessed Jesus, they cannot cast me out of Thy true Church.” That record is true! Not all the power of Satan can cast out of Christ’s true Church one single believer.

I trust that no reader of this paper will ever allow fear to prevent his beginning to serve Christ. He to whom you commit your soul has all power in heaven and earth, and He will keep you. He will never let you be cast away. Relatives may oppose. Neighbours may mock. The world may slander, and ridicule, and jest, and sneer. Fear not! Fear not! The powers of hell shall never prevail against your soul. Greater is He that is for you, than all they that are against you.

Fear not for the Church of Christ when ministers die, and saints are taken away. Christ can ever maintain His own cause. He will raise up better servants and brighter stars. The stars are all in His right hand. Leave off all anxious thought about the future. Cease to be cast down by the measures of statesmen, or the plots of wolves in sheep's clothing. Christ will ever provide for His own Church. Christ will take care that "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." All is going on well, though our eyes may not see it. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ.

I will now conclude this paper with a few words of practical application.

(1) My first word of application shall be *a question*. What shall that question be? What shall I ask? I will return to the point with which I began. I will go back to the first sentence with which I opened my paper. I ask you, whether you are a member of the one true Church of Christ? Are you in the highest, the best sense, a "churchman" in the sight of God? You know now what I mean. I look far beyond the Church of England. I am not speaking of church or chapel. I speak of "the Church built upon the rock." I ask you, with all solemnity—Are you a member of that Church? Are you joined to the great Foundation? Are you on the rock? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Does the Spirit witness with your spirit, that you are one with Christ, and Christ with you?—I beseech you, in the name of God, to lay to heart these questions, and to ponder them well. If you are not converted, you do not yet belong to the "Church of the Rock."

Let every reader of this paper take heed to himself, if he cannot give a satisfactory answer to my inquiry. Take heed, take heed, that you do not make shipwreck of your soul to all eternity. Take heed, lest at last the gates of hell prevail against you, the devil claim you as his own, and you be cast away for ever. Take heed, lest you go down to the pit from the land of Bibles, and in the full light of Christ's Gospel. Take heed, lest you are found at the left hand of Christ at last—a lost Episcopalian or a lost Presbyterian, a lost Baptist or a lost Methodist—lost because, with all your zeal for your own party and your own communion table, you never joined the one true Church.

(2) My second word of application shall be *an invitation*. I address it to every one who is not yet a true believer. I say to you, come and join the one true Church without delay. Come and join yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ

in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten.

Consider well what I say. I charge you solemnly not to mistake the meaning of my invitation. I do not bid you leave the visible Church to which you belong. I abhor all idolatry of forms and parties. I detest a proselytising spirit. But I do bid you come to Christ and be saved. The day of decision must come some time. Why not this very hour? Why not today, while it is called today?—Why not this very night, ere the sun rises tomorrow morning?—Come to Him who died for sinners on the cross, and invites all sinners to come to Him by faith and be saved. Come to my Master, Jesus Christ. Come, I say, for all things are now ready. Mercy is ready for you. Heaven is ready for you. Angels are ready to rejoice over you. Christ is ready to receive you. Christ will receive you gladly and welcome you among His children. Come into the ark.—The flood of God’s wrath will soon break upon the earth; come into the ark and be safe.

Come into the lifeboat of the one true Church. This old world will soon break into pieces! Hear you not the tremblings of it? The world is but a wreck hard upon a sandbank. The night is far spent—the waves are beginning to rise—the wind is getting up—the storm will soon shatter the old wreck. But the lifeboat is launched, and we, the ministers of the Gospel, beseech you to come into the lifeboat and be saved.—We beseech you to arise at once and come to Christ.

Dost thou ask, “How can I come? My sins are too many. I am too wicked yet. I dare not come.”—Away with the thought! It is a temptation of Satan. Come to Christ as a sinner. Come just as you are. Hear the words of that beautiful hymn:—

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

This is the way to come to Christ. You should come waiting for nothing and tarrying for nothing. You should come as a hungry sinner to be filled—as a poor sinner to be enriched—as a bad, undeserving sinner to be clothed with righteousness. So coming, Christ would receive you. “Him that cometh” to Christ, He “will in no wise cast out.” Oh! come, come to Jesus Christ. Come into “the true Church” by faith and be saved.

(3) Last of all, let me give a word of *exhortation* to all believers into whose hands this paper may fall.

Strive to live a *holy* life. Walk worthy of the Church to which you belong. Live like citizens of heaven. Let your light shine before men, so that the world may profit by your conduct. Let them know whose you are, and whom

you serve. Be epistles of Christ, known and read of all men—written in such clear letters that none can say of you, “I know not whether this man be a member of Christ or not.” He that knows nothing of real, practical holiness is no member of “the Church on the Rock.”

Strive to live a *courageous* life. Confess Christ before men. Whatever station you occupy, in that station confess Christ. Why should you be ashamed of Him? He was not ashamed of you on the cross. He is ready to confess you now before His Father in heaven. Why should you be ashamed of Him? Be bold. Be very bold. The good soldier is not ashamed of his uniform. The true believer ought never to be ashamed of Christ.

Strive to live a *joyful* life. Live like men who look for that blessed hope—the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is the prospect to which we should all look forward. It is not so much the thought of going to heaven as of heaven coming to us, that should fill our minds. “There is a good time coming “for all the people of God—a good time for all the Church of Christ—a good time for all believers—a bad time for the impenitent and unbelieving, but a good time for true Christians. For that good time, let us wait, and watch, and pray.

The scaffolding will soon be taken down.—The last stone will soon be brought out.—The top-stone will be placed upon the edifice. Yet a little time, and the full beauty of the Church which Christ is building shall be clearly seen.

The great Master Builder will soon come Himself. A building shall be shown to assembled worlds in which there shall be no imperfection. The Saviour and the saved shall rejoice together. The whole universe shall acknowledge that in the building of Christ’s Church all was well done. “Blessed”—it shall be said in that day, if it was never said before—“BLESSED ARE ALL THEY WHO BELONG TO THE CHURCH ON THE ROCK!”