NUMBER NINETY-ONE.

A Tract for the Present Times.

BY ONE WHO NEVER CONTRIBUTED TO THE FORMER SERIES.

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THAT the present are very extraordinary times must be acknowledged by all who are acquainted with the ordinary course of human affairs: but that we are living also in times when the truth of the Gospel, and its essential characteristics, are on the one hand more widely spread than ever before, and on the other, more insidiously, as well as openly attacked, will probably be scarcely denied. It seems as if a great struggle of principles were approaching, and the crisis cannot be long deferred; it therefore behoves every reasonable person, who professes to be a Christian, to look around him, in order to discover the standard of truth; that in matters so essential as are the concerns of the soul, he may know how to direct his steps in such dangerous times, and be found on the right side in the result of that momentous crisis.

Within the last few years a number of publications have appeared, addressed to the Church, and many of them more especially to the clergy. They are called "Tracts for the Times;" and it is not too much to state, that their contents include the setting forth of "erroneous and strange doctrines." Erroneous, as being opposed to the truth to be gathered from the whole scope of the word of God: and strange, as being different from those which the authorized statements of the Church of England have familiarized to our minds. They have attracted the attention of all classes, more or less; and been marked by the disapprobation of a large majority of the clergy, while the expressed opinion of many bishops is against them. Though published anonymously, yet several of their writers have been avowed. One Tract more open to objection than the rest having been branded by the official disapprobation of the University within the precincts of which they were published, the author came forward, and proved to be a clergyman of the Church of England; thus offering an opportunity for the distinct interference of his own diocesan; who signified his desire that these publications should be discontinued.

As a high estimate of episcopal power and authority forms part of the system set forth in these Tracts, it was not unreasonable to expect that, at the word of the Bishop, with whatever forbearing gentleness and Christian kindness it may have been uttered, the authors would have withdrawn the Tracts from further circulation. So far however from this being the result, the only evidence which has been given of consistency with the doctrine of respect due to episcopal influence has been the smallest amount of obedience that could possibly meet the lowest and most literal interpretation of the Bishop's requirement. The Tracts have not been withdrawn: only their number has not been increased—that is, no new Tract has been added to the ninety which had before appeared, though the number of copies has been largely increased by the circulation of new editions, even of the Tract the more prominent offensiveness of which had produced the impeding censure: while, under various other forms, and with different titles, the writers have not ceased to publish statements of doctrine similar to those contained in the "Tracts for the Times."

The subjects of these Tracts extend over a large portion of the ecclesiastical field; embracing matters, some of lesser and some of greater importance. Taken as a whole, they exhibit a system confessedly different from that upon which the Protestant Reformed Church has been arranged. It denounces the principle upon which the Reformers considered it essential to separate from the corrupt Church of Rome, and depreciates the course they took in acting upon that principle.

Offensive as is this feature in the system of the Tracts for the Times, this error is but as the dust in the balance, compared with the mode in which they state some of the vital doctrines of Christianity. These are set forth in terms widely opposed to the spirit of the Scriptures, and to the distinct declarations of truth which the Church requires that her ministers should solemnly pledge themselves. In order to justify the strength of this statement, it will only be necessary to refer to five points which it cannot be denied are characteristic features in the "Tracts for the Times."

The first of these is the mode of stating the doctrine of "the Justification of man." While the language of the eleventh Article is very precise and clear in stating that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings;" and thus especially excludes the latter from any share in producing the justifying righteousness which must be instrumentally applied to each individual "by Faith alone:" the system in question openly propounds a second kind of justifying righteous-

ness as absolutely necessary to be wrought by our own works that we can be "accounted righteous before God;" while, at the same time, it goes nigh to neutralize altogether the power of the justification which alone is recognized as Scriptural by the Church, in that the system limits the application to the instrumentality of baptism; and therefore, practically and avowedly substitutes justification by baptism alone, for justification "by faith alone."

A second point naturally arises from this first error. From the exaggerated influence of the Sacrament of baptism, and the disproportioned dimensions into which it is swollen, according to the system of the Tractarian writers, it is made to dam up the broad stream of the pardoning grace of Christ, instead of acting as a regulating flood-gate to conduct its waters within their appointed channel. Perhaps there is no feature in this system of error more painfully contrasted with the cheering beauty of the gospel of grace, than that which exhibits its bearing upon the state of "such as fall into sin after baptism." In a country where it has been ruled by authority, that "the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ," the mass of the people must have been baptized in infancy; and those who receive baptism when they are "of riper years, and able to answer for themselves" must constitute an infinitely small minority. Without however taking into account the different consequences that must naturally result in the effects of baptism under a system of vicarious answering (involving a responsibility merely of oversight, and that only for a definite period, until the baptized infants come of age to take it on themselves)—without taking into consideration the arrangement of the Church, which requires a personal ratification of the baptismal contract by the recipient of baptism, before any warrant is given for the complete admission to its benefits—the system of these writers imposes the heavy yoke of personal penance upon all such as fall into sin after baptism; and unwarrantably attributes a value to such observances; substituting, in effect, a baptism of tears for that renewing of the Holy Ghost, without which the Scripture affords no warrant for the hope of any benefit from a baptism of water. The pivot upon which the true doctrine of the Church respecting baptism is, by these writers, turned into a position from which it is seen in such a point of view as conveys an untrue impression to the mind, may be found perhaps in one single word in the 27th Article. While it is true that all the benefits there set forth may be faithfully expected by those who "receive baptism *rightly*" (*recté* baptismum suscipientes), there are no just grounds for supposing that the same can be pre-

dicated of those who receive baptism only *ritually (rité)*. Yet is it pretended that, under any and every circumstance, the mere formal administration of the *rite* of baptism secures, on the one hand, the instant salvation of the recipient; while on the other hand, it precludes him from any warranted participation in the free pardon purchased by the Atonement of Christ, for any act of sin which may follow upon the doubtful mercy thus dealt out from the font—a mercy which would but mock the hopes of the sinner, by pardoning the past only to entail upon him bondage, and misery, and death in the future.

The third point may properly be linked upon the last. While the great doctrine of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, is as the sun in the heavens of our Church—as the heart that propels every pulsation in her teaching—the very point of the sword of the Spirit which she places in the hands of her ministers—it is an important feature in the "Tracts for the Times," not indeed to withhold altogether, still less to deny the essential character of that Atonement; but as a matter of counsel to becloud the morning beams of this sun—to make the pulses of this heart be faint and few—to use the sword by which the Church begirds her champions as though it were blunted at the point, and given for parade and not for prowess. The Church commands that the earliest instruction to her infant members should be of Christ and him crucified; that the daily devotion of her simplest members should touch upon every string of the chord which brings all the mysteries of Christ into full harmony. The Church lifts up the Atonement of the Saviour in all the openness of Scriptural declarations. She so sets forth its mysteries that the whole may be viewed by the eye of faith; and made, by the act of Divine grace, the medium of communicating power to the soul in every degree, as the Lord pleases to impart it; either to the least of his babes, or to the greatest of his maturer servants. And while she guards those sacred doctrines with every solemnity of statement, she would rather leave it to the Lord himself to defend them from the blasphemy of the infidel, than run the risk of withholding one ray of truth which Christ himself may please to use in order to reveal the light to a babe. But these writers would enshroud the glory of the work of Christ in the thick folds of superstitious mysticism; requiring an initiation to qualify for a contemplation of the reserved mysteries: building up a sort of Holy of Holies of their own imagination, the entrance into which is forbidden without previous preparation, even to those, *all* of whom St. Peter calls "a royal priesthood;" keeping them at a distance until they shall have passed a long portion of their

Christian course, and have arrived at a day when the Atonement may at last be recognized by them. They thus shape their course as if the typical veil of the temple had not been rent in twain at the consummation of that very Atonement, when Christ entered into the antitype of the Holy of Holies; and tore away the screen, which, up to that moment, had hid the mercy-seat, opening a clear view of the Ark of the covenant to the eyes of the worshipper in the Sanctuary.

The fourth point relates to a kindred error. The word of God must be obscured if the great doctrine of the Atonement is to be withheld, even for a season. Such an effect would be produced by these writers;—not indeed by openly attempting to depreciate the Holy Scriptures, but by substantially denying to them that sufficiency which is ascribed to them in the Sixth Article of the Church, and by maintaining that no interpretation of them will suffice for salvation but such as is sanctioned by a so-called Catholic Antiquity. Traditionary opinions of uninspired men imagined to be held "always, everywhere, by everybody," are set up as of co-ordinate authority with the words of the Holy Ghost, and are supposed to form the light by which alone the Scripture is to be read;—an ignis-fatuus which leads the mind through the offensive corruptions of an age in which a thick darkness of superstition and error had already been permitted to settle, and causes it to wander from the plain path fenced in at the earlier period of the true light, when the Spirit of God enabled his chosen instruments to write "This I say unto you by the word of the Lord." The Tractarian doctrine concerning Tradition, and its relative bearing upon the sacred Scriptures, goes nigh to limit the possession of essential knowledge to the "wise and prudent" ones, almost to the exclusion of those "babes," for revealing it to whom our Saviour gave thanks to "the Lord of heaven and earth;" and it is difficult to conceive how that doctrine can be reconciled to the express declaration of our Church that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

The fifth point follows almost necessarily from the conclusion to which the Tractarian doctrines concerning all the previous points brings the mind. The system developed in the "Tracts for the Times" has provided for those who embrace it a conscientious escape from those bonds settled at the Reformation, and required by law to be imposed upon every Minister of the Church,

for the special purpose of securing their fidelity to the very principles and doctrines repudiated by the Tractarian writers. The last of the Tracts in question is that which, having taken this large step, produced the remonstrances already spoken of; and if it were not impossible to suppose, that a subject of such grave importance as religious truth; and one involving the dangerous entanglement of men's consciences could be made, by any, the occasion of experimental syllogisms for logical exercises, it might almost seem that the Tract had been written for the purpose of exhibiting a specimen of the ingenuity, with which a number of syllogistic examples may be constructed, so as to lead the mind to erroneous conclusions, without enabling the student to detect the fallacies. It must be evident that there was a necessity for securing such a refuge for the consciences of those, who undertook the difficult task of accommodating the doctrines set forth in the "Tracts for the Times" to the language of the Articles of the Church of England; but it must be equally evident that the Reformers could not have contemplated such a mode of evading the confession of a belief in those truths which they took pains to state in terms as plain as language can convey: nor is it easy to imagine how such evasion can consist with the requirement made in the royal declaration prefixed to the Articles; "that no man hereafter shall either print or preach, to draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof; and shall not put his own sense or comment as the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense."

A great number of sincere and sober-minded members of the Church of England, including very many of her most efficient and devoted Ministers, are deeply impressed with the conviction that danger of the most alarming kind at present threatens the practical and spiritual usefulness of our beloved Church; and tends, therefore, to defeat the great purpose for which, as a Church, she exists. This danger is pressing and imminent, more especially because it arises within the Church itself; and works towards the subversion of the sound doctrines of Scriptural truth amongst us, or to the neutralizing of their power by an admixture of unsound and erroneous dogmas. While the Church continues to maintain, in its purity, the truth of God as her standard, no attack of the most powerful of her enemies from without could afford a reasonable ground for the smallest alarm; and when it is acknowledged on all hands, that the enemies from without are marshalling their utmost powers, it would be an unpardonable inattention to our highest duties if we were to allow the approach of such domestic

danger to creep on us unawares—to undermine the ground of our strength—to relax the armbands of our shield of defence—to lower the standard of our glory, and to leave it an easy task for our enemies to write ICHABOD upon the doors of our sanctuary.

That this danger is not imaginary may be shewn from the tenor of the writings which those who advocate the system of the "Tracts for the Times" continually put forth. Some of these make many plain acknowledgements of the extent embraced by the designs of their authors. On one point they are very open and distinct —they scruple not to avow that their object includes the "*unprotestantizing of the National Church.*" The following extract from the "British Critic," No. lix. page 45, will fully justify this statement.—

"It ought not to be for nothing; no, nor for anything short of some very vital truth; some truth not to be rejected without fatal error, nor embraced without radical change; that persons of name and influence should venture upon the part of "ecclesiastical agitators;" intrude upon the peace of the contented, and raise doubts in the minds of the uncomplaining; vex the Church with controversy, alarm serious men, and interrupt the established order of things; set the "father against the son, and the mother against the daughter;" and lead the taught to say "I have more understanding than my teacher." All this has been done; and all this is worth hazarding in a matter of life and death; much of it is predicted as the characteristic result, and therefore the sure criterion, of the Truth. *An object thus momentous we believe to be the* UNPROTESTANTIZING *(to use an offensive, but forcible, word) of the* NATIONAL CHURCH; and accordingly we are ready to endure, however we may lament, the undeniable, and in themselves disastrous, effects of the pending controversy. But if, after all, we are not to be carried above the doctrine and tone of the English Reformers; if we are but to exchange a congenial enthusiasm for a timid moderation, a vigorous extreme for an unreal mean, an energetic Protestantism for a stiff and negative Anglicanism, we see but poor compensation for so extensive and irreparable a breach of peace and charity. The object, important as it may be in itself, is quite inadequate to the sacrifice.—WE CANNOT STAND WHERE WE ARE; *we must go backwards or forwards; and it will surely be the latter. It is absolutely necessary towards the consistency of* THE SYSTEM WHICH CERTAIN PARTIES ARE LABOURING TO RESTORE, *that truths should be clearly stated, which as yet have been but intimated, and others developed which are now but in germ. And, as we go on,* WE MUST RECEDE MORE AND MORE FROM THE PRINCIPLES, IF ANY SUCH THERE BE, OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION."

When a party exists who can openly make such avowals, while they pretend to maintain external connexion with the Protestant Reformed Church of England, and while many of them continue to exercise the influence of her pledged ministers, and to eat the bread she provides for them in executing that office; it must indeed be high time for all true-hearted members of that Church,

as she is now constituted, to be upon the alert in endeavouring to guard against the pressing peril. As far as the experience of human affairs, and the records of past events will supply grounds for a judgment as to the result of the present state of things; it is plain, that the direct tendency of the course thus marked out by the Tractarian writers, is to delude the people of this nation once more into the spiritual darkness and degradation of mind in which the Romish tyranny formerly enslaved them; and from which through Divine mercy they were rescued, though a torrent of martyr-blood was shed in the struggle. And should any suppose that it is impossible for the quickened intelligence of this generation which has also the benefit of judging under the influence of so much real spiritual light, as by God's grace is diffused in the present day, to bow down to the Moloch of Popery, and receive the fetters of its anti-christian dogmas—let such persons consider the alternative which will most probably arise. A generation of blind guides in the persons of an assuming priesthood, cannot obscure the true light of the Church, and insult an intelligent, and in some degree spiritual laity, by decking the bushel under which they put it, with puerile gaudiness and mystic emblems, without arousing the indignation of the true professors of real Christianity, and letting loose the passions of the false. A fearful reaction must then take place; and an awful crisis would probably cast this nation under the tyranny of puritanical fanaticism, clashing with the recklessness of infidel anarchy. Either alternative is terrible to contemplate, but the course which lies before us leads directly to the one or to the other.

Whatever may be the nature of the evil to be apprehended, there may be said to be a proximate source of danger which is truly alarming. This is of two kinds: one arises from the influence which is obtained by a class of persons who, while they deprecate the system of the Tracts for the Times, and speak decidedly against some of the doctrines it inculcates, yet concur in some important features of it; and especially in exaggerating the efficacy of the Sacraments, and in the personification of the Church in such a form as prepares the way for its substitution in the place of the Saviour. Persons of this Class are doubtless sincere in imagining that they oppose Tractarianism, and avoid its errors; but they nevertheless keep open the door by which all the evils of the system find their way into minds of less learned theology; and they fail to mark a distinguishing line between the right and the wrong in doctrine; nor do they set up any fence to keep the people within the garden of truth, and to prevent them from wandering into the wilds of error. Their expressed disap-

probation of certain parts of the system, puts their hearers off their guard, and allows them to imbibe an essential portion of that system, almost without suspecting it. This gives great cause for alarm in the present state of the Church.

The other proximate source of danger is the backwardness which characterizes too many of the Clergy, whose minds are really preserved from any participation in the errors in question. There is a shrinking feeling, arising from humility, in some;—from disinclination to prominence in others;—from a mistaken notion of the learning of the advocates of Tractarianism in others;—from difficulties in producing combination;—from various motives and circumstances; but resulting in a practical want of boldness in asserting openly and plainly the opinions which they conscientiously hold. This difficulty in earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints paralyses the efforts which might be made to resist the approach of the evil, and affords perhaps the greatest and most distressing cause for alarm. This is more to be regretted as the system in question brings, by implication, a serious charge against those ministers who repudiate it. Differences of opinion may exist with reference to religious truth, which yet need not prevent the differing parties from subscribing the same statement with a good conscience; and each may allow the other standing room upon the common ground of the terms employed. The Articles of the Church of England are raised upon a base sufficiently broad to admit of several shades of such differences. But the system propounded in the "Tracts for the Times" is so essentially opposed to the views of truth expressed in those Articles, that there cannot be room for both; even when the breadth of that base is measured to its utmost limits. As a necessary consequence, it must result that if the Tractarian system be right, those who differ from it are essentially wrong; and, on the other hand, if the objectors be in the right, that system is essentially wrong. If the former be the truth, those who differ can scarcely be worthy of respect as Ministers of that Church, which, in such a case, they must have betrayed; since their teaching and their influence is systematically employed in a manner irreconcileable with the duty which, upon that supposition, they should have sworn to fulfill. If the latter be the truth, it behoves those who think so, for the Church's sacred cause to do all that in them lies to defend her from the perversion of her doctrines, and to warn others of the snares which beset them, thus fulfilling the solemn promise made at Ordination, that they would "be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word."

To encourage the clergy in thus fulfilling this vow, many of the Bishops of our Church have given expression to their opinions in disapprobation of the system of the "Tracts for the Times;" while no one Bishop has expressed approbation of any of those doctrines which have justly created alarm. Some Bishops have spoken strongly, definitely, and officially, manifesting distinct disapprobation: others have not seen their way to give the same degree of force to their public statements, though they have marked their disapproval with equal definedness of expression. Others, again, have been placed in circumstances which have made it the path of wisdom for them to abstain from official declarations; while they have taken care that their decided disapprobation should be known through some more private statements, so as to leave no doubt of the nature of their opinions. There are others, besides, who have given a testimony of the disapproving view they take of the Tractarian doctrines, by maintaining a grave and impressive silence upon the subject; which, under all the circumstances, admits of no mistaken interpretation. It cannot, for instance, be said, that these have not thought the matter of sufficient moment to call for notice from them: had none of our venerated fathers in God lifted up the voice, or had they only doubtfully expressed dissent, the silence of others might have been indicative of no particular opinion; but as to suppose the matter insignificant would be to bring a heavy charge against those Bishops who have loudly sounded the alarm, so a charge of equal weight would be involved in the supposition that those who have expressed no opinion thought lightly of a matter which has called forth such energetic appeals from others; since it would convey the notion that they are altogether heedless as to the danger of the flocks committed to their oversight.

While such is the danger with which the Church of England is menaced, her true members will feel the blessedness of looking up to the only source of safety for her, and of committing her to the great Head of the Church, who is the "King of kings and Lord of lords," and "by whom all things consist." But while this is the comfort of the real Christian, there is a special duty which arises out of these perilous times; and which engages us in the the active employment of the only means of safety which is sure never to fail whenever it is rightly used. God will preserve His people in the true worshipping of Him;—Christ will never desert his 'little flock' in the midst of the world;—the Holy Ghost will abide with the spiritual Church for ever. But for all this He will be entreated;—His gracious promises must be produced and pleaded, in order that they may be fulfilled:—we must ask

in order that we may have. PRAYER—secret, earnest, unceasing Prayer—this is the weapon of defence for God's people;—this is the sure means of safety. The danger in which the Church is placed should call forth a prayerfulness of spirit, which will give the Lord no rest until He arise on our behalf, and manifest His arm in defence of the truth as it is in Jesus. If every one who feels the reality of the danger, and the deadly nature of the errors which are taking root amongst us, were to make it a special duty to devote some short time every day, or, at the least, every week, to earnest heart-prayer upon the subject, a blessing would assuredly follow.

In order to facilitate the regular performance of this duty, the following Heads for Prayer are suggested for the direction of the thoughts into the channels through which such supplications might flow. A very large number of persons are in the habit of joining the "General Union for *Private* Prayer," every Saturday; thus striving to obtain the benefit of combination and agreement, in approaching the Throne of Grace. It would be very encouraging if such persons would add these Heads for Prayer to those already suggested in the little Tract upon the subject, and if they would make use of them at the same time. May the Lord put it into the hearts of very many of His people to be thus effectual helpers in maintaining the purity, spirituality, and integrity, of that pure and Apostolic branch of Christ's Holy Catholic Church established in these realms.

HEADS FOR PRAYER,

Suggested for frequent use at the present crisis of the Church.

I. Pray that the Church may be maintained in purity of Scriptural doctrine, and in simplicity of faith.

II. Pray that the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of His Atonement, may never be obscured by reserve in teaching, nor by the addition of unscriptural dogmas.

III. Pray that the Church may be blessed with a spirit of real unity; not merely by outward consent to true doctrine, but by a spiritual oneness of heart in Christ Jesus.

IV. Pray that unction and power may be given to all Ministers, who preach in simplicity the truth as it is in Jesus; and that all those whose errors are disturbing the peace of the Church may be brought to a better mind—may have their eyes opened to discern their mistakes—and their hearts disposed to correct them speedily.

V. Pray that spiritual wisdom may be given to all God's people; and especially to His Ministers; together with self-denying boldness in earnestly contending for the Faith once delivered to the saints, and in protesting against all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word.

From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and commandment.—GOOD LORD DELIVER US.

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