

DOES IT MATTER WHAT I BELIEVE?

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DOES IT MATTER WHAT I BELIEVE?

LET deadly vapours be diffused by a great *national* enemy on the battlefield, and loud, indignant cries of just protest are heard on every hand.

But let *soul-destroying* doctrines be spread abroad by the great *spiritual* enemy, and they are either welcomed at once, or simply regarded as subjects for a little harmless discussion—matters of no vital importance whatever! How truly applicable the words of Elihu: “*They cry not when he bindeth them*” (Job xxxvi. 13).

As the very foundations of the Gospel are being boldly assailed by one of the most popular of these fallacies, we believe we shall do well to hold it up to the light. This is the substance of it:—

‘If we are only *sincere* in what we hold, it does not matter *what* we believe, we shall be taken to heaven all the same.’

It is a solemn fact, that men seem more easily duped in matters relating to their *soul's* welfare for another world, than in their temporal interests for this! For example: Send round a notice to all the merchants and shopkeepers in the country, that, for the future, *it will not matter what kind of customers they trust*, so that they themselves are *sincere in trusting them!* How many, think you, would act upon your new theory? We venture to say, NOT ONE!

Take another simple figure. Let us suppose that you have accidentally slidden to the bottom of some deep mountain crevice. You call for help, and your cry is heard. A rope is fetched and let down. When it reaches you, you see at once that it looks very old and rather rotten, and frankly express your fears. But it is the only one they possess; and they try to persuade you that it will serve your purpose well enough; and that, indeed, *any* rope would do if you were only sincere in trusting it! Would this satisfy you? Would it cause you to say, *Then I hope my faith will prove so strong that I shall be*

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quite safe in hanging my whole weight upon it! I will answer for you. You would not. You know very well, that the *strongest faith in a rotten rope* would let you down; while the most trembling faith in a dependable rope would bear you to the top.

Hundreds *sincerely believed* that the huge liner, the *Titanic*, was unsinkable. But what did their sincerity do for them when she struck an iceberg and began to go down?

“I know WHOM I have believed,” said the Apostle, “and am persuaded that HE IS ABLE to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day” (2 Tim. i. 12). He knew *what* he had believed; He knew that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; and said, “*I am not ashamed of the Gospel*” (Rom. i. 16). “This is a *faithful* saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. i. 15). Yet he was thoroughly *sincere* while he stood out as the champion persecutor of Christ’s beloved disciples. “*I verily thought with myself that I ought to do*

many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9).

In Scripture we find two ways of believing. We may sincerely believe the *truth*, or sincerely believe a *lie* (2 Thess. ii. 11, 13).

Sincerity of itself is not enough. *Sincerity* and *truth* must go together (1 Cor. v. 8). *Believing* a thing does not make it true; nor does trusting a person make him trustworthy.

A soldier simply expressed himself the other day. When a comrade told him that they had to leave the railway carriage into which they had only just jumped, he replied in two significant words, "WHO SAYS?"

Never was that soldier's question of more serious consequence than in connection with some of the pulpit-utterances of to-day.

The popular consideration, *What will be most agreeable to the congregation?* seems to be rapidly taking the place of "WHAT SAITH THE LORD? WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?"

Take one painful instance out of many.

A newspaper clipping, sent to the writer, contains the report of a sermon

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preached in a village near Lancaster. The rector was the preacher; the occasion a memorial service for three young men recently fallen in action. We only give a brief extract :—

“ These men had not only accepted the greatest privilege on earth—that of fighting for God, they had also *died for God*, and that was the greatest boon which could be given to a man. Just as the ancient Christian martyrs went straight to the presence of God, so did these men. *Their sin was expiated by their sacrifice, and they went straight to Paradise!*”

“ The converse was equally true. Those who refused to make the sacrifice, were *risking the damnation of their souls in all eternity*. If it be true that *self-sacrifice meant salvation, the deliberate refusal of sacrifice means damnation.*”

One weighty question naturally arises,

IS MAN HIS OWN SAVIOUR ?

This preacher said, Yes, and possibly believed it. But may God yet open his eyes to his *own* necessity of a

Saviour, as well as to the awful sin of deceiving others.

But hear the words of the Holy Ghost through the lips of the Apostle Peter. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, he says:—

“This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. **NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER: FOR THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN, WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED**” (Acts iv. 11, 12).

God’s answer, then, is plain enough,

MAN IS NOT HIS OWN SAVIOUR.

He *needs* a Saviour, for he is a sinner. But can he win a place in Paradise by dying for *himself*? *If his sin can be expiated* by his *own* sacrifice, and *self-sacrifice* means salvation for him, then Christ has surely died in vain! Scripture says, that it was to purge man’s conscience by the shedding of His blood, that, “*through the Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God*” (Heb. ix. 14). But if an unclean sinner, offering *himself* to

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God as a sacrifice, will do as well, then God's unspeakable Gift, His Son's most precious death, and the Holy Spirit's gracious testimony, are entirely unnecessary ! (Heb. x. 11-15). Alas, for those who think so !

But if sincerely trusting a rotten rope is *not* the same thing as sincerely trusting a sound one ; if opening your heart to a designing traitor is not the same as confiding in a faithful Friend ; if believing the devil's lie is not the same thing as believing God's truth, then, indeed, *what you believe does matter*—and will matter ETERNALLY.

No cloak of sincerity can possibly shelter you from the eternal consequences of refusing the provision God has made for sinners in the death of His beloved Son. This only is the language of faith,

JESUS ALONE CAN SAVE.

“ NO LIE IS OF THE TRUTH ” (1 John ii. 21).

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