

LETTER TO AN AGNOSTIC



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Dear Mr. ———,

I trouble you with this letter, only because I am sure that you are under a very great mistake. If you held shares in a company under the impression that you would come out well, and I had reliable information to the contrary, ought I not to enlighten you?

But suppose you said, "Let me alone! I don't care if I am ruined; I am quite content at present. I am determined to go on living upon the illusion; you say it is so, but I don't know it, and I don't want to be disturbed. Let me alone I say; if I am to starve, if I am to be turned into the streets and my furniture sold over my head, I don't care, as long as I am happy and comfortable at the present moment, I will just shut my eyes to the future."

Now, dear Sir, what do you think of that for a rational, intelligent man? And yet,—is not this an exact picture of yourself in relation to eternal things?

You say that you do not *know*. But that is not because you are not capable of knowing, nor because information is not to be had. Is it not because you do not wish to know? Because you deliberately shut your eyes to the light?

Then let me tell you one thing, of which perhaps you may not be aware. If, dear Sir, you are finally lost it will not be merely because you were born in a sinful state, which you were; nor merely because you have committed actual sins, which you have, as well as I: for all that, there is a remedy, through a Saviour, whom God has provided. BUT "THIS is *the condemnation*, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

You are pleased to call yourself, dear Sir, an "Agnostic." But adopting this name will not relieve you of responsibility. You are by creation capable of knowing God. You have faculties for investigating and ascertaining truth, for which you are accountable to Him who created you. With one half of the earnestness with which you would investigate a company in which you were about to invest, you could ascertain the truth of the gospel.

For all this, dear Sir, you will give account to God. To say "I DON'T KNOW," only augments

the heaviness of your responsibility, if, *along with the ignorance*, you have faculties capable of knowing, and ample means of information at hand.

But I have always found that Agnostics never read the evidences of Christianity: they do, however, read with gusto anything against it. Take yourself, for instance, you will not receive me as a visitor, unless I agree to ignore my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. I might talk on any other subject under the sun—but not about God's blessed salvation for sinners.

All this reveals the secret of your *will*. It is not simply that you do not know, but that you will not. Your ignorance is like what Peter describes:—"Of this, they *willingly are ignorant*." There is a word which, while it sweetly encourages the earnest soul, condemns the opposed or the indifferent—the Lord, who knows all hearts, has said, "If any man **WILL** do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17).

There is another point I wish to put before you. It is the wildest folly for an Agnostic to suppose that his belief or unbelief, his knowing or not knowing, will make the *smallest difference in the facts themselves*. If God is going to "*judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*"—my ignoring it or disbelieving it, will make not a bit of differ-

ence, except in the pangs of remorse I may feel—bitter, eternal remorse—at having neglected and rejected the golden offer of salvation that had been held out to me. A large class of persons seem to think that they have quite disposed of Christianity, gospel and all, by saying that they don't believe it. They may indeed dismiss it from their minds, but if there is to be a GREAT WHITE THRONE before which the dead, small and great, will stand, disbelieving it now, will make not the smallest difference as to the holding of that solemn Session. A man may tear up a summons and trample it under his feet, but the Courts of Justice will know how to find him, and to bring him face to face with his responsibilities. The African Republics disbelieved the power of Great Britain, when declaring war, but they have now discovered it to their destruction. They know it now, but too late. Millions will be in the same position as to the gospel which they are despising to-day.

There is awful deception in that name "Agnostic." One makes up his mind to reject the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; but he flatters himself that he is not a common unbeliever. Oh! no; he is an "Agnostic." That sounds so much better! An "Agnostic"! One would think it was a sect of deep philosophers, whereas it simply

means one who does not know; translate this Greek word into a Latin equivalent—an “ignoramus”—“we are a lot of ignoramuses”! How does that sound? Ah! there is much in a name; and this high-sounding term “Agnostic” is one of the falsities which Satan uses—the small deceptions and follies by which he turns man away from Him who has said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John xiv. 6).

Dear Mr. ———, I trust you will not be offended at this letter, but there is one more point I want to make. It is this. The short space of life remaining to you has a character of value, greater than all the eternity that lies before you. Never in eternity will you have such a time as the present. How so? Because you are in the world where the gospel is made known. You have rejected it all your life. In the short period remaining to you, you may undo that error if you will. If, *between now and your leaving the world*, you come to God, through Christ, there is full and free *forgiveness for you for all* your sins. God is now “reconciling the world unto himself; *not imputing their trespasses unto them*. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. v. 20).

Let me beseech you to consider what a golden offer is made to you. Do you really apprehend that a "clean balance sheet" is offered to you as a responsible human being? The Boers have till the 15th September to surrender. You have *the present time* to surrender to God. You may have a year; you may have ten; you may *not* have ONE—not even six months! No one can tell. The only time you can be sure of is the present time, and of that the Scripture says:—"Now is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation." To believers it is said, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

But if you say, "No! I don't want cleansing; I don't want forgiveness or pardon, or remission of sins"; then you bind your own sins doubly upon yourself; and deliberately, and audaciously go into eternity with the load of a life's sins upon your back; and, added to them, the sin of despising God's mercy, and rejecting His Son—by that action virtually ENDORSING THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST—crucifying Him afresh, as it were, unto yourself.

I should be delighted to come and see you, dear Sir, but cannot accept the condition that Christ is to be left outside. They don't reject Him in

heaven, and those who would have Him in heaven must come to Him on earth.

Believe me, dear Mr. _____,

Yours sincerely,

E. J. T.

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