

THE NEED OF DECISION FOR THE TRUTH.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

SOME things are true and some things are false: -- I regard that as an axiom; but there are many persons who evidently do not believe it. The current principle of the present age seems to be, "*Some* things are either true or false, according to the point of view from which you look at them. Black is white, and white is black according to circumstances; and it does not particularly matter which you call it. Truth of course is true, but it would be rude to say that the opposite is a lie; we must not be bigoted, but remember the motto, 'So many men, so many minds,'" Our forefathers were particular about maintaining landmarks; they had strong notions about fixed points of revealed doctrine, and were very tenacious of what they believed to be scriptural; their fields were protected by hedges and ditches, but their sons have grubbed up the hedges, filled up the ditches, laid all level, and played at leap-frog with the boundary stones. The school of modern thought laughs at the ridiculous positiveness of Reformers and Puritans; it is advancing in glorious liberality, and before long will publish a grand alliance between heaven and hell, or, rather, an amalgamation of the two establishments upon terms of mutual concession, allowing falsehood and truth to lie side by side, like the lion with the lamb. Still, for all that, my firm old-fashioned belief is that some doctrines are true, and that statements which are diametrically opposite to them are not true, -- that when "*No*" is the fact, "*Yes*" is out of court, and that when "*Yes*" can be justified, "*No*" must be abandoned. I believe that the gentleman who has for so long a time perplexed our courts is either Sir Roger Tichborne or somebody else; I am not yet able to conceive of his being the true heir and an impostor at the same time. Yet in religious matters the fashionable standpoint is somewhere in that latitude.

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We have a Axed faith to preach, my brethren, and we are sent forth with a definite message from God. We are not left to fabricate the message as we go along. We are not sent forth by our Master with. a general commission arranged on this fashion -- " As you shall think in your heart and invent in your head, so preach. Keep abreast of the times. Whatever the people want to hear, tell them that, and they shall be saved." Verily, we read not so. There is something

definite in the Bible. It is not quite a lump of wax to be shaped at our will, or a roll of cloth to be cut according to the prevailing fashion. Your great thinkers evidently look upon the Scriptures as a box of letters for them to play with, and make what they like of, or a wizard's bottle, out of which they may pour anything they choose, from atheism up to spiritualism. I am too old-fashioned to fall down and worship this theory. There is something told me in the Bible -- told me for certain -- not put before me with a "but" and a "perhaps," and an "if," and a "may be," and fifty thousand suspicions behind it, so that really the long and the short of it is, that it may not be so at all; but revealed to me as infallible fact, which must be believed, the opposite of which is deadly error, and comes from the father of lies.

Believing, therefore, that there is such a thing as truth, and such a thing as falsehood, that there are truths in the Bible, and that the gospel consists in something definite which is to be believed by men, it becomes us to be decided as to what we teach, and to teach it in a decided manner. We have to deal with men who will be either lost or saved, and they certainly will not be saved by erroneous doctrine. We have to deal with God, whose servants we are, and he will not be honoured by our delivering falsehoods; neither will he give us a reward, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast mangled the gospel as judiciously as any man that ever lived before thee." We stand in a very solemn position, and ours should be the spirit of old Micaiah, who said, "As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, whatsoever the Lord saith unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more than God's word are we called to state, but that word we are bound to declare in a spirit which convinces the sons of men that, whatever they may think of it, we believe God, and are not to be shaken in ore- confidence in him.

Brethren, in what ought we to be positive? Well, there are gentlemen alive who imagine that there are no fixed principles to go upon. "Perhaps a few doctrines," said one to me, "perhaps a

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few doctrines may be considered as established. It is, perhaps, ascertained that there is a God; but one ought not to dogmatise upon his personality: a great deal may be said for pantheism." Such men creep into the ministry, but they are generally cunning enough to conceal the breadth of their minds beneath Christian phraseology, thus acting in consistency with their principles, for their fundamental rule is that truth is of no consequence.

As for us -- as for me, at any rate -- I am certain that there is a God, and I mean to preach it as a man does who is absolutely sure. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the Master of providence, and the Lord of grace: let his name be blessed for ever and ever! We will have no questions and debates as to him.

We are equally certain that the book which is called "the Bible" is his word, and is inspired: not inspired in the sense in which Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden may be inspired, but in an infinitely higher sense; so that, provided we have the exact text, we regard the words themselves as infallible. We believe that everything stated in the book that comes to us from God is to be accepted by us as his sure testimony, and nothing less than that. God forbid we should be ensnared by those various interpretations of the *modus* of inspiration, which amount to little more than frittering it away. The book is a divine production; it is perfect, and is the last court of appeal -- "the judge which ends the strife." I would as soon dream of blaspheming my Maker as of questioning the infallibility of his word.

We are also sure concerning the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. We cannot explain how the Father, Son, and Spirit can be each one distinct and perfect in himself, and yet that these three are one, so that there is but one God; yet we do verily believe it, and mean to preach it, notwithstanding Unitarian, Socinian, Sabellian, or any other error. We shall hold fast evermore the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

And, brethren, there will be no uncertain sound from us as to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot leave the blood out of our ministry, or the life of it will be gone; for we may say of the gospel, "The blood is the life thereof." The proper substitution of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, on the behalf of his people, that they might live through him, -- this we must publish till we die.

Neither can we waver in our mind for a moment concerning the great and glorious Spirit of God -- the fact of his existence,

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his personality, the power of his working, the necessity of his influences, the certainty that no man is regenerated except by him; that we are born again by the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit dwells in believers, and is the author of all good in them, their sanctifier and preserver, without whom they can do no good thing whatsoever : -- we shall not at all hesitate as to preaching these truths.

The absolute necessity of the new birth is also a certainty. We come down with demonstration when we touch that point. We shall never poison our people with the notion that a moral reformation will suffice, but we will over and over again say to them, "Ye must be born again." We have not got into the condition of the Scotch minister who, when old John Macdonald preached to his congregation a sermon to sinners, remarked, "Well, Mr. Macdonald, that was a very good sermon which you have preached, but it is very much out of place, for I do not know one single unregenerate person in my congregation." Poor soul, he was in all probability unregenerated himself. No, we dare not flatter our hearers, but we must continue to tell them that they are born sinners, and must be born saints, or they will never see the face of God with acceptance.

The tremendous evil of sin -- we shall not hesitate about that. We shall speak on that matter both sorrowfully and positively; and, though some very wise men raise difficult questions about hell, we shall not fail to declare the terrors of the Lord, and the fact that the Lord has said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Neither will we ever give an uncertain sound as to the glorious truth that salvation is all of grace. If ever we ourselves are saved, we know that sovereign grace alone has done it, and we feel it must be the same with others. We will publish, "Grace! grace! grace!" with all our might, living and dying.

We shall be very decided, also, as to justification by faith; for salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Life in a look at the Crucified One" will be our message. Trust in the Redeemer will be that saving grace which we will pray the Lord to implant in all our hearers' hearts.

And everything else which we believe to be true in the Scriptures we shall preach with decision. If there be questions which may be regarded as moot, or comparatively unimportant, we shall speak with such a measure of decision about them as may be comely. But points which cannot be moot, which are essential

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and fundamental, will be declared by us without any stammering, without any enquiring of the people, "What would you wish us to say?" Yes, and without the apology, "Those are my views, but other people's views may be correct." We ought to preach the gospel, not as *our views* at all, but as the mind of God -- the testimony of Jehovah concerning his own Son, and in reference to salvation for lost men. If we had been entrusted with the making of the gospel, we might

hard altered it to suit the taste of this modest century, but never having been employed to originate the good news, but merely to repeat it, we dare not stir beyond the record. What we have been taught of God we teach. If we do not do this, we are not fit for our position. If I have a servant in my house, and I send a message by her to the door, and she amends it on her own authority, she may take away the very soul of the message by so doing, and she will be responsible for what she has done. She will not remain long in my employ, for I need a servant who will repeat what I say, as nearly as possible, word for word; and if she does so, I am responsible for the message, she is not. If any one should be angry with her on account of what she said, they would be very unjust; their quarrel lies with me, and not with the person whom I employ to act as mouth for me. He that hath God's Word, let him speak it faithfully, and he will have no need to answer gainsayers, except with a "Thus saith the Lord." This, then, is the matter concerning which we are decided.

How are we to show this decision? We need not be careful to answer this question, our decision will show itself in its own way. If we really believe a truth, we shall be decided about it. Certainly we are not to show our decision by that obstinate, furious, wolfish bigotry which cuts off every other body from the chance and hope of salvation and the possibility of being regenerate or even decently honest if they happen to differ from us about the colour of a scale of the great leviathan. Some individuals appear to be naturally cut on the cross; they are manufactured to be rasps, and rasp they will. Sooner than not quarrel with you they would raise a question upon the colour of invisibility, or the weight of a non-existent substance. They are up in arms with you, not because of the importance of the question under discussion, but because of the far greater importance of their being always the Pope of the party. Don't go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers. There is no sense in being a sort of doctrinal

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game-cock, to be carried about to show your spirit, or a terrier of orthodoxy, ready to tackle heterodox rats by the score. Practise the *suaviter in modo* as well as the *fortiter in re*. Be prepared to fight, and always have your sword buckled on your thigh, but wear a scabbard; there can be no sense in waving your weapon about before everybody's eyes to provoke conflict, after the manner of our beloved friends of the Emerald Isle, who are said to take their coats off at Donnybrook Fair, and drag them along the ground, crying out, while they flourish their shillelahs, "Will any gentleman be so good as to tread on the tail of my coat?" These are theologians of such warm, generous blood, that they are never at peace till they are fully engaged in war.

If you really believe the gospel, you will be decided for it in more sensible ways. Your very tone will betray your sincerity; you will speak like a man who has something to say, which he knows to be true. Have you ever watched a rogue when he is about to tell a falsehood? Have you noticed the way in which he has to mouth it? It takes a long time to be able to tell a lie well, for the facial organs were not originally constituted and adapted for the complacent delivery of falsehood. When a man knows he is telling you the truth, everything about him corroborates his sincerity. Any accomplished cross-examining lawyer knows within a little whether a witness is genuine or a deceiver. Truth has her own air and manner, her own tone and emphasis. Yonder is a blundering, ignorant country fellow in the witness-box; the counsel tries to bamboozle and confuse him, if possible, but all the while he feels that he is an honest witness, and he says to himself, "I should like to shake this fellow's evidence, for it will greatly damage my side of the question." There ought to be always that same air of truth about the Christian minister; only as he is not only bearing witness to the truth, but wants other people to feel that truth and own the power of it, he ought to have more decision in his tone than a mere witness who is stating facts which may be believed or not without any serious consequences following either way. Luther was the man for decision. Nobody doubted that he believed what he spoke. He spoke with thunder, for there was lightning in his faith. The man preached all over, for his entire nature believed. You felt, "*Well*, he may be mad, or he may be altogether mistaken, but he assuredly believes what he says. He is the incarnation of faith; his heart is running over at his lips."

If we would show decision for the truth, we must not only do so by our tone and manner, but by our daily actions. A man's life is

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always more forcible than his speech; when men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as pounds and his words as pence. If his life and his doctrines disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice and reject his preaching. A man may know a great deal about truth, and yet be a very damaging witness on its behalf, because he is no credit to it. The quack who in the classic story cried up an infallible cure for colds, coughing and sneezing between every sentence of his panegyric, may serve as the image and symbol of an unholy minister. The Satyr in AEsop's fable was indignant with the man who blew hot and cold with the same mouth, and well he might be. I can conceive no surer method of prejudicing men against the truth than by sounding her praises through the lips of men of suspicious character. When the devil turned preacher in our Lord's day, the Master bade him hold his peace; he did not care for Satanic praises. It is very ridiculous to hear good truth from a bad man; it is like flour in a coal-

sack. When I was last in one of our Scottish towns I heard of an idiot at the asylum, who thought himself a great historic character. With much solemnity the poor fellow put himself into an impressive attitude and exclaimed, "I'm Sir William Wallace! Gie me a bit of bacca." The descent from Sir William Wallace to a piece of tobacco was too absurd for gravity; yet it was neither so absurd nor so sad as to see a professed ambassador of the cross covetous, worldly, passionate, or sluggish. How strange it would be to hear a man say, "I am a servant of the Most High God, and I will go wherever I can get the most salary. I am called to labour for the glory of Jesus only, and I will go nowhere unless the church is of most respectable standing. For me to live is Christ, but I cannot do it under five hundred pounds per annum."

Brother, if the truth be in thee it will flow out of thine entire being as the perfume streams from every bough of the sandal-wood tree; it will drive thee onward as the trade-wind speeds the ships, filling all their sails; it will consume thy whole nature with its energy as the forest fire burns up all the trees of the wood. Truth has not fully given thee her friendship till all thy doings are marked with her seal.

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We must show our decision for the truth by the sacrifices we are ready to make. This is, indeed, the most efficient as well as the most trying method. We must be ready to give up anything and everything for the sake of the principles which we have espoused, and must be ready to offend our best supporters, to alienate our warmest friends, sooner than belie our consciences.

We must be ready to be beggars in purse, and offscourings in reputation, rather than act treacherously. We can die, but we cannot deny the truth. The cost is already counted, and we are determined to buy the truth at any price, and sell it at no price. Too little of this spirit is abroad now-a-days. Men have a saving faith, and save their own persons from trouble; they have great discernment, and know on which side their bread is buttered; they are large-hearted, and are all things to all men, if by any means they may save a sum. There are plenty of curs about, who would follow at the heel of any man who would keep them in meat. They are among the first to bark at decision, and call it obstinate dogmatism, and ignorant bigotry. Their condemnatory verdict causes us no distress; it is what we expected.

Above all we must show our zeal for the truth by continually, in season and out of season, endeavouring to maintain it in the tenderest and most loving manner, but still very earnestly and firmly. We must not talk to our congregations as if we

were half asleep. Our preaching must not be articulate snoring. There must be power, life, energy, vigour. We must throw our whole selves into it, and show that the zeal of God's house has eaten us up.

How are we to manifest our decision? Certainly not by harping on one string and repeating over and over again the same truths with the declaration that we believe them. Such a course of action could only suggest itself to the incompetent. The barrelorgan grinder is not a pattern of decision, he may have persistency, but that is not the same thing as consistency. I could indicate certain brethren who have learned four or five doctrines, and they grind them over and over again with everlasting monotony. I am always glad when they grind their tunes in some street far removed from my abode. To weary with perpetual repetition is not the way to manifest our firmness in the faith.

My brethren, you will *strengthen your decision* by the recollection of the importance of these truths to your own souls. Are your sins forgiven? Have you a hope of heaven? How do the solemnities of eternity affect you? Certainly you are not saved apart from these things, and therefore you must hold them, for you feel you are a lost man if they be not true. You have to die, and, being conscious that these things alone can sustain you in the last article, you hold them with all your might. You cannot give them up. How can a man resign a truth which he feels to be vitally important to his own soul? He daily feels -- "I have to live on it, I

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have to die on it, I am wretched now, and lost for ever apart from it, and therefore by the help of God I cannot relinquish it."

Your own experience from day to day will sustain you, beloved brethren. I hope you have realised already and will experience much more the power of the truth which you preach. I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that doctrine. I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that there dwelleth in my flesh no good thing. I cannot help holding that there must be an atonement before there can be pardon, because my conscience demands it, and my peace depends upon it. The little court within my own heart is not satisfied unless some retribution be exacted for dishonour done to God.

They tell us sometimes that such and such statements are not true; but when we are able to reply that we have tried them and proved them, what answer is there to such reasoning? A man propounds the wonderful discovery that honey is not sweet. "But I had some for breakfast, and I found it very sweet," say you, and your reply is conclusive. He tells you that salt is poisonous, but you point to your own health, and declare that you have eaten salt these twenty years. He says that to eat bread is a mistake -- a vulgar error, an antiquated absurdity; but at each meal you make his protest the subject for a merry laugh. If you are daily and habitually experienced in the truth of God's Word, I am not afraid of your being shaken in mind in reference to it. Those young fellows who never felt conviction of sin, but obtained their religion as they get their bath in the morning, by jumping into it -- these will as readily leap out of it as they leaped in. Those who feel neither the joys nor yet the depressions of spirit which indicate spiritual life, are torpid, and their palsied hand has no firm grip of truth. Mere skimmers of the Word, who, like swallows, touch the water with their wings, are the first to fly from one land to another as personal considerations guide them. They believe this, and then believe that, for, in truth, they believe nothing intensely. If you have ever been dragged through the mire and clay of soul-despair, if you have been turned upside down, and wiped out like a dish as to all your own strength and pride,

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and have then been filled with the joy and peace of God, through Jesus Christ, I will trust you among fifty thousand infidels. Whenever I hear the sceptic's stale attacks upon the Word of God, I smile within myself, and think, "Why, you simpleton! how can you urge such trifling objections? I have felt, in the contentions of my own unbelief, ten times greater difficulties." We who have contended with horses are not to be wearied by footmen. Gordon Gunning and other lion-killers are not to be scared by wild cats, nor will those who have stood foot to foot with Satan resign the field to pretentious sceptics, or any other of the evil one's inferior servants.

If, my brethren, we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be made to doubt the fundamentals of the gospel; neither can we be undecided. A glimpse at the thorn-crowned head and pierced hands and feet is the sure cure for "modern doubt" and all its vagaries. Get into the "Rock of Ages, cleft for you," and you will abhor the quicksand. That eminent American preacher, the seraphic Summerfield, when he lay a-dying, turned round to a friend in the room and said, "I have taken a look into eternity. Oh, if I could come back and preach again, how differently would I preach from what I have done before!" Take a look into eternity, brethren, if you want to be decided. Remember how Atheist

met Christian and Hopeful on the road to the New Jerusalem, and said, "There is no celestial country. I have gone a long way, and could not find it." Then Christian said to Hopeful, "Did we not see it from the top of Mount Clear, when we were with the shepherds?" There was an answer! So when men have said, "There is no Christ -- there is no truth in religion," we have replied to them, "Have we not sat under his shadow with great delight? Was not his fruit sweet to our taste? Go with your scepticisms to those who do not know whom they have believed. We have tasted and handled the good word of life. What we have seen and heard, that we do testify; and whether men receive our testimony or not, we cannot but speak it, for we speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen." That, my brethren, is the sure way to be decided.

And now, lastly, *why should we at this particular age be decided and bold?* We should be so because this age is a doubting age. It swarms with doubters as Egypt of old with frogs. You rub against them everywhere. Everybody is doubting everything, not merely in religion, but in politics and social economics, in everything indeed. It is the era of progress, and I suppose it must be the

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age, therefore, of unloosening, in order that the whole body politic may move on a little further. Well, brethren, as the age is doubting, it is wise for us to put our foot down and stand still where we are sure we have truth beneath us. Perhaps, if it were an age of bigotry, and men would not learn, we might be more inclined to listen to new teachers; but now the Conservative side must be ours, or rather the Radical side, which is the truly Conservative side. We must go back to the radix, or root of truth, and stand sternly by that which God has revealed, and so meet the wavering of the age. Our eloquent neighbour, Mr. Arthur Mursell, has well hit off the present age : --

"Have we gone too far in saying that modern thought has grown impatient with the Bible, the gospel, and the cross? Let us see. What part of the Bible has it not assailed? The Pentateuch it has long ago swept from the canon as unauthentic. What we read about the creation and the flood is branded as fable. And the laws about the landmarks, from which Solomon was not ashamed to quote, are buried or laid upon the shelf.

"Different men assail different portions of the book, and various systems level their batteries of prejudice at various points; until by some the Scripture is torn all to pieces, and cast to the four winds of heaven, and by even the most forbearing of the cultured Vandals of what is called modern thought, it is condensed into a thin pamphlet of morality, instead of the tome of teaching

through which we have eternal life. There is hardly a prophet but has been *reviewed* by the wisecracks of the day in precisely the same spirit as they would review a work from Mudie's library. The Temanite and the Shuhite never misconstrued the baited Job with half the prejudice of the acknowledged intellects of our time. Isaiah, instead of being sawn asunder, is quartered and hacked in pieces. The weeping prophet is drowned in his own tears. Ezekiel is ground to atoms amidst his wheels. Daniel is devoured bodily by the learned lions. And Jonah is swallowed by the deep monsters with a more inexorable voracity than the fish, for they never cast him up again. The histories and events of the great chronicle are rudely contradicted and gainsaid, because some schoolmaster with a slate and pencil cannot bring his sums right. And every miracle which the might of the Lord wrought for the favour of his people, or the frustration of their foes, is pooh-poohed as an absurdity, because the professors cannot do the like with their enchantments. A few of what are called miracles may be credible, because our leaders think they can do them themselves.

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A few natural phenomena, which some doctor can show to a company of martinets in a dark room, or with a table-full of apparatus, will account for the miracle of the Red Sea. An aeronaut goes up in a balloon, and then comes down again, and quite explains away the pillar of fire and of cloud, and trifles of that kind. And so our great men are satisfied when they think that their toy wand has swallowed up the wand of Aaron: but when Aaron's wand threatens to swallow up theirs, they say that part is not authentic, and that miracle never occurred.

"Nor does the New Testament fare any better than the Old at the hands of these invaders. There is no toll of deference levied on their homage as they pass across the line. They recognise no voice of warning with the cry, 'Take thy shoes from off thy feet, because the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' The mind which halts in its career of spiritual rapine on any reverential pretext, is denounced as ignorant or slavish. To hesitate to stamp the hoof upon a lily or a spring flower is the sentimental folly of a child, and the vanguard of the thought of the age has only pity and a sneer for such a feeling, as it stalks upon its boasted march of progress. We are told that the legends of our nurseries are obsolete, and that broader views are gaining ground with thoughtful minds. We are unwilling to believe it. The truth is, that a few, a very few, thoughtful men, whose thinking consists in negation from first to last, and whose minds are tortured with a chronic twist or curve, which turns them into intellectual notes of interrogation, have laid the basis of this system; these few honest doubters have been joined by a larger band who are simply restless; and these again by men who are inimical to the spirit and the truths of Scripture, and together they have

formed a coterie, and called themselves the leaders of the thought of the age. They have a following, it is true; but of whom does it consist? Of the mere satellites of fashion. Of the wealth, the pedantry, and the stupidity of our large populations. A string of carriages is seen 'setting down' and 'taking up' at the door where an advanced professor is to lecture, and because the milliner is advertised from floor to ceiling in the lecture room, these views are said to be gaining ground. But in an age of fashion like this, who ever suspects these minions of the mode of having any views at all? It becomes respectable to follow a certain name for a time, and so the vainlings go to follow the name and to display the dress. But as to views, one would no more suspect such people of having any views than they would dream of charging more than a tenth part

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of the crowds who go to the Royal Academy's exhibition with understanding the laws of perspective. It is the thing to do: and so every one who has a dress to show and a lounge to air, goes to show it, and all who would be in the fashion (and who would not?) are bound to advance with the times. And hence we find the times advancing over the sacred precincts of the New Testament, as though it were the floor of St. Alban's or of a professor's lecture room; and ladies drag their trains, and dandies set their dress-boots on the authenticity of this, or the authority of that, or the inspiration of the other. People who never heard of Strauss, of Bauer, or of Tubingen, are quite prepared to say that our Saviour was but a well-meaning man, who had a great many faults, and made a great many mistakes; that his miracles, as recorded in the New Testament, were in part imaginary, and in part accountable by natural theories; that the raising of Lazarus never occurred, since the Gospel of John is a forgery from first to last; that the atonement is a doctrine to be scouted as bloody and unrighteous; that Paul was a fanatic who wrote unthinkingly, and that much of what bears his name was never written by him at all. Thus is the Bible rubbed through the tribulum of criticism from Genesis to Revelation, until, in the faith of the age in which we live, as represented by its so-called leaders, there are but a few inspired fragments here and there remaining."

Moreover, after all, this is not an earnestly doubting age; we live among a careless, frivolous race. If the doubters were honest there would be more infidel places of concourse than there are; but infidelity as an organised community does not prosper. Infidelity in London, open and avowed, has come down to one old corrugated iron shed opposite St. Luke's. I believe that is the present position of it. "The Hall of Science" is it not called? Its literature was carried on for a long time in half a shop in Fleet Street, that was all it could manage to support, and I don't know whether even that half shop is used now. It is a poor, doting,

drivelling thing. In Tom Paine's time it bullied like a vigorous blasphemer, but it was outspoken, and, in its own way, downright and earnest in its outspokenness. It commanded in former days some names which one might mention with a measure of respect; Hume, to wit, and Bolingbroke, and Voltaire were great in talent, if not in character. But where now will you find a Hobbes or a Gibbon? The doubters now are usually doubters because they do not care about truth at all. They are indifferent altogether. Modern scepticism is playing and toying with truth; and it takes to

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"modern thought" as an amusement, as ladies take to croquet or archery. This is nothing less than an age of millinery and dolls and comedy. Even good people do not believe out and out as their fathers used to do. Some even among Nonconformists are shamefully lax in their convictions; they have few masterly convictions such as would lead them to the stake, or even to imprisonment. Molluscs have taken the place of men, and men are turned to jelly-fishes. Far from us be the desire to imitate them.

Moreover it is an age which is very impressible, and therefore I should like to see you very decided, that you may impress it. The wonderful progress made in England by the High Church movement shows that earnestness is power. The Ritualists believe something, and that fact has given them influence. To me their distinctive creed is intolerable nonsense, and their proceedings are childish foolery; but they have dared to go against the mob, and have turned the mob round to their side. Bravely did they battle, let us say it to their honour; when their churches became the scenes of riot and disorder, and there was raised the terrible howl of "No Popery" by the lower orders, they boldly confronted the foe and never winced. They went against the whole current of what was thought to be the deep-seated feeling of England in favour of Protestantism, and with scarcely a bishop to patronise them, and but few loaves and fishes of patronage, they have increased from a handful to become the dominant and most vital party in the Church of England, and to our intense surprise and horror they have brought people to receive again the Popery which we thought dead and buried. If anybody had told me twenty years ago that the witch of Endor would become Queen of England, I should as soon have believed it as that we should now have such a High Church development; but the fact is, the men were earnest and decided, and held what they believed most firmly, and did not hesitate to push their cause. The age, therefore, can be impressed; it will receive what is taught by zealous men, whether it be truth or falsehood. It may be objected that falsehood will be received the more readily; that is just possible, but anything will be accepted by men if you will but preach it with tremendous energy and

living earnestness. If they will not receive it into their hearts in a spiritual sense, yet at any rate there will be a mental assent and consent, very much in proportion to the energy with which you proclaim it; ay, and God will bless our decision too, so that when the mind is gained by our earnestness, and the

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attention is won by our zeal, the heart itself will be opened by the Spirit of God.

We must be decided. What have Dissenters been doing to a great extent lately but trying to be fine? How many of our ministers are labouring to be grand orators or intellectual thinkers? That is not the thing. Our young ministers have been dazzled by that, and have gone off to bray like wild asses under the notion that they would then be reputed to have come from Jerusalem, or to have been reared in Germany. the world has found them out. There is nothing now I believe that genuine Christians despise more than the foolish affectation of intellectualism. You will hear a good old deacon say, "Mr. So-and-so, whom we had here, was a very clever man, and preached wonderful sermons, but the cause has gone down through it. We can hardly support the minister, and we mean next time to have one of the old-fashioned ministers back again who believe in something and preach it. There will be no addition to our church else." Will you go out and tell the people that you believe you can say something, but you hardly know what; you are not quite sure that what you preach is correct, but the trust-deed requires you to say it, and therefore you say it? Why, you may cause fools and idiots to be pleased with you, and you will be sure to propagate infidelity, but you cannot do more. When a prophet comes forward he must speak as from the Lord, and if he cannot do that, let him go back to his bed. It is quite certain, dear friends,. that now or never we must be decided, because the age is manifestly drifting. You cannot watch for twelve months without seeing how it is going down the tide; the anchors are pulled up, and the vessel is floating to destruction. It is drifting now, as near as I can tell you, south-east, and is nearing Cape Vatican, and if it drives much further in that direction it will be on the rocks of the Roman reef. We must get aboard her, and connect her with the glorious steam-tug of gospel truth, and drag her back. I should be glad if I could take her round by Cape Calvin, right up into the Bay of Calvary, and anchor her in the fair haven which is close over by Vera Cruz, or the cross. God grant us grace to do it. We must have a strong hand, and have our steam well up, and defy the current; and so by God's grace we shall both save this age and the generations yet to come.