

**THE VICTORY OF  
DIVINE GOODNESS:  
INCLUDING**

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The Victory of Divine Goodness: Including by T. R. Birks

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**T. R. BIRKS**

**THE VICTORY OF  
DIVINE GOODNESS:  
INCLUDING**



THE VICTORY  
OF  
DIVINE GOODNESS;

INCLUDING

- I. LETTERS TO AN INQUIRER ON VARIOUS  
DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE;  
II. NOTES ON COLERIDGE'S CONFESSIONS OF AN  
INQUIRING SPIRIT;  
III. THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE OF  
THE ATONEMENT  
AND OF ETERNAL JUDGMENT.

BY

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## PREFACE.

THIS little Volume, in its object, though not in structure, is a sequel to the "Difficulties of Belief," and the "Ways of God," published some years ago. It consists of three parts, distinct from each other, and written at long intervals; but their common aim, like that of the two previous works, is to throw light on those difficulties by which some of the main doctrines of Christian revelation are often clouded and obscured in thoughtful minds.

The First Part consists of Letters to an Inquirer, written more than seven years ago. A gentleman of rank, to whom I am still personally unknown, but who had found help from some of my works, addressed to me a paper of inquiries on several topics which had caused him either perplexity or distress. Its cautious and reverent tone claimed from me a deliberate reply in several letters, which now appear, slightly revised for the press, in their



original form. They were written under the impression that their publication might be desirable for the sake of others, while passing through a similar stage of mental conflict. Some remarks in the fifth letter will explain my chief reason for the long delay of seven years. It seemed to me that thoughts there condensed into a few pages, the fruit of long and painful meditation, needed some special call of Providence to justify me in giving them to the public. On that solemn topic it is dangerous to speak, when Scripture, on the surface at least, appears to keep silence. The fallen heart is only too prone to find excuses for deadening and abating the force of the solemn warnings of God.

This scruple, after seven years of waiting, when almost thirty years have elapsed since the vista of thought itself was opened to me, has now been overcome by still weightier motives. The subject has of late been revived, and has acquired new prominence among the theological and ecclesiastical controversies of the present day. Any contribution, in a reverent and cautious spirit, to the guidance and relief of perplexed minds, is now more seasonable than ever. The thoughts in the letter, and partly those in the supplement, by transmission or by conversation, have been given privately to various friends

or perplexed inquirers, and they contain fertile seeds of truth, not likely to remain dormant when once received. Thus the only probable result of further delay would be their first presentation to the Christian public under forms or with associations which I might esteem undesirable. I believe that the obligation of caution and reverence has been fulfilled by seven years' and even thirty years' delay. It remains for me now to fulfil the duty of a "steward of the mysteries of God," by imparting to the Church, in their simplest form, those meditations, deeply rooted in Scripture, yet found only beneath its surface, which tend to throw light on the darkest and most solemn portion of Divine revelation.

The Second Part consists of marginal comments on Coleridge's well-known little work, "The Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit." These were written soon after the first edition of the book appeared, more than twenty-five years ago. They were shown to his daughter, Mrs. S. Coleridge, when she was preparing the second edition, by a common friend. Several pages of her long supplementary note, in 1849, are an attempted reply to some of these criticisms, to which she alludes very courteously in these words:—

"I have lately perused an interesting manuscript,

commenting on the Confessions, written by a decided dissentient from the views of the author, but a fair and straightforward one, who sometimes, *I think*, mistakes the true import of those views, but never wilfully misrepresents them. This critique is written in so good a spirit, shows so much acuteness and knowledge of Scripture, and enters on the examination of my father's little work in so elaborate and legitimate a manner, that I cannot help wishing the author would revise and publish it. I have no stronger desire with regard to the letters than that they should be subjected to close and searching *honest* criticism."

The wish so courteously expressed by Mrs. Coleridge seventeen years ago, even while battling eagerly in her text for the view I have opposed, is now fulfilled long after her own decease. Very few and slight corrections have been made in these Notes, and so much of the Confessions is quoted as seems needful to explain their application and reference. The controversy has grown in importance since Coleridge's little work appeared. The cloud, like a man's hand, has almost overspread the firmament. The question of the true authority of Scripture claims more and more the careful study of every Christian, who would not drift away, in utter