

HALF-HOURS IN THE TEMPLE CHURCH

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Half-Hours in the Temple Church by C. J. Vaughan

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C. J. VAUGHAN

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CHURCH

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By C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.,
MASTER OF THE TEMPLE



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I.

THE CHRISTIAN SELF-INTROSPECTION
HUMBLE, BUT NOT MORBID.*

I know nothing by myself: yet am I not hereby justified.—
1 COR. iv. 4.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.—JOHN iii. 21.

THE two texts read together give a notable instance of what the infidel calls the self-contradictions, of what we call the self-corrections, of Holy Scripture.

Theology, gendered of controversy, is cautious and balancing: Revelation, flashing from heaven, is bold and free.

Human hands have soiled, human feet have trampled, the bright, the precious deposit of the faith once delivered. Heresy has corrupted, schism has torn, the simplicity which is in

* December 12, 1869.

2 *The Christian Self-introspection*

Christ. Then the Church must mend and patch, must restore and reconcile, must define and systematize;—and the result is Theology—a thing of creeds and formulas, of accuracies and harmonies, necessitated by the existence of error, and accepted as a safeguard by all but the presumptuous.

Still this theology was not the first utterance, but the second: not the voice, but the letter; not the lively, living, life-giving word, but the drier, duller, less sparkling form, in which, as in a protecting casket, the original jewel of Revelation is packed and enfolded.

The very Word itself, conscious of truth, majestic in its divinity, speaks here, speaks there, as God prompts, as man wants it. It stays not to guard against right-hand mistake or left-hand abuse: it flings forth its broad free saying, and waits not to fence itself against each possible misconception. Sometimes therefore to the careless ear it seems ambiguous or double-tongued—seems even to contradict itself—seems even to say here what it denies there, or to unsay in this place what it had emphasized in that.

Examples will occur to every one. *He that is not with me is against me*, Christ says in St. Matthew. *He that is not against us is for us*, Christ says in St. Luke. The one is the maxim of decision, the other is the maxim of charity. *Justified by faith*, St. Paul says, *we have peace with God—Not of works lest any man should boast. By works a man is justified*, St. James rejoins, *and not by faith only*. The one thinks of a living faith—living, and therefore (for so life proves itself) working: the other has in his view that spurious, degenerate thing, which devils call faith, and God, because it lies lazy, calls infidelity. In some places the two opposite utterances are brought together into one, tied to each other by a most incongruous *for*—as where St. Paul bids the Philippians to *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*, and adds this unexpected reason—*for it is God which worketh in you*.

The explanation of all this is, that truth has ever at least two aspects: to see but one of these is at once error: to allow for both is a condition of sound doctrine. Yet to state both sides