

# The Christian Visitor.

"HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS"—2d Timothy, i.

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Poetry.

The Last Hymn.

The Sabbath day was ending in a village by the  
sea,  
The uttered benediction touched the people  
tenderly,  
And they rose to face the sunset in the glowing,  
lighted west,  
And then hastened to their dwellings for God's  
blessed boon of rest.

But they looked across the waters and a storm  
was raging there;  
A fierce spirit moved above them—the wild  
spirit of the air—  
And it lashed and shook and tore them, till  
they thundered, groaned, and boomed,  
And alas for any vessel in their yawning gulf  
entombed.

Very anxious were the people on that rocky  
coast of Wales,  
To see the dawn of coming morrow should be  
telling awful tales,  
When the sea had spent its passion and should  
cast upon the shore  
Bits of wreck and swollen victims, as it had  
done heretofore.

With the rough winds blowing round her, a  
brave woman strained her eyes,  
And she saw along the billows a large vessel  
fall and rise.

Oh! it did not need a prophet to tell what  
the end must be,  
For no ship could ride in safety near the shore  
on such a sea.

Then the pitying people hurried from their  
homes and thronged the beach,  
Oh! for power to cross the waters and the per-  
ishing to reach!

Helpless hands were wrung for sorrow, tender  
hearts grew cold with dread,  
And the ship, urged by the tempest, to the fa-  
tal rock shore sped.

She has parted in the middle! Oh, the half  
of her goes down!  
God have mercy! Is heaven far to seek for  
those who drown?

Lo! when next the white, shocked faces looked  
with terror on the sea,  
Only one last clinging figure on the spar was  
seen to be.

Nearer to the trembling watchers came the  
wreck tossed by the wave,  
And the man still clung and floated, though no  
power on earth could save.

"Could we send him a short message?" "Here's  
a trumpet. Shout away."  
'Twas the preacher's hand that took it, and he  
wondered what to say.

Any memory of his sermon? Firstly? Secondly?  
Ah no!

There was but one thing to utter in that awful  
hour of woe.  
So he shouted through the trumpet, "Look to  
Jesus! Can you hear?"

And "Aye, aye, sir!" rang the answer o'er the  
waters loud and clear.

Then they listened. He is singing! "Jesus  
lover of my soul!"

And the winds brought back the echo. "While  
the nearer waters roll!"

Strange indeed it was to hear him, "Till the  
storm of life was past,"

Singing bravely from the waters, "Oh receive  
my soul at last!"

He could have no other refuge! "Hangs my  
helpless soul on thee;  
Leave, ah leave me not!" The singer dropped  
at last into the sea,  
And the watchers, looking homeward through  
their eyes with tears made dim,  
Said, "He passed to be with Jesus in the sing-  
ing of that hymn."

Marianne Farnham.

The Nihilists of Russia.

THEIR ORIGIN, AIMS, AND METHODS OF  
OPERATION.

The recent attempted assassination of  
the Czar of Russia has attracted renewed  
attention to the society known as Nihilists,  
by whom it is supposed the attack on his  
life was directed.

The vast empire of Russia, said to com-  
prise one seventh portion of the territorial  
surface of the globe, and containing a popu-  
lation of over ninety millions, is under  
the absolute rule of the Czar, and the peo-  
ple have no voice, either by representation  
or otherwise, in the conduct of government.  
Under a system of despotism abuses must  
inevitably flourish, for however wise and  
benevolent the personal ruler may be, he  
is liable to be misled by the opinions of in-  
terested persons who surround him, and he  
must intrust a considerable part of his  
power and authority into the hands of men  
unfitted to exercise it with benefit to either  
the ruler or the people. So it has been in  
Russia, and the Czar, who is said to be a  
man of a kindly humane disposition, is  
held responsible for acts of cruelty and op-  
pression perpetrated by subordinate offi-  
cials.

A feeling of bitter hostility to the gov-  
ernment has for some time been prevalent  
throughout the country, and the vigorous  
measures adopted to repress it has only  
fanned the flame, until at the present time  
the Nihilists and kindred secret societies  
have spread through the nation like a can-  
cer, and number among their adherents  
men and women of every rank in society.

The cruelties practised in the fierce sup-  
pression of an insurrection in 1825 left in  
the minds of survivors and their friends an  
insatiable craving for vengeance, which is-  
sued early in the following year in the  
formation of a society, established with  
the design of overthrowing despotism and  
giving Russia a free constitution. The  
leader of the society was Herten, a man  
of conspicuous ability, whose writings ex-  
ercised a powerful influence over the minds  
of Russian youth. He published a journal  
in London, which was secretly smuggled  
into Russia and eagerly read. It contain-  
ed details of court intrigue and reports of  
affairs in the Czar's palaces, supplied to  
Herten by secret allies in high position at  
St. Petersburg, and revealed much of the  
workings of the machinery by which the  
people were oppressed.

The society was the object of a furious  
persecution by the authorities. Many of  
its members were executed, and others ex-  
iled and imprisoned, but notwithstanding  
the efforts made to extirpate it, it increased  
in number and in power. Journals, politi-  
cal treatises, and novels issued from its  
printing presses, and were circulated  
among all classes of society.

In 1870 this society took the name of  
Nihilists, from the Latin word Nihil, sig-  
nifying nothing, indicating that those who  
took the name believed in none of the ideas  
and doctrines considered orthodox in Rus-  
sia. From this time they began to take  
decided and important action. The young  
men spread themselves through the differ-  
ent provinces, propagating the new ideas  
among the peasantry, presenting them with  
books and instigating them to revolution.  
Young ladies even of the highest rank of  
society, dressed themselves as peasants and  
sought menial employments, that they  
might instruct others in their peculiar  
views. Tombovskoie, a wealthy princess,  
moving in court circles, was discovered  
among peasant washerwomen with a like  
object. In the schools the young girls  
nearly all became converts, and no restric-  
tions, no persecutions, have been able to  
arrest the rapid growth of Nihilism.

It is necessarily a secret Order, for a  
traitor among its members might consign  
the whole fraternity to death. The follow-  
ing are some of the secrets of the Nihilist  
Order. The society is administered under  
the following rules: Six members can form  
a separate body, or circle, with full power  
to act and receive new members, but only  
with the greatest precautions. A candi-  
date for admission must be recommended  
as a trustworthy man, upon whom reliance  
can be placed under any circumstances.  
After satisfactory investigation the circle,

in full meeting, votes on the new member.  
Two votes against him are sufficient cause  
of rejection. One may be if the opposing  
member can support his opposition by un-  
doubted evidences of disqualification. A  
newly-chosen member is invited to a meet-  
ing of the circle, where he must take a  
solemn obligation or oath in which he  
pledges himself to sacrifice his life and all  
that is sacred to him in the struggle against  
the tyrants and oppressors of the Russian  
people; that he will obey and execute  
every unanimous decision of the circle  
without hesitation, regardless of any per-  
sonal danger he may encounter by so doing.  
He avows himself a sworn enemy of the  
Russian Government, and promises to im-  
mediately act against it by every means  
he can command.

When a circle reaches the number of  
sixty it is subdivided into ten circles of six  
each, so that if discovered by the police  
only six persons will suffer arrest. Into  
these circles, which meet ostensibly only  
for social purposes, as in the enjoyment  
of friendly hospitality, it is sought to draw  
in members from every class of society—  
military officers of every rank, common  
soldiers, the middle classes and peasantry.  
It is the passion of the day and the dread-  
ful mystery which envelops the Order adds  
to the fascination. Every member accord-  
ing to his means makes weekly or monthly  
payments to the treasurer. Money is used  
for the purchase of arms, the propagation  
of free ideas among the peasantry—each  
circle sending an armed agent on this er-  
rand. Many women belong to these cir-  
cles. In every town and large village of  
Russia there are so many circles, that had  
the Government a true conception of the  
extent of their number it would be even  
more seriously alarmed than it is.

The audacity with which the Nihilists  
avow their principles and acts, is an im-  
portant feature of their society, and shows  
the dangerous character of the organiza-  
tion. This feature was brought into prom-  
inence after the recent murder of Prince  
Krapotkine by a Nihilist agent. A placard  
was posted through the capital by the so-  
ciety, avowing the deed and stating the  
causes which had led to its commission,  
and concluding with these remarkable  
words: "Death for death, execution for ex-  
ecution, terror for terror. This is our  
answer to the threats, the persecutions and  
the oppression of the government."

So appalling is the struggle now in pro-  
gress in Russian society. Injustice and  
oppression have evoked lawless retaliation,  
and the social problems of the future will,  
it is feared, be worked in blood. We can  
only pray that they may be solved by the  
doctrines of the Prince of Peace having a  
full and wide extension in Russia, teaching  
men that they are brothers, and mov-  
ing governors and people alike to a mutual  
recognition of each other's rights, as in-  
cited by our blessed Lord in his sermon  
on the Mount.

Essentials and Non-Essentials.

There is a motto which has had a wide  
currency in our time among those calling  
themselves Evangelical Christians. It gives  
expression to the fundamental principle of  
what may be called Liberal Denomina-  
tionalism. As I remember, it the motto  
runs something like this: "In essentials,  
unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all  
things, charity." The sentiment has been  
frequently approved, and so far as I know,  
never contradicted, but I confess that I do  
not like it. It has been especially used  
with reference to denominational creeds or  
polity. It takes sectarianism for granted,  
and having the churches of Christ divided  
on the basis of creeds it proposes to  
organize a limited degree of fellowship  
among the more approved divisions, and  
to refrain from persecuting those who do  
not attain to such approval. Some articles  
of belief are held to be essential, and all  
who are agreed in respect to these articles  
can give to each other friendly recognition.  
Other beliefs are not essential, but they  
may be made a convenient basis for divid-  
ing the churches, while furnishing no  
sufficient ground for actual hostility among  
the fragments.

What, in the ordinary use of this matter,  
is meant by essential? Essential to what?  
Does it mean essential to Christian faith?

In other words, do the understood essentials  
of a creed include simply those things  
without believing which no person can be  
regarded as a Christian? If we believe  
that there are certain well defined doctrines  
which no true Christian, however ignorant  
or wrongly educated, can fail to accept  
without reservation, then it is indeed fit-  
ting that we should call these doctrines  
essential and proclaim them everywhere  
as such. I do not think that the word is  
generally used in this sense. Most of us  
have charity enough to suppose that there  
are many who doubt what are called  
essential doctrines, who yet are really  
Christians, though of course very imperfect  
Christians. If we are to define essential  
belief as signifying simply the least belief  
possible for one to have and be a Christian,  
I think it likely to be both difficult and  
unprofitable so to minimize creeds, as to have  
them exactly specify the essential doctrine.

But if we do not mean essential to being  
a Christian, perhaps we mean essential to  
the truth of the gospel. If so, I do not see  
how any man dare speak of non-essentials.  
Jesus came to bear witness to the truth,  
and if I understand his teaching, all truth  
of every kind has a place in His kingdom.

The gospel appropriates all truth whether  
speculative or practical, and teaches us to  
be loyal to it always, as fast and as far as  
we attain to it. Philosophy may recognize  
actions which have no moral characteristics;  
many truths may be out of present personal  
relation to individual men; but there is no  
truth which it is right to deny, or safe to  
forever disbelieve—no truth which when it  
enters into relation to our lives we may,  
with impunity disregard. The truths of  
natural science even are used to promote  
the salvation of men under the gospel  
dispensation, and the importance of any  
religious truth may be immeasurable in  
the history of a soul. There is no truth  
which is non-essential, none which we can  
afford to think lightly of. This distinction  
between essentials and non-essentials in  
belief seems to me as false and mischievous  
as the old distinction between mortal and  
venial sins. There was no need of pick-  
ing out deadly sins, for "the wages of sin  
is death." There is no need of specifying  
essential truth, when all truth is essential.  
I regard the way of thinking represented  
by the motto, I have called in question as  
fraught with danger and working much  
actual harm to our time.

Positive Obedience.

A captain of one of the merchant vessels  
of the late Stephen Girard on hearing,  
after he had safely crossed the ocean, that  
he could do much better for his employer  
by taking his ship to a different port from  
that to which it was consigned, took the  
liberty of disobeying his instruction, and  
went to the better market. By doing so  
he increased Mr. Girard's profits several  
thousand dollars. When he returned and  
gleefully told his employer what he had  
done, Mr. Girard thanked him, paid him  
an extra amount for his services, and then  
discharged him at once from his employ.  
On the captain expressing great surprise  
and sorrow at Mr. Girard's decision, that  
wise financier said, "I can have no man in  
my employ who will disobey my instruc-  
tions. It so happens that on this occasion  
your disobedience was profitable to me.  
At another time, however, it might be just  
the reverse. At any rate I cannot feel  
satisfied to allow any man to take such  
liberties, and as you have done this I can  
trust you no more."

Thus no matter what is proposed as the  
alternative, "to obey is better." If a child  
is sent to school or on an errand, and is  
urged by a companion to go elsewhere, let  
him remember "to obey is better." If he  
is tempted to break any command of parent,  
teacher, or master, any proper law of his  
government or commandment of God, he  
may be sure that "to obey is better." If in  
business it seems to a man as if dishonesty  
was likely to pay well, as if indeed some  
swerving from the law of God was a  
necessity of trade, let him understand that  
without any question, always "to obey is  
better." In every time of temptation to  
disobey God's commandment, in the least  
thing or in the greatest, let this aspired  
declaration ring in the ears, and influence  
the conduct, "To obey is better."—Selected.

He is not Here.

You cannot find Christ? Perhaps you  
are looking for Him in the wrong place.  
So the women could not find Christ that  
first Easter morning when they came to  
the place where the Lord lay, came in  
earnest quest, bringing spices and sweet  
perfume, came to love, to honor, to wor-  
ship. But the Lord was not there. They  
found grave-clothes, but no Christ. How  
that first Easter morning scene is repeated  
peated again and again in our experience!  
We come to the spot where we saw Christ  
yesterday, but to-day He is not there. He  
is gone. And our ears are dull—heavy  
with sorrow perhaps—and we hear not, or  
heed not, the angel's gentle rebuke, "Why  
seek ye the living among the dead? He  
is not here; He is risen."

Men go to the Gospel alone to seek for  
their Christ. But the living Christ is not  
in a book. In it are the grave-clothes,  
that bear the impress of His form. The  
Gospels contain at best but the footprints  
He left along the shore, upon the sand on  
which he walked. Most lives are like the  
way of a ship at sea; they leave no discern-  
able path behind them. A few leave a  
wake, that remains a few moments, or  
hours at best, after the living that made it  
have disappeared beyond the horizon.  
Christ, walking upon this erasive sea, has  
left upon its waves His footsteps, as in ar-  
chaic periods the great creatures of the  
past have left their foot prints in the rocks.  
His footprints will never disappear, never  
even grow dim. But Christ's footprints  
are not necessarily Christ. Christ's grave-  
clothes are not Christ.

The church is ever going back to the  
century, or centuries preceeding, to find  
its Christ. It looks for Him among the  
traditions of all elders. A curious quest  
this is, for a living Christ in a dead past;  
and a mournful quest, in not one but many  
tombs. He has lived in many hearts of  
many faiths; in the heart of Eusebius, of  
Thomas a Kempis, of Augustine, of Luther,  
of Calvin, of Cramer, of Wesley, of Ed-  
wards, of Channing. But it was in their  
living hearts He dwelt; only his sweet  
memory enshrined in sacred spices, only  
his grave clothes are or can be in their  
writings. But disciples, on a more sacred  
quest than any of the mediaval saints, for  
Holy Grail, go again and again to those  
tombs for the living Christ. They even  
chide, sometimes gently, sometimes with  
fierce upbraidings, those who, having a  
living Christ, refuse to go back to search  
for the living among the dead, who having  
a living Christ refuse to anoint with spices  
the grave-clothes.

Christians are ever going back to their  
dead experiences for a living Christ.  
They search for Him in their memories.  
They look for Him in the hopes of yester-  
terday whom they should look for in the  
hopes of to-day and of to-morrow. They  
know not the meaning of the declaration,  
His mercies are new every morning. They  
mourn over the withered flowers gathered  
last week instead of going out to pluck  
those that have the dew upon them. They  
try to keep the manna of yesterday, and  
know not that manna fresh fallen from  
heaven sparkles on the ground to-day.  
Many a Cowper seeks thus the living  
among the dead, singing,

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still.

Sorrowing disciples, why seek ye the  
living among the dead? He is not here.  
He is risen. Go into Galilee. Go to your  
daily tasks; to your accustomed work. He  
will come when you seek Him in the way  
which he has appointed. Walking on your  
mission, whatever it may be, He shall ap-  
pear to you; perhaps unrecognized, save  
as He makes your heart burn within  
you, you know not why. Offering your  
humble hospitality to a stranger, He shall  
suddenly be revealed to you in the moment  
in which you give of your own to another's  
need. After the long night of seemingly  
fruitless toil He shall suddenly reward you  
by His appearance and His invitation,  
Come and dine.

"He that hath My commandments and  
keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and  
he that loveth Me shall be loved of My  
Father, and I will love him and manifest  
Myself to him."