

**VERILY, VERILY:
THE AMENS
OF CHRIST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649290215

Verily, verily: the amens of Christ by George Bowen

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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THE AMENS OF CHRIST

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MDCCLXXIX.

'VERILY, VERILY:'

THE AMENS OF CHRIST.

'Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'—*Matt. v. 18.*

THEY to whom these words were first addressed by our Lord understood by "the law" the body of commandments and ordinances given to the Jews. But the copious illustrations of his meaning given by Christ in the exposition that follows enable us to apprehend it very clearly. He takes up one after another of the precepts in the observance of which the Jews were seeking to establish for themselves a righteousness and ground of acceptance with God, and discloses in them a fulness of meaning that had not been dreamt of. It was not intended that they who had refrained from actual murder and adultery should flatter themselves that they had religiously kept the commandments prohibiting those sins. Open transgression

is but the fruit; there is before this the tree, and before the tree there are the roots, and first of all the seed. Sin has a considerable life before it flashes itself forth in acts. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" says the mouth sincerely at the very time the heart is hiding the seed of the future misdeed. In multitudes of instances the full efflorescence does not take place; conventionalities, rules of society, fear of consequences, hinder the development; but the sinful tendency may be in the heart all the time.

Proceeding with his illustrations, Jesus shows that the law is tending to fulfilment when an inferior or temporary expression of the Divine will is replaced by a higher expression of it. The injunction to give a writing of divorcement was subordinate to the higher law that forbade the putting away of the wife; and by parity of reason all that was temporary and special in the commandments given to the Israelites had to be superseded by that higher expression of the will of God which Christ came to give. The Jews who flattered themselves that they were righteous because they had not forsworn themselves, were to learn that the use of oaths was itself offensive to God. A Divine interpreter of the law is come among them, and he shows them that they have constantly misapprehended its scope. The Sermon on the Mount is an inspired commentary on the law, revealing its length and breadth, and showing that nothing less than absolute perfection is required of those who would be called the children of God. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

At a later period we find our Lord varying the words of our text thus: "Heaven and earth may pass away; my words shall not pass away." The law passes over into the words of Christ; these are the final and complete expression of the Father's will, the new version of the Divine code. The law thus embodied is an essential part of the Gospel. It is only as we know the will of God that we know God; his character expresses itself in his requirements; and if any man turns his back on the law, or gives it the cold shoulder, he is so far turned away from God. A thing this to be considered by many who seem to have little solicitude for the doing of God's will, many to whom the commandments are grievous, and whose Bible is limited to the promises. "I never knew you" is what the Judge will say to them; had they known him he would have acknowledged them.

Exceeding great and precious promises are scattered over the Gospel, but the larger part of it is preceptual; and he who would preach the Gospel must see to it that the Lord's requirements are fully set forth. It is said that the point of primary importance is that men should come to Christ, and through him be reconciled to the Father, and receive forgiveness of their sins; after that they will seek the knowledge of God's will. Yes, but in order that they may come to Christ, they must be made sensible of their need of him, they must know their sinfulness, and this they will never know till they understand better than they do the commandments of God. The Spirit of God convinceth the sinner first of his sin and then of the righteousness of Christ; and convinces him by showing

him God's holy and perfect law embodied in Christ and set at nought by the sinner. Christ's recorded words were addressed for the most part to those who had not yet come to him in faith, and consist of very much that is not invitation. They who find their complacency in the thought of fulfilled duty need to have much more of duty piled upon their consciences, till their complacency is crushed to powder and they cry out in anguish, "Wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us?" The reason why Christ's salvation has so little effect upon many who appear to have embraced it is because they do not know from what it delivers them. They have never known their absolute ruin; have not been shown the length and breadth of the Divine law; they have perhaps learned that Christ is the best of all leaders, the One most worthy to be followed; but a far more powerful consideration than this is necessary for such hearts as ours. And the fashion of the day which makes it inexpedient to say much of man's ruin and danger, and the wrath of God, tends to make it impossible that converts should know the grace of God in its magnitude and power, and effectually precludes the attainment of a high degree of consecration.

"Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law of God unfolded in my word shall pass away." May we not infer that the Spirit of God, before the close of this dispensation, shall have exhibited in the heart and life of the believer the complete triumph of God's word, complete conformity to the word of God, the image of Christ, the perfection of sonship? Is not this that manifestation of the sons of God for which the whole

creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now? "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be my son."

'Verily, verily I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.'—*JOHN 1. 52.*

THESE words of our Lord were addressed to Nathanael. We have a very interesting account of the interview which proved to be of such everlasting importance to Nathanael. It is full of suggestions. Philip findeth Nathanael. Can we really know Christ and not desire that our friends should know him? What is our friendship worth if we carry not a glad report of the majesty and grace and truth that are in Christ? Philip's message was met by prejudice and unbelief. Your Jesus is of Nazareth; this is enough to show that he is not the Messiah; of all places in the world this is surely the last where we should look for a Divine deliverer. How many, even in our own day, are hindered from hearkening to the Gospel message by some similarly plausible but groundless prejudice. How many in this country (India) are unwilling to look to Christ for salvation, because his Gospel comes to them from a foreign land. But happy is that man in whom candour is stronger than prejudice; who keeps open all the doors of his mind; who will not so far favour even his most cherished opinions as to protect them from the test of new light. As the spirit of Nathanael was opposed to all guile, so it was open to all inquiry. He came and saw. "Behold an Israelite indeed,