

**FRAGMENT ON THE
CHURCH, WITH
THE APPENDICES ON
THE SAME SUBJECT**

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Fragment on the Church, with the Appendices on the Same Subject by Thomas Arnold

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THOMAS ARNOLD

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(196.50)

FRAGMENT

ON

THE CHURCH.

SECOND EDITION :

IN WHICH ARE CONTAINED

APPENDICES ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

BY

THOMAS ARNOLD, D.D.

LATE HEAD MASTER OF RUGBY SCHOOL.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages, chiefly composed in 1839, 40, 41, are a part of a much longer work which Dr. Arnold contemplated, but which was interrupted by his early death.

The executors having kindly allowed me to fulfil my wishes as to this fragment, I have felt it a duty not to withhold what remains from his pen on the subject which so greatly occupied his thoughts.

The earlier approaches to the same subject it has been thought desirable, even at the risk of some inconvenience to the purchasers of the first edition, to publish in the form of Appendices to the fragment of 1839, 40. The brief sketches of 1827, 1833, and 1840, may be useful in showing how very small a portion of the Author's design was actually accomplished in the following pages, whilst the fragments of 1833, may illustrate a portion of the argument which accidentally he had

treated of more fully in his earlier than his later MSS. on the subject.

I have been entirely indebted to Mr. Stanley for the whole arrangement and revision of the present volume.

MARY ARNOLD.

Fox How, March 25, 1845.

THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE language of prophecy leads us to hope for more than the salvation of a certain number of individuals through the gospel. It speaks of a general restoration, so complete as to repair altogether the mischief which had been introduced into the world by sin. And the language of St. Paul, when declaring the great mystery of his preaching, namely, the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, seems also to go beyond the redemption of a few individuals, comparatively speaking, out of the multitude of all nations. Christ was to present unto himself a Church holy and without blemish; and the distinction made by some between the visible and invisible Church, seems only a later refinement of interpretation, suggested by the fact that the Church, in the obvious sense of the term, was not pure and spotless. Now ought we to lower the language of prophecy, in order to make it agree with the existing state of things? or to be anxious to amend the existing state of things, for the

very reason that it does not correspond with the promises of Scripture?

The spread of Christianity, speaking of the geographical extent of its mere nominal dominion, has been partial;—its real moral effects have been still more partial. The largest part of the world does not acknowledge Christ so much as in name; and where he is acknowledged in name, he is yet denied in many instances in works. The perfect work of the Gospel has been seen only in individuals: Christ has laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them; but he has done no mighty work of spiritual healing on a whole church. It is still most true, that we see not yet all things put under him.

Now are we prepared to say that, whereas the world was lost by one man's sin, it was only to be in a small part recovered by one man's righteousness?—that, whereas through Adam all died, only a very small number were through Christ to be made alive? This is directly contrary to the language of Scripture, which represents the redemption as designed to be a full reparation of the evil occasioned by the fall.

Or are we prepared to say that God's purposes have been defeated by the greater power of God's enemy?—that sin has been stronger than grace, Satan mightier than Christ?—that the Church with its divine Head and its indwelling Spirit

has been unable to overcome the powers of evil?—that the medicine was too weak to overcome the disease?

If neither of these alternatives be true; if the Scripture will not allow us to doubt of God's gracious will towards us all; and if to doubt his power be blasphemy,—what remains, but that we have weakened and corrupted that medicine, which was in itself sufficient to heal us?—that we have not tried, and are not trying Christianity, such as Christ willed it to be?—that the Church, against which the powers of hell have so long maintained an advantageous conflict, cannot be that same Church against which Christ declared that they should not prevail?

Now here it is necessary, in order to prevent much confusion and very much uncharitableness, to distinguish carefully between what I may be allowed to call Christian religion and the Christian Church*.

By Christian religion, I mean that knowledge of God and of Christ, and that communion of the Holy Spirit, by which an individual is led through life, in all holiness, and dies with the confident hope of rising again through Christ at the last day. This knowledge being derived, or derivable at any rate, from the Scriptures alone, and this communion being the answer to our earnest

* [See Sermon. xxxix. in vol. iv.; Lect. on Modern Hist. vi.]