

GOD IS GOOD.

– *BY J. G. WHITTIER.* –

O friends! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God,
And love of man, I bear.

I trace your lines of argument;
Your logic, linked and strong,
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds;
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms, the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Ye praise his justice; even such
His pitying love I deem:
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
The robe without a seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself, alas! I know;
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

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I bow my forehead in the dust,
I veil my eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies;
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings:
I know that God is good!

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see;
But nothing can be good in him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above:
I know not of his hate – I know
His goodness and his love.

I dimly guess, from blessings known,
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments, too, are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And he can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed he will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works, my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts he gave,
And plead his love for love.

And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care.

O brothers! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me, that my feet may gain
The safe and surer way.

And thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me, if too close I lean
My human heart on thee.

REPLY.

– *BY MRS. C. T. RUSSELL.* –

Ho! weary, longing, fainting souls
Who thus in darkness grope,
And drift amidst the dang'rous shoals –
Steer by yon star of hope!

That star of hope, our risen Lord,
Jesus, the crucified,
Will guide you safely into port,
Beyond this stormy tide.

I, too, have drifted on that sea,
Its rocks and shoals have feared;
But, praise the Lord who leadeth me!
The shores of rest I've neared.

And to-day I'm in the harbor,
And the dawn of earth's new age
Is brightly beaming on me
Through the blessed, sacred page.

O! midst "the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,"

I'm glad thy faith with patience clings
To hope that God is good.

Indeed he is both good and wise,
A Friend and Helper true.
His plan, discovered to our eyes,
To hope gives courage new.

Thou sayest, "Who talks of scheme and plan,
Or fathoms God's deep thought?
He needeth not device of man."
O! hast thou not forgot –

That in his Word the promise lies,
"The wise shall understand,"
That all its hidden mysteries
In "due time" shall be scanned? –

And that "the pathway of the just
Is as the shining light,"
And that it "shineth more," and must,
Till faith is lost in sight?

True, none hath been God's counselor,
And none could trace his thought,
Till the divine Instructor,
The truth to light had brought.

Thou needest not to "dimly guess"
That God some good will bring,
For lo! in pow'r and righteousness,
Behold earth's coming King!

Do the Scriptures not declare it?

Hast thou not clearly read
That which all the holy prophets
From dawn of time have said? –

O! "the time of glad refreshing
From presence of the Lord"
Is the blissful hope of blessing
We have from his sure Word.

Give o'er the clashing creeds of men,
And vain tradition's lore;
Trust not to reason's feeble ken,
But search the Scriptures more.

Keep the bright star of hope in sight,
And past the dang'rous shoal,
Into the port of rest and light,
'Twill guide thy weary soul.

And yet before thou comest down
To the dark and "silent sea,"
The blessings of God's truth shall crown
Thy four-score years and three.

Thy love and rev'rence, faith and hope,
Are precious in God's sight,
While in the darkness thou dost grope
And hope and pray for light.

Behold One standeth at thy side,
All glorious and fair!
'Tis earth's new King, thy risen Lord,
Who marks and heeds thy prayer.

Far out upon the stormy tide

To thee he comes, O see!
And reaches out a "Helping Hand,"
To cheer and comfort thee.

Nor canst thou lean too heavily
Upon his might and strength;
His arm is strong, his grace is free;
Here thou mayst rest at length.

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Wilder waves may lash in fury
About thine anchored soul;
God's truth will hold thee steady,
Storms must yield to his control.

His truth, thy shield and buckler too,
Thy strong support must be,
And every line both old and new
Be meat and drink for thee.
