



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

Impure Hearts Foster Declension

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Chapter 37

THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT

The downward tendency of our nature, as shown by man's perennial hidden deep distaste for spiritual truth, has created the necessity for epochs of reformation throughout past generations of men. The teachings of the less spiritual systems of religion are more acceptable to unspiritual men. Hence the dogmas of Rome will prevail, and her unspiritual ceremonies will control millions of our race till the end of time.

To the degree that the great bodies of Christian Protestantism lose sight of their spiritual centers and drift into formalism, in that proportion will they ordinarily, increase in numbers, in wealth and in greatness. It was by widening God's narrow way, that the church was able to boast of the apparent conquest of the world in the days of Constantine, only to be waked from the delusion after the darkness of centuries, to find that she had been conquered by the world.

From the death of Abel to this day, God has renewed, at different periods, every system of spiritual truth which He has instituted. As organized bodies of men become unspiritual, they are either reorganized or superseded by other organizations. Every great spiritual movement inaugurated by God, has, in process of years, become unspiritual. Gospel truth becomes perverted, and its claims to the veneration of mankind must be enforced by new methods, or utterly lost to the world. As poor Lot almost became a Sodomite by his continuance in that wicked city, so God's organized forces have always become demoralized by too close contact with this wicked world.

The host of Israel was beautiful to contemplate, as it crossed the Jordan six hundred thousand strong; and in all that multitude there was but one rebellious soul. But this very people were terribly depraved, and her priests the embodiment of sensuality when Samuel was born. The altars of Zion were pure and glorious in the days of King David, but utterly depraved in the latter part of the reign of David's son. The tents of Israel were beautiful for their purity in the reign of Hezekiah, but were a spectacle of abomination in the reign of Manasseh. Israel was purified from corruption under the godly reign of Josiah, but Jerusalem was corrupt as Sodom in the reign of Zedekiah. The conquering hosts of Israel were glorious in righteousness, at different periods after their return from Babylon, but seemed lost to God and goodness when Jesus came. Despite the fact that they had had ages of culture and centuries of divine teaching, they crucified God's only son.

The early church at Pentecost was "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." See her as she starts out. Her ministers a flame of fire; her blood-washed witnesses whiter than snow; her conquering legions invincible. Devils fled at her approach. At her word the bars of death were broken, and the fetters of the grave were sundered. Heathen deities crumbled, and ancient systems of corruption gave way before the simple preaching of the cross. Darkness yielded to this glorious light, and the world was bending at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth.

Who could have foreseen that such power would be lost in weakness, and such purity drift into corruption. How could such incorruptible doctrines be intermixed with and finally disappear in heathen mythology? How could such simplicity and spirituality drift into a mystic semi-heathen, unspiritual system of ceremonies? Who that sat at the

feet of the great Apostle, and listened to His teachings, could have believed that the doctrine of justification by faith, would be lost to the whole Christian world for a thousand years?

The church of Martin Luther, whose cornerstone is the doctrine of justification by faith alone, has passed her third century; (as of 1897) and today, in her stronghold, in her centres of learning, on the very ground where Martin Luther preached, her disciples are sent through a round of ceremonies and service, in order to be justified, that requires from nine to fifteen years. God, by Luther, resurrected the doctrine of justification by faith from its grave of a thousand years; but Luther's disciples have found for it a sepulcher.

Mr. Wesley was raised up of God to restore to the Christian world the doctrine of complete sanctification by faith. Luther was rejected by all Christendom for teaching the simple doctrine of justification by faith only. In like manner, Mr. Wesley found both the Catholic and Protestant world arrayed against him because of two simple points of doctrine which he taught, viz: the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, and the attainment of entire sanctification by faith only.

As justification by faith is the cornerstone of the church of Luther, the church of Mr. Wesley was builded, under God, on the specific doctrine that we are justified, and afterward fully sanctified, of both which experiences the Holy Spirit is the inward witness. The words of John and Charles Wesley, have been officially recorded on the first page of every book of discipline, published in either Europe or America, as follows:

“We think it expedient to give you a brief account of the rise of Methodism, both in Europe and America.

“In 1729, two young men in England, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737, they saw, likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their object. God then thrust them out to raise a holy people.”

This doctrine is considered of such vital importance to the (former) Methodist Episcopal Church, that each of her ministers must answer the following questions in the affirmative before he can receive ordination at her hands, and be received into the public ministry: “Have you faith in Christ?”

“Are you going on to perfection?”

“Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?”

“Are you groaning after it?”

Not one of all the ministers could have been ordained, in the order of Methodism, without giving an affirmative answer to these questions.

A single century is passed, and hundreds of these ministers unite with thousands of her membership in declaring there is no such experience. Other thousands, who concede the possibility of attaining entire sanctification in this life, are seeking it as some seek salvation, by an endless series of works. Every student of church history must be aware of the truth suggested in this chapter.

Thus, from the earliest antiquity to the present date, we see this tendency from the spiritual to the unspiritual; from the substance to the shadow; from the power to the forms; from salvation by faith in Christ, to a futile trust in the performances of men. But God has, in infinite love, kept spiritual religion alive on the earth, by the recurrence of periods of reformation during the generations, in which this tendency is arrested, and his plan of salvation is again presented to the multitudes who perish for lack of knowledge.

It is the same truth, the same God, the same mighty Saviour, the same deliverance from sin. But ever and anon during the centuries, it has been hid from men, till the Lord has reproduced His buried truth, and brought forth the hidden glory of His great salvation.

Special agencies have always been used to accomplish this, as Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, of the former dispensation; and St. Paul, Huss, Luther, Fenelon, Knox, Barclay, Wesley, Whitefield, Asbury, Caughey, Inskip, Moody, McDonald and Harrison, of our own dispensation. These, with other chosen vessels, have each had their appointment of God to a special work. Some to bring to light a single point of buried truth, others to formulate a system of truth and organize victory. This one to wake the dead with the notes of alarm; that one, as God's battle axe, to cut through the ranks of sin, and another to specifically teach the way of holiness. It is a marked indication of

the wonderful love of our Heavenly Father, that in every age of spiritual declension, He has raised up special agencies to turn back the tides of death and bring deliverance to captive souls.

But another truth gleams from the page of history which gives us pain of heart. I refer to the fact that all reformers sent from God, for the purpose of correcting abuses and bringing in a more spiritual religion, have been opposed by the prevailing authorities of the church. If there is an exception to this rule since the days of Abraham, I have failed to note it. The earth has been drenched with the blood of millions from this source. If the multitudes who have pleaded with men to be holy, and have sealed this ministry with their blood, were buried side by side, it would belt the earth with graves.

Why this opposition is so nearly universal, it may be difficult to decide; but the fact is before us, that church authorities, in seasons of decline, have always been arrayed against the men and the measures which God has employed to stop the downward current, and turn men to a life of holiness.

Possibly, the following reasons may throw light on this question:

1. The decline of spirituality is so gradual, that it is not readily perceived.

In no instance have the ministers of religion, as a whole, either seen or conceded the fact of spiritual declension. The mass--ministers and people--have gone together, and the work has been so gradual it has not been discovered.

No power on earth or in heaven could have convinced the Jewish High Priest who crucified the Lord, that either he or his people were fallen from grace. Not one of the Roman priesthood, which for ages controlled the civil authorities, and incited the horrible butchery of Protestant Christians (especially the charismatic Huguenots), could be convinced that he was not doing God a service. The professed ministers of God who moved hell and earth to crush the Wesleys, and extinguish the rising fires of Methodism, thought to suppress an evil. Many of the ministers of God, who in these latter days throw the whole weight of their position and ministry against the holiness movement, do it in sincerity.

2. The presentation of substitutes for spirituality is a device of Satan by which millions are deceived. As the life and power of salvation are dying out of organized bodies, or individual Christians, there is an immediate effort to supply a conscious lack with something else.

- Mental culture. God forbid that I should, even incidentally, make an impression against the cultivation of the mind. I wish the people of God had a thousand times more knowledge than they now possess. Not a single Christian enterprise could be successfully carried forward--not even the publication of a single copy of the Holy Scriptures, or a periodical for the spread of Christian holiness, without mental culture. But the point of satanic delusion, is in the effort to supply the lack of spirituality by the cultivation of the intellect; the substitution of light in the head for purity of heart; the vain effort to fill the place of God's presence and power in the soul, with our own works and wisdom. To gain a knowledge of scientific truth is right and pleasing to God, but to let such knowledge usurp God's place in the soul, is sin.

Under this delusion, some thoughtful Christian teachers who see the world coming in like a flood, and sinful indulgences increasing on every hand, comfort themselves and say, "Well, it is true that some evils have crept in among us, but we are much wiser than at the beginning. Look at our institutions of learning. Think of the power of the press and the increase of Christian literature. We have an educated ministry. Our people are more enlightened than formerly. Why this croaking about spiritual declension? We are on the way to victory. Let the young people be brought into the schools and trained for the army of the Lord. Give us an educated people, and we will conquer this world for Christ." This snare is the more devilish, because the object presented is good, approved of God and must have the attention of all good men. If learning were an evil, no good man would fall into this snare.

Germany is the hot-bed of rationalism (1897), not because of her learning, but because of her attempt to substitute literary attainments for saving relations to Christ. No method could be more subtle, no network more damning than the Unitarian profession of faith in the Redeemer, which quietly substitutes culture for the atonement, self-improvement for the new birth, and mental polish for Christ's cleansing blood. Let the eyes of God's ministers be opened to this subtle satanic snare!

- Another method of quieting the fears of good men on the subject of spiritual declension, is the appeal to

numerical prosperity. Why all these fears? Are we not growing more rapidly than at any former period?" Every lover of God and his church is comforted when he hears of the increase of her membership. What a solace to discouraged souls, to hear of the widening of the boundaries of Zion.

And yet, behind this increase in numbers, is a question which all good men should consider. Ancient Israel was often furthest from God when her hosts numbered the most.

The church was never, apparently, so glorious as in the days of Constantine. Surely her prosperity could not be questioned, for she extended her hand and with one grasp took in a whole empire. Was that unparalleled increase in numbers, an evidence of her spirituality? We find the answer in the thousand years of darkness which immediately followed. With these examples before us, is it not wise to study the present as connected with the probabilities of the future? Can we decide that the churches of Luther, and Calvin, and Wesley, are more incorruptible than the early church organized at Jerusalem under the flame of Pentecost? Let us reflect, and humble ourselves before God.

- The wealth, and enterprise, and influence of the church are cited as an indication of spiritual prosperity. These agencies are good in themselves, and when rightly used, aid in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom; but because they have been wickedly perverted from their proper relations to the work of the Lord, many holy men have very foolishly concluded that they are, in themselves, altogether wrong. In so doing they have thrown the whole weight of their influence in favor of indolence, poverty, and inaction. God uses industry, economy, enterprise, wealth, and influence, to advance the purest spirituality. To reject these agencies because they have been perverted, is as foolish as to reject the gospel. To use them as God designs, is the purpose for which they are given, and is pleasing to Him.

But in times of declension, these agencies, so powerful for good, become a power for evil. The more powerful the organization of an army, the better for the defense of a country; but if it becomes disloyal, just in proportion to its power does it become an evil. If the organized branches of the Church of Rome were the outflow of holiness at the center, they would conquer this world for Christ in twenty years; but as they are not, this organization is one of the greatest existing evils (1897). If the mighty agencies of Methodism were all saturated with the spirit of holiness, they would completely revolutionize this world in fifty years. It is because of the excellency of these agencies that good men are led to trust in them, in the delusive hope that they will compensate for the loss of gospel power.

The power of the church at Pentecost was not vested in the strength of her organization, nor dependent upon numbers. It is written that "one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."

- Another form of delusion in seasons of spiritual declension, is the substitution of ritualistic ceremonies for divine power. The original Mosaic ritual contained ceremonies which St. Paul declares, neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, and yet in their times of backsliding they were ever adding to those ceremonies.

The Christian church, starting out with tongue of fire and heart of flame, with the rites of baptism and the Lord's supper administered in the simplest form, seemed wholly untrammelled with ceremonies, and all her services were characterized by simplicity. In later centuries, when she lost the tongue of fire and heart of flame, she required seven sacraments, and ceremonies without number. This devotion to ritualism is not only an indication and accompaniment of spiritual dearth in Christian bodies, but is inevitably associated with all false worship as well.

The human soul away from God, and ever pressed by a sense of want, must have something to meet this demand, and frequently tries to satisfy itself by increased activity in church labor. This is a most subtle delusion, because Christian activities always result from the deepest spirituality, and men who are the most spiritual are usually the most active. Many, who are utterly bereft of God's presence, will go through heat and cold to work out their salvation. Roman Catholics throng the sidewalks of the city before daylight in the winter time, and crowd their way, like a great army, to the cathedral, when it would be difficult to get five spiritual persons to a Holy Ghost prayer-meeting.

Many members of Protestant churches, who have never been born of God, or who are now so backslidden in heart they cannot endure a conversation on real salvation, will exceed all others in service of the church and Sunday-school. Is it not alarming that so many Sunday-school superintendents and teachers are so unspiritual that they can rarely be found in the church prayer-meeting? How easy for them to be deceived by a trust in these works and go quietly forward into despair. Of this class the Saviour makes the following record: "Many shall say unto me in that

day, Lord, Lord, open unto us; have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name done many wonderful works?" It is this class of workers that introduces unspiritual, indecent, and immoral practices into the church to carry on the work of God! This unceasing effort to get good fruit from a bad tree, and pure water from a corrupt fountain, results in Christian lotteries, grab-bags, fish-ponds, kissing bees, and the lustful dance, to get money to carry forward, the work of Jesus Christ! If such practices had been introduced in the beginning, they would have filled the church with horror; but coming step by step, as they have, they are endured by good men, with all their damning results and enjoyed by those who need a substitute for Christ.

Neither of these four classes of substitutes is necessarily wrong, and each, when occupying the right relation to human salvation, is a power for good; hence Satan, in his wisdom, uses them to cover his design, and lead good men astray. While the elements of apparent prosperity are kept in sight, men are prevented from seeing the undercurrent which is quietly, but surely, drifting the masses toward hell.

3. The demand for reformation is a reflection on the teachers of religion. To say that the flock is astray, suggests negligence on the part of the shepherd. Hence, the naturalness of the opposition rendered by the priests, and the scribes, and the doctors of the law, to all reforms suggested. In this we see (in connection with reasons previously given) ground for the almost universal opposition of church authorities to every radical reform which has occurred in the church since the days of Christ.

If you point out to a mechanic some defect in his work, it implies failure, and the pride of his heart is touched. If you expose an imperfection in a statue, it implies a lack of skill in the sculptor. If a man of medical skill reveals a hitherto unperceived phase of disease in a patient, and prescribes the remedies necessary, the attending physician will directly oppose the new diagnosis and treatment.

Human nature is the same the world over, throughout the generations. It is the same in ministers and Christian teachers as it is in other men.

When Christ came to Judea, proclaiming the gospel of reformation, the common people heard him gladly; but the priests, the rabbis, and the doctors of the law hunted him like a wolf hunts prey in the mountains. His pure life and holy teachings seemed to be a direct attack on their integrity and ministry.

For these reasons, it may be, the ministers of religion and church authorities united in the persecution and burning of Huss, and millions of martyrs, before and since His day. These reasons, and others, were at the base of the slaughter of the Huguenots, the murder of early Quakers, and the driving of Wesley from his pulpit to the tomb of his Father, with the summons from God to herald the gospel of holiness! All of this was done by the authorities of the church and the ministers of religion.

The design of this painful recital is to show that the opposition of church authorities to the present holiness movement, is but history repeating itself, and is no indication that the work is not of God.

Furthermore, the opposition thus rendered clearly shows, in the light of all past history, the necessity of the Holiness movement.

For more information on this complete sanctification (His Rest) see: <http://www.enterhisrest.org>