

DECEIVING
THE SOULS
OF THOUSANDS.

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**"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God,
God dwelleth in him, and he in God."-1 John 4: 15.**

JOHN says in this chapter, " try the spirits," that is, try the teachers. But why called spirits? Because they all give it out that they have the Spirit of God. In the Church of England there are many who declared on their solemn oath that they were moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them the cure of souls ; but their line of conduct shows that they were moved rather by a good benefice of some hundreds a-year : "By their fruits ye shall know them." I believe one trait of good Christians is to try what they hear and what they read. I find the apostles preached in Thessalonica, where some believed and some believed not, and where they seem to be spoken of as a poor kind of indifferent

hearers; but when the apostles went from thence to Berea, they found these more noble than those of Thessalonica, "in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so" (Acts 17: 11). We find there were some good Christians of sound judgment and an excellent discernment in the Church at Ephesus, for they " tried those who said they were apostles, and were not, and found them liars " (Rev. 2: 2). In this chapter there are two sorts of confessors-negative ones and positive ones. There are those that say Christ is not come in the flesh; and there are those who say He is. Those who say He is not come in the flesh are the Jews who, as a body, say it to this day. Now those who say He is not come are not of God; that is, they are not of the truth; they are not on God's side; they speak not for God, but they are against Him. Those who confess that Christ is come in the flesh are on the side of truth, and, so far, speak for God, whether they themselves are born of God or not.

In making a few remarks upon these words let us, first, notice the confession here made; and then, secondly, the indwelling union expressed.

First, we notice the confession here made, which is, " that Christ is come in the flesh;" this is one branch of the confession. A second is, " that Jesus is the Son of God." But let us notice the first branch of this confession-" every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." But is a bare assent to this truthful declaration sufficient of itself to prove a man a real Christian ? Did not devils acknowledge as much (Matt. 8: 29)? Multitudes of

men have made the same acknowledgment who were never born of God. At the crucifixion of Christ, the centurion and those who were with him made the same confession, saying, " Truly this was the son of God " (Matt. 27: 54). Do not think because you say in so many words that you believe in Christ as being the Son of God, and also that He is your own Saviour, that this will make you a Christian ; for you must be made a Christian before you can spiritually and vitally call Christ your own, and trust in Him as your everlasting all.

THERE IS A FATAL ERROR IN OUR DAY,

even among many who are thought to be quite orthodox. They positively assert that looking to Christ, and trusting in Him as your own Saviour, is within the power of the creature, and that this power may be put forth at any moment, subject to the creature's own will. What if numbers believe in this easy-going religion, which appears so plausible, recommending itself at once to the carnal mind? What if they comply with such deceiving teachers and their deceiving system? What if they say they believe, trust in God, and have taken Christ just in the way in which He has been offered to them by their blind guides? What does it all amount to? Have their natural assent to such statements as are made, and their immediate compliance with the same, given them a new birth unto righteousness? They stand just where they did before with this exception, they believe they are now Christians because they have done as their teachers told them to do, and conclude all must be right. Sure enough thousands are thus deceived.

May God give them the power of trying the spirits before they die, that they may find out the cheat. Never mind how popular such men may be who give the children's bread to dogs, and make no proper distinction between the children of the bond-woman and those of the free. Never mind the great cry of the good that is said to be done by them, and the multitudes of converts made by their indiscriminate invitations; but rather test the things you hear and read about by God's Word, and ask, Is it all truth what they say? Be not carried away by popular preaching; for the real work of the Holy Spirit is not represented as existing among the masses of the people, but quite the contrary; and the true and faithful servants of Christ are spoken of "as not being many which corrupt the Word of God." The servants of our free-will Jezebel are always very numerous, but God's own servants are something like pearls, scarce to be found (2 Cor. 2: 17; Mal. 3: 17; Matt. 7: 14, 22, 20: 16; Jer. 15: 19; Isa. 54: 15).

This is the Lucifer, the Antichrist, the son of the morning, who sprung up at the beginning (1 John 4: 3), who has weakened the nations, and is the head of those wandering stars to whom is reserved the mist and blackness of darkness for ever. Among all the outercourt worshippers, his language is that of free-will; his stature is I or Anti, presuming and setting up himself in an artful way, so as to set aside the Lord Jesus Christ. The language of this great beast is, " I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." Yet mind, with all this boasted free-will and creature-power of his, he shall be

brought down to hell. This mystical Babylon prides himself in speculative theology, delights in reviving old errors, and setting them forth as new flashes of long-hidden truth, and carries the million by the charms of novelty. He is in confederacy with old Moab, who is also the son of pride (1 John 2: 16, 3: 8), being even proud of his pride, delighting to add house to house and field to field, saying in his covetousness, I will dwell alone. He is the essence of impiety, revelling in idleness and feasting, following strong drink, and having music and dancing in his feasts; he adds sin to sin, spurning against all convictions and reproofs; even draws iniquity to himself, and sins, as it were, with a cart-rope, pulling down upon himself the dreadful judgments of the Most High. He is waxen so wicked in rebellion that he calls good evil, and evil good, and is always accusing and excusing himself, feigning repentance, but still hardening himself more and more. This is proud, mystical Babylon working with impious, covetous Moab, and the fearful end of both is seen in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation of John.

Furthermore, looking to Christ and trusting in Him are either natural acts or spiritual acts: if natural acts the kind of teachers alluded to are right with their general invitations and universal redemption, which may prove effectual or ineffectual, depending on the free-will of fallen nature; but if these are spiritual acts, such men are wrong and must be deceiving their hundreds and thousands. Looking to Christ and trusting in Christ are not such easy things, not such common everyday things as they are represented to be; these are scarce, something like silver and gold, which men

do not pick up as they would pick up stones on the road. These are not to be found just when you will and where you will. We cannot, in winter time, go into our gardens and gather roses, carnations, and tulips. No, friends; I say no; looking to Christ and trusting in Him are acts which the quickened or spiritually dead can no more put forth than the dry bones, without life, could rise in the valley where they were found. I well recollect that I not only tried hard but felt determined to settle matters for myself upon the false system in question; that is,

**I WAS RESOLVED ON LOOKING TO CHRIST
AND BELIEVING IN HIM
AS MY OWN SAVIOUR,**

that I might get rid of all my doubts and fears, avoid the wars I had within, and obtain that peace and comfort of mind I so much needed; but still, when I had done my best, I found I stood where I was before, for I could not feel satisfied that, with all my looking and trusting to Christ, He had made a revelation of Himself to my soul. I knew He could if He would, and I also knew He was under no obligation to do so, however much my free-will nature might think otherwise. Alas, how dull, cold, and lifeless! it seems just like winter-time in my soul: death and barrenness are within and nothing moves; no germinating, no sprouting, no budding forth in the divine life. Can God, who is called a Sun, have ever cast down one of His genial rays upon this dark, dead, and cold heart of mine? Oh, that I could emerge from my present condition and come forth into the light of His countenance, where I could have peace,

joy, and satisfaction to the full! But the Lord Jesus did, some time after this, while I was looking for wrath, condemnation, and eternal death, in one moment reveal Himself to me as my Saviour, when I could then, feeling my union to Him, call Him mine.

I have learned that the foundation is sound, solid, and safe; and I have also learned that there are swarms of mongrel builders, building up and pulling down, affirming and unaffirming, bringing bricks for mortar and mortar for bricks, trimming their way, serving the times, pleasing the flesh, kindling revival fires and compassing themselves about with their own sparks, sewing pillows under all armholes, and crying peace, peace, where there is no peace. We read of gold, silver, and precious stones, and also of wood, hay, and stubble, and I leave the wise and heaven-taught reader to judge for himself which is most in use in our day, whether the former or the latter?

I had a number of a Sunday School periodical sent me the other day, in which we are ingenuously told how we may easily get the little children to Christ. First, the teachers must invite them home to tea, then have a romp, then win the children over to themselves, and then, lastly, win them to Christ. This is the divinity taught in our wonderfully enlightened nation, the bent of which is towards the Arminianism of Rome and the ranks of atheism and deism. No doubt it is with Sabbath Schools, as it is with other good institutions, there are some great evils connected with them, and we ought to try what is introduced into them as well as try what is advanced from the pulpit. The above

statement is just as bad, and as much insulting to the Divine Being, as to talk about

**SENDING FOR REVIVALISTS TO COME
SEVERAL MILES FOR THE
PURPOSE OF CONVERTING THE PEOPLE (Matt.
23: 15).**

But perhaps you will after all say, Are not the people called upon to believe in God; and does not God even express His anger because they do not? Granted; but what kind of trust is demanded of them? A moral trust or a spiritual and saving trust? Is it that they should believe in Christ as their own Saviour, and so produce good and heavenly fruit as this, even while the tree itself is corrupt? No such thing. A man is called upon to believe in God so far as his knowledge goes of God, both in His works of grace and His works of providence. No man is called upon to believe what he never heard; and when we have fully believed in all that we have heard and seen of God we have done well, we have done what we are commanded to do; but this is not a sufficient argument to prove that we are the subjects of spiritual life. There is not only a claim upon all men, as the rational creatures of God, to believe in God, Christ, and the Holy Scriptures, but also to practice what they know, to the very utmost of their ability, while, even then, they have no claim upon God for anything beyond what they already possess. The Saviour condemned the Jews for not believing in Him after they had seen His miracles, and the light that was come into the world; and Jehovah condemned His ancient people because they

trusted not in Him after they had seen His powerful works in so many convincing instances (John 12: 36-41; Mark 16: 14; John 3: 19; Psa. 78: 22, 32).

To believe in Christ as my own Saviour is purely a spiritual act; and before I can do this, it is certain

I MUST HAVE A REVELATION OF CHRIST TO MY SOUL;

for this I must wait, and hope, and pray, knowing that where God begins the good work He will carry it on. But this waiting for God is reprobated by the so-called wise men of Christendom now-a-days they say, Tust ! You are not to wait another minute, but take the offered Christ, the offered salvation, the offered mercy, and thus be a heaven-born soul at once. I care not what they say, since I have made trial of their deceiving system, and have proved the difference between God's work and the creature's work. No one could try the system of these men more than the woman of Canaan did; but she had to wait Christ's time, and could not walk off with the prize till He had put it in her hands. The man had to lie by the pool of Bethesda till Christ thought proper to cure him ; nor could he be cured, with all his anxiety and importunity, till the Lord thought proper to say unto him, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk."

Again, "No man can know the Father except he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (John 2: 27). Well, but believers are encouraged "to trust in God, even when they walk in darkness, and have no light." It is true ; but still they prove by experience that they cannot do that

which is least, being worm Jacobs, without strength, bottles in the smoke, and bruised reeds without any stability, proving the words of the great Head of the Church true:-" Without Me ye can do nothing."

And again, " No man can come unto the Father but by Me." Only think at the same time of how they are tried within, and how they have to try themselves ! Say they, Is my hope a living hope ? Is my faith a living faith ? Sometimes I am ready to think I do feel something of spirituality of mind ; a devotional feeling rises in my soul ; I am humble, meek, mild, less than nothing, and Christ unspeakably great in my thoughts. Yet I am fearful I am not right; I have to try this frame of mind, and ask, Is this from God? Or

IS THE DEVIL TRYING TO DECEIVE ME?

and representing that for spirituality which is only a fire of nature's own kindling, and sparks of her own lighting? Sometimes I have a little liberty in prayer more than usual, and have something of a softening and melting down at a throne of grace; and then I am fearful that even this may be either a work of Satan, or of the flesh, or both. Indeed, I have to trace and retrace the ground I take, and have, after all, to give up the trial to God, and say, " Search me, O God, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I would observe again: if the fall did really sink us to ruin, as to all spiritual acts, then it must be an error to tell unregenerate men that they can spiritually believe in Christ

as their own Saviour at any moment if they will. This is but rank Arminianism, blended with Calvinism, dressed up in a somewhat new form, and constitutes the idol of this nineteenth century. 'Tis no surprising thing to find men storming against Arminianism in one sentence, and soundly preaching it in another sentence. What a mixed medley, to see in the same person, as a public teacher and sermonizer,

**A COMBINATION OF CALVINISM,
WESLEYANISM, QUAKERISM, FULLERISM, AND
RANTERISM !!**

This reminds us of the image that was made up of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay. Surely the Apostle's words are fulfilled, " The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears."

I add one word more in concluding this part of my subject, and which will be by far the longest, and that is, we read that it is "given unto men to believe; " and also that none can so believe till it is given to them of God. Now if it is an act of man's to trust in God as being his own God and Father in Christ, how can it be a pure gift altogether independent of the creature ? How can we make this gift our own by a power of the flesh, whether God is disposed to give or not to give ? I read that none vitally and relatively believe in Christ only the sheep (Phil. 1: 29 ; John 12: 39, 10: 26, 3: 27 ; Matt 13: 11 ; Exod. 33: 19 ; Matt 20: 15). But false teachers declare that God will have the goats so to believe ; thus upsetting at once their Calvinism, and are down right upon universalism (Matt. 25:

32, 33). Our God is not represented under the new covenant as an object to be either taken or left ; but the real spirit of this new covenant is simply,

I WILL AND THEY SHALL.

To the truth of this I desire to stick, without self contradiction, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. This is a wonderful day for proclaiming human responsibility. And what can men know about this, I should like to ask, unless they are taught it by the Lord ? I say, in one word, human responsibility can never be spiritually understood by any only those who have been burnt out of themselves by Sinai's fire, and have been driven to take shelter under the wings of the covenant of mercy, and to rest themselves upon the suretyship of the Son of God.

The second confession is that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God." For this to be a living confession, a son-ship confession, and so, a relative confession, it can only be made by a grace union to Christ. Mind, this confession may be verbally made without a vital union with Christ ; but every child of God makes this confession to His Father in a way, with a feeling, and to an end, that no unregenerate man can form an adequate idea of. The confession of the Church is very beautiful:" I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." The beauty of this confession lies in the relative claim here made, " My Beloved's." The love of the Church is a principal fruit of the Spirit, the life of religion in the soul, and is the fulfilling of the law ; yea, it is an element not found in depraved nature ; it comes from above, and is infused into the new creature, formed by

God's will, and is of infinite duration. Peter's confession must not be overlooked, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter said this by the Spirit of God, and said it from a feeling of attachment to the Saviour, which could never exist only from a relative principle ; while it is certain no man can know anything of the divine Sonship of Christ without a revelation of it from the Father "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." On what ground did Thomas say "My Lord and my God?" This confession was made from his own experience, from what he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears ; and sure I am that no spiritual confessions can be made to God only from the possession of divine life in the soul, after a man is begotten of God.

I must not pass by Job's confession : "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Job's Redeemer was the Son of God in His divine nature, hundreds of years before the "word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" and in the divine and infinite Son of God rests the infinite redemption of that peculiar ALL given into His hands by the Father. Every one of these shall know and learn of the Father, and shall be able to say from the Spirit's witness within, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." I know Him in myself as the image of God in my soul, and my only hope of eternal glory. This Son of God has eternal life in Himself, even as the Father has eternal life in Himself ; and this Son of God gives eternal life unto all who shall be eternally saved, and shall reign with Him in the boundless worlds of light, and sing that song which no man can sing but themselves. These, my

beloved reader, are the new covenant whosoever, whether Jews, or Gentiles, who make their new covenant confessions to the Holy Three, arising from living and reigning grace in their hearts.

Secondly. By way of conclusion, permit me to say a word or two upon the indwelling union here expressed. I consider the Person of Christ to be the only foundation of this union: " I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

**THE PERSON OF CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION
OF OUR SAVINGLY
BELIEVING IN HIM,**

or of trusting in Him as our own Saviour. The Person of Christ is the foundation of godly sorrow for sin ; the Person of Christ is the foundation of an internal knowledge of ourselves, and so of a proper acquaintance with the fatal consequences of the fall to man. A vital union to the person of Christ is our only security against finally falling away. Had Adam been a spiritual man, and vitally united to Christ, such personal union with Christ would have prevented his falling away as he did ; but the saints' standing in the Person of Christ, so to speak, makes their standing more secure than what their standing was when they fell in Adam, their first and natural head. The Person of the Son of God is the foundation of our hope, faith, and every other grace. This personal union of the saints with Christ is the foundation of that communion or fellowship they have with Him ; and this is "walking in the light as He

is in the light." But what is the proof we have of our personal union with Christ? It is love. Hear what John says, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." This indwelling union is explained in an experimental way by the Saviour in John 6: 53-56:-" Whosoever eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him."

This indwelling union is set forth by the vine and the branches. Now the branches in the vine would not be enough to prove this indwelling union vitally, because the vine itself must be in the branches; I mean in respect to its life-imparting principle; for it is probable for branches to be in the vine and have no life, and so bear no fruit; but if the life of the vine be in the branches, fruit is a consequence of this life. We might be in Christ by name and profession, but Christ might not be in us as the gift of eternal life. In a word, there is no abiding of the branches in the vine without the abiding of the vine in the branches; while the vine stands first and the branches next, as in John i. 4, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Thus, then, Christ dwells in the saints and the saints dwell in Christ, and, by this means, a perpetual union is maintained between the two.