

sound doctrine. Men try to mix truth and error, as though they were not inherently different. A false liberalism propounds the plausible theory that it matters not what one's opinions are if he be sincere. Such liberality is laxity. It upturns the very basis of truth, for it puts truth and error on a level: and since all history and experience show a natural link between truth and goodness, faith and practice, doctrine and duty—to depreciate the importance of discovering and embracing the truth undermines, also, the true basis of morals. Sincere convictions may thus be urged to justify crime, as the Spartans upheld secret theft, and David Hume secret adultery.

The Word of God shows a vital bond between doctrine and duty, charging us to hold fast the form of sound words, and warning us of a way which seemeth right to a man, yet whose end is death. The Hindu wife and mother thinks it right to hurl her child into the Ganges, and lay herself on her husband's funeral pile. Simon Magus thought it right to buy and sell the miraculous gifts of God: his condemnation is written in the very word "simony," which he has thus given to the crime of bartering in ecclesiastical preferment. Saul of Tarsus "verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," yet he deemed himself "the chief of sinners, because he persecuted the Church of God."

Nowadays there is a clamor for the surrender of every distinctive doctrine of our faith, in order to make the Gospel more palatable to the worldly heart. Infidelity, in the guise of liberalism and charity, says to Christianity: "Come, let us look one another in the face;" but our reply must still be the parable of Jehovash: "The thistle, that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying: 'Give thy daughter to my son to wife;' and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle." While we are asked to concede equality between the thorny thistle and the gigantic, fragrant, undying cedar, the

wild beast has his hoof on the thistle, while the monarch of the forest, which has reigned for a millennium, still proudly defies destruction.

II. Another sad sign of the obscuration of the line between the righteous and wicked, is found in the practical association of those that serve God and those that serve Him not. God decrees separation, as the means of expressing and impressing these vital distinctions. Abram was called out from idolatrous surroundings, an historic type and symbol of separation and consecration; and the one law of all holy life is, "Come out from among them and be ye separate." To avoid or evade this separation, Satan perpetually plots, and Christians, often, are unwittingly giving him aid.

1. For example, many believers in Christ are only secret disciples. While their faith rests on the Word of God as the rule of duty, and the blood of Christ as the ground of salvation, they are like the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, who yet left Elijah to feel himself alone in love and loyalty to God. These secret believers actually give color to the pretense that worldly men exemplify all the virtues of Christian disciples; for, however complete their dependence on divine grace, however devout their life, they are classed with the world. As the ring of a few pieces of genuine metal among counterfeit coin helps to give it currency, so do they help justify the claim that the world is as good as the Church. Their very success in practising Christian virtues is disastrous, fostering self-righteous hopes in worldly hearts, and leading men to confuse worldly morality with genuine piety.

2. Another thing which contributes to the confusion of godly and ungodly, is the fact that many worldly men are professed disciples. Secret believers make the world seem more godly; unregenerate professors make the Church seem more worldly, and so there is double confusion: worldliness made respectable, Christianity disreputable, and practical difference reduced nearer to nothing.