

Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The Christianity of those days was a thing of profound and enthusiastic earnestness.

Look at it as exhibited by the Apostles and their preaching coadjutors. What burning words are those which Peter uttered! Who would face a hostile multitude, and fling out upon them a doctrine so foreign to their modes of thought, so strongly opposed to their prejudices, a doctrine requiring them to worship one whom they had despised, to ask pardon of one whom they had crucified, to take the law of their lives from one who had been disgraced and executed as a criminal, if he were not intensely in earnest? What a testimony was that of Stephen! How earnest on the one hand to enlighten the minds of his auditors; on the other hand to glorify his Master by an unmistakable witness to His claims. They, the first preachers of Christianity, "counted not their lives dear unto them." So overpowering was their earnestness that it was superior to the love of life,—it conquered the *fear of death*, thus mastering one of the strongest instincts of human nature.

Look at it in the *people*. So completely did the new enthusiasm possess their minds, that they "had all things common," "neither said any of them that ought of the things that" "he possessed was his own," and "as many as were possessors of lands" "sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold," "and laid them down at the apostles' feet." The earnestness of the people conquered the *love of property*, a principle or feeling inferior only to the love of life in the heart of average humanity. The Church of Pentecost and following days presents us with Christianity as Christ would have it to be, for it was founded in exact accordance with His own expressed promise and prescribed condition. The disciples did exactly as they were commanded to do by Him, they waited and prayed as they were directed to do, and the promise He gave was verified truly and fully in the event. We are thus furnished in the first few chapters of the Acts of the Apostles with a specimen of *normal* Christianity—a model for all time to come, and we find in it a *heroic* enthusiasm in the teachers, a *self-sacrificing* earnest aim in the taught, which flashes a condemning light over the leaden ages of the Church's formalism, lukewarmness, and apathy,—a demonstration which we thank God has not been left out of the canon of inspiration, that he who would be a genuine Christian must be an earnest one.

When shall the visible Church be everywhere the "Church militant" in the true sense? The marvellous successes of the first few days of the Church's history,—the continuous advance of Christ's cause in spite of many internal evils, and in the face of mighty opposition, until in three centuries it had moulded the institutions and wielded the sceptre of the mightiest of human empires,—justifies us in believing that if the evangelical Church of to-day were filled with earnest members, Christendom would soon be purified from open vices and infidelity. Mohammedan imposture would evaporate and leave no *residuc*, and Paganism would soon be amongst the curiosities of history, and the human family, regenerated and blessed by the grace of its Redeemer, would enhance the gladness of heaven by the spectacle of Paradise Regained.

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