

The question comes home to us with immense force, Do Christian believers now generally enjoy this experience and wield this power? We fear not. Pentecost interpreted thus is not so much as the *ideal* of some churches. It is not likely then to be realized by them. Alas! in our own churches, where entire holiness is one of "those things which are most surely believed among us," and where examples of holy men and women, filled with the Spirit and speaking in his power, are precious hoarded memories—how few there are who have attained to this Pentecostal grace! We very much fear the Methodist communities are living far below this glorious privilege. We do not deny the reality, the sincerity of their Christianity. They know Jesus in the mystery of his death and in the power of his resurrection. They have died unto sin and have risen again to holiness and newness of life. Nay, they have gone out as far as Bethany, and have seen their risen Lord "carried up into heaven;" and with their ascended Saviour have gone their affections, their hopes, their faith, and according to his word they are looking for "the promise of the Father." But somehow they do not get beyond this. Their day of Pentecost does not fully come. The fulness of the Spirit is desired, prayed for, but not attained. Entire sanctification with them is a pole-star, to be admired from afar—a sign in the spiritual firmament by which they may steer their course, but not to be reached until they ascend to eternal glory.

Whilst entire sanctification is thus regarded, that quickening and elevation of the whole spiritual life which makes "doing good" to the souls of men a *passion*, is looked upon with dread. To be thus possessed with the Spirit would make them very peculiar, would stamp them with a marked eccentricity, and set them out of gear with the conventionalisms of society. Properness is apparently a far more important principle than holiness, and gentility than Holy Ghost-excitement; and rather than let properness and gentility be compromised, human souls may be damned by the thousand.

The result is a lower degree of spiritual life and power than ought to exist. The true communion of the primitive church is feebly apprehended. Fellowship is often lukewarm, and its ordinances, instead of being cherished, are coldly criticised and anatomised. "The house of prayer" becomes a mere seventh-day shrine at which people pay their devotions, and public worship is slurred through or æstheticised until its simplicity and power are expelled. Instead of being God's priests everywhere and always, we become so only on Sundays, and the orbit of the week-day life lies almost wholly among wages and profits and self-pleasing. There our witnessing power is almost toned out. If we speak to sinners at all, it is with such "bated breath and whispered humbleness," that the world mocks at our pointless, forceless testimony. The converting grace is restrained, the godly seed is minished, and Satan triumphs. O Lord, how long?

We have on several occasions in recent years mourned actual decrease in our church membership; while for some time past, notwithstanding increasing congregations, additional chapels, and multiplying ministers, there has been no enlargement of the church worthy of the instrumentalities employed, or at all comparable to the great demonstration of power which glow on the first pages of the Church's history. The pulse of the Church's inward life beats slower; her limbs are chilled and sluggish in their movements. She is not maimed by faction, or mutilated by persecution, or diseased by heresy; and, therefore, many eyes fondly admire her fair form and beautiful proportions. But her heart is weak, and her spiritual life has not a healthy tone. We are pained unspeakably by the conviction which is forcing itself upon us, that we are losing our "first love," and need to "repent and do" our "first works."

If Pentecost teaches us anything, assuredly it is this, that *holiness is power*, that to be filled with the Spirit is to be charged with a divine energy