

Those who are most earnest in pressing forward, come soonest into the light which reveals their own pollutions. The laggards among the prophets are not apt to have visions of God in his exalted purity and glory, making them exclaim, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips." Such a vision—with the live coal from the altar to take away our sins, would be a blessing of unspeakable value to every ambassador of Christ, and there are many who would welcome it gladly. Perhaps it was the increasing desire to do good, and to learn the way to gain the power from God to do it. Such aspirations are indeed angel visitants—not few or far between—in the pastor's heart.

But, however it was, at the time our sketch commences, the pastor had become deeply convinced and was earnestly longing for the experience in question. He was a student, and, student-like, his *first resort was to books*. Whatever his own library contained, or the book-stores could supply, or other libraries could lend, he got and devoured, upon the subject of the higher forms of Christian experience. He pored over the memoirs and writings of the most noted in each of the three classes we have named, "Lutheran," "Wesleyan," and "Oberlinian." He ranged about and fed with the greediness of Pharaoh's lean kine, and gained as much, but no more by it. He read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested, the experiences of all he could hear about, who had found the way to the tree of life and fattened upon its twelve manner of fruits, but he was as lean as ever.

His church had reason to know something of this. If he devoured books as the silkworm does mulberry leaves, for his own food, it gave material for the pulpit and the prayer meeting, which, like the cocoons of the silk-worm, the people had occasion to spin and weave into close-fitting garments for themselves. Like others who write bitter things against themselves, he of course told his people over and over, that they were no better than they ought to be, and were in great need of a deeper work of grace as well as himself. Like Legh Richmond under conviction, unconverted but preaching, he preached his people into convictions like his own, but had no power to point them the way out; for as yet, and for a long while, he did not know it himself.

Meanwhile, he wrote to the living, or visited them, from whom he hoped to receive light. But neither the illustrious dead by their memoirs, nor the living by their words, could give him the light of the way of life. They could tell him what to do—could tell him to consecrate himself, and to believe; but they could not make him understand. The Lord alone could do *that*, and he had not yet learned to go as a child and ask the way.

Strange, we are so slow to learn that the Lord alone can open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and set the prisoner free!

All books, like the book in the Apocalypse, are sealed, until they are opened by Him who sits upon the throne. And the living teacher, though he were an Isaiah, is no better than the dumb, until our ears are opened by the Lord to hear, and our hearts to understand his words. The Word of God itself is only a dead letter to us, until we look to the living Saviour for light, and he then makes it a quickening spirit.