

THE EXIGENCES OF HOLINESS CREEDS.

It is the fancied necessities of their creeds which make professors of the blessing of cleansing from inbred sin underrate justification. For how can a believer be cleansed from sin if there is no sin to be cleansed from? Hence it is presumed to be present in the soul which is only justified, even when there is confessedly no inward consciousness or outward proof of its existence—its presence being simply and purely an inference.

The history of this inference is an interesting one, and may some time claim investigation as a simple matter of curiosity, but the cause of its origin is easily traced.

When in the early Church the Galatians, and other Christians like them, forsook the way of the Spirit, and attempted to be made perfect in the flesh, that is, by the works of the law—legalistic efforts—they failed to live a justified life. And no matter how often they returned to first principles, *i.e.*, recommenced in the Spirit, they as often failed when they strove to live without condemnation by the use of doctrines or works. And when they finally lost sight of the way of the Spirit, how natural for them to presume that there was in them at conversion some inherent defect which accounted for their constant failure to retain their first love.

Having admitted this, then it was in order to manufacture substitutes for the walk in the Spirit.

And, here we remark, that the holiness creed device is not the only one—the theological world is full of them.

But recently we listened to the testimony of a brother who could tell of six months' uninterrupted walk with God from the moment of his conversion. And his description of that walk was quite up to apostolic language. But, when years of failure supervened, he had at length taken refuge in doctrinal device to meet conscious lack. He had fallen back on the letter of the Bible, forcing himself to believe in spite of his lost unction, that he was eternally saved, because Christ said, "He that be-

lieveth hath *eternal* life." But as we listened to the two parts of his interesting experience we could easily recognize how dry and perfunctory was the latter, as compared with the former part of it, by the very tones of his voice, let alone the unconscious admissions of his testimony.

Do we anathematize these legalistic efforts after continuous justification? Not in the absolute sense. It is only by compassion that they are to be desparaged. Legalism is a good thing, in the absence of a better. It is only by contrast that it sinks down to its proper level. And it is only when it *consciously* undertakes to usurp the place of spirituality that it becomes deadly.

Legalism, whilst it stops short of securing the object aimed at, *viz.*, continued justification before God, yet is vastly better than anarchy and unbridled lust, and it only shows its innate antagonism to spirituality when it meets the Son of God, or those who illustrate His walk in the Spirit.

But our chief aim in this article is to show that one cannot profess the blessing of being cleansed from inbred sin without in that very act desparaging the blessing of justification. For it implies on the very face of it that the one who only professes justification, no matter how close his walk with God, is on a lower plain of Christian life than the one professing to be cleansed, because, according to his, the latter's creed, the other has not, like him, got rid of inbred corruption, and that, therefore, whilst the one is not prepared for heaven, the other is so prepared. Hence we maintain there must ever be an impassable gulf between the two professed experiences. It matters not if the one professing the higher blessing protests against such minifying of the other, or lower blessing, in spite of his protestations, the wording of his testimony does so minify it.

It is not good to live in jest, since we must die in earnest. —*Whickcote*.

We have two ears and one tongue, that we should hear much and say little. —*Zeno*.