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## The Evangelical Churchman

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### THE FAITHFUL COMFORTER.

"The Holy Ghost—He is faithful."—1 IER. ix. 15, 23.

To Thee, O Comforter Divine,  
For all Thy grace and power benign,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, whose faithful love had place  
In God's great Covenant of Grace,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, whose faithful voice did win  
The wandering from the ways of sin,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, whose faithful power doth heal,  
Enlighten, sanctify, and seal,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, whose faithful truth is shown  
By every promise made our own,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, our Teacher and our Friend,  
Our faithful Leader to the end,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, by Jesus Christ sent down,  
Of all His gifts the sum and crown,  
Sing we Alleluia!

To Thee, who art with God the Son  
And God the Father ever one,  
Sing we Alleluia! Amen!

—Frances Ridley Havergal.

### THE SPIRIT THE INTERPRETER OF THE WORD.

The Bible is emphatically the Book that all may read and understand. The faith the Bible

commends to us is a very simple faith; and though heresies many have disturbed the Church in all ages, they have never originated from the prayerful study of the Word of God. Truth in its essence is simple. "I believe in God the Father who loves me, in God the Son who redeems me, and in God the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth me," is a complete summary of the essentials of the Christian Catholic faith.

"God is love." "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? "God is able to make all grace abound towards you." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief." Here is God's food for the soul—spiritual food for the learned and the unlearned; for the king upon the throne, and the peasant in the cottage. It is what Christ has provided for us as sinners—Christ for us and the Spirit in us—Justification through faith in Christ alone, and Sanctification—the inward life of progressive holiness—inwrought by the Spirit of Grace. It is simple food; it is the bread of life. It is light from heaven; and what can be clearer than that? If God be the Author of the Bible, and if He designed it to be His revelation of the Truth, then we may be sure He would make it a plain Book.

But still—and this is too often "the forgotten truth"—the Bible needs an Interpreter. All who read their Bible do not find the light that is in the Bible. The Bible alone will not convey it. There must be an Interpreter: for "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." The Church, as an ecclesiastical organization, is not the Interpreter. The Church ecclesiastical is "a witness and keeper of Holy Writ" (Article XIX.), but she is not the Interpreter either for head, heart, or conscience. The individual preacher is certainly not the Interpreter. So far as the Bible is a Book for the head, it is, as I have said, a plain Book, and no ecclesiastical body or human teacher ever made its fundamental truths plainer than they are. Holy Writ enlightens the Church and the preacher—the Church and the preacher do not enlighten the Scriptures. Man's words are not needed to make God's Word clearer.

But for the heart and conscience the Bible does need an Interpreter—one who can so apply its truths as to enlighten the conscience and affect the heart by them: One who can convince of sin, and then take of "the things of Christ," of which the Scriptures "testify," and show them to the convinced sinner: One who can so bring the truth of God's Word "to light" as to enable the hearer to "discern spiritual things."

The Divine Spirit is this Interpreter, and He alone. The Church, a fallible body, much less the preacher, a fallible man, must never claim to exercise—it were blasphemy to do so—the special work and office of the Divine Spirit. Neither the one nor the other can convince of sin, or reveal Christ as a Saviour to the eye of faith; and short of this experience there can be no "reception" of the Word, read or preached, "with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. i. 6)

The work of the ministry, therefore—the work

of the preacher—is not to come between the hearer and God's Word written; not to give utterance to human opinions about truth; but as I have said, to preach the Word—the Truth itself: and whilst doing this to make constant reference to the Divine Spirit as the alone Interpreter, who can enable us spiritually to "understand the Scriptures" (St. Luke xxiv. 45).

Let us mark well, then, how the Light is to be found.

Religious truth alone is not all we need. I may know there is a God: I may know all that the Bible tells me about God and Christ and His atoning work: and yet know nothing as I ought to know. The truth may have no hold upon me, no influence over me. The influence of the simple truth, "There is a God," would and must be marvellous when really felt. But we feel it not, until the spiritual discernment is granted to us which alone can enable us in the true sense of the words to "discern spiritual things."

"Now mine eye seeth thee," said Job. And what a spirit of humility and penitence and self-abhorrence came over him:—"I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." "Woe is me," cried the prophet Isaiah, "for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." "Depart from me," said Peter, amazed at the vision of Christ's glory, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This is the very first lesson in experimental teaching and knowledge which we need to acquire; and this experience the Holy Ghost alone can work in or impart to us.

If the Light has never humbled us, the Bible may have told us all about God and all about Christ: but the Spirit failing to "shine upon the Word," we really know nothing about God. He is to us "an unknown God"—as unknown to us for all practical purposes as the true God is to the blind idolater. Our fitting place in that case is on our knees, with an open Bible before us: the light there, but hidden because we lack spiritual discernment: and the prayer on our lips:—"O Spirit of the living God, shine upon the Word and bring the truth to light; anoint mine eyes with spiritual eyesalve that I may see."

But this searching and solemn lesson is a lesson for all. For those who do see, often see spiritual things very imperfectly. Those who have light need more light; and more light we shall assuredly possess if we are more earnest and constant in the prayerful study of the Word of God. Let us remember more constantly our need of the Spirit as the Interpreter of the Word; our need of the anointing of the Spirit that our eyes may be more fully opened; and then we shall indeed behold "wondrous things in God's Word"—"the things unto which the angels desire to look." Its reception, its entrance into the mind, will bring Light, and in the Light thus brought we shall indeed rejoice—"rejoice in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost"—rejoice with "joy of the Holy Ghost."

### THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word—deeply mysterious as it is—constitutes the preacher's and the teacher's power. When it is realized the art of preaching and teaching is truly felt to be but the scaffolding—the temple is

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