

Alas! from observation we are forced to the sad conclusion that a very grave evil underlies the whole matter.

How often have we seen these and similar expressions used as pious ejaculations to cover up conscious lack, not only of spiritual power, but also of Christian graces, yes, and even of defective morality. What waste of time and energy in the private closet and at the public altar in struggling after this sort, when they might be utilized under the Spirit's guidance for the advantage of others!

True it is that where there is lack of power, or any of the graces of the Spirit, the attitude of a seeker is the proper one, whether at home or in the Church. But how useless the seeking which voices itself in words that imply the impossibility of finding!

## HOLINESS CONVENTIONS.

"Come and see."

Such was Philip's reply. Nathanael's question was, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Does the reply answer the question? Yes! No! Yes, to all Nathanaels; No, to all others.

There were some traits of character about Nathanael that made him the very man for such a test, and that largely unfitted him for any other. But credulity was not one of these traits. He was exactly the opposite of credulous. Neither was he preinclined to believe. His question shows the contrary.

Nathanael was a frequent visitor to that "fig-tree" in his garden. And his visits were neither formal nor meaningless. They were redolent with the spirit of devotion. They caught and fixed the gaze of the "All-seeing eye." So the sequel shows. Here then was one fitness Nathanael had for this divine test—he prayed. God being judge, he prayed. A man may "say prayers" and still retain his prejudice; but he can't PRAY and do it. He may "say prayers," and still close his eyes to the things he don't want to see; but he can't PRAY and do it. He may "make long prayers," and "breathe out threatenings and

slaughter" against good people. So did Saul of Tarsus. But when God said of him "Behold, he prayeth," the threatening was all gone from his mouth and the slaughter from his heart. He was then ready to "see" the very men in whose blood he had already been revelling, in anticipation. And lo, when he saw them, they were the loveliest people he ever beheld. A little praying had a wonderful effect on his eyesight. Nathanael was fresh from that fig-tree, where he had been talking almost face to face with the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; and all he needed was to "come and see" Jesus with his own eyes.

Besides, he was "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile." Transparent honesty was characteristic of his inmost soul. He was as open to conviction as a flower to the sunshine. To such a man, "coming" was "seeing." There would be no closing of the eyes to the light; no opening to things he wanted to see, and shutting to those he did not want to see. "Coming" was "seeing," and "seeing" was believing. Place such a man in the presence of Jesus, and conviction will be but the work of a moment. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." "Whence knowest thou me?" "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel." The question was settled, settled forever; and the great-hearted Nathanael passed in among the chosen—a candidate at once for martyrdom on earth and a throne in heaven.

But the reply of Philip does not answer the question to any, save Nathanaels. Others came, and saw all he saw, and yet reached exactly the opposite conclusion; and the conclusion was just as final. They followed Him by land and by sea; they watched Him by day and by night; they heard every sermon He preached, and saw every mighty work which He did, and yet, they neither believed that He was the Son of God, nor admitted that He was the King of Israel. And it was not because they did not believe in a coming Messiah, and a coming kingdom. They were foremost among the believers in both. But