

Now as the gathering together in His name—solely and simply in His name—alone answers the requisition of this gracious abiding promise of Christ, so is it His promised presence that is the simple and only guarantee of the looked-for blessing. And if we could suppose such a thing as all Christians at this moment acting on the faith of this word of Christ, adding nothing to Christ's name as their bond of association, but having a heart-felt value for that name, what would they leave behind them, as they stepped disencumbered within the limit of this simple but comprehensive bond? What, but the doctrines and commandments of men?—but bonds unsuspected or self-imposed?—but human systems and human forms? What, on the other hand would be gained? CHRIST'S PRESENCE—faith's beginning and faith's ending. Is this enough? To the heart that has known His presence it is enough. And to the heart that has never thus committed itself to Christ's faithfulness and love, as to a heaven-thrown plank amidst the general wreck, there is a secret spring of security and joy, which it never dreamt of while trusting to the wisdom or the security presented in the creeds and systems of men.

The provision of Christ is perfect. In a single sentence He has pointed out "the way of truth in evil times for the believer and for the Church of God."

This is no wholesale condemnation of everything, bad or good, in the professing church, and the setting up of the claims of a narrow sectarianism in its place. It is but the presentation of that which in Christianity characterizes the child of God amidst every outward change that may mark its progress, from its first brightness to its darkest hour, and which over-lives all its corruptions and incrustations by human forms. Believers are bound to Christ, their living head, not so much by a voluntary profession of His name, as by their possession of eternal life—a life that links them with Himself, and links them with one another as possessors in common of this eternal life, in a world whose moral characteristic is that of death. It is infinite grace then in Him to assure their hearts that He will, everywhere, and at all times, meet them by His living presence when they seek it on this simple ground. For, whatever be the fates or fortunes of that which ostensibly and publicly bears the profession of Christ's name, if but "two or three" are found gathered together, animated by the faith of His promise, there is *His presence known*.

To acknowledge good to be of God, wherever it is found, and to be separate from all evil, by whatever name disguised, is the unchangeable obligation of the people of God. The standard by which the one and the other must be judged is, and can be, nothing short of the revelation which God Himself has given.

God will have a testimony to His grace until the day of grace is closed; and He will continue to work where there is any presentation of His truth to which He can attach His blessing. But he leaves everything connected with the testimony, which is not the testimony itself, to be judged by the light of His blessed word. It is, therefore, no legitimate use of His blessing, whether in the conversion of souls, or in the maintenance of fundamental truth for the good of His people, to point to it as if it were, or could be, a sanction in practice of that which is contrary to His word. Because God still works in grace, amidst the corruption and confusion of His church, to use that as a proof that He sanctions evil, or that He thinks lightly of it, is ecclesiastical antinomianism; while an appeal to His blessing as a proof of His approval of the system is as much as to say that he approves equally the most contrary things—things both opposed to one another, and opposed to the word of God.

For example, if the working of God's grace in those who are faithful is to be taken as a sanction of any system, it would make me an evangelical with the

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