

His personal ambitions, perhaps, are at stake. His official position may be endangered. For some reason it may impolitic for him to admit the truth of what is said, or to yield to what is being done.

So the very seeking of signs is a characteristic mark of an evil and adulterous generation. Doubtless it would be equally evil to overlook or ignore, despise or reject, any truly providential or gracious sign that may be vouchsafed to us by high Heaven. Nevertheless, the language of true faith always is, "Speak the word only. Thy naked word is enough for me. I ask no confirmatory sign." It is to such persons, even though they may have been very far gone in error and sin, to whom God, in most unexpected and condescending ways, grants all needful signs of His presence and power, of His favor and salvation.

If we desire to be upon the most intimate relationship with God, we must put ourselves in hearty accord with His will, no matter how nor by whom that will may be manifested to us (vs. 46-50). Those who are standing so near to Christ, whom He counts among His immediate family, will never be found making any speech concerning the Holy Ghost that is not truly Christ-like. Christ testified to the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, in turn, takes of the things of Christ, and testifies of Him. He must be amazingly out of harmony with Christ who can flippantly (or from any unworthy motive whatever) allow himself readily to fall even into mistakes in dealing with the Holy Ghost, whether as revealed to himself or to others, through himself or through others. A calm, judicial, carefully observant, tenderly conscientious and frankly candid state of mind is pre-eminently needed in all cases where spiritual discernment is required; for none can be more sensitive to anything in the form of a slight or a slur than the Holy Spirit.

We have in verses 43-45 an awful illustration of the extremes to which a once cleansed, but still restless, and much misguided, person can reach, whose spirit yet cleaves to those other spirits more wicked than himself, who consents once again to associate with them, whose last state is therefore worse than the first.

The fact that the account of such a person is here presented in the same discourse by Christ in which He has been speaking of light treatment of the Holy Ghost, shows that the connection between the last state and the first are much closer than might be at first imagined; for we must grant a

logical connection in all the teachings of Christ; if one thing suggested another to such a mind as His, it was because they doctrinally, experimentally, practically, essentially, belong together.

And, as a matter of biography and history, of talk and practice, has it not always happened that he who parts with the Holy Spirit is, sooner or later, linked up by his own restless spirit with a gang of other spirits who perpetually conspire or contribute to bring him down to that last state which is so much worse than his first? No man can trifle with the Holy Ghost, much less that man who has once experienced His cleansing power; yet it is an awful fact that none talk so strangely, controvert so loudly, oppose so bitterly, colleague so quickly with unclean spirits, mistake so egregiously, and sink so low, as those who have gone out, walking through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none.

Surely, the last place, as well as the last state, of that person shall be worse than any in which he has ever yet found himself, miserably situated and helplessly mired.

What difference can it possibly make whether we misunderstand, misrepresent, or slander the Holy Ghost as manifested in the most ignorant, the most humble, the (apparently) most insignificant, of his followers, or as manifested in the ineffable person and peerless words of Him who spake as never man spake? It is the same Holy Ghost against whom we array our vanity of person, our prejudice of doctrine, our pride of intellect and learning, our bigotry of ecclesiasticism, our pomp of position, our lust of power, our ambition of popularity, our contemptible greed for the foremost places in the synagogues, for obsequious greetings in the markets, and for the reverent calling by the name of rabbi, D.D., or what not, and (however it may be covered up by millinery, by ritualism, by an excellent order of ceremonies) for our huge churchianity.

It may be in the storm; it may be in the still, small voice; it may be in prophetic foresight; it may be in the sacred person of Jesus; it may be amid the wonderful outpourings of Pentecost; it may be in miraculous apostolic gifts; it may be in some one for whom you cherish a supreme and haughty contempt; it may be in Him who casts out devils, but who considers it a waste of time to follow you in casting out none,—it may be against this temple of the Holy Ghost that you are raising your mistaken and impious and (eventually) self-condemning voice.—*Standard*.