

## CHAPTER III.

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### *Deception by evil spirits in modern times.*

**I**N the special onslaught of the deceiver, which will come upon the whole of the true Church of Christ at the close of the age, through the army of deceiving spirits, there are some more than others who are specially attacked by the powers of darkness, who need light upon his deceptive workings, so that they may pass through the trial of the Last Hour, and be counted worthy to escape that hour of greater trial, which is coming upon the earth (Luke xxi. 34-36; Rev. iii. 10).

For among those who are members of the Body of Christ, there are degrees of growth, and therefore degrees of testing, permitted by God, Who provides a way of escape for him who knows his need, and, by watching unto prayer, takes heed lest he fall (1 Cor. x. 12, 13). He is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, and Satan is set his limit with every redeemed believer (see Job i. 12; ii. 6; Luke xxii. 31). Some of the members of Christ are yet in the stage of babyhood, and others do not even know the initial reception of the Holy Spirit. To such this book has not much to say, as they are among the weaker ones who need the "milk of the Word." But there are others, who may be described as the advance guard of the Church of Christ, who have *been baptized with the Holy Ghost*, or who are seeking that Baptism; honest and earnest believers, who sigh and cry over the powerlessness of the true Church of Christ, and who grieve that her witness is so ineffective; that Spiritism and Christian Science, and other "isms," are sweeping thousands into their deceptive errors, little thinking, that, as they themselves go forward into the spiritual realm, the deceiver, who has misled others, has special wiles prepared for them, so that

he might render ineffective their aggressive power against him. These are the ones who are in danger of the special deception of the counterfeit "Christs," and false prophets, and the dazzling lure of "signs and wonders," and "fire out of heaven," planned to meet their longing for the mighty interposition of God in the darkness settling upon the earth, but who do not recognize that such workings of the spirits of evil are possible, and so are unprepared to meet them.

These are the ones, also, who are recklessly ready to follow the Lord at any cost, and yet do not realize their unpreparedness for contest with the spiritual powers of the unseen world, as they press on into fuller spiritual things. Believers who are full of mental conceptions wrought into them in earlier years, which hinder the Spirit of God from preparing them for all they will meet as they press on to their coveted goal; conceptions which also hinder others from giving them, out of the Scriptures, much that they need to know of the spiritual world into which they are so blindly advancing. Conceptions which lull them into a false security, and give ground for, and even bring about, that very deception which enables the deceiver to find them an easy prey.

#### CAN "HONEST SOULS" BE DECEIVED?

One prevailing idea, which such believers have deeply embedded in their minds, is that "honest seekers after God" will not be allowed to be deceived. That this is one of Satan's lies, to lure such seekers into a false position of safety, is proved by the history of the Church during the past two thousand years, for every "wile of error" which has borne sad fruit throughout this period, first laid hold of devoted believers who were "honest souls." The errors among groups of such believers, some well known to the present generation, all began among "honest" children of God, BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY GHOST; and all so sure that, knowing the side-tracking of others

before them, they would never be caught by the wiles of Satan. Yet they, too, have been deceived by lying spirits, counterfeiting the workings of God in the higher ranges of the spiritual life.

Among such devoted believers, lying spirits have worked on their determination *literally* to obey the Scriptures, and by misuse of the letter of the written Word, have pushed them into phases of unbalanced truth, with resulting erroneous practices. Many who have suffered for their adherence to these "Biblical commands," firmly believe that they are martyrs suffering for Christ. The world calls these devoted ones "cranks," and "fanatics," yet they give evidence of highest devotion and love to the Person of the Lord, and could be delivered, if they but understood why the powers of darkness deceived them, and the way of freedom from their power.

The aftermath of the Revival in Wales, which was a true work of God, revealed numbers of "honest souls" swept off their feet by evil supernatural powers, which they were not able to discern from the true working of God. And later still than the Welsh Revival, there have been other "movements," with large numbers of earnest servants of God swept into deception, through the wiles of deceiving spirits counterfeiting the workings of God; all "honest souls," deceived by the subtle foe, and certain to be led on into still deeper deception, notwithstanding their honesty and earnestness, if they are not awakened to "return to soberness" and recovery out of the snare of the devil into which they have fallen (2 Tim. ii. 26).

#### FAITHFULNESS TO LIGHT NOT SUFFICIENT SAFEGUARD AGAINST DECEPTION

The children of God need to know that to be true in motive, and faithful up to light, is not sufficient safeguard against deception; and that it is not safe for them to rely upon their "honesty of purpose" as guaranteeing protection from the enemy's wiles, instead of taking heed to the warnings of God's Word, and watching unto prayer.

Christians who are true and faithful, and honest, can be deceived by Satan, and his deceiving spirits, for the following reasons:—

(a) When a man becomes a child of God, by the regenerating power of the Spirit, giving him new life as he trusts in the atoning work of Christ, he does not at the same time receive fulness of knowledge, either of God, himself, or the devil.

(b) The mind which by nature is darkened (Eph. iv. 18), and under a veil created by Satan (2 Cor. iv. 4) is only renewed, and the veil destroyed, *up to the extent that the light of truth penetrates it*, and according to the measure in which the man is able to apprehend it.

(c) "Deception" has to do with the *mind*, and it means a wrong thought admitted to the mind, under the deception that it is truth. Since "deception" is based on ignorance, and not on the moral character; a Christian who is "true" and "faithful" up to the knowledge he has, must be open to deception in the sphere where he is ignorant of the "devices" of the devil (2 Cor. ii. 11), and what he is able to do. A "true" and "faithful" Christian is liable to be "deceived" by the devil because of his *ignorance*.

(d) The thought that God will protect a believer from being deceived if he is true and faithful, is in itself a "deception," because it throws a man off guard, and ignores the fact that there are conditions on the part of the believer which have to be fulfilled for God's working. God does not do anything instead of a man, but by the man's co-operation with Him; neither does He undertake to make up for a man's ignorance, when He has provided knowledge for him which will prevent him being deceived.

(e) Christ would not have warned His disciples "Take heed . . . be not *deceived*" if there had been *no danger of deception*, or if God had undertaken to keep them from deception apart from their "taking heed," and their knowledge of such danger.

The knowledge that it is *possible* to be deceived, keeps the mind open to truth, and light from God; and is one of the primary conditions for the keeping power of God; whereas a closed mind to light and truth, is a certain guarantee of deception by Satan at his earliest opportunity.

#### THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

As we glance back over the history of the Church, and watch the rise of various "heresies" or delusions—as they have sometimes been called—we can trace the period of deception as beginning with some great spiritual crisis, such as that which, in later years, we have termed "the Baptism of the Holy Ghost"; a crisis in which the man is brought to give himself up in full abandonment to the Holy Spirit, and in so doing thus open himself to the supernatural powers of the invisible world.

The reason for the peril of this crisis, is, that up to this time, the believer used his reasoning faculties in judging right and wrong, and obeyed, what he believed to be, the will of God, from *principle*; but now, in his abandonment to the Holy Spirit, he begins to obey an unseen Person, and to submit his faculties, and his reasoning powers in blind obedience to that which he believes is of God. What the Baptism of the Spirit means will be dealt with in a later chapter;\* at this point it is only necessary to say that it is a crisis in the life of a Christian, which none but those who have gone through it in experience, can fully understand. It means that the Spirit of God becomes so real to the man, that his supreme object in life is henceforth implicit "obedience to the Holy Ghost." The will is surrendered to carry out the Will of God at all costs, and the whole being is made subject to the powers of the unseen world; the believer, of course, purposing that it shall only be to the power of God, not taking into account that there are other powers in the spiritual realm, and that all that is "supernatural" is not all of God; and not realizing that this absolute surrender of the whole being to invisible

\* See Chapter XII.