



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

A. M. HILLS

(Congregational)

The writer was born of New England ancestry. I was brought up at the family altar. I read the Bible through before I was eight years old, and always was better acquainted with it than with any other book. One of the most precious of my childhood's memories is that of my mother reading to the children the immortal Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," until my whole heart would thrill at the touch of Divine truth, and I was often melted to tears. Then she would commend us to God in prayer. I believe those sacred hours made an indelible impression upon my young life for good. I shall be glad to meet John Bunyan in heaven .

I was converted the winter I was eleven years old, during a revival held in the Baptist Church. I shall always have a tender feeling toward the Baptists. I have tried to pay my debt of gratitude to the denomination by leading hundreds of the young people and youth of their churches to Christ. I never stand before a Baptist audience without feelings of grateful joy welling up in my soul.

I naturally joined the church of my parents; and of that denomination I have ever since been a member. I find that, to a great extent, the denominational connection of most Christians is simply matter of providential circumstances and environments. My mother was converted in a Methodist Church, and so was my wife. Perhaps these facts have had some mysterious influence in making me take so kindly and naturally to Methodist theology. But after a somewhat extended acquaintance with both Methodist and Congregational Churches during five years of evangelistic work, I have come to the deliberately formed opinion that, aside from the doctrine of sanctification, no two denominations in America today are preaching so nearly the same theology as are the Congregationalists and Methodists.

I graduated from the Mt. Vernon High School in 1867, and soon after entered the Freshman class of Oberlin College. There I met the mighty Finney, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." by far the mightiest preacher I ever saw stand before an audience. And he was then seventy-five years old. What must he have been thirty years before when in his glorious prime?

In the remarkably spiritual atmosphere that then characterized Oberlin, and under the heart-searching, preaching of Finney, I had awakened within me a great heart-hunger for holiness. President Mahan's "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" was given me in my senior year in college, and it deepened all former impressions and filled me with longings for the great blessing. Had Mahan's book given clear and full instruction on how to enter into the experience of sanctification, I am sure I should have obtained the blessing then. But its directions were meager and indefinite where they should have been full and plain, and I missed the way. I went to President Finney's home and asked for light. The old saint knelt and prayed with me, putting his dear hand on my head; *but he gave me no instruction,*

and left me in darkness as dense as ever. I marvelled at it then, but understand it now. His own philosophy, erroneous in two or three particulars (pointed out in "Holiness and Power" -on the "Entry Directions" page), unfitted him to lead others into that blessing of which he himself seemed to be such a marvelous example. That was in the early summer of 1871, just before graduated from college.

A few weeks later I entered Yale Theological Seminary, and under the depressing spiritual atmosphere of the college and city, the longing for the blessing subsided. The baptism with the Holy Ghost and Fire was never mentioned, and nothing definite and tangible about sanctification, that I can recall, was ever spoken in my hearing by any professor or minister during all those important three years when I was being trained to preach the Gospel of Christ. I am amazed at this now. Rev. R. A. Torrey, of Chicago, says the same, and declares that in all his years at Yale, he never heard the baptism with the Holy Ghost and Fire mentioned, save once by a student, and then he did not know what the man was talking about. God speed the day when in all our schools of theology this important subject will be taught as carefully as Homiletics or Systematic Theology!

Mahan's book quickened in me a great desire to be a soul-winner, and I began my first pastorate at Ravenna, Ohio, with that purpose burning like a flame in my soul. During my ten years' pastorate, God gave me in that and neighboring churches with whom I labored in revivals, five hundred souls. I was then pastor for six years of First Congregational Church, Allegheny City, Pa. We built a church building costing twenty thousand dollars and God graciously gave me another five hundred souls.

During this pastorate, too, in August, 1886, God took from me to her eternal home the precious wife of my youth, leaving me three children. In the following August another took her place who has faithfully mothered the motherless into Christian manhood and womanhood, -- two of whom graduated from Oberlin College this last summer. She has also borne me four children, three sons and a daughter, all dedicated by her before their birth to be heralds of the Gospel of Christ.

I then was called to become pastor of the College Church in Olivet, Mich. We were at once blessed with a gracious revival and sixty-four joined the church, and the aisles were seated Sabbath after Sabbath. But an ambitious self-asserting minority of ten per cent of the church made the pastorate anything but a delight, and I resigned for the sake of peace. At once a call was accepted to become the State Evangelist of the Congregational Churches of Michigan. Nine new churches were organized in connection with the revivals held, and eight hundred and sixty joined the churches in twenty months. Then the financial panic came on, and the shrinking of contributions made retrenchment necessary; and that stopped the enlargement and the evangelistic work. A call came to the Central Congregational Church, of Springfield, Missouri, which also brought college opportunities for the children, and it was accepted. But the stern panic of 1893-4 so oppressed the church and State Missionary Society, that it seemed impossible for the church to continue to bear its burden, and the pastorate ended after the first year. *(This panic was caused by speculative railroad overbuilding and shaky railroad financing which set off a series of bank failures. This was followed by the bankruptcy of many other companies; in total over 15,000 companies and 500 banks failed (many in the west). According to high estimates, about 17%-19% of the workforce was unemployed at the Panic's peak. The huge spike in unemployment, combined with the loss of life savings by failed banks, meant that a once-secure middle-class could not meet their mortgage obligations. As a result, many walked away from recently built homes. From this, the sight of the vacant Victorian (haunted) house entered the American mindset Sound familiar? Wikipedia)*

After the two long pastorates of sixteen years, the later rapid changes were disheartening and bewildering. My heart was humbled and subdued, and I began to cry out for God,

more of God! A Doctor of Divinity wrote me that these changes had come through no fault of mine, and that God did not want me to be pastor; that I could do more good as an evangelist than as pastor, and that God wanted me to take the gift He had bestowed upon me and humbly use it.

I resolved to do it, and moved to Oberlin, Ohio, for the sake of the privileges of the college, and entered at once into general evangelistic work. I was soon invited to conduct a revival in President Finney's old church, which resulted in the conversion of two hundred souls – the greatest spiritual movement Oberlin had seen since Finney's day, so reported by members of the faculty.

This work was God's way to bring me to the unutterable blessing. In the Oberlin meeting I met the leader of the Oberlin Holiness Band, Brother L. C. Presler, who had stood in Oberlin for a quarter of a century for holiness, *much of the time alone*. He became deeply interested in my work; for I was teaching, as best I knew, the privilege of being holy. I was convinced of the Scriptural truth and was hungering for the blessing, and dare not teach anything else. He kindly loaned me a dozen of the standard books of Methodist on holiness. I was then writing the "Life and Labors of Mary A. Woodbridge," my true and sainted friend, who had recently gone to her glorious reward. I finished that book and sent it to the publishers the last week in March, 1895, and then put all my leisure and my heart and soul into the study of the great subject of holiness. All this time I was preaching fifteen sermons a week, and was constantly in the midst of glorious revivals, and teaching the believer's privilege to be holy.

God knew I was an honest seeker, and He never withholds from such the truth. The light came, and when I found definitely just what God wanted me to do, and what were the conditions of receiving the baptism with the Holy Ghost and Fire, my heart cried out, "I will gladly pay the price." I made over my will unreservedly and forever to be obedient to God, by a renewed act of obedience. Acts 5:4. I presented myself anew to God for this definite blessing in a consecration that covered everything,--body, mind, will, hands, feet, lips, influence, reputation, wife, children, possessions – ALL to be the Lord's FOREVER. Rom. 6:13.

Then, like Abraham, I watched for the fire to fall and consume the sacrifice. I waited – note it, dear reader – six months! Why? Because I was so foolish as to doubt God's blessed assurance: "The altar sanctifieth the gift." We are sanctified by faith. Acts 2:18.

The patient Heavenly Father grew weary of waiting for His tardy child, and the Holy Spirit convicted me mightily of my sin of unbelief. I went to the public meeting and confessed it, and solemnly declared that, as I had urged others to believe God for justification, I would believe for sanctification. For two days I fought the devil of doubt with a desperation of purpose to believe. I walked the city park in the darkness alone, saying countless times: "I can, I will, I do believe."

Finally the Spirit suggested that I thank God for the sanctification as a blessing already received. I began to do so. I had prayed but a few sentences, when lo! The witness came! The fire fell! Glory to God forever!

Then I began to feel divinely kindled desire to write a book that would make it very plain how to obtain this blessing, that other souls might not wander long and painfully grope in darkness as I had done, seeking light in vain.

My Oberlin brother, who loaned me the helpful books, learning of my purpose, urged me to show up the theological and philosophical theories that hindered people from seeking sanctification. It all led to my writing "Holiness and Power for the Church and the Ministry," for which I shall praise God forever. When I hear of and meet ministers who

have been led into the experience of sanctification by it, my soul is filled with gratitude and joy unutterable. President Hughes, Of Asbury College, submitted the book to the critical examination of an editor of a holiness paper and he pronounced the book "a classic on the subject." It has been adopted as a textbook in this college.

Then, at dear Brother Knapp's request. I wrote "Pentecostal Light," which God is so graciously using to the praise of His name and the spread of His truth.

These books have increased my influence immeasurably, and are living in the lives and hearts and preaching of others. They led to my being invited to speak last May at the Commencement of Asbury College, and then to my being called to the professorship of Theology in this Holiness School. And here I am, teaching some of the most blessed young men and women I ever met how to preach a full salvation to needy, hungering churches and a dying world.

At this writing I am filled with the sweet peace of full salvation and graciously kept by the sanctifying Spirit of God.

WILMORE, KY., November 6, 1898.



AN IMPERATIVE OBLIGATION

If there is one obligation resting upon sanctified souls more imperative than others, it is to spread Holiness and thus to glorify God. All, or nearly all, would like to be great orators or brilliant writers. There is a fascination about a line of work that "fills the public eye" and brings upon one the attention of the multitude. But God has called comparatively few to walk these dizzy heights. Most servants of God are called to serve in a more secluded way. But that is not saying that this kind of service need be any less effective.

I am more and more impressed with the fact that our beloved Holiness people do not appreciate the value and importance of circulating Holiness literature. This is a work within reach of the most shy and retiring people, to whom more public efforts would be positively painful. It requires no genius or high degree of culture, no special gifts of any kind. Nothing is needed but a prayerful, sanctified spirit, whose efforts God will delight to honor and use. First read the literature you sell or loan to others, then follow it up with conversation and prayer, answering any questions that may be asked and explaining whatever needs to be explained, and urging those you are dealing with to follow faithfully any light received. The influence of such efforts, prayerfully and persistently exerted, may be as lasting, as time and glorious beyond our possible conception or present knowledge.

It seemed to be a matter of little importance that an humble woman, whose name has been forgotten (we may be sure it has not been forgotten in heaven), put a booklet in the hands of a wicked young man by the name of Richard Baxter, and it was the means of his salvation. He became a great minister and wrote many books. One of them "The Call to the Unconverted," was the means of bringing a multitude to God; among others, Philip Doddridge. Philip Doddridge became a great minister and author, and wrote, besides other books, "The Rise and Progress of Religion," which has brought thousands and tens of thousands into the kingdom of God; among others, the great Wilberforce. Wilberforce wrote a book called, "A Practical View of Christianity," which was the means of bringing many to Christ; among others, Leigh Richmond. He became a faithful minister and wrote the story of the religious life of an humble Christian girl in his English parish, who died

in 1801. The story was called “ The Dairyman’s Daughter.” Within twenty-eight years that little story had been translated in nineteen different languages and four million copies have been sold; and it is printed and circulated yet, and has led multitudes to Jesus. This mighty river of influence flowed from that holy fountain in an humble woman’s heart, who put a bit of Christian literature in Richard Baxter’s way, and the mighty tide will roll on, and on, and on forever.

A modest, humble farmer living near Oberlin, Ohio, has stood for Holiness for twenty-five years. He reads all Holiness books and papers, and then loans them right and left to all whom he can induce to read. By so doing, he has led many to Christ and into the experience of sanctification. Three years and a half ago he loaned to the writer some standard books on Holiness. They led him into the blessed experience of sanctification, and since then, besides seeing, several thousand converted and sanctified under his preaching, he has written “Holiness and Power,” and “Pentecostal Light,” and other books, which have led to the sanctification of a goodly number, among them several ministers. A young lady loaned “Holiness and Power “ to a young minister overnight, and in that short time it led him to seek and obtain the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The writer’s books have already crossed the boundaries of the nation, and are doing their work far and wide. And this influence has but just begun, and it started with the loan of some books.

One of the most beautiful stories of this kind came to the writer one week ago today from the lips of Rev. Edward Allen, Irvine, Ky., whose parish is among the foothills of the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. I had helped him over Sunday in a gracious revival now in progress. His story was as follows:

“One Mrs. Curry, of Lebanon, Ohio, a widow of two M. E. ministers, for years held every Sunday afternoon in her own house a Holiness prayer-meeting. There is a normal school in the town which I attended. She would invite the students to attend her meeting. She called us her boys and girls, and would tell us she had but one request, which was that we come the next Sunday and bring someone with us. In one year while I attended her meetings, one hundred and three were converted or sanctified, and at least twenty-five of us are now either preachers or missionaries. This went on for years, and I think it is safe estimate that there are now in the field five hundred teachers, or ministers, or missionaries who were converted or sanctified in her meetings. She insisted on our reading and buying if we could, her holiness literature, and she kept us circulating it. I feel myself among the least of those sanctified young men, and yet, during the last fourteen months, I myself have seen one hundred and fifty converted or sanctified right here in my ministry, and the whole community is now under conviction by the Holy Spirit.”

What a revelation eternity will make of the influence of that widow, who sat in her chair and taught the young men and young women Holiness, and circulated Holiness literature. O Holiness people, bestir yourselves and do likewise! NOVEMBER 28, 1898.

Source: “Pentecostal Messengers” by M. W. Knapp



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