

**SPIRITUAL LIFE IN  
ITS EARLIER STAGES.  
FIVE LECTURES**

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Spiritual life in its earlier stages. Five lectures by G. Robert Wynne

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**G. ROBERT WYNNE**

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE

IN ITS EARLIER STAGES.

*Five Lectures*

*DELIVERED IN THE PARISH CHURCH, HOLYWOOD,*

*LENT, 1880.*

BY

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VICAR.



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## CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE BEGINNING, . . . . .	5
II. THE SPIRIT CONVINCING, . . . . .	17
III. THE GREAT SIGHT, . . . . .	28
IV. SELF-SURRENDER, . . . . .	39
V. THE USE OF MEANS, . . . . .	51

# SPIRITUAL LIFE

## IN ITS EARLIER STAGES.



### L

#### *THE BEGINNING.*

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"—JOB xxiii. 3.

YOU will see from the text which I have chosen, that I do not intend to speak to people who don't care about religion.

On the other hand, do not suppose I address only those who are intensely in earnest.

Between these two states of the soul many are to be found. These may for months or years remain without going forward, because they scarcely understand either the danger or the hopefulness of their position. I should like to help them. They must beware of resisting the Holy Ghost, by treating their desire for God as a thing which

may lightly be put aside. They must thank God and seek more light, or that which they have may be removed.

Now, in beginning these lectures, I must clear the way by telling you plainly that there are some things—many things—connected with Divine truth which we cannot explain. Apostles could not explain them. God has not explained them. But because there are matters which God's ministers do not presume to explain, that is no reason why you should not give good heed to those plainly-revealed things which they are commissioned to teach.

It is about these plain things, and not about hard and mysterious things, that I intend, please God, to speak to you this Lent. This evening the subject is *the beginning of an earnest Christian life*.

The first question or difficulty of some hearts is this: "I don't know how to begin. I have been baptized, instructed, confirmed—have gone to church and done my best; but all seems to no purpose. I have no reason to believe that I am one of God's faithful soldiers and servants. And this I do wish to be."

Is this your wish? Not merely as you read



this page, but often (I do not say always) in secret, when you lie awake at night, or work alone at your business, or walk in the fields and see the wonderful beauty of God's works. Do you sometimes sigh and say, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him"? Is there a real desire to be safe, or to serve God, or to be a Christian, or to feel or to have a peaceful heart?

THEN YOU HAVE BEGUN. Oh, believe this. Or rather, GOD THE HOLY GHOST HAS BEGUN to work in your heart that gracious work, which, if you do not stifle His voice and resist His leading, will lead you to the peace and service of God on earth, and to the joy of the Lord in heaven.

This desire is the germ of the future tree; small, easily killed by unkindness, but possessed of life. Do you suppose such a desire is of yourself, or of the world? Who but Himself could kindle that earnest wish to seek and find the Lord? (See Phil. ii. 13; also Prov. xvi. 1; Jas. i. 17.)

1. Therefore let us lay down, as a first principle, this truth for each to hold fast:—God the Holy Ghost is living and working in me. I do not understand how; I do not understand why. But since from Him "all holy desires" do proceed,

(Second Collect, Evening Prayer), and since this is a "holy desire," it therefore is from Him.

Thank God for this. It is a beginning.

Meditate on this truth, full of solemnity and of hopefulness:—My body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in me, not yet as my controlling Lord, but as my Guide to more than I now possess, or perhaps can imagine I ever shall possess.

Say, "Lord, I thank Thee that I have not to call on Thee as an abstract, distant, unwilling, fault-finding Spirit. But I thank Thee that, on the contrary, Thou dwellest with me and workest in me. May I not quench that quiet voice. Help me to listen to it, and to follow where it leads, for Christ's sake."

2. Try to understand clearly for what purpose He dwells in you, and to what He desires to lead you.

The Bible tells you that in Christ's great goodness He has given the Holy Comforter as His gift to the Church, and as a guide to each soul (St. John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xvi. 7, 8). And St. Paul tells you (Rom. ii. 4) what that goodness or kindness (*τὸ χρηστόν*, translated *kind* in St. Luke vi.

35; *benignitas*, Vulg.) is doing:—"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

Listen to that quiet voice; it demands an attentive ear; it is a gentle voice, persuasive but not loud. It speaks; and what is the message?

"Soul, canst thou be satisfied with thyself?"

Think of days long ago, of youthful purposes, promises, wishes. What has come of all thou didst learn, and know, and purpose, and vow? Think of the years of boyhood and girlhood, and the opening up of sinful knowledge, desire, practice! Compare thy past years with this law:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself."

Think of thy hidden sins.

Try to remember thy forgotten sins.

Think—unchecked faults are willing sins.

Think—God forgets nothing but what through Christ He forgives.

Think of the words which during how many years thou hast spoken.

Think of thy temper—how often others have been made uncomfortable by it, and God dishonoured.