

PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.

PART I.

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD EARNESTLY SEEK THIS PRICELESS
GIFT FOR THEMSELVES.

PART II.

THE DUTY OF SEEKING THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE CHURCH
OF CHRIST AND FOR THIS FALLEN WORLD.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM SCRIBNER,

AUTHOR OF "PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN."



NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

770 BROADWAY, COR. 9TH STREET.

6.5
AUG 1 1875

BT
121
S32
1875
445145

COPYRIGHT, 1875, BY
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & Co.



EDWARD O. JENKINS,
PRINTER AND STEREOTYPYER
20 NORTH WILLIAM ST., N.Y.

ROBERT RUTTER,
BINDER,
84 BEEKMAN STREET, N.Y.

U V

PRAY FOR
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Publisher, by permission, prints the following letters addressed to the author.

I.

“It seems to me that you have composed a treatise upon the office of the Holy Spirit, and the duty of Christians in reference to it, which will be very useful to Christian readers.

“It is sufficiently theological to lay a foundation for the exhortations to the duty of prayer and the use of means, and at the same time is practical and popular in the style of remark. You have made good use of Owen, who, in my judgment, is unequalled in the treatment of this great theme, and have adapted the discussion to the mental habits and characteristics of the present generation of readers. The attention of the Church *needs* to be directed to the internal work which needs to be carried on, in order that outward service may be persevering and successful. Praying for the Holy Ghost and praying in the Holy Ghost is the only method of obtaining that great measure of prosperity for the Church, both at home and among the heathen, which is both promised and prophesied in Scripture.

“Hoping that your volume will have a wide circulation, I am,

“Yours sincerely,

“WM. G. T. SHEDD.”

II.

“I have just finished reading your manuscript, and give you, at once, my thanks for writing it and letting me see it. Surely you can have no doubt as to its publication. More

(5)

brilliant and more theologically subtle books may have been written on the importance of prayer for, and dependence on, the Spirit ; but a more *useful* treatise than yours for the Christian Church at large, I could not lay my hands on. Your language is very plain, and almost lacks color, but verve and movement more than make up for the deficiency in color, metaphor, and illustration. Your points are all points indeed, so that the table of contents alone creates an appetite for your discussion of them. The importance of prayer—as not to an abstraction, but to the Spirit of God—not for abstractions, but for carefully enumerated *things*—looms more largely before my mind every page I read of your book, and then the *things* themselves separately and cumulatively increase their dimensions in proportion. A safer, more judicious treatise, is scarcely possible. The Church at large needs just the instruction your book gives, and the ‘common people’ for whom you evidently wrote it will ‘hear it gladly.’

“Yours as ever,

“WM. C. STITT.”

CONTENTS.

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| PRELIMINARY | PAGE 11 |
|-----------------------|------------|

PART I.

REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD SEEK THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR YOURSELF :

| | |
|--|-----|
| I.—You will then enjoy the continuance of His indwelling | 37 |
| II.—You will see more and more beauty, glory, and attractiveness in the truths of the Bible | 42 |
| III.—You will be enriched with all the graces of the Spirit | 49 |
| IV.—You will gain a better knowledge of the Spirit's agency and operations in our redemption | 55 |
| V.—You will gain a deeper knowledge of yourself and your wants | 62 |
| VI.—You will perceive that the things which are unseen are more real and powerful than the things which are seen | 67 |
| VII.—That faith which gives life, will be sustained in your soul | 74 |
| VIII.—You will daily grow in the knowledge of Christ | 78 |
| IX.—You will possess an assurance of Christ's love for you | 84 |
| X.—You will experience consolation and support in affliction | 91 |
| XI.—You will be prepared to enjoy and to profit by the services of the Sanctuary | 98 |
| XII.—You will never have occasion to fear that your growth in grace will be interrupted | 106 |
| XIII.—You will be enabled to see the glory of God in His works | 112 |
| XIV.—You will be enabled to heed the admonition, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" | 118 |
| XV.—It will have a happy effect on the manner in which you will attend to the duty of closet-prayer | 125 |
| XVI.—Your unconscious influence will be powerful for good | 135 |
| XVII.—God will give you His Holy Spirit more willingly than parents give good gifts to their children | 140 |

PART II.

EARNESTLY SEEK THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR PERISHING MEN :

| | |
|--|-----|
| I.—That He would ever abide with the Church for her enlargement and prosperity | 149 |
| II.—That his converting influences may be granted unto millions who already know enough of truth to be saved | 158 |

(7)

| | |
|---|-----|
| III.—That He would enable the Church to obey Christ's last command | 164 |
| IV.—That He would descend with converting power upon the heathen world | 173 |
| V.—That He would continually call laborers into the harvest, and would assist and strengthen those actually at work | 184 |
| VI.—Entreat the Holy Spirit to have compassion on other classes and conditions of men besides those already enumerated | 195 |
| VII.—That He would restrain the wicked, and keep within bounds their corruptions | 204 |
| VIII.—You do truly seek the Holy Spirit for your fellow-men, when you pray for the progress of Christ's kingdom in the world by means of genuine revivals | 210 |
| APPENDIX.—The condition and character of the French as affected by the suppression of the Reformation | 251 |

PRELIMINARY.

PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.

PRELIMINARY.

THE infinitely blessed God did not become tri-personal for the sake of carrying out the plan of redemption. He has subsisted in three distinct Persons from all eternity. This, however, was not revealed until after the fall; and when the revelation was made, it was made in connection with the disclosure of the Divine purpose, to save the lost.

In the earliest books of the Old Testament, the doctrine of the Trinity is only obscurely intimated. In its later books, the revelations are much more full. The writings of the New Testament everywhere take it for granted that, while true believers, in all places and in all times, recognize but one God, they do truly worship three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even though their knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity may be no greater than is barely involved in such worship, and may

fall short of what is taught in the definite statements of the creeds of the Church.*

These three Persons are equal in power and glory. But, while there are three Persons, there are not three Gods; for the Persons are not three in the same sense in which they are one. It is in the sense of participating in a common divine nature that they are one, while in their distinct subsistences they are three.

At the baptism of Christ we have presented to us three Persons. We know that each of these is God—that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. We also know that there is but one only living and true God. But as long as it is admitted that the Three are not one, and three, in the same sense, the doctrine, however incomprehensible, is not self-contradictory. As to equality, the three Persons must be equal in power and glory if they are the same in substance.

* "It is characteristic of the Scriptures, that the truths therein presented are exhibited in the form in which they address themselves to our religious consciousness. A truth often lies in the mind of the Church as an object of faith long before it is wrought out in its doctrinal form; that is, before it is analyzed, its contents clearly ascertained, and its elements stated in due relation to each other."—Dr. Hodge's *Theology*, vol. I, pp. 448, 449.

If we sincerely believe in, and love the doctrine of the Trinity because the Bible teaches it, it is not necessary that in every prayer which we offer, the thought should be distinctly in our minds that there are three divine persons in the Godhead. As the Three are one God,—one in essence, knowledge, will, and power, we may pray to God as God. And we may also pray to each of the persons separately. But though we may address, and ought often to address, and worship each person separately, we cannot do so without worshipping the whole Trinity.

Each person of the Godhead has an agency in our redemption. This truth is set before us throughout the whole Bible with great prominence—that each divine person of the Trinity has an agency and an office in the redemption of those who are saved. The Father performs a part in our redemption—the Son also performs a part—and it is no less true that the third Person, the Holy Spirit, has an agency and performs a part in man's salvation. And it is expressly in order that He may do His part, that He may execute His own office in the work of redemption that He is given to men.

We see then why they are happy who do truly ask for the Holy Spirit and to whom He is given by

our Heavenly Father. We see why God himself regards them as happy. They may not be the world's favorites—they may often indeed be found among the poor, the sorrowful, and the neglected. But in being made possessors of the Holy Spirit—the very temples in which He dwells, they are unspeakably blessed. They, however, prove that they are indeed God's children by valuing the blessing and by asking for it. It is only by asking, that it can be obtained.

It is sad to think that there are some who hold errors which make it impossible for them to pray for the Holy Spirit. We refer to those who maintain that the term Holy Ghost is merely used in the Scriptures to designate a divine influence—the power of God—God's energy, when exercised in a particular way. They have adopted this view, because they do not, they say, recognize it as true, and therefore cannot admit, that the blessed Spirit is a person having an individual subsistence, and possessed of all divine perfections.

Now while it is true that the third Person of the Godhead is not as separate from the Father and the Son precisely as one human person is from every other, it is equally true that He is in Himself a distinct, living, intelligent, powerful, and divine Person.

We deem it unnecessary to quote the numerous passages of Scripture in which the Holy Spirit is represented as one who can be the object of our acts; in which He is spoken of as performing operations which imply intelligence and will; in which intelligence, will, and individual subsistence are distinctly attributed to Him; and in which the personal pronouns are used in relation to Him. With these passages the readers of this little volume are doubtless familiar, and are convinced by them that the Spirit is as truly and really a distinct person, as the Father and the Son. "The Scripture tells us that the Holy Ghost governs the Church; appoints overseers over it; discerns and judges all things; comforts the faint; strengthens the weak; is grieved and provoked by sin; and that in these and many other affairs He works, orders, and disposes all things according to the counsel of His own will. Can any man credit this testimony and conceive otherwise of the Spirit than as a holy, wise, intelligent Person?"

They with whom these evidences of the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit go for nothing, and who assert that what is called the Spirit of God, is nothing but a power, cannot, as was said, pray for Him. Refusing to admit that any such Person

exists, they of course deny His activity, His agency in human redemption, His operations, His gifts, and influences. They cannot then entreat that they and others may be the subjects of His operations and influences, and the recipients of His gifts. They cannot, we say, pray for the Holy Spirit.

No true Christian will intelligently reject the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Such a one will neither maintain that there is but one person in the Godhead,—who is called Holy Spirit in certain relations,—nor that what is spoken of as the Spirit is merely the power that God exerts for particular purposes.

“Every believer feels that he stands to the Holy Spirit in the relation which *one person sustains to another*: a person on whom he is dependent for all good; whose assistance must be sought; and whose assistance may be granted or withheld at pleasure; and who may come or withdraw either for a season or forever. Such has been the faith of the Church in all ages . . . Hence the prayers so frequent in Scripture and so constantly on the lips of believers, that the Spirit would not cast us off; would not give us up; would not be grieved by our ingratitude or resistance: but that He would

come to us, enlighten us, purify, elevate, strengthen, guide, and comfort us; that He would come to our households, renew our children, visit our churches, and multiply His converts as the drops of the morning dew; and that He would everywhere give the Word of God effect."*

The Holy Spirit not only causes the Word of God to take effect upon the hearts of men; if He performs an inward work on the heart, He is also present and active in the external world, and has been so from the beginning of the creation. The forming and perfecting of the host of heaven are ascribed peculiarly to the Spirit of God, for it is said, "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." We know from the language of the inspired writer that while the Earth was as yet unfinished He brooded over the waters and reduced chaos to order.

The work of producing a new supply of creatures is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit and they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth." "He daily replenishes the earth with life and beauty." The intelligence which we see evinced in the structures of vegetables and animals is likewise to be referred to

* Dr. Hodge's Theology, vol. iii., page 475.

Him. The omnipresent Spirit also has an efficiency in the actions of men which are concerned in the great affairs of the world.

The Holy Spirit inspired all the prophets and writers of the Bible. It is said that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that "they searched what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." That the Apostles had the habitual guidance of the Holy Spirit, that He abode in them to enlighten and fit them for their work is evident from their express declarations. They declared that they "preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," that they "had received not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God;" that they "spoke these things not in words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Holy Ghost taught;" and that they "could be judged of no man," because "none knew the mind of the Lord so as to instruct Him, and they had the mind of Christ."

The prominence which our Saviour Jesus Christ has in all religious instruction, and in the religious experience of believers is necessarily great, but that

should not cause them to overlook the obligations they are under to the blessed Spirit of God. Let it be considered that the Holy Spirit is intimately concerned in every thing which endears the Saviour himself to us.

He who in consequence of the sweetness and glory of His person, and His mediatorial work, is to us the chief among ten thousands, was once divine without being human, but now through the Holy Spirit's creative agency He wears human nature, while notwithstanding that He is, and ever will be, both God and man, He remains only one Person, just as He was only one Person before His incarnation.

We know that the blessed Spirit had an agency in bringing into existence Christ's human body and soul, for the Scriptures expressly teach that when the time arrived for the Son of God to assume human nature into personal union with Himself, the Holy Spirit produced that nature by His own creating act. Said the angel to the Virgin Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also, that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Having created the body of our Lord, and infused a rational

soul to quicken it, the blessed Spirit carried on the work which He had begun, by anointing Christ with those extraordinary qualifications and gifts which were necessary for the discharge of His office. During our Lord's whole course on earth, the Divine Spirit directed, strengthened, and comforted Him. And the work which He performed for the Redeemer is to be regarded as a proof of His love to us. It implies His concurrence with the Father, and the Son, in the great scheme of man's redemption.

It delights believers, and what wonder, to dwell on the Person, work, and glory of their dear Lord. All divine and human excellencies are so combined in Him as to ravish their hearts. And, in addition to being the only object of their saving faith, He is the central sun in their entire religious experience. "Their whole inward spiritual life terminates on Him." But, as was said, the Holy Spirit is intimately concerned in Christ being that complex Person which makes Him so glorious and attractive to us, in His possessing the graces, and extraordinary gifts with which He was anointed, and so in all the blessedness and joy which the Son of God designed to secure for us when He assumed our nature.

How closely is the Divine Spirit united with the Redeemer in bringing about our salvation. If Jesus purchased our redemption, the Holy Spirit applies it. Regeneration is His sole and special work. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Having breathed spiritual life into our souls, He sustains and nourishes it. He carries forward our sanctification. He is our Comforter. He is our loving, careful, tender Friend, and such is His condescension that He is sincerely concerned in our good and well-doing. He is our ruler, teacher, and guide. We are His disciples. We are His worshippers, and we humbly offer supplications to Him.

It was said that regeneration is the sole and special work of the Holy Spirit. But, besides this, whatever progress in holiness the soul may make after its regeneration, is likewise due to the power of the Holy Spirit working in it.

Divine truth is, indeed, quick and powerful—a sanctifying influence, indeed, belongs to it; but even on the regenerated soul the truth can have no sanctifying, purifying effect, unless the Holy

Spirit attends it, works with it, and gives it effect. It would be a sad mistake to suppose that whenever a soul is saved, the activity of the Blessed Spirit is confined to that one operation by which it is created anew. His agency is still necessary, and His agency is continued during the believer's whole life. We should, therefore, feel how entirely dependent, as Christians, we are on the Holy Spirit's influences, and should constantly pray that He would enlighten the eyes of our understandings, increase our spiritual life in vigor, and soften our hearts.

The power, then, which is the cause of our growth in holiness, and which produces in our souls the Christian graces, is no less supernatural than the power which new creates or makes alive a soul dead in trespasses and sins.

What, then, is there peculiar and distinctive about the *regenerating* act of the Holy Spirit? In what does it differ from His other supernatural operations on the soul? Since, in every case in which a soul is saved, the Spirit's agency is continued after His regenerating act has been put forth, wherein is His regenerating act in contrast with that agency or work which He carries on in the soul already born again? The points of dis-

similarity are several, but we will confine ourselves to one, which we proceed very briefly to state.

Although in order to the believer's sanctification there is need of the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, yet this is not because there is no power or adaptation in divine truth, in itself considered, to sanctify; for if it had no such adaptation or fitness, it could not even be employed by the Holy Spirit as an *instrument*. It has fitness in itself considered, and yet it remains true that it performs in the hands of the Omnipotent Spirit, only the part of an instrument. And as an instrument or means, it is *always* employed. In maintaining and advancing holiness in our souls, He works for that purpose, in no other way than by using the truth. There must always be knowledge of the Word. It is by the Word that all the graces are called into exercise. It is by the Word, and by that means alone, that the Spirit works in the people of God to will and to do.

But in regenerating a soul—in raising it from death to life (for we use the word regeneration as designating the instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life)—the Spirit makes no use of the truth to impart life. When by His divine power He regenerates a soul, the regenerating act then

put forth is not one in which the truth also concurs. There is not a concurrence of both the Spirit and the truth in the act, as there is in the work of sanctification. The Spirit's operation on the soul when He regenerates it, is an operation in which the truth performs no part, just as when our Saviour enabled Bartimeus to see the light, the light itself performed no part in removing Bartimeus' blindness.

Divine truth indeed has power—it has an adaptation to transform any soul upon which it is brought to bear, into the likeness of God. But the soul while unregenerate and blind has no susceptibility to that renovating influence which the truth possesses. It fails to perceive the truth in its real nature, and *therefore* experiences not in the slightest degree the renovating effect which it is fitted to produce.

Spiritual life—power of spiritual perception—must *first* exist in the soul before divine truth held up to it can have any really saving influence upon it. It is only *subsequently* to the taking place of the regenerating act, which is the act of God's Spirit upon the heart, that the person begins to experience its saving virtue. The regenerating act is, we repeat it, the act or operation of God's Spirit.

And the result of this operation is, that the spiritually dead soul is at once quickened—instantaneously receives life, with power spiritually to discern the things of God. But the truth has no coöperation in what takes place ; in other words, the Spirit makes no use of the truth itself, to give life and spiritual perception. Our Saviour acted with a divine power directly on the sightless eye-balls of Bartimeus without the intervention of any means, and in like manner the Holy Spirit acts directly and immediately on the soul destitute of spiritual life, without the intervention of the truth. It is in this way that the image of God is not completely, but partially restored to the soul.

In His *previous* workings on the souls of men, which workings are preparatory to regeneration, the Spirit does indeed use the Word, just as, after the new birth has taken place, He employs the truth to carry forward the Christian's sanctification. Most true is it, that it is the Word which in the hands of the Spirit arouses, alarms, and convinces the unregenerate man. The Word awakens and enlightens him, so that he is brought, anxiously and with the greatest earnestness, to seek reconciliation with God. But what is maintained is, that the truth has no concurrence or instrumentality in

that act of the Holy Spirit by which souls spiritually dead are quickened.*

But it is objected, that if the Divine Agent acts on the soul directly and immediately, the laws by which the human spirit are governed, are then set aside, and violence is done to its nature. This objection, however, assumes what can never be proved. It is altogether unreasonable. Why cannot the direct operation of the Divine Agent on the soul, whereby it is made spiritually alive, be so congruous to its nature, that under its influence the soul shall move most freely? "The Spirit who knows human nature and human sinfulness in their totality, can make His abode in that sphere which is out of sight; and there, with a love all the greater because

* The terms "beget," "begotten," "being born again," are sometimes so used in the Scriptures as to include more than the bare act of imparting life to the spiritually dead soul. They are sometimes meant to include all that is intended by the comprehensive word *conversion*. It is evident that the word "begotten" is used as synonymous with conversion in that passage 1 Peter i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "Being born again," has also this wide meaning in 1 Peter i. 23, which is the reason why this latter passage says that we are born again by the Word of God, or through the instrumentality of the Word. In the regeneration of an unrenewed person the truth does indeed cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the production of the effect, if the

it is not perceived, He can work at the very foundation of depravity ; resting not till that foundation is undermined, the building that was erected upon it overturned, and a new one raised in its stead. The Restorer of souls may thus work among the principles of our depravity without at all infringing upon any of the laws of the mental nature. Yea, everything like undue pressure may be obviated all the more by the very fact that the Spirit makes no direct assault upon any of the faculties, but is contented to touch the hidden springs that lie far beneath, and thus moving them, He moves effectually the whole man. As sin has fixed its habitation in the very interior of the human spirit, I see not why God may not be acting there with as much safety

term regeneration is meant to include not only the bare act of imparting life, but those exercises of the soul which are consequent to that act. The Apostle teaches that as long as a man is in his natural state, or, in other words, that until the soul's regeneration, or resurrection to life, has *already* taken place, it has no ability whatever to see the truth, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The inward work of the Spirit is first necessary before the truth can be discerned in its real nature,—before it can have any transforming effect on the soul.

They who contend that the Holy Spirit is unable to renew the spiritually dead without the concurrence and co-operation of the truth must, in order to be consistent, deny that He ever regenerates infants, and that even if He were willing to regenerate a soul in heathen darkness, it would be impossible for Him to do so.

and efficiency as among those powers whose ongoing is seen by the eye of the soul."

It is of the utmost importance that we recognize this point of dissimilarity between that operation by which the Spirit new creates a soul and that agency by which He afterwards carries forward its sanctification. Other differences might be considered, but it is not so necessary that in this little work they should be presented.

The personality and agency of the Holy Spirit were not as distinctly understood by God's people under the Old Dispensation as by believers in these days. Not only this, but the blessing was not so abundantly given to men. It was not withheld, but it was bestowed with limitations. The purpose and plan of the all-wise and infinitely blessed God was to wait until after the advent, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ before enriching the Church in any remarkable manner with effusions of His Spirit. This is the way we are to understand the promises and predictions of the prophets, Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The gift of the Holy Ghost is, by these prophets, set forth as the great distinguishing blessing of the times of the Messiah.

We are so favored as to live in the times referred to by the prophets. *These* are the times of the Messiah. *This* is the dispensation of the Spirit. If we may congratulate ourselves on this account, we should also remember how solemn and responsible is our position. The thought which should deeply impress us is, that without the sovereign and omnipotent influence of the Third Person of the Godhead, neither the Father nor the Son are of any avail for human salvation. We are now, in a sense, shut up to Him. Everything depends upon His love, and presence, and working. Friendship, power, with Him, are the indispensable duties of the Christian Church.

The impenitent should also remember that the teachings of the Scriptures, concerning the Holy Spirit, sent to convince sinners, and to allure them from the paths of destruction, are guarded by the most awful sanctions. The Scriptures teach that though He is long-suffering and kind, yet He will not always strive. "He is a righteous Sovereign, and men can vex His benignant heart and limit His influence, so that He may stop short in His work of mercy. And thus this gracious power, moving in the depths of the soul, secretly guiding, inspiring, urging the sinner to renounce his sin and

flee to Christ, is banished and withdraws. There are six forms of expression made use of in the Bible to set forth the activity of the human soul against the presence, power, and grace of the Divine Spirit; these are: 'resist,' 'limit,' 'grieve,' 'provoke,' 'vex,' 'quench.' And the responsibility of men, under these influences of the Holy Spirit, is in the last degree solemn. For these sacred influences all look and tend to actual regeneration—to the breaking down of the barriers which so long had shut out all the love of God the Father, and all the grace and goodness of God the Son. And, there being no fourth person in the Godhead, and the love of the Father and of the Son having been rejected, the Holy Ghost is man's last, man's only hope."*

It is to be feared that there is much ignorance among many Christians in regard to the teachings of the Scriptures concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; ignorance which affects, unhappily, their manner of praying for this blessed gift; which prevents them from so praying for the Spirit as to give Him the honor which He claims, and which is His due. Did they possess that knowledge which

* See an excellent article, entitled "The Trinity in Redemption," in the *Princeton Review*, vol. 38, p. 565.

a more faithful study of the Bible would give them of the relations which the third Person sustains to the other Persons of the adorable Trinity; did they especially have clearer and fuller information than they possess of the precise office, work, agency, and operations of the Holy Spirit in our redemption, and a more profound and abiding realization of the voluntariness and sovereignty of His agency; and, at the same time, of His amazing condescension and love for us, they would pray for this gift in a manner more pleasing to God, and more profitable to themselves.

Our ignorance is surely culpable, and no doubt the Holy Spirit is often grieved at the remissness of believers in gathering up all the instruction which they might obtain from the Scriptures concerning Him. "He comes to us in the name, with the love, and upon the condescension, of the whole blessed Trinity. To do that which might grieve Him so sent . . . is a great aggravation of sin. He expects cheerful entertainment with us [and may we not add the most eager desire and effort on our part to search the Scriptures for the revelations they make concerning Him?], and may do so justly on His own account, and on account of the work He comes about; but when to this it is

added that He is sent by the Father and the Son, commissioned with their love and grace to communicate them to their souls—this is that which is, and ought to be, of unspeakable esteem with believers.” *

The coming and work of the Holy Spirit were the great theme of our Saviour’s last discourses with His disciples, and He dwelt upon them with special emphasis.

Surely those tender words of the divine Saviour (and they are only a small part of what He said) should quicken and stimulate us to meditate upon the Spirit’s character and work, and to pray much for His influences and help: “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”

It is to be feared that Christians are not sufficiently alive to the importance of making this request their principal one in all their approaches to the throne of grace. There is absolutely nothing worth having if we are to remain destitute of the Holy Spirit. They who continue to want His

* Owen on “Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each Person distinctly, in love, grace, and consolation.” Vol. 2 of Owen’s works, p. 230; Goold’s edition.

friendship and assistance, can neither be good nor happy in this world nor in eternity. Our Saviour enjoins it upon us to be exceedingly importunate in our supplications for Him, and the Apostle Paul offered scarcely any other petition for the Churches in his days than this, that God would bestow upon them and increase in them the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Everyone will, upon reflection, assent to the words of the great Owen, that *He should be the great subject-matter of all our prayers, and that the chiefest work of faith in this world is this asking of the Spirit of God, in the name of Christ, either directly or immediately, or under the name of some of His fruits and effects.*

2*

PART I.

**Why Christians should earnestly seek the Holy
Spirit for themselves.**

I.

*PRAY MUCH FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS A MEANS OF SECURING
THE CONTINUANCE OF HIS INDWELLING.*

IT may be thought that there is no propriety in saying that His continued indwelling in our souls will be the result of our constant praying for the Holy Spirit. It may be objected that no one is a Christian at all, in whom He does not dwell; and moreover, that we cannot co-operate with God in preserving our vital union with the Saviour, between which union and the indwelling of God's Spirit the Scriptures make little or no distinction. But it should not be forgotten that the comforting truth, that the Divine Spirit never removes from the heart in which He has once taken up His habitation, is perfectly consistent with the absolute necessity of using diligence to keep Him from departing. Apostacy from even a real union with Christ is a danger which is always regarded in God's Word as imminent, and one to be averted by prayer and holy living.

Besides, our Saviour's command is, "Abide in
(37)

me." And He enforces this command by adding the assurance, that unless we abide in Him, we can no more bear fruit than can the branch when dis-severed from the vine. Therefore, we say : Pray for the Holy Spirit as the means of preserving your union with Christ, and the Spirit's continued indwelling.

When the Spirit of God is said to make the souls of believers His dwelling-place, the meaning is, that He is always personally present with them in such a way as to produce and sustain in them spiritual life and all holy affections.

The Scriptures, as was intimated, make no distinction between the oneness of believers with the Saviour, and the abiding in them of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is said to be in them and to live in them, and this indwelling of Christ is declared to be by the Holy Ghost. So that the same passages speak interchangeably of the Holy Spirit being in us, and our being the members of Christ ; or, of the Spirit being in us, and Christ being in us, thus : "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit (or soul) is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken

your mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in you."

In consequence of partaking of the Holy Ghost, you have become a partaker of the Saviour's life. The very life which the blessed Jesus now in heaven has, His people have who are here on earth. Paul writes to the Collossians, "Your life is hid with Christ," and he speaks of the appearing of Christ who is "*our life.*"

"As the life of the vine is diffused through all the branches, sustaining and rendering them fruitful, and as the life of the head is diffused through all the members of the body, making it one, and imparting life to all, so the life of Christ is diffused through all the members of His mystical body [*i. e.*, all believers], making them one body in Him, having a common life with their common Head." Or, to borrow the language of Legh Richmond to little Jane, "Just as a limb is connected with your body, and so with your head, and thereby gets power to live and move through the flowing of the blood from one to the other, so are you spiritually a limb or member of Christ if you believe in Him." •

Your vital union with the Saviour, then, and participation of His life, is due to the permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit within you. We

therefore understand why the Scriptures represent the indwelling of the Holy Ghost as the great pre-eminent blessing purchased by the death of Christ. It is the secret of a holy life. We really live only so far as we have the Holy Spirit. No affliction, no poverty, no distress, no deprivation can be conceived of, which is not more than a thousand times made up to that man who is filled with the Holy Spirit. His soul truly lives. He glorifies God, for he exhibits in his life those lovely fruits of holiness which inevitably mark the Spirit's indwelling. He is renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and is enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. No wonder David's prayer was, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

As then the Spirit is in believers the principle or source which determines their whole inward life, let us, when we long to be partakers of His fruits, think even of His indwelling itself, and earnestly desire its continuance. It is natural that this desire should find its expression in prayer, and indeed prayer is the means which God has appointed for preserving our spiritual life in existence, and for retaining the Holy Spirit. When a new heart, and a new Spirit, are promised in Ezekiel, it is added, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of

Israel to do it for them." And this is still the condition on which the blessing is bestowed. In order to obtain the gift, we must still ask, and seek, and knock. Such importunity is delightful to our Heavenly Father. He delights in those who thus show how deeply they feel their need of this crowning blessing.

We are dependent on God for our very desires for spiritual good. Entreat your Heavenly Father, therefore, to impart to you suitable longings for the continued indwelling within you of the Divine Spirit, and to enable you constantly to pray that your soul may be His dwelling-place forever. Seek also to be filled with gratitude to the Holy Spirit Himself who thus condescends to make you His temple.

II.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, WITH LONGINGS FOR HIS BLESSED ILLUMINATION, AND YOU MAY EXPECT TO SEE MORE AND MORE BEAUTY, GLORY, AND ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE.

WHAT has been said pertains to the indwelling or permanent abiding within us of the Third Person of the glorious Trinity. It is His inward work which will be spoken of in this section, and in a few of the sections which follow. For the Spirit of God must be sought by prayer, if we would experience His blessed inworking. This consists, in part, in enlightening the mind, that we may know the things which God has revealed in His Word.

It may be said that the way to increase in the knowledge of God, of Christ, of sin, of redemption, of things unseen and eternal, etc., is to study and ponder the revelations made of them in the Holy Scriptures. It is true that such study will give knowledge of a certain kind, that it is also necessary, and should never be discontinued while we

live. But no amount of such searching and application, however much they may inform the mind, will give an insight into the spiritual qualities of the truth. A work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is an indispensable prerequisite to such an insight.

However strongly a blind man may believe that light exists, and however accurate may be his knowledge of its laws, it will not awaken a single feeling in his mind, because he cannot see it. His investigations may enable him to explain much about it to others, but of the thing itself, he can never have any notion whatever, as long as he remains destitute of an organ of vision.

Suppose there exists a friendly power capable of giving him gradually a perfect organ. In order to his obtaining sight, he would need to have such power put forth upon him. And after he began to see imperfectly, it would be necessary that the friendly power should *continue* to be exerted upon him, for the purpose of increasing the capacity of seeing. The glory and beauty which belong essentially to light would then enter his soul, and produce their rapturous effects.

This may illustrate the way in which all who become Christians are brought to spiritually apprehend the truths of God's Word.

However familiar men may become with the contents of the Bible, through reading and study, they must remain incapable of discerning the spiritual qualities of the truth, until the Holy Spirit, by an exertion of His infinite power, creates them anew ; in other words, makes them holy, and thus enlightens the eyes of their understandings. When they are thus changed, the truths of God's Word appear glorious, and more to be desired than gold. The Bible now seems a new book. Moreover, the inherent power and sweet attractiveness of its doctrines begin to have a transforming influence upon them, that influence being greater and greater as their ability to see the truth increases, through the Holy Spirit's inworking.

That there *is* this inworking of the Spirit in the believer (though granted only when it is earnestly prayed for), by means of which his capacity to see the truth in its real significance and glory constantly enlarges, the Scriptures plainly teach. The Apostle, after thanking God for the spiritual gifts which the Ephesian Christians had already received, prays that the eyes of their understandings may be still further enlightened.

It is to be supposed that the renewed soul will desire and prize, above all things, the seeing of

which we are speaking. The Bible itself describes but in part its blessedness. The whole process of salvation is described as a translation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. "If a man born blind were suddenly restored to sight, such a flood of knowledge and delight would flow in upon him through the organ of vision that he might well think that all living consisted in seeing. So the New Testament writers represent the change consequent on the opening of the eyes on the certainty, glory, and excellence of divine things, and especially the glory of God revealed in the person of His Son, as comprehending almost everything which pertains to spiritual life."*

What a powerful motive does every lover of the Bible have to pray most earnestly for the enlightening of his mind by the Holy Spirit. In a letter which the writer once received from a friend now in glory, the following words on this subject, which seem well worth quoting, occur:

"I am much impressed with the belief that if we would pray more earnestly for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit while reading the Bible, and lean less upon the help of commentaries, we would have

* Dr. Hodge.

profound experimental knowledge of divine truth ; such as we too seldom have. If one were shut up in a cell with the Word of God only as his companion, and the opportunity of prayer, what limit could we place on his advancement in religious knowledge? I wish I knew just what is the best method of studying the Holy Scriptures, so much time is lost in using inferior methods. Meditation, the careful pondering of each thought with earnest desires and prayers for spiritual illumination, greatly enrich us. And I often think that we do not credit enough the direct agency of the Spirit on the mind as well as on the heart. May we not have valuable thoughts come to us directly through that agency, and not as the result solely of careful logical thinking? Is there not often a consciousness, and particularly while engaged in prayer, of thoughts coming to us from the Holy Spirit, and what limit can we place upon such help? It may be a mere quickening of the mind which then acts according to its own laws. Still it is none the less the result of the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the thoughts would not have been arrived at, if the mind had been left to itself. The subject is one of profound and practical interest to every Christian."

It is because the believer grows in the power to

discern the divine excellence and beauty of the Scriptures, that His love for them daily increases. It is of the utmost importance that the young disciple should understand, that the secret of an increasing delight in the inspired volume, is this growth in the power of spiritual discernment. If you would love the Bible more, remember your absolute dependence on the illumination of the blessed Spirit, by which alone you can be enabled to see the glory of the Word. And constantly pray for that illumination.*

Let your heart be filled with gratitude to the

The following account we extract from the columns of a recent number of the *New York Observer* :

“Twenty-seven years ago, in the congregation of my first charge was a lady whose love for the Bible was something remarkable. In the confidence of a pastoral visit, she told me of her joy in the divine word, and also recited the incidents of her experience in this regard. She had formerly read her Bible as so many do, a chapter now and a half chapter then, without much interest or profit. She was even then most interested in religious things. But her chief sources of spiritual strength were in such writings as those of Baxter, Payson, and Robert Phillip. It was her custom to read the Bible from duty, and then turn to these uninspired volumes for the kindling of a higher devotion. For a good while this satisfied her. But at length she came to feel grieved about it. She thought it a dishonor to God’s word that any book should be as interesting to her as the Bible. She tried to change this, but at first with little success. The Bible was still duty. Baxter was pleasure and spiritual elevation.

Spirit of Truth, who has removed your blindness, and by "opening your understanding" has enabled you to perceive the sweet majesty and divinity of the Scriptures.

"At length she could bear it no longer. So she took the case to God with strong crying. She told her Heavenly Father how grieved she was that any book should rival the Bible in her affections. She asked this one thing—and she renewed her prayer every day—that her first delight might be in reading the Word of God. I think it was some time before she felt that her request was granted. But at length the answer to her prayer was complete and marvellous. A strange light came over the sacred page. A fascination held her to her Bible. She discovered a depth, a meaning, a curiosity, a charm which were all new and most wonderful. Sometimes, when she had finished reading her Bible for the night, and had closed the book and had moved toward her bed, she would go back again and enjoy the luxury of a few more verses. At the time of our interview she was thus delighting in the law of God. The conversation made an indelible impression upon my mind."

III.

PRAY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD DO HIS OWN WORK THOROUGHLY IN YOUR SOUL, AND YOU WILL MANIFEST BY YOUR LIFE THAT YOU POSSESS NOT MERELY A FEW, BUT ALL THE GRACES OF THE SPIRIT.

SOME of the Christian graces have God for their object, as love, faith, adoration, obedience, gratitude, etc.

Others do not terminate on God, but have our neighbor for their object, as kindness, justice, courtesy, truth, pity.

And there are still other graces which are distinct from these, and which terminate on no particular object without the mind, as meekness, humility, sorrow for sin, zeal, courage, moderation, inward peace, etc.

One of these graces—faith—the Apostle Peter calls precious, without implying that the rest are not so. They all have God for their Author; are His choicest gifts to man; and are the fruits of the inworking of the Holy Spirit.

The graces belonging to one of these classes can-

not exist without having associated with them those of both the other classes. Love to God and faith in Him, belong to the first class of graces above mentioned. But no man ever exercises this love, or this faith, or any other grace belonging to the first class, who is not at the same time to his fellow-men just, kind, courteous, merciful, forgiving, and true. "Those who are unkind, proud, or revengeful towards their fellow-men, are not the people of God; they do not bear the heavenly image, and have never been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Let no man deceive himself with the hope that though a bad neighbor, parent, or child, he may be a good Christian."

And in like manner no man can feel and act right towards God and man, who does not also exercise the graces belonging to the third class—who is not more or less humble and broken-hearted on account of sin; has not, to some extent, the ornament of a quiet spirit; and is not at war with the subtle evil principles of pride and selfishness which are still alive within him.

There are those who profess to love God, and to trust in the Saviour of sinners, while they are confessedly chargeable with no neglect of the external means of grace; and there would be no reason for

doubting their piety towards God, were it not for their lamentable dearth of those other lovely graces of the Spirit, which are exercised, not towards God, but towards men. The Holy Spirit never produces some graces of the Christian character, and leaves the person destitute of others, for all the graces are exercises of one and the same principle of holiness.

In answer, then, to your many supplications for the Holy Spirit, you will be made a partaker of *all* His graces. You cannot lack any of them, if He is really given to you. He who is the author of life, is the source of all its manifestations—of everything which sanctification includes. He is ever exciting the soul which is blessed by His indwelling, to the exercise of holiness in all its forms. If it is asked, whence spring the holy desires which live in the souls of God's people, their animating hopes, their strength to endure, and to glory in tribulation, their power over depraved affections? The reply must be, that the Holy Spirit is the author of all.

Thus it is said, The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His

Spirit in the inner man. If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

If it is still further inquired, where they obtain their assurance of being God's children,—their joy, peace, love, humility,—the same reply must be given. For we are told that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

They who are the subjects of His inward work are also sure to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and this longing after holiness causes them to make constant exertion to mortify their evil propensities. They are described as those who have set their affection on things above, as those who mortify their members which are upon the earth, as those who, walking in the Spirit, do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. They trust in God and are submissive to His will.

They do not depend upon the Spirit's influences to keep alive the Christian graces in their souls, without any effort on their own part to cultivate them. Knowing that it is God who worketh in them, they yet make positive effort of their own to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering; and also to be kind one to another, ten-

der-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them.

The Christian graces cannot thrive in any soul without making it spiritually-minded. This is, perhaps, especially true of some of them, as sorrow for sin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, reverence for God, a spirit of devotion, and an inward quietness and peace of soul passing all understanding. You see, therefore, how blessed they are who are signally under the Holy Spirit's influence; in whom He is ever working with great power. For they are eminently spiritually-minded. But eminently spiritually-minded men are the very excellent of the earth. There is something in them so single and unearthly, so unselfish, so Christ-like, that the very sight of them refreshes our souls.

Some unconverted men are not only just, but exhibit high-toned feelings and a certain nobility of soul. But their moral virtues differ from the fruits of the Spirit, and are in no sense forms of the divine life. They are not conformed to God, and do not love Him as true Christians do. But some Christians, alas! have made such small attainments, that they almost seem to be less free from envy, selfishness, and meanness, than many unconverted men.

Although no man is a Christian who has not the

Spirit of God dwelling within him, yet some believers receive this blessing in larger measure than others, because they pray more for it. The promise is fulfilled to them. God rewards their faith in His promise. Let us imitate the example of such. Would not he be our greatest benefactor who should succeed in leading us to pray continually, habitually, and always, with a determination not to be denied, for the Holy Spirit? We have but to ask for the gift, and it is ours. The Father of mercies liberally bestows it and upbraideth not. Let us, then, ask, and that fervently. Let us plead for the several gifts and fruits of the Spirit, which are so precious.

If, believer, as a branch of the true vine, you have been enabled to bear fruit, be filled with gratitude to the blessed Spirit, the sole author of your Christian graces, and who, in answer to fervent prayer, will not fail to watch over these graces and bring them to perfection.



IV.

*PRAYER ASCENDING CONTINUALLY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT'S
INFLUENCES AND HELP WILL RESULT IN YOUR GAINING
A BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF HIS AGENCY AND OPERATION
IN OUR REDEMPTION.*

IT is not meant by this that the power of directly discerning the Spirit's workings in the soul will be attained. Of our own exercises we can be conscious, but not of the supernatural influence which originates them. That is a secret influence. The Spirit's operations are beyond the reach of our perceptions; they are altogether inscrutable. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

But though we cannot immediately inspect the influences and workings of God's Spirit in our hearts, yet of their reality we are absolutely certain from the teachings of the Bible. We shall make no attempt to state fully what these workings and influences are. Everything concerning the Holy

Spirit's work is summed up when it is said that He applies to God's chosen people the redemption purchased by Christ; in other words, that He first brings them into saving union with Christ by regenerating them, and then carries forward their sanctification until they leave the world. This sanctification by the Spirit includes His communicating unto us, and keeping alive within us the Christian graces. These graces are our soul's own holy exercises, whilst they are the fruits of the Spirit's inward operations. So entirely dependent are we on His influences. We work out our own salvation while He works in us to will and to do.

As already intimated, this is only a general statement of the agency of the Divine Spirit. To describe all that He does for us, we shall not attempt. He convinces, draws, quickens, teaches, guides, prompts, suggests, helps, revives, strengthens, comforts. Many of His gracious actings are only performed on condition that we co-operate with Him in various ways. We should know His gracious actings, and we should know, also, the conditions of His operations.

The way to attain this knowledge and to increase in it, is to study the Scriptures. This is the source from which to derive instruction on the subject.

Why then have we said that the attainment of clearer light on the subject will be the result of prayer?

Because (we answer in the first place), if you spend much time in pleading with your heavenly Father to give you the influences of the Holy Spirit, you can scarcely avoid attending carefully to what the Scriptures teach about His office-work. And not only will that which the Word of God makes known concerning the Spirit's offices and actings towards believers then be better studied, but also what it reveals in regard to His love, wisdom, power, and sovereignty in all that He does for us, and the worship, honor, and gratitude due to Him from believers.

In the next place, if you constantly pray for the Holy Spirit, you will grow in the habit of recognizing His agency in your possessing spiritual benefits, and of ascribing them to His love. This will increase your gratitude to Him. And gratitude to the Holy Spirit for loving you, cannot but have the effect of fixing your attention more and more on His gifts, and His operations and actings towards you, whereby your knowledge of His gracious dealings with souls will be increased.

In the next place, the Holy Spirit himself will

reward you by teaching and enlightening you. He will give you a spiritual discernment of the excellence of the things concerning Himself and His offices. And if, by His divine illuminating power, He reveals to our souls His saving work, that work will, indeed, be known and appreciated by us. When the Apostle wanted the Ephesians to appreciate the work wrought in them by the third Person of the Trinity, he entreated that for that purpose, they might receive the enlightening influences of the Holy Ghost. He prayed that God would, by His Spirit, enable them to know a number of things, and one was, *the exceeding greatness of the Spirit's work which was performed in their new creation, or spiritual resurrection.* "That the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that ye may know . . . the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."

It will readily be conceded by every Christian that a knowledge of the office-work which is peculiar to the Third Person of the adorable Trinity—that an acquaintance also with the methods and conditions of His gracious operations—is exceedingly important. It is absolutely necessary indeed

if we would make the greatest attainments possible in holiness. Besides, we do not honor the blessed Spirit unless we seek to become as familiar with the conditions and circumstances of His actings as He invites and permits us to become. Unless, moreover, we have this knowledge, we shall often be aided and blessed by Him, without perceiving that it is to *Him* we are indebted for what we have received, and so without the possibility of exercising gratitude to Him.

In addition to this, is it not true that to have an *experimental* acquaintance with the special office-work of the Holy Spirit; of His work in teaching, helping, and comforting the soul, is the way to enjoy a sweet and holy friendship with Him? It may sound strange to you, believer, to talk of intimate and endearing friendship between your soul and the Holy Spirit, but the following considerations will show you that such friendship may exist:

1. The Holy Spirit is truly and strictly a Person. He is not a mere power or influence, but a Person. He has an individual subsistence, and is not inferior in power and glory to the Father or the Son.
2. He tenderly loves you, and that though He is infinitely holy, and you are polluted.
3. He is not only always within call, but is always nearer to you

than you can comprehend. 4. He can be wounded and grieved by you. 5. He has a loving complacency in your affection for Jesus, and in your faith in Him. 6. Notwithstanding that He is infinitely great, and you are insignificant, His companionship with you, instead of being forced, is delightful to Him. 7. Constancy is always a quality belonging to a true friend, and there is more constancy in Him than was ever found in any human friend. 8. He has already done so much for you (His work is always carried on *within* the soul), that He cannot bear now to leave His work unfinished.

We are greatly assisted to cultivate endearing friendship with the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, when profoundly conscious of our weakness, and of our sinful inability to be and do what is required of us, we confidently lean on Him for help.* It was said that the Holy Spirit Himself will reward those who are much engaged in praying for His influences and help, by giving them a spiritual discernment of the excellence of the things con-

* The subject of the third part of Owen's treatise on Communion with God, to which we have before alluded, is the illustration of a distinct fellowship with the Third Person of the adorable Trinity. It cannot but be greatly prized by all who would attain to a sweet, assured, and intimate converse with the Holy Spirit.

cerning Himself and His offices. For thus enabling us to know and appreciate the greatness of His own work, we cannot be sufficiently grateful to Him.

V.

*PRAY MUCH FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE ONE WHO ALONE
SEARCHES THE HEART, AND YOU WILL GAIN A DEEPER
KNOWLEDGE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR WANTS.*

PERHAPS most persons of education are acquainted with some of the striking aphorisms and sentiments of the ancient heathen writers on the subject of self-knowledge. Modern writers of ability have handled the subject, by whom it has likewise been treated as a mere question of self-discipline; and many directions have been given how to attain it. Their directions, however, are of no value, since they only can attain it who study the Bible with the disposition of little children, and who enjoy the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit.

One who is conscious that he does truly rely on Christ alone for his salvation, has no fears of suffering in his own person the penalty of the law. Christ has suffered it in his place. He knows that,

(62)

although God in His fatherly love inflicts chastisement upon His children, He never punishes them. Still, he is deeply in love with holiness, and he is ever longing for and striving after conformity to God's law in heart and life. He knows that there is need of such strivings—that the attainments which he has made in holiness are, in comparison with what they should be, as nothing; that he is full of sin; and that there is no help for him, except in God. He even knows that his inward pollution is far greater than he sees it to be.

Now, this sense of personal defilement, and helplessness, including a recognition of the sins which most easily beset us, is that in which self-knowledge mainly consists. It awakens no alarm or terror, because the believer who has it, is assured that Christ has borne the punishment of his sins. But though unaccompanied with alarm, and even attended, it may be, with much peace, it is a source of perpetual sorrow and brokenness of heart; and if there is joined with it hungering and thirsting after righteousness, its tendency is to excite to prayer and diligence in using all the means of grace.

This perception of his personal defilement, and sinful weakness, and helplessness, and besetting

sins, is a source, it was said, of continual sorrow to the believer. How could it be otherwise? He may certainly know that he is forever safe, that Christ loves him and will never cease to love him. He may know all this, and yet how can his soul but be burdened by the consciousness of his dreadfully defective love, faith, humility, gratitude, and reverence; of his shameful hardness of heart and insensibility to the condition of the perishing; and of the workings of pride, envy, selfishness, and unbelief within him? How can his soul but be afflicted to find, daily, that there is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members?*

It is of the utmost importance that believers should increase in the knowledge of their own

* The excellent and sagacious Cecil says: "There is a large class of Christians who are sound and excellent men, but they are not men of deep experience. They are not men of Owen's and Rutherford's school. They want discrimination in religion. They have a general, but not a minute, acquaintance with the combat between sin and grace. I have learned not to bring deeply experimental subjects before such persons. They cannot understand them, but are likely to be distressed by them." He goes on to give the reasons for this difference between persons of genuine piety, and describes the classes of men who are generally the subjects of this "deeply interior acquaintance" with religion. There is truth in this, and yet Christians should surely

hearts, of the depth of iniquity which lodges within them, and of their particular defects. This is the will of God. To have just views of our own character ; to see ourselves as we really are with a spiritual discernment, is to have that humility with which God commands us to be clothed. Besides, the path to great attainments in holiness lies through this intimate acquaintance with self.

One way of growing in this kind of knowledge consists in forming and keeping alive the habit of turning our thoughts away from our own attainments in virtue, while we dwell on our defects. It has been well said by some one, that excellencies are not inspired by being often contemplated ; that their purity and lustre are best preserved in a state of seclusion from the gaze even of the possessor ; that our virtues will thrive best when abandoned to a partial oblivion ; while, on the other hand, the more our faults and imperfections are detected and exposed, the greater is the probability that their growth will be impeded, and the resolution formed to extirpate and subdue them.

be exhorted to seek to attain a profound knowledge of themselves, of their sins, and of their wants, and an "interior acquaintance" with religion, and of the Christian's inward warfare. Without it there can be no really great advance in holiness, and yet it involves a "minute" acquaintance with experimental subjects, and with the combat between sin and grace in the heart.

But it is more by means of earnest and importunate prayer for the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, than by any other method, that the believer advances in the knowledge of himself. Without His divine illumination, all our care and pains will avail nothing. Our hearts will certainly deceive us. The Spirit of God searches our hearts, and knows their depths and devices, and He is an infinitely kind, condescending, compassionate, and patient teacher. Pray to Him for light, and you cannot ask in vain, for it is a part of His office to enable us to see ourselves as we really are. Let our humble prayer be, Cleanse Thou me from secret faults; search me, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Let this prayer for still further light be accompanied with sincere gratitude to the blessed Spirit for the knowledge of your own character and your great wants, which He condescends to give you.

VI.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEACHING GRANTED YOU IN ANSWER TO PRAYER, WILL ENABLE YOU TO PERCEIVE THAT THE THINGS WHICH ARE UNSEEN, ARE MORE REAL AND POWERFUL THAN THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN.

SOME unseen things have a present existence, as God, His being and perfections; the Person and glory of Christ; angels, principalities, and powers; the great cloud of witnesses who watch the Christian in his course; the heavenly world and the world of fallen angels, and of lost souls. To which must be added the government of God; His perfectly holy law, with its requirements and sanctions; the truths relating to the wants and the present perilous condition of the soul of man; and the truths which pertain to the Gospel, with its directions and requirements.

Other unseen things are in the distant future, as our own entrance into glory at death; the second coming of Christ; the resurrection day and the day of judgment; the glories which the righteous shall witness after the judgment is over; the going

away of the wicked into everlasting punishment, etc.

Now, these present and future unseen things are more real than the objects of sense amid which men live, and are infinitely more important. They are substantial and abiding realities, while the things which are seen are shadowy and unsatisfactory. This, almost all admit in words, but the true Christian believes it practically, for in the language of the Apostle, he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

It may seem to be a contradiction to say that believers behold *unseen* things; and so it would be, did they have no other sight than that which unrenewed men possess. These have power to see temporal and earthly things, but that is all. They have power to see wealth, and worldly honor, science and literature, elevated station, human applause and earthly friendships. God's people also can see these things, and they rate them sufficiently high; but they have another faculty or power called *faith*, which enables them to see the spiritual world.

What is the effect of having the eyes, which the unregenerate possess, accompanied with blindness to the things of the Spirit? The effect is lamentable. Such men exceedingly overvalue tem-

poral things. They attribute to the things of this life a fixedness and a worth which by no means belong to them. They habitually look at the temporal things out of their relations to that which is infinite and eternal. They are, therefore, so unhappy as to be ignorant where ignorance is ruin. "We can have no true knowledge of ourselves, unless we study ourselves in our relation to God. We can never know what this world truly is, unless we look at it in its connection with the world that is to come." The things of the other world being hidden from the unregenerate, and those of the present life having such fascinating distinctness, and nearness, they readily fall a prey to destructive temptations.

If such consequences follow blind unbelief, what are the effects of that faith in the unseen which true Christians possess? Its effects upon the life of the believer have been, in many cases, wonderful, and would always be most striking, did all Christians possess it in great strength. Their faith would then be as the evidence of eyesight, as it has been with very eminent believers, and would influence them just as much as the objects of sense influence the men of the world. Things visible would be to their eye but "the accidents and vanishing forms, of

which things invisible are the true and abiding realities." They would have more success in overcoming the world, and would be more heavenly-minded. They would still more clearly see than they do that the things which God has prepared for those that love Him, are the only objects worthy of their desires.

It was in the exercise of this faith that Noah saw things which were not present in their own evidence to the senses, or to reason. When he was warned of God, of things not seen as yet, he believed the warning, and the proper consequence followed—he was moved with fear, he trembled at God's word. It was this same faith which enabled Abraham to offer up his only son, and Moses to prefer suffering affliction with the people of God to enjoying the pleasures of sin. The other illustrations of the power of this faith which Paul gives in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, are equally affecting. It dominated the lives of David, of Samuel, and of all the prophets. Some were, by faith, made strong out of weakness, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. The Apostle himself was a glorious example of the power of this faith. By looking at the things which are not seen, instead

of looking at the things which are seen, he was enabled to endure through all that could be laid upon him. He triumphed over temptation. He exulted in the assurance that his afflictions were working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Troubled on every side, he was not distressed, perplexed he was not in despair, cast down he was not destroyed.

The Saviour promises His people in this world of trial and danger, encouragement—support—strength. But you must be destitute of all this, unless you have the power spiritually to discern unseen things. And this power must be in *constant* exercise. Unseen things must be *constantly* before you, as well as intently beheld. Looking at them thus, you will see how much more real—how superior they are in importance to the things that are seen, and these will cease to be your tyrants—their governing power over your soul will be broken forever.

Like men of the world, you were once destitute of this power of spiritual discernment. You owe it to the kindness of the Holy Spirit, that you now possess faith, and are capable of the intuition of divine truth; and that same gratitude with which you first received the gift, should impel you to cul-

tivate it. Moreover, efforts to cultivate the power of discerning the things of the Spirit, will certainly be rewarded. All the Christian graces and gifts increase by exercise, while they become weaker by disuse.

It is ever to be remembered, however, that the power to walk by faith, and not by sight, is the gift of God. And at the same time that divine grace makes us partakers of it, the Holy Spirit is its author—it is the effect of His operation. It is His *special office* to call into existence, to keep alive, and to increase in vigor that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. “It is the Spirit who enables believers to see the reality, glory, and infinite importance of the things unseen and eternal. The soul is thus raised above the world. It lives in a higher sphere. It becomes more and more heavenly in its character and desires.”

You perceive, then, how much you gain by incessantly and earnestly praying for the blessed Spirit. Pray thus faithfully for Him and expect an immense enlargement of your power to discern and to prize unseen realities. You will not be disappointed. All who are full of the Holy Ghost are full of faith. It is equally true that all who cry mightily and

every day for the Holy Ghost, are filled with Him. To believers who read their Bibles, this need not be proved; and if they are convinced of its truth, how will most of them explain their remissness in prayer for so transcendent a gift? Be not among the number of those who are thus remiss. But remember the importance of importunity, for to those who are wanting in this, no special promise is made.

While you acknowledge that you are entirely indebted to the blessed Spirit for the power to walk by faith, be filled with gratitude to Him for revealing to you the power and glory of unseen things.

VII.

PRAY MUCH FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THAT FAITH WHICH HAS CHRIST FOR ITS IMMEDIATE OBJECT, AND WHICH ALONE IS LIFE-GIVING, WILL BE SUSTAINED IN YOUR SOUL.

THE expressions, "all revealed truth," and "revealed truth in general," are of frequent occurrence. Either of them is used to designate all the truths of the Bible—all the unseen things which have been revealed to us, and which were spoken of in the preceding section. Some of them were there mentioned, as the being and perfections of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, verities relating to our future state of existence, the divine promises and threatenings, etc. All these truths are the objects of the Christian's faith, *and none but a regenerated soul can believe them in the way God requires.* The blessed effects which a genuine belief of them produce in the life, need not be again considered. Every truth of the Bible produces its appropriate effect in proportion to the strength of the faith which receives it.

But though the faith which receives as true the

teachings and declarations of the Bible in general, in virtue of an evidence exhibited and applied by the Holy Spirit, is necessary, and is from God, it is not life-giving. Those acts of faith, we say, which have "revealed truth in general" for their object, do not save the soul, though they are *holy* acts, and though they do comfort and sustain the believer, regulate his conduct, enable him to overcome the world, and lead him to confess that he is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

That faith which alone has power to give life has Christ for its immediate object, terminates directly on Him. None of the other acts of faith are, in the Word of God, connected with our justification as this act is which has reference to Christ and His mediatorial work. Believing in Christ, Coming to Christ, Receiving Christ, are the terms by which it is described. Believers are said to have been brought unto Christ by the law as their School-master, that they might be justified by faith *in Him*. They are said to be justified by the faith *of Christ*, and to live by the faith *of the Son of God*.

It is not, then, by a believing apprehension in what constitutes the whole revelation of God, *even though such a faith as that can be exercised only by a true Christian*, but it is specifically by faith in Christ

that the soul is freed from condemnation and made a partaker of divine life. This is the *special* act of faith which is life-giving. But it can only be the source of life while it remains in existence and is exercised. If it should become extinct, the spiritual death of the soul must ensue. In order to the preservation of the life of God in his soul, the believer must look unto Jesus all day long and all through life. He must look unto Jesus for pardon and supplies of grace and strength, precisely as he did when he first obeyed the gospel invitation.

But how is faith in Christ to be kept from becoming extinct? How is it to be steadily maintained in the soul? We answer, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us; and thus we see how necessary it is that we should humbly and importunately entreat our Father to give us His Holy Spirit, pleading His own promise to give this blessing to those who ask Him.

Do you not see that there is no gift which you could possibly possess, so precious as this life-giving faith in Jesus? Do you not desire, above all things, that it should be preserved, and daily increase in activity and strength? Pray much, then; pray incessantly for the Holy Spirit; for it is His special work to watch over such a faith, to nourish it, and

make it more and more vigorous. And in doing this, He both glorifies Christ and blesses you.

While you thus pray, be not unmindful of the duty of cherishing the most lively gratitude to the blessed Spirit for imparting to you that faith in the Redeemer which is the only source of your soul's life.

VIII.

BE EARNEST AND UNWEARIED IN YOUR PRAYERS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND YOU WILL DAILY GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

CHRIST not only existed in a state of majesty previously to His entrance into our world, but He is co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is co-equal with them. He is called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Father of Eternity, The Prince of Peace. He created the angels, not only those who continue holy, but Satan, and all the other fallen angels. "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."

He who is thus God over all, blessed forever, the Second Person of the Trinity, the God who made all things, assumed our nature into personal union with Himself, to be His own, even as His divine nature is. He was made in the likeness of men, and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death.

(78)

Love to us was the motive which constrained Him to do this. When He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him, His meaning plainly was, "If it were possible to pass from Him, without passing to us, which He had a still greater aversion to than to drinking it Himself." The nature which He still retains, in ineffable subsistence in His own Person, is now exalted above the whole creation of God, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. In the very nature which was so depressed "God hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

One effect of the work which He accomplished on earth, and which He is still carrying on, is the deliverance from eternal bondage and death of a multitude that no man can number. All its effects, however, it would be impossible to describe, "unless we could fully reckon up all the spiritual and eternal evils it prevents, all the riches of grace and glory it purchases, and all the divine perfections it displays."

The world is to be judged, and Christ is to sit on the throne of judgment. "Behold he cometh with

clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." While He shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.

These are some of the truths which the Scriptures teach concerning Jesus. But, alas! how many have learned these marvelous things concerning our Immanuel, who have not a particle of that knowledge of Him which it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit to impart. To say that such persons have no ideas, no instruction conveyed to their minds by the Scripture-teachings regarding Christ, would not be true. There is no difference between them and the spiritually enlightened, as far as comprehending the external revelation is concerned. They may even be impressed intellectually by the beauty and sublimity of the descriptions of the Messiah contained in the Bible. But, seeing no divine loveliness in the Saviour, entirely failing to apprehend the glory of God as it shines in Him, they cannot be said to have any true knowledge of Christ.

Such knowledge, however, all have who have

been born of God ; such knowledge you possess, if you have received power to believe on the name of Jesus. The Spirit has taken of the things of Christ and shown them unto you.

The first object which the newly-converted soul beholds is its Saviour. Then it begins to know Him as it never knew Him before. Your own sweet experience, believer, testifies to the truth of this. And if you have made progress in holiness, it is because you have grown in the knowledge of Christ. But you will never know Him fully—no, not even in eternity. For the object of the transporting knowledge of which we are speaking is boundless in its nature—it is infinite.

Paul felt it to be so. “Unsearchable riches of Christ” are the words by which he labors to set forth our Saviour’s divine glories and perfections, and the fullness of grace which is in Him to pardon, sanctify, and save. He never wanted to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To the Ephesians he thus speaks of the immeasurable love of Christ: “That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. God forbid,” says the ravished Apostle, “that I should glory, save in the

cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Nothing throughout eternity will fill the holy angels with such wonder and rapture as the beholding this object. And if the Person, the love, and the work of Christ will be so glorious in *their* eyes, how lovely will their Redeemer appear in the eyes of His own saints!

The celestial vision of Christ which believers will enjoy in the future world will, perhaps, bear some proportion to their knowledge of Him here, and this should stimulate them to make vigorous efforts to increase in it daily. Now, although to attain this object, the diligent perusal of the Scriptures cannot be dispensed with, yet that of itself will not suffice. In order that the believer's perception of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ may constantly increase in clearness, the influence of the Holy Spirit; His inward illuminating testimony, is absolutely necessary.

Seeing, then, that the degree of attainment which you make in this blessed knowledge will be according to the measure of the Holy Spirit's influences which you receive, let it be your incessant prayer that He would even *fill* your soul.

There can be no doubt that, if we are full of faith

and of the Holy Ghost, we shall have clear and powerful views of Christ. Pray, then, we repeat it, incessantly and unweariedly, for that Spirit of Truth, of whom the Saviour Himself said: "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you."

While this petition is constantly offered, be filled with gratitude to the Holy Spirit, who, in His infinite love, is willing to remove your sinful and shameful ignorance of the Saviour's excellence, and reveal Him more and more to your soul.

IX.

*PRAY MUCH FOR THE WITNESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND
YOU WILL OBTAIN AN ABIDING ASSURANCE OF CHRIST'S
LOVE FOR YOU.*

TO be fully assured of God's love for me is one thing; to believe it faintly and tremblingly is another. I may by no means have an assurance of it, and yet be a true Christian, and exercise a living faith in Christ; but I cannot have the Christian's faith if destitute of every particle of belief that I am beloved. If I am really one of Christ's, and possess even a weak justifying faith, I must also have a small grain of belief, at least, that the Saviour loves me in His heart. When my faith in Jesus becomes a little stronger, there will certainly be a little addition to my belief that I am an object of God's love, and I shall no sooner possess a vigorous saving faith than I shall arrive at a full assurance that Christ loves me and gave Himself for me.

Even though a soul may not shut others out, yet if it decidedly and totally shuts itself out, it has no

faith at all. If it has a very weak faith in Christ, it must and will have a grain of belief at least—a weak belief that it is included among those whom Christ loves and saves, and this gives some comfort. But if it vigorously, clearly, and wholly rests on Christ for salvation as He is offered in the gospel, it cannot but have an *assurance* of its being beloved.

There is no danger that a strong and mighty grasp of Christ will be unaccompanied with this assurance. If one of the very things which is faintly believed by a trembling soul when it first comes to Christ, is that Christ loves it (and this cannot be denied), then it is only necessary that that soul's faith should become exceedingly strong, in order to its having an *assurance* of the Saviour's love.

Thus we see that one way to arrive at an assurance of being beloved by the Saviour is to increase in faith. But believers are also assured of God's special love to them in another way.

You are familiar with that passage, so dear to the heart of the believer, in the fifth of Romans, fifth verse, where Paul says: "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us." In this verse we are told that the Holy Spirit con-

vinces the believer that he is the object of God's love. For "the love of God" here means His love to us, and not ours to Him, as appears from the following verses.

The most striking commentary on these words we ever met with, is that contained in an account of an interview between a laborious and faithful minister of the gospel and a dying young Christian. The account is contained in the minister's own words, and is as follows :

"The first time I ever knew the meaning of Romans v. 5, it was conveyed to me under circumstances which I can never forget. I was called, many years ago, when but a short time in the ministry, to visit a poor creature, dying of a fever.

"The door leading from the miserable chamber to the kitchen (the only other room in the habitation) was built up, to prevent infection, and the only entrance was through a window about a foot and a half square, out of which the frame had been taken for that purpose. In the corner of that wretched apartment, on some straw, lay a young man of twenty-one, dying, but in the fullest possession of his faculties. A few moments' conversation convinced me that I was there, not to teach, but to learn, in witnessing the triumph of a believer over sin, death, and hell.

“The young man was rejoicing in Christ, and as a passage of Scripture which seemed appropriate to his state of mind, I opened to the fifth of Romans, and began to read it, applying each successive sentence to the young man, as according with his experience, to which he gave a most cordial response. When I reached the fifth verse, I said: ‘Now, you feel how true this is; you have that “blessed hope which maketh not ashamed,” *for* you feel such love to God shed abroad in your heart that it must be by the Spirit of God which is given you.’

“‘Ah, sir,’ said he, ‘that is not the meaning of that text at all.’

“‘What!’ said I; ‘not the meaning?’ and I looked at the verse again, never having thought that any other meaning could be attached to it; ‘what meaning, then, do you give to it?’

“‘Ah, sir,’ he replied, ‘it would be a poor hope I should have, if it was derived from any love I feel to God. When I think of what He has done for me, and how I ought to love Him, I feel so cold and dead, compared to what my love ought to be, that I would be in despair, instead of having a hope that maketh not ashamed, if my love to Him was to be the ground of my hope. No, sir, it is God’s love to us poor sinners that the Holy Ghost sheds

abroad in our hearts, and it is that which gives us the hope that maketh not ashamed. Read on, sir, and you will see it is.'

"I read on, and the next three verses convinced me at once that he was right, and that I had taken an erroneous view of the text, which, of course, I immediately acknowledged, and never can forget either the comment or the commentator; both may well serve to illustrate this passage."

There are other passages which teach that the Holy Spirit conveys to the souls of God's people the assurance of the delightful fact that they are the objects of His love. How He does this, we cannot understand.

It is delightful to have an inward assurance that *we* love Christ, and it is what we all ought to have.* But the hope which maketh not ashamed springs

* The consciousness that we love the Saviour is not a thing to be discovered by painfully looking within. A boy thinks of his mother, and is immediately conscious that he loves her, without laboriously searching his heart for the purpose of ascertaining. He puts the matter to the test by simply placing the object of his affection before him. In like manner, if our love to Christ does not reveal itself in the consciousness, while we are looking away from ourselves to Him, it never will while we are carefully and anxiously inspecting our own hearts. A Christian who is unaccustomed to the work of examining his own mental states and exercises, and who has very little power of introspection, may yet examine himself whether he be in the faith. He may do so either

rather from *His love to us*, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us.

He is, indeed, blessed who is assured of being the object of God's love, this divine love being shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. If you would be thus richly blessed, abound in supplications for the priceless gift which God has expressly promised to grant to those who ask Him, and which He is more willing to give to sincere seekers, than we are to bestow good things upon our children. If we are every day humble, earnest suppliants for the Holy Spirit, having desires for Him so intense as to be made almost indifferent about every other good, we shall doubtless possess that assurance of God's love which is one of the benefits which accompany justification, adoption, and sanctification, and which it is the peculiar work of the Comforter to shed abroad in the heart. For He it is, and He alone, who gives "the poor sinful

by looking at his life, to see what fruit he bears, or by placing the divine object of the Christian's love before his mind; that is, by turning his thoughts to Christ. A distinguished man, possessed of rare mental powers, was dying. He "spoke of the difficulty, simple as the act of faith is, of knowing whether we truly believe. As soon, however, as the object of faith was presented to him in the free, full, and explicit declarations of the Scriptures, he seized it with a clearness and strength that left no doubt in his own mind whether he had faith or not."

soul a comfortable persuasion, affecting it throughout, in all its faculties and affections, that God in Jesus Christ loves him, delights in him, is well pleased with him, and hath thoughts of tenderness and kindness towards him."

If this is so, you yourself must admit that you can never render to the blessed Spirit all the gratitude which He deserves from you.

X.

PRAY CONTINUALLY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, IN THE DAYS OF YOUR PROSPERITY, AND WHILE YOU ARE EXEMPT FROM SEVERE TRIALS, AND THEN WHEN AFFLICTIONS ACTUALLY OVERTAKE YOU, YOU WILL EXPERIENCE ABUNDANT CONSOLATION AND SUPPORT.

IN the fifth chapter of Romans it is declared that our afflictions are made instrumental by the Holy Spirit, in greatly strengthening our hope, and in assuring us of God's love. And in the eighth chapter of the same epistle, the Apostle declares that the condescending Spirit takes upon Himself, as it were, a portion of our sorrows, in order to relieve us of their weight. "The Spirit likewise helpeth our infirmities." Our blessed Saviour is Himself called (Luke ii. 25) the Consolation of Israel. But on the eve of His departure, He said to His sorrowing disciples: "I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth."

Let all, then, who are in bitterness of soul, and

suffer under a load of grief, remember whose office it is to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion—to give unto mourners beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

But how does the Holy Spirit sustain and comfort a child of God when pressed down by affliction? By taking *those sources of joy* which he has too much neglected, though he has always possessed them, and by making him feel as never before their power and sweetness. He causes the afflicted believer to feel that these are far more satisfying, far more productive of solid joy and peace, than they had ever been to him in prosperity, and thus He does His work of comforting. Let us briefly consider some of these sources of the Christian's joy.

The first that may be mentioned, believer, is God Himself, considered as the portion of your soul.

Your Heavenly Father has given you the plainest proofs of having loved you before you ever loved Him, while He has the most tender pity for you in your sufferings and wants. Then, His power, holiness, wisdom, faithfulness, and love are infinite, and excite your profoundest reverence,

wonder, adoration, and affection. Now, if you have really none in heaven but God, and if there is none on earth whom you desire besides Him, is it not evident that you ought to rejoice in Him as your portion?

Again, you have a source of joy in the attributes of God.

If the attribute of almighty power belongs to God, so that He can accomplish with infinite ease whatever He pleases, how safe your condition is! The pestilence, famine, war, the instruments by which He executes His omnipotent will, are wielded, not by the hand of an enemy, but by the hand of a kind Father. And as it regards the divine attribute of knowledge, just as an earthly parent will certainly employ *his* knowledge for the happiness, and not the injury, of his child, so God will use His infinite knowledge to advance the good of all believers. It is equally plain that God's mercy should rejoice the Christian, and His justice too. It would be difficult to tell which of these perfections our redemption more clearly displays.

Again, in the Providence of God you have a source of joy.

What is there so adapted to gladden our hearts as the doctrine of an overruling Providence? Who

has not felt that his soul has been elevated or depressed, according as he has believed or doubted this doctrine of the Holy Scriptures?

This providence extends to every thing. "Behold," says our blessed Saviour, "the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not; neither do they spin;" "wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered; fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." If the infinitely glorious Being who thus speaks is your Father, then you may well cast all your care upon Him; all things are constantly working together for your good.

Once more, you have a source of joy in the doctrines of the Cross.

The sinner who listens to the invitations of mercy is not compelled to behold justice outraged, when forgiveness is offered to him. A method of forgive-

ness which contemplated no satisfaction to justice would shock the conscience, and would fail to command "the full acquiescence of the penitent soul." But in the plan of mercy devised for fallen man, justice is fully satisfied, and the law is magnified and made honorable. It is, therefore, adapted to produce in all who intelligently embrace it, peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. The penitent believer in Jesus has a sweet understanding of those words: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The doctrine of the Cross is not mere pardon and salvation, but it is pardon and salvation bestowed in a way which reflects the highest honor on God.

Thus, we have mentioned things which, although they ought to prove sources of joy to the Christian at all seasons and in every period of his life, yet are never made by the Holy Spirit so precious to him, so powerful to give him strength and joy, as when he is in the furnace of affliction.

When the Spirit of God fills the hearts of believers, and controls and guides their inward exercises, then these sources of gladness, these glorious realities, these precious verities, clearly apprehended, call forth love, and gratitude, and faith.

And it is impossible that love, and gratitude, and faith should be active, and not be accompanied by peace and joy. "Let them that love thy name," says the Psalmist, "be joyful in thee." And another servant of God thus declares the effect which an unshaken trust in the Providence of God produced in his own heart: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Be, then, diligent and faithful in using the appointed means for obtaining the Holy Spirit; be incessant and unwearied in your prayers for Him, and then, when troubles multiply and threaten to overwhelm you, you will find in your covenant-keeping God as your portion; in His glorious perfections and in His Providence; in the doctrines of the cross; in the sympathy of Jesus; in the graces of a renewed soul; and in that mysterious supporting grace of which the indwelling Spirit is the author, springs of strength and consolation, so precious as to make you thank God for sending afflictions upon you. The Holy Spirit is, indeed,

a gift to be prized by the afflicted. But then, you must pray *while prosperous and in health*. It is an oft-repeated remark of that delightful commentator, Matthew Henry: "It is good when afflictions find the wheels of prayer a-going."

For the consolation and support which is promised you, believer, in your sorrows, and of which, when afflicted, you never need be destitute, you are bound to exercise tender gratitude to the compassionate Spirit of God.

XI.

*THE MORE YOU PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BETTER
WILL YOU BE PREPARED TO ENJOY AND TO PROFIT BY
THE SERVICES OF THE SANCTUARY.*

THE worship of God in the tabernacle or temple was a service in which the pious Israelite greatly delighted. We find in many of the psalms the most ardent longings expressed for the ordinances and house of God. We hear the devout Jew exclaiming, in the ardor of his holy emotions: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thine honor dwelleth. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple."

(98)

Why this panting of the soul after a place in the earthly courts? What was to be found there which could so ravish the hearts of God's ancient people as to call forth such exclamations as these? It was the transporting presence of the Lord of glory. The sanctuary of old was the place which God had chosen to set His name there. It was expressly designed to symbolize the precious doctrine of the divine inhabitation and peculiar presence with the chosen people. How could it, then, but be dear to their hearts?

The house of God contained much which made it a delightful place of resort to the pious Jew,—as the lamb, with its blood flowing from the altar, which exhibited by anticipation the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,”—the laver of purifying water, which taught so forcibly the doctrine of cleansing from sin by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; the golden candlestick, that emblem of divine knowledge, constantly illuminating the sacred place; the table of shewbread, which symbolized the grace and truth by which the soul is nourished in the divine life; the ascending smoke, and the sweet odor of the perfume, which was burnt on the altar of incense, representing the prayers of the saints and the interces-

sion of our great High-Priest ; the ark ; the mercy seat ; the golden cherubim ; and the divine glory visibly resting over the ark.

But never was the pious Israelite so conscious of attachment to the courts of the Lord as when he was absent from the Sanctuary and unable to approach it. It was when a wanderer in the wilderness of Judah that David gave vent to those longings for the Lord's house, which we find in the sixty-third psalm : " O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee ; my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

When the ancient servant of God was under the necessity of absenting himself from the sanctuary, his views of the coming Saviour became, it may be, faint and indistinct ; but when he was able to resort to it, he learned more and more concerning the love of that Redeemer for whom he looked. The doctrines of grace, such as the defilement of the human heart ; the necessity of divine influence ; the nature and necessity of the atonement ; Christ's intercession ; the power of prayer ; the pity of our Father in heaven ; the blessedness of heaven as the abode of God : these truths were so exhibited to

him in the sanctuary as greatly to strengthen and comfort his soul.

It is essential to the character of a believer to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the ancient saints found, as God's people now find, that an attendance on the sanctuary was a powerful means of grace. Their own prayers and praises, as well as those offered by holy men around them ; the very presence, indeed, of devout, humble fellow-worshippers : all tended to benefit their souls and to promote their sanctification.

We should not entertain lower ideas of the sanctuaries in which we worship than the Israelites did of theirs. In our sanctuaries the truth is not dimly exhibited, as it was in the tabernacle and temple of old, but is made to shine like the light of noon-day. The ancient Jews were, indeed, familiar with the promises of the covenant of grace, and they had much experimental knowledge. They had experience of the Christian graces of repentance and faith, of love, joy, and peace. They were able to answer those two great questions : How can man be just with God ? and how can he be cleansed from the pollution of sin ? Still, the hearers of the gospel are far more favored than were the Jews who lived under the dispensation of the law.

How would it have rejoiced the saints of old to hear Christ preached as He is now preached in temples dedicated to His worship! The doctrine of Christ's righteousness, His ascension, and glory, and the way of salvation were in a great measure hid from the ancient Jews, under the veil of types and shadows, and more obscure revelations. None of them could ever hear the wonderful truths announced that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

But now these precious truths are constantly held up in the Word and sacraments. The places where God is worshipped by the assemblies of His people, where prayer and praise are offered, and where His Word is preached and ordinances dispensed, are the places where God has now recorded His name. In these assemblies all who desire any blessing of the Lord should present themselves. "Often has he spoken peace in his own house to his waiting people; so that they have said in their hearts, 'It is good to be here,' and have felt reluctant to depart. Souls oppressed with a load of guilt have, by waiting on the Lord in His house, often been relieved of their burden by rolling it on

the Lord, according to His gracious invitation ; that is, by faith in Christ crucified, they have obtained assurance of the pardon of their sins. And persons whose minds are clouded and perplexed with doubts and unbelieving suggestions, by going into the sanctuary, like Asaph, experience a speedy relief, and find their faith, which was shaken, wonderfully confirmed."

Whenever we enjoy and are profited by the exercises of public worship, we are to ascribe it to God's special goodness to us. Whenever we are so favored, we should gratefully recognize the presence and assistance of the Holy Spirit sent to us by the Father.

The possession of spiritual life, and a relish for divine things, are indeed indispensable to fit us for the services of the sanctuary ; but how often do God's children in whom spiritual life abides, fail to derive benefit from their attempts to unite with other Christians in public worship. They would never come short of a blessing were they always on such occasions specially aided by the Spirit of God. We are to remember that the Holy Spirit is not only the source of spiritual life, but of all its manifestations. For each particular Christian act, His in-working is necessary. Souls born of God are the

only ones who can truly worship Him; but even they, whenever they attempt to offer such worship, must be strengthened for the employment by a divine influence. Hence, the disciples of Christ are said to have access to God by the Spirit, and to pray and sing in the Spirit.

We are employed when in the house of God not only in praying and praising, but in listening to the Word. But in order that the Word may do us good, the Spirit must attend it and give it effect. He must do so, on each particular occasion on which we listen to the truth. The sovereignty of the blessed Spirit in His operations should not be forgotten. His influence is "not the influence of a *uniformly* acting force co-operating with the truth; but that of a Person, acting when and where he pleases, more at one time than at another."

From all this we see the connection between praying much for the Holy Spirit and being blessed in our waiting on God in His house. It is indeed the special office of the Spirit to assist us in acts of worship, and to give effect to the truth when we hear it; but He is nevertheless a Person, and a voluntary Agent, and sovereign in all His operations. It is for this reason that we remind you that you must abound in humble and importunate prayer for the

Holy Spirit, if you would enjoy, and be profited by the services of the sanctuary.

And when you find that they refresh and strengthen you, remember to whose kindness you are indebted for the blessing, and let sincere gratitude to Him fill your heart.

5*

XII.

LET YOUR SUPPLICATION FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT BE UNINTERMITTED, AND YOU NEED FEAR NO INTERRUPTION TO YOUR GROWTH IN GRACE.

ALTHOUGH it is God who works in us to will and to do, yet great exertion on our part is necessary in order to uninterrupted progress in the divine life. For does it not require great exertion to watch; to deny ourselves; to become familiar with divine truth as contained in the Scriptures; to pray much in secret; to keep our appetites in subjection; to exercise an habitual vigilance against besetting sins and temptations; to put a restraint on evil thought and imaginations; and to keep down likewise those evil passions, pride, resentment, envy, etc.? Does not all this, we ask, require vigorous effort? And yet all this is necessary if we grow in grace.

No man expects to obtain worldly prosperity without industry, or knowledge without labor; and we see what toil men cheerfully undergo for the attainment of these. Now in regard to the matter

of making attainments in holiness, the necessity of energetic effort in order to success, is equally God's law.

Even inspired men found that diligence and great effort were indispensable if they would grow in grace. Had Paul been slothful in spiritual things, he never would have become, with all his inspiration, the eminently holy man he actually became. He knew that active and energetic effort was necessary, and therefore, notwithstanding he enjoyed the full assurance of Christ's love for him, he said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

He also lets us know in many places that he kept up a constant opposition to the subtle evils of his heart, which, in common with all the other people of God, he found it still more difficult to do, than to hold his bodily appetites in subjection. Some men seem to think that only those Christians who have strong bodily passions, have severe conflicts. Whereas, "what belongs to the body is in a certain sense external; the evil dispositions of the heart are in more intimate connection with the soul. Pride, vanity, envy, malice, the love of self, are more formidable foes than mere bodily appetites.

They are stronger, more enduring and more capable of deceit. As these dispositions are deeply seated in our nature, the putting off the old man which is corrupt or the destruction of these unholy principles is the most difficult of all Christian duties."

We see, from all this, that steady growth in grace involves unceasing, unintermitted conflict with spiritual foes; that no man, in fact, can be a believer at all, without engaging in a warfare. There is an inward conflict, it is true, which men may have who are not Christians. It is sometimes the case that a struggle goes on even in them, between reason and conscience on the one hand, and passion on the other. But there is no analogy between this inward warfare and that which the real child of God wages, because the contest in which the latter is engaged is due to the opposition between the sin still remaining within him and the principle of spiritual life which has been supernaturally implanted in his soul.

Whenever the real disciples of Jesus fail in their conflicts, they blame themselves, and they are right in doing so. They know that they have failed through indolence, self-confidence, or shameful discouragement. They know that they have neglected to watch and pray as they ought to have done.

Perhaps very few Christians are spiritually-minded. In many, alas! the spirit of the world has gained such an ascendancy, that we can see nothing in their lives to distinguish them from the multitudes who make no pretensions to religion.

Cases of spiritual declension are so common, that some have thought that there is no way of avoiding the evil; but for this opinion there is no foundation. While it is true that they who live near to God have not always equal life and comfort, the supposition finds no support in the Bible that it is impossible for any believer to live near to God all his life. The declaration of the Bible addressed to every Christian is: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Surely, then, it is possible for every Christian, who is faithful in using the appointed means, to grow in grace to the very end of his course. There are hindrances enough to progress; but, through Christ strengthening him, the believer can surmount them all; left to himself, a single obstacle would be too much for him.

Doubtless, among Christians living in neglect and obscurity, and who attract no attention from men, there are, in every age, many who walk humbly with God all their lives, and grow in grace without interruption, until the Saviour takes them

to Himself. Yes, many of the best saints, and who are most dear to the Saviour, live and die unknown. It is a remark of John Newton, that "if an angel were sent to find the most-perfect man, he would probably not find him composing a body of divinity, but lying a cripple in some poor-house, whom the parish wish dead; a man humbled before God, with far lower thoughts of himself than others have of him." We take far too little pains to visit and become acquainted with the godly and humble poor.

While we are to set it down as a certainty that we can make no progress in piety without vigorous, continued effort, yet we must also remember that failure will be the inevitable result of depending on ourselves, to the neglect of the divine agency. We must show how deeply we realize and feel this dependence, by praying perpetually and with intense earnestness for the Spirit's influences. Could we be certain of receiving the Holy Spirit largely every day from this time till the day of our death, we could count with certainty on our unimpeded progress as Christians during the remainder of our lives. And what is there to hinder us from receiving Him and His blessed influences in abundant measure every day? Is not our Heavenly Father

bound by His promise, and has He not said that parents are not so willing to give good things to their children as He is to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

Let any man show, if he can, how it would be possible for the Christian to take any backward steps; how it would be possible, indeed, for the Christian not to be incessantly making progress, who should every day of his life pray with the deepest sincerity and earnestness to be led, governed, and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The question, believer, which you now ask is not, "What must I do to be saved?" Your salvation is already begun. Your whole relation to the law is now changed. You are now in a justified state. But your question, as far as your own soul is concerned, is: "What shall I do to grow steadily in grace, to make progress each day in the divine life, without declining and without halting?" The Scriptures reply to this interrogation, by exhorting you to be always filled with the Spirit, at the same time teaching, with sufficient plainness, that they are full of the Holy Ghost who incessantly pray for Him.

At every step of your advancement in holiness, if, indeed, you are advancing, let gratitude to the blessed Spirit be in lively exercise.

XIII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOSE OFFICE IT IS TO REVEAL THE CHARACTER AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD, WILL, IN ANSWER TO EARNEST PRAYER, ENABLE YOU TO SEE THE GLORY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS.

IN the account of the conversion of one who subsequently became a distinguished and successful minister of the gospel, it is stated that "he was riding at a late hour one evening, when the moon and stars shone with unusual brightness, and when everything around him was calculated to excite reflection.

"While he was meditating on the beauty and grandeur of the scene which the firmament presented, and was saying to himself how transcendently glorious must be the Author of all this beauty and grandeur, the thought struck him with the suddenness and force of lightning: 'But what do I know of this God? Have I ever sought His favor or made Him my friend?' This happy impression, which proved by its permanency and its effects to

have come from the best of all sources, never left him until he took refuge in Christ as the hope and life of his soul."

The person of whom this account is given, felt his soul stirred within him by the exquisite beauty and sublimity of the scene which his eyes surveyed. But he did not stop there. He thought of God, and was convinced that He who could create such a world must be a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. Whether he immediately saw more of God than this, we do not know. If he did,—if the perfections of God, thus revealed to him, possessed for him a sweet divine glory and loveliness,—his regeneration had already taken place, when, speaking to himself, he gave utterance to his thoughts concerning the adorable Creator. The Holy Spirit had already begun to show unto him, as He does in some degree to every believer, the glory of God in His works.

A person may derive keen enjoyment from the survey of some beautiful work of the Creator, or from the contemplation of the evidences of design in creation, without having awakened within him a single pleasurable thought of God's perfections. Such a person, however enjoyable his emotions may be, when he looks upon the beautiful external

world, fails to see in the external world any manifestation of his Creator's glory.

To be convinced by the proofs, which immediately appear when nature is inspected, that the Creator exists, and that He possesses certain attributes—even to feel admiration whenever the eye rests on nature's lovely scenes—is not to see God's glory in His works; but it is to see the manifestations of the divine perfections in the wonders of earth which encircle us, *accompanied with holy complacency and delight in those perfections*, as disclosed in these wonders. *He* discerns the glory of His Heavenly Father in the things which His hands have fashioned, who, having first seen and loved God's character and attributes, as they are revealed in the Scriptures, recognizes with sweet pleasure that same character and those same attributes in nature's works.

The works of God, as soon as they begin to be contemplated, call into action the intellectual powers and the æsthetic nature of men, and men cannot help deriving pleasure from the exercise of these, whatever may occasion their exercise. *This*, with the fact that men vary in their intellectual gifts, enables us to see why the pleasurable emotions of one who loves God may very possibly,

when he beholds some beautiful work of his Maker, be less vivid than those experienced by an unbeliever in looking at the same object; why also one Christian may find keen enjoyment in reflecting on the evidences of design with which God's works abound, without being necessarily superior in piety to another Christian, to whom the discovery of the marks of design in nature affords no such pleasure.

That which led the inspired writers to dwell with such delight, and often at such length, on the marvels of earth, was not merely their fondness for earth's beauties and sublimities, such as is felt by all persons of taste, but it was their clear recognition in these marvels of the holy attributes of God, that God concerning whom the words are uttered: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." "Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters." "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handi-

work." "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth ; he maketh the lightnings for the rain ; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures." "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps : fire and hail, snow and vapor : stormy wind fulfilling his word : mountains and all hills ; fruitful trees and all cedars : beasts and all cattle ; creeping things, and flying fowl."

Believers who never accustom themselves to see God in His works, lose much happiness. Indeed, if the many who are chargeable with this neglect would cultivate the habit of which we are speaking, they would find it beneficial in many ways. No doubt some are grieved at their own remissness in this thing, and often wish that they could never walk abroad without being sweetly reminded of God—without being able to say,

" If in the field I meet a smiling flower,
Methinks it whispers, ' God created me ' !"

The habit can undoubtedly be formed, but not without the aid of the Holy Spirit. He is the only revealer of God's glory in the Scriptures, and He alone can enable us to recognize that glory in the

Creator's works. Rely not, then, on your own unassisted efforts. Be fervent and importunate in your entreaties for the teaching influences of the Holy Spirit, and He who giveth His choicest gifts to all those who ask, will grant your request, so that you will often find yourself examining with care the beautiful works of nature, for the sole purpose of delighting yourself with discoveries of the proofs of your glorious Creator's perfections.

Indeed, there must already often have been times when, upon surveying the wonders with which all God's works abound, you have recognized with holy admiration the evidences afforded by these wonders of the glorious perfections of your Creator. For this feeling of holy admiration you were entirely indebted to the Spirit of God, to whom, therefore, your gratitude should flow forth.

XIV.

*THE MORE YOU PRIZE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND
THE MORE YOU PRAY FOR IT, THE BETTER WILL YOU
HEED THE ADMONITION, "GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT
OF GOD."*

THE influences of the Holy Spirit are in a greater or less degree granted to all men. This appears plain from those words in Genesis vi. 3, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The same thing is taught by the language which Isaiah uses with reference to the men of his generation, "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit." And the martyr Stephen tells the Jews, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."

Another source of evidence on this subject is furnished by experience and observation. Every Christian is conscious that long before his conversion he was many times the subject of influences awakening serious and anxious thoughts, leading him to see the emptiness of the world, convincing him of sin, and tending to draw him to the Saviour. And what the believer remembers to have been his own experience when he was an impenitent sinner,

(118)

is likewise the experience of those who are never truly converted. These also have serious thoughts which come and go in a way which to them is unaccountable, attended with many desires and yearnings of soul; and they frequently, under the influence of these feelings, endeavor in various ways to satisfy conscience, and appease an offended God.

Such convictions and inward workings are due to the operation of the Spirit of God. It is His still small voice which men hear, inviting, warning, arguing, and expostulating, and seeking with infinite compassion to draw them from the paths of destruction. There is no one who is not at times the subject of the Spirit's common operations, when he is thus made to feel the power of the world to come.

Whenever the blessed Spirit of God enlightens, or checks, or warns us (and it makes no difference whether at the time of our being the subjects of these operations we are Christians or not); whenever He exhorts and allures us to that which is right and holy, this working of His cannot be distinguished from our soul's own exercises. "We do not at first think of the presence of the Divine agency, owing to its working being in such perfect unison with our nature, and in such living harmony with

all our faculties. The thoughts that are awakened, the emotions that are stirred, the desires that are kindled, appear so thoroughly our own, so proper to us, so natural, that we do not at first attribute them to any other source than our own mental activity. We find these better views and feelings already in place and asserting their power. They are the insignia of the Divine presence, and our treatment of them is a direct dealing with the Holy Spirit."

As the Spirit is always opposed by the unbelieving, so, alas! He is often grieved by Christians.

How often when we see the path in which we ought to go, do we delay and even refuse compliance with what we justly suspect to be the inward motions, the silent urgings of this Divine Agent. Perhaps the particular thing in regard to which we are admonished is the duty of retiring at once for secret prayer. It would, however, be impossible to enumerate all the suggestions and promptings of the still small voice, to which, notwithstanding we are warned not to grieve the Spirit of God, we repeatedly fail to give heed. Sins of this kind should make us truly penitent, and increased faithfulness to all Christian duties should evince our penitence and also our deep gratitude to our Sanctifier for His

condescension and loving-kindness to us. "As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit."

How often is our temper and behavior the opposite of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance! If we are not guilty of giving utterance to corrupting language, yet how seldom is our conversation edifying, ministering grace unto the hearers! How frequently are we guilty of bitterness of feeling, wrath, clamor, and evil-speaking! How often do we forget to be kind one to another, to be tender-hearted, and to forgive one another! To ask these questions is the same as to ask, How often do we grieve the blessed Spirit? For He *is* hurt, and He *is* offended when evil tempers and passions are indulged, and when we fail to cherish those holy dispositions which, although they owe their origin to Divine influence, and are called the fruits of the Spirit, are truly our own, and are to be cultivated by us with the greatest faithfulness and care.

How frequently do we utterly fail to practice moderation in indulging our appetites, often even eating to excess. But for Christians to defile their bodies by intemperance or impurity is sacrilege, because their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost.

How frequently do we neglect, disregard, and even disobey the inspired Word! We have some love and reverence for it, or we would not be Christians at all, and yet it would be difficult to describe all the ways in which we dishonor it. How many are the days in which our interest in the writings of worldly men far exceeds our delight in the study of the Scriptures! How ignorant we are, in comparison with what we should be, of its truths! How little are we affected by its promises, threatenings, and cautions! How sadly we fail to exercise prompt, simple, and implicit faith in what the Bible says! And how exceedingly do we fail to live according to its precepts and directions! Now, when we thus treat the inspired Word, we grieve the Holy Spirit. For that Word is *His* Word—He is its author, and it bears a resemblance to Him. It is divine, like Himself—it is a word of infinite majesty. And He is not only its author, but He will use no other instrument in carrying forward our sanctification. The

blessed Spirit therefore regards us as treating Him just as we treat the Bible, which is the product of His own infinite wisdom, and which He so honors.

How often do our lives belie, or falsely represent the Spirit's work in the heart! The Scriptures teach that we are the temples of the Holy Ghost; and if there is this relation between Him and us, it is, of course, through the medium of our conduct that His character and religion will be contemplated by men. If, then, there is a want of accordance between His holy nature and our walk and conversation—if while professing to be led and governed by Him we are worldly-minded—we misrepresent His nature and work to those who are watching us, and exceedingly grieve Him.

It is not, however, in these ways alone that we wound the blessed Sanctifier. Every sin that we commit is an offence against Him. This must be so because of the relations He sustains to us. He dwells in us as the source of our spiritual life. He has begun a glorious and blessed work within us. The true way, therefore, to obey the injunction not to displease Him, is to practice universal holiness.

If this is so, we see the connection between our continually praying for the Holy Spirit, and our being kept from grieving Him. For if we are al-

ways engaged in pleading with God to give us the Spirit, we shall certainly die unto sin and live unto righteousness. We shall be sure to exercise the graces He bestows upon us, if they are bestowed upon us in answer to our perpetual and earnest supplications. Besides, we are far from grieving: we are greatly glorifying the blessed Spirit when we show that we deeply feel our dependence upon Him. And in what way can we better express our sense of such dependence, than by continually seeking His influences? Surely, then, we are right in saying, that the more you pray for the Spirit, the better you will heed the warning, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

Ever remember, however, that it is by means of the assistance which the Holy Spirit Himself vouchsafes you, that you are enabled to avoid grieving Him. To Him, therefore, your gratitude is due whenever you are kept from falling into this sin.

XV.

EARNEST AND INCESSANT SUPPLICATIONS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL HAVE A HAPPY EFFECT ON THE MANNER IN WHICH YOU WILL ATTEND TO THE DUTY OF CLOSET PRAYER.

WE cannot err in believing this, for there is no other act binding upon the Christian, in performing which the aid of the Spirit is so expressly promised.

If, in accordance with your heart's desire, the Holy Spirit is given you to guide your exercises, you will not, indeed, neglect to offer supplications, with thanksgivings, for temporal mercies. Nevertheless, in all your petitions, spiritual gifts will have the precedence.

Spiritual gifts alone make us truly rich. We may have all that Solomon had, and yet, like him, be miserable; but if we have received power to exercise the Christian's faith, and love, and gratitude, and humility, and submission, and hope, and patience, and forgiveness, and moderation, and courage, and zeal, and holy longings and desires,

(125)

we are in possession of good which infinitely outweighs all that the world is able to bestow.

These graces wrought into the soul bring it into fellowship with God. The believer who is thus enriched has a foretaste of heaven here, and knows that heavenly blessedness, in its perfection, will be his hereafter.

Now, the prayers of each believer will be characterized by pleadings for *these* priceless blessings, if the Holy Spirit is his prompter and teacher.

The child of God often has a sense of his need of these spiritual gifts, which no words are able to describe. He is unable to say which of the graces of the Spirit he needs most. If he looks at his slowness to believe God's promises, it seems to him that there is nothing he is so much in want of as a stronger faith. If his attention is turned to his sadly defective love for Christ's people, it appears to him as if the grace of love to the brethren is that in which he is most deficient, and which he should seek more earnestly than any other grace. If he considers his want of lively sensibility to the condition of perishing souls, he is ready to say that love and pity for lost men is the feeling which requires to be strengthened more than any other. And so, whichever of his Christian graces he ex-

amines, he finds that the one to which his attention is directed is so far from having the strength and activity which it ought to have, that he can hardly avoid concluding that in no other grace is he so weak.

And the feebleness of his faith and love—the exceeding imperfection of his gratitude, humility, penitence, zeal, and Christian boldness and faithfulness : all this is a matter of complaint to God in his daily prayers. “ This part of prayer is most acceptable with God, and that wherein believers find ease and rest unto their souls. For, let the world scoff while it pleaseth, what is more acceptable unto God than for His children, out of pure love unto Him and holiness ; out of fervent desires to comply with His mind and will, and thereby to attain conformity unto Jesus Christ ; to come with their complaints unto Him, of the distance they are kept from these things by the captivating power of sin. . . . I say these complaints of sin, poured out before the Lord, are acceptable to God, and prevalent with Him to give out aid and assistance. He owns believers as His children, and hath the bowels and compassion of a Father towards them. Will He, then, despise their complaints and their bemoaning of themselves before Him ? ” *

* Owen on the “ Holy Spirit,” Vol. III., pp. 558, 559 ; Goold’s edition.

In regard to the manner in which you will attend to the duty of closet prayer, we think we are safe in saying that you will certainly, if you are led and controlled by the Spirit, form the habit of observing, during all your Christian life, *stated times* for that employment. It is true, that whenever we speak to God affectionately and reverently, in solitude or in company, we pray; but though such converse with God as this ought always to be maintained, yet it is not all that is required. It is the duty of every believer carefully and strictly to observe regular seasons of devotion; and because it is his duty, he certainly will do it, if he follows the directions of the Bible and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret will reward thee openly."

It may be admitted that there are some whose employments are of such a nature that they find it difficult to be much alone, and especially to observe stated seasons of communion with Jesus. Such should cry to God earnestly and perseveringly to help them to overcome their difficulties, and they will not cry in vain. They will find that somehow in the providence of God they begin to have frequent opportunities for retirement.

- With most persons, it is not so much the pressure of business and duties which keeps them from regularity in habits of devotion, as it is spiritual sloth. It is important to take time by the forelock, and neither business, company, nor indolence should hinder us from doing so. How often do professing Christians find that the day has passed away and closed upon them without their fulfilling the intentions formed when they rose, of praying in their closets. The reason is because they have no fixed regular times set apart for the purpose.

It is not the will of God that His own dear children should be so overwhelmed with anxieties and labors as to be cut off from opportunities of profitable worship, and of frequent and calm communion with Himself. If any find themselves so situated, is it not probable that they have been gradually brought into such an unhappy position through their own fault? May it not be owing to some mismanagement that cares have so accumulated as to hinder devotion? Many, especially among those who have been brought to love the Saviour, and to delight in His service in the morning of their days, have never found it necessary to be hurried and brief in their prayers, because they have resolutely made everything bend to this all-important matter.

It has always, and justly, appeared to them that this is the great work, in comparison with which, other occupations are almost trifling. *Converts* ought to be particularly urged to take pains to begin such habits, and to be strictly regular and punctual in point of time.

Many of the very busiest of God's servants have prayed much. None have ever exceeded Paul, or Luther, or Knox, in labors, and yet how they prayed! A multitude of passages might easily be collected from Paul's epistles, which show that much of his time was given to supplication. Our blessed Saviour was ever to be found in the busiest haunts of men, and perhaps He was always weary, and yet He often retired to hold converse with God, and not unfrequently spent whole nights in prayer.

The men who have prospered best, and accomplished most during their lives, have taken time to commune with God. Let us imitate their example, even though we find that prayer, deliberately attended to every day, delays for a little the business of the day. "You have read of that hero who, when an overwhelming force was in full pursuit, and all his followers were urging him to more rapid flight, coolly dismounted, in order to repair a flaw in his

horse's harness. Whilst busied with the broken buckle, the distant cloud swept down in nearer thunder ; but, just as the prancing hoofs and eager spears were ready to dash down on him, the flaw was mended, the clasp was fastened, the steed was mounted, and, like a swooping falcon, he had vanished from their view. The timely delay sent him in safety back to his huzzaing companions. There is in life the same luckless precipitancy and the same profitable delay."

It is not necessary to remind you that it is only when supplications are offered with faith and importunity and in the name of Jesus, that they have power with God, and that the stronger our faith and the greater our importunity, the more signal and abundant will be the answers to our petitions. To ask with faith for mercy, and for grace to help in time of need, is not easy ; it requires *boldness*, since conscious guilt makes us afraid. Therefore, we are commanded to draw nigh with boldness. "Let us," says the Apostle, "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

But to ask with importunity is just as necessary as to ask with faith. It is not only natural that we should be importunate in seeking what we long for

with overmastering longings, but it is the will of God that we should be importunate. He even withholds the blessing for a time, on purpose to increase our earnestness. He did so in the case of the Syrophenician woman.

If we are importunate, we shall not only come to God *often* for what we need, but we shall sometimes *continue long in prayer*. It is not that power of concentration which is the result of education, which enables a person to pray a great while at a time. It is simply that energy of will which belongs to any one who is fully determined to succeed in his suit, who is all alive to the infinite importance to himself and to the Church of the blessings which he is seeking from God. "If I perish, I perish," said Esther, and the fixed resolution seen in these words was that which also possessed Jacob's soul, when he wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant to the breaking of the day.

We never have much success in the affairs of this world, unless we apply ourselves to what our hands find to do with pains, energy, and inflexible determination; nor can we have much success in prayer, unless we engage in it with the same resolute spirit. This resolution and vigor of will in prayer, we shall surely possess if we have the powerful inworking

of the Holy Spirit. *In the things of God, grace abundantly bestowed can make any man active and energetic.* It has aroused multitudes to call upon God with great vehemence of desire and unyielding importunity.

One reason why we may expect the assistance of the Holy Spirit in prayer is, because God has appointed prayer to be a means of grace, and of securing our salvation.

Another reason is, that prayer has been divinely appointed as one of the ways by which to obtain the things we need. We need strength to perform duties and to endure afflictions, and we also have special wants which none but God knows, and which we never could disclose to any mortal.

It is not merely since the gospel dispensation began, that the Holy Spirit has assisted believers to pray. He was bestowed as a Spirit of grace and supplication upon Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Hannah, and likewise upon Samuel, and Elijah, and David, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Daniel.

We feel that we know not what to pray for as we ought, but our hearts are encouraged by the assurance that the Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, or advocate—that we have His agency joined to ours in our holy exercises. Left to ourselves, we cannot

plead our own cause, but He dictates to us what we ought to say. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Can anything be plainer than that our hearts should overflow with gratitude to the Holy Spirit for whatever power we may have to pray?

XVI.

PRAY MUCH THAT YOU MAY BE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND YOUR INFLUENCE, UNCONSCIOUSLY TO YOURSELF, WILL BE POWERFUL FOR GOOD, AND THAT DAILY.

THE Bible has much to say on the subject of doing good to others. Its exhortations to labor for the welfare of men, and its promises and encouragements addressed to those who thus exert themselves, are many. "Trust in the Lord and do good." "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" "Pure re-

(135)

ligion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

But besides their voluntary labors and active efforts to benefit others, those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells are always exerting a heavenly influence of which they themselves are altogether unconscious.

This unconscious involuntary influence is entirely due to their inward character. It follows their character as the shadow follows the sun. "As every bad man has a fund of poison in his character which is tainting those around him when it is not in his thoughts to do them an injury, so every good man has a power in his person more mighty than his words and arguments, and which others feel when he least suspects it." Our Saviour says to His people, "Ye are the light of the world." They shine, then, not because this is their purpose, but because they are luminous.

Not only does this kind of influence flow immediately from the Christian's inward character, but it is in exact proportion to its excellence. The better his heart is, the more good will he unconsciously do, from which it follows that his uncon-

scious power to benefit others is at least under his indirect control, since he can increase it by faithfully using the means which, *when* faithfully used, will secure his spiritual growth, and increase his excellence of character.

And what means can be thought of which will so certainly result in this growth and advancement, like praying earnestly and unceasingly for the Holy Spirit? Have not the effects of such entreaties upon the life and character of the supplicant been shown to be blessed? Has it not been shown that the way to be enriched with all the graces of the Spirit is to pray for Him? That this also is the way to know more of Christ, to find sweetness in serving Him, to have Christ living in the soul, to obtain the power of looking at unseen things, and of walking by faith? That this is the way, likewise, to grow uninterruptedly in grace, to retain at all times a spirit of prayer, to enjoy a sense of Christ's love and sweet friendship with the blessed Spirit Himself? Has it not, then, been convincingly shown that he who abounds in prayer for the Spirit, is sure to grow more and more like God in disposition and character? If, then, increasing in unconscious influence for good, must be the certain result of advancing in holiness of character—of increasing

in Christian worth and loveliness—were we not right in saying that if you pray much for the blessed Spirit, your influence, unconsciously to yourself, will be daily powerful for good? You can never trace this, your unconscious influence, partly because it is noiseless, which fact, indeed, makes it all the surer and stronger, though it may cause it to be underrated; partly because it is impossible for you to be in contact with *any* person without his receiving an impression from it; and partly because through your associates it will be transmitted to still others whom you will never see.

The young especially feel this undesigned, mysterious power which flows out from our lives. Into them we especially work our own character. It has been asserted as a probable thing, that in all the voluntary, active, intended influence of our whole lives, we do less to shape the destiny of our fellow-men, than in the single article of unconscious influence over children. "They watch us every moment, in the family, before the hearth, and at the table; and when we are meaning them no good or evil, they are drawing from us impressions and moulds of habit, which, if wrong, no heavenly discipline will ever wholly remove; or if right, no bad associations utterly dissipate. And thus we have a

whole generation of future men receiving from us their very beginnings, and the deepest impulses of life and immortality.”

How evident it is from the considerations above presented, that we should be as much grateful to the Holy Spirit for the unconscious influence for good which we may exert, as for that holiness of character to which we may have attained.

XVII.

IN ADDITION TO THE REASONS ALREADY URGED FOR SPENDING MUCH TIME IN PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, YOU HAVE THE WELL-KNOWN WORDS OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR, RECORDED IN MATT. VII., AND LUKE XI.

IN both these passages our Saviour gives a direction, and accompanies it with an encouraging assurance.

The direction is to *ask* for the Holy Spirit.

The unspeakable gift—the gift of Christ, God's own Son—would be of no value to us without the gift of the Holy Spirit. What a comfort, then, it is to those who greatly covet this benefit, to know that to obtain it, they have simply to ask for it. It is not every kind of asking, however, that deserves the name. We must ask *sincerely*.

The indispensableness of sincerity is so evident, that it would not be mentioned as a requisite, were it not that we are all familiar with the fact that men daily pray for divine blessings in the most formal manner, and utter words before God in which their hearts do not join. I would caution you against

(140)

falling into this habit. We are all in danger of it. Are you accustomed, in all your approaches to the throne of grace, to offer up a request for the influences of the Spirit? This is well! It is at all times suitable to petition God for His Holy Spirit. But are you sure that you really desire what you profess to seek?

Suppose, when listening to the request of another for some favor, you felt convinced that there was no sincerity in his request—that he had no desire for the favor he was asking for—could you help regarding his conduct with indignation? What, then, is to be thought of us, when, at the very time we are entreating God to bestow upon us this priceless gift, we have no real wish for it?

If you are conscious that there is great defect in your desires for spiritual blessings, and if you grieve over it, remember how dependent we poor sinners are on God for our *very desires* for things of a holy nature. Confess this dependence, humble yourselves before God, and pray that He would not only grant you that which your souls, above all things, need, but that He would also impart to you suitable desires for such good.

But sincerity, though necessary, is not sufficient. The direction of our Saviour to ask, is prefaced by

a parable, designed to teach us the importance of urging our suit with importunity. We are taught by His parable that, even in our dealings with selfish men, we are likely to be successful, if we are only importunate. How much more successful, then, may we expect persevering application to be, when He to whom we go is the merciful God? Men are displeased with importunity, and yet they are not often proof against it. But our Father in heaven is pleased with it—the importunate ones are His favored ones. Surely, if any believer is not rich in spiritual things, it is because of his want of importunity.

Another requisite to successful prayer for the Holy Spirit, is faith. We must believe that, in answer to our petition, God certainly will give His Spirit. But why must we believe this? Why would it be wrong to doubt it? Simply, because our Heavenly Father has graciously bound Himself by promise to bestow this blessing upon all who truly ask. *That which our faith should lay hold of is God's express promise.*

Even when we offer supplications for temporal benefits, our supplications will not be useless, but will be sure to meet with some answer. Still, the divine promise to grant temporal benefits to seek-

ers is conditional. To bestow upon the supplicant the precise thing prayed for might injure him, and, therefore, instead of what is expressly petitioned for, some equivalent may be given. But the promise to give the Holy Spirit is not conditional, so that we see the exact thing to be believed. It is that the Spirit of God Himself—even He Himself, the divine Quickener, Sanctifier, and Comforter—will be given us, if we ask for Him.

But, again: we do not ask aright, unless we ask in the name of Christ. We must plead that the blessing may be granted us for Christ's sake. We must abhor the thought of relying on our own merits—we must not even trust simply to God's mercy—but we must rely on God's regard for Christ as the ground on which we expect to be listened to. What Jesus is, and what He has done, *that* we should urge as the reason for our being heard.

But what is the encouraging assurance with which our Lord accompanies His direction? What does He say as to the power which prayer for the Spirit's influence has?

Why, in the first place, He says: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Here is a promise three times repeated. Is not that em-

phatic? Could we desire anything more? Our blessed Saviour, however, knowing how slow we are to believe, would be still more emphatic, and, therefore, He adds: "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." The assurance is repeated here in terms still stronger, and that as a fact of actual experience, for the words, you observe, are changed from "*shall be given you,*" "*shall find,*" to "*receiveth,*" "*findeth.*"

But our Lord, considering our weakness and patiently bearing with our unholy distrust, condescends, besides giving us these explicit assurances, to reason with us in these remarkable words: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

Here is a formal argument, which the Divine Saviour, in His amazing condescension, employs: "If ye, mere men, and not only mere men, but fallen, sinful men, know how to give the good gifts

of this life to your children, how infinitely more shall your Heavenly Father's parental love constrain him to give the Holy Spirit to his spiritual offspring who ask him?"

You perceive that the force of our Lord's reasoning lies in these two facts which His words imply. The first is, that God has the same kind of feeling towards the poor in spirit, who cry to Him, that parents have for their children. Do you doubt this? The Scriptures plainly teach it. Long before our Lord came into the world, David, who wrote by inspiration, declared: "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Parents, then, may understand what God's feelings are from their own.

The other fact which is implied is, that our Heavenly Father is infinitely free from those evils and dreadful imperfections which belong to all earthly parents, and which prevent them from being good parents. For we are often sinfully impatient with our children, and besides, are exceedingly ignorant as to what will really be for their good. Our Father in heaven, on the contrary, is absolutely without limit as to His knowledge of our wants and His ability to supply them, while

His parental tenderness is infinitely perfect and unmixed with evil.

When it is considered that we well know that prayer offered for the Holy Spirit always prevails, is it not astonishing that we spend such little time in praying for Him? Can even the busiest Christians consistently plead the multiplicity of their earthly labors as an excuse for being so little alone with God for this purpose? Do we know of anything which lays us under such a debt of gratitude as the standing offer to give us the Holy Spirit when we pray?

And, if we should always be exercised with gratitude to our Heavenly Father for this His standing offer, should not lively gratitude to the Blessed Spirit also fill our hearts, who, with love equal to that of the Father and the Son, condescends to the watch and care and conduct of such vile worms as we?

PART II.

**The Duty of seeking the Holy Spirit for the Church
of Christ and for this fallen world.**

I.

THEY ARE VERY PRECIOUS TO GOD WHO LOVE AND PRAY FOR THE CHURCH, WHICH IS THE LAMB'S BRIDE. CEASE NOT, THEREFORE, TO ENTREAT THE HOLY SPIRIT CONSTANTLY TO ABIDE WITH AND PROSPER HER.

THE exceeding great and precious promises made to the Church may seem to you to render it unnecessary to be continually engaged in offering up supplications in her behalf. By these promises her continuance until the second coming of Christ is already secured. Our Lord said: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And He promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church. Christ assures His beloved Church that she shall be sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the Word, and presented to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But, while these assurances of the Saviour, with similar predictions contained in the Old Testament, do, indeed, show that the Church will continue till the end of all things, they also declare, impliedly,

(149)

that there will always be some to pray for her. They do not prove that her perpetuity and final triumph are certain, whether her members pray for her or not. Least of all do they prove that your intercessions would be of no benefit to her. Besides, there are other blessings to seek for the Church besides her preservation and final victory, though these do, indeed, involve much.

Consider how it has been with her in the past. During all her history, she has been pressed down with many burdens. Satan's hosts have been arrayed against her, and, for the sake of more effectual opposition, have been organized by him into a kingdom. The fires of persecution have been kindled to consume her. She has been tried by the world's blandishments and seductions, and to these temptations of the world great force has been given by the corruptions and imperfections of her members—sincere and true members who have really belonged to her. She has been weakened by the poison of errors. She has been paralyzed by internal strifes and dissensions. She has been burdened by having in her very midst unconverted and wicked professors. What she has suffered, even from her own unfaithfulness, has continually called forth the compassion of her Saviour and her King, notwithstand-

ing that she has, on account of her sins, incurred the displeasure of her faithful Redeemer, and has often been visited with chastisement.

This is not only a description of her past history ; her sins continue to prevail. Unbelief, ignorance, and error still exist in her midst, and still hinder her advancement. And these of themselves have been sufficient to create many of the difficulties which stand in the way of her fully accomplishing the work which the Saviour has given her to do—difficulties so appalling that it requires strong faith even to think of them without being overwhelmed.

If the condition of our beloved Zion weighs upon our hearts and awakens deep anxiety, let us have faith in the willingness and ability of the Holy Spirit to work effectually in her behalf—to enlighten and purify her, and to fill her with a life and vigor unspeakably greater than she has ever known. Let us show that we have this faith by giving Him no rest till He establish her and make her a praise in the earth. Let us unceasingly ask not only that there may be conversions every day among the multitude of unrenewed professors, which would of itself greatly add to the Church's strength, but that all her living members may exceedingly grow in faith and holiness.

The truth is, there is a similarity between the condition of the Church of Christ and that of the individual believer. The believer is in some degree holy, but he is likewise sinful. He possesses spiritual life, but the increase, the continued existence even, of that life depends upon its being cherished, and guarded, and fed. He holds the truth, but the corruptions of his heart have an affinity with error; and owing to the weakness of his intellectual and moral nature, which sin has caused, he is easily deceived. The world wishes him to live as it lives, and leaves neither flattery nor specious argument untried to bring about his conformity to its own principles, maxims, and practices. He is continually watched, and tempted where he is weakest, by Satan and the hosts of fallen spirits. These are very numerous, and they never relinquish their efforts even for a single moment to do him injury. He would fall an easy prey to their wiles and power, but for the protection of the Captain of our salvation, who came to destroy the works of the devil. It is because all believers, while in the body, are in this condition, that they should love, pity, watch over, warn, and pray for each other.

But this is also descriptive of the state of the Church on earth. What is true of each disciple of

Christ, is true of the entire body, which we call the Communion of Saints. The Church, likewise, is holy; and yet is full of imperfections and sins. The light with which she shines is, indeed, from heaven, but it cannot grow brighter; it must even die out, if it is neglected. She is ever in danger of imbibing the hurtful errors which so constantly arise, and they are often, indeed, embraced by her with dreadful tenacity. In seeking to bring her into conformity with itself, the world has every advantage, owing to the corruptions which cleave to her, and to the weakness of her faith in things which are unseen and spiritual. Then, as in the case of the Christian, Satan is her watchful enemy, and is unceasingly, with all the strength of his whole kingdom of darkness, working for her destruction. Is there any duty more solemnly binding upon God's people than that of wrestling with God daily in behalf of Zion?

As the Holy Spirit is the author of all the graces of the individual believer, He likewise with His graces enriches the whole Church. And it is only as He dwells in her and works mightily in her, that she can increase in holiness. It is because Jehovah Jesus dwells in her by His Spirit that she is called the Temple of God. But as some saints receive

the gift of the Spirit in larger measure than others, because they pray more for the gift, so the Church is more filled with the Divine Spirit at one time than at others. It depends on the faithfulness and earnestness with which He is sought for the Church by God's people, how largely she enjoys His influences. The condition on which God promises to revive, purify, beautify, increase, and strengthen Zion is, that her children pray for her.

The increase of the faith and holiness of each believer now in the world would, of course, result in great good to the whole Church, for the Church is nothing else but the body of believers collectively considered. Pray, then, for all believers living in the world—for all and each of them.

Professor Phelps, in his little book, entitled "The Still Hour," says that we lose many prayers for the lack of what he calls "specificness of object." But is there any want of specificness of object in your request when you entreat your Heavenly Father to bestow upon *every* saint, upon every soul beloved by Him, those spiritual blessings which He sees to be most needed? Can you not define to your own mind the exact thing you petition for, when you offer this request?

Such a request is not vague, neither is it absurd

or unreasonable on account of the number of believers being so great. If there were only a hundred Christians alive, you would see nothing unreasonable in your expecting God to give His Holy Spirit to every one of the entire number, just because you asked Him to do it. Why should the fact that there are millions of them on earth, instead of only a hundred, deter you from seeking spiritual gifts for each one?

Begin this day to offer the supplication, and persevere in offering it during the remainder of your life—the supplication that (great as the number is) all your brethren in the world—all, without a single exception, may be enriched with spiritual gifts, and may constantly grow in grace.

God's people are of all denominations of Christians. Some are vigorous Christians, mighty believers, while others are weak in faith. Some are honored and conspicuous in the Church; others are obscure, hidden, and without honor. Then, there are the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the aged and the young. But however widely they may differ from each other in some things, they are all alike partakers of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. They sustain the same relations to Christ. They are His own, and they shall never

perish. "They were in His heart during the sorrows of the garden and agonies of the cross, with a knowledge of each individual and all his numerous wants, as clear and distinct as if that individual was the only object of His attention." He intercedes for them all, and will soon receive them to Himself, where they shall be with Him forever and behold His glory. Pray, then, for all your fellow-members that are in the world. In your daily supplications, entreat your Heavenly Father to bestow His Spirit upon *each one*, that each may glorify God by bearing much fruit.

Multitudes of your fellow-saints are deeply afflicted. Do not forget the burdened and the sorrowful ones. You know that it is impossible to be mistaken in taking it for granted that there are many such, and they can be relieved by your prayers, though you will never know until you reach heaven who they are whom you have thus assisted. "It is for want of our prayers that men lie so long under their burdens. If we would commend them unto God, He would either deliver them, or, what is the same, He would sanctify and sweeten the affliction, and make it as great a blessing as a deliverance. If you can do nothing else, pray for your brethren. You may not have other

means of helping them ; but the poorest Christian has an interest with God, and if he use it in prayer, it will do his brethren and himself a real service ; for prayer, in this case, for others, is a clearer evidence of grace than prayer for ourselves.”

II.

AS THE WORLD CONTAINS MANY MILLIONS OF UNCONVERTED PERSONS WHO YET KNOW ENOUGH TO BE SAVED, WE SHOULD PRAY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD APPLY THIS TRUTH ALREADY LODGED IN THEIR MINDS TO THEIR CONVERSION.

GOD says (Hosea iv. 6): "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;" and we are accustomed to use the same language with reference to the heathen, who form by far the larger part of the world's population. But not the heathen alone are perishing through ignorance. There are multitudes in the most enlightened regions of the earth who must be lost unless they obtain more instruction than they now possess. Of the many in various Christian lands who are unable to read, a large proportion, it is to be feared, know not the way of salvation, and probably a large proportion also of the numerous minds devoted to intellectual pursuits are, on this subject, equally in the dark.

Still, there are living in the enlightened countries
(158)

of the world millions of unrenewed souls, who are sufficiently informed concerning Christ and His redemption to be saved. They consist of several classes. Some of them have been under Christian training from their infancy, and keep up their habit of frequenting the house of God, while others have ceased to honor the Sabbath, have lost in a great degree their susceptibility to religious impressions, and are daily becoming more hardened. Some are people of intelligence and refinement, while others are entirely destitute of mental culture. Great familiarity with the doctrines of Christianity is possessed by some, while a very limited amount of Scripture knowledge has been attained by others. These various classes, however, agree in this: that they all have sufficient knowledge of divine truth to render the loss of salvation unnecessary. They have all learned that men, without exception, are sinners, that death is the wages of sin, and that the way to escape death is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

These unregenerate millions who have, at least, this amount of light, are not all confined to this land. They also mingle with God's people in the nominally Christian nations of Europe, greatly outnumbering them there, as they exceedingly out-

number true believers among us. They are to be found likewise in the other quarters of the globe. They are to be found in heathen lands. A beloved missionary in Canton, in one of his letters to our churches, used lately the following language: "There are tens of thousands in this great city and the surrounding country who know sufficiently of the truth to be saved, if it were only savingly applied to their hearts by the Holy Spirit. This," he goes on to say, "is given in answer to believing prayer."

The multitude of that class of men in our world of whom we speak would all be converted and saved without our prayers, if the mere truth without the attending influence of the Spirit always availed to change the heart. But the truth in itself is inoperative; for men, by nature, being spiritually dead, are unable to receive or know the things of the Spirit. They must be changed by the supernatural, almighty operation of the Spirit of God. Then the truth formerly proclaimed to them, and still remembered, produces its effect. It bears fruit, and their repentance and faith call forth the joy of the angels in heaven.

If we believe that God is willing to hear prayer for the perishing, are we not exceedingly guilty in

His sight if we refuse to pray for the dying multitudes who already know enough to be saved? We have this thought to encourage us: that it is not absolutely necessary that any more truth should be communicated to them than they now know. The Holy Spirit is infinitely able to apply to their salvation the truth which has in times past obtained a lodgment within their minds. It is not even necessary that they should be gathered into meetings. Indeed, in the case of most of them, this would be impossible. Wherever they are, and whatever may be their outward circumstances, if they know that Christ died for sinners, that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost, then they need nothing more than that the Holy Spirit should at once, by His infinite power, make use of this their knowledge to translate them into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Think of what a glorious thing it would be, should the millions who *already* have sufficient light, be convinced of their lost condition, and be brought by the Holy Spirit to embrace Christ! What an immense accession of numbers and of power would the Church receive! These millions have been called externally. The outward call of the Gospel has been addressed to them, because

they have obtained sufficient knowledge of the way of salvation to escape eternal death, if they would only act up to what they know. Salvation has been offered to them, and they know that they commit great sin in rejecting the offer. They know who it is who says: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Even though there is much in the Gospel which they could not explain, they nevertheless well understand that they are required to have repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. They have learned that God is not willing that any should perish—that all are invited to take of the Water of Life freely. O, let us entreat the Holy Spirit not to give them up, but to continue to strive with them, and even to make them willing in the day of His power.

Let us remember that God has, in all time past, heard the secret prayers of His people for souls unrenewed, though outwardly enlightened. Year after year, and sometimes in large numbers, have they been brought into the kingdom of Christ by the instrumentality of the truth applied in answer to the importunate prayers of obscure believers, by the Holy Spirit. And this work continues to

go on in our own day. Multitudes at a time are converted.

The Holy Spirit is infinitely able to apply the truth, as fast as it is received, to the conversion of those who hear it; and this we may humbly believe He would do, should all the people of God so long for the salvation of every one brought under its influence, as to wrestle in prayer continually for the uninterrupted outpouring upon them of the Holy Spirit. The two facts which we should lay well to heart are these: first, that there are many millions in the world who already know enough to be saved, if the truth lodged in their minds were only applied by the Spirit. And, secondly, that the Blessed Spirit is infinitely able to apply that truth to their salvation. Let incessant prayer be offered that He would put forth His power.

III.

AS CHRIST HAS EXPRESSLY COMMANDED THE CHURCH TO ESTABLISH HIS GOSPEL IN EVERY LAND UNDER HEAVEN, YOU SHOULD PRAY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD ENABLE HER FAITHFULLY TO PERFORM THIS GREAT WORK.

OUR Lord ascended from the Mount of Olives on the fortieth day after His resurrection, in the presence of His apostles. As they had but just asked Him whether He was then about to restore the kingdom to Israel, it is evident that they had no expectation of such a thing as His departure from the world. On a previous occasion He had been seen on a mountain in Galilee by above five hundred of His disciples, who, when they saw Him, worshiped Him ; and it was on that mountain, and to those worshiping disciples, that He addressed the command : “ Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the

(164)

world.” Here we have the commission which our Lord gave to His Church. She is commanded to disciple all nations.

This command was by no means understood at first. After it was delivered, and even after the day of Pentecost, surprise was expressed that even unto the Gentiles God had granted repentance unto life. The time came at last, however, when the men who went forth to labor for Christ ceased to speak and act as Jews, and joyfully proclaimed a religion for a whole world. And the Church went on expanding and spreading until there was no part of the Roman empire in which she had not gained a foothold. In the first age every minister was a missionary, and the Church of Christ felt that the one thing for which she existed was to diffuse the gospel. Christianity is essentially missionary. It has been said, with truth, that the missionary enterprise is but Christianity in action, carrying out the design of its Founder to subdue the whole world to Himself.

Every lover of Jesus wishes from his heart that the missionary spirit which characterized the early believers had never been lost—that Christians had always, as at first, faithfully responded to the parting injunction of their blessed Saviour. It seems

strange that so plain an injunction should not always have been as well understood as it was in the days of the apostles. How few really understood it, and fully entered into its import, at the time when the modern missionary spirit began to be developed in England and in this country, we all know. Had the duty laid by Christ upon His Church been even partially performed in every generation, from the time of His ascension to the present, how much easier would be the work which the Church now has to do. The difficulties which now stand in the way of evangelizing the whole world, though not incapable of being overcome, provided we have faith enough, are still very great. These difficulties exist, and they must be met. The Church cannot yield to them consistently with obedience to Christ. She has the precious assurance to encourage her—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” She has the many promises of the Old Testament that in the latter days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. She may expect to be herself filled with the Spirit, if she prays for the blessing. It is absolutely necessary that she should be. In no other way can she be fitted for the work of discipling the nations. Not merely for her own sake should you pray that the Church may continually

enjoy effusions of the Spirit, but for the sake of the perishing nations for whose conversion to the faith she is commanded to labor. Whenever the Church has been largely blessed with the Spirit's quickening influences, her members have been mightily strengthened and victories have been gained in the regions beyond.

What is the feeling which the Church needs to have wrought in her by the Holy Spirit, in order that she may be thoroughly stirred up to engage in the work of discipling all nations?

The answer is: She needs to have wrought in her an unquenchable desire to obey Christ's command. Even were we satisfied, on good grounds, that the heathen are safe without the gospel, it would, nevertheless, be just as much a duty to send them the gospel as it is now, when we know they must perish if they do not have it. Whether they are in danger, in their present state of destitution, or not, the command of the blessed Saviour is plain. Our part is implicitly to obey. If we really love Him, to whose sufferings on our account we owe our salvation, obedience will be a joy. We could conceive of no greater misery than to be left to go contrary to His will. Each member of the Church, purchased by the blood of God's own Son, should

feel himself addressed whenever he reads the words, "Go teach all nations;" and while humbly acknowledging that he is honored in being permitted to aid in the work of permanently establishing the gospel in every land, he should also feel that he is personally *commanded* to assist.

We ought indeed to resemble Him whom we are with reason expected to be like; and as He pitied perishing men in heathen blindness, so we should pity them. We, like Christ, should be moved with compassion for all who are as sheep without a shepherd; and impelled by this feeling, we should be willing to undergo any amount of labor, and endure any amount of suffering if we can thereby save them. Still, the motive which should have the precedence of all others, is an inextinguishable longing to obey our dear Lord's last command.

The Church has not even begun to be prepared to engage in this work, unless a grateful and loving desire to be conformed to the will of the Master is the motive which constrains her.

You see, then, what the blessing is which you should seek for the Church, in order that she may be prepared to work in her missionary character. You should entreat the Holy Spirit to fill her with

a consuming desire to be obedient to the parting injunction of her Lord and Saviour.

But, supposing the Church to be thoroughly actuated by this feeling, what special gifts does she need from the Holy Spirit to enable her to carry forward her work successfully ?

As she is commanded to make men disciples, and as her office is, therefore, to teach, she must receive such qualifications as knowledge ; skill in teaching ; patience in laboring ; love for the ignorant and benighted ; faith ; zeal ; and the grace of self-denying liberality.

In addition to this, she must receive wisdom to guide her in managing the details of her work—wisdom to use promptly and in the right way all those methods in the conduct of missions which experience may have taught to be the best. How much help from God she loses in consequence of unfaithfulness on the part of Christians to pray for her, it is sad to think of. Consent not to be among the number of those who grievously, habitually, neglect to seek for the Church, by their prayers, the gifts so much needed for the successful prosecution of her work, and which it is the sole office of the blessed Spirit to impart.

The duty prescribed in our Saviour's command

is that of teaching. And *this* is preaching. We are apt to use the word preaching in a more restricted sense than it is used in the Bible. The word does, indeed, mean the public formal proclamation of the doctrine of the Cross; but it means more: it comprehends other methods of communicating divine truth. Laboriously and patiently teaching that truth is, in Paul's sense of the word, preaching it. He says, in the first chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that God does not save men by the wisdom of the world, but that He saves them by the foolishness of preaching the *hidden* wisdom: namely, the gospel. *Any* method by which the gospel or the hidden wisdom is communicated, Paul would denominate the foolishness of preaching.

We cannot expect the secure and permanent establishment of the gospel in heathen lands, if we rely altogether on the public proclamation of the gospel, although that method must not be neglected. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a resort to the employment, however self-denying it may be, of teaching, day after day, the first principles of the oracles of God. If this agency, which the Church is bound assiduously to use, is trying to her faith and patience, it only shows how

much she needs to be strengthened for the work through your prayers. The very fact that the process is a slow one, shows that it is indispensable, for its very slowness is owing to the darkened minds, the degraded moral feelings, and the insensibility of the heathen.

Dr. Ellinwood, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in the United States, in a thrilling address which he lately delivered, said: "There can be no permanent mission work without education. A tribe in some of the mountains of India, or some island of the sea, may be converted—a tribe of uninfluential aborigines, though even among them you must establish schools. But especially among the great and strong races there can be little or nothing accomplished of a permanent character, without a foundation of knowledge."

"We should commit a fatal error," says Dr. Hodge, "if we should infer from the itinerant character of the apostles' labors that our missionaries should pass, in like manner, from city to city, abiding only a few months in any one place. It would be most unreasonable to expect that this mode of operating would now be attended with a success analogous to that which followed similar labors of

the apostles under circumstances essentially different. Permanent missions must be established, and the people must be laboriously taught. No man expects to raise a crop of wheat by casting seed broadcast in swamps, forests, and jungles ; and just as little reason have we to expect a harvest of souls, or the secure and permanent establishment of the gospel in heathen lands, by any such short and easy method of disseminating truth."

God's people would be continually engaged in praying that the Church may be quickened and assisted in her great work, if they would only always remember that the more faithful she is to the Saviour's command, the sooner the world will be converted ! It is in her power to hasten on the blessed day ; she may also, by unfaithfulness, delay it. O, let our supplications be abundant and unwearied, that the Holy Spirit would make the Church of Christ more engaged : more self-denying, zealous, laborious, liberal, prayerful, wise, and enterprising in carrying forward the glorious work which the Lord Jesus has given her to do.

IV.

WHILE YOU FAITHFULLY PRAY THAT THE CHURCH MAY BE ASSISTED TO DO HER WORK, BE EQUALLY IMPORTUNATE FOR THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT UPON THE HEATHEN THEMSELVES.

ALTHOUGH the old economy was indeed intended by its divine founder to have an exclusive character, yet there was much in the feelings with which the Jews contemplated the heathen around them which was at variance with the precepts and requirements of their own Scriptures, and highly offensive to God. They were proud and self-righteous. They despised the Gentiles. They regarded them as reprobates, and unworthy to have the true religion offered to them. Possessing themselves the advantages and privileges of that religion, they viewed without emotion the perishing condition of other nations. They had no pity on them. The prayer that God would have compassion on the heathen world was one which probably very few of the descendants of

(173)

Abraham ever offered. For this insensibility there was no excuse.

They were indeed precluded, by the very nature of the dispensation under which they lived, from sending forth missions to the heathen. They were divided from the rest of mankind by barriers which God Himself had erected. They were required to live apart from other nations, and to avoid all communion with them. God had chosen them to be a peculiar people, and had instituted for them a system of religious observances in which He did not intend that other nations should participate. To them were committed the prophecies and types of Christ, which were designed to prepare the way for His coming. According to God's plan, it was necessary that they should remain for a time secluded from the rest of the world, in order that a foundation might be laid for the future ingathering of the Gentiles into the Church.

But though the Jews were not to blame for making no attempt to convert the pagan population by which they were surrounded to the worship of Jehovah, they ought not to have looked upon their hopeless condition without compassion. They should have so pitied them as to long and pray for

the day when the Messiah would come to do away with the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and give even the sons of the Stranger a place in His kingdom.

That such a day was coming, they might have known. It was their narrow, selfish spirit which made them blind to the real character of their own dispensation. Their inspired teachers plainly taught them that the old economy was designed to be only temporary, and to prepare the way for the universal diffusion of the truth in after ages.

No change in the feelings of the Jews toward the heathen had taken place when Christ came, and when His apostles labored.

During the age of the apostles, and in the first centuries which succeeded it, the devoted disciples of the Lord Jesus labored for the salvation of all whom they were able to reach. They had an expansive Christian spirit. They loved benighted souls everywhere.

Then, alas, followed many long centuries in which the millions dying in ignorance—destroyed for lack of knowledge—were forgotten. In fact, it is only within the last sixty or seventy years that the Church of Christ has awakened to feel for the

heathen, to wrestle with God in concert for them, and to put forth the exertions required for their enlightenment and evangelization.

It is very possible to offer empty petitions for the conversion of the nations. Prayer for their conversion must always be empty, which is unattended with active efforts and self-denying labors to send the gospel to them. The uselessness of prayer without such toils and efforts, however, should not for a moment cause us to forget the immense power which it has, when in connection with it we use the other means which God has instructed us to employ.

If we believe that the Holy Spirit alone has power to change the heart, pity for the benighted will lead us to pray, that as fast as the truth is made known to them, they may experience its saving influences. "This is the one thing needful in the present posture of the heathen world. The way of the Lord is sufficiently prepared in many places to admit of glorious and triumphant displays of His grace."

Our Saviour commands us to pray for the conversion of the heathen nations, since He enjoins it upon us to pray for the extension of His kingdom over the whole earth. His words are: "After this

manner, therefore, pray ye. . . . Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In no way, however, can the heathen be converted unless they receive the Holy Spirit. If, then, we make no mention of them and their dreadful wants in our supplications; if our intercessions for them that they may have the Holy Spirit are even intermitted, we disobey the Saviour's positive command.

Believers pray that all nations and people may flow unto the Church when they plead for the complete establishment of Christ's kingdom in the world. The two petitions are the same. When, therefore, in the sixty-second chapter of Isaiah, seventh verse, the people of God are called upon to be importunate for the Church's establishment, they are called upon to plead for the ingathering of the nations. That verse is as follows: "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." In reference to this passage, President Edwards says: "I know of no place in the Bible where so strange an expression is made use of to signify importunity in prayer. How strong is this phrase, and how loud is this

call to the Church of God to be fervent and incessant in their cries to Him for this great mercy. How wonderful the words used concerning the manner in which such worms of the dust should address the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity! And what encouragement is here to approach the mercy-seat with the greatest freedom, humble boldness, earnestness, constancy, and full assurance of faith, to seek of God this greatest favor that can be sought in Christian prayer."

There are many passages of the Old Testament, a few of which we shall now quote, which foretell that the true religion shall prevail over the whole earth, that Messiah shall be a light to the Gentiles, and that all nations shall see the salvation of God. But these predictions of that glorious consummation—and remember it as you read them—are, at the same time, injunctions to pray for it. That which God abundantly makes the subject of His promises, God's people should abundantly make the subject of their prayers.

The Messiah is represented as saying, Ps. ii. 8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." In Ps. xxii. 27, it is said: "All the ends of the earth shall remember

and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."

Isaiah says, chap. ii. verses 2, 3: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

And, in other places, God speaks by His prophet as follows: "I have sworn by myself—the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return—that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." "Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim."

"Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?"

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in

their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."

"Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

“I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.” (xlv. 22, 23 ; xlix. 12, 21-23 ; liv. 2, 3 ; lx. 2-5 ; lxv. 1.)

And the prophet Jeremiah says (chap iii. 17) : “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord ; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem : neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.”

By His prophet Hosea, God said : “ I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people ; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” (Hos. ii. 23.)

Some of these promises are quoted by the Apostle for the express purpose of showing that the gospel was designed for the Gentiles, and of impressing on the Church its obligation to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven. And frequently, and with great earnestness, does he, in his epistles, set forth the purpose of God to bring the Gentiles into the Church.

Be much engaged in prayer, then, for the outpouring of the Spirit upon the nations, because it is in this way that the glorious ingathering of them

into the Church is to take place. Whenever, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is said to be "poured out," it has respect to gospel times. Some of the promises that the Holy Spirit shall be poured out upon all nations are to be found in Isaiah xxxii. 15; xliv. 3; lix. 21; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; xxxix. 29; Joel ii. 28, 29; Zech. xii. 10.

Although many have long been engaged in pleading for the dying heathen, yet the number, after all, is small, compared with the multitudes who have neglected this duty. The majority of those who compose the visible Church make it manifest that they take little interest in the work of missions; who, then, can believe that they pray for its success? The majority, we say, manifest no vital interest in the cause. We see the fact in the smallness of the sums contributed for the support of missionary establishments; for it will not be disputed that the amount is very little, compared with what ought to be contributed. We see it in the limited attendance on meetings for public and social prayer for the world's conversion. We see it in the fewness of those who subscribe for missionary publications. And we see it in the wealth and fashion which display themselves in the dress, furniture, and houses of Christians.

When we consider how wonderfully God has answered the prayers which the comparatively few faithful ones have offered, what glorious displays of divine grace in heathen countries might we not have witnessed, had every member of the Church of the last and present generations wrestled daily with God for the salvation of the pagan world!

V.

IF YOU REALLY HAVE THE INTERESTS OF THE SAVIOUR'S KINGDOM MUCH AT HEART, YOU WILL PRAY FOR THE INCREASE OF LABORERS, AND YOU WILL LIKEWISE INTERCEDE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY ENTERED THE HARVEST, AND ARE ACTUALLY AT WORK.

IF it were the office of the Holy Spirit to make the ignorant acquainted with the truths of the Bible, human laborers would not be needed. But this is not the Spirit's office. He has done all He will ever do, as far as externally revealing the will of God is concerned. He has revealed it in His Word. To make it known to men is now the business of Christ's disciples. The Blessed Spirit has, indeed, a part to perform after the truth has been communicated, but His divine saving influence has never been experienced, as far as we know, by any adult soul until the knowledge of the truth has been conveyed to that soul through the instrumentality of some human teacher.

Our Saviour pitied the ignorant multitude who daily surrounded Him, and He might have re-

(184)

moved their ignorance by miracle without the painful exertion of teaching them. But He did not work a miracle to fill their minds with knowledge. He laboriously taught the people; and what He did for the uninstructed around Him, He requires us to do for the uninstructed of our day. The ignorant masses will never be miraculously made to know what it is the business of the Church to communicate. Laborers will always be needed.

Angels would have considered it a great honor had the blessed Saviour seen fit to employ them in the work of extending His kingdom in this world, by instructing poor sinners. But God chooses not angels to do this thing, but men; not unconverted men, but those who, though once under the sentence of death, are now pardoned, and through free grace made heirs of heaven. Neither does the Head of the Church limit Himself to ministers. Others are permitted to be workers besides these, *and our Saviour did not mean ministers only* when He commanded us to pray that laborers might be sent into the harvest. He will reward all who from love to Him devote themselves to the work of advancing His kingdom.

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to call men to labor in our Lord's vineyard, and it is also His

office to endow them with the gifts necessary to enable them to do the particular work assigned them. To one He gives one gift, to another, another, dividing to each one severally as He will. This is the reason why our Saviour requires us to pray for laborers. If they could be constituted laborers by *human* appointment, or could be *self*-appointed, the Church and the world would not have been entirely dependent, as they now are, on the Holy Spirit; but as ministers and all other workers are gifts of the Spirit, and can be obtained only when He furnishes them, there is no other way by which a supply can be secured except by prayer.

Christ's words in Matthew ix. 38 are not to be regarded as advice or counsel which we are at liberty to comply with or not as we please. They are a positive command. We are expressly commanded to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. He will be inquired of for this blessing that He may do it for us. There are many other places in which He exhorts His disciples to the duty of prayer, but in this He informs them particularly what to pray for. He puts words as it were into their mouth. Is it not absolutely certain, then, that the dreadful

deficiency of faithful laborers affords proof that His command has not been obeyed?

There are hundreds of millions of dying men in our world, and Christ commands His Church to preach the gospel to them all. He knows, however, that she can only do this by employing men who are qualified for the work. But then He shows her how such men can be obtained. They can be obtained by prayer. And He commands us to pray for them. If we obey this command, we shall see our prayers answered. Laborers will be raised up in all parts of the world. They will be raised up in parts of the world and among people which are now in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death, and that in great numbers—laborers who will prove themselves, in multitudes of instances, as efficient workers under the guidance of the Master as the Church has ever seen, and who will accomplish much in the way of establishing His kingdom in their own lands. As soon as the heathen are converted to Christ, they feel that His parting injunction, “Go teach,” is addressed to them. In fact, it is chiefly by means of converted heathen that the heathen world is to be brought into the Church. This is a truth which all recognize.

But not to speak of the destitute hundreds of

millions in heathen and in other far-off lands, statistics show that from one-fourth to one-half of the people in every State of our Union are living without the regular ministration of the gospel; and there are heathen enough in our cities to give employment to an army of laborers. What is to be thought of us, if knowing these facts and knowing that our Lord has expressly commanded us to pray for laborers, we continue to be remiss in the duty?

While we are required to pray that laborers may be raised up and sent into the harvest, it is also His will that we faithfully intercede for all His servants who have already entered the field and are actually at work. It is true that every believer is a servant of Christ, and that no man is a Christian at all who does not exert himself to some extent, at least, to further the interests of the Saviour's kingdom. But *they* are in a peculiar sense laborers who preach the gospel, *or who not being ministers, spend their strength and time either in teaching God's word, or in doing work in the various departments of Christian effort.* What an immense multitude of beloved workers of this description, and that of both sexes, there are, both in Christian and in heathen lands! Let us intercede for them day and night, and beg

the blessed Spirit of God to strengthen, comfort, guide, cheer, and prosper them.*

In praying for ministers, you make a great mistake if you only ask that they may be successful in their work. Pray, indeed, that they may be permitted to see visible results of their labors. Do not omit to seek *that* for them. Seek it very earnestly; but pray that they may continue to be faithful, whether they appear to be successful or not. Pray that they may indeed be reapers, but entreat that they may not faint, should it be God's will that they only sow. Herein is that saying true says our blessed Lord, "One soweth and another reapeth." "The reaper is scarcely accounted a laborer, so light and easy is his harvest work; still he is permitted to rejoice in the harvest home

* The appeals which are constantly made to us by the missionaries to pray for them are most affecting. "No miser," says one of these beloved laborers, writing from India, "ever gloated over his gold and coveted every shining coin more than I rejoice in and covet the prayers of God's people. The battle rages fiercely about us, the conflict is hot, and we hardly know in the smoke of the battle whether the din be the shout of victory or the wail of defeat. The result depends very much on the Aarons and Hurs who sit high above us on the hills of gospel light in the far-away Christian lands. Are their hands still raised? If so, we shall prevail, even though we are faint and few in this dark, heathen land."

with the hard-working, wrestling, waiting, watching sower; To be in profound sympathy with the most high God; to be His willing instruments for His sovereign pleasure, ready either for hard work or still harder endurance, for success or for seeming defeat; to live for God's great glory,—this is the chief end of the ministry, as it is of all men who live aright." *

Intercede not merely for your own pastor, but for all Christ's ministers in all the world of every Christian denomination. Pray for the increase of their piety: that they may be holier men; that they may be filled with the Spirit. It is possible for one to perform ministerial duties steadily, without himself cultivating those graces which he urges

* See the article in the *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review* for January, 1873, entitled, "Why are not more persons converted under our ministry?" In another paragraph of the same article, the writer says: "Fidelity in darkness and in difficulty, when the Church is cold and apathetic, and God's Spirit is withheld; fidelity when a whole nation seems apostate, and there are but seven thousand of the Lord's hidden ones; fidelity like that of Athanasius, when the word became proverbial, 'Athanasius contra mundum, mundus contra Athanasium;' such fidelity compared with the richest harvest ingathering, marks ministerial heroism of the highest order. Such heroes were John Howe and John Owen in the days of Charles the Second. Such heroes to-day preside over multitudes of churches in our own land."

his hearers to cultivate—love for the Master and for souls, faith, humility, patience, long-suffering, a spirit of forgiveness, of prayer, of self-denial, and of liberality. Some have thought that this is a day of peculiar temptation for many ministers, from the very fact of their being so honored, beloved, and sedulously cherished.*

If, in accordance with the will of God, you earnestly and importunately intercede for Christ's laborers, you identify yourself with them. Because of your loving intercessions, you are regarded by the blessed Saviour as yourself a laborer. "It may be that the lives of some are lengthened out, that

* "Would that it were in my power to place in this pulpit a Paul, emaciated by fasts, worn out by toils, exhausted by watchings, pining away from confinement in prisons, mutilated by the rods of Phillippi and the stones of Lystra! That sight, those recollections: think what an exordium for his discourse! What weight, what savor, must they have given to the least of his words! What power, such as never will be attained by a minister of the gospel, faithful in the contemporary acceptation of the word, but living in comfort, a stranger to suffering, largely sharing in the sweets of individual, domestic, social life; honored, beloved, sedulously cherished by all men! Those evangelical ministers of ease and comfort, alas! must one go far to find them? Ah! were we other than we are, how could we have been produced, or how endured by this contemporary generation of the children of God? Is it not itself the generation of ease and comfort?"—
ADOLPHE MONOD.

they may offer up many prayers for the Church and the world ; for, after all the activity, and bustle, and zeal apparent, there is no service which can be performed by mortals so effectual as prayer. While Joshua and the men of war contend with the Amalckites in the battle, Moses assists by lifting up his hands in prayer ; and when he is, through fatigue, no longer able to hold them up, he is assisted by Aaron on one side and Hur on the other. Here, then, is a work to which you may be devoted. You can follow the missionary, who leaves all to go and labor in heathen lands."

How frequently and earnestly the great Apostle begged an interest in the prayers of God's people, often enforcing his request by the tenderest considerations ! To the Christians at Rome, he says : " Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive, together with me, in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea, that my service for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." (Rom. xv. 30-32). In all his other requests of this nature, he expresses the same reliance on the power of human intercession.

The excellent William Romaine, of London, kept a list of ministers and others, whom he made the subjects of special intercession by name. In a letter to a friend, in regard to this practice, he says: "Once a week, on Friday, I have what I call the clergy's litany, in which, after general petitions for the outpouring of the Spirit upon all the ministers of our Church, I make mention by name of those my fellow-laborers whom God has highly honored in making them faithful and useful in the ministry. As I go over their names, recommending them to the care, and their people to the blessing, of our glorious Head, it is my custom to ask particularly for them such things as I know or hear they want. To set forth Jesus, that men may behold His matchless glory, is our office. O, for more love to this precious Jesus and to His cause in your heart! It will be as a thousand arguments to put you upon praying for an increase of laborers, and for an increase of usefulness in those He has already sent out. To send out ministers to promote His glory through the salvation of His people, is the ruling affection in the Head of the Church, and when He intends to send them out, He gives His people the Spirit of prayer."

When Christ's servants are personally known to

us, we do well to pray for them *by name*, as this eminent servant of God did; but the ear of our Heavenly Father is equally open to our prayers, when we plead for the greater number of laborers whom we shall never know in the flesh.

VI.

THE COMMAND CONTAINED IN I. TIM. II. 1, TO PRAY "FOR ALL MEN," MAKES IT YOUR DUTY TO INTERCEDE FOR OTHERS BESIDES THOSE ALREADY ENUMERATED.

THE pious habits of even those believers of whom a pretty full account is given in the Bible, are but partially disclosed. Moses, no doubt, prayed much every day for the Israelites, and yet mention is only made of his interceding for them five or six times. Abraham must have interceded for others very frequently—for Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, and all his household. Since he was faithful in instructing them, we may conclude that he was faithful in praying for them. And yet he is only presented to us as offering two intercessory prayers. Samuel must have prayed for his countrymen all his life; for, if that were not the case, he would hardly have said: "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

The intercessory prayers of the New Testament saints, also, must have been much more frequent

(195)

than we would suppose, did we only judge by the number of times they are exhibited to us as praying for others. If believers prayed for Peter in prison without ceasing, they certainly were in the *habit* of praying for Christ's servants and for each other. Paul's desire and entreaties for the prayers of others appear in all his epistles, and he knew that throughout the wide field of his apostolic labors, his request was complied with. To the Philippians he says: "I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." There can hardly be a doubt that the Churches to which he addresses his epistles greatly excelled us in obeying his injunction, or rather the command of God: "That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority."

Our blessed Saviour said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We limit this exclusively to that form of giving which consists in aiding others by bestowing our worldly possessions upon them, but it has a wider application. To employ our time in devising liberal things: to give our thoughts, sympathies, anxieties, strength, our very selves to others, in efforts to relieve and help them,

is more blessed than to receive the same from them. And our Lord may have intended to teach us that even in giving others our *prayers*, we are more blessed than when we are the subjects of *their* prayers, highly favored as we are when God inclines His people to intercede for us.

The sympathies of a generous philanthropy have in these days been greatly aroused in behalf of the various classes of needy sufferers, and not only what is commonly called philanthropy, but Christian love, has led to concerted action to rescue these sufferers and to do them good. And surely the unhappy and the neglected, whom good men are making organized efforts to save, should be constantly remembered in our prayers. We identify ourselves with these beloved Christian workers, when we daily intercede for those whom they are seeking to benefit. Some of those who in our day are most sought out and lovingly ministered unto, are Seamen, Orphans, Freedmen, the wretched Poor in cities, Prisoners, homeless Young Men employed by mercantile houses, Inebriates, Emigrants from abroad, and forsaken and errant Children. It is sad to think how long the exposed and needy belonging to these ranks of our fellow-creatures have been forgotten. In speaking a word in behalf of

the first of these classes—Seamen, a devoted servant of Jesus and a faithful friend of the Sailor, eloquently says :

“ How long was it before Christian watchmen even missed the sailor from Church assemblies? How long before means were used to furnish his sea-chest with the Bible? How long before a Bethel-flag was hoisted, or a Bethel-chapel built? While we bless God for what has been done, and for the encouragement we have to proceed, we cannot but bewail the absolute destitution of the vast body of mariners. Immense portions of the Christian world take no cognizance of them as immortal beings. Congregations send up prayers for years without remembering those whose business is in the great waters. And the consequence is, that although no field of effort has yielded more fruit in proportion to the labor bestowed, yet so vast is the amount to be compassed, that the great mass is not reached. Neglected mortals continue to plunge unprepared into eternity. It would be a consolation to the pallid, shivering seaman, as he spends his few last moments on the parting timbers, before the final plunge, to remember some word of promise ; some hour of communion ; some message from Christ’s ministers ; some precious sacrament—alas !

what multitudes have none such to remember! They have come and gone for years to and from Christian ports, but they have found no Christian privilege there; for none have taken them by the hand, or led them to the house of prayer. A poignant sense of this neglect moved the founders of Bethel Societies to begin and prosecute their work."

Besides the classes which have been enumerated, there are those who, on account of the offices which they fill, the work which they perform for the public, and the trusts committed to them, need to be continually commended to God. Such are Magistrates and Rulers, Teachers of youth, and those engaged in editing and conducting journals. The youth collected in Colleges and other Literary Institutions, have long been interceded for by our Churches in their assemblies on set days; but it is to be feared that they have seldom been earnestly commended to God in the closet.

Let your intercession, reader, however feeble it may seem to you, be put forth to move the will of God to show mercy to all conditions of men. Other intercessions shall meet it at the throne of grace. "Yea, his shall certainly meet it which is singly and by itself the strongest of all forces with God—

powerful at all times to bend his will, and impetrate from him the highest blessings."

It has been well said, that in our reluctance to intercessory prayer, we must acknowledge, if we be candid with ourselves, the presence of a bad feeling, a great want of sympathy with others; or, in other words, a lack of love. We feel no interest in them, and therefore do not care to pray for them, not considering that such selfishness invalidates and empties of efficacy our prayers for ourselves.

The Church of God is constantly increasing in strength and numbers. The Lord is daily adding to it such as shall be saved. There are not only always millions of advanced believers on earth, but there are always multitudes in the world who are young in the Christian life. It is astonishing that these newly-converted souls are so forgotten by us. They have become subjects of a work of grace under diverse circumstances, though in all cases by means of the truth applied by the Holy Spirit. If there are parts of the world, as we know there are, where, at this very time, the Church is refreshed and gladdened by revivals, in these places especially many souls are daily translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Do not take it for

granted that they are receiving from those around them such assistance as renders your prayers for them unnecessary. You know not what good you may do by faithfully interceding every day for the Church's converts.

Pray for those who have done you wrong. Seek for them the same blessing which you petition for on behalf of those who love you—the Holy Spirit. Pray for all in any way dependent on you—for all your relatives, near and distant. You may have many thus to commend—parents, brothers, sisters, children, helpmates, friends, masters, servants, pastors, parishioners; and may commend them all by the simple, quiet, devout recitation of their names. God understands their necessities perfectly; and we may safely ask Him to supply them all according to the understanding which He has of them, in His infinite Mind.*

“A friendly intercessor at the throne of grace is of more real value than many worldly friends. Such should be highly appreciated while they live, and when their death is deplored, it should be chiefly on this account, that we have lost one of the most efficient aids to our spiritual security and

* Goulburn's "Thoughts on Personal Religion."

advancement. In the death of Christian friends, we are too apt to think of the loss we suffer in a merely temporal point of view. But one who has learned the way of access to the throne of grace, and has become familiar in his approaches to God: who has daily wrestled in prayer, and whose prayers of faith have been effectual, subjects his surviving friends, by his death, to a much greater loss than can be estimated by the ordinary rules of calculation. He will pray no longer for us, nor use his influence at the throne of grace in our behalf. We have lost an advocate and intercessor in regard to interests of deep moment."

Dominion over the whole universe was given to our Lord after His resurrection. All power in heaven and earth was then committed to His hands, and He reigns as Mediatorial King. Pray, then, incessantly that He would make all things concur in the execution of His glorious designs. Entreat Him to make governments, wars, revolutions, inventions, discoveries; all human plans and enterprises, good and bad; all science; all the arts; all knowledge, tributary to the advancement of His kingdom. And as fallen spirits, no less than good angels and men, are in complete subjection to Him, earnestly and incessantly pray that He would de-

fend poor perishing souls, and especially all His people, from the arts, malice, designs, and power of the Evil One, and even limit, diminish, and destroy Satan's entire kingdom.

VII.

AS IT IS A PART OF THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO RESTRAIN MEN AND KEEP WITHIN BOUNDS THEIR CORRUPTIONS, YOU SHOULD PRAY THAT HE WOULD MORE AND MORE RESTRAIN THE WICKED.

ONE of the ways by which He exercises an influence to restrain ungodly men is by co-operating for that purpose with the truth already presented to their minds.

Millions of wicked men in our world have some knowledge of the truths of the Bible. This is the necessary result of their having been born in Christian communities, and of their being surrounded by those who fear God and openly keep His commandments. Though such men may succeed in keeping themselves remote from all the direct means of religious instruction, they cannot prevent the truth from having an indirect influence upon them. More or less truth has entered their minds, and if they are raised in the scale of intellectual and moral being above the heathen, it is owing to the power over them of that very truth which they do not love.

(204)

Now, it is partly by using that amount of divine truth which wicked men have reluctantly imbibed that the Holy Spirit operates on their minds to hold their corruptions under restraint. Insensible as they may be, He guards against their sinking into that degree of insensibility which would allow of their utterly and totally disbelieving the truth. There is a secret conviction in their breasts that the solemn and fearful things spoken of in the Bible are real. The Holy Spirit having intimate access to their souls, keeps their moral nature roused; and as long as man's moral nature is active, he will be convinced by the internal evidence which the Word of God contains, that it is indeed His Word.

No soul having this insight into the truths of the Bible, and awakened to see the divinity which is in them, can sin as it otherwise would. It is held under restraint. It experiences the power of the truth thus apprehended, to produce in it a feeling of its accountability to the righteous Governor of the world.

Most of the fallen inhabitants of this earth, however, are in heathen darkness, and are entirely unacquainted with the truths revealed in the Scriptures. But we are not to suppose that, on that account, the Holy Spirit has no truth which He

can use to restrain their wickedness. They possess that same moral constitution which belongs to other men, and, therefore, though they know not the way to be saved, yet they are not destitute of light—they have knowledge of moral truth—they know what is right. They are not ignorant of the righteous judgment of God, and that they which do such things are worthy of death. No; even the heathen, though they may be to a fearful extent given up and judicially abandoned, are not as totally unrestrained as are the lost in the world of despair. While their corruptions are allowed to flow out so far as may serve to accomplish God's holy purposes, yet even *their* wickedness the omnipotent Spirit confines within bounds.

By coöperating with the truth, then, the Holy Spirit exerts His influence to keep the ungodly in check. With every human mind He is present, enforcing truth and restraining from evil. As to the nature of His influence, which He thus exercises in a greater or less degree on the minds of men—as to the way in which He comes in contact with the soul, and so operates upon it that the truth lodged within becomes quick and powerful, we are left in ignorance.

But it is not merely by using the truth as an in-

strument that the Holy Spirit keeps down the wicked. Doubtless He also exerts a restraining influence by acting upon them directly and immediately.

We know not how to be sufficiently grateful for those influences of the Spirit of God which are common to all men. The Bible shows us what would be the effect of His entire withdrawal from the control of rational creatures by the glimpse which it gives us of the state of the lost, both men and angels. "Heaven is a place and state in which the Spirit reigns with absolute control. Hell is a place and state in which the Spirit no longer restrains and controls. The presence or absence of the Spirit makes all the difference between heaven and hell. To the general influence of the Spirit we owe all the decorum, order, refinement, and virtue existing among men. Mere fear of future punishment, the natural sense of right, and the restraints of human laws, would prove feeble barriers to evil, were it not for the repressing power of the Spirit which, like the pressure of the atmosphere, is universal and powerful, although unfelt."*

* Dr. Hodge.

The more the evil which is in men is checked and curbed, the better is it for sinners themselves—the better it is also for the Church and the world; and therefore we should pray very earnestly that God would send forth His Spirit expressly to limit and repress human wickedness. If we who love Zion ask God to coerce and restrain by His providential efficiency Satan and the Powers of Darkness, why should we not also entreat Him to keep under and bind by the influence of His Spirit the unholy passions of the unrighteous? Besides, the bad in this world belong to Satan, and are a part of his kingdom. He does all in his power to increase and heighten the violence of their corruptions; he likewise by his wiles entices them in the paths of sin as far as he can. So that when the wicked men of the world are restrained, the adversary's empire is checked in its progress.

Our blessed Saviour has been exalted to His mediatorial throne on purpose that He may cause the doings of evil men to work together for the establishment of His kingdom. And one way by which he makes their actions tributary to its establishment, is by confining their corruptions—by saying to them: "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther."

However much external polish a man may have, yet if his heart has become hardened and very vile, two consequences follow: his influence for evil is powerful and wide-spread, and the probability of his own conversion is far less than it once was. Men of this description abound. Why was not the Spirit's influences sought for them by God's praying people before they attained to their present degree of vileness? We are persuaded that Christians pray far too little that God would by His Holy Spirit restrain wicked men. Therefore it is that we urge you to offer daily this request.

VIII.

YOU DO TRULY SEEK THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR YOUR FELLOW-MEN WHEN YOU EARNESTLY PRAY FOR THE PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM IN THE WORLD BY MEANS OF GENUINE REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

THAT it is the design of God that the work of redemption should be carried on in part by means of revivals will not be disputed, and we should desire and pray for their frequent recurrence. Before, however, considering the inducements to petition God for them, we will very briefly look at the other methods by which the Saviour builds up His kingdom.

As far as the children of the covenant are concerned, we know that they are to be trained up both by their parents and by the Church as those already belonging to God. And if these parents and the Church are faithful to their trust, they will not lose their reward. They will, in due time, find that the God of the covenant has also been faithful to His promise. Their children will by their godly

lives give evidence of having indeed undergone the second birth, and of being the subjects of a continuous work of grace.

According to this method—one which God's people have always recognized as included in the divine plan, and which we see from both the Old and the New Testaments is very dear to the heart of God—the manifest and striking conversion of multitudes simultaneously is out of the question. It is a method of increase by which Christ's kingdom grows from within. Unless we earnestly desire in behalf of Zion this kind of growth, and unceasingly pray for it, and diligently *use the means* which are adapted to bring it about, we are guilty of a neglect, the effects of which upon the Church and upon our children must be disastrous in the highest degree. These means are none other than the early, assiduous, and faithful culture of the young, mainly by their Christian parents.

This parental culture or Christian training as a means for the salvation of the children and the increase of the Church has, as was said, been always more or less recognized as one of God's own appointment. The divine blessing on its use is secured by the precious promises with which all are so familiar. But though the creeds of most evan-

gical Churches are on this subject sound and in accordance with the teachings of Scripture, yet in practice they have often placed a disproportionate reliance on the proclamation from the pulpit as the only means of conversion.

The growth of the Church through the cultivation of family religion "is the natural method of increase, and it accords also with the inspired explanation, through Malachi, of God's intent, in the institution of marriage and of the family, 'that he might seek a godly seed.'" *

But Christ's kingdom on earth also makes progress by gradual accretion—by the conversion and reception into the Church of small numbers, from time to time. The Church has ever grown, "not merely by great sudden movements, such as that of Pentecost, but also by constant though insensible accretion." It ought not to be disputed that this, too, is a method of God's own choosing. Many Churches, both in this country and in other lands, have been, by God's blessing upon them, preserved in a healthy state for years, using only the ordinary means of grace. They have been

* Rev. Dr. Patton's paper on Revivals of Religion read before the late Evangelical Alliance.

permitted to witness for a long series of years, and that without interruption, a steady, quiet ingathering of souls from the world.

The writer has long been acquainted with a pastor whose church, from the time of his first settlement over them until the present, has been thus favored; and yet nothing has ever been published in the religious papers in regard to its condition. Speaking especially of the state of things which existed during a certain period of the history of his church, he says: "The promise, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel,' was sweetly fulfilled. Gently the grace of our Lord Jesus distilled upon us. He seemed to breathe on all our assemblies and say, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' We did not multiply religious services, because we thought it better to attend those already established, and to put honor on home duties. Adults and youth gave themselves to Jesus, believing that they were no longer their own, but were bought with a price. Those precious years, I am sure, did much to establish our hearts in the faith of the gospel, to strengthen us for Christian toil, to bind us together in the love of brethren, and though we knew it not then, to help us safely through the stormy period of our history, when the fearful commotions of the State

threatened the Churches through the length and breadth of our darkened land."

The church of this favored pastor has had no revivals with protracted meetings, or meetings additional to the usual ones; and yet it has so prospered and increased as to be able, on three different occasions, to give away members and families to form separate organizations, which, beginning their existence with small numbers, are now three flourishing churches.

Still another way by which the Church of Christ makes progress, is by revivals, in which multitudes are at one time born again by the power of the Holy Spirit and brought to the Saviour. Whenever, within a short period, large accessions are thus made from the classes of the impenitent and the ungodly, it is entirely owing to a gracious outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Now, it is our privilege to pray for the frequent recurrence of revivals in all places where the Church is planted and the gospel is proclaimed. It is granted us to ask freely and importunately that the Church may be more and more favored with special seasons of mercy, in which, as the result of copious effusions of the Spirit, her numbers may

be greatly multiplied. Our object is to urge you to offer this prayer. A word or two first, however, by way of explanation.

There is a difference between praying for a revival in the particular local church, where our name is enrolled, and entreating God to revive the Church at large. It is this latter request which we would more especially entreat you to present to God. This, above all other kinds of intercessory prayer, is most free from selfishness, and it is even the best way to intercede for the little society with which we are more palpably connected. If the Church at large is greatly blessed, your own will share the blessing. When we are too exclusively interested in the local body, with which we are, as it seems to us, especially identified, God, in His condescending love, may not reject our prayers in its behalf, but He may answer them by blessing some part of His earthly kingdom, remote from where we live. And we should be grateful if He does answer us in this way, since, even then, He is using us to promote His glory and the good of souls. Even our own country should not be thought of too exclusively. Angels are at this very time rejoicing over the repentance of multitudes of con-

verts in Great Britain ; they are rejoicing just as much as if these conversions had taken place in this country, and so should we.*

While we do not overlook the importance of earnestly pleading in the sanctuary and in the meeting of brethren, that multitudes may at once be turned unto God, yet we are mainly anxious to prevail upon you to be earnest and importunate for this blessing in your secret prayers.

When we thus plead for the simultaneous conversion of multitudes, our supplications may assume one of two forms, according as our thoughts dwell on the instrument or on the power. If that which is the more prominent and vivid in our minds is the instrument, our petition will be that the truth may have efficacy ; that the Word may mightily grow and prevail, and may so prosper in the thing whereunto it is sent as to effect a saving change in thousands ; that preachers may be blessed in their labors and may be successful in winning, in a brief period, vast numbers to Christ. But if the *power* is more prominent and vivid in our minds, our prayer will be that the Holy Spirit, abundantly poured out, would breathe upon the slain, and cause them to

* The above was written at the time of the religious movement in Great Britain, under Moody and Sankey.

live; would, by His divine energy, open the hearts of multitudes, sweetly constraining them to attend to the things spoken; would create anew thousands of spiritually dead souls and unite them to Christ by an effectual calling.

Now it is a benefit, whilst we are supplicating, to have the power uppermost in our minds—the Holy Spirit—because we are ever apt to see more clearly the necessity of instruments than we are to feel profoundly human dependence on divine influence. Such is our weakness that there is always a tendency in us to have faith in the instrument, instead of in the power. “The Spirit first, the Spirit last, ought to be remembered, trusted in, exalted.” The total spiritual death of the soul renders the mere use of means and the labors of human instruments and agencies working alone, utterly powerless.

As no wicked being is as powerful as the Holy Spirit of God, no wicked being can prevent Him from creating anew, in a moment of time, as many as He pleases thus to quicken, though Satan would willingly, if he could, contend successfully with his Creator, and hinder Him from calling the spiritually dead to life.

One reason for continuing in prayer for abundant

outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and for the sudden conversion of multitudes, is that such visitations will bring on more rapidly the latter-day glory.

It would seem to be indispensable that from time to time the cloud of mercy above should burst and pour down a flood at once, unless the time of the final subjugation of the world to Christ is, according to the plan of God, far more distant than any one believes it to be. Our Saviour's method of carrying on the work of Redemption does, indeed, require the use of other means besides revivals; but, if His kingdom is to gain only and always by slow degrees, how are 1,200,000,000 of souls ever to be converted? It would seem to be necessary that there should now and then be periods of sudden and very great expansion. Even then, however, the latter-day glory must be exceedingly distant, if these precious seasons are to be few and far between. Nothing can insure the speedy establishment of our dear Lord's kingdom on the ruins of Satan's kingdom, but the frequent repetition of revivals, provided these are genuine, powerful, and extensive. May we not expect such glorious repetition? We may, if we humbly, but importunately, wrestle for it, with our souls filled with unutterable longings for the salvation of men, and for the

crowning of our Saviour Lord of all. May not the time come when Christians will look back on Pentecost as a day of small things, compared with that which has dawned on the Church? "It is to be hoped," says Dr. Hodge, "that a new effusion of the Spirit, like that of the day of Pentecost, may be granted to the Church, whose fruits shall as far exceed those of the first effusion as the millions of Christians now alive exceed in number the one hundred and twenty souls then gathered in Jerusalem." *

This reason for supplicating for powerful revivals is one which, in times gone by, has stirred up the best of God's people to offer such prayer, so that we are all the more inexcusable if we fail to be influenced by it.

During the years 1744 and 1745, many ministers and large numbers of God's people in Scotland and England spent, by agreement among themselves, a portion of every Saturday evening and Sabbath morning in earnest prayer for "an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit on all the Churches and the whole habitable earth, and for the reviving of true religion in all parts of Christendom." At the ex-

* Dr. Hodge's Theology, Vol. III., p. 804.

piration of the two years, the ministers agreed on a memorial to be printed and sent abroad to their brethren in various parts of Great Britain and to the Christians in this country, proposing to them and requesting of them to join in this method of united prayer. Copies of this memorial were circulated according to the plan. President Edwards was deeply interested in the whole movement, and it was the occasion of his writing his celebrated "Humble attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people, in Extraordinary Prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth." Who shall tell when the glorious power of the innumerable prayers offered in response to the appeal of those good men shall end?

Other examples might be presented of holy men pleading with God for the pouring out of the Spirit and for world-wide revivals of religion.

There have been held in our country occasionally conventions of ministers and elders for special prayer. In a convocation of this kind which met in the city of Pittsburgh, in 1842, a venerable servant of God made this impressive statement: "I have in my mind one who, when brought into the Church, could not read the Bible; yet that man

did more for the cause of Christ than many ministers. He lay, I think, at the foundation of the great revival which took place forty years ago. He was a wrestling Jacob, who poured out his soul to God. A hundred times have I knelt with him in a solitary thicket and implored God to pour out His Spirit on the whole Church."

It is well known that the first of the daily prayer-meetings with which the revival of 1857 began was held in the Consistory room of the North Dutch Church, at the corner of William and Fulton streets, New York. Speaking of that precious work of grace, James W. Alexander, in his little book, "The Revival and its Lessons," says: "Prayers long treasured-up were beginning to receive copious answer — prayers of which some we have thought *may have been offered by those venerable ministers of Holland whose portraitures still adorn the walls of the Consistory room.*"

Another reason for desiring and praying for the conversion of great multitudes at once is, that by such remarkable displays of grace, God is, at the very time of their occurrence, greatly glorified.

"If a large number of thoughtless youths, or confirmed sinners," says William Arthur,* "be-

* "Tongue of Fire."

come devoted to God through the instrumentality of some one preacher, and if this extend to neighborhood after neighborhood, a feeling falls upon spectators that it is not to be accounted for by reasoning about proportion, but by the operation of a superior power. Let but the results of preaching, as to the number and suddenness of the conversions, pass a certain point—let the number be thousands, and the time one day—and the idea of attributing this to the power of men would not enter the mind. Who ever thought, on reading that three thousand Jews were converted on the day of Pentecost, and lived holy lives afterward, of exclaiming, ‘What a preacher Peter was!’ The magnitude of the effect at once suggests a super-human cause. Had the result been small, the man would have been glorified; but when it took such proportions, he was thrown into the shade, and the ‘mighty power of God’ alone occupies the mind.”

No wide-spread movement of this kind ever occurred in which men were not constrained to adore the majesty, power, and grace of God; and no doubt it is in order to display His power and glory, that God at times carries forward His cause in this way. Even the ungodly are often at such seasons compelled to use the language of saints,

and say, "This is the finger of God." The glory of God the Saviour is the chief end to be regarded in the salvation of souls; and perhaps our prayers for the frequent recurrence of revivals would be more prevalent with God, were we when offering such petitions, more influenced by the desire that our blessed Redeemer should be glorified.

In the next place, the good to neighboring communities, and the benefit to the whole Church, which hitherto have accompanied and grown out of every extensive revival, ought to be remembered.

Whenever such a gracious visitation has been vouchsafed to any people, it has invariably proved the means of preparing souls in other places for a similar blessing. Sometimes the flame is kindled in so many places that the whole land is overspread; and a revival of peculiar power has even exerted an influence over lands far away.

A powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the community increases the demand for ministers, and also secures a greater supply of ministers. The ranks of the army are replenished. "When conversions are not few, but many; when 'numbers turn to the Lord;' when there are many repenting, and many rejoicing, saying, 'We have

redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins'—then will assuredly appear some with plain marks that the spirit of the prophets is in them, and that they are called to spread far and wide the glorious salvation of which they themselves partake. It is also wonderful how much the occurrence of conversions heightens the efficiency of men already employed in the ministry, or in other departments of the work of God. The joy of conquest breathes new vigor into all the Lord's host."

As the result of great and extensive revivals, the Church is often stimulated to start new plans and organizations for evangelistic effort. It is impossible that the effect of a genuine work of grace, extending over a large part of the Church of Christ, should not be both permanent and quickening. A vast increase of the number of believers, together with the strengthening of the graces of God's people, must necessarily be attended with an elevation in the general standard of piety and efficiency. The very idea of a revival is that of an increase of religious life; and how can the Church's religious life become more vigorous without an increase of her resources and capacity of usefulness, as well as in her activity and zeal? We are not surprised therefore, when, upon studying the history of past

great revivals, we find that they have been the means of arousing the whole Church to new exertions to extend Christ's kingdom.

But another and very important reason why we should pray for powerful and abundant outpourings of the Holy Spirit remains to be presented. It is derived from the *encouragement* which God has given us thus to pray, in that He has abundantly shown us that this is one of the ways by which He delights to advance His kingdom.

Not only may Pentecost, with its thousands of conversions, be appealed to in proof of this, but evidence is also furnished by the rapid accessions to the Church during the whole of the first two centuries. If it is certain that ministers of the Lord Jesus, laymen, devoted and fearless women, and even slaves, then united in bringing the gospel to the different circles of society, and that commerce likewise was a powerful agency in carrying it to the remotest parts of the Roman empire, it is equally evident that the Holy Spirit attended the truth diffused in this manner, with His converting influence, and that as fast as it was disseminated. It is mainly from the language occasionally employed by the early Apologists and Controversialists that we are informed concerning the wonderful growth

of the Church, and her rapid advance on the world. The triumphs of Christianity during so short a period, can only be accounted for on the assumption that the Christian host was constantly swelled by the addition of large numbers.

In succeeding ages, similar outpourings of the Spirit were attended with the same effects. What was the Reformation but a glorious revival of religion? The Spirit convinced men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. There were stormy controversies for truth and right, but these did not stand in the way of conviction of sin and conversion unto God. A large part of the time of the Reformers was taken up in giving counsel to the inquiring and the tempted. The questions which were publicly debated often received their importance from the connection which they had with the personal interest of souls in distress about the way of salvation. This state of things reigned throughout whole countries. Almost the entire continent of Europe was shaken.

Every one knows how it was in Germany.

McCrie, in his "History of the Reformation in Spain," speaking of the horrible Inquisition and other measures used to destroy the Reformed Church in that country, says: "Had these obstruc-

tions to the progress of the reformed doctrine in Spain been removed, *though only in part and for a short time*, it would have burst into a flame, which, spreading over the whole kingdom, would have consumed the Inquisition, the hierarchy, the Papacy, and the despotism by which they were upheld. These were the deliberately-expressed sentiments of the decided enemies of the Reformation. 'Had not the Inquisition taken care in time,' says one of them, 'to put a stop to these preachers, the Protestant religion would have run through Spain like wildfire.' " If any one wishes to know how the reformed religion spread in Italy, and how numerous the converts were in that country, let him read the "History of the Reformation in Italy," by the same writer. Truly, as one has said, the Reformation was a second Pentecost. "Sermons and preachers seemed magnetic with the Holy Spirit."

But in no country was the truth taught and the Word preached with greater success than in France. Not only a large portion of the people in inferior stations, but many belonging to the class of nobles and princes, as well as men of wealth and learning, embraced the reformed faith. And they did this in opposition to all their temporal interests, and in spite of the greatest persecutions. In some parts

of the kingdom the entire population of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, had become Protestants. Such wonderful progress did the Reformation make ; its progress was really by a succession of glorious revivals. The blessed Spirit so attended the truth which was faithfully taught, and gave that truth such effect, that it was rapidly leavening the whole nation, and making France as religious and noble a people as the world has ever seen. Had it not been by dreadful and long-continued persecution suppressed, how different would have been the subsequent career of France from what it has actually been ! How different would have been the character of her people ! We shall never know, until the results are disclosed in eternity, how gloriously the work of the divine Spirit went forward in those days of the Church's advancement, struggles, and sufferings.*

If many churches in Europe have lost nearly all they gained by the Reformation, it has not been so with the Church of Scotland. In that land the results have been permanent. We cannot stop to show this, nor can we speak of the many revivals with which that highly-favored people have been

* See Appendix, page 251.

visited. We must also forbear to enlarge on the blessed outpourings of the Spirit under the Bunyans and Baxters of England.

And how has it been in our own country? All know how often in this land these seasons of mercy have been enjoyed. Sometimes these have been general, but "the two which are the most distinguished for the power with which the Holy Spirit was poured out, for the distinctness of the concurrent evidences that the work was from God, and by the beneficent results which followed, were those of 1730 and of 1800, and the years adjacent."

It would be difficult to describe how great a change was wrought by the great awakening which occurred at the earlier of these dates throughout New England and portions of the Middle States, and of Virginia. The principal laborers from 1740, and a few years onward, were Whitefield, Edwards, the Tennents, and Davies. It is the remark of a writer, speaking of the scenes witnessed in those days in the Middle States, that the pious now living in that region of our country are not aware that the ground on which they tread has, as it were, been hallowed by the footsteps of the Almighty. Our whole population owes much that is good in its character to the revivals of that period, and to the Presbyterian

Church particularly they were the commencement of a new life, "the vigor of which is still felt in all her veins."

While speaking of examples in our own country, we ought not entirely to pass by the precious reviving of 1857. It began with the pouring out from on high of the Spirit of grace and supplications, amid one of the greatest commercial alarms which our country ever experienced. Although calamities of this kind often produce a hardening effect, yet it pleased God at that time "by the plowshare of His judgments, to furrow the ground for precious seed of salvation, and to make distresses touching worldly estate to awaken desire for durable riches, and to call forth spiritual yearnings and thirstings after the fountain of living waters."

Thus, it appears that the rapid ingathering of many souls is a means which God has often honored for the exaltation of His Church; and this, as was said, should be an encouragement to us to pray for sudden and large accessions in time to come.

As in the past periods of the Church and in ages gone by, revivals occurred in every part of Christendom; so, even at the present day, they occur

wherever there are churches and wherever the gospel is preached. They are not a phenomenon which, in this age, is especially characteristic of American churches. Perhaps these visitations will no longer be called, as they have sometimes been, an American peculiarity, now that one of the most remarkable revivals that has ever occurred is attending our own Moody's labors, and the labors of other devoted servants of Christ, in Great Britain.*

If revivals mean a great and sudden multiplication of believers as the result of the supernatural

* A judicious writer, speaking on this subject, says: "It may almost be doubted whether they are of more frequent occurrence here than in Great Britain. We fear that the only difference is, that we make more noise about them; that we number the people more frequently, and publish the result more ostentatiously." The advantages which may attend the notoriety given to every little case of religious excitement in this country are, we fear, more than counterbalanced by the evils which follow. It has been suggested that all the desirable ends of publicity might be attained by the regular annual reports of ecclesiastical bodies, without the evils attending on the loose accounts with which the newspapers abound. We suppose that our journalists must publish the accounts of revivals and of religious interest which are sent to them, but the anxiety of many pastors to have the papers forthwith report to the public all the instances of religious interest which may exist in their congregations, we never could understand.

operation of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, they cannot, of course, be productive of evil—they can be productive of nothing but good. The sins and follies associated with them are just the sins and follies of men who were never truly converted, or else of men who, if not self-deceived as to their piety, are at least very imperfectly sanctified; not the sins and follies of men alone however, for Satan is always present doing his own work, except in so far as he is hindered in answer to the prayers of Christians.

Real Christians never did and never will oppose a work of grace, and they ought not to be charged with doing so. Is not the language of all true believers, "I love Thy kingdom, Lord"? Do not rivers of waters run down their eyes because men keep not God's law? Do they not feel that heaven itself could hardly be more delightful than this world would be, were every person on earth a lover of Jesus?

Sometimes, however, all that is intended in reference to those thus accused is, that they are too sensitive and anxious on account of the great evils which so often mar the work of God. When this is all that is meant, the state of mind which is deprecated does not justify the use of the language in which the charge is often couched.

In regard to the evils which so often attend revivals, men may go to two opposite extremes. On the one hand, they may be excessively anxious and discouraged on account of these evils; and on the other, they may fail to give them any attention whatever, and may exercise no watchfulness against them.

There is a class of evils such as extravagances, excesses, nervous excitements, etc., which some churches, in the midst of a revival, are in no danger whatever of falling into; but there are certain fatal *mistakes* against which even the best of Christians, in times of great awakenings, are not so secure. On the contrary, it is very difficult to avoid them.

Now, it is important that our attention should be called to these grievous mistakes, in order that when we would pray that revivals may be preserved from harm, we may definitely know what to ask of God. Perhaps the prevalence of these false ideas is not often occasioned by powerful revivals in the Church at large; but that they are almost certain to accompany regularly returning seasons of religious interest and excitement in *separate local* churches will, we think, be admitted as soon as they are stated.

1. In the first place, there is the mistake of relying on revivals as the only, or almost the only means of promoting religion in the Church. This is far from being a trifling evil. The ordinary means of grace are very precious, and it is the will of God that we make much of them. And yet, with some, it is so much a habit to rely on revivals as the means of conversion, and of the growth in grace of members, that all other means are lost sight of. Indeed, in reading a certain book lately, entitled "Revivals of Religion: their Theory, Means, Obstructions, Uses, and Importance," we came across these very words: "The real question at issue is, Which is best for the cause—to have revivals of religion, or continual death and decay?" It would seem as if the mind of the writer had never been visited with the idea that there are other means of divine appointment for the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. God, he thinks, intends that there should always be decline and revival, and we ourselves must look for it. "To look," he says, "for spiritual improvement *in any other way* would be to expect the Divine Being to change His established mode of operation. It has uniformly occurred under powerful excitements, and this method is no less philosophical than gen-

eral. Revivals of religion, therefore, are just as important as it is to save the Church from entire and unceasing apostasy."

This being God's "established mode of operation," it, of course, follows that visible success is the proper criterion of fidelity. Duty, however, as God's ambassadors, and as the shepherds of souls, is to be tested, not by visible success, but by faithfulness in the delivery of our message, and by the care, and watchfulness, and prayerfulness used in its discharge. Prophets, and apostles, and thousands of beloved laborers, both in heathen and in Christian lands, have toiled faithfully and toiled long without revivals, and God has been greatly glorified by their fidelity and labors.

2. When a periodical recurrence of revivals is expected, there is danger of forgetting that the Holy Spirit is a FREE AGENT and sovereign, and there is a tendency in people to assume that revivals are subject to law, like the laws which govern the material world. A revival preacher, in a communication to a religious paper, not long since, giving an account of such a visitation in which he had been the principal laborer, used this language: "I perceived now that the revival had *spent its force*"—the very language one would use if he

were describing a storm at sea. And a very respectable writer, speaking of these seasons of mercy, says: "No one has yet succeeded in definitely stating *their law*, or in bringing them under fixed conditions of time and circumstance."

3. The mistake of supposing that God would have us rely on revivals as the means of the salvation of the *children of the Church* just as much, if not more, than He would have us rely on family religion and parental training.

The carrying out this error in practice is what Bushnell calls "The ostrich nurture." He says: "Any one can see that Christian parents may very easily roll off a great part of their responsibilities, by just holding it as a principal hope for their children that they are to be finally taken up and rescued from sin by revivals of religion. How agreeable to hope that gales of the Spirit will come, to make amends for conscious neglects of parental duty! God will some time have His day of power in the community; and they piously hope that their children will then be converted to Christ. But children have been so trained as never to remember the time when they began to be religious. Baxter was at one time greatly troubled concerning himself, because he could not remember the time

when there was a gracious change in his character. But he discovered, at length, that 'education is as properly a means of grace as preaching,' and thus found the sweeter comfort in his love to God, that he learned to love Him so early."

Yes, parental nurture is the means which God has expressly appointed for the saving conversion of the children of believers; and *their* saving conversion should be looked for and expected in *this* way, instead of through revivals. As God has commanded that this method of religious training should be employed, so, in the covenant with parents which embraces their children, He has expressly promised that the use of this means shall be attended with His blessing.

If what is supposed to be a work of grace, in any Church, is really a work of grace, the people are anxious to know what their duties are—if the Spirit of God is among them—their minds are tender and easily impressed. How favorable, then, is the opportunity which the laborers in a genuine revival enjoy, of explaining to those who have children their parental duties; of showing them the relation which their children sustain to the Church, and how they should be treated. But is it often the case that parents who are accustomed to revivals

perform their parental duties any better in consequence, and expect that their children and their children's children may be saved, as the result of religious training in the family, and in fulfilment of God's covenant promise? *

4. Satan's kingdom is, of course, endangered by revivals, and, therefore, at such times he is very active. He naturally uses all his wiles and power to save his kingdom, and to injure the cause of our Saviour. We are all ready to forget this, because our faith is weak, and because we pay too little attention to what the Scriptures teach in regard to the Adversary. But those who are in the midst of revivals are especially in danger of underrating the power, vigilance, wiles, and activity of Satan. Their situation is unfavorable to alertness and watchfulness against his arts, because they see lit-

* "Admitting with gratitude all that can be said of the great advance made by the Church, in this country, within the last fifty or sixty years, there are loud and almost universal complaints made of the decay of family religion, of family training, and especially of the ecclesiastical instruction of the young. It is within the memory of many now living, that in almost every Congregationalist and Presbyterian family in the land, as a matter of course, the children were regularly taught the 'Westminster Catechism.' It is not so now."—*Dr. Hodge's Theology*, vol. *iii.*, p. 572.

tle going on which does not appear to them to be good, and just what the friends of Christ should desire.

How should it affect our hearts to think, that often where the blessed Spirit is carrying on His work with peculiar power, there are persons who are concerned about their salvation, without enjoying the benefit of the guidance and instruction of wise and competent leaders, and that in this condition they are exposed not only to the harm which their own treacherous hearts may do them, but to the wiles of Satan and of fallen spirits! The apostle teaches us to consider the power of hostile and designing men to pervert and destroy as far inferior to that of principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. If the influences and operations of evil spirits could only be detected, their power would not be so great, but these influences never reveal themselves any more than do the influences and operations of holy angels for good. We have every reason to believe that revivals are occurring in some parts of Christendom at all times; and how earnest should be our daily prayer that God would preserve them from Satan's malicious interference! But how seldom is this prayer offered!

5. Many having grown up in ignorance of the truths of the Scriptures, find themselves some day in the midst of a revival, and soon indulge the hope of having passed from death unto life. Now, if experience is a teacher to be relied on, a dangerous mistake is committed when no fear is entertained that the conversion of *such* persons is spurious. Rarely is it the case that this class arrive at correct ideas of what religion, in its real nature, is. How often has it been seen that the religion of a community who have grown up in ignorance is but the destructive fire of fanaticism! We must not rely on other things without instruction. We should obediently and cheerfully conform to God's method. If religion ever flourishes, it is when the people are well-instructed in the truth. Without this thorough instruction, it barely exists. Nothing, indeed, is impossible with God; and those who have passed their years in ignorance are often truly changed by His grace, but they are not the most hopeful subjects of conversion. So that, while their conversion should not be despaired of in a time of religious excitement, yet to be exercised with no anxiety and fear on their account, and to admit them hastily, is to be cruel to them, and unfaithful to the Church's Head.

6. It is sometimes the case, though not always, that before a revival the decay of godliness is so great, while the prevalence of worldliness and immorality is so fearful that a copious effusion of the Spirit is positively and absolutely necessary, just as unusual remedies are sometimes necessary to save life. Now, because God is willing, in His infinite condescension, love, and goodness, to pour out, in this state of things, His Holy Spirit, and thus save the Church, it is a fatal mistake to suppose that He overlooked the prevailing irreligion and deadness which imperatively called for the work of grace. The prayers of Christians for a blessed remedy of this kind against the advance of moral and spiritual death slowly creeping over the Church and the land, ought to be characterized by humiliation, self-abasement, and confession. It was in this spirit that Ezra and Nehemiah prayed for a revival. They did not feel that God had bound Himself to do what they besought Him to do. They prayed with broken hearts and with confession. They humbly and affectionately importuned God to give plentifully His Spirit, remembering that their people had forfeited the blessing since they had not feared the Lord, nor remembered His commandments to do them. If these holy men,

when they besought God to revive His people, were thus penitent and felt that He might justly forsake and cast off forever the entire nation, then certainly it becomes professors to pray for religious reviving with humiliation, who are conscious that a special season of visitation, so far from being needed by formalists alone and those outside of the Church, seems to be the only hope left even for themselves and their neglected children, some of whom perhaps have already departed from the way they should go. Perhaps times of refreshing would be vouchsafed more frequently, were they always petitioned for in this spirit.

7. It is a very grievous mistake, and yet by no means an uncommon one, to underrate the importance of paying attention to the fruits of the revival. It is the opinion of some who are competent to judge, that full half the benefit of revivals is lost from neglect of those who have been converted. Some pastors do next to nothing by way of visiting, praying with and for, warning, exhorting, and feeding these lambs of Christ. Christ not only cares for them, but He wills that His servants should care for them and cherish them "as a nurse cherishes her children." "Young converts are ignorant. They cannot have learned the whole will

of God, especially those who have almost entirely neglected His Word. They often stumble, through misapprehension. They not only need instruction, but the utmost kindness on the part of their ministers and brethren. They may have formed wrong notions of the nature and effects of religion. They not unfrequently mistake faith for presumption, or compare themselves with what others appear to be, instead of with the Bible, and thus get into darkness and doubts. They have not as much feeling as they expected to have. Now these and many other difficulties incident to spiritual infancy and childhood are to be met and rectified in the spirit of sympathy and kindness, if we would save the subjects of them from discouragement and backsliding. The private members of the Church should treat converts with attention as well as ministers. They should interest themselves in the experience and progress of each one. This will give the Church an influence over them, to keep them in the way, and restore them should they wander. The affectionate watch and care which they will thus have, will hold them to the Church by indissoluble ties.’

These are some of the hurtful mistakes and errors which, though they may not be accompanied by

extravagances and injurious excitements, yet more or less prevail wherever communities are blessed with frequent revivals, and are accustomed to look for them. They are in no sense objections to revivals; but, as was said, it is important that our attention should be directed to them. While those who love Zion and the perishing souls of men will pray much that the whole Church may often enjoy seasons of refreshing, and powerful and extensive awakenings, they will also earnestly entreat God to watch over these revivals, guard them, and preserve them from such evils as have been enumerated. No revival of unmingled purity was ever enjoyed, and it would, of course, be unreasonable to expect that in time to come, any more than hitherto, Satan will permit wheat to be sown without sowing tares. Nevertheless, it is certain that much can be accomplished by prayer to prevent these seasons from being perverted and abused.

It has been the design of these pages, reader, to show you what unspeakable blessings you may secure for yourself by praying much for the Holy Spirit, and what almost limitless good you may do by seeking His influences for others. In conclusion, permit me to remind you of what God has

done to inflame and excite your desires for this priceless gift.

How did He keep alive in the hearts of His ancient people a longing for their Messiah's coming? By causing His prophets to announce His approach in prediction after prediction, abounding in the most lively representations of the glories which would attend and follow His appearing. Now, in a similar way, He has sought to arouse and stimulate our desires for the Spirit of grace, of truth, and of holiness. For, by the pens of these same prophets, He has promised to the Church His Holy Spirit, with a frequency, particularity, and magnificence of language "which has led believers themselves to mark that gift with supreme distinction by calling it *the Promise*, and which showed that He, the divine Promiser, regarded it as identical with a state of distinguished prosperity." We cannot but feel that God regards the gift of the Spirit as next in value to that of His own Son. How intensely should we long for its possession!

The inward change in which salvation in part consists, is effected entirely by this blessed Agent. He alone is the Author of holiness, and of all those graces which every believer so loves and so covets.

But why have we been told this? Why has it been so clearly revealed to us, seeing that it would have been enough had the Bible simply taught us that to infinite power we are indebted for these priceless blessings? The answer is plain. It has been carefully and explicitly declared that *that* Person of the Trinity who enriches us with these gifts is the Holy Spirit, in order that love to Him might be enkindled in our souls, with ever-growing desires for His presence, His indwelling, and His inworking.

But what, above all things, is fitted to make the Church welcome with joy this blessed Visitant, is the teachings of our Saviour concerning Him, when He was upon earth. Our Lord taught that the presence of the Spirit with His Church is more important than His own bodily presence. "My tarrying with you," He says, "would be attended with greater loss than you are able to bear; for, if I remain, the Comforter will not come to you. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you." "What must be the value of that gift which would supply the place of the orb of day, and make us cease to deplore its extinction?"

The first intercessory prayer, therefore, which

our Saviour presented in heaven after His ascension, was for the gift to His Church of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit came down, as He had promised. What the object of His mission would be, Jesus showed, when He said: "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Finally, our Lord, when He was in the world, assured us that this one blessing comprises the essence of all good. One evangelist represents Him as promising all good things to them that ask, but the report of His words by another shows us that by this all-comprehending offer, He expressly intends His Holy Spirit, thus leaving us to infer "that universal good and the Divine Spirit define each other, or that they are one and the same thing." We are also taught by our Lord's words that the Spirit is the only and unchangeable good.

"What more can be necessary to turn our whole soul into desire?—to turn all our most ardent thoughts and longings into one channel, pouring forth a copious stream of supplication for the one great gift of the Spirit? Is it possible that we can ask for any inferior good till we have obtained this? Had we an adequate impression of its magnitude, we should forget that any other want existed; our

entreaties would rise in energy and earnestness as we moved forward to the attainment of the blessing ; our cry would ascend, and peal with ceaseless importunity at the gate of heaven—would go unto the Almighty, even into His holy place ; we should ask, and seek, and knock, till He had bestowed it with a liberality which left nothing for our fears to apprehend, or our expectations to desire.” *

* Harris' "Great Teacher."

APPENDIX:

APPENDIX.

*The Condition and Character of the French, as affected
by the Suppression of the Reformation.*

(Referred to on page 228.)

IN no country in Europe was the Christian religion more cordially embraced after the Reformation had begun than in France; in no country did it make more rapid progress. Why God permitted it to be almost entirely rooted out by its bitter haters in so short a time, is more than any man can tell. God is wont to move in a mysterious way. He calls upon us to trust in Him when clouds and darkness are round about Him.

The people of this country and of England often speak with contempt of the irreligious, unstable, and superficial character of the French nation. Perhaps as it regards some things, this is its character. But is this a matter of wonder? Would not the national character and the political condi-

tion of the French have been altogether different, had God permitted the Reformation to have the same success in France which attended its course in some countries neighboring to it?

The massacre of St. Bartholomew, in 1572, was preceded by the most terrible persecution of the Reformed. In the year 1562 they were slaughtered in many towns and cities all over France. With the massacre of St. Bartholomew every one is familiar. It was immediately followed by similar diabolical deeds in all parts of the kingdom. The number killed on, and shortly after, St. Bartholomew's day has been variously estimated from 30,000 to 100,000. No doubt there were many thousands of individual murders of which the historians of that day were entirely ignorant, or which were not deemed by them worthy of special record. It is known that in many of the provincial towns not a single Huguenot was left alive. It was intended that the butchery should be much greater than it was. The design had been deliberately formed of destroying at one blow the whole body of Huguenots in France—of murdering in cold blood one entire class of the nation.

In 1598 Henry the Fourth issued the Edict of Nantes, which secured to the Reformed, after sixty

years of persecution, the rights of worship, though from civil office and from political employment this people were still excluded. They devoted themselves, for the most part, to industrial pursuits, and they were acknowledged to be not only the best agriculturists, but the most skilled artisans in France. They were still persecuted, notwithstanding the edict of Henry the Fourth; and, in 1681, the famous dragonades were instituted. The scenes of brutality which were enacted during these dragonades cannot be described, for the soldiers were the roughest, loosest, and cruelest of men. At last, the Edict of Nantes was revoked. The cruel act of revocation was published on the 22d of October, 1686. Then were the people hunted like wild beasts, robbed of their children, sent to the galleys by thousands, and murdered by thousands, by methods of the most refined cruelty. The Reformed religion was proscribed, nearly all the churches of this people that remained in France were destroyed, and they were prohibited, under fearful penalties, from instructing their children in their own faith. Thus rigorously was this terrible edict—this war against the rights of conscience—enforced.

No nation in the world could afford to lose what

France lost, as the result of these impolitic, these detestably wicked acts of her Popish rulers. For, without considering the very many thousands who were murdered, immense swarms—sufficient to constitute a small nation—of the best people of the country sought safety in exile, while property to the value of millions of money was taken to foreign lands. The prodigious exodus of the French people which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes constitutes one of the most important historical events of the seventeenth century. Many of them were likewise driven to expatriate themselves in the persecutions of 1715, 1724, and 1744. They settled in nearly all the countries of Europe, and there was not a country which received them which they did not enrich. The Huguenot merchants, artisans, and literati, who fled to England, exercised an immense influence on English industry and English literature. Indeed, there is no computing how much of her prosperity England owes to the great waves of population which flowed over to her from France in those times.

She received the fugitives kindly, and richly did they repay her, for they gave a new impulse to her manufactures, and introduced many entirely new branches of industry. They were skilled, intelli-

gent, and laborious, and they were among the most virtuous people in the world.

By thus persecuting unto death and exile on account of their religion this immense body of French citizens, whose active pursuit of commerce, the arts, literature, and science, was advancing the best interests of their country, the Popish Bourbons inflicted lasting evils on France. The prosperity of Nantes, Tours, Lyons, and other cities was destroyed. Hundreds of manufactories were closed, whole villages were depopulated, many large towns half deserted, and large tracts of land went altogether out of cultivation. These persecutions, moreover, paved the way for the miseries which, from those times to the present, have afflicted the nation. Even the historian Alison admits (we would hardly expect it of him) that "the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was the chief remote cause of the French Revolution, and the terrible evils brought upon the government were the natural consequence and just retribution of that abominable act of religious oppression." "The severities," says another writer, "made France what she was at the Revolution—prepared the nation for scourging themselves—and led to the sanguinary scenes perpetrated in Paris and Lyons."

Her sufferings did not end with the reign of terror. It is sickening to contemplate what the nation endured under the Empire. "The setting sun of Austerlitz alone saw twelve thousand French in their gore." Under the Empire the able-bodied men of France perished in her wars at the rate of more than two hundred thousand a year. The destruction of her youth during the twenty-five years of her revolutionary war so deteriorated the physical stature of the population that a large part of the recruits for the army have been, for a long time, rejected as dwarfish or unsound; and if the standard height of the French army were the same now as before the revolution, half the men actually under arms must be discharged.

But the saddest result of the oppressive policy of Louis XIV. and his wicked counsellors was, that the French *character* became almost the opposite of what it would have been had the gospel been permitted to have unobstructed course. The French are said to be destitute of rooted moral convictions. God does not seem to be for them a living person, nor the future life a solemn reality. They do not act in view of eternal truths. There is a great lack of conscience in them and of moral power. Their character is "one-sided and super-

ficial, excitable but not strong, impulsive but not enduring. They prefer glory to duty, *éclat* to self-respect, success to right." All this may be true; but did not the nation, in the inscrutable providence of God, undergo precisely that which was adapted to make her what she is? It becomes us who have been so much more favored, not to be boastful, but humble. Utterly deprive this country or England of all the people who constitute the *very salt* of these nations, and then, in addition to this, cruelly keep the masses from having access to the Bible, and cut them off from all opportunity, for generations, of knowing and of being influenced and moulded by its truths; and who that knows what man is, can believe that we would have any reason for boasting of our superiority? We cannot too fervently thank God that we have never, for a long period, been forcibly kept in ignorance of the truths of the Bible, subject in the meantime to the immense power of education in favor of irreligion. When, at last, the Reformation in France was almost entirely crushed, she lost the conservative moral influence of its religious doctrines, while her mental energy soon revived, and the public mind fled for refuge to the only alternative—philosophical and atheistical speculations.