

## CHAPTER X

ARTICLE VIII.—*Of the Holy Spirit.*—We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who moves upon the hearts of men to restrain them from evil and to incite them unto good, and whom the Father is ever willing to give unto all who ask Him. We believe that He has spoken by holy men of God in making known His truth to men for their salvation; that, through our exalted Saviour, He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten men's minds in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the spirit of truth, of power, of holiness, of comfort and of love.

1. The Biblical Idea of the Spirit. The root idea of the spirit of God, both in Old Testament and in New Testament is that of Power. The Spirit is, in fact, God, exerting power. That power is manifest in nature, and in the intellectual life of men. But its characteristic product is the moral and religious life, and specially the Christian life as such. Using the language of an ancient creed, our article describes the Spirit as "the Lord and Giver of Life." It is important to dwell on the deep and prevailing note of the Spirit's presence and operation, the infallible test of the Divine power being at work, namely, the ethical quality of the result. It was part of the Apostle Paul's great service to the Church of Christ, that he settled this problem for all time coming. Many in his day contended that certain hysterical phenomena were a sure index that the Spirit was at

work. But the sober mind of the Apostle was wholly opposed to such a conception, which indeed had nothing specifically Christian in it, and could have been matched in the "Mystery Religions," which were the forerunners and rivals of Christianity in the Græco-Roman Empire. The one indubitable mark of the Spirit is that it is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christlikeness, the Spirit of holiness and love. Apart from this, physical disturbances, physical manifestations, are mere irrelevancies, have no spiritual quality belonging to them, and are dangerous to unstable souls. In view of the prevalence of certain sects, it would appear that Saint Paul's teaching and warnings would need to be considered afresh. 2. The Place of the Spirit in the Creeds. When we compare the New Testament with the creeds of the ancient Church, and when we study the sacramental system as it speedily captured the imagination of men, we note almost complete failure to do justice to the Biblical idea of the Spirit. The conception of power and of the operation of that power in the production and development of the Christian life is disappearing and a metaphysical conception is taking its place. As noted above, in relation to controversies regarding the Person of Christ, a widely prevalent idea was that He was a Divine Being of lower rank than the Father, a kind of second-grade God. In consonance with this, the Spirit tended to be viewed as a Divine Being of lower rank still. All this, of course, is mere specula-

tion controlled by Greek philosophy. Christian experience knows and adores a Saviour, who is as Divine as the Father, and is profoundly aware of a power at work in the soul, which is nothing less than Divine in the fullest sense. Hence the Church declined any formula, which made the Spirit a kind of appendix to the Godhead. When the soul surrenders to Christ, it receives the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus. This experimental fact, the theologians of the ancient Church were wont to describe by a non-scriptural technical term, to which the modern mind can attach no intelligible meaning—"procession." No doubt, the intention was to indicate what in Scripture is implied by such a word as "sending," or "pouring," i.e., an act of God imparting His Spirit, which is the Spirit of the Son, to the human spirit, to work out, in it, through it, the great design of saving love.

It is a strange and tragic fact that the great division, which separated the Eastern churches from the Latin church of the West, turned upon so abstruse a doctrine as that of the procession of the Spirit. The Roman Church desired to remove all trace of "subordinationism," by declaring that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (*filioque*). The Greeks would not accept this clause; and the breach, for which there were other causes, has remained unhealed to this day. Protestant Churches have stood with the Roman Church in this affirmation, as being theologically accurate and religiously valid. The United Church of Can-

ada joins with the Latin Church—another point of contact which is worth noting—in accepting the *filioque* clause, not certainly because it is Roman, but because it rules out a metaphysical conception of God, which has no countenance in the Bible, or in Christian experience. 3. The Work of the Holy Spirit. In one sense, it would be vain to attempt to give an account of the work of the Spirit of God. No human mind can trace the working of God in all His gracious dealings with the soul of man. Yet it is precisely in the study of such actings of the Divine upon the human spirit, that we come nearest an understanding of His ways with men. Christian experience begins with the impact of the Spirit of God. Preachers will find that in considering with their people “the work of the Holy Spirit,” which they may have eschewed because it seemed to them a remote and incomprehensible theme, they are touching the realities of life, and are awakening the very springs of Christian experience. A wide literature will give them guidance. Our article gives a brief classification of aspects of this Divine action. (1) The Spirit’s work upon the hearts of men everywhere. How comes it that men, who do not profess the Christian faith, have got what Donald Hankey called an “inarticulate” religion? Whence come the splendid virtues, which may be seen in the characters of quite non-religious men? How is it that there are good men among the adherents of non-Christian religions? The older theologians spoke of “common operations” of the

Spirit. Now if we drop the phrase, let us joyfully recognize that these qualities, which we ought to hail with admiration wherever we observe them, were not the achievement of unaided human endeavor. Wherever goodness is, God the Spirit has been at work, restraining evil impulses, begetting noble ideals, and giving strength for worthy practice. (2) The Spirit’s work in the proclamation of saving truth. We hold the doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture (Art II above). We affirm here a more intimate kind of inspiration, that of men raised up for the purpose of making known the will of God, and prepared for this great function by an individual communion with God, in which their spirits were subject to a dealing of the Divine Spirit, which quickened their whole being, and renewed every faculty. From such men, through such an experience, the sacred Scriptures of Christianity, in their declaration of saving truth, have come to the Church. Many criticize the Scriptures in a merely intellectualist interest, whether orthodox or heterodox. But the Scriptures will never be understood, till we “recapture” (a phrase of Glover’s) the experience, of which they are at once record and product. (3) The Spirit’s work in bringing men to a knowledge of need, and to a saving knowledge of Christ. The older theology spoke of “effectual calling” (see answer to Question 31, in the Westminster Assembly’s “Shorter Catechism”). The language of that answer is in part reproduced here. Without trenching on the domain of psychol-

ogy, the article indicates the action of the Divine on the human as consisting in (a) Conviction, (b) Enlightenment of the mind; (c) Persuasion; (d) Enablement. (a) Before a sinful man can accept Christ as Saviour, he must be convicted of being, in fact, sinful. But the characteristic effect of sin is to dull, or even extinguish, the sense of its presence and of its issues. It needs a work of God to break through the crust of ignorance and self-righteousness, and penetrate to the secret places of man's soul, and there so confront him with himself, seen now for the first time in the light of God's holiness and love, that he will cry—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" (b) Before the sin-convicted soul can recognize the grace of God in Christ, there must be an enlightenment of the mind, leading to a discernment of the meaning and value and power of our Lord's person and work; and this process is not carried through by any intellectual faculty that man possesses. "That I may know Christ in the power of His resurrection," is the goal, not of scientific enquiry, but of a process, which goes to the very roots of our nature, and requires an absolute forsaking of self. And this process is possible only through the in-working of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge of Christ, of which Scripture speaks, and which experience confirms, is of the nature of personal acquaintance. It comes, when mists of sin and self are removed, as they can be, only by the Spirit's operation. Then we discover what He is, in His unsearchable riches, and what He has

done for us, in His exceeding love. "To know Christ," says Melancthon, "is to know His benefits." (c) Yet there is something more even than enlightenment needed. There is an action to be taken, from which the natural man shrinks, and which the paralysis of sin makes impossible. We sinners, strange as it may seem, are unwilling to do the very thing by which we are to escape from sin's guilt and power, and begin a new life of liberty. We need to be persuaded that it is the right thing to do, and that God is calling on us to do it. We must give full force to the idea of "persuasion." There is nothing coercive about it. It means that all our moral and rational powers are being brought into one line of action. The *mind* acknowledges truth, now seen for the first time. *Conscience* issues its imperative. The *will* consents. Let us set aside all analogies of external force, as of one body upon another. We are dealing with the action of spirit upon spirit; and here we are sure that the Maker of man will not violate His own creation. He will persuade; He will never coerce. (d) The last point is reached. The call of the Gospel, the voice of God, reaches the inmost sanctuary of the human soul. It finds there a being sunk in torpor, numb in every faculty, "dead in trespasses and in sins." Nothing can raise the dead but the power of God; and that power now acts. They who obey the call have been "persuaded and enabled" so to do by the Holy Spirit. But for that gracious quickening Power they had remained

for ever, inert, lifeless and unsaved. Our salvation has its source in the love of the Eternal Father, in the dying and undying love of Christ, crucified and risen, and in the Spirit, who in the depths of our spirits enables us to perceive and receive the Love of God, and to yield ourselves to its claim upon the allegiance of those for whom it was poured out to the uttermost. (4) The Work of the Spirit Within the Church. The article notes the fact—"He abides within the Church"—but does not expand the idea of this indwelling. Yet nothing could be more important for us, in this connection, than to recognize that the Church is the creation of the Spirit, and that it may be briefly defined, as "the fellowship of the Spirit." It is a community of persons, who have been united to Christ, and to one another, by the Spirit of God. Prevalent denominationalism and the modern exaggerated notion of the value of machinery, has caused this vital New Testament teaching to be relegated to obscurity. The "Acts of the Apostles" are really, as has often been remarked, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." Various gifts of the Spirit are noted as belonging to the Church. Its public acts are attributed to the guidance of the Spirit. Its ministers and missionaries are directed by the Spirit in the exercise of their functions. The ideal set before us in the New Testament is that of a Spirit-filled Church. All else is secondary to the presence and power of the Spirit, constituting the continued life and energy of the Body of Christ.

(5) The Work of the Spirit Within the Believer. Dr. Denney has summed up the teaching of the New Testament on this subject in one memorable phrase. "In Acts, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the reception of the Spirit is the whole of Christianity." Legalism, ritualism, formalism, professionalism of every kind die down before this profound conception of the moral and religious life of man, energized, and brought to fruition by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Hence in the New Testament we have none of the rules, regulations, and directions, common in many manuals of devotion. The life of the believer is life in the Spirit. The believer stands in such nearness to God that into him, through Jesus, the Divine life is poured as a continuous stream. And the ethical results are not ascribed to independent human abilities, but are regarded as "fruit of the Spirit." Hence, too, there are no lists of virtues, with discussion of their nature—nothing parallel to the "Nicomachean Ethics," or to the catalogues so carefully prepared by mediæval writers, and often illustrated in painting and sculpture. The Spirit is like a vital force in a living organism, endlessly productive, and endlessly varied in its manifestations. All that we get from the New Testament writers may be looked at as *examples* of what the Spirit will effect, when the soul is freely open to the operation of Divine quickening energy; and so, also, as *objects* of a holy and prayerful ambition; and so, too, as *tests* of our progress in the Divine life. In short, Christian character, with

all its excellencies, is not a manufactured article. It is the outcome of an immanent life. It is the work of the Spirit in us; and so its finest manifestations have no touch of self-consciousness about them; and its special and crowning glory is humility. Our article does not fall into the mistake of attempting a list of fruits. But it does offer indications of the directions in which we may look for manifestations of the Spirit's presence. First—*truth*; the Spirit leads to insight into Divine realities, meanings and values. Second—*power*; the Spirit inspires courage in face of difficulties, and imbues the receptive soul with strength for the work and warfare of life. Third—*holiness*; the Spirit has as goal for the Christian the whole *Imago Christi*. One taint of self or sin mars the work of the Spirit; and nothing can balance that defect, not emotions, however thrilling, not professions, however loud, not financial liberality, however large. Fourth—*comfort*. That word has wide and deep meaning in the New Testament; and the believer is encouraged to apply it fully to his need: consolation, support, upbuilding, confirmation and the like, are available for the Christian who is living in the Spirit; and, we may add, are meant to be communicated by him to others in like case with himself; for we are to be, not recipients only, but organs of the Spirit. Fifth—*love*. The spirit is the spirit of God and God is love; the spirit of Christ, and He so loved us that He gave Himself for us. Here, then, is the broadest, deepest sign of the presence of the Spirit. If the

spirit we are of is a loving spirit; if the Apostle's great hymn of love is recognizably a portrait of us, as at least we strive to be; the inference is that there God is at work by His spirit, and that Christ is indeed being formed in us. Tolstoy's phrase, "where love is, God is," is not too penetrating or comprehensive, to describe the characteristic and crowning glory of the life that is "hid with Christ in God." Conclusion: One phrase in the body of the article would have been better placed at the close: the Father is ever willing to give the Spirit to all who ask Him. If we who are evil know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more, so runs the argument our Lord uses (Luke 11: 13) shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him! Set down all that we can learn of the power and work of the Divine Spirit—then reverently and believingly claim all that, and possess ourselves of it. Set down all that we have learnt of our exceeding need, and note how the power of the Spirit meets every situation into which we come—then reverently claim that supreme Gift of the Spirit, and set forth to live in the power of it. Christianity is supremely the religion of the Spirit. Only so is it a Gospel for man's "most need."