

THE
PARACLETE OR COMFORTER.

JOHN xiv.—xvi.

THE one great truth respecting the Holy Spirit that runs through these chapters, distinct from anything that has been presented in any previous part of this gospel, is, that here we have a divine person prominently brought before us. It is not merely the Holy Spirit as a source, which imprints its own character on the new life given to the believer (John iii.), nor a power working, whether inwardly in worship (John iv.), or outwardly in testimony to a world-rejected but heaven-honoured Christ (John vii.); but above and beyond this, we have here, the personality of the Holy Spirit Himself.

The occasion demanded this difference. The Lord Jesus was leaving this world, to be glorified at the right hand of God in heaven, as the full answer to His work accomplished on earth, whereby God had been glorified in Him. All His moral nature—His

indignation and wrath against sin, and His love to a lost and guilty world—had been vindicated by the cross. God was glorified infinitely and for ever ; and this it is that accounts for all that He is now doing. In virtue of it not only has He put Jesus at His own right hand in glory, but from thence sends forth the gospel to every creature (Rom. i. 1-5 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4-6). Thousands of years had rolled over this world, yet He had never before sent out such a message to man as is now preached by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1 Peter i. 12). Good news there was no doubt of various kinds, *e.g.*, to Abraham (Gal. iii. 8), or to the children of Israel (Heb. iv. 2) ; but there never was the glad tidings of salvation (Acts xiii. 26-39) spread abroad to every creature before. For that upon which it is founded was not hitherto accomplished.

But more than this. God takes Jesus to His own right hand in heavenly glory ; and this, it is evident, gives occasion for the wonderful teaching of John xiv.

First, He assures them He was going to prepare a place for them with Himself, in the Father's house above, and that He would return for them to take them home. But during His absence He would make a provision for them in every way suited to His love and their need while here below. As for them He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I," in proof of My love, "will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth ;

whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And again, He adds, what makes the personality so very evident—"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name" (not "will give," as though it were merely a power, or a blessing of any such kind : but, as distinctly applying to a person, "will send").

True, the Spirit is spoken of as being "poured out," or "shed forth," thus representing to our minds the profuseness of the blessing that God the Father is giving for the glory of His Son. Certain it is also, that by-and-bye men here below shall receive another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when Jesus comes forth again to diffuse a new form and fulness of the Spirit's blessing on all flesh, according to His promise in Joel ii. Of this we have a sample in Acts ii., on the day of Pentecost, and an earnest that He will yet remember and revisit His ancient people Israel in grace ; though the blessing will not be confined to them at that day.

But here we have what is transcendentally beyond all this. For the first time, and I fully believe for the only time, we have the personal presence of the Spirit, actually come down from heaven, and here on earth, as the fruits of redemption, and of the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ to heaven. The day of the Lord will be marked by the presence of Christ Himself, coming to reign over the earth ; but while greater

spiritual powers may be then (referred to in Heb. ii. 5 and vi. 5 "as the world to come,"* and "the powers" of it) larger, if not deeper, it has no such personal presence of the Holy Spirit attached to it. Another state of things altogether from the present will be introduced, with many most striking differences. Thus the veil is no longer rent in the millennium, and people will again have recurrence to an earthly sanctuary, a separating veil, a human priesthood, and outward sacrifices, no doubt commemorative in their import at that day [and in that particular point similar to the Lord's Supper now]. (Compare Ezek. xlvi. 1-3). And to this agrees the fact that in Ezek. xlv. Pentecost is omitted in the list of the renewed feasts (compare Lev. xxiii. and Acts ii. with Ezek. xlv. 21-25): for that day will bring with it the fulfilment of the promises to the earth, and an earthly people as the centre of their fulfilment. But here we have something above all promise, and undefined in prophecy, reserved according to the depths of the goodness of God Himself, hidden from ages and generations—"hid in God"—for the time when, Christ being rejected by the world and glorified in heaven above, the Holy Spirit would come forth, that other Comforter, to lead the souls of His disciples into all the counsels and grace of God the Father, and all the glory of the Lord Jesus exalted to His right hand.

* In Heb. ii. it is "the *habitable earth*;" in Heb. vi. it is "the age," the future scene and dispensation.

Now this Comforter or Paraclete is not here simply to console us in the midst of the distress of this world. This no doubt He does. But more: He is identified with our interests; He undertakes all our cause; He engages to see us through our difficulties in every way; He becomes our representative, and the great personal agent that transacts all our business, being more than either Advocate or Comforter, though including both. Such is the Holy Spirit now. And how blessed to have such an one! And for this very reason it is evident that such a state of things was never known before, nor can it ever be repeated. While the great High Priest is on high, the Spirit gives a heavenly entrance into His glory, as well as His redemption. When the High Priest comes forth for the earthly throne, the Spirit then poured out will give a testimony suited to the earth over which the Lord will reign.

This then is the great test truth of Christianity; the presence of the Holy Spirit known, not merely as a matter of faith, though surely all be received by faith, but also in the conscious enjoyment made known to our souls by His presence; as it says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is a blessed and admirable thing that the Lord gives us to receive the gospel on His naked word; but, as surely as He who comes down and really dwells in us is a divine person, to suppose He does not give the sensible enjoyment of His presence

in our souls, and in the assembly of God, is a very great mistake indeed; and this is the more important, as it is the truth of all others forgotten by Christendom. It finds no place in her confessions. Other truths are there: the need of the new birth; the work and person of Christ; the deity and personality even of the Holy Spirit. But of His personal mission to the earth, and of His personal presence now with Christians, both dwelling in them individually (1 Cor. vi. 19; Rom. viii. 9, 11, &c.) and collectively (1 Cor. iii. 16; Ep. ii. 22), even the traces are not to be found.

But this is what this chapter expressly speaks of, and accordingly we have the believer contrasted with the world when our Lord says, "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." There is, then, this double truth—the "dwelling with" and "being in." These two things are of importance. From the time that He comes down He dwells with us [*par humin menei*, verse 17, the same word as is used in verse 25 for the Lord's personal presence], and that permanently, as He says, "that he may abide with you [*menē meth humōn*] for ever."

But not only was He to be here as one outside them, which is true in an assembly of saints; He was also to be in them, intimating the closest possible presence of the divine Spirit, "in" as well as "with" those He was coming to, and this "for ever."

“At that day,” referring to the present time during which the Holy Spirit is now on earth, “ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me” (*i.e.*, while He is there), “and,” at the same time, “I in you.” During the millennium, while of course suited blessings will be enjoyed by the saints on earth, in the nature of things this special blessing cannot be. When our Lord Jesus Christ leaves heaven and takes the kingdom, all these elements will form a new state of things entirely. During His personal absence there is the personal presence of the Holy Spirit ; and, as His personal presence characterises the age to come when He returns, the action of the Holy Spirit is necessarily modified by so new and fruitful a fact.

This is evidently a most weighty truth. Accordingly we find that those who do not believe in the personal presence of the Holy Spirit on earth have no adequate apprehension of Christ Himself in heaven, as Head of the church. Thus the present state of Christendom, in every form of it, whether national or dissenting, is founded on unbelief in the distinctive truth of the church, as far as the Holy Spirit is concerned. Not but that many of God’s children are in the various sects of which Christendom is composed, who confess the Lord Jesus, and truly believe in His work as their only and all-sufficient ground of confidence before God. They own the true deity and personality of the Holy Spirit likewise ; but this is altogether another thing from the recognition of the personal presence of the Spirit,

and His acting freely and sovereignly, by such of the members as He is pleased to employ in the Christian assembly.

Not that by this I mean to presume to anything so monstrous as that we are thereby either infallible or inspired. Surely we are all liable to err. Nor, that I think persons should not be received till they possess previous understanding and faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Many individual members of Christ are but feeble in it, and do not enter into its preciousness in any appreciable degree. But so long as the meeting as a whole is guided by the Spirit, recognises His presence, and abstains from human devices and rules of men, or other arrangements which interfere with His action according to the word, there all the children of God are bound to be, and may be thoroughly happy, because, if His presence were believed in, all would take its shape and be governed by so immense a fact.

Therefore it is I feel that we need look well to it when we come together, that we act as those who believe in the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Little things betray how far we have faith in His real presence. Still more, let us take heed if we venture on a hymn or prayer, or any other ministry in the assembly, that it be done in the Spirit, and for the edification of the assembly, and not from personal motives, be they in themselves good or bad. And I do strongly press it on my brethren, for we all have a part (and not brothers only, but sisters also)—I do beseech

them to remember to what a place of divine dignity and responsibility they are called ; that their spirit and behaviour may never be unsuited for the presence of God, the Holy Spirit.

In chapter xv. 26, 27, the Holy Spirit is presented in a slightly different way from chapter xiv. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me ; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Here we have rather the heavenly character of the testimony of the Spirit. Hitherto the disciples had seen the earthly side ; this they were to bear witness to. But the Spirit was to give His heavenly supplement—not only bringing to their remembrance what they had already seen and heard on earth, but also bringing down for the joy and knowledge of their souls that which He alone could tell them of the heavenly glory of Christ.

In chapter xvi. we have a further advance. It was expedient for them, as it was for Himself, in chapter xiv., that He should go away, as otherwise the Comforter would not come. "If I go not away, the comforter will not come ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the work of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Here we have, first of all, His relation to the world. The Spirit in most important respects takes the place of the law. As that was the reprover of Israel, so now He is the

reprover of the world ; and that not of sins only, but “of sin ;” not because they broke the law, but “because they believe not on me ; “of righteousness,” because now, righteousness is inseparable from Christ, no longer on earth, but at the right hand of the Father ; “and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” The execution of this judgment awaits God’s own appointed time (Rev. xix. xx.). But the cross and exaltation of Christ is the proof, morally, of the judgment already passed by God on the prince of this world. And accordingly, in connection with this, now comes out the solemn fact that “seeing the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John v. 19), “whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God” (James iv. 4). The Holy Spirit does not, could not dwell in an unbelieving, Christ-rejecting world ; He dwells outside of it, among the saints of God, and testifies against it that its works are evil.

Accordingly, we are told, verse 13, how He will deal with the disciples, in leading them into all truth. “He shall not speak of himself”—not about Himself—for that He does very fully, viz., in the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Corinthians, &c., but “from” Himself, [aph heautou, as the Lord constantly spake of Himself, chapter v. 19, viii. 26, 28], “but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” He comes down to honour Christ, even as the Son came to honour the Father.

Hence it is said, “whatsoever he shall hear, that

shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." And by virtue of this, the church has not only a priestly, but a prophetic place, as competent by the presence of the Spirit to be the interpreter of everything around in this world.

May this precious truth be evermore increasingly prized by us, not only as individuals, but by the assemblies of God on earth. And may the Lord keep a single soul from abandoning the truth, no matter what the difficulty, as well as from practically acknowledging any assembly where the Holy Spirit is not allowed His due place according to Scripture. —
Abridged, with permission of the author, from "Kelly's Lectures on the Holy Spirit."

THE LORD'S LAST PROMISE.

Most precious were those parting words
 Of our Almighty Friend,
 Who loved His own while in the world
 And loved them to the end.

"I leave you not as orphans here,
 The Comforter shall come
 And fill your hearts with joy and peace
 Till I shall fetch you home."

And soon upon that watching band
 The heavenly stranger came;
 And, like a rushing mighty wind,
 Thrilled thro' each quivering frame.

Like a vast flood, He buried deep
 Pain, grief, and worldly care;
 In resurrection-life, they breathed
 Heaven's own fresh vital air.

Dead to the world thro' Jesus' love,
 Nothing their own they call;
 With power they preached their risen Lord,
 Great grace was on them all.

Like ointment poured on Aaron's head,
 That down his garments flow'd,
 Was that rich oil of grace and joy
 From Christ our head bestowed.

Great smitten Rock! from thee flow'd forth
 A stream so full and free,
 Each desert heart that drinks the flood,
 Soon shall like Eden be.

Well may we ask, "will God indeed
 Descend to dwell in clay?"
 We marvel at such wondrous grace,
 And well indeed we may.

As once the pleased Rebecca trod
 A desert long and drear,
 While Abraham's wealth, and Isaac's love,
 Rang in her raptured ear.

So, in this dreary wilderness,
 The Holy Ghost makes known
 The Father's house, the Son's rich love,
 And all He has our own.

Blest thought! our hearts are with Him there,
 We see our glorious home,
 Made ready for our bridal joys—
 Come Jesus, quickly come!

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