

THE SPIRIT IN THE APOCALYPSE,
AS COMPARED WITH THE EPISTLES.

REVELATION i. 4, 5, xix. 10.

THE Holy Ghost is always presented, whatever Scripture may treat of Him, according to His own object in each book where the reference occurs. Thus in the Epistle to the Romans, where righteousness, and especially the righteousness of God is the subject, the whole question of our sins and God's judgment of them is gone into before we read (chapter v.) of "the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." And it is not until chapter viii.—after our *sin* (not here our sins), and deliverance from it has been fully discussed—that we have the full doctrine of the Spirit, viewed both as the condition of the Christian and also as an indwelling person. The believer is first set free as in Christ before God. There must be liberty as well as life; and, founded on this, the righteousness (*i.e.*, the moral scope and purpose) of the law is fulfilled in the believer. It is not exactly *by*, still less *for* the believer, but "*in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (chapter xiii. 10); and this the Holy Spirit works in

us as possessed of a new nature, and through the exercises of the new man by His power, enabling us to work inward and practical righteousness.

In 1 Corinthians we find carnality at work in every possible form except legalism. They were too loose to like the law: and the law could not remedy such; it could but condemn them. Christ alone, made good by the power of the Spirit, can meet such evil, or any other. Hence (chapter i.) we have man's wisdom first judged by the cross, and supplanted by the communications of God's Spirit, who (chapter ii.) gives the truth, and due words, and the capacity to man to bow and to understand it. In point of fact the Spirit has to do everything as to the truth of God, which moreover is only rightly seen in Christ Himself.

In chapter iii. believers are constituted by the Holy Spirit God's temple; and therefore the seriousness of meddling, either bringing in mere trash, or positive defilement and destructive evil. On the one hand a man would suffer loss, though he himself would be saved, yet so as by fire (verse 15); on the other hand, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (verse 17).

Next (chapter vi.), not only do Christians together constitute the temple of God, but each one's body is His temple. It is an error to suppose that, if we be only right in the heart, it matters not about the body. Not so, says the apostle; the Holy Spirit dwells in the man, and makes, as we are told, the body His temple. And this is eminently practical; for excuses might be made, so as to leave the body free for self-indulgence and downright wickedness, while highflown sentiments filled the spirit of a man. This is evidently

hateful to God. "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

Again (chapter xii.), we have the operation of the Spirit in the church in the way of gifts; and in chapter xiv., regulating the action of these gifts in the assembly of the saints—all being in subjection to the Lord's authority by His word. In vain does a man plead that he has a word from God, and that it must be spoken. Not so, save in due season and in the proper place. The word alone—not the Spirit, but the word that He has Himself inspired—is the standard for due order in the house of God; nor does the Spirit of God set aside in the smallest degree personal responsibility in this matter.

Next, in 2 Corinthians i., however they might accuse the apostle of vacillation in not coming to them as he had promised, at any rate he shows them God keeps His promise in the gospel; for all His promises in Christ are yea and amen, to the glory of God by us. Then he adds, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This is just what is presented in the gospel: first the believer is "stablished" in Christ; then he is "anointed" by the Holy Spirit giving him power to know all things according to God with a new and divine capacity (compare 1 John ii. 20-27); then he is "sealed" by the Spirit on the ground of redemption; who further becomes to him the "earnest" of the future inheritance.

This double thought occurs also in Eph. i. 12-14, in which chapter we have the *call* of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also the *inherit-*

ance. The Holy Spirit deals with us in reference to both. Relatively to the call of God, He seals the believer—and this is a work of the Holy Spirit distinct from faith: “in whom also after that ye [Ephesians, Gentiles] believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;” and relatively to His inheritance He is the earnest in our hearts. In the one case He is the power of conscious separation to God on the ground of that which is now complete (therefore He speaks here of “the word of truth, the gospel of your *salvation*);” and, having sealed the person of him who rests on redemption, He becomes to such the earnest of the inheritance of glory, which we shall share along with Christ.

In quickening, the Spirit of God finds a soul that has no life towards God. There is nothing but fallen nature, till the soul is connected by faith with the word of Christ and a new nature communicated. Of course the old nature is not sealed. It is the quickened person who is sealed. But there is even more than a new nature; for the Old Testament saints had that, yet we never read of their being sealed of the Spirit. Here it follows the reception of “the gospel of our salvation.” “In whom also after that ye believed [or having believed], ye were sealed.” In short, men are not sealed as unbelievers but as believers, even as they were quickened when dead in sins; and, even as believers, it is only after they submit to the righteousness of God when redemption is an accomplished fact.

The question of the time elapsing between the believing and the sealing is of no consequence; it might be but a minute; but the distinction between the two things

is of great moment, for there is the danger of confounding the condition of saints under Christianity with those of Old Testament times. Undoubtedly they were quickened and they believed; but they were neither sealed, nor had they the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts. And the reason of this was, because the gospel of salvation was not yet a known published ground of blessing for the soul in its relation to God. Theirs was a condition of expectancy. But now Christ has come and accomplished redemption, and salvation is no longer *promised* but *preached* (Acts xiii.). It is not now a mere hope of Christ, and a yearning for an interest in Him. This was all right in the Old Testament, and no person was entitled to go beyond it. The Messiah was not come, nor the work done. But now forgiveness is an actual fact; while eternal life is a present possession (John v. 24), though future also (Titus i. 2). Salvation, in a most true sense, is the believer's present portion (Ep. ii.), though our bodies must be changed by-and-by into the likeness of His body. In this sense salvation is only at hand, not yet come. But as far as the soul is concerned, salvation being already perfect (1 Peter i. 9), the Holy Spirit who bears the message of this also seals the person of him who believes it.

But, besides the seal of what is complete, the Spirit is an earnest of what is to come—not of salvation in Christ, nor of the love of God (these we have perfectly), but of the *inheritance*; and He gives me to enter into the anticipation, joy, and blessing of it, even while in this world. Thus He is the seal of the one and the earnest of the other.

So again in Galatians iv., when His people were under law, "God sent forth his Son to redeem

them that were under law that we might receive sonship. And because ye [Galatians, who were not under law] are sons, God [when redemption was accomplished] hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus it is the Holy Spirit giving us the consciousness of the relationship already ours by faith in Christ (Gal. iii. 26). They were sons already—"Because ye *are* sons." But that they might know it "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Under the law the believer, though a son, had a place nothing better than a servant held in bondage under the principles of the world; and, scourged under the law as under a schoolmaster, he only learned how naughty he was, and how rebellious is human nature. But now, Christ being come, and redemption accomplished, we are no longer in that state of things.

With Christ crucified, I am entitled to account myself dead to sin (Rom. vi. 11). I am not called upon to die to sin. Indeed I could not do it. Dying of course, as a question of exposure to trial and death for Christ continually—dying daily—is spoken of (1 Cor. xv. 31; 2 Cor. xi. 23). But as to the flesh, I am to reckon myself henceforth and always dead. Mysticism is an effort to die in oneself and sounds well; but for the believer the question is settled in the death of Christ, so that I may without presumption reckon myself dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. And the Holy Spirit is the great delivering power given to us practically, founded on redemption by and in Christ.

Turning again to Ephesians, in chapter ii., the Holy Spirit is the power of access to the Father for both Jew and Gentile believers (verse 18); while also He

is the constitutive power of the habitation of God (verse 23)—not externally with a visible cloud of glory marking His presence as in Israel, though not for that reason less really present. In chapter iv. the doctrine of the Spirit is largely developed in relation to the body and the individual gifts; above all (verse 30) as the active power and personal measure of holiness in walk. In chapter v. we are not to yield to carnal excitement, but to be filled with the Spirit: “speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.”

For the Jew such praises were provided as an external supply in the book of Psalms; but there is no such provision of psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs written by inspiration for the Christian. Because the ever-present and indwelling Spirit is as a well of living water (John iv.), the constant spring of joy within, breaking forth naturally and normally in such expressions of praise and worship as those under the dolorous experience of the law cannot, by the fact of their being there, know anything about. Hence they fall back on Jewish ground, and seek help from the Psalms of David, which, if they only understood, suppose a wholly different experience as well as relationship from that of Christians. But the Holy Spirit is in the Christian and in the church, and leads upward naturally, not to say necessarily, in these Christian compositions, expressive of the various praise and proper joy of those who are brought to know God as a Father, and are found speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord. The

variety of spiritual experiences of the Christian, as well as the fact that there were known metrical compositions of these kinds already existing, seem intimated in the threefold division. And you cannot take up a Christian book of praise to God without finding one and another or all of these things.

Finally, in chapter vi., we read, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"—never *to* the Spirit. Prayer to *God* includes the Spirit with the Father and the Son. Praying to the Spirit would be unconsciously not to believe in the Spirit as dwelling in the church and in the Christian—characteristic of those who confound the church's estate with the Jewish position.

In 1 Thessalonians v. we read, "Quench not the Spirit" in others; I suppose in public action, in the use of their gifts: while "grieving" Him, in Eph. v., is clearly a personal question. I am not to hinder the manifestation of the Spirit in any brother, even in the least, nor to grieve Him in myself.

In both epistles to Timothy we hear of the Holy Spirit repeatedly: "God has not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of discreteness." Such was the general character of the Spirit given to the saints, to give them power against the difficulties and disappointments of the way.

In Titus iii. 4, we have not new birth only, but "the washing of regeneration," not the mere sign of a changed estate, but that form and fulness of it which now pertains to the Christian in "the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and this, because of redemption accomplished.

In Hebrews we have the Spirit of *grace* (chapter x.) as contrasted with *law*, and the "*eternal Spirit*," with temporary dealings as of old.

Next, in 1 Peter i. 10-12, we have Him who in prophets of old was a Spirit of prophecy, now that redemption is present fact, taking an altogether new place—"the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," as contradistinguished from His Old Testament operations. He is the present power of the believer's entering into that which is now reported in the gospel; while the accomplishment of the prophecy awaits another epoch, when the kingdom shall be (not preached, but) set up in power and glory here below. There are therefore three things: first, the Holy Ghost predicting; next, the present enjoyment of soul-salvation proclaimed by the gospel; and thirdly, the revelation of grace at the appearing of Christ, which will be the fulfilment of the prophecies.

Lastly, we come to the Revelation, and in the very terms of the salutation we hear of the "seven Spirits which are before his throne:" evidently another order of ideas from what we get in the epistles, and connecting us with a scene of government and judicial dealings; and the Holy Spirit viewed, not as the spirit of grace, but according to the governmental character which the book as a whole unfolds to us. God Himself is presented judging, and consequently every system, and man as such, must be judged. And, consistently with this, "the seven Spirits" present the full but varied perfections of the Holy Spirit acting according to the developed ways of God in government, and therefore designated as being "before the throne."

Remark again, "what the Spirit saith to the churches."

It is not the working of the Spirit *in* the saint or the church, viewed as the habitation of God in the Spirit. He takes the place rather of warning as One outside. Christ Himself does the same, who is not here as Head of the church His body, but as the Son of man going to take the kingdom, with all judgment committed into His hand (John v.).

And first, the churches must be judged: (chapters ii. iii.)

Then (chapter iv.) the scene changes. Redeemed ones—no longer on the earth—are glorified in heaven, and the Lord is seen as a Lamb that had been slain (a rejected Christ) in the presence of God and His throne; and again the seven Spirits, as seven lamps of fire; and further (in chapter v.) we see their activity as being sent forth into all the earth, on a mission not of grace but government. The churches are no longer heard of: God is occupied with other plans in view of all the earth. The term of long patience ceases, and divine judgments run their course. But even with reference to the saints on earth during that period, the Holy Spirit stands in relation to them as a Spirit of prophecy. The sole testimony He renders to Jesus casts them on the future—on what they are to receive by Jesus when He appears.

It is not really so with the Christian: he enjoys Him now for his heart, while too he waits for Him as His hope. So here it is only with the Bride (chapter xxii.) the Spirit says "Come;" not with those who succeed the church. And He says, "Come," because He who loves us best, and is truly loved by us, has told us that He is coming. Therefore I have, while I have not: I have the blessedness of possession by faith,

and the stimulus of hope, that makes me long to be satisfied with Him in that heavenly glory where He is gone.

But when the heavenly saints are gone on high, there will still be souls to be quickened by the Spirit of God, and are being prepared for the millennial earth, their hearts will be directed to the future that is about to be revealed. The Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. It is not the opening out of the fulness of redemption, nor the power that gives the soul the consciousness of drawing "within the veil." They will have to wait amidst suffering for Him who is to come. Accordingly we find such words as, "How long, O Lord?" And nothing but the mighty power of God can work this in them.

For the Christian, in full possession of faith's blessing now, and hope's anticipation, he stands on an eminence whence he can survey the future, looking right into eternity itself. Oh! how little we enter and know and enjoy our proper blessing in Christ! The apocalyptic saints will not have this, but a *prophetic* testimony from the Spirit of Jesus.

And mark the place the Holy Spirit takes at the close of the book in unison with the hope of the Bride—the church. The detailed description of God's dealings with man up to the very end, the final judgment before the great white throne, the description of the new heavens and the new earth, have not detracted from her own proper joy and hope in Christ. After all is gone through, the main thing He sets Himself to do is, as it were, to establish us in looking completely out of the earthly scenes for our own proper object in Christ. The final call lifts us out of the lower region

of prophecy into that which suits the renewed heart in its truest affections for its right and heavenly attraction—Christ on high, and coming again (compare 1 Pet. i. 19).

May we enjoy with ever-deepening relish what God's word affords us as to the Holy Spirit who deigns to be in us for Christ's sake, and have our hearts strengthened thereby to enjoy in Christ our Lord all that God has been pleased to reveal to us in His precious word for the obedience of faith!—*Abridged, by permission of the author, from "Kelly's Lectures on the Holy Spirit."*

Price, for gratuitous distribution, direct from Manchester, 2s. 3d. per 100; or per post, or through any Bookseller, 3s. od.

Published at 93, Bloomsbury, Oxford Road, Manchester.

R. L. ALLAN, 15, Paternoster Row, London.

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POST-OFFICE.