

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES:

A LETTER

TO

THE REV. JOHN COX,

IPSWICH,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE TRACT ENTITLED

'THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER.'

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ON THE SUBJECT OF THE TRACT ENTITLED

“THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER.”

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just been reading your tract on the “Holy Spirit and Prayer,” written in reply to one entitled “The United Prayer Meetings.”

As the writer of the latter tract, allow me to offer, in the shape of a friendly letter, a few remarks on what you have said.

The subject before us is far too solemn to be discussed in the spirit of mere controversy. Hence, I wish to banish from my own mind any thought or feeling of a personal character. If in the course of these remarks I refer to myself, it will only be so far as your words compel me to do so.

And, first of all, I heartily rejoice that my Tract should have helped to elicit your thoughts on the “Conditionality of the Comforts of the Holy Ghost.” Thankfully, indeed, can I echo the sentiments which you express. Coming as they do from one whose thoughts and words must have weight, I pray they may be read and pondered by many who will never even see what I wrote, much less take heed to it.

The four points which you have insisted upon are, alas! too little understood—too slightly remembered by us all.

The world lying in wickedness, incapable of spiritual apprehension, having nailed to the cross and rejected the Lord of life! And we Christians, believers in the same Lord Jesus, too prone, alas! to love the world and the things that are in the world!

The disciples *knowing* that blessed One of God through the revelation of the Spirit, and yet fleeing in the hour of trial, and leaving him alone to the shame of the judgment and the cross. Peter himself, ever ready to own Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, thrice denying Him before ungodly sinners. A true picture of “confidence in the flesh.”

Yet this same Peter, with the eleven—strong afterwards in the “*possession of the Comforter*”—and Paul likewise, the apostle to the Gentiles, going forth to preach the gospel to every creature, approving themselves, through much tribulation, the ministers of God. A blessed example of devotion and power of service *in* the Spirit. (2 Cor. vi. 4—11.)

Lastly, the gift of the Comforter through the “*intercession of Jesus*,” and the enjoyment of his gracious presence through the “*obedience*” of faith.

Surely these four points should be impressed on our hearts in the light and power of the word of God; surely they should awaken our consciences to a closer walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, as—separate from the world—having no confidence in the flesh—being filled with the Spirit—abiding in Christ. May the Lord help us all to meditate on these truths, and to *live* in the *faith* of them.

But, I need scarcely add, my dear sir, that these four points are only a beautiful development of those words in my tract, “You should BELIEVE He was given, and be SUBJECT to his guidance.”

Are not those words an epitome of all that could be said or written on the *practical* part of the question? Do not misunderstand me. No commendation of myself here. I don't mean that *you* have written from what *I* said. I am only

expressing my joy and thankfulness to God on finding that the true, *practical* conclusion, drawn from the Scriptures, which I had brought together, has found a response in your heart, and has been echoed with unction for the edification of souls.* May that echo be prolonged far and wide, and ring through the hearts of believers, awakening them to a keener apprehension of their responsibilities and their privileges !

Having thus expressed my heartfelt desire to receive your words of counsel, and to weep with you over our numerous deficiencies and shortcomings, I shall now endeavour to answer some of the objections which you have raised against my tract. These objections I can scarcely reconcile with the closing address on the "Comforts of the Holy Ghost," for which I really feel thankful. In fact, there appears to me to be a contradiction throughout.

The main points of my tract you grant. It could scarcely be otherwise, seeing there is more of Scripture in them than of my own thoughts.

I must then conclude that you allow the facts proved by Scripture, that the church is the TEMPLE of the Holy Ghost, built up of lively stones quickened by His divine energy ; that she is the BODY of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, each member in particular being a member of Christ, and He Himself the glorious Head ; that there is a FAMILY of God composed of SONS and DAUGHTERS of the Lord Almighty, but emphatically called *Sons of God* in the 3rd chapter of John's 1st epistle (as alluding, doubtless, to the priestly character of believers). The Holy Spirit bearing *witness* of that adoption, you likewise grant the SEALING and the INTERCESSION of the

* Not that I can endorse *all* your expressions. Communion *with* the Spirit, for instance, appears to me to convey a thought foreign to Scripture. Is not "the communion *of* the Holy Ghost" the common union which binds and sanctifies together all the members of the body of Christ? *Through* that communion there is fellowship with THE FATHER and with his SON JESUS CHRIST, and with one another. (1 John.)

Comforter. Moreover, you have long thought with me that many Christians are ignorantly waiting for the Spirit, instead of "waiting for the Son of God from heaven."

Thus, you do not dispute any of the positions which I had established from Scripture; nay, you enlarge, and that, much to edification, on these scriptural grounds, at the close of your remarks. Meanwhile, you disavow my deductions, conclude they are altogether wrong, and apparently remain satisfied that invocation *to* and *for* the Spirit is quite consistent with the truths in question.*

Your first argument is a strong one. You urge the assumption that I was writing as a "representative of others," (p. 13) as connected with a "system." (p. 3.) Now, if this statement were correct, it would be a very strong argument against me—stronger, indeed, in my eyes than in the eyes of most, as I should, on principle, reject everything which was written for a sectarian purpose. But allow me to say it is *not* correct. I had not spoken with any one on the subject before writing my tract; and as to systems, I have none to defend. I have no opinions to quote, no doctrines to maintain. The Word of God is my only guide through the Spirit. As regards "Brethren," I look upon it as the true name of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If there be a family of God, the children of the same Father must assuredly be Brethren. If Christians *will* adopt other denominations; if they *will* delight in the name of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Gregory, Wesley, and others, or bind themselves together as Independents, Baptists, Arminians, Calvinists, or otherwise, I can but deeply lament the fact; but I cannot leave the general brotherhood, which is the only bond acknowledged of God. In spiritual things, I must know, and be known, in Christ Jesus only.

But you will, of course, say you use the term "Brethren" as characteristic of those holding certain opinions which you

* At the same time I cannot find in any of your remarks on the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, a single exhortation to continuance in that practice which you defend.

denounce as unscriptural; but which *you*, not *they*, embody into a set form and system which you term "Brethrenism."

It is quite unwillingly that I allude to this, but it is necessary that I should at once disavow connection with *any* system of man. I know of none which I can conscientiously adhere to; the Scriptures positively condemn it; the very truths upon which we both agree in connection with the subject before us are utterly opposed to any outward form which man can establish. Spiritual worship has nothing to do with place or circumstance. Our blessed Lord met all the shiftings and objections of the woman of Samaria, with these ever memorable words: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship HIM in spirit and in truth."

I at once, then, dismiss the argument you wish to enforce in connection with "Brethrenism." "Brethren" to me, are the whole church of God; would that everywhere Christians were content with that blessed name! I have no desire in what I write, say, or do, but to know Christ and Him crucified among *all* them that are sanctified and consecrated as a royal Priesthood unto God. But more of this presently. To answer your arguments seriatim:—

I. "*Is it right to address the Holy Spirit in praise and prayer, or is it 'almost blasphemy' to do so?*"

Now as far as the words "almost blasphemy" are concerned they appear to have shocked many sincere Christians. I deeply regret that the feelings of any should have been thus wounded; but, doubtless, they were hurt through a misconception of my words. My intention in writing the tract was not to assert any fresh doctrine, but to rouse the minds of believers, and to point to such Scriptures as might help them to study the question as I had done myself—not from men's works, but from the word

of the living God. Hence the brevity and apparent harshness of expression in the tract. But look to the context. I have just been shewing from Scripture that Prayer, in the present dispensation especially, should be the intercession of the Spirit. Now, if any one grant this, it would be an *absurdity* to suppose that the Spirit of God should indite a prayer for himself to come down where He is already. And the thought of *absurdity* in connection with his gracious work, how could it be qualified save as "almost blasphemy"? But the next sentence in the tract clears up the subject and exonerates from such a charge all those who use similar invocations. They would say: "It is not the SPIRIT who is praying, but WE are praying *for* the spirit." Hence what I charge them with is *ignorance*, and I can only maintain what I then said. Praying *for* the Spirit is a virtual avowal that they are not sealed by the Spirit; it is a practical denial of their Christianity: "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." What clearer than this? Not that I deny the *position* before God of those who are thus praying in ignorance—otherwise, I should not have addressed them as "those who love the Lord Jesus Christ;" but they deny it-themselves; they *virtually assert* that they are without the Holy Ghost.

And I would here say the same as to the term *mockery* which I used in page 7. A strong word, I own; but a censure of the *fact*, not of the *heart*. If God hath given me His Spirit, it is *practically* a mockery to pray for Him again; yet I do not charge the dear children of God with *mockery*; nay, I know that many of their prayers are heard. Neither can I see in this the discrepancy which you observe. The prayer "which cannot be answered," is that the Holy Ghost should descend again on the Church. To descend again he must first have departed; but our God and Father, at the intercession of his glorified Son, sent down the Holy Ghost to *abide with the Church for ever*. How then can the prayer be answered? It is only unbelief, through want of subjection to the *word of God*. Assuredly, God is faithful, and the promise of our Lord was fulfilled. The Scripture tells us the gospel was "preached with the Holy Ghost sent

down from Heaven;" it also tells us that He was sent to abide with us for ever. Where, then, is the warrant to ask that He should come again? *

Yet, the petitions of those thus ignorantly praying may be fulfilled in measure, and special desires granted; for if the Lord limited His answers to *my* intelligence, where should I be? No, he is a God of compassion; and, although the ignorant prayer cannot be granted *as it is put up*, the tender pity of the Lord does meet His child's need. Only the child has not the *full* blessing, because he is not believing his Father's word of truth, who hath of his own free grace given unto us the Spirit of adoption "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

Your *first* point, then, in favor of praying *to* the Spirit, is, that we are nowhere forbidden to do so. To that I reply, we are "not under law, but under grace." The word of truth is given to us, among other purposes, for instruction in righteousness; and, if no law be laid down as to this point, it behoves us all the more to search the Scriptures, and, from their general tenor, to gather our conclusions. "I will pray with the understanding," writes Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The words you quote from Ephesians and Thessalonians, as to "grieving the Spirit," etc., only confirm the fact of His presence, and in no way sanction an invocation *to* Him. "Teachings and utterances" *in* the Spirit are not addresses *to* the Holy Spirit *that he would come down from heaven*. They are an intimation of His holy presence within, sanctifying the heart first, and *then* the tongue. Hence I freely admit, yea, I rejoice to own, that "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, singing and making melody in your hearts to the

* While admitting this, it is argued: "But we want more of the Spirit." My reply to that objection is the same as elsewhere: If God hath given us the Holy Ghost it is already an infinite gift. What we want is not "more of the Spirit," but more dependence on, and subjection to, His guidance by the Word of God.

Lord," is a blessed thing ; but Scripture shews us this as the *result* of being filled with the Spirit, not as a "*help* to fill the souls of many saints with the Spirit." "Be not drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves," etc. Self being for the time forgotten ; the flesh ignored, reckoned dead ; the vessel emptied of the world—there is room for the *full* teaching and manifestation of the Holy Ghost. (Eph. v.)

You maintain *secondly* that the HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD. Doubtless ; and for ever be adored the glorious triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; but this is a deep mystery, and will not allow of human thought beyond what is positively *revealed*. The Godhead is revealed to us in that triune character, as the ever blessed Trinity ; as such, our worship is presented to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Yet the special manifestation of each Divine Person is likewise revealed to us in the perfection of distinctness as to the work of redemption. The Father so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son : the Lord Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, gave Himself for us. His glorious intercession provides for us the abiding gift of the Comforter, that He might take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us. Hence, when prayer is alluded to in Scripture, in especial connection with the distinctive manifestation of the triune Jehovah, the special character of each blessed Person is still maintained. "We have fellowship *with* the Father and *with* his Son ;" but it is "the COMFORT of the Holy Ghost." Through Jesus, the Great High Priest, "we have access unto the Father by one Spirit." Prayer to the Holy Ghost in His distinctive manifestation as the *Comforter* is not, I believe, alluded to in Scripture. Accordingly, I proceed, *thirdly*, to examine your quotations of "positive Scripture warrants" for invocation to the Spirit. Your selection from the work entitled "The Comforter" may be very grateful to the thoughts of him who wrote it, and to others, but it can be no *authority* in settling the question. Men may find pleasure in that which is quite unscriptural. A Romanist (and he may be a child of God too, as you suppose Gregory was), delights in addressing the Virgin, and

thinks he thus has sweet communion with God! Not that I would here establish a parallel between Romanists and godly men who have protested against all the abominations of their system. Still, you will agree with me that no thoughts of men on this subject should satisfy the soul. It is the word of God, and the word of God *alone*, which should have any influence with the child of God. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8.)

"Matt. xxviii. 19," has nothing to do with PRAYER; neither, I think, can it be said that 2 Corinthians xiii. 14, is a prayer *to* the Spirit. If the Holy Ghost be in us, as the Body of Christ, the communion or fellowship of the Spirit must be there too. That it may be *fully felt and enjoyed* is the prayer of the apostle.

"Canticles iv. 16, Ezekiel xxxvii. 9—14," are both in the Old Testament; you, yourself, (p. 21) acknowledge—though reprov- ing me for thus answering the objections from Luke xi. 13— that the dispensations are quite different, and that the Holy Ghost was not *in* the disciples until after Pentecost. Besides, "Canticles" is one of the most poetical books of the Bible; and, surely, we must be careful in deducing rules of action from a poetical figure. To stretch it into a sanction for prayer *to* the Holy Ghost would be a strange anomaly. Could the church say to the Spirit "Awake"? Why, it is the church that is slumbering, (Matt. xxv), not the Spirit of God!

Ezekiel xxxvii. is the quickening of the Jewish nation—their restoration from the Babylonish captivity in the first instance; but, of course, in a much stronger sense, a prophecy of the final return to their land, of their establishment once more as the nation which God has promised to make the centre of all his dealings on the earth. Such, I believe to be the meaning of that passage. *Applied* to the present time, it may have reference to the new birth, the quickening of the Holy Ghost; but if thus applied, who shall utter to the Spirit the prophecy given by commandment to Ezekiel?

“THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH.” But I will speak of this further on.

Is Rev. i. 5, a misprint? If it be i. 12, this, again, is a *figure* corresponding evidently with the seven golden candlesticks in the “holy place.” When the vail was rent they appeared, as it were, in the “holiest of all,” a blessed figure of the church now sitting in the heavenlies in Christ, quickened, sanctified, *enlightened* by the Holy Ghost. (Eph. i. and ii.)*

“Thess. iii. 5, studied with Rom. v. 5, and 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.” The second scripture here, Rom. v. 5, is a positive assurance from the Word of God, of the presence of the Holy Ghost. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is *given to us.*” Supposing the Lord (in Thess.) to be the Spirit (which, though doubtful, I do not dispute), this is no prayer for Him to come down again from heaven; but a hearty desire that He who is thus given unto them may “direct their hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ,” that love of God being already shed abroad there by the presence of the Comforter.

Nor yet does 2 Cor. iii. 17, contain a prayer to the Spirit. In that verse, however, there is much precious truth the other way. If the *gift* of the Holy Ghost be truly understood, firmly believed, there is *liberty* in the individual soul; liberty in the church, as the assembly of believers; liberty—not for sin, not for the flesh (God forbid!)—but *holy* liberty *in* the Spirit: liberty of conscience, liberty of perfect access unto the Father, because the Spirit testifieth of Christ, “in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

Here, the taking away of the vail in connexion with Israel, as a nation, evidently corresponds with the passage in Ezekiel xxxvii., above quoted; and, at *that time*, the Spirit *will* be poured out on the Jews. They are now Lo-Ammi, without the Spirit; but God will bring them into

* Such is the position of the Church in the sight of God—our apprehension of the truth depends, of course, upon our faith.

their own land (verse 14), and plead with them, and put His Spirit in them; and they shall live. They shall look on Him whom they pierced, and mourn, and, once more, *in their own land*, they will be Ammi (my people.) This blessed vision of the glory to come is most precious; but, assuredly, it only confirms the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the church; *not* with the Jews yet, the vail being still upon their hearts.

Fourthly. Prayer to the Lord Jesus is a different thing. We have instances of positive addresses to Him, both on the earth and after His resurrection. The distinctive character of His present appearance at God's right hand leads us *in* the Spirit to address Him as the Great High Priest.

Fifthly. Your *collateral* evidence I cannot enter much into; neither into the quotations from holy, godly men, who may have had thoughts upon the point at issue. It would lead into speculation upon *men's* opinions, instead of a study of the Word. I would only here observe that none of these dear children of God—Brethren, I love to call them, (including poor Gregory)—had learned to worship God in the assembly of saints, according to the directions in 1 Cor. ix., xii., xiii., xiv. They one and all had an appointed mode of outward worship, which is completely antagonistic to the liberty of the Spirit, and diametrically opposed to that portion of God's Word, where the Holy Ghost is giving rules to rectify an assembly of Christians sadly fallen into error and darkness—giving rules, I say, the rules of God for the meeting of Christians. All being priests unto God, have the privilege of worshipping Him “in spirit and in truth, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

If it can be shewn that the dear saints whom you mention had any light at all upon these points, I will return to the question, and examine it on that score; but, if not, I can only say: holy, blessed, devoted, *anointed* as they were in their day—and as thousands now are—as *individuals*, they had never yet learned from the Word of God their right place in the body of Christ. They were still under bondage through

the leaven of false doctrine which had well-nigh leavened the whole body since the days of John, when there were already many Antichrists. As individual saints, blessed be God for all the grace bestowed on them; yet they were men, and were never thoroughly purged from this old leaven of a man-appointed ministry in *connexion with some particular sect*. Gathering into *that sect* the scattered children of God, and having lost the truth of the Head and the Body, they were, alas! as thousands are still, adding members to another name but that of Jesus. They come under the class of those of whom I speak in p. 6 of my tract; the grace and tender compassion of the Lord being all the more magnified through their want of light.

As regards your quotation from Hart :

“Descend, O holy Dove!
With Jesu’s flock abide,
Grant us that best of blessings, LOVE,
Whate’er we want beside.”

I simply compare it with Scripture, and ask: Is not this a practical denial that the Holy Ghost did *descend* at Pentecost, according to promise, to abide for ever with the church? *Does it not contradict Rom. v. 5, quoted by you?*

Sixthly. Granted again that the Lord has met all our ignorance, and given much blessing in answer to the prayers of his children uttered in ignorance. The Word preached by missionaries has been blessed. Thousands have been born again of the Spirit, and this may be in answer to a prayer which is not intelligent. But what and if one of the results of such prayer is the light given on this very point? And what if that light be now *rejected*? “If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” “Yet a little while is the light with you, walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.” Granting, then, much of the late blessings as answers to *unintelligent* prayer, I would say, If such has been the blessing in the midst of a failing, divided,

sectarian, denominational state of things in the church, through the mere attempt at *outward* union in supplications, what would it be were the church endeavouring to "keep the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT in the bond of peace?" I say our poor hearts can scarcely conceive (not receive as you have quoted) what blessings would be the result. "Showered down," is perhaps, as you say, open to objection: but when writing it, I had James i. 17 in my mind; nothing connected with a second descent of the Holy Ghost now, but the *manifestation of his presence* through the grace of God.

But if you insist on using as an argument for praying to the Spirit, that much blessing has attended the preaching of the pure gospel of late, I would at once point to the Revivals. Where is the blessing principally found? Where the channels through which the streams of living waters are flowing? Are they in the organised systems of men? In the large churches; in the graceful, elegant chapels of the day, through the appointed ministry? No. Where are the crowds flocking to hear the Word? Above all, where are the *poor* who have the gospel preached to them? In theatres, halls, barns, cottages. Who are the preachers raised up by the Lord for this wonderful work? Principally laymen, barristers, officers, men, and even women, torn from the elegancies of life, and suddenly endowed with faith to preach to the multitudes the unsearchable riches of Christ. Converted actors, chimney sweepers, colliers, and others are the principal instruments used of the Lord at this time of refreshing. Assuredly, there is a lesson here for all who would learn the ways of God.*

* By this statement I do not deny for a moment the blessing received through ordinary channels, but I say, there must be something very defective in those channels for the Lord to effect such a wonderful work *outside* of them all. Yet they are always praying to the Spirit!

Again, if the special blessings received are owing, as you infer, to the multiplied use of hymns and invocations to, and for, the Spirit, why do you not exhort believers to adhere *above all* to this practice, when you write with unction on the Comforts of the Holy Ghost? Surely, if the hymns and invocations in question are the mainspring from whence the blessings have flowed, they are to be commended above everything else; but what *you*

II. To your 2nd inquiry, "Is it right to pray FOR the Spirit? or do we by so doing 'fearfully sin,' by grieving the Spirit?" I have already, in the main, replied throughout the preceding remarks. While agreeing with you in many respects as to the "*principle pervading*" the Word of God, I cannot think you apply it happily in the connexion between the Holy Ghost and the church. The Jews knew very little, if anything, of the distinctive manifestation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They addressed God as Jehovah, and were the continual recipients of fresh manifestations of his *visible* glory and *power*. Hence, the prayer "to come," "to appear," "to arise," etc., etc. Faith, altogether without sight, was scarcely required of them. They relied, through faith, on *signs and wonders*. They did not know the dispensation of the Spirit, which is *all* of faith. It was a mystery. Doubtless, the words of the blessed Lord to unbelieving Thomas have a dispensational aspect: "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

I do not for a moment deny the *necessity of prayer*. How can a saint live without it? "Pray without ceasing." "In all things, by prayer and supplications, let your requests be made known unto God." Needless to multiply quotations for this. But how can you reconcile the statement that "while gratefully recognising the mission and *presence* of the Holy Spirit, we should earnestly pray that he would COME to us in *manifestation and power*, filling us with the 'fruit of the Spirit.'" If he be with us, how can he come?* The fruit of the Spirit is the inward and outward demonstration of His *presence*. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

The manifestation and power, to which you refer, would be in proportion to our faith. "As is your faith, so be it unto you." Hence, the first thing is to believe what God hath

commend is to *believe* and to *abide* in Christ; the very conclusions I had myself drawn.

* The coming of *Jehovah* among Israel, in addition to the presence of the *Shekinah*, was in power, signs, and wonders.

said, that the Spirit was given to *abide* with the church. With such faith, prayer will be *in* the Spirit, and we shall be *subject* to his guidance, by the WORD OF GOD. Do we need a manifestation of the Spirit in converting power among those dead in trespasses and sins? Let us simply ask of the Father that His own Word may so be applied by the Holy Ghost to their hearts as to bring them to "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ." Do we feel our *own* coldness and want of power? Let us first go to that Word, and see whether there is not a reason for this coldness in our own disobedience to its precepts. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Accordingly, when the Lord Jesus gives Himself for the church, it is "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word"—the Spirit testifying of him through the Scriptures. (Eph. v.) Let us, therefore, yield to His *guidance*.

The inspiration of the Holy Ghost, given to the apostles, and to which you allude, is not ignored in my tract, nor confounded with His abiding presence in the church. The POWER and COMFORT of the Holy Ghost are distinctly alluded to.

As to what Dr. Winslow states—sincere, devoted man as he is—what, I would ask, is meant by an "*ever-abiding* VISITANT?" The thought is too subtle for me. I can imagine a visitant "going and coming," but cannot conceive of an *ever-abiding one*. His statement as to the effusions of the Spirit may sound clear; but where is it in Scripture in connexion with the Church? If not there, why receive it as an authority?

And this brings me to a point where there may really appear to be some difficulty. I mean the various outpourings of the Spirit mentioned in Acts iv. 34; viii. 15; x. 44; xix. 6.

To this I reply:

1. In each place it was in connection with the APOSTLES' mission; they were "endued with *power* from on high;" it was accompanied, accordingly, with miraculous gifts, and bestowed on those who had *not* previously received the *promise*.

2. These outpourings were *dispensational*. They were the

beginning of a new era. Peter quotes the prophecy in Joel ii. as applying to the day of Pentecost; but Peter knew nothing then of the glorious fact afterwards revealed to him, that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were to be admitted to the dispensation of the gospel of the grace of God. He knew nothing of what was afterwards shown, that the middle wall of partition should be broken down, and Jew and Gentile builded into one "temple for the habitation of God through the Spirit." (Study this with the 3rd chapter of Ephesians.)

Accordingly, is it not remarkable that the Holy Ghost, speaking through Peter in Acts ii., leaves out the latter clause of the promise which declares the deliverance as connected with Mount Zion and the Jewish remnant? There is, surely, meaning in this. The 11th of Romans explains this omission, the Gentiles being ultimately cut off through unbelief, and the natural branches grafted in once more to the stock of Israel. "And the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." (Isaiah vi. 13.)

And this brings me to the main question at issue, and to your remarks on "Brethren;* for the root of the whole subject lies here.

You rejoice in the "glorious fellowship," in which you are associated while praying for the Spirit. Do not forget that you are there in company with the poor benighted millions who are still bowing to the sway of Rome. The Greek Church has similar invocations, which, I believe, are sung at "high mass." The fellowship is numerous, but I doubt whether there is much of "the spirit of glory and of God," enjoyed by those poor priest-ridden members of professing Christianity. While on the other hand I could not say that the Lord has not many precious jewels in that dunghill of human superstitions. Doubtless, Gregory's utterance of the *Veni Creator* was the result of *habits of unbelief* which had long been sapping the foundations of true Christianity, while the *heart* was aspiring

* Though, as already said, I deprecate this name as applying to any specific class of believers, for it belongs to all, I am obliged to use it in *your* sense to answer what you say.

to nobler and more glorious things. I delight to think of Gregory and others, including many poor Romanists known to myself, having obtained salvation through simple faith in the atoning blood of Christ. I delight to think that many will be found at the appearing of Jesus, who shall shine throughout all ages as "brands plucked out of the fire," in spite of all the darkness and superstition which clouded their faith.

But it is time that the Word of God should have its full weight on consciences; its full power over the affections of Christians. And the more I look into the subject, the more I see that ignorance and doubt as to the truths of Christianity proceed mainly from the adoption of the thoughts of good, earnest, devout Christians, in preference to a childlike subjection to the Word of God.

In page 17 of your Tract, you draw, from the failures of "Brethren," an argument in favor of your views. You charge them with sectarianism, proselyting, divisions; and you ask: What have they gained by abstaining from prayers and hymns to the Spirit? Well, I am not going to defend "Brethren." I at once own all their failures and shortcomings; I confess their deplorable separations and deficiencies. But as I mix with them here and there, this at least I find: they *acknowledge the evil*, and, in many cases, *mourn* over it. May our mourning be deeper and deeper each day. O that *all* Brethren in Christ Jesus, whatever name they may assume, would join in weeping over the sorrows and divisions of the Body instead of rallying round gifted men to strengthen some peculiar *ism*! What and if all Christians would, as some have done, renounce their unscriptural connexion with sects and parties, and learn to follow Jesus without the camp, bearing His reproach, and gathering to His precious name alone? Ah! if this were taken to heart by those who are so strenuously opposing the few thus gathered by the Lord, surely the church would be in a very different state. What, and if every opposition to "Brethren"—continuous and positive as it hath been, from ministers of the gospel especially—is one of the main

causes of their meeting oft in great weakness and sometimes confusion? What and if thousands of Christians, not excluding ministers, are willing to learn from the writings of "Brethren," but reject all the consequences of such learning? Such is the case; and it proves that all the blame is not with "Brethren"; their opponents have some share in it.

Within the last thirty years, many Christians, among whom were ministers of the gospel, charmed with the scriptural character of "Brethren's" tracts, have left their denominations to gather round the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Centre of unity and blessing. But many of these found it to be a very narrow path; much narrower, in fact, than they had expected. To walk with Him "outside the camp," despised and rejected for the shame of the Cross, to give up the world, and to be ruled entirely by the authority of Scripture, under the rules laid down by the Holy Ghost—this proved too blessed for many. Through love of the world, or through want of spiritual apprehension, they have left this strait path and returned, some to their old connexions, others to new systems of their own, some to *no place* at all in the Church of God, meeting with *any* body of Christians, where they could have fellowship *without discipline*—some, alas! have fallen away altogether. (1 John ii. 19.)

Converse with those who have thus forsaken their first love. What is the result? In nearly every instance they still declare the principles on which "Brethren" meet to be quite right and scriptural, and the usual excuse for their present position is, that they *could not carry those principles out*. Why? because they would not be subject to the Holy Ghost. But that was *their* fault, not the want of power from God. (*See postscript.*)

The church is in darkness and confusion at Corinth; the Holy Ghost, through Paul's epistle, gives distinct rules as a remedy for the evil. They consist principally in gathering together to break the bread and drink the wine "in remembrance of the Lord Jesus until he shall come," and in dependence upon, and liberty in, the Spirit. These rules apply to "all

the churches of God," for "He is not the God of confusion, but the God of peace." No more peaceful, orderly government than that of the Holy Ghost in the assembly of saints—liberty in dependence, and dependence in liberty, the characteristics thereof. How well these are appreciated in the *earthly* government of a nation! Why, they are the very foundations of all peaceful and happy constitutions; yet only the reflection of the thoughts and ways of God. Christians, struck by these facts, come to the conclusion that this is the scriptural way for God's children to meet, till the Lord return. They join outwardly, rejoice for a season, and then, when the offence of the Cross abounds, or the rule of the Spirit has to be applied—when evil has to be judged and put away—immediately, they are offended and leave the family meeting place, to go wandering back into the wilderness of men's systems, *acknowledging them all the while to be in a great measure unscriptural!* (Jer. ii. 13.)

What, and if these practically become the bitterest enemies of the truth of God! Many follow them, and a state of things is thus engendered worse even *in appearance* than the worst systems of men. I confess it all—but I say, do not blame the few who, in spite of obloquy and opposition, remain faithful to the principles given to the Church of God, and to the blessings which He, in His infinite grace, has provided for them who *do* His will. "If ye *know* these things *happy* are ye if ye do them." Rather should those be pitied who have gone away; still more pitiable the case of some who remained in an unscriptural place to receive them back from the narrow path *which they still hold to be right in principle.*

A few words more on this subject. A skilful and daring general has an enemy to attack, more powerful than himself; he discovers the strongest point in the enemy's defence, and in that stronghold a *weak spot*. He has been watching all the other positions, but now leaves them to concentrate his whole force at once against that weak spot. He attacks and scatters the enemy's best troops, and can then make easy havoc of the remainder, though at first the enemy were stronger than he.

The Lord was especially with those first gathered in his blessed name, some thirty years back. It was the stronghold of faith. Satan—who has thus acted throughout the history of the Church, wherever Christians have had more light—Satan, comparatively leaves all the sects and denominations of Christians, and boldly assaults the position of those holding communion in the name and strength of the Lord. Attacking the one weak point in them, he soon came in as a flood, and many of the souls gathered out of forms of religion were at once scattered abroad. Now, what was the weak point in that stronghold of faith? The very question before us in its fundamental character—the nature and destinies of the Church; for I need scarcely say that both the Lord's coming and the truth as to the Holy Ghost are inseparably connected with that question. You strongly condemn the writings of "Brethren" on the former truth, nor can I myself endorse terms, or accept thoughts, which are not in Scripture. I much regret them, but there is no space to enter upon this subject here; the question before us is the nature of the Church.

It was held by some Brethren, and is still held, I believe, that the Church of God is composed of all men saved from Adam downwards, including the whole number of the blessed who shall dwell on the earth in the cycles of never-ending bliss. By others the Church was supposed to be limited to those who believed from Abel to the Millennium. Others judged from Scripture that the Church is formed of Jews and Gentiles quickened together in *resurrection life* from the day when the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead until he shall come again to receive them to himself. The whole tenor of Scripture appears to me to warrant no other conclusion.*

* It would require a volume to enter fully on this question, but I here give some Scriptures which I think would be read with profit in the following order, viz.—

Matt. xiii.—"The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," then declared in parables. The Church *within* that kingdom. (v. 11.)

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven was not known in

Matt. xvi, 13 to xvii. 10.—Its connexion with a rejected, suffering, glorified Saviour. This with Matt. xxi. 33 to end, the stone rejected of the builders becoming the head of the corner.

Parallel passages in the other gospels.

John xii. to xvii.—The spiritual exposition to disciples of this then future state of things.

Luke xxiv.—The special connexion between the preaching of the gospel and the death and resurrection of the Lord.

Acts i., ii., iii.—The fulfilment of the promise and the first fruits at Jerusalem.

Acts x., xiii.—The Gentiles admitted (verse 46 especially.)

1 Cor. i. to iii., x. to xv.—The church among the Gentiles. Her calling, failures, government.

2 Cor. iii. to v.—Contrast between the old dispensation of shadows and the manifestation of the grace of God in the Church. The epistle to the *Galatians* sets this point forth in the way of controversy.

Rom. i. to viii.—Exposition of the principles on which God draws man to himself, chapters vi. and viii. especially shewing the position of believers. Power to “live unto God,” the fruit of “no condemnation in Christ.”

1 John.—The love of God in giving his Son to be the way, the truth, the LIFE, as in John’s Gospel. The character of that life which the risen Lord is to the believer—all love.

Colossians and Ephesians.—The result of *this life in the RISEN CHRIST*—the individual and collective position of the Church set down with Christ in heavenly places, etc. How God views the Church.

Philippians.—The result of *this life on the earth*. The Church, *in the wilderness*, entering into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings and conformed to his death, with the present help through *grace*, and the *glory* in prospect.

Hebrews.—The Church *worshipping* her Lord in the “holiest of all”—In *faith* looking for the glory. 1 Peter i. 9.

James and Jude.—Dangers, warnings, and privileges.

Timothy, Titus, and Thessalonians.—Ministry, rule, failures, prophecies, history, true hope,—“waiting for the Son of God,”—the close of the dispensation through judgments on professors.

the previous dispensations of the Jews.* It was first spoken of by the Lord himself. The forming of the mystical Body of Christ through this present age, was another mystery, still deeper and more unsearchable, only revealed to the apostles and prophets after the *national* rejection by the Jews of a risen and glorified Saviour, first preached at Jerusalem, and in the synagogues of Abraham's seed.

Though this was a deep mystery, the old Testament contained many precious figures of it; and these, we gather from Corinthians x., happened unto the saints of old as ensamples (in Greek "typically.") Let us take heed to one of those types in Genesis xxiv.

Abraham of old, the friend of God, receives the son of his love—his only son, Isaac—from the dead. Sarah dies, and he bestows on him all his inheritance. He sends his faithful servant (Eliezer?) to find a bride for that son of promise among his kindred, then heathens, in the far country. The servant goes in dependence on God, meets her whom the Lord hath chosen, adorns her with the jewels sent by Abraham, and tells her of him whom he represents. She at once leaves her household, and, trusting to his guidance, is conducted safely by him through the wilderness, and presented to the expectant Isaac, and by him to his father; and that in the very spot where Abraham had once loved to dwell with Sarah.

Apply the figure. The Lord Jesus, the only Son of God,

1 and 2 Peter.—All the above, as viewed in the light of the Apostle to the circumcision.

Revelations.—The *judgment* of Christ against evil, first in those whom He loves, and secondly in that which assumes his blessed name, having the form of godliness without the power and ending in open apostacy.

The whole of these subjects appear to me to belong to the Church only, as distinct from all other saints—Jews or otherwise.

* Passages in Scripture linking Jews and Gentiles together in glorious happiness were viewed by the Jews in their true interpretation—that of millennial glory.

lays down his life and is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. His own people reject Him; the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven into the world to gather out a bride, and to form his mystical body from among those once dead in trespasses and sins, but made kindred spirits with the Father and the Son through his quickening grace. The Spirit testifies of Christ. The soul—collectively, the Bride—hears and believes the testimony, commits herself to His guidance through the wilderness. Adorned with the gifts of the Father and the Son, the bride is by the Spirit presented to the Lord Jesus, who comes out to receive her “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” that she may share His glory in the Father’s presence, and in the very place where the glory once dwelt. “Then shall the moon be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously!” What a beautiful figure! How each part corresponds—the type and the antitype!

If the mystical Body of Christ be formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (which you grant), then each member, and the body collectively, is quickened and animated by that blessed Spirit, as I have fully shewn from Scripture in my first tract.

But the special nature of the Church being denied by those to whom I have alluded and by most Christian sects, the word of God is not “rightly divided.” Earthly promises to the Jews are taken by the Church to whom the Lord only promised “persecutions,” and Israel is thus robbed of all the glory promised to Messiah, as the true seed of Abraham, the true son of David. The relationship of the Church to Christ, as her blessed Lord, is likewise misunderstood, and her special glory hereafter ignored; or, at best, very loosely held. Hence, the presence of the Spirit, and, still more, dependence on Him, is well nigh lost sight of by Christians. But “the Spirit and the Bride say, COME,” and when He cometh again and hath received His Bride, the Holy Ghost will be poured out once more on the JEWISH PEOPLE! “There shall be deliverance

in Mount Zion, and in the remnant whom the Lord *shall* call." (Joel ii.) The dry bones shall be quickened by the same Spirit, and the people once more brought into national blessing. But we are not told that the Spirit shall dwell among the Jewish people *as* he now dwelleth in the Church and in the hearts of believers, for He abides with them *for ever*. Now there is a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. v.), but *then*, no conflict: the holy *law* of God will be written in the hearts of the children of Israel. All shall know Him from the least to the greatest. All Israel shall be saved, and the knowledge of the *glory* of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

When you say "Brethren" *rob* themselves (by a clear interpretation of Jewish Scriptures), allow me to ask: Did you not once, with many others, believe that the Millennium was to be ushered in through the preaching of the Gospel and the efforts of Societies? Had you not learnt this from the false teachings of *holy, earnest, sincere* Christians? Did you find it loss to search the Scriptures, whether these things were so? While thanking God for the preached Gospel, and the many devoted labourers at home and abroad, have you not, 'midst it all, seen the end of the present dispensation? Have you not oft rejoiced in public, and, still more, felt the springs of joy welling up in your own soul, as you described, or mused on, the glories of Messiah's kingdom, and the scriptural reign of "Immanuel Enthroned?" Would you give this up now for all the most exquisite spiritualisms which could be penned by any devoted, but prejudiced, child of God? Assuredly not. And have you lost any of the precious savour of Christ, any of the blessed spiritual truths of the word, through an *application* only to the Christian of a well grounded *interpretation** of Jewish truths? No: you will own at once that the true way to receive and enjoy the spiritual teaching of the Old Testament, is to obtain first of all a correct *interpretation* of the passage.

* I quote your own words here, and refer to your work, "Immanuel Enthroned."

Then how full, how precious, oft, how glorious, the spiritual *application!* Depend on it, we do not deprive ourselves of any blessing when we maintain, in accordance with Scripture, that the promise of the Spirit to the disciples, *yet* in the Jewish dispensation, was completely fulfilled at Pentecost; that its fulfilment is still being carried out in the formation of the Church by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that our duty and privilege *now* is to *believe* He was sent to abide for ever, and be *subject to His blessed GUIDANCE by THE WORD OF GOD.*

The want of spiritual discernment on this point was the weak spot among "Brethren." Satan saw it; and what would he delight in more than to blind and misguide the Bride of Immanuel? This was the very point on which he had ever concentrated all his satanic wisdom and energy—dispersing the flock, severing them by their own lusts and folly, and ever increasing the terrible division of the Church, while he helped to build up the *Uniformity* of Rome, Greece, England, Prussia, or otherwise, at the various epochs of her eventful history. The one point which Satan has all along striven to wrest from the Church is faith in the **UNITY (Oneness) OF THE SPIRIT.** How far he has been successful, let eighteen centuries of misery and unfaithfulness declare! Had she truly believed in the presence, and trusted to the guidance, of the Holy Ghost by the Word, what glory would have ensued! "That they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me!"

But not so; she trusted to *men*; and what is the result?

The simple meeting of Christians in the blessed name of Jesus, inviting all to rally round that name alone, and receive the blessing, was too glorious a spectacle, too powerful an element, in the world of which Satan is god. He saw it, and left those in systems to unite for a time in outward demonstrations of fellowship, while the whole heart was sick; he launched all his strength against the *weak spot* in the stronghold, and the last attempt to recover the "Unity of the Spirit" was once more broken up.

And now, having thus dispersed the few once gathered in *holy* fellowship, he returns to the systems which he had apparently left undisturbed in their efforts towards outward union on a few common grounds, and is fast sowing discord between Churchmen and Dissenters on questions connected with politics, or with vituperative recollections of the past (black enough in either case, where the truth will out!)

What will be the result of all this? ANTICHRIST, THE BEAST and the unity of his reign over the ten kingdoms and over all men; the last display of Gentile power and rebellion energized by Satan in his enmity against Christ. How blessed, midst all this time of anguish, to have the sure word of prophecy: "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!"

And what, if amid all the present sects, a few remain faithful, and refuse to deny the *name* of Jesus? (Rev. iii. 8.) Have we not a beautiful illustration of this, familiar, doubtless, to many?

Paul, persecuted, appeals to Cæsar; it ends in his going to Rome; but he is wrecked on the voyage—an awful storm indeed—darkness and distress everywhere—the ship, at last, goes to pieces. Happy those who could swim; they cast themselves into the sea and *first* got to land. The rest were saved also—some on boards, some on broken pieces of the ship.

What a picture of the Church's history! She is tempted by Satan through trials and persecution. She appeals to the world for help; goes hand in hand with Constantine and his worldly power. The ship in which she has taken refuge is exposed to the long night of Papal darkness and horror; at last the day dawns, the Reformation comes, and every effort is made to save the *ship*; but "corporate Christianity is a failure," and the whole apostacy (falling away) ends in a perfect wreck! True, all on board are saved, for none shall perish or be plucked from HIS hands—some are laying

hold of boards, others of broken pieces of the old ship; but happy, thrice happy, they who can swim! Safely resting on the promise, while they struggle through the troubled waves of the world; looking to Jesus alone, and confiding in the guidance of the Holy Ghost, they can already see the shore, while others are *entangled* with their *planks* and their *pieces*. They already anticipate the joy of beholding Him, "whom having not seen we love;" endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, they "remember His death, till He should come again" to receive them to Himself.

In closing this letter, let me observe that I have also read your tract, entitled "Test Before you Trust." I cannot but regret you should have given us so much of man's word to strengthen your views; and I accordingly purpose, if the Lord will, addressing you another letter on the subject of that Tract, in order to show that some of the extracts quoted by you contain statements positively opposed to the Word of God.

Having thus examined your tract on the Holy Spirit, and felt, as I have said, deeply thankful for the second part of it, I would beseech you, in all simplicity, to search the Scriptures more and more, and inquire whether you are doing the Lord's work in opposing against the "liberty of the Spirit" the *words, thoughts, and systems of men*. If I am unscriptural on any point, I pray for grace to retract what I have said; but until Scripture (unclouded Scripture) can be produced to disprove the significance of the texts which I have brought together, I must adhere to the conclusions I have drawn of the mission and abiding presence of the Holy Ghost; I must rest in dependence on Him, meeting with the few who—through much weakness, and oft without any gifts—are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus only, to witness for dependence on the truth of God.

Content to follow God's ways rather than man's, we rejoice in the blessed liberty of the Lord the Spirit, in the unction of that Holy One, who is testifying of Jesus and guiding

into His presence—in faith *swimming* to the shore without the trouble of boards or ship.

The Lord grant that many of His dear children may be led into this blessed liberty!

Believe me, my dear Sir,

In the bonds of Christian love,

Yours affectionately,

ALFRED BELL.

Ipswich, March 15th, 1862.

P.S. While speaking of the *weak spot* among Brethren, and while confessing all their failures, it should be remembered that the word of God abideth for ever. In the midst of all our weakness and failures, He still remains unchangeable, and His principles true and full of gracious power.

Is there a weak spot among us, let it be owned—for the remedy is provided. (1 John i. 8, 9.)

Is there *failure*? It cannot proceed from the principles of our God, it must proceed from *our* folly! Confess the folly, cease from man. If you fail to-day, to-morrow rally round the principles of God and begin afresh. The promise is: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.)