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The Holy Spirit.

NOTES OF A DEVOTIONAL ADDRESS.¹

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I.

IT has been said that "the power of the Church to propagate her faith is largely dependent on her power to commend the great truths of the Gospel to the *understanding* as well as to the *hearts* of men." This sentence exactly describes two of the unique functions of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of Truth—guiding into all moral and intellectual truth. Through Him "the word of knowledge" and "the word of wisdom" are mediated, as St. Paul reminds the Corinthian converts. But it is He who also enables us from the depths of the *heart* to cry Abba, Father; and who sets the seal to our sonship, by the witness He bears, in co-operation with that of our own spirits, that we are indeed children of God.

II.

The Christ whom we now apprehend is not merely the historical Jesus, but the ascended and ever-living Lord; and never at any time in the Church's history was it so necessary as it is now to hold fast to the truth, verified in the religious experience of all true Christians, that Jesus *LIVES*: it is this truth which makes religion vital, which appeals to living men, and which alone can evoke that spirit of loyalty and obedience which we characterize as faith. He *lives*—not merely in the memory of His disciples; He *lives*—as a Person, real, active, and with whom men can commune; He *lives*—as a King, possessed with all power. We believe in the *real* presence of our Lord, in a spiritual fellowship between Him and His humble followers, as real as the fellowship which human minds have with each other.

¹ Delivered at the annual meeting of the Daily Prayer Union, May, 1914.

The influence of Christ ceased not at His death, as, alas! is held by many. Had it done so, we should have had before us a glorious example of holy living, a teacher whose revelation of the Father of all transcended all other conceptions; but Christianity's *vital* element would have been lacking—the gift of the Holy Spirit. As one writer has put it, “The real content and power of Christianity are dissipated if it be cut loose from our immediate relationship with Him, mere teaching preserved in books or traditions being substituted for the life-giving influence of a present Lord.”

III.

The promise is, “Lo! *I* am with you always, even unto the end of the ages”; and any gospel which does not carry with it *this* proclamation is a defective gospel, and does not realize that the secret of the “unseen companionship” is the great secret of Christianity, a secret, like all the Gospel secrets, now revealed and within the grasp of all believers. The great secret could not be revealed till after the Resurrection—“God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both *Lord* and Christ.” He is Jesus still—the identical One who had experience of our woes, made in all things, sin excepted, like His brethren; but He is now also *Lord*, powerful and almighty. And the New Testament writers tell us the exalted Christ is the Giver of the Spirit; and St. John especially dwells on the thought that it is through the Spirit we have contact with the living Christ. Not that the Spirit is the substitute for the Christ, for, as He says, “*I* will come unto you.” Christ was not going to cut Himself off from His disciples: there was merely to be a transformation in His mode of existence; and His Spirit is now free from all earthly trammels, to be shed forth for universal experience.

IV.

A mysticism which is merely sentimental finds no ground for its existence in the religion of the New Testament. The *historic* Jesus is there set forth as the object of faith, as well as

is the *living Christ*—the One who says, “*I will come unto you*” is the same Person who is described as the Lord, and the moral and spiritual qualities of the ascended Lord are those of Jesus of Nazareth. And the charge that believers in the power of an unseen Holy Spirit are mere visionaries and idealists is refuted by the insistence in the New Testament of obedience to the laws laid down by the Divine Teacher—“God hath given the Holy Spirit to them that *obey Him*.” The fruits of the Spirit are the normal Christian graces—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance,” as enumerated by the Apostle in Gal. v. ; and throughout his writings he lays stress on the *ethical* effects of the Spirit’s dominance. The Spirit of Christ is manifested in Christian walk, and “he that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His.”

V.

The Holy Spirit is the guide of the Church ; and it is in the unity of the Spirit that the oneness of the Church consists. But as we read the annals of the Early Church in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Pauline epistles, there is no truth more patent than this, that the Holy Spirit dwells in the *individual* Christian ; and this truth, I take it, is what the Daily Prayer Union wishes to emphasize. Its prayer for each who joins it is, “O God, give *me* Thy Holy Spirit, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” The Apostolic *body* received power, after that they were robed with the Holy Ghost ; but the Apostles *individually* received the gift of the Spirit ; and if we are to get back to the very heart of things, we must get back to the Christianity of Pentecostal times, when individuals sought and obtained and lived in the Spirit of Christ.

VI.

The days of expectation are not without their blessed lessons : waiting for Pentecost, the Apostles “continued with one accord” steadfastly in *prayer*. Continuous, faithful, believing prayer is the one condition of obtaining the Spirit’s power—the means

which will remove all obstacles of unbelief and disobedience. "The recognition of our impotency without the Spirit," says Mr. Arthur, "and the absolute necessity of His presence and His power, is as needful as the recognition of the fact that, without sunshine and rain, all labour and all skill would fail to preserve the human race for one season. But the sunshine and the rain are precisely the things which cost nothing, and on which we may constantly depend. So it is with the baptism and power of the Holy Spirit. Freer than the air we breathe, freer than the rich sunbeams, freer than any of God's other gifts, because it is the one which has cost Him most and which blesses His children most, *that gift* is ever at hand ; and when we have done that which the Lord lays upon us to do, it is dishonouring to Him to cherish a secret feeling as if He were backward to pour out His Spirit and to do good to His children." We want to take God at His word, and this we are so prone to fail to do. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." It is our supineness, our unfaithfulness, our neglect to seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which prevent the Word of God growing *mightily* and prevailing as it did in Apostolic times. Oh! let us fall earnestly to prayer and invoke the Spirit's aid :

"Breathe on us, Breath of God ;
 Fill us with life anew,
 That we may love what Thou dost love,
 And do what Thou wouldst do.

"Breathe on us, Breath of God,
 Until our hearts are pure,
 Until with Thee we will one will,
 To do and to endure.

"Breathe on us, Breath of God,
 Till we are wholly Thine,
 Until this earthly part of us
 Glows with Thy fire divine.

"Breathe on us, Breath of God,
 So shall we never die,
 But live with Thee the perfect life
 Of Thine eternity."

VII.

Spiritual power will accompany the preaching of men who are filled with the Holy Ghost, as it did the preaching of the Apostles after Pentecost. A ministry which does not lead sinners to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" which does not lead believers to hunger and thirst after righteousness—such a ministry, however learned, however cultured, has missed the mark, and such a minister is not an ambassador for Christ. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may descend on all those who are engaged in the ministry of the Church, and make them a real, living power in this and other lands! In your prayers may I crave a place for those who teach and those who learn in our theological colleges, that there the Holy Spirit may be honoured, may be experimentally realized in the plenitude of His power, that while knowledge increase spirituality may abound, and that there may be raised up to serve the Church of God those who, out of the fulness of a rich experience, shall be able to teach men to be no loiterers on the highway of God.

