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THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE OFFICES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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AMONG the more important themes alike of theological and of practical interest the work of the Holy Spirit would perhaps be generally regarded as most in need of study. The settlement of this doctrine has been postponed because the time had not come when its settlement could be reached. The church gives herself to but one great subject at once, and takes centuries instead of years to arrive at a lasting decision. The lesson of history upon this point, although familiar, is hardly the less startling. It is natural that so abstruse a doctrine as that of the Trinity should wait nearly four hundred years for definition, and that the problem of the relations of divine to human in Christ should not be worked out to the general satisfaction until near the close of the seventh century. But how explain that it took the Western church a good part of five hundred years fully to recognize so obvious a fact as that men are born depraved, and more than eleven hundred years before her Anselm gave to the atonement, that is to the Good News itself, the enunciation which begins all modern thought upon this subject?

And we must review the whole complex process of church history if we would understand why the application of the atonement, or justification by faith, had to wait a full millennium and a half in order to receive a sufficiently simple and sufficiently wide publication.

No one then should be surprised to find John Wesley, about half way from Luther's day to ours, first making it understood that a new begetting by the Holy Spirit and a definite progress in the new life, together with the Spirit's witness to his own work, are within reach at once. Up to Wesley's time emphasis had been laid upon what the Holy Spirit does for the church, that he gives authority to her teachings and efficacy to her sacraments; Wesley preached the work of the Spirit in the individual. His contribution to the development of Christian doctrine was as timely as Luther's, and left as much for further inquiry within the very range of truth which he took in hand to expound. It was a sense of guilt for past sins on which Tetzels traded, and which was fully satisfied in Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. It was the spectacle of sin yet reigning in the church which inflamed the zeal of the young Methodists at Oxford, and which found its corrective in the offices of the Holy Spirit. But just as Luther's doctrine of justification invited an antinomian perversion, so Wesley's doctrine of immediate regeneration, sanctification and witness to the same, inevitably led to unwarrantable opinions about the nature of the changes actually wrought, and to a fanatical misunderstanding of the Spirit's attestation to his own work. What our time demands is a union in life and a reconciliation in doctrine of the benefits which Luther and Wesley proclaimed. We need more fully to apprehend both in thought and in experience the relations of the work of Christ to that of the Holy Spirit. Justification for Christ's sake must be seen to go into effect through regeneration by the Holy Spirit in order either to bring opposite doctrinal tendencies

into accord, or to show that any reality underlies either doctrine. This is too much for a Review article to undertake; but it may not be immodest nor wholly profitless to attempt an orderly statement of what our generation may claim to know as to the offices of the Holy Spirit.

Common opinion has lit upon a distinction fundamentally correct, and helpful in the present inquiry; namely, that the dealings of God with men fall under two dispensations which, as regards the work of Christ, are called dispensations of the Law and of the Gospel, and as regards the work of the Holy Spirit, dispensations of the Letter and of the Spirit. This latter distinction is what Paul had in mind when he wrote, in a chapter devoted to the contrast between the two covenants, that "the letter kills, but the spirit makes alive" (2 Cor. iii. 6). John also contrasted the baptism which signaled his work with the baptism of the Spirit which was to distinguish the ministry of Christ (Luke iii. 16). But Christ in turn put off the gift of the Spirit until his own departure to the Father (John xvi. 7).

An answer to the question why the Holy Spirit could not come until Christ had gone, will lay open the whole subject of the Spirit's work. Two answers may be given, one of which seems to have escaped general notice. Christ could not send the Holy Spirit so long as he was himself in the position of a servant. All authority was given him in heaven and in earth only after the resurrection, an event which was completed in the ascension. A comment of John upon an earlier promise of the Holy Spirit recognizes this fact: "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). It is not denied, it will presently be affirmed, that the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world. It is not forgotten that, after he rose and before he ascended, Jesus breathed on the disciples, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John xx. 22). But the same

evangelist records that the special gift of the Spirit could not be conferred while Christ yet walked among men. Another reason why this could not then be done is more immediately pertinent to our theme: The distinctive office of the Spirit under this dispensation is to testify of Christ (John xv. 26), but that testimony could not be given until the work to be attested was complete. Here we reach a view of the one all-inclusive office of the Holy Spirit; namely, *to minister the truth*. The truth may be either revealed or applied by the Holy Spirit; but, in one form or the other, a ministration of truth is all that the Bible unequivocally asserts or experience attests. The scope of the ministration will depend upon the nature of the truth to be administered. This fact, and nothing in the way of arbitrariness, fixes the boundary line between the old and new dispensations.

Under the old dispensation the people were in a state of pupilage, and the truth was embodied largely in symbols. An immediate result was restriction of the truth to those who had a symbolical fitness to make use of the symbols. So far then as the practice of Levitical rites was limited to the priestly nation of Israel, so far the work of the Holy Spirit was limited to that nation.

A predominantly ritual religion is subject to a still further limitation: its ceremonies are apt to hide what they are intended to show. The more they mean, the less meaning they actually convey. This is a familiar reproach against the Romish ceremonial, and our objections are graded to the importance of the service which a symbol is intended to render. Once there was universal Puritan objection to crosses on houses of worship; now not only meeting-houses wear crosses, but Protestant ladies carry the cross as an ornament, if it happens to be the fashion in jewelry. Yet we never see a painting of the crucifixion behind the pulpit of a church known as evangelical, nor a carved crucifix set up before the

eyes of all the worshippers. But why not the crucifix, if the cross? Because the cross but hints what the crucifix exhibits. The crucifix means too much. Hence the risk that the worshipper will let his mind rest where his eyes are fixed, and an idol usurp the place of Christ. Not even the rites appointed by our Lord are simple enough to escape this liability. It was because baptism so vividly sets forth a spiritual dying and rising that it was credited, perhaps before the last apostle had died, with conferring the new life. It was because the bread and the wine so vividly picture the broken body and shed blood, and because it was so important to "discern the Lord's body," that men began, one can hardly tell how soon, to believe the very body and blood were present in the symbols of them. And so it is quite probable that few of those who strictly kept the Levitical law looked through its emblems to realities, and the work of the Holy Spirit could not but be correspondently restricted.

The priestly office tends to aggravate this difficulty. Priests are not forward to simplify ritual; on the contrary, they elaborate it, lay stress on their own share in it, lay so exclusive a stress upon the correct performance of functions as eventually to release thought itself from any part in worship. The truth thus passes wholly out of sight, and the Holy Spirit is banished from the temple. It is worthy of note that this tendency ruled far beyond the family of Aaron, and that the scribes, who gave themselves with exhaustless ardor to the study of the Law, in attempting to fence in the law fenced out obedience. Hence among the many who listened to Christ, there was no class more out of sympathy with the essentially spiritual character of his religion, than the scribes and their most ardent adherents, the Pharisees.

Again, it is a singular proof of the radically anti-spiritual character of a too highly symbolical religion that, whereas the methods of the kindergarten are early laid aside in secular education, the clumsiness of object-lessons in religion

increased as the Hebrew people outgrew their childhood, until the burden became too grievous to be borne. It was the painful spectacle of misdirected effort to please God which drew from our Saviour the sweetest of all his invitations: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Parallel with the development of legalism, during about half its period, was the antithetic development of propheticism. The priestly function is conservative; the prophetic is progressive. The priest must adhere to his formulas; the prophet challenges attention to a new word from God. The older a ceremonial, the more reverend; but the fresher the God-sent message, the more imperative. When we are satisfied that a thought is God-given, we are sacredly bound to search out all its meanings, and to follow them whithersoever they lead. Nothing is so radical as an idea; nothing so provocative of advance as a suggestive idea. The prophet, therefore, was unavoidably the antithesis of the priest. And he did not hesitate to show this. While he might recall the people in some cases to observance of Levitical precepts, his familiar burden was right and wrong, godliness and wickedness. To emphasize the importance of these he did not hesitate to disparage, even to scout and flout, the functions over which a priest presided. Saith Asaph in the fiftieth Psalm: "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; and thy burnt offerings are continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. . . . Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High." Even more soulful are the words of Micah: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,

and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 6-8.) And what was this but an early recognition of that which Paul afterwards so explicitly declared, that the handwriting of ordinances was against us, that Christ took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Col. ii. 14)? And what was this saying of Paul but an unfolding of the Master's own teaching to the lewd woman of Samaria, that neither on Gerizim nor in Jerusalem was the place for worship, but in our spirits, because God is himself a spirit (John iv. 21-24)? So far then as the prophet's office extended, so far the work of the Holy Spirit might extend.

It remains to be said of the office of the Holy Spirit under the Law that, whether the truth was embodied in symbols or declared in words, all the ancient worthies had enough truth in possession to serve as the means of their transformation by the Spirit. A few doubt whether the Holy Spirit gave new birth to any soul before the Lord was glorified; but this much, at least, is certain: under the old dispensation as under the new, that which was born of the flesh was flesh, and that which was born of the Spirit was spirit. But plainly enough the Scriptures would have us believe that the elders, who through faith obtained a good report, were also the children of God by faith; and our own truest experience of the new life finds in what they wrote, not reluctant prophesyings of wicked Balaams, but the most adequate outpourings of piety.

1. Under the new dispensation the first point to be

noted is that the truth as it is in Jesus is of limitless applicability. All delimitations have been done away with the limiting symbols and types. That this had been accomplished by Christ was guaranteed by his resurrection, and his resurrection was guaranteed by the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. We could hardly ask a more significant assurance that it was the promised Power from on high which filled the whole company of disciples than that their spokesman, Peter, was not diverted by excitement to any false or even merely collateral lesson of the miracle, but saw in it precisely what needed first of all to be assured, that Christ, because he was at the right hand of God exalted, and had received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, shed forth this which all saw and heard (Acts ii. 33).

Rightly understood, this office of the Spirit answers a question which many Christians have reluctantly admitted to their thoughts, why the Lord did not show himself to the world alive after his resurrection. If he had, what good would it have done? No doubt some would have believed; but it is equally certain that others would have withstood the evidence of their senses. They would have resorted to some of the shifts with which the evidence to the senses of the guards and of the disciples was at once, and has been ever since, withstood. Those who made the raising of Lazarus an argument for destroying Jesus, would have found in his own resurrection another reason for at least dreading and denouncing him. If they charged his kindly miracles to Beelzebub, what would they not have said against this marvel in his own behoof? And our conviction that he rose would still have to rest where it now rests; that is, upon the testimony of witnesses who believed in Christ. Furthermore, the corroboration afforded by the Holy Spirit was of the exact, and the exacting, kind which ought to have most weight, and which actually proves irresistible. The aims of our Lord were spiritual, that is, his work was in the sphere

of the spirit, and the evidence that it had been brought to a successful close should be of the same kind. It was, indeed, true, that if Jesus would be accepted as divine he must show divine powers; but miracles, like physical symbols of truth, ever threatened to hold the mind to lower views and interests. Hence our Lord concealed his wonders as far as practicable. He could not fitly gratify the curiosity of Herod, nor make his resurrection-body a gazing stock to the world. No appeal to the senses, even by the charisms of Pentecost or of later apostolic days, so fitly or so fully proved the resurrection and divinity of our Lord as does the spiritual fruitage of the Holy Spirit's work. To this day the best reason the world has for accepting Christ is the transformation of Christians; and even shallow objectors have touched the weakest point in the testimony of the church when they cite the unfaithfulness of church-members. It is pitifully true that every wicked act and every shortcoming of a Christian are testimony against his Master. Christ might well demand, "Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Startling as is the warning, the writer to the faint-hearted and dissatisfied Hebrew converts but indicated the real nature of their threatened offence when he charged that those who fall away put the Son of God to an open shame, tread under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace (Heb. vi. 6; x. 29). Only, it is the corresponding privilege of all the faithful to offer in their lives testimony, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It ought to be added that, if any one could succeed in living according to the Spirit while he withheld the credit from Christ by refusing to confess Christ before men, he would unquestionably fall under the reproach that those who are not for Christ are against him. He would at least seem to be doing

what Paul refused to do, frustrating the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain (Gal. ii. 21).

2. Now when once the Holy Spirit had given assurance of the resurrection and divinity of our Lord, the purpose of his mission needed to be made plain. It is an interesting question in what way the Holy Spirit did this imperative service for the truth. We know that it was the Spirit's general function to testify of Christ (John xv. 26); or, as the Master broadly stated it, "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 15). We are not entirely without information as to how this service was performed; the Holy Spirit was to make the Master's own teaching available; he was to bring to remembrance whatever Christ had said to the apostles (John xiv. 26). So fully and so exactly were the words of Christ borne in mind, that, instead of being lost in conjecture as to how this could be done by a few of the Lord's companions, students of the Gospels are tempted to ask, whether his reported sayings are not all a widely current tradition. But, accepting the assurance that the Holy Spirit would aid this momentous work, we note here a fact of the highest value in any attempt to construe a theory of inspiration. If we set aside the exceptional case of Paul, we find that the only mentioned revelation in those days of the purpose for which Christ came, was from his own lips; that this revelation was promptly rejected by his most intimate disciples; that, so far as the record goes, the revelation was not repeated by the Holy Spirit, but that the Spirit, instead of this, recalled to the minds of the apostles what Christ had said, setting their minds at work upon his sayings and career. It was the method of illumination, of insight into things already revealed. That is, it was by a ministry of the Spirit common to all spiritual men, that the apostles themselves attained

the doctrines of atonement, of justification, and of regeneration,—the doctrines which give its highest value to the story of Jesus, which indeed save it from being merely an amazing but idle tale. The issue is not whether direct revelations were not afforded, because the promise was that the Spirit should teach them all things (John xiv. 26), but whether these most important of all things were ministered to the apostles, after they had been once and again declared by Christ, in any other way than that by which the church yet maintains her insight into the gospel facts, and continues to press their meaning upon the world. Setting aside, I say, the exceptional case of Paul, the direct evidence is that the modern disciple shares thus far the very ministry of the truth which the elect apostles enjoyed, while there is no evidence to the contrary.

If, then, the question arise, Has the insight of the apostles into the meaning of the Saviour's words no more authority than that of the church? it may be replied: 1st. That no fuller insight than that of the church is needed; because the sayings of Christ are entirely explicit for all who are prepared to receive them; 2d. The promise that the apostles at least should be guided into all truth (John xvi. 13) is guarantee that the truth would be reached by them in one way, if not in another, whatever the authority of the church may or may not be.

3. The Holy Spirit thus far has supplied the truth on which the church was to be founded; he must next gather the living stones of which the church is to be built. The Spirit must apply the truth for the moral renewal of believers. As to the nature of the Holy Spirit's office in regeneration, the warning of Jesus about its mystery has not sufficed to prevent the elaboration of theories, some of which are not without a baleful importance. Two only require notice.

(1) The first is that the Holy Spirit does not use the truth in regenerating men, because the carnal mind cannot

receive the truth. But over against this deduction from the doctrine of human depravity is to be placed the express statements of the New Testament; such as that "faith cometh of hearing" (Rom. x. 17); "In Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel" (1 Cor. iv. 15); we are "begotten again . . . through the word of God" (1 Pet. i. 23); God "brought us forth by the word of truth" (James i. 18). This is simply one of many cases in which we must amend dogmatic inferences by the distinct teaching of the Book. As a candidate for ordination replied to a question on this very point: "Faith and regeneration are like the cannon-ball and the hole; they both go through together."

(2) The second theory requiring notice should be impossible to any who recognize the instrumentality of the truth in regeneration. It is the theory that regeneration consists in adding to the substance of the soul. This addition is sometimes conceived, for example by Henry Drummond, as a principle of vitality; sometimes as a newly created spiritual substance, for instance the *pneuma*, the only part which is supposed to deal with God; sometimes as a transubstantiation of Christ himself into the soul's substance. Such views are especially characteristic of Plymouth Brethren, and of not a few devout but unguarded lovers of the Bible who have been misled by the commentaries of the Brethren. There is certainly no lack of texts which, taken literally, support this astounding view. The very names for the change might be so understood; for example, "a new begetting," "a birth from above," "born again," "a new creation," a crucifixion and dying, "a passing from death unto life," and even an engrafting. Add certain statements descriptive of the change produced: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" possibly this, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;" certainly these, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me;" "Put away the old man who waxeth corrupt

. . . and put on the new man, who after God hath been created in righteousness and true holiness;" "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" "Partakers of the divine nature;" "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." After reading these passages we need not wonder that it is often a part of this same theory that the "new man" is not only the real self but is sinless, while "the old man," the abandoned ego-substance, is hopelessly depraved and can only be destroyed at the coming of the Lord. All can see what possibilities of mischief are in a mere theory when we notice how close akin it is to the antinomianism of the old Gnostics, who said that whatever their bodies did, they themselves committed no sin. Against so immoral a theory John aimed this shaft, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8).

Against a theory at once so fantastic and of possibilities so pernicious, the following considerations may perhaps be accepted as conclusive: All spiritual facts have figurative names; and in this case their startling character ought to warn us against taking any one of them literally. It is clear that regeneration cannot be at the same time a begetting and a birth, a dying and a resurrection, a creation and an emancipation, an engrafting and an illumination. Nor are we to take literally what seems common to all the boldest of the figurative titles, to-wit, that regeneration is the origination or the impartation of a new substance; for this method of interpretation carries us quite too far even for any Plymouth Brother. We would have to say that regeneration is really the annihilation of believing souls, and the substitution, not of another human soul, but of the newly and innumerably incarnated Christ; for such is the account expressively given of the change in one of Paul's most notable utterances: "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no

longer live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Nay, it is worse even than this. Everything else is annihilated too; for not only is every man in Christ Jesus a new creature, but old things have passed away with the old man; behold all things have become new (2 Cor. v. 17). This, to be sure, involves a stretch of idealism beyond Hegel, and which only a Hume could reach; for it is virtually a denial of all reality. Again, it would, I dare say, be agreed that regeneration becomes necessary only in consequence of the fall; that it is therefore, so far as it goes, a corrective of the evil done by the fall; and as the Bible nowhere hints, nor any one, so far as I now recall, pretends that the fall subtracted any substance from human souls, so the new birth need add no substance to souls. It is a change in the quality, not the quantity, of being. In the fall our first parents lost their supreme love for God; regeneration inclines the heart to love God supremely. Finally, this purely moral change is of the sort, and of the only sort, which the instrumentality of the Word is fitted to effect. The gospel moves the heart, not changes its material.¹

¹Not a few love this ultra-mystical, impossibly psychological account of regeneration, because it seems to pay especial deference to the Word, and to meet not a few difficulties. It is, however, one more illustration of the fact that easy answers to hard questions in theology are easy only because they overlook part of the case. Some overlooked part of it is given in the objections above. Here too is another proof how important it is in biblical study to take into account a writer's habits of speech, as well as the situation he addresses himself to. Now it was the habit of the most important New Testament writers to use metaphor and hyperbole to an extent without example in guarded religious discussions of to-day. Was it not the boldest of metaphor which Jesus used when he said, "This is my body"? which Paul used when he commented, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," and that we must "discern the Lord's body"? Was it not an amazing stretch of hyperbole when Jesus utterly forbade resistance of injury, enjoined on one who was beaten at the law to yield more than the law exacted, bade his hard-working followers to give all any beggar or borrower might ask, prohibited inviting one's friends or kindred to dinner, and required that unpleasant street folk should be called in as guests? Was it not a stretch of hyperbole which no modern orthodox theologian would allow himself when Paul wrote that, "as through one trespass the judgment

4. Luther, as is well known, not only insisted that we might be saved by faith, but that we ought to feel assured of our safety. His doctrine as to assurance was really part of his doctrine about justification. Trust in Christ of itself excludes distrust about our safety. So Wesley's doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit was associated with his doctrine of regeneration; but there is no obvious connection between having the heart renewed and having an immediate and irresistible conviction of its renewal. It is in no way surprising that a strong revulsion from mental distress to mental exhilaration should be accepted as the Spirit's own testimony that his work had been done upon the soul. It is within the memory of many that churches after a time looked for these contrasts of feeling as normal, and regarded the absence of them as something which an alleged convert had need to account for. The arid and matter-of-fact view of Alexander Campbell and his early followers was a strong protest against placing an unscriptural emphasis upon emotional states as evidence of regeneration; but the protest was timely, and most evangelical churches have at length to considerable extent cleared themselves of unbiblical, irrational, and fanatical notions as to the Witness of the Spirit.

5. When the Holy Spirit has imparted and applied the *came* unto all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift *came* unto all men to justification of life"? Did not the hyperbole reach to express contradiction in terms when John wrote, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us," presently adding, "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin . . . and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God"? Take this literally, and there never was nor can be a regenerate person. If one sin, he is not born of God; but if he says he does not sin, then he is not born of God. It ought to be plain enough that John is but emphasizing the intolerable fact of human inconsistency; that he puts in his figure of hyperbole what Paul puts in his of metaphor when he challenges us with the question, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" A due recognition of this habit of writing would spare us the fantastic notion that the substance of the soul is increased or exchanged by an operation of the Spirit, the sole need for which, and only aim of which, is moral.

truth of the gospel, he unites the disciples in mutual fellowship. The question whether the church is a voluntary or a required organization seems to many minds highly important; because if it is only voluntary, then believers may use their option about uniting with the church and maintaining its ordinances; whereas, if the church is an enforced association, too much might be looked for from church-membership. The truth would seem to be that the church is both voluntary and obligatory, and for precisely the same reason. It is *normal* for those who hold the truth as it is in Jesus, and who have received from the Holy Spirit a common life in Christ, to seek intimacy with each other. And because it is normal therefore it is required. This office of the Holy Spirit is so obvious that we may pass at once to the last.

6. The church, thus constituted, becomes an habitation of God through the Spirit. But service of God in the living temple is for the most part service of his people. The ministers of the temple are appointed "for the perfecting of the saints . . . for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12). As to the offices of the Spirit in the church the same questions arise as concerning regeneration.

(1) What is the nature of the union which the Spirit forms between Christians? Is it a mystical union? That is, is there some inexplicable, organic relation between two or three when gathered in the name of Christ which makes it possible for him to be in the midst of them as he could not be with them singly? This may be the case, but there is no unmistakable warrant of Scripture for so affirming. We know that the relation of the Holy Spirit to every believer is mysterious. Our Lord taught Nicodemus so. But what reason is there for believing the mystery is redoubled in the case of the church? The language of Paul to the Ephesians (v. 32), "This mystery is great; but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church," will not bear such an interpretation. The New Testament meaning of "mystery" is not

something hard to understand, but something unknown until it is revealed. In the case before us the mystery is not a so-called "mystical union" between the church and Christ, but the heretofore unnoted fact, that the relation of Christ and the church is like that of husband and wife. Whether or not a mystical union exists, we sufficiently account for the fitness of the church to advance the work of the Holy Spirit when we note that the church places at his disposal the tremendous enginery of the social faculties in man. These are the highest faculties in man. It is well known that the common conscience rules individual consciences. In certain states of society, which have often recurred, which indeed continually exist, social indifference to immorality of some kind prevails with most individuals against the express precepts of religion. But it is not so often noticed that the common conscience can elevate and sustain the demands of individual consciences. Reformers at least seek to avail themselves of this potent agency. When the flag was lowered at Sumter, the public conscience, alike North and South, summoned thousands upon thousands of good citizens to offer themselves to the perils of war. Each and all would have hidden from a pistol turned in their direction from almost any distance at which it could be seen; but their several consciences drove them to meet the demand of the public conscience. And the more thoroughly they were used, in later years, to acting as regiments, as brigades, as divisions, corps, or armies, the more irresistible became the control of the common conscience over the private conscience. And so the church lifts up and holds up the lives of innumerable weak men, animates and sustains the zeal of many easy souls, emboldens her own ministers, and steadily extends the kingdom of light. This is a notable advantage of the kingdom of light over the kingdom of darkness. The church is a permanent nucleus for the organization of righteousness; whereas evil is unable to maintain organiza-

tion except so far as it can claim, or pretend, that its aims are right. Formidable and persistent as are the unions for ends which most good men denounce, such unions fall to pieces, or submit to reformation, when the public conscience is aroused against them.

(2) The second problem as to the Spirit's work in the church is a very practical one for every church-member: What is the relation of the truth to church life? Evangelical theology has certainly not laid upon the truth anything like the emphasis which it receives in the Gospel according to John. Unitarianism has perhaps made us afraid of emphasizing the office of Christ as teacher. But he calls himself "the Truth," says the truth shall make the disciples free, assures them that they have already been cleansed through the word which he had spoken unto them, prays the Father to sanctify them through the truth, and even declares that it is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. And yet, without daring to assign to the truth the office which the Teacher claims for it, evangelicalism has insisted upon the importance of orthodoxy for orthodoxy's sake; that is, it has insisted upon the importance of agreeing with the church, or with some sect in it, until individualism has rebounded to the opposite extreme of announcing that it is a matter of indifference what doctrines people believe. But if God has "chosen us to salvation," it is "in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. ii. 13). Can it be credited that the Holy Spirit is the minister of error? Is a noble type of man matured by misunderstanding the real nature of man? Is godliness fostered by mistakes about God? Do we become Christly through the ministry of false opinion about Christ? Is it possible to grow in the grace without growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus? Surely doctrinal indifference is inconsiderate. We must credit whatever merit in character is associated with error to the element of truth which is

always mixed with widely accepted error. There is no justifiable account of man's nature, nor of what knowledge is, nor of what goodness is, which does not testify against the light-hearted and frivolous fancy that it makes no difference what a man believes. "What think ye of Christ?" can never cease to be a question of the highest moment; or, if it can, this will be because Christ ought no longer to be called the Truth.

Read what James Martineau, noblest of liberals, wrote more than forty years ago to George Macdonald: "I am constrained to say that neither my intellectual preference nor my moral admiration goes heartily with the Unitarian heroes, sects, or productions of any age. Ebionites, Arians, Socinians, all seem to me to contrast unfavorably with their opponents, and to exhibit a type of thought far less worthy, on the whole, of the true genius of Christianity. I am conscious that my deepest obligations are in almost every department to writers not of my own creed. In philosophy I have had to unlearn most that I had inherited from my early text-books, and the authors most in favor with them. In biblical interpretation I derive from Calvin and Whitby the help that fails me in Crell and Belsham. In devotional literature and religious thought I find nothing of ours that does not pale before Augustine, Taylor, Pascal. And in the poetry of the church it is the Latin or German hymns, or the lines of Charles Wesley or of Keble, that fasten on my memory and heart, and make all else seem poor and cold. . . . I cannot help this. I can only say I am sure it is no perversity; and I believe the preference is founded on reason and nature, and is already widely spread among us."¹

"All things follow their tendencies," as was remarked by the sage Francis Wayland; what wonder that Dr. Martineau, after a long life of service in a Unitarian pulpit and

¹ London, 1859, quoted in Oxenham's *Catholic Doctrine of Atonement*, pp. 108-109.

professorship, at length publicly accepts for truth the substance of that doctrine which, in common with the church, he has found so profitable, and tells Unitarians that they and we alike worship the Son, because all which we know of God was revealed by act of the Son.

Has Christian experience taught any one of ourselves any other lesson than that the Holy Spirit carries forward his work within us in proportion as we give thought to the truth? Who has not found that to withhold his mind from meditation on the truth is to take the tools out of the Holy Spirit's hand? And what pastor has not witnessed the saddest, and the most farcical, proof of this in the stubborn silence at his prayer-meetings of those who allege that the Holy Spirit has given them no message to their brethren, while the bald fact is that they come with empty minds; or till worse, in the excessive talkativeness of some who allege that the Holy Spirit gives them on every occasion pretty much the same thing to say, and who, naturally enough, are the only ones present of that opinion? If Christian folk will dwell upon the thoughts of God they will dwell in God; and when they come to the assemblies of the saints they will come every one with a psalm, a doctrine, a revelation, an interpretation. Certainly every pastor may be cited to his own experience for decisive evidence that the all-inclusive office of the Holy Spirit in the church is to minister the truth.

And thus is afforded a criterion by which to judge whether one may ascribe to the Holy Spirit the lively impressions that he is so subject to in favor of this or that unheard-of interpretation of the Bible or this or that queer line of conduct. Not that any such person can be persuaded to submit to this criterion. When a horse gets the bit between his teeth, he is almost sure to run away. But other as eager spirits may perhaps be warned away from the like mistake. It ought to bring our inspired brother to a pause

that he denies the infallibility of the pope as earnestly as he insists upon his own. And then the Scripture makes it plain that impressions of this sort are subject to tests. "Believe not every spirit," said John, "but try the spirits, whether they be of God" (1 John iv. 1). When so many presumed to speak for God there was a special gift of "discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. xii. 10); and the apostle's order for receiving alleged prophecies was, "Let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others judge" (1 Cor. xiv. 29). Now let our modern prophets say what is to prevent any one from opposing their confident prophesyings with an equally confident insistence that some false spirit has been misleading them. This is the way it has turned out in some circles. This is the way it stands between the Orthodox and the Hicksite Friends. Are there then no tests? Paul and John agree to one test: "No man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 3). "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God" (1 John iv. 2, 3). But all our modern claimants to infallible insight into the Word and into duty will with scarcely an exception pay special honor to Christ. Are they then always right, no matter how they contradict each other and defy the plain sense of other students of the Book? No; because the authoritative Paul undertook to prove the truth of his revealed doctrine. If it did not commend itself to all, it must be supported by its demonstrable conformity with truth which all accept. I think this example is conclusive as to doubtful inspirations in our day. Isaiah's criterion is still as good as ever: "To the law and to the testimony." They must speak "according to this word" or expect no credence with Christians (Isa. viii. 20). That is, since the truth is the instrument of all the Spirit's work, all which he dictates will be demonstrably in harmony with

truth. Whimsical opinions and fantastic actions are discredited by their very character, "for God is not the author of confusion." "Decency and order" belong to all the proceedings and all the beliefs which are inspired by the "Spirit of truth."