

judged of the Lord. If we would "not be condemned in that fearful judgment, we must accuse and condemn ourselves for our own faults" now, and strive, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, even the fruit of a holy and religious life. And let us remember for our encouragement, that the Being who will then come in great glory to judge the world, is he who once came in great humility to save the world. Our Judge is one who took our nature upon him, who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are,^a and who died to save us from condemnation. Although we have sinned, "yet we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."^b If we will but repent and believe, our Judge himself becomes our Advocate. "Let us therefore return unto him, who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners; assuring ourselves that he is ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us, if we come unto him with faithful repentance; if we submit ourselves to him, and from henceforth walk in his ways; if we will take his easy yoke and light burden upon us, to follow him in lowliness, patience, and charity, and be ordered by the governance of his Holy Spirit; seeking always his glory, and serving him duly in our vocation with thanksgiving."^c

^a Heb. iv. 15.^b 1 John ii. 1.^c Commination.

SERMON V.

BELIEF IN GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

2 Cor. xiii. 14.

The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

IN his affectionate farewell to the Church at Corinth, St. Paul expresses his wish or prayer, that the "communion of the Holy Ghost might be with them all." He could have expressed for them no kinder wish; and it accordingly has been adopted as the conclusion of our ordinary Church Service, and of most of our forms of domestic devotion. The communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost, in other words, the being continually assisted by him, is of absolute necessity to the salvation of our souls. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," says St. Paul, "he is none of his,"^a and those who belong not to Christ, must be left to perish in outer darkness.

Important, however, as this doctrine is, it has not, I fear, its due influence in the world. Some men seem disposed to consider all reliance upon the aid of the Holy Ghost as a species of enthusiasm; and others treat it with such total neglect, that if they should be asked, like the imperfect converts at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy

^a Rom. viii. 9.

"Ghost since ye believed?"^b they would reply like them, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." The Apostle immediately rejoins, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" All persons baptized, according to Christ's institution, are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as in the name of the Father and the Son. The Church of England, very properly, teaches us to consider belief in GOD THE HOLY GHOST, WHO SANCTIFIETH US, AND ALL THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD, as one of the chief articles of faith; she implores his aid in numerous passages in her public services, and concludes almost every psalm and hymn in these services, with ascribing glory to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the other two Persons of the blessed Trinity.

In discoursing on the fellowship or assistance of the Holy Ghost, I shall, First, shortly state the necessity we all lie under of receiving his aid; shall, Secondly, point out the proper fruits or effects of his fellowship, by which effects we may judge how far we have received it; and shall, Thirdly, direct you to the most effectual means of procuring such assistance.

First, then; the assistance of the Holy Spirit is necessary, in consequence of the weakness and corruption of our nature. The Scriptures both of the Old and of the New Testament, represent the natural state of man as being a state of moral infirmity and sin. In the first age of the world we read of the generation then living, that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth," and "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;" that "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."^c Whence did this general prevalence of wickedness proceed, but from

^b Acts xix. 2.

^c Gen. vi. 5, 12.

an innate tendency and disposition to evil? David laments of himself, that he was conceived in sin and shapen in wickedness,^d and represents the Almighty as looking down "from heaven upon the children of men: to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God; but," he proceeds, "they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable: there is none that doeth good, no not one." The wise son and successor of David in like manner asserts, "that there is not a just man upon earth who doeth good, and sinneth not;"^e that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live:"^f and Isaiah, in the name of mankind, confesses, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."^g

Whatever allowance may be made in some of these passages for the strong manner of expression common among the nations of the east, they certainly imply a great degree of depravity and corruption. The New Testament speaks the same language. Both our Lord himself, and his Apostle St. Paul, express the natural state of man by the terms "the flesh," and "the old man;" and again and again assure us, that "they that are in the flesh," in that natural state, "cannot please God."^h Our Saviour speaks of men as loving "darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."ⁱ And St. Paul, having adopted the acknowledgments of the sinfulness of man, made by the Psalmist and by Isaiah, says, "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin."^k He addresses the Ephesians as having been "dead in trespasses

^d Psalm li. 5, and xiv. 3, 4.

^e Eccles. vii. 20.

^f Eccles. ix. 3.

^g Isaiah liii. 6.

^h Rom. viii. 8.

ⁱ John iii. 19.

^k Rom. iii. 9, and Gal. iii. 22.

“and sins, wherein,” says he, “in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in time past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”¹ And in that well known passage in the Epistle to the Romans, speaking in the person of a man still under the influence of his native corruption, he says, “I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” And again, “for I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.”^m

The histories both of ancient and of modern times; indeed, the daily and weekly records of passing events, tend to confirm these Scriptural representations of the sinfulness of man, since a great part of these records is made up of the recital of human weaknesses and human crimes. Our observation—unwilling observation—of what passes under our own eyes, bears painful testimony to the same truth. Indeed, for the confirmation of it, we need only appeal to what passes in our own bosoms. For which of us does not often feel a backwardness to what we know to be our duty, and a strong inclination to many things which we know to be evil? How unguarded are we sometimes, both in our words and in our actions; and how many emotions of vanity, of undue desire, of causeless anger, and of ill will, arise in our bosoms? In particular, how indisposed are we often for prayer, and for the other offices of devotion!

¹ Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3.

^m Rom. vii. 14, 15, 18.

It is true, that a man may, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, maintain a generally moral line of conduct, and a fair reputation among men. He may be led to do this by regard for his own character, for his own interest, his own health, his own ease, and by a variety of other human motives and human feelings; but without that aid he cannot become really religious, he cannot become HOLY; and we know, that without holiness, “no man shall see the Lord.”ⁿ “He cannot,” as our article expresses it, “turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God;”^o or do works well pleasing in his sight, well pleasing as proceeding from a pure principle of religion. As long as a man is destitute of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, he is in his natural state, in that state which the Scriptures term the flesh, and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God; if ye live after the flesh ye shall die;”^p “shall of the flesh reap corruption.”^q

Hence then arises the necessity of our receiving the help of the Holy Ghost. Hence it was that our Saviour said, “Except a man be born again—born of water and of the Spirit—he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”^r Hence it was, that St. Paul so repeatedly exhorts his converts to “be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”^s

In strict agreement with this doctrine of Scripture are the prayers of our Church. In them we acknowledge “that such is the frailty of man, that without God we cannot but fall;” that “through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no

ⁿ Heb. xii. 14.

^o Art. x. See that article and the ninth.

^p Rom. viii. 3, 13.

^q Cal. vi. 8.

^r John iii. 3, 5.

^s Ephes. iv. 23, 24.

“good thing without God;” that “if we have good desires in our hearts, or think those things that are good,” they are put into our minds by the preventing grace of God, that is, by the grace of God *going before* our thoughts to purify and guide them. We pray in one collect that “we may be daily renewed by God’s Holy Spirit;” in another, “that by the same Spirit we may have a right judgment in all things;” and in another, we say, “forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.”

The Communion Service, and the occasional offices, particularly those for Baptism, are full of expressions to the same purport.

Weak and frail as we are in ourselves, and encompassed as we are with moral and spiritual dangers, yet, God’s grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in our weakness. “The Spirit still helpeth our infirmities,”^u and we may be able to do all things through Christ strengthening us.^x

From the beginning of time, the Holy Spirit, we doubt not, was ready to help those who sought his aid; but under the Gospel dispensation his influences were to be more plentifully poured forth. “A new heart will I give you,” saith the Lord, “and a new spirit will I put within you.” “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”^y And again, “the Spirit” shall “be poured upon us from on high—and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”^z Our Lord, just before his death, in

^t 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^u Rom. viii. 26.

^x Phil. iv. 13.

^y Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

^z Isaiah xxxii. 15, 17.

one of his last affectionate discourses to his disciples, says, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”^a Accordingly, St. Paul speaks of the bodies of Christians as being the temple of the Holy Ghost.

II. We will now, in the second place, proceed to inquire into the proper fruits of the Spirit, into the effects which follow from our partaking of his fellowship or communion.

And, first, we are repeatedly assured by St. Paul, that if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. What the works of the flesh are you well know. Some of them are enumerated by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. “The works of the flesh,” says he, “are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.”^b

To be guilty of any of these works of the flesh, shows that we are not wholly led by the Spirit. All the sins of unchastity appear to be peculiarly repugnant to the influence of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul argues against them on this very ground. “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?”^c and “if any man defile the temple of

^a John xiv. 16, 17. See also chapters xv. and xvi.

^b Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

^c 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19.

"God, him shall God destroy."^d Drunkenness also St. Paul appears to place in particular opposition to the influence of the Spirit: and certainly this may well be said of a sin, which besots even a man's natural reason and conscience, and deprives him of the common knowledge of right and wrong. If, my friends, you are in the habit of giving way to any of these lusts of the flesh; to drunkenness, for instance, or unchastity, or hatred, or a quarrelsome disposition, you may be sure that you are not duly led by the Spirit, and are therefore far from the kingdom of God.

Among the positive effects of the communion of the Holy Ghost, one of the first that I shall mention is, a sincere practical belief in the Christian dispensation, especially in that main branch of it, the redemption of the world by the death of Christ. True Christian faith is the offspring of a divine influence. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;"^e and whosoever confesseth from his heart that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is born of God.^f

A leading feature in the character of those who are led by the Spirit of God, is frequency and earnestness in prayer. In one of the prophetic promises of the Spirit, it is said, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications;"^g and the Spirit is represented by St. Paul as assisting us in prayer, as making "intercession for us."^h If we pray not at all, or but seldom, and then without earnestness or fervency, we have great cause to fear that we are very imperfectly influenced by the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord assures us that the love of God is the

^d 1 Cor. iii. 17.
^g Zech. xii. 10.

^e 1 Cor. xii. 3.
^h Rom. viii. 26.

^f 1 John iv. 2.

first and great commandment of all. This love of God, however, finds little place in our corrupted nature; until, as the Apostle speaks, "it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," which "is given unto us."

In the passage of the Epistle to the Galatians before referred to, St. Paul says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."^k He whose heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit, will be influenced by *love* to God; and by real good will to man, which he will show in all the acts and offices of Christian charity, as opportunity is offered to him. The other fruits of the Spirit here mentioned are *joy*, a religious cheerfulness, springing from an humble trust in God's mercy through Christ; and *peace*, peace of conscience, produced by the same cause, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, together with a peaceable disposition and behaviour towards men, and a wish to promote peace by all proper means. *Long-suffering*, *gentleness*, and *meekness*, are again and again recommended and enforced by the Apostles, and by their divine Master, as distinguishing marks of being influenced by the Spirit; and we are repeatedly charged to "put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice,"^l as sins which are contrary to his suggestions. *Faith*, in the passage above quoted, appears to mean, not so much faith in God, as faithfulness, or good faith, in our intercourse with man; a strict regard for truth in all we say or do, the being true and just in all our dealings. And certainly we shall not be otherwise than true and just if we are guided by the Spirit of truth. *Temperance* implies self-command and mo-

^k Rom. v. 5.

^l Gal. v. 22, 23.

^l Ephes. iv. 31.

deration in all things. It implies not only the curbing of the appetites and desires of the body, but the keeping within due bounds all earthly passions and feelings of every description.

There are many other passages in the Epistles, particularly in those to the Ephesians and the Colossians,^m which give the distinguishing marks of the old and of the new man; that is, of a man under the government of his evil nature, and of him who is led by the Holy Spirit. By attentive consideration of these passages, you may be assisted in judging for yourselves, whether you are, or are not, led by the Spirit of God.

Let us, my friends, guided and assisted by these passages of Scripture, fairly and honestly ask ourselves how far we have got the better of the lusts of the flesh, and how far we show forth in our tempers and conduct the fruits of the Spirit.

Perhaps upon such examination we shall find that we are far from being habitually led by the Spirit of God, and that therefore we have little reason to consider ourselves as his children. And this leads me, in the last place, to direct you to the means of procuring the influences—the fellowship—of the Holy Ghost.

Since the Holy Spirit is the spirit of knowledge, you must seek the knowledge of him, and of the effects which he produces on the heart, in those Scriptures which were “given by his inspiration,” which “holy men of God wrote as they were “moved by the Holy Ghost.” If able, you should diligently read them; but, at all events, should attentively hear them, should mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

Prayer, however, is the great means for obtaining the aid of the divine Spirit; but our supplica-

^m See the three last chapters of each of these Epistles.

tions must be frequent and earnest, in proportion to the importance, the absolute need in which we stand, of the blessing which we ask. Petitions uttered only with the lips, without any corresponding emotions of the heart, deserve not the name of prayer. Our prayers for the help of the Holy Spirit must be constant, fervent, importunate; and if we thus pray, we shall be graciously heard. “Ask, and it shall be given you,”ⁿ says our Saviour, “seek, and ye shall find;” and he encourages us to hope that our heavenly Father will give “the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”^o

Another powerful means of procuring the assistance of the Spirit of God is furnished by the holy sacraments. To the sacrament of Baptism we were admitted in our infancy; but when arrived at mature years, we should look back to it with serious reflection upon the privileges to which we were then admitted, and the solemn engagements into which we entered. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was appointed expressly for “the strengthening and refreshing of our souls.” To that we ought regularly to have recourse, for fresh supplies of those influences of the divine Spirit, which are essential to our spiritual life here, and to our life in heaven hereafter.

My friends, I hope that you have paid attention to the doctrine which I have endeavoured to place before you. You all profess, as one of the main articles of your faith, to believe in GOD THE HOLY GHOST, WHO SANCTIFIETH YOU, AND ALL THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD. Who sanctifieth you. But are you sanctified by him? The word sanctified, you know, means to make holy. Are you made holy? Are you attentive to all your duties to God and man, and governed by religious principles in all you

ⁿ Matt. vii. 7.

^o Luke xi. 13.

do or say? In Baptism you were made the children of God.^p But remember, that in order to be numbered among the children of God, it is necessary that you be led by the Spirit of God. And are you led by that Spirit? You trust that you are members of, that you belong to, Christ. You are not to any profitable or saving purpose his members, unless you are influenced by his Spirit.^q

Seriously lay these things to heart. Seek in earnest prayer for fresh supplies of the aid of the Spirit; and may God of his mercy grant, that the communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost may be with us all evermore.

^p Church Catechism.

^q Rom. viii. 9.

SERMON VI.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN v. 39.

Search the Scriptures.

A MAN who has any belief in a God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments, must naturally feel anxious to know, by what means God may be made his friend, and his future condition rendered happy. Upon these most interesting subjects of inquiry, however, man is by nature greatly ignorant. "Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out?"^a Man is often too at a loss, with respect to the line of conduct which he ought to pursue, and frequently most powerfully disposed not to pursue that course which his better judgment would point out to him. "The way of man," says the Prophet, "is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."^b

For the direction both of our faith and practice, God has been graciously pleased to give us the holy Scriptures. He has given them to be "a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths."^c

^a Wisdom ix. 16.

^b Jer. x. 23.

^c Psalm cxix. 105.