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THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT.

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“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”—JOHN 16: 12-15.

CHRIST is to be glorified by the Spirit. He humbled himself in his incarnation, in assuming the form of a servant, and in submitting himself to death. This work is now accomplished. The Father is glorified in his obedience, and his reward remains. He is to go away, to go to the Father, to be glorified with that glory which he had before the world was made. The Spirit dwelling in his humanity, fills him with the power and the glory of God, so that what in his humiliation was the veil of Godhead, becomes in his exaltation its adequate expression. He fills heaven with the

splendor of the presence of the glory of God, and is the object of the adoration of saints and angels. But the Spirit glorifies Christ not only in his personal exaltation, but in his Church: "He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The glory of Christ is to be manifested in the completion of his work of redemption. He has received the Spirit that he may give the Spirit to his Church. This is his ascension gift, which carries into execution the work which he came to do, and thus manifests his glory. The Spirit is to convince of sin, to work faith in men, to unite to Christ, to communicate his life, to procure the victory over the world, and to bring his people to the enjoyment of his glory in eternity.

The fundamental fact with regard to this work of the Holy Spirit is that it is accomplished by means of the truth. Christ describes it as a process of teaching. "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will lead you into all truth." The Spirit, indeed, as a divine agent, acts immediately on the soul, imparts the principle of new life, determines the will, and influences the affections; but in all the conscious activities of the soul

the truth is the instrument by which he works, and the sphere of all the activities of the new life. Jesus promises the Spirit to enable believers to keep his commandments; as such he is the "Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth in you." The indwelling Spirit is a spirit of knowledge. He promises the Spirit to unite to himself in order to fruit-bearing. And again, he says of the branches, in order to their fruitfulness, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." He is to give life; "and this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." The promise to prayer is conditioned on the revelation of his name. The mystical theory of religion, therefore, which depreciates the truths of revelation, and which claims priority for a divine love and obedience, in immediate contemplation and personal communion with God, arrays itself against the plain teaching of Christ. Because Christ identifies the truth which the Spirit is to bring with the truth which he taught. It is of the same character, and addressed to the intelligence, claiming faith, and operating practically on the conscience. He had taught them of the Father, and the Spirit was to

early on his teaching to completion in the same way. And the criterion for truth in the teaching is not the inward light, making every man a law to himself, or the Church as mediator of truth, but it is that what the Spirit is to communicate is the things of Christ. "He shall take of the things that are mine, and show them to you:" thus identifying his whole revelation of truth in his person and teaching with that which the Spirit should afterward communicate. To love this truth is to love the Spirit; to look away from the Scriptures for the truth is to give ear to other spirits, to whose teaching there is attached no promise of the revelation of the glory of the Lord.

I. In this supreme promise of our Saviour we see the unity of the dispensations. The salvation promised is wrought by Christ; and the Spirit secures it to every believer. Regeneration, sanctification, glorification, are his work, and this work is radiant with light and love, because it consists in bringing Christ to us, in binding us to him, and in making all our service to be replete with his presence and to tend to his glory.

II. In this promise we read clearly the basis of our faith in revelation, and in the inspiration of the writings of the New Testament. An acute commentator has remarked that at John 14: 25, 26 we

have the warrant for the inspiration of the Gospels : "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And here also is the warrant for the inspiration of the Epistles: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

It is impossible to conceive how the authority of the Master could be conveyed to the teaching of the disciples more emphatically than is here done by Christ. He identifies his teaching and the teaching of the Spirit as parts of a whole: his teaching is carrying out my teaching; it is calling to remembrance what I have told you; it is completing what I have begun. And to make the unity emphatic, he explains why he had reserved so much of his own teaching, and committed the work of revelation to the Spirit. He, in his incarnation and life, comprised all saving truth. He was the revealer of God and the truth and the life. But while some things he had taught while yet with them, he had many things to say which must be postponed, because they could not bear them yet.

He had taught them of the spirituality of his kingdom, of its universal application, of the duties to God and man which it demanded, of the love of the Father in our salvation, of his own divine claims and the necessity of faith in him. He had taught them of the necessity of his dying in order to their coming glory; but they were so preoccupied with the notions of a temporal kingdom that they could not bear the conception of the cross. He had taught that his kingdom was for all men; but their Jewish pride could not brook the idea that salvation was by faith only, and on equal terms for all men; these truths they could not bear. There was the natural limitation of their receptivity to be estimated. The change from the old to the new order, the idea of the incarnation and of the kingdom to be established, were an intellectual revolution quite enough for one generation to receive and to realize. There were their Jewish prejudices to be considered, which colored all their conceptions, and perverted their apprehension of the truth which Christ taught. Besides this, the full conception of the relation of Christ's death to the doctrine of the Atonement could not be positively formulated until after his death had occurred; nor the adequate apprehension of his divine claims and mediatorial government attained until after the

resurrection and the ascension had afforded the material facts upon which the doctrine was based. And still more, the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was essential to illumine their minds and convey the promised inward strength, by which they could understand these stupendous truths. What is old to us was new to them; what is full of spiritual attraction to us required for them the renunciation of the most cherished hopes; what is to us most manifestly divine seemed to them to contradict the express teaching of their Scriptures. So Christ, as a wise teacher, imparted the germ of truth as they were able to bear it, and when he promised the Spirit to carry forward this teaching he made it impossible to conceive of it as differing in kind, or in any essential, except mode of revelation. He was to take of the things which were Christ's, and show them to the disciples.

That this promise to the disciples is specific, and constitutes them the inspired teachers of the Church after them, is proved first of all, (1) by the circumstances of Christ's address to them. They are in the upper chamber, at the last supper, separated from the body of believers, plunged in grief at the approaching separation. He tells them that his departure means his exaltation, and that his exaltation means his giving them the Spirit, who

should teach them all things. He distinguishes them from others when he prays for them, and not for them only, but for all who should after believe "through their word."

(2) It is proved next by the whole history of their selection and separation from the body of disciples, to be witnesses for him, both of his resurrection and of his teaching. "The Comforter shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." "As the Father hath sent me into the world, so have I sent you into the world." "Whoso heareth you heareth me, and whosoever receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." "If they have not kept my saying, how shall they keep your word?" It is one of the central facts of the life of Christ that the work of founding and instructing the future Church was prepared for by the appointment of the body of Apostles, and the charism of the Spirit is but the necessary qualification for the work.

(3) It is seen further in the great commission specially given to the eleven, to go into all the world, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

(4) It is seen still further in the scope of the

promise given to them. This is not simply to enlighten them, so that they would spiritually apprehend essential truth, so that their faith should not rest on human evidence but on the power of God. It is more than that the Spirit should so unfold the truth that they should be able to apprehend the love of God, and be sanctified and prepared for heaven. It is that they should complete his work. That primary revelation of truth, which was to be authoritative for the Church and demand the faith of all, and which he had only partially made, they were to make complete. The Spirit should take of the things which were his. And the measure and scope of this truth is stated: "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore I said that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." Evidently whatever of divine truth is communicable, in its whole comprehensive scope and sublime elevation, is here conveyed. No human intellect can embrace the measure of this bestowment. No Christian Church can claim to have exhausted it. There are illimitable heights and depths here, which belong alone to the Divine Being, and can characterize a vehicle of truth only such as the Spirit of God himself can constitute. Which will you have, the Bible to open to you the eternal depths of the Divine Being, or the mystic's

consciousness when he reduces to expression the summary of his feelings?

(5) But if on the one hand we find Christ giving authority to the disciples, and on the other the disciples after Pentecost assuming authority on the ground of Christ's appointment, the conclusion is irresistible that we must accept from them their own statement as to the nature and extent of their inspiration. It is therefore a perfectly logical position, as it is the only Scriptural position, that our doctrine of the inspiration of the writings is to be derived from the writings themselves. If Christ has referred us to the Apostles as teachers of the truths which he would have us know, certainly this primary truth of the authority of the Scriptures themselves can be no exception. All questions as to the extent of this inspiration, as to its exclusive authority, as to whether it extends to words as well as doctrines, as to whether it is infallible or inerrant or not, are simply questions to be referred to the Word itself. Whenever it claims authority we are bound to accord it absolute trust.

The question of inerrancy, which upon these principles must be reduced to the very narrowest limits, can be a question to be determined by observation only when it can be shown that it is

covered by no claim of authority; for where an apostle makes that claim we must hear him as we would hear Christ. And that for the whole substance of the teaching, in the separate writings of the New Testament as well as in the New Testament as a whole, they do claim authority as the guides of faith, as the rule of life, can be denied only by very reckless assertion. We read it in the stress laid on the fact of their appointment by Christ; in the constant urgency with which Paul claims his equality on this point with the original apostles; in the express assertion, "I, Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." We read it in the constant demand for faith in their message and obedience to their injunctions. It is implied in their indignant rejection of all humanly devised error which would contradict or modify the Gospel as they had taught it: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." We see it in the whole conception of the Gospel as a body of revealed truth committed to them, and by them to the Church, which the

Church is bound to guard as its peculiar trust, and for the sake of which, specifically, the organization of the Church, with its specified offices, was instituted according to the Pastoral Epistles. We read it most clearly in Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians, where he contrasts the validity and effect of revealed truth with the speculations of philosophy: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual;" i.e., spiritual truths with spiritual words. We see it in the miraculous attestations to which apostles appealed to support their claim of supernatural authority. And we see it in the unity of the Scriptures; in the accord of apostolic teaching with the teaching of Christ; in the historic development of the revelation, in accord with the existing wants of the churches; in the whole tone of divinity, as with tenderness and fidelity the divine oracles open to us the deep things of God. It is one kind of religion to make the divine Word the test of our characters, and to be enabled by the Spirit to recognize its divine quality. It is a very different kind of religion to

bring the Bible to the test of our religious feelings, and to decide whether or not it is of God by its accord with the responses of those feelings.

III. The New Testament doctrine of the Canon bases itself on the authority of Christ in this promise. Those books which by clear historical proof can be shown to have belonged to the collection given by the apostles to the churches, or in their separate issue to have been given by them as the revelation of truth, come to us with the authority of the apostles, and their authority conveys to us the sanction of the Lord. As was the Old Testament to him, so he gives us the New Testament for our guidance. We are constantly told that this is antiquated; that it is mere traditionalism; that the new Apologetic is based upon our recognition of Christ in the Word; and that the Bible is truth to us because "it finds us." Thank God if it finds us! So does Tennyson find us, and so do Shakespeare and Seneca and Sophocles. If we are to judge by the opposition to some of the distinctive doctrines of the Bible, it is only part of it that "finds us." It finds us when it tells us that we are weak and need help; but when it tells us we are guilty and need forgiveness, we are not so sure of it. It finds us when it offers a better life and a better hope; but when it declares the right-

eous judgment of God on all sin, the response becomes very weak. It finds us when we read of the universal Fatherhood of God, of the unfathomable love, of the helpful sympathy of Christ; but when it tells of the resplendent justice on which the creature cannot look and live, or of the atoning sacrifice, or of the sovereignty of grace, there is no inward response. This new conception of God, to which the milder and more loving theology of this end of the century has come, is not the God of the Bible. The New Testament only has given us Jesus Christ. Surely we cannot, on the claim of the authority of Christ, reject the authority of the New Testament!

IV. The promise of the Spirit is the promise of spiritual illumination to all believers. It is confessedly difficult in the interpretation of this discourse of our Saviour to distinguish accurately what applies to apostles only, and what to the Church at large; what conveys the promise of inspiration, and what of spiritual illumination to all believers. And yet the distinction is essential; for if it be disregarded, if the promises of revelation and inspiration be applied to all believers, the authority of the apostles and their writings is reduced to the common level of the religious thought of men of peculiar genius and peculiar advan-

tages; or, on the other hand, the inward light common to all is elevated to equal or superior authority to the Word of God. It is, however, in analogy with the general teaching of Christ that his doctrine of the work of the Spirit should be given in the germ, and not unfolded; in its broad outlines, and not specialized. And as we have found clear evidence that some of these words can be realized in their full sense only in the inspiration of the apostles, so we find no less clear proof that the supreme gift of the Spirit is not confined to them.

And this proof consists, first, in the fact that he assigns to the work of the Spirit now promised the imparting of the Christian life, in all its graces which are the common heritage of all believers. The Spirit, who is to lead us into truth, is thereby to unite us to Christ; to constitute the life of Christ in his Church; to bring to us the love of the Father; to enable us to believe in Christ; to work in us obedience to his will; to secure the hearing of prayer; to cause us to bring forth fruit unto God; to gain the victory over the world; and, finally, to bring us to the beatific vision of God in the better life. Obviously, the promise is not exclusively to the apostles.

The second proof is the close relation between

the spiritual illumination, which is common to all, and the superadded revelation and inspiration, which is promised to the apostles. They need this spiritual knowledge and personal apprehension of the truth before they can convey it to others. It is no mechanical but a living force that lifts them to heights of view of divine things whence they discern the glories of Christ and convey them to us. In his measure—not of authority to others, not as the teacher of the whole Church, but for his own spiritual satisfaction—the humblest Christian has in kind the same knowledge of the divine power and light and grace which is in the Word of Christ as had Paul or John.

And thirdly, as before, the promise of authority to the apostles points us to their own teaching for the fuller unfolding of the distinction between that grace of the knowledge of the Spirit, which is common and necessary for all, and those peculiar gifts which make their writings authoritative.

These truths, which only the Spirit can communicate, can only be apprehended by the Spirit. Precisely their divine quality, which separates them from all other deliverances of truth, is only apprehended by a divine influence in the soul. The life-giving power, which conveys faith and love and hope, which goes from the particular truth to

the relations and sees the harmonies and beauties of the whole, which sees in the Word in all its parts the revelation of the Father and the glory of the Son, is by spiritual discernment. This blessed gift, comprehending all gifts, is thus the unity of the Christian life, bringing Christ to dwell in us; and through the instrumentality of the Word, by the authority of the Scriptures, it works out our complete salvation, for "He takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them unto us."

Your future ministry is cast in times of great theological unrest. Foundations are broken up; truths long accepted are brought anew into question; the very principles upon which the certitude of belief is to rest are under debate. There is no use in these days for men of a light and easy temper, who make up their judgment hastily on the most vital questions, or who like to be in the advance of all changes, and easily renounce the most sacred of heritages. Men should be sober and thoughtful; they should be students of history; they should be prayerful students of the Bible. Change is not necessarily advance. The majestic testimony of the Church in all time is that its advances in spiritual life have always been toward and not away from the Bible, and in proportion to the reverence for, and power of realizing in prac-

tical life, the revealed Word. The watchword of the modern school is, on every hand, "Back to Christ!" Surely we say "Amen!" From every departure of thought or life, let us go back to Christ. But it is one thing to realize afresh the life and teaching of Christ in the historic spirit, in relation to what is to come, as the germinal planting of a future harvest of life and doctrine; it is a very different thing to go back to Christ by the rejection of all subsequent revelation, which is based on his authority and is the living development of his teaching. They tell us that it is not the "Christ of the creeds" to whom we should go. "The Church has lost the Spirit of Christ," it is said, "because she has attended to the doctrines about him, confining her conception in scholastic forms, disputing about consubstantiality, and person, and nature, and satisfaction to justice, and thereby losing the living pulse of sympathy and love and practical life in his teaching." So far as the Church has sacrificed life to mere theological science, it is to be repented of and amended. But when the process of generalization and definition and coördination of Scripture facts is sneered at, the charge is simple puerility; and when the assertion is that logical definition has interfered with reverential love and obedience, it is reckless

slander of the Spirit-led history of the Church of Christ.

We are pointed back of the Christ of the Church theology to the Christ of the New Testament. But we cannot stop there. Because the Christ of Paul is not the living and personal Christ, but a person of theological debate. The questions of preëxistence, of revelation, of humiliation, of exaltation—especially the legal aspect of his work, satisfying justice and working righteousness—have begun this process of “disastrous disfigurement” of the sacred things, which the Church has carried onward. We must not rest in apostolic conceptions, but go back to the fountain-head, the historic Christ of the Gospels. But even here the Christ of John has already begun to be overlaid with foreign speculative elements. Tender, sublime, spiritual, offering mystical union and exalting love indeed, but at the same time asserting with unfaltering authority his equality with God, asserting that life depends on faith in him, magnifying the divine sovereignty and efficacious grace. Here are speculative elements which may interfere with the simplicity and truth of the figure, and we therefore come back to the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels. But there we are cautioned that these Gospels were written late in the life of the Church, and we must carefully

distinguish between what Christ really did and taught, and what is ascribed to him by the growing misconception of the Church theology. And when, at last, we have reached this teaching, rich, profound, divine, containing in germinal form the whole of the truth afterward communicated by the Spirit, we are still further taught that we must discriminate carefully in the teaching of Christ himself between what belongs merely to the prejudices of his day and generation, and the message that he is commissioned of God to impart. He comes not with infallible revelation, teaching the things of God out of his conscious omniscience, we are told; but one tells us that his Messianic consciousness grows out of his consciousness of ethical oneness with God; and another that it is an inference from his universal love for men and his desire for their salvation. In the one sphere he is not only limited in knowledge, but may be entirely mistaken. In the other sphere he brings to us the truth which is our life. And we are to distinguish, by the light within, what is really of Christ and what is not.

We, on our part, accept this motto, "Back to Christ." And as his parting word, we hear him tell the disciples that he would send the Spirit, who should lead them into all truth. We, on this

authority, accept the teaching of Paul and John concerning him. And so far as the Church has by this promised guidance unfolded the truth of revelation, we accept her interpretation of the Scriptures. Here is the New Testament criterion of truth. Here is Christ's most sacred parting legacy. Here is our choice of method. Which do you choose, *Christ* or *Barabbas*? Away from Christ, as imparted by the Spirit, we may not have the life he promises. For his promise to the Church to be with it alway to the end of the world is *by* that Holy Spirit.