

ON BEING IN THE SPIRIT.

Rev. D. Nash.

"Let us live in the Spirit."—Paul to the Galatians.

What a brief and comprehensive description is this of the true element and sphere of the Christian life! Undoubtedly there is a sense in which this expression is sometimes used, when the Holy One in his mighty energy elevates the soul to the apprehension of truths and events unattainable by uninspired reason. So John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day," and had his natural faculties so greatly enlightened and strengthened, that he was fitted to become God's amanuensis—the writer of the epistles of the Son of man to the Asiatic churches. He doubtless then received the spirit of prophecy, and was under its full influence when the Son of man appeared to him as given us in the first chapter of Revelation.

But there is an ordinary and general sense in which it is to be taken, indicating the real state and action of Christian believers. The all-surrounding, all sanctify-all-filling Spirit is the great element and sphere of the new life in the regenerate soul. "In Him we live and move, and have our being." The fish lives in the sea, the great waters being the feeder and orbit of its life. The bird lives in the air and, without it, it can neither enjoy life nor motion. So the believer "lives in the Spirit;" the Holy Ghost being absolutely necessary to the sustenance and action of his heavenly life.

"In times past," sin was the element and sphere of our being. Sin filled the circle of our nature and activities. All in us, all around us, was sin: our carnal man lived and moved in it. But when we were "quickened," when, "born of God," we breathed a new atmosphere, and moved in a new orbit of action, then we were in the Spirit; the Holy Ghost became the essence and element of our life, filling and sustaining the very vitals of our spiritual nature. The Holy Ghost became also the sphere of all our activities, out of which we cannot move; for we "walk in the Spirit." The branch lives in the vine; but how? By the continued flow of the sap from the parent stem. So we live in Christ Jesus by the continual procession of the Spirit from him to us. Without this, in neither case can there be either life or fruit. The Church of God is founded upon the holy apostles and prophets; the underlying chief corner-stone being Jesus Christ himself. But it is the Spirit that gives life to the stones, and so frames them together, that they grow into a holy temple. The temple of our humanity is thus a habitation of God "through" or "in the Spirit."

Hence it is that prayer is to be "in the Spirit." "Praying in the Holy Ghost," says St. Jude. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," says St. Paul. It is the Spirit that reveals our wants to us, and helps us to express them; that creates in us the pangs of hunger for the bread of heaven, and thirst for the waters of life, and then assists us in our cry for them; for "we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Prayer may be very fluent and very noisy without the

Holy Ghost; but such prayer is heard only on earth. Prayer must be "in the Spirit" to be accepted and effectual; and only such can ever climb to heaven. And this may be affirmed of all other Christian duties. To be heartily, healthily, and successfully performed, they must be accomplished in and through the Spirit.

Peace and joy also can only be found in the Holy Ghost. False peace, withering joys, may be grown in the 'weak and beggarly elements of the world; but true peace, unfading joys, can only grow in the divine element of the Spirit. And this it is which renders the believer's joy independent of the external circumstances of this earthly life. Bonds usually manacle the wretched, and prisons are mostly the habitations of mourning and despair; but let a man be full of the Holy Ghost, and though he be bound with fetters that groove bloody channels in his limbs, and cooped up in a dungeon, blinding and fevering him with its darkness and malaria, yet there is the very incarnation of peace and joy.

John Bunyan sleeps and dreams of heaven in Bedford prison as sweetly as in his own home; Paul and Silas, prisoners, their backs lacerated with stripes, and their feet in the stocks, sang as joyously in the dungeon at Philippi as in the meeting-house at Ephesus; and John, though an exile, was as gladsome on the Lord's Day at Patmos as when he lay on the bosom of Jesus at the Supper in Jerusalem. And an aged friend of mine, lately departed, while stretched on a bed of intense suffering, sang triumphantly "in the Spirit."—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.
I would Thy boundless love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
So shall the music of Thy name
Refresh my soul in death."

A pure and godly heart can find a heaven of gladness anywhere in the sphere of the Holy Ghost.

We rejoice because we live under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. But do we "live in the Spirit?" Does he glorify us as his habitation? Does he pervade the entirety of our being? Does he constitute our life, and inspire all our deeds? If so, the world will "our influence feel, our gospel grace partake." They will acknowledge us as the temples of God, and feel the sanctifying power of our divine anointing.

Let us be "in the Spirit," and we are always ready to work for God; ready for prayer, for exhortation, for testimony for Jesus; ready for the class-meeting, for pastoral visitation, for any word in the cause of our divine Redeemer; and when the day of the holy Sabbath arrives, the day of his holy worship, what new scenes of glory, rivalling those of the ancient Pentecost, should we see, if all the congregations of Christendom were to sing and pray and worship, "in the Spirit!" The Spirit would give a melody and power to our songs, such as angels hear in the courts of heaven. The one prayer of the congregation would cleave the skies and bring down "showers of blessings," making the "wilderness and the solitary place to be glad,

and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose." What an era of triumphant gladness would be inaugurated if all the heralds of salvation were to preach in "demonstration of the Spirit and of power!" Multitudes of seared consciences would be enlightened and quickened, multitudes of stony hearts melted and softened, multitudes of unhallowed breasts cleansed and purified, doubting Thomases rising into a nobler faith, backsliding Peters rejoicing in repeated pardons, sin-cased formalists bursting into the life of God. These would be the glorious signs of such an era. How great is our sin! and how great should be our sorrows because these signs are so sparse and scanty! Shall we not pray for them? shall we not expect them now? O God the Spirit! forgive our forgetfulness and our contempt of thee. Re-annoint thy ministry, re-baptize thy Church, and hasten the world's conversion.—Guide to Holiness, 1867.

GRATEFUL TESTIMONY.

By A. T. Allis.

Oh, joy to know that Jesus' blood
Can cleanse a being vile as I;
To feel the Spirit witnessing
With mine that it does sanctify!

Yes, now I feel its cleansing power,
While through my conscious being roll
Rivers of peace, that fill and flood
And satisfy my thirsting soul.

Before I found this peaceful way,
My heart was often sore oppressed
With anxious thoughts and cares and fears
And reasonings; but now I rest,—

Rest on His everlasting word
With filial trust I had not known,
Till, buried in the cleansing flood,
I rose to live for Him alone;—

To live for God!—Oh precious thought!—
A life with but a single aim,
A single theme, a single work,—
To glorify the Master's name!

What lips can speak, what words express,
The glory such a life affords?
In joy or sorrow, ease or pain,
Labor or rest, still all the Lord's!

INFALLIBLE BALM.

Nature bleeds when our reputation suffers from the evil opinions of our fellow-men but the true and only infallible balm for this wound is the consciousness that we have done those things, for which our fellow-men blame and distrust us, with a single eye to the divine glory.—Dr. T. C. Upham.

"The world's most crying need today is for men and women who take their ideals of life, not from the marts of trade or the coteries of fashion, but from fellowship with the Son of God."

When Elisha made his consecration, he burned his oxen and plow so he had nothing to go back to but a few dry bones and a heap of ashes.—A. W. McCallom.