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Our Celestial Guest:

OR,

A FEW STIRRING THOUGHTS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A LECTURE:

BY THE

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"HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR."

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

LONDON:
WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER-RROW.

1855.

Price Ninepence.

WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.



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JOHN XIV. 16, 17.

“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.”

THESE words are a part of our blessed Lord's farewell discourse with His disciples. Naturally, at such a time, He would choose the weightiest and most consolatory topic. This, in his estimation, was the approaching Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost. Evidently it was engrossing his thoughts on that solemn occasion.—It breaks out, like a rich under-tone, in almost every sentence He utters. In the earlier part of the chapter He speaks of the many mansions, his second coming, and faith in Himself as the “express image” of the Father's person, and the prevalency of his name at the throne of grace; but this is only the prelude to his grand theme,—“*the mission of the Comforter,*” which He introduces as above.

“Full of the Holy Ghost” Himself,—having Himself received it without “measure” from the Father, his supreme

desire for his disciples is, that this "his joy," may be "fulfilled" in them.

Now, surely, Brethren, what was weightiest and most consolatory in the eye of the dying Saviour, must be of equal importance and virtue to his Church in every age. Yet, if I mistake not, few subjects are so neglected. And not with impunity—it is the root of half our evils. Were I asked, how it comes to pass that, with such a multiplicity of means, there is so little sterling piety amongst us?—How it comes that, with so much toil, night and day, the fishers of men "take" next to nothing?—How it comes that, with so much ploughing and sowing, there is so little ripening and reaping?—How it comes that, with everything to invigorate and cheer us, so few are "anointed with the oil of gladness," and so many lead lives of bondage and gloom, "fast bound in misery and iron?"—Were I asked how it comes that there are such defections from duty, such declensions from spirituality of mind and walk, such tamperings with error, such flinchings from the cross?—Were I asked how it comes to pass that, although they are the only authentic criterion of regeneration, we yet see such unworthy exhibitions of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance?"—Were I asked these questions, I should reply, without hesitation,—*It is because of our low, and, therefore, inoperative, views of the Holy Spirit of God.*—It is because He, the third Person of the glorious Trinity, *standeth in the midst of us, and we know Him not!*

I speak not now of individuals; there are hundreds of eloquent exceptions; they shine as stars; their mouths are "most sweet;" all their garments "smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces,"—in a word, they are filled with the Spirit. But I am thinking of Christians generally. I have cause to believe that their ideas about the Holy Ghost are exceedingly vague and uninfluential. They have heard, indeed, that there is such a Being; they accept the

dogmatic proposition, that "He is the Lord and Giver of life, that He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; and that He spake by the prophets." But does not the faith of too many stop here? Have they—*have you, any realizing, heart-affecting, soul-constraining apprehension* of the Holy Ghost? I mean, such an apprehension of Him as leads you to turn to Him in your difficulties, to enjoy daily intercourse with God in Him, and to look to Him for all the strength, encouragement, endurance, guidance, and growth, which we need to qualify us for the duties of the present life, and to fit us for the ineffable purities of the life "which is to come?"

I hear some one say,—“My difficulty is to understand the *Personality* of the Holy Ghost. I can conceive of Him as ‘living water;’ as the ray of the Sun of righteousness; as ‘the wind blowing where it listeth;’ but I cannot view him as a *Person*,—a Person who can ‘strive’ with me, and reason with me, and instruct me, and reach and transform and inhabit my inner man,—a Person who can be ‘grieved’ and resisted; or entertained and honoured by me.”

So you find yourself speaking of Him as “*it*,” as if He were a *thing*, a *quality*, an *essence*; and not a Divine *person*. And I will allow that the figurative expressions of Scripture—such as the “outpouring of the Spirit,” and the “quenching of the Spirit”—justify somewhat loose phraseology in talking of Him; but then the same might be said of the scriptural references to *Christ*. The sacred writers,—particularly the prophets, often speak of the Messiah as if He were a thing rather than a person; but no one supposes that Christ was an “*it*”—a mere quality or essence—We all hold most thoroughly that He was a Person. And this, by the way, will supply us with an appropriate illustration.

For observe, it was not the fact of Christ’s *taking our nature*

which made Him a Person. He was the Son of God, with all his Divine peculiarities, just as much *before* He became incarnate as afterwards. It was only that *at his incarnation* He took the peculiarities—that is, the characteristics of a perfect Man, into *union* with those of his previous godhead, and so became that new and astounding combination,—GOD-MAN—IMMANUEL!

But if Christ was a person *before He became incarnate, and his incarnation added nothing to his personality*, why should we not conceive of the Holy Ghost as a person, albeit *He* is not “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.”

Or to take another illustration. A deceased parent or child is a person, just as truly *now*, as whilst they remained in the body. Their arms, and legs, and eyes, and ears, and human voice, and the internal organs were not essential parts of them; they were, indeed, essential to their continuance in the material world, but is it to be imagined for a moment that the MIND—that intellectual, moral, and spiritual being which inhabited “this mortal,” and made it its temporary residence and vehicle, and which passed out of it so vigorous, elate, and complete—is it to be imagined that *that* cannot be *independent of the body*, and that, when it is delivered from its “burthen,” it is not as actually a Person, and as such as capable of thought, gratification, and service, as when it was fettered by animal appetites and necessities?

Well, and so let us conceive of the Holy Ghost as a person, albeit *He* has never allied Himself to a *body* of his own—I say, let us conceive of Him as a person; as distinguishable from the Father and the Son, as they are from one another; and with an office and work as distinct from Christ's, as Christ's from the Father's.

Now, mark how the Saviour enunciates this fact.

“Sorrow hath filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: *for if I*

go not away, the Comforter will not come to you : but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." He meant that the pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit, was dependent on the presentation of his blood in the Upper Sanctuary.—“The Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” It was at his ascension that He received the precious gift for men—it was, “being by the right hand of God exalted,” that He “shed it forth.” The Spirit had fallen as “dew and tender showers” all along the Mosaic dispensation ; but *Christ’s entrance into heaven* opened its doors and windows, and He came down like the tropical or latter rain !

Again,—

“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 show you things to come ! HE shall glorify me, for HE shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you !”

Or take the still more emphatic language of the text,—

“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.”

Now, Brethren, what can we say after such witness as this?—What need have we of any further witness ? If Christ’s words convey anything, they teach us that the Holy Ghost is a *Living Person* to-day as truly as Christ is ! When Christ sat at that Supper-table, He said to his Church, “I am going from you personally ; but you shall not be left orphans in the world : I go ; but I will send HIM to you ; and when HE IS COME, in my place, personally, HE shall do this and that *for me* in you !”

Look at this, Brethren. Christ says, "HE (the Holy Ghost) is so entirely a Person, that HE could speak what He chose: He could tempt and torment you: He could lead you whither He pleased: He could glorify Himself. But HE will not do so. He has lovingly submitted Himself to mine and the Father's disposal, even as I lovingly submitted myself to his and the Father's disposal; so He will not speak of Himself, but 'whatsoever He shall hear, *that* (to wit, the Gospels, Epistles, the Book of Revelation, and all the apostolic sermons and discourses) *that* shall He speak.' He will not terrify and torment you, but He will be a '*Comforter*' to you—(Oh, how He has vindicated this name!) He will not lead you at random, but 'He will lead you unto all truth.' He will not glorify Himself, but 'He will glorify me!'"—Thus lovingly does He submit Himself; but is He any the less a *Person* because He does so?

Then, as if to put this in a still stronger light if possible, Christ says,—

"I tell you the truth, it is *expedient* for you that *I go away.*"

Now, how could this be? Should we not have said,—and have seconded our speech with petitions signed by every Church member—should we not have said, "Nothing can render it expedient for you to leave us, Lord! What can be better for us than thy personal presence, instruction, and protection?"

Do we not often think, Oh, that He, on whose shoulder the "government" rests, were now on earth! Oh, if He were but in Galilee or in Jerusalem as of old! Oh, if steam could transport us to his haunts, or the telegraph flash us intelligence of his movements! Oh, if He were but here to visit his Churches occasionally—to settle our controversies—to reprove our ecclesiastical rulers, and weed out our clergy—to head the missionary enterprise—to "keep us in the

world"—to heal our sick! Oh, if it were so, that we could go to HIM whenever we wished with our perplexities, our oppressions, our infirmities! What a new rapture it would infuse into life! What a new thing it would make one's religion! Surely nothing could be preferable to that—*Christ's personal presence!*

But what says Christ to this? "I tell you the truth, *it is expedient for you that I go away.*" And why?—What does He assure us is better for us now than his immediate personal presence?—What is the mighty equivalent for such a bereavement?

Here it is—"If I go not away, the COMFORTER will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send HIM unto you!"

On the Saviour's own showing, therefore, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost with us, is better for us now—more conducive to our best interests and God's glory—than his own personal presence.

So, then, we *now* have "with us and in us" a Being—a Divine person—whose presence is more than a compensation for the bodily absence of our most precious Lord: There could be no force in Christ's reasoning if he did not intend this. For the apostles, to whom He was speaking, had Him, their Master and Lord, "with them,"—with them at their meals, with them in their journeys, with them in their synagogues, with them in their trials.—So that they had only to direct the eye and it rested on the features, or to lift the finger and it touched the flesh, or to turn the ear and it heard the voice of the Son of God! But Christ meant them to understand that the Holy Ghost would be "with them" in a superior manner even to this; for if he were only to be with them *as* Christ had been, where was the expediency of Christ's removal? No! He must have meant that they and we should be materially and notably benefited by the *exchange* of his personal presence, for the personal presence of the Holy Ghost whom He would send in his stead!

And who can doubt that it is indeed so? Who can doubt it, Brethren, who remembers what followed the return of the Head of the Church to his native skies, and his enthronization as KING of his saints! Who can doubt it, who remembers the brilliant world-wide triumph of the simple Gospel which occurred only six weeks subsequent to his departure! Who can doubt it, who contrasts the "Twelve" before Christ left them, with what they became directly the Holy Ghost had come *to* them and *in* them! They were the same men—they were still weak in themselves—but they stood forth, each a Goliath, challenging the world, and doing even "greater works"* than Christ himself had done! Who can doubt it, who contrasts the progress of the Gospel during Christ's earthly sojourn, with that which it afterwards made, when from his seat in the highest heavens He inaugurated the reign of his vicegerent, the Holy Ghost!

Without controversy, it was a wondrous privilege to receive Christ into your house; to have your lack of wine at a marriage festival supplied by miracle; to listen to his "gracious" words as they fell sweetly on the ear; to gaze at the external features of Him who was none less than GOD *manifest in the flesh*; to hand him his meat and drink; to have a frenzied child, or a dying mother, or a faithful servant healed by a touch of his fingers; and to follow Him about from place to place as far as your purse or your strength would allow you. Yes, these were wonderful privileges—there was HEAVEN in them. But we must not forget that they were *outward* privileges only, and, as such, were shared by a Judas as well as a John, by the Pharisees as well as his disciples. Compare these privileges with such as follow—a broken and a contrite heart; an enlightened and renewed mind; a lively conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; a hunger and thirst after righteousness; a filial fear of God's wrath; an

* St. John xix. 12.

insight into the spiritual character of Christ ; a drawing out of the soul after him ; a re-creation of it in his image ; an opening of the inner ear to hear every word of his with meekness and pure affection ; a blending of our will into the Divine will ; an infallible guidance into truth ; supernatural assistance in prayer ; a power to resist and vanquish Satan, and overcome the world, and correct every evil habit ; never-failing support and solace in the midst of afflictions ; “ all joy and peace in believing ; ” full assurance of acceptance in the Beloved ; actual earnest and foretastes of heaven ; and, to crown the whole, uninterrupted, conscious, delightful communion with the Father and the Son : — *these*, Brethren, are the *operations of the Holy Ghost*, and who can read of them even, and not see the point of the Saviour’s declaration, “ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is *expedient* for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come, but if I depart, I will send HIM unto you ! ”

He would have us know that the Holy Ghost is “ amongst ” and “ with ” and “ in ” us,—not to teach us any fresh truth, but to “ open our understandings, that we may understand ” what Christ has taught us—not to do any fresh work on our behalf, but to *carry out and apply* the work which Christ has “ finished ” at such a cost. But the one is as important as the other—the one is valueless to us without the other. It was Christ’s office to preach, and exemplify, and obey, and atone as man’s representative—this brought him here for three-and-thirty years : It is the Spirit’s office to make salvation effectual, and to work upon man—this brought *Him* here ; and for eighteen centuries and more he has been so engaged. To put it in parables : Christ procured the medicine—the Spirit administers it. Christ erected the bridge over the gulf—the Spirit compels perishing sinners to cross it ! Christ brought the life-boat to the side

of the sinking wreck—the Spirit lowers the half-drowned crew into it and ferries them safe ashore!

These, then, Beloved, are facts—not fancies, not theories, not mere doctrines—they are FACTS. And I repeat that they are marvellously overlooked by the great body of professing Christians, and very inadequately realised by those who are truly converted. Of the Holy Ghost, as of the Messiah, it may be said, “He was in the world, and the world knew Him not. He came to his own, and his own received Him not. He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men. . . . And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”

The WORLD, indeed, *cannot* receive Him, because (as Christ says) it “*seeth Him not* ;” for He is invisible to the fleshly eye, and only to be “*spiritually discerned*.” We must not be surprised, therefore, if worldly-minded men do not believe our “report,” and count it “foolishness.” Why, Brethren, they had the Saviour,—the incarnate God, amongst them for thirty years, and yet they did not “*see*” Him ; and when He publicly pressed his claim, they branded him with the vilest epithets, and put Him to death ! I am not surprised, therefore, that the majority around us know nothing about the Holy Spirit—all invisible as He is to the perception of the senses ; but what surprises, what pains us, is, that those who are spiritually-minded and able to judge all things, that *they* should entertain such narrow ideas about Him to whom they owe every spark of Divine life, every uplifting of the heart to Christ, and every flower and fruit of piety which distinguishes them. Yet, is it not so ?

To be personal,—Have not *your* views of this great and ever-present Friend been hitherto most meagre ? For

instance, have you known and realized that HE is in the world *now*, as Christ was a few centuries back,—Christ's Representative, to advocate his claims, energize his truth, apply the balm of his promises, and glorify his name?

Have you known and realized that He is to be found in the closet and the sanctuary, yea, wherever you seek Him, just as Christ was once to be found in the house of some villager, or in a corn-field, or in a boat on the Lake of Galilee?

Have you known and realized that He has been in direct communication with you, as truly as Christ was with Peter when He said to him, "Follow me;" or with the sinful woman, when He said to her, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee"?

Have you known and realized that it was the HOLY GHOST who produced those first religious impressions on your heart—followed you when you fled from convictions—bore with your rebellion, whispering at every opportunity "Why, why will you die?"—filled you with a strange despondency, and awakened your conscience till it cried, like Esau, with an "exceeding great and bitter cry"—came to you, it may be, on a bed of sickness or by the death-bed of a parent, and *convinced* you "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment"?

Have you known and realized that it was the HOLY GHOST who made sin *distasteful* to you when you had wallowed in it as a sow in the mire—and implanted an imperishable desire in your soul to be a child of God—and quickened you with a new and unearthly power, so that as a wonder to yourself you defied temptation, mastered besetting sins, corrected evil habits, and began to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ, by holy and accurate imitations of his character?

Have you known and realized that it was the HOLY GHOST who enabled you to *hold on your way, and wax stronger and stronger* in the face of all allurements and oppositions,

renewing your strength like the eagle's, and equipping you in the whole armour of God?

You have been in perplexity sometimes. You knew not which road to take—fears were on every side. But suddenly, by a chain of coincidences, crooked things were made straight, and rough places plain; mountains were levelled and valleys exalted; and a voice said, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Who was it who led you when so blind and at fault? Did you know and realize that it was Jehovah's fellow—the *Holy Ghost*?

You were overwhelmed by some affliction—wave after wave went over you; or it was all concentrated in one bitter cup. But now you see that it was "good" for you—water has gushed out from the "stony rock;" the wilderness has proved a "vineyard," and the desert has "rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." Who was it that drew near to you when you were indeed "weary and heavily laden," and "eased your shoulder," and poured oil and wine into your lacerated bosom, and bade you be of good cheer? Did you know and realize that it was the HOLY GHOST, THE COMFORTER?

You have often felt utterly unequal to some duty; you dreaded it and shrunk from it—it was altogether above and beyond nature. But you kept casting a look to Christ; and you leant on the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and so you "leaped over that wall!" Did you know and realize that it was the Holy Ghost who nerved and invigorated you for that achievement?

You have "fallen away" from your "first love" at times. Like the prodigal son, you have collected what "substance" you could, and stolen away to spend it riotously in some far country. But there you have come to yourself, and you have seen how fearfully you had provoked God, and what imminent jeopardy you were in! *Then* the pleasures of time and sense were to you, what the sponge filled with vinegar was to our Lord when He cried, "I thirst."—You

turned from them heartsick. "No," you said, as you arose and set out for your Father's house; "only let me get a 'hired servant's' place *there*, and I shall be happy; and never till then!" Now who was it that thus drew you back with the cords of love, and re-lighted your candle, and restored to you the joys of your salvation? Did you know and realize that it was the Holy Ghost—a Being, equal to the eternal Father and the incarnate Word; so that it was precisely as if Immanuel Himself had missed you from the royal table, and come after you, and had an interview with you, and convinced you of your wickedness, and given you his absolution?

These inquiries, Beloved, are sufficient for my purpose; if you address them to your conscience, it will tell you that you have *not* known and realized as you ought your infinite obligations to the Holy Spirit—his nearness to you, his interest in you, his sympathy with you; it will tell you that your views about Him have been sadly superficial; and oh! it will prompt you to admire and adore the grace which He has manifested towards you notwithstanding! You have been like a new-born infant all unconscious of a mother's presence and love. But this has not cooled his affection, or caused Him to slacken his efforts in your behalf. You were "His," therefore He has watched you with parental tenderness, and "nourished and cherished" you, in the assurance that some day (perhaps to-day!) you would awaken, as from a dream, and recognise his goodness, and give thanks to Him with a loud voice.

And now, if you have felt this to be a word in season, you will be ready for two or three practical exhortations upon it.

First, I would say—

Set yourself to get clearer and more enlarged views on this most important subject.

You will find it *most* important! I will undertake to affirm that your attainments in piety, and your happiness,

and the degree of your usefulness, and your zeal for God's glory, and your superiority to afflictions and vicissitudes and worldly pleasures, will bear an exact relation to the character of your views of the Holy Spirit:—if they are crude and unsettled and indefinite, your religion will be little more than a struggle to keep your head above water; but if you have a *vivid apprehension* of that glorious Person and his relation to yourself, then you will do great things, and Satan will set the battle in array against you in vain!

Secondly, I would say—

Cultivate a close walk and continuous fellowship with the Holy Ghost.

Just get that thought fixed in your mind—"He is 'with me' and 'in me' everywhere.—He sees everything that I do, He hears everything that I speak.—He is about my path and my lying down, and spies out all my ways. This being the case, what have I to do but to make Him my Friend—my bosom Friend? I will set Him at my right hand—I will open my inmost soul to Him, and, where no other being may enter—where, *if* they enter, they become idols—for it is the holy of holies—*God's* habitation alone—*there* the Holy Ghost shall make his abode, and thence give his laws, and thence dispense his streams of gladness, and thence work that blessed work in me which shall fit me for angelic, aye, for Divine society, and thence make intercessions for me with "Abba, Father," and "groanings which cannot be uttered."

This is Christianity, Brethren—"Christ in us the hope of glory," Christ "formed in us," Christ enthroned in us—all by that one and the self-same Spirit! Without this, religion is but a name! a sham! a syren song, to enchant us as we float down the river of life, till we are seized by the sweeping cataract, and hurried into the irremediable abyss! *A religion devoid of the Holy Spirit!*—God deliver those who have fallen into such a trance! None but He can break it!

But what I desire to impress upon you is, that you cannot have this walk and communion with the Holy Ghost without *perfect integrity of heart*. There must be guilelessness, sincerity, honesty of purpose, before He will join us under the fig-tree, and take us into the choice circle of his friends. He will, indeed, attach himself to a sinner in his sins, however odious, with a view to deliver him out of them—just as a philanthropist would attach himself to a prisoner, or a physician to a patient, with a view to his restoration. But when He has once “convinced” of sin, then He expects us to “*walk in the light, even as He walks in it.*” Indulged lusts are to Him, what a tainted reputation in a woman is to the man who is seeking her hand in marriage,—however much He may love, He cannot commit himself to such an alliance. Like Joseph, He may not make “a public example” of us always, but, like him, He will assuredly “put” us “away privily,” till He sees that the sin is *abhorred*, and that He, the thrice holy One, may venture to solicit an entrance again. This is the experience of all the Lord’s people—they have (alas!) tried the experiment too frequently, and invariably with the same agonizing result; and now their constant cry is, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Then, too, I would impress upon you that you cannot have this walk and communion with the Holy Ghost, unless you are *ever looking to Him by faith*,—ever reminding yourself of his presence,—ever acting precisely as if you saw Him standing by your side defending you against the “gates of hell” with one arm, whilst with the other He supported your trembling spirit, and enabled it to do whatever God calls it to do, and to suffer whatever God calls it to suffer.

Again: you cannot have it *without using all diligence yourself.*

It is only as you "work out your own salvation"—it is only as you "make your calling and election sure" by daily, unremitting activity and self-denial, that God the Holy Ghost will "work in you." It is only when you rise in arms against your "iniquities," that He will "subdue" them. It is only when you whet your sword and bend your bow, that "He will teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight." When you are most devotedly fulfilling all the duties of your station, and adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour in all its relations—when you are most prayerful, most laborious, most watchful—*then* it is that you will enjoy most of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

And once more on this point—

You cannot have this walk and communion with the Holy Ghost, *unless you make Christ, and Him crucified, "all your salvation and all your desire."* The Holy Ghost will have nothing to do with formalists. The self-righteous, the self-complacent, the Pharisaical, He knoweth "afar off." The man who trusts in his Church, or his creed, or his philosophy, He leaves to his Church, his creed, or his philosophy. But whenever He sees the eye directed to Jesus—whenever He hears the cry, "Lord, I believe"—whenever He finds that the "name" of Christ is as "ointment poured forth"—thither He hastens; and ever increasingly, as the soul gets to depend on Christ more simply and confidingly and wholly, does the Holy Ghost take that soul into closer companionship.

Finally,

Need I say, *PRAY for more of the influences of the Holy Ghost?* Let this be the first and last of your petitions, whenever you pass within the veil. Let God see that you are in earnest about it—that your heart is set upon it—that "you will not let Him go" until He "bless" you with it.