

QUENCH NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT!

BY REV. JOHN PHILIP, M. A.

"A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above," whence "cometh down every good and every perfect gift." And no gift ought to be more prized than the gracious impulses of God's blessed Spirit.

Although they may come in the form only of a feeble, fluttering, unsyllabled desire; or a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction with all earthly things; or of an inward sighing, longing, groping after something higher and better, perhaps some undefinable good; nevertheless, let these be welcomed even more than angels' visits, and entertained and held fast, and you cannot tell to what blessed, everlasting issues they may lead. Even a single live coal, though burning feeble and low, if fanned and fed, may kindle into a bright and vehement flame. And so a single spark of spiritual desire, jealously watched and gently handled, may, as by a process of evolution, soon flame up in rapt and fervent prayer, and burst into a beautiful life, and become a burning and shining light. It may even grow into a great sun, and shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But extinguish that spark, quench that live coal, stifle conviction and strangle desire—and your light may go out in darkness, and your soul be chilled down to zero, and held firm and fast in the grip of spiritual and eternal death. If one were alone in some dense forest, or lonely isle, and had but a single match left, how nervous he would be in striking it, lest it should go out!—and if it were lit, how careful to shield it from any rude blast or even breath of wind!—and how anxious to foment the flickering flame with some dry leaves or withered grass that would catch and spread, and preserve the living fire! Thus watchful ought every one to be over the first beginning of grace, the strivings of God's good Spirit, the stirrings of holy desire; because if these are allowed to die out, or be rudely quenched, you cannot tell when, if ever, they will be rekindled again.

Not usually in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, but in the *still small voice*, does the Spirit make his presence known and felt. When the prodigal was in the far country, a feeling of want, weariness, and unrest, and a flashing memory of the plenty and peace of the old

home he had left, formed, so to speak, the pivot, the turning point, of his future history. And had he callously or coolly given these thoughts the go-by, he might have lived and died a poor besotted swine-herd, and never have seen his father's face, nor felt the fond clasp, the warm embrace, of his fatherly arms, nor the sweet, soft, tear-bedewed kiss of his free, forgiving, and overflowing love.

Thus it is the wisdom and interest of all to strike in at the first and fitting opportunity, *the very nick of time*, and not be disobedient to the heavenly voice: "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

"Look at yon struggling barque battling with the angry billows. How can it live in such a sea? Already it is in the midst of the breakers, and drifting towards the rocks. Suddenly it strikes, and all on board seem destined to perish. Not a moment is to be lost. A signal of distress is hoisted from the quivering topmast, where it wildly flaps and flutters in the furious gale. The faithful coast-guards sight the fatal vessel and the well-known signal. Promptly all hands are summoned to the rescue. The lifeboat is launched, and gallantly pulled through the crested billows by stalwart arms; or the life-saving apparatus is suddenly called into requisition, and ere long the swift-flaming, arrowy rocket has shot the friendly rope across the sinking vessel.

But the poor bewildered mariners have failed to grasp it! Yet another chance will be given them, and still another. Then, if they miss their last chance, what hope remains, what fate, but only a watery grave!

"Reached, but not saved! There is more to do,

A trumpet voice is heard;
And over the rage and over the roar
Of billowy thunders on the shore
Rings out the guiding word:

'There is one chance, and only one;
All can be saved, but how?—
The rope hold fast, but quit the mast,
At the trumpet signal—now!'"

No true man can live a half-life when he has genuinely learned that it is only a half-life. The other half, the higher half, must haunt him.—*Phillips Brooks.*