

sons of the Godhead have been graciously pleased to enter, for the redemption of sinners of mankind. It has been committed to him to apply the salvation which the Son has wrought out and brought in, in fulfilment of the purpose of the Father. The same truth further appears from the express statement of Scripture. These may be collected from both the Old and New Testaments. The Psalmist felt the necessity of the presence and operation of this divine agent, when, in the season of his conviction and contrition he prayed earnestly that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord. He is the comforter whom Christ promised to guide into all truth, to show the things concerning himself, and to abide with the Church for ever. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is God who gives the increase. When again we look at the facts in the history of religion we learn that it is the Holy Spirit who begins and promotes it. Was it not in consequence of his descent and operation that the thousands were converted in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and afterwards? "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." The Holy Ghost fell on all them in the house of Cornelius who heard the Word preached to them by Peter, and although the language denotes an extraordinary mode and measure of communication, for this effusion constituted the gentile Pentecost, yet it unquestionably implies his working for conversion to the experimental knowledge and appropriating faith of the truth of Christ. It was He who opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken by Paul; and in every instance in which souls are gathered to the Saviour, or edified and made to prosper, or that congregations exhibit signs of being blessed, it is consequence of the Word being in demonstration of the Spirit.

If the religious prosperity of congregations depends upon the agency of the Holy Ghost, of what importance is it that those who preach the Word should be men truly and deeply baptized with his influences? Those who have most of the Spirit will, if not in all cases, at least in a very great majority of them, be the most successful in turning the ungodly from the error of his ways, and promoting the holiness of those who are actually in Christ. Of what importance again is it, that they depend not on their own natural powers, on their own acquirements, or anything apart from the Spirit. To do so must grieve him and provoke him to withhold his agency, to the deadness and barrenness of the congregation. On the other hand, let those to whom the word is dispensed be much in prayer for large outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the soul of him who ministers to them in holy things, and for his influences to accompany the preaching of the Word, that it may prove unto them the savour of life unto life. Then and only then will the congregation be as a fruitful field, and as a garden which the Lord has blessed. Is not much of the spiritual apathy that prevails in our land, and of the formality that is observed among the members and adherents of our Churches, owing to want of prayer for the Holy Ghost? We are far from thinking or saying that our Church is not prospering. Facts would contradict us were we to do so. But are there among us that piety, earnest devotion, self consecration to Christ, abounding in heavenly graces, the working out of our salvation with fear and trembling, the giving of all diligence to make our calling and election sure, zeal for the glory of the Redeeming God, and participation of the comforts of the promises, that might be evinced and experienced? If there is a want here, is it not because we have not the Spirit in the measure he has been promised? And if we have him not, is it not because we ask not?

III. Many are the evidences that religion is prospering in a congregation. We shall attempt to mention only some of them. First, there will be an affectionate, brotherly spirit exhibited by the members towards each other. How strikingly and beautifully does this appear among the first converts to the gospel, and when a different spirit was displayed, how prompt is the rebuke tendered. We have only to bear in mind the change, in its kind and degree, pro-