THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT AS OUTLINED IN PAUL'S SUBLIME PRAYER.

REV. R. OGGOOD MORSE, M. A., LYONS, N. Y.

Eph. 3: 14-19.—For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

I bring you this morning a great theme, drawn from a great text, found in a great prayer. I have frequently studied this prayer but have never before had courage to attempt to preach from it. A man needs a sublime faith to preach from so sublime a text. Let us try to obtain a good draught from this well of fathomless depth.

This prayer is the most concise and comprehensive prayer in the bible. In these respects it far surpasses Our Lord's Prayer. The Lord's prayer might be used by Jew or by devout Mahometan as well as by Christian. There is in it no reference whatever to the Trinity. There is in it no mention of the Son nor of the Holy Spirit. This prayer, on the other hand, gives clear recognition to the doctrine of the Trinity, to the divinity of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is thus a distinctively christian prayer. The prayer clearly outlines the converging lines along which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operate in the process of human salvation. It is to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as outlined in this prayer that your attention is asked. This ministry is best understood in the light of the fundamental thoughts of the prayer.

Notice.

I. *Salvation is conceived of under the idea of adoption.* Paul places the first person of the Trinity first. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But Paul does not rest there for he says He is our Father. He is the universal Father for from Him every family in heaven and on earth is named. In this the primal relation of man to God we see the original dignity of the race. You see, too, the unity of the entire race of man. We have in society families all of one family name. There are the Browns, the Jones, the Smiths. All of those bearing one family name may trace their relationship back along their family genealogical tree to some specific person bearing that name who may be called the source or taproot of the whole great family.

And so with the great family of man! There is a common link of relationship back even of our unity in Adam for the real basis of our unity is in Christ. He is not only our creator, but it is in Him we live and move and are. It is in virtue of this that we are orginally the sons of God. For such was man in its fulness before sin did violence to this filial relationship. And such is he even in the fallen state. But that sonship which makes us heirs of God and heaven comes only through our special relationship to God through adoption into our Father's family through Jesus Christ.

Having seen what man's primal relation to God is, this will help us to understand what sin is. Sin is rebellion against this filial relationship. We say sin is transgression of the law, and so it is. But who is the giver of that law? He is our common Father, the universal Father and that it is which makes sin so exceeding sinful. If you lay a command upon your own child you have the right to expect obedience. If you command another's child over whom you have no right of control, the child is not blameworthy if he disregards that command. But the child who disregards the commands of a father's love is blameworthy indeed. He has committed high treason against the dearest principles of manhood, and it is that which makes filial disobedience a thing to be utterly abhorred. Now God's commands to us are the commands of love, of infinite love. They are the commands of our Heavenly Father's love and in doing violence to them is the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Where sin begins there repentance must begin. If a child has disobeyed his father, that child can make things right with the father only by coming right back to the point of disobedience and repenting right there. Now man has repudiated his filial relationship to God, and that wrong can be righted only as we come back to God and call Him our Father, and call ourselves His children. And this is faith. What an audacious thing then is faith, that by it one who had repudiated all God's claims upon him should come back to the point where he will say unto God, "Thou art my Father." The audacity of faith is that I dare to think of myself as a child of God.

This view of sin and of faith enables us to give a very simple and yet I think a very accurate definition of regeneration. Regeneration then is simply the Holy Spirit bringing into the foreground the filial spirit, or the spirit of child relationship on our part to God. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to reestablish this forfeited child relationship. Paul speaks of as being strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inward man. Now it was sin that thrust this filial spirit into the background. It was sin that did violence to our true relationship to God, our Father. Sin took from us the power to be acceptable to God. Hence it is only by the might of the Spirit that we are brought back into this filial relationship with the Father.

This which is embraced in God's adoption is the greatest of miracles. Indeed it is greater than a miracle that man created in the image of God, having willfully defaced that image, should be restored unto the likeness of that in which he was created. Granted the miracle of regeneration, the miracle of the resurrection must follow, just as surely as the foremost link of a chain drags after it the hindermost link.

II. *The office of the Holy Spirit signified.* I said that this prayer clearly outlined the work of the Holy Spirit, and yet I have said and shall say very little directly of the Holy Spirit. He is best understood through what he does. His work is to cause Christ to dwell in our hearts. Much of the prevalent discussion of the Holy Spirit loses sight of this fundamental part of His work. I think he is grieved by this, for he unduly exalt the Spirit is to dishonor Christ. He is nowhere anxious to reveal himself. He keeps himself as far in the back ground as possible. But he takes of the things of Christ and manifests them, or shows them forth to the believer, and makes Christ live within him. Christ is the object to be assimilated into our life. The Spirit is the power by which the assimilation is to be accomplished. Without the objective revelation given in Christ the Spirit would have nothing to make live in us. Without the Spirit the revelation granted in Christ remains outside of us as a parable which is not understood. We see then how absolutely necessary it was that Christ should first be made manifest in the flesh, that he should live, die, and rise again that the Holy Spirit might untramelled do his blessed work in us.

No! The Spirit speaks not of himself but of Him who sent him. His action has sometimes been compared to that of light. The comparison is an admirable one. What is light? No one knows. Some persons tell us it is the undulations of ether. And yet they are as far as ever from telling what light is. But the rays of light fall upon the objects by which we are surrounded. They focus in our eye and form a photograph of the objects of vision on the retina of the eye. Of all this complicated process, the work of an instant we are unconscious. We had never known there was a retina had not some scientist told us so. And a yet more curious scientist searching into the problem of sight, discovered to us the fact of the photograph on the retina. The one thing of which we are conscious is that we see various objects about us and that this mysterious thing which we call light has revealed them. In the same way, the Spirit reveals not himself but Christ. He honors not himself, but Christ. It is his mission to manifest and honor Christ. It is Christ, Christ, ever Christ who is in the foreground.

This suggests the question which no doubt troubles you more than any other, How may I know the Holy Spirit, or know that I am under his influence? Well, you cannot know him directly, even as you cannot know light directly. You know him only through his revelation of Christ. It is of vast importance that we do not mistake some other spirit for the Holy Spirit. Every religious impulse which may come to us is not of the Holy Spirit. It may be of Satan himself. Some of the most frightful evils have been perpetrated in the name of religion and with a good conscience. From Saul of Tarsus who persecuted the first christians, to Philip II of Spain who devoted millions of Protestants to death, the worst that happened, was made possible only by a strong belief that one verily did God's service.

How then may I know that the Holy Spirit works within me? If I am obtaining larger and fuller views of the Christ of the Gospels, if he is becoming constantly more and more to me, if my life is showing more of his life day by day, if in my face the image of my Saviour's face is seen coming into fuller and fuller view, then may I be sure, yes, very sure, that the Holy Spirit is making Christ to live in me day by day.

But this is not all. In addition, to the test of experience we have the test of the Word. He shall not speak of himself, but always in accord with the Word of God. Even as he honors Christ, so does he honor the Word.

Surely then, we are not to look for the Holy Spirit's guidance in strange questionable ideas or impulses. What we need is that he will help us to keep our hearts clean, our wills fixed on God's known wills, our minds ever at home on sacred things, and progressively enlightened, not by fanciful discoveries, which are but idle whims, but by fuller apprehension of the common treasure of truth. This may be disheartening to those who love to count themselves leaders through the Spirit's special gift to themselves of truth that no others have found; but it will be a priceless encouragement to those men and women of sober mind who fain would follow the leadings of the Spirit, but dread the effect of self abandonment to the thoughts and impulses which cannot find any justification in either the law or the gospel. Be sure He will always lead in the line of conscience enlightened by the Word of God and in the way of sanctified common sense.

But to return to our text! How does Christ dwell within the believer? By faith says the Word. We are not to suppose that he unmans the man we are. No! we are most truly our own free selves when Christ dwells in us most richly. Never is a man so full of freedom as when the freedom of Christ is his freedom. So it is by faith that the Holy Spirit causes Christ to dwell in us. Now faith is that trust in Christ which results in obedience to his word. Christ lives in the person who is obedient to him. You say that is a mystery. Well, it is no more mysterious than that the mother lives in the obedient child. Yet such is the case. The mother lives in her child and the child life reproduces the mother. So the Holy Spirit seeks through the faith of the believer to reproduce in him the image of the Christ.

Christ dwells in the believer in love also. "To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Twenty-five years ago a minister married a couple in a western city. The bridegroom was a tall, gawky countryman, dressed in ill-fitting garments, short trousers and long coat, and looking as if he felt all the time that his hands were out of place. The bride was as pretty as a butterfly in a clover patch. A short time ago the minister attended their silver wedding and saw them in their happy home, with their children about them. They were as much alike as if they had been twin brother and sister. They talked alike, walked alike, looked alike. They had loved each other, lived together, thought each others thoughts, shared each others joys, borne each others burdens, until in manner and in feature they had become alike. Such will be the result with us ungainly sinners who have become the bride of Jesus Christ. As we love him we shall think his thought, walk his way, do his will until we shall be transformed into his likeness.

III. *The Holy Spirit in the communion of all saints.* Let us follow the apostle to the climax of his thought. We learn there that the Holy Spirit reaches the fulness of his manifestation of Christ in us in bringing us into Christlike sympathy and communion with all the saints. It is then that we apprehend the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of the love of God. It is when we are united heart to heart with all the saints in the effort to make earth like heaven that we are filled with the fulness of God.

The religious world is full today of the cry for church unity. It is a healthful sign of the times. It is an indication that the fundamentals which bind all christians together, are far more mighty than the incidentals which keep them apart. I follow somewhat carefully these discussions and comments, yet I do not care so much for the outward and formal unity as for the spiritual unity. Give us unity of spirit and if God thinks it best in his own good time he will usher in unity of form.

But from the night when Jesus pronounced the greatest discourse on christian unity, John, chaps. 14 to 16, and offered his intercessory prayer, the sweet and triumphant song of oneness in Christ Jesus has filled the air, even as at Jesus' birth the midnight song of angels proclaimed to all the world, "Peace on earth good will to men." I hear that song coming down through nineteen christian centuries, ever swelling with the voices of a larger chorus, and now it breaks upon our ravished ears in sweeter and in grander melody than ever before was heard. Every land and every people join in the sweetest song of the ages. From Judean hills and Samarian plains, and Galilean farmfields, do I catch the sweet notes. Asia Minor sounds out the note to cultured Greece, while Imperial Rome and Northern Africa join in the glad refrain. On, on extends the song until its echoes come to me from Germany, Scandinavia, Gaul and the sea girt British isles. But we have only began to hear the music of that glad song. From frozen Iceland and Greenland it comes to meet that wafted from India's coral strands. It crosses the ocean and from wooded hills along the Plymouth coast you catch the strain. On, on it goes till Japan, China and the provinces of Asia and Africa join once more in the glad song whose chorus is swelled by all the islands of the sea.

And every tongue is mingled in this common song. You hear Barnabas and Polycarp, the Greeks, Jerome and Augustine, the Latins, Patrick the Briton, Columba the Celt, Savonarola the Italian, Wycliffe the Englishman, Huss, the Bohemian, Luther the German; and then a thousand tongues blend in jubilation to swell the glad song of christian fellowship.

No sect can build its walls so high as to keep in or shut out the song. They may build their walls so high that I cannot get in. But they cannot prevent the issue of the song. Neither papal decree, nor Anglican creed, nor confession, nor discipline, nor baptismal font of any shape can prevent the music of the song reaching all ears that will hear.

As for myself, I believe that this common song of christianity in which all devout hearts join is for me. I will allow neither pope, nor mitered bishop, synod, conference, nor convocation, baptistery, nor communion cup, to interfere with the sweetest notes of the song, nor prevent me from joining in the grand chorus. But with heart in sympathy with all that is Christ-like, I give heart and hand to every one who owns Jesus, my Saviour, to be his Christ and Lord.

Thus alone can Christ dwell in us richly and can we be filled with the fulness of God.

Surely this is greatly to be desired. It may be attained by each one of you. You have but to submit yourself to Christ, with an unquestioning faith, and cast out every cherished evil, that Christ may have the supreme love of your life, then will the Holy Spirit manifest him to you in the length and breadth, and height and depth of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Then will you be wholly given up to God.

Oh! for men wholly given up to God! One man even Christ was such. If we will let the Holy Spirit manifest Christ in our lives so that we shall be filled with the fulness of God, our world shall learn what God can accomplish through one person wholly given up to Him.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Literary Note.

The Homiletic Review for January, 1896, introduces its promised "Special Feature" of "schools" for direction in the study of various important subjects on which the ministry and the intelligent laity are just now peculiarly desirous of being instructed and guided.

The *Review* comes to us with its matter classified and arranged under Sections, as follows: Review, Sermonic, Illustration, Exegetical and Expository, Pastoral, Social, Miscellaneous, and Editorial. By turning to any one of these Sections, the reader will find a rich array of helpful material for homiletic suggestion and use.

On the whole, it is not too much to say that the present number of the *Review* comes very near to realizing the ideal which the editors set before them in the recently issued "Prospectus" for 1896.

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No family living in a bilious country should be without Parmelee's Vegetable Pills. A few doses taken now and then will keep the Liver active, cleanse the stomach and bowels from all bilious matter and prevent Ague. Mr. J. L. Price, Shoals, Martin Co., Ind., writes: "I have tried a box of Parmelee's Pills and find them the best medicine for Fever and Ague I have ever used."

WE ENJOY LIKENESS IN EACH OTHER.—What we truly enjoy in each other is likeness, not unlikeness. That is what makes the pleasure of good society. There is no rest save on the common ground. If I meet a man of different tradition, different religion, different race, different language, I am pleased with him for a moment, as I should be with a fairy or an amiable goblin; but he presently bores me, when the surprise of him is over. I find that we have no common ground. The perpetual yearning of our hearts is for intelligent response, and this can come only from our equals, from equality.—W. D. Howells, in November Century.

Every day in this world has its word; and every day as it rises out of eternity keeps putting to each of us the question afresh: What will you do before today has sunk into eternity and nothingness again?—Frederick W. Robertson.

What we wish to do for our fellow-creatures we must do first for ourselves. We can give them nothing save what God has already given us. We must become good before we can make them good, and wise before we can make them wise.—Charles Kingsley.

Are you rich in the years of bright gold
Yet untold?
Do they leisurely go,
Like a dream that is fair,
Or a prayer?
Oh, be wise; use them well! You shall know
How the years, growing shorter, with good can increase,
And a life at the end be transfigured with peace
—Marianne Farningham.

The Christian life is a growth as well as a business. While service is the business of life, growth is the manifestation and measure of life. "This year also" was the gardener's plea for the barren fig tree. The close of the year is a fitting time to consider our growth in the divine life. We measure our children year by year to see how much they have grown. The mark on the wall made last year, and the top of the head above it, tell the story of a year's growth. It may not be more than a few inches, it may not be more than one, but we know by the marks the growth of a year. If the marks tally we are not satisfied, indeed we are concerned. For standing still is not the sign of vigorous life. So is it in our Christian experience. "How much have you grown" during the year? —Christian Intelligencer.

The year which has gone brought to us much, and took away much. . . . There is no necessary sadness in last times. The sun which sets on our horizon is rising on a western world. Every setting sun is also a rising sun. Every end is also a beginning. Every death is the beginning of another life. If, then, we look backward on past opportunities, it is that we may look forward on new duties. Opportunity goes, but inspiration comes. Time goes, but eternity comes; the human goes, the divine comes. The world passes away, and the fashion of it; but heaven comes—the heaven of a better faith, loftier hope, more generous love, making all things new and fair.—James Freeman Clarke.

It is written of the Israelites that they carried with them none of the leaven of Egypt. If any one parcook of leaven during the great feast, from the first until the seventh day, he was cut off from Israel. It was the custom to go about the tents with a lighted lamp searching for leaven in every nook and cranny. Leaven was an emblem of the life of old Egypt—the worship of Apis and Osiris. In the Scriptures it is ever a type of sin; so says Paul to the Corinthians, "Purge out the old leaven, for Christ is made a sacrifice for us forever. Let us keep the feast not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Let me exhort you as we cross this border line of time to put away the last remnant of sin; to bring no leaven out of Egypt with you. Pass into the new year free from your bondage. Put off more and more the old man, and put on more and more the virtue of the new man Jesus Christ. By the holy passover of Calvary, by the memory of Him who leads us forth out of bondage, let us go unencumbered, and undefiled into the coming year!—David J. Burrell, D. D., in "The Spirit of the Age."

Once when a king was being conducted in a splendid triumphal procession, in all the intoxication of human pride and glory, one of his flattering courtiers asked him, "What is wanting here?" And with a sigh answered the magnificent monarch, "Continuance!" Yes, "forever and ever." That belongs only to what is divine in man. Continuance, permanence, is the stamp of the eternal life; evanescence, momentariness, the blight of this. Even if the things or which men toil and moil and weary themselves in the very fire, could last, they could not satisfy the noblest nature for a day; they could not satisfy even the meanest for a year. . . . Why, it would be even worse for us if such things did last! Of their own selves they would dwarf us into vileness and insignificance. Believe me.—

"The worst of miseries
Is when a nature, framed for nobler things,
Condemns itself in life to petty joys,
And, sore athirst for air, breathes scanty life
Gasping from out the shallows."

Ought not, then, our one prayer to be the prayer of St. Thomas of Aquino: "Give me, O Lord, a noble heart, which no earthly affections can drag down?"—Canon Farrar.

We leave many things behind as we go on. We can never go back again over the closing year. We never go over any life-path a second time. We never pass a second time through any experience. We have infancy once, childhood once, youth once, manhood and womanhood once, old age once, and we die once. We are forever leaving things, places, conditions and experiences behind us. But through all these we have the same christ, unchanged, unchanging. The old ark was carried forward into the new land of promise, and still led the people. The Christ of childhood and of youth remains the Christ of manhood and of old age. Whatever changes the years bring to us, we must ever keep our eyes on the living Christ. He will always be all we need: There will never be a path which He cannot find for us and show us. There will never be a dark valley which He cannot light up for us. There will never be a battle which He cannot fight for us. There will never be an experience through which He cannot safely take us. We are leaving the old year behind, but we are not leaving Christ in the dead year. We need not be afraid, therefore, to go forward, if we go with Him. We have not passed this new way heretofore, and it is all strange to our inexperience; but Christ knows and He will guide us, and all will be well if we put our hand in His.—J. R. Miller, D. D.

OLD AND NEW.

JOSEPHINE RAND.

Old Year at death, New Year at birth,
So close they stand!
The one with wistful, tearful gaze
And outstretched hand
Loth to let go its hold on men,
By them once loved,
Out of its place by stranger hands
To be removed.

But ah! that stranger turns its eyes
With smile divine,
And whispers: "Old Year, be not vexed,
Thy fate is mine.
The strength of youth is mine today
Let me rejoice,
Though, gazing at thy saddened face
I hear a voice,

"Which, soft and low, with minor strain,
Sings of an hour
When youth's delights and pleasure's charms
Shall lose their power.
That voice I heed today. Think not
I have the heart
To bid thee hasten on thy way,
Loveless depart.

"I bid thee linger for a year
Close to my side;
Then will I join thee, heart to heart,
And be thy bride.
Together, hand in hand, we'll go
To some best clime,
Where there shall be no tears, no death,—
Eternal time!"

Waterville, Me.

THE LESSER MINISTRIES.

A flower upon my threshold laid,
A little kindness wrought unseen;
I know not who love's tribute paid.
I only know that it has made
Life's path as smooth, life's borders green.

God bless the gracious hands that o'er
Such tender ministries sway,
Dear hands, that help the pilgrim bear
His load of weariness and care
More bravely up the toilsome way.

Oh, what a little thing can turn
A heavy heart from sighs to song!
A smile can make the world less stern;
A word can cause the soul to burn
With glow of heaven all night long!

It needs not that love's gift be great—
Some splendid jewel of the soul
For which a king might supplicate.
Nay! true love's least, at love's true rate,
Is tithe most royal of the whole.

—*The Churchman.*

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

LOUISE DUNHAM GOLDSBERRY.

Shall I shrink what must be?
Nay; God forbid that I shall fear
To drink the angels' loving cup,
Or be less brave to walk alone
The narrow way my heart before has gone
To company my loved ones as they went.
Some dear voice unforgot
Will answer ere I call;
Some hand I kissed with tears
Yesterday, or yesteryear,
Will reach and help me up the last dark step,
And give my kisses back to me
Without the tear.

Once a member of our church came to me to ask what she ought to try to look at when she shut her eyes in prayer. All I could think of was to read her two or three verses about Bartimeus. A smile ran over her whole face as she rose suddenly and said, "Good morning." Then I asked whether her question had got an answer. "Oh, yes," she replied, gratefully; "I ought to see what the blind man did before his eyes were opened; he saw he was blind, and he seemed to see Jesus there, waiting to be prayed to."—C. S. Robinson, D. D.

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To character and success two things, contradictory as they may seem, must go together—humble dependence and manly independence; humble dependence on God and manly reliance on self. —Wordsworth.

In the Beginning

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Failure after a long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure.—George Eliot.

"Old, yet ever new, and simple and beautiful ever," sings the poet, in words which might well apply to Ayer's Sarsaparilla—the most efficient and scientific blood purifier ever offered to suffering humanity. Nothing but superior merit keeps it so long at the front.

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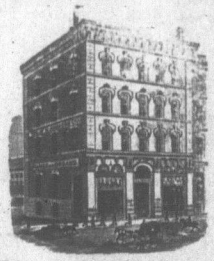

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