

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONGREGATION.

BY REV. JAS. HASTIE, CORNWALL.

I SHALL speak of a fourfold ministry of the Holy Spirit, in and for the Church; and mention four of His qualifications for that ministry.

I. A FOURFOLD MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The following are not all of the Spirit's ministries, but they are samples, and are all of paramount importance.

1. *Vivification.*

When Ezekiel preached in the valley to the dismembered and bleached bones scattered about "There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them." (Ezek. 37 : 7-8).

To-day, under an able magnetic ministry, a large congregation may be gathered and organized, and a magnificent edifice may be erected. Mutually pleased, pastor and people may long abide in peace and prosperity, the admired and envied of many. Yet, "No life!"

What is wanting? Vitality. Life. And whence cometh it? Spiritual life can come only from the Holy Spirit. His power alone can change dead souls into living ones, and from a gathering of dead bones raise up a host of saints.

Shall we then count the end of our ministry attained when we have simply gathered together a heap of dead bones, called a congregation, and not rather go a step farther, after Ezekiel's example, and plead for the Divine Spirit to vivify our lifeless product?

2. *Conviction.*

Reduced to its last analysis, the convictive work of the Spirit is one great act, embracing man's entire being and life; yet, according to our Lord's statement, it is divided into three sections—conviction of *Sin*;—conviction of *Righteousness*;—and, conviction of *Judgment*.

The world has its own notion of wrong doing, and that notion is false; its own notion of justice or right, and that notion is false; its own notion of the desert due to wrong doing, and that notion is false. These false notions are because the world judges of moral actions by outward manifestations, and not from the notions that prompt them, or by the Divine standard of right and wrong.

But when the Spirit is come, He will correct all these errors, and teach men the truth as God sees it. In doing this He deals with the roots and causes of things, as Christ does in His sermon on the Mount, where He declares that to hate a brother without cause is to murder; to lust after, is to commit adultery; to covet, is to be guilty of idolatry. As Christ does, so does the Holy Spirit penetrate the hidden workshop of the heart to find out what causes are at work

producing overt acts and crimes, and He arraigns and condemns these causes first and mainly.

The relation of the convictive work of the Holy Spirit to the Redemptive work of Christ, may be perceived at a glance. What ploughing and harrowing in Spring are to sowing and harvest, that by which the soil is prepared to receive the seed and germinate it; the Spirit's convictive work is to the seed of the Word.

At Pentecost, the former was done most thoroughly, thousands being purgently convicted of sin, then ready they were and most anxious to accept the proffered remedy—Christ the crucified. So to-day, souls will believe in Christ and be saved just in proportion to the intensity of their conviction of sin; and, as on the day of Pentecost, so among us, it will take place in connection with the ordinary Sabbath Services, and while the sermon is being delivered. Saved ones will be added to the Church daily as in Apostolic times, so soon and so far as men are convicted of sin daily by the Holy Ghost.

Then, conviction of righteousness, or right doing: in private life, in domestic life, in social and commercial life, in political and national life. Who will deny that there is a clamant call for this in our time? What but such conviction can root out the lying and deceit, the cheating and hoodling, which enter so largely as woof into the web of present day life. Is it not so that only by making men better can manners be made better; that according as men are made better, society is made better; or according to Bushnell's famous epigram: "The soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul."

3. *Edification.*

Or, maturing in the Church the fruits of Divine Grace, a list of which is given in the fifth of Galatians, and to which may be added the grace of liberality, of which the Apostle makes so much in the eighth of second Corinthians.

Think you that if our people, rich and poor and all between, were filled with the Holy Spirit, our Mission Boards and College Boards would need to load the mails with appeals for more money to wipe out arrears and extend the work? Rather, as Moses had to do in connection with the erection of the Tabernacle, they would have to stay the people from giving; and perhaps an occasional circular would be issued, *mutatis mutandis*, as follows. "Moses (The H. M. Committee—The Foreign Mission Committee—The College Board) "gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp (Church), saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary (give any more money). So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff (money) they had was sufficient for all the work, and too much."—Ex. 36 : 6-7,

Unquestionably, there is abundance and to spare in the Presbyterian Church in Canada to