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MAN INSPIRED OF GOD.

BY REV. G. R. BRACKETT, D. D.,

Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S. C

“There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”—JOB xxxii. 8.

ALL things sustain necessary and vital relations to their Creator. In him they “live, and move, and have their being.” “In whose hand is the life of every living thing.”

One of the most wonderful discoveries of modern science is the correlation and conservation of forces. The forces of light, heat, chemical force, and electricity are transmuted into each other, but the sum of the original force is never diminished. Moreover, it has been discovered that the sun is the source from which all these forces originate, so that it is “one and the same force, but under a vast variety of modifications, which warms our houses, and our bodily frames, which raises the steam and impels the engine, which effects the different chemical combinations, which flashes in the lightning, and lives in the plant. It furnishes the most striking manifestation of God; the one God, with his infinitely varied perfections; and we should see the one power blowing in the breeze, smiling in the sunshine, sparkling in the stars, quickening us as we bound along in the best enjoyment of health, efflorescing in every form and hue of beauty, and showering down daily gifts upon us.”

Again, we read: “The Spirit of God hath made me,

and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." The word "spirit" literally means "breath," and "inspiration" the act of inbreathing. In a physical sense, all life, motion, activity depend upon the constant inspiration or inbreathing of the Almighty, but in a higher, spiritual sense, the spirit of man is inspired by God.

The Spirit of God is said to exercise a peculiar efficiency in all the rational and moral actions of men. He inspired men to rule and govern his ancient people, and with courage and skill in the day of battle. Nor is this influence confined to the people of God. Even ungodly men have been providentially raised up, and specially qualified to execute divine judgments. Cyrus, a heathen prince, is called the "Lord's anointed," and Jehovah inspired him with wisdom, courage, and military skill. Only those who received the "unction of the Spirit" were said to be anointed, and when the anointed Cyrus had accomplished the divine purpose, in the destruction of Babylon, Jehovah said to him, "I have girded thee and thou hast not known me."

When the Persian Empire rose like a mountain before Zerubbabel, apparently an impassable barrier, to the work assigned him of rebuilding the temple, the prophet said, "Before Zerubbabel, O mountain, thou shalt become a plain; not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Joshua, the high priest, and upon Zerubbabel, the civil ruler, and upon all the people," and also worked in the minds, and hearts, and counsels of their enemies, bringing them to confusion.

When the Spirit of God came upon Gideon and Jephthah, they were mighty men of valor. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson, inspiring him with bodily strength, and when the Spirit of God departed

from him he became as weak as other men. Bezaleel and Aholiab were inspired with artistic and mechanical skill for "cunning workmanship" in beautifying the tabernacle. In some sense all men are inspired by the Spirit of God. The redemption of Christ has placed the world under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, who directs, controls, and restrains the ungodly, and whose universal presence and agency is the source of all those virtues that are the bond of society.

How the Spirit of God works in and through the "spirit in man," without disturbing our free agency, we do not know. Neither do we know "how the light shines through the transparent crystal, or how matter conducts electricity, or how an opaque body becomes luminous without the least change in its organization."

But passing from this general view of the subject, let us consider more particularly the kind of inspiration indicated in our text, whereby the "spirit in man" receives such an "understanding" as qualifies for the knowledge, love, and service of God.

1. It is as a spirit that man is capable of divine inspiration, and as a spirit he is related to God, and bears his likeness. God is the "Father of our spirits," and "we are his offspring." The soul of man is a spiritual substance, manifesting all the properties of pure spirit. It is immaterial, invisible, indivisible, intelligent, self-conscious, and voluntarily active. He who can say, "I am," is the image of the "Great I Am." He who can say, "I think," is the image of the Supreme Intelligence. He who can say, "I will," is the image of the Omnipotent Sovereign. He who, in the consciousness of personal identity, can say through all the vicissitudes of life, "I have the same unchangeable personality," is the image of the immutable God, who is "the same

yesterday, to-day, and forever." He who has but to will it, and his imagination calls into existence new worlds, and peoples them with its own ideal creations, and his fashioning hand creates new forms of matter in endless combinations, and by his miracles of art "mocks his own Creator's skill," is in the image of the all-wise Creator. He who feels the pulse of immortality beating in his soul, which is incapable of death by dissolution, bears the image of the ever-living God. "The eternal years of God are hers." He who sits upon the throne of the lower creation, and feels, notwithstanding his lost "dominion," that he is still lord of all, "subduing time and space," controlling the mighty forces of nature, and rendering all things animate and inanimate, subjects of his royal authority, and compelling them to glorify his name, and who rules among the kingdoms of the earth, is the image of "the sovereign and only potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords." Thus, as another has expressed it, man bears the "traces of God's incommunicable perfections." All this is implied in the term "spirit," which is the image of the Infinite Spirit, considered as the natural image of God.

But man was created for moral and spiritual ends, of which this natural image is the mere servant. It is only as this spiritual nature, with its faculties of understanding, affection, and will are crowned with the glory of holiness, that man reflects the image of God's moral perfections. In the epistle to the Colossians we learn that "the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"; and the Ephesians are exhorted "to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Holiness in the soul is what life is in the body. It is the principle which pervades all its faculties and powers, and

determines their character and direction. Holiness in the understanding imparts to all our information the character of true knowledge and wisdom. We know with the certainty and clearness of God's knowledge as we become like him in holiness. Holiness in the heart, purifies the affections and draws them up into the fellowship with God, and our love responds to his love. Holiness in the conscience, reveals the law of righteousness, the image of God's moral rectitude. Holiness in the will, brings it into gradual harmony with the will of God, and produces the image of the divine freedom.

Thus holiness is the bond of union between the soul and God, and between the various powers of our nature, securing their perfection and harmony. If we were perfectly holy, knowledge would always nourish our love, and love would always move the will, and the will, guided by the law of the conscience, would always yield a spontaneous and joyful obedience. As by an irresistible attraction, holiness draws all the powers of the soul to God, as the centre and inspiration of all their movements, which realizes its perfection and blessedness in the divine favor, fellowship and service. For as holiness is the life of the soul, love is the life of holiness, and communion and obedience are the life of love.

All this is implied in the term "spirit." The "spirit in man" is the image of the spirit in God. Man was created in his likeness that he might be capable of divine inspirations. He was made to receive all the fulness of those attributes of spirit which can be communicated to a creature. And inasmuch as the spirit in man is capable of infinite and eternal expansion, he bears no dim traces of those infinite attributes which belong only to God. Through the endless ages of eternity, he will be forever approaching the infinite, outstripping all present

angelic glory, and the "rapt seraph that burns and adores" before the very throne of God.

2. The spirit in man! Here is the true measure of its dignity and grandeur, and the magnitude of its spiritual wants:

Man's arts and inventions; his scientific and philosophic achievements; his wisdom, penetrating the secrets of the telescopic and microscopic universe; his power, controlling and mastering the tremendous forces of nature, chaining the lightning, harnessing the steam, and making the winds and the waves to obey him, are but dim prophecies and shadowy intimations of the glorious possibilities of eternity, when our perfected and enlarged and ever-expanding faculties shall work without let or hindrance, in a sphere that is unlimited, in a light that is clear and cloudless, and overflow with the everlasting influx of infinite wisdom, perfect holiness, and boundless love.

O brethren! what must be the wants of such a being, so allied to the infinite, eternal, and ever-blessed God, reflecting his divine attributes, and capable of being filled with all his communicable fulness! Created in the likeness of God, can the spirit in man find anything outside of its Maker to suit its god-like capacities? All our faculties turn to God as their ultimate end, and find in him their highest activity, their complete development, and their full satisfaction. Matter and spirit have nothing in common. Earthly things are material and have no affinity for the soul. They are only instruments and occasions of the soul's felicity.

Our lower nature has affinities for material things. God has given us a nature that responds to the beautiful in the physical world, and to the pleasures of wealth, honor, learning, and social relationships. These lower

objects were made to be loved, and only as they are loved and enjoyed, according to their nature and design, can we fulfil the end of our being, and glorify our Maker. But God, himself, must ever be the supreme Portion of the soul. The spirit in man must hold communion with the infinite Spirit. The sweet and blissful amenities of human society can never satisfy a capacity for love God made for himself to fill. Again, man has a capacity for knowledge, which the knowledge of all created beings and of the whole created universe could not satisfy. He has, also, capacious activities which find an adequate scope for their development and exercise only in the service of an infinite being. Virtue is indeed its own reward, and there is a pleasure in holy energies. There is a delight that flows from a mere sense of duty. The self-denials and sacrifices we make in the service of others is attended with a high and noble joy. But not until we recognize our relations to God, and realize that we are doing his will and accomplishing his purposes, do our faculties reach their highest limit of power, and the fountain of our joy touch the skies.

1. In the light of this subject, we see wherein consists the essential misery of our fallen state. Said an old divine, "The fall of man was the departure of the Holy Spirit from him." Disobedience broke the communion between the "spirit in man" and the Spirit of God; and though the Holy Spirit continues to exercise his creating, sustaining, and controlling agency, he no longer dwells in the unrenewed soul, as the source and inspiration of its life. "To be severed eternally from God's inspiration," says Dr. Bushnell, to whom we are indebted for some thoughts of this discourse, "is enough, as we are constituted, to seal our complete misery. What is called hell in the Scripture is the world of misery constituted

by the complete absence of God. It is the outer darkness because it is that night of the mind which overtakes it when it strays from God and his light."

Dear brethren, does not this account for all the misery of this life; for the mysterious sadness of those who are "smothering their affinities for God"; for the "sublime unhappiness" of great souls whose spiritual faculties are closed against the inspirations of God; for the restless undercurrent of dissatisfaction, when the sea is calm, the sky clear and cloudless, and favoring breezes fill the swelling sails; for the feverish excitement of men of business; for the intoxicating mirth of the votaries of pleasure; for the mad ambition that never rests so long as there is another height to gain; for the sickening disgust with earthly vanities; for the corroding cares, the gnawing envies, the burning jealousies? There are so many ways the hungry, famishing soul has of saying it is not satisfied without God.

2. Again, we see the true glory of the gospel. The curse of sin is lifted from the guilty conscience, and the broken law, that the redeemed and regenerated soul may be brought into living, conscious relations to God, that the Holy Spirit may return to his deserted habitation, and abide with us as the source and inspiration of all our energies. An unpardoned soul cannot be inspired by God; therefore it must be redeemed. A soul that does not love holiness cannot receive divine inspiration; therefore it must be "born again." In Christ we are restored to our relation to God as justified sinners. In Christ we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and with him the restoration of the lost image of God; and as the work of sanctification progresses, all our faculties are opened, more and more, to the inspirations of God.

How unreasonable and utterly vain are all our efforts

at self-restoration! All our works are dead works, until our spiritual life is restored. If we are constitutionally related to God, and made to live in his inspiration, then we must live as we are made to live, if we will be happy, and this inspiration extends to the humblest duties of life. He who "abides in his calling with God," will find God abiding with him, inspiring him to do all things rightly and wisely. Thus the whole "spirit in man" becomes like an instrument of music, filled with the breath of God, and whether we press the higher or the lower keys the music is all divine.