

The Holy Spirit and the One Church

A Sermon

(No. 167)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 13, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”—[Jude 1:19](#).

WHEN a farmer comes to thrash out his wheat, and get it ready for the market there are two things that he desires—that there may be plenty of it, of the right sort, and that when he takes it to market, he may be able to carry a clean sample there. He does not look upon the quantity alone; for what is the chaff to the wheat? He would rather have a little clean than he would have a great heap containing a vast quantity of chaff, but less of the precious corn. On the other hand, he would not so winnow his wheat as to drive away any of the good grain, and so make the quantity less than it need to be. He wants to have as much as possible—to have as little loss as possible in the winnowing, and yet to have it as well winnowed as may be. Now, that is what I desire for Christ’s Church, and what every Christian will desire. We wish Christ’s church to be as large as possible. God forbid that by any of our winnowing, we should ever cast away one of the precious sons of Zion. When we rebuke sharply, we would be anxious lest the rebuke should fall where it is not needed, and should bruise and hurt the feelings of any who God hath chosen. But on the other hand, we have no wish to see the church multiplied at the expense of its purity. We do not wish to have a charity so large that it takes in chaff as well as wheat: we wish to be just charitable enough to use the fan thoroughly to purge God’s floor, but yet charitable enough to pick up the most shrivelled ear of wheat, to preserve it for the Master’s sake, who is the husbandman. I trust, in preaching this morning, God may help me so to discern between the precious and the vile that I may say nothing uncharitable, which would cut off any of God’s people from being part of his true and living and visible church; and yet at the same time I pray that I may not speak so loosely, and so without God’s direction, as to embrace any in the arms of Christian affection whom the Lord hath not received in the eternal covenant of his love.

Our text suggests to us three things: first, *an inquiry*—Have we the Spirit? secondly, *a caution*—if we have not the spirit we are sensual; thirdly, *a suspicion*—there are many persons that separate themselves. Our suspicion concerning them is, that notwithstanding their extra-superfine profession, they are sensual, not having the Spirit; for our text says, “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

I. First, then, our text suggests AN INQUIRY—Have we the Spirit? This is an inquiry so important, that the philosopher may well suspend all his investigations to find an answer to this question on his own personal account. All the great debates of politics, all the most

engrossing subjects of human discussion, may well stop to-day, and give us pause to ask ourselves the solemn question—"Have I the Spirit?" For this question does not deal with any externals of religion, but it deals with religion in its most vital point. He that hath the Spirit, although he be wrong in fifty things, being right in this, is saved; he that hath not the Spirit, be he never so orthodox, be his creed as correct as Scripture-ay and in his morals outwardly as pure as the law, is still unsaved; he is destitute of the essential part of salvation—the Spirit of God dwelling in him.

To help us to answer this question, I shall try to set forth the effects of the Spirit in our hearts under sundry Scriptural metaphors. Have I the Spirit? I reply, And what is the operation of the, Spirit? How am I to discern it? Now the Spirit operates in divers ways, all of them mysterious, and supernatural, all of them bearing the real marks of his own power, and having certain signs following whereby they may be discovered and recognised.

1. The first work of the Spirit in the heart is a work during which the Spirit is compared to the *wind*. You remember that when our Saviour spoke to Nicodemus he represented the first work of the Spirit in the heart as being like the wind, "which bloweth where it listeth;" "even so;" saith he, "is every one that is born of the Spirit." Now you know that the wind is a most mysterious thing; and although there be certain definitions of it which pretend to be explanations of the phenomenon, yet they certainly leave the great question of how the wind blows, and what is the cause of its blowing in a certain direction, where it was before. Breath within us, wind without us, all motions of air, are to us mysterious. And the renewing work of the Spirit in the heart is exceedingly mysterious. It is possible that at this moment the Spirit of God may be breathing into some of the thousand hearts before me; yet it would be blasphemous if any one should ask, "Which way went the Spirit from God to such a heart? How entered it there?" And it would be foolish for a person who is under the operation of the Spirit to ask how it operates: thou knowest not where is the storehouse of the thunder; thou knowest not where the clouds are balanced; neither canst thou know how the Spirit goeth forth from the Most High and enters into the heart of man. It may be, that during a sermon two men are listening to the same truth; one of them hears as attentively as the other and remembers as much of it; the other is melted to tears or moved with solemn thoughts; but the one though equally attentive, sees nothing in the sermon, except, maybe, certain important truths well set forth; as for the other, his heart is broken within him and his soul is melted. Ask me how it is that the same truth has an effect upon the one, and not upon his fellow: I reply, because the mysterious Spirit of the living God goes with the truth to one heart and not to the other. The one only feels the force of truth, and that may be strong enough to make him tremble, like Felix; but the other feels the Spirit going with the truth, and that renews the man, regenerates him, and causes him to pass into that gracious condition which is called the state of salvation. This change takes place instantaneously. It is as miraculous a change as any miracle of which we read in Scripture. It is supremely su-

pernatural. It may be mimicked, but no imitation of it can be true and real. Men may pretend to be regenerated without the Spirit, but regenerated they cannot be. It is a change so marvellous that the highest attempts of man can never reach it. We may reason as long as we please, but we cannot reason ourselves into regeneration; we may meditate till our hairs are grey with study; but we cannot meditate ourselves into the new birth. That is worked in us by the sovereign will of God alone.

“The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh,
Inspires us with a heavenly mind,
And forms the man afresh.”

But ask the man how: he cannot tell you. Ask him when: he may recognize the time, but as to the manner thereof he knoweth no more of it than you do. It is to him a mystery.

You remember the story of the valley of vision. Ezekiel saw dry bones lying scattered here and there in the valley. The command came to Ezekiel, “Say to: these dry bones, live.” He said, “Live,” and the bones came together, “bone to his bone, and flesh came upon them;” but as yet they did not live. “Prophecy, son of man; say to the wind, breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” They looked just like life: there was flesh and blood there; there were the eyes and hands and feet; but when Ezekiel had spoken there was a mysterious something given which men call life, and it was given in a mysterious way, like the blowing of the wind. It is even so to-day. Unconverted and ungodly persons may be very, moral and excellent; they are like the dry bones, when they are put together and clothed with flesh and blood. But to make them live spiritually it needs the divine afflatus from the breath of the Almighty, the divine pneuma, the divine Spirit, the divine wind should blow on them, and then they would live. Say, my hearer, hast thou ever had any supernatural influence on thine Heart? For if not I may seem to be harsh with thee, but I am faithful: if thou hast never had more than nature in thy heart, thou art “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Nay, sir, sneer not at that utterance; it is as true as this Bible, for tis from this Bible it was taken, and for proof thereof hear thou me. “except a man be born again (from above) of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” What sayest thou to that? It is in vain for thee to talk of making thyself to be born again; thou canst not be born again except by the Spirit, and thou must perish, unless thou art. You see, then, the first effect of the Spirit, and by that you may answer the question.

2. In the next place, the Spirit in the word of God is often compared to *fire*. After the Spirit, like the wind, has made the dead sinner live, then comes the Spirit like fire. Now, fire has a searching and tormenting power. It is purifying, but it purifies by a terrible process. Now, after the Holy Spirit has given us the life of Christianity, there immediately begins a burning in our heart: the Lord searches and tries our reins, and lights a candle within our spirits which discovers the wickedness of our nature, and the loathsomeness of our

iniquities. Say, my hearer, dost thou know anything about that fire in thine heart? For if not, thou hast not yet received the Spirit. To explain what I mean, let me just tell a piece of my own experience, by way of illustrating the fiery effects of the Spirit. I lived careless and thoughtless; I could indulge in sin as well as others, and did do so. Sometimes my conscience pricked me, but not enough to make me cease from vice. I could indulge in transgression, and I could love it: not so much as others loved it—mine early training would not let me do that—but still enough to prove that my heart was debased and corrupt. Once on a time something more than conscience pricked me: I knew not then what it was. I was like Samuel, when the Lord called him; I heard the voice, but I knew not whence it came. A stirring began in my heart, and I began to feel that in the sight of God I was a lost, ruined, and condemned sinner. That conviction I could not shake off. Do what I might it followed me. If I sought to amuse my mind and take it off from serious thoughts it was of no use; I was obliged still to carry about with me a heavy burden on my back. I went to my bed, and there I dreamed about hell, and about “the wrath to come.” I woke up, and this dreary nightmare, this incubus, still brooded on me. What could I do? I renounced first one vicious habit, then another: it mattered not; all this was like pulling one firebrand from a flame, that fed itself with blazing forests. Do what I might, my conscience found no rest. Up to the house of God I went to hear the gospel: there was no gospel for me; the fire burned but the more fiercely, and the very breath of the gospel seemed to fan the flame. Away I went to my chamber and my closet to pray: the heavens were like brass, and the windows of the sky were barred against me. No answer could I get; the fire burned more vehemently. Then I thought, “I would not live always; would God I had never been born!” But I dared not die, for there was hell when I was dead; and I dared not live, for life had become intolerable. Still the fire blazed right vehemently; till at last I came to this resolve: “If there be salvation in Christ, I will have it. I have nothing of my own to trust to; I do this hour, O God, renounce my sin, and renounce my own righteousness too.” And the fire blazed again, and burned up all my good works, ay, and my sins with them. And then I saw that all this burning was to bring me to Christ. And oh! the joy and gladness of my heart, when Jesus came and sprinkled water on the flame, and said, “I have bought thee with my blood; put thy trust in me; I will do for thee what thou canst not do for thyself; I will take thy sins away; I will clothe thee with a spotless robe of righteousness; I will guide thee all thy journey through, and land thee at last in heaven.” Say, my dear hearer, Dost know anything about the Spirit of burning? For if not, again I say, I am not harsh, I am but true; if thou hast never felt this, thou knowest not the Spirit.

3. To proceed a little further. When the Spirit has thus quickened the soul and convinced it of sin, then he comes under another metaphor. He comes under the metaphor of *oil*. The Holy Spirit is very frequently in Scripture compared to oil. “Thou anointest mine head with oil; my cup runneth over.” Ah! brethren, though the beginning of the Spirit is by fire, it does

not end there. We may be first of all convinced and brought to Christ by misery; but when we get to Christ there is no misery in him, and our sorrow results from not getting close enough to him. The Holy Spirit comes, like the good Samaritan, and pours in the oil and the wine. And oh! what oil it is with which he anoints our head, and with which he heals our wounds! How soft the liniments which he binds round our bruises! How blessed the eye-salve with which he anoints our eyes! How heavenly the ointment with which he binds up our sores, and wounds, and bruises, and makes us whole, and sets our feet upon a rock, and establishes our goings! The Spirit, after he has convinced, begins to comfort; and ye that have felt the comforting power of the Holy Spirit, will bear me witness there is no comforter like him that is the Paraclete. Oh! bring hither the music, the voice of song, and the sound of harps; they are both as vinegar upon nitre to him that hath a heavy heart. Bring me here the enchantments of the magic world, and all the enjoyments of its pleasures; they do but torment the soul and prick it with many thorns. But oh! Spirit of the living God, when thou dost blow upon the heart, there is not a wave of that tempestuous sea which does not sleep for ever when thou biddest it be still; there is not one single breath of the proud hurricane and tempest which doth not cease to howl and which doth not lie still, when thou sayest to it, "Peace be unto thee; thy sins are forgiven thee." Say, do you know the Spirit under the figure of oil? Have you felt him at work in your spirits, comforting you, anointing your head, making you glad, and causing you to rejoice?

There are many people that never felt this. They hope they are religious; but their religion never makes them happy. There are scores of professors who have just enough religion to make them miserable. Let them be afraid that they have any religion at all; for religion makes people happy; when it has its full sway with man it makes him glad. It may begin in agony, but it does not end there. Say, hast thou ever had thine heart leaping for joy? Hath thy lip ever warbled songs of ecstatic praise? Doth thine eye ever flash the fire of joy? If these things be not so, I fear lest thou art still without God, and without Christ; for where the Spirit comes, his fruits are, joy in the Spirit, and peace, and love, and confidence, and assurance for ever.

4. Bear with me once more. I have to show you one more figure of the Spirit, and by that also you will be able to ascertain whether you are under his operation. When the Spirit has acted as wind, as fire, and as oil, he then acts like *water*. We are told that we are "born again of water and of the Spirit." Now I do not think you foolish enough to need that I should say that no water, either of immersion or of sprinkling, can in the least degree operate in the salvation of a soul. There may be some few poor creatures, whose heads were put on their shoulders the wrong way, who still believe that a few drops of water from a priest's hands can regenerate souls. There may be such a few, but I hope the race will soon die out. We trust that the day will come when all those gentry will have no "other Gospel" to preach in our churches, but will have clean gone over to Rome, and when that terrible plague-spot

upon the Protestant Church, called Puseyism, will have been cut out like a cancer, and torn out by its very roots. The sooner we get rid of that the better; and whenever we hear of any of them going over to Rome, let them go—I wish we could as easily get rid of the devil, they may go together—we do not want either of them in the Protestant Church, anyhow. But the Holy Spirit when he comes in the heart comes like water. That is to say, he comes to purify the soul. He that is to-day as foul a liver as he was before his pretended conversion is a hypocrite and a liar; he that this day loveth sin and liveth in it just as he was wont to do, let him know that the truth is not in him, but he hath received the strong delusion to believe a lie: God's people are a holy people; God's Spirit works by love, and purifies the soul. Once let it get into our hearts, and it will have no rest till it has turned every sin out. God's Holy Spirit and man's sin cannot live together peaceably; they may both be in the same heart, but they cannot both reign there, nor can they both be quiet there; for "the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;" they cannot rest, but there will be a perpetual warring in the soul, so that the Christian will have to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in due time the Spirit will drive out all sin, and will present us blameless before the throne of his Majesty with exceeding great joy.

Now, my hearer, answer thou this question for thyself, and not for another man. Hast thou received this Spirit? Answer me, anyhow; if it be with a scoff, answer me; if thou sneerest and sayest, "I know nothing of your enthusiastic rant," be it so, sir; say, nay, then. It may be thou carest not to reply at all. I beseech thee do not put away my entreaty. Yes or no. Hast thou received the Spirit? "Sir no man can find fault with my character; I believe I shall enter heaven through my own virtues." It is not the question, sir. Hast thou received the Spirit? All that thou sayest thou mayest have done; but if thou hast left the other undone, and hast not received the Spirit, it will go ill with thee at last. Hast thou had a supernatural operation upon thine own heart? Hast thou been made a new man in Christ Jesus! For if not, depend on it, as God's Word is true, thou art out of Christ, and dying as thou art thou wilt be shut out of heaven, be thou who thou mayest and what thou mayest.

II. Thus, I have tried to help you to answer the first question—the inquiry, Have we received the Spirit? And this brings me to the CAUTION. He that has not received the Spirit is said to be sensual. Oh, what a gulf there is between the least Christian and the greatest moralist! What a wide distinction there is between the greatest professor destitute of grace, and the least of God's believers who has grace in his heart. As great a difference as there is between light and darkness between death and life, between heaven and hell, is there between a saint and a sinner; for mark, my text says, in no very polite phrase, that if we have not the Spirit we are sensual. "Sensual!" says one; "well, I am not converted man—I don't pretend to be; but I am not sensual." Well, friend, and it is very likely that you are not—not in the common acceptance of the term sensual; but understand that this word, in the Greek, really

means what an English word like this would mean, if we had such a one—*soulish*. We have not such a word—we want such a one. There is a great distinction between mere animals and men, because man hath a soul, and the mere animal hath none. There is another distinction between mere men and a converted man. The converted man hath the Spirit—the unconverted man hath none; he is a *soulish* man—not a spiritual man; he has got no further than mere nature and has no inheritance in the spiritual kingdom of grace. Strange it is that *soulish* and *sensual* should after all mean the same! Friend, thou hast not the Spirit. Then thou art nothing better—be thou what thou art, or whatsoever thou mayest be—than the fall of Adam left thee. That is to say, thou art a fallen creature, having only capacities to live here in sin, and to live for ever in torment; but thou hast not the capacity to live in heaven at all, for thou hast no Spirit; and therefore thou art unable to know or enjoy spiritual things. And mark you, a man may be in this state, and be a sensual man, and yet he may have all the virtues that could grace a Christian; but with all these, if he has not the Spirit, he has got not an inch further than where Adam's fall left him—that is, condemned and under the curse. Ay, and he may attend to religion with all his might—he may take the sacrament, and be baptized, and may be the most devout professor; but if he hath not the Spirit he hath not started a solitary inch from where he was, for he is still in “the bonds of iniquity,” a lost soul. Nay, further, he may pick up religious phrases till he may talk very fast about religion; he may read biographies till he seems to be a deep taught child of God; he may be able to write an article upon the deep experience of a believer; but if this experience be not his own, if he hath not received it by the Spirit of the living God, he is still nothing more than a carnal man, and heaven is to him a place to which there is no entrance. Nay, further, he might go so far as to become a minister of the gospel, and a successful minister too, and God may bless the word that he preaches to the salvation of sinners, but unless he has received the Spirit, be he as eloquent as Apollos, and as earnest as Paul, he is nothing more than a mere *soulish* man, without capacity for spiritual things.

Nay, to crown all, he might even have the power of working miracles, as Judas had—he might even be received into the church as a believer, as was Simon Magus, and after all that, though he had cast out devils, though he had healed the sick, though he had worked miracles, he might have the gates of heaven shut in his teeth, if he had not received the Spirit. For this is the essential thing, without which all others are in vain—the reception of the Spirit of the living God. It is a searching truth, is it not, my friends? Do not run away from it. If I am preaching to you falsehood, reject it; but if this be a truth which I can substantiate by Scripture, I beseech you, rest not till you have answered this question: Hast thou the Spirit, living, dwelling, working in thy heart?

III. This brings me, in the third place, to THE SUSPICION. How singular that “separation” should be the opposite of having the Spirit. Hark! I hear a gentle man saying, “Oh! I like to hear you preach smartly and sharply; I am persuaded, sir, there are a great many

people in the church that ought not to be there; and so I, because there is such a corrupt mixture in the church, have determined not to join anywhere at all. I do not think that the Church of Christ now a days is at all clean and pure enough to allow of my joining with it. At least, sir, I did join a church once, but I made such a deal of noise in it they were very glad when I went away. And now I am just like David's men; I am one that is in debt and discontented, and I go round to hear all new preachers that arise. I have heard you now these three months; I mean to go and hear some one else in a very little time if you do not say something to flatter me. But I am quite sure I am one of God's special elect. I don't join any church because a church is not good enough for me; I don't become a member of any denomination, because they are all wrong, every one of them." Hark ye brother, I have something to tell you, that will not please you. "*These be they that separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*" I hope you enjoy the text: it certainly belongs to you, above every man in the world. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." When I read this over I thought to myself, there be some who say, "Well, you are a dissenter, how do you make this agreeable with the text, 'These be they who separate themselves;' " you are separated from the Church of England. Ah, my friends, that a man may be, and be all the better for it; but the separation here intended is separation from the one universal Church of Christ. The Church of England was not known in Jude's day: so the apostle did not allude to that. "These be they who separate themselves,"—that is from the Church of Christ; from the great universal body of the elect. Moreover, let us just say one thing. We did not separate ourselves—we were turned out. Dissenters did not separate themselves from the Church of England, from the Episcopal church; but when the Act of Uniformity was passed, they were turned out of their pulpits. Our forefathers were as sound Churchmen as any in the world, but they could not take in all the errors of the Prayer Book, and they were therefore hounded to their graves by the intolerance of the conforming professors. So they did not separate themselves. Moreover, we do not separate ourselves. There is not a Christian beneath the scope of God's heaven from whom I am separated. At the Lord's table I always invite all Churches to come and sit down and commune with us. If any man were to tell me that I am separate from the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, or the Methodist, I would tell him he did not know me, for I love them with a pure heart fervently, and I am not separate from them. I may hold different views from them, and in that point truly I may be said to be separate; but I am not separate in heart, I will work with them—I will work with them heartily; nay, though my Church of England brother sends me in, as he has done, a summons to pay a churchrate that I cannot in conscience pay, I will love him still; and if he takes chairs and tables it matters not—I will love him for all that; and if there be a ragged-school or anything else for which I can work with him to promote the glory of God, therein will I unite with him with all my heart. I think this bears rather hard on our friends—the Strict Communion Baptists. I should not like to say anything hard against

them, for they are about the best people in the world, but they really do separate themselves from the great body of Christ's people. The Spirit of the living God will not let them do this really, but they do it professedly. They separate themselves from the great Universal Church. They say they will not commune with it; and if any one comes to their table who has not been baptized, they turn him away. They "separate," certainly. I do not believe it is willful schism that makes them thus act; but at the same time I think the old man within has some hand in it.

Oh, how my heart loves the doctrine of the one church. The nearer I get to my Master in prayer and communion, the closer am I knit to all his disciples. The more I see of my own errors and failings, the more ready am I to deal gently with them that I believe to be erring. The pulse of Christ's body is communion; and woe to the church that seeks to cure the ills of Christ's body by stopping its pulse. I think it sin to refuse to commune with anyone who is a member of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire this morning to preach the unity of Christ's church. I have sought to use the fan to blow away the chaff. I have said no man belongs to Christ's church unless he has the Spirit; but, if he hath the Spirit, woe be to the man that separates himself from him. Oh! I should think myself grossly in fault if at the foot of these stairs I should meet a truly converted child of God, who called himself a Primitive Methodist, or a Wesleyan. or a Churchman, or an Independent, and I should say, "No, sir, you do not agree with me on certain points; I believe you are a child of God, but I will have nothing to do with you." I should then think that this text would bear very hard on me. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." But would we do so, beloved? No, we would give them both our hands, and say, God speed to you in your journey to heaven; so long as you have got the Spirit we are one family, and we will not be separate from one another. God grant the day may come when every wall of separation shall be beaten down! See how to this day we are separate. There! you will find a Baptist who could not say a good word to a Poedo-Baptist if you were to give him a world. You find to this day Episcopalians who hate that ugly word, "Dissent;" and it is enough for them that a Dissenter has done a thing; they will not do it then, be it never so good.

Ah! and furthermore, there are some to be found in the Church of England that will not only hate dissent, but hate one another into the bargain. Men are to be found that cannot let brother ministers of their own church preach in their parish. What an anachronism such men are! They would seem to have been sent into the world in our time purely by mistake. Their proper era would have been the time of the dark ages. If they had lived then, what fine Bonners they would have made! What splendid fellows they would have been to have helped to poke the fire in Smithfield! But they are quite out of date in these times, and I look upon such a curious clergyman in the same way that I do upon a Dodo—as an extraordinary animal whose race is almost, if not quite extinct. Well, you may look, and look and wonder. The animal will be extinct soon. It will not be long, I trust, before not only the Church of

England shall love itself, but when all who love the Lord Jesus shall be ready to preach in each other's pulpits, preaching the same truth, holding the same faith, and mightily contending for it. Then shall the world "see how these Christians love one another;" and then shall it be known in heaven that Christ's kingdom has come, and that his will is about to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

My hearer, dost thou belong to the church? For out of the church there is no salvation. But mark what the church is. It is not the Episcopalian, Baptist, or Presbyterian: the church is a company of men who have received the Spirit. If thou canst not say thou hast the Spirit, go thy way and tremble; go thy way and think of thy lost condition; and may Jesus by his Spirit so bless thee, that thou mayest be led to renounce thy works and ways with grief, and fly to him who died upon the cross, and find a shelter there from the wrath of God.

I may have said some rough things this morning, but I am not given much to cutting and trimming, and I do not suppose I shall begin to learn that art now. If the thing is untrue, it is with you to reject it; if it be true, at your own peril reject what God stamps with divine authority. May the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon the one church of Israel's one Jehovah. Amen and Amen.