THE TWO ADVOCATES.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." — John xiv: 16.

The contrasts and the comparison suggested by these words are very striking; and perhaps nowhere in Scripture shall we find the relations of the second and the third persons of the Godhead more distinctly outlined than here. The Comforter promised, we shall speak of as the Advocate, since this is the rendering of the word as found in another Scripture, and since this term probably expresses more nearly the meaning of the original than any other that we can find. And remembering that Christ himself is the other Advocate, let us study the relations of the two as they are here indicated.

We shall consider, then, —

I. The personal relationship of the two Advocates.

For the very word "another" carries a strong argument for the personality of the Spirit. There can be no comparison between a man and an influence, between a person and an attribute. If I say, "I am a man and you are another," the implication is immediate and obvious that you are another man. And so this word "another" establishes an equation between Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is like the mechanic's level laid across two objects to bring them upon the same plane. It gauges the mysterious Being who is to come by the greatness and divinity of him who is about to depart. And nowhere do we have the co-equality of Christ and the Paraclete more strongly argued than by the use of this single word, another.

I have said that the term Comforter means exactly an advocate or intercessor. Jesus was about to go to the Father, to take his place as our heavenly Advocate, and before going he pledges another Advocate to take his place on earth. What must this be that shall be deemed worthy to fill so exalted a sphere? Is it only the abiding personal influence of Jesus, as intangible as that which we name the "spirit of the age," or the "spirit of antiquity," — the shadow of Christ's personality lingering on the earth after he has gone, but fading out more and more as he recedes? No, this Comforter must be a holy and abiding person, — distinct from Jesus, or he could not be called another; coordinate with Jesus, or he could not be called
another Advocate. And so we find these predictions of what the Spirit should be, verified in every particular by his actual manifestations when he came. Not the waning influence of the departed Christ, his posthumous fame treasured in the loving traditions and holy memories of his followers, but surely dying out as the years go on, — not this was the heritage which the Lord left to his disciples as he went away. If he were only a man that is all he could have left.

Napoleon is said to have declared, a little while before he died, “When I am gone my spirit will return to France, to throb with ceaseless life in new revolutions.” And his prediction was fulfilled; his military genius, the inspiration of his wonderful personality, was felt for a generation in European politics. But that influence has waned year by year, as inevitably as the echo dies away when the voice that woke it has been silenced. Not so concerning the Spirit which Jesus promised after he should depart. Instead of the diminished and ever diminishing impression of his personal presence, it was rather an augmenting of it. Christ was now alive from the dead, having all power in heaven and in earth given unto him, and another has been installed in his Church, who shall communicate his power, and execute his authority and prolong his ministry. It is not a lesser being, but another self; not the abiding of Christ’s personal influence, but the abiding of another person who is yet one with Jesus in essence.

Christ called himself “The Truth.” The one whom he was to send after his departure, was to be “The Spirit of Truth.” Will the light diminish then, and the instruction be curtailed, in this exchange of teachers? It is not probable; for disciples do not graduate downward in God’s school any more than in man’s; they who are to be taught of God are not suddenly dismissed from the tuition of a living Master to the training of a vague, impersonal influence. Hence listen to Jesus committing his disciples to his divine successor: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” I have led you a little way, he shall lead you further; I have taught you many truths, he shall teach you all truth. And he shall do this because he shall “take of mine and show it unto you.” The Spirit of truth, then, is no mere effluence of the Truth, no feeble emanation of the living Teacher. He is rather an augmenting of his presence than a diminishing of it; he is a living lense for transmitting the light of Christ to eyes that were holden before his immediate personality, — nay, rather, he is himself a light, only within instead of without, impinging immediately
on the spirit instead of addressing men through the external senses.

Again, Jesus is "The Life," and he whom he should send is named "The Spirit of Life." And will there be less of renewing energy and quickening power under the ministry of the latter? So far from this, our Lord declares, "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." His going to the Father was the condition of the coming of the Spirit; and under this Spirit the Lord's own ministry was to be surpassed, and his own mighty works were to be transcended. And so it was. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, brought three thousand to repentance by a single sermon, where the Master's preaching had won but comparatively few. The Church baptized by the Holy Ghost moves forward with an energy unapproached under the Lord's own personal guidance. Who is this that has transformed timid disciples into dauntless confessors, and ignorant apostles into illumined and burning heralds of redemption? Who is this that has multiplied the ministry of Christ in scores of preachers, and expanded and unfolded the germs of truth which he left in history and epistle and apocalypse? Surely the Church has not exchanged a person for an inspiration,—a living being for a communicated life,—a great teacher and wonder-worker for a heavenly influence and impression. On the contrary, so personal and divine and all-powerful is this Spirit, that Christ identifies him with himself as absolutely as he distinguishes him from himself. "Another Comforter" he names him now, and immediately he says, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." That "I," which is the symbol and epitome of personality,—that in which all being and powers and attributes stand,—he freely ascribes to this Holy Being. So truly one are these two, that when he has said "I go away," he can declare, with equal emphasis, "I am with you always." Absent, yet present; another, yet the same! Surely we have touched the mysterious bounds of the Trinity here; and as those who profess to be led by the Spirit, we must be assured that we are just as truly under a personal divine guidance as were the disciples who followed Christ and were instructed by the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.

II. The local relationship of the two Advocates.

"If I depart I will send him unto you," are words that indicate at once the two paths which bring us to these two beings. One path is upward, from earth to heaven; the other downward, from heaven to earth. If we follow the ascended
Saviour, we find him in the midst of the throne above; if we follow the descending Spirit, we find him in the midst of the Church below. How carefully and clearly is the abode of each of these divine persons defined by the Word of God! For, after all, it is the presence of God more than his omnipresence of which the Christian heart desires to be assured. God's omnipresence expands the thoughts as we meditate upon it; and realizes to us his immanence in the universe; but it is the apprehension of his presence that concentrates our thoughts, and gives us a sense of personal communion and companionship with the Holy One. Hence the distinctness with which the Scriptures localize the persons of the Trinity.

Following the path of Christ's ascension we find him established on his Father's throne. "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." And, as though to emphasize this declaration, we have it reiterated nearly a score of times in the gospels and epistles and apocalypse. Into the temple above, into the Holy of Holies of heaven itself, Jesus, the Son of God, has now entered, and there he remains and will remain till he shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

But as Christ sat down at the right hand of God at his ascension, so the Spirit, after his descent, sat down in the Church of the redeemed on earth. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," is the record of the coming of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost. Striking symbol is this, and one on which many interpreters have dwelt, of the abiding presence, of the perpetual dwelling of the Spirit in the earthly Church. And one has only to search the Scriptures carefully to find this truth confirmed in a multitude of passages. The Church of the redeemed on earth is henceforth the "habitation of God through the Spirit." These hearts of ours, sprinkled with the blood of Christ are the Holy of holies where the Lord dwells. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost that is in you?" Oh, matchless mystery! The apostate Church has proudly arrogated to herself the title of "The Holy See;" but the lowliest tabernacle of flesh, if only it has been sanctified by the sprinkling of the blood, and hallowed by the renewing of the Spirit, is constituted by God's own authority the Holy See, the seat of the Holy One, the dwelling-place of the Most High through the Spirit.

This fact of the present, personal abiding of the Holy Spirit in the Church on earth cannot be too strongly emphasized. There is danger that we
grieve the Spirit by the unbelief that regards him as distant from us, when God has given him to abide with us perpetually. To forget an absent friend is a serious slight; but to forget a present friend, and to be so little sensible of his nearness that we put him afar off in our thoughts, is a most grievous affront. The sin of the Jews was that they knew not “the day of their visitation,” and looked and prayed for a Messiah yet to come, instead of recognizing his presence when he had already come. So many pray for the Spirit now, calling to him beyond the stars to descend to us, as though we knew not that he had been here for eighteen hundred years, perpetually bearing witness on earth, and making his abode in the Church, which is “the body of Christ.” I sometimes think that if Christ were to speak to us from the heavens he might repeat the words which John the Baptist uttered concerning him,—“There standeth one among you whom ye know not”—so little do we seem to apprehend this marvellous fact that the Spirit of God is personally with us and in us.

It was not so in the early Church. The presence of the Comforter seems to have been just as real a fact to the first disciples as that of Jesus had been before his departure. Read a single testimony on this point, found in the book of the Acts,—so assured, so quiet, so almost unconscious,—“It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,” says Peter. The first serious controversy and dissension had arisen in the Church. If Christ were present, how quickly would he be sought out to give his counsel and direction in the exigency! But he had gone into heaven, to be the Advocate of his people; yet the other Advocate had come, and so real was his presence to the disciples, so plain and decisive was his advice, that they could say with all the positiveness of a client returning from a conference with his lawyer, “It seemed good to my counsellor and myself.” Would such faith were in the Church to-day! Then we should not have to determine our action merely by hand counts and majorities; then we should not forever measure the power of our churches by the number and character of names on our roll; then should we not constantly pray the Lord to be present with us according to his promise, instead of rejoicing in the fact of his presence. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” He does not come at our call: he is present by our coming. As the cloud of glory attended the tabernacle, moving where it moved and halting where it halted, so the Spirit attends the Church. The two or three believers constitute the Spirit’s presence, because they are
man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But the other Advocate in the heart is ever counselling and cooperating with the one on high. He convinces us of the sins for whose forgiveness Jesus pleads with God. He persuades us of the righteousness which Christ exhibits before the Father. He convinces us of the judgment against sin, of which Jesus' wounded but living body is the pledge and certificate in the courts of heaven; and thus he brings our convictions, our faith, and our prayers into harmony with Christ's intercessions. For this must be so if we are to prevail with God. "Let us plead together," saith the Lord; but our hearts must not say one thing while our Intercessor says another. If we plead innocent while he pleads guilty, or if we condemn ourselves after he has procured our absolution, how can our suit succeed, and how can we find peace with God? When the client and his lawyer are not agreed, it is of no use to enter court. And that is the rash and hopeless attitude of all who pray without the Spirit,—they are ignorant of their own case, they ask for things that are contrary to the will of God,—and hence Christ cannot undertake for them, and they appear before God without counsel.

And therefore nowhere is the blessedness of the Spirit's ministry within us more apparent than here.
If a black and hideous stain were on your face, and you did not know it, would it not be the greatest kindness for one to point it out to you, especially if you were about to stand before a public assembly? The Holy Spirit is here to show us the sins, the faults, the imperfections, the stains which we could not discover ourselves, that we may not make Christ and the angels ashamed of us by going into their presence with these things all unknown and unconfessed. What shall I say? The Spirit prepares our case for Christ's advocacy, by discovering to us our heart, harmonizing our will with God's, and bringing us so into accord with Christ that he can stand for us, and with the whole energy and sympathy of his heart enter into our condition.

And what is true of individuals is equally true of the Church. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them," says Jesus. And that word "agreed" is a beautiful one in the original, meaning, to be in symphony or musical accord. But it is not possible for two to be in holy agreement among themselves unless each is attuned to the third,—the Holy Comforter. The harp-strings must be keyed to a common pitch in order to chord with each other. And this is the ministry of the Spirit within us,—to give us the divine standard, even the holy mind of God, that our minds may be brought to chime in with it. "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." But how can we know his will, and how can we be sure then that we do not ask amiss? Here the service of our bosom counsellor comes in. "The Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." He matches our desires to Christ's intercessions, inclines our wills to God's purposes, and so harmonizes perfectly the prayer on earth with that in heaven. Do you not see how absolutely necessary this is? Christians must be "of one accord" if they are to prevail with God. It is with their prayers as with music,—discords destroy each other by their crashing and colliding; only the harmonies sustain and bear each other upward and onward. Guided by their own will alone, a score of Christians might all be praying at cross-purposes, one desiring this thing and one the opposite, and each thereby nullifying the petition of the other. How shall they come to agreement? By the worldly method of getting the sense of the majority? Nay, "the unity of the Spirit" is the only unity that can put us in accord with heaven. Human agreements, however unanimous, are good for nothing in prayer, unless they have taken their key from God. Therefore, because "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," God
has sent this inner counsellor into our hearts, to bring our thoughts and desires into obedience to his holy mind. The earthly intercession answers at every point to the heavenly. In heaven we have an High Priest who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” On earth “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” He “who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,” also prolongs his ministry for his people above, “seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;” while here below, in the hearts of his children, “the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” And if we cannot always interpret the language of the Spirit; if we confess ourselves unable to determine exactly what he would have us ask,—yet we are to remember the gracious saying of Scripture, that “He that searcheth the hearts,” the all-seeing, holy God, “knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.” It is for us to yield our wills utterly, and to pray in the Spirit instead of in ourselves. An obedient mind will sometimes be led in prayer, as a blind man is led by his guide,—in the right way, and yet unable to see the path or to trace the footsteps. Oh, blessed privilege sometimes accorded to God’s saints, to be so in the Spirit that thoughts come unbidden, language shapes

itself, and desires breathe spontaneously, as though we were in the unbroken circuit between the throne and the footstool, and God’s desires were only flowing through us and returning to himself again.

But this is too rare and exalted an experience to be dwelt upon. I would rather make this truth so practical that the weakest disciple might grasp it. We read in Scripture that “the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits.” It is not to our spirits, as though with some distinct and supernatural voice he spoke to us to reveal the Father’s will. It is rather that he addresses us through our own thoughts,—thoughts so good and true, unselfish, that we may know that they are born of God. It is no deep mystery. If you have longings after another’s soul that prompt you to pray for him; if you have sympathy with another’s sorrow that leads you to plead for him with the tender High Priest; if you have impulses to duties which are against the natural inclinations, and yet eminently in harmony with God’s word,—you can hardly be mistaken in regarding these as the counsels of the Advocate within you. This is his mission,—to bring us into communion with God, to make our thoughts become as his thoughts, and our ways as his ways, that so we may be at one in all our supplications with the Most High.
And now, O Holy Spirit, help us to receive thee in the fulness of thine indwelling; to pray ever under the power of thy prevailing intercession; to walk according to thy holy guidance, and to live in the power of thine endless life. Discover our secret sins by thine all-searching light; kindle our dead affections with thy heavenly life, and so possess us and abide in us forever, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Amen.

END

XVIII.

CHRIST CALMING THE HEART.

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come."


ALL the miracles of Christ are parables, and all his parables are miracles. When he does some great work of healing or life-giving he seems careful to do it in such manner as that every line and feature of it may teach us vivid spiritual truths. And when he frames some parable to illustrate the way of grace he fashions it with such power and grandeur as to make it seem a very miracle of words.

With this familiar story before us, of Christ coming to his disciples on the stormy sea, let us see what suggestions we may find in it for our spiritual instruction and comfort.

I. Consider the Master's invitation, — "And he said, Come."

There are two ways in which Christ gives peace to the tempest-tossed soul, — by quieting the winds and waves without, or by calming the doubts and