

Pam. 4029

No. 477

THE

HOLY SPIRIT IN CHURCH FINANCES

BY

REV. C. A. COOK



PHILADELPHIA

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

1420 Chestnut Street

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHURCH FINANCES

THE general subject of church finances has been very widely discussed. Undoubtedly the churches, as a result, are dealing more intelligently, scripturally, and successfully with their financial work than ever before. Educational influences in the young people's movements are lifting money matters in the church to a higher level. Proportionate giving is being widely adopted, and a new race of givers is growing up. In this there is cause for thanksgiving and joy.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church's financial work has not, however, been so generally considered, or emphasized. A survey of this work from this point of view

is greatly needed. Far too long and far too generally has the financial work of the church been divorced from its spiritual life, and been made a matter of planning, and scheming, and working, and worrying, without the presence, leading, and power of the Holy Spirit. And yet the Spirit's influence should be desired and sought here as earnestly as in connection with the preaching of the sermon, or the conversion of a soul.

THE SUPREME MISTAKE.

The Holy Spirit and the money matters of the church have usually been kept very far apart. We have believed in the Holy Spirit everywhere in the church's work but here. In calling men into the Christian ministry, in equipping them for service, in the regeneration and sanctification of men, we have believed in the Holy Spirit. But when we have needed money for the Lord's work we have

relied upon ourselves, upon our own tact and good judgment, upon our business, and sometimes our *unbusiness* methods, upon our plans and appeals. Here is where a supreme mistake has been made, and just so long as no place is given to the Holy Spirit in the financial matters of the church, just so long will she remain on the side-track of mere human plans and possibilities, and come far short of her God-given privileges.

The financial work of the church should be as much under the direction of the Holy Spirit as any other work of the church. Dr. Gordon says: "His [the Holy Spirit's] oversight extends to the slightest detail in the ordering of God's house, holding all in subjection to the will of the Head, and directing all in harmony with the divine plan." Dr. John Humpstone says: "The question of finance is a question of the Holy Spirit.

Given pentecostal blessing, and pentecostal consecration of property will follow. No one but the Holy Spirit can incite souls to that degree of faith which will lead them to set at defiance the dictates of selfishness, the maxims of worldly policy, and the suggestions of over-cautious prudence." The taking of the financial work of the church out of the Spirit's power is as unwarranted, and as greatly to the church's loss, as the taking of any other work out of his power. He who should have been honored here, has been most shamefully dishonored. Worldly schemes with which the Holy Spirit has had no sympathy have been resorted to to raise money for the Lord's work. The Spirit has often been grieved, his influence quenched.

THE GROUND OF EXPECTATION.

On what ground may we look for the working of the Spirit in the church's finan-

cial work? We are living in the dispensation of the Spirit. He has to do with everything that pertains to the welfare and progress of the church, both as to its inner life and its outward activities. Financial matters are not to be excepted. The first financial difficulty which came up in the church, when there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration, was settled by the fullest recognition of the Holy Spirit, and dependence upon him. The seven men appointed to attend to that business were men filled with the Holy Spirit. To them was committed what was perhaps the only financial work of the church at that time, and they evidently made a success of the business, for no further complaints followed. In 2 Cor. 8, giving is spoken of as a grace, and hence as a product

of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. Is faith, or utterance, or knowledge, or love, a fruit of the Spirit? So also is the grace of giving. The giving which Paul commended in that chapter was a giving begotten of God, a giving inspired by the Holy Spirit, and hence the freeness, heartiness, abundance, and joyousness of it. There were no distressing appeals, no embarrassing canvassing of the members of the church, no fairs or lotteries or shows of any kind to raise the money. The Holy Spirit filled the hearts of the saints, and sweetly impelled them freely and gladly to give. Where the Holy Spirit is permitted to work to-day the same results follow.

Some one has said : "It is high time that the church of Christ had learned that her glorious Lord is not in straitened circumstances." God has abundant resources at his command to meet every real need in the

work the church has been given to do. There is nothing whatever, of men or money, of utterance or power, of talent or agency, with which effectually to carry on the great work of evangelizing the world which may not be fully supplied through the presence, power, and manifold operations of the Holy Spirit. Nor are these supplies, especially money, outside the church. The church has plenty of money; the church is wealthy, enormously so. Dr. Strong, in "Our Country," says the church-members in the United States possess not less than fifteen billions of dollars, and this wealth is increasing at the rate of five hundred millions annually. God's work need never stop, or be curtailed one moment, for lack of funds. What is needed is the pentecostal fullness and power of the Holy Spirit to produce a consecration of this money to God. Under the Spirit's indwell-

ing everywhere, money now held back would be willingly and gladly given to God.

NO FAILURE POSSIBLE.

But even if the church were not wealthy, the presence and working of the Holy Spirit would still secure the highest possible success in the church's financial work. "Nothing is too hard for the Lord." "Our sufficiency is of God." "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Men are only stewards, not owners. God is the universal proprietor, and it is written, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And just as God by the temperature and the winds makes the showers of rain to fall where he wills, so under the working of the Holy Spirit the Lord our God is able to turn the streams which flow from his sufficiency in whatever direction he pleases, and in the most simple

and wonderful way supply the needs of his own work. Nor are instances lacking in which the Holy Spirit has been manifestly present in the financial work of the church. When the Clarendon Street Baptist Church, Boston, awhile ago, made an offering of twenty thousand dollars to foreign missions, the church spent much time in prayer, and the people were asked to give only as the Holy Spirit prompted them. In a similar way, from forty to sixty thousand dollars has been given for missions at the Christian Alliance Tabernacle, New York, in a single day.

Two or three years ago a Baptist church in the vicinity of New York needed one thousand two hundred dollars to meet a payment on a new building. Some of the members came to the pastor and proposed a fair. The pastor knew a better way, and suggested that the need should be made a subject of

prayer for a week, and that on the following Lord's Day offerings be presented as the people were prompted by the Spirit. The result was an offering three hundred dollars beyond what was needed. Like results have often been secured when the working of the Holy Spirit has been sought.

THE REAL NEED.

The church does not need more money, but she does need to give the Holy Spirit a larger place in her money matters. She needs an increase of faith in God, a firmer confidence in the all-sufficiency of his resources, and in the power of the Holy Spirit to work upon the hearts of men to lead them to give according to his will. Under the Spirit's power and leading, giving would be lifted to a higher level, and instead of there being so many questionable methods of money-raising, by which worldliness is introduced and spir-

ity driven out, there would be an increased spirituality throughout the church, all the needs of the Lord's work would be supplied, and success would crown the efforts of God's people everywhere. In the financial work of the church, as elsewhere, we shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon us.

