and hence a partaker of His nature, 1 John  
iii. 9; 1 Pet. i. 23.  
  
**15, 16.**] *Appeal to the* CONSCIOUSNESS  
*of the Christian to confirm the assertion*  
assumed for the moment that he *is led* by  
God’s Spirit) *that he is a son of God*.—  
**For** (confirming what preceded) **ye did not  
receive** (at your becoming Christians: not,  
as A. V., obscuring the sense, “*have not*  
received” **the spirit of bondage** (i.e. ‘the  
Spirit which ye received was not a spirit  
of bondage.’ **The spirit** is not *merely* a  
spirit, *a disposition*, but evidently refers  
to the same Spirit which afterwards is “*the  
Spirit of adoption*,” and “*the Spirit itself*.”  
The Apostle seems however in this form of  
expression, both here and elsewhere, e.g.  
2 Cor. iv.13; Eph.i.17; 2 Tim. i.7, to  
have combined the (objective) *Spirit* given  
to us by God with our own (subjective)  
*spirit*. In the next verse they are separated)   
[**leading**] **back** (or,**again**. But the  
latter word is undesirable, as having led to  
its being imagined here that it must refer  
to a *former* bestowal of the *spirit of  
bondage*, and consequently that the reference   
is to the Old Test. dispensation. For  
there seems to me to be no occasion to go  
back for the reference to the Old Test.  
The state of the *natural man* is *bondage*:  
the Holy Spirit given to them, the agent  
of their birth into, and sustainer of, a new  
state, was not a spirit of bondage back  
again into fear, a spirit merely to retain  
them in, or take them back into their old  
state, viz. a state of *slavery* :—to *whom*, or  
whether to *different masters*, is not here in  
question, but the *state* merely—the object  
of the gift of the Holy Spirit was not to  
lead them *back* into this) **unto fear** (*so as  
to bring about or result in* fear, see ch. vi.  
19); **but ye received the Spirit of** (the  
Spirit *whose effect* was, see above) **adoption**  
(this stricter meaning, and not that of  
*mere sonship*, is plainly that intended by  
the Apostle. Of course, the *adoption to  
be a son involves sonship*, but not the  
converse), **wherein** (compare “*in* the  
Spirit,” ch. ii. 29, and ver. 9. It is not  
merely “*whereby*,” as A.V. The Spirit is  
He *in* whom, not merely *by* whom we use  
the voice of a son, being not merely an  
external agent, but an indwelling and pervading   
power) **we cry** (the earnest expression   
of supplicating prayer), **Abba, Father**  
(I have said, on Mark xiv. 36, that **Father**  
does not appear to be a mere explanation  
of **Abba**, but to have been joined to it in  
one phrase, as a form of address: expressing   
probably a corresponding ‘my Father’  
in the Hebrew expression. Luther, to  
express the familiarity of Abba, renders  
this *‘dear Father’*).—See on the whole,  
the strictly parallel place, Gal. iv. 6.  
  
  
**16.**] *And this confidence is grounded on  
the testimony of the Spirit itself*. So  
Chrysostom: “I assert this, says the  
Apostle, not merely from the cry itself,  
but from the cause out of which the cry  
arises: ... for it is not a cry belonging  
alone to the state of grace, but belonging  
to the Comforter who gave the gift: for  
it is He Himself who taught us, being in  
the state of grace, thus to cry.” This  
verse, being without any conjunction  
coupling it to what went before, is best  
understood to refer to the same as the  
preceding, and the assertion to concern the  
same fact as the last verb, “*we cry*,”  
grounding that fact on an aet of the indwelling   
Spirit Himself. See again Gal.  
iv. 6.—**The Spirit itself** (the word *itself*  
expresses the independence, and at the  
same time, as coming from God, the preciousness   
and importance of the testimony)  
**beareth witness to our spirit** (see ch. ii. 15,  
and note: not, asin A. V., ‘beareth witness  
*with* our spirit,’ which is not the usage of the  
verb in the original. It is the same word  
as in Rev. xxii. 18, “*I bear witness unto*  
*every one, &c.*”), **that we are children of  
God**.— What is this *witness of the Spirit  
itself*? All have agreed, and indeed this  
verse is decisive for it, that it is *something  
separate from, and higher than, all our  
own inferences and conclusions*. But on  
the other hand it does *not consist in mere  
indefinite feeling*, but in a *certitude of the  
Spirit’s presence and work continually  
asserted within us*. It is manifested, as