

# THE HOLY SPIRIT

*An exploratory survey of  
Scripture Teaching*

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**The Holy Spirit**  
*An Exploratory Survey of Scripture Teaching*  
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## Foreword to the First Edition

This book is based upon a series of talks given at a Bible study class held in London in the autumn of 1970, in which I sought to bring together the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit, believing that a greater awareness of this could do wondrous things in our lives as Christians.

My grateful thanks go out to the members of the class for their spiritual support during the study and their material support in ensuring that this publication saw the light of day. Several years have elapsed before publication owing partly to other pressures, and partly to give time for careful appraisal of the exposition in view of the fact that in some quarters the doctrine of the present work of the Holy Spirit is viewed with suspicion by those who fear that "inner experience" may become detached from Scriptural revelation and subjective feelings may overshadow objective truth presented in the Bible.

I have been especially helped by Eddie Garner, the Secretary of the Class; by Diane Brettell who initially typed the book and Marjorie Mullard who produced the final typescript. Others have helped by a careful reading of the typescript. Their comments did much to clarify both the English and the soundness of the exposition. Particularly I believe the book to be the better for the friendly criticism of Jack Balchin.

I offer it now to the readers with the prayer that they will consider what has been written with open minds, weighing up the testimony of Scripture and being prepared to receive the help which God and the Lord Jesus Christ offer through the Spirit. Quotations from Scripture are mainly from the New English Bible for ease of reading. Where however a more precise translation is required, the reader is recommended to consult the Revised Version and the Revised Standard Version

1st May 1975

Edgar Wille

## Forward to the Second Edition

This second edition of my book on the Holy Spirit, issued by the brotherly support of Trevor Brierly of Virginia, does not amend the original text, though if I were writing it now I would have made specific the references to other writers, of whose names I have in the main lost track. I might also have been tempted to pursue difficulties in greater depth. However the Biblical exposition still stands and makes clear that the Holy Spirit is God at work within the hearts and minds of those who have faith in him through Jesus Christ. This is distinct from the view that the Holy Spirit is manifested only in special gifts such as are described in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit runs deeper than that, inspiring the lives of those who respond.

When we are baptised into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we enter a threefold experience:

1. There is God, infinite, for whom there are no limits large or small. For him nebulae and electrons are equally accessible. He created them. Furthermore no human being (or sparrow) is too small for Him to notice and to help. Such infinitude is beyond our comprehension as Job learned.
2. Then there is Jesus, the human manifestation of the eternal God (1 Tim. 3:16 KJV). Because of the humanity of Jesus, God in him comes closer to our understanding. Through the communion of Jesus with His Father, we begin to see God as Father and to share a brotherhood with Jesus.
3. Then from the Father and the Son proceeds the Holy Spirit, perceived as God within the believer now (John ch 14-17). And God within is God at His most understandable, most influential and closest - God "who works in you inspiring both the will and the deed for his own chosen purpose" enabling us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:13 & 12).

So to understand the NT teaching on the Holy Spirit gives us an awareness of a God who comes alongside us (paraclete) as helper, advocate and guide, displaying Himself in the Son as well as in His eternal creative glory. Can any theme of Scripture be more important?

Edgar Wille

September 2000

Readers of this book may be interested in the book I have just written, entitled Maps for the Journey - Finding your way around the Bible. Its 464 pages look briefly at every book of the Bible, putting them in context and clarifying their message in a way that leaves the readers to draw their own conclusions and to decide what to do about it.

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## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 1.

Just as the appearance of the divine glory at Sinai inaugurated the age of Israel under the law, so the pouring forth of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost ushered in the age of the new Israel under grace. It is therefore a most appropriate point at which to begin a study of the work of the Holy Spirit.

#### WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT

The events of the day as recorded in Acts 2 were preceded by a period of intense anticipation. The disciples were waiting for one of the great turning points in the history of the divine dealings with men. Luke records how the Lord after his resurrection opened up the Scriptures to the disciples, showing how it had been foretold that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (echo of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4). They were witnesses of these things and Jesus was going to send the Father's promised gift upon them. Until that had happened they were not equipped for their work of witness. Hence the instruction: "stay here in this city, until you are armed with the power from above." (Luke 24: 44-49).

This instruction was repeated in Luke's second volume. Here Luke says that Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem. "You must wait" he said "for the promise made by my Father, about which you have heard me speak: John, as you know, baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit, and within the next few days". (Acts 1:35). Furthermore "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth" (v 7-8 summarising in few words the theme of the whole book of Acts). And on the day of Pentecost it happened!

#### WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

First notice what exact effects the Spirit had. It was not primarily a matter of sensational phenomena. The wind, the fire and the sudden ability to speak in foreign tongues certainly acted as a spotlight on the whole event, and drew the attention of the crowd -- but more fundamental are:

### THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

a. the newly acquired clarity of understanding which enabled Peter to expound the significance of Old Testament scriptures and with a confident touch apply them to Jesus in his suffering, resurrection and ascension; the instruction of the 40 days after the resurrection had now fallen into place and he was no longer dominated by pictures of merely political glory.

b. the new found courage which enabled disciples who but recently "forsook him and fled", to stand up and publicly proclaim Jesus and even to point the finger of accusation at their adversaries.

c. the conversion of 3000 human hearts -- softened into believing in Jesus as Lord.

d. the sharing of a common life -- the formation of the church.

The Holy Spirit brought changes of outlook and of character: new vision: new understanding: new fellowship and new joy, And these have always been and still are the consequences of the Holy Spirit at work. Pentecost was the dawn of the age of the Spirit, the opening of a new chapter in God's dealings with men. Pentecost saw the formation of the new community -- the new Israel -- the church: the finished work of Christ being made known to the believers in the intimate way described in John 16: 13-15.

The Holy Spirit was not by any means "new" -- but Pentecost was without precedent or parallel. Until now "the Spirit had not been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39). But now having been crucified and raised and having ascended to the right hand of God, the glorified Jesus was available to the church in a new and universal way, no longer being confined as the earthly Jesus was to a particular locality in the land of Palestine (John 16:7). And it was thus that Peter explained the events of Pentecost in the speech recorded in Acts 2 which we now consider.

Hearing the gospel preached in their local languages created great excitement and speculation among the Jews gathered from all parts to keep the feast. Some were impressed when they heard in their own tongues the great things God had done: others were skeptical and put it all down to drunkenness.

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### PETER'S SPEECH

Peter stands up, shouts for a hearing and in his characteristically practical way debunks the accusation of the skeptics by pointing out that it was only nine in the morning. Rather what they were seeing was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy of the last days, that their sons and daughters should prophesy, their young men see visions, their old men dream dreams and slaves, male and female, be endowed with a portion of God's spirit and should prophesy. In other words the pouring out of the Spirit was not to be limited by sex, by age or by social status. And it would enable them to prophesy, which did not here mean to foretell the future, but to witness to the great things done by God (v 11).

However, could they not have witnessed at any time after the Resurrection morning? Surely from then on they could have spoken with conviction based on the evidence of their outward senses about an empty tomb and a Lord who had once more spoken with them and eaten with them. But Jesus had in effect said: "Wait here in Jerusalem and don't begin your witness until I come to you in a new form and endow you with an inner witness". They could have argued effectively and intellectually that the Lord was risen, but their mission could not and must not begin until they had a new experience and a unique participation in Christ.

The witness foretold by Joel is associated with apocalyptic portents, signs and wonders, in sky and on earth before the day of the Lord should come. "And, then, everyone who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Later on Peter uses the same language and says that Jesus was made known to Israel through miracles, signs and portents during his ministry (v 22). From Pentecost onward, forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit was "for everyone whom the Lord our God may call" (v 39). This is another echo of Joel, who is thus interpreted to mean that the earth -- and heaven -- shaking work of Christ would subsequently be mediated by the Spirit to those who turned to the Lord. This was the meaning of the day's events.

Before reaching this conclusion however Peter took them through a sequence of steps, largely based on the interpretation of the Old Testament, to lead them to the conclusion that the Lord upon whom they must call was none other than Jesus of Nazareth:

1. His listeners themselves knew of the

remarkable activities of the Lord. They also knew that their race had used the heathen to crucify and kill him (v 22-23).

2. He then added the witness which he and his fellow disciples could give to the fact that God had raised him to life again (v 24).

3. However this should not surprise Jewish listeners. Didn't Psalm 16 contain just such an expectation that the Messiah's soul would not be left in Hades: his holy one would not see corruption (v 25-28).

4. They could themselves check, by going along the street to David's sepulchre, that Psalm 16 was not really fulfilled in David, for he saw corruption. Therefore David must have been foretelling the resurrection of the Messiah, who should fulfil God's promises and sit on David's throne, which was, of course the throne of the Lord (v 29-31).

5. Peter then repeats the witness of the disciples to the Resurrection (v 32).

6. The Ascension of Christ followed his Resurrection and Peter asserts that he was now in heaven. But whereas their witness might produce conviction that Jesus rose, they could not produce similar testimony that he was now at the right hand of God: they had not seen him there. How then could they be sure. Where was the proof? The proof lay in the events of that very day. The purpose of the Christ's ascent to heaven was that he might receive the Holy Spirit to pour out on those who should turn to him. "Exalted thus at God's right hand, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father, as was promised and all that you now see and hear flows from him" (v 33) Jesus had received the Holy Spirit personally on Jordan's banks -- but only when seated on the throne of the Lord at God's right hand, did he receive the Holy Spirit to share with the believers. This was proof that he was, by the Spirit, present in their midst. If the disciples could not clinch their witness by producing Jesus visibly, they could point to the work of the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost as demonstrating that Jesus, as promised, was in their midst, giving them an experience of him and an inner conviction of his presence.

7. Then, as with the other stages of the glorification of Jesus, Peter quotes the Old Testament to prove that they ought also to have been

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expecting the Ascension because of the words of Psalm 110. David had not ascended to heaven but he expected his Lord to do so: "the Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

8. Finally Peter brings his quotations together by declaring "Let all Israel accept as certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah". In other words the Holy Spirit has produced by this day's activity the evidence that Jesus is the Lord spoken of in Psalm 16, "and you have seen him at work in your midst". But for the manifest work of the Holy Spirit the Apostles would have had no answer to the challenge: "you say he is alive: produce him". That is why they had to wait at Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. Till Pentecost, the last link in their chain of witness was missing. Jesus could not be produced: now he could. To sum up, the expressed and implied argument of Peter's dialogue with the crowd was : --

- a. Jesus by many signs and portents in his ministry demonstrated that he came from God.
- b. But he died on the cross.
- c. But this was part of the predicted experience of Messiah and moreover he rose, as was foretold.
- d. How do you know?
- e. We saw him with our own eyes.
- f. Produce him -- or else your witness is suspect.
- g. He is in heaven as it was predicted he would be.
- h. Then he isn't here for us to be sure of your message.
- i. But he is, you know -- all that has happened today has been his work by the Holy Spirit and you have felt him in your midst.

### THE INNER WITNESS

Not only was he in their midst but also in their hearts convicting them of sin, as the Lord had promised. The Lord in John 16:8-11 had stressed the inner and outward witness: outwardly the Spirit

would demonstrate that Jesus had gone to the Father when he passed from their sight: inwardly it would convict them of wrong in their refusal to believe in him.

And so, as soon as Peter had finished, this inner conviction wrought by the Holy Spirit caused them to be "cut to the heart". The words "whom you crucified" from the lips of Peter filled them with fear. They saw the enormity of their guilt -- and to this day we will find all our own sins mirrored in those of Sadducees, Pharisees, Romans, Crowds and Disciples. We were all there. Jesus on his cross puts the spotlight on sin as he draws its venom upon his own pure person. This is one of the ways in which he bore our sins. As we thus see our guilt, and as the listeners on the day of Pentecost saw theirs, the only possible words are: "What are we to do?" (v 37).

Peter's reply gave the essence of Christianity.

**"Repent"** -- turn right round: face a new direction, having seen yourself as you really are, as a result of the Spirit bringing home the message of the cross to your personal experience.

**"Be baptised"** publicly commit yourself to the sharing of the Christ: publicly appropriate the cleansing from sin in him.

**"Every one of you"** -- irrespective of age, sex or status (echo of Joel).

**"In the name of Jesus"** -- Joel's "name of Yahweh" (the Lord) to be invoked is now "the name of Jesus" (to understand the name of Jesus is to understand the name of Yahweh).

**" -- the Messiah"** (Christ) -- Peter had proved by his quotations that Jesus was Messiah, showing from messianic Psalms that what had happened to Jesus was what the scriptures had foreseen of Messiah -- a momentous ministry -- a cruel death -- a decisive resurrection and an ascension to the Father's right hand.

**"for the forgiveness of your sins"** -- the sacrifice that made them feel their guilt also covered it and man's great need was met: "sins forgiven" is the element of the message of salvation concerned with removing the impediment to fellowship with God.



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**"and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** -- this is the element of the message of salvation concerned with the positive boon of fellowship with God. If the forgiveness of sins is part of the message of salvation for all time, the very words require that the gift of the Holy Spirit shall equally be so regarded. It would be an artificial treatment of the words which considered "the forgiveness of sins" as a permanent Christian blessing and the Holy Spirit a temporary first century phenomenon.

**"The promise is to you and to your children and to all who are far away"** -- Peter was appealing to those present, that they let themselves be carried along from conviction of sin to repentance, to forgiveness of sins and to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which would then become a permanent feature of their lives, and the same promise applied to their children also and to Gentiles afar off (Isa. 57:19; Eph. 2:17).

**"everyone whom the Lord our God may call"** -- could words be more inclusive? No man can come to Jesus unless he is drawn by the Father (Jno. 6:44) whose instrument both initially and continuously is the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost was the first demonstration of what Paul later described: "To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his son, crying 'Abba! Father'" (Gal. 4:6). There are intellectual factors involved in accepting Christ -- just as the Jews had to wrestle with a Messiah dying

and rising as foretold in the Psalms -- but, fundamentally, conversion is a revelation of Christ which he gives us as he gave the early church on the day of Pentecost. The written Word is obviously the basic source of our information. Without initial reading of it and subsequent diligent study of it we would not get far. However to read, to reason intellectually and to make logical deductions would not of themselves convince us of our sins and bring us face to face with our living Saviour. Christianity is an experience, not a philosophy, or a theology, or a dogma, though these have their place. It is the precious gift of God, not the hard earned outcome of the exercise of man's mental powers. Christ lays his hand upon men and renews them by the Spirit, as he did for 3000 on the day of Pentecost, affecting them not only individually, but also collectively forming them into a community who met constantly to hear the Apostles teach, to share the common life, and to break bread and to pray. There were special features as well, in terms of marvels and signs. Also the Spirit worked strongly within them to give a sense of community, so that they even held all their goods in common. "One mind" is the phrase describing how united they were as they worshipped, prayed and ate together, full of joy and unceasingly praising God, and just to emphasise that it was all the work of the Spirit -- i.e. of the ascended invisible Christ, and not the work of man, Luke adds: "and day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving" (v 47).

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### Chapter 2

All that went before in Scripture led to the glorification of Christ. In turn the glorification of Christ, crucified, risen and ascended to the right hand of God, led to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit -- the sending of the Comforter (John 7:38-39). To understand Pentecost fully we need to look back at what went before, starting with the anticipations of the prophets as they looked forward to the day of Messiah.

A new and major outpouring of the Spirit was an essential part of their hope.

Many of the Old Testament prophecies of the great Spirit outpouring are associated with the regathering of Israel and the consummation of the Kingdom of God. No doubt the most natural reading of these passages, one followed generally by Israel, was of national glory, with material prosperity and political supremacy for the race; though spiritual objectives are also constantly set forth. Any supremacy granted to Israel was in order that the other nations might give praise to Israel's God (Deut. 4:6). We cannot ignore the "political" aspect of God's workings, for he is concerned with redeeming the material earth to provide a tangible base to his spiritual purposes in which a remnant of Israel will play their part. But relationship with men and a divine fellowship are his ultimate objectives. The tabernacle of God shall be with men. God shall be all in all. These objectives determine where we should place the accent in the interpretation of the prophecies -- in the realm of the spiritual rather than the material and political. And this is where the New Testament places the accent.

#### THE REVEALED MYSTERY

The New Testament reveals a mystery (or secret) that had been embedded in the Old. Even angels were puzzled about the prophets' messages. The joy of Christian salvation, the grace of God in Christ, the sufferings of Christ, the glory of resurrection, ascension, Pentecost and the second advent were the themes of prophets who ministered for a generation to come (1 Peter 1:8-12). None could have foreseen this fulfilment by a straight reading of the Old Testament. Assuming that the Old Testament gave the total picture of what was to be and of who was to come, they would not have recognised him when He came -- and in fact they did

### OLD TESTAMENT ANTICIPATIONS OF THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

not.

"In former generations the secret of Christ was not disclosed to the human race". So Paul shows how Old Testament prophetic messages needed the additional light of the Apostolic Word to make clear the purpose of God (Eph. 3:1-11).

It is inadequate to read the Old Testament without interpreting it by the New; or to seek to establish the gospel by reading the Old Testament and then assuming that Christ would fulfil the Old Testament message precisely as written. The Old Testament is where the message is hidden -- the New brings it to the light.

The divine secret was long kept in silence and needed the work of the Apostles for its disclosure (Romans 16: 25-27).

The message of the New Testament is of fulfilment reached, not of fulfilment still to come, even though some elements of the fulfilment lie yet in our future. The message of the New Testament is "the secret is revealed" a new day has dawned -- the hope is fulfilled and will go on being fulfilled. The first words of the ministry of Jesus, as recorded by Mark, are:

"...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

A new day was dawning. And in a sense when the Kingdom is consummated that will not be the dawn of the new age, but rather the noonday when the mass of mankind will receive its blessings.

#### THE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

This reinterpretation of the Old Testament, this revealing of what was previously hidden, comes out particularly in connection with the promises made to Abraham, which are a fundamental expression of the purpose of God.

When the Jews read the promises straightforwardly they thought in terms mainly of:

a. a land to be possessed to its full extent (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15).

b. being a mighty nation (Gen. 12:2).

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c. victory over enemies -- "possessing the gate of their enemies" (Gen. 22:17).

Some would also recognise:

d. world blessing through Israel (Gen. 12:3).

e. that God would be a God unto them and that they should be his people (Gen. 17:7).

f. that faith would be counted for righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

In such understanding, incomplete though it was, there was faith and trust in Abraham's God, which was pleasing to him.

When we come however to the New Testament the land, as such, is less emphasised. The fact that God wants to be at home with men is more the emphasis. The tabernacle of God shall be with men (Rev. 21:3).

The mighty nation is redefined. God's promises were not for many seeds, but for one -- even Christ: and this includes his body, who are all one person in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:16 and 26-29).

This is the new definition of Abraham's seed or Israel. It is men of faith who share the blessing with faithful Abraham (Gal 3:9 see also Romans 4:11-12).

Then as to the nature of the blessing in Abraham: Acts 3 redefines it. Peter speaks of the raising up of the prophet like unto Moses and then adds: "And so said all the prophets from Samuel onwards: with one voice they all predicted this present time" (v 24). "This present time" was the age of fulfilment, elsewhere spoken of as "the last days" and "the final age". This "present time" started in the events from Bethlehem to Pentecost and reaches beyond the second coming to the time when "God shall be all in all". That is the period of the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham.

As Peter continues:-

"You are the heirs of the prophets; you are within the covenant which God made with your fathers, when he said to Abraham, 'And in your offspring all the families on earth shall find blessing'. When God raised up his Servant, he sent him to you first, to bring you blessing by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:25-26).

The Jews were receiving in the post Pentecost period the opportunity to be the *first* among the nations to receive the blessing of Abraham -- and the prime feature of the blessing was to be *turned away from their wicked ways* i.e. repentance and the forgiveness of sins. This interpretation was implicit in the Abrahamic covenant where faith was accounted to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:6 declares Abraham to be a forgiven man. However, but for Peter's words and Paul's expositions this emphasis might not have been noticed. Peter did not teach that when the Lord returns in a future day the blessing of Abraham will *begin* to be poured out. The blessing started in Peter's own day, though it is true that the number of people participating in the future day will be greatly extended.

In Peter's speech at Pentecost he associated the removal of the impediment of guilt with the positive boon of the Spirit. And, in addition to foretelling forgiveness of sins, the promises to Abraham were in fact also foretelling the blessing of the Spirit. This is what Paul means when, in Galatians 3:14, he regards the blessing of Abraham as being the "receiving of the promised Spirit through faith". In v. 8 he considers that the promise of blessing on all nations was in effect a preaching of the Christian gospel, for it implied "justification by faith", forgiveness of sins and the pouring out of the Spirit. He doesn't mean that if we want to know what the gospel is we should start with a straight reading of the promises to Abraham uninterpreted by the New Testament. Rather, having heard the gospel from Jesus and the Apostles, as the good news of redemption in Christ, we can then go back and see it implied in the ancient promises. And outstanding among the blessings included in being accounted righteous by faith is the promised Spirit. Sin removed and the Spirit implanted: that is the great work of Christ as he fulfils the promises made to Abraham.

Of course we are right to refer to the promises to Abraham when we speak of the great day to come, but we ought not to paint the "millennium" merely as a super welfare state -- though men's physical welfare will be attended to. Rather we should see sins forgiven and the Spirit outpoured as the prime blessings through which at last "God will be all in all". The whole work of Jesus, the Apostles and the church is to bring to men both forgiveness of sins and the Spirit. This whole work is the fulfilment of the covenants of promise and the words of the prophets. It started 1970 years ago. We await its

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consummation. From Pentecost to "God all in all" is the age of the Spirit. We are privileged to live in it. Read the Old Testament with this perspective and untold thrills are waiting to be revealed.

### **KINGDOM PASSAGES INTERPRETED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

We have already seen the Kingdom picture in Psalm 110 applied to the work of the ascended Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Church. One or two more examples must suffice for now.

Isaiah 49 is very clearly a Kingdom picture and, in its finality, the portrayal of God's servant Jesus as a "light to the Gentiles and salvation to earth's farthest bounds" lies still in the future. As far as Paul and Barnabas were concerned, however, the passage was being fulfilled in the first century as they went forward to preach in the Roman Empire (Acts 13:46-47).

The ultimate Kingdom triumph is mirrored in Isaiah 52:7 (K.J.V.).

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

In the inspired hands of Paul (Rom. 10:15) this also becomes the preaching of the gospel by the Apostles; also (Gal. 4) the Jerusalem, of which Isaiah speaks, becomes the heavenly Zion -- the New Jerusalem community, whose name is the "Lord our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16).

Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem's time of joy in terms of the joy of motherhood coming to a barren woman and the return of a husband to a deserted wife (Isaiah 54:12). In Galatians 4:27 this becomes the joy of the new Jerusalem, the Church, whose tent area is being increased by the inclusion of the Gentiles, and who brings forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Isaiah 11 presents a very familiar picture of the day when a shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse and a branch shall spring from his roots. The picture continues after describing the one upon whom the Spirit should rest, with the wonderful idyll of the wolf lying down with the lamb and the lion eating straw like the ox. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so shall the land be filled with the knowledge of the Lord".

It is reasonable to carry on in the 11th chapter of Isaiah to verse 10:

"On that day a scion (or shoot from the root of Jesse shall be set up as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall rally to it, and its resting place shall be glorious".

This too is a picture of the Kingdom and Israel's glory, yet to the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:12 it speaks of the call of the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel; in other words of Paul's special task.

One more illustration: the prophet Amos describes the sparing and restoring of Israel's remnant when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the mountains run with fresh wine. He also describes the day when the fortunes of Israel are restored in these words:

"On that day I will restore David's fallen house: I will repair its gaping walls and restore its ruins; I will rebuild it as it was long ago that they may possess what is left of Edom and all the nations who were once named mine. This is the very word of the Lord, who will do this" (Amos 9:11-12).

At the Jerusalem conference, on the lips of James this passage was quoted to give support to the place of equality in the Church which belonged to Gentiles with the Jews. The work of the Lord Jesus had in some way rebuilt the fallen house of David, and into this house in its new form, that is as the Church ruled over by its heavenly King, seated at the right hand of God, the Gentiles were now invited to enter, claimed by God as his own. In other words there was a large measure of the fulfilment of the promises made to David taking place at that very time (Acts 15:13-18). (See also Acts 26:16-18).

These passages are but a sample. Many other Old Testament passages about the Kingdom are handled in this manner in the New Testament.

### **THE INAUGURATION OF THE KINGDOM**

To Jesus and the Apostles the present aspect of the Kingdom of God was highly important. The Kingdom of God was truly within or amongst the believers. (The believer had been rescued from the domain of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of his dear Son -- Colossians 1:13-14). This was something that had happened; something living and something real at that present time, though, as we can rightly preach, there is more to come. Our understandable emphasis on the Kingdom of the

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future has perhaps led us to undervalue the Kingdom as present with the coming of Jesus as Son of man.

One writer has compared this New Testament recognition that the Kingdom of God had begun, to the relationship in the 1939-45 war between D-Day and V-Day. When the allied troops landed in Normandy, within a week it could be said that the war was won. In fact it took another year before victory was complete and the nations were able to celebrate V-Day.

Thus it is with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The war had been won by his victory on Calvary and the empty tomb. The age of the Spirit had dawned. We await the completion of the victory when it is extended to all mankind. Then at last we shall be able to celebrate V-Day.

Thus we find repeatedly that the Apostles bring a new and spiritual interpretation to bear upon many a material and political foretelling of the Kingdom in the Old Testament. Something which starts out as a "Kingdom" passage, which we might be tempted to refer exclusively to a time still future -- the Apostles referred to a time then present and to the work of Christ from his begetting to his ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit. The events of Christ's first coming were essentially fulfilments of the hope of the Coming of the Kingdom. That Age of Messiah was to be an Age of the Spirit.

### THE SPIRIT Poured OUT ON MESSIAH

Against this background we can review briefly some of the passages which speak of the outpouring of the Spirit in a way which was to surpass all that the Spirit had wrought in Israel so far.

We have already considered Isaiah 11 as a Kingdom passage, applied by the Apostle to the work of preaching to the Gentiles. In describing the branch that should spring out of the root of Jesse, emphasis is placed upon the Spirit that should fall upon this Son of David.

"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
a spirit of counsel and power,  
a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,  
He shall not judge by what he sees  
nor decide by what he hears:  
he shall judge the poor with justice  
and defend the humble in the land with equity;  
his mouth shall be a rod to strike down the ruthless,

and with a word he shall slay the wicked.

Round his waist he shall wear the belt of justice,  
and good faith shall be the girdle round his body". (Isa. 11:25)

This is obviously a description of the Holy Spirit which came upon the Lord without measure, at his first coming and which will be associated with the completion of his mission at his second coming.

Isaiah 42, another Kingdom passage, speaks of the one upon whom God would place his spirit. God's servant, God's chosen One, gentle and tender, carefully seeks to bring the smouldering wick to full flame. In Matthew 12:15-21 Jesus is said to have been fulfilling this when he avoided contention in the streets of Israel and withdrew himself, asking people not to make known to the mass of the population what he had been doing. Similarly v. 7 of Isaiah 42 speaks of the Lord's work of opening the blind eyes and bringing the captives out of prison, out of the dungeons where they had laid in darkness: words aptly descriptive of his first coming (cf Luke 7:22).

Isaiah 61 is a further foretelling of the outpouring of the Spirit from the individual Messiah (v. 13).

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the humble  
to bind up the broken hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to captives  
and release to those in prison,  
to proclaim a year of the Lord's favour  
and a day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn,  
to give them garlands instead of ashes  
oil of gladness instead of mourner's tears,  
a garment of splendour for the heavy heart.  
They shall be called Trees of Righteousness,  
planted by the Lord for his glory".

This outpouring of the Spirit is clearly attributed in Luke 4 to the ministry of Jesus as he preached the good things to come. He startled his hearers by saying clearly that He was the One spoken of by Isaiah. "Today", he said, "in your very hearing this text has come true". He was at the start of the process of inaugurating the Age of the Spirit. (It is often said that the Lord Jesus stopped in the middle of v. 2 of Isaiah 61 and did not proceed to speak of

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the day of vengeance because the day of vengeance lay yet in the future. The reason he stopped might rather be that, at that point, early in his ministry, he was not preaching judgment. He did preach it later and throughout his ministry he did preach the offer of the oil of gladness instead of mourner's tears as in Isaiah 61:3).

### JOEL'S PICTURE OF PENTECOST

The Old Testament also speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit, not only upon a particular individual, but upon the whole of Israel.

Outstanding among such passages is, of course, the prophecy of Joel Chapter 2, which we have already partly considered, as Peter explained it on the day of Pentecost. In its original context, the picture is of a nation which had been the subject of natural calamity, of a plague of locusts in association with a drought and a famine. Eventually they had turned to God and rent their hearts, not merely their garments. In the wake of this repentance and renewal there would come physical blessing. The harvests would be resumed when the northern peril was removed from them and the rains returned. (Joel 2: 18-26).

These physical blessings were designed to help them grasp the spiritual truth that God was in their midst and ready to pour his Spirit on them. After their repentance there was to come a wonderful spiritual renewal.

"and you shall know that I am present in Israel,  
that I and no other am the Lord your God;  
and my people shall not again be brought to  
shame.

Thereafter the day shall come  
when I will pour out my spirit on all mankind;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams  
and your young men see visions;  
I will pour out my spirit in those days  
even upon slaves and slave girls" (Joel 2:27-29)

Old men and young men, slaves and slave girls were to receive this outpouring of the Spirit of God. Ordinary folk, not just leaders -- all flesh, anybody, not just kings and priests. No doubt there was some fulfilment (or at least "half-fulfilment") in Joel's time, but even those who read the prophecy in Old Testament times must have felt that any "half-fulfilment" was insignificant compared with something that was to

come in the time when the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem would be reversed (Joel 3:1).

And Peter says that on the Day of Pentecost it happened. The revival -- the outpouring of the Spirit proclaimed by Joel had begun. He did not enter into any explanation such as a "double application", but simply said that the Age of the Spirit had started. There was fulfilment in Peter's day and rather than describe the future outpouring of the Spirit at the Lord's return to earth as a second fulfilment or double application of Joel's prophecy, we ought to speak of a continuous fulfilment, which began at Pentecost and will reach its fullness when God is all in all.

There is no suggestion that the Spirit which was poured out on the day of Pentecost would cease to be poured out on those who subsequently repented and turned to God. There will certainly be a mighty extension at the Lord's second coming, but the Age of the Spirit started at Pentecost. That surely is what we must understand from Peter's explanation.

### ISAIAH'S PICTURE OF PENTECOST

There are other similar passages which Peter and Paul did not quote, which deal with the same theme.

Thus Isaiah 32, which speaks of the King who shall reign in righteousness, also describes the trouble of God's people and their land and the sense of desolation which they were to experience "until the Spirit from on High should be lavished upon them" (v. 15). Then righteousness would make its home in the wilderness and dwell in the grass land and yield peace and its fruit would be quietness and confidence forever, and God's people should dwell in peace. There is a link between God's Spirit poured out and the resulting spiritual qualities developed in Israel, and the righteousness spoken of by Paul in Romans and the peace spoken of by Jesus, when he promised his disciples the Spirit from on High: "My peace I give unto you". "The fruit of righteousness and confidence for ever" would have been the fruit of the Spirit that was then being enjoyed by the Church and which will be enjoyed on the widest scale in the finality of the Kingdom.

Isaiah 44 is another such passage (v. 25)

"Thus says the Lord your maker,  
your helper, who fashioned you from birth:  
have no fear, Jacob my servant,  
Jeshurun whom I have chosen,

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for I will pour down the rain on a thirsty land,  
showers on the dry ground.

I will pour out my spirit on your offspring  
and my blessing on your children.

They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,  
like poplars by a flowing stream.

This man shall say, 'I am the Lord's man'  
that one shall call himself a son of Jacob".

Was this one of the passages which Nicodemus should have understood, being a master in Israel? It certainly associates water and the Spirit.

### JEREMIAH AND THE NEW COVENANT

Parallel with these passages which speak of a special kind of restoration of Israel, linked with an outpouring of the Spirit is Jeremiah 31, the famous New Covenant passage, which describes the work of the Spirit without using the actual word (v. 31-34).

"The time is coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although they broke my covenant, I was patient with them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts; I will become their God and they shall become my people. No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sin no more".

This is a key passage as quoted in the New Testament. In fact the New Testament itself should be termed the New Covenant, deriving its description from this passage. The passage itself in Jeremiah 31 is set in the context of the restoration of Israel, in a day when merriment shall pervade the restored nation, rejoicing that God has remembered them and brought them back from all parts of the earth, so that they come with shouts of joy to Zion's height, singing with happiness at the bounty of the Lord (v. 12). Young men and maidens, old men as well, all dance for joy as they see their mourning turn into gladness.

Without a doubt there is reference here to good things yet to come to Israel after the flesh, though

those only will receive these good things who recognise Jesus as Lord, (Romans 11). However, New Testament exposition shows us the relevance of this prophecy to the Gospel.

The Lord Jesus quotes Jeremiah on the New Covenant at the first Breaking of Bread, when he says: "this is the blood of the New Covenant shed for the remission of sins". On two occasions the writer to the Hebrews quotes the same New Covenant and says in effect: "It is already in force, the Lord Jesus, having ascended to the right hand of God, is already writing his law in men's hearts and granting them forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 8:7-13; 10:15-18).

Ever since Pentecost made the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ available to the inner experience of men and women, there has been a move away from a series of do's and don'ts which could be written on stone, to a new approach, to a new "law", which could be written by the Spirit of God in their very inward being. No longer an outward law emphasising conformity by outward discipline but an inner relationship. "I will become their God and they shall become my people and all of them, high and low alike, shall know me" -- not merely know about me, but have that intimate knowledge which the word "*know*" carries in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 31 in fact brings out the two prime blessings which belong to the Age of the Spirit, and which Peter defined on the day of Pentecost; sins forgiven and transforming of the minds and hearts of the forgiven sinners.

### EZEKIEL AND THE NEW HEART

When we move into the prophecy of Ezekiel we recognise a "nowness" as well as a "thenness" about references to the outpouring of the Spirit. In the passages we have been considering there is a clear New Testament suggestion that the Age of the Spirit has already started. If then we meet similar language in Ezekiel, even when it is set in a context of Israel being gathered from the nations into the physical land, we will expect there to be a present aspect to the prophecy in line with the New Testament interpretations. Thus, for example, Ezekiel 11 speaks in this way (v. 17-20):

"Say therefore, These are the words of the Lord God: I will gather them from among the nations and assemble them from the countries over which I have scattered them, and I will give them the soil of Israel. When they come into it,

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they will do away with all their vile and abominable practices. I will give them a different heart and put a new spirit into them; I will take the heart of stone out of their bodies and give them a heart of flesh"

If Jeremiah 31 is applied to the Church according to Hebrews 8 and Hebrews 10, although the chapter itself was originally a chapter about the restoration of Israel, then equally the removal of the stony heart and the receiving of a different heart and a new spirit by the new people of God, even the Church, is surely included here, both as it is happening now and as it will happen in the final consummation.

Of course this interpretation is not without difficulties. In what way can the building up of the Church out of Jew and Gentile from the first century onward be said to be a regathering of Israel. Perhaps we could see it as the reforming out of disintegrated elements of a new entity, of a new Israel; as James said "God is calling out of the Gentiles a people for his Name". The book of Revelation speaks of a new Israel being formed out of every kindred, tongue and people and nation (Rev. 7). The formation of the Church is a regathering of Israel in a new form, much as a general after a defeat may reform his army with new personnel and go on to victory.

In the light of the New Testament handling of the Old, it may therefore be legitimate to see some fulfilling of Ezekiel chapter 36, 37 and 38 in the proclamation of the gospel, the pouring out of the Spirit, and the establishment of the Church.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit into you and make you conform to my statutes, keep my laws and live by them. You shall live in the land which I gave to your ancestors; you shall become my people, and I will become your God. I will save you from all that defiles you; I will call to the corn and make it plentiful; I will bring no more famine upon you. I will make the trees bear abundant fruit and the ground yield heavy crops, so that you will never again have to bear the reproach of famine among the nations" (Ezekiel 36:26-31).

Obviously there are references here to a material redemption that has not yet happened, but the spiritual redemption it implies has already been the experience of the church -- the new Israel.

In view of the fact that Ezekiel 37 flows from chapter 36, even this intensely political prophecy, associated with the revival of the natural Israel, could have been fittingly applied by a Peter or a Paul to what was happening in their day as Jew and Gentile were gathered together in the new Israel. They did not do so, but such an application is in character with their actual exposition and as elsewhere this would not thereby have excluded still further development.

"These are the words of the Lord God: O my people, I will open your graves and bring you up from them, and restore you to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from them, O my people. Then I will put my spirit into you and you shall live, and I will settle you on your own soil, and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken and will act. This is the very word of the Lord" (v.12-14).

As the age of the Spirit started at Pentecost and as there are many manifestations of the Spirit, but one Spirit, then it is not surprising that there would be a number of stages in the manifestation of that Spirit leading to the final consummation, when God will be all in all. This being the case, then the passages which speak of the outpouring of the Spirit as the regathering of God's Israel no doubt cover the whole regathering of all God's people into one, of the Church, of natural Israel and ultimately of all mankind. And even in the gathering of men into the Kingdom of Christ during its preliminary stages, the prime intention is that their sins may be forgiven and that the Spirit may be poured out upon them so that God himself may be their God and may tabernacle among them.

What will happen in the establishment of the "millennial" reign of Christ will be of a piece with what has already happened. The fundamental change has begun to operate. It remains for it to be made perfectly available, and available to all remaining mankind.



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### Chapter 3

The Age of Fulfilment starts with John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, whom we might term the "bridge man", who links the Age of the Law with the Age of the Spirit. He, who was the last and greatest of the prophets, who heralded the Coming One, had a lot to say about the work of the Coming One, in particular of his work of baptising men with the Spirit. Jesus asked why were men so keen to go into the wilderness to see John. They went to see a prophet and more than a prophet, the man of whom Scripture said: 'Here is my herald, whom I send on ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you' (Mal. 3:1).

Then Jesus continues:

"I tell you this: never has there appeared on earth a mother's son greater than John the Baptist, and yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. Ever since the coming of John the Baptist the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and violent men are seizing it. For all the prophets and the Law foretold things to come until John appeared, and John is the destined Elijah, if you will but accept it". (Matthew 11:9-15)

John had sent a message from prison asking whether Jesus was the One to come or whether another Messiah was to be expected. By way of answer Jesus enacted the prophecies of Isaiah 35, so that the blind recovered their sight and the lame walked and the deaf heard.

In his comments on the type of man that John was, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3. These two were "kingdom" passages, but he has no hesitation in applying them to that which they had just witnessed in the mission of John the Baptist.

#### THE THRESHOLD OF THE NEW AGE

When you stand with John the Baptist you are on the threshold of the Age of the Spirit, at the beginning of the Kingdom of God. There had been a political Kingdom of God in the past. A Kingdom is a kingly dominion. Now God's kingly dominion was taking a tremendous leap forward. John was its herald. In the words of v. 12 men of enthusiasm had, ever since the appearance of John, been seizing hold of the Kingdom. It was now no longer something to come, but something that was there present in their

### A BRIDGE TO THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

midst in the person of the King (see also Luke 16:16).

When one sees the relationship of John the Baptist to the Kingdom which Christ was both preaching and manifesting, then the oft discussed passage -- "he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist" becomes clear. Those who were among Christ's entourage, the nucleus of his church were no longer on the threshold, but had entered inside. In the nature of things John the Baptist could not be in this position. Those who were the disciples of Jesus had privileges superior to the one who was but the forerunner. They were not superior in moral standing, but in status, as a king's courtier may be said to be in a more privileged position than the man who goes ahead sounding the trumpet to say that the king is coming.

One writer has commented:

"It was not given to John the Baptist to enter the Kingdom of Heaven or to taste the good things that were prepared for the members of Christ. He stood on the border of the promised land and from his Mount Pisgah saw it with his eyes: he beheld the Spirit descend on Christ and knew this was the greater Baptist who should baptise with the Holy Spirit -- that he himself was not thus baptised, full though he was of the Spirit: there were mysteries of the Spirit life that he could not have understood. The Spirit was in John the Baptist as it was in the ancient psalmists and prophets, not as afterwards it dwelt in the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, not as it now dwells in all believers".

#### "HE WILL BAPTISE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT"

Matthew 3 makes it quite clear that a turning point had been reached in the history of Israel and of mankind.

"Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees; and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on to the fire. I baptise you with water, for repentance; but the one who comes after me is mightier than I. I am not fit to take off his shoes. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His shovel is ready in his hand and he will winnow his threshing floor;

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the wheat he will gather into his granary, but he will burn the chaff on a fire that can never go out" (Matthew 3:10-12).

John the Baptist's language is that of an imminent new age. He speaks of the One who shall come as being mightier than himself, not in a physical or military sense, but in the extensiveness and effectiveness of what he would do. His might would lie particularly in the baptism of the Holy Spirit that he would bring. John the Baptist, who baptised with water for repentance, was not fit to do even the slave's work of unloosing the shoe latches of his successor who should baptise with the Spirit. John the Baptist was contrasting his own water baptism with the later Holy Spirit baptism of the One who should come. He was not comparing his own water baptism with water baptism in the hands of Jesus, but rather was seeking to bring men to see that his own water baptism was a pointer to the greater baptism which Jesus would bring. Obviously such a greater baptism would lead us to expect something more fundamental than a merely temporary first century phenomenon of outward miracles, which some have suggested.

John the Baptist stands in the tradition of the prophets. He is still awaiting a gift of the Holy Spirit which, in the words of John 7:38-39, had not yet been given. The mightier one that should come after him would give it. John the Baptist also made clear that the work of the Holy Spirit is not all gentle and gracious. His words about gathering the wheat into the granary and burning up the chaff suggest messianic judgment and purifying, purging and refining.

The effect of the Spirit upon the individual was to produce a judgment, a "krisis". The Holy Spirit would burn up impurity with its purifying flame, hence the reference to the Holy Spirit and with fire. Jesus as judge through the Spirit would probe and thresh out the secret thoughts of men. Judgment would start as an inward spiritual process and be completed in the final sorting of wheat from tares. John's record of the work of John the Baptist has an additional fact in Chapter 1:33. John the Baptist had previously been told that when he saw the Spirit coming down upon someone and resting upon him, then he would know that this was the one who was to baptise in Holy Spirit. This was God's Chosen One (reference to Isaiah 42).

Also in John 1:29-31, John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God to take away the

sin of the world. It would be the work of the Holy Spirit to make Christ's redemptive work available to the inner experience of men.

John the Baptist sees Jesus as the one who takes rank before him; before John the Baptist was born in some sense Jesus already was -- that is to say His significance was eternal, by the origin he had in God, even though as a man he did not begin his personal existence until born of the Virgin Mary. And now John the Baptist baptised in water for the very purpose that Jesus might be revealed in Israel.

The words of John the Baptist about the Spirit baptism of Jesus never left the minds of the Apostles, so that even in connection with the baptism of Cornelius in the Spirit, Peter is still thinking back to what Jesus had said: "John baptised with water but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11: 16). The original words are found in Acts 1:5, when Jesus told the disciples to wait for the promise made by the Father of which they had heard him speak (i.e. in John 14 to 17): "John as you know baptised with water but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit and within the next few days." Always there is this contrast between John's water baptism and a greater baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

By receiving the preparer's baptism (for John prepared the way of the Lord), the penitent prepared himself to receive the Coming One's baptism; he submitted to John's baptism ready for later initiation by the greater baptism into the Messianic Kingdom.

"Holy Spirit and fire" are mentioned together. It is sometimes considered that the baptism of the Spirit referred to Pentecost, and the baptism of fire to A.D. 70, when the Romans burnt up the Jewish commonwealth and Jerusalem physically. This would however seem too narrow and too temporary and destructive an exhibition of the Spirit to meet the language of permanence and benefit in all the references that contrast John's baptism with the greater baptism of the Spirit in the hands of the Messiah.

### "ANOINTED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT"

John's baptism then leads us to the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This baptism of Jesus at the hands of John is said quite clearly to be the occasion of the outpouring of the Spirit upon Jesus. This would be the fulfilment of Isaiah 61 and Isaiah 11, and particularly of Isaiah 42 to which reference is made

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in the Voice from heaven ("My Beloved in whom I am well pleased").

Yet surely Jesus must have been filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, no less than John the Baptist, particularly when his very conception was the result of the direct work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:30-35). The special presence of God with Jesus is seen in his growth in wisdom and God's favour (Luke 2:40) and in the remarkable interest in divine *things* shown by him at the age of 12 when found in the temple by his parents who had, sorrowing, sought for him. Indeed as Jesus grew up he advanced in wisdom and in favour with God and men (Luke 2:52). However, whatever is meant by John the Baptist's being filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (literally fulfilled when the babe leapt with joy as Mary entered the room) and however Jesus shared a similar filling, yet it was only when he was baptised by John that the New Testament speaks of a full indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Jesus. Matthew's description puts it thus:

"Then Jesus arrived at the Jordan from Galilee, and came to John to be baptised by him. John tried to dissuade him. 'Do you come to me?' he said; 'I need rather to be baptised by you'. Jesus replied, 'Let it be so for the present; we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires.' John then allowed him to come. After baptism Jesus came up out of the water at once, and at that moment heaven opened; he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove to alight upon him; and a voice from heaven was heard saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, on whom my favour rests'. (Matthew 3:13-17; see also Mark 1:9).

Great though Jesus had already been, something new and different happened when the Holy Spirit took up residence in him by Jordan's waters.

After his baptism he climbed up the banks of Jordan out of the water, perhaps up some little path and when he stood on the top of the bank above the river, heaven opened and the heavenly voice linked the words "This is My Son", with "My beloved on whom my favour rests". thus combining the Davidic promises in Psalm 2 with the Servant promises of Isaiah 42. The voice declared that in Jesus the Davidic promises and the Servant prophecies met. In his own person he would unite both kingly and suffering aspects of Messiah's mission, thus solving a problem which must have often puzzled the

students of the prophets in times past.

This baptism was the point of handover from the Law and the Prophets to the Age of the Kingdom and Messiah. As Peter declares in Acts 10 to Cornelius, "I need not tell you what happened lately all over the land of the Jews, starting from Galilee after the baptism proclaimed by John" (Acts 10:37). This baptism was the starting point and Peter goes on to say:

"You know about Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him".

Again Paul in Acts 13 stresses the importance of the point of handover, and final span of the bridge between the Testaments:

"John made ready for his coming by proclaiming baptism as a token of repentance to the whole people of Israel. And when John was nearing the end of his course, he said 'I am not what you think I am. No, after me comes one whose shoes I am not fit to unfasten". (v 24-26).

The Lord Jesus may be described as the pivot of history, and his baptism was a vital link in the initiation of the Age of Messiah; it was indeed the moment of initiation of Jesus himself into that Age. Thereafter he could walk forward into Galilee and say 'The time is fulfilled' (Mark 1:15).

### "WITHOUT MEASURE"

Jesus himself was the first to experience the baptism of the Spirit. The Lord himself personally entered the New Era which he was then to introduce to those who should follow him. Thereafter it was by the Spirit of God that he performed wonderful works so that men could be sure that the Kingdom of God had come upon them (Matthew 12:28).

Even the very opening of the heavens from which emerged the dovelike symbol of the Spirit, was itself symbolic of a breaking through of the divine from the heavenly realm into the earthly. The divine begetting of Jesus had been the breaking in of the Spirit of God in the person of his Son. The baptism of the Spirit was the breaking in of the Spirit upon the Son. In the voice that came from the gap in the heavens, the decree of Psalm 2 was indeed

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declared "You are my Son". "This Day I become your Father". God already was his Father but now there was a formal acknowledgment and an endowment with special equipment and special power.

Often men have argued about when Jesus became the Christ, the Anointed. In fact there are a number of milestones in the coming of the Spirit to Jesus. He was conceived by the Spirit; 'he was baptised by the Spirit'; he had a foretaste of the full glory of the Spirit, when transfigured; he was resurrected according to a Spirit of Holiness and when he ascended to the right hand of God, then his anointing by the Spirit was complete.

His own receiving of the Spirit without measure constituted him the initiator of the New Age, the nucleus of the New Man, of the One Body, the nucleus of the New Israel. Having been begotten of the Spirit he was prepared later to share it with others.

Sometimes readers are puzzled by Acts 2:33 which speaks of Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit from the Father when he was exalted to God's right hand. This passage refers to his receiving of the Holy Spirit to give to others, whereas the baptism of the Spirit which came to him after his water baptism of John was a baptism personal to himself, though it enabled him to minister unto others.

### ACCEPTING THE CROSS

A later chapter will demonstrate how the Spirit made the redemptive work of Jesus available in the experience of others (John 16:14). It is therefore important to recognise the redemptive implications of the acceptance of baptism by Jesus at the hands of John. He who needed not to repent and who had no sins needing forgiveness submitted to a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins. This was a significant work of association with sinners, being numbered with the transgressors and making their load his. In effect he here proclaims himself the sin bearer and accepts the way of the cross -- being ready to share the consequences of human sin. His Spirit baptism takes place only after the water baptism in which he indicates his close association with sinners and his understanding of his redemptive ministry. As on Pentecost dealing with sin came first: then the positive gift of the Spirit. God proclaims his pleasure in his beloved Son who has now committed himself to die for sinners.

It is important to notice that the Spirit is poured

upon Jesus quite separately from his water baptism. Sometimes the two are confused and some see in the water baptism a means of the mystical transmission of the Spirit. This is not the teaching of Scripture. Water baptism expresses commitment and the commitment so expressed is both the product of the Spirit and the channel of the Spirit's further work.

Thus baptised in the Spirit without measure (John 3:34) Jesus is equipped for life and service in the New Age and the New Covenant. Far more than Saul before him, Christ is now "another man", able to go forward and grapple with the tempter's power, able to enter upon a new wilderness journey as part of his new exodus. What way would he take? The answer is in Matthew 4. Would he seek to win people by using his newfound powers to be a bread-king and feed the hungry? Would he be a sensation-monger appealing to the superstitious?

Would he be a politician doing evil that good might follow, in the manner of politicians who have always manoeuvred affairs "for the good of others"? All these courses he rejected when led by the Spirit into the wilderness. His first action after being baptised by the Spirit was to determine that he would follow the way of the cross and not the way of the political schemer.

So began the great ministry. How happy were the eyes who saw these things and the ears that heard the things of him who had been anointed with the Spirit of God. Many prophets and saints had desired to see what they now saw, but never saw it; to hear what they now heard, but never heard it (Matthew 13: 16-17). In other words the anticipations of these prophets and saints who foresaw the Kingdom of God were now coming to pass in the ministry of the Lord.

Men were now pressing into the kingdom of God (Luke 16:16). The Kingdom now proclaimed was not a political or observable physical phenomenon but an inner state (Luke 17: 21; 21). It was the seed of a great tree (Luke 13: 18-19); it was a state into which people could enter if lawyers did not hinder them (Luke 11:52): it was a gift to be received as little children (Mark 13:10-16) and to be entered by new birth -- of the Spirit (John 3:35): it was a realm which publicans and sinners were then and there entering, while spiritual leaders remained outside (Matt 21:31 cf Luke 7:29-30). If by the Spirit of God Jesus drove out demons, then Israel could be assured that the Kingdom of God was already at work among them (Matt. 12:28). When disciples went forth in the name of Jesus to preach in

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

a city, then the Kingdom of God had come close to them (Luke 10:11-12). The parables of Matt. 13 portrayed the qualities of this divine realm that Jesus established. They were all likenesses of the Kingdom of God -- that Kingdom Age which was dawning. Men could reject it, more or less (the Sower); some could be unaffected by it (wheat and tares); it was the small beginning of great things (mustard seed); so slight at times as to make its great potential unbelievable (leaven); its life was from God (the crop that grows while the farmer sleeps). And when Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God his emphasis lay on the present blessings he was then and there endowing. He did of course speak also of final judgment and the consummation of all things. but essentially he was the bearer of the gospel of God's kingly dominion (Kingdom) manifested among men, in fulfilment of the prophetic anticipations, in the person of the Son who was richly endowed by the Holy Spirit.

### THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST

How great he was words fail to tell, and yet it is in his uniqueness that we find our own conviction of his divine personality. Just as it laid its grip upon the disciples so it does upon us. In his baptism of the Holy Spirit lay the power to realise his divine Sonship, to lay his spell on those who should come to him. As we stand before him, there is an inner compulsion that makes us certain that we stand in the presence of our Lord.

We see the effect of his baptism of the Spirit in his quite assumption of authority. He spoke as One having authority. "It is said of old... but I say unto you". When Jesus spoke men were amazed -- "What manner of man is this?" Quietly he assumed authority, "Many will say unto me in that day... then will I say unto them" -- "all judgment is committed unto the Son". His message pointed to himself. To bring men to trust in him as their unfailing guide and resource was his main objective. He trained them to give him a trust which otherwise belonged only to God. He talked unceasingly of himself, yet never appeared an egotist. He recognised and recommended humility in others, yet he said that he was the bread of life; the way, the truth and the life; the resurrection and the life, whom to see, Abraham rejoiced. Jesus, after his baptism of the Spirit realising his true destiny and his true origin in all its fulness could say "This day is this scripture fulfilled". Others may have seen him as a mere man,

but he called all men to come unto him, "for to believe on him was their main duty and not to believe in him their chief sin".

Side by side with his indirect assuming of authority he made direct claims describing himself as the Son of Man, and God as "my Father".

To these direct claims he added indirect claims by doing only what God could do, forgiving sins, stilling waves, bestowing life and claiming to be the one who would judge the world. Yet never could man regard him as an imperial megalomaniac.

Furthermore he was altogether above us, yet never superior with any overweening superiority. It seemed so natural for him to say "Which of you convinceth me of sin", and "I do always those things which please my Father". Yet never does he strike us as a boastful man. Other men needed saving, not he. Other men were lost sheep, he was the Good Shepherd. He was one on his own, yet never did he say or seem to convey the impression that he thanked God that he was not as other men were. All other men were dead. He was the Life. All other men were in darkness. He was the Light. All other men were hungry. He was the Bread. No consciousness of sin or moral failure. Master of every situation. Altogether above us.

And yet not superior, no snob, no crank, no eccentric, no self important purveyor of new theories. His teaching was certainly self-centred, his behaviour totally unself-centred, friendly to sinners, to children, to lepers, to harlots.

What a character he was! How inadequate our praises! Whence came this power? Firstly from the fact he was the Son of the living God, divine in his origin, even called God upon occasions, God visiting his people, Emmanuel, God with us. In Jesus, God entered human life, entered to overcome, in human nature, what defeats us, to bear our sins, to share our situation, to enter our valley of the shadow of death, to share our "penalty", to become the nucleus of the new humanity, to identify with us that we might be identified with him, to live as the Head and centre of the Church, renewing it by the Holy Spirit, and ultimately to come again and receive us into his immortal fellowship. This is Jesus. It was by the baptism of the Holy Spirit that he revealed in action his divine origin and divine role and began the three years of lonely walk to the cross which he had chosen when the Spirit drove him into the wilderness.

Before his baptism of the Spirit he was free of sin and unblemished. He seemed but an ordinary

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man, who had originally been just the carpenter of Nazareth. But after the Spirit was poured upon him, his true divinity was recognised by others, not so much in the outward miracles that he performed, though those were great, but by the sheer superiority which caused him to tower above all his contemporaries, without in any way seeming to stand on any self erected pedestal.

The Lord's baptism by the Holy Spirit on Jordan's banks was the first stage of his baptism. It was not complete until he emerged from the tomb; as he told the sons of Zebedee, he had a yet further baptism to undergo and was under severe constraint until the ordeal was over (Luke 12:49-51). When the baptism was thus complete and he ascended to the right hand of the throne on high, then he was in a position to pass on to his followers a baptism of the Spirit which paralleled his own. Exalted thus at God's right hand he received the Holy Spirit from

the Father as was promised, and all that the disciples saw and heard on the day of Pentecost flowed from him (Acts 2:33-34).

This chapter has taken us from the old covenant anticipation of the Spirit to the new covenant manifestation of the Spirit in three stages:

a. Jesus entered the new age himself -- was baptised in the Spirit, tested and proved.

b. As Messiah and Servant ("the beloved Son in whom I am well pleased") he underwent the representative Messianic baptism of fire, in his death.

c. Then, with victory complete by his resurrection and ascension, the Lord can baptise others in the Spirit.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 4

Early in his ministry, as recorded by John, Jesus expounded to Nicodemus the principles of the birth of the Spirit by which men could enter the new age. Within this conversation lie the seeds of the New Testament teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, both when viewed as the Lord's gift from the right hand of God and as the Christian's experience as he is sanctified by his living Lord.

The conversation takes place against the background of the baptism of John, which we have been considering. The mission of John had stirred the whole nation including the Pharisees. Then Jesus had moved into the limelight and the more sincere, like Nicodemus, felt that his claims must at least be investigated (John ch. 3).

The Jewish Rabbi visits Jesus by night. Perhaps we should not criticise his caution: he was genuinely impressed by Jesus and he did go! He could hardly be expected to commit himself publicly at this stage - though later on, when all seemed lost, he did. The reason he was impressed by Jesus seems more open to criticism.

"Rabbi, we know you are a teacher sent by God; no one could perform these signs of yours unless God was with him" (V 2).

It is as if the outward accompaniments of the teaching of Jesus made greater impact on Nicodemus than the inner quality. This kind of failure to understand constantly distressed Jesus throughout his ministry: "ye sought me because of the loaves": the Samaritan woman was impressed by his knowledge of her private life: the disciples misunderstood his warning about the leaven of the Pharisees. Men listened at the level of the flesh -- the material and physical.

### BORN AGAIN

So Jesus sweeps aside all compliments and conversational niceties and goes straight to the heart of his message:

"Unless a man has been born over again he cannot see the Kingdom of God".

Not intellectual satisfaction or external power -- but divinely initiated inner change alone could enable a man to perceive the Kingly dominion

### BORN OF THE SPIRIT

(Kingdom) of God which operated at a higher level than the physical.

But Nicodemus still groped :

"How is it possible for a man to be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" (v 4).

At best he felt that as one grew older one's pattern of life could not be changed: at worst he was resting his faith in having been born a Jew: what more could Jesus want? Or perhaps he was just obtuse and thought in purely physical terms. However it brought forth the most fundamental of replies from the Lord:

"In truth I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born from water and spirit. Flesh can give birth only to flesh; it is spirit that gives birth to spirit. You ought not to be astonished then, when I tell you that you must be born over again".

The Kingdom of God could not be seen at this stage, neither could it be entered as a result of physical birth or natural descent. Being a Jew did not make a man a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Once the Kingdom of God was perceived on the spiritual level then racial privilege had no bearing on a man's position. Neither could the punctilious observance of religious practices bring a man into the sphere of God's reign. The initiative was with God, not with man. Here was no salvation by the racial origin of the Jew, nor by the theological expertise of the rabbi. Men are impotent. Only God can save. Repeatedly we shall come back to this theme as we explore New Testament teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit.

What Jesus was teaching fitted in with a proper understanding of John's baptism, towards which Nicodemus can be assumed to have had sympathy. "Except a man be born of water AND of the Spirit..." -- in the ears of Nicodemus "water" would have referred to the baptism of John. The baptism of John, rightly understood, expressed the principles fully realised in the baptism of the Spirit, which said John, would be bestowed by the greater than he. The baptism of John was in outward form identical with the cleansing ceremony by which Gentiles were proclaimed as Jewish proselytes. By adopting the same rite John was declaring to Jews, the humiliating

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truth that they were as much in need of cleansing as the Gentiles. He, like Jesus after him, proclaimed that the initiative was with the God who could from the very stones raise children to Abraham.

But John's mission was one of preparation: as he himself confessed, it only went so far. It pointed to the one who should baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus was he and therefore tells Nicodemus that to the water baptism of John must be added the baptism of the Spirit. John proclaimed the need to die to sin -- to be cleansed -- to be forgiven. Jesus brought the means of attaining a new life to supersede the old life of the flesh. And the rest of the New Testament tells the great story of how men and women, not only had their past blotted out, but also became new creatures in Christ Jesus, living temples of the Holy Spirit. They therefore had to abandon their reliance on race and accept the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They had to cease from righteousness which springs from human effort and rest upon the righteousness of faith. By the act of God in Christ men would emerge as from the womb, from darkness into light, from the confines and restriction of legalism into the freedom of the Spirit, from a continual reminder of sin in daily sacrifice, to an uplifted saviour who was even more beyond the Mosaic ritual, than was the brazen serpent in the wilderness (v 14).

All these themes are implicit in John 3 and, even further, the fact that the new age of the Spirit -- the Kingdom or Kingly reign of God -- could not become fully effective among men until Jesus himself had risen beyond the realm of flesh: until he had transcended the local, national and human and was sat down at the right hand of God. Then, and then only, could he fully perform the work of recreating men and women, as we shall see when we consider John 7:38-39 "the Spirit was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified", and the "Comforter" chapters (John 14-17).

### HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE

So important is John 3 that it also records the answer of Jesus to those who as they read the scriptural testimony in this book, may be constrained to ask: "but how does the Holy Spirit operate? What is the meaning of Christ dwelling within the believer?" Nicodemus is their spokesman when he asks how the second birth can take place. After telling him that the whole matter is on the level of spirit, Jesus adds:

"The wind blows where it wills: you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from, or where it is going. So with everyone is born of the spirit" (v 8).

The wind is "a powerful unseen force which sweeps across the face of the earth, none knows whence or whither. The wind -- the spirit" (the same word means both and the one stands for the other) -- "it bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest its voice, but thou knowest not whence it cometh or whither it goeth. But you can feel its breath on your face if, hearing it pass, you go out and stand in its course. So is every one that is born of the spirit. Don't ask for credentials. Don't wait till you know the source of the wind before you let it refresh you, or its destination before you spread sail to it. It offers what you need: trust yourself to it".

Nicodemus is still puzzled. "This talk of the freely blowing wind is destructive of the sacred fabric of institutional religion. 'How can these things come to pass?'"

And Jesus meets this puzzlement of Nicodemus with amazement:

"What! is this famous teacher in Israel ignorant of such things?"

Nicodemus should at least have glimpsed these ideas from the Old Testament scriptures in chapter 2 of this book (i.e. Ezek. 36:26 et seq.). And, says Jesus, if Nicodemus could not grasp spiritual things from earthly analogies, how would he see the full blaze of heaven, from which Jesus had been sent and to which he would return, to be the link between heaven and earth, the fulfilment of Jacob's dream of the ladder (John 1:51). "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man, which is in heaven" (John 3:13).

The theme of the divine initiative in the recreation of men and women is pursued throughout the gospel of John and is presented as the "truth", and reality, in contrast with the racial, legal and material shadows which had preceded it. Jesus inaugurated a new age -- the age of the Spirit -- which transcends all that went before.

### I CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN

Thus John presents Jesus as the One who brought heaven into earth's affairs, who being on the



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level of the Spirit, gives himself to men, who then cease to live on the level of the flesh and began to live on the level of the Spirit. John is reflecting on the life of the Spirit as experienced by the church and traces it back to its origin in Jesus, who as the Word made flesh, came from God and went to God, giving men power to become the sons of God (John 1 and John 13:3).

The heavenly origin and power of Jesus is expressed by John in such phrases as these:

"So the word became flesh: he came to dwell among us and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only son, full of grace and truth" (1:14).

"John cried aloud, 'This is the man I meant when I said, 'He comes after me, but takes rank before me', for before I was born, he already was'" (1: 15, 30).

"I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (6:38).

"I am that living bread which came down from heaven" (6:51).

"You belong to this world below: I go to the world above".

"Your home is in this world; mine is not" (8:23).

"If God were your father, you would love me, for God is the source of my being, and from him I come" (8:42).

"Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58 -- my heavenly origin pre-dates Abraham).

"My Father and I are one" (10:30).

And this heavenly power was his to communicate to those who put their trust in him. This was partly true when he was among them; "For as the Father has life-giving power in himself, so has the son, by the Father's gift" (5:26). But for the New Age to be fully established he must first be glorified. "What if you see the Son of man ascending to the place where he was before?" (6:63): "for a little longer I shall be with you: then I am going away to him who sent me" (7:33).

## LIVING WATER

The effect of the Son of Man's Ascension will be discussed in subsequent chapters -- but it is widely expressed under a variety of symbols in John, as the imparting of the life of God -- the life of Christ -- the life of the Spirit to the believer.

"The water that I shall give him will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life" (4:14).

"Anyone who gives heed to what I say and puts his trust in him who sent me has hold of eternal life, and does not come up for judgment, but has already passed from death to life" (5:24).

"The bread that God gives comes down from heaven and brings life to the world" (6:33).

"Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you can have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood possesses eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food. My blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells continually in me and I dwell in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me shall live because of me" (6:53-58).

"My own sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one shall snatch them from my care" (10:27-29).

In all these sayings, Jesus himself is presented as the source of the conveying of the divine life of the Spirit to those who put their trust in him. He is the place where God is to be found and experienced. Not in the material, geographical and physical but in the spiritual, in Jesus. As he told the woman of Samaria the time was coming when men would worship the Father neither at Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem, "the time approaches, indeed it is already here, when those who are real worshippers (contrast the shadow worshippers) will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Such are the worshippers whom the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth" (John 4:21-24).

This is the distinctive theme of the New Testament. Jesus is the place where the Father may

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be found; he, not temples made with hands, is the true place of contact between God's sinlessness and human sinfulness. Not the correct ceremony in the right place, as the Samaritans and the Jews thought: salvation is not mediated by cult or location but through the living Jesus -- the source of both Spirit

and truth.

Such is the lofty theme which permeates the fourth gospel. It is central to Christianity. A true doctrine and real experience of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to the Gospel.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 5

### THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS NOT YET GIVEN BECAUSE JESUS WAS NOT YET GLORIFIED

As the time approached for his glorification in death and resurrection, John tells us how the Lord gathered his disciples together into an upper room to speak of the things closest to his heart as a final preparation of them for the ordeal to come and the mission which should follow. His main message was that his impending departure from the earthly scene was not a cause for sorrow, as in fact he would be more fully present than ever before, by means of the Comforter or Holy Spirit.

The record of the solemnly beautiful occasion in John chapters 13 to 17 is set in the total context of the fourth gospel with its emphasis on the Christian experience of the indwelling Lord Jesus. The inspired arrangement of the material in John's gospel was carried out subsequent to Pentecost and therefore reports especially elements of the Lord's teaching which became meaningful as the Church experienced the Holy Spirit at work in their midst. (e.g. John 2:22; 12:16).

#### WHY THE SPIRIT WAS NOT YET GIVEN

This is especially clear in the case of chapter 7 which describes the life-giving work of Jesus in terms of the Holy Spirit and declares that the receiving of this new life of the Spirit was not possible till after Jesus was glorified. So "on the last and greatest day of the festival Jesus stood and cried aloud, 'If anyone is thirsty let him come to me; whoever believes in me, let him drink'. As Scripture says 'Streams of living water shall flow out from within him'. He was speaking of the Spirit which believers in him would receive later; for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified".

This inspired linking of living water and Spirit makes us look again at the episode of the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus offers her "living water" which, when the thirsty drink they will never thirst again. "The water I will give will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life". An inner spring continuously producing a new quality of life! That will certainly be True of the life to come, but is not Jesus speaking of a new life in the present; a new experience now? These words describe a gift given by Christ to all true believers, in all centuries. It is that living force capable of transforming men's lives and giving them, even now, a taste of eternity -- an

experience of that divine quality of life called eternal. And every Christian who has really been born again, receives this life and rejoices in the words of John 4.

He must therefore also rejoice in the message of John 7:38 which takes the metaphor a stage further in that the water not only wells up but also flows out of the person and becomes a source of benefit to others. And verse 39 declares that this water represents the Spirit (described as the Holy Spirit in the KJV), given to all believers.

But then we come to the puzzling statement that this Spirit had not, during the days of Christ's ministry, been given, because the time was not ripe. Jesus had not yet been glorified.

This passage makes the glorification of Jesus the turning point in human history. Before this glorification the Spirit had not yet been given; after it the Spirit had been given. This is notwithstanding the evident activity of the Spirit in the Old Testament. There was some sense not previously evident in which the Spirit was at work in the New Testament times, and even then at work in none but the Lord Jesus till Pentecost.

True it is that Matthew 10 records how the disciples were sent out and received a special manifestation of the Spirit to shower upon others, but something happened after the glorification of Jesus which had no precedent. There is a new sense of Spirit activity.

If this is true then it significantly affects our exposition. It means that we cannot take the Old Testament or even the Gospels as giving us the base for a full definition of the Spirit. We must come to Pentecost after the glorification of Jesus. Only then can we expect to see the fullness of the Holy Spirit at work among believers.

#### THE GLORIFICATION OF JESUS

The first need is to define the term "glorification".

Jesus was not glorified completely until the Ascension. However, there is a unity in the events of the life of Jesus so that his ministry, his death, his resurrection, the ascension and the gift of the Spirit stand together as one event. Thus John 12:16 speaks of the disciples as understanding only after his glorification, the application of the prophecy of

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

Zechariah to the triumphal entry of Jesus. Here glorification refers to the ascension to the Father from whence he sent forth the Spirit (Acts 2:33). When in verse 23 of the same chapter Jesus tells the Greeks that the hour was come for the Son of Man to be glorified, the emphasis is upon his death. Likewise in John 13: 31-35 Jesus is referring to his death when he says "Now is the Son of Man glorified". Judas has had his last chance in receiving the sop. Jesus had given him the opportunity to rethink his whole course. Instead he went out and those most pregnant words appear in the King James version "And it was night". The figure of Judas leaving the light of the room and receding into the darkness outside has been likened to the symbolic blackness which was his destiny. By leaving him free to go out into the night Jesus had sealed his own death warrant. The last opportunity for Judas to respond to an uneasy conscience had gone and, as the Lord Jesus would not call upon ten legions of angels, he was as good as dead. He described this fact by the words "Now the Son of Man is glorified and in him God is glorified".

In his last prayer Jesus prays that God will glorify him, that he may glorify God. Here the total triumph of death and resurrection would be in mind. In verse 4 he speaks of having glorified God on the earth by completing the work he had been given, particularly in relation to the men God had given him out of the world. In verse 5 he looks forward to being glorified in the presence of God with that glory whose origin went back before the world was. (John 17).

All the aspects of his mission are described as glorification. Glorifying the Father and being glorified were a process involving the displaying of the Father during his ministry, the tasting of death and finally of triumphing over death.

The completion of his glorification is reached when the men who were God's gift to Jesus should be with him where he would be so that they might

look upon his glory, or in the words of the King James version "that he might be glorified in them" (John 17:24). From Pentecost onwards the believers dwelt in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and could be said to be with him where he was, sharing the glory which streamed from him at the right hand of God.

It is against this background that we understand John 7:39. It was not possible to give the Spirit to men in the new sense until Jesus had reached the realisation of his glory. The realisation of his glory was the completion of his redemptive work. Only when this was complete was there a basis on which to work into the experience of others that which he himself had achieved. Until it had been achieved it was not there to become part of the believer's experience. Once he had completed his work then the objective facts outside people, concerning what he had accomplished could become subjective facts inside them. He could write his "law" upon men's hearts (Jer. 31:33); could be mediator of the new covenant by means of his redeeming death (Heb. 9:15).

Until Jesus had completed his redemptive work and passed through all the stages of glory to the fullness of heavenly glory the foundation had not been laid for the giving of the Holy Spirit. Put the other way round, once he had completed his work of providing the basis of linking heaven and earth, then and then only could he proceed by the Spirit to forge the link. Redemption had to be achieved before the Holy Spirit could inspire its preaching (1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:12). The Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, would draw from the things of Christ and make them known in the inner experience of the believers. So the Lord promised, in his words after the last supper (John 16:14-15). The Jesus who was about to leave them would come back to them in the closest possible way.

And this was the message that shone through as Jesus talked with the disciples in the upper room after supper.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 6

The well known words with which he began his after supper exhortation echo the thought that Jesus had ascended far away to the Father's throne for the very purpose of coming very close to them.

"Set your troubled hearts at rest. Trust in God always; trust also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father's home; if it were not so I should have told you; for I am going there on purpose to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also; and my way there is known to you". Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way; I am the truth and I am the life; no one comes to the Father except by me" (John 14:1-6).

His going would be spiritual as well as spatial, but is expressed wholly in spatial terms because there is no better way to describe it than in terms of physical ascent to God. The Father's house and dwelling places here are spiritual rather than structural. The road or way to it is also spiritual -- for it is Jesus himself (v 6). One need not be surprised, then, if the coming in this instance is also spiritual. The physical return of Christ to earth for which we wait is of course taught in abundance by other Scriptures, but is not intended here.

The Coming in John 14:3 is none other than his coming in the Comforter, Advocate or Spirit of truth.

"If you love me you will obey my commands, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another to be your Advocate, who will be with you forever -- the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot receive him, because the world neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he dwells with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you bereft: I am coming back to you. In a little while the world will see me no longer, but you will see me; because I live, you too will live; then you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you. The man who has received my commands and obeys them -- he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love him and disclose myself to him" (v 15-21).

### "I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF"

Through the Comforter or Advocate Jesus will dwell in the believer. He will not leave them bereft -- He will come back to them. Because he is alive in heaven -- they will be alive too -- alive with his life. He will disclose himself to them.

The idea is repeated in verse 23 "Anyone who loves me will heed what I say; then my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him". This was to be a coming to indwell the believer: to all who put their trust in Jesus. (see also Rev. 3:20).

### THE PARACLETE

The word translated "Comforter" or "Advocate" is "paraclete". It is translated variously by different renderings: advocate, comforter, helper, strengthener. It is very difficult to find a precise English word to match this term. The idea of "para" is alongside, as in the word parallel, and the paraclete is the one who comes alongside another one. It can be that he comes alongside to comfort, to say "cheer up"; it can be that he comes along as your lawyer to see you do not go to prison, in which case "advocate" is the better translation. All too often the word "comfort" is thought of as a sugary and insipid word. However, its real basis is quite strong. "FORT" has the idea of strength and fortitude in it, so that the Comforter comes along to strengthen the believer. It was indeed a very virile sixteenth century word. James Stewart in his book "The Wind of the Spirit" variously translates the word "paraclete" as the reinforcer, the strengthener, the giver of power and might and victory. It conveys the idea, he says, of some heavenly reinforcement to your side. Barclay's "New Testament Words" has the same idea. This book will use the words Comforter, Advocate, Strengthener and the original Greek word paraclete interchangeably so that we can get used to the rich variety of ideas involved.

A feature of these passages which speak of the Comforter or Advocate is the way in which the personal pronoun "he" is deliberately used. (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; v 14). When we think of a "he" we usually mean a bodily individual, and obviously the Holy Spirit is not personal in this sense. On the other hand when we use the word "it" of the Holy Spirit we almost feel as if we are detracting from the personal power of God manifested through the

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Spirit. There is indeed a deeply personal link between the Holy Spirit and the person of the Lord Jesus. So much so, that the Holy Spirit can be described now as his "alter ego", "his other self". The sequence of thought in John 14 is then

**John 14:1-6** "I am going to my Father, that I may be fully united with him, and then I will come to you by the Comforter that you may be at one with me in sharing this unity".

**John 14:7-11** "Already he who sees me sees the Father, and what I do the Father is doing in me".

**John 14:12-14** "If you have faith in me, then when I have ascended to the Father, in response to your faith I will ensure you the power to carry out my work even more extensively than I have been doing while with you. Greater works than these you shall do!"

How can the one who has faith in Jesus do greater things than Jesus and why should the reason be given as because Jesus is going to the Father (John 14:12)? The intention of this passage is not to say that the disciples would work bigger miracles than Jesus. The biggest thing he ever did anyway was to die. The works they would do would be greater because more extensive: they carried his gospel to the ends of the then known world and indeed laid the foundation of the wider conversion that has taken place ever since. (Col. 1:23).

This extension has derived its strength from his heavenly supervision and has all along been a continuation of the work he started when upon earth. The Lord's range of activity had then been limited by locality. Once he had gone to the Father and the Comforter had come to the believers, then the range of his work was greater and through his church the Lord Jesus has done greater things than he was previously able to do.

These principles still apply. If I am in Christ and he is in me, then what I am doing is what he is doing, and is not the result of my own self-determination. If I respond to the Spirit, then Christ will do in me what he was doing in his own day and what he did in the first century. A thousand Christs, that is to say a thousand in whom Christ dwells, will spread Christ more widely than one Christ, though it will all be the work of the one Christ.

**John 14:15-17** "I have been your Comforter -- Strengthened, while here upon earth with you -- but when I ascend to the Father, He will send you another Strengthened (i.e. I, or the Father and I, will come to you in a new form) -- even the Spirit of Truth who will be with you for ever. He is

recognisable only to the eye of faith -- not to the world in general. You know him -- because you know me and you will be able to recognise me within him. You know him, because he dwells with you -- (in the person of Jesus) -- and will be (NEB margin) in you (by the Spirit v.17).

Note that in response to Christ's prayer the Comforter would be with the believer for ever (v 16). No sense here of a temporary first century gift to launch the church, but the whole passage, like the rest of the New Testament, vibrates with awareness of the resurrected Lord who ascended to the right hand of God and who LIVES -- at this very moment and for all time: who has received all power and is therefore universally available in the individual and in the church and at work within us for ever. At the right hand of God, sat down in God's throne, he may seem immeasurably far away. In fact, the New Testament tells us that, as our heavenly high priest, he is nearer to the believers than when he was among them on the earth, because his presence is now inward and universal.

His receiving of power at his ascension to the Father is associated in Matthew 28:18-20 with his permanent presence in the church.

"Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptise men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time" (K.J.V. 'for ever').

I suggest that these words of Christ in Matthew 28 come echoing down the years for our comfort. They cannot be limited in their scope to the first century. Some would translate the last phrase as "end of the age" which they date in A.D. 70 when Rome overthrew the Jewish Commonwealth. This particular "with-ness" of Jesus is thus said by them to be applicable only to the first century church with the Apostles in their midst. This would mean that the unity of Christ with his church was then broken and they were left to depend for the presence of Christ solely on the written record of the Apostles' labours in the New Testament. This runs counter to the confidence and place in the gospel narrative of these assuring words. They then would be worthy of a politician, but not of the risen Christ. Surely John 14 would lead us to appropriate these words even in our

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own day and rejoice that Jesus is still closely and personally with us. If we have Christ only in a written record why should John chapter 14 be preserved at all? It would only be telling of blessings denied to us.

**John 14:18-21** -- "I will not leave you bereft -- on your own -- without strength. I will come back to you in this new form, a form which the world in general will not be able to recognise. They will think I am still absent, but you will know better: by the eye of faith you will still see me. Because I am alive at my Father's right hand and in you -- therefore you too, will live (not merely exist). By your own inner experience, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you. And if you show an obedient love, my Father will reciprocate that love, and 'I will disclose myself to you' -- you will know by experience that I am with you and in you".

Paul in Galatians 2:20 echoes these ideas of the Son living in the believer by the Spirit : --

"I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" -- words which can be as true today of others, as they were when uttered by Paul.

**John 14:22-25** The other Judas is puzzled about how the believers will be able to see Jesus and yet he will not be visible to the world in general. Jesus makes it clear that it is an inner -- but very real -- experience of the Father and himself, coming to dwell within, because they would heed his words and open to him. He is telling them now, so that they will be ready and waiting for the power on high (which for them came on Pentecost).

Similarly, in all ages, the believers must come to a state of response, ready for their individual Pentecost.

"Behold I stand knocking at the door: if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20-21).

**John 14:26** The Comforter or Advocate is here identified by Jesus with the Holy Spirit. The Father will send him in the Name of Jesus -- that is the Father will send the Spirit as the representative of the Son. In ordinary speech the phrase "in the name

of" means "on behalf of" (e.g. when a policeman commands: "In the name of the law" -- not in his own right). Thus the Holy Spirit comes not with any separate authority, but to represent and make Jesus real. And when men open to the Spirit they open to Jesus. (As spirit is often contrasted with law, our policeman analogy is given only to help define the use of the words).

And the Comforter will teach them everything and will call to mind all that Jesus has told them. For the immediate disciples this meant that the things Jesus said during his ministry (and of course during the forty days after the resurrection) would be brought to their minds -- not only in the sense of reminding them of what they might have forgotten -- but more fundamentally -- matching the words of Jesus to their appropriate situations and enabling the disciples to see them as a whole. Thus the disciples after Pentecost were able to recall applications of Scripture Jesus had made and apply them confidently to appropriate aspects of the Lord's work. Thus his saying about the temple of his body being raised after three days came to have meaning to them after his glorification. It fell into place "and they believed the scripture (e.g. Psa. 16 quoted by Peter on Pentecost) and the Word which Jesus had said". They believed the words factually before, but now they understood them to the point where they could have faith in him and map their course and witness by these words (John 2:22).

Similarly "when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him". (John 12:16 -- particularly concerning the application of Zech. 9:9 to the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on an ass's colt). They were now able to match Old Testament predictions with the events of the Lord's ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again in the Comforter. Before the witness of the disciples could begin, this facility had to be granted them. That is why they had to wait at Jerusalem till endowed with power from on high.

Another aspect of this being taught everything and having the Lord's words brought to remembrance, is the ability to witness fearlessly before Kings and rulers, as recorded of Peter and John in Acts 3 to 5. "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you shall speak, for it will not be you who are speaking but the Spirit of your Father, speaking in you" (Matt. 10: 19-20). The Spirit would witness within them. The very fact that

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the Apostles had to delegate serving of tables to others in order to find time for the Word and prayer, shows that they were not exempt from continual preparation by meditating on scripture and seeking their Lord in prayer. Yet they would not have to prepare their witness when faced with a crisis, but would find inner resources based on all previous instruction and experience made relevant to the moment.

And can we say that the Spirit never acts in this way now? For example will not the Spirit call to mind for us what we have read of the words of Jesus, either in the Bible or in the expositions of others, and make them living and active and powerful, so that the right words come for the right situation -- the right passages to meet a crisis. And have we not known the thrill of seeing new relationships in well known scriptures, bearing testimony to the power of our Lord. We must read the source book -- but the Spirit presides over the effect of his own words.

**John 14:27-29** Christ's parting gift to the disciples would be his peace -- an inner sense of

oneness with him, for oneness is the idea of both words for peace i.e. shalom (Heb) and eirene (Greek). This peace would give rest and banish fears. It is only by Jesus within that such rest can be attained -- mere objective intellectual reasoning will not do it, however Biblically based. Again he assures them that he is going away, only in order to come back and that therefore they ought to be glad that he was going to the Father. The Father was greater than he and thus his ascent to the Father would make available to them more of Christ and his power than was possible when he dwelt among them in his earthbound form. He was going to be more present with the believers when absent than when upon the earth. The presence however, though very real, would not be physical: it would not be geographical, but a matter of personal relationship, not local, but universal.

Of this presence of the absent Jesus by the Spirit we will hear more as the words of Jesus after supper proceed (especially chapter 16: 5-15).



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### Chapter 7

The Lord continues his words in the upper room with the analogy of the vine. Israel had often been likened to a vine, but he was the true or "real" vine. The theme of the indwelling Christ is implicit throughout the parable.

**John 15:1-8** "Ye are the branches". They were united to him as the branches to the main stem of a vine. "Dwell in me, as I in you". The fruit they bore would not be in their own strength but would be by his "sap" passing through them. Thus Christian righteousness is not the result of personal will and ethical strength, but is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). "Apart from me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). This is the principle running right through Paul's teaching on how to live a life pleasing to God -- not external obedience to the law, but a dispensation of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3). The only fatal sin a Christian can commit is to cease to dwell in Jesus. He will then wither and be subject to judgment. But if he stays linked with the vine, then the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus will free him from the law of sin and death and there will be no condemnation for him (Rom. 8:1-3). The one command which incorporates all others is to dwell in his love and bring forth much fruit as a consequence. Not effort and achievement, but receiving the power of inner growth. The fruit on a vine doesn't have to try to grow.

**John 15:9-17** This inner power from the risen, ascended and indwelling Lord would give them a joy such as no one under law and outward commandments could know (v 9-10); and dwelling in his love would lead to self sacrificing love for each other (v. 12-14). Their position was no longer of slaves blindly obeying -- but personal friends kept fully in the picture and bringing forth fruit of permanent value, unlike that of legalism. These hints of the theme of law versus spirit are filled out by the apostles in their letters where they contrast the way of obedience in one's own strength with the obedience of love through the indwelling Lord (v 15-17).

**John 15:18-25** He goes on to stress that He has chosen the disciples for himself, but they will be sharing his suffering at the hands of those whose vision did not extend to the inward and spiritual, who did not know the One who has sent him. They would therefore reject the witness of the disciples, in spite of the works Jesus had done among them (v 18-25).

### "IT IS EXPEDIENT THAT I GO AWAY"

Then Jesus adds that when he has ascended to the Father he will supplement their witness to the objective facts of his total ministry, by sending them the inner witness of the Spirit, which as we have seen was the great feature of Pentecost. "When your Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father -- the Spirit of Truth that issues from the Father -- he will bear witness to me. And you also are my witnesses, because you have been with me from the first" (v 26-27). The testimony of their own human observation would be augmented by the greater witness of Christ himself, present by the Spirit within them and among them as on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit comes alongside the believers to help (paraclete) their witness. The witness that they bear, the preaching that they undertake, is of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus in emphasising the doctrine of the Spirit, we do not detract from the doctrine of Christ. It is through the Spirit that Christ is made glorious in the eyes of men and in the experience of the believer. Witness without this would be purely intellectual and sterile.

**John 16:14** In the record of John 16 Jesus proceeds to explain that he is making clear to them the privilege that will be theirs, so that when they are faced with persecution and death, their faith will hold, because they will recognise that the Lord is within them as he had said he would be. The indwelling Holy Spirit, would not override their personal response -- they would have to have faith and believe that the Comforter was helping them -- they would have to recognise the experience and they would then not feel alone. Hence Jesus was preparing them and, one could add, preparing also believers in all subsequent ages.

**John 16:5-7** -- "It is for your good I am leaving" Till now Jesus had been "with them" -- i.e. present physically and so there was no need till now to prepare them for when he was no longer there. "Now I am going away to him who sent me". None of them asked him where he was going -- they did not probe to see if there were any bright aspects to this apparently grim news. It was just a disaster which plunged them into grief.

Then he adds the incredible statement:

"It is for your good I am leaving you"

The King James version is probably more familiar to us "it is expedient that I go away". What

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an amazing suggestion -- that they would actually be better off without his physical presence.

"If I do not go, your Advocate (paraclete) will not come, whereas if I go, I will send him to you".

Only by his ascent to the Father was it going to be possible to send the paraclete (Advocate or Comforter). As we saw in chapter 5 when discussing John 14, the ascended Lord Jesus -- apparently absent -- would be more present on earth than when he had been "with them". His ascension enabled him to be nearer to more people than had been possible during his ministry. Then he was inhibited by time and space and in general terms was only in one locality at a time. Now these limits would go. His presence could now be universal and inward, instead of local and outward. And to this very day "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". Now he had been glorified, the Holy Spirit could be given to make him universally available to all who should put faith in him. Not now just in Galilee or Judea in A.D. 29, but in every century from "Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strands", Jesus is present to enter into the lives of those who turn to him.

**John 16:9-11** The immediate consequence of the coming of the paraclete or Comforter would be that he would "confute the world and show where wrong and right judgment lie". The first purpose of the Advocate's coming would be one of witness to spotlight man's sin, demonstrate the source of righteousness and warn of judgment.

The three aspects of this testimony of the Spirit were all present on the day of Pentecost :

a. "to convince them of wrong by their refusal to believe in me" (Thus Peter's speech on Pentecost was to wring from his listeners the agonised cry: "What shall we do?").

b. "he will convince them that right is on my side, by showing that I go to the Father when I pass from your sight". (The Spirit on the day of Pentecost demonstrated that Jesus really had gone to the Father and from thence was still in charge of affairs -- he really had triumphed.)

c. "he will convince them of Divine judgment, by showing them that the Prince of this world stands condemned". (The work of the disciples,

especially Peter and John, as recorded in the early chapters of Acts illustrates this).

**John 16:12-13a** Jesus desists from saying much more to the disciples as they would find it beyond them. Later (after his glorification) the "still much that I could say to you" would be said, for he who is the Spirit of Truth, would guide them into all truth. The paraclete would bring authentic truth from the Father and the Son. He would have no independent authority but would be the means whereby by Father and Son entered the believer's inner experience. He would bring them the "Truth" in the sense John so often uses it, of fulfilment compared with anticipation, substance compared with shadow, reality compared with type. The Spirit would bring the complete: till then their Christian experience would be incomplete.

**John 16:13b-15** He will draw from what is Mine. These perhaps are the most vital words of all:

"He will make known to you the things that are coming: He will glorify me, for everything that he makes known of me to you he will draw from what is mine. All that the Father has is mine, and that is why I said, 'everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine' ".

Let us look closely at these words: --

a. He will make known the things that are coming (v 13). This did not mean that the Spirit would reveal the future in the sense that the book of Revelation or Daniel are doing. Rather the Spirit would make known to their experience the great events which at the time when he spoke were still future -- i.e. the events of redemption, the cross and the resurrection and their relationship to them.

b. The Spirit would glorify Jesus -- would mediate to the believers the full effectiveness of what Jesus had done. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6), This would occur when the Spirit took hold of and transmitted to the believers the things that belong to Christ ("that are mine") in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ("All that the Father has is mine"). Thus

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of his fullness have we all received (John 1:16), and in this fullness is the blend of sacrifice and victory, which originating in the Father's heart, was wrought in His Son, then by the Spirit to be worked out in the believers.

**John 16:16-30** Then Jesus summed his teaching up enigmatically. "A little while and ye shall not see me" (his physical departure) "Again, a little while and ye shall see me" (his spiritual return in the Comforter).

"Because I go to the Father" (the ascension indispensable to the outpouring of the Spirit. The Spirit could not be given till his glorification was complete -- John 7:39).

The disciples were baffled. So he expanded the thought. When he suffered they would be plunged into grief, but after the birthpangs of the new creation were over (the things that are coming v 13) they would rejoice. When the Spirit took hold of the things of Christ and worked them into their experience, then they would know a joy which was complete (v 24). They would then see him again (v 22). This does not mean seeing him in the physical sense in the post-resurrectional appearances. "When the day came they would ask nothing of him" (v 23) -- for through the Spirit they would have direct access to God, though in the name of Jesus, and this would replace the Lord's prayers to the Father on their behalf (v 25-30).

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### Chapter 8

The theme of the Spirit making the fulness of the Father in Christ known in the experience of the believer is so crucial that we must pause in our exposition of the words of the Lord after supper, to digest them and relate them to our own experience.

We saw in Chapter 5 of this book, that until Jesus had been glorified, his redemptive work was not complete and therefore not available for the Holy Spirit to minister to man's experience. After his ascension, his glorification was completed and the Spirit was poured out to give both outward and inner witness to his victory (John 7:38-39).

John 16:13-15 is expressing a parallel thought, that the work of the Spirit was to minister Christ to the believer, to minister Christ as possessing all that belonged to the Father, Christ who had risen to the right hand of God after the mightiest of all victories, even over sin and death. And by the Spirit we are led to appropriate that victory in faith and receive assurance that in him our sins are forgiven; and by the Spirit the fulness of Christ feeds us and we take of the things that are his and live by them.

Redemption and atonement are not theological issues appropriated by great intellects after a process of intense logical endeavour. They are a mighty power available to all men and women, of every race and social status who have faith in Jesus. This is not to say we should not reason about the cross and its meaning, but that salvation does not lie in the reasoning but in the fact. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a single comprehensive and exhaustive exposition of the atonement. We get a facet here and another there. Yet by the Spirit, the cross works its work and the death and resurrection of Jesus. enter plainly and gloriously into our personal spiritual experience.

I do not mean by this, that the believer learns about redemption without the Bible. The Bible is the source of information about the redemptive work of Christ. It reports the great redemptive act, but it takes something more than black words on white pages, to work it into our very experience. The Bible itself indicates here in the saying of Jesus that it was through the Spirit that he would make the cross and resurrection the supreme experience of the believer's personal life.

#### THE CROSS AND EXPERIENCE

Indeed all expositions of the cross in the New

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Testament make an appeal to experience. Thus for example in 1 Peter 2 when talking to slaves and telling them to put up with bad masters, Jesus is brought forward as the example in whose steps they are to follow, who when he was abused did not retort with abuse, who when he suffered uttered no threats. And this leads on to the fact that in his own person he carried our sins to the tree or gibbet, that we might cease to live for sin and begin to live for righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed.

Similarly in Philippians 2 Paul exhorts the Church at Philippi that they should be thinking more of each other than of their own interests, because that is what Jesus did, when in spite of his divine status he laid down all his privilege in the humiliation of the cross.

Never does the exposition of the cross in the New Testament start with an apostle saying "I am going to give you a theory or a doctrine about the cross".

There is a place for a creed or a statement of faith which attempts to systematise what we understand the cross to have achieved. This is, however, not how the Bible works. The Bible is greater than any creed. It so often starts in experience and draws power to develop it from the cross, and it is almost as if we learn what the cross means as an incidental to its moral power.

Understanding the doctrine of the cross has been likened to looking at the same one cross down a number of different avenues. A complete perspective is not gained by remaining in any one avenue.

This fact is reflected in great hymns like "The Church's One Foundation", "O Saviour where shall guilty man find rest except in Thee", "There is a green hill far away", "Was it for me that thy flesh was wounded sore", "When I survey the wondrous cross", "When my love to God grows weak, when for larger faith I seek, Then in thought I go to thee, Garden of Gethsemane", "Bread of the world in mercy broken, Wine of the Soul in mercy shed", "Here O my Lord I see thee face to face, here would I touch and handle things unseen". Read the whole hymn in each case and you will find that you have some of the finest expositions of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, as one aspect after another is highlighted, whether it be his suffering, his self abnegation, his sympathy for others or his refusal to follow the world.

It remains true that the death of the Lord Jesus

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Christ was an objective fact and that it did something outside us as well as something to us. He did die for our sins "that we might be forgiven". Yet whether or not we could write an essay on the atonement or give a clear exposition of the theology of the cross, all who have in truth contemplated the cross know what their Lord has done for them, and are constantly being bought for God by the suffering of his Son.

### CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Thus it is that Paul says in Galatians 2:20 -- "I have been crucified with Christ. The life I now live is not my life but the life which Christ lives in me. My present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me". To understand this verse is to understand the atonement in one's experience. To have Christ living in us is another way of expressing the whole work of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 6:14 has a similar ring. The crucified risen Lord, still living, enters into our experience and transforms it. We enter into his experience and are transformed so that, as far as we are concerned, the world is dead, and as far as the world is concerned, we are dead.

Many who accept the idea of Christ living within us are uneasy when we talk of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. It is a pity to disagree about words; equally however it is our loss if we hesitate to face up to the New Testament words used. The Spirit of God somehow takes hold of the cross of Christ and the whole redemptive work of Jesus and works it into the experience of the believer. This is probably the greatest truth in the whole of the Bible.

When the cross comes home into our experience, it means that we died there. The death that he died is our death: as the hymn says -- "In whose death our sins are dead". It is this death of the cross that we are appropriating as our own when we are baptised.

As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:17, when anyone is united to Christ there is a new world. The old order has gone and a new order has already begun. In other words once you are in Christ Jesus and Christ Jesus is in you, you have entered into a new age, the age of the Spirit.

Or again the words of Colossians 2:6: "Therefore since Jesus was delivered to you as Christ and Lord, live your lives in union with him". This is inward personal experience not an external impersonal doctrine. Indeed the windows through

which one views the cross are the windows of our human experience and what we see through those windows brings into our human experience a whole range of personal emotions and attitudes.

One day as we contemplate the cross and hear the words of Peter in his Pentecostal sermon "Whom you crucified", we realise that the very things we do every day are the things that brought Jesus to his death. So our sin is shown up: whether it be the sin of the Sadducees who sought material well being for themselves: or the sin of the Pharisees who could not bear to be put right: or the sin of Pilate who passed responsibility on to the others: or the sin of the multitude who just wanted to be like anybody else -- these sins are our sins, and the cross puts the spotlight upon them.

Another day in another mood, a sense of deep gratitude will be our main response to the cross. On a third day it will be a sense of assurance that in spite of our unworthiness, he has done all that could be done. This will lead to boldness, will give us strength in weakness, matched however by humility, a desire to serve, a sense of peace, a joy of fellowship. Still another day the contemplation of the cross will deliver us from the concept of Law into the glorious wide ranging liberty of the Spirit of Christ. All these attitudes, all these reactions are the work of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things which belong to Christ and making them ours. One of the most thrilling of experiences is to learn from the cross that when we try to achieve righteousness in our strength, we are lapsing into legalism and are doomed to fail. When we rest on him then we enter into the liberty, the perfect law of liberty in Christ.

In short, the cross is not merely to be read about but to be experienced. The Bible in our intellects is not the total working of the Spirit, though it has its place. Contemplative prayerful reading; fellowship with others; experience of life -- all ministered by the Spirit -- invite the indwelling of the living Christ, make us temples of the Holy Spirit.

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER

The New Testament is constantly saying that what happened to Christ happens to us. All his sadnesses and triumphs are mirrored in the personal crucifixion and constant rising of the believers. The key facts of his biography are taken by the Spirit and made part of the autobiography of each believer.

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The following passages of the New Testament take the various experiences of Christ and speak of the believer as sharing them.

"But if *we died* with Christ, we believe that we shall also *live* with him" (Romans 6:8).

"knowing this, that our old man was *crucified* with him" (Romans 6:6).

"I have been *crucified* with Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

"For if we *died with* him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

"We were *buried* with him through baptism, baptism into death" (Romans 6:4).

"having been *buried* with him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12).

"baptism, wherein ye were also *raised* with him through faith in the working of God, who *raised* him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).

"If then ye were *raised* together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

"and *raised us* up with him, and made us *sit* with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

"You did he *quicken* together with him" (Colossians 2:13).

"but God *quickened us* together with Christ, and *raised us* up with him" (Ephesians 2:4).

"if so be that we *suffer* with him, that we may be also *glorified* with him" (Romans 8:17).

"and if children, then *heirs*; heirs of God, and joint *heirs* with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

"*if we endure*, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

Commenting on such scriptures Vincent Taylor writes:

"There is an advantage in surveying these passages as a whole, because they show that the relationship described is one of mystical fellowship in Christ so personal and intimate that the believer enters into, and shares in, the experiences of Christ, His life, suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, quickening, glorification, heirship and kingship. These are not simply external events, contemplated from without, but experiences in which he participates in virtue of the faith relationship between himself and the Exalted Christ. They are made possible, within the fellowship of the church, by faith and by common acts of worship, including baptism and sacramental devotion (i.e. the Lord's Supper or breaking of bread), directed to the Living Lord; but fundamentally, they are personal experiences of the believer which, as an individual, he knows, or may know, for himself. Their character is indicated best by the words of Galatians 2:20, quoted above, which indeed can rightly be extended to all the allied experiences of suffering, resurrection, and exaltation already named. The essential condition is that the old selfish ego is dethroned, and is replaced by the Christself, the personality in which Christ "lives". No loss of personal identity is implied by Paul's words; for, after saying: "I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me", he immediately adds: "and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me".

He goes on to speak of "an enhanced and enriched personality with increased powers and possibilities of life. The area of moral and religious experience is widened; the mind, the feelings, and the will are stimulated and engaged, no longer at the behest of purely self-regarding purposes, but in obedience to motives which are 'baptised into Christ' and are associated with His work for men in dying, rising, living and interceding on their behalf. This redemptive ministry is unquestionably His, wrought upon the Cross and incapable of receiving addition in its positive content, but, none the less, within the limit of his powers the believer shares in it and enters into its meaning, because the love, implicit in his faith, breaks down the 'barriers' which so often enclose men within egoistic ways of thinking and living. The experience is one in which personal interests

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and the purposes of God are no longer separate realms, but superimposed circles with a common centre, however incomparable in radius. The Christian dies, is buried, rises, lives, is glorified with Christ, and waits to reign with Him when His victory shall be complete. Released from the limitations which cabin and confine his existence, he is brought into an ampler form of life, with increased possibilities of pain and joy. In virtue of his fellowship with Christ, he too feels the crushing weight of the world's sin and bears it upon his heart, so that for him also there is a Gethsemane and a Golgotha; but with Christ again, he rises from death and despair in an Easter morning which sets the tone and temper of his life, fixing his hope in imperishable faith upon an End-time when God shall be all and in all and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

### CALVARY THROUGH PENTECOST

It is in the light of such thoughts as these that we need to appraise our daily experiences of life, the sad as well as the happy. How far do we care about people and their problems? To the extent we do we shall be sharing the Lord's experiences of Gethsemane and Golgotha. Being crucified with Christ is not only a matter of avoiding worldly pleasures but a matter of caring about our fellow men even when it hurts, and that is the work of the Spirit, "to take the things that are mine and make them yours".

But none of this could have been true until the Lord had been glorified, until His mission was complete. Only then could it be worked into our experience by the Spirit.'

The epistles, throughout, apply the cross to the thousand and one experiences of daily life so that we might have enough specimens to work at to cover our own diverse: lives. Man does not change, human hearts have the same needs and experiences, and same basic backgrounds; the same redemption ministered by the same Spirit meets all their needs. As Peter said on the Day of Pentecost -- "all that you see and hear flows from Him". On the Day of Pentecost they had a need, they had crucified Jesus or sinned in like manner. "What shall we do?" they cried. In response, Peter brought to them the comfort of sins forgiven and the Spirit outpoured which would apply the benefits of the crucified and risen Lord to them all.

The ascension was the climax of the ministry of Jesus for himself. Pentecost was the climax of his ministry for the Apostles.

It was only at Pentecost, by the gift of the Spirit, that the benefits and blessings won by the Lord Jesus Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension were applied to the disciples. As one writer has put it "Calvary without Pentecost would not be atonement to us".

It needed Pentecost to bring home the atonement to us, because the work of the Spirit is the bringing home to the believer of the redemptive work of Christ. Jesus portrays the work of the Spirit as the continuation of his own work. The Spirit is his "alter ego" or "Other I". As John 14:15 has it, "If you love me you will obey my commands. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another to be your advocate who will be with you for ever -- the Spirit of Truth". The Spirit takes over therefore where the Lord leaves off, though actually we should not say that the Lord leaves off; the Lord continues through the Spirit. Jesus continues to be present with and in his disciples through the Paraclete (comforter, advocate, helper).

### THE FINAL PRAYER -- John 17:1-10

To make clear that he would continue his work through the Spirit, was one of the Lord's purposes in using the words recorded in John 17 in the closing prayer of his ministry, after the discourse we have been considering.

First he prays for strength to go forward in this crucial hour of glorification, that as a result the Father would be glorified, that eternal life should pass through the Lord to the believers. Eternal life speaks here of divine quality now, and not primarily of immortality later. This is clear from v 3 where eternal life is defined as knowing the one who alone is truly God, and Jesus Christ whom God sent.

The Lord then summarises his mission in terms which regard the disciples as God's gift to him, to whom he taught all that he had learnt from the Father, which they had received by faith, seeing Jesus as the one who came from the Father to make them the vehicles of the divine glory.

### John 17:10-12

When he comes to the Father (he speaks of being already on his way, as on a journey), he begs God to protect his disciples and bind them together in a perfect unity, which is none other than the unity

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of the Spirit. Jesus was here fulfilling his promise of chapter 14:15-16. "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another to be your advocate".

### **John 17:13-19**

Jesus was praying these words in their presence that they might bring them to remembrance in after years and find joy in realising the relationship of which they spoke. God's Word -- his active proclamation of Himself as well as the Scripture still to be written -- would find lodgement in them. This Word was the Truth -- that is, the fulfilment before which all else was but shadow. This Truth they would now minister to the world as they proclaimed the new age, consecrated as its priests (sanctified KJV) supervised by the heavenly High Priest. (All of which is another way of expressing the work of the Comforter).

### **John 17:20-26**

In this section of the prayer there is special encouragement for believers today. Jesus specifically says that his prayer is not for his immediate disciples only, but for all who should believe in the Father and the Son through the word that the Apostles should speak.

The objective of the words that the Apostles were going to use in preaching Jesus was that all the believers of all time and of all places should be united; "as thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, so

also may they be in us that the world may believe that thou didst send them. The glory which thou gavest me I have given to them that they may be one as we are one, I in them and thou in me. May they be perfectly one. Then the world will learn that thou didst send me, that thou didst love them as thou didst me" (v. 21-23).

And if the prayer of Jesus is that the believers of all time shall share the fellowship of the Father and the Son, then it is certain that the coming of the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, is also for them, as the means of laying hold of the blessings of the Father and the Son.

The prayer of Jesus is the top stone of the whole sequence John 14-17; we are assured by the prayer that the whole of the discourse applies fundamentally to the believers of all time. We can rejoice that the Spirit lifts us into his holy fellowship.

Let us appropriate what God has offered and realise the wonder of receiving the things that belong to Christ, and of having his redemption worked into our experience. Let us by the Spirit share not only Gethsemane and Golgotha but also the resurrection morning and the day of ascension. In Christ may we deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him in suffering for others, dying for others, and with self buried, rise to newness of life and heavenly places in Christ Jesus.



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### Chapter 9

We began our study with Pentecost, then went back to the Old Testament prophets, to John the Baptist and to Jesus, before his full glorification, so that we might see the way to Pentecost. Now we consider the way from Pentecost. We have heard prophets foretelling the age of the Spirit: we have seen John the Baptist emphasise the baptism of the Spirit as the greatest of blessings to come; we have listened to the words of the Lord after supper concerning the Comforter, in whom Jesus would come to his disciples and continue his presence and his activity. He would by the Holy Spirit enable them to give effective witness to him: would convict men of sin and make his own redemptive work part of their own inner experience. By the Spirit in the church, the risen and ascended Lord would continue his ministry and take charge of the whole work of bringing the gospel to men and women of all nations.

#### THE SPIRIT IN ALL AGES

Pentecost was the beginning of this new phase of the ministry of Jesus. Now we must follow on from Pentecost to see how this supervision of the work by the Lord through the Spirit was effected. We shall be trying to grasp what it must have felt like to have been a member of the church in the first century and as we do so we shall become increasingly aware that the Spirit did not create a situation of continuous wonder working, where what we would call the "supernatural" completely took over and reduced the men and women involved to mere automatons. The Apostles and other believers were still required to study, to think, to discuss, to debate, to weigh practical possibilities, decide on courses of action, show boldness on some occasions and reticence on others; and yet all this activity as well as the overtly supernatural was the Holy Spirit's work. We should therefore be able to recognise in the Book of Acts our own experiences in the church today. If some of the more dramatic features are not part of our experience, yet this does not mean that the Holy Spirit is less active or that the risen and ascended Lord has brought his promised ministry to an end and retired from the scene. And as we become aware of the more "ordinary" activity of the Holy Spirit in the early church so we shall become more certain that the Comforter can be with us today, and having faith in this fact will find our Christian witness, Christian fellowship and Christian

### THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

living more dynamic.

The book we call "the Acts of the Apostles" might well be called "the Acts of the Holy Spirit". Right through, there is an electrifying atmosphere: we feel we are plugged into a very live circuit. And if this has never been switched off we should turn to examine our own Christian experience. Without the written record -- the Bible -- we should be ignorant of Christ, but has an intellectual grasp of that record superseded direct contact with the Living Lord of whom it speaks? The fundamental work of the Lord by the Spirit is surely common to first and twentieth century.

#### FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

The book of the Acts is the story of the ministry of Christ as he developed his church from a small band of Jews in Jerusalem to a large body of people of every race and colour throughout the Roman Empire. All too often we are preoccupied with the Acts as the epic of Paul's missionary journeys, following them through with geographical and archaeological enthusiasm. In fact it is a highly selective record of "how they brought the good news from Jerusalem to Rome": of how the "paraclete" led the Apostles in the expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea -- to Samaria -- to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). When he was upon earth, the Lord's visible ministry had been largely confined to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel"; now the invisible ministry of the risen Lord breaks these bounds and becomes a light unto the Gentiles and salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6 and Acts 13:47). In other words Acts really is part two of the gospel story told by Luke and it is a story under which "concluded" has never been printed.

Acts chapter 1 makes it quite clear that everything that follows in the book is the story of the witness created and nurtured by the Holy Spirit. Every step that took the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and that developed the band of disciples from Jewish sect to universal church is the result of the power they received when the Holy Spirit came upon them after they had waited in Jerusalem for a short while. The seemingly natural events as well as the "miraculous" are all part of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Why then in our day, when the seemingly natural seems to prevail should we suppose that the Holy Spirit has ceased to operate or that the Lord

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has abdicated as Living Head?

We have already seen the significance of Pentecost that the real power lay in the gift of ability to witness and the inner witness which convicted multitudes of sin and led them to Jesus as the Christ. After Pentecost everything was different. Life could never be the same again for the twelve, for the hundred and twenty, or for the three thousand or for anyone who came in touch with this dynamic power from the Lord Jesus seated at the right hand of God, yet present in their midst. Frequently reference is made back to that great day, and again and again the experience is reproduced, although of course there is only one Pentecost as such.

### "IN THE NAME OF JESUS"

So we pick up the story after Pentecost, as the Lord Jesus continues his ministry through the Apostles.

Peter and John see a cripple begging by the temple gate: gaining his attention, Peter can offer him no silver or gold, but what he has he gives: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" -- and the man does, praising God as he leaps about (Acts 3: 3-10). The crowd are filled with wonder and come surging forward toward Peter and John. Peter meets them with spoken witness to the meaning of the miracle and the essence of his message is that what they are seeing is the evidence that the risen, ascended Lord is at work. They have no power of their own. "The name of Jesus, by awakening faith, has strengthened this man". Jesus -- invisible though he is -- is present and active (v 11-16). In so far as they have been involved, Peter and John have been only the visible ambassadors of their invisible leader. What has been done has been done "in his name" -- as any ambassador acts in the name of his king and country and not as a person in his own right. As Paul declared, God had entrusted them with the message of reconciliation. "We come therefore as Christ's ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5:18-20). The Apostles are men representing their king, one, however, who unlike earthly kings, is actually able to be present in a unique way to carry out his will. This is the theme of Acts, and our own spiritual life, individually and collectively, will be enhanced the more we realise that it is still true.

The story in Acts 3 follows the pattern of chapter 2. Having explained the sign, Peter is guided by the Spirit to speak words to lead them to repentance. He brings into focus the death and

resurrection of Jesus, and shows how the promises to Abraham are being fulfilled by the blessing of sins forgiven in Jesus being offered to them, and that all the prophets had been predicting that very time (chapter 3:17-26). There is an outward and inward witness by the Spirit in the Apostles. Jesus is felt to be present and another 2,000 people become believers.

Peter and John are then arrested and stand trial before the Jewish authorities (chapter 4). The question is "by what name have such men as you done this?" The Apostles had no qualifications or authority. It was all very irregular. It is by the "Holy Spirit" that Peter answers. Luke 21:12-18 is being fulfilled.

Christ gives him a power of utterance and a wisdom which no opponent is able to resist or refute. Faced with crisis situations the disciples were to rest on the fact that they had been with Jesus. They would not be studying their notes, as it were, but from the influence that he would still be having on them the right words would come. Similarly today Christians find within themselves power from the Lord to cope. Perhaps they are faced with an exacting situation, of having, on the spot to answer for their beliefs (for example, through refusal to join a strike which would involve others in suffering): they have no opportunity to prepare a well reasoned case -- so they rest on their overall knowledge of Christ and trust in his promise to guide and help them.

Peter's answer on this occasion is that the cure has been wrought by "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (4:10). This constant use of the phrase "name" is meant to indicate both the presence of Jesus in their midst and the authority which this gives to them. The Jews were used to things being done in the name of God -- but now God has come very close in Jesus ("of Nazareth" being added to stress his humanity) and Jesus was in fact the Father's representative; now there was no other name through whom salvation might come. Heaven has broken into the affairs of earth in an unparalleled way and is in the midst of the new Christian group. Peter is proclaiming clearly that the ministry of Jesus is continuing, in spite of the fact that the Jewish authorities thought they had put an end to it. The whole scene is electrifying -- Jesus is very much active in this episode (4:8-12).

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### FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Men then marvel at the boldness of Peter and John -- mere untrained laymen -- and then suddenly remember having seen them previously with Jesus. The critics are defeated, have to acknowledge the miracle, and tamely order that preaching in the name of Jesus must cease. Peter replies that this is utterly impossible -- not merely that they do not want to obey -- but they cannot. They are moved by a mighty inner call:

"we cannot possibly give up speaking of things we have seen and heard" (4:13-20).

Being freed they rejoin the church in a service of praise at which they unite in singing Psalm 2 and applying this "Kingdom" psalm to the Lord's past encounter and his current battle with the Jewish and Gentile authorities. They invoke God's promise to defeat the enemy in a way which recognises the living God and his Messiah as being in their situation. They also take up the Lord's promise that after the Comforter had come they would be able to go direct to the Father (John 16:23-24). They look to heaven for boldness in speaking the word and ask for more signs and wonders "through the name of thy servant Jesus". Their prayer over, the building rocks, they are all filled with the Holy Spirit and they "speak the word of God with boldness" (chapter 5:23-31).

How did it come about that they were then filled with the Holy Spirit. Had this not happened on Pentecost? The answer lies in looking at the occasions when the phrase is used. Often it is used when a specially powerful action of the Spirit is being noted in people who had already received the Spirit anyway (see Acts 4, 8, 13, 9). This repeated filling with the Holy Spirit has been likened to a container being "topped up". There is one outpouring at the time of conversion and then a repeated topping up. In the present case even before the house rocked they were filled with the Holy Spirit, for Christian hymn singing is said by Paul, as we shall see later, to be the consequence of letting the Holy Spirit fill you (Eph. 5:18-20). Then after the hymn and prayer they were filled even more!

### LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

The story of the Acts of the Holy Spirit continues with the Lord blending activity which

appeared supernatural with that which would not appear particularly miraculous. Thus the Apostles bore witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and there was a decision made to pool many of the material resources of the members of the Church. No voice thundered from heaven to tell them to do this. It was a consequence -- a natural consequence, if one might so say -- of the fact that the Spirit had mused the "whole body of the believers to be united in heart and soul". So when Annanias and Sapphira practise deception it is to the Holy Spirit that they have lied (5:4); it is the Spirit of the Lord (v 9) that has been put to the test. And consequently the Lord from heaven strikes them down. They had not lied to men but to God -- i.e. the Holy Spirit in the Church. Some say that the death of Annanias and Sapphira was not a miracle but the result of violent fear when found out -- a fear which in the exalted atmosphere of the church at the time brought on a stroke. I would have thought this was still a miracle, for the exalted atmosphere of the church was due to the Lord's presence in their midst.

### THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 5 continues with the story of people flocking into Jerusalem to be healed: of further arrest and rescue by an angel (messenger) of God. Peter's reply to the Sanhedrin when accused of defiance was boldly to accuse them of killing Jesus, who however was very much alive and from his heavenly throne, very near to Israel, available as a leader and a saviour to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins. The Apostles were witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus and so, indeed, was "the Holy Spirit given by God to those who are obedient to him" (5:31-32). In other words all who joined the church received the inner witness of the Holy Spirit which gave them conviction of sin (John 16:9-11) and certainty of salvation as the things of Christ were mediated to them (John 16:13-15). Peter is speaking here of the inner working of the Spirit in all Christians, not the outward signs which were mainly in the hands of the Apostles. Gamaliel takes the point and urges caution. The Apostles went on with their work in joy (5:33-42).

### SERVING TABLES

The work of the church grows and matters of practical administration (serving tables) are taking up a lot of the Apostles' time (chapter 6:1-6).

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Quarrels over poor relief are occurring and the twelve make a sensible decision to delegate these responsibilities. No doubt they would have considered it a decision of the Spirit, but it was taken in a natural enough manner. The qualifications of the helpers are instructive. They were to be of good reputation -- men of integrity who could be trusted with handling money; "full of the Spirit and of wisdom". Not just full of the Holy Spirit -- they were required to have natural wisdom, to be capable of handling delicate human situations. This was something being full of the Holy Spirit did not ensure. So in our own day we will have known men of great spirituality, who were nevertheless hopelessly impractical. The Holy Spirit did not overrule men's lack of aptitude, though it would heighten what natural aptitude they possessed. The apparently "ordinary" nature of the conduct of affairs in this Spirit-guided community is brought out in the phrase "this proposal proved acceptable to the whole body" (v 5) and the apostles laid their hands on them, as a token of association and approval, not as a means of conveying the Spirit.

Stephen in particular comes to the fore. He was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit (v 5). A man of deep trust in the living Christ, he is also said to be full of the Holy Spirit, which is elsewhere said to be the cause of deep faith. He is full of grace and power, and he works miracles: but the outstanding feature of his activity is the inspired wisdom which enables him to refute the arguments of his adversaries who engineer his arrest.

### THE IMPACT OF STEPHEN (Chapter 6:8-7:60)

His speech before the Council is obviously a Spirit-inspired one, but it was not received like tablets of stone from heaven: it could only have come from the lips of one steeped in the Scriptures and who had meditated much on the meaning of God's dealings with Israel. Neither Stephen's speech, nor the inspired utterances of the prophets of former ages, would have had much impact if they had not represented personal convictions. Few speeches have been so subtle as Stephen's exposition which showed how in the history of the patriarchs God appeared in strange places, usually outside the holy land; the presence of God made a place holy; it wasn't a question of the holiness of a place attracting God's presence. Moreover the custodians of the law had failed and rejected Moses and all subsequent prophets. Eventually they see what he is driving at

and presumably interrupt him, provoking his final outburst, which "touched them on the raw and they ground their teeth with fury".

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen is granted a specially intimate awareness of the source of the Church's power. He sees what the whole of the book of Acts is based upon: "the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand". So real is this vision that he calls to the Lord to receive his spirit and dies, like his Lord, forgiving his enemies. It is not clear in what sense he saw -- he would hardly have seen God literally; no doubt he saw in the sense of John 16:16 "a little while and ye shall see me" -- i.e. he was intensely aware of the Lord's presence.

The Stephen episode brings out the interplay of human decision and divine guidance. The whole advance of the gospel is in the hands of the Lord Jesus; the Spirit is guiding affairs -- yet many stages appear quite normal. Men feel moved to take a certain line. Stephen introduces a new element into the church. Up to his appearance the Pharisee and Levitical element had been friendly, a great company of priests had believed (6:6) and the church met in the temple as well as in private houses. Stephen does not appear to have had any commission to alter this - but effectively this was his achievement. The Apostles had not linked themselves with his public debating and in fact were able to stay in Jerusalem after his death. In general however, Stephen's martyrdom got the church on the move into Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1 cf 1:8) and things were never the same thereafter. The Lord of the church worked through the insights of a man like Stephen in an apparently natural way rather than instruct the Apostles to get out into Judea and Samaria.

### THE GOSPEL SPREADS

Philip, another of the "deacons", moved out into Samaria, preached the gospel and healed the sick. Many were baptised from among the despised Samaritans and now the Apostles are drawn (providentially i.e. by the living Lord) out of Jerusalem to investigate. The baptism of the Samaritans is unique, for the Lord deliberately withholds the Spirit from them: the fullness of Christian awareness of the living Christ did not come to them at once. This was to give the opportunity for the new move away from Jerusalem into semi-Gentile territory to receive the double approval of the Apostles and the Holy Spirit for when the Apostles laid their hands upon them as the token of

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approval, at the same time, in response to Apostolic prayer, the Lord laid his hands upon them and granted the Holy Spirit (chapter 8: 1-25).

Simon the Sorcerer completely misinterpreted the episode along purely physical lines and sought to buy the power to lay hands on people and grant them the Holy Spirit, failing to see that the Lord was the giver of the Spirit in response here to the prayers of faithful men.

Next Philip is led by the Spirit into the wilderness and a eunuch, one not allowed in the Jewish sanctuary, is admitted to the true sanctuary. (chapter 8: 26-40).

Leaving Saul on one side for the moment -- he has been introduced here, because the entry of the Gentiles is about to come to a head -- we learn that the persecution after Stephen soon subsided and the church was left in peace to build up its strength. "In fear of the Lord, upheld by the Holy Spirit, it held on its way and grew in numbers" (chapter 9:31). No special event is here referred to. Just everything that happened to the Church was the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the same key Peter healing Aeneas, says "Jesus Christ cures you", and those who were converted in Lydda and Sharon are said to "turn to the Lord", or at Joppa "to believe in the Lord" (Acts 9:32-43). At every step there is consciousness of the presence in the church of the living Lord.

### THE GENTILE PENTECOST (Chapter 10 and 11: 1-18)

Now we reach a vital step in the outgoing procession of the gospel. Individual Gentiles have joined the church: now a semi-proselyte (a God-fearer who stood on the edge of Jewry) is about to be received into the church with the blessing of heaven and the approval of the Apostles in Jerusalem. Accordingly Acts chapter 10 might be termed "the record of the Gentile Pentecost" for here it is that the Holy Spirit authenticates, beyond all doubt, the call of the Gentiles into the church, without their first having to become Jews. In accordance with Joel's prophecy, the Lord makes use of visions to prepare the ground: a directly instructional vision to Cornelius giving Peter's name and address, and a vivid lesson to Peter. Peter falls asleep on the housetop, while waiting for dinner which seems to be late (even delayed dinners enter into the Spirit's calculations); he dreams and three times is taught not to call unclean what God calls clean.

Peter goes to Cornelius and after acknowledging what has now clicked into position for him, that God is no respecter of persons nor, therefore of racial differences (cf Rom. 3:29-30), he proceeds to give his normal presentation of the gospel, with basic facts about the ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and his role as judge of quick and dead.

He has just reached the point in the message that forgiveness of sins is available to those who trust in Jesus, and is about to go on to his appeal for repentance, when suddenly, while he is yet speaking, saving him any doubt about whether the appeal should be made, the Holy Spirit falls on all the listeners. The presence of the Spirit is indisputable, for outward evidence is given by the gift of tongues. In utter astonishment Peter and his Jewish colleagues can do no other than acquiesce in the revealed will of the Lord who is the head of the Church -- and water baptism follows the Spirit baptism. The order is unusual because the situation is unique: usually the Lord who has brought faith to fruition, enters fully into the believer's life in association with his act of commitment -- but here the Lord's entry came first and the formal commitment second.

Peter then has to appear before the leaders of the church at Jerusalem. He and his supporters state the facts in the face of the suspicion of those who still think it a sin to eat with the uncircumcised. He virtually describes what happened in the house of Cornelius as a repeat of Pentecost. "The Holy Spirit came upon them, just as upon us at the beginning". Peter comments that when it happened he grasped the meaning of Matt. 3:11 and Acts 1:5. The Spirit of Truth (John 14:26; 16:13) brought to his mind the words: "John baptised with water but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit". "God gave them no less a gift than he gave us when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: then how could I possibly stand in God's way" (11:16-17).

What could Jerusalem do but acquiesce? We can hear the tone of awe in their voices: "when they heard this their doubts were silenced: they gave praise to God and said, 'this means God has granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles also'". Thus did the Spirit crack open a rigid mentality which would otherwise have impeded the progress of the Truth in Jesus (11:18).

Note that Peter says that the Holy Spirit came to the disciples when they put their trust in Jesus. Perhaps this is the moment at which the Holy Spirit may be said to take up residence in the believer.

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Every believer has his Pentecost and only through it can he enter into the full persuasion and inner experience of the Lord's death and resurrection.

### **"I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS"**

This chapter has shown how the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the means whereby the Lord leads his church in the way he wants it to go. It does not supersede human will and decision: it is not overtly miraculous all the time: the fundamental concept of the work of the Spirit is that the absent Lord is present in his church, moving it how he will; whether the outward appearances are normal or supernatural he will never go back on his promises recorded in John 14-17 to send the Comforter to the Church. We have been seeing the outworking of Matt. 28:18-20.

"Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go forth and make all nations my disciples; baptise men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always to the end of time".

This has never been revoked. It is still true that the love of God in Christ Jesus is made real to the believers by the Spirit. During his visible ministry Jesus was Emmanuel -- God with us. Since then the Spirit represents the ascended Jesus and is Jesus with us.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 10

### THE SPIRIT GUIDED JOURNEYS OF PAUL

The Gentile Pentecost, involving the conversion of Cornelius and his household prepared the way for wider developments in which Paul, rather than Peter is the key figure. However, as in the earlier events, the Lord Jesus is really the central figure and neither Peter or Paul. He is the invisible head supervising, from the throne of God, and by the Spirit, all that took place in the church, both externally and within the hearts of the believers, both in the apparently supernatural and in the seemingly natural. Saul (or Paul) is introduced into the story before the Cornelius episode, in the way that Acts has of presenting the main characters a little ahead of the stories in which they are going to figure.

#### A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT

Saul is on his way to Damascus resolved to destroy the influence of the growing church, when the blinding light of the Lord's glorified presence strikes him and the question assails him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" In these, the very first words Paul heard from the lips of Jesus, was locked the whole principle of the Lord's dwelling in the church, which is his body. To persecute the church was to persecute the Lord who dwelt in it. The ministry of the Church was the continuation of the ministry of the Lord. Saul reacts to the voice and the glory in reverence: "Tell me Lord, who are you?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:1-9).

The exalted position of Jesus is demonstrated by his acceptance of the title Lord, which in the Old Testament would have been Yahweh (applied to Jesus out of Isaiah 45 in Philippians 2), yet at the same time the Lord shows his solidarity with the church by using the word "me" of them. It is noteworthy that through the Acts, Jesus is referred to as the Lord -- or put the other way, wherever the Lord is mentioned he is normally Jesus. This harmonises with the picture we are seeing, of Jesus as the Lord of the church, from his heavenly seat controlling and guiding all their affairs by the Spirit.

"The Lord" speaks to Ananias. (Five times he is so described in verses 10-16). Ananias receives his instructions to go to the praying Saul, who is the Lord's personally chosen instrument to bring his name before the Gentiles, rulers and Israel. The Lord is continuing his ministry and chooses an extra apostle as specifically as he chose the original twelve. The Holy Spirit is going to work through

Saul's natural qualifications: a Greek speaking man of culture to speak to Gentiles; a Roman citizen to speak to rulers; a Pharisee of the Pharisees to speak to Israel. Christ is going personally to supervise his initiation: "I myself will show him all that he must go through for my name's sake". As Paul tells the Galatians: "God chose to reveal his son to me and through me".

Ananias goes to Saul, who recovers his lost sight and is filled with the Holy Spirit. These were the two main objectives of the visit. Saul is then baptised as the outward mark of his commitment and starts on his witness. The Spirit leads him along in a natural way: he grows "more and more forceful" (v 22) in his presentation of the facts in Damascus, after first having stayed a while in Arabia to think through his course (Gal. 1:17). Three years after his conversion (which in Hebrew idiom could mean as little as 18 months -- i.e. part of three years) he visits Jerusalem, meets Peter and James, while the other Apostles are out of town, and preaches in Jerusalem to the Greek speaking Jews, though he was still unknown in Judea and finally has to flee for his life, back home to Tarsus. Thus we may link together harmoniously Acts 9:29-30 compared with Galatians 1:15-22: the picture which emerges is of natural temperament reacting to spiritual revelation to cause Paul to throw himself into the work both at Damascus and Jerusalem. However, the time was not yet ripe and the living Lord by the Spirit contrives events in a seemingly natural way to drive Saul back for a period of some ten years in the Tarsus area where his experience of preaching to Gentiles would be developed out of the glare of publicity.

Meanwhile the Cornelius conversion and the Stephen scattering had led some to preach to Gentiles in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). "The power of the Lord was with them, and a great many became believers, and turned to the Lord". The Lord is the power behind the continuance of his own ministry.

#### "I WENT UP BY REVELATION"

Jerusalem hears and the church chooses Barnabas to inspect the work: absolutely the right man -- a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. The Holy Spirit is one of his three qualifications mentioned. He sizes up the situation and thinks: "I know just the man for this" and off he

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goes to Tarsus for Saul. Again the Holy Spirit doesn't supernaturalise the situation: Barnabas has to look for Saul -- he has no address: the phrase "and when he had found him" suggests a search. Then for a year Saul and Barnabas minister in Antioch, where the believers are called Christians and not just a sect of the Jews .

While this is going on Agabus has a Spirit-guided message that a world famine is about to start and apparently because the brethren in Jerusalem are particularly vulnerable, the Antioch disciples "agreed" to make a contribution, each according to his means, for the relief of the brethren in Judea. The decision was one taken quite spontaneously, as love's response to the Spirit's revelation: no edict from heaven instructed them. The decision reached, who better to take the gift than Barnabas and Saul (11:30). Acts tells us nothing of this visit to Jerusalem, except that "Barnabas and Saul, their task fulfilled, returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John Mark".

For further details of this, Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, we have to go to Galatians 2, where we learn that Paul went up because it had been "revealed by God" that he should do so. This would sound, if we had no other information, as if an edict from heaven had sent Paul and Barnabas. In fact this particular act of the Spirit was a combination of supernatural and seemingly natural. The fact of the famine was revealed in an abnormal manner; but the decision to send help and the selection of Barnabas and Saul was the result of common sense spiritual decision. But as far as Paul is concerned it is all part of the revelation by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps Paul would have attributed to the Holy Spirit many of our decisions on Christian activity in the twentieth century that we do not think of in that way. The two ages are not so different in kind.

This visit to Jerusalem also has other features which Paul would feel by the Spirit, even though his own decision-taking qualities and inmost emotions were involved. Too "miraculous" a view of inspiration robs it of its vital qualities and fails to take sufficient account of the human instruments God is pleased to use. Galatians for example is too dynamic a description of a real man's reactions to be a piece of word by word automatic dictation. And it is in Galatians that we find greater detail of what happened on the second Jerusalem visit. Were the Jerusalem Jews going to accept these same Gentiles, just as they were, as Christian brethren? Hence the uncircumcised Titus was taken to help probably with

the purchase and conveyance of relief food supplies and Paul refuses to allow Titus to be circumcised (v 1-5).

### DIVISION OF DUTIES

The Apostles approved Paul's course and recognised Paul (or Saul as he was still known) as the Apostle to the Gentiles, on the basis of his Tarsus and Antioch ministries over the previous ten years. The NEB uses the word "consultation" and the flavour is of urgent discussion and careful weighing up of possibilities, seeking devoutly to know the will of the Lord. Decision is reached -- not miraculously imposed -- and they shake hands on it (extend the right hand of fellowship) dividing the field of labour and only requiring that Paul shall keep the poor in mind, as indeed he was eager to do (v 6-10). To help them reach the decision Paul "laid before them" the gospel he preached to the Gentiles (v 2): this is another phrase implying human judgment. Yet the whole episode was cited revelation and was the work of the Spirit -- the guidance of the living Lord.

An important issue that must be faced is that the presence of the Spirit did not ensure infallibility, for a little later, Peter is in Antioch, (perhaps the "elsewhere" of Acts 12:17 NEB -- to which Peter fled from Herod) and plays false by not eating with Gentile brethren. Even Barnabas gets caught up in the act of cowardice along with the Jewish brethren (Galatians 2:11-13), and Paul has to rebuke them with Spirit-filled vigour, anger and wisdom to ensure that a racist approach to salvation is not allowed to prevail. Eventually the whole Jerusalem church accepts Paul's stand -- but the total work of the Spirit is an interplay of human judgment with overt divine revelation. The open revelation appears to be kept to the minimum necessary, for God seeks voluntary obedience from free agents. Is it any different today? We have the same living Lord invisibly presiding over the interplay of revelation from the Bible with wisdom, experience and knowledge in the minds of prayerful men and women, together with practical circumstances and exercise of judgment. Should we not wait upon the Spirit as they did?

### SENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paul and Barnabas were sent out on the first missionary journey after a group session of fasting and prayer during which they received indication



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that the Holy Spirit required Barnabas and Saul to start on the work to which they had been called. The report of the division of labour agreed upon at Jerusalem led to the special prayer and fasting: having waited upon the Lord, the conviction pressed upon them that the Spirit was at work in the proposal to make a start (13:1-3). The elders of Antioch gave their blessing (by laying on of hands) after further fasting and prayer and "let them go" -- which phrase suggests that the purpose of the whole session was to decide "shall we let them go?" -- and when they went they were sent not by Antioch elders, as such, but "by the Holy Spirit" (v 4).

The first missionary journey shows us Paul "filled with the Holy Spirit" (v 9) whether rebuking Elymas or preaching in the Pisidian synagogue. What he preached was the word of the Lord (v 46, 48, 49) -- indicating whose ministry it really was. And the consequence of the preaching was that "the converts were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit".

One little sideline on the apparent "naturalness" of much of the Holy Spirit's work is the John Mark episode. He deserted Barnabas and Paul probably because he feared the Jerusalem reaction to moving into such completely Gentile territory (13:14): when the Jerusalem council had approved such action, then he was willing to resume with Paul and Barnabas. Disagreement over this, split the Paul-Barnabas partnership. Thus two men filled with the Holy Spirit came to a totally different judgment over the reliability of Mark, to the point of parting. They both remained faithful Christians, but there was no automatic assurance of inerrancy in the fact that they were inspired men. This makes the record of the Acts much nearer to our own recognisable experiences than we normally think. This is why later on when Paul is telling the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit, he instructs them to "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good".

The missionary journey had its quota of what we would acknowledge as miraculous signs and wonders -- though side by side with that, the Lord Jesus permitted Paul and Barnabas to labour under human limitations, so that owing to ignorance of the local language it took them a little while to realise that the men of Lystra had mistaken them for the gods, Jupiter and Mercury (14:8-17). Neither did the Holy Spirit give the disciples the medical knowledge to distinguish between death and concussion when Paul had been stoned (14:19).

And so back they came to Antioch to report the

success of the venture which they described as the work of God through them, of "throwing open the gates of faith to the Gentiles" (v 26-27).

### **"IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT -- AND TO US"**

The saga continues. A contingent from Jerusalem hears of Paul's work and comes to Antioch to demand that all Gentile converts be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas fought against this, seeing clearly that salvation by Jesus plus circumcision is not salvation by Jesus at all. To add to the conditions of salvation is to destroy the redemptive work of Christ, whether the extra conditions be legal as in this case or intellectual as in Colosse.

"So it was arranged" that Paul, Barnabas and some others should go up to Jerusalem and confer with the Apostles and elders (Chapter 15:1-2). "It was arranged" -- a perfectly normal procedure from one angle: the work of the Spirit from another. And so indeed with the whole of the Jerusalem conference. There was a long debate (v 6-7). Peter retold the story of Cornelius -- the Father had shown his approval by giving Gentiles the Holy Spirit and letting them share the grace of the Lord Jesus (v 8-11). Paul and Barnabas told the story of what God had done through them on their missionary journey (v 12). James summed up and gave his "judgment", just as might happen in our own day, that in addition to obviously avoiding temple prostitution, for the sake of the feelings of the Jews they should also avoid idol temple meat which had been bled improperly as far as the Jews were concerned (v 13-21).

They then proposed a resolution to choose representatives to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to convey the decision. The church passed this resolution unanimously and a letter was composed announcing the decision as being taken by the Holy Spirit and themselves. (The familiar words of the KJV are: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"). Note too that the object of sending Judas and Silas was to vouch for the authenticity of the letter, which was received in Antioch with great joy. The way was now wide open for Gentiles to flood into the church through the gates of faith which had been opened. Men's prayerful thought had been involved: "It seemed good to us". The Holy Spirit had been the hidden doer of it all: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit". The Lord Jesus was in command

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of this vital stage of the operation as of all the rest before and since.

### THE HIDDEN LEADER

The same principles shine through the rest of the book of Acts: seemingly supernatural and apparently natural are found side by side throughout. How did the Holy Spirit keep Paul and Silas out of Asia (16:6) and the Spirit of Jesus (the same Spirit) keep them out of Bithynia (v 8-9)? We are not told: it could have been by most natural methods. It was a dream that took them into Europe, and even there in the words of the NEB "they concluded that God had called us to bring them the good news" -- they concluded, obviously after deliberation on the hindrances and the dream in the total context (v 10).

Language like the "Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul said" reflects the idea of the Lord Jesus making the words of his preachers effective in the hearts of the listeners (16:14-15) by the Spirit. Chapter 17 suggests the "natural" reaction of a spiritual man to a devout but misled city, leading him to seek to win attention. Paul would have regarded it as the leading of the Spirit.

In Corinth the Lord had many people and secured Paul's safety (Acts 18:9) and when he left, he assured the Corinthians that he would come back to them if it was God's will.

At Ephesus Paul met some believers who had been baptised by John the Baptist but were ignorant that to be complete in their relationship with God they needed to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19: 1-7). They had never come to the stage where they put their trust in the one who had come, even the Lord Jesus. Therefore there was no basis on which the Spirit could take of the things of Jesus and manifest them in their experiences (John 16:14-15). Christ could not dwell in their hearts by faith if they were ignorant of him. Paul remedied this: as a token of their commitment they were baptised with water and the Spirit filled them, including in the experience outward tokens like ability to talk in tongues.

The hidden leader of the church was vividly active at Ephesus. Cures were effected by Jesus through contact with Paul's skin: exorcisms occurred and false wonder workers were put to shame and "the name of the Lord Jesus gained in honour" -- there was recognition of the personage behind it all (chapter 19:17). Magic fled before him, for the Spirit was not just regarded as a superior form of magic (19:18-20).

Eventually "Paul, led by the Spirit, resolved to visit Macedonia and Achaia and then go on to Jerusalem". So the NEB margin renders v 21. It is a combination of the Spirit at work with Paul's personal resolution. The Spirit was in the apparently natural exercise of his will.

Similarly in the riot over Diana of the Ephesians there was a perfectly normal interplay of human reactions: Paul seeking to go into the throng, other equally Spirit-filled brethren holding him back (19: 30). Paul's further movements abound with phrases like "he decided" (20:16).

### "UNDER THE CONSTRAINT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

His farewell message to the elders at Ephesus sums up how he regarded his mission as he led people to trust in the Lord Jesus. His journey to Jerusalem, now beginning, was "under the constraint of the Spirit", though by his own resolution. The Holy Spirit had assured him of trouble ahead. His advice to the elders was to keep watch over themselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit had given them charge, as shepherds of the Church of the Lord (20: 28). And this advice is surely no less appropriate to elders of the church in the twentieth century.

As he approaches Jerusalem the interplay of Spirit-guided prediction and human decision is very closely linked, Agabus whose utterances had previously sparked off, but not instructed, a course of action (Acts 11: 27-30), again foretells the effects of Paul's further journeying toward Jerusalem. His words were words of the Holy Spirit (Acts 21:11). The inspired picture of Paul in bonds could logically have led to his calling off the trip. But rather Paul chose to regard the warning as one designed to nerve him for the trouble ahead, certainly not to cause him to back out of taking the collection to Jerusalem. "Why all these tears? Why are you trying to weaken my resolution? For my part I am ready not merely to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus". The rest of them then gave up "as he would not be persuaded". "The Lord's will be done". His rejection of the advice which they had deduced from the Spirit's information did not alter the fact that the Spirit was still in charge (Acts 21:12-14). That this assessment is true is evident from the remainder of the book of Acts.

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### "WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE"

A number of human decisions were the raw materials out of which the Spirit brought Paul to Rome where he was required by the Lord. There was the decision to pay the expenses of the four men with a vow and to be associated with Jewish orthodoxy in the minds of the people: out of respect for the Apostles there was a measure of compromise here, but it did not secure a quiet passage for the church. The insult to the High Priest; the subtly divisive cry about the resurrection; the use of his nephew's information about a plot to kill him; the respectful tone of his address to Felix; his decision to appeal to Caesar -- these are not the words of a puppet on a string, manipulated by supernatural power. He tells the story to Agrippa as one who lived continuously in the presence of his Lord (Acts 26:22). That the Lord was in the whole sequence is evident from the whisper that came to him when things look most desperate: "Keep up your courage: you have affirmed the truth about me in Jerusalem, and you must do the same in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

The shipwreck episode (Acts 27) is another beautiful blend of Paul, the man of decision and determination, with Paul the instrument of his living Lord. He is the man who gives practical advice about venturing into the winter seas (v 10); who maintains morale in the storm (v 21-26); who stops the sailors from abandoning the ship, virtually giving orders to the centurion (v 27-32); who gets the passengers and crew to eat (v 33-38). A giant of a man who dominated the scene! The secret of his power -- the Lord "whose I am and whom I serve"; the God in whom he trusted that things would turn out as he had been told (v 21-26).

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And so to Rome: and this is by no means the end of Paul's story. He was released and re-imprisoned before he passed off the scene, as the epistles indicate. But the Book of Acts is not Paul's story, but the Acts of the Holy Spirit -- or how they brought the good news from Jerusalem to Rome. We leave Paul still at it explaining that for the Hope of Israel he was bound -- that is, he was bound because of his testimony that what Israel hoped for and the one in whom they hoped (Jer. 14:8) had now come in the person of Jesus; and that if Jews rejected him, Gentiles would be glad to receive him (Acts 28).

Thus we have seen in two chapters on the events recorded by Luke in the book of Acts, a major development of the Lord's ministry, which was just as much his ministry as the earthly one recorded in the four gospels and yet while we have considered the work of the Holy Spirit, the events have been brought more within the range of our own experience as Christians. We have seen the part played by human judgment and decision in what is nevertheless the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, into which name Jesus commanded that men be baptised. We have tried to avoid the error which by overstressing what we call miracle and supernatural and overlooking human involvement, removes the experiences of the early church from the realm of our practical fellowship. The "miraculous" element may not be evident today, but it would be a mistake to assume that a Christian in the first century was different from one in the twentieth. In both centuries the church is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

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## Chapter 11

Our study in the last chapter, of the establishment of the church by the Holy Spirit has made it clear that the one Spirit works in a variety of ways: that way which we term miraculous is but one and not really the most fundamental. The most significant works of the Spirit are those which affect the mind and heart: witnessing within, converting and regenerating, enabling one to witness without; providing courage and clarity of thought and spiritual fruit, binding the new converts together into a new collective experience. All these activities were a continuation of the Lord's earlier ministry.

The Christian church "is not simply the result of the coming together of like-minded people, drawn together by a common interest. It is the result of the action of the Spirit Himself. Throughout the New Testament the church appears as a Spirit-filled and Spirit-indwelt body. No amount of the energy of the flesh could produce the church of God, only the divine within could do that. The Church did not go its own sweet way. It was the fellowship of the Spirit. It went where the Spirit led".

These principles are particularly developed by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians and in the epistle to the Ephesians. Throughout them both we are conscious of the living presence of the Lord in the church, irrespective of the precise nature of the manifestations of the Spirit, and are brought to ask why the atmosphere of those churches in those days should not be reproduced in our own in these days.

The very beginning of I Corinthians speaks of a relationship with the Lord of an intensely personal nature. They were dedicated to God in Christ Jesus, claimed by him as his own (1:2). The salutation which is normal in all the epistles is not a mere conventional greeting: "grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". It speaks of the basis of Christian living, individual and collective, as resting in the gift (grace) of the Lord's presence and the oneness (peace) with him which is the theme of the gospel. These and many other phrases where the word "Spirit" does not appear, nevertheless speak of the work of Christ as expressed in John 14 to 17. An awareness permeates the epistles of the work of the living Lord -- a fulfilling of the Comforter promises, and most of the time in seemingly natural ways. The awareness that he is there makes a tremendous difference to Christian living and Christian fellowship.

Then I Corinthians I goes on to speak of "all the

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enrichment that has come to you in Christ" (1 Cor. 1:5). "God called you to share in the life of his son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1:9). This was a reference to a sharing now, because he goes on to draw from this the lesson of avoiding party spirit: and commenting on the folly of depending on human wisdom, Paul sets forth the basis of their Christianity: "you are in Christ Jesus by God's act, for God has made him our wisdom; he is our righteousness; in him we are consecrated and set free" (1:30).

## REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

In the second chapter (v 6-10) Paul refers to the passage in Isa. 64 "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" -- and then he goes on, contrary to how many think of this passage -- "but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit". The idea is that man's own observation (eye), man's own attentiveness (ear), man's imagination, could never have found the love of God in Christ. It has been necessary for the Spirit to reveal it as promised in John 16:14-15, where the Comforter will "draw from what is mine", i.e. mediate redemption in Christ to the experience of the believer.

We could never know the things of God if the Spirit had not revealed them: only God's Spirit knows what goes on in the inner being of God -- and this is the Spirit we have received, in distinction from the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2:11-12). The familiar phrase "comparing spiritual things with spiritual", which has been interpreted to mean looking up the concordance to compare one Bible passage with another, is translated in the NEB "because we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God (i.e. those relating to salvation and the Lord's living presence) in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit" (v 13). This echoes "it shall be given you" in the words of Jesus and leads us to realise the grace of God not solely by appeal to reason, logic and Bible, but by something more than Scripture.

"A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit" (v14) This clearly speaks of a divinely given inner awareness without which a real

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fellowship of the Spirit is impossible. This does not mean a merely subjective light within or indulgence in transcendental meditation: facts about Jesus revealed by God are the raw material on which the Spirit works, and they, for us, are found only in the Bible: prayer is the tap which opens the channel for the Spirit's operation. Then the Spirit gives discretion and true awareness, for a man "gifted with the Spirit can judge the worth of everything". He has inbuilt standards of judgment (v 15-16), and it can be said that he has the mind of Christ.

### THE TEMPLE OF THE SPIRIT

So in chapter 3, still combating the following of human leaders, even though Spirit gifted, he regrets that his readers were so immature that he could not speak to them in the way that he ought to be able to speak to those "who have the Spirit". The fact of their immaturity did not alter the fact of the Spirit's indwelling, though it was a cause for regret that they did not fully respond to the Spirit.

He likens the whole church collectively to a building -- indeed a temple, "God's temple where the Spirit of God dwells" (v 16-17) -- a passage which few would deny refers to the community of the believers in all periods of Christian history.

Then in I Corinthians 6 -- a chapter on moral standards of timeless application -- Paul derives the whole power of his appeal for purity from the fact that their individual bodies were "shrines of the indwelling Holy Spirit", that the Spirit was God's gift to them, and that they no longer belonged to themselves, they were bought with a price. Our bodies should be shrines of the Holy Spirit for a deeper reason than that we have a good knowledge of the Bible which, because ideas have power, influences us. That is part of the story -- the factual part -- but the facts have vital and transforming impact and this is the work of the Spirit. In the same chapter Paul so clearly states:

"Surely you know that the unjust will never come into possession of the Kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty of adultery or of homosexual perversion, no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanderers or swindlers, will possess the Kingdom of God. Such were some of you. But you have been through the purifying waters; you have been dedicated to God and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus and the

Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:10-11).

They had been delivered from moral evils through being washed in the blood of the Lamb. Note however that not only were they (and we) justified through the name of the Lord Jesus -- but also through the Spirit of our God. This is yet another echo of the Comforter taking of the things of Jesus and working them into the experience of the believer (John 16: 14). Redemption becomes real to us through the work of the Spirit. Thus the Spirit shares in the work of our justification. As we said earlier in this book "Calvary without Pentecost would not be atonement to us"

### VARIETIES OF GIFTS: BUT THE SAME SPIRIT

The major section in 1 Corinthians on the Spirit in the church is of course the section in chapters 12-14 where Paul begins:

"About gifts of the Spirit, there are some things of which I do not wish you to be ignorant" (12: 1) -- words which are very appropriate to the whole purpose of this book.

Paul starts by giving a general guideline for recognising the activity of the Spirit:

"I must impress on you that no one who says 'a curse on Jesus' can be speaking under the influence of the Spirit of God. And no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except under the influence of the Holy Spirit" (v 3).

This verse very clearly states that every Christian is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. No mere intellectual pursuit could bring him to recognise Jesus as Lord: it is a divine act that creates the realisation in the mind and heart of man and brings about the consequent commitment. The written Word, prayer, experience, the witness of others are media through which the Spirit works -- but the Spirit is the creator of the conviction -- the heart and mind of a man respond (2 Cor. 3.3).

The exposition then proceeds to clear up a point which often hinders understanding.

"There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit".

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It is thought that where certain specific gifts (e.g. healing, miracles) are not evident today in a community then the Holy Spirit is absent: this is not so. Because some varieties of gifts are not in action there is no cause to say that the Spirit has been withdrawn. The absence of some actions of the Spirit may be due to our deficient faith, but in any case the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to do the Divine will, as they decide.

The next point to notice is the bringing together of Father, Son and Spirit in the work of ministering to the whole body.

"There are varieties of gifts -- but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service- but the same Lord. There are many forms of work -- but all of them in all men, are the work of the same God" (v4-6).

Often in similar passages the Spirit is just described as the Spirit; on other occasions it is described as the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Jesus. Also the Spirit's work is often attributed to God or to Jesus. However inadequate the Athanasian trinity may be, we must recognise that the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is all the work of God.

Paul proceeds to suggest that all members had some gift of the Spirit to bring to the common benefit. "In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose" (v 7).

That all members of the church were thus involved is evident from the analogy to a human body in verses 12-27.

"For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink" (v 12-13).

All were baptised, into the one body in the one Spirit. The Holy Spirit was poured out for all of them to drink (cf John 7:37-39). Not all had outstanding gifts, but all were organs of the one Spirit-produced body of Christ. The absent Lord was nevertheless very much present with them. Baptism and Spirit endowment are inseparable here, and there is no indication that they would ever be otherwise.

### DIVERSITY OF EXPRESSION

Therefore each brought some Spirit-produced contribution to the whole, unless we are going to say that the body of Christ is the aristocracy and not the totality of the church. No one would say that, for: "Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it" (v 27). And therefore all are included in the serious humour of v 14-26 where we have a kind of cartoon of the various limbs and organs of the body -- foot, hand, ear, eye, nose, vying with each other in rivalry, "Because I am not a hand, I the foot, am not part of the body". "Suppose the ear were to say 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', it does still belong to the body. If the body were all eye, how could it hear? If the body were all ear, how could it smell?". A modern cartoonist would have a wonderful time drawing this -- a big ear with minute head, arms and legs, or a big eye or nose with similar appendages.

"But, in fact, God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body, as he chose. If the whole were one single organ, there would not be a body at all; in fact, however, there are many different organs, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you; nor the head to the feet 'I do not need you'. Quite the contrary: those organs of the body which seem to be more frail than others are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we regard as less honourable are treated with special honour. To our unseemly parts is given more than ordinary seemliness, whereas our seemly parts need no adorning. But God has combined the various parts of the body, giving special honour to the humbler parts, so that there might be no sense of division in the body, but all its organs might feel the same concern for one another. If one organ suffers, they all suffer together. If one flourishes, they all rejoice together".

According to Paul the body of Christ knows of no elite who alone possess the Spirit: this idea of a special group in the church called "the spirituals" or "Spirit possessed" would disrupt the unity of the body of Christ, and to propound it is to miss the point Paul is making. All members are organs of the Divine Spirit activity, though some have a seemingly more prominent role.

Verses 8-10 set out a specimen of some of the

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gifts possessed. All are said to be through the Spirit, through the same Spirit or through the one Spirit. We may list them as follows:

- the gift of wise speech (v 8)
- power of putting the deepest knowledge into words (v 9)
- faith (v 9)
- gift of healing (v 9)
- miraculous powers (v 9)
- gift of prophecy (v 9)
- ability to distinguish true spirits from false (v 10)
- the gift of ecstatic utterance of different kinds (v10)
- the ability to interpret it (v 10)

It would be mistaken to assume that none of these gifts is still in action. How we thank God today for those with the gift of wise speech: and how glad we are that some can put the most profound knowledge into words that we can understand: and how those with strong mature faith galvanise us by their lifetime of experiencing Christ.

Faith that can move mountains (1 Cor. 13:2) could be faith strong enough to overcome major obstacles or it could be the faith needed to make "miraculous power" effective (Mark 9:28-29, Matt. 17:19-21). Or maybe there is less difference than we suppose.

The gift of healing is not recognised among us in the "miraculous" sense -- but there are those whose sympathy and practical care, as Christian nurses for example, can be considered as a gift of the Spirit, for even in the first century, ointment was used as well as prayer (James 5:13-15). The gift of prophecy has a current counterpart in exposition which deepens the insight of the church. Ability to distinguish true spirits from false is a valued quality among those to whom we look for wise counsel in the church.

In verses 29 and 30 there is a list of particularly gifted people, with presumably some order of priority in the benefit that came to the church through them:

- a. Apostles,
- b. Prophets,
- c. Teachers,
- d. Miracle Workers,
- e. Those with gifts of healing,
- f. Those with ability to help others,
- g. Those with power to guide others,
- h. Those with gifts of ecstatic utterance (tongues).

Only the presence of a. and d. and h. is in doubt today: c., f. and g. are present: b. and e. are present, even if not miraculous in activity.

### THE SPIRIT STILL WORKS

How can we say all gifts of the Spirit have been withdrawn? To say so is to say that the Lord has revoked his promise of John 14-17, or else he confined it to the Apostles themselves plus (though there is nothing of this in the text) those to whom they would personally transmit it. Some gifts are not in evidence; others have been modified in form, but may we not think that the Spirit still works and suits the gifts to the need of the situation as God alone can determine. We ought to rejoice in the gifts we have from God: if some are missing, let us be thankful for what we have.

Romans Chapter 12 has similar comment on the Spirit's gifts.

"In virtue of the gift that God in his grace has given me, I say to everyone among you: do not be conceited or think too highly of yourself; but think your way to a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of you. For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united with Christ, form one body serving individually as limbs and organs to one another" (v 3-5).

Note that all serve by some gift or other as a result of their union with Christ.

In Romans 12 the Apostle goes on to give yet another list of gifts. Note how "natural" and "non miraculous" some of them are, and how relevant to our own day:

"the gifts we possess differ as they are allotted to us by God's grace, and must be exercised accordingly :

- a. the gift of inspired utterance, in proportion

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to a man's faith (not necessarily miraculous utterance),

- b. the gift of administration, in administration.
- c. a teacher should employ his gift of teaching,
- d. one who has the gift of stirring speech should use it to stir his hearers.
- e. if you give to charity, give with all your heart;
- f. if you are a leader, exert yourself to lead;
- g. if you are helping others in distress, do it cheerfully".

All these gifts can be found in the church of the twentieth century. They are the marks of the presence of the living Lord. All are the gifts of God's grace, even generosity and helpfulness, which should encourage those members of the church today who feel they are less gifted. Response to the Spirit does not depend on intellectual ability.

### TONGUES

I Cor. 14 amplifies information concerning the gifts as experienced in Corinth. The question of the gift of tongues is outside our main theme in this chapter. Suffice it to say that apart from Acts 2 in no place does it seem likely to refer to the ability to speak in foreign languages -- but to a gift of emotional involvement in the power of the Spirit with associated ecstatic utterances. Paul plays it down because it was asserting itself to the disruption of the assemblies and he prefers that more emphasis be given to prophetic utterance. "The prophet is worth more than the man of ecstatic utterance".

### THE WORSHIPPING CHURCH

The chapter serves our immediate purpose by the information it provides about the way in which the gifts were used for the benefit of all. Note how the Spirit is here working in a way much of which would not be foreign to worship in our own day :

"To sum up, my friends; when you meet for worship, each of you contributes a hymn, some instruction, a revelation, an ecstatic utterance, or the interpretation of such an utterance. All these

must aim at one thing: to build up the church" (v 26).

The first century church was very much a worshipping community and their worship was "in the Spirit" (Phil. 3:3 KJV). Paul is telling the Philippians that their association does not depend on racial descent, human will, circumcision or anything external. Worship is an expression of fellowship between God and man, not derived from any human source.

As Jesus told the woman at the well:

"The time approaches, indeed it is already here, when those who are real worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, Such are the worshippers whom the Father wants. God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

The Christian society as a worshipping one would be directed by the Spirit. This would be "true" worship -- fulfilment compared with the symbolic ceremonialism associated with the law ("true" here means the real thing as contrasted with the shadow). Worship would cease to depend on geographical location. The meeting place would now be Christ himself and worship inward ("in spirit") not external.

Should we not dismiss our hesitation to apply these words to our collective worship? Think how often prayers are offered in our services for God to make his presence felt among us: "thou hast said where two or three are gathered together there thou art in the midst of them". "Grant that our worship may ascend as a sweet smelling savour". "Be unto him who shall minister unto us, mouth, matter and wisdom". These phrases recognise that our worship is a partnership between God on the one hand and ourselves on the other: that the living Lord is present in our midst, continuing his ministry as he promised.

### EXERCISING JUDGMENT

It is also important in seeking to show the comparative narrowness of the gap between the working of the Spirit in the first and twentieth century to observe that when the prophets contributed to the collective worship they were not helpless automatons:

"You can all prophesy, one at a time, so that the



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whole congregation may receive instruction and encouragement. It is for prophets to control prophetic inspiration, for the God who inspires them is not a God of disorder, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:31-33).

Moreover when they spoke, the rest had to exercise their judgment on what was said (v 29). This connects with what Paul told the Thessalonians: "quench not the Spirit" (KJV): "Do not stifle inspiration, and do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind" (1 Thess. 5:19-22). In other words it was not the work of the Holy Spirit to ensure infallibility in the elders. What they said was to be tested against the witness in the hearts of the listeners to the total message of God in Christ so that the first century church was not in a radically different situation from ourselves, who listen to our speakers and preachers and have to decide for ourselves whether what they say is in accord with Scripture. We, like them, have to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).

The danger that human ideas might get mixed up with the Spirit's should not however lead them on that account to stifle inspiration. They were to listen attentively and pick out the good and beneficial, rejecting the chaff. This means that the utterances of Spirit gifted men, could be a mixture of sound and less sound ideas. God did not vouchsafe a stream of infallible information for unthinking reception by the listener. He wanted people to reflect and exercise judgment in the first century as in the twentieth.

This was based on the principle from Moses, where even if a man foretold events which came to pass he was not to be followed if his advice ran counter to God's commandments (Deut. 13:1-5). God does not want dumb, unthinking acceptance of an authoritarian line -- even though he is the ultimate source of authority.

The work of the Holy Spirit did not create a situation in the first century, where a twentieth century visitor, if such were possible, would have found himself out of his element, surrounded by a totally and obviously supernatural atmosphere. As today, there was the need for the right blend of tolerance and intolerance in relation to those who expounded the Word.

## THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

Returning to 1 Corinthians 12-14, the most important feature is the exposition of love. It was quite proper that the members of the church should pray for the higher gifts (12:31) but there was something which Paul called the best way of all -- the way of love (agape).

The words are well known to us; a man might be gifted by the Spirit with tongues, prophecy, strong faith, courage, but without love it was fruitless -- for love was the end product aimed at by all the operations of the Spirit -- it was that quality of reflecting in dealing with others, God's concern for undeserving sinners.

Love was the reverse of the attitude being shown in Corinth, as they showed envy and rivalry, wishing they had the gifts of others, thereby regarding them as means of self gratification. Love was characterised by patience and kindness. It excluded envy, boastfulness, conceit or rudeness, selfishness or ease of taking offence, keeping score of wrongs, gloating over the other men's sins (which last sin often goes with zeal for purity). This love can face anything with limitless faith, hope and endurance.

## THE PERFECT THING

Then in chapter 13:8 we come to the section which is often thought to prove that the gifts of the Spirit were withdrawn when the canon of scripture was complete. Prophets, tongues, special knowledge -- all would go when the perfect (i.e. wholeness) came. The perfect is sometimes interpreted as being the completed Bible which rendered superfluous, so it is said, any special activity of the living Spirit in the church. The Spirit was thenceforth in the Bible and of course angels would still encamp round those who feared God.

But is this what the section really says? A natural reading would suggest that Paul is simply saying that the full glory of the Spirit was not available in the church. The treasure was in earthen vessels -- "our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial, and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes". And wholeness will come when the fullness of fellowship with Father and Son is manifested in the consummation of the Kingdom. "God all in all" is obviously a much more complete state of Spirit indwelling, before which earlier manifestations of the Spirit pale. It does not teach that there were only

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two Spirit outpourings: one in the first century and the other when Jesus returns. Instead it seems to be saying that when the perfection of the Kingdom comes, the imperfect outpourings of Pentecost, and after, fade before the complete Glory of God.

Some have so translated the idiom whereby "partial" or "in part" become "from parts", and held it to mean that only particular parts of the church had particular gifts, but that in the completed New Testament all that we needed would be brought together to supersede the gifts of the Spirit which were a temporary system to launch the infant church. But there is no such contrast in the Apostle's words. He was contrasting the limited nature of current insights with the maturity and perfection of the full glory.

"When I was a child, my speech, my outlook and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things. Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me" (v 11-12).

The Spirit's guidance was partial: it did not bring the church fully face to face with God as will happen in the final Kingdom age.

### THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

This seems to be the Apostle's argument here, although there is an interesting suggestion that the various gifts were partial because no one member had the whole. Each eye, ear, hand or foot

contributed its quota and it should not negate love by childishly arguing about the effectiveness of its contribution. If the parts were brought together into a harmonious whole by the exercise of love then they would have left behind their childishness and be no longer tossed to and fro but would have reached the manhood of the unity of the Spirit. Exercising the gifts unitedly in love might then be said to be the perfect thing or wholeness. However, this perfect pooling of partial resources will only be fully attained in the day of consummation. Individual contributions are lost sight of in the beauty of the whole till the glory shall be to God and Him alone.

"In a word, there are three things that last forever: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of them is love" (v 13).

Covet the best gifts earnestly (12:31) -- but love was greater than them all. The fact that it is presented as superior to any one gift of the Spirit, and as the objective of them all demonstrates that the indwelling of the Spirit was for all the believers. The kind of love shown by Father and Son consisted in loving, even unto total sacrifice, those who were totally unworthy. This love was, by the Spirit, to be implanted in the believers. Because this love is divine and not human it cannot be produced but by the Spirit. Awareness of this will reduce human endeavour and enhance trust in God from whom alone comes the fruit of the Spirit, of which love is the leading feature (Galatians 5:22).

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### Chapter 12

The Epistle to the Ephesians is very much the epistle of the Spirit. And because it may have been a circular letter sent to a number of Asian ecclesias including Laodicea (Col. 4:16) and Ephesus, it offers a helpful picture of how the Spirit guided the new society and in the fourth chapter parallels Corinthians. Sometimes the Epistle describes the divine activity in plain terms; sometimes Paul uses the words Spirit or Holy Spirit -- but all is of God: all of it demonstrated that the absent Lord was nevertheless present, continuing his ministry.

In Christ God has bestowed on us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (1:3) and has lavished upon us the richness of the free grace (1:8-9) imparting wisdom and insight.

The real essence of our standing in Christ is expressed in Chapter 1:13-14.

"And you, too, when you had heard the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation, and had believed it, became incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; and that Spirit is the pledge that we shall enter upon our heritage, when God has redeemed what is his own, to his praise and glory."

When we come to be "in Christ" (incorporate in Christ), we are sealed with the Holy Spirit which is the pledge of the glory to come. The word "pledge" means "down payment" or "first instalment". We can hardly suppose that first century believers received the down payment and that we do not in the twentieth.

This idea is a familiar one in Paul's writings :

"If you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing: it is God also who set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

Again,

"Our desire is to have the new body... so that our mortal part may be absorbed into life immortal. God himself has shaped us for this very end: and as pledge of it he has given us the Spirit" (2 Cor. 5:4-5).

### THE PLEDGE OF INHERITANCE

All Christians look forward to the complete heritage -- the life immortal; it is therefore evident that they all receive the pledge or first instalment: the Spirit -- the new life which Christ generates in the believer and which will ultimately be clothed with a house from heaven.

### THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF WISDOM AND VISION

In Ephesians 1, Paul goes on to pray for these Spirit filled Christians (and if Christ dwells in our hearts by faith we are among them): --

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-glorious Father, may give you the spiritual powers of wisdom and vision, by which there comes the knowledge of him. I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him. They are measured by his strength and the might which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 1:17-20).

Vast resources of power from the Lord at God's right hand give spiritual wisdom and vision and illuminate their inward eyes, enabling them to hold within themselves collectively "the fullness of him who himself received the entire fullness of God" (v. 23).

Paul would not have expected them to be exempted from diligent reading of God's Word -- but spiritual powers of wisdom and vision and inward illumination would be working with this Word. Indeed by the spiritual powers of wisdom and vision there comes the knowledge of Christ. This is yet another way of expressing the thought of John 16:14 -- the Spirit taking of the things of Christ and making them part of our experience. Knowledge of Christ is of course knowing him -- not just knowing about him.

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### A HABITATION OF GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT

The second chapter portrays the closeness between the Father, the Son and the Christian community.

"But God, rich in mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ even when we were dead in our sins; it is by his grace you are saved. And in union with Christ Jesus he raised us up and enthroned us with him in the heavenly realms, so that he might display in the ages to come how immense are the resources of his grace and how great his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by his grace you are saved, through trusting him; it is not your own doing. It is God's gift, not a reward for work done. There is nothing for anyone to boast of. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us" (v 4-10).

Our whole life in Christ depends on grace; none of it is our own doing. However natural our lives may appear, yet we are God's handiwork. On earth bodily, yet our real home is in union with Christ Jesus. Even our good deeds are God's deeds worked through us. "We are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God designed us" (v 10).

The chapter continues to describe Jew and Gentile united in one community by the Lord's sacrifice and sums up :

"So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near by; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit" (v 17-18).

That one name into which we were baptised is here once more "through the Son to the Father the Spirit". In this way we are grafted into God's new Israel (v 19-20). Jesus is the foundation stone of this community; in him the whole building is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord (v 21), "in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (v 22 KJV). In such words as these, shot through with specific references to the Spirit, is described the whole quality of Christian living, both individual and

collective, for all time.

### "STRENGTH IN OUR INNER BEING"

The third chapter of Ephesians is in the same mood as it describes how God's secret was revealed to Gentiles as the unfathomable riches of Christ were made available to them. "In Christ we have access to God with freedom, in the confidence born of trust in him" (v 12 -- such verses speak of a very close and personal relationship that goes beyond the merely intellectual acceptance of truth).

Paul continues:

"I kneel in prayer to the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, that out of the treasures of his glory he may grant you strength and power through his Spirit in your inner being, that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and firm foundations, may you be strong to grasp, with all God's people, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So may you attain to fullness of being, the fullness of God himself. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive, by the power which is at work among us, to him be glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus from generation to generation evermore. Amen" (Ephesians 3:14-21).

"Strength and power in our inner being through his Spirit", so that "through faith Christ may dwell in our hearts in love". Let us recognize this work of Father and Son as no less "a power which is at work among us", through the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century; it will add joy and power to our Christian living and our community fellowship.

The fourth chapter continues the exposition of the effect of the Spirit upon the church. The prime task of the elders was (and is) to "spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives. There is one body and one Spirit, as there is also one hope held out in God's call to you; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:3-6). The one Spirit is a permanent part of the seven-fold spectrum of the divine unity. The one God and the one Lord by the one Spirit make the effects of the one Salvation collectively available.

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This chapter and the next abound with practical advice in Christian living but it is all part of the work of the Spirit. "You must be made new in mind and Spirit, and put on the new nature of God's creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth" 4:23-24. Christian behaviour is the result of the work of the Father and Son through the Holy Spirit -- not of our own strong characters and resolute wills.

Uncontrolled tongues, cursing and swearing, ought not to be heard from saints. This would "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for that Spirit is the seal with which you were marked for the day of our final liberation" (v 29-31). So "have done with spite and passion, all angry shouting and cursing, and bad feeling of every kind".

### "BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT"

We have already had occasion to consider the phrase "filled with the Spirit": it occurs yet again in Ephesians chapter 5:17-21:

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God".

This passage is collective: it speaks of the fellowship of the believers. There is a touch of humour in the admonition to avoid becoming drunk with wine -- and rather be filled with the Spirit. These verses then give four effects of a community being filled with the Spirit:

- a. speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.
- b. singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.
- c. giving thanks always for all things unto God.
- d. submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

So when we sing hymns together, or just within

ourselves; when we give thanks or when we submit to one another in love, we are not acting naturally: the Spirit is at work.

### STRENGTH IN THE LORD

The Epistle concludes on a note of triumphant power. "Finally then, find your strength in the Lord, in his mighty power" (6:10-11). There follows the analogy with a warrior's armour based on the prophecy of Isaiah. One item of equipment -- the sword -- is specifically linked with the Spirit.

"For sword, take that which the Spirit gives you -- the words that come from God. Give yourselves wholly to prayer and entreaty; pray on every occasion in the power of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17-18).

The words from God were more than verses selected from the Old Testament: more than groups of letters in a book. The Word of God was not just the Old Testament as an inert book, but was all that God had to say in any way and included the way in which the Old Testament was made by the Spirit to come alive in his life and experience. In the first century there were included new revelations of additional information from God: in the twentieth century, though this is not granted to us, exhortation based on Scripture may stimulate us with new insights so that we might legitimately say that the preacher "truly spoke by the Spirit this morning".

And as to prayer, there is no other way to pray but by the Spirit. Prayer is a Spirit activity. It is not from men.

When Paul begs the Romans to be his partners in prayer, his words are:

"I implore you by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love that the Spirit inspires, be my allies in the fight; pray to God for me that I may be saved from unbelievers" (Romans 15:30-31).

The Spirit inspires the love which is the basis of their fellowship and of their prayers.

So much is the Spirit at the root of prayer that when we cannot find the words the Spirit does :

"In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate

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groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God's people in God's own way; and in everything, as we know, he cooperates for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:26-28).

Have we never known the inward, personal, moving out towards the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with groans inexpressible. This is the Spirit, worked into our experience, doing what we can't find words for.

### GIFTS FOR MEN

Thus we have looked at some references to the Spirit in each chapter of the letter to the Ephesians. Throughout we have seen a message that is appropriate for the church in the twenty-first as well as in the first century.

Chapter 1 -- the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2 -- a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Chapter 3 -- strength and power through his Spirit in your inner being.

Chapter 4 -- the unity which the Spirit gives.

Chapter 5 -- filling with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 6 -- prayer in the power of the Spirit.

We have however omitted reference to Chapter 4: 7-16. If the rest of the epistle is relevant to our own day is it likely that this section will be irrelevant and be applicable only to first century experience? Let us set out the text:

"But each of us has been given his gift, his due portion of Christ's bounty. Therefore Scripture says: 'He ascended into the heights with captives in his train; he gave gifts to men' Now, the word 'ascended' implies that he also descended to the lowest level, down to the very earth. He who descended is no other than he who ascended far above all heavens, so that he might fill the universe. And these were his gifts: some to be

apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ. So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God -- to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ. We are no longer to be children, tossed by the waves and whirled about by every fresh gust of teaching, dupes of crafty rogues and their deceitful schemes. No, let us speak the truth in love; so shall we fully grow up into Christ. He is the head, and on him the whole body depends. Bonded and knit together by every constituent joint, the whole frame grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up in love".

To illustrate that each member of the Christian society has been given his gift -- his portion of Christ's bounty, Paul turns to Psalm 68. We need to do the same.

The Psalm is descriptive of the progress of the Ark of the Covenant from the wandering of the wilderness to the stability of Mount Zion. The opening verse: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered before him" (v 1 KJV) is based on the words of the priests when the ark led Israel to their next camping place, when it went forward to search out a resting place, for them. (Numbers 10:33-36). The final resting place was Mt. Zion: it was the end of the journey. Similarly Jesus (the antitypical Ark of the Covenant) went to "prepare a place" for the believers (John 14) and his ascent to the right hand of God was for this purpose.

David completed the work of Moses and on the day when at last the ark settled down David would celebrate by distributing gifts so that all might rejoice together in peace. It was the end of a centuries old battle, just as the Lord's victory defeated centuries old sin. As the ark was taken into the place of God's choice, so the Lord was taken into heaven and from the right hand of God sent forth his gifts to men, that God might dwell among them.

Again we are meeting the theme of the ascended Christ. "The Spirit was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified" (John 7:38:39). When he was glorified then it was given. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I depart I will send him unto you.

Ephesians chapter 4 then lists the gifts, more briefly than Corinthians.

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Apostles,  
Prophets,  
Evangelists,  
Pastors and teachers.

The object of the gifts was and is to equip God's people for work in his service, to build them up, to bring them to unity, to enable them to know the Son of God, to give them stability, that they might grow up into Christ.

If we think of the word Apostle too technically then Christ selected twelve men and they alone are entitled to the description (whether Matthias or Paul has the 12th place being a disputed point). However the word means "one sent" and is applied in the New Testament to many others beside the Twelve, although we rightly hesitate to use it in the twentieth century. Prophets: on the other hand there are still those who tell forth the Word of the Lord and give us new insight. Evangelists: there are those who specialise in the external work of proclaiming the gospel in simple terms to those who believe not.

As far as pastors and teachers are concerned -- men who concentrate on the internal work of stabilising what the evangelists had founded -- there is no doubt that we are blessed with these in our own day even though we may sometimes pray for a larger supply of them. Their objective is still to bring us to manhood in Christ.

We might demur from the application of these descriptions to the twentieth century on the ground that the first century Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors were infallible and our counterparts are not. However these men did make mistakes even in the first century. As we have seen already, they had to be tested very carefully. Even Paul, Peter and Barnabas did not always speak with one voice -- but the fact that infallible accuracy was not assured every time they opened their mouths did not prevent the essential message from getting through: "Christ in you the Hope of Glory". (see Gal: 2:11-14; Acts 15: 36 -- 41).

## LOVE -- THE BOND OF PERFECTION

Christ still gives to his church Spirit-filled men who have special roles in guiding the community that it may increase in the unity of the Spirit: and be "built up in love" (Ephesians 4:16). Love is the end product of the Spirit's work. Love -- that word so hard to define -- and still harder to display as Christ did: "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

This love is beyond ordinary human Love of even the highest calibre. The Greek idea of love -- eros, was a love created by desire to acquire its object: it reached upward in its own strength; it was man's way to God: it was man's own work; it was egocentric, however noble it might sometimes be, it sought to gain its reward out of self interest; it was man's love; God was its object; its strength was determined by the beauty and worth of its object.

Christian love, agape -- this bond of perfectness and end product of the Spirit's activity is unqualified goodwill expressed in sacrificial giving, it comes down and is God's way to man; it is directed toward righteous and unrighteous alike; it is independent of value in its object.

As Nygren puts it in "Agape and Eros", "Eros recognises value in its object, and loves it. Agape loves and creates value in its object".

Thus it was that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The Father and the Son did not wait for us to acquire value before loving us to the uttermost (Romans 5:6-11). It is this love -- agape -- that the Spirit designs to create in the society of the redeemed. Yet again we have an application of the passage we quote so frequently -- "He shall take of mine and show it unto you" (John 16:13-15). The Spirit works Christ's sacrifice into our experience (Gal. 2:20) and when this happens, we begin to love with his love in us. Love of this kind is unnatural in us. It is the most supernatural product of all the Spirit's activity. "I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples (John 13:34-35).

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 13

The key thought in all that we have been studying is that in our relationship with God, everything is of Him and nothing is of ourselves. Fellowship with God and inner experience of the Lord's sacrifice is the creation of the Spirit, and grateful response produces action in love which, as we saw in the last two chapters, is the fruit of the Spirit.

We move on to consider more fully the foundation of Christian conduct to see that it is not a matter of law keeping, code observing or trying hard, but of walking in the Spirit and trusting in the Lord. Thus Jesus says:

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are Spirit and are life" (John 6:63).

Similarly Paul in the chapter which provides our heading "The dispensation of the Spirit" declares: "not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who hath made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:5-6).

In these words: "it is the Spirit that quickeneth" and in the parallel ones: "the Spirit giveth life" we have something that comes close to a definition of the Spirit. Here is the life giver and the only way whereby men can be energised to spiritual action.

The phrase, "the flesh profiteth nothing", is not describing the flesh as the source of sin, but as the power in which the natural man, or even a believer who has not fully learned his heritage in the Spirit, seeks to serve God or to know and possess divine things in his own strength. All such efforts to please God profit nothing and are of flesh. The dispensation of law is a dispensation of the letter and the flesh, and is based on doing. The dispensation of the Spirit is based on grace and receiving. This comes over clearly in 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

It is by the Spirit that we are to put to death our earthly deeds (Rom. 8:13) and we have been called away from the spirit of slavery and bondage (Rein. 8:14-15).

2 Corinthians 3 and the epistles to the Galatians and Romans are continually saying that I must surrender my own efforts to be righteous, stop trying

### THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT LAW AND GRACE

and start trusting. Fearful Christianity is not fruitful. An understanding that the Spirit is the source of Christian behaviour will put to flight such foreboding remarks as "I'll never be in the Kingdom" or "I keep trying but I never seem to get anywhere in Christian living". This sad story of failure springs from inability to believe fully in the indwelling Spirit and consequent failure to let the Spirit take over the running of our lives.

Let us look at the third chapter of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in its context.

### FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISES

The letter begins in an atmosphere of recognition of God as the source of all mercy and comfort (1:3) who personally supervises the believers in their troubles that they may learn not to trust in themselves, but in God, who raises the dead (1:9). Paul then handles the doubts he had incurred in his recent relationships with them through his change of plans. He stresses that he has been absolutely straightforward with them (v 15-18). He doesn't plan with his tongue in his cheek, saying "yes" and meaning "no": in this he follows the Lord Jesus who was himself the divine 'Yes'. "He is the Yes pronounced upon God's promises, every one of them" (v 20 -- "all the promises of God in him are yea and in him Amen" KJV).

All God's promises find fulfilment in Jesus. And he goes on to mention one particular promise the fulfilment of which they and he had experienced. "And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing: it is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts" (v 21-22). If this promise has ceased to be applicable and the pledge is no longer available in the twentieth century, then will not the Lord Jesus himself have proved to be "yes and no"? That is unthinkable as Paul indicates. Do we not belittle the Lord's faithfulness to his promises if we underrate the effectiveness of the Spirit in our own day?

He goes on to explain his conduct in relation to them; he had refrained from visiting them out of love, to avoid an open rupture, and he justified his activities in writing severely to them as fully sincere and motivated by deep concern. Toward the end of the second chapter he begins to introduce his



## THE HOLY SPIRIT

defence of his ministry and the validity of his Apostleship which becomes so important later in the epistle. This is the background of the third chapter which starts by saying that if evidence of his Apostleship is needed, they themselves are the evidence.

### THE NEW COVENANT

He then expresses the witness of the Spirit to the fact that they belong to Christ, in the words: "you are a letter that has come from Christ, given to us to deliver, written not on stone tablets but on the pages of the human heart". He is contrasting two forms of writing, the material on stone and the spiritual on hearts. He is presenting his credentials as a dispenser of the New Covenant and in so doing is expounding Jeremiah 31:31-34 :

"The time is coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although they broke my covenant, I was patient with them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts; I will become their God and they shall become my people. No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sin no more".

This new covenant, says Jeremiah, was to supersede the old one made with Israel at Sinai, which was external in its action, whereas the new one was to have inward force. The old one did not provide for forgiveness of sins, only cleansing from ceremonial defilements and general national uncleanness and specific judicial crimes; the new one would provide for the forgiveness of sins and would restore them to fellowship with God. This is termed the better covenant in Hebrews chapters 8 and 10 and it is brought into effect by the work of the Lord Jesus, who at the last supper said of the wine he shared with the disciples "this is the blood of the new covenant shed for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-29).

It was this new and better covenant that Paul ministered and the fact that God's law had been

written in the hearts of the Corinthians was evidence of the validity of his ministry. That is how they were his letter of credentials. And the great feature of the new covenant is that it produces inward change by the working of the Spirit of the Living God. This is something which cannot be achieved by trying to keep laws external to one's self by one's own resolution and self determination.

The covenant he ministered was independent of human ability, and thus Paul's ministration of it was not in his own strength, but in reliance upon God, through Christ. He was dealing not in "letter" -- an eternal written code: but in Spirit. Men could not keep the external written code and so it condemned them to death. The new and Spirit-applying covenant gave an inner power which achieved a change of outlook and heart which no amount of effort to comply with an external law could achieve (2 Cor. v 4-6). And as we read this epistle we will be conscious of the fact that the New Testament predicted no discontinuance of the new covenant. On the contrary it was permanent as were the blessings that featured in it. There is no ground for expecting any change, either in intent or manner of working. It established relationships which are spiritual not physical.

### THE GLORY OF THE NEW

Paul (still justifying his own ministry) now shows how the ministry of the inferior covenant by Moses was accompanied by great splendour or glory. When Moses came out from the presence of the Lord his face shone and he had to cover it with a veil. How much more glorious then must be the administering of the covenant of the Spirit which gives life. In comparison there is no glory at all in the old covenant ministry which could only show men up as sinners. Paul is implying that they are not to assume that because his ministry is not accompanied by physical brilliance and glory, it therefore lacks effectiveness. The ministry of Moses and its glory was visible and physical, for that was the plane on which it operated. The ministry of Paul dealt in the invisible and the spiritual; it operated on the higher plane; it brought the power of the invisible Christ, continuing his ministry invisibly and inwardly, into the hearts of the believers.

Once more we are against the background of the Lord's exposition in John 14 to 17. It was necessary for him to ascend to the Father so that his invisible universal ministry, unhampered by physical and

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

spatial limitations might begin ("it is expedient that I go" John 16:5-7). The new covenant was not being ministered by a physically visible Christ, but by the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18). Remember our earlier study of the way in which the Comforter would be the Lord's other self. There is no doubt of the allied thought in Paul's exposition that his own personal ministry very much reflects the new relationship associated with the new covenant. The other Apostles had as prime among their credentials the fact that they had been physically with the Lord in his visible ministry. This had not been Paul's experience; his association with the Lord belonged entirely to the post ascension ministry. His seeing of the Lord was on a different plane from the original experience of the other Apostles. Far from making Paul's ministry inferior to theirs, his experience was intensely appropriate to ministering the invisible Lord to the inner experience of the believers.

Gem after gem springs out of the wealth of Paul's thought in this section of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. For example he shows the inferiority of the law (or in fact any law-keeping approach to salvation) by a neat explanation of why Moses wore a veil when he came out from the Lord's presence (Exodus 34:29-35 -- it should be re-read here to get the point). It was so that Israel should not see the glory fade, says Paul. Moses took the veil off when he went into the Lord's presence and received a further inflow of glory, which he then again veiled from Israel, who therefore never saw it fade and attached an unwarranted permanence to it and to the law which it represented.

### TURNING TO THE LORD

Then, again, Israel were, figuratively, the body of Moses and they were like Moses in his veiled state, only they had been keeping it on all the time and were sticking to the old covenant which had been abrogated. However if only, like Moses, they would enter the Lord's presence ("turn to the Lord") -- and this Lord would now be the Lord Jesus -- the veil would be taken off and they would behold the superior, unfading glory of the ministration of the Spirit. And this was just what Jews who turned to Jesus, like Paul, the Corinthians and all new covenant believers, were doing: "the Lord of whom this passage speaks is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And because for us there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord; thus we are

transfigured into his likeness, from splendour to splendour; such is the influence of the Lord who is Spirit". (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Instead of seeing their salvation in external compliance with a code of laws in their own strength, the believers in Christ are invited to keep their gaze absolutely fixed on Jesus (looking unto Jesus) and his reflection will show in their whole being. They themselves will progressively develop into his likeness: obviously falling short as a mirror reflection does of the real person. Also the very idea of progression suggests that completeness is not reached. Phillips renders it: "We are transfigured in ever increasing splendour into his own image, and the transformation comes from the Lord who is the Spirit".

These verses are universally conceded to be speaking of all believers in all times, even though the Lord's influence is sometimes thought to be operated solely through the written word. But it is impossible so to limit these words in view of the whole sweep of the argument, which justifies Paul's particular ministry as a mediation of the continued, though invisible, ministry of the absent Lord, present through the Spirit. If v18 applies today then the Lord by the Spirit is still writing his law in men's hearts. From his throne at the right hand of God he still ministers the new covenant and sustains the saints in a spiritual relationship with himself.

### CHRIST WITHIN

Paul continues the theme in the fourth chapter of this second epistle. He goes on justifying his ministry. If people couldn't see his gospel of grace -- it was because there was a veil on their minds. For one reason and another, their own self sufficiency blinded them to the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. "The same God who said, 'Out of darkness let light shine', has caused his light to shine within us, to give us the light of revelation -- the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v 6).

He and they were mere earthenware pots to hold such treasure. His own experience could be theirs and in offering to share it he was not boosting himself as some had suggested: "wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died, that in this body also, life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives" (v 10). The invisible heavenly ascended life of Jesus was, by the Spirit, being made part of Paul's experience and by his preaching, part of their's: the starting point was sharing his death, so

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that in his death their sins were dead. Here are echoes once more of John 16 -- the need for the Lord to ascend so that he might be universally present and the fact that the Comforter would make redemption in Christ real in the experience of the believer.

Verses 16-18 will no doubt always be best remembered as expressed in the incomparable King James' version: "though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day". This is still the work of the Spirit as expounded in chapter 3. The contrast between "the things that are seen" and "temporal" on the one hand, and those which are "unseen" and "eternal" on the other, is in fact continuing the contrast of the two covenants in chapter 3 and the higher plane of living with Christ within, rather than by law without.

### RECEIVING -- NOT ACHIEVING

The change, from the law to Spirit stressed in 2 Cor. 3-5, was a permanent change, not a temporary privilege limited to the Apostolic epoch. It was evidence that the new age -- the age of fulfilment had dawned. Associated with this thought was another which Paul has constantly emphasised -- the old covenant could not continue side by side with the new spirit covenant. They were mutually exclusive. The new covenant had rendered the earlier covenant obsolescent: it was on a new plane and produced a new approach to fulfilling the will of God. The law said "Do and live". They said "We will", but they didn't, and, as far as law went, were condemned. The ministry of the Lord who is of the Spirit says "Let me do it! Receive me into your life and let me live in you. Trust in me and I will gradually change you from within and you will live". And after the bondage of trying to achieve one's own salvation by self determination, this was liberty.

Too many Christians still consider obedience a matter of gritting their teeth and clenching their fists

and making up their own minds that they will summon every ounce of their own will-power to do what is written on the pages of the Bible. Instead they should be heeding the voice of the one who stands at the door and knocks and says "if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). They still place most emphasis on trying rather than trusting and achieving rather than receiving. They hesitate to declare "Yes I believe the Holy Spirit works in our lives today" and often lack the confidence and assurance that the living Lord will see them through.

Victorious living is only possible when we know that of our own selves we can do nothing. The initial victory is the Lamb's and the continuing victory is his as well: through the Holy Spirit -- whose spiritual power transforms our lives in Christ.

We are not excused of all effort in the working out of our salvation, but our primary task is sufficiently to empty ourselves that the Lord of the new covenant may truly inscribe his will upon our hearts. This is where our effort should concentrate itself. It is hard enough to bring ourselves to open the door and let him in. This will take us all our time. But it is joyous effort which brings peace, whereas to agonise to express his will as a code of commandments, external to ourselves, and to concentrate on effort to obey each one will bring us defeat and despair and will give us burden and bondage. How to say these things without being thought to imply that conduct doesn't matter is difficult indeed, as the apostle Paul discovered. The difficulty can only be met by traversing the ground a number of times as we look in all the epistles at the way Paul and the Apostles viewed Christian living as the work of the Spirit and not of the flesh, however devout that flesh might be.

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### Chapter 14

The letter to the Romans was the most comprehensive exposition of the gospel to come from the pen of Paul. It is not surprising then that it is largely taken up with contrasting salvation by grace and by Spirit with that by law or by flesh. A comprehensive exposition of Romans will not be possible here and we shall have to rest content with a sample of the Apostle's teaching, just sufficient to bring home the way of peace and the route to righteousness in the age of the Spirit.

Early in the epistle he expresses the same thought as we have seen in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Thus "the true Jew is not he who is such in externals, neither is the true circumcision the external mark in the flesh. The true Jew is he who is such inwardly, and the true circumcision is of the heart, directed not by written precepts, but by the Spirit" (Rom. 2:28-29).

#### JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

In chapters 1, 2 and 3 Paul demonstrates that all men, Jew and Gentile alike, are one in sin and the condemnation that stems from sin. The only saving power is from God and is by faith in the gospel, which reveals God's way of righting wrong (ch. 1: 16-17). Chapter 3 emphasises that God's free grace alone justifies men, or puts them in the right, when they put their whole trust in the redemptive work carried out once for all by the Lord Jesus (3:23-26).

"What room is left for human pride? It is excluded. And on what principle? The keeping of the law would not exclude it, but faith does. For our argument is that a man is justified by faith quite apart from success in keeping the law" (Rein. 3:27-28).

Where men deceive themselves into thinking they have kept God's law they are filled with human pride. Religion which seeks to achieve righteousness in its own strength is described by Paul as "seeking to establish their own righteousness" (Rom. 10:3). One writer has aptly remarked that this:

"has been the religion of the ordinary man both before and since. It is the religion of the man in the street today. Indeed it is the fundamental principle of every moral and religious system in the world except New Testament Christianity. It

### BY GRACE WE ARE SAVED

is popular because it is flattering. It tells a man that if he will only pull his socks up a bit higher and try a bit harder, he will succeed in winning his own salvation".

This is a fearful delusion, because no one except the Lord has ever been perfectly obedient to God both in outward action and also in inner motive.

In Romans 4, the Apostle Paul shows how Abraham was considered (counted) by God to be a righteous man, not because of outward obedience to the rite of circumcision but because of his faith. He took God at his word and lived in total commitment to God. He proceeded not upon the basis of earning his wages for good deeds, but rather did good deeds because God had freely promised to make him heir of the world. True believers walk the path of Abraham's faith and, taking God at his word, receive the gift. They do not wrest from him a reward in recognition of their moral superiority to other men. They receive it gratefully, recognising their inferiority to Christ.

Thus Chapters 1-4 bring us to the point of universal sinfulness from which conscientious attempts at law keeping did not deliver. So God had another way of putting people in the right (justifying them); that was by including them in Christ as an act of grace, permitting them to share the fruits of his victory -- to participate in the righteousness of God declared in Jesus. This sharing in the triumphant Christ is independent alike of ritual such as circumcision, of racial origin, and of merit. All a man has to do is to believe, have faith, trust that he has been included in Christ, then his sins are forgiven -- he is justified by faith.

Chapter 5 speaks of the believers as justified by faith and continuing at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "We have been allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace, where we now stand". This gives us hope of the completeness of divine glory which is to come and we are not to be in doubt about this, like those who depend on their own righteousness. "Such a hope is no mockery, because God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us". This is the same idea as the one we have met already that the present inward working of Christ, the present indwelling of the Spirit, is the pledge -- the assurance of the fullness to come. The partial points to wholeness to come (1 Cor. 13). For all our personal failures, we know that

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the Lord is at work within us progressively transforming us; so there is no need for morbid despair about attaining to glory. We heed his promises "fear not little flock: it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom". Paul's argument will not allow us to limit the application of God's overflowing love through the Spirit. The first few verses of Romans 5 are part of a sequence as applicable in the twentieth century as in the first. It is a call for us too, to rejoice even though we may not be able to specify precisely how the Spirit works.

### UNMERITED FAVOUR

In Romans 5, Paul shows that every member of the human race recapitulates in himself the sin of Adam and thus lies under the just wrath of God.

God cannot condone his sin and still remain a moral God. But the man who believes has, by God's free love to the completely undeserving, been placed in Christ, as part of him. Thus Christ's breaking out of the circle of sin and consequential death avails for the Christian as well. The Christian does nothing to earn it. All the action is from God to man, not from man to God. Reconciliation is the gift of God, though it does something to the whole manner of life. Christ has shared the death we deserve in order to render it powerless; we are permitted to share the life he now lives. When we were enemies and without strength we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, and now we are reconciled, the life of the ascended son works in us that we may be freed from wrath and saved by his life (Rom. 5:9-10).

Then by God's grace and his gift of righteousness we may live and reign through Jesus Christ. The contrast is between sin and death reigning as a dictator over us and righteousness establishing a reign which we share in Christ, partaking of his ascended life, now and in the age to come. As sin established its reign by way of death, so God's grace establishes its reign in righteousness, and issues ultimately in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (v 21).

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound". The very entry of sin into the world, regrettable though it was, gave God the opportunity to shower grace on men who did not earn anything, but received a gift.

### DEAD TO SIN -- ALIVE TO GOD

Paul realises that his readers are going to interpret him as saying: "if this be the case, let us sin more that God may forgive more". At this idea Paul is aghast! "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" We appropriate the death of our Lord Jesus when we repent and are baptised. In his death our sins are dead. Romans chapter 6 says that if we are crucified with Christ we cannot sin: we have yielded our will to a new master -- righteousness. The regenerate "me" cannot sin; it is the area where Christ dwells. The non-generate "me" still sins; it is the area where I still try to do things myself and run my own life.

The chapter shows the inherent contradiction in a Christian being dominated by sin. "Life in sin cannot co-exist with death to sin" and baptism implies death to sin in the sharing of Christ's death: and coming out of the water is a token of sharing in Christ's resurrected and ascended life. We have shared his death: we shall also share his resurrection life (v 8): what follows indicates that Paul primarily has in mind the present new life as much as future immortality, though the two are related. "In dying as he died, he died to sin, once for all, and in living as he lives, he lives to God. In the same way you must regard yourselves as dead to sin, and alive to God, in union with Christ Jesus" (v 10-11). The famous baptismal chapter is saying most clearly that when we become part of the body of Christ, he sends forth the Comforter from the right hand of God, that we may be alive with his life. John 14-17 is reproduced in the baptismal situation of Romans 6.

We have a new king -- Christ instead of sin -- and our bodies are to be yielded to him so that he may work his righteous will through them (v 13-14) He uses us as his instruments. This is the basis of Christian morality: our behaviour is not our own, but another is using us, if we will let him. Sin as a ruler has been dethroned and we have a new ruler within our hearts. This does not mean we are sinless -- but that we have come over to God's side and have the divine reinforcement in the struggle, though not exemption from the struggle. One writer remarks: "the God of whom Paul speaks is the living God, and when men and women present themselves to him to be used in his service, he accepts them as his servants and gives them the power to do his will. The Christ of whom Paul speaks is the Christ who truly died and rose again, and in the lives of those

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who put their trust in him, 'He breaks the power of cancelled sin' ".

Augustine once said "Love God and do as you please" -- and, although there is the exaggeration allowable in an epigram here, yet God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, should result in our being pleased to do things which please God. "Freed from the commands of sin, and bound to the service of God, your gains are such as make for holiness, and the end is eternal life" (v 22).

The very use of the verb 'yield' in Romans 6 suggests that we are mastered by a power greater than ourselves, far greater than our own resolution could be. The foundation of Christian conduct lies in yielding to the Spirit. Those who minister words of exhortation in Christian worship should motivate their congregations by this great truth. Then their listeners will go home resolute to respond, without feeling that the goal is beyond them. Those ministering public exhortation who carry their duty to warn to the point where their hearers are made wretched and joyless are missing the point of the gospel and tending toward law and the ministration of death. As one writer says,

"Can a man effect his own deliverance from evil? Can he give himself a new mentality or a new will or a new heart? The answer is he cannot, any more than he can lift himself into the stratosphere by his shoe strings. The effort of a man to complete the moral transformation of his nature, especially in view of the searching light of the divine holiness which Jesus Christ turns on to him, can only bring him to despair".

Thus those who exhort their Christian brethren should be telling them of their privileges and how to claim them, rather than increasing their anxiety and implanting a sense of despair. "You are no longer under law, but under the grace of God" (Rein. 6:14).

But some will say: "what about Romans chapter 7? Surely this tells us that wretchedness is the normal experience of the Christian". We shall see that this is not the message of Romans 7.

### FREED FROM LAW

In the first part of Romans 7, Paul uses the analogy of marriage to state that death ends the sway of law, just as only death ends the marriage bond because then the husband is removed from the pale of the law. Paul might equally well have used the

analogy of a defendant in a murder case, who dies while on trial. He too would have been removed from the sphere of law. It would have no more claim on him.

As Nygren puts it in his commentary on Romans, "It is, then, indubitable that one can die to the law. Paul has shown that clearly in this illustration. And that is exactly what has happened to Christians, according to Paul. They were formerly under the law. The law was the power which had complete command of them and placed them under condemnation. But now a death had intervened. Christ had died and they have died with him: and the result is that they are henceforth free from the law. Hence Paul continues, 'Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ (i.e. as part of Christ) so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God' (Rom. 7:4 RSV)".

Paul is not working out a detailed allegory here. There is no question of law being represented by the husband and dying. The law does not die, i.e. God still has standards, a righteous requirement which man cannot meet. "There is only one way to liberation. Only in the fact that the Christian has died with Christ is he really and truly set beyond the realm of law. The law no longer rules over him, for he belongs to Another, he has another Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ who arose from the dead."

As in Romans 6 when one is dead to sin in Christ he lives for God in Christ Jesus; so in Romans 7 when one has died to the law in Christ, he lives for Christ and belongs to him, and this is the context of the oft quoted Gal. 2:19-20. "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me". As the body of Christ, we are him and he is us, and what happens to the one happens to the other, dying, rising and living in heavenly places. By one Spirit we were all baptised into One Body (1 Cor. 12:13). Rom. 7:4 thus gives us the idea of a man under law finding himself incapable of bringing forth fruit unto God, but when he dies and rises with Christ, he is on a new plane of existence: he is freed from the approach of law keeping and reward earning. Only in Christ, can he really bear fruit for God. The Christ, who by the Spirit lives within him, achieves through him what his own efforts never would.

"While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bring forth fruit for death. But now we

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are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit" (Rom. 7:5-6).

This is the same idea as that in 2 Cor. 3; we are delivered, in Christ, from the outward observance of the external code into the new covenant, where the Spirit writes the Lord's will in the heart -- in the inmost being. And only as Christians base their conduct on committing their way to the Lord will they find that peace and joy which belong to the fruit of the Spirit. Not now "I must", but rather "He will". Let him work his will in me.

Rom. 7:7-13 continues by speaking of the way in which the law defines sin and by prohibiting certain actions stimulates the perverse will of man to perform those very deeds. One has quaintly put it that God gave us a law to break -- not that he wanted us to break it, but because he knew that, in the inevitable fact that we would break it, we would learn our own weakness as Adam did. We would learn our own need of a Saviour.

### THE END OF CONFLICT

Again and again we commit the same sin. I want to serve him. I want to please him, but I fail. The trouble is, I am trying to do something for God. Law means I do something for God. Grace means he does something for me. In Rom. 7:14-24 there follows the cry from the heart of Paul which some have explained as belonging to his pre-conversion period when he tried to follow God. Actually it belongs to the experience of Christians because they live in two ages at once, that of the Spirit and that of the flesh. They still experience the pull of sin and, all too often seek to meet it by their own will-power.

The reading of Paul's cry requires carefully placed emphasis. For example in verse 19 the emphasis needs to be on the 'I' and the 'would': "the good that I would that I do not". It is a picture of failure because I am trying to succeed. However, this is not the norm, the standard, of Christianity. Although we often experience this battle, this grief, this terrible struggle, we should not think of it as an exhibition of Spirit-guided Christianity. Instead of "I must", we have to learn "I am unable to do anything but trust". When I know that I am at the end of the line, with no resources of my own, then some progress will be made. The man who is nearly drowning and is too weak to resist his rescuer, is the one who is most likely to be saved. We deny the cross until we know we are powerless. The frenzy of

religious activity: 'I must do better', 'I must not sin' is in fact negative thinking. Even if I say 'I must do more Bible reading', good though it is of itself, I may still be stressing human effort. If I say 'I must take more resolute action' as I dispose of some impediment to Christian living, such resolution is not of itself making me more the sort of person God wants, spiritually wise though the action could be. The more I try in my own will power the more I shall cry out "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death".

When I say this struggle is not the norm of Christianity, I do not mean it is not the usual experience of Christians. There is for all of us a tension between sin within and the Lord within -- but the idea of winning the struggle by mere effort is non-Christian. The Christian lives, as we have said, simultaneously in two worlds and the two clash. Temporally he is a flesh and blood son of Adam living in this world: "Spiritually however, he has passed from death to life, from the realm of darkness to the Kingdom of Light; he is a member of the new creation".

When the Lord returns, then the tension between the two ages will be resolved. But so long as Christians live 'between the times', Paul's words in another epistle retain their full relevance: 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would' (Gal. 5:17).

But the cry "wretched man that I am" belongs only to the body of death. As part of the body of Christ, the Christian is redeemed and the Spirit of Christ dwells in him. When he grasps this, then his struggle ceases and he cries; "I thank my God through Jesus Christ" (v 25). As one commented: "The passage which begins with a sad confession of inability leads up to a paean of triumph. The inability persists only so long as 'I myself' -- that is, I in my own strength -- fight the battle. So long as I do that, says Paul, I may serve the law of God with my mind, but my body willy-nilly goes on rendering obedience to the law of sin. Must I always know defeat? Must I always carry this incubus on my back? Will deliverance never come? Thank God it will through Jesus Christ our Lord".

### THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Thus we are lifted out of our depression on to a higher platform altogether, one which transcends law

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and brings forth fruit unto God. How this deliverance from indwelling sin may be appropriated is the theme of chapter 8 which begins:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death".

This is the way of escape from the fear filled life. There is the law of sin which brings death, and there is the law of the Spirit which brings life. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus may be likened to a bird free upon the wing, quite unperturbed by the law of gravity, which parallels the law of sin and death. There is life in the bird which counteracts the other law; so the life of the Spirit counteracts the law of sin and death which pulls to the earth. It is a matter of an inner and upward power spontaneously developed by the Spirit, in contrast with the outer and downward pull, of a code law demanding outward compliance.

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh".

I could not do it -- he did. All the clenching of my teeth, all the taking grip of myself could not gain the victory, but the Father can do what we cannot. We let go and we trust in him who is in us. It is not however a passive response. It involves a constant drawing on him, and trust in him. And the result is that "the righteousness of the law" (i.e. the righteousness at which Law aimed, but could never bring about) is fulfilled in us (v 4) -- not by us, who walk not after the flesh, that is in their own strength, but after the Spirit. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh"; that it is to say if one's mind is set on willing to avoid sin then there will be much more concentration on sin than on righteousness. Those who are after the Spirit, because of their positive thinking in Christ, will follow the things of the Spirit: and it will not merely be a matter of keeping the law by the Spirit, but of living on a new and higher level.

The conduct of such Christians is no longer "under the control of the lower nature", but "is directed by the Spirit" (v 4). "Those who live on the level of our lower nature (after the flesh KJV) have their outlook formed by it, and that spells death;

(they are working independently of God) but those who live on the level of the Spirit have the spiritual outlook and that is life and peace. For the outlook of the lower nature is enmity with God; it is not subject to the law of God; indeed it cannot be: those who live on such a level cannot please God" (v 5-8). In other words to go a warring at our own charges is to fight a losing battle. "Under the old order it was simply impossible to do the will of God, and if that old order still dominates a man's life, to do his will remains an impossibility".

### "YE ARE NOT IN THE FLESH"

"But that is not how you live. You are on the spiritual level, if only God's Spirit dwells within you; and if a man does not possess the Spirit of Christ, he is no Christian. But if Christ is dwelling within you, then although the body is a dead thing because you sinned, yet the Spirit is life itself because you have been justified" (v 9-10). These words make it clear that Christian living cannot proceed without the Spirit: only when the Comforter is received, so that the absent Lord may continue to minister his redemption to our experience (John 14 to 17), can a man begin to do the will of the Father. The Spirit does not mean a righteous disposition induced by our own effort. It does really mean Christ within.

"When men avail themselves of the resources of life and power that are theirs in Christ Jesus, they are more than conquerors. There is therefore no more reason why those who are in Christ Jesus should go on in a life of penal servitude, bound to carry out the dictates of the tyrannical law of sin and death. Christ dwells within them by his Spirit, and his Spirit infuses into them a new principle -- the law of life -- which is stronger than the strength of indwelling sin and sets them free from its tyranny".

Rom. 8:10 acknowledges that the body is still for the time being subject to the law of death, but if the Spirit of life is allowed to prevail, then this indwelling presence is the token that the body will escape from present mortality and share the new physical life of Christ's resurrection body. There are intimations of future immortality even now in the inward work of the Spirit. As John Thomas puts it: "The saints have within them the seed of immortality". This is the message of Romans 8:11: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead



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dwells within you, then the God who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give new life to your mortal bodies through his indwelling Spirit". This links with the idea we have met in a number of places that the present work of the Spirit is the pledge of the complete inheritance of the future, and that the presence of the Spirit is the first-fruit of glory to come (v 23).

So then we are out of the realm of self effort and fleshly independence of God. "If by the Spirit, you put to death all the base pursuits of the body you will live" (v 12-13).

And the Spirit does not affect us spasmodically. It is a habitual experience and makes the believer into the free-born son of God, so that instead of regarding God as an awe-ful potentate, the Spirit-guided believer is in the family of God and calls him 'Abba', the intimate name a child gives to his father. "For all who are moved by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. The Spirit you have received is not a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons, enabling us to cry, Abba! Father!" (v 14-15).

This intimate link with God is the inner witness to the reality of Christianity which from Pentecost onward has been a key feature of the work of the Spirit. "In that cry the Spirit of God joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children: and if children, then heirs" (v 16-17).

Notice that the Spirit joins (or KJV bears witness) with 'our spirit' in testifying that we are the sons of God.

This phrase 'our spirit' is interesting. There is in the human make-up a spirit which is capable of responding to the Holy Spirit. This does not alter the fact that "in the flesh dwells no good thing", that

mere human will-power is not capable of evolving godliness, but it does mean that there is an element in the human make-up, as God made it, which is capable of responding. This is involved in God making man originally in His image, after His likeness.

Let us then open our minds and hearts to receive the teaching of Romans 5-8. Let us recognise that we cannot create righteousness -- but we can hinder the Spirit. The Spirit can be hindered by the flesh, when the flesh is the power behind service to sin. The Spirit can be hindered no less by the flesh, when the flesh seeks to be the power behind service to God.

We need to join our spirit with God's spirit. Then the note of joy which concludes Romans 8 can be ours.

"If God is on our side, who is against us? He did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all; and with this gift how can he fail to lavish upon us all he has to give?... It is Christ -- Christ who died, and, more than that, was raised from the dead -- who is at God's right hand, and indeed pleads our cause".

In other words throughout his exposition Paul has Christ at God's right hand before his mind. "It is for your good I am leaving you. If I do not go, your Comforter will not come, whereas if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7). The presence of the Lord Jesus in heaven is the source of the inner victorious life of the Christian on earth. "Then what shall separate us from the love of Christ?- Nothing! There is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".

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### Chapter 15

1 Corinthians and Ephesians have together given us a powerful picture of the Holy Spirit at work guiding the new society whose creation we saw in Acts. 2 Corinthians and Romans showed us the work of the living ascended Lord, in which the Spirit transforms the lives of the believers as law and self mastery never could. Space permits only a brief review of how other epistles echo these same sentiments.

#### NOT JUSTIFIED BY HARD WORK

Paul's letter to the Galatians has much to say about the contrast between law and Spirit. Probably it is not usual to think of the contrast between law and Spirit as having any connection with the Biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. But in fact this contrast lies right at the heart of such a doctrine. For the work of the Spirit is the inworking of Christ in the believer. The legal approach to Christianity looks at him afar and seeks to make a code of behaviour out of what he said. The epistle to the Galatians shows us Paul opposing those who are overthrowing the gospel of redemption, by saying that it is essential to observe the external rite of circumcision. He insists:

"We know that no man is ever justified by doing what the law demands, but only through faith in Christ Jesus; so we too have put our faith in Jesus Christ, in order that we might be justified through this faith, and not through deeds dictated by the law; for by such deeds, Scripture says, no mortal man shall be justified" (2:16).

The position of these Judaisers was in effect to say that the only way men could be justified was by sheer hard work. You had to toil at it. The work you had to do was the work of the law. It was essential to do everything that the law commanded and refrain from everything the law forbade. Keep all the commandments, observe all the ceremonies, read the Scripture, attend the services, fast, pray, give alms, 'and if you do all these things and do not fail in any particular you will make the grade and God will accept you'.

It is of course an absolute delusion to think this way because no man in fact does succeed in achieving this kind of obedience, and therefore no one would succeed in winning his own salvation.

### THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Nevertheless the appeal of the idea lingers on. Paul however goes on in the oft quoted passage to express the only way of salvation : --

"I have been crucified with Christ; the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. I will not nullify the grace of God; if righteousness comes by law, then Christ died for nothing" (2:20-21).

As the Spirit and the indwelling Christ are interchangeable concepts, the work of the Spirit is implicit in this passage. Its basic idea is that the death and resurrection of Christ are not only historical events (he gave himself and now lives), but events in which, through faith -- union with him, his people have come to share (I have been crucified with Christ and now I live). Once we have been united to Christ in his death our old life is finished; it is ridiculous to suggest that we could ever go back to it.

In the third chapter Paul rebukes the stupid Galatians, as he calls them, for being deceived back into law keeping :

"Did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the gospel message? Can it be that you are so stupid? You started with the spiritual; do you now look to the material to make you perfect? . . . When God gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you, why is this? Is it because you keep the law, or is it because you have faith in the gospel message? (3:2-5).

These verses take for granted that receiving the Spirit goes with conversion (as also does 2 Cor. 11: 4). The working of miracles is mentioned separately in verse 5. There is no question in Paul's mind whether they had received the Spirit, but whether the Spirit was received by works or by faith. He assumes that their Christian life began in the Spirit, not in their own self-determination.

"The law says 'do this'; the gospel says, 'Christ has done it all'. The law requires works of human achievement; the gospel requires faith in

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Christ's achievements. The law makes demands and bids us obey; the gospel brings promises and bids us believe". (J. Stott.)

Paul brings out the thought of the Spirit in connection with this theme to stress that salvation is not a human achievement but a divine gift.

### BY FAITH

Paul next looks at Abraham and the way in which his faith and not his obedience to any law brought him into God's fellowship. As the spiritual descendants of Abraham, Christians receive the promised Spirit through faith. The Spirit as God's gift is part of the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham:

"And the purpose of it all was that the blessing of Abraham should in Jesus Christ be extended to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith" (v 14).

Justification by faith and the gift of the Spirit -- these are the two great blessings for men of all nations concerning which Paul speaks. God justifies us by accepting us as righteous in his sight and then he puts his Spirit within us.

We get these gospel blessings, not by doing something, but by believing that they are offered and reaching forth our hands to receive them. This is the true gospel. 'It is the setting forth before men's eyes of Jesus Christ as crucified. It offers on this basis both justification and the gift of the Spirit. And its only demand is faith'.

Toward the end of chapter 3 Paul shows that law had its place in creating an awareness of need. We were prisoners, or schoolboys under the disciplinary tutor who kept us in order, and the national history of Israel is to some degree the personal history of every man. There is a tendency in our early years in Christ to think solely in terms of commandment keeping as the way of pleasing God. Little by little our self confidence is broken and we lean on Christ.

If we fail to make this transition, and remain occupied with Christianity as if it were a legal system, we shall not have learned Christ. The Old Testament concept of religion by law is an important preliminary- a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But thereafter we must cease to live under law and live instead in Christ. One writer develops this point

in an interesting, indeed challenging fashion:

"God's purpose for our spiritual pilgrimage is that we should pass through the Law into an experience of the Promise. The tragedy is that so many people separate them by wanting one without the other. Some try to go to Jesus without first meeting Moses. They want to skip the Old Testament, to inherit the promise of justification in Christ without the prior pain of condemnation by the law. Others go to Moses and the law to be condemned, but they stay in this unhappy bondage. They are still living in the Old Testament. Their religion is a grievous yoke, hard to be borne, they have never gone to Christ to be set free". (J. Stott.)

We are staying in the Old Testament and in the law if we seek to determine our own salvation. We come to Christ and rejoice in the deliverance of the Spirit. Then notwithstanding our imperfection, life in Christ becomes sheer joy as we walk in daily fellowship with the one who was the friend of publicans and sinners; with the God whose inner heart was laid bare in the parable of the prodigal son. "To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6).

### WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Once we are walking in the Spirit, then "to us, our hope of attaining that righteousness which we eagerly await is the work of the Spirit through faith". (Gal. 5:5). The good things we do are not then our good deeds. "If you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfil the desires of your lower nature. That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while the Spirit fights against it. They are in conflict with one another so that what you will to do you cannot do. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under law" (Gal. 5:16-18).

The Spirit at work within the believer lifts him out of the works of the flesh and causes the production of the fruit of the Spirit. Notice this is 'the fruit' -- - singular not plural -- of the Spirit and it is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self control" (v 22). "There is no law dealing with such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also

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direct our course" (v 23-25). The reason Paul says there is no law dealing with these things is evident. You can't say to anybody: "be joyful or else..." The qualities which make up the fruit of the Spirit are a steady inward development which we cannot produce by our own willpower.

The last chapter of Galatians still continues with the theme of the Spirit. When anybody does something wrong, because the Galatians were endowed with the Spirit they were to "set him right again very gently" (6:1). This reference to the Spirit obviously does not mean "you who can work miracles set him right very gently". Finally in Galatians toward the very end of his letter Paul tells us that a man reaps what he sows. If he sows seed in the field of his lower nature, he will reap from it a harvest of corruption, but if he sows in the field of the Spirit, the Spirit will bring him a harvest of eternal life (6:8).

"So let us never tire of doing good, for if we do not slacken our efforts we shall in due time reap our harvest" (6:9).

So there is effort, but not mere human effort. We must be receptive and responsive. We must have faith and we must reach forth our hand. The Spirit will carry us forward.

This treatment of the teaching of Paul to the Galatians about the Spirit does the topic much less than justice. However, the main theme is so similar to that of Romans that for our present purposes the brief reminder must suffice. To read Galatians at a sitting after considering Romans will make its purpose clear. It is written with a sense of urgency which underlines the importance of recognising that it is by grace we are saved initially through the redemptive work of Jesus: it is by grace we are continuously being saved by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. "If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course" (5:25).

### THE THESSALONIANS AND THE SPIRIT

We pass on to those early letters which Paul wrote from Athens in much anxiety to the new and much harassed church in Thessalonica, who had just been brought into existence by the Lord's ministry through him. There are a number of allusions to the Spirit's work in establishing and maintaining the Church and in working the ways of Christ into their experience.

Thus when a short while previously, he had brought the gospel to them, he brought it not in mere words, "but in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with strong conviction" (1 Thess. 1:5). Note his personal quality -- strong conviction -- is in tandem with the power of his Lord in the Holy Spirit: also the process of conversion involved something more than the appeal of mere words to the intellect. The consequence was a sense of joy and relief, but as it was not a merely humanly derived sense of well being, they are said to have rejoiced in the Holy Spirit (1:7). All through these early epistles, and indeed all others, there is a very real consciousness of the Lord's living presence -- an awareness we need to recapture. It is expressed in phrases like "the living God", "by the help of our God" (2:2), "God has approved us" (2:4), "Christ's own envoys" (2:6), "the God who calls you" (2:12), "the very word of God at work in you" (2:13), "standing firm in the Lord" (3:8), "may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, bring us direct to you; and may the Lord make your love mount and overflow towards one another and towards all" (3:11-12), "our fellowship with the Lord Jesus" (4:1).

Morally to flout God's rules for holy living was a serious matter because one was flouting not men, but "God who bestows upon you his Holy Spirit" (4:7-8). Ethically they were "taught by God to love one another" (4:9-10) and the maintenance of holiness extended to every element of the human constitution: spirit, soul and body (5:23).

In the second epistle to the Thessalonians we read that "God chose them to find salvation in the Spirit that consecrated them" (2 Thess. 2:13). This was the source of their whole life as Christians. Paul adds: "may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has shown us such love, and in his grace has given us such unflinching encouragement and such bright hopes, still encourage you in every good deed and word!" (v 16-17). This relationship with the Father and the Son by the Spirit was very personal. Need it be any less personal and real now? Ought not such language to be looked upon as expressing the atmosphere of the individual and collective life of Christians today as vividly linked with the living Christ as it was 1900 years ago?

Towards the end of his second letter to the Thessalonians (3:16) Paul echoes the Comforter discourse of the Lord and the real, living presence of the Lord: "May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all".

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### TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The confidence which the NT teaching about the work of the Spirit creates is engendered early in Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Of one thing I am certain; the one who started the good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6). Their whole Christian life was God's good work -- yet theirs as well. This paradox, which has been with us throughout this study, is expressed later: "Work out the salvation that God has given you with a proper sense of awe and responsibility. For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve his purpose". (2:12-13, Phillips). Knowledge of the enabling power within creates the sense of awe and responsibility.

Everything that Paul talks about in this letter is deeply involved with the personal Jesus. He longs for them with the deep yearning of Christ Jesus himself (1:8). His longings are Christ's yearnings in him. The gospel he preaches is "Christ" (1:13, 15, 17-18). The Philippians pray for him in his imprisonment and he is given the support of the "Spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19). He hopes that the greatness of Christ will shine out clearly in his person (v 20). For him to live means "Christ" (v 21). All these phrases are pregnant with meaning against the background of our study of Pentecost and the Comforter chapters in John as amplified in the rest of the New Testament and anticipated in the Old.

A sharing of the Spirit was part of the common life in Christ (2:1). Their bearing toward one another was to arise out of their life in Christ Jesus (2:5) and to result in each of them being more concerned about others than themselves. Paul counts everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord (3:8). ("To know" means to be intimate with). All he wants is to "gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of his own, based on law, but that which is, through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that he may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible he may attain the resurrection from the dead" (3:8-11 RSV). The message of Romans and Galatians is here expressed in a few verses, as also is the idea of John 16:13-15, that the Spirit would make Christ's redemptive work part of the inner experience of the believer. Verse 12 beautifully *expresses* the relationship of the future fullness to the present indwelling of Christ: "Not that

I have already obtained this (resurrection) or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own".

One of Paul's most encouraging descriptions of the inner effect of being in Christ is found in this epistle. "The Lord is near: have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts, in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Paul rounds off his letter to the Philippians with appreciation for their help in his need, though he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him (4:13). He assures them that God would supply all their wants out of the magnificence of his riches in Christ Jesus (4:19) and closes with the prayer that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should be with their spirit (4:23).

### TO THE COLOSSIANS

Paul's words have much common ground here with the circular letter called the Ephesian epistle. It is rather more specific, being concerned with specific false teachings ranging from ritualism and asceticism to libertinism. To all of them the answer was the all sufficient Christ. The actual term 'Spirit' is not mentioned so frequently as in Ephesians but the notion of the presence of the living Christ is in almost every verse. The opening greetings reflect the living reality of Christ in the believers most vividly. Epaphras has told Paul of their love "in the Spirit" (v 8). He prays that they may be "strengthened with all might according to God's glorious power" (1:11). Their whole standing and power to live righteously springs from Christ "in whom all fullness dwells", and they are "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to be presented to God as dedicated men, without blemish and innocent in his sight" (1:21-22). This is the application of the cross to believers experience and conduct, which is elsewhere said to be the work of the Comforter.

Paul speaks of the mystery or secret he has been proclaiming to the Gentiles. It is "Christ in you -- the hope of glory" (1:27). To him this is the heart of the gospel. They receive Christ Jesus the Lord; are rooted and built in him, are complete in him, circumcised in him (2:6-12).

The risen Christ, ascended to the right hand of God, is the dynamic of their behaviour. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are

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above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (3:1-3). Here are echoes again of John 14 "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there ye may be also". Romans and Galatians are there as well: our sins are dead in Christ and Christian living is the open manifestation on earth of what is hid with Christ in God. Bad deeds are natural clothes to be removed and the new man is a clean, Christ-provided garment to be put on (3:5-10). Racial origin is irrelevant because "Christ is all and in all" (3:11). The believers by the Spirit are Christ's other self and the peace of God is to rule in their hearts (3:15).

Epaphras cooperates in their growth in the Spirit. He labours fervently that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (4:12). Their perfection is not their own work but something which happens to them by the action of God in response to prayer.

### THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

Direct references to the Spirit are few in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. But the same awareness of the living Lord is there throughout, particularly in discussion of the organisation of the church.

According to the first letter to Timothy it was the Lord Jesus Christ who appointed him for the ministry (1:12); Jesus is the bridge or mediator between God and man (2:5); the church is the house of God; the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the Truth (3:15). Timothy is warned not to neglect the spiritual endowment he had received, in his case through the laying on of hands of the elders as a body (4:14). The gifts of the Spirit did not exempt him from energetic action.

The second letter is full of pathos as Paul's serenity in Christ contrasts with the sombre background of a condemned cell. Timothy must stir into flame the gift of God within him for it is not a

spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind (1:6-7). To stir it up he has to take action "to hold fast the form of sound teaching" he heard from Paul, living by the faith and love which were theirs (and ours) in Christ Jesus. He was to "guard the treasure put into our charge, with the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us" (1:13-14). "Take strength from the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus" (2:1); "the Lord give thee understanding in all things" (2:7). And Paul being dead yet speaketh.

The letter to Titus was to help him in his ministry to those happy-go-lucky islanders of Crete, whose pleasant climate, sailor frequented quays and plentiful vineyards made it a place of easy morals, drunkenness, and idleness. This background accounts for the particular problems which created a duty for Titus to teach the church "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, stimulated by hope of the reappearance of the Lord and appreciation of the Lord's redemptive work, to purify a peculiar people zealous of good works" (2:12-14).

Paul's letter to Titus contains one of the classic passages on the Holy Spirit. "For at one time we ourselves in our folly and obstinacy were all astray. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of every kind. Our days were passed in malice and envy; we were odious ourselves and we hated one another. But when the kindness and generosity of God our Saviour dawned upon the world, then, not for any good deeds of our own, but because he was merciful, he saved us through the water of re-birth and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. For he sent down the Spirit upon us plentifully through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, justified by his grace, we might in hope become heirs to eternal life". And he adds "These are words you may trust". 3:3-8).

One could say that these words sum up the whole of this present publication.

Chapter 16

Completeness is not something this book can hope to achieve. In any case the Spirit is not "a subject" -- to be written about, to debate, to have a theology of: the Spirit is to be experienced. However without a brief guide to references to the Spirit, by James, by Peter and by John this book would have failed to bring under review all the material out of which the experience can grow. Inevitably it will be but a sketch.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

James has little direct reference to the Spirit, though a power larger than one's own willpower is implicit in his exhortation to good works.

A personal relationship with God of a very direct kind is suggested by this opening exhortation on prayer: "If any of you falls short in wisdom, he should ask God for it and it will be given him, for God is a generous giver who neither refuses nor reproaches anyone" (1:5). "All good giving, every perfect gift, comes from above, from the Father of the lights of heaven" (1:16-17).

The inward work of the Lord is described in the idea to "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls" (1:21 KJV). This does not mean just "know your Bible well" -- though this will be an important aspect of the process. The NEB renders it: "quietly accept the message planted in your hearts, which can bring you salvation". This message or word gives us birth to be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (1:18 -- an echo of John 3 and of the new creation theme).

For James, action flows out of the acceptance of the gospel and what he, in complete harmony with Paul, calls "the perfect law, the law that makes us free". We look into it as in a mirror and it becomes the basis of action (1:22-25).

Throughout James is saying: there is one God, therefore all your loyalty must be for him alone: there is one God for all nations, therefore he cares about you, whoever you are, for he alone made all of you and you must share his care: there is one God with all the attributes of goodness, you must reflect him with an integrated personality, where will and deeds are one. The theme of James is that the unity of God works through the believer to

THE SPIRIT IN THE GENERAL AND JOHANINE EPISTLES

unify his own personality and to unify him with his brethren.

The natural trend in man's inner spirit is envious desire (4:5 freely quoting Gen. 6:5 about man's basic inclinations) -- but the "grace God gives" is stronger and can master the wrong desires. "Humble yourselves before God and he will lift you high" (4:10).

James' recipe for meeting trouble, is prayer: for meeting joy, is praise (5:13-14). Cases of sickness were to be met by prayer; prayer meetings for those in serious sickness and other trouble are still appropriate, even if in our modern medical situation we don't administer the physical medicine at the meetings. Initially the idea of anointing with oil may have been nothing more than to apply the appropriate ointment or medicine to his body, but do it in prayerful dependence on God for results (5:14-15).

FROM PETER

Peter's first letter is written to people experiencing trouble through being Christians. He writes against the background of a living Lord deeply involved by the Spirit in the lives of the believers: "chosen of old in the purpose of God the Father, hallowed to his service, by the Spirit, and consecrated with the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ". The Christian experience starts with a "new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3). The resurrection of Jesus has led to his position at the right hand of God as living Lord. Hence the living Hope. The believers are under the protection of God's power, (v 5) loving Jesus without seeing him (v 8) and even now reaping the salvation of their souls (v 9).

The gospel they have received, is the revealing of what was a secret to the prophets and has been announced to them by preachers who brought the gospel "in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (v 12). All true gospel preaching derives its force from the same power. The believers have been born anew of immortal parentage through the living and enduring word of God (v 23), which word is "the word of the gospel preached to you" (v 25).

The believers have to let themselves be built as living stones into a spiritual temple; and

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become a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices. The whole picture vibrates with the life of the Spirit in a people who proclaim the triumphs of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:1-10).

The effect of the cross was ministered by the Lord to the experience of the believer: "In his own person he carried our sins to the gibbet, so that we might cease to live for sin and begin to live for righteousness" (2:24-25).

The Christian conduct which flows from this "life" is not automatic. There are things to be done and there are things not to be done: all that should be done flows from "holding the Lord Christ in reverence in our hearts" (3:15). The rebirth associated with baptism brings salvation (present and future) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who entered heaven after receiving the submission of angelic authorities and powers, and is now at the right hand of God (3:21-22). (Note the work of the ascended Lord again).

The gospel is preached so that although men are still mortal yet in the Spirit they may be alive with the life of God (4:6).

Peter also speaks of gifts of the Spirit in terms reminiscent of Paul in Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians: -- "Whatever gift each of you may have received, use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing the grace of God in its varied forms. Are you a speaker? Speak as if you uttered oracles of God. Do you give service? Give it as in the strength which God supplies. In all things so act that the glory may be God's through Jesus Christ" (4:10-11). Likewise in verse 14 "if Christ's name is flung in your teeth as an insult, count yourselves happy, because then that glorious Spirit which is the Spirit of God is resting upon you". Nothing is their own action -- it is Christ within them. The very insults they receive are not directed at them but at the Spirit dwelling within them, without which they would not attract the insults. When they edify one another in the church it is out of the strength which God supplies. The concept of the Living Lord, continuing his ministry by the Spirit, quietly underlies all that Peter says.

The God of grace has called them into his eternal glory in Christ (5:10). He will see them through to the permanent and final expression of that glory. Their part is to stand fast in the true grace of God (5:12).

## MORE FROM PETER

The second epistle from Peter opens with emphasis on the present power of the risen ascended Lord to equip Christians for holy living. This invisible power is based on the certain fact of the visible manifestation of the historical Jesus.

Grace and peace is invoked upon them in the fullest measure, through knowing (having personal involvement with) God and Jesus our Lord (1:2). "His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and true religion, enabling us to know the One who called us by his own splendour and might. Through this might and splendour he has given us his promises, great beyond all price, and through them you may escape the corruption with which lust has infected the world and come to share in the very being of God" (1:3-4).

This last phrase is more familiar as "partakers of the divine nature" which even an expositor like John Thomas, who tended to give emphasis to yet future interpretations of prophecy, regarded as describing the present life of the believer. No doubt it is a present experience to find completion in the future. There follows a series of exhortations to action and even exertion in the development of the divine qualities. Yet the fostering of them depends on "knowing our Lord Jesus Christ". He reminds them that he and two other apostles had seen the power of the Ascended Lord, even before he ascended, on the occasion when he was transfigured before them, when the Davidic song of victory had been pronounced over him. "This is my son" (Psa. 2) and the servant message applied to him "the beloved in whom I am well pleased" (Isa. 42). Thus the message of the prophets was confirmed and became a blazing light to illuminate their minds (1:19).

The epistle continues with warnings about false teachers, who had once escaped the corruption of the world through knowing "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2:20). The last chapter speaks of the reader's time as belonging to the last days and of the certainty of the Day of the Lord to consummate the divine purpose. They were to keep their foothold and to "grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him to be glory now and for all eternity" (3:17-18).

Those are the two dimensions of Christian time: now and eternity. The age of the Spirit spans them both.



## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

The opening words of John's first epistle vibrate with the feeling of a spiritual thriller:

"It was there from the beginning: we have heard it: we have seen it with our own eyes; we looked upon it, and felt it with our own hands; and it is of this we tell".

And we are on the edge of our seats asking "of what?" The answer comes: "our theme is the Word of Life" -- God's very speaking to men made visible in Jesus. In him was the eternal life which dwelt with the Father who during his ministry was made visible to men. Eternal life means that life which belongs to God who is eternal; it refers to the divine quality rather than an unending quantity of years (see Barclay's New Testament Words).

### THE COMMON LIFE

The Apostle is telling the story of Jesus that his readers "may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his son Jesus Christ". It is all in the present tense and speaks of a real supernatural life, yet within the believer giving a complete joy even now (1:4).

We cannot "share his life" and walk in darkness. The two are contradictory, "but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, then we share together a common life". Here our action is not to create the light or the life -- not to perform our own righteousness but rather to walk in his -- to expose ourselves to the effect of the light divine. If we do this "we are being cleansed from every sin, by the blood of Jesus his son". Note the tense "are being cleansed" (v 7 NEB). The Comforter (paraclete) applying the redemptive work of the Lord to the believers' experience as foretold in John 16:12-15 is before us yet again.

Then follows a beautiful chain of paradoxes. We all sin and need forgiveness and cleansing (the twin blessings announced at Pentecost), yet he writes in order that we might not commit sin -- but if we do Jesus is our advocate (paraclete) in heaven. Here is the heavenward aspect of the work of the ascended Lord. Jesus Christ is himself the remedy for the defilement of our sins (2:1-2).

Next John introduces the other paradox of keeping "commandments" in a new covenant

environment, "binding ourselves to live as Christ lived" (2:6). Yet the command-keeping is not human achievement but a sharing of what Christ has done. The commandment is called new in the sense that "the darkness is passing and real light already shines. Christ has made this true, and it is true in your own experience" (v 7-8). The age of the Spirit is dawning and Christ is working within the believer.

John then relates this to the love of the brethren which must flow from walking in the light. He probably does this because controversy about the Word (Logos), Jesus in the flesh, light and darkness and related topics was causing much unbrotherliness. In an old man's way he appeals to each age group to abide in the love of God: the sense of spiritual unity with Christ pervades his words -- they "know" the Father and the Son; God's word, the message of the gospel, is in them; and they are related to the abiding will of God, not the passing allurements of the world (2:9-17).

### THE TRUE INITIATION

Then follows specific mention of the false teachers or antichrists. They claim to have special knowledge (gnosis -- whence the later description "gnostics") and had the superior air of the "initiated". So John says to those who remained true: "You, no less than they, are among the initiated; this is the gift of the Holy one and by it you have all knowledge" (2: 20). The word translated in the NEB "initiated" is literally in the Greek "you have an anointing": they had been "christed", as we might say. Christ in them gave them the knowing which was experience of him. Their part was to keep in their hearts the knowledge of Christ which had been given them from when they first heard the gospel. Then they would dwell in the Son and in the Father, (2:21-24) -- their new existence had its source in the person and work of the Lord: they were inserted into Christ -- in union with him -- which equally means he was in them. And the promise of the gospel was "eternal life" of which he has more to say as he proceeds.

"But as for you, the initiation (anointing) which you have received from him stays with you; you need no other teacher, but learn all you need to know from his initiation (anointing), which is real and no illusion. As he taught you, then, dwell in him" (2:26-27). The gospel preaching had been

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

accompanied by an anointing of their minds direct from the Lord; it was no mystical illusion, but very real, but because of its invisibility -- it was an inward witness -- they needed reassuring of its reality, so that they might fulfil their own part. There is nothing peculiar to the first century about this; it is timeless Christian experience.

They were therefore to abide in Christ (KJV) and then they would meet him at his second coming in confidence and not in fear (2:28-29). There is no question of people only just attaining the Kingdom on the basis of a small credit account in their own attempts to be righteous. Whatever our weaknesses, we either abide in him or we do not. If we do, he will receive us and we can look forward to that day with gladness and assurance. "Beloved NOW are we the children of God" -- right now this is our privileged position, and there is more to come. And even that more to come depends on him and not on us: "when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". This means that whereas at present we reflect his glory as in a mirror with the distortions inevitable in a mirror reflection (2 Cor. 3:18): whereas we now see only puzzling reflections in a mirror (through a glass darkly), then shall we see face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). We shall see him as he is, and the glory of the future age is that the saints will reflect a perfect image. However even in that day of perfection it is still a reflection of the divine and not a creation of their own. The present work of the invisible Lord is an advance on the local and limited work of his earthly ministry: but what lies ahead (when that which is perfect is come 1 Cor. 13) transcends even that: it is beyond us -- "it does not appear (is not disclosed) what we shall be". A comparison of these early verses of I John 3 with 1 Cor. 13 clinches our earlier exposition of the latter chapter. Note too that the future glory is not a reward for achievement, but a perfecting of the Lord's present work in us.

### SIN REMOVED

John continues to balance the paradox of Christian conduct which has been with us so much. Christ did away with sin in his own person ("in whose death our sins are dead"): "no man therefore who dwells in him is a sinner: the sinner has not seen him and does not know him" (3:4-6). This is the theme of Romans 6, that a man in Christ cannot sin -- it is a contradiction in terms.

Yet because the Christian lives in two worlds at once -- he does sin, as John earlier has insisted, but it is not as a new creature that he sins -- it is not the real centre of his being and habit of his life: it is not the regenerate "me" that sins, as Paul insists in Romans 7. Both Paul and John present ideals as facts and suggest that the ideal only becomes fact insofar as we let Christ undertake the work within us.

So "a child of God does not commit sin, because the divine seed remains in him" (3:9a). This is the new life from God, the new birth; a person with this indwelling cannot be a sinner because he is God's child (3:9b). Even though we find these exalted ideas difficult at times to relate to our experience we should try to see our lives as God regards them in Christ.

With such new life within us hatred of brethren is ruled out. We have crossed over from death to life (echoes of Romans 6, 7, & 8 in those words). The evidence of Christ in us -- of life -- is in our loving of the brethren (3:13-14). Hate belongs to the realm of death and is in the same family as murder. It is incompatible with eternal life. No murderer has eternal life (i.e. the divine quality of life) dwelling in him (3:15). "Christ laid down his life for us. And we in our turn are bound to lay down our lives for our brothers" (3:16). In other words, the Lord's self sacrificing spirit is made part of the practical experience of the believer. (Cf John 16:13-15 again: everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine). The divine love dwells in him (1 John 3:17).

The word "commandments" appears in this section of John's letter and could be interpreted as setting out a new covenant legalism, though this would contradict the idea that Christ within is the source of all righteousness. However, "this is the command: to give your allegiance to (believe on the name of) his son Jesus Christ and love one-another as he commanded". The action required of the believer is "to give his allegiance"; love will follow; and love means action (v 21-24). Command keeping of this character ensures that "we dwell in him and he dwells in us" (v 24). This is circular reasoning: a virtuous circle. We dwell in him and he in us, because we keep his command to give him our allegiance which command we keep because he dwells in us. No amount of writing will clarify a paradox like this but meditation and experience of life will.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

And how do we know he dwells within us? John's answer is "we know it from the Spirit he has given us" (3:24). This takes us back to the idea of the inner witness -- the inner consciousness of Christ -- which makes us sure of Christ's presence and the truth of Christianity, where intellectual reasoning on its own could not. If we believe in our own day that the Father and the Son dwell within the believer, then we must also believe that the Spirit has been given to us. The ideas go together.

The fourth chapter of John's first epistle gives a yardstick for testing claims to be speaking by the Spirit in the particular controversy that faced them. If a teacher did not teach the reality of Christ's humanity, he was not from God. The idea is similar to Paul's: "Quench not the Spirit, prove all things and hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:19).

### LOVE IN THE SPIRIT

John then continues against the background of the unloving nature of controversy, to show that love -- and love for the undeserving at that -- is the very essence of God; God within, means love within. This love was shown by the giving of his Son "to bring us cleansing effect which must inevitably make us show love to one another". "Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another; his love is brought to perfection in us" (1 John 4:7-12). Other men will see God through the medium of Christians in whom he dwells: it is only thus that a picture of God approaching completeness (perfection) can be available within the human scene. Only thus can the invisible God be made visible to men.

Then John piles up emphasis on the life of the Spirit, which is love, which is God in us, which is us in God, which is eternal life. Chapter 4:13-14 repeats the idea that the imparting of the Spirit is proof of the divine indwelling. The acknowledgment of Jesus as Son of God leads to this indwelling (v 15-16 which echo John 16:13-15 again). This indwelling gives a sense of confidence for judgment day. We can have this love which casts out fear because "even in this world, we are as he is" (4:17). This is the idea of John 14 that Jesus ascended to heaven "that where I am ye may be also" and Eph. 2 which places the

saints even now in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus", as they share the life of the ascended Lord.

The world tries to rob us of this relationship by making us hate our brethren -- but "the victory which defeats the world is our faith, for who is victor over the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (5:5). This faith links us with the divine and lifts us off the human plane of thought and action: it grants us access to vast resources of power which transcend all human counterparts.

And Jesus was manifested as the Christ not only by the water of John's baptism, but also by the blood of his own sacrifice and the Spirit which bore witness at his own baptism. These also bear witness of the divinity of Jesus to us now. This testimony reaches right into the Christian's heart and is there to produce conviction, (it can of course be refused). (5:6-10).

### ETERNAL LIFE

This inner witness is the eternal life that God has given us. This life is found in his Son and we possess it in so far as we possess him. We possess him in the sense that we have grasped hold of him as he has of us (v 12). The whole purpose of the letter says John, "is to assure you that you have eternal life".

It is addressed to those who "give their allegiance to the Son of God" (v 13). Eternal life belongs to the End and the Coming Kingdom and will be expressed in immortality. But Jesus is already endowed with it and has given it to us as a token -- even in our mortality -- of that life that is to come. The gift of life, like the gift of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of the harvest of life to be ours in the Kingdom to come.

Right to the end of the epistle John is concerned with the practical work of the Spirit. "We know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real, indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, this is eternal life" (5:20). We know God in Christ and he communicates to us the very life of God. The epistle vibrates with the reality of a personal living relationship between the Father and the ascended Lord in heaven on the one hand, and the believer on earth on the other. The Spirit is the connecting link.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

The two shorter epistles of John are charming reflections of the life of the Spirit among brethren in whom love dwells. The salutation in 2 John v 3 carries the warmth of the life of the Spirit:

"Grace, mercy and peace shall be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the son of the Father, in truth and love".

It is not a formal greeting but a rich exposition of the privilege of being a Christian, who living on earth is yet related to the things of heaven.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 17

Before making a short study of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation, which both powerfully portray the work of the Lord, "seated at the right hand of God", we do well to consider the Psalm upon which this phrase is based, first seeing the "heavenly session", as it is often termed, in the context of the whole New Testament.

Our most quoted portion of the New Testament has been the Lord's last talk with the disciples recorded in the "Comforter" chapters (John 14-16). Their theme was that the Lord's departure to the heavenly realm would make him more powerful on earth in the lives of his followers. The book of Acts was examined as recording the life of the Christian community as the Lord Jesus guided it from his heavenly throne.

In fact the New Testament may be divided into three parts :

- (a) The gospels:  
what Jesus began to do and say in the days of his flesh.
- (b) Acts:  
what Jesus continued to do by proxy through the Spirit in the Apostles
- (c) The epistles:  
reflections on the living experience of the Spirit in the Christian community set down for guidance of future generations.

The gospels record the life Jesus lived in the limitations of the flesh in preparation for the day when his power would be unlimited by space, place and time. The remainder of the New Testament shows what happened when Jesus was made "perfect". The Jesus presented in both situations is the same Jesus, so that to know what he IS like, we have only to read the gospels in the light of the knowledge that "all power in heaven and earth" has "now" been given unto him.

Jesus is portrayed in two states:

### THE LORD AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND

(a) "God sent his own son, born of a woman, born under the law, to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law" (Gal. 4:4).

(b) "To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6).

Our theme has been Jesus in the second state, when having brought about the purgation of our sins, "he took his seat at the right hand of Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3) when having transcended the realm of the flesh he inaugurated the Age of the Spirit.

The concept of the Lord's activity at the right hand of the Majesty on High is the premise out of which so many of the major New Testament themes spring, that we might well have constructed this whole book around it, but we chose to work from the more familiar areas of Christian understanding, leaving to the end a brief study of the "Ascension" and "heavenly session" as giving perspective to what has gone before.

Thus we shall gather up the threads of what has been written as well as providing some new insights, which will underline the message of this book, that Jesus is not to be regarded as an absentee landlord between his first appearance and what we term his second coming: but rather that only as we know him as living now, shall we know the power which will at last take us fully out of the realm of flesh into the realm of Spirit.

### PSALM 110

The key passage for a consideration of the Lord at God's right hand is, of course, the Old Testament Psalm which originated the phrase -- Psalm 110. We have frequently met this psalm in our study and before seeing it in the Epistle to the Hebrews it will be helpful to gather together the bulk of the other references to Psalm 110 into one place, even though we have looked at most of them previously.

Psa. 110 is a poetic expression of David's gratitude for the kingly position God had granted him, with its unique opportunities for spiritual and military service. It is written in the light of the

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promise God had made to David (2 Samuel 7) and looks beyond the occupation of the throne by David and his immediate successors to the day when the seed of David (his Lord) should sit on the throne of the Lord at God's right hand until all his enemies were defeated. All this had its initial fulfilment in the rest and peace which David bequeathed to Solomon who sat on the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem and led the worship of Israel as a kind of non Levitical King-Priest. The fullness of the Psalm lay however in the future when the Messiah's triumph should be complete.

Yet Peter, as we have seen in Acts 2, says that Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, was already sitting on the throne of the Lord and fulfilling Psalm 110, gaining spiritual victories by sending forth the Spirit from on high. That throne of the Lord had once been David's in Jerusalem, was now Christ's in heaven. This is not to deny a future reappearance of Jesus as literal king reigning on earth, but it is an interpretation of the promises to David which relates them in part to the present work of Jesus. There are many references in the New Testament to the redemptive work of Christ as the beginning of the Age of Fulfilment: we have seen some of them.

### PSALM 2

Psalm 2 is similarly handled by the Apostles. In its original setting it presents a living situation with Jerusalem threatened by a rebellious confederacy. The King's confidence in victory is based on God's decree (v 6-7 i.e. the promises God had made to David) and the particular phrase of the promises which gives him greatest confidence is "I will be his Father and he shall be my Son" (2 Samuel 7:14) paraphrased in the Psalm as "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee". Victories by members of the house of David, such as those by Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah would also be appropriate occasions for the singing of this hymn -- but the fulfilment (full-fulfilment) lay in the final victory by the ultimate seed of whom God could very specially say "thou art my Son".

And in the eyes of the early church this final victory had been achieved and was being achieved. Acts 4 (v 24-30) records the way in which the early church sang the Psalm and expounded the words as referring to the conflict between Herod, the Jews and Pilate on the one

hand and Jesus and the church on the other. Jesus had gained the victory over spiritual enemies which had for centuries defeated men.

In his speech at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul similarly handles Psalm 2 and declares that the promises to David concerning the one to whom God would be a Father had been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:33). It was a resurrection, too, with no danger of return to the dust and so the mercies of David (Isaiah 55:3) were sure (v 34).

So Jesus took his place on the throne of the Lord. He was victorious and sat down with his Father in his throne (Rev. 3:21) and from thence was very present in the church.

### PAUL AND PSALM 110

In Ephesians the Apostle made liberal use of the Ascension Psalm (110) whereby he saw the Lord's fulfilment of significant aspects of the Promises to David in their very experience. What is happening at the right hand of God is the basis of the inner life of the believer and the collective life of the church, through the resources of the Spirit sent forth from on high. It will help us to look again at passages like Ephesians chapter 1 :

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-glorious Father, may give you the spiritual powers of wisdom and vision, by which there comes the knowledge of him. I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him. They are measured by his strength and the might which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (v 17-20).

From the Lord enthroned at God's right hand (Psalm 110) come vast resources of power open to those who trust in him. He is the source of their spiritual powers of wisdom and vision and of their inward illumination. How sad if through failure to grasp the Biblical doctrine of the ascension of Christ and the pouring forth of the Spirit we should fail to tap those vast resources of power. Verses 22 and 23 add:

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"He put everything in subjection beneath his feet, and appointed him as supreme head of the church, which is his body and as such holds within it the fullness of him who himself receives the entire fullness of God".

The divine fullness in Jesus is shared through the Spirit with the church, At this stage we are concerned only with the fact of the Spirit's indwelling, not with the method. Whatever the media, it is all the work of the living Lord. "He who descended (Jesus in the days of his flesh) is no other than he who ascended far above all heavens so that he might fill the universe".

### IN PHILIPPIANS

The lovely hymn of praise to Christ found in Philippians 2:5-11 also includes indirect reference to Psalm 110

"Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. For the divine nature was his from the first; yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself, and in obedience accepted even death -- death on a cross. Therefore God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow -- in heaven, on earth, and in the depth -- and every tongue confess 'Jesus Christ is Lord', to the glory of God the Father".

Their life in Christ was to be the basis of their attitude to each other. His self abasement was followed by his being raised to the heights and he is now recognised as the Yahweh of Isaiah 45 by those who confess "Jesus Christ is Lord (Yahweh)". This they can only do by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3) and while its climax lies in the future, the Apostles are applying it to the work and worship of the church in their day (and ours).

### IN COLOSSIANS

Psalm 110 and the work of the ascended Lord come to the fore again in Colossians 3 -- this time

with an ethical emphasis:

"Were you not raised to life with Christ? Then aspire to the realm above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, and let your thoughts dwell on that higher realm, not on this earthly life. I repeat, you died; and now your life lies hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you too will be manifested with him in glory".

The life of the higher plane now derives its hidden source from Christ in heaven (this is dwelling in heavenly places in Christ Jesus -- Ephesians 2) and has the effects set out in the rest of the chapter and will find its culmination in being manifested with Jesus in glory.

### IN CORINTHIANS

Paul quotes Psalm 110 in I Cor. 15:27. The reign of Christ at the right hand of God started as we have seen at the Ascension. Since then by the Spirit he has battled with the enemies of light (Ephesians 6:12) and delivered captives from sin. This reign will go on till "he has put all enemies under his feet" (Psalm 110:1). It incorporates the period of the visible reign of Christ often described as the millennium, as well as the past 1970 years. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. This passage indicates that the enemies are not essentially military and political and links with the general theme that from the throne on High the Son sends forth the Spirit to the Church.

### IN ROMANS

One of the most powerful references to Psalm 110 is found in that prince of chapters on the Spirit - Romans chapter 8. After showing how our inarticulate groanings are turned into prayers by the Spirit (v 26-27), Paul reaches his final cry of praise:

"With all this in mind, what are we to say? If God is on our side, who is against us? He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all; and with this gift how can he fail to lavish upon us all he has to give? Who will be the accuser of God's chosen ones? It is God who pronounces acquittal; then who can

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

condemn? It is Christ -- Christ who died, and, more than that, was raised from the dead -- who is at God's right hand, and indeed pleads our cause.

Then what can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril or the sword?"

Having given his son, with this gift, God "lavishes

all he has to give". Once again this gift of the Spirit is linked with the ascended Christ at the right hand of God (v 34). What indeed can separate us from the love of Christ -- nothing in all creation ! It was indeed expedient that he should go to the Father that he might be more fully present with the believer by the Spirit. It is for us to recognise and rejoice in the fact that we live in the Age of the Spirit which at the Lord's second coming will enter upon its final stage.



## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Chapter 18

The epistle to the Hebrews is dominated for much of the time by Psalm 110. It starts with the Lord Jesus taking his seat at the right hand of God and it is from this glorified position that he is viewed throughout the Epistle. The Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned as frequently as in Paul's epistles but as the Lord ascended for the very purpose of sending the Comforter the theme of the Spirit is really central to the epistle which could be summed in the words of the hymn :

"Now on high, yet ever with us,  
From his Father's throne, the Son  
Rules and guides the saints he ransomed  
Till the appointed work be done  
Till he see, renewed and perfect,  
All things gathered into one".

The Epistle speaks throughout of Jesus as our advocate in heaven with the Father and present with us on earth, thus fulfilling Psalm 110 in an unexpected way: Jesus reigns now upon that throne of the Lord in heaven, which had once been David's on earth; he is a priest of the order of Melchizedek upon that throne and even now rules over the new Israel -- the house of Jacob -- the church, leading them along the road to triumph. This new age of the King-priest having dawned at Pentecost, and a transition period having been allowed, the call to the Hebrews was to break with Judaism, with its emphasis on race and place, ritual and things material. They were to be committed solely to the new covenant in Christ, where emphasis is on the universal and the spiritual, and where obedience was to be an inner force and not merely an outward code.

A sentence of two on each chapter of Hebrews will show how the invisible ministry of the ascended Lord of Psalm 110 is never far from the writer's thought.

#### CROWNED WITH GLORY

**Hebrews 1** -- The Lord Jesus at the right hand of God has powers superior to the angels who ministered the law, and his ministrations are permanent and changeless. There is here an implicit contrast between the age of the Law and the age of the Spirit.

**Hebrews 2** -- The message of salvation in

### THE HEAVENLY KING-PRIEST

Christ (superior to the earlier message through Moses) was "first announced through the lips of the Lord himself; those who heard him confirmed it to us, and God added his testimony by signs, by miracles, by manifold works of power, and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit at his own will" (v 3-4). There is the idea we saw in our consideration of the day of Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit provides inner and outer witness to the truth of the gospel. It is interesting to note that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are mentioned separately from signs, miracles and works of power. Notice also that the great fact of the Holy Spirit does not depend on the particular medium of working. God distributes the gifts of Holy Spirit at his own discretion, to whom and in what form he chooses. This chapter also describes Jesus sharing our sinful situation, tasting death for every man: having been through our experience he is a high priest who understands and is able to help those who are meeting their test now.

**Hebrews 3** -- The idea that Psalm 95's warnings for its "today" can also be a warning for the first century "today", leads on to the thought that the Holy Spirit can still take hold of the past Word of God and relate it to the needs of our "today". Thus the Holy Spirit inspires the original word and then interprets it to the needs of each generation of believers, enabling them to see its relevance. Such interpretation may come through teachers and prophets, experience or insight.

#### A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

**Hebrews 4** -- closes with an exhortation "let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help". This is due to the presence of "A great high priest who has passed through the heavens". Psa. 110 and the Comforter being sent from the ascended Lord are again implicit.

**Hebrews 5** -- presents Jesus as the begotten son of Psalm 2 and the Melchisedec priest of Psa. 110. It uses the words of the Psalms as the divine utterances at the Lord's heavenly coronation. His representation as a priest is a two way activity: in heaven to God for man: on earth to man for God. By this he becomes "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him".

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**Hebrews 6** -- takes it for granted that when once men have been enlightened they have a taste of the heavenly gift and a share in the Holy Spirit: they experience the goodness of God's word (i.e. his fulfilment of his promises) and the spiritual energies of the age to come. The Christian experiences the spiritual blessings of the future age although he lives in the present one. To go back to Judaism is therefore to make mock of the Lord's work. By the certainty of God's promises, though on earth bodily, we are linked with heaven, in Christ, our kingly high priest.

**Hebrews 7** -- expounds his unique high priesthood, which not being Levitical is based not on a system of earth bound rules, but on the power of indestructible life from God, Jesus is "always living" to plead on behalf of the believers. His one sacrifice and subsequent raising high above the heavens, of itself pleads their cause in heaven, and at the same time, begins to sanctify their present lives on earth.

**Hebrews 8** -- The writer declares that the main point of his message was that in Jesus they had a high priest who had taken his seat at the right hand of Majesty in the heavens, and was ministering in the real sanctuary pitched by God. The saints are this sanctuary; they are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and for them the tabernacle of God is already with men; by the Spirit he dwells with them. Where he is they are also (John 14). And the covenant upon which the Lord's ministry is based is the New Covenant which inscribes God's will on men's hearts as an inward power. This we have seen elsewhere is the ministration of the Spirit, which is superior to the ministration of condemnation by Law. The same idea is present here: the inner work of the new covenant is superior to the merely outward ministry of Law, with its absence of real forgiveness. The doctrine of the work of the living ascended Lord is fundamental to the apostolically enjoined rejection of legalism. (The themes we saw in 2 Cor. 3, Romans and Galatians are here again from a different starting point).

**Hebrews 9** -- Christ's ministration as high priest is "out of this world" yet it affects his people in this world and the application of his blood (cf again John 16:13-15) cleanses their consciences from the deadness of their former ways and fits them for the service of the living God. The writer implies the folly of going back to the material; to

animal blood and ceremonial. He again reminds them of Christ entering into heaven "for us", after abolishing sin "by the sacrifice of himself" at the climax of history (v 26).

**Hebrews 10** -- again stresses the inadequacy of legalism and ritualism: they can never take away sin. "Christ offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat at the right hand of God, where he waits henceforth till his enemies are made his footstool". What is he doing? The writer goes on, yet again, to quote the key Old Testament passage on the spirit -- Jer. 31. Jesus is engaged in writing his law on their hearts and forgiving their sins, so that men are free to enter boldly into the sanctuary by a new and living way. In terms of relationships, heaven is opened to the believer: the believer dwells in heaven and heaven dwells in the believer. Bible students are used to the words -- but originally the ideas must have presented a shattering revolution to Jewish minds obsessed with their distance from heaven. To go back to the old covenant now was to "affront God's gracious spirit" (v 29): this is the most serious of all sins.

### LOOKING UNTO JESUS

**Hebrews 11** - Faith makes us certain of realities that are not visible (v 1). The honour roll of the faithful is given to show how the heroes of the faith, living in the midst of adversity, were sustained by a vision of the invisible.

**Hebrews 12** -- We too can be sustained by "looking unto Jesus", keeping our "eyes fixed" on him who for the sake of the joy that lay ahead of him endured the cross, despising the shame and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God, from whence he sustains them in their tribulation. Our part is simply to keep our eyes fixed: he gives the strength. Verse 22 describes the heavenly links of the believers: they stand before Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem (not mere geographical and material Jerusalem in bondage to law). They have the fellowship of all who walked by faith and of Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

**Hebrews 13** -- This special relationship and deliverance from legalism does not lead to moral anarchy but has its fruits in righteous attitudes leading to righteous acts. The souls of the believers are strengthened by the grace of God from Jesus Christ who is the same, yesterday, today and for ever -- his ministry has never

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

ceased, and through him we offer up the true spiritual sacrifices. All we have written about Pentecost, about the Comforter chapters, about the Spirit in the church, and the contrast between law and Spirit is implied in the words of v 20-21:

"May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant make you perfect in all goodness so that you may do his will" (i.e. he makes you perfect); "and may he make of us what he would have us be through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen".

### THE LAST MESSAGE OF THE ASCENDED LORD

It was only as I was writing this book that I became aware of the close association of thought between the epistle to the Hebrews and the book of Revelation. Both span the work of the heavenly King-priest from his Ascension to his second coming, Hebrews presents this work as the loving care for the church which needs his mediation, Revelation presents this loving care against the broader canvas of world history. Both reflect the Lord's words in Matthew 28: "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me... lo, I am with you to the end of the age".

All too often the book of Revelation is thought of as a history book where selected events are said to have been predicted in symbol, though diligent students disagree about which events are being spoken of and the basis of selection is often somewhat subjective. Nevertheless Jesus is presented as both the Lord and climax of history, for the encouragement of Christians enduring much tribulation.

Jesus addresses the seven representative churches as the first born from the dead and ruler of the Kings of the earth. He is associated with what he poetically calls the "seven spirits before the throne" (1:5). He then describes himself in vivid poetic imagery as an awe inspiring Kingly and priestly figure who holds the whole church in his hand (1:12-20). When reading the book we must approach it as the work of the divine poet and artist impressing dramatic images upon our imaginations in order to create the atmosphere of the Lord's work. It is not to be treated as the product of a divine mathematician where precise

equations have to be found for each item of imagery. We must also be prepared to see a general picture of divine activity which can be repeatedly anchored to specific situations in the conflict of each generation, rather than each symbolism being a precise prediction of a specific event.

Each of the churches then receives a message from the living Lord and one gets the flavour of his care which continues down the ages. From the right hand of God he knows their works and apportions blame and praise, threats and promises, related to their response. To those who are victorious he will grant a place on his throne, as he himself was victorious and sat down with his Father on his throne. This is certainly a promise of future glory and could also be parallel to the references in Ephesians about saints already being elevated "to heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; it is linked with the call that has enheartened the saints of all ages: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:19-22).

This call expresses in simple words what we have been saying throughout this book.

### THE CLIMAX OF THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

Revelation chapter 4 is a vivid word painting to allow the reader metaphorically to witness heavenly decisions taken in relation to the earth and man's salvation. This is the heaven -- the divine presence whence the Lord rules. From thence go forth the seven spirits (representing the fullness of the Holy Spirit) to the believers. With the ascended Lord are the angelic representatives of the saints -- present as the twenty four elders and four living creatures in the heavenly places. Chapter 5 gives us the Davidic Lion-King and suffering Lamb-Servant unloosing the scroll as he shares the Father's throne and from it controls the affairs of earth as unfolded in subsequent chapters. This leads ultimately to the exaltation of redeemed mankind to heavenly places in Christ Jesus "standing before the throne of God and ministering before him day and night in his temple" -- in that sense only they will "go to heaven". On the other hand he who sits on the throne will dwell with them: he will "come to earth". The present day experiences of the saints

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of the Lord's presence will then be extended in perfection to all mankind (Ch. 7).

The lamb upon the throne is in the background or foreground of the Apocalyptic drama throughout (e.g. 11:16; 14:1-5; 15:5-8; 19:1-10; 20:11-15; 21, 22). Read with a sense of poetry without initially trying to pinpoint specific events, the mood of the vision captivates one as it portrays the interplay of heaven and earth. Earth's affairs -- both of church and of nations are controlled from the one at God's right hand: believers become involved in his heavenly status and he becomes involved with men. The object of

the book is to give suffering believers the sense of present interpenetration of the divine and the human, which will culminate when the climax of history is reached and God is "all in all", all enemies having been defeated. Then the new age of the Spirit, which we have been studying will have reached its fullness. "God will dwell with men and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes: there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain; for the old order has passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4)

### Chapter 19

I have called this book an "exploratory survey": it does not profess to have a definitive answer to every problem raised by a study of Scripture teaching on the Holy Spirit. It has aimed simply to stir believers to a greater awareness of the work in their lives, both as individuals and as a community, of the living God and the risen Jesus, which work is said consistently in the New Testament to be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. I submit that the evidence is beyond contradiction and that the work of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the gospel. So it is no mere striving about words to no profit to urge that the New Testament expressions about "Christ in you" and "God at work in you" which we accept as applicable today, are equivalent to the New Testament descriptions of the individual Christian or the Christian church being a temple of the Holy Spirit. Indeed if we deny this we shall finish up with gravely depleted New Testament and a corresponding depletion of spiritual strength.

To sum up in a concluding chapter, what in any event has been but a "survey" and an "exploratory" one at that, is no easy matter. The more particularly is this so when the subject is the "surpassing grace of God" in the believer, concerning which Paul says: "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" (2 Cor. 9:14-15). How can we hope to express the inexpressible. I shall therefore attempt to draw but a few threads together, leaving the reader to continue in the diligent and reflective consideration of Scripture. In this he can be aided by unceasing prayer, by the warmth of Christian fellowship and by giving free course to Jesus as the Lord of every day's living.

#### THE SPIRIT NEVER WITHDRAWN

None will deny that the wealth of evidence submitted in previous chapters establishes conclusively that the life of the church and of the Christians who constituted it was permeated by the Holy Spirit, by virtue of which the foundation confession was made that "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3). The church was the temple of the Spirit and the individual Christian provided a habitation for the same Spirit, God's power working in both to prepare for the returning Lord, a people, who meanwhile walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Nowhere does the New Testament conceive of the possibility that one day the church or the constituent members

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

should be bereft of the Spirit. The Spirit, as we have seen, belongs to the age to come and this -- the New Testament affirmed -- had commenced. Indeed the presence of the Spirit is an earnest (guarantee, deposit or down payment) of the harvest of that age (2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13-14). No one can give a deposit to guarantee good faith of full performance in due time and then withdraw it -- least of all God.

The Spirit's presence in Christ's church was therefore meant to stay so long as the church remained Christ's. To speak of its withdrawal in any part of that church or to assert that it is no longer present in that church or any part of it is to deny that in either part or whole it belongs to Christ.

In New Testament times the Spirit was widely operative in the church which was the fellowship of the Spirit and shared in the Spirit (blending the two interpretations of 1 Cor. 13, 14). Furthermore the Lord who said he would be with the disciples always to the end of the age, meant it and achieved that presence through the Spirit -- an abiding presence, which throughout the New Testament was assumed to continue unto the coming of the Lord.

In that event it seems inevitable that we must look for the Spirit to be at work among us today and the purpose of my numerous asides as we have considered the text of Scripture in this book, has been to invite the reader all the time to consider its twentieth century application.

Of course, as soon as we postulate the view that the Spirit is still at work amongst us we are challenged by a number of questions and consequences. An attempt has been made to answer them as we have proceeded with the exposition, but one or two call for further comment as we round off the survey.

#### ERROR IN A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH

First there is the question of error in the church. Yet the Spirit was to guide Christ's disciples into all truth. Should we infer that where error is present, the Spirit is absent? That would be a powerful argument but for the fact that where the Spirit was most evident (e.g. in the Corinthian and Galatian churches) many of the brethren were immature, bewitched, perverse and even in conflict with fundamental doctrine and practice. Moreover if when Jesus was visibly present, his disciples were prevented by hardness of heart from absorbing his

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teaching and example, then we must not expect the Spirit in mediating his invisible presence to override all wrongheadedness.

It is certainly true that the understanding of the early Christians was greatly enlarged because the Spirit had been given and where the Spirit was allowed its full work there truth was wholly revealed. In another context the Scripture says that the Spirit of (or in) the prophets was subject to the prophets. And again, the flesh lusted against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: "for these are contrary the one to the other". The "control" of the prophets and the "lusting" of the flesh may prevent God having his perfect work in us; but that in no way warrants our saying that because of our imperfection neither he nor his Spirit work in us at all.

We have seen the interplay of the human and the divine in the church. There were the moments of irresistible authority in the work of the Holy Spirit as when holy men of God spoke as they were borne along by the rushing torrent of the Spirit. Elsewhere there was partnership, as we have seen so often in the Acts of the Apostles (e.g. "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"), with the Spirit as the senior partner. Then there are cases of men possessed by the Spirit who forsook the work (e.g. Mark -- who returned -- and Demas -- of whose end we are uninformed), but their vacillations do not warrant our saying the Spirit never possessed them, any more than in our own experience the ebb and flow of faith -- which faith is God's gift -- suggests that we are outside the pale of His care. "He yearns jealously over the Spirit which he has made to dwell in us" (Jas. 4:5 RSV) and invites us, when we fall, to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me" (Rev 3:20). Because we are weak and sinful we must not refuse to believe in the Spirit's work -- for then it is most needed.

### RECOGNISING THE SPIRIT

The difficulty may still persist in another form. How do we know when the Spirit is guiding us and when we are disregarding the Spirit? We are probably falling victim to the search for certainty. All of us indulge a desire for black and white answers in situations where we should venture forth in faith. But we know that God has said that he will "never leave us nor forsake us", and we should believe that he is at work in us to will and to do of

his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13). Instead then of introspective enquiries we should concentrate on our part of the partnership, working out our own salvation in fear and trembling, that is to say "with a proper sense of awe and responsibility" as Phillips renders "fear and trembling". Awe and responsibility "for God is at work in you". Our task is to work to let him work and it is indeed an awesome privilege.

The Apostle John's answer to the question how do we know when the Spirit is at work in us is both a circular one and an ethical one, It is as if he were discouraging theory and encouraging practice. The gnostics who "knew" and despised the simple Christians had nothing on the believers who could say we "**know** Christ if we keep his commandments" (2:3); "we **know** we are in him" (2:5); "we **know** we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (3:14). This theme of "knowing" reaches its climax in chapter 3:22-24 and 4:7-13, where we are told in effect that God's abiding in us enables us to love our brethren, and we thereby know whether he abides in us because of the Spirit he has given us, which enables us to love our brethren. No cut and dried answers there, but a wealth of exhortation and encouragement.

The Lord himself discouraged any academic attempt to pin down the work of the Spirit when he told Nicodemus that the Spirit is like the wind -- you can't see it, but you can see its effects. "You know not whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one born of the Spirit".

And these effects of the Spirit do not have to be what we would call "miraculous". This is a problem for some and we have sought to answer it in the exposition. Where God's Spirit is at work he is **giving** -- thus it is incorrect even to say that the gifts of the Spirit have been withdrawn. Because he is the giver, he has sovereign right to give us as he will and if at one time and to some people he gives power to speak in tongues and heal the sick, and not at another, that is his privilege. If over the centuries he changes the form of his gift to suit the requirements of the time, that too is his privilege.

But if one thing was clear as we studied Corinthians, Ephesians and Romans 12 together, it was that the greatest gifts of the Spirit were those which contributed to the growth of the church collectively and individually. Paul very severely puts the more sensational gifts into perspective, gifts which although of the Spirit were the subject of unspiritual wrangling. On the other hand he extols such gifts as teaching and wisdom, administration,

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leadership and counselling, for the presence of which in our own age we are profoundly thankful -- and often in our public prayers we give expression to that thankfulness. In doing so we show that whatever intellectual difficulties we may encounter, in our hearts we believe that God's Spirit still girds men and women for the work to be wrought.

Another question asked is "how does the Spirit work?" Even more the answer of Jesus to Nicodemus applies here. What makes one man believe and not another? What is responsible for some people congregating into a church and not others? What makes some men and women radiate the love of Christ and not others. The New Testament says it is the work of the Spirit partnered by the response of faith, which in turn is the gift of God! All we can do is believe it and in the believing we shall find strength. We may not know how electricity works but we don't hesitate to use the switch. Similarly we should not hesitate, because we haven't all the answers, to tap those vast resources of the Spirit which are mediated through the reading of Scripture, through prayer, through Christian fellowship, through active love of our neighbour, through the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, through alertness to the lessons of life and through other channels as God and the Lord Jesus may determine.

### POSSIBLE DANGERS

But are there dangers in stressing the work of the Spirit? True! But then discipleship is a dangerous business and always the most wonderful of truths carry with them the possibilities of misuse. There is the danger of placing emphasis on subjective experience to the point where the Bible loses its paramount position as the source of divine information. The present writer or any who feel his exposition is broadly sound can hardly be accused of that, in view of the way in which the Bible has been our only guide throughout this book. In fact it is those who tell us that the Spirit is not at work in this age who are in danger of belittling Scripture, for if all references to the Spirit are treated as not currently applicable, they will be for all practical purposes left with a gravely impaired Bible.

There is of course the fear that stress on the work of the Spirit might lead to the emotional, individualistic and extravagant behaviour often associated with Pentecostalism. A close attention to Scripture is the proper counterbalance and a

recognition that the Pentecostal movement tends to assume that they must reproduce the outward form, as they understand it, of the Spirit's first century work. As one has put it: "a new well always begins with a vehement spouting up of water; after that it creates a more steady and quiet stream". Pentecostals often want to retain the vehement spouting, which they tend to exaggerate anyway. There is in the opposite direction the danger of thinking the well has stopped (but see John chapter 4 and 7), but Pentecostals would do well to heed the restraining advice of Paul and the authority he gives to the Scripture.

Another danger illustrated in some Pentecostal groups is to give priority of emphasis to the Spirit over Jesus. They would deny this and would not perhaps intend it, but that is how it works out in practice. The exposition in earlier chapters of John 14-17 is the true safeguard here. The object of the work of the Holy Spirit is to draw attention to Jesus not to the Spirit. The Spirit makes the work of Jesus part of the personal life of the believer, who lives, dies, rises and ascends to heavenly places with and in Christ Jesus. There is indeed almost an interchangeability between the exalted Jesus and the Holy Spirit e.g. "The Lord is that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17) -- the Spirit is the divine power by which the exalted Lord is present and active in the Church. Through his resurrection Jesus became the life giving Spirit (I Cor. 15:45 cf John 7:39); until his glorification Christ could not by the Spirit minister to others the fullness of his victory.

A further concern to some will be the tension in some parts of my exposition between the present and future work of the Lord Jesus. I have followed the New Testament teaching that the age to come has in fact invaded the age of sin, this "present evil world". As a result, in what the writer to the Hebrews calls "these last days", we live at the intersection of the ages. The age to come -- the age of the Spirit started in the glorification of Jesus. Great are the blessings now of belonging to that age, and we need to believe in them and cherish them. This is in no way to belittle the future consummation at the coming of the Lord just because we stress the undoubted present blessings. If we understand Paul's teaching about the Spirit as the deposit or down payment on future blessings we will avoid this danger. In fact the more we experience and rejoice in the beginning of the future, the more we shall long for its completion -- for the full payment. "We who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as

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sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23 RSV) We groan not in spite of the first-fruits of the Spirit, but because of them. What we already have makes us long passionately for the more that is to come. The joy and peace granted by the Holy Spirit makes us abound in hope (Rom. 15:13).

### THE SPIRIT'S PRIORITIES

A balanced understanding of the work of the Spirit will avoid treating it as a private luxury or esoteric mystery. All the Biblical material I have offered could be gathered together under four headings which are impossible to place in a true order because each impacts on the other. Perhaps the New Testament order is best reflected by recognising the work of the Spirit as having priority in its collective activity in the church as the means of effecting individual renewal. The Holy Spirit is given:

1. **To witness to the work of the Lord Jesus to those in the World who will listen.** "He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Book of Acts is the outstanding illustration of this. Each gospel concludes with this commission of the Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-22). The act of witness to the world is itself one more of the great saving acts of Jesus. It is the portal through which men can enter and finally reach the consummation of the Kingdom of God.
2. **To feed and edify the church.** We have seen how particularly I Cor. 12:14 and Ephesians emphasise the way in which the Spirit is given to bring the body of Christ to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:1-16). The Church is the fellowship of the Spirit in which people who may have nothing to share in the flesh, yet are drawn together by the Spirit to a participation in Christ. And even this collective work of the Spirit is not selfish, but outgoing in its concern for others. As has been said of the church:

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to

look out to the World. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now".

3. **To awaken faith in Jesus.** The church is made up of individuals who have heard the witness of the Spirit through the church. Each of these has been born of the Spirit, begotten of incorruptible seed. Each has been called by the Spirit, to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, to be buried with Christ in baptism, to be crucified with him in a life of service, to rise with him to newness of life and share his ascended life even now in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Previously dead, they have been quickened by the Spirit which causes them, in Christ, to become a new creation. By the Spirit they are brought to the confession that 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12:3).
4. **To sustain and develop the individual in Christ.** "And we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another: for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit". Sanctification is in the Spirit. We are each, as well as all, the subject of "the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-7). It is all of grace and not of the flesh. We cannot attain to salvation by our own deeds, but by appropriating his deeds in the Spirit.

Thus the Spirit witnesses in the church and builds up the church, working through the Word in all its forms, written, spoken and made flesh. Equally and as part of the same process the Spirit quickens individuals and develops them in holiness, so that each may bring his quota into the whole, in each generation, that at length all generations of the sanctified may bring their quota into the eternal whole, that God may be all in all.

The object of this book has been to expound Scripture that our individual and collective life in Christ may respond to his living touch. A church that knows that Jesus is alive and acts as if it did, will find rich experience in him now, and a sure hope for the future. Such a community will be given power to do what it could not do in its own strength. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self



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control". Where that fruit is being produced this publication will be assured of a fair and thoughtful hearing, for the writer's aim is not to stir up controversy, but to serve the cause of that love which binds the true Christian community together -- that love which outstrips and yet encompasses every other gift of the Spirit past, present and future -- the love which abides, and by comparison with which all

else is but a partial expression of the Spirit. May those who have followed this course of study be knit together in love so that they may, like the first century church, breathe continually the atmosphere of the Spirit, so that the world may not seem a strange place to them when it becomes totally the abode of the Spirit in the final consummation.