

the

DAY

of the

SPIRIT

Geoffrey
Bingham

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FOREWORD

This volume, *The Day of the Spirit*, should be subtitled 'And the Days of the Spirit', for every day is a day of the Spirit. In creation, redemption, in sanctification and the ultimate renewal of all things, no day passes without the work and ministry of the Spirit. Yet, in another sense, Pentecost was 'the Day of the Spirit'. All history had been moving towards that hour, the time when God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. His promise that he would do this is truly amazing. As all events lead to Pentecost, so they lead from it to the consummation of all things.

I do not lay claim to having written anything like the ultimate book on the Holy Spirit. Years ago one theologian expressed the hope that such a book would be written, 'a bell-ringing book' which would alert us powerfully to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Probably such a book will never be written. I have tried, however, to take some sort of narrative approach, for the Spirit is always in action. For this reason, the treatment is not so much theological as it is descriptive. I believe there is a place for this method of teaching.

I am also sure that theology must always be to some degree experimental. We must not be afraid of 'agreed findings', for we may agree more out of fear of the academic than out of conviction of the truth. The Spirit is necessarily related to the prophetic: indeed prophecy is rooted in the Spirit. It is the prophetic which gives movement to the religious history, for it is action. It is truth not only being communicated, but truth being lived, namely the truth of God which is God himself, God in action. Whilst theology must take some form, it must be lived out. James Denney once said, 'I haven't the faintest interest in theology which does not help us to evangelize.' After Denney's death, Carnegie Simpson of Cambridge said of the theologian that

he was 'intense and passionate in his Christianity. He was one of the very few men I have ever seen at white heat over what Christ has done for the world.'

There is then the requirement that we be at white heat over the message of the Scriptures. Whatever training we may need in critical studies, they should never take from us the reverence and humility with which we need to attend Holy Writ. It is an awesome thing to think and speak—let alone write—of the Holy Spirit. It is not that we need to dispense with our critical faculties, but rather that we use them in deep humility. In no way may we subject God to our scrutiny. We may, however, trust the revelation which is graciously given by the Holy Spirit, and it is that revelation alone which will make us 'intense and passionate' in the faith, and 'at white heat over what Christ has done for the world.'

This present volume then, even if it is not a bell-ringing book, and lacks somewhat of 'white heat', may yet prove useful to readers who wish to cover as fully as possible elements of the person and work of the Spirit. To write a full theology of the Holy Spirit would be to write a full theology of the Godhead, for the Spirit is not, so to speak, 'his own person'. He is the Spirit of the Lord, of the Father, and at the same time the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of the Son. Even so, he is discrete, and so we may learn of him in his own rights.

The volume of writing on the Holy Spirit has swelled in this century of all centuries. This is an interesting and encouraging fact. Perhaps the one thing which gives some warrant to such a book as this is its descriptive nature. I trust so, but even more I trust that our personal response to this most Holy One, the Spirit of God, will increase. If this volume assists anyone in doing this then it will not have been written in vain.

Geoffrey Bingham'
Coromandel 1984

THE SPIRIT, CREATION AND THE PLAN OF GOD

1. COMING TO KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT

I assume that anyone picking up this book in order to read it must either know the Holy Spirit or at least be interested enough to find out something about him. You, the reader, may be a theologian who knows much concerning the Spirit; or you may be a simple practising Christian with deep personal knowledge of him; or you may be someone who has an interest in religion, and who has been attracted by the word 'spirit'. We shall proceed, therefore, on the basis that you are already keen to learn of him, and shall begin to seek answers to some basic questions.

How does anyone come to know the Holy Spirit?
How does he know there is a Holy Spirit?

The nation of Israel, in its life, practice and Scriptures, often spoke of 'the Spirit of the Lord' or 'the Spirit of God'. This Spirit is not described very much, but is spoken of as the power moving over the face of the waters at creation, dwelling actively in human beings prior to the Flood, and moving prophets to prophesy, even bodily transporting them from one place to another. In a general sense, the Israelites saw him as the Spirit of life, both in the making of man and all creation, and in sustaining them. This spirit is described in one place as,

Isa. 11:2

'The Spirit of the Lord...
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord'.

Part 1.1

In another place, Israel was said to have 'grieved' or 'provoked' this Spirit who was now called 'the holy Spirit'. It seems that there is something personal about the Spirit, ie. that he may have personhood. The word for 'spirit' in Hebrew is *ruach* and it is feminine in gender; but the actions of the Spirit are not especially feminine. Often in the prophets, there are promises that God would pour out his Spirit upon 'all flesh', ie. universally.

The early Christians were Jews, and they had a fairly well-developed idea of the Holy Spirit. They looked forward to the universal outpouring of the Spirit because of the prophets, and especially because of John the Baptist, who told them that Messiah was about to come, and that he would soon baptise them in the Holy Spirit. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, they believed that the Spirit had come on the Jewish festival day of Pentecost. They understood him to be amongst them as a community, and in them as individual persons. From the point of Pentecost onwards, we find a much more developed understanding of the Holy Spirit than in even the Hebrew Scriptures.

Knowing the Hebrew and Christian ideas, which, after all, are in the one line of development, we are able to give answers to the questions we asked above.

Isa 63:10

How does one come to 'know the Holy Spirit'?

The answer could be that it is done by reading the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and working out what they say. This is fair enough; by this means we could learn some ideas and receive some teaching concerning the Spirit. Indeed, the information received would be most valuable. Even so, there is a problem in this method, for whilst we could thus arrive at a fairly well-formed view of the Spirit of God, we might not come to know him personally. Clearly, it is possible to know much *about* a person without actually knowing the person himself. Knowledge about a person is generally objective, but knowing a person is necessarily relational and experiential. To truly know the Spirit we would have come into relationship with him—given in that this were possible.

It is interesting to notice that, whilst many of the Jews had

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knowledge of the Spirit through their Scriptures, traditions and teaching, it was the impact of the Spirit upon them as he came personally to them, that gave them the true knowledge they needed. Jesus insisted that, unless a person was 'born from above' or 'born anew', he could not *see*, let alone *enter*, the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God to the Jew was that rule and community of God into which only the faithful were permitted to enter. This 'new birth' could only come through the personal agency of the Spirit; so, in that sense, one first came to know the Spirit by this regeneration or new birth.

The point that I am trying to make at the very outset is that knowledge of the Spirit, in order to be true knowledge, must be personal. Whilst a person of faith can come to know the Spirit, those not of faith can only come to know about him, ie. have notional but not personal knowledge.

First contacts with the Spirit

As long as some of the Jews looked for God to pour out his Spirit upon them, his coming to Israel would be intelligible. However, for non-Jews, known as Gentiles, this was not the case. It happened that when the early (Jewish) Christians preached their Gospel (ie. the good news of Jesus), some Gentiles who heard their message believed in it. As a result, the Spirit of God came upon them and they were filled with him. Yet it is doubtful whether many of them had even heard of the Holy Spirit. In other words, their knowledge of the Spirit was relational and experiential before it was notional. The notional followed the experiential.

Doubtless this principle obtained for other things. Those who came in contact with preaching Christians often repented of their sins, believed on Jesus Christ, and received (so they claimed) the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of eternal life. It is almost certain that many of them had very little idea of what repentance, faith, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life really meant. At the same time these elements became most vital to them in both practice and understanding.

I am suggesting, then, that generally speaking, theology

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does not precede the knowledge of the Spirit and the truth and life that he brings to people, but rather that knowledge grows out of the Spirit's contact with us, our response to him, and the truth which he reveals to us. This sort of statement is not unreasonable, for in ordinary life we come to know people as they relate to us. We rarely read about them, and, even when we do, we still insist on personally meeting them before we will say that we know them.

But is there a Holy Spirit?

One of our questions, above, was 'How does one know that there is a Holy Spirit?' We have not even begun to answer that. We have simply said that the people of Israel believed in his person and existence, and that the Christians followed on with this same conviction. The Hebrew and Christian belief in the person and work of the Spirit is no proof that he exists, or that he has been truly understood. We have to be honest and say there is no answer to our question—at least, no answer except to persons of faith. That faith would have to arise from the Judaic-Christian Scriptures and their contents. It would, of course, be backed up by the thousands of years of testimony by Jews and Christians who have believed, but, again, their witness is not proof. On the one hand we cannot turn a deaf ear to what they say, and on the other we cannot accept what they say as undeniable proof. We have then to read the Scriptures, listen to the witness of men and women, and decide for ourselves. When—if ever—we do decide to believe the Scriptures and the accounts people give of their experience of the Spirit, then our decision will be a matter of faith. That faith will bring us into the range of the Spirit himself, with all that he does, and with what he effects in the lives of believers.

There is another thought concerning the Spirit which ought to be shared. Jesus Christ knew the Holy Spirit. Without doubt he believed in the truth of the Spirit. The Gospels make it clear that he was anointed with the Spirit, led by him to be tested out for his ministry, enabled by him to do signs and miracles, and aided by him in his death; resurrection and ascension. The fourth Gospel, of which

John was the author, shows Jesus as teaching about the Holy Spirit. If this be the case, then there are good grounds for believing in the Spirit. Of course, if we do not believe in Christ except as an historical person, then we will not see any point in receiving his witness to the Spirit.

WHAT NEED IS THERE TO KNOW THE SPIRIT?

Before closing this section, I also want to address myself to people who do believe in the Holy Spirit. You will already know the Spirit through the means we have outlined above, namely the witness of the church and the writings of the Scriptures. You will know that the Spirit comes to man to convince and convict him concerning his own life, and to show him the truth of God, especially as it has been shown and acted out in the life of Jesus. You may believe in the Spirit because you have been brought up that way—trained in belief. It may nevertheless be that you have not come to know him personally. If not, then you probably have never been 'born anew', that is, come to regeneration. In other words, you have not been through the elements of repentance, conversion, faith, the forgiveness of sins and the reception into your life of the Holy Spirit. It is even possible to have an excellent knowledge and theology of these matters, and yet not be a true person of the Spirit. This, of course, is no reflection on anyone, but to recognise that such things may yet be ahead of you must surely be an incentive to read more concerning the Spirit.

There are, of course, many people who have been regenerated but are not conscious that this crisis has happened in their lives. They are simply believers, and cannot remember when that happened, if indeed there was ever a crisis point in their lives. For such people, the value of examining the person and work of the Spirit is to see what has happened, and what can happen, in a life that is in the Spirit. This information can be most valuable for faith and practice.

For those who know much of the Spirit, from the word, from experience, from excellent theologians, and from a continuous life in the Spirit, this book may also prove of some value. There may be useful insights, culled from here

Part 1.1

and there, seen and known in my own experience and personal life and life in the church, and from being in genuine revivals in which extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit were seen.

2. THE BEGINNING, THE MIDDLE AND THE END

Rev. 1:8

The Scriptures portray God as 'the Alpha and the Omega', which in English would be 'the A and the Z', or 'the First and the Last'. This simply means that God is the originator and concluder of (ie. the one who climaxes) all things. What is there at the beginning, in the middle and at the end all springs from him, however we may or may not understand it. Just as the Father was called 'the Alpha and the Omega', 'the First and the Last', so was the Son likewise called. It is also reasonable to see the Spirit in the same light, for he is 'the Spirit of the Lord', 'the Spirit of God', 'the Spirit of the Father', 'the Spirit of the Son', 'the Spirit of Christ', and so on.

John 5:17

We expect him, then, to be present and operative in all history. Jesus said, 'My Father has always been working, and I go on working', meaning that he was one with the Father in all that he did. Likewise, the Spirit is one with both the Father and the Son, as the terms above indicate.

This means that we can discover his nature and being from what he did even before time, as well as in time, and what it is said he will do at the end-time, and then, even, in eternity. This being so, we have many materials at our disposal. They are the Scriptures themselves as well as the fascinating insights which scholars and students of the Bible have worked out over many centuries. Sifting through these materials, we should be able to build up a sketch of the person and work of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in the present time

Even accepting that we have many materials at our disposal to study, we still need to repeat that we know the Spirit

because we have met him in the present. It is more correct to say that he has first met us, so that now we can know him. Paul has a definitive statement. He says, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him'. In the early church, the primary test of a person having salvation and belonging to God was that he had received the gift of the Spirit. In one place, Paul asked, 'Did you receive the Spirit when you believed?' The answer, 'We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit', (or, 'We had not heard that the Spirit, as yet, had come') means that they did not have the Spirit. They were then encouraged to faith in Christ and helped to receive the gift of the Spirit.

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Rom 8:9

Acts 19:2

There was a reason for doing this. Anyone who did not have the Holy Spirit had not gone through the experience of regeneration, and thus had not experienced conviction, repentance, faith, forgiveness and the like. He was still what Paul called 'the natural man', ie. a man who as yet lacked the Spirit of God. Such a person, Paul says, '...does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned'. By 'spiritually discerned' he means 'discerned by aid of the Spirit'. No human being of himself has spiritual discernment.

1 Cor 2:14

The coming of the Spirit

From the biblical point of view, this age in which we now live is 'the age of the Spirit'. It began at the first Jewish Feast of Pentecost which followed the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Christ had said he would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples and their followers, and at Pentecost this event happened. The Holy Spirit of God came down upon the assembled group of about one hundred and twenty persons. The happening and its effects were electrifying. Physical symbols of wind and fire were seen and heard, and the Christian group spoke in tongues (languages) which were known to those who listened to the apostles and other speakers.

At that point, the Christian Gospel was preached, and it began with proclaiming the Lordship of Christ over all

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Gal. 3:2, 14

Gal. 4:6

things, after which the offer of the forgiveness of sins was made, conditional upon persons repenting. Along with this promise was the offer of the gift of the Holy Spirit. In his writings (which came later), Paul spoke of the gift of the Spirit being received by faith. This was a simple enough matter. The Christian writers, generally, speak of God's willingness to give the gift to those who came into faith. In one case, Paul wrote of God sending the Spirit into the hearts of men and women.

The effects of the Spirit

On that special day of Pentecost, Peter indicated that the coming of the Spirit was not a novel event, something which was wholly unexpected, but in fact was an event promised by the prophets. He quoted one of these prophets, Joel, in the following manner:

Acts 2:17-20

'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
And I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth beneath,
blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke;
the sun shall be turned into darkness
and the moon into blood,
before the day of the Lord comes,
the great and manifest day'.

If we analyse the teaching in these verses we will see. amongst many other things, that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was an initial and principal event. It was intended to trigger off a new era which we can call 'the era of the Spirit'. This era was to begin at that point in time and culminate in the 'great and notable day of the Lord', ie. the last Day which would close off history. The time between Pentecost and the Day was called 'the last days'. Throughout the last days, God would pour out his Spirit. This gift or affusion of the Spirit was to be 'upon all flesh', ie. upon all

human beings, irrespective of race, class, colour and creed. It was Part 1.2 not to be confined to Israel, which had been known for a long time as 'the people of God', although it was, of course, intended for them as well.

The result of the outpouring at Pentecost was quite dramatic. Suddenly there was a new people of God who lived in close love and fellowship, accepting the teaching of the apostles and living according to it. These people had times of fellowship and prayer, and they broke bread together, ie. ate together (from house to house), and as they did so, they probably celebrated the Last Supper in a very simple way. They were remarkable in their practical love, for they shared what they had with one another, to the point of a daily distribution of food and necessities. They had concern for the sick, the poor, the hungry and the needy.

The coming of the Spirit was to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, but principally that outpouring was also for the Samaritans and Gentiles, as Christ had indicated and the prophet Joel had foretold. For this reason, a Samaritan outpouring followed (after some time) and then again a Gentile outpouring. This did not mean that the outpourings were finished, but it did mean that Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles were all, now, recipients of the Spirit, wherever repentance and faith followed the convicting work of the Spirit.

Acts 8:14-17
Acts 10:34-48,
11:15-18

A valuable conclusion

We could go on to say much concerning the Spirit as he is and operates in this present era. The affects and effects were (and are) so many and so radical that they could fill volumes. However, our main point is that when a person has been wrought upon by the Spirit and has received him as a gift, then, and only then, can he begin to understand who he (the Spirit) is and what he is about.

Some of us are born researchers. We can never gobble enough knowledge, never receive (or puzzle out) enough information, and this keenness extends to research about the Holy Spirit. Others of us simply take things as they come. We are grateful for the work of the Spirit in our lives, but we feel no need to go back into history to the beginning of

Part 1.2

things. We feel that to know what happened in the past does not greatly matter, and adds little to our height or breadth. This may be so, of course, yet in life most of us are keen to know the past of people we love. A young man, for example, eagerly peruses past photographs of his wife-to-be, wanting to know her as she was.

The subject of history can be fascinating, particularly when it concerns someone we know personally. When it is the Spirit whom we know and study, the past is not only fascinating; it also teaches us great lessons and wisdom.

As it happens, the terms 'Alpha and Omega', 'First and Last', are important. They tell us that nothing happens in history by mere chance. God is the sovereign Lord over all time and space. To come to know him in the present is to be joined with all that happened in the past, and all that is yet to happen. Life becomes rounded out and full-orbed. To have the Spirit of God work on us and in us is wonderful. To know the significance and goal of that work is no less wonderful.

3. THE SPIRIT AND THE BEGINNING

The Spirit of God before time

Heb. 9:14

Gal. 6:8

Without going into 'proofs' let us say it is axiomatic in Scripture that the Spirit is eternal. One writer speaks of 'the eternal Spirit', and some understand this to be Christ's eternal spirit. Another speaks of us reaping eternal life 'of the Spirit', ie. through and from the Holy Spirit. He is called 'the Spirit of life', and we assume that his links with eternal life indicate that he too is eternal.

Whilst the word 'eternal' or 'everlasting' is somewhat problematical, yet, practically speaking, we do have an understanding of what it means; namely, 'without beginning or end', 'timeless', 'forever'. Even so, it is a word not so much intended to be quantitative, as it is meant to be qualitative.

The thrust of Scripture, which always links the Spirit with

the Father and the Son, suggests that he was before time. We know that when time began he was there, the implication being that he was existent 'prior to time'. So we must not think of a binitarian (Father and Son) Godhead, but of a trinitarian Godhead. Such a One we cannot understand, unless we see his actions in time and realise they are the fulfilment of an intention conceived prior to time.

The ultimate intention of God

We will see (below) that God's ultimate intention for his creation is a multi-faceted one. All history, both that which is past and that which is to come, is prophetic, ie. it is the communication of God's word to, and for, his creation. The Scriptures, roughly speaking, commence with the creation story and proceed through time. Their goal is the end-time. What is yet to happen has been set out prophetically. If we go back to the fall of man, we see that what was then future, from the perspective of that time, was also set out prophetically. Much of the prophetic prediction has been fulfilled in the history of Israel, the coming and work of Messiah, and the consequent acts of the church. Even the movements of nations have been predicted, and events appear to be consonant with predictive prophecy.

For this reason, we have grounds for seeing the Scriptures as an integrated whole, and we need to see them that way if we are to understand God's multiple intention. As creation sheds its light forward into history, so also the (predicted) end-time sheds its light backwards in history. We understand the end from our knowledge of the beginning, and the beginning because of what we know about the end. This is surely the principle behind God's titles of 'The Alpha and the Omega', 'The Beginning and the End'. What lies between the beginning and the end is only intelligible in the light of those two extremes. We say this because we cannot know God in his being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit unless we know his intentions for creation, time and history. If we can discover the various strata of his multiple intention, then we have a fascinating key—in fact *the* key—to history, as well as to the nature of God.

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A multiple intention

The Christian Creeds, Councils and Articles of confession—especially of the Confessional churches—have always been interested in God's purposes for his creation. Theology is always about this task, investigating, stating, revising and restating what it sees as God's ultimate intention. The task is not easy, but it is greatly assisted by the Scriptures which tell us clearly some of the things God had in mind before he began creating the universe. If what we set out below constitute his multiple intention, then we have the means of interpreting history at its beginning, in its processes, and in its movement towards the end-time. This helps us to avoid saying that God changes his mind because of the (seeming) exigencies of history. God is sovereign over all. He does not look into the future, as we call it 'future', for he is not bound by time. It is true, of course, that he works in time, and speaks to us in the language of time, but it is his sovereignty which determines the events of time.

Even so, we must not think of his working as cutting across the will of man, invading his sovereignty, and choking off his rebellion. God works his will in and through all these elements. Having stated these qualifications, humility bids us admit we do not know how; but that he does work in this way is most important for us, for whilst his sovereignty is preserved, so is our dignity as creatures of choice, even if those choices be wrong.

Let us look, then, at the multiple intention of God, knowing it is the functional key in our thinking to the meaning and purpose of history. There are some nine elements. Doubtless there are more in minor key, but we examine these which are in major key.

Eph 1:4

Element One: *The chosen people of God:* 'he chose us in him[Christ] before the foundation of the world': cf. 'For those whom he knew he also predestinated' 'Us' in its context must mean 'the elect people of God'.

Rom 8.29

Eph 1:4

Element Two: *The holy people of God.* 'he chose us in him[Christ] before the foundation of the world, *that*

- we should be holy and blameless before him'. Part 1.3
- Element Three:** *His people are to have salvation:* ' . . . the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago [before times eternal]'; 'you were ransomed. . . with the precious blood of Christ. . . destined before the foundation of the world, but...made manifest at the end of the times for your sake'. II Tim. 1:9
I Pet 1:18-19
- Element Four:** *His people are to be his children, ie. sons:* 'He destined us. . . to be his sons through Christ Jesus'; cf. 'our Father, Redeemer from eternity is thy name'; '...my sons...and my daughters... whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made'. Eph 1:5 Isa. 63:16
Isa. 43:6 -7 cf. Eph. 1:4-14
- Element Five:** *His people are to have eternal life:* ' . . . God's elect. . . in hope of eternal life which God. . . promised ages ago [before times eternal]'; '...name[s]...written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb. . .'. Titus 1:1-2
Rev. 13:8
- Element Five** *His people are to enter his Kingdom:* 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'; cf. 'He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love'. Matt. 25:34
Col 1:13
- Element Seven:** *His people are to be glorified:* '...we impart a secret and hidden wisdom. . .which God decreed before the ages for our glorification'. This glorification glorifies God: '...we who first hoped...and have been destined and appointed ...for the praise of his glory...you also [Gentiles]. . .to the praise of his glory'; ' . . . my sons and my daughters...whom I created for my glory. . .'. I Cor. 2:6-10
Eph 1:11-13
Isa. 43:6-7
- Element Eight:** *The whole creation will be brought into unity by Christ:* ' . . .a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth'. Note also other things which equal unification, ie. 'filling up', 'harmonising', etc. 'Christ . . . who fills all in all'; ' . . . that he might fill all things'; ' . . . reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven. . .'; ' . . .love, Eph. 1:9-10
Eph 1:23, 4:10
Col 1:20
Col 3:14

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which binds everything together in perfect harmony,.

II Pet 3:7

Element Nine:*All evil will be judged:* 'But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men'; 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble [disaster, judgement]

Prov. 16:4

When we weave these strands together, we get the one rope of God's plan. Doubtless there are more threads to it, but if we take these which are explicit, then we can see why God created, and what he is about in history. It tells us that God plans these things from the point of view of what he is, namely Father-Creator-King-Redeemer. His Son shares with him in 'the counsel of his will' and so does the Holy Spirit. Each person of the Godhead is discrete, ie. has his own identity, but because God is love, they are one in disposition, relationship, plan and goal, they are one in the unity of their being as love.

When we come to the beginning, which for us is creation, we see that it is all with a view to this most wonderful end. We need to contemplate the greatness, glory and gravity of these nine elements.

4. THE SPIRIT AND CREATION

Eph. 1:11
Eph. 3:11

When our understanding includes what we can know of God before creation, then we also know what is the thrust of creation itself. We need to reinforce this idea by seeing that God does all things 'according to the counsel of his will' which means that all that happens in time is 'according to the eternal purposes which he has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Those who think that happenings in time are expedients to meet contingencies which have arisen, need to consider Isaiah's words:

Isa. 46:9-11

'... I am God and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,

declaring the end from the beginning
 and from ancient times things not yet done,
 saying, "My counsel shall stand,
 and I will accomplish all my purpose,"
 . . . I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
 I have purposed, and I will do it';

and again,

'The former things I declared of old,
 they went forth from my mouth and I made them known;
 then suddenly I did them and they came to pass
 . . . I am He, I am the first, and I am the last.
 My hand laid the foundation of the earth,
 and my right hand spread out the heavens;
 when I call to them,
 they stand forth together'.

Isa. 48:3, 12--13

So then God, with his purpose in view, creates, and in creation he uses both the Word and the Spirit. Let us consider, now, the account of creation, and, in particular, the role of the Spirit, which is mentioned very early.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was *moving* over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.'

Gen. 1:1-3

The word 'moved' has been translated 'brooded', and even 'rushed'. An old idea was that the Spirit was like a brooding bird, hatching out some cosmic egg! There is none of this. The Hebrew word for 'spirit' also means 'breath', 'breeze' and 'wind'. It could even be said there that there was a hurricane. Certainly, the movement, whether slow or fast, is dynamic. Some do not even see a reference to the Spirit in this word, but in the Old Testament, and even the New, the Spirit is often described as a wind at hurricane force. The same word that is used here for moved' is used again in that form in only one other place, and that is in the famous Song of Moses:

'He found him in a desert land,
 and in the howling waste of the wilderness;
 he encircled him, he cared for him,
 he kept him as the apple of his eye.
 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,

Deut. 32:10-12

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that flutters over its young,
 spreading out its wings, catching them,
 bearing them on its pinions,
 the Lord alone did lead him...'

The chaos at creation is named *tohu* and *bohu* ('without form and void'), and this is the same term that is used for the 'howling wilderness'. We can almost say that the eagle, which *is fluttering* (the same word as *moving* in Gen. 1:2), is the Spirit. Indeed, in Isaiah, it is the Spirit who bears them up in the wilderness:

Isa. 63:10-12

'But they rebelled
 and grieved his holy Spirit;
 .. Where is he who put in the midst of them
 his holy Spirit,
 who caused his glorious arm
 to go at the right hand of Moses?'

In both cases it is the Spirit who is stronger than the *tohu* and *bohu*. We do not understand the dynamics of creation. Indeed we understand little or nothing of creation at all, but the 'rushing mighty wind' which is symbolised on the day of Pentecost has to overcome the *tohu* and *bohu of man's* chaotic condition, his dreary wastes of spirit which have resulted from his estrangement from God. Likewise, in Ezekiel, the dead Israel is a desert of wild dry bones, scattered and disintegrated. Again, it is the forceful wind which comes to give form first, and then life to the bones and flesh of the dead warriors. The awful dynamic is such that these renewed ones leap to their feet. This creation, which is really the renewal of the original creation, may even be said to be a greater force than the initial life-giving power. Of course it is the same. It is the situation which is different.

Ezek 37:1-14

The power of the creative Spirit

The Word and the Spirit are one together, and one with the Creator-Father. Later, we will see that it is the regenerating power of the Spirit, rushing into the heart of man' which revives him from death and reunites him with that Creator-Father. Man then cries, 'Abba!' ie. 'Father!'

The Word is powerful. John tells us, 'All things were

John 1:3

made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made,. This Word, when it became flesh, was known as Jesus the Messiah.

The psalmist knew of the creation:

‘...he commanded, and they were created’;

‘By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host *by the breath of his mouth*.

... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth’.

The Word and the Spirit—‘the Breath of his Mouth’—are both working in co-ordination. The word ‘spirit’ and ‘breath’ here are the one, ie. *ruach*, in the Hebrew. There is, then, no creation without the Utterer of the Word, and the Breather of the Breath. It is a triune creation. Speaking humanly, we can say that the Three have the one plan and purpose in mind, and it is to this end that they create.

Part 1:4

John 1:14-18

Psa. 148:5

Psa. 33:6, 9

The breath of God

In the second part of the creation account, we are told that God made man of the dust of the earth and breathed into him ‘the breath of life’. The breath here is not the *ruach*. It is the life of man which makes man ‘a living being’. This living being or soul is called *nephesh* and represents man in the totality of his being. That is what man is—soul (*nephesh*). Even so, he needs the *ruach* of God for his *animated* living, a living which is vital motion and action. Man and the animals all have *ruach* in common, and when they die this life-giving and sustaining power goes back to God. The writer of Ecclesiastes says, ‘Who knows whether the spirit [*ruach*] of man goes upward and the spirit [*ruach*] of the beast goes down to the earth?’ Where the *ruach* comes, life is created, and where it is present, life is sustained.

Gen. 2:7

Eccel. 3:2

Again the psalmist speaks:

‘... when thou takest away their breath [*ruach*], they die and return to their dust.

When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground’.

Psa. 104:29-30

Isaiah links the Spirit with creation. He says, speaking of

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Isa. 40:12-13

Creation,

'Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?
Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?'

The inference is clear: the Spirit creates without direction from man: but he creates!

Job 27:3
Job 33:4

Job says, 'The spirit [*ruach*] of God is in my nostrils'. and his would-be counsellor Elihu says, 'The spirit of God has made me'.

Job 26:12-13

We see then—not without awe—that the Spirit is the *Spiritus Creator*, the Creator Spirit. In what many think to be the fragment of an old Creation story, Bildad says, 'With his power he calmed the sea; and his wisdom struck Rahab down. His breath [*ruach*] made the skies clear. . . .' The KJV has, 'By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens'. The work of the Spirit is vast. It is difficult for us to understand the mighty power that is at work in creation, and the vast dimensions that are involved: they are not only spatial; they are also dimensions of life.

5. THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

As we move freely through all the pages of Scripture between Genesis and Revelation, there are many relevant insights and revelations for us to glean. For example, in the New Testament we find the Spirit spoken of as *the Spirit of life*; we must accept such a statement without making it 'spiritual' or to do only with religion. Also in the New Testament, we are twice told that the Son or Word upholds all creation. We take it that the Father acts similarly, for he is called 'Father, Lord of heaven and earth'. If this is so with the Father and the Son, then it must be the same with the Spirit. He must uphold all life, whether it is sentient or not. In the Old Testament, too, we find this to be the case:

II Cor. 3:6

Rom 8:2, 7:6

Matt 11:25, cf
Acts 4:24

'When thou takest away *their breath*, they die'. *Their breath* comes from *the ruach* of life, for 'When thou sendest forth thy Spirit [*ruach*] they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth'. Isaiah speaks of God who ' . . . gives breath to the people upon it [the earth], and spirit [*ruach*] to those who walk in it'. Isaiah sometimes gives us a picture of the land languishing because of its lawlessness, its moral state of *tohu* and *bohu*—*so to speak*—but when the Spirit comes, that which was languishing revives:

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Isa. 42:5

' . . . until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest';

Isa. 32:15

and again,

' . . . I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit [*ruach*] upon your descendants,
and my blessing on your offspring.
They shall spring up like grass amid waters,
like willows by flowing streams'.

Isa. 44:3-4

The power of the Spirit in life

What we have to realise is that the Holy Spirit sustains all life. He gives the gift of life-sustaining *ruach* to all things. Yet that life which we may call 'biological' is not merely biological. Man is *soul* (*nephesh*), yet as soul he always requires *ruach*. In a way *ruach* makes his *nephesh* to attain its fullness, to live in its true being. *Nephesh* is more often called 'life' than it is 'soul'. Even so, it is dependent upon *ruach* for its fullness of being and living—so much so, that so far as man is concerned, *soul* and *spirit* become almost synonymous. If we can think of man as created and gifted, but needing what today we call stimulation, motivation, and inspiration. then we can see what the Spirit does as he comes to man. When that happens, man not only has *ruach*, but can actually be called a *ruach*, because he is able to link with God, and to rise above mere living to the real purpose of life and history. When the Spirit comes, he comes in order ' . . . to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of the contrite'.

Isa. 57 15

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Gen. 45:27

We are told that 'the spirit. . . of Jacob revived' when he heard that Joseph his son was not dead. Some people have troubled spirits, spirits of bitterness and anguish, whilst others have a contrite spirit, a firm (right) spirit. In every case, man is not static but 'spirited', whether this spiritedness is good or otherwise.

There are special occasions when the *ruach* of God comes in power upon men, sometimes with devastating effects. The Judges knew this enormous power. Samson could perform extraordinary feats, on one occasion tearing a lion limb from limb, and on other occasions slaying thirty men and finally destroying the temple of Dagon.

When the Spirit came upon Saul he prophesied, and cut a yoke of oxen in pieces in order to send them out to all Israel. On a later occasion when he prophesied, he stripped himself of clothes and lay all night before Samuel the prophet. The coming of the Spirit (*ruach*) in this manner often makes men do unusual things. Their spirits become vibrant through him. In such cases, there may be no special moral connotation.

Rom 8:10

Whilst it is true that the vision of Ezekiel in the dry valley is a vision and not an historical event, yet it takes away nothing from its message, namely that the Spirit brings life. Paul can say 'The Spirit is life-giving because of justification', or 'Our spirit has life because of justification', but whatever the construction of his statement, it means we do not have life in our spirit until the Spirit comes. His coming is not simply to sustain our lives biologically, but to so inform and empower them, that they now become authentic as spirit.

Life in the Spirit

Titus 3:3-5

Just as in creation the Word and the Spirit brought into existence that which did not have such existence before, so with regeneration or the new creation. In the New Testament Paul speaks of 'the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of [or, renewing by] the Holy Spirit'. When Jesus spoke of the new birth by the Spirit, his listener, Nicodemus, was puzzled. Jesus told him that, as a leader in Israel, he

John 3:3-14

ought not to be puzzled. He ought to have knowledge of this. This was no new teaching in Israel.

Nor was it. Ezekiel had spoken of regeneration in his vision of the dry bones. He had also spoken of it in the promise of a new heart and a new spirit (Spirit?) which God would put into Israel in a collective sense, and also in a most personal sense.

David, in his famous penitential psalm, realised that he must be thoroughly renewed, right down to what he called his 'secret heart'. He prayed,

'Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right [steadfast] spirit within me'.

He went on,

'Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy holy Spirit from me...
uphold me with a willing spirit [Spirit?]'.

Without entering into the matter of the Spirit of God being always in Israel, we can see that Israel had seen the Spirit of God in many of its leaders, kings, priests and prophets, to say nothing of artisans like Bezalel and Aholiab. All this given in, we must recognise that in David's case, he had two things in mind. The first was the effect of the Spirit in his life following his anointing by Samuel: '. . .the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward'. The second was the effect on Saul when the Spirit departed from him; for 'an evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul'. As he expressed in his psalm of repentance, David dreaded the withdrawal of the Spirit for the loss it would be to him in his person, his living and his leadership. No less did he dread the possible alternative of an evil spirit coming to him, as it had to Saul. From what we can see of the presence of the Spirit in men like Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Joshua—to say nothing of others who came later—we are forced to conclude that the presence of the Spirit was not only of general benefit to the people of God, but of personal usefulness to those in whom he dwelt. In some cases, the Spirit brought the skills

Ezek. 36:24-26,
cf. 11:19-20,
37:14

Psa. 51:10-12

1 Sam. 16:13ff

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of an artisan, in others abilities for leadership. In yet others he brought wisdom and intelligence. All of these elements constitute life. Life is not just the dynamic occasions such as Samson knew in his unusual strength. It is the rich and vivid life of man's spirit for which the *ruach* of the Lord comes. It is in this way that man truly lives, as the Spirit comes to his own human spirit.

6. THE SPIRIT OF GOD, MAN AND THE PLAN

The greatness and glory of the plan

In the last three sections, we have spoken in terms which are general rather than specific, abstract rather than concrete. This does not greatly matter, for we are simply etching out something of the panoramic view of God's intentions. Even so, the ninefold plan of God which we sketched in section three is breathtaking when considered. For example, the term 'the people of God' may look simple enough on the printed page; but the reality of it, experienced and shared by actual people on this earth, is mind-boggling. Further, the thought that man is to be given the gift of eternal life is stupendous; it means having genuine and personal fellowship with God. It means 'participating in the divine nature'; it means—to coin a phrase—being *eternalised*, so that the fearful element of mortality is banished forever.

Rom 8:21

Again, to speak of 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God' is to evoke a picture of man wholly liberated from the vanity and pointlessness of existence, emancipated into full being, glorious in the full image of the Son, and liberated into a rich, functional and endless life. To be free from temptation, to be free to love all that is in heaven and earth, and never to feel a shadow of guilt fall athwart one's life—that is superb! That is unspeakably beautiful! Yes, and to know that God is the God of judgement, that without any element of failure, as Creator and Father, he will have judged all evil and dissolved it in the history of the world, is to *see* and *know* the righteousness of God and to

join with the great celestial host as it cries in joy and assurance:

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'Great and wonderful are thy deeds,
 O Lord God, the Almighty!
 Just and true, are thy ways,
 O King of the ages!
 Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord?
 For thou alone art holy.
 All nations shall come and worship thee,
 for thy judgements have been revealed';

Rev 15:3-4

'Just art thou in these thy judgements,
 thou who art and west, O Holy One. . .';

Rev. 16:5

'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory
 and power belong to our God,
 for his judgements are true and just;
 he has judged the great harlot
 who corrupted the earth with her fornication,
 and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants'.

Rev. 19: 1-2

If we can really see the glorious goal of God in history, then we have joined those who love him, ' . . . whom not having seen you *love*: whom seeing not you believe and rejoice with joy unspeakable!' This is to know what Jonathan Edwards once called 'the religious affections'. It is to know all that is ascribed as coming from the Holy Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, self-control and faithfulness. It is to know pure joy of heart, sheer peace of conscience, and yet to enter the unplumbed depths of suffering and sorrow. It is not simply to be tossed to and fro by restless passion, but it is to share in all the compassion and pity and love which God has for the creation which has rebelled against him, and this without erosive sentimentality and mindless empathy. It is to know 'the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom', and that 'the law of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever'. It is genuinely to understand the glory of judgement.

1 Pet. 1:8

Why then do we take this discursus and enlarge on the wonder of God's plan which he is executing after the counsel of his own will? The answer is that if we see that plan coldly, and if we are so objective that it does not touch and open the

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springs of the heart, then we will not know the subjective love and adoration that we ought to know and have. Furthermore, when we presently talk of the Spirit labouring patiently in all his ministry—and ministries—down through the millenniums of time in order that God may reach his wonderful goal, we would otherwise see that goal prosaically. There is nothing so dehydrating to the human spirit as theology divorced from the juices and realities of life. To discuss the Truth with lack-lustre spirits, and with unastonished minds or unmoved hearts, is to miss the living glory of the Truth.

Therefore, when, at this point of our story, we begin to look at the plan of God, and the part the Spirit plays in it, we ought to be humbled in our spirits, and have glory in our hearts. By this we do not mean we should be bathed in concocted devotion which is void of reality, and that our minds should be unthinking, uncritical and gullible. By no means! But to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength is to live under the inspiration of the great glory of God in his priceless wisdom, and his adorable and eternal counsel. In that love, we put away the haughtiness of our spirits and intellects, whereby we assume to judge him in what he is about, and we accord to him all the reverence and worship and power due to him.

So then, with our hearts lifted up, our spirits humbled, and minds in worship of him, we can proceed to see the part the Holy Spirit plays in God's history of creation.

The Spirit at creation

Scholars who are ardent readers and listeners—and analysers—of the Story of God have worked hard to tease out the nature of man as they trace it in the Scriptures. The task has not been easy, but the results are worthwhile. They go something like this:

God has created man in his own image which means that man is like (and reflects) everything that God is. At the same time he is not anything that God is, for he is man. God is God, man is man: and that is pleasing for both. Man is free never to have to rise above what it is to be a man. He is flesh (Heb. *basar*), and

he is *soul* (Heb. *nephesh*). He does not merely *have* a body and *have* a soul. In all that he is, he is *soul*. That is his true being and identity.

We have also seen that man is spirit: he does not only have spirit; as flesh and soul he is spirit. The being of man is wholly dependent biologically and essentially upon the *mach* of God. Man is *a ruach* but he is dependent upon *the ruach* of God for the fullness of his being, especially as he relates to God, to his fellow man, and to creation. Yet even this analysis and summary of what man is does not touch us deeply. We should ask ourselves what it means to be body, to be soul, to be spirit, ie. *to be man!* When we enter experientially into the reality of what this means, the whole matter comes to life. We live! We see the creation about us and relate to it. We are aware of man—our fellow creatures—and relate! We are aware of God in all his Person and attributes and glory, and this consciousness is life!

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To be a human being is a marvellous matter, a thrilling event. If for the moment we disregard the rebellion of man and his fall which unmanned him, then we can see his true glory. We can understand the wonder—and delight—in the mind of the psalmist when he cried, 'What is man that you are mindful of [go on minding] him, and the son of man that you visit [go on visiting] him?'. He was breathless with wonder that God should form him in the womb, that he should know (ie. plan) all his days before he had lived one of them! To be a human being created as a son of the Father, a subject of the great King, a warm, dependent creature, trusting the Creator and relating to him—all of this makes the mind fill with wonder. Those of mankind who are cynical and bitter may view this paradigm of man with suspicion and scorn, but then they do not know what the Spirit has done to bring man into life, and to make him a *living soul*. We need to know the biblical view of man without converting it to a dry and particularised anthropology, or a stiff and awkward psychology which leaves us rather as robots, and missing the true glory of man.

Psa. 8:4

Psa. 139:13-18

Our point in speaking in this way is to preserve us from a remote and impersonal view of man. We cannot study man in a purely detached way. Theology is a fascinating study, but when it operates only in the realm of abstractions, it is often unreal and leaves us with a lifeless view of God, man

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Part 1.6

and creation.

What then is our conclusion regarding the Spirit, creation and man? Our conclusion is that when God, speaking into and above the *tohu* and *bohu*, said, 'Let there be light!' then the Spirit, poised above and vital in his being, acted in such a way that light flooded the darkness, and beauty, form and order began. The glorious creation was coming out of water and earth and sky. God was acting in the grace of creation. Man was part of that creation.

Prov. 16:4

We need not go into the *how* of creation at this point. Without doubt, something of the *how is* revealed to us, but the *what* of creation is that which intrigues us. The *why of* it—the ninefold plan—must be kept in mind strongly or we miss the planned goal of it all, for 'he has created everything for its own purpose', and he has planned to reveal himself in time as the God of grace, for he was this before time. He was always this in the counsel of his own will. Yet it would take the Spirit of truth to reveal this and it would take the Spirit—as also with him the Father and the Son—the whole span of history to accomplish such revelation.

7. THE SPIRIT IN EARLY TIMES

II Cor. 4:6

By 'early times' we mean firstly the time which we call primeval. It is the time of creation, and the time which leads to the judgement of the Flood. Paul speaks of 'the God who commanded the light to shine *out of* darkness'. Note that the light does not simply shine *on* or *into* the darkness but *out of* it. Whatever else is intended by this statement, it means that 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not [cannot] overpower it'. God creates in the midst of *tohu* and *bohu*. That is why Paul goes on to say that the same God 'has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. He is really saying that the creative miracle which happened in the beginning of time has happened afresh to fallen men and women through the advent of Christ. It is the same Spirit who moves about our internal *tohu* and *bohu*, the chaos and the void of our sinful lostness (as persons), and

who brings, by means of the new birth, the beauty, form and order that constitute true humanity!

Part 1.7

What we need to see is that this continuous work of the Spirit, in bringing light, is the same work as the creating of all things. It is not that creation is created but what creation is created to be which proves significant. George MacDonald, in his famous essay on 'The Truth', depicts a scientist seeking to spell out *the* truth of a flower. He does it in dissection, analytically and atomistically. The poet spells out *the* truth of a flower in a quite different way. How would the theologian do it? What *is* the reality of a flower, a bird, an animal? What is *the* truth of a man, a living soul? Should we look at things and people for their usefulness, or analyse their aesthetic qualities, or seek to see where they fit in the scheme of things? Does not the truth—the reality of them—evade our analysis? Are we not *too* subjective—or *too* objective—to know what they are? The writer of Ecclesiastes says, 'You have made everything beautiful in its own time'. By 'beautiful', does he mean 'aesthetically pleasing' or 'functional' or 'fitting' ('appropriate'), or does he just mean 'good' ie. geared into the 'all things' of God's universe as an integral part? It does not really matter. It simply means that we must pause in humility and spend time in contemplation when we are talking of 'the works of his hands', the true Being and ministry of the Creator Spirit. We must not take these wonderful things for granted. We must cultivate the spirit of awareness of them.

Ecc1. 3:11

Primeval man

Scholars may debate the form of the creation accounts, ie. whether they are figurative, and mythical (in the theological understanding of myth), or literal and factual, but the thrust of the accounts is clear enough. Man is made in the image of God; and he is created in that image as a male-female unity. Paul does single out male-man as 'the image and glory of God', but in the same breath he says the woman is the glory of man, so that whilst God can have his glory without man reflecting it, man cannot have his glory apart from woman. The word was 'Let us make man in our [own] image'. The

Gen. 1:26

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Gen 1:27

Gen 5:2

Gen 1:28

result was 'In his image made he *him*, male and female he *them*'. In another place is added 'and he called *them man*'. When the Bible talks of 'man', it is usually generic, that is, it covers the human race and does not refer to the male person as such. There is therefore nothing 'sexist' in this use. On other occasions, it does refer to a male person as 'man', and refers to the female person as 'woman'. It never sees humanity as composed of two races—one male and one female. Humanity is always a male-female entity. We might even say a 'dual-unity'. Most of us see such a unity as relating only to marriage, but this is a false idea. All maleness and all femaleness (masculinity and femininity) are joined in one, each needing the other for complete humanness.

Primeval man—often called Adam and Eve—lived in innocence. Innocence must not be thought to mean flack of knowledge of things'. It means guiltlessness as regards evil. Obviously man's relationship with God, and the interrelationships that existed with his fellow creature and all creation, sprang from the knowledge which is given to *living souls*. Man was fully informed as to his place and vocation in the world. God had commanded him to 'be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over [it]'. Man was to be lord of his world, and as such, he named the creatures' all of which tells us that he was intelligent and had knowledge. He was placed in a garden, the term for which could be 'paradise', and given the mandate to tend it and watch over it, ie. to keep and guard it.

We have seen that man as a living *soul* had been given personhood which was in the image of God. He, man, expressed this personhood in the mutual male-female unity which was his (theirs). This could be nominated as love. Man then was superb, royal, regal, vocationally equipped and operative. The interrelationships of man and woman—being as they were without the shadow of a guilt—were surely very rich and fulfilling. Man related to his creational surroundings with serenity and understanding God, for man's own sake and protection, had given him a prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Man knew all he needed to know in regard to good and evil. He had no need to know by eating the fruit of this tree.

We can say then that man who was *soul* with *ruach* was in a paradisaical state. He could be said to 'walk in the Spirit', his own spirit depending upon that of God.

The fall of man

It does not take much to describe the fall of man, and to spell out the obvious effects of that event. The woman was tempted to eat of the tree because the serpent insinuated that by forbidding the eating of its fruit God was holding out on man, preventing them from coming to a knowledge which they needed, namely the knowledge of good and evil. To know good and evil did not seem a wrong thing, and it certainly seemed desirable; it was 'a tree to be desired to make one wise'. Surely God was not against wisdom!

Paul says the woman was deceived. He says the man was not deceived. The man decided to listen to the voice of his wife. The woman believed the word of the serpent before she believed the word of God. Man—the male—chose the word of the woman before the word of God. Creation had come through the word of God, and the Spirit. Denying that word was also ignoring that Spirit. It meant that man wished to 'go it alone', to be autonomous, and to achieve his identity apart from God. It meant many more things, but there is no point in us examining all these now.

God had warned that man would die were he to eat of this tree. Man died; we can say nothing else. He was no longer 'a living soul' or 'true *ruach*'. He was—so to speak—unmanned or dehumanised. Whilst he still had existence, he did not have life. His body was not God-worshipping nor God-serving. All of man was turned to itself. Man died to God, and in a fearful sense came alive to himself. This sort of thing could not be said to be the essence of true man. Man was now debased.

Instead of destroying man, for that had never been his purpose, God revealed his salvific intention. He said to the serpent, 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head,

1 Tim 2:14,
cf. II Cor 11:3

Gen. 3:15

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and you shall bruise his heel'. This prophecy has often been called 'the Proto-Evangel' or 'the Golden Evangel'.

Having delivered this news of salvation, God then pronounced chastisement on the man and the woman, which was a work of grace, and a dignifying act.

The new race and the old

Whilst, for the moment, we are not making statements as to the work of the Spirit in all this, it soon becomes apparent that as a result of the fall, one part of mankind is committed to self-rule, and another part of mankind is constituted as 'the people of God' or 'men and women of faith'. We will see that those of faith are people of the Spirit and those without the Spirit are people of the flesh. John, in his first letter, tells us that there are two families of man, one under their Father, God, and the other under their father, the devil. He cites Cain as being one of the latter and Abel as one of the former. The writer of Hebrews says Abel was a man of faith. We are given the distinct impression that when Seth was born to Eve, she regarded him in the same light as she had regarded Abel, ie. as a person who related properly to God.

1 John 3:11-12

Heb 11:4

From this point onwards, we see the development of 'line people of God' and 'the people of evil'. Both are sinful, and both need God, and no less his salvation, but those who are the people of God—later called 'the elect of God'—are those who have faith in God. Noah is included amongst these, as also are some of his sons. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are listed among them. There are others, not directly in this covenant-line, who are also people of God.

Gen. 6:3

At the time of the Flood, violence and corruption were at an all-time peak. The Flood was clearly a judgement on man's evil. Noah was not only to build an ark to save the people of God, but he was to witness to the truth as a 'herald [proclaimer] of righteousness'. It was said by God to man, prior to the Flood, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be one hundred and twenty years'. This could mean a number of things. It could mean that man was given a period of 120 years to respond to

the call and command of the Spirit, after which God would withdraw his Spirit, or it could mean that, with the withdrawal of the Spirit, man's lifespan (before or after the Flood) would be limited to 120 years. We need not be dogmatic about which it is, but we can say that the change had to do with man's sin and God's Spirit.

Finally, as we look at the two peoples who inhabit the earth, we see that men of faith are always understood also to be 'men of the Spirit'. There are many indications of this throughout Scripture, but we will not examine them at this point.

8. THE SPIRIT, THE PATRIARCHS AND ISRAEL

Noah to Abraham

When we consider the family of Noah, we see, first of all, that he was undoubtedly a man of the Spirit. This is seen in his acceptance by God, his preaching of righteousness, his inclusion in the roll of faithful persons in the Book of Hebrews, as well as in other references. God's statement about *ruach* not always dwelling in man, at that time, could mean that God had simply abandoned man to his evil and would judge it. Man always needs the *Ruach* of God to work on him, and in him. Noah had a son, Ham, who committed some indignity in regard to his father, and as a result the curse of Noah came upon his family. The other two brothers, Shem and Japheth, received blessing. Out of Shem came the Semites, among whom was the Abrahamic line.

The account in Genesis of the families of the earth is most significant, because the story of these families leads to the judgement of the tower of Babel and the covenant of grace with Abraham. The account shows us that God deals with nations or people—a theme which we will need to see in order to understand the work of the Spirit. Ham was the grandfather of Nimrod who hunted men, and who formed a kingdom, from which arose the concept of Babel. Babel was

Gen. 10,11

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the full expression of man's secularity, his rejection of dependency upon God, his desire to live autonomously, his worship of power and things other than God, and his determination to set up the kingdom of man. Babel epitomises the danger of monolithic humanity, and monopolistic aggrandisement within creation. It also typifies what Paul calls 'the natural man', ie. the 'soulish man'. There is nothing wrong with being 'a living soul', for in that sense all men are 'soulish'; but what is wrong is not being 'spiritual', ie. fulfilling the demands of human *ruach* by the aid of, and submission to, the *Ruach* of God.

Abraham should be seen as a man of the Spirit, for he was the 'father of faith', ie. the great man of history as a man of faith. He became 'father of the faithful'. Paul speaks of his son Isaac as being 'born of the Spirit', relating it to being 'born of the free woman [Sarah]'. It is fair to conclude from this that Abraham and Sarah were a Spirit-couple. They were—at the same time, of course—a faith-couple. On this principle the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—were all men of the Spirit. In Hebrews they are significant amongst the men and women of faith. To be people of the Spirit does not mean to be perfect, for they were far from that; but it means to have faith in God and have the Spirit of God working within their own spirits.

Abraham and the covenant of grace

God's covenant with Abraham was unilateral, ie. he required no action on Abraham's part to effect it. Of course, without faith, Abraham would get none of the good of it, but God acted towards Abraham and his people in total grace. The substance of the covenant was that Abraham would inherit the earth in the sense that his own descendants would be as the sands upon the seashore and the stars of the heavens—ie. innumerable. All nations would be tested, and so either blessed or cursed by their attitude to Abraham. Paul develops the thought that *all men of faith are children of Abraham*. John the Baptist insists that blood descent from Abraham does not qualify a person for inclusion in the covenant or the Kingdom of God. Abraham's children,

Rom 4:13

Gal. 3:6-9, 29

Matt. 3:7-12

then, will all be the people of faith. This must mean they will all be persons of the Spirit!

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What we must keep at the back of our minds is that fallen human creatures who do not have faith are not sons of God. No one can have faith or be a son of God without the Spirit. The spirit in man cannot be alive without the Spirit of God. Hence we must see, in the Old Testament especially, that wherever a person was a person of faith, the Spirit was at work in him or her. We must see that the Spirit has always been working in the elect of God to bring them to the ultimate fulfilment which God has projected in his ninefold plan.

Gal. 3:2-4:6

Israel and the Spirit

Isaac has already been nominated as a person 'born of the Spirit'. Without going into the fascinating and somewhat dreadful history of Jacob (later called 'Israel'), we must see him also as a man of the Spirit. A short cut to this is to read the words addressed to Jacob in the prophet Isaiah, for there he is mentioned often in relation to the Spirit. These prophetic statements are, of course, linked primarily with the nation Israel of that day, doomed for exile, or in exile. Even so, the prophetic principle still obtains for the Jacob of history. Also, he himself was a prophet, as we see in his prophetic statements at the end of his life. One of his prophecies is famous, for it is linked with the Proto-Evangel of God to Adam and Eve:

Cf. Isa. 48:8,
44:1-5, 42:1-4

Gen. 49

'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples [nations]'.
Gen. 49:10

Gen. 49:10

This concept of the nations coming to the feet of the Ruler is prominent in the Psalms and the Prophets.

When we examine the history of Israel we find an illuminating literary fact. The Jews nominated the books from Joshua to Nehemiah as 'the former prophets'. They saw what we call *history* as in fact being *prophecy*. Prophecy is simply *God speaking*. The prophets would say, 'Hear the word of the Lord!' or 'Thus says the Lord!'. That was

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Ex. 7:1

enough. The *principle* of the prophet was given to Moses, who protested that he was no speaker. God said, 'I make you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet'. The prophet is the mouthpiece of God, but the words uttered—though they be human—are the words of God, the truth he communicates.

Haggai 2:5

In one of the post-exilic prophets, we find the following statement: 'My Spirit abides among you: fear not'. If we look at the context we can see that God promised this to them as they were coming out of Egypt. For God to be with them meant his Spirit was with them. This we saw in our comments on Isaiah 63. It was God who led them through the wilderness, but in practical fact it was the Spirit. The glory manifestation of God to the Israelites was the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. These are symbols of the Spirit. Fire is a symbol seen clearly in Ezekiel, and it is in Ezekiel that we have a temporary departure of the glory of the Lord from Israel, which must necessarily mean a departure also of the Spirit. Yet Haggai's prophetic statement stands as a constant principle in Israel: God is always present by his Spirit.

Men and people of the Spirit

What we have to do, continually, is to remind ourselves that the people of God did not have some kind of theology of the Spirit. To them life was very much down to earth, but they knew that, unless the Spirit of God were with them, they were—to use a modern illustration—like flat tyres. They had no idea of sacred and secular. Life was just whole, for they saw themselves (as one writer has said) as 'animated bodies and not incarnated souls'. So they were, ideally speaking, people of God, of worship, of covenant-obedience, knowing God as Creator and as Father of his covenant people. Even these ideas had not come to them 'religiously', but rather as the substance of life, especially corporate life as a nation.

Long ago—before even they had come to Egypt—Joseph had been nominated by Pharaoh as 'a man in whom is the Spirit of God [or, 'the spirit of the gods']'. He could see that

the *ruach* in Joseph did not originate in Joseph. Later, it was Moses, the man of God, who was a man of the Spirit. He was not only a prophet, but the prophet par *excellence*. He was a man of faith, but ever so much a man of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, Moses would have been a hopeless leader.

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As it was, the day came when he had to choose seventy elders to assist him in the leadership. God said to Moses,

Num 11:16-30

'And I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the Spirit which is upon you and put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone'.

The subsequent event was like a mini-Pentecost, especially as all who received the Spirit prophesied. No doubt all this was part of what it meant for Israel to be led through the wilderness by the Spirit of God. Linked also with it was the anointing of Joshua with the Spirit. Both Moses and Joshua needed the Spirit for wisdom to lead the people. Their spirits needed *the* Spirit, without which (whom) they could not help to fulfil the plan of God for his people (at this point, Israel).

Num. 27:18-23

Deut. 34:9

It would take reams of reportage and comment to fill out the work of the Spirit in Israel. Isaiah tells us the nature of the Spirit:

. . . the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord'.

Isa. 11:2

God said of Bezalel, who was to be the artificer of the tabernacle and its furniture:

...I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every craft'.

Ex. 31:1-11

The account goes on to include Oholiab and others who are to make furniture. This must mean that the tent of the covenant—the tabernacle of God shown to Moses in the mount—is deeply significant. The writer of Hebrews also linked the Spirit with the tabernacle: 'By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened...' We can observe, incidentally, that true art

Heb. 9:8

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springs from the Spirit who is Creator. This certainly sounds logical.

Joshua 24:1-8

The judges of the people

Joshua helped the people to settle in the new land, but he had little trust that they would carry out true worship. He was not cynical, only realistic. His famous message at the end of his life was that of a man who had the discernment of the Spirit, even though, in essence, it was not heeded. The judges who followed Joshua were not kings and not elected as leaders. They were accepted for the charismatic leadership they gave, but this was rarely over all the tribes. Samuel seems to be the first leader to do this, and his was a limited leadership.

Judges 3 to 15,
esp. 3:10, 6:34,
11:29, 13:25,
14:6, 19, 15:14

The judges, then, were men and women who needed the power and wisdom of the Spirit, and that is how the Book of the Judges portrays them. We need not go in detail into their exploits, but the names of Othniel, Ehud, Deborah (a prophetess and so a woman of the Spirit), Gideon, Jephthah and Samson became famous in Israel. These were persons upon whom the Spirit came, and in some cases almost violently. In their own time they effected the liberation of Israel from their enemies. They were agents of the Spirit in his work amongst the people of God.

9. THE SPIRIT AND ISRAEL

More persons of the Spirit

Acts 3:24, 13:20

I Sam. 10:6, 10, 11:6

What we may call the truly prophetic series commences with Samuel who could be called the last of the judges. A priest, a prophet and a judge, he was, in fact, almost a king. Both Peter and Paul rate him highly in the story of Israel. He was certainly a man of the Spirit. In his ministry he is called upon to anoint Saul, and Saul is thus one upon whom the Spirit comes, although for the most part he is a dark and negative person. David also is anointed by Samuel, and

I Sam. 16:13

from that anointing becomes a man of the Spirit. We have seen his fear when he thinks the Spirit may be taken from him

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The principle of 'My Spirit abides among you' is most powerfully seen in the prophets. One prophet states, 'I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord', which, again, is a principle of prophecy. Some scholars have maintained that the ecstatic prophets were feared or scorned, much as irrational dervishes who are looked upon as unreliable by all but the superstitious. This may be partly true, but not wholly so. It is doubtful whether all the prophets habitually exhibited ecstatic states, but some may have gone into them from time to time. We need to distinguish between genuine legitimate states of union with God and the induced psychic states of dervish-type seers. The former is rational even though mystical. The latter is irrational.

Micah 3:8

Primarily we must not think of the utterances of genuine prophets as coming from their own contemplation and reasoning. What they said was revelatory, for God showed himself to them by the medium of dreams and visions. This was precisely the method he promised at Pentecost. What we must keep in mind is the patience and persistence of the Spirit as he guards Israel and shapes it up as the servant of God.

Num. 12:6,
passim, cf.
Jer. 23:23-32
Acts 2:12-18

The prophets and the Spirit

Here, again, the subject is so vast as to deny us a full coverage. We must not think that prophecy began with Israel. Prophets, Peter tells us, have been 'since the world began'. Jesus nominated Abel as the first prophet, and Enoch is also called a prophet. Jesus speaks of the prophets from Abel to Zechariah. The writer of Hebrews says that in many ways and various times, *God spoke to the fathers by the prophets*. He says that in these days God speaks by his Son. The angel in the Book of the Revelation tells John, ' . . . the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy'. He may mean that the way Jesus is and what he does is the spirit in which prophecy is delivered; or he may mean that the essence or subject of all prophecy is the witness of (or to) Christ. Certainly Peter

Acts 3:21

Luke 11:51;
Jude 14

Heb. 1:1 4

Rev. 19:10

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- Part 1.9 touches on the same idea when he says, 'The prophets who prophesied of the grace [of God]. . .inquired what person or time was indicated by the *Spirit of Christ* within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory'. In the second Petrine letter we read, ' . . . no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God'.
I Pet. 1:10-11
- Clearly, no age has been without prophetic utterance. It is true that in Samuel's early days 'the word of the Lord was rare...there was no frequent vision'. Even then, though, there was what we can call 'the prophetic deposit', ie. prophetic truth already given. God's words could never age, but the direct word of the Lord through the prophet was most dynamic. It was, of course, immediate, God speaking at that point of time to his people; hence the writer of Proverbs was moved to say, 'Where there is no prophecy [vision] the people cast off restraint'. He meant that the direct word of the Lord keeps his people in trim. In Samuel's case we are told, ' . . .the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel. . . by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel'; ie. the word of the Lord was now the word of Samuel. Now it was not 'rare'!
I Sam. 3:1
- If, then, we keep in mind that the Spirit is the one who inspires the prophets and brings the word of the Lord to man through them, we will see the constant unremitting endeavour and work of the Spirit to ensure that God's plan be brought to fulfilment. This *continuity* of the prophetic ministry is recognised by Ezra, who says, 'Thou gayest thy good Spirit to instruct them [Israel]... Many years thou didst bear with them, and didst warn them by thy Spirit through thy prophets. . .' Zechariah follows on (later) with the words, 'They made their hearts like adamant lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by *his Spirit through the former prophets*'. We remember that Moses watched the seventy elders prophesy when the Spirit came upon them, and, when Joshua complained about the Spirit coming upon Eldad and Medad, said these famous words: ' . . .Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit'
Prov. 29:18
I Sam. 3:21, 4:1
II Pet. 1:21
Neh. 9:20, 30
Zech. 7:12
Num. 11:29

upon them!. Moses saw the power and need of prophecy.

The classical pattern as Ezekiel spells it out is: '. . .the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the Lord. . . "' John, the writer of the prophecy of the Revelation, opens with these words, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. . .' He could write no prophecy until that happened.

We see, then, the enormous importance of the prophet. The Spirit gave him the words and power of God to proclaim. Not one human being, by sitting down and being contemplative, or even by studying the Scriptures themselves, can ever devise a word which is the prophetic word of God. That is why Peter quotes Joel in saying:

'. . . I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy'.

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Ezek. 11:5

Acts 2:17-18

The community that began with Pentecost was to be a prophetic community, so that Peter could say, 'If any man speak, let him speak as [one who utters] the oracles [truths] of God'.

It is no wonder, then, that Jeremiah says at least six times that God has sent his servants the prophets, and that he does this *persistently* to warn his people against rebellion, idolatry and evil, in order that he may either save them from the judgement they so much deserve, or confirm them in it. Three of the prophets are exercised concerning the principle of prophecy. Others among them, although aware of the importance of what they are doing, simply prophesy and make no comment. *Jeremiah* is the one who seems almost to have an obsession about the matter of the prophet and the word of God. Most of his book is given over to this theme. The *Isaianic* writings are also concerned for prophecy, but not as something in itself. The prophetic consciousness is very strong, but it is all with a view to spelling out the word of the Lord. *Ezekiel* is greatly caught by the relationship between prophecy and the Spirit. Indeed, he is deeply concerned with the Spirit, whom he aligns and even identifies

I Pet. 4:11

Jer. 25:4, 26:5,
28:8-9, 29:19
35:15, 44:4

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with the glory of the Lord, and thus the dynamic presence of God, especially to Israel. Paul, in the New Testament, has something of this also, for with him the Spirit is the Spirit who relates to glory. In Ezekiel, the glory of God is almost a palpable, literal presence, shown in light and brilliance; whereas for Paul, glory is a moral-spiritual quality, the nature of God affecting redeemed man even to the point of true ethical living. He does see a glory in eternity, yet this is not just literal radiance. It is—if anything—the radiance of true being.

If all this helps us to see the persistence of the Spirit in working towards the goals of God—the ninefold plan—then we are even further delighted to see that the prophets of the exilic and post-exilic periods speak of a very beautiful and powerful phenomenon which is to take place, namely that God will pour out his Spirit *upon all flesh!* It may be that those in Israel understood this to mean 'upon all Israel', ie. not just upon prophets, priests, kings and rare artificers, but on the commonalty of the commonwealth of Israel. It is possible, even probable, that they saw such an outpouring as truly universal. Whatever the meaning, it portended a new day for Israel and a wholly prophetic era. Fancy all God's people having dreams and visions and crying, 'Hear, O Israel! Thus says the Lord. . .!'

Isa. 32:15

THE ERA OF THE SPIRIT

10. THE ERA OF THE SPIRIT AND MESSIAH

The prophetic promises

Let us look at some of the promises concerning the giving of the Spirit to men. We need not quote again Joel's promise of the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, but we need to keep it in mind.

Isaiah generally links the promises with Messiah or the Suffering Servant, or the coming of a special age, and we shall look more

closely at those prophecies when we discuss Messiah. One promise looks to a time when ' . . . the Spirit is poured upon us from on high. . .' Other similar prophecies are:

'...waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert. . .';

' . . . I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself... ';

' . . . I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants
and my blessing on your offspring'.

Ezekiel often speaks of God putting a new spirit within his people. He does not state whether this is a new human spirit or the Spirit who makes new, but the two must come together for the people to have a new heart and a new spirit. Their *ruach*—not good at the point of the prophecy—needed the *Ruach* of God. In fact, God ordered them to get

Isa. 35:6-7
Isa. 43:20, 21

Isa. 44:3

Ezek. 18:31

Part 2.10

Ezek. 37:12, 14

a new spirit and a new heart! In the vision of the valley of dry bones, God says, ' . . . I will . . . raise you from your graves. .. And I will put my Spirit within you'.

These promises then are to make the people of God envisage a great new day, as indeed many did. History tells us that although, between the Testaments, there was a period of 400 years without prophecy as such, yet many in Israel concentrated on the promises of the Spirit and were in anticipation of their fulfilment. There sprang up in Palestine many communities which had Messianic expectancy, and when John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit, the language and the promise presented them with no difficulty.

Given in all this, the main concentration of the prophets, and those who shared their anticipation of his coming, were the promises concerning Messiah. Some of them are not linked explicitly with the Holy Spirit and some are, but as we have seen in Peter's first letter, the prophets were moved by the Spirit to speak of Messiah. In this respect, we need to be aware that in the Old Testament there are mentions of 'son of man', 'son of God', 'Davidic king', 'the anointed one [Messiah]' and 'the servant of the Lord'. There are other titles as well, but the five mentioned here become applied, in the New Testament, to the one person, namely Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

Let us consider some of the prophecies in the light of the person of Jesus. In Isaiah, we find this significant statement:

Isa. 9:6-7

'For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called
"Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there shall be no end,
upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom...

Linked with this is another prophecy:

Isa. 11:1-2

'There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
 the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the spirit of counsel and might,
 the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord'.

Isa. 42:1

In regard to the one thus described, Isaiah further prophesies about his receiving the Spirit:

'Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
 I have put my Spirit upon him,
 he will bring forth justice [*mishpat*: righteousness]
 to the nations'.

The prophet has yet another pronouncement concerning Messiah and the Spirit, and since Jesus explicitly applied it to himself it is of great importance:

'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
 because the Lord has anointed me
 to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
 he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,
 and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
 and the day of vengeance of our God;
 to comfort all who mourn'.

Isa. 61:1-2

Nor has Isaiah finished here. He has another passage which ought to be read from beginning to end. We will quote just a little of it after we have explained the theme. Isaiah has spoken of the sin and transgression that is in Israel, and of 'truth fallen in the public squares'. The situation is frightening and God is indignant, so much so that he equips himself with his battle gear and, in person, moves in powerfully to defeat evil. We cannot escape the thought in this whole chapter that when God moves in to fight evil, it is his Messiah whom he is using. The passage on the Intervener closes with these words:

'And he will come to Zion as Redeemer,
 to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord'.

Isa. 59:20

Following this is the promise of the Spirit and the covenant. We have already seen that Israel, the covenant and the Spirit are linked, and here the matter is clear:

'And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of

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your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore.¹

Isa. 59:21

We see, then, that Israel in exile, and Israel returned to Palestine but under the heel of various conquerors, naturally looked to the Messiah, 'great David's greater son', and anticipated with joy and fervour the coming of the mighty *Ruach* of God, the one who would come and liberate his people. It was at a time of expectancy such as this that John the Baptist came to Israel.

A man of the Spirit: John the Baptist

The accounts of the births of Jesus and John are brought together by Luke at the commencement of his Gospel. Both births were attended with what we may call 'supernatural signs'. We need not go into them, but it is significant that angels were sent as God's messengers to speak to Zechariah the father of John, and to Mary and Joseph concerning the coming of Messiah. Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, made a rare but authentic prophetic utterance. He was not alone, for Anna and Simeon also had prophetic words at the appropriate time.

Mal. 4:5-6

John the Baptist was unique among all the prophets in that his prophethood had already been prophesied. The angel, speaking about him, quoted from Malachi the prophet, saying,

Luke 1:17

'...he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared',

Matt. 11:14

Jesus affirmed this matter by saying of John, '...if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come'. Luke uses Isaiah's prophecy of John: 'The voice of one crying in

Luke 3:4

¹ This may even be the gist of Peter's promise in Acts 2:38-39 where forgiveness and the covenant are present as in Isaiah 59:20-21. Peter says, '...For the promise is a you and to your children and to all the: are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him'. And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation," '

the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord'. Matthew uses this passage and so does Mark who conflates it with another word of prophecy from Malachi: 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way'.

We see, then, that the Spirit authenticated John by the prophets, and John himself was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. He was undoubtedly a man of the Spirit as a prophet, and Jesus called him 'more than a prophet'. He was the one who, having innate authority, could declare the coming of Messiah, and actually point to him as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. John himself had attended Jesus at his baptism and had seen the Spirit come upon him. He had been told, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit'. With this revelation, it was now to be known that the great day had arrived. John had promised that whereas he, John, baptised with water, this one would baptise with the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, John had announced three things of universal nature: (i) Jesus would bring in the Kingdom of God; (ii) he would bring in the universal forgiveness of sins for he would take away the sin of the world; (iii) he would bring a universal outpouring of the Spirit. In these universals we see the work of the Spirit moving towards some kind of a climax, for these three elements accord with the ninefold plan of God for his creation.

The man of the Spirit: Jesus

The authority of John the Baptist was naturally enough questioned by the leaders of Israel. John denied he was Messiah, Elijah or *that* prophet, ie. the prophet predicted by Moses, through whom God had said,

'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him'.

In fact, Jesus was this prophet, as Peter later affirmed in his first message after the day of Pentecost. John, however, claimed that although he himself was not 'that light', yet he

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Mark I :2,

Mal 3:1

Luke 1:15, 41

Deut. 18:18-19

Acts 3:19-26

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was sent to 'bear witness of the light'. 'Bearing witness' was no careless claim. It meant that the Messiah—the one anointed by the Spirit—was witnessed to by another, who was anointed of the same Spirit, though John's anointing was in order to be a forerunner and not the Messiah himself. We see, then, that John authenticated Jesus, and had Jesus cared to say so he could have used this authentication. He himself had greater witnesses, such as the Father, the works he was doing which were given by the Father, and the very Scriptures themselves. Even so, he asked his questioners whether John's baptism was of heaven (God) or of man. They cased not answer Jesus either way. much to their own discomfort.

John 5:30-47
Matt. 21:25

The Spirit in the life of Jesus

We see now the working of the Spirit from creation through to the annunciation of the birth of Messiah. To use a modern expression, 'it had been a long haul'. Yet here the result was about to break on the world. The Messiah was about to come. The prophecies given from Eden to father Zechariah were now about to be fulfilled. No wonder the angels on that first Christmas burst out of their celestial dimension into the terrestrial to break the good news! They could not contain their joy and adoration.

The Spirit was in the conception and birth of Jesus. The angel told Mary,

Luke 1:35

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be called holy,
the Son of God'.

We certainly cannot penetrate the intimate mystery of the conception, even at the human level, let alone on this mysterious level of the Spirit and Mary. For Jesus to be man, a living soul, true human *ruach*, would be impossible without the Creator Spirit. What to us is so important is the fact that Jesus was wholly a man of the Spirit, and, even more, *the* man of the Spirit. Nor can we doubt that he was filled from conception with the Spirit. Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit when she met Mary her cousin, and John the Baptist leapt in the womb; doubtless he also was filled with the

Spirit at that point. Modern medicine, especially gynaecological research, has discovered, as had those in Old Testament times, that much that is formative, and much that is personally volitional (the exercise of the will) happens in the womb.' Certainly much happened in Jesus in the womb¹, before there was the remarkable, though simple, birth of the promised Seed which was to crush evil underfoot and liberate man into eternal freedom! In all this—if we may use imagination—was the Spirit yearning and working. He had much to show the world about God, and this was to be done through Messiah the Son.

When we talk of the conception we are speaking of the mystery of the Word becoming human, the Son of God becoming the son of man. We are talking about Deity taking on flesh, and of course the act, being unique, has no precedents or parallels, so that we are thinking of that which is outside the normal province of man. As simply as Mary accepted the word, so must we. What comforts us is to know that the Spirit took the initiative in the whole matter. None but he could know the mystery of the conception and the formative period in the womb.

We have referred to John the Baptist. He was filled with the Spirit in his mother's womb. Was his being simply overcome by the *Ruach* of God? Was he passive, and did nothing volitional take place in him? What then of Esau and Jacob in the womb when there was obviously conflict between them? Was there no volitional action there? There surely must have been. What of the cry of the psalmist, 'The wicked go astray from the womb. . . speaking lies', and God's word to Israel, ' . . . from birth you were called a rebel'? From such statements we take it that John the Baptist knew his calling in the womb; if this was true of him, then even more it would be true of Jesus. He was willing to be what the Father required, as the writer of Hebrews ascribes willingness in the words of the psalmist: 'Then I said, "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God," as it is written of me in the roll of the book'.

Psa. 58:3

Isa. 48:8

Heb. 10:7, Psa.
40:6-8

Notice that in all our discussion we have avoided seeking

¹ See Gen. 25:19-23, Psa. 58:3, cf. Isa. 48:8, Jer. 1:5, Gal. 1:15-16.

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to say *how* he became flesh, *how* he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. In this sense, we cannot understand the incarnation, let alone explain it.

11. THE SPIRIT AND JESUS

Gal. 4:22-31

The conception of Jesus was by the Spirit, as the angel attested to Mary. No less was Jesus born of the Spirit. On the one hand he was born of Mary, and on the other of the Spirit. Isaac was said to have been born of the Spirit, his mother Sarah being *the free woman*. Mary, doubtless, was no less *a free woman*. The remarkable response of Elizabeth in meeting Mary was to be filled with the Spirit. Jesus, being born both of Mary and the Spirit, was truly a child of the Spirit. It is doubtless this which accounts for descriptions of his growth, which preserve us from ideas of his being a freakish prodigy on the one hand, and mediocre humanity on the other.

Luke 2:32

Luke 2:38

Luke 2:40

We have already seen that when the *Ruach* of God comes to the *ruach* of man—the rightful place for the Spirit—then man becomes enlivened, and it is proper for us to speak of Jesus being enlivened in his humanity. By this we do not necessarily mean ecstatically or even charismatically. We might speak of him being enlivened Messianically at his baptism, but then he had—from the womb—been a person of the Spirit. His Messianic anointing was for his Messianic office and the action it demanded. The Spirit moved both Simeon and Anna at the dedication of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem. We need not look at this in detail, although both these persons of the Spirit perceived Jesus to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel', and 'set for the redemption of Israel'. Following that we are told, 'the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him'. These surely are indications that the life he lived in his spirit was equally lived in the Spirit of God.

The event of Jesus as a child speaking with the teachers in the temple also indicates that his wisdom and knowledge

were beyond what was the norm for his age.¹ What is highly significant is his question: 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'. Whilst it may be that he asked, 'Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?',² the former question seems the correct one. Doubtless his Father's business was being carried on in his Father's house. Later he was to call the temple 'my Father's house', as he overturned the tables of the money-changers. We observe the use of 'my Father' at this point because we see that the ministry of the Spirit is generally linked with consciousness of Sonship.

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Luke 2:49

John 2:16

Psychological speculation will probably be useless at this point, but we can surmise that a human being—even a young boy—who lives guiltlessly, and who does not have the human (sinful) drive to prove himself, must be free to absorb wisdom, to go straight to the point, and to be uncomplicated. It is natural for him to be strong in spirit—ie. strong in the Spirit—and to 'increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man'.

Luke 2:52

Jesus, the Spirit and baptism

The question is often asked as to whether or not Jesus had consciousness of God being his Father before his baptism. We do not understand the psychology of a fully guiltless person. We have evidences that he read the Hebrew Scriptures, and that he understood them thoroughly. We do know that, following his baptism, he had no doubts about who he was. He considered himself faithful to 'Moses, and

¹ In no sense must we think of him as a prodigy in his intellectual levels or his apprehension of truth. It opens up the whole matter of true knowledge as it comes to man in simplicity and obedience or in the simplicity of obedience. Jesus often said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear', and in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Revelation, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'. Both these statements imply that *true hearing is a matter of the will*. This must mean that there is acceptance of the Word of God by faith. It may thus mean that the person who works on the intuition and obedience of faith learns truth deeply and rapidly. The person who is concerned with dialectical reasoning may miss the truth because of his mode of reasoning. Jesus, as a child, would thus represent the true paradigm of the learner. This would relate to his demand for us to become as little children in order to enter the Kingdom. There we would always need to be childlike, though not—of course—childish

² Some translators prefer this form.

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the Psalms and the Prophets', for he considered himself to be the fulfilment of these. On this basis, there is every reason for believing that Jesus knew himself to be the Son of God. It is probably not correct to talk about 'a gradual flowering of consciousness' prior to his baptism, which then became crystallised in the event at Jordan.

Be that as it may, Jesus is acclaimed as the Son at his baptism.¹ The different Gospel accounts make the affirmation by God to be both 'Thou art my Son', and 'This is my Son'. However, what is important is that God spoke. Isaiah had cried, 'O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence', and now this had happened! The unusual act of God in proclaiming Jesus as his Son is not to be taken lightly. After all, this was the great day towards which Father, Son and Spirit had been working. It was the day of anointing, and this anointing meant Jesus was the Messiah, Lord of the Kingdom of God and the one who, according to the prophets, was to liberate humanity from the bonds of its sin, guilt and rebellion. This will be made clear when we examine the full affirmation of the Father. As we consider the baptism as an event, it is clear that Jesus identified himself with humanity in requesting baptism from John. What followed has often been called 'Jesus' baptism in the Spirit', but this may not be strictly correct. The parallel event for a believer in the Gospel would mean regeneration, the gift of the Spirit, and probably power for witness to Christ. All of this could scarcely be said of Christ. It was, in fact, his anointing as Messiah, as the Son of God.

First we see the Spirit coming upon Jesus, and this event John the Baptist interprets as the permanent bestowal of the Spirit. Later Peter described the event, saying, ' . . . God

Isa. 64:1

John 1:33
Acts 10:38

¹ When we say 'Son of God', what then do we mean? Undoubtedly Peter and the high priest linked this sonship with true Messianic being. Peter's affirmation 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' is in like with the high priest's question 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the living God?'. It is doubtful that they were thinking in metaphysical terms of him having deity and being 'of one substance with the Father' at this point of Jewish thinking. What we say below in the text relates to the Son as seen in Psa. 2 and other Scriptures such as Psa. 89, Isa. 9:6-7, II Sam. 7:14, and similar prophetic passages. The O.T. idea of a 'son of God' requires thoughtful study. In the N.T. it requires an examination of the idea in the Synoptic Gospels regarding the 'Son of God', and John's understanding of Jesus as the Son.

anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power'. Jesus himself quoted Isaiah 61:1, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me. . .'. The statement of the Father, 'Thou art [this is] my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased', is a conflation of two important Scriptures. The first is 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee', from a Messianic Psalm and the second, 'Behold my servant, mine elect, *in whom my soul delighteth*. I have put my Spirit upon him, and he will bring forth justice to the nations'.

It is interesting to note that Psalm 2 is quoted at least twenty times in the New Testament and always significantly, leading us to believe that the early church saw the event of Jesus in the light of this Psalm.¹ In it, God has with him his 'anointed', who is the King whom he has put 'on the holy hill of Zion'. This is the one to whom he gives the nations—the 'peoples' of Jacob's prophecy. These nations are to belong to the anointed and 'the uttermost part of the earth' is to be his possession. It is to this 'uttermost part of the earth' that the apostles are commissioned to go, for Jesus includes this part of the Psalm in his telling the apostles of their impending baptism in the Spirit, and their consequent proclaiming of the Gospel.

The *servant* of Isaiah's prophecy is the one who has God's Spirit upon him with a view to proclaiming justice (*mishpat*) to the nations. Jesus quoted the passage after having healed all who followed him for that purpose, thus referring it to himself. Not only is the statement 'with whom I am well pleased' ('in whom my soul delights') part of the baptismal affirmation; it is also in Matthew's account of the Transfiguration. The term 'servant' is also applied Messianically to Jesus by the apostles in their post-Pentecostal preaching. In any case, Jesus spoke of himself as the one who had come to serve and give his life a ransom for many.

The anointing of the Spirit is thus the coronation of the Messianic King of Psalm 2. We might call it a 'first instalment' of the coronation, for other references link it with the

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Luke 4:18

Psa. 2:7

Isa. 42:1-2

Gen. 49:10
Psa. 2:8, cf. Phil. 2:11,
Isa. 45:23

Acts 1:8

Matt. 12:15-21

Matt. 17:5

Acts 3:13, 26,
4:27, 30

Mark 10:45

¹ See, for example, Matt. 3:17, 17:5; Acts 1:8, 4:25, 13:33; Heb. 1:5, 5:5; Rev. 1:5, 2:26--27, 12:5, 19:15.

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transfiguration, death, resurrection and ascension.¹ Yet *without doubt* it is the King who goes on his way from the baptism. He goes as King, proclaiming the Kingdom. He has a whole programme to accomplish by the aid and direction of the *Ruach* (the *Pneuma*) of God.

Jesus, the Spirit and the temptation

Mark 1:12-13,
Matt. 4:1-11,
Luke 4: 1 13

Paul states a principle which obtains for the children of God: 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God'. To see this principle in practical operation, we look at Jesus, who is the Paradigm-Son. He was led by the Spirit when he went into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Mark says the Spirit *drove* him, whilst Matthew and Luke say he was *led* by the Spirit. The word 'drove' is not harsh, for the Spirit often sweeps men off their feet, as in the cases of Ezekiel, Philip, and John the Seer in the Revelation. Mark says that his temptation occurred immediately after the baptism. In fact Jesus' baptism actually took place in the wilderness, but where he went afterwards may be called 'the heart of the wilderness'. There were wild beasts there, and Jesus neither ate nor drank. All the time, if we conflate the three accounts, he was battling with Satan who is also called in these accounts, 'the devil' and 'the tempter'. He was being tried out. The point is that the Spirit wished him to be tried out.

Many reasons could be given for this testing time, but the basic one must be that he is the Second Adam, the Messiah of the Kingdom. If he fails, all fails. From Satan's point of view there is nothing good in man, and he wished to seduce this man with promises of quick Messianic success. Jesus did not battle alone; the Spirit was with him, and angels were there to strengthen him. What we must remember is that Jesus had nothing at his disposal which is not at the disposal of all those who wish to do the will of God. Jesus was one

¹ The references mainly refer to Christ's Sonship and are linked with his baptism (Matt. 3:17), his transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), his crucifixion (Acts 4:25-28), his resurrection (Acts 13:32-33, cf. Rom. 1:4), his ascension (Heb. 1:5-13), and his Lordly reign over creation (Rev. 2:26-27, 19:5). We can—in a way—speak of the baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension as elements of coronation

with the hierarchy of God; his obedience linked him with angelic powers and the aid they could give.

Again, in the temptation we see the cohabitation of the two, the nexus between the Spirit and the Word. It had been that way at creation: 'By *the word* of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath [*ruach*] of his mouth'. David knew the same principle: 'The *Spirit* of the Lord speaks by me, His *word is* upon my tongue'.

So Jesus' answer to Satan is always, 'It is written. . .' This is the reverse of the Adamic temptation when Eve listened to the word of Satan, and Adam to the word of woman. Note that later Jesus said, 'The words which I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are life'. We do not know whether *Spirit* should have the capital or not. It does not matter, for Jesus' words cannot be 'spirit' without the indwelling *Ruach*. If he had failed in the temptation, his words would not then have been *ruach* (*pneuma*).

Satan's temptation of Jesus was to bring him into doubt about his Messianic sonship ('If thou be the Son', etc.). The purpose of the temptation for Jesus was for him to stand firm on his Messianic authority. This is why Peter says, in regard to *the word*:

'You know *the word* which he [God] sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (*he Is Lord of all*), the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all those that were oppressed by the devil. for God was with him'.

Peter means that the word and the Spirit are joined in Jesus and so evil is overcome. This is the essence of the temptation victory, for victory it was. Satan would come again in Peter to tempt Jesus from the Cross, as he sought to do in the temptation, but he would not succeed. Many times he would bring pressure to bear, but the truth triumphs over the lie. The devil withdrew for a time, no doubt to make recovery from the lacerations caused by the truth!

There is no point here in comparing the temptation of the first and second Adams. Helpful as that may be, the temptation of Jesus simply secured the Messianic mission. That is

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Cf. Matt. 4:6,

11, 26:53,

Heb. 1:13-14

Psa. 33:6

11 Sam. 23:2

John 6:63

Acts 10:36-38

Cf. Matt.

16: 15-23

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Luke 4:14

why (Luke tells us), ' . . . Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee'. He adds, ' . . .and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all'.

Gen. 3:15

We must not miss what is implicit in Peter's statement, that the promise of the Proto-Evangel was now in the process of dynamic fulfilment. The whole kingdom of evil rose up to crush the new Man, and to defeat the purposes, the ninefold plan of God, whose fulfilment rested on him as he was led and aided by the Spirit.

12. JESUS, THE SPIRIT AND THE MINISTRY

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to commence his ministry. The selection of his twelve disciples was over a period and some time elapsed from when he called them to when they all left their occupations to follow him in a full-time manner. Jesus' first act was to proclaim the Kingdom: 'The time appointed is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel'. He had followed hard and vigorously on the heels of John the Baptist. John's ministry was virtually finished, and that of Jesus had begun in earnest.

Mark 1:24

He healed the sick, he cleansed lepers, he cast out demons. One of the first attacks upon him was the snarl of a demon within its human host: 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God'. Jesus, no more than Paul on a later occasion, accepted this kind of conversation or attestation of his vocation. With a word of authority, he silenced the evil spirit, casting him out. Later, his exorcisms were put down to Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Either Jesus cast out by evil powers or he must be Messiah! Jesus' answer was powerful: ' . . . if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then *the kingdom of God has come upon you*'.

Matt. 12:28

It must be seen, then, that there is no action either of Messiah or the Kingdom which is apart from the Spirit. This

lends great point to Peter's similar statement in Acts when he spoke to the Gentiles at Caesarea.

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Acts 10:36-38

Later we will see the rich connection between the Spirit and the Kingdom of God, but at this point we can see that the healing and exorcising powers lay within the Spirit. On the one hand, Jesus was the Kingdom of God, for he was the King about his business! On the other hand, the anointing he had received—of the Spirit—was the power by which he reigned. Indeed, it was via the Spirit that he exercised his authority, for authority he had! The crowds said, 'With what authority he speaks!' and they compared this to the lame (academic?) authority of the scribes and Pharisees. It was said of him, 'Never man spoke like this man!'

In our preoccupation with the detail of Jesus' life and action, we must not miss our continuing point which runs like a golden thread through all our story: that the Spirit, through time, through the succession of events initiated by him, and through the prophetic word, had prepared this time in history when Jesus was to minister. Now he, the Holy *Ruach*, filled Messiah to the full in his *ruach* so that the truth of God would confront men, and change them from the lie to that truth.

It is interesting to note two things at this point: (i) Jesus rarely mentioned the Spirit, although John had magnified his office as the 'baptiser in the Spirit'; and (ii) that Jesus seemed almost to neglect the three universals promised by John (to come through Jesus), namely the outpouring of the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, and the immediate coming of the Kingdom. This is not to say that Jesus did not give certain teaching on the three, but the action—apart from certain Kingdom action—seemed almost absent.

John the Baptist, languishing in prison, was at least tempted to think that Jesus might not, after all, be the Messiah. Perhaps his view of the action of the Spirit was that it would be sudden, dynamic, driving all before it. When he asked, 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?' Jesus did not react. He quoted at least three passages of Isaiah to him, conflating them, and doubtless John understood them as being Messianic. We can learn, in passing, that it is not always in the outwardly

Matt. 11:2-19

Isa. 29:18-19,
35:5-6, 61:1

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dynamic action that the Spirit works; he is also effective in gentler ways. In any case, John would have been told enough of the powerful works of healing and signs to show him that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and, as such, the man of the Spirit. Certainly, the words he spoke were spirit (Spirit) and life, and they came with authority that was undeniable, much to the discomfort of his antagonists.

The Spirit, Jesus and the Kingdom

Matt.. 25:34

In a way, this point seems like a discursus in the story of Jesus and the Spirit. Yet we need to see that Jesus' ministry and the Kingdom of God cannot be seen apart. If we go back to the nine strands in the plan of God, we see that one of them was that of the Kingdom. 'Come,' Jesus will say at the end of the age, 'O blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. Those conversant with the Gospels and Epistles--to say nothing of the Revelation--will know the thought of 'entering' or 'inheriting' the Kingdom of God.

We know also that John the Baptist's threefold promise was for the Spirit, forgiveness and the Kingdom of God. Obviously, these are three elements of the one action of God. The news of the Kingdom of God was something John's hearers understood. Simply speaking, the Kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God; nothing more, nothing less. Creation was the full Kingdom of God. All creatures and things—celestial and terrestrial—were under the Kingship of God. Rebellion came in both the heavenly and earthly spheres by angels and men, and so there was rebellion within the Kingdom, but that did not alter the fact of the Kingdom or even its essential nature.

Exod.. 19:5-6

In the Old Testament, Israel is specifically God's Kingdom. God had said, '...you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. Whilst thoughtful Jews saw Israel as God's Kingdom, they did not see that Kingdom as limited to Israel. They knew of God's universal Kingdom, however much it may have been particularised in Israel. As we quoted before, Solomon could say at the dedication of the temple

'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is shine; shine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all'.

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I Chron. 29: 11

Likewise in the Psalms and the prophetic writings, God is 'King over all the earth'.

The failure of Israel to be faithful to God, and the punishment which came upon them from God via their enemies, made the thoughtful in Israel see that God had something beyond the locale of Palestine for the Kingdom. There are rich and vivid pictures in the prophets which show Jerusalem as the head of the earth, primary city amongst the nations, towards which the nations flow. Also, there are visions of a new heaven and a new earth, the old giving way to the new, and peace and righteous government coming upon the earth with Jerusalem at the head of the nations, that city the primate city of the earth. A time of peace, plenty, righteousness and universal justice would come with the Kingdom.

There were local political views, of course, which looked for the Romans to be vanquished and for the Messiah of the prophets to come and reign. Naturally enough, many were anxious for this kingdom to come quickly and all who heard John and Jesus would simply translate the word 'kingdom', as they uttered it, into their own thought patterns.

Jesus' view of the Kingdom

When we try to see how Jesus thought about the Kingdom, we are faced with various elements of teaching. Jesus said that there was no entrance into the Kingdom unless a person became as a little child, ie. simple and trusting. He commended the poor in spirit, the meek, the humble, the pure in heart, seekers of righteousness, and those who sought to reconcile others. These, he said, were in the Kingdom of heaven. One day they would inherit it fully. He said the greatest thing was to trust God for the necessities and to seek the Kingdom. The King of this Kingdom was the Father, to whom we should pray, asking that the Kingdom might come on the earth, and operate as it does in heaven.

Matt. chs 5-7

Part 2.1.2
Cf. Matt. 13

There were other teachings, too, about the Kingdom in the end-times and in eternity. Some related to violent movements in history, some to the coming judgements, and some to the bliss and joy the inhabitants of the Kingdom would know. For practical purposes, Jesus was about the business of the Kingdom, right there, at the time of his incarnation, in Palestine. In fact, the Kingdom was—at that point in time and place—the dynamic action of God in defeating evil, in liberating men and women from the bondage of evil, thus bringing them into the present life of the Kingdom of God.

Matt. 12:28

The anointing of Jesus as King at his baptism, was the enduement of the Spirit so that Jesus could fight the forces of darkness. In this sense, the Kingdom of God was the 'showdown' that God, through Messiah and the Spirit, was having with Satan and his evil powers. It consisted in the liberation of human beings from the devil's grip and domination. That is why Jesus said, 'If I by the Spirit of God [or, the finger of God] cast out demons, *then is the kingdom of God come upon you*'. He was representing the power of God by breaking the power of evil. As the Kingdom of God pressed forward, the kingdom of darkness retreated. Thus when Jesus sent out his disciples on two occasions, he said their work was as his, the work of the Kingdom. He said, 'Lay hands on the sick and heal them and say, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" '. Even when certain places and people would not accept them, they were to shake the dust off their sandals and say, 'The kingdom of God has come near'. This was to mean, 'You have seen the action of God's Kingdom. Your rejection is not merely of us, but of the King and his Kingdom'. So dynamic was the nature of the Kingdom.

If we look at this *action of the Kingdom* as a functional pattern, we are confronted by the puzzling thought that this mode of operation has to be perpetual, first in Palestine, and then world-wide, and always in the presence of Jesus the King; otherwise it will not wholly succeed. For its total success, something conclusive had to happen, particularly in the ministry of Jesus, in order to break the power of evil,

and—so to speak—secure the Kingdom definitively. God's rule must be so presented that the possibility of success by evil must be wholly cancelled out.

Jesus and the triumph of the Kingdom

Jesus showed he possessed authority from God and that power also by which he could—as he did—defeat the powers of evil at any point of contact. He had not only triumphed over Satan at the temptation, but also following it, and especially in the events of the Cross and Resurrection. In relation to this, he made a number of statements before his death and resurrection. He said,

'When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoil'; Luke 11 :21-22

'Now is the judgement of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out'; John 12:31

.. .the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me'; John 14:30

...concerning judgement, ...the ruler of this world is judged'. John 16:11

Of Jesus' active opposition towards Satan, Peter said, '... doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil'. At the commencement of his ministry, Jesus had announced, Acts 10:38

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. Luke 4:1 8

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'.

Whilst his doing of this had been in what we have called 'the action of the Kingdom', it yet had to be climactic and conclusive in the death and resurrection events. John the apostle later said, 'For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil'. This is equivalent to the statement of the writer to the I John 3:8

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Hebrews:

Heb. 2:14-15

'Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage'.

The victory of the Cross and Resurrection was to purge the guilt of sinful man, release him from condemnation, purify him from his pollution and defilement, and make him to be a new creation, ie. a 're-creation'. This was the triumph of the Kingdom. There were also other elements, for it meant the simple coming to God in submission—as a little child, as a person 'begotten anew from above'—and so living under the reign and rule of God. Such living, Paul later said, is 'righteousness, peace and joy *in the Holy Spirit*'.

Rom. 14:17

In this simple excursus we see enough to conclude that Jesus and the Spirit were about the matter of the Kingdom. There was no point in thinking of Messiah without thinking about the Kingdom. It is clear also, that those who heard him on the matter of the Kingdom did not really understand what he was about. The disciples were certainly envisaging a great and universal reign of Christ, even if it were not vigorously political. They were looking to places of primacy and leadership. The Jewish authorities represented the aims of Jesus as political, and a threat to Rome. Jesus' reply to Pilate's question, 'Are you a king?' was,

John 18:36

'My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world'.

He did not deny, however, that he was a king. He affirmed that he was:

John 18:37

'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice'.

Even so, the ministry of the Spirit was yet needed, not only to 'secure' the Kingdom in the death-resurrection- ascension

event of Jesus, but in the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world in history until the end-time.

13. JESUS, THE SPIRIT AND THE CROSS

Jesus, the Spirit and the work of the Cross

If we refer back to the ninefold plan of God for creation, we see the salvation that the Father must effect through Christ, the grace he must exercise to redeem man, the work which must be done to bring man to eternal life, and the ministry which must be accomplished to bring his elect people to sonship of the Father. None of this could be effected apart from the Cross. Hebrews describes the offering by Christ of himself upon the Cross:

' . . . how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit [spirit?] offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God'.

Heb. 9:14

If, in this passage from Hebrews, 'through the eternal Spirit' means 'by agency of the Holy Spirit who is eternal', then it is clear that, in the Cross, Christ was aided by the Spirit.

There are some commentators, however, who do not agree with this interpretation, and we ought to look at their claims. They link this passage with the statement about Jesus in Romans; he was the ' . . . Son of God with power, according to the spirit [Spirit?] of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead'. They see Paul's purpose in the latter quotation is to establish Jesus' divinity. So the linking of the two passages would lead to the conclusion that Jesus both died and rose through his own eternal spirit, and not through the Holy Spirit. They argue that Jesus, as *nephesh* (soul) which is human, could not sustain the offering of the Cross nor (of himself) rise from the dead. What he did, he did by (his) eternal spirit, i.e. unaided. In this case 'eternal spirit' would virtually equal his deity so that the work on the

Rom. I :4

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Cross would not be wholly human. The Word would be incarnated spirit, i.e. incarnated deity. Undoubtedly, there are problems in this kind of thinking, which comes close to Docetism.¹

It is clear that we cannot think of Christ doing *some* of the offering, and the Holy Spirit—coming on to the Cross—doing the other part of the offering, but there is another way of looking at the matter. Jesus was the Suffering Servant referred to in Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 53. Yet the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 was also, in Isaiah, the Servant on whom God put his Spirit. He was the man of the Spirit. Is it possible that going to the Cross he cast off the Spirit, and cast off the Father, and alone carried out the work of the atonement? It is difficult to see it this way. Surely he went as man-for-men, but equipped with the power of the Father and the power of the Spirit! Surely, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' cannot mean 'God was out of Christ when he, Christ—at the climactic point of the Cross—was reconciling the world unto the Father'. Patrapassionism—an early Christian heresy—insisted that the Father came down and was crucified. Wrong as is the heresy, it has—like most heresies—more than a grain of the truth. Christ's high-priestly prayer to the Father contains his insistent request that *the Father glorify the Son for the work of the Cross*. What less was he saying than, 'Father, equip me from your Fatherhood—your relationship with me—for the work of the Cross.'?

John 17:1-5

When we see that from time immemorial the Spirit was aiming at, and working towards, the work of the Cross, we can scarcely believe that he was not permitted to share in that work. When we see that he was one with Christ—in the

¹ That is, that Jesus was not truly man, genuine flesh, blood and humanity, but an appearance of a human being, an accommodation to human finiteness. Even if we reject Docetism (which we must), we have not resolved the problems raised by the two variant views given above. The co-existence (in Jesus) of his deity and humanity is a mystery to human comprehension. *That* they co-existed in him must not be denied. *How* they co-existed must remain a mystery. We cannot separate their work in the action of the crucifixion and resurrection, but we must insist that his humanity in this work was true humanity. All the resources available to obedient man were available to him. What such resources constitute is difficult for us to say, but they were the full resources of the Father and the Spirit, and we doubt not but that he (Jesus) drew on them fully.

roles of aide and guide—in the conception, birth, life, baptism, temptation, ministry and transfiguration of the man Jesus, then in his resurrection and ascension,¹ we can scarcely believe he was absent from the work of the Cross. Just as it can and must be said, 'God was in Christ [i.e. in the Cross], reconciling the world unto himself', so it must be said, 'The Holy (Eternal) Spirit was in Christ reconciling the world unto the Father'.

The *modes* of the presence, in the Cross, of the Father and the Spirit, are significant, and our inability to define them precisely does not invalidate this claim. We can define some of the modes in which they were not present, i.e. we can say that neither the Father nor the Spirit were crucified, neither the Father nor the Spirit bore the sins and pollution of the world, and neither Father nor Spirit personally battled with the power (and powers) of darkness, but we cannot say they were not present in supportive and aide roles.

What we *can* say is that everything which is spoken of as being carried out by Christ is also—though in another mode—attributed to the Father. Consider the following statements:

- 'whom God put forward as a propitiation';
- '... he made him to be sin...';
- 'sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins';
- '... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all'.

Rom. 3:25
 II Cor. 5:21
 I John 4:10
 Isa. 53:6

In the Isaiah passage quoted immediately above, it would seem at first sight that it was the enemies of the Servant who caused him to suffer. In a way that is correct, but it is certainly no mistake to think that 'we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted'. All that happened to the Servant came from God, for 'it was the will of the Lord to bruise him'. In that sense, there were things which Jesus could not himself do. He could not, unaided, take up the sins of the world. The Father had to lay these upon him. His identification with the whole body of humanity in the hours of the Cross *must have been a task beyond his humanity*. That is why 'he offered himself through the eternal Spirit'. I he Spirit of life had to be the one to identify Jesus with the

Isa. 53:4
 Isa. 53:10

Heb. 9 14

¹ We anticipate part of the story here, but see Rom. 1:4. 8:11 and Eph. 1 :19-20.

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ruach or pneuma of each person within that body of humanity, that 'old Adam' which Paul says was crucified with Christ.

Thus the Father and the Spirit were aides in the *manner* of Christ's suffering but they did not (except possibly by some kind of empathy, if that were needed) participate in that suffering. When Jesus became one with humanity ('we judge that if one died for all, then did all die'; 'I have been crucified with Christ'; 'our old humanity was crucified with him'), then Jesus needed an aide for that total identification.

In any case, whether our argument above fits or does not fit the case, Jesus was surely aided by the Father and the Spirit and not deserted. The cry of dereliction, 'My God! My God! Why did you forsake me?'—whatever its meaning and purpose—does not cover the entire period of the Cross. Also, the past tense of the cry means the event was over. His initial and last cries were made in total fellowship with the Father.

Jesus, the Spirit and the Cross

Whatever stormy waters we may have traversed in our argument above, the point is never in doubt throughout the New Testament that the Son and the Spirit are inseparable in the matter of the Cross. John's powerful presentation of the 'Lamb-as-it-had-been-slain' in the Book of the Revelation shows the Lamb as having seven eyes and seven horns. It is said of them, 'These are the seven spirits of God'. 'The seven spirits of God' are mentioned four times and may well be understood as 'the sevenfold Spirit', *seven* being used over fifty times in the Revelation, and having the idea of fullness, completeness, perfection. Thus, in this vision of the seer, the Lamb and the Holy Spirit are one, as much one as when Paul says, 'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is. . .the Lord who is the Spirit'.

Our point is that they are one in all things, and most certainly in the matter of the Cross. The letter of Paul to the Galatian church has been called 'The Letter of the Spirit and the Cross'. Certainly in the third chapter to 'begin at the

Rev. 5:6, cf.
1:4, 3:1, 4:5

11 Cor. 3:17-18

Gal. 3:1-5

Cross' is to 'begin in the Spirit'. It is to come into justification and receive the gift of the Spirit simultaneously. The fruit of the Spirit is the gift of the Spirit, but then that gift is dependent upon the flesh having been crucified at the Cross. Throughout the Galatian letter, the emphasis is made that the one crucified with Christ, whose sins have been borne on that Cross, is the one who walks in the Spirit and is led by the Spirit. It is impossible for that person not to have the Spirit.

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Gal. 5:22-24

Paul is the one who understands the unity of Christ and the Spirit, and who knows that the Word alone brings faith to birth and action, but for him there is no Word without the Spirit. For him the Word is primarily 'the word of the Cross'. He understands that that word alone (i.e. with and through the Spirit) can save human beings,

Gal . 5: 18-26

'For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach [the word of the Cross] to save those who believe'.

1 Cor. 1:2 1

The word of the Cross to the intellectual is foolishness and to the Jew it is a scandal. This is another way of saying 'the unspiritual¹ man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God', for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned'. Hence Paul says to one church, ' . . . our gospel came to you not *on/v in word* [it *did* come in word!], but also in power and *in the Holy Spirit* and with full conviction'. This principle is expressed in other places in the New Testament, notably in the Book of the Acts, where the apostles preach in the power of the Spirit.

1 Cor. 2:14

I Thess. I :5

We are not for the moment concerned with the principle of the word of God being powerful through the Spirit, so much as knowing that the word is, indeed, 'the word of the Cross'. This word only becomes intelligible because 'God has revealed to us through his Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God'. When we ask, 'What are the depths of God?' we have to answer that they are depths that are beyond human depths. We can thus say that the principle of the Cross—God's love

1 Cor 2 10

¹ Some translators have 'natural' or 'soulish'.

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in redemption—is not comprehensible unless the Spirit search that depth and make it intelligible to man. He is the Spirit of truth, and Christ said he would lead men into all *the* truth. We can see, then, that unless the Spirit is one with Christ in the work of the Cross, he cannot (and we speak here most reverently) disclose in full what is that work. In disclosing it, he must have so related to both Father and Son in the atonement that now his revelation comes to man as the full-orbed truth.

In this sense, it is not at all naive to say that 'Christ offered himself through the eternal Spirit', even though we may understand little of what that statement means.

14. JESUS, THE SPIRIT OF LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION

We have already seen that creationally and in providence—the sustaining of life in the universe—the Spirit is the Spirit of life. This principle is of far-reaching dimensions. It embraces all creation.

Psa. 104:29-30

'When thou takest away their breath, they die,
and return to their dust.

When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
and thou renewest the face of the ground'.

We do not understand the mystery of human spirit, but we know it is dead—though existent—unless the Spirit vivify it.

Death we do not understand. It is as great a mystery as sin, which we cannot know either. Only the revelation of the truth can help us to comprehend life. We do not, therefore, understand the dying part of the crucifixion of Christ. We can follow the events until he cries, 'It is finished!' but we do not understand 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit', and the statement 'he bowed his head and gave up his spirit'.

What is it to go down into death? We do not know until we come to that point ourselves, and perhaps not even then. Even if we could understand our own death, we would not

be able to understand the death of the Cross, for it is unique in all man's history. No *one ever died as did he*, although his death was truly human. He had said, 'No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again'. Whatever did he mean by this? Did he mean, 'If they (the enemy) seek to take my life, they can only do this if I give them permission'? The answer lies, in part, in Peter's statement in Acts that, on the one hand, the Jews had killed Jesus, but what they had done was in accordance with God's predetermined plan. it is true that in history human beings have willed to die and have died. In Jesus, case it was different. He did not die because life was no longer good, but because his death was indispensable for the redeeming plan of God. Further, it was a death which was with a view to the Resurrection, for the Cross without the empty tomb was to no point, just as an empty tomb without the Cross could be to no point. If, then, he gave up the spirit to the Father, what did that mean in terms of death and resurrection?

John 10:18

First of all, it was *the attitude* with which he died that mattered. Peter quotes the psalmist on this score:

For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will dwell in hope.

For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,
nor let thy Holy One see corruption.

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence" .

Acts 2:25-28

Psa. 16:8-11, cf.
Acts 13:35

We take it from this that Christ did not face death with fear, for he did not see corruption coming to him. His flesh 'dwelt in hope'. That hope was the Resurrection. Paul speaks of this Resurrection: '...designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead'.

Rom. 1:4

We saw earlier that this 'Spirit of holiness' referred to above may in fact be Jesus' own spirit of holiness. The writer may be saying that the fact that he rose from the dead—i.e. did not see corruption—proves his own spirit was holy (i.e. without sin) and so death could not hold him as it

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could a sinful person. Given in that Jesus' own spirit was holy, and we have no reason to doubt that, there is still the question whether Jesus' spirit in death and in rising was unaided by the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 6:4,
Cor. 15:4, 12.
Luke 24:7,
Mark 16:6

The New Testament states, on the one hand, that Jesus was raised from the dead by the Father, or simply that he was raised, without giving the medium. On the other hand, it also says that Jesus rose. The two statements are not mutually exclusive. We take it that Jesus actually rose, and also that he was aided in rising. Because death and resurrection are a mystery to us, we cannot say how all this happened. Paul says in one statement that he 'was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father'. In another statement, referring to the resurrection of believers, he says,

Rom. 8:11!

'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus...will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you'.

Paul is surely saying that we who are in Christ cannot rise from the dead without the aid of the Holy Spirit, and our guarantee is that he presently dwells within us. At the moment of need, he will be there to raise us from the dead. Was this, then, the case with Jesus? Note in the verse quoted above, that Paul does not say the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead; but is this not inferred? Is not some sort of a parallel inferred, such as 'God raised Jesus from the dead by the Spirit, so he will raise you by the same Spirit'?

Surely Christ's humanity—sinless and spotless though it was—was in need of the work of the Spirit. When we come to Ephesians we read of Christ's resurrection and ascension:

Eph 1:19-20

'...according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places...

Did not the Spirit—so to speak—see him not only to the Cross and death, but also to resurrection, and then to ascension. Did not 'the man' need the Spirit up to the point of death, resurrection and ascension? Is his death not—in some sense—a paradigm of our own, and is this not the same with his resurrection? If it is so, then it encourages us that the Spirit of truth, who is the Teacher, will take us through the

mysteries of death and resurrection. He has already done this in the vicarious death and resurrection of Christ, and that assures us he will do this in our own death-resurrection at the end-time. What we call the death-resurrection action of the Gospel in the life of man who comes to repentance is something we must consider later on in our story of the Spirit. Here, it is sufficient to say that this work is subjectively supplied in the believer by the Spirit.

Christ is alive

He has died; he has risen; he is ascended: and if our reasoning is correct, then all of these events were aided by the Spirit. As we have inferred, it is difficult to see how the Spirit could be with Jesus in his life-events and be absent from the last three of these. Paul's use of an early Christian hymn covers Christ's remarkable life:

'He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory'.

I Tim. 3:16

Whether 'vindicated in the Spirit, means 'vindicated by the Spirit', ie. attested to as righteous and as Messiah, does not much matter. The truth is his own spirit is full, and as to humanity, filled by the Spirit. That is what we will have to consider later in regard to ourselves. Is there a fullness of the human spirit—by the Spirit of God—which just makes us truly human, and which does not necessarily require charismatic manifestations such as Jesus had? Or are such pneumatic expressions part of the 'full spirit' of true Christians? Does Christ live in all believers as Paul suggests, and does this mean that by the Spirit his life is actually worked out in them, and through them, both personally and corporately in the body of the church?

The Holy Spirit is truly the Spirit of Jesus

If readers have thought that some of my writing in this section comes close to 'special pleading', then they may well be

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right. However, it is not an arguing for a case, so much as a conviction that for the Holy Spirit to be the Spirit of the Son he must have shared in the actions of that Sonship when Christ was incarnate. For him to be the Spirit of Jesus must mean he was one with Jesus the man. For him to be the Spirit of the Lord must mean he was present in, and an aide to, the Lordship of Christ.

John 14:6,
cf. 18:37

At first glance, this insight may not appear to have any great significance. But it has! We have looked at the fact that the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Now we can see that, as Jesus came to bear witness to the truth, and said, 'I am the truth' (meaning, 'As the Son I am the witness to the truth of the Father'), so the Spirit, who has been so wholly with Jesus, is able to convey this truth to the human mind and heart. God is omniscient, and so is the Spirit. But the idea that he knows all does not move us so much as does the knowledge that he has shared with Jesus in all that he was and did. So the statement, that the Father 'has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts', is electrifying. The Spirit comes as 'the Spirit of his Son', i.e. he reveals the relationship of Jesus as Son to the Father. What is more, the Spirit himself is crying, 'Abba!' (i.e. 'Father!') and this causes us to know the Sonship of Christ within us by the Spirit, so that we cry 'Abba!' ourselves, involuntarily, and the Spirit witnesses *with* (not *to*) our spirits that we are the children of God.

Gal. 4:6

Rom. 8:15

15. THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN

When we briefly review the goals of God according to his eternal counsel and decrees, we see how the Spirit has been the sovereign aide of the Father. The salvation that God has planned for men, the new birth and adoption that forms the people of God, the processes of holiness that have their genesis in this life, and the direction in which the believer heads in the Spirit (i.e. glorification), are all fruits of the ministry of the Spirit.

It is because all of Christ has been shared by the Spirit, that it is essential for Christ to go to the Father and be in session at his right hand, there to reign and rule in the interests of his people and the will of the Father. Jesus spelled out clearly the need for his going and the coming of the Spirit. Part 2.15

'I will pray the Father, and he will give you **another Counsellor**, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you'.

John 14:16-17

The apostles (and those after them) will need 'another Counsellor', i.e. another one such as Jesus, who will never have to leave them, and who will live in them, and constantly bring the truth to them.

'But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, **whom the Father will send in my name**, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you'.

John 14:26

The Holy Spirit, having the truth, will be the Teacher. Through him they will know all things, and will recall the things which Jesus did and said, this time really understanding what they meant.

'But when the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will hear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning'.

John 15:26-27

The point mounts up. Man does not receive Christ as the truth, but the Spirit will show that he is. This will enable the followers of Christ also to bear authentic and compelling witness.

'Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement. . . I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, *he will guide you into all the truth*; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and *he will declare to you the (hinge that are to come. He will glorify me*, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. *All that the Father has is mine*; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you'.

John 16:7-15

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He is saying that it is better that he go and the Spirit come. The Spirit will convict *the world* of sin, righteousness and judgement. In one sense, that was more than Christ was fully able to do. Again, there is the promise of knowing the truth. Note that it is not *to*, but *into* all the truth that they will be guided. Truth is something that is known in the living of it, lived in the knowing of it. He will still be the Spirit of prophecy, revealing what is ahead, both immediately and ultimately. He will show the full glory of Christ as the Son, and so glorify the Father.

The man of the Spirit becomes the sender of the Spirit

Note that Jesus started off on the last night with his disciples by saying that *he* would pray to the Father. He then proceeded to the Father, sending the Spirit to them in *Christ's name*. He told them that *he* would send the Spirit from the Father. In the opening of the Book of the Acts' he said, 'John baptised with water, but before many days you will be baptised with [in] the Holy Spirit'. They would remember that John had said that it was Jesus who would baptise men with the Spirit.

When Pentecost came and the Spirit was poured out on the faithful group, Peter said of Christ,

Acts 2:33

'Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and *having* received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *he has poured out this* which you see and hear'.

The Holy Spirit then, has become 'the Spirit of the man' (i.e. the man Jesus, the man now exalted and glorified). He has been sent not only to transform and further edify God's people, but also to carry out the will of the Son, who, in his turn, is carrying out the will of the Father. That is to say, the Spirit is to continue that action which will bring creation to the ultimate intention God has for it. That is why the Spirit and Christ are so close. In the Book of the Revelation we saw that the Lamb-as-it-had-been-slain had for horns and eyes the very sevenfold Spirit himself, 'sent out into all the world'. The creation created and sustained by the Spirit *of* life is now to be redeemed by the same Spirit. That is to say, the Spirit is to take the work of the Father and the work of

the Son—the work of redemption—and apply it to the human race and to the whole creation in order to bring redemption, glorification and the ultimate unification of all things.

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This is what the Spirit—with the Father and the Son—is all about.

16. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WORLD AND IN THIS AGE

The Spirit comes at Pentecost

We have seen, from the statements in John's Gospel, that the Father was about to send the Spirit. In this sense the Spirit is as 1 Luke records, 'the promise of my Father', and as Paul records, 'the promised Holy Spirit'. Probably, Paul's idea carries the thought of the Spirit being 'the Spirit of promise', connecting him with the promises of prophecy. Jesus' statements in John's Gospel also show his eagerness to share in the sending of the Spirit.

Luke 24:49, cf.
Acts 1:8. Gal.
3:14, Eph. 1:13

The event of Pentecost is of enormous importance. To be a little imaginative we may say that the moral and spiritual power of the Cross-Resurrection, i.e. the atonement accomplishment, remained (and remains) locked up from humanity apart from the Spirit. Not only was he to come as the Spirit of truth and so bring the truth to the world, but he was to act *upon* humanity via the Word, i.e. the word of truth. His objective teaching and his subjective impressions on the spirits of men were needed in order to set free that great dynamic of the Gospel. Paul, Peter and John all agree that it is the Spirit alone who can communicate the Gospel, although he uses men and women as his agents in order to do this.

Paul says: 'And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God'.

1 Cor. 2:3 -4

Peter says: '...those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look',

1 Pet. 1:12

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1 John 5:7
2:20, 27

John says: And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth'.

. . . you have been anointed by the Holy One and you all know for, you know all things]' . . . his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie. . .

Heb. 6:4

Heb. 2:4

This relates to what the writer of Hebrews says: '. . .you ...have become partakers of the Holy Spirit'. He insists that when the apostles preached, then God 'bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will'.

The significance of Pentecost

Jesus had given the disciples a number of reasons for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Most of these we saw in John's Gospel. Generally speaking, the coming of the Spirit is intelligible simply in that *man's spirit needs the Spirit of God to fill it with life*. We may speak of this enlivening and refreshing in many ways such as new birth, regeneration and the new creation, describing this initial event as a crisis. This crisis then leads to a process, namely the constant presence of the Spirit in terms of filling our spirits continually, and leading and guiding us in the actions of life, obedience and service. Whilst all these things are true, Jesus gave his disciples the foremost of all reasons, prior to his ascension. To see them, we need to read the relevant passage:

Acts 1:1-8

'In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, for John baptised with water, but before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth".'

The passage highlights the following elements:

- (i) Jesus and his disciples discussed the Kingdom of God throughout the forty days he was with them following the Resurrection.
- (ii) Jesus demanded that they should remain in Jerusalem, pending the coming of 'the promise of the Father', i.e. the gift of the Holy Spirit. He talked about them being baptised in the Spirit.
- (iii) the apostles obviously saw the Kingdom of God and baptism in the Holy Spirit as being linked integrally. The reason for this lies in the fact that *in every place in the Old Testament where there is a promise of the outpouring of the Spirit, there is, in that same context explicitly or inferred, the promise of the restoration (or, renewal) of the Kingdom.*
- (v) Jesus' reply must be seen in the light of the four points above. His words were, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth'.
- (iv) The apostles, seeing this link, were moved to ask whether the Kingdom was to be restored *to Israel* at that point of time, i.e. at the outpouring of the Spirit. Their question was an extremely intelligent one in the light of the prophecies.

Acts 1:7-8

Jesus was saying that the time of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel was not for them to know—not anyway, at that stage. That knowledge and happening belongs to the Father. Their part was to receive the Spirit and so receive power, by which they would be *witnesses to Christ*. This witness had to be to the Jews (Jerusalem and all Judea), the Samaritans (Samaria) and the nations, i.e. the Gentiles (to the end of the earth). To witness to Christ should be understood as proclaiming the Gospel in all the world, but then proclaiming it in truth, which—as we will see—includes his Lordship, and the offer of forgiveness, justification and the gift of the Spirit. Of course, it includes much more than this.

What we can easily miss is that *the Spirit* and *the Kingdom* are linked. No Spirit: no Kingdom. The outpouring of the Spirit is linked with the restoration of the

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Kingdom, yes, but *not only to Israel; it is to include Samaria unto the Gentiles*. In other words, the Kingdom is universal. 'To the end of the earth' is taken from Psalm 2, when God says to the one just appointed as his Son, 'Ask of me' and I will give the nations your inheritance, and the ends of the earth your possession', meaning 'Your Kingdom will embrace all nations'. This, then, must be linked with Jesus' baptism, the anointing of the Spirit, 'bringing judgement [*mishpat*] to the nations', as in the prophecy of Isaiah. It must also refer to Jacob's ancient prophecy, And unto him shall be the obedience of the peoples [i.e. the nations!]. In fact the Messianic witness is really Christ bringing in his Kingdom, via the Messianic victory of the Cross and Resurrection.

Isa. 42:1

Gen 49:10

Acts 1:8

The outpouring of the Spirit is for power. Without this power how could the apostles 'convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement'? How could they evidence the powers of the Kingdom except through the Spirit by whom Jesus himself performed his signs and wonders, and thrust back the kingdom of darkness?

Pentecost and the people of God

As we will see, Pentecost was the beginning of the Spirit being poured out upon all flesh. This was eventually to include Samaria and the Gentiles, but in fact the Pentecostal outpouring was general for all three branches of the human race, as it was also specifically for the Jews. Samaria—so to speak—was to have its own outpouring when Peter would go to Samaria, and the Gentiles when he would go to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea. We saw that Jacob's prophecy was that all nations would be gathered in obedience to the Ruler of Judah. He would be Ruler over all!. We saw that the Abrahamic covenant envisaged the nations being blessed through the father of the faithful.

The new community was to be a prophetic one: we must not lose sight of this:

Joel 2:28,
Acts 2:17-18

'... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy'.

They were to be a prophetic people, proclaiming the truth as 'the oracles of God'. Yet this witness had to spring from a community which was itself the fruit of the work of Christ and the (communicated) truth of the Spirit. At Pentecost, then, was born the people which has been called 'the third race',¹ i.e. neither Jewish nor Gentile, but the new humanity minted at the Cross, 'one new man'. Paul goes to great lengths to explain this saying: '... for through him [Christ] we both have access *in one Spirit* to the Father'. Elsewhere, he tells us that this Spirit is 'the Spirit of his Son', which he has sent into our hearts, and by whom (as also with whom) we cry, 'Abba!' He also speaks of 'the unity of the Spirit' and 'the fellowship of the Spirit'. He speaks of Christ where 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female', and he tells us that it was 'by *one Spirit* [that] we were all baptised into one body —Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and *all were made to drink of one Spirit*'.

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Cf. Eph. 2:1
1-18

Gal. 4:6

Gal. 3:28

1 Cor. 12:13

Another way of saying all this is that the Spirit did what Jesus said he would do; he led them into all the truth. This truth is the nature of God, what he does, has done and will do. It discloses to the human heart the great reality of God as Father, as Creator, as King and as Redeemer. The personal elements of repentance and faith, forgiveness, cleansing, justification, regeneration and the like—all of which amount to the reality of new birth—were of such nature as to release the recipients of grace and the Spirit from their sins, their guilt and their pollution. It turned their alienation from God into fellowship with him. It restored them to true human status and life. In breaking down the barriers between them and God, it broke down the horizontal barriers between them and others. Pentecost, then, gave birth to the new people of God. Doubtless, as the one hundred and twenty who received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were Jews, there was continuity with the old congregation of Israel. That congregation (*qahal*) now became the new congregation (ekklesia), so that the new had both continuity

¹ I understand this to be the term used by the Christian historian Adolf Harnack (born 1851). The first race is Israel, the second the Gentiles and the third the Christian community.

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and discontinuity with the old.

The reality of this people was seen in the immediate action of love and concern. Their four unities, 'the apostles' teaching, the prayer, the fellowship and the breaking of bread', were expressed in the immediate sharing of their goods, concern for the poor, the widows, and the orphans. They were 'of one heart, and one soul and one mind', which was a remarkable state not hitherto achieved in Israel. Out of Pentecost was to flow the stream of those who ventured on to Samaria and to the Gentiles. This remarkable family was not to be confined to those blessed at Pentecost, but was to reach out to the end of the earth. This was the true mission of the Holy Spirit, for it was the mission of the Son, and the mission of the Father. Before time began, the Lamb had been slain and the people of God predestined.

17. THE SPIRIT AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Pentecost and the Kingdom

John the Baptist's message was that the Kingdom of heaven was on the doorstep. He called for people to share in a baptism of repentance with a view to the Kingdom of God. He linked forgiveness with the baptism and the Kingdom. Those who came, but whom he discerned were not truly repentant, he refused baptism, sending them away until they brought forth fruits which befitted repentance.

Matt. 3 1-12

Not all his message was peaceful. Certainly, one aspect of the Kingdom is peace for the righteous, but there is also judgement for the ungodly, who, in this case, were the Pharisees and Sadducees and their fellow travellers.

The Messiah to come would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John explained the matter of fire as that of judgement. Having winnowed the grain from the wheat, Messiah would burn up the chaff with 'fire unquenchable'

Isa. 4:4,
Ezek. 22:18-22,
Mal 3:2-3

This was not a new idea for the Old Testament speaks of 'a Spirit of judgement', and 'a Spirit of burning', With a slightly different description, Isaiah prophesies of Messiah

that 'he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath [*ruach*] of his lips he shall slay the wicked'. The he first figure in this passage refers to God's Word and the second to his Spirit.

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Isa. 11:4

During his Palestinian ministry Jesus showed the attack by the Kingdom of God on the powers of darkness: '...if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you'. In other words, one ministry of the Kingdom was to come upon evil for its judgement. The other was to liberate man from that evil and transfer him into the Kingdom of the Son of his love.

Matt. 12:28

Col. 1:13

At Pentecost, the Spirit came, and also the fire, even though it was rather in symbolic form than as visible judgement. We must not think of the Kingdom coming at Pentecost in a merely gentle and quiet way. The rushing of the wind, the flames of fire, whilst energising to the recipients, were judgement to the enemies. Christ had already said that he had come to send fire on the earth and incidentally linked the principle of fire with that of baptism. The strong manifestations of 'the age to come' in signs and wonders was by no means a gentle thing. Nowhere does the Kingdom appear bland!

Luke 12:49

Cf. Heb. 2:4,
6:4-5

We might think at a first reading of the Acts that the Kingdom was not even mentioned at Pentecost and that the message proclaimed then and later had little to do with the Kingdom. We would be much mistaken. One thing is clear to proclaim the Lordship of Christ is to proclaim his Messianic office, and thus the Kingdom.

In the Acts we read of Philip going down to Samaria as an evangelist. One part of the account says 'he proclaimed to them the Christ', and another part, 'he preached good news concerning the Kingdom of God'. Both elements were of the one Gospel. What Jesus had called 'the gospel' was to him 'the gospel of the Kingdom of God'. It was not less than that when preached by the apostolic band, except that, then, the Kingdom had been secured by the work of the atonement. It was now the good news of the unassailable victory of the Kingdom.

Acts 8:5., 12

Paul makes it clear that the apostolic Gospel is that of the Kingdom. To the elders of the Ephesian church as they

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Acts 20:1 8-25

Acts 19:8

Acts 28:23, 31

assembled with him at Miletus, he spoke of testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of *repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, ' . . . the gospel of the grace of God', and 'preaching the kingdom'. These three were, to him' the one. Previously at Ephesus, he had spoken boldly, 'arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God', and yet later at Rome testified 'to the kingdom of God, and trying to convince them about Jesus . . . ', and ' . . . preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ'. It is notable that Paul presents the Gospel without 'soft sell'. He ends the proclamation a number of times by confronting his listeners with a direct choice in a way we would not call 'diplomatic' today. This is because the Gospel of the Kingdom is both grace and judgement!

The Spirit and the Kingdom

Previously we discussed the matter of the Spirit and the Kingdom. We saw that, from creation, the Spirit has been in the action and goal of the Kingdom. He—so to speak—intends to see it through to fulfilment His ministry with Christ was to this end. By the Spirit, Christ not only cast out demons, but was aided in every other aspect of his work. When Christ was seated at the right hand of God, the work of the Kingdom did not cease. In fact, the whole work from Pentecost to the Parousia (the future appearing of Christ) is *the outworking of the Kingdom*. It is summed up clearly in the ending of Mark's Gospel:

Mark 16:20

'And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it'.

Another ending to Mark has the remarkable statement,

'And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation'.

It is set out even more clearly by Paul in his first letter to the church at Corinth:

I Cor. 15:24-28

'Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.. When all

things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone'.

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The Book of the Revelation confirms this:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. " "

Rev. 11:15

In other words, the goal of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit is that set out by the prophet Zechariah:

'And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one'.

Zech.. 14 9

The Kingdom of God will, of course, equal God's action for the fullness of time, namely 'uniting all things in Christ'. To this end the Spirit is currently working, and the working of the Spirit in this mode is what we have been pleased to call 'mission'. The Scriptures call it 'holding the word of God and the testimony of Jesus', for this, the angel told John the Seer, 'is the spirit [Spirit?] of prophecy'. On the one hand, he brings the message of grace through the church and the word, and on the other, the message of judgement.

The judgement before the end-time, at the time of the ushering in of the Kingdom, will be by Messiah: 'And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming'. The Spirit as the Spirit of holiness must prepare the people of God in sanctification, and at the same time judge that which is evil and impure. When the Kingdom comes in fullness, then its victory over evil will be wholly apparent and irreversible. Meanwhile, 'the kingdom of God is not [questions of] eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. Also, it is 'not a matter of mere words, but is in power', i.e. the power that Jesus promised to those upon whom the Spirit would come.

II Thess. 2: 8,
cf Isa. 11:4

Rom 14:17

I Cor. 4:20

When the kingdom of this world becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, it will be because the Holy Spirit has ever been in mission preparation before the coming of Christ, in aide-ministry during the action of Christ, and as

the Spirit of truth—the guide and empowerer of the church in this present age.

18. THE HOLY SPIRIT ON MISSION (1)

According to our impression, experience and/or theology *of* the Holy Spirit, we are continually tempted to take a reductionist stance on the person and work of the Spirit. By this we mean that we see all things through the lens of one principle. However, because of the diversity of his being, and the fact that 'he bloweth where he willeth', it is difficult—indeed impossible—to capture his nature within formulated categories. We have already said that he is Creator, Sustainer, and aide of the Father and the Son in fulfilling the will *of* the Father which we have formulated in some of its aspects as a ninefold plan. Even a ninefold plan is a form of reductionism in regard to the Triune God and his acts

In saying, now, that the main purpose of the Spirit is mission, we inevitably tend to be reductionist. Let us, therefore, keep constantly in mind both the dangers of such an approach, and the unimaginable variety *of* the Spirit's action.

The term *mission* is one of more modern use. It comes from the Latin *missum* (sent) and parallels the Greek *apostello*. However, we understand 'mission' in its widest sense to cover what God is about in these last days, if not indeed in all history. What he is about in this era is, in fact, what he has always been about. We saw that God planned the end from the beginning and even before it. We have seen the patience and persistence (regarding these two elements from a comparative human point of view) of the Spirit, from the beginnings of creation to the final climax of the new creation. We have seen the preparation of God's people as the matrix of the Messiah, the stock from which he was to spring, and the prophetic word which foretold his coming as well as revealing what sort of person he would be, and the work he would accomplish. We have also seen that had such

prophetic truth not been given, we would have no criteria by which to judge Jesus authentically as the Messiah. The statement of God after he had put his Spirit upon him, and Jesus' own statement claiming that God had anointed him for the Messianic task, both show that Jesus and the Spirit were one in Christ's earthly ministry. Jesus was the King of the Kingdom, going about securing the salvation of man and the defeat of evil. Not even the Ascension ended that mission. We have seen in section 17 that in these last days—the days of the Spirit—Christ is active in the outworking of the victory of his Cross. He is putting down all rule and authority and power until all things are under his feet, at which point he gives the Kingdom to the Father. It is on this mission that the Holy Spirit is once again the aide of Messiah, and the power for the people of God.

Elements within the mission

We could say that the primary goal of the Spirit is to effect the 'witness of Jesus' (i.e. the proclamation of the Gospel) to Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and the end of the earth. Within that scheme he has the people of God in mind, i.e. the nature and action of the new community of believers. God's plan to present man to himself as holy and blameless is not just a functional matter within the community of the Spirit. It is an eschatological achievement. Man must be brought to this in order to face the judgement, and to continue in the new heavens and new earth, 'wherein dwells only righteousness'. Nothing unclean will be permitted to enter the Holy City. The God who is holy will only have children who are holy.

II Peter 3:13
Rev. 21:27

Later we will speak of the equipping of the church with gifts and weapons. The Spirit-filled community does not receive the endowment of the Spirit and his endowment of power simply to revel in it, or to live ecstatically. Gifts and weapons are for the purpose of mission. Inwardly, the exercise of gifts strengthens the community so that outwardly, it can be on mission with the Father, with the Son, and through the Spirit. Along with the gifts, we can speak of the gift of love, the life of fellowship, the innate unity, and the exercise

of prayer, worship and service. Each of these has its source in the Spirit, and in fact nowhere else.

The action of the mission

When we come to the work of the Spirit, we see the very objective happening of Pentecost. Whether the sound of the wind was of actual wind, and the flames of actual fire. or whether troth were visionary symbols, to conduct us to the significance of wind and flames, does not matter. To all outward appearances, something wholly objective happened People saw the flames and heard the tongues. The comment by some bystanders indicates that the Spirit-recipients were in a state resembling intoxication Whether they were ecstatic or not does not really matter. An event was happening and was drawing many to itself.

Acts 2:13

In Old Testament happenings, to be filled with the Spirit was a temporary situation, designed to effect certain immediate results. Once that particular work was done, the Spirit did not then 'fill' the recipient habitually, i.e. go on filling him. Doubtless David knew the *presence* of the Spirit and seemed to rely on him for his powers to rule. He feared the withdrawal of the Spirit. By contrast, the Spirit being poured out on 'all flesh' was a new experience. The pouring out of the Spirit upon the seventy elders had been a memorable—though temporary—event. Now the listeners were told that they too—were they to repent, be baptised in Jesus name and receive forgiveness—would receive the gift of the Spirit. The sense of the promise is that the gift is not temporary.

The gift having come to the apostolic band, what Jesus had foretold then happened. They began to witness to Christ, i.e. tell the truth about him, and tell the truth which was Christ himself. They fastened on the fact of the Cross being predetermined by Christ, the Resurrection being God's plan, and also the attestation of his Son. The new band spoke of the Lordship of Jesus—a quite remarkable claim. This claim was believable only in the light of his

resurrection. If he had risen then he was greater than death, that is, greater than sin. He was both Saviour and Lord!

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'Jerusalem and all Judea'

Only a superficial reader of the Acts could miss the fact that the book is divided fairly clearly into three sections, viz. 'Jerusalem and all Judea', 'Samaria', and 'to the end of the earth'. The proclamation began in Jerusalem under the Holy Spirit. The guilt of Jesus' death lay with the Sanhedrin (the Jewish parliament of seventy elders). Very quickly the situation polarised and the apostles were brought before this Council. As a result, the apostolic band was forbidden to preach in the name of Christ. When it persisted, the attack on the person of Stephen became the occasion from which to begin severe persecution of the new people.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter had warned his listeners to 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation', i.e. the generation which had crucified Christ and was now refusing its true Messiah. He had said to them, in regard to the Spirit: 'For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him'. On the one hand, listeners were confronted by the Gospel, and on the other hand, by the loyalty they should give to Judaism.

Acts 2:39

Stephen proved too much for his opponents. Peter, 'filled with the Holy Spirit', had spoken powerfully to the Sanhedrin. Stephen, 'full of the Holy Spirit', was killed, because

. . . they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke'. He told them, 'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you *always resist the Holy Spirit*. As your fathers did, so do you'. The Spirit was present among them, for Stephen, 'full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people'. The power of Stephen's ministry, along with the guilt for the death of Christ, triggered off the killing of Stephen himself. There was power in his amazing death, so much after the pattern of his Master's. He whose face was like the face of an angel

Acts 6:10
Acts 7:51

Acts 6:8

Part 2 19

had shown what it meant to be 'full of the Spirit'. It seems that every nook and cranny of his being was flushed to loving and truthful fullness and his death was a dynamic 'witness to Jesus'.

One of the effects of this martyrdom was to open the full blaze of persecution against the church. It could well be that the Hellenistic Jews were the main target, rather than the native Palestinian Christian Jews. In any case, the persecution was fierce and Saul of Tarsus seems to have been one of the major figures in the attack. The persecution caused many Christians to be scattered into other places. Philip, who was not an apostle and was later called an evangelist, went to Samaria.

*Acts 2:39**Eph. 2:17*

*Matt. 3:1 1-12,
cf. Matt. 3:7-10*

It is pointless to debate why and how it was that the apostles had not previously followed the Lord's statement about witnessing to him in Samaria and amongst the Gentiles (i.e. the nations). At Pentecost, Peter had said the promise was 'to you and your children and to all that are far off'. The 'far off' could mean other Jews of the Dispersion, or the Gentiles, for later Paul uses the term for them. If the Spirit had brought Christ's words to the remembrance of the apostles, then they would have recalled the saying that Gentiles would enter the Kingdom whereas many blood descendants of Abraham would be cast out. In any case, the apostles may not have felt their primary task of 'Jerusalem and all Judea' was completed.

19. THE HOLY SPIRIT ON MISSION (2)

'Samaria'

Acts 6:3-5

Philip was one of the seven who served at tables during the daily distribution to the needy of the church, including the widows, and was spoken of as one who was 'full of the Spirit and of wisdom'. Serving at tables was obviously only a part of the work of the seven, for Stephen debated the truth with his fellow countrymen and Philip had been given the gift of an evangelist. The latter's ministry in Samaria

was the proclamation of Christ, the teaching of the Kingdom of God. He was not an apostle, but, as an evangelist, was the first probe of the Gospel into the Samaritan people. He was obviously sent by the Spirit, and later was led by the Spirit in an extraordinary way as he came to speak with the Ethiopian eunuch. Even more extraordinary was the way in which 'the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more'.

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Acts 8:26

Acts 8:39

The ministry of Philip was not sufficient of itself to bring the blessing of the Spirit to Samaria. It seems that this particular charge was given to the apostles, and it required such to bring that gift to the people there. In any case, that is how it happened. It was not normative for hearers to believe and be baptised and *not* receive the Spirit. Or perhaps we could put it another way: the gift of the Spirit had to be received by a people which was not Israel before they could be said to have entered the Kingdom of heaven and become part of the new people of God. We will discuss this point further when we come to the matter of 'the baptism of (in) the Spirit'.

Matt. 16:19

'To the end of the earth'

The strategy of the Holy Spirit in regard to mission is seen in the exodus of persecuted Christian Jews from Jerusalem, and the proclamation of the Kingdom to Samaria. At the same time, we read of two happenings, the first being Peter's call to Caesarea, and the second, the flight of Christians to Syria and in particular to Antioch. The event, in which Peter was sent to Caesarea by the seeing of a vision, the coming of messengers from Cornelius the Roman centurion of Caesarea, and the direct command of the Holy Spirit, constituted the first strong movement towards the Gentiles. Years before, Simeon had quoted Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant: ' . . . a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel'.

Acts chs. 10-11

Luke 2:32
Isa. 42:6, 49:6

Now it was happening. Peter undoubtedly had to be persuaded against his own will to go to Caesarea. He had to be convinced the Gentiles were not unclean. We need not pause to contemplate the event where the Spirit was poured out upon the Gentile audience and people who, as at Pentecost,

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were gripped by the power of the Spirit' and began speaking in tongues and prophesying. The fact that the Spirit had come to the Gentiles was sealed in and by the rite of baptism. The Kingdom of heaven was now opened to the Gentiles. This was, of course, revolutionary to Jewish thinking, even to Christian Jewish thinking, and the disturbance caused by this event was felt throughout the whole of the period recorded by the Book of Acts.

Acts 26 17 14

Saul of Tarsus was given a command by Christ himself to go to the Gentiles, 'to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me'. Gradually the picture emerges that, whereas Peter was the apostle to Israel, it was Paul who was the apostle to the Gentiles. For Paul, this had been a powerful revolution in thinking. We would not have been surprised if, following his conversion, Paul had been intensely Judaistic and had concentrated upon the Jews and Jewish Christians, but he had the widest of all visions. In this, he was a man of the Spirit. Initially filled with the Spirit, he proved to be habitually a man of the Spirit.

Acts 11:19 30

When we advert to the founding of the church at Antioch, we see that it began without reference to the apostles. Those who had fled Jerusalem travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, but they preached the Gospel only to Jews. Some who had originally come from Cyprus and Cyrene preached Christ to the Greeks at Antioch, and out of this proclamation a large number turned to the Lord. There was now a church—for the first time—in which were both Jews and Gentiles who had become Christians. Without doubt this was the strategy of the Holy Spirit. The church at Antioch—so far as we can gather—became a more effective centre for reaching 'to the end of the earth' than did the church at Jerusalem. We might note in passing that none of these things would have been planned by a modern missionary strategy committee! This, of course, without prejudice to committees!

The writer of Acts takes pains to show how the church was accepted by the leaders at Jerusalem, how it was

fostered by the oversight of Barnabas, who was 'a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith'. Barnabas was not only responsible for a growth in the church, but for bringing in Saul of Tarsus who by this time had had a vital and varied ministry. We need to read certain autobiographical passages of Paul in order to understand that, from his conversion at Damascus to his call to Antioch, he had had a powerful ministry. There was no other time in his ministry when these things he describes could have happened.

We cannot escape the fact that all of this was part of the Spirit's strategy. When we hear of the prophets and teachers at Antioch--with others--'worshipping the Lord and fasting' and the utterance of the Holy Spirit to them, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them', then we know that the Spirit had shaped up these two great men, and Paul in particular. We note that, whilst the *church* sent them out, this was none other than the Spirit sending them. As we trace their missionary journeys, and the success of those, we clearly see the strategy of the Spirit.

On their second missionary journey we have an example of very close guidance by the Spirit:

'And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them'.

The apostolic band passed across from Asia Minor into Europe. This again was part of the strategy of the Spirit. Later Paul reported back to the church with his team, as he had done previously.

When Paul was looking back on his ministry, he ascribed it mainly to the Holy Spirit:

'For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ'.

Part 2.19

Acts 11:24

II Cor. 6:4-10,
II :23-27

Acts 13:1ff.

Acts 16:6-10

Rom. 15:18-19

Part 2.19

I Cor. 2:3-5,
I Thess. 1:5,
I Pet. 1:12

Other elements convince us that the early church sought to follow the guidance of the Spirit in the life of mission. Peter, Barnabas, Stephen and Paul are all said to be men filled with the Spirit. These all proclaimed in the power of the Spirit. Often, they overcame deep opposition through the aid of the Spirit, and without doubt the word of truth came to their audiences by his power. As we proceed through the Book of Acts, we see the plan of mission and witness working itself out. Even Paul's going to Rome has the affirmation of the Spirit. This also was one of his stratagems.

20. THE SPIRIT, THE CHURCH AND MISSION

Christ and the Spirit as one

Rev. 5:6

Jesus had called the Holy Spirit 'another Counsellor such as I am'; hence he has been called Christ's *alter ego*. In a way of speaking, the Holy Spirit is 'Christ on the move'. He is the aide of Christ to fulfil his plan. At the same time he is the Lord of the church. Hence, in the Book of the Revelation, the slain Lamb has seven horns and eyes which are the sevenfold Spirit of God 'gone out *into all the earth*'. When Christ writes to the seven churches (i.e. the sevenfold or total church), he sends his messages via the angel of each church. However, when he concludes each letter, he cries, 'He who has an ear, let him hear *what the Spirit says to the churches*'. All the time the Spirit is speaking to the church.

Rev. 2:7

Unfortunately, in our post-Reformation pietism, we have often taken the injunction to 'be led by the Spirit' or to 'walk in the Spirit' to be our acts of piety. In fact they should prove to be acts of mission—not, of course, that we ought not to do genuine acts of piety.

The Spirit is deeply concerned with the proclamation. It has to be made in the power of the Spirit or it is ineffective. The word of the church must always be prophetic. Hence in the Book of the Revelation, it is those who 'hold the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' who truly proclaim the

Gospel. 'The two witnesses who proclaim the truth have fire come out of their mouths. This fire is part of the action of the Spirit—in judgement. Indeed, as we read this prophetic book, we see that the Spirit conveys the entire prophecy to John; hence:

Rev. 11 :395.

'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day';

Rev. 1. 10

'I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne';

Rev. 4:2

'he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness';

Rev 17: 3

'he carried me away in the Spirit to a great high mountain';

Rev. 21:10

'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come!';

Rev. 22:17

It is fair, then, to say that the guidance and strategy *of* the Spirit did not end with the apostolic age, but that the Spirit still presses forward, speaking to the church when and where it listens. Church history records remarkable events, some of them very similar to those recorded in Acts, especially the second occasion when the Spirit was poured out on the Jerusalem church. Then the purpose of the Spirit was to so fill the community with his life and power that they would proclaim the word with even greater zeal and effect. So, in history, there are seasons when the Spirit comes as he did at Pentecost. Each such revival—although attended with problems and difficulties—makes an indelible impression upon the people who are involved, and sends the church forward on mission.

The eyes of the Spirit—so to speak—are on the end goal. All his gifts and graces are there to enable the people of God to reach this fulfilment. He is without doubt the great Spirit *of* mission. Therefore, in order to round off our story of the Spirit and mission, we need to go back to the words of Christ before the Ascension. In Luke's Gospel he told the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. Why? The answer is (a) the message of repentance and remission of sins is to be preached in *all* nations, *beginning* at Jerusalem, and (b) this requires the understanding which the Spirit will give, and then the power to proclaim that understood Gospel. Without the Spirit none of this can be: with the Spirit none of this can not be!

Luke 24:44-49

Again, if we go to the first chapter of Acts we see that the Spirit alone can empower people to proclaim the Gospel as it relates to the Kingdom. This is underlined in John's Gospel

Acts 1 :8

where Jesus breathed on them in much the same way as God breathed into man in the Garden to make him a living soul. He breathed on them and said,

John 20:22-23

'Receive [take] the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained [i.e. whose sins you forgive they have already been forgiven, and whose sins you retain, they have already been retained]'.
 Matt 16:18
 Acts 7:38

This forgiveness is not magisterial but ministerial. Even so, forgiveness is the most difficult thing of all to convey and to communicate with conviction and effect. Thus the need for the Spirit who internalises the message as well as makes it truth to the mind and spirit of man. What we have to seek to understand is the sheer love of the Spirit for the Father, the Son, and for creation. His delight is to bring grace to sinful creatures, and then to take them on, through redemption, to holiness and ultimate glorification. If we dare talk of the Spirit being motivated, then it is that he might bring all to the goal God has set out for them. The Father, as we have said, has always been on mission. Likewise the Son, and so, no less, the Spirit.
 I Thess. 1:1

THE SPIRIT AND GOD'S CHILDREN

21. THE SPIRIT AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The Spirit initiates the church

When we say, 'The Spirit initiates the church', we mean he does this in union with Christ who can be said to be the true founder of the church. He had said to Peter, 'I will build my church'. At that time of his ministry it had not been built. It was yet to be founded. Stephen could speak of Israel in the wilderness as 'the church [*ekklesia*] in the wilderness', i.e. 'the congregation [*qahal*]'. and in that sense Israel was the 'old church'. At Pentecost Christ began his church through the Spirit. The church is his body, and as we have seen it is 'in the Father' also. Normally the thought is 'the church of

God' and 'in Christ Jesus'. However, none of this is so apart from the Spirit.

Post-Pentecostal references to the Spirit in the New Testament speak of him as the Spirit of love, of fellowship, of sonship, of community. They speak of 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit', 'the unity of the Spirit' and similar elements, all of which tell us that he is indeed the Spirit of oneness. The source of this oneness is the Triune Godhead. God is love, and those in his image must be creatures who love. Someone has said that love is the most theological thing of all. This, of course, does not mean that God in judgement is opposed to himself as love, or that any of his attributes are in contradiction of his love, for they are all of the one piece. We would expect, then, that the Spirit's coming at Pentecost

would result in love.

In that we are not disappointed. Through the Spirit—as we have seen—the new people of God was born. When later we examine the action which initiates a person into salvation and the church, we will see that the action of the Spirit is interior, whole and radical. By means of this work the person is liberated from the things which formerly held him. He can now be free. That is partly what Paul means by saying, '...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom'. He means here, 'freedom against legalism', 'liberty against the guilt and bondage of law' which in turn must mean 'freedom of life and decision through living in the Spirit'.

II Cor. 3:17

Take one pertinent example. On the day of Pentecost, the watchers saw over a hundred liberated persons extolling God. Thus they had the living paradigm of a united community dynamically before their eyes. They were then invited to become part of that new community through repentance and the gifts of forgiveness and the Spirit. Having been forgiven, what then could they do in their new inrush of freedom *but forgive all others!* This must be part of the explanation of their immediate oneness, i.e. 'the fellowship' or 'the fellowship of the Spirit'. It was to this that Paul could appeal later, when divisions began to appear in the Philippian church. He said,

'So if **there is any encouragement** in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in [fellowship of] the Spirit, any affection and sympathy complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind'.

Phil. 2:1-2

These words are reminiscent of the early account of the church in the Book of Acts:

'And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need';

Acts 2:44-45

'Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common'.

Acts 4:32

We have to say, then, that the Spirit initiated the church through his revelation of the truth of grace and by bringing them to be recipients of that grace. That 'great grace' which

'was upon them all' was what motivated them to utter oneness.

The unity of the Spirit

Some well-meant attempts to bring separated Christians together fail because we have forgotten the origins of true fellowship, i.e. objective grace applied subjectively to the believer. We attempt to develop an *emotional* stance towards others, and to stimulate church members into acceptance of one another. Paul puts the real basis of unity in the work of the Cross. He tells the wonderful story in his Letter to the Ephesians, where he speaks of the essential loneliness of the Gentile who is separated from God, Christ and the commonwealth of Israel. This lonely race of non-God people may have had jealousy of the seemingly elitist race of Israel, but, in the Cross, Christ has done a wonderful thing. He has taken up the law-guilt of Jew and Gentile, and the law-cultus of the Jew, and has finished both. In bearing the guilt of the world, and in fulfilling the Mosaic law, he has dissolved the need for the temple at Jerusalem and the law it epitomised. In fact, in that Cross of suffering, Christ *minted a whole new humanity!* This was no fusion of Jew and Gentile, no amalgam of the two, but a whole new humanity—the community of the Father! Eph. 2:11-18

That is why Paul can say, '...through him [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access *in one Spirit* to the Father. It is no different from his Corinthian statement concerning the 'one-ness' Spirit:

'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit'. 1 Cor. 12:12-13

Now we have to see the happening of the day of Pentecost in that light: 'one-ness' Spirit, 'one-ness' body, 'one-ness' drinking. This was the unity of the Spirit and it was evidenced in practice. The widows, the orphans, the poor, the sick and the needy were all loved and cared for. Emotional needs in relational and practical levels were also met in and by the love of the community. Vocation—the church on

mission—was also understood and pursued in the same breath.

The Spirit in the life of the church

We have seen that individualistic piety was not a hallmark of the early church. Obedience, worship and devotion were clearly present. The harmonious working of the body brought a corporate worship, a corporate praying, and corporate serving. This did not blur the clear identity of the personal believer. In fact it enhanced that identity, and the personal prayer, worship and service of each member was enriched by the corporate participation. Corporate and personal were two sides of the one coin. When one suffered, all suffered; when one rejoiced all rejoiced. Paul speaks about '...love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony'. He also tells us that that same love was flooded into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was (himself) given to us.

Col. 3:14

Rom. 5:5

We must not imagine that love and unity were amenities given to the church for better living. They were vital, essential to the life of the church, and indispensable to the true 'witness to Jesus'. Men would never know they were his disciples if they did not love. The very unity of the church was a witness to the unity and love of God. It was, of course, no proof. Many times the church failed, but that did not invalidate God or his love. Certainly, their failure was covered by grace, but that was no excuse for failing to love. John—like Paul—placed the truth and love together. The Spirit was there for the continual love and unity of the body.

I John : 3: 16-18

Eph. 4:15

Eph. 4:1- 6

Paul spoke to the Ephesians about being 'eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'. He added, 'There is one body and one Spirit. . .' These two are inseparable when it comes to unity. This is because the Spirit brings love, love that is flowing from the Cross. Jew and Gentile were made one there. Guilt was lifted, forgiveness flowed the community became one. Yet not only this, for, as we have already seen. the Spirit is also the Spirit of (Christ's) Sonship. As such he can give us revelation of Christ, the true

Son, and this revelation is the paradigm of our own sonship with the Father. Hence the Spirit comes into our hearts as the Spirit of his Sonship and our sonship. By him we lose our rebellion and become warmly filial.

Now it is a fact that we cannot be filial towards the Father without being familial in the presence of the brethren. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren'. It is the Spirit who has brought us into family: ' . . . through him we both have access *in one Spirit* to the Father'. Christ's claim to be the way to the Father is authentic. The Spirit reveals that claim to us in its practical reality and leads us to walk that way—to the Father! Sonship then brings brotherhood and we are now 'the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth'.

I John 3:14

Eph. 2:18

1 Tim. 3:15

The Spirit builds the dwelling place of the Father

What then is this household of faith? Paul tells us:

'So when you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom *the whole structure is joined together and grows* into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God *in the Spirit*'.

Eph. 2:19-22

This holy shrine is the home of God! It is the sanctuary in which he dwells. The prophet Ezekiel spoke of it:

'My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore'.

Ezek. 37:27-28

John, the great seer of the Revelation, saw the fulfilment of the prophecy:

'And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" '.

Rev. 21:2-3

It was this people—the dwelling place of the Father—that

the Spirit inaugurated at Pentecost. Whatever continuity with the people of God, Israel, and whatever discontinuity it may have had, this was the great—if unrecognised—miracle that happened via the Spirit at Pentecost.

The Spirit and the people of God

We have looked at God's plan for his elect—how they were to be holy and blameless before him, how they were to be sons, and how they were to be to his glory by being glorified. If we are not careful, and if we are not even broader in our thinking, we will conclude that what matters most is the fact of 'the people of God'. They surely do matter to God, Not what they *are is* vitally related to *what they do*. God is shaping a people by his Spirit who will not only be commended for their state, but also for their activity. For God, to be is to do! For man, to truly be is also to do! We are not talking about perfection, about special accomplishment, but about man living out his personhood in true righteousness, holiness, love, goodness and truth.

When the church becomes a coterie, an elitist group, a body which has privatised itself, then it has become sectarian. When—as is much the case in these days—it looks at the Gospel for what it can do for man, then it misses the great Godward dimensions of the truth. When the life of the church is looked at as utilitarian, then our worship, our studies and our mentality are oriented towards human benefits to be obtained. When we think only in terms of social justice and care and concern for the poor, the weak, the indigent and the like, then in giving the good we may neglect the best. When we say this we do not mean that we should not 'do good unto all men', but we mean the option is not an 'either-or', i.e. that either social activism or personal salvation is the essence and meaning of the Gospel. Each relates to the other and they cannot be mutually exclusive. However, there can be no doubt that the prior emphasis is salvation. 'Labour not for the food that perishes but for the food which endures unto eternal life.'

John 6:27

Enough, then, has been said about the misconception that the church exists only for its own sake and not for God's or

creation's sake. The Son of God worked in order to liberate mankind, not just from material or emotional want, but from evil's bondage and human bondage. He laboured to emancipate mankind unto God, unto its own full stature in growth, and unto ultimate maturity—the full glorification of his Being in the total glorification of its being.

Here we will deal minimally with what man is destined to become. However, both Paul and Peter have strong good words to say about the household of God created by the Spirit and maintained by him through the gifts of love, unity, prayer, worship and service. Paul's statement is:

'For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.' Titus 2 11-14

Peter's statement is:

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.' I Peter 2:9-10

This is the church that the Spirit guides into witness to Christ, to pity for the creation, into conflict against the enemy and into reflecting the glory of God in the world in which it lives.

22. THE SPIRIT AND THE CHILDREN

The Spirit of conviction

In appropriate order, we have considered the objective events which happened first at Pentecost, and then as a result of Pentecost. In other words, we have started with the new era of the Spirit, commenced at Pentecost, and have seen the action of the Spirit among the people of God, and on mission. Now we need to see the work of the Spirit in the

children, the persons who constitute the people of God. In doing this, we must again keep in mind what the Spirit—with the Father and the Son—is about in history, namely the destination of the people of God, their holiness, their salvation, their sonship, sanctification and glorification. It is a pity that we have only such terms as these to use; as mere words, they are so different from the dynamic action they represent when the Spirit works in them. These are truly breathtaking elements when experienced by sinful man as he is lifted from the degradation of sin and human lostness into this radically changed life.

The prevenient work of the Spirit

Eph. 2:1, 5,
Heb. 6:1,
Heb. 9:14,
1 Tim. 5:6

We have said that man is spirit. He is a living soul, but that soul does not reach its fullness without the Spirit of God. For biological life, the Spirit (*Ruach*) of God must continual', sustain him. Man, who is spirit, needs the Spirit to go beyond sustaining him to bring him to true life. God is Spirit and so is man. God is self-existent Spirit and man is derived spirit. Because of the fall, he is not true spirit, i.e. does not relate to God. The Scriptures speak of man as *dead*, and as also active in *dead* works. It needs a flush of the Spirit to come and renew the person who is lifeless.

Jer. 10:23

Man is primarily a volitional creature, a creature of will. He has his deepest difficulties in the matter of choice-. Jeremiah said, '...the way of man is not in himself. . . it is not in man who walks to direct his steps'. Yet man wants to do just this—without God. Because he refuses to work according to God's plan, he has difficulty in making his own plan, and even more in sticking to it. Hence any talk of him being wrong is rejected. Any talk of him having to repent, convert, turn to God and receive his grace is anathema How then can man be brought out of this state of self-direction and rebellion against God? How can a man be shown the nature of sin, the righteousness of judgement, the necessity to believe in Christ, and be made to want the truth? The simple answer must be that it is not possible whilst man insists that he, of himself, can distinguish good and evil and believes that he is all right.

That is not the whole answer, however; the positive part of it is that this can be accomplished by the prevenient work of the Holy Spirit. 'Prevenient work' means that work done to change a person's disposition towards God, and to bring him (or her) to accepting the Gospel as truth, and so being prepared to repent.

Does the Spirit in fact do a prevenient work? The answer is 'Yes!' Jesus said, ' . . . when he comes he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement'. How, then, can the Spirit help to change the minds and attitudes of those whom Paul has said have 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator'? Paul shows in the same context that men '*hold* the truth in unrighteousness'. This must mean that, while they know the truth, they are so unrighteous in their wills as not to do the truth, yet, at the same time, reassuring themselves that what they are doing *is* the truth. The word *hold* is sometimes translated as 'suppress'.

John 16:8

Rom. 1:25

Rom. 1:18

The Pharisees provide one example of this. They were sure they knew and practised the truth, yet in fact they did not. They lived a lie. There were other more outwardly evil people, such as harlots and tax gatherers, who were aware that they were not living the truth; but then they did know the truth. Paul said of evil people, 'Though they know. . . that those who do such things are worthy of death, they not only do them but approve those who practise them'. All this is surely saying that, although man continually suppresses the truth, yet in some real sense he knows the truth, at least what we may call the 'truth of creation'. We grant that he would not know the truth of redemption.

Rom 1:32

The Spirit, being the Spirit of truth, is the one who can constantly confront man with the truth, until man cannot escape its reality. In the case of the Gospel, the Spirit brings the conviction to man that 'this is the truth,, i.e. that Jesus is the true and faithful witness to the truth of God, especially as Father and Redeemer. Prevenient work does not ensure that the one convicted will turn to God. Indeed he may refuse what he knows to be true, in which case he earns judgement on himself:

Part 3.22

Rom. 2:4-5

. . . do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgement will be revealed'.

On the positive side, the Spirit alone can bring man to conviction through his prevenient work.

The Spirit's revelation of grace

Rom. 5:5

There is a passage in Paul which is often not fully understood. The statement is simple enough: ' . . . God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'. We might imagine that the Spirit in some supernatural way infuses love into us. This is not so. The Holy Spirit, by the proclamation of the word, shows us the truth, the love of God, and we see that love. We do not fully understand it until we receive the benefits of it. In the context in which Paul utters this statement, he tells us a number of things:

Rom. 5:5-10

- (i) we were utterly weak, i.e. entirely helpless in will and capacity and desire to do anything about our salvation, but God did what was needed;
- (ii) we were ungodly, i.e. irreligious—idolatrous or secular—but Christ died for us;
- (iii) humans will not die for a 'righteous' man; they may possibly for a 'good' man, i.e. one who does good for another, but God's love is shown in this, that when we were "neither righteous nor good but) sinners, Christ died for us;
- (iv) when we were enemies, God did not angrily reject us, but reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son;
- (v) when we were all rightfully doomed to experience the wrath of God, he in fact has saved us from that wrath, by justifying us from sin through the blood (the death) of Christ.

1 John 4:19

We, fully realising all these things, including the sinful state which is ours, are surely flooded with love when we receive all the benefits of the Son's death and resurrection. The Spirit must convey these things to us in our spirits, as we are knowing, willing and feeling people. Hence, with John,

we can say, 'We love, because he first loved us'. How the Spirit does all this we do not know, but one statement of Paul reveals the beautiful intimacy that the Holy Spirit has with man. He says,

'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us *with sighs too deep for words* [inarticulate groanings]. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God'.

Rom. 8:26-27

What we have to assume and understand is that the Spirit created us, that he sustains us with the *ruach* (breath) of life, and that he is the Spirit of love. How then can he be less than intimate with us, less than one with us, even though he is holy and man is not? He is the one of all who can—and does—penetrate to the depth of man, understanding him. As we have said, he works through the psychological elements of man, through mind, feelings and will, and 'puts it all together' so that man is drawn to recognise the truth, even if his rejection of it may not be weakened by this recognition, but rather, increased. Those who have ears to hear the truth will respond, and the love of which we have spoken above will grip them.

23. THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE TO THE CHILDREN

Man under the power of the Cross

It is correct to talk of the power of the Spirit. This is especially so in the matter of his creating life and sustaining it, for he is uniquely the Spirit of life. It is also correct to talk about him having the power of redemption, i.e. of liberating man from his bondage. That is why Paul says, '...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'. His parallel thought to that is, '...the [guilt of the] written code kills, but the Spirit gives life'. Yet Paul also speaks of the 'word of the Cross' being 'the power of God!', and the

II Cor. 3:17
II Cor. 3:6
I Cor. 1:18
Rom. 1:16

Gospel as 'the power of God unto salvation'. The power of the Spirit in redemption is really the power of the Cross which the Spirit takes and applies to man, gripping his will and liberating him. It is not, therefore, irreverent to say that the power which the Spirit exercises in saving man is the power of the Cross. This is brought out clearly in Paul's statement that 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death'. The 'law of the Spirit of life' must—in this context—mean 'the Gospel as applied by the Spirit'. The 'law of sin and death' must be 'the law against which we have sinned and which therefore becomes to us the law showing sin and demanding death'. Only the Gospel—as the Spirit brings it to us—can liberate us from death through the law. That is why the same apostle says,

Rom. 7:6 *'But now we 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.'*

How then does this come about? It comes through the prevenient work of the Spirit and the revelation of grace. How then is grace revealed? We have answered that it is by the intimate work of the Spirit. When we look at the Book of Acts and see the work of the Spirit, we may then read the epistles and discover what it is the Spirit does, even if the *how* of his doing still—for the main part—evades us.

The Spirit and repentance

Repentance is dynamic since it means 'a change of mind or attitude'. It is a radical change. It is not remorse, which is the suffering of pride when confronted with one's evil, crime or failure. Repentance is an acknowledging of that evil, crime or failure as being one's own, but, at the same time, with the new certainty that grace has happened in history, and that God has covered man's sin. Repentance is humiliating to man's pride, but liberating at the same time. Repentance is a miracle God works in the heart of man by confronting him with his love and evoking this change Or understanding. It is the truth confronting man and man

being prepared to respond.

When Peter told the Sanhedrin (the Jewish parliament), 'The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him', then the assembly was incensed; 'they were enraged and wanted to kill [him]'. In their thinking this was near blasphemy, for Peter was saying that they had entirely missed and mistaken the Messianic event. It was near blasphemy because it was saying that God had certified this Jesus whom they had slain and given him the gifts of repentance and forgiveness of sins to pour out on Israel! Where then did that leave them? Our point in saying this is that *with the gift of the Spirit come also the gifts of repentance and forgiveness of sins*. It is the Spirit who brings repentance to man, and with it faith, and with them the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:30-32

This is borne out in the Book of Acts. When Peter spoke through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he offered the gifts of repentance, forgiveness and the Spirit. Man cannot repent from himself, but God has given the gift of repentance to those of Israel and to the Gentiles. It appears from the account of Peter's message to the Gentiles at Caesarea, that he did not explicitly demand repentance. He said that all who believed on the name (of Christ) would receive forgiveness of sins. Immediately the Spirit fell on all present. The question is, 'Did they repent, and were their sins forgiven?'. The answer must be, 'Yes', but Luke the narrator was interested in the *happening* of the Spirit's coming. Later, the Jews at Jerusalem recognised that the Spirit's coming now included the Gentiles in the true people of God. They 'glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted [the gift of] repentance unto life" '. We have to say that it is the intimate work of the Spirit which induces or evokes repentance at the point of his coming and as he brings forgiveness to the graced recipient.

Acts 5:31, 11:18

Acts 11:18

In regard to this, Paul has a beautiful word, for he speaks of the Lord's servant not being argumentative but 'kindly to

11 Tim. 2:24-25

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everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. *God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth'.*

The Spirit and forgiveness

The forgiveness of sins is no less humiliating than the demand for repentance. Both are gifts and man reacts violently to gifts, especially as they come from God. Not knowing pure giving himself, i.e. giving without some element of selfish motive, man cannot know pure receiving either. Without the prevenient work of the Spirit, man would wholly resist forgiveness. In human life, the asking or receiving of forgiveness can be humiliating. God's forgiveness makes clear the fact that we are sinners, that nothing less than the work of the Cross can deal with our sins, and that we are shut up to the love of God to be free from our sins. We saw from John's Gospel that Jesus was indicating to his disciples that they needed the Spirit in order to declare the (ministerial) forgiveness of sins. In Luke's Gospel he spoke of repentance and remission of sins being proclaimed to all nations. On saying this, he forbade them to leave Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high, i.e. the Holy Spirit.

This sort of reasoning brings us back time and again to the fact that, without the Spirit, man is helpless. Only the Spirit can bring the truth to him, and the truth of forgiveness must be the most dynamic of all, whether couched in terms of lifting the load of guilt, of justifying man in the face of the law, or of the sheer cleansing from all moral defilement and pollution. It is interesting to note that, at Pentecost, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit were linked. Also, when we put together the accounts of Paul's conversion, we see that, there too, the washing away (forgiveness) of sins and the infilling of the Spirit are linked. This too was the order of events at Caesarea when the Gentiles received the Gospel.

As to the event of forgiveness of sins in the life of a person, we will always be compelled to wax lyrical. More the pity it is, that when we discuss forgiveness from only a

Acts 2:38

Acts 9:17, 22:16

Acts 10:43 44

'theological' point of view, then we make it conceptual and miss the deep affectional elements it contains. We become dry Pharisaical sticks like Simon, who watched the harlot, in a passion of love at Jesus' feet, and thought it merely pointless or maudlin. We talk about 'emotional histrionics' when a person is inspired by love to praise with enormous joy. It tells us we have either never known forgiveness by *the Spirit*, or we have deliberately 'forgotten that [we were] purged from [our] old sins'. When the Spirit brings forgiveness to our lives we are the most blessed of all: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered . . . and in whose spirit there is no guile'.

Luke 7:36ff.

II Pet. 1:9

Psa. 32:1-2

The Spirit and cleansing

Peter, in speaking of the admission of the Gentiles into the people of God, says, 'And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed *their hearts by faith*'. In other words, the initial repentance/forgiveness/gift-of-the-Spirit event was also the cleansing event. The writer of Hebrews speaks of the Cross as 'when he had made purification for sins', and adds, 'the blood of Christ . . . purify your consciences from dead works to serve the living God'. He also writes about 'hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience'.

Acts 15:8-9

Heb. 1:3, 9:14

Heb. 10:22

Paul uses similar language and links cleansing with the Holy Spirit. He speaks of 'the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit'. His statement must be linked with the promise in Ezekiel where God promised he would 'sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols I will cleanse you. He added, 'A new heart I will give you. and a new spirit [Spirit?'] I will put within you: and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances'. Here, as in Paul, it is the work of the Spirit in the heart that brings cleansing and renewal. *The spirit* of man becomes as new!

Titus 3:5

Ezek 36:25-27

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1 Cor 6:9-11

Paul also speaks of what kind of persons we were before the Gospel came to us—immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, alcoholics, thieves and robbers. But now things have changed because 'you were washed, you were sanctified' you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by *the Spirit of our God*'.

We can only conclude that, when the Spirit communicates the truth of forgiveness, and effects it in the lives of human beings, that he simultaneously communicates and effects the purification of the heart and conscience.

For man to have his robes made white in the blood of the Lamb, and to sense his utter purity as though it were pristine, is of immense power in the human spirit. This is how love comes to man. This is how the Spirit works.

24. THE SPIRIT JUSTIFIES AND SANCTIFIES THE CHILDREN

The Spirit of justification

We should have a less imposing heading. We should say, 'The Spirit sets man free from guilt by helping him to see he is acquitted of all his guilt. The Spirit not only cleanses man but he gives him the status of a person who belongs to God's holy people, and implants a desire for purity of life'.

The Spirit is again at the heart of justification. We have just quoted (above) that we are 'justified. . . in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God'.

Psa. 32:2

What is justification? It is acquittal from the charge and guilt of sin. To be justified is very powerful: 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity'. This is indeed a state of blessedness, i.e. of serenity' quiet joy and union with God. ' . . . God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses against them'. Paul puts it simply: 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. .and we are not ashamed to hope,

II Cor 5 19

Rom. 5:1, 5

because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by *the Holy Spirit* who has been given to us'. In another word, there is liberty of spirit because 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them that 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'. We saw before that it is the Spirit who brings to the human heart the message of 'no condemnation' and of freedom from the curse and guilt of the law.

Rom. 8:1-2

One translation of another verse in the same chapter is: 'But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are doomed to death, yet the Spirit is life-giving because of justification'.¹ Paul is surely contrasting death which comes to man through guilt, and life which is now his because he has been delivered from death by the Gospel, but the Gospel as applied by the Spirit. It is significant in Galatians that Paul—at least twice—links justification and the Spirit. Once he speaks of the simultaneous impact of the Cross and the reception of the gift of the Spirit. Later in the same chapter, he speaks of Christ becoming *curse* for us *that* the blessing of Abraham might come upon [us] *that* we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'. The same faith that brings justification also brings the gift of the Spirit. These two are together.

Rom. 8:10

Gal. 3:1-5

Gal. 3 13--14

Justification is of such rich importance that it is naturally attacked by the powers of darkness. John talks of 'the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world . . . the accuser of our brethren. . . who accuses them day and night before our God'. These accusations may be equated with 'the flaming darts of the evil one'. That is why we must walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit, otherwise we will doubt our justification and be led back into the legalism of 'law-way' as against 'faith-way'. Only the Spirit can preserve us in justification or rather, in the faith-consciousness of it.

Rev. 12:9-10

Eph. 6 16

Paul also speaks of the ministry of hope which the Spirit exercises in the church. He says, 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness [i.e. justifi-

Gal. 5:5

¹ See John Murray's *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, pp. 288-291 (Eerdmans. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960).

ation]'. We do not have justification by sight, but by faith. Even so, it is the Spirit who maintains us in this, for the day when we shall know it by sight.

The Spirit of sanctification

When we come to sanctification—i.e. being accounted holy and living a holy life—we are now not so much speaking of the work by which the Spirit initiates us into the faith and the church, as of the daily work which the Spirit does within us with a view to our ultimate holiness. Yet New Testament writers also speak of a sanctification which is unilateral, as indeed is God's covenant of grace. Paul—we saw—speaks of us being 'washed, sanctified and justified', and we need to note that sanctification precedes justification. This is also the case when Peter speaks of our being 'chosen and destined by God the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit *for* obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood...' Again Paul says, '...God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth'.

I Peter 1:2

II Thess. 2 13

In two of these cases, sanctification comes before belief in Christ, i.e. in the truth of the Gospel. It means that God's sanctifying work is prior to redemption. In these three cases (above) the Spirit is involved. This must mean that, before time, the Spirit set us apart as and for the people of God, i.e. for the salvation to be given by the Father. The people of God are holy because God has set them apart. A principle in the Mosaic covenant was that 'the altar sanctifies the gift (offering)', i.e. what is set aside by God for himself is considered holy in his eyes. So it is with God's elect:

Exod. 19:6,
Lev I 1 :44

' . . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'; . be [you] holy for I am holy'.

This sanctification by the Spirit is not merely a status, but issues in action:

1 Peter 2:9-10

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people. . '

What was true of old Israel is now true of the church. It is a holy people, by the Cross and the Spirit. The coming into this holiness, Peter can say, is the cleansing by the Spirit of the (Gentile) hearts by faith, and Christ also speaks of those 'who are sanctified by faith in me'.

Acts 15:9

Acts 26:18

Later, when we look at the holiness which the believer practises through the Spirit, we will see that sanctification of life, ;.e. practical holiness, is based in justification. The taking away of guilt breaks the innate power of sin which is guilt itself. It is sufficient for us to know, at this point, that the Spirit sanctifies in the sense that he consecrates us to God and his service, and—having purified us—keeps us in the life of holiness through the means of prayer, worship, fellowship and service. In all these aspects, he is the Spirit of holiness.

25. THE SPIRIT, CHRIST AND THE NEW LIFE

From death to life

It is the most remarkable miracle of all—out of death, into life. Paul said, 'You were dead'. Jesus said, 'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'. The writer of Hebrews speaks about 'dead works', i.e. works done by dead men John said, 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren'.

John 10:10

Heb. 6:1, 9:14

I John 3:14

Jesus said, 'Let the dead bury their dead'. Paul said, 'You were dead in your sins'. Of the promiscuous widow he said, 'She. . . is dead even while she lives. . .'

All of these terms make sense to the person who, having been dead, has now—through regeneration—come to life. Such statements as ' . . . dead to that which held us captive', ' . . . dead to sin and alive to God', have reference to others, i.e. those who live 'no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised'. Such persons know they were once dead to God (relationally) and so were alive only unto themselves. What then do we mean by all this use of 'dead' and 'alive'? Since we live in live bodies, think

Rom. 7:6

Rom. 6:11

11 Cor. 5:15

Rom. 14:7-8

logically, and have every appearance of life, how can we say we were once 'alive' and then 'dead', or once 'dead' and now 'alive'? We will become confused if we try to divide our personal being into 'body, soul and spirit', and suggest that one or more of these parts was either 'alive' or 'dead'. No, we must think of ourselves as total beings and say that *relationally* we were once—as persons—alive to God, but through the fall we died (relationally) to him. Now, through the work of redemption and regeneration, we have died to our 'dead' selves and have—by grace—come alive to God. Paul states a paradox when he says that the widow who is self-indulgent is 'dead even while she lives'. We find no difficulty in seeing the truth of this paradox.

1 Tim. 5:6

How then do we understand this death? The beautiful story of the aged Jacob explains this. When he heard that Joseph was not dead, 'the spirit of. . . father Jacob revived'. We can see it. The old man had lost heart. Regarding his son, he had died inwardly. Now, suddenly everything came to life, not because extraneous influences were working upon him but because *he was faced with the vivifying truth!* Man 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie', so man lives in the lie, and makes the lie out to be the truth. Living in the lie, he is dead. When, then, the Spirit of truth comes to man and reveals the truth of God, he does not bring extraneous influences to bear upon man but he confronts man with the truth, with 'things-as-they-really-are'. So the spirit of a person revives, for that spirit was dead but not non-existent. It was 'alive' to evil, but 'dead' to the good, to the truth.

Gen. 45: 27

Rom I :25

Consider the miracle

We can understand Kierkegaard's anger at the frilling church, we can comprehend Dietrich Bonhoeffer's indignation at cheap grace. We ought to feel strongly about the blandness of much present preaching, and the inconsequential nature of some of the church's activity. Most of all, we ought to be shocked by the almost nonchalant acceptance of the great truths of the Gospel. The miracle of life out of death is so stupendous in its dimensions, happenings and significance, that a mild recounting of it must constitute

a deep offence. The church has to be gripped time and again with a powerful view of God's amazing grace. We must know something of the depths to which the human spirit goes in debasement, as also we must consider the contrast when the Spirit raises it to life. Unless we understand that 'the ransom of a [man's] soul is [very] costly', we will always be open to the so-called cheapness of grace. Grace in fact is neither cheap nor costly: it *is free!* To God, nevertheless, it is unspeakably costly.

Psa. 49:7-9

So then, 'the written code [law] kills, but the Spirit gives life', and we 'serve. . . in the new life of the Spirit'. We have been enlivened from death in our spirits to life in them. We do not receive much satisfaction in answer to our query, "how does the Spirit do it?" mainly because 'the Spirit blows where he wills', and our desire to know the how?' is in order that we may work it out *ourselves!* If we really understood the horror of a human in death, if we could fathom the evil of the rebellious human heart, the seeds of every form of sin and the dreary loneliness of a creature cut off from God, then we would see that the difference between life and death is total. We would understand that man cannot emerge from death, and that he is hopelessly and irredeemably dead forever. Only with that knowledge gripping us can we recognise the miracle of being brought to life out of death. Only then can we realise the magnificence of that new life.

II Cor. 3 6
Rom. 7:6

Christ In us: Christ and the Spirit

Understanding creation, we know that man as *nephesh* (soul: *psyche*) needs the *Ruach of God*. He—man—is himself *ruach* as he is *nephesh*, but his *nephesh* is not fulfilled, enriched to its boundaries of being, without the Spirit. God flushes man into full life—so to speak—by his Spirit. The New Testament makes man's life to be 'in Christ'. 'He that hath the Son hath life'. Paul says, 'For me to live is Christ'. He also says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me'. In the light of these statements we can also say, 'God flushes the believer's spirit into full life by his Son'.

I John 5:12

Phil. 1 :21
Gal. 2:20

Many have taken this to mean that we have a mystical union with Christ. The esoteric mystics seek such subjective

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union, but this kind of union is not found in the New Testament. We find a faith-union, and if one can speak of a mystical faith-union then that may well be, but a direct union of *nature* is certainly foreign to the New Testament writings. Certainly the believer is not fused together with Christ. Christ's life—which is present action—makes its impact upon the life of the believer.

Our subject is 'The Spirit, Christ and the new life', and our new life is at once the life of the Messiah and the Spirit. We could also include the life of the Father. Paul addresses one church with the words, 'To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. Paul says elsewhere, '...one God and Father of us all who is above all, and through all, and in all'. Jesus speaks of the Spirit dwelling in believers and promises that both the Father and the Son will come and take up their dwelling in his followers. The people of God are in him, and he is in them. Such references abound. We can say there is an objective dwelling of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in man, and, by faith, this indwelling may be apprehended.

Even so, the 'in Christ' teaching of the New Testament is indispensable to true life. Whilst the believer has his own identity, i.e. his own discrete being, yet that very identity is contingent upon his being in Christ, and Christ's being in him. Not to put too fine a point on it, this identification with Christ, inwardly and externally, is dependent upon the Spirit. Writing to the Romans, Paul makes it clear that having the Spirit dwell within cannot happen unless Christ also indwell. To have the Spirit is to have Christ: to have Christ is to have the Spirit.

Paul prays for the Ephesians, to the Father, 'that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man; *that Christ may dwell in your hearts* through faith. . . .' We must not be matter-of-fact about this indwelling of Christ. Because he is *our* life, we need the powerful undergirding of our inner beings so that we may take the great weight of his glory within us, we might say 'the moral weight of Christ'. He does not dwell in us as a static entity. He is most vital in his movement and being. His life will powerfully affect

ours.

For years the evangelical sector of the church has been soaked with a certain pietism which has much of an 'emotional-devotional' character. Subjectivity has been greatly encouraged, but the objectivity needed to keep that subjectivity in a healthy state has often been neglected. Following certain of the Teutonic Liberal theologians, 'feeling' has become the yardstick of true religion. Reactionary objective theologians will have little, if any, of subjectivity. This too is over-reaction. Christ's indwelling *is* an objective fact and reality; faith apprehension of it must be prior to subjective feeling of it, but that does not decrease the value of either.

We see, then, how important is an understanding of the part which the Spirit plays in bringing the life of Christ to us. We are apt to think of Christ's life as a kind of dynamic substance when it is not. His life has three basic elements: namely, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will accomplish. These three elements affect us deeply. We are what we are because of what he has done: namely, the work of creation and the work of redemption. We are what we are because of what he is doing: namely, defeating all evil and working all things towards the final *denouement* of history. The shape of our life is greatly determined by the life of Christ within us. It is the life too in which we live, for it constitutes our true environment.

The Spirit, then, has the ministry firstly of revelation, secondly of glorifying Christ, and thirdly of applying Christ and his redemptive fruits to our hearts. Jesus said that when the Paraclete came he would glorify Christ. This must mean that the Spirit would reveal him truly to us so that we would see all he is and has done. Seeing this, we would thus be led into all the truth. At the same time, the Spirit applies Christ personally to us. Paul talks about Christ being *formed within* us. That is, we catch his shape in our lives. This process is through the internal working of the Spirit, especially as he reveals the truth of Christ.

Gal. 4:19

In another way—Christ's way—we abide in Christ; that is we are dependent upon him, drawing from his life. The term 'abiding' means resting upon him as the source of our

Cf. John 15:1-8

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life; 'I in you, and you in me' is a powerful principle. Put in yet another way, it simply means that the 'fruit [harvest] of the Spirit' are (is) Christ. When our lives are one with Christ's by obedience and faith, then that is the meaning of Christ's indwelling.

26. THE SPIRIT AND CHRIST IN US

Cf. John
14:15-23

This heading does not really change our theme. We press on to discover the meaning of the New Testament statements which speak of God being in us, and we in God, whether the Father or the Son or the Spirit. Each Person of the Triune Godhead has his own function or relationship with the children of God. God is over, through, and in us *as* Father. The Son is in us *as* the saving Messiah, the true archetype of sonship, as the true Husband, and as the Elder Brother. The Spirit is in us *as* the Spirit of the Father and the Son, seeking to bring the ministries of the Father and the Son to us in a revelatory, applicatory and practical way. Put succinctly, we mean that when the Spirit is in us, then so are the Father and the Son.

What all this amounts to is that we cannot grasp the truth and practice of Fatherhood without the aid of the Spirit. Christ's Messianic liberation and wholeness of life in obedience and vocation passes us by without the revelation of them through the Spirit. Then, when he comes, he also brings his own life—a life of serving as it is—and is the Spirit by which our spirits truly live, and are active. The Spirit as the Spirit of the Father reveals God's love to us in his Son, and the Spirit of the Son brings that very Sonship to be the source of our sonship. Because he is one with the Father and the Son, he brings us both the knowledge and impact of their love.

Christ's life worked out through us

We saw that the Spirit was intimately in the conception, birth, baptism, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. As such he is 'another Comforter', Christ's *alter ego*. With this knowledge and relationship, the Spirit comes

to us. That is what Jesus meant when he said, 'I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you'. He meant 'in the person of the other Comforter. He will be to you as I am'. When sending the disciples into the world, he said, '...lo, I am with you always, to the close (consummation) of the age'. He meant, 'Through the Spirit I will be with you in the task you are doing'.

We also noted that the Spirit is 'the Spirit of Jesus', 'the Spirit of Christ', the Spirit of the Lord'. Paul adds, 'Now the Lord is the Spirit. . .', '...the Lord who is the Spirit'. He did not mean the Spirit was Lord,¹ but rather that the Lord (Christ) is the Spirit. That is to say, the two are one in their action, just as Jesus was able to say of his relationship with his Father, 'I and the Father are one'.

The implications of these facts for the believer are important. It is not just that he is an envelope in which are tucked Christ and the Spirit, but rather the believer is a volitional person who is deeply affected by the indwelling presence of Christ and his Spirit. Paul prophesies that ultimately all God's elect will be fully formed into the image of his Son. This must not be seen to mean that the elect will be homogenised, all made alike, and mere imitations of his Son. Rather, Paul means that within the unique identity of each person, the character and life of each child of God will bear the marks of the character and person of the Son of God. In our following sections we will see how this works out, but we must stress again the volitional element. The growth of the believer is a process of *transformation from within*, rather than being conformed from outside. Whilst it is true that we will ultimately be *conformed* to the image of him, this will have been wrought by the action of *transformation*.

The elements of Christ's life

We are told by some that the work of the Spirit is merely applicatory. *Merely* is an unnecessarily minimising word. To

Part 3.26

John 14:18

Matt. 28:20

11 Cor. 3:17-18

John 10:30

Rom. 8:28-30

¹ There can be no doubt that just as the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, so also the Spirit is Lord, for he is 'The Lord the Giver of life', and he was Lord over the man Jesus -; However, in the context of 11 Cor. 3:18 Paul is emphasising that Jesus as Lord is one with the Spirit, cf. I Cor. 12:3.

Par. 3.26

John 14:12

take the work of Christ and apply it is a maximal work. It involves revelation and the ministry of glorifying Christ. It involves bringing understanding to the mind of man. The transformation of the sinner into a child of God is no light work. Bringing man out of death into life is—as we have said—the working of a great miracle. When we look at Christ's life in Palestine and realise it was all wrought through the Spirit, and when we remember that Jesus said, ' . . . greater works than these will [you] do', we could easily despair of reaching up to what he did, let alone to doing 'greater works'! Yet the Spirit is present in order to help us to do the works of Christ in this post-Pentecostal era.

'The greater works'

Before we attempt to show the things that Christ did, let us see what is the meaning of 'greater works than these'. Does Jesus mean, 'I fed five thousand, you will feed ten thousand'? Does he mean, 'I healed this number of people; you will heal more, and do so more often'? Surely this is what he means:

'I laboured in life and ministry, and I am about to go to the Cross, and rise the third day, and go to my Father. What this work of the atonement will accomplish is the source from which you will work your marvellous works. Yes, you may do extraordinary things of healing, cleansing lepers and raising from the dead, but the great thing you will do—even in the context of these others—is that you will bring salvation to men through my finished work. In doing this, you will be sharing in the bringing in of the true people of God according to the covenant promises of the Father. This will be a work not limited to Palestine, but it will reach to all nations throughout the world, and it will continue right up to the consummation of the age, and the time of the fulfilment of God's plan. Such are greater works than these that I have done, albeit what you will do could not happen without the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit.'

The life which was Christ's

We need not spend much time on the person and work of Christ. What we need to see is the pattern set for us to imi-

tate and the life which is expressed in us by the indwelling Spirit. Below, is a list of his qualities and actions relevant to this pattern.

- He was a man constantly filled with the Spirit.
- He was one who showed us the nature and meaning of true Sonship.
- His Sonship was a continuing revelation of God's Fatherhood.
- He was a person of authority, speaking with authority because he was under the authority of the Father.
- He displayed the nature of true obedience, for he gladly obeyed the will of God—even unto death.
- He was a man who denied temptation any power or place in his life: he constantly fought the powers of evil, giving them no true place in God's creation.
- He was a man of wisdom, yet showed utter humility.
- He was a person who showed love and compassion in practical ways; he loved his enemies as he loved his brethren.
- He evidenced what Paul calls, 'the fruit of the Spirit', i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- His love worked out in practical ways towards the sick, the poor, the demon-possessed, the guilt-oppressed and the sinful failures, as indeed towards all.
- His humanity was normal, regular and true, and in fact it was the paradigm of humanity for all.
- Whilst his personality and vocation were unique to him, yet he witnessed to the *principle* of vocation, i.e. each person is called—within God's plan—to a special exercise of obedience and partnership with God.
- He was a true creature within the creation, living in relationship to it, and with it to all other human creatures.
- He lived as a person without human guilt, knowing himself to be accepted by the Father, and thus was unafraid of death.

The outworking of the elements

Docetists believed that Christ's coming was not genuinely in human flesh, that he had the appearance, but not the reality of being man. They thought that it was impossible that God

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would become man. Gnostics believed Jesus dwelt in a body, but that the flesh was not him. Many modern Christians are unwittingly Docetists or Gnostics. They have a low—even cynical—view of humanity. To say that our lives can be lived as was Christ's in his humanity is regarded by them as impossible, and almost as blasphemy. Yet, if we look back to the New Testament, we see that this is just what happened. We are told to be 'imitators of Christ', to 'be imitators of God, as beloved children', and to 'walk in love, as Christ loved us'. We must see that for us 'to live is Christ', i.e. 'we live yet not us, but Christ lives in us'. This indwelling is personal and it is also corporate. Christ lives in each believer, and dwells amongst all believers as Lord of the Church.

I Cor. 11:1

Eph. 1: 1-2

Phil 1:21

Gal 2:20

Thus when we look at the characteristics of Christ—summed up in his works and the fruit of the Spirit—we have to say to ourselves, 'This Jesus, risen and ascended, lives in me. He cannot be present without being powerful. He cannot be static within me. It may well be that I can resist his life within me, and not come under its Lordship, in which case I will feel the tension of the matter. Given his presence, he can work out his life through me, not as a demon possesses its unwilling host or as a power which overcomes its object, but as the one who loves me, and wishes his life to be lived out in me,.

We can then develop and habituate the life of Christ within us, as indeed we live in him. Yet all of this is dependent upon the ministry of the Spirit to us, and within us

When we saw that 'the Lord is the Spirit', we saw that the meaning of these words is not that the persons of the Spirit and Christ have become fused or merged, but that when the Spirit is present, Christ is present, as Lord. Apart from the Holy Spirit, this is not so. Thus, to walk in Christ is to walk in the Spirit. For Christ to live in us is for the Spirit to live in us.

Eph. 5:1-2,

Gal. 5:16, 25

All of this is most important for our 'witness to Christ', a subject on which we will spend some time. However, the living out of the life of Christ is not simply seeking to fulfil an image of him, i.e. of what he was and did. It is the acceptance and pursuit of the internalised life of Christ which is

present by the Spirit. The 'how' of this need not occupy our minds or attention. The fact of it confronts us, and the living of it by faith is not only possible but enjoined. Its execution or working out is by the power and aid of the Holy Spirit.

The implications of Christ's life in his people

We have to keep reminding ourselves that the life of Christ working out in us, and so through to the world, is not a privatised 'emotional-devotional' affair. We are not endeavouring to develop personal pietism, or focus upon religious attainment. Christ did none of this. He lived where people lived, and certainly prayed to the Father, but even his prayer was with a view to the ministry the Father had given him. The implications of Christ living in his people in the world are that the risen Christ is reproducing his gifts in action in the world. The elements which we have nominated above now have their expression through his people. Not only is there beauty of character ('the fruit of the Spirit'), but there is the dynamic Messianic thrust to the ends of the earth. There is salvation, and new community, and new creations. There is the host (army) of the Holy Spirit marching against the citadels of darkness, hauling them down, raising the banner of Christ, and moving on as the living Kingdom of God until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father, until the kingdom of this world shall have become the Kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah.

That is what it means for Christ's life—historic, risen, ascended and operative—to work out in his people and through them to the whole world in these 'the last days'.

THE SPIRIT IN TRUTH AND WITNESS

27. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND WITNESS

In continuity with our past five sections, this one could have been headed, 'The Spirit and Christ Working Through the Children of God in Witness to the Truth.' This too, is what we must consider; but the main point under consideration is the Spirit as the Spirit of truth, and how that truth confronts man who lives in the lie.

Man lives in the lie

Rom. 1:25

In the fall, the woman chose to trust the word of the serpent over and against the word of God. The man chose to listen to the word of the woman over and against the word of God. Paul says that although man is continually—through creation—confronted with the truth of God, he has deliberately rejected God, and has 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature [creation] rather than the Creator'. This must mean that man now has a false view of God, man and creation. It must mean that he is continually living in a lie and that he is bound to rationalise the lie as the truth, and the truth as a lie, seeing he is a creature also of conscience.

Put simply, man may gather researchable facts concerning himself and the creation and seek to put them together, but those facts will not be the truth even though they may be authentic facts in themselves. *The truth can only be God as*

he is, as he works, acts and brings his plan to completion.

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The truth of the truth

We can speak generally about 'scientific truth' when we mean 'the phenomenology of things', 'the principle of things' and so on. We can **even speak** about 'the truth of justice', 'the truth of manhood' and the like; what we probably mean is some principle or other which we have come to accept. If it works out in practice, then we may call it 'practical truth'. Yet none of this may be truth, even though it works out in practice. God is the truth, and whilst it is certain, therefore, that man and creation somewhere fit into, relate to, and are part of the truth, they are only this as things have their true being in relation to the true God. The truth, simply put, is God.

The word 'truth!', 'true' and its cognates in the Old Testament can be translated by 'faithful', 'faithfulness', 'honesty', 'honest', 'trustworthy', 'reliable' and similar words. They mean there is no false note, no deception or lying, but only things as-they-really-are' because of 'God-as-he-really-is'. The truth is God and what he is about because of who he is. It embraces what we have called 'the ninefold plan'. History, really understood, is *his story*. It is part of the whole truth, the truth within the truth.

Not knowing the truth

Since man has exchanged the truth of God for a lie, then it seems he does not know the truth. This is correct and incorrect at the same moment. Man *can* know the truth, but chooses not to know it. Because he was created by the word of truth, and by God who is true, man innately knows the truth. What he knows innately he refuses to know consciously, and his life is a constant battle not to know the truth. In this he is aided by his own heart which is 'deceitful above all things'; so '...God be true but every man a liar' can well be said of man in deceit. There are 'the deceitful lusts', 'the deceitfulness of sin', Satan, 'the deceiver of the whole world with his lying spirits.

Cf. Rom. 1:18, 25

Jer 17:9
Rom. 3:4
Eph. 4:22
Heb. 3:13,
Rev. 12:9,
20:7-10

Pan 4.27

Rom. 1:18

Man himself 'holds [down] the truth in unrighteousness'. That is, he actually holds the truth but holds it wrongly so that it is not in fact the truth. He either holds it in self-righteousness and self-justifying acts ('dead works'), or he holds it down by suppressing it in acts of wickedness, i.e. he suppresses purity by impurity, goodness by evil, and righteousness by unrighteousness.

Gen. 3:5

What is most deceiving is man's belief that he can discern between good and evil. This was what the serpent promised: '...you will be as God [or, 'as gods'], knowing good and evil'. Universally, man believes he can discern what is good and what is bad, but his choice is greatly determined by the context in which he lives and the desires which he has, especially if he has habituated himself in them. A Klu Klux Klansman thinks it is 'good' to persecute black people. Black people might—on occasions—think it 'good to make a Klansman suffer retribution. Some see sexual promiscuity as 'freedom', and thus 'good', whilst others, for other reasons, may reach the opposite conclusion. Justice is perhaps the most emotive element in human experience, and man recognises that it is true. However, he may still pervert its truth and execute all kinds of cruelties and injustices in order to get what he calls 'justice', but which is really vengeance, retribution and the like.

The imagined ability of man to discern between 'good' and 'evil' is the greatest lie with which man lives. It is also the most dynamic, especially in a world of guilt, where humans are always judging other humans as they seek to off-load their own inner guilts.

The need to know the truth

If man is set against the truth, if Satan and his cohorts are continually at their task of deceiving persons and the nations, and if they are aided by the self-deceits of man, then how will men ever come to know the truth? The answer is that unaided and unconvicted man will not come to know the truth. Man does not want to know the truth, although

the thrust of his created nature is towards it. ' . . . they know. . . that those who do such [evil] things deserve to die' and ' . . .you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...' are statements which show that man knows the truth even whilst denying it.

Jesus said, ' . . . you will know the truth and the truth will make you free'. From this we see that the way of truth not only liberates from falsehood but it is the very (functional) way of living freely, i.e. being truly human as created. However, since, as we have seen, man does not wish to know the truth, how can he possibly come to it?

Part of the answer is that God is continually setting out the truth of himself and his nature. He does this by the creation, by his word which, through the ages, has come to human beings in the action of his providence by means of angels, prophets? and—for them especially—by means of dreams and visions. His acts in history, and in particular those with his people Israel, all spell out his nature. Doubtless, many things happen which are difficult to interpret, but elements of providence and disaster are ways in which he speaks.

We must see these media as being all of one piece. The history of Israel, the prophetic word, the coming of Christ in accordance with the same prophecies, the life of Christ, the inner ministry of the Spirit, the ascension of Christ and the sending by him of his Spirit along with the birth of the proclaiming church, are all ways in which God has gone on speaking. The Bible—often known as 'the inscripturated Word'—is in the hands of human beings. Truth, which philosophical or religious reasoning *would never arrive at unaided*, is set out so clearly by him, in all these ways. In other words, rebellious man, in order to avoid knowing the truth, has to fight the heavens which declare the glory of God, the firmament which shows his handiwork, the whole creation by which God is known, and the personal experiences of countless witnesses who have come to know the truth.

Having said all this, we may still ask the question, 'How

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Rom. 1:32

Luke 11:13

John 8:32

does the natural man, the man who is not 'the man of *ruach*', come to know the truth?'. Hearing it like that, some listeners might conclude that the Spirit exercises a supernatural power—what we might even call white magic—which convinces a person, even against his own will. Yet that is not what we are saying, although it is true that the Spirit has supernatural power.

What we are really saying is this:

'Jesus, the Logos, the eternal Word and Son, by whom the worlds were made, became flesh, i.e. human. He came "full of grace and truth", i.e. he was essentially truth, "the truth of the Father". As he told Pilate, "I am come into the world to *bear witness to the truth*". He said to his Father, "Thy word is truth". He was the living Word, the living truth bearing witness to the truth of God. He did this by what he was and by what he did. He showed God as Father, as Redeemer, and as love. He went against all the lies piled up in the dossiers of men from the time of the fall, and refuted these untruths. He said simply, "I am a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God". Living that truth, he died, rose and ascended. This was showing the truth which man needed to know. That is the truth which the Holy Spirit brings to man in a convincing and convicting way. He has this ability to make truth real to human beings.'

So man is turned to the truth by 'the Spirit of truth', who, Jesus said, would convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgement. He would glorify Christ, i.e. display the truth as in Christ. Also he would 'lead *into* all the truth'. In other words, truth is greater than the lie. It needs no embellishment, no plausible persuasion, but simply an 'open statement of the truth'. The Spirit of truth has been in the truth, part of the truth, with the Son who was 'full of truth' and who 'witnessed to the truth'. Nothing that has been in all eternity and in all time has he ever missed. He has been in it all, and can tell it all, and when the truth confronts the lie, the lie shrivels. Then, although the liar persists in his deceit, he is undone in the conscience, in the depths of his heart. He may still refuse the truth, but *he knows that it is the truth*. He may continue to call light darkness and darkness light,

II Cor. 4:2

Isa. 5:20-21

sweetness bitterness and bitterness sweetness, but he knows that it is not so.

The response to truth

We have seen previously how dynamic is the word of God when proclaimed under the power of the Holy Spirit. We need not repeat all those Scriptures, but be selective of a few which directly relate to the term 'truth'. John said, ' . . . the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is truth'. That is, the Spirit is the irrefutable witness. Men could not withstand Stephen because of the truth he proclaimed in the power of the Spirit. So in and by all human witnesses, the Spirit exercises his power of truth-conviction.

1 John 5:7

Jesus said, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'. Paul said, 'In him you also...have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him. . .' He told Timothy to deal gently with opponents for ' . . . God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth'. Paul expected 'the open statement of the truth' to do its own work, and it did! He paralleled 'all men to be saved' with 'to come to the knowledge of the truth'.

John 8 31 32

Eph. 1:13

11 Tim. 2:25

11 Cor. 4:2

I Tim. 2:4

It is equally clear that many opposed the truth. We need not dwell on these, for they are not relevant to our present subject, but having heard the truth, they denied it. The proclamation of the word does not *ex opere operato* save human beings, but rejection of the truth brings with it its own judgement.

Knowing the truth

To know the truth is to be freed of the lie. It is to be 'free in deed'. It is to know God in all his being and in all his ways. It is living in the functional way of life both as to our created beings and as to our now re-created beings. It is to be proof against error and deceit, especially deceivers who are under the prince of deceit—Satan. Even more, to know the truth is to be a witness to the

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truth. This, in fact, is the great work of the Spirit in man. Had man lived purely in his Creator, then he would have been a witness—albeit an unconscious witness—to the truth of God, creation and man. Having fallen, he could not be this. Having been redeemed and made new, he can now, through the Spirit, be a witness to the truth.

This, of all, is his great vocation in time, and this too will be his vocation in eternity.

28. THE SPIRIT AND THE WITNESSES (1)

A witness is a person who tells what he has seen; he tells the truth. He can offer an opinion on what he has not seen, and even on what he has seen, but none *of* that is authentic witness. Genuine witness is true reportage. A person who did research into certain historical trials came to the conclusion that no human being on earth is ever wholly unbiased, even if consciously he seeks to be impartial. This goes for judge, counsel, defendant, plaintiff and witnesses. Truth does not stem innately from human beings, i.e. from fallen human beings. Hence the need for the Spirit of truth.

God is never without a witness

Paul sought to convince the idolaters at Lystra in Asia Minor that God had always given a witness to himself. He said.

' . . . We . . . bring you good news. that you should turn from these vain things [idols] to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness'.

Acts 14:15-17

Paul saw God's provision for man as a witness to himself. Israel was created to be a witness to the truth of God. He was the true God as over and against the idols. He was holy, therefore they were to be holy. Being unholy would profane

his name in the eyes of the heathen, the Gentiles. In Israel no one was to bear false witness against his neighbour, for this would put the neighbour into the lie. In Deuteronomy, certain conditions are laid down for witness, namely that there must be at least two witnesses. One is insufficient. The Book of the Law was itself a sufficient witness against a person, or the nation, should there be a departure from the law.

Deut. chs 17, 19

Later, in the prophetic body of truth, the idea of witness is very strong. God is jealous for his good name, so that anyone who bears witness against him, i.e. accuses him of being other than true, must bring his witness against him. He is—as it were—invited into a court of law, there to present his case, but woe to him if he proves to be wrong! God will fight his own case, of course. In the Book of Job and its last five chapters, God presents his own case to Job, who is quickly flummoxed. There, interestingly enough, it is 'The Case of God the Creator' which reduces Job to fervent penitence.

In Isaiah, God tells Israel his servant that he will be God's witness. In some cases the nation is the witness, and in Others, the Suffering Servant. Within this prophetic demand, there is even a word against the idolaters:

Isa. 43:8-12.
44:6-8, 55:3-5

'All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. Who fashions a god or casts an image, that is profitable for nothing' Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are but men; let them all assemble, let them stand forth, they shall be terrified, they shall be put to shame together'.

Isa. 44:9-11

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah is the Messiah who said, 'I have come not to be served but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many'. He is the true witness to God.

The prophetic witness of John

John the Baptist—as we have seen—is remarkable in that certain prophets had witnessed to his coming. The events that happened at his birth also witnessed to the unique ministry which was to be his. Amongst these was the matter

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John I :6-8

John 1 15,
23, 29 34

John 5 33-35

of his being filled with the Spirit in his mother's womb. He came with authority to Israel, having been established by God. His authority awed his audiences. Yet he proclaimed that he had been sent 'to bear witness to the light', i.e. to Messiah. The writer of John's Gospel declares, 'John bore witness'. Jesus also claimed that John had borne witness to him: 'You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth'. John gave witness to the truth by witnessing to Jesus. When Jesus asked his interrogators whether John's baptism was from God or men they did not dare answer. They knew that Jesus was saying, 'If John's baptism was authentic then his witness to me was also authentic'.

Jesus the witness to the truth

We have already mentioned that Jesus told Pilate, 'For this cause came I into the world that I might bear witness to the truth'. However, he had to be authenticated and he acknowledged John's witness to him. Even so, he spoke of other and greater witnesses, namely the Father, and the works the Father had given him to do. These should have been enough for men to see who he was. He also claimed that the Scriptures bore witness to him, and in particular Moses. Later, he spoke of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets all witnessing to him, since he was their prophetic fulfilment.

John 5:36-38

John 5:39-40,
cf. 8:12-18,
14:11

The Jews misunderstood Jesus, for they were living in the lie. Jesus told his disciples that when the Spirit came he would witness to Christ, and that the disciples also would witness because they would have within themselves the witnessing Spirit. On this basis, we see the importance of the Spirit of truth.

Luke 24:27, 44

John 15:26 27,
Luke 24:45 49,
Acts 1:8

John says in his first letter that there are three witnesses, namely ' . . . the Spirits the water [baptism] and the blood [the Cross]; and these three agree'. He adds, 'If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son'. He continues, 'He who believes in the Son of God has the

1 John 5:8-10

testimony [witness] in himself', and this presumably because he now has the Spirit within him, and has the anointing of the Spirit by which he 'knows all things'.

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In the Book of the Revelation Jesus, now risen and ascended, is called 'the faithful witness', and 'the true and faithful witness'. He is also called 'the holy one, the true one'. These titles verify what Jesus claimed of himself: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'. In that context he meant, 'I am the way to the Father, I am the truth *of* the Father, I am the life *of* the Father'. In this sense, he was a witness to the Father, just as the Spirit could have said, 'I am the way to the Son, I am the truth of the Son, and I am the life of the Son', though Of course he was equally that in regard to the Father. The Son is the way to the Father, and the Spirit the way to the Son, and thus ultimately to the Father. Paul verifies this: '...through him [Christ] we...have access in one Spirit to the Father'.

Eph. 2:18

We said that man will not to know the truth. He has ground rules for denying the truth, namely that God is indefensible, as he has not warranted acceptance and obedience. Man claims to know the 'truth' about God, and has evidence to show he is not what he ought to be. The favourite atheist utterance is 'I cannot believe in a God who. . .' This superior stance is bolstered by so-called evidence' and to those who adopt it, God issues an invitation *to truly examine the truth*. His media of communication--about which we have spoken above—are all oriented towards the fact and coming of the Son who is the true and faithful witness.

Christ's coming into the world and the living of a blameless life, i.e. the living of the truth, now confronts man. His claim, '[I am] a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God', has to be investigated under pain of insincerity and hypocrisy by those who pose as seekers of the truth. 'Never man spoke like this man' is a witness to the difference between him and others who have spoken. He is the true witness to the truth.

John 8:40

Of course—as we will see—only the Spirit can reveal

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Christ and in that sense the Spirit must also confront man, but whether the Spirit reveals or not, man is bound to use even his faulty reasoning to see whether or not Jesus is God's unique witness to himself.

29. THE SPIRIT AND THE WITNESSES (2)

The witness of the word

John 5:39-47, cf.
Luke 24:26-27

Heb. 1:1
Acts 26:22

Rom. 3:21

1 Cor. 15:3-4
Eph. 2:20

Jesus claimed that the word of God, the Hebrew Scriptures, witnessed to him. The writer of Hebrews said that, in times past, God spoke to the fathers, by *the prophets*, and that in these last days he is speaking to us by his Son. The apostolic preachers believed they were saying 'nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass'. Paul said that 'the righteousness of God', i.e. the Gospel, was testified to by the law and the prophets. He said he preached Christ's death and resurrection 'in accordance with the Scriptures'. When he said the household of God was 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets', he surely meant the teaching which the apostles gave on the basis of the prophetic word fulfilled in Christ.

Matt. 24:14

Jesus called the Gospel a witness: 'And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony [witness] to all nations; and then the end will come'. He also called the word a judge, meaning that it spoke the truth, and the lie of man would be made evident by the word of truth: 'He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day'.

John 12:48

Now we do not have the true word which is not the word of the Spirit. The 'word of God', 'the word of the Lord', and 'the word of Christ' are all the word of God as given, inspired and powerful by the Spirit. We saw that in creation the word and the Spirit were one together. We note that the Son upholds all things 'by the word of his power', and that the Spirit gives the *ruach* that is life to the world. He, too, upholds the world by his power. In the Book of the Acts and

some of the Epistles, there is no thought of the uttered word being the word of God where the Spirit is not present.

This is because the word is truth. '...thy word is truth', Jesus said to the Father. It is the word of truth which redeems men, and that word is the utterance of the Spirit. Peter says, 'You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God'. James says, 'Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures'. None of that word is without the Spirit. Peter refers to '... those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven'. Paul says, '... our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction'.

John 17:17

I Peter 1:23

James I :18

I Peter 1:12

I Thess 1-5

The dynamic nature of the word is seen in creation and recreation. Isaiah speaks of the assured outcome of the word:

'so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;

it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,

and prosper in the thing for which I sent it'

Isa. 55:11

This statement is especially interesting because it is linked with:

'...my steadfast, sure love for David.

Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a

leader and commander for the peoples'.

Isa. 55:3-5

In the Book of the Revelation the word of God is important. As in Acts, it is almost the primary subject. In Acts, the word of God grows, and spreads and multiplies. It is effective. One example of its innate dynamism is seen in Revelation where it relates to the two witnesses: '...if any one would harm them, fire pours from their mouths and consumes their foes'. This is surely the word of God. The word of God is a sharp two-edged sword which goes out of Christ's mouth, the same sword which Paul calls 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'.

Rev. 1 1:5

Rev. 1 16. 2:12.
19:15

Eph. 6:17

The word, then, is a witness, and authentically so because it is inseparable from the Spirit. The word of truth and the Spirit of truth do not exist apart. Together, as one, they

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Rom. 10 :17

present a formidable onslaught on the citadels of deceit and evil. They represent great power to bring faith to birth: ' . . . faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ'.

The witness of the new people of God

We have dealt previously with the part that the people of God play in the mission of the Triune God. Now we look more particularly at their witness by means of the word of God and the power of the Spirit. Jesus had told the apostles that they would be witnesses to him:

Luke 24:48
John 1 5:27

'You are witnesses of these things';
. . . and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning';

Acts I :8

' . . . you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth'.

Acts 10:41

They were to witness to what he had done in his ministry, and to his death, resurrection and ascension. Peter said that after his resurrection Jesus had appeared, 'not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead'. If we take a concordance and look up the words 'witness', 'testimony' and the cognate verbs, we see how important the matter of witness really is. In fact, we are driven to the conclusion that the early church did not really think in terms of what we call 'evangelism', but in terms of witness. We can, of course, say that true evangelism was true witness. It was the witness which gripped people, not theological exposition regarding Christ. As for then, so it must be for now. Yet it could not be witness apart from the Spirit of truth.

We take it for granted that the witness was by the Spirit. When we examine what witnessing really is, we are in a field which is somewhat foreign to us today. Everything the early church did was witness. That is, their fellowship, their truth, their unity and their life-style were elements of the witness. The principle is seen in Jesus' statement that, when the disciples loved one another, then they would be known to be Jesus' disciples, i.e. they were like him and in this sense

witnessed to him. This takes us on (or back) to the ideas of imitation of Christ, and of him dwelling in his people, and they in him. Thus *the witness of Jesus* is not so much testifying to him and his truth and action, as it is *'living out, moment by moment, the life of Jesus within'*.

This is a radical statement. We are not thinking of a mystical Christ within a devotee, but of the actional Christ in history, working out the Father's plan up to the Cross, beyond it, and until the Parousia. In other words, the people of God witness to Christ as he works out God's plan in their midst and by means of them. Thus, in the Book of the Acts, the people of God live in love together and then give effective witness to the Resurrection:

'...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony (witness) to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all'.

Acts 4:31-33

This powerful witness to the Resurrection of Christ showed that he was risen and amongst them and working with them. There was more to it than that, though. They themselves were so filled with the Spirit that he, as the Spirit of truth, was able to convince those who listened that Jesus had risen, and that he was therefore Lord of life, and Lord of death; thus he was Lord of all and Saviour of the world.

'The word of God and the testimony of Jesus'

This statement is found in fairly regular form in the Book of the Revelation. We consider the various occurrences of it:

'John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus';

Rev. 1:2

'I John. . . was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus';

Rev. 1: 9

'. . . Antipas, my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you';

Rev. 2:13

' . . . the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne';

Rev. 6:9

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Rev. 12:11	'And they have conquered him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony';
Rev. 12:17	'Then the dragon. . . went off to make war. . . on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus';
Rev. 14:12, 13:10	'Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus';
Rev. 19:10	' . . . I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. . . For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit [Spirit?] of prophecy'.
Rev. 20:4	'I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast'.

30. THE SPIRIT AND THE WITNESSES (3)**What is, 'The word of God and the testimony of Jesus'?**

When we look at the Revelation as a whole, and when we see the context of each of these references we have just cited, then we realise what it is to witness to Jesus, or 'bear the witness of Jesus'. It is to be one with Messiah in the ongoing fulfilment of his plan, which is also the Father's plan, as in these the last days it moves towards its consummation. It is the plan which envisages man's redemption, the new heavens and the new earth, as the climactic judgements take place. It is the plan which destroys all evil and liberates creation from its bondage to corruption and futility, which brings man to ultimate glory, and which eternalises and unifies all things.

The word of God is the Gospel of Christ, involving man's redemption and his obedience of love to God. The testimony of Jesus is his revelation of the truth—his testimony to the truth of God. That testimony—as we here repeat—is who he is and what he does (i.e. has done, is doing, and will do). The living, risen Christ is working out this witness by his present actions, and in this working out the church—the people of God—is wholly involved.

In practice, it means that the Spirit of truth inhabits each child of God personally and the whole church corporately. The church proclaims Christ by word of mouth, and by the

practice of life. They are Christ in the world, and the world is hostile to the truth because it lives in the lie. In the Revelation, all evil is headed up under the dragon ('that old serpent the devil'), the beast, and the second beast who is also known as 'the false prophet'. Evil uses all its 'testimony to the lie' to oppose and destroy the people of God. Its system is that system called 'Babylon'. A mark or sign of its system is mandatory on all humanity. Those who oppose it do so under pain of persecution and destruction. The kingdom of the beast dominates society and creation. In the face of all this, the people of God 'hold the commandments of God and bear the witness of Christ', i.e. Christ's witness by the Gospel and his present action to the truth of God. For this, they are harassed, pursued, mocked and killed. Even so, they do not desist.

How can they stand up under such pressure? The answer is, 'Only by the power and presence and encouragement of the Holy Spirit'. He, in another sense, 'holds the commandments [the word] of God, and the testimony [witness] of Jesus'.

We admit that this long explanation seems complicated, yet it is difficult to simplify it. Jesus witnessed to the truth of God. We, by the power of the Spirit, receive that witness, contain it in ourselves, and so become witnesses to Christ—the truth of God. That is a simpler way of saying it, but the seeming complicated nature of the explanation derives from the fact that this matter of the testimony of Jesus is largely foreign to our thinking, even our churchly thinking. We are in an age when we have made the Gospel a manward rather than a Godward thing. We are utilitarian in our attitude, i.e. our concern is 'What do we get from the Gospel? How does it serve us—salvifically, emotionally, personally?' Hence when we enter the great prophecy of the Revelation, we are in a strange and unfamiliar world. Our tendency is to use it as a code book and elicit from it fascinating interpretations to titillate our jaded and curious minds.

The witness to Jesus in the Book of Acts

Now is the time to look at our concordance, and the Book of Acts, and see that what the Revelation calls 'the word of

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Acts 6:4

God and the testimony of Jesus' is the daily experience of the new people of God. This is along various lines. The life of the community can be seen to be the actual life of Jesus in his people. He indwells them personally and corporately by the Holy Spirit and they work this life out in their love of one another, their fellowship, unity, and their mutual caring concern. They proclaim the Gospel in a hostile world, giving themselves to prayer and to the word of God. Thus when we look in a concordance at the two terms 'witness' (29 times) and word of God' (45 times), we see how thrilling was the life and action of the church. We do not find a church loaded with apologetics, seeking to obtain the goodwill of surrounding society, and preaching the Word with brilliance, eloquence and plausibility. Rather, it is a steady community, standing firm, proclaiming unoffensively but unmistakably the truth of God as Jesus had revealed it.

'The word of God'

Here, gathered together from the Book of Acts, are many statements about 'the word':

- 'those who received his word were baptised';
- 'many who heard the word believed';
- 'spoke the word with boldness';
- 'devote ourselves to the ministry of the word';
- 'the word of God increased';
- 'went about preaching the word';
- 'Samaria...received the word of God';
- 'you know the word which he sent';
- 'the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word';
- 'the Gentiles also had received the word';
- 'the word of God grew and multiplied';
- 'they proclaimed the word of God';
- 'the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God';
- 'they. ..glorified the word of God';
- 'the word of God spread';
- 'bore witness to the word of his grace';
- 'Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel';
- 'preaching the word of the Lord';
- 'we proclaimed the word of the Lord';
- 'they received the word with all eagerness';

'the word of God was proclaimed by Paul'; 'teaching the word of God among them'; 'all the residents of Asia heard the word'; 'so the word of the Lord grew'.

It is clear that the word was dynamic, and that the early church attached a great deal of importance to its proclamation.

The witness and the testimony

Again we see the numerous references to 'witness' and 'testimony':

'You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem...Judea...Samaria...end of the earth';

'of that we are all witnesses';

'to this we are witnesses';

'we are witnesses to these things';

'we are witnesses to all that he did';

'who were chosen by God as witnesses';

'now his witnesses to the people';

'for you will be a witness for him';

'the blood of Stephen thy witness';

'appoint you to serve and bear witness';

'so you must bear witness also at Rome';

'and when they had testified';

'Paul was testifying to the Jews';

'testifying both to Jews and to Greeks';

'to testify to the gospel of the grace of God';

'testifying to the kingdom of God';

'they will not accept your testimony about me';

'with great power the apostles gave their testimony .

Just to look at this array of quotations is to stir the blood of true witnesses. The angel had told John, 'The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus' and he had meant that wherever the prophetic word is uttered—whether from 'Abel to Zechariah' or 'from John the Baptist to John the Seer', the principle is still the same. Jesus is the testimony of God, and his people have the testimony of Jesus, and this witness is by the Spirit and through the people.

No wonder the people of God sense their high destiny and are charged with wonder that they are counted worthy to proclaim and to suffer for his sake.

31. THE SPIRIT AND THE POWER (1)

Jesus said, 'You shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you'. The apostles had no question about this. Their question concerned the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. They remembered the prophets who always linked the coming of the Spirit with the coming of the Kingdom to Israel. They would have no need to question the power that would come with the Holy Spirit. They had a whole history about it, from creation, through the patriarchs, and through the beginnings and history of Israel, including the judges, the kings and the prophets. They had recently watched John the Baptist and Jesus at work, in power, because of the Spirit.

Their understanding was a biblical one. They did not have a merely philosophical view of God and his Spirit having power. They did not reason that because God was God he was necessarily powerful, nor that he had unlimited stores of power. Rather, they knew that God used power in accordance with his nature. Whereas the gods and lords and idols sought to exercise their power in domination, Yahweh was the God of love, of loving kindness and grace (*chesed*). His power was not autocratic and indifferent to human frailty. It was power that worked through creation and covenant, in nature and grace. This sort of power was not to be feared, although it was to be respected.

The fact of the Spirit and power

The word 'power' in English means 'strength', 'ability', and even 'capacity'. Its meaning is similar in Hebrew (*gebura, yea, koach*) and Greek (*dunamis, ischus, kratos*). If we look at the *fact* of the Spirit's power we are impressed by its reality in instances like the following:

- The Spirit in creation as a powerful force moving across the face of the waters;

- the Spirit dwelling in and with man, giving him life, striving with him;
- the creative power of the Spirit in the whole universe;
- the Spirit in men like Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Joseph, Moses and Joshua, giving them power especially in relationship to covenant;
- the Spirit in the judges, almost as physical might and power: Samson tearing a lion from limb to limb, slaying men, bursting ropes; Saul cutting in pieces a yoke of oxen; Othniel, Jephthah and Gideon leading Israel to war in exploits; David a changed man from an anointing; Bezalel a great artificer; Caleb faithful; Joseph and Daniel discerning in the matter of dreams;
- the Spirit in the priest-judge-prophet Samuel, and in all the prophets from 'Abel to Zechariah'; Micah saying, 'But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord'; the prophecies of Messiah, upon whom will be the sevenfold Spirit, the beloved Servant upon whom the Spirit will come and who will preach justice to the nations; the Anointed One who will preach good tidings to the poor and deliver the captives; upon the nation Israel so that floods will come upon dry grounds and streams in the desert;
- the Spirit coming upon Zechariah, John the Baptist, his mother Elizabeth, Mary in conception and life, Simeon and (doubtless) Anna the prophetess;
- the Spirit upon Jesus, working the powers of the Kingdom, aiding him in life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension;
- the Spirit coming upon the church for proclamation, signs and wonders, giving gifts, producing a spiritual harvest, aiding in love, fellowship, unity' worship, service and the like; coming upon the apostles and using them at various times, aiding the people of God in warfare against evil, drawing the age to its close and to the judgements of God.

We need then, to understand the power of the Spirit. The brief survey above, if we consider it thoughtfully, provides us with a knowledge of its scope and variety, and will help us to see it in perspective.

The modes of the Spirit in his power

The reason for trying to understand the Spirit at work in power is that we wish his power to be operative today with-

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out hindrance from us. Christ's promise that we would receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon us, is an important one, especially when we often see the church, both in the past and today, helpless in the face of world events and human weakness. Although the idea of power is of ten played down and even rejected by theologians and Christian practitioners, it is nevertheless of great importance in the things of God.

What then are the modes of power the Spirit uses, and why do these modes vary?

Our answer must be that the work of God is wide and varied, and the exigencies are many. The power of the Spirit in creation and the sustaining of creation is one kind of power, one mode of exercise. To contemplative human thought it is most awesome. Job, listening to God in his discussion of the creation event, and the upholding of the varied creation, was deeply awed. His own late arguments with his acquaintances dwindled into nothing. His spirit came alive to the greatness of God. Likewise, when we see the Spirit's power in the giving and sustaining of life, then we too are deeply humbled.

When we see the literal physical power that clothes men like Samson and Othniel, Gideon and others, we are even appalled. There seems to be so much supernatural energy which grips human beings that we fear for the known norm of humanity. It seems almost unfair, as though powers that equal (or surpass) the demonic simply grip man. even beyond his will. When John the Baptist leaps in his mother's womb, we wonder what it must have meant to her. Leaping babes in wombs must be deeply uncomfortable for bearing mothers.

This its the power which comes upon the bones in the dry desert and brings them together, knitting them, fleshing them out, and then causing them to stand up turgid with life--a mighty army! True as it is that it is a vision and not a literal happening, we doubt not that God could—even would--do it literally! However, the vision was a parable of what God would do with Israel as a nation, a miracle of revival even greater than a physical resurrection

The Spirit in Jesus is a great power. Jesus does *dunemeis*,

'works of power', and so do his disciples, for power comes upon them. In Jerusalem, a lame man leaps for joy, dances, walks and sings. In Samaria, an evangelist stirs an entire city and demons go shrieking out of their unwilling hosts, the sick are healed, the lame also leap. The 'age to come' breaks in upon this age with strange revelations of God's power. Stephen is filled with such power that no one can defeat him in debate. The Spirit causes Ananias and his wife Sapphira to drop dead, a sorcerer to be blinded, prison gates to be opened, the Jewish Peter to go to the Gentiles at Caesarea, and the rebel Saul to be filled with his power and also to do signs, miracles and wonders. He causes the two witnesses to have a word of proclamation and prophecy which is like fire as it hits their opponents. He is the power who motivates the church, giving them weapons against which there is no defence.

What kind of power?

The trouble with some of us is that we would like the Spirit to work in ways which we pre-conceive and which appeal to us. They are attractive because they fit the image we have (or wish to have) of the Holy Spirit. Take one prophet for example: Elijah was very human, as James tells us, but the Bible speaks of 'the spirit and power of Elijah'. The word 'spirit' may well mean 'Elijah's spirit', but it must mean, 'The spirit of Elijah as enlivened by the Spirit and so having power'. James tells us that Elijah had no power of himself.

Luke 1:17,
cf. Mal 4:5

James 5:17-18

Elijah's life story is fascinating. The prophet had to be trained for the great day of Carmel. He was fed in the wilderness by ravens. He was cared for by a Gentile widow—a woman! He was brought to Carmel by God to confront King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. He did this successfully; the Spirit came in the fire and consumed the water-soaked sacrifice—against all natural odds! The elated Elijah ran twenty-four miles to Jezreel, having caused the death of hundreds of apostate prophets of Baal. Next day the victorious prophet was reduced to despair, fear and futility. God's care for him was compassionate, but Elijah was untouched by it.

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Then God prepared a lesson for Elijah. *The forces* of the Spirit—wind, fire and earthquake—had no message for him. It was the *still small voice* ('the sound of a gentle breeze', *Jerusalem Bible*) which spoke to him. Whilst it is true that the dynamic of the prophet remained with him, it is also true that he did not idolise God or his Spirit by expecting *only one mode of operation*. The miraculous power remained with Elijah, but not the hunger for it, or the idolatry of it.

For us, there is something didactic in this. We must conclude that the Spirit operates on many fronts, works in various ways to meet various needs, and to accomplish a variety of goals. Of necessity, his modes of operation will be varied, but the same central drive will be there. It will be the drive of love to accomplish the purpose of God, and to fulfil his ninefold plan.

32. THE SPIRIT AND THE POWER (2)

The fronts on which the Spirit works

When we speak of the Spirit working on many fronts, what do we really mean? The answer must be that the Creator Spirit knows the Father and the Son, he knows the nature and goals of creation. He knows man. He knows what everything is about. When he works as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, as the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of holiness, truth and love, then he meets the needs as they are set out by nature of the case. Seeing that all is within the providence of God—including the judgements of God, present and future—the Spirit is in no sense forced to adapt. He is the Lord of life, and in the economy of the Triune Godhead, he faces each situation, each front, each movement and—so to speak—decides the mode of action.

We need to keep in mind also that he keeps everything within the ultimate goal. He works in any and every age and epoch, not as one who changes from epoch to epoch, but as one who works processively and progressively within them,

through them and by means of them. They are in fact *his* epochs.

The use of the power

Man who has rejected God, and thus has refused his power, seeks by means of the gods, the lords and the idols to manoeuvre the power that is in creation. He gives his idols great powers and hopes to have those powers used for his own benefit. Without doubt, there is occult power, but man exaggerates this to be equal with or surpassing God's. The idols are perverse. Whilst they do not have genuine (optic) existence, they do have reality to their devotees, whom they bring to the place of slavery. They also disappoint their worshippers. The Hebrews refused to believe idols had reality, but they knew them to be dangerous. Life then, for the idolaters, is a struggle for power. Power is obtained by political means. Under the idols, everything is political when clearly seen for what it is.

Rebellious man transposes on to God this pattern of the struggle for power and its use. That is why he sees him as rival, and hates him for the upper hand that he has by nature. He—man—is constantly struggling for power. Thus he is angered when the Spirit uses his own power in unpolitical ways. There is nothing political about creation, about the making dynamic of the Word (*dabar*). There is nothing political in upholding all creation—including sinful man—by the 'powerful word' of the Son. There is nothing political about salvation, i.e. planned redemption. All of these things arise from the love of God, his righteousness, goodness, truth and holiness. They are apolitical.

Thus, when the vast power of the Spirit seizes Samson or Gideon, David or Jephthah, it is not, as man might want to describe it, 'unfair' or 'unjust' or 'an imposition on the free will of man'; it is one action in a series of many which moves creation towards its destined goal and which—by the way—thwarts evil in its struggle to win supremacy.

The Spirit within the spirit

Man is a living soul. As a living soul he is spirit. As man he

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- Judges 15:19 needs the Spirit of God to enliven his own spirit. We saw that Jacob's spirit *revived* within him when he heard that Joseph was not dead. When the weary Samson found water and drank it, 'his spirit returned, and he *revived*'. Conversely, the Queen of Sheba did not have the spirit to grasp, take in, and comprehend all the wisdom and splendour of Solomon, and 'there was no more spirit in her'. I can remember attending an electronics exhibition in Tokyo and staggering from it almost collapsed. It demanded more of my spirit than I could give. It was beyond me. The theological situation I attended at the same period did not drain me I longed for more!
- I Kings 10:5 We are told that God has put eternity into man's heart so that by searching he cannot find out the end from the beginning. Man then—to use a term—is a 'multi-featured creature'. Being in the image of God he has endless permutations. At Babel, God said, 'If we do not go down and disturb them there is nothing they will not be able to do'. One clue to man's essential being is to look at the sevenfold Spirit him
- Eccl. 3:11 self. Isaiah describes him as,
- Isa. 11:2 . . . the Spirit of the Lord . . .
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord'.
- These are all elements of man when he is authentically himself. The Spirit then draws into this state which cor-relates with his own. Similarly, man's affectional, emot-ional and moral state can be seen in the fruit (harvest) of the Spirit: ' . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . . '
- Then again, man has been vested with great physical powers. If, under the Spirit, he manifests these beyond what we deem to be normal for man, then let us see what extraordinary things men can do when they have a powerfully motivated will to do them. In the grip of fear, man can run' lift weights, oppose cruelty, and virtually accomplish (comparative) miracles. Under certain stresses of love, loyalty and hatred, he can face an army, can defeat a brain-washing technique, and even tear a lion from limb to limb.
- What the Spirit of God does is, in one sense, quite

natural. If fear can drive a man to unusual feats, and if the will can be given over to the occult for seemingly supernatural actions, then even more legitimate is the action of the Spirit upon man. If, for example, we take the case of Bezalel, we see that,

. . . the Lord has called by name Bezalel. . . he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab. . . He has filled them with ability to do every sort of work done by a craftsman or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer...every able man in whom the Lord has put ability and intelligence. . . shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded'.

Ex. 35:30--36:1

What Bezalel and others did is not beyond human ability; when the Spirit directs and enables that ability, it is remarkable but not freakish. The significance of each element of the tabernacle and its furniture cannot be exaggerated. The Holy Spirit was signifying something by every thing, hence his insistence that the artificers move and work by his power and ability.

Man is so many-faceted as a creature, that the Spirit has a vast range and variety upon which to work. He stimulates man in his intellect. In what we call 'the communicable attributes', i.e. the moral elements of love, holiness, righteousness, goodness and truth, man, under the Spirit, correlates to God. When it comes to man's nature in worship, adoration, praise and service, the Spirit takes up these native correlates and works upon them.

This means that down through history, *there is no element of man and creation in which the Spirit does not participate in a creative, sustaining, energising, inspiring and enabling capacity*. Equally, it is true that when man gives over to 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works [energises] in the children of disobedience', then man becomes subject to that evil influence within his spirit.

Eph. 2:2

Conclusion on the work of the Spirit in various ways

We come then to a fascinating conclusion. It is that 'the Spirit of life' is involved in every detail where life exists

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through his creative and sustaining powers. Thus when he *appears* to work in one way in one epoch and in another in a different epoch, it is not that he changes his modes or that he progresses to a better situation. It is just that he relates to the needs of creation and especially those of man, fallen or otherwise. This helps us to understand that *he is always power*, no matter what the situation or need may be. That power, in its particular mode of operation, will always be sufficient to meet the need, the contingency, the demand of God. This is what makes the ministry of the Spirit and the Spirit himself immediately and continuously relevant to all life. It also takes away the imagined 'secular' nature of much that there is in creation. It obviates a false sacramentalism, and places life on a sane footing, promising an endless, rich and satisfying variety of life and action.

We have yet to see then, how the gifts, fruit and weapons. of the Spirit fit into this working of the Spirit in the processes of history. Because these are linked with the baptism of (in) the Spirit, we must explore that fascinating subject. If possible we must rid our minds of concepts and stereotypes that we have developed on the theme, and be open to new ways of seeing it.

33. THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (1)

Being baptised in the Spirit

There is no doubt that what happened to the apostolic band at Pentecost in the place where they gathered must be called 'the baptism in the Spirit'. The nounal term as such is not found in the New Testament, but the fact that Christ baptised them in the Holy Spirit cannot be doubted. John the Baptist had promised that Jesus would do this, and Jesus himself had said to them, 'before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit'. Historically, this took place, but we may well ask whether it has any significance for mankind generally.

In answer to such a question, Peter seemed to be saying

that it was important for all generations to come. In his Pentecostal address he announced, ' . . . the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him'. The *promise* doubtless included the whole matter of the forgiveness of sins and inclusion within the (new) people of God, but since the term 'promise' refers a number of times to the Holy Spirit, then we have reason to believe that the Spirit was to be the gift which all true believers would receive.

What we need to examine is whether the outpouring of the Spirit on the Samaritans and Gentiles, and also a later group of disciples of John the Baptist, may (also) be called 'the baptism in the Spirit'. We would want to know whether receiving the Spirit is normative and obligatory to all who would call themselves Christians. We note that Paul said, 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'. Rom. 8:9-11

The term 'baptism in the Spirit'

As we have said, there is no explicit use of this term. Baptism is always something which is done to a person. Speaking of water baptism, I would say, 'I was baptised in water'; so also, in speaking of what we loosely call 'Spirit baptism', I should rightly say, 'I was baptised in the Holy Spirit'. Baptism is something received through a 'do-er' or 'giver'. John the Baptist said Jesus would baptise with or in the Holy Spirit. Baptism, then, is a verbal rather than a nounal thing. We cannot object to the term 'baptism in the Spirit' being used, but even so, to ask the question, 'Do you have the baptism?' or 'Did you receive the baptism?' is likely to lead to a wrong understanding of the event. We do not possess a baptism. We were baptised; we were the recipients of an act of Christ.

The meaning of being baptised in the Spirit

When John the Baptist promised that the coming one would 'baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire', his words must have been intelligible to his listeners. They would be

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intelligible on a number of counts. John—as we have seen—had promised three great 'universals', namely universal forgiveness of sins, the universal Kingdom of God, and the universal outpouring of the Spirit. It is true that while John said Jesus would 'take away the sin of the world' (universal), and all would understand the Kingdom of God (now coming immediately) as universal, he did not actually say the outpouring of the Spirit would be universal. It remained for Peter on the day of Pentecost to indicate that by quoting from Joel: 'I will pour out my Spirit upon *all flesh*'. Even then, the Jews may have missed the universality of the prophecy. It is clear enough, however, that if the Kingdom were universal, so too would be the gifts of forgiveness and the Spirit.

Acts 2:1 7

The second basis for understanding would relate to the promise of the Spirit in the prophets. Thoughtful Jews would understand the meaning of the gift of the Spirit for the human spirit, i.e. its enlivening and fulfilling power. Mainly, then, they would understand by 'baptising in the Spirit' the pouring out by Messiah of the Spirit upon his people, the people of the Kingdom of God. The prophecies indicated this:

Isa. 32:15

'...until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high';

Isa. 44:3

I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants,
and my blessing upon your offspring';

Joel 2:28-29

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh;
[upon] your sons and your daughters...
the menservants and maidservants...'

What, then, would they understand by such an outpouring? What would be the point of it?

The prophecies gave the answer. The Kingdom of God would be restored to Israel. All dryness—moral, spiritual, personal, national—would be gone, and freshness and newness would take place. People would be changed, the nation renewed, and, indeed, the whole earth would be revived. Forgiveness would flow—some traditions had it—even without the sacrificial apparatus. God would directly forgive his people; Jeremiah and Ezekiel both had given such promises.

Those who received the Spirit would have new hearts and new rich obedience to God.

There may well have been in their minds the dramatic promise of Ezekiel concerning the dry bones coming together, being en fleshed, receiving life and being a mighty army—ostensibly for some great battle! That would be it: battle against evil and victory for the Kingdom!

To impose on those times, modern individualism, with its concentration on personal experiential results of Spirit baptism, would be to miss what the expectant Jews understood. We have seen that the apostles—with others—looked forward eagerly to the outpouring of the Spirit. How disappointed they must have been when Jesus scarcely mentioned the Holy Spirit¹ until the last night, the night of his betrayal. True, he had encouraged them with '...[shall not] your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?', but that was a rare mention of the coming event. It is also relevant to remember that although Jesus spoke about the Kingdom, he only once encouraged them personally: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'.

Luke 12:32

The context and significance of being baptised In the Spirit

When we go back to the first chapter of Acts, we see that Jesus' main topic for the forty days following his resurrection was *the Kingdom of God*. When he told them that they would soon be baptised in the Spirit, they rightly connected this fact with the teaching of the Kingdom of God. Hence they asked, 'Lord, will you [then] at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'. His reply (which we have seen) was, in essence: 'It is true that the Kingdom and the Spirit are linked, but the restoration of the Kingdom is the Father's business. Yours is to be baptised in the Spirit and get on with the witness in all Jewry, amongst all Samaritans and out where the Gentiles are. Of course, your concern will be the Kingdom of God, but *not the Kingdom as limited to Israel*'.

Acts I :6-8

This must surely mean that when we think of Spirit-

¹ But see Luke 11:13, Matt. 12:28f., John 7:37-39

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baptism, we must think in terms of the Kingdom.¹ This, we see, is the case in the Book of the Acts. The Gospel of the Kingdom was the apostolic proclamation of the good news, the *kerugma* and the *euangellion*. That was why Jesus had said that the Father would give them the Kingdom, and that he would give the Holy Spirit.

When we say that Spirit-baptism was in the context of the Kingdom, that statement must be seen in context with witness, the proclamation of the Gospel, the radical change in the life of Spirit-recipients, and many other related elements. We shall try to look at these particularly.

Spirit-baptism and the Kingdom

The first chapter of Acts links the outpouring of the Spirit with the Kingdom. Jesus had told the disciples that he was giving to them the keys of the Kingdom, and whatever they opened would have been opened, and whatever they bound (shut) would have been bound. This approximates to, 'Whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven [have already been forgiven]; and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained [have already been retained]'. Note that this charge was also in the context of the giving of the Holy Spirit, namely, '...he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins you forgive. . ."'

John 20:22-23

Again, in Acts 8, we see the account of Philip who had preached Christ to the Samaritans and had 'told them the things concerning the Kingdom of God'. Jews came into the Kingdom at Pentecost and the door, from that point onwards, was wide open to Jews. They, of course, would receive the Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom. Jesus had linked new birth by the Spirit with entrance into the Kingdom. Jesus exhorted Jews to be born again, and this could be no less for Samaritans or Gentiles. The coming of the Spirit was necessary in order (a) to give the recipients entrance into the Kingdom, and (b) to attest to others that they

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¹ We remind ourselves that although the term 'Kingdom of God' is little used in the Acts, yet the Lordship of Christ must be seen in relation to the Kingdom of God. To preach this Lordship was virtually to preach the Kingdom. See Acts 20:20-25, 19:8, 28:23, 31

had been admitted. This is certainly the thrust of Peter's explanations to the Jews for admitting the Gentiles to the faith, i.e. the Kingdom. Following the first explanation by Peter that he had received the Gentiles because God had given them the Spirit, the listening (Christian) Jews 'glorified God, saying, "He has granted also to the Gentiles [the gift of] repentance unto life". John the Baptist had pointed out the need to Jews for such repentance with a view to the Kingdom and forgiveness. All these elements come together to form a tightly fitting complex of the initial events of repentance, faith, the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, regeneration, love and the Holy Spirit. All of these relate to the Kingdom of God.

To view being baptised in the Spirit apart from the Kingdom of God is to remove this dynamic surround to the event, and to denude it of its true meaning. Removed in this way it can become—so to speak—the plaything of experientialists and theological reductionists. The first see everything in terms of experience and the latter see all truth, theology, doctrine and practice in the light of their understanding of the baptism in the Spirit.

34. THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (2)

Were the four main outpourings, in the Acts, Spirit-baptism?

The outpourings to which we refer are in Acts chapters two, eight, ten and nineteen. There is another outpouring described in Acts chapter four, but this was upon those who were present at Pentecost or received the Spirit around that time, so that the four referred to above are the principal initial events which relate to (a) the Jews, (b) the Samaritans, and (c) the Gentiles. As we have noted, these three groups are mentioned by Jesus in reference to the anticipated Spirit-baptism. The fourth event—the giving of the Spirit to a little group of disciples of John the Baptist—seems somewhat out of context with the others.

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If it is true that the first three outpourings were the opening of the door of the Kingdom to the three racial groups, then, in a sense, the outpourings were three Pentecosts. Almost certainly, Pentecost was the major event which proleptically included the Samaritan and Gentile outpourings. The fourth group was a catch-up of a group of *Jews* who were John's disciples and who (a) had not believed on Christ, and (b) who had not known the Spirit had come. In one sense, they were drawn into the Pentecostal event as much as if they had been included there. It must be stressed they were not direct believers in Christ, but being the disciples of the Baptist may have anticipated his ministry and the coming of the Spirit. Whilst they had answered Paul, 'We had not so much heard that there is a Holy Spirit', it is doubtful whether they meant this literally. It seems almost certain that they meant they had not heard that the Spirit had come. John (the Gospel writer) himself had said 'the Spirit was not yet', meaning he had not yet been given.

John 7:39

The giving of the Spirit, then, happened on three principal occasions, with the fourth being 'an occasion within an occasion', i.e. for Jews alone. This, of course, is not to say that similar outpourings could not have taken place elsewhere, with Jews who had not been at Pentecost, or with Samaritans not at Samaria and Gentiles not at Caesarea. The Spirit may come at any time in his own fashion. We are simply saying that what happened on those occasions is not *necessarily* normative for today.

We have to conclude that the four events were undoubtedly Spirit-baptism even if the first three occasions differed somewhat in significance and context from the fourth.

The modes of Spirit-baptism

We need to state a few ground rules for this part of our investigation. The four occasions mentioned above—no matter what elements they have in common—were not the only times the Spirit was received. From the Acts and the Epistles we can reconstruct a number of events when the Spirit was received. The four mentioned above have at least one thing in common: *all who were baptised received the gift*

of the Spirit with clearly observable manifestations. Others seemed to receive the gift of the Spirit without those phenomena attending which were present in the Acts accounts of Spirit-baptism. This fact will emerge as we examine the events.

Firstly, we look at the need for repentance. John the Baptist stressed repentance with a view to the forgiveness of sins. Repentance must have related to the three universals we have mentioned (forgiveness, the Kingdom, the Spirit-baptism), as they to it. Jesus, too, stressed repentance in relation to the Kingdom, i.e. ' . . .the kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the gospel'. If we put together the sayings in the four Gospels concerning the proclamation, linking them with the first part of chapter one of Acts, then we have virtually the same complex that John outlined, namely Kingdom-forgiveness-the Spirit, and these all relating to repentance. Notice, '...repentance and forgiveness of sins [shall] be preached in his name to all nations. . . [wait] until you are clothed with power from on high', i.e. 'the promise of the Father' (the Spirit).

Mark 1:15

Luke 24:47-49

At Pentecost, the one hundred and twenty assembled there received the Spirit in the outpouring. There is no question of them having to repent, for most would have done this as early as John the Baptist's preaching or as a result of Jesus' ministry. Peter faced a crowd which had not repented in this sense. So they were to repent and be baptised and receive the Spirit, which presumably they did. Note the formula: 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'

Acts 2:38

Peter's second proclamation called for conversion and repentance so that 'times of refreshing may come from. . . the Lord', following the gift of conversion. We may or may not have the right to see 'times of refreshing' as referring to the gift of the Spirit, but certainly those times would not come without the Spirit. When Peter spoke to the Sanhedrin for the second time, his words were clear enough: 'God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are

Acts 3:19

Acts 5:31-32

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Acts 6:7, cf.
II Thess. 1:8,
Rom 10- 16

witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him'. The words 'who obey him', here, must mean 'believe the Gospel'. This is the meaning given to obedience in the next chapter, where it is reported, 'and a great many of the priests were *obedient* to the faith'.

We cannot doubt that Philip's converts came through the doorway of repentance, although the demand of repentance was not made explicitly. Likewise, when Paul preached at Caesarea, he did not demand repentance, but, as we saw, 'God has granted to the Gentiles [the gift of] repentance unto life'. As a matter of fact, we glean the principle in this event at Caesarea, that repentance happens as a response to the Gospel when faith is present.¹ Paul was also commanded to preach repentance to the Gentiles, and this was related to forgiveness. In his own case, Paul's repentance is not in doubt, though not explicitly stated.

Secondly, we look at the need for belief, i.e. faith. Such belief was not explicitly demanded by Peter in his apostolic preaching, but undoubtedly it was required. Here are some of the statements which support this conclusion: 'They who *received his word* were baptised. . .'; '. . . this name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong...'; '...many of those who heard the word believed...'; 'more than ever believers were added to the Lord'.

Acts 2:41, 3:16,
4:4, 5:14

In Philip's case, prior to his converts receiving the Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostles, ' . . . they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. . .' It was when Peter went to Caesarea that he said, 'To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives remission of sins through his name'. In fact, at the moment they receive the promised forgiveness of sins, they receive the Spirit. Paul reminded the Galatians that they received the Spirit by faith, and the same is inferred to the Ephesians:

Acts 8:12

Acts 10 43

¹ The debate as to whether faith precedes repentance or repentance faith should not divert us. It seems, surely, that all the elements of the initiation-complex (conviction, repentance, faith, forgiveness, conversion, etc.) are simultaneous, or elements of the one, whatever time factors may obtain.

' . . . having believed in him [you] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit'. Paul told the Philippian gaoler, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. . .' He develops his great theme of justification by faith in the Roman and Galatian Epistles.

Eph. 1:13
Acts 16:31

Thirdly, we note that forgiveness of sins was received with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is clear in Peter's utterance to the audience at Pentecost. Forgiveness of sins is linked with both the gift of the Spirit and repentance in Peter's second proclamation to the Jews and then in his statement to the Sanhedrin. We can assume that the Samaritans received both forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit, and this without doubt happened in the event at Caesarea. Paul, in relation to his conversion, was told to rise, be baptised—washing away his sins—and be filled with the Spirit. Few would doubt that this order is presupposed in the Epistles.

Acts 9:17, 22:16

In regard to the order of Spirit-baptism then, we can conclude that, although for the one hundred and twenty of the apostolic band the reception of the Spirit must have been primarily for power to witness,¹ yet from that point onwards it was inextricably related to the elements of the conversion complex. This is a most important point if it be true. It must mean that the Spirit came at the point of conversion, and was intimately related to that process. This does not at all deny that he simultaneously came for power also, so that the new converts could witness to Christ; indeed it is undeniable that this was the case.

Acts 1:8, cf.
4:29-33

Fourthly, we note the ways in which the Spirit is said to come to believers.² The terms used, although not wholly synonymous, are mostly interchangeable. *At Pentecost the event happened which Jesus spoke of as being 'baptised in the Holy Spirit'. The origin was heaven ('a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind');* the *extent* was that

Acts 2:2-4

¹ Cf. Sections 31 and 32, 'The Spirit and the Power'.

² See Acts 2:38, 10:43-44, 11:17-18, 9:18 with 22:16, Gal. 3:1-3, 13-14. In these and other related references, listeners hear the Gospel, believe on Christ for salvation, and receive the Spirit.

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it 'filled all the house'; whilst the *mode* was 'tongues of fire', distributed and resting on each one of them'. The *consequence* was (a) 'they were all *filled* with the Holy Spirit' and (b) 'began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance'. Peter explained that Christ, 'having received from the Father the promised Spirit...has poured forth this...' Later, Peter spoke of Pentecost as the point where the Jews received *the gift* given by God.

Acts 11.17

At *Samaria* the new believers had not received the Spirit, 'for it had not *yet fallen* on any of them'. The apostles laid hands on them 'and they *received* the Holy Spirit'. It was something which could be *seen*: '...Simon *saw* that the Holy Spirit was *given* through the laying on of the apostles' hands. . . ' At *Caesarea*, 'the Holy Spirit *fell* on all who heard the word'; 'the gift of the Spirit *had been poured out*. . . on the Gentiles' and ' . . . the Holy Spirit *fell on them* just as on us at the beginning [Pentecost]'. Later, Peter described it as giving 'the same *gift* to them as he gave to us'.

Acts 8:15 18

Acts 10:44-45

Acts 11:15

Acts 11:17

Acts 9:17

Rom. 5:5

II Cor. 1:22

Gal. 3:2, 14

I Peter 1 12

II Tim. 1:14

Rom. 13:9-11

To Paul, it was said simply, ' . . . you may. . . *be filled* with the Holy Spirit'. In the Epistles are found these descriptions: ' . . .the Holy Spirit who *was given* to us'; ' . . .*given us his* Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee'; ' . . . *receive* the Spirit . . . by the hearing of faith'; ' . . . might *receive* the promise of the Spirit through faith'. Peter speaks of ' . . . the Holy Spirit sent from heaven'. Again, Paul speaks of '...the Holy Spirit who dwells within us', and says in the same vein, '...the Spirit of God dwells in you', adding, 'Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'. His meaning in these three statements is that believers *have received* the Holy Spirit. Indeed, many more of his references to the action of the Spirit in the believer likewise presuppose possession of the Spirit. He says clearly, '...God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts...'

Gal. 4:6

I John 3:24

I John 4:13

1 John 2:20,, 27

John says, 'And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which *he has given us*', and 'By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because *he has given us* of his own Spirit'. He also speaks of believers having been 'anointed by the Holy One', and adds, 'the anointing which you have received from him abides in you'. This anointing is undoubtedly that of the Holy Spirit, for he links it with

having received the truth and says, later, 'And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is truth'. For John, to have the truth is to have the Spirit, and to have the Spirit is to have the truth.

A conclusion as to the gift of the Spirit

We have to conclude, then, that not to have the Holy Spirit is not to belong to God. Paul says, ' . . . the natural [*psychical* = unspiritual] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him'. Jude speaks of ' . . . worldly [natural = unspiritual] people devoid of the Spirit'. Jesus says 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. There is no question: for 'any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him', and '...no one can say, "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit'. One cannot have the truth apart from 'the anointing' and no one can have 'the anointing' apart from possession of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 2:14

Jude 19 John 3:5-6

Rom. 8:9
1 Cor. 12:3

Most believers would agree that the conclusions reached in the paragraph above are true. What puzzles many is that where there is a claim to have the gift of the Spirit, there often seems to be a contradiction of life in the Spirit, i.e. so many who assume that they have the gift of the Spirit would appear to be mainly devoid of 'the harvest of the Spirit', and lack power that is said to come to the children of God when they are baptised in the Spirit.

These are the points we go on to discuss in our next section.

35. FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (1)

The principle of fullness

The French theologian F. Godet once said, 'Man is a vessel destined to be filled by God, and as he is filled, so he expands, and as he expands so he is filled'.¹ Man *qua* man is only such when completely filled. God formed him of the

¹ I have, unfortunately, lost the reference.

dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living being. In his rejection of God, man became empty. That vacuum was immediately filled. If it is true that 'nature abhors a vacuum' then it is no less true that man himself abhors a vacuum. He is made to be full: ' . . . he [God] has put eternity [the world] into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end'.

Ecc. 3:11

Rom. 1:29-30

Col. 2:10

Col. 1:19

Eph. I :23

Paul says of sinful men, 'They *were filled* with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. *Full* of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity. . .' The Scriptures speak of people being filled with wrath, with fury, with sorrow and with joy. Believers 'come to fullness of life in him' (Christ) because 'in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily'. Paul, in speaking of Christ, refers to his 'fullness...who fills all in all', and says that he ascended to heaven after his descent 'that he might fill all things'. Because of the fall, all things are 'empty', the creation having been subject to emptiness (*mataisteti*)¹ or vanity. It is waiting for the liberation into utter fullness.

Eph. 4:10

Rom. 8:20

Paul is greatly occupied with the thought of fullness, whether it be God's, Christ's, man's or creation's. For Christ to fill up all things is to give them their functional fullness, to harmonise, unify and complete. In one passage he prays for the Spirit to strengthen the believer inwardly that Christ may dwell in the heart, that true knowledge of love may come, and that the person (or persons) 'may be filled *unto all the fullness of God*'. This very rich concept reveals the true nature of man. As we have suggested above, he is not man when he is not filled with God. He cannot rightly be filled with man. He may be filled with pleasures, with possessions, with ambitions, and with illicit loves, but far from filling (completing) him, they empty him of his true being.

Eph. 3: 16-19

We may assume then, that man is a creature who requires filling by some thing or other. Properly speaking, he must be filled by God and with God's fullness. In practice, all

¹ Translated as 'futility', 'frustration', it parallels the 'all is wind' of Ecclesiastes, i.e. 'vanity'. The creation temporarily is unable to fulfil its functional operations, due to the fall of man and the consequent inhibitions laid on it.

human creatures seek to fill up 'the God-shaped blank' with one thing or another. When we understand man as *nephesh* (soul), i.e. as total person, himself, and unique, then we must understand that he *is ruach* (spirit) but needs the *Ruach (pneuma)* of God to be fully himself. Somewhere, his will must desire God and not something that is a substitute for God. (Any substitute is of course an idol.) But filled he must be, whether with wickedness, fury and jealousy, or love, joy and peace.

Fullness comes from and by the Spirit

Paul has a significant saying, i.e. 'the supply of the Spirit'. The genitive here can be either a subjective or objective genitive. If it is the former then it means, 'that which the Spirit supplies', and if the latter then, 'the Spirit who is supplied'. The Spirit is supplied by the Father and he comes to fill the recipient. But he also fills the recipient from himself. Being the sevenfold Spirit, he can supply things such as wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Being the prophetic Spirit, he can give guidance for the present and hope for the future. As the Spirit who produces his harvest or fruit, he can supply the materials for moral living. From him come the gifts, which may be either what we would describe as natural and creational, or what we would call spiritual. There are gifts of worship and service. He supplies skills and abilities as he did to Bezalel and Oholiab. Most—and best—of all, he is the one who, being Spirit with our spirits, can aid us in our fellowship with God. We can worship *in Spirit* and *in truth*, he—the Spirit—being the truth. Phil. 1:19

All this is just another way of saying that all of those elements which fill and delight a man's spirit can come to him either through an inrush of the Spirit, or through the habitual and functional presence of the Spirit, keeping him—albeit very calmly and quietly—at full pitch as a person. Thus we can be filled with joy, abrim with love, flooded with praise, awash with adoration, and full of power to witness to Christ. In this, we are not going beyond what it is to be a true human being, but, in fact, reaching up to what is truly natural for us to be.

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Gal. 3:5

Therefore, when Paul says, 'that which the Spirit supplies', he means man's needs are supplied through the Spirit. He also speaks of God 'who goes on supplying the Spirit',¹ meaning that even though we have once received the Spirit and possess him as a gift, we need to see him as constantly coming from the Father to us; otherwise there could be presumption on our part.² Whilst in one sense we 'possess' the Spirit, in another way the Spirit possesses us. If we are the children of God, then we are willing to be led by him. In any case, we cannot use him. We must be led by him, and walk by him. Whilst this relationship obtains, then there is habitual fullness of life through the Spirit. Should we grieve him or quench his ministry, then we will feel the fullness of life diminish, even to seeming emptiness. We must grasp the principle that our life in the Spirit is a relationship with him. Relationships are contingent upon will, and where our wills are gladly aligned to his, then life will be full and the relationship will be rich. Where we seek to live autonomously, and plough our own furrow, then we will again experience the futility and vanity of human existence, although this will not mean that the Spirit has departed from us.

Let us see then, that the living fullness of our beings is always dependent upon the Spirit. Once come, he will not depart, but he can be one whom we mostly ignore, or whom we do not fully respect and obey. That he comes to us in the grace of God, bringing the supply of our needs, ought not to encourage presumption.

Fullness that is initial

We have seen that the Holy Spirit comes upon a person (falls, alights, baptises, fills, is given, received) for certain reasons. In the Old Testament, the visitation of the Spirit could be—as in the case of Moses and Joshua—for a task that would be continual. In the case of Bezalel and Oholiab,

¹ It is possible that Paul is referring to the gift of the Spirit as a believer would initially receive him, but, even so, what I have said above is still valid. We are dependent upon the Father for the Spirit to remain with us.

² David prayed, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me'. Whilst this is not a prayer we need to pray today, we should not *presume upon* the continuing presence of the Spirit, although we may gratefully *assume* his continuing presence.

we assume it was for that period in which they would do the work of artificers. Prophets would know the Spirit for their ministry of prophecy. David the king was anointed for the task of kingship, and dreaded the Spirit being taken from him. In the New Testament, the unique thing about Jesus—according to John—was that the Spirit *remained* on him. Also he was not given to Jesus 'by measure'.¹

John 1:33
John 3:34

Without doubt, the Spirit was given permanently to each recipient at Pentecost, and in this era of the Spirit, we expect the gift of the Spirit never to be recalled. This, of course, implies obedience to the Spirit. What mainly concerns us is the way in which the Spirit comes to one who believes. We saw the modes of his coming to the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles. We need to see how he came to persons, and Peter's formula for this (if we may call it that) was to repent, be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and thus to receive the Spirit. The Epistles, on the whole, would appear to confirm this. So having faith, repenting, and receiving the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification and sonship all went along with the reception of the Spirit. This is clear in the case of the apostle Paul, and is set out in this way in his teaching.

Is it as clear that others such as the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian gaoler and Lydia all received the Spirit? The Ethiopian 'went on his way rejoicing', the gaoler 'rejoiced with all his house' and Lydia had her heart opened by the Lord to give heed to all that Paul said. Were they then not 'rejoicing in the Spirit'? Surely they were. When Paul said, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to him', did he not mean there were signs and evidence of the presence of the Spirit? Writing to the Galatians he did not ask, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit?' but 'Did you receive the Spirit *by* works of the law or *by* the hearing of faith?'. They had received the Spirit; they knew that and so did he. He had seen it happen; they knew it had happened. We can be clear then, that all believers have an initial reception of the Spirit and it would be normative on that

¹ Some exegetes see that the Father does not give the Spirit 'by measure' to Jesus, and some that Jesus does not give the Spirit 'by measure' to his people. In any case, this must mean that Jesus does not receive the Spirit as measured out to him.

reception to be filled with the Spirit.¹

In speaking of the initial filling we can make one of two mistakes. We can say it is no filling unless it fits what we see to be the pattern in the Book of Acts, or we can say that the reception of the Spirit does not necessarily mean an infilling by the Spirit. We make these mistakes because we either stereotype the pattern and mode of the Spirit's coming, or because working back from our present situation to the apostolic days, we assume people can be converted without having an inrush or anointing of the Spirit. Without entering into this debate, we must admit that—apart from the peculiar situation at Samaria—all who believed received this Spirit. This was normative and must still be normative. Doubtless, many will protest at such a conclusion *because their own experience* tells them something else.

36. FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (2)

Fullness that is habitual

When a crisis arose in the daily distribution to the needy in the church, the apostles who had shared in the serving at tables demanded that the church search out seven men, 'of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom'. We could argue that if all the men were filled with the Spirit there would be no need to mention this characteristic. Perhaps all were full

¹ It is unprofitable for us to stereotype the matter of the initial reception of the Spirit. At Pentecost—doubtless because of its unique nature—the 120 had a special mode of reception. There is no account of how the 3,000 who were baptised received the Spirit. But there is no doubt that they did. Had their reception of the Spirit been dramatic we could assume that Luke would have described it. Luke is not interested in describing the events of Paul, the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian gaoler and others, in regard to their reception of the Spirit. What cannot be doubted is that they did receive the Spirit. It is argued by some that there were those who received the Spirit but were not 'baptised' or 'filled', i.e. the Spirit did not fall on them. We have no evidence for this, and we cannot argue from silence. Probably we are trying to rationalise the many situations in church life today when so many who call themselves Christian give little—if any evidence of the present of the Spirit and of power to witness, proclaim the Gospel, and live in the dynamics of interrelational love, worship and service. There are, of course, explanations for this state of things, but we must never work back, from what seems anomalous, to the New Testament church.

but may have lacked 'good repute' and 'wisdom'! In any case, they found seven such people. Stephen is mentioned as 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'. Barnabas is also called a man 'full of the Spirit and faith'. The seven (and Barnabas) would be no more 'full' than the apostles, and so we assume the apostles were also *habitually* filled with the Spirit.

Being habitually filled with the Spirit would appear to be the norm for all Christians. Paul's injunctions such as 'Go on being filled with the Spirit', and 'Be aglow with the Spirit', as well as 'Be . . . led by the Spirit' and 'Walk in the Spirit', would indicate that he expected this for all believers. When we examine the reasons for being filled with the Spirit, such as power to witness to Christ, the life of love, unity and fellowship, the continuing exercise of worship and service, and the use of gifts for the profit of the community, then we can see the need for being filled habitually.

One very powerful indication of habitual filling is the Pauline use of the phrase 'a spirit of. . .' He speaks of 'a spirit of faith', 'a spirit of gentleness', 'a spirit of wisdom and of revelation' and 'a spirit of power and love and self-control'. He also speaks of *not* having received *a* spirit of slavery, but *a* spirit of sonship'. On any reckoning, faith, gentleness, wisdom, revelation, love, power, self-control and sonship are *all* contained in the Holy Spirit and communicated to the recipient of the Spirit. How then can one be said to have *a* spirit of one or other (or all) of these things?

The answer is that the Spirit brings these elements to us as gifts, but *we must habituate them* in our lives. This is done by the aid of the Spirit but it requires the exercise of our wills, and the *constant practice* of the element under consideration. One then develops 'a spirit' from the aid of 'the Spirit'. Practice habituates. For example, the context in which Paul speaks of having 'a spirit of faith' shows us that he was under constant pressure of opposition, persecution and the like. By his continual exposure to such experiences and by his habitual overcoming of them in Christ's strength, an habitual spirit of faith was developed.

We conclude that none of these things could be habitually

Eph. 5:18
Rom. 12:1-1
Gal. 5:16-18

II Cor. 4:13,
I Cor. 4:21,
Gal. 6:1,
Eph. 1:17,
11 Tim. 1:7

Rom. 8:15

II Cor. 4:7-14

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 practised and developed without the habitual fullness of the Spirit.

Intermittent fillings of the Spirit

Doubtless, the one habitually filled with the Spirit will experience a *variety of* gifts, operations and other elements of the Spirit. We might even call these regular elements. However, there are times of high crisis, when more of the Spirit—so to speak—will be necessary. This is shown in the Book of the Acts. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and, without doubt, continued to be habitually filled.¹ When he was hauled before the Sanhedrin he faced a crisis. Luke says, 'Then Peter, *filled* with the Holy Spirit', addressed the Council with boldness. It would appear that Stephen was specially 'full of the Holy Spirit' as he looked into heaven and saw the Son of man. He needed such fullness for the martyrdom which was upon him, for he died a most glorious death. Paul—an habitually filled man—also faced a crisis on the island of Cyprus, and at that point, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and resolved the crisis.

Acts 4:8

Acts 7:55

Acts 13:8-10

Acts 4:23-33

Even more significant was the occasion when the apostles returned from the Sanhedrin, having been threatened if they preached Christ. The whole church prayed to the Lord, not specifically for an infilling of the Spirit—for had they not all been filled at Pentecost or on later occasions when they had believed?—but for *empowerment* of the apostles. Suddenly, the place was shaken and *all* were filled with the Holy Spirit, the result of which was (a) total love in the whole community, and (b) the dynamic witness to the Resurrection by the apostles.

We conclude, then, that whereas there is—or should be—an initial infilling of the Spirit at conversion, and there should be an habitual daily or momentary infilling, yet also there are special fillings (so to speak) for special occasions.

¹ Was Peter still filled with the Spirit around the time when Paul confronted him at Antioch? He (Peter) had broken off table-fellowship with the Gentile Christians when the Judaisers had come from Jerusalem. We surely see this as an occasion grieving to the Spirit. Assuming Peter's acceptance of Paul's rebuke and his sorrow over the matter, we would conclude that Peter was freshly filled with the Spirit through the prevailing grace of God.

Paul's exhortations, 'Go on being filled with the Spirit', 'Grieve not the Spirit' and 'Quench not the Spirit' imply that there can be hiatuses in the regular infilling of the Spirit. These put aside, habitual and special infillings can take place.

The fullness that is missing

We now face the anomaly of life, or much of it, in the church today. Do we see rich evidences of men and women living in the fullness of the Spirit? Is there 'the community of love, of worship, witness, proclamation and service'? Do we see both the power and the fruit of the Spirit? Is the consciousness of Christ's Sonship, the Father's Fatherhood, and the Lordship of Jesus strongly evident? On the contrary, do we not often see apathy and lethargy, and church more cultural and social than dynamic and radical? Are we not often churches of committees and methodologies, patterns and systems, rather than communities of the Holy Spirit?

Can we wonder, then, that many critics have suggested that the Spirit has left some churches? Can we not understand why people are prevailed upon—urgently—to be baptised in the Spirit? Is not much of our Christian living bland and ineffective? The dogmatic insistence of 'Well, I believed, so I must have the Spirit' betrays the person. He is not sure on personal grounds, but only on what he believes the Scriptures tell him. When Paul says that we are not Christ's if we do not have the Spirit, he surely means that there are observable elements which fulfil the criteria of having the Spirit, criteria such as we mention above.

Church history shows us that when a Luther, a Calvin or a Wesley arises, it is because he has rediscovered the power of the Word and has been visited by the Spirit. When revival comes, it is not a happening beyond the norm of Christian living, but an event which *restores* the normal life of the church. Unfortunately, we accept the sub-normal as the normal, and any special visitation of the Spirit seems temporary and exceptional. These visitations of God bring extraordinary sensitivity to sin, careless living and spiritual deadness.

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The Spirit of truth moves with power and a radical restoration to true life is effected. *The way is again made open to the people of God to know the habitual infilling of the Spirit*, the resumption of true living.

There is no doubt whatever, from a reading of the Epistles and the second and third chapters of the Revelation, that the early church had many who—far from being aglow with the Spirit and knowing his habitual infilling—were fleshly, rebellious, unspiritual, given over to pleasure, seeking their own, factious and self-indulgent. They had, undoubtedly, once known a rich infilling, but now showed little or no signs of a life led by the Spirit. As then, so now. We need to be those constantly filled by the Spirit.

How, then, are we filled with and by the Spirit?

The knowledge of how we are filled initially and continually by the Spirit is valuable, for it enables us to live a life that is habitually full. When we use the word 'knowledge', we do not mean the result of an examination of the observable data. The filling of the Spirit is not a mere *datum* (given fact) but a *donum* (gift, a thing given). The New Testament does not speak so much about *how* we receive the Spirit as it does about the fact that God (the Father and the Son) *gives* the Spirit. Even so we can draw many valuable *data* in our looking for the *donum*.

Luke 11:13

Jesus put it simply to his disciples: '[Shall not your] heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' At the same time, they were men who had joined him because John the Baptist had said, ' . . . he [Jesus] will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire'.

Luke 3:16

They had also wanted the coming of the Kingdom, and he had twice encouraged them, once by saying, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom', and again with 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me'. He saw his disciples as men who desired the things God had promised by his prophets.

Luke 12:32

Luke 22:28-29

Matt. 5:6

Jesus also taught the principle, 'They who hunger and thirst . . . shall be filled'. To find a human being in this state

of hunger and thirst is in itself a wonderful thing. He had taught them along with this, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you', and 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'.

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Matt. 6:33

Matt. 7:7

By the day and time of Pentecost, the apostles and the small band of believers had been through much suffering. The sight of their resurrected Lord had revived them from their sorrow and fear. His words on the Kingdom and his renewal of the promise of Spirit-baptism had set their hearts beating in renewed anticipation. Not one of them was unaware of the coming confrontation with the Jews, and Jesus had taught them of the persecution which would come 'for the Kingdom of heaven's sake'. We can imagine their state of mind, their clear mind-set about the coming gift of the Spirit. We can see that, having received him, they would still need his inflow daily. He came as a rushing mighty wind at Pentecost, and then fell on them when the house shook on that later occasion. Various apostles received—so to speak—'super-fillings', (i.e. beyond the habitual level but springing from it) for highly critical situations. It seemed to be that they were continually in the mind-set of living in the Spirit, i.e. being led by him, walking in him, deriving their life from him.

How then can we also live in habitual fullness? Paul's injunctions to go on being filled, to be aglow with the Spirit, walk in him, live in him and be led by him, all presuppose the obedience of love. When Peter told the Sanhedrin that he gives his Holy Spirit to them that obey, he did not mean that when we have achieved a life of habitual obedience, then God will give his Spirit. We cannot, in fact, be obedient without the presence of the Spirit! In the context in which Peter was speaking, those 'who obey' meant those who 'obey the Gospel'. To obey the Gospel is to believe it, and the Acts and the Epistles strongly indicate that that is what is required of us.

Acts 5:32

So then, we receive the Spirit by believing the Gospel—a fact we have already seen. Continual obedience is the key to

They wage a war against evil. They allow themselves—from time to time—to be betrayed by the flesh. Yet there is restoration, and the teaching about it in the New Testament is clear. Grace covers not only sins before regeneration, but the sins of the believer. One can become dull in the Spirit through sin, through the deceit of evil, through grieving and quenching the Spirit, but grace can restore a million-fold, and does!

What then, is the simple recipe for being continually filled with the Spirit? The answer is, 'Be sure that you are aware of what being filled with the Spirit entails, i.e. persecution, hardship, strong demands of suffering where one part of us longs for ease, pleasure and human acceptance. Know that the Spirit is present for power to witness to Jesus, to effect love, fellowship, unity, true sonship of the Father, true submission to Christ's Lordship, fearless proclamation of the Gospel, untiring doing of good to all men, and the acceptance of the fierce hatred of sinful men and evil creatures. Know that the life of the Spirit will lead to the deep things of God, the encouragement of hope, the vibrancy of ministry, the character of Christ. Know, then, the difficult things and the wonderful things and say, "These are what I want. I shrink from nothing that brings suffering. I am glad of the good things of God". It is in this context, when we are in this state of mind, that the Spirit comes to us habitually, and brings his vast supplies of power, love, and enablement for the difficult times'.

We conclude, then, that the continual infilling of us by the Spirit is mandatory. We must be filled. It is indispensable: we cannot do without his presence and power. We cannot witness, pray, praise, encourage others, fight spiritual warfare, and live in hope of the new creation unless he is continually present, and we continually relate to him.

THE SPIRIT AND THE ESCHATON

37. THE SPIRIT AND 'THINGS TO COME' (1)

The eschatological Spirit

Jesus told the apostles, ' . . . he will declare to you the things that are to come'. In the context in which he uttered these words, he was speaking about (a) the Spirit convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgement, (b) the Spirit leading the apostles (and thus the church) into all the truth, and (c) the revelation of both Father and Son, thereby showing their glory. These three elements are closely linked to the guiding and prophetic work of the Spirit. Ultimately, the glory of the Father and the Son will be shown, i.e. in the eschaton, the new age, but here the Spirit is already showing that glory. Doubtless, this is both by the revelation of the truth of the Father and the Son, and the showing forth of their work yet to be done. The 'things to come' of which he spoke then, are the events of the Cross and the Resurrection, with their implications for 'all the truth', and also future events connected with that truth. The Spirit has always been the eschatological Spirit.

Christ's predictive instruction is borne out at Pentecost. Peter, quoting Joel, says,

'And in the last days. . . I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy... yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy'.

John 16:13

Acts 2:17-18,
cf Joel 2:28f.

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*The new community then is the prophetic community.*¹ We have seen that it is this not merely by predictive prophecy—although that element is included—but by giving the testimony of Jesus which is the Spirit of prophecy. The prophetic community is hortatory in its life as well as its words. Paul gives a window into this when he says,

1 Cor. 14:23 25

'If therefore the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God, and declare that God is really among you'.

We notice that Joel and Peter refer to 'the last days'. The Spirit is poured out in the aeon of the last days, leading to 'that great and notable day of the Lord', i.e. the day of the Lord or the end-time. Jesus, Joel and Paul connect the Spirit with these days and the end-time.

The Spirit of prophecy

1 Cor. 2:10

Pointing to what will be in the glorification of man, Paul says, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit'.

This, of course, is telling us 'things to come', as though they were now here. Also, this is what we would expect of the Spirit because there is no prophecy apart from him, as we have previously seen. The first prophet was Abel, and doubtless his prophetic ministry—as the voice of God—was confronting and threatening to Cain. Enoch was a prophet and foretold the end things:

¹ Gerhard Friedrich (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. VI, p. 849; Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968) has the following comment: 'Ace. to Acts. 2:4; 4:31 all are filled with the prophetic Spirit and ace. to Acts. 2:16ff. it is a specific mark of the age of fulfilment that the Spirit does not only lay hold of individuals but that all members of the eschatological community without distinction are called to prophesy. In Corinth there was obviously a greater number of prophets, for those who spoke at divine service had to be limited to two or three, I C. 14:29. In spite of this, Paul urges the Corinthians to strive after the *charisma* of prophecy, I C. 14:1, 5, 12, 39. It is not a gift for the chosen few. It can be imparted to any man even though in practice it may be limited to a comparatively small circle.'

'It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads, to execute judgement on all, and to convict au the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."'

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Jude 14-15

The whole prophetic series has been oriented to 'things to come', whether they be in the immediate foreground, or predicted of the last times. In one sense, the moment human history begins, it is all eschatological, especially if we understand the biblical meaning of hope. However, the best way to look at these things is to see the Spirit not only in a predictive role, but as the Lord of life and creation, shaping up history—with the Father and the Son—to its destined end. This is how we began our book, and this is what we must emphasise to the last. The Lord the Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy because he is the Spirit of history.¹ We see this because he works from creation to the new creation, from giving life to creation to giving eternal life in the new creation. Creation and redemption must be seen as in the one bundle, and both must be understood in the light of the goal of God, which he has planned. This puts the entire work of the Spirit in time into its true perspective. We do not, then, have a curious dispensational **view which makes** the Spirit act differently in different epochs, but rather we see a processive progression operating in and through all the epochs until they climax in the end-time.

The eschatological Spirit in the 'now-time'

The 'now-time' is really 'the last days' and is summed up powerfully in Paul's words:

'Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. "For God has put all things in subjec-

1 Cor. 15:24-28

¹ We repeat that the O.T. books from Joshua to Nehemiah were known as 'the Former Prophets' to the Jews because history—especially as recorded by these godly writers—was known to be prophetic i.e. the work and truth or God communicated to man, especially man under the covenant of God.

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Rev. 11:15

tion under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection under him," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one'.

This is the programme on which Christ and his church are working at the moment. Revelation speaks of the kingdom of this world having become the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ and that he (God) shall reign for ever. In other words, the work listed by Jesus ' . . . amongst all nations. . . ', '...Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the end of the earth', constitutes the range of what is happening in the now-time with a view to the end-time. In this work, the Spirit is paramount. It is he who is drawing the age to a close.

Once we understand this principle, we can then understand why the Spirit is the Spirit of the church, the Spirit of witness, the Spirit of proclamation, and the Spirit of warfare, i.e. warfare with the powers of evil whom Christ is overcoming. We can see his part in the outworking of God's plan in the 'now-time', which climaxes in the end-time. Thus nothing that happens in the internal life of the church is unrelated to the plan, just as nothing that is in the external life of the church is irrelevant to the completion of that plan.

Phil. 2: 10-11

We need to keep in mind that all this includes the bringing of the nations to the feet of Christ, when 'every knee [shall] bow. . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'. This is 'the obedience of faith...among all the nations' of which Paul speaks. It is likewise the climax when the Kingdom shall be shown to have triumphed and when the people of God will inherit and enter it. We now see, as a whole, the work of the Spirit.

Rom. 1 :5

38. THE SPIRIT AND 'THINGS TO COME' (2)

The Spirit of hope

Hope is a great theme in the Scriptures. The writer of Hebrews links faith and hope, for 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for'. In fact, hope itself is a fixed assurance

that what God has promised he will fulfil. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of hope, as Paul states so powerfully: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope' .

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Rom. 15:13

In this letter to the Romans, Paul has already said, ' . . . we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God', and adds, ' . . . hope does not disappoint us, because the love of God has been flooded into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us'. In yet another Romans utterance, he says, 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you'. In other words, when the Spirit dwells in persons, he does not leave them; he assures them of resurrection—however he may do that!

Rom. 5:5

Rom. 8:11

Again Paul tells the Galatians, 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness [justification]'. He means that, whilst justification is a present reality, it is not fully known until the eschaton. The Spirit keeps the believer reassured through hope. Yet it is a broader hope than justification. It is the hope of all things being liberated from their slavery to corruption; it is the hope of glory; it is the hope of being released into the glorious liberty of the sons of God which the Spirit brings to the believer. Peter calls the Holy Spirit 'the Spirit of glory', and Paul says that we groan convulsively in this age, waiting for our sonship to be fulfilled. We do this only by the aid of the Spirit of hope. Were the Spirit not with us, we would feel hopeless. As it is—in this anticipation of hope—we are too weak to know how to pray in respect of it, but the Spirit intercedes within us 'with unutterable groanings'. In this way he keeps us alive in hope.

Gal. 5:5

I Peter 4:14

Rom. 8:18-25

When we examine the hope, we find it to be a full one. It is trust in the fulfilment of all that God has promised and it includes resurrection, glorification, eternal life, entrance into the Kingdom of God, the liberty of sonship, and the inheritance of all things. The vastness of all this requires the Spirit to keep us assured in hope. This is an internal work he does, but he does it also by giving us an earnest, a part of

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II Cor 3:18
Rom. 8:23
Eph. 4:10

what will be. Paul tells us we are being changed from one stage of glory to another—now! He tells us we have the first fruits of the Spirit, i.e. samples of the ultimate harvest. We are sealed by the Spirit with a view to the day of redemption, meaning we have God's mark of ownership now.

In every way, and in a manner related to our present living, the Spirit keeps hope alive in us.

The Spirit of the end things

We have already made some reference to this function of the Spirit. What God has commenced in creation he completes in the new creation. The first is with a view to the latter: God had always planned the fulfilment of creation, setting that completion in the end-time. So the Spirit—like the Father—is 'from first to last', 'the beginning and the end'. This is why he moves across the face of the deep in the primaeval act of creation. It is also why he moves across 'the deep' of history, and is found at the end—in John's prophecy—saying, with the Bride, 'Come!' His invitation is to those who thirst to drink at living waters. It is also an exhortation to the glorified Christ to come and take up his reign.

Within the wonderful things of the end-time are the grim ones also, namely the acts of judgement. It is the Spirit who shows John the Seer the things leading up to, and within, the eschaton. Nothing that the church needs to know is omitted, the Spirit taking John thoroughly through the acts of God as he draws history to a close. Often, as we read, we see lightnings and hear thunders, we sense earthquakes and feel convulsive movements both in heaven and on earth. We saw earlier that 'the Holy Spirit and fire' are the elements into which the church is baptised. In Isaiah, the Spirit is 'the spirit of judgement and the spirit of burning'. John the Baptist warns his hearers that this judgement will come upon them if they do not repent. Later, Jesus speaks of the Spirit convicting men and women of judgement 'because the ruler of this world is judged'. In this sense, then, the Spirit is the Spirit of judgement.

We have also quoted previously that Messiah, when he comes, will have the sevenfold Spirit upon him and, conse-

Isa 4-4, cf. 9:5

John 16:11,
cf. 12:31

quently, '...he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath [*ruach*, Spirit] of his lips he shall slay the wicked'. It is to this breath that Paul later refers in the context of judgement: '...then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath [*pneuma*, Spirit] of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming'.

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Isa. 11:4

II Thess. 2:8

The psalmist refers to judgement in some powerful figurative language, and speaks of the 'channels of the sea' being seen and the 'foundations of the world' being laid bare, 'at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath [*ruach*] of thy nostrils'. In the same **Psalm he says**, 'Smoke went up from his nostrils, and **devouring fire** from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him'.

Psa. 18:15

Psa. 18:8

Joel—as quoted by Peter—links the outpouring of the Spirit with (i) *the last days*, and (ii) *the last day*, the day of the Lord, preceded by and attended with supernatural signs and wonders:

' . . . I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, *the great and manifest day*'.

Acts 2:18-19,
Joel 2:29-30

The idea of fire testing and judging is often used in Scripture and it is reasonable to see this as the ministry of the Spirit in judgement. We need to see—against the accusation of critical humans and evil powers—that God's judgements are 'true and righteous altogether'. Paul says these judgements are 'according to the truth'. This is why the Spirit is linked with judgement, because he is the Spirit of truth. In any case, it is inconceivable that the Spirit should be in all things from creation to the new creation and not be present in the judgements.

Psa. 19:9,

Rev. 19:2
Rom. 2:2

He is the Spirit of judgement by which history is sealed after a holy manner. Yet judgement is never a thing in itself. It is only with a view to the renewal of the heavens and the earth so that they are new, and in them is only righteousness. The creation having been liberated, all the elements and fruit of the Spirit become wholly apparent and operative. The ultimate order of things is love, joy and peace, with

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man in the new creation constituting a royal priesthood, i.e. a priestly kingship.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

39. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (1) VARIOUS ELEMENTS

We have already examined the Spirit as 'the Lord and giver of life' in his work of giving life to persons who are in a state of mortality, and in giving corporate life to the church. That life, we saw, issues in witness and proclamation to the world, and in true unity, in true social relationships of love and fellowship within the church. In describing these elements, we inevitably touched on the work of the Spirit in regenerating persons, and their subsequent life and action within the church and the world. Now we wish to look more closely at life as it is lived in the Spirit.

The initial salvific complex

We know that conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement is the work of the Spirit of truth, and from this he leads on to repentance, faith and conversion. In conversion, the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification and sanctification are received. The gift of the Spirit is eternal life, and this comes with the Spirit himself. So also does love and other gifts of the Spirit, for the benefit of the church and the world.

All of these gifts result in the liberation of the recipient from 'the law of sin and death'. He is now a person who is free, for 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom'. This is not merely a subjective feeling, although it may

Rom. 8:2
II Cor. 3:17

include that. One has been freed by the Spirit through the Gospel.

Life as children of God

1 John 3:1 John the apostle marvels at the gift of sonship. He says, 'See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; *and so we are*'. Paul marvels no less. He says, 'God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, "Abba! Father!" ' In Gal. 4:6 another place he adds, 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God'. We remember that Jesus was led by the Spirit of God, as the Son. In the same place Paul adds, 'For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God'. Rom 8:14

Rom 8:15- 16

Here the amazing thing is that the Spirit is 'the Spirit of his Son', i.e. the Spirit by whom the Son knew, exercised and lived in Sonship *as a man!* That very Sonship passes into us through the Spirit, so that rather than us being made responsible to produce the actions of sonship, or even the entity of sonship, these are present through the Spirit of (Christ's) Sonship. In practice, this means that we so participate in and draw from Christ's Sonship, that we can be the children of God. Apart from the Spirit, none of this would be possible.

We cannot here enter into all the implications of being sons of God by the Spirit, but they are many. They affect us in the reality of human sonship of our parents, in true familial relationships and the discovering of God's true paternal care for us. Being God's sons also has links with the image of man and woman, and their mutual relationships. Perhaps the richest element of sonship is fellowship with the Father, and so glad conformity to his will, along with the emotional fulfilment that every human being needs. There is a 'Father-shaped blank' in every human being, and until the Spirit shows the Father (through the Son) we can never come to know the full nature of God, i.e. as Creator, Redeemer and Father. Then, and only then, is the 'Father-shaped

blank' filled—with his Fatherhood! All relationships stem from the Father, 'from whom the whole [every] family in heaven and on earth is named'. This is the Father who is 'above all, and through all, and in all'.

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That our sonship is continually contingent upon the Spirit is seen by Paul's statement, 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God'. Sonship of God means many things, and obedience is not the least of these. Filial obedience is better than the obedience which slaves and servants are forced to give. Christ is the paradigm of true sonship, and to be partakers in his Sonship is to live as he lived. Hence Paul's injunction, 'Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us. . .'

Rom. 8:14

Eph. 5:1-2

One other element which is most important in sonship is that we are relationally integrated. Not only are we emotionally satisfied in the Fatherhood, but we are also functionally secure. We have direction; we are in the Father's will, and hence we pray, 'Our Father. . . thy will be done'. We know that the King of the Kingdom is the Father. We are not as orphans. Indeed we are now 'family', and this rich context of life has been made real to us by the Holy Spirit.

Life under Lordship

Man's insecurity lies in trying to live independently of God. Jeremiah said, '. . .the way of man is not in himself . . .it is not in man . . . to direct his own footsteps'. The writer of Proverbs has much to say about being directed by God. The new man needs Lordship for direction in life, for the life of vocation, and for the fullness of service. 'No one can say, "Jesus is Lord!" except by the Holy Spirit'. It is also true that when the Spirit is present one cannot but say, 'Jesus is Lord!'

Jer. 10:23

I Cor. 12:3

This Lordship is a joyous thing. There is nothing grim and authoritarian about Christ's leadership. His service is perfect freedom, and this fact and sense of freedom the Spirit has brought to the children of God. Christ leads the Messianic battle against the foes of God and the Gospel. Obedience is not a dreary moral stint into which men are conscripted, but a positive life of service and warfare under

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the loving and strong leadership of the True and Faithful Witness, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. In such service the created spirit of man finds satisfying fulfilment.

The life of love

II Cor. 5:14

I Peter 1:8

I John 4:19

Rom. 5:5

Paul says, '...the love of Christ constrains us', and this links with Peter's 'Jesus Christ, whom not having seen you love, who seeing not you believe and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory'. John says, 'We love, because he first loved us'. All this, Paul indicates, is because 'the love of God has been flooded into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'.

Rom. 1 5:30

Gal. 5:22

The life of love is firstly that God loves us, secondly that we love him, and thirdly that we love others and ourselves. This whole action of love is simultaneous, and only when we seek to place an impediment in the way of that whole complex of love do we have trouble. The Spirit is the Spirit of love, so that Paul could say, 'I appeal to you. . . by the love of the Spirit', and adds, ' . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love. . . '

I Thess. 4:9

Motivated by God's love—and not, as many of us think, by our love for God—we gladly obey him. We love as those redeemed from death, as those who are children of the Father and as those who are taught by God himself to love. 'But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God'. Familial love arises from him who is both the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son.

Rom. 5:5

I Cor. 13:2

Gal. 5:6

The triad of faith, hope and love is a triad which springs from the Spirit. We have seen that faith and hope are linked with the Spirit. We should also observe that faith and love are linked, and hope and love are likewise linked. Paul says, ' . . . hope does not disappoint us, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit'. He also says, ' . . . if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing'. Elsewhere he speaks of 'faith working through love'. The life of love is true life which is never apart from faith and hope, and of course is always

contingent upon the Spirit.

The life that is taught and guided

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, 'He will teach you all things'. He was also to bring to remembrance the things Christ had said to them, the apostles. Paul later added, 'Now we have received...the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit'. This fits perfectly with Jesus' promise that the Spirit would lead us into all the truth. It is also consonant with John's statements that we have had an anointing from the Holy One and we know all things, and that we have no need that another should teach us because his anointing teaches us about all things, and is true.

1 Cor. 2:12-13

1 John 2:20, 27

The teaching the Spirit gives is not a mere academic or theoretical teaching, but one that comports with the need for practical knowledge. In this sense it is also guidance. Hence the injunctions to 'walk in the Spirit' and to 'be led by the Spirit'. Indeed it is all contained in 'let us live by the Spirit'. The sevenfold Spirit is glad to impart knowledge, revelation and wisdom. He also—so to speak—is in full possession of the plan of God and will lead us in accordance with that. In the Book of Acts, Philip was led by the Spirit, Peter, Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Spirit, Paul and Silas were directed by the Spirit. Persons are still led by the Spirit, as the church also—corporately—walks in the Spirit. Sometimes the Spirit says, 'Come!' and sometimes he says 'Go!' He is the agent of both Father and Son in the vocation they have planned for each person in creation, and particularly for the people of God.

Gal. 5:16, 18,
Rom. 8:14, Gal.
5:25

Most of all, the Spirit teaches us how to live in the Father, and in the Son, and how to go out into the world of the (as yet) unredeemed, with the message of God's love in creation and redemption. He teaches us not only personally but corporately as the people of God. This latter comes to us through

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the ministries he has set out—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—and, in particular, through the elders in the local church who are 'apt to teach', for they themselves have been ardent pupils of the Spirit.

Guidance, incidentally, is not a complicated matter. The axiom is 'As you go, you know, and as you know, you go', and this fits the early church. They listened to God's voice in their worship, through the gifts of prophecy, revelation, knowledge and wisdom, and came—as a community—to understand the immediate will of God for them. The will of God for the whole world was already revealed to them through the prophets and the apostles, and—so to speak—they sought his immediate will within the total plan. They needed little teaching and guidance as to holiness of life and purity of ethics, because that had been set out in his word and was rooted in the new heart. They needed only exhortation to keep them in the centre of this.

40. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (2) HOLINESS THROUGH THE SPIRIT

The Spirit and holiness

Lev 11:44

The *command* to the people of God (Israel) was, ' . . . I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy'. The promise to Israel was 'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. Peter sees both command and promise as now applying to the church:

Exod. 19:5-6

'..but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, "You shall be holy for I am holy".

1 Peter 1:15-16

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. . . . Once you were no people, but now you are God's people . . . '

1 Peter 2:9-10

The people of God are to be a holy entity, for not only is

each to be personally holy, but together all are to represent a collective holiness and they are to do this to the world. Paul speaks of ' . . . Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds'. This emphasis on holiness abounds in the Epistles. It is also Paul who says, 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification . . . For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness'.¹ Again, quoting to the Corinthians some of the Old Testament promises and commands concerning holiness, he exhorts, 'Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God'.

The need for holiness is corporate (for the whole people of God), personal, present and eschatological. Paul sees God's plan for holiness: ' . . . the chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him'. God's holy people represent the triumphant climax of history. John the Seer speaks of 'the holy city, the New Jerusalem' and says that ' . . . nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life'. This accords with Jesus' saying, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', and the dictum of the writer of Hebrews, ' . . . holiness without which no one will see the Lord'.

The New Testament—in accordance with the Old Testament—sees holiness or sanctification in a number of ways. Anything which belongs to God is holy, even if—as in the case of the material possessions of the conquered Canaanites—it is intrinsically unholy. Israel is holy because God has chosen her as a nation, even though as a nation she often proves unholy. Holiness is separation from that which is unclean. Holiness is a status God gives, but is also an actual state into which God calls. God works in establishing intrinsic holiness in his people. The Scriptures which relate to holiness and the Holy Spirit fit one or other—or all—of

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Titus 2: 13-14

I Thess. 4:3, 7

II Cor. 7:1

Eph. 1:4

Rev. 21:2
Rev. 21:27

Matt. 5:8

Heb. 12:14

¹ It is here that Paul directly links the life of holiness with God and his Spirit: 'Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, *who gives his Holy Spirit to you*'. That is, the Spirit is given for personal holiness of life.

I Thess 4:8

these categories. .

Peter speaks of the church as 'chosen and destined by God the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood'. This appears to mean that, before time, the Spirit set apart this people as holy with a view to their obeying the Gospel and coming under 'the sprinkling of the blood', i.e. into intrinsic purification. This accords with ' . . . God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth'. 'Belief in the truth' is 'obeying the Gospel', and it is preceded by the sanctifying act of the Spirit. Peter speaks of 'Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth', meaning' in this case, that to obey the Gospel *brings* purification, so that the order is somewhat different.

Paul speaks of the evil ways of many of the Corinthians prior to their conversion. Then he contrasts their former and present states: '...but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, *and in the Spirit of our God*'. Sanctification here precedes justification in the order in which they are listed. Washing precedes sanctification, as though Paul were saying, 'Being cleansed you were consecrated to God and justified; all of this by Christ and the Spirit,.

The corporate cleansing and the holy people

Under the figure and reality of the church being the bride of Christ, Paul says,

' . . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish'.

We have seen that there is no true and dynamic utterance apart from the Spirit, and no cleansing by Christ apart from the same Spirit. Christ offered himself without spot and blemish through the eternal Spirit, and it is in the Spirit that the church is wholly cleansed. I remember the case of a

young woman who had felt her defilement quite deeply and been unable to sense the purification which Christ brings through his Cross; but on hearing of the cleansing of the church as the bride of Christ, she came into a beautiful sense of personal cleansing. We ought to lay more stress on the corporate cleansing, whilst not diminishing the rightful emphasis on the personal.

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In the Old Testament, God had promised that the time would come when he would have 'washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgement and by a spirit of burning'. Zechariah simply says, 'On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness'. This theme of corporate cleansing is also taken up by Ezekiel, who at least three times speaks of Israel being given a new heart and a new spirit. The passages make it clear that they have a new spirit because of the new Spirit. One promise is,

Isa. 4:4

Zech. 13:1

'And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people and I will be their God'.

Ezek. 11:19-20,
cf. 18:31

When this promise is repeated later, it is accompanied by the promise,

'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you. . . I will put my Spirit within you. . .'

Ezek. 36:25-27

Pentecost ought to be read in the light of these prophecies, for the Spirit in the New Testament is closely connected with the forgiveness and cleansing of sins. Whilst these Old Testament prophecies seem limited to Israel, the Book of the Acts shows us that they were extended to Samaria and the Gentiles. At first this was difficult for Jewish Christians to understand. Peter, before he could accept Gentiles, had to be given the vision of the unclean things and to hear God's command to him to eat of them. To enter the house of a Gentile was defiling to a Jew, but Peter suddenly understood that he was not to call the Gentiles unclean. He told

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the Christian council at Jerusalem,

Acts 15:8-9

'And God who knows the heart bore witness to them [the Gentiles], giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith'.

Acts 26:18

This accords with the commission given personally to Paul by Christ to go to the Gentiles, 'to open their eyes, that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me'. This is why Paul can speak of his calling 'to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*'. This, then, is 'washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit'. It brings the miracle of inner personal purity as well as the objective inclusion in the people of God. It creates the corporate entity of holiness in which each member is supported by the whole.

Rom. 15:16

In the light of this, the Epistles exhort time and again to holiness of life, and urge obedience out of love and gratitude. The Spirit has set Christ's people free 'from the law of sin and death'. They no longer walk as the Gentiles do, but they walk in light and rebuke the darkness. This is because they are now both corporately and personally the temple (temples) of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter for astonishment that humans who were once polluted in their fallen beings are now temples of the most holy Spirit. The thought is awesome!

Living in holiness

Sin has two dynamic elements which give it power, namely guilt and pollution. The stain of sin is indelible and its defilement carries deep shame to the human spirit which was created in the image of the holy God. Guilt is not merely a feeling but a condition. It is related to God's wrath and to judgement, which overtakes man daily, and gives him dread of the ultimate (coming) day of judgement. Sin, by its impurity and culpability, keeps man in a state of moral

impotence and hopelessness. The ministry of the Spirit, in applying the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection, give new life and new direction to the human spirit. Even so, the *crisis* of holiness must be followed by the *process* of living daily in sanctification. Here the Spirit aids the believer.

Rom. 12: 1-2

Paul speaks a number of times of the new person in Christ being 'renewed in the spirit of your minds', and of 'being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'. He teaches that powers of evil and impurity are constantly attacking the minds of the people of God. They seduce, threaten, deceive and confuse. The mind needs constantly to be renewed. Again, it is the *practice* of holy living which needs to be taught and then aided by the Spirit. This new, holy life is lived in the polarity of mortification and vivification, which the Spirit enables man to accomplish.

Eph. 4:22 23,
Col. 3:9 10

Mortification is the putting to death of fleshly desires and actions. It would be impossible to put these elements to death if they had not already been put to death by Christ in his death. Paul says in one place that 'our old self was crucified with him', and the thought here is that it was rendered useless and, in particular, sin lost its hold. He also says, 'I have been crucified with Christ', meaning that in some way he has been identified with Christ in his death and so has risen with him. He links the power of sin with guilt: 'The *sting* of death is sin, and the *power* of sin is the law'. He may mean 'psychological power', but primarily, he means that when guilt is destroyed, the power of sin is broken. This argument may seem a little complex but it is worth pursuing. Many years ago I read the treatise of the Puritan Walter Marshall, entitled *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*,¹ and its dynamic has never ceased to affect me. He shows that without guilt and the fear of penalty, the power of sin is neutralised. Paul is on this point when he says,

Rom. 6:6

Gal. 2:20

I Cor. 15:56

'The death he died he died to sin. once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions... For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace'.

Rom. 6 10-14

¹ The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Walter Marshall (Evangelical Press, Yorkshire, 1982).

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Paul means that our penal death in Christ has set us free from the burden of guilt and therefore the power of sin. None of this truth, however, would have any dynamic or living reality were it not for the Spirit of truth who dwells within us and makes the principle real to us. When Paul says, 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death', he is speaking about a past and definite objective act. One is not under law in respect of its guilt. The law thus no more represents impending death and doom. Hence, in another contrast between law and grace, Paul says, ' . . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'. He links such liberty with the assurance of resurrection. The Spirit who dwells within us will not leave us. By him, Christ was raised from the dead, and so shall we be. He says in a fascinating verse,

Rom. 8 2

11 Cor. 3:17

Rom. 8:12

'So then brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh...'

He means that when we are under the guilt of the law, then we are victims of the flesh. All forms of evil have their legal and psychological power through guilt, i.e. guilt which is both objective and subjective. When the guilt is taken, the power of all forms of evil is cancelled. This is so with the flesh. Yet there is also a positive conclusion to Paul's statement just quoted above, especially if we were to complete what is inferred but not written explicitly:

...but we are debtors to live according to the Spirit; for if you live according to the Spirit you will not die'.

Col. 3:5

Mortification is based upon Christ's already having put sin to death. We died with him, and are alive again. For this reason we can refuse the operations of sin within us. 'Put to death therefore what is earthly in you; fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry'.

Rom. 8:13

Paul puts the same thing in another way: '.. .if, by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live'. He is clearly against self-endeavour in the life of holiness. In his famous exposition of man's innate inability to defeat sin which dwells in him, Paul concludes that *sin of itself* is more

Rom. 7 13-25

powerful than man is *of himself*. He has a passage where he speaks about commands, such as 'Touch not! Taste not! Handle not!' and says that such regulations 'are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh'. He means that self-mortification is impossible *apart from the Holy Spirit*. Humanly attempted mortification of sin results in hideous pride, i.e. 'will-worship'.

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Col. 2:20-23

At the same time, we must not merely think of the Spirit as an aide in mortification, but rather as the one who so fills us with the love of God, so suffuses us with the joy of new life, and so aids us in suffering that we have a genuine yearning for holiness of life. He comforts and encourages us in holiness.

Vivification is the other side of the coin of holiness. Paul says that for every deed of mortification there is a release of life. Death brings resurrection. Holiness is not a pursuit in itself. The life of liberty and love in the Spirit brings—so to speak—the spin-off of holiness. The Spirit keeps us in love, so that Paul can tell the Colossians that he has heard of their love in the Spirit. He says, on the one hand, 'Put to death...' and 'Put away...'; but on the other hand, he says, 'Put on. . .' This is vivification.

Col. 1:8

'Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony'.

Col. 3:12-15

We have not only died with Christ but we have risen with him. His resurrection life is not the figment of a religious imagination, but a present reality through the indwelling of the Spirit. To live in the Spirit is to live a holy life.

'But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the lusting of the flesh is against the desire of the Spirit, and the desire of the Spirit is against the lust of the flesh, so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. . . but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Gal. 5:16-18,
22-24

...and those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its

passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit'.

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41. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (3)

LIVING IN PRAYER, WORSHIP AND SERVICE

These three elements—worship, prayer and service—all go together to form a way of life. Whether one is a servant of God or a servant of idols—there is none who is not one or the other—the same principles obtain. Worship is giving worth to the object which is our god. Prayer is a relational form of communication, giving and receiving in order to carry out the business of life. Service is the actional side of worship.

Fallen man chose 'to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator'. In so doing, he chose to exchange the truth of God for a lie. In that action he also exchanged the truth of man and the truth of creation for the lie. Fallen man can be no other than idolatrous. Restored man—man renewed in Christ by the Spirit—finds his true self in prayer, worship and service. These three elements really constitute his life.

Prayer by and through the Spirit

It was as Jesus was praying at his baptism that the anointing of the Spirit came upon him. Later it is recorded that Jesus 'rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth..." ' Jude says, 'But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; *pray in the Holy Spirit*; keep yourselves in the love of God'. Paul has the same idea: '*Pray at all times in the Spirit*, with all prayer and supplication'. If we needed proof that prayer is made in the Holy Spirit, then these passages would supply it.

We need not be surprised that the Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. By him we were created, and through him born anew into the Kingdom of God, being given the love by which

Luke 10:21
Jude 20, 21

Eph. 6:18f

prayer alone can be made, and the revelation by which we see the Father and the Son. Prayer is personal communication with God. Through it we approach him and worship him, and in it we listen to him. Prayer covers many areas of the life of man as spirit. The personal hunger for God is met in the relationship which man, as a creature, has with his Creator. How often the psalmists say that God is indispensable in satiating man's hunger and quenching his spiritual thirst.

Because man is not man without God, prayer is everything to him. Even the fallen man, who hates God, insists on angry forms of prayer and hateful communications of bitterness and venom; he feels never so great as when he can shake his fist at God! Because his prayer is perverse with God, he must shape up for himself a god or an idol, who will receive his homespun prayers and do him good!

The authentic side of prayer is that it pursues man's relationship with God. By it, man receives wisdom to understand the world and life, to live within the creation, to know the will of God, and to be aided to do it. In prayer, he can contemplate and meditate as in no other situation. It is not wrong to say that prayer is really his whole life. P. T. Forsyth says bluntly, 'The worst sin is prayerlessness'.¹ Not to pray is to deny the new relationship we have with God, through the Son and the Spirit.

We are not here attempting a comprehensive manual on prayer; so we will just note briefly the elements of it that are said to be linked with the Spirit. The first is that *all true prayer is filial*. The Spirit has been sent into our heart, crying 'Abba! Father!' We then cry 'Abba! Father!' which fits with Christ's injunction, 'When you pray say, "Our Father. . ." ' We saw that he rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ' . . . Father, Lord of heaven and earth. . .' The Lord's prayer is Kingdom prayer and must be thus interpreted. The Spirit of his Son in our hearts is also 'the Spirit of your Father'. This two-way traffic springs from the Father's love to us, and our responding love to him.

Matt. 10:20

The second element of prayer is intercession. We may un-

Jude 20

¹ P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer*, p. 11 (Independent Press, London, 1951).

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ashamedly speak of self-intercession. We are bidden to pray for ourselves, for it is a sign of trust in the Father. Yet whilst we pray for ourselves, we also intercede for others. Paul says that in the present convulsive suffering, not only of fallen man and nature, but also of ourselves, we need to intercede, but the pity of it is that we do not know *how* to pray. We may know generally what to pray for, but how to pray that prayer, we do not know. He tells us that 'the Spirit himself makes intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered'.

Rom. 8:25f.

Here we touch on the deepest elements of prayer. Whilst the Son is interceding for us against our accusers and those who condemn, the Spirit is with us in close intimacy. When he prays, the Father, who searches the heart of man, knows what is the mind of the Spirit. It is often when we do not know *how* to pray that we pray best. This is when—perforce—we 'pray in the Spirit'. We are not only one with him, but he *is first* one with us. He heads up our intercession.

Zech. 12:10

That intercession is for all saints, and calls for 'all prayer and supplication'. Only the Spirit of love is 'the Spirit of compassion and supplication', and it is native to him to move us to intercede for others. Paul places such intercession in the context of spiritual warfare. The prayers of the saints are in golden bowls which the celestial elders hold, and eventually they are offered up with incense, and the result of such intercessory prayers is the action of the judgements of God! God has obviously made provision for the dynamic of prayer in the outworking of his plan for the universe, and it seems amazing that we have such a significant part in that plan, through prayer.

Eph. 6:10 20
Rev. 5:8,
cf. 8:3-5

Paul, in speaking of prayer made through the gift of *glossolalia* (tongues), tells us in passing that we can pray 'with the spirit',¹ i.e. our own spirits, or 'with the mind'. We need not go into this interesting passage in detail, but observe in passing that prayer relates to the spirit of man, and

¹ In Cor. 14:13-19 Paul opens up the subject of praying 'with the spirit' and 'with the mind'. This should not be identified with 'praying in the Spirit', although it may well be linked with it. Paul is examining prayer made when speaking in a tongue and when not.

to the mind or intelligence God has given him by nature. The Scriptures give us a view of prayer as a powerful thing, often calling out tears, physical wrestling and conflict with the power of darkness. This is why it must never be made in human strength. Even 'praying with the spirit' must also be 'praying with the Spirit'.

Worship and service In the Spirit

Prayer and worship can never really be apart. Nor, for that matter, can worship and service. Man is a creature made for worship. He cannot *not* worship, whether the object of his worship be God, the idols or himself. He must have an object of adoration. True worship of God is its own reward, and has its own intrinsic motivation. Worship of idols is with a view to trading what the idol can give for what man gives to his idol. A human being is degraded or elevated to the level of his object of worship. Man is caught up to God by true worship, and depressed to hell by his idols or himself.

True worship is by the Spirit. Jesus said that those who worship God 'must worship in spirit and in truth'. Paul said, ' . . . we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit'. Peter said, ' . . .like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. Wherever a man's spirit worships God, it is always through the Spirit himself. To worship God in spirit and in truth is to worship him in the Spirit of truth.

John 4:24
Phil. 3:3
I Peter 2:5

We need first to see that man, who must worship, had to exchange the worship of God for the worship of creation: '...they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature [creation] rather than the Creator'. Man cannot serve two masters, but also he cannot serve none. True worship, then, is linked with the truth of God. It is impossible to give true worship where there is no knowledge of the truth. This leads us directly to Jesus' classic teaching on worship.

Rom. 1:25

Matt. 6:24

The occasion was his conversation with the woman at the well in Samaria. She had said,

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John 4:19-24

'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain [Mount Gerizim]; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship'. Jesus then replied, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth'.

With the whole spread of John's Gospel behind this utterance, we can paraphrase it here in order to get its meaning. Jesus was saying, 'There have been two places of worship, Gerizim and Jerusalem. You Samaritans, for historical reasons, believe this to be the true place of worship, and the Jews, for their historical reasons, believe it to be Jerusalem. Well, the time is here—and will continue to be—when no place will be the only authentic place of worship. As it happened, Jerusalem has been the place, and salvation flows from Israel. Not only is your *place* wrong but your god also, for you do not know God. The One to worship is the Father] The way to worship is in spirit and truth. You do not have the truth, nor can you worship in your spirits because you do not have the Holy Spirit. True worship is of the Father, and the Father himself initiates this. Your spirit must be in the Holy Spirit, and he must bring the truth to you so that you can see and know God as Father. When this happens, the affinity which man has with God as a created creature will be restored. As "deep calls unto deep", i.e. "like unto like", so the children will worship the Father This will be universal worship.'

We have said that we have to see Jesus' statement here in 'the whole spread of John's Gospel' and this context is essential Man can only see the Kingdom and enter it when he is born of the Spirit. The truth which was exchanged for a lie has come in the person of Jesus who is 'full of truth and grace', who 'witnesses to the truth' and who tells the truth which he has heard from God. This one, as Son, is the revelation of God the Father. He and the Father will give the Holy Spirit who, being the Spirit of truth, will lead into all the truth so that men can worship the Father in spirit and in truth, i.e. they can worship in the Spirit of truth, especially

as they now know the truth.

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The early church and worship

Paul repeats Jesus' principle of worship. He says, ' . . . God . . . whom I serve [worship] with my spirit. . .' It is in the spirit of man that deep movements take place, hence Paul's statement, 'For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of man which is in him?' We are told on one occasion that Jesus 'was deeply moved in spirit and troubled', and on another, 'he was troubled in spirit'. It is only a man who is possessed by truth in his spirit who can truly worship. He cannot have this truth unless he is born anew of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth. Therefore, man must always be under the Spirit to worship truly.

Rom. 1 :9

I Cor. 2:11

John 1 1:33

John 13:21

This is why Paul says, 'For we are the true circumcision who worship God in spirit', and some translators have shaped his statement as ' . . . worship God in the Spirit'. Certainly, at Pentecost, with the coming of the Spirit, there began a new worship. We see this many times. Emancipated from the incompleteness of the old covenant, they had a rich and new freedom in worship.¹ They were, in fact, a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices which the writer of Hebrews calls 'sacrifice of praise.. .that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name'. This worship is emphasised in the Epistles, and in one of the classical references in the letter to the Ephesians:

Phil. 3:3

Heb. 13:15

...be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father'.

Eph. 5:18-19

Worship, then, is in the Spirit. In the worship, the gifts given by the Spirit are utilised: 'What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done

1 Cor. 14:26

¹ This is not to denigrate worship in the Old Testament. It is described in those writings as reaching to a very high level. Nevertheless, when 'grace and truth came by Jesus Christ', a new and worshipful era began.

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for edification'.

When worship edifies the church it is actually building it up in love. Members are relating to God, and to one another, but then worship is not only something embodied in a time of meeting together. It is never apart from rendering service to God and man.

42. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (4)

THE LIFE OF SERVICE

There are a number of Greek words for service and worship. One of these—the verb *latreuo*—can be equally translated 'to worship' and 'to serve', as we see when we note the contexts of use. Paul uses the noun *latreia* in speaking of Israel and 'the worship'. He speaks of those who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie as *worshipping* and *servi*ng the creature more than the Creator. In this verse he uses the verb *latreuo* for serving and another verb for worshipping. In the letter to the Romans he talks about himself *servi*ng (*worshipping*) God in his spirit, and later exhorts the church, 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual worship* [reasonable service]'.

Rom. 9:4
Rom. 1:25

Rom. 1:9

Rom. 12:1

In the Old Testament sacrifices, the live victim of sacrifice was soon a dead offering. Paul asks that we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, the kind that meets God's criteria. This can only mean that what the body does constitutes a constant living (active) sacrifice. What one sees, hears, speaks and does, where one goes, the way one goes; indeed, every action is part of *true worship*, which of course is—at the same time—*true service*.

There can be no 'living sacrifice' without life, i.e. without the Spirit. The life he gives is ethical, moral, spiritual, living and actional. It is the Spirit who has taught the truth of God, who brings us livingly and relationally to God. He brings the knowledge and experience of love and thanksgiving. These are the basic elements of worship. The writer of Hebrews talks of the blood (death) of Christ. He says it will

'purify [cleanse] your conscience from dead works *to serve* the living God'. He is at one with John the Seer who sees the great multitude of the redeemed in heaven, and is told, 'These are they who have come through great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'. To which he adds, 'Wherefore they serve [worship] him day and night in the temple'.

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Heb. 9:14
Rev. 7:14

This cleansing of the conscience from dead works, this purifying of the heart, not only inspires love and gratitude, but it restores man's normal state and he now lives in the truth. It is now part and parcel of man to love and serve God. By creation it was always part of man to serve God. I his was, indeed, the primary idea behind his creation. Not only was he to tend the Edenic garden, but he was to populate the world and serve it by being its appointed steward. Nor was he created only for this. Man's ultimate vocation—planned before time—is to be that of a royal priesthood, reigning for ever in the glorified universe.

Gen. 1:28f.

In serving both God and the human race, man is not going beyond what it is to be human, but filling out what it is to be truly human. God is the great Servant of eternity, serving first by creating, and then by sustaining, by redeeming, by glorifying his creation. He never ceases to serve, and so man—made in his image—is functionally created to serve. Thus the idea of being a 'living sacrifice' does not bear the marks of an unreasonable demand upon him, but a recall to what he is essentially. Thus to have his conscience cleansed, to have his being purified, is to restore him to human reality and so to motivate and stimulate him to full worship.

An example of worship-service

Pentecost resulted immediately in a serving of God by the recipients of the Spirit. They did this by continually proclaiming the Gospel. At the same time they served one another in the sharing of their goods as they cared for the widows, orphans, the sick and the poor. Doubtless, there were exigencies which drew them together, but the test of true worship and service came when the Sanhedrin rejected their Gospel and threatened their leaders. There was a

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Acts 4:23-35

dynamic response of worship as they addressed God in intercession, and saw his powerful response to their need in a fresh effusion of the Spirit.

The daughter church at Antioch was even more sharply marked as a serving community. When the members received a prophecy concerning an imminent famine, they determined to help the mother church at Jerusalem and did so by the sending of gifts to sustain believers under starvation stress.¹ The church at Antioch was itself composed mainly of former Gentiles. We read that as 'they were *worshipping* the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" '. The church did this, and so their *worship (leitourgeo)* issued in *service*. When we examine the kind of service, we discover it to be greatly significant. Antiochene worshippers little suspected what might emerge from their time of worship, but then that is not the point at all. The Spirit draws the people of God to worship and to serve.

Serving In the newness of the Spirit

When we read the Old Testament, particularly such passages as Psalms 1, 19 and 119, we are struck with the deep love of the law which the devout Israelite expressed. In his letter to the Romans, Paul himself says, 'I delight in the law of God after the inner man'. He does, however, speak much of freedom from the law, by which he means (a) freedom from the penalty of the law; and (b) freedom from seeking to obey the law in order to establish one's righteousness, i.e. to achieve salvation. The first eight chapters of this letter establish the truth of justification (imputed righteousness) by faith, as against the futile endeavour to accomplish this through law endeavour.

Rom. 13:8-10

I Cor. 9:21

Gal. 6:2

All this given in, Paul sees himself as wanting to obey the law of God, often called today 'the moral law'. He has terms he uses to refer to it, namely 'the law of love' or 'the law of Christ'. Rightly understood, it is the age-old moral

Acts 11:27-30,

I Cor. 16:1-4,

II Cor. 8:1—9:13

¹ This became the pattern for missionary churches abroad. Although many of them were primarily drawn from Gentiles, they were eager to supply the needs of the Palestinian church.

law. Paul, however, never sees obedience to the law as a stint, nor as merely morality. His view of law is far too dynamic for that.

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Jeremiah had prophesied of the new covenant when God would write his law in the heart and put it in the inner part of man. Ezekiel had also said that when God took out the heart of stone, put in the heart of flesh, and gave a new spirit through the renewing Spirit; that his people would walk in his ways and keep his statutes, commands and ordinances. This might be called 'the new obedience' or 'the new service'. Such would not be mere law-keeping, but a joyous life of service, doing the will of God and participating in his purposes for creation. It would be an ongoing, dynamic matter.

In fact, this sort of obedience, rightly understood, is 'walking in the Spirit' and being 'led by the Spirit', for *it is the Spirit* who internalises the law, giving the subjective drive for obedience. This saves present obedience to law from being a rigid legal matter, and ethics from becoming a deadly, absolute set of injunctions. Love—in the Spirit—determines the warm, living nature of true ethical living and serving.

Paul also knew—as we have previously noted—how paralysing is sin, especially its incipient guilt. His triumphant cry in the Roman letter is, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!'. In dealing with the principle of law, he says, 'But now we 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*'. He means that we are new in our spirits by the Spirit who renews, and the law is written in the heart. There is no threat of punishment where there is failure, and obedience is native to the new creature in Christ.

Rom. 7:6

This is in the same sense as Jesus' words, 'If you love me, *you will keep my commandments*'. Paul speaks on similar lines: ' . . . the love of Christ constrains us'. John says, 'And his commandments are not burdensome [demanding, intolerable]'. This is because the Spirit has poured the love of God into our hearts. It is out of love that we worship and serve. In so doing, we fulfil our destinies as creatures of

John 14:15

II Cor. 5:14 I
John 5:3

vocation.

The arena of serving

What we have said above about serving in the newness of the Spirit is a revolutionary concept and operation in a world where, at best, men and women seek to serve God through the compulsion of their guilt, and at worst, rebelliously refuse to serve him at all. To serve in newness of the Spirit means a new thrust in motivation and action. The Spirit—so to speak—has the blueprint of God's plan in his hand, and he directs God's people in true service.

The arena of this service is the whole creation, and we can say that the new man in Christ is called upon to serve the creature and the Creator. The mandate given to him at creation to be a steward, a servant and a lord over the universe has not been rescinded by the fall. Indeed, it has been renewed in redemption. Man, then, must serve what we call 'nature', but what God calls 'the creation'. He must serve man, and he must serve God. All three elements are the objects of a simultaneous and total service.

In this service, the Christian will be a true conservationist, but certainly not a legalistic one. He must see creation as dynamic, and not as fragile. He must not see it with some sort of fatalistic despair, as though the elimination of a species will endanger its constitutive balance. Its ecology is primarily a moral one: it will not fail because of the loss of species, or changes in the balance of 'nature'. God has given the gifts of creation to be enjoyed, though not, of course, exploited. All creation is in a state of contingency, and hence is dynamic. Man must follow the dictates of the Spirit of life and creativeness. The changes this Spirit rings in the onward movement of creation constitute part of the joy of true conservationism. The creature is servant to God and not God to it. God serves it so that it may serve him and continually find its true self. Even so, it is presently 'subjected to futility', always living in God's gift of hope that one day it will be fully released.

In this arena of the creation, man's primary service to his

fellow man is a redemptive one. To 'do good unto all men' is not limited to social obligation. Service is firstly to redeem man out of his lostness. We saw in our examination of 'witness', 'proclamation' and 'the fulfilment of God's plan', that the bastions of evil fall when human beings receive the Gospel and are 'transferred into the Kingdom of the Son of his love'. It is quite clear—and axiomatic—that the Spirit's primary task is to renew and restore man who is made in the image of God. In so doing, he not only serves the Father and the Son who set their primary task as redeeming man; he also expresses himself as the Spirit of life, creation and new creation. Man, who shares this mandate of redemption, finds his truest being in this area of service.

Thus, it is when the Christian man becomes obsessed with social action, with the theology of service rather than its practice, and when he is misled into forms of truth-reductionism,¹ that he both grieves and quenches the Spirit. When he gives himself over continually to being led by the Spirit, the Christian man gives joy to the Spirit and—at the same time—himself. He finds his vocation satisfying, even if opposed by powers of evil, and he knows himself—under the Spirit and the Lordship of Jesus—to be in the will of the living God.

43. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (5) **LIVING IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

For those who desire a continuously ecstatic experience of life—and life in the Spirit has its times of ecstasy—the life lived in the Spirit will be disappointing. Living in the Spirit is an experience of unremitting warfare, much of which is attended by persecution, suffering and even confusion. Jesus told his disciples not to marvel if the world hated

¹ By 'truth-reductionism' we mean seeing the Gospel theologically through one principle only. In this case it would be to interpret the Gospel wholly in the light of a principle of social activism. Doubtless social justice and concern to serve is *part of* the Gospel, but not the whole of it.

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them, but they were to remember, it hated him before it hated them, and it hated them because they were one with him. In the same breath he said,

John 15:26-27

'But when the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning'.

Suffering is part of the warfare, but then the battle is to win men and women back from the forces of darkness who hold humanity in their fierce grip. It requires all the weapons of God and his Spirit to prise the captives free.

The historic warfare

Job 38:7

The Bible pictures celestial creatures in raptures of joy at the scene of creation. '...the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy'. When a celestial rebellion took place we do not know, nor is the event described to any significant degree, but, without doubt, it did take place. Satan, who was possibly one of three archangels, drew with him a third of the angelic force. Hence the rebellious hosts who oppose God. Paul says,

Cf. Rev. 12:1-10

Eph. 6:1 2,
of Rom. 8:38,
Col. 2:14-15

'...we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers [authorities], against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places'.

Cf. Gal. 4:8-10,
Col. 2:15, 20-23

We need not go into too much research concerning these evil powers. Led by Satan, 'the prince of the power of the air', these celestial creatures seek to oppose the plan of God being worked out in history. They seek to despoil man and the universe. Hence in the Bible they are often called 'evil spirits' or 'unclean spirits'. The New Testament itself was written in times when men worshipped angelic powers, either in hierarchies and gradations, as did some Gnostics, or by seeking to propitiate through sacrifices and systems of idolatry.

What we must understand is that these forces are *spiritual*

forces. They are evil, but spiritual. Also they are highly intelligent. Some scholars have seen them as not having ontic reality, as though they exist only in the minds of people who needed such a system of thought to rationalise for themselves the conflict between good and evil that they see in the universe. Whilst such rationalisations undoubtedly exist, there is no way in which the biblical truth can have rationality without accepting the fact of evil rebellious powers

The powers and the nations

Jacob saw angels ascending and descending upon a stairway. Somehow the traffic of these angels had to do with the Abrahamic covenant and the rise and fall of nations. In the Book of Daniel, the prophet is told that there is conflict between good and evil angelic powers. The 'prince of Greece' and 'the prince of Persia' are supernatural powers linked with the destinies of those nations. If the Abrahamic covenant is concerned with nations—their blessing and cursing—then evil powers are also in the business of destroying the families of the earth. Jesus said to Nathaniel, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man'. He meant that the rise and fall of angels—and so of their nations—is dependent upon himself, the Son of man.

Gen. 28:12

Dan. chs. 10-11

John 1:51

Indeed, we miss the whole thrust of Scripture if we think in individual terms of man, and not in terms of the families and nations of the earth. The creation, through the Son, of 'things...in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities', must surely mean that such ruling and aide powers are functionally essential to the universe. It means also that evil is going to attack these powers and seek to seduce them or undermine their authority.

Col. 1:16

John the Seer depicts the revolt of the dragon and his angels in heaven, and pictures them as defeated by being cast from the heavens, so that they turn to wreak their anger on the inhabitants of the earth. The Book of the Revelation

is the story of this battle and its outcome.

The Spirit and the battle

Whilst it is true that all men and women of faith face the onslaughts of evil, it is more to the point to see the armies of evil seeking to dominate and destroy the people of God as a whole. These evil powers endeavour to subvert the whole creation, so that it joins the camp of Satan. Even though they do not succeed, some of mankind is deceived into joining battle against God. Whilst some introspective believing individuals are seeking to fight alone their own personal battle, they would do better to be part of the spiritual human hosts who not only defend themselves successfully, but go out to pull down strongholds of the enemy. They, of course, rely wholly on God and use his spiritual weapons.

It is a matter of fact that little is said of Satan in the Old Testament. This is probably because the Hebrews were more occupied with the greatness and goodness of God than they were with personal powers of evil. Without doubt, though, they fought an unending battle when they went into Canaan amidst the gods and idols whose worship and ethos were sensual and demoralising. This, in fact, was their constant battle against evil, possibly often fought without their even knowing that there was such a battle. All too frequently they lost, which is a matter of sadness to have to record.

Ezek. 37:1-14

In the great vision of Ezekiel, Israel is described as a mass of strewn and sand-worn bones in a dreary desert. When the prophet is moved to pronounce the word of God, and when, in response, the life-giving Spirit comes, then Israel is revived. The bones have come together, the flesh has been renewed on the bones of the warriors, and suddenly they all have life! Who has life? Israel corporately. The nation now composes 'a mighty army'. This parallel of Pentecost tells us that the Spirit leads the hosts of the Lord in battle.

Luke 11:14-26

Pentecost, the occasion when the new people of Israel rose from the scattered dry bones of the nation, constituted the opening gambit of a new battle. Previously, Jesus had depicted Satan as 'the strong man' and himself as 'stronger than the strong man'. At the Cross, the battle was joined. In

taking away from Satan the one great weapon of human guilt, Jesus placed new power in the hands of his people, but such power is not operative apart from the Spirit. It is he who transmutes the moral power of the Cross into weapons in the hands of the people of God. He is 'the Lord of Hosts' so far as the church is concerned.

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Heb. 2:14-15

The Spirit's weaponry

Paul says, '. . . the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [fleshly] but have divine power to destroy strongholds'. We would have expected him to oppose 'carnal' with 'spiritual' (i.e. 'of the Spirit'), but he opposes it with 'powerful' (*dunata*); the thought is the same. It is the power of the Spirit. These spiritual weapons pull down and destroy strongholds of evil, so that the spiritual battle is far from a mere holding operation. The witness and proclamation of the truth is what destroys evil, for evil has no true ontic being. It is exposed and destroyed in the light of the truth.

II Cor. 10:4

Paul's other description of weaponry is in his famous passage of Ephesians. Here he is describing 'the armour of God'; it is not armour that the Christian man fashions and employs. It is what Isaiah describes in such wonderful terms. We must not treat this latter passage as a source or proof passage. It is telling us the nature of God in the face of Israel's national evils. It also describes God as 'the Intervenor'. This is the passage where amongst other things the prophet says,

Eph. 6:10-18

'Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands afar off;
for truth has fallen in the public squares,
and uprightness cannot enter.
Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey'.

Isa. 59:14-19

Then comes the dynamic action of God:

'The Lord saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.
He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intervene;
then his own arm brought him victory,

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and his righteousness upheld him.
 He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
 and a helmet of salvation upon his head;
 he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
 and wrapped himself in fury as a mantle.
 According to their deeds so will he repay,
 wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies;
 to the coastlands he will render requital.
 So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west,
 and his glory from the rising of the sun;
 for he will come like a rushing stream,
 which the wind of the Lord drives'.

This, then, is the armour which the people of God put on, in him. When righteousness, salvation and judgement come together, they are formidable. In this way, God intervenes against evil. Thus when Paul mentions this armour, he is not thinking of us fashioning such for ourselves but availing ourselves of the Victor himself. He is our armour. It is in this sense that Paul can say in one breath, 'Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light', and '...put on the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Rom. 13:12, 14

Isaiah chapter fifty-nine concludes with the promise of both the Spirit and the word to his children:

' "And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord. "And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore." '

Isa. 59:20-21

This confirms the words of Peter at Pentecost that the new community is the prophetic community. The prophetic word by the Spirit is the equivalent of 'the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God'. This is the same as the sharp two-edged sword which goes out of the mouth of the glorified Christ, and by means of which he smites the nations. It is the same sword that we wield. This is the word that is brought into action by those who are accused by Satan, who is '...the accuser of our brethren...who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of

Rev. 1:16, 2:12,
19:15

Rev. 12:10-11

their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death'.

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The prophetic scheme of the battle

John's prophecy of the Revelation is just this. John first shows us the victorious, glorified Christ with all his eternal powers, including the sharp sword which goes out of his mouth. He then relates the letters of Christ to the church, which on any reckoning is the sevenfold, complete church, ranging across this last church age. Yet, at the same time, Jesus says the letters are what *the Spirit says to the churches*. We have seen that the basic ministry of the church is to witness to Christ, and this through the power of the Spirit. Thus the key theme regarding the church (in the Revelation) is that they 'hold the word of God and the witness [testimony] of Jesus'. Mission, from one point of view, is the breaking down of the strongholds of Satan. What are such strongholds? One view of them is that they are all the human beings who have been made captives of Satan. The Gospel releases them from this bondage. Each man is a stronghold of evil until the Gospel of the Kingdom releases him. From another point of view, strongholds are the vantage points which Satan has captured in the course of history: In this very book (the Revelation) Jesus speaks of 'the synagogue of Satan' and 'where Satan's seat is'.

Rev. 2:9. 13

As the book proceeds, we see the onslaught of evil powers on the people of God, and the setting up of that system which we call Babylonian. An endeavour is made to threaten people into complicity with the dragon (Satan), the beast (his henchman or counterpart messiah), and the second beast or false prophet. The weapons that the two witnesses of God use are the witness of truth, which the powers of deceit cannot deny, and the fire which proceeds from their mouths and which destroys active enemies. The fire is the word of God, as Jeremiah so clearly states. Finally, all evil is destroyed—following judgement—and the battle is concluded.

Rev. chs. 12,
13, 16, 17, 18

Rev. 11:1f.

Jer. 23:29

In all of this history-long conflict, the weapons used are not 'carnal' or 'worldly'. The people of God use the pro-

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phetic word, and the prophetic life. The fruit of the Spirit is deadly for evil powers which cannot comprehend it; they cannot defeat love, joy and peace and the other similar elements. Without the Spirit, these weapons cannot be used. Only love can cancel the rebellion of man, grip the heart that is angry and calm the lost and bewildered spirit of man. This love of God is the great weapon which the people learn to use. It has destroyed their own strongholds of rebellion; it will destroy others. Perhaps the very lake of fire is the fire of God's love. 'God is love', and 'Our God is a consuming fire' may, in the ultimate, be one and the same.

The Letters of the New Testament give a great deal of instruction and encouragement to those who are involved in the battle. The weapons are from God and victory is assured:

- Rom. 13:12-14
 - '... the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires'.
- Phil. 1:27-28
 - 'Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit [Spirit?], with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. *This is a c/ear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God*'.
- James 4:7
 - 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you'.
- I Peter 5:8-9
 - 'Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith. . .'
- I John 2:14
 - '... I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one'.
- I John 4:4
 - 'Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world'.
- ...
 - 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith'.
- Eph. 6:16 17
 - '...besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and *the sword of the Spirit. . .*'

Living in the Spirit is living in daily warfare with evil. The action called for is what builds muscle in the man of the Spirit. He becomes a sagacious warrior of the truth, and this alone develops the true 'spirit of faith' and 'spirit of love'.

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44. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (6) THE SPIRIT AND SUFFERING

Suffering is not unique to Christianity. It is a common factor in all faiths. Where a faith or ideology confronts persons, it arouses enmity and opposition which often develop into overt hostility and so into persecution of the exponents. In that sense, Christians cannot claim a mortgage on suffering.

There is, however, a very special sense in which suffering is bound to come to those who believe the Gospel and follow it. This is because the Gospel is not a truth which is in competition and rivalry with other faiths or ideologies, but is—as it claims—the truth, and therefore will rouse up the opposition which is innate in all men who have chosen—consciously or unconsciously—to follow the lie. Man bitterly resents being told that he does not know the truth. His basic insecurity as he lives in untruth often makes his opposition develop into compulsive violence.

Paul said the word of the Cross to the Jew was a scandal, and to the Greek it was foolishness. So has it been down through history; the 'religious' are scandalised by grace, and the intellectuals see the whole message as irrelevant to sensible reasoning and basic human living. So the Gospel will be either ignored, deprecated or opposed. The Gospel—misunderstood and maligned—must itself be the offence. There must, therefore, be no personal offence within the proclaimer. His proclamation must be pure in motivation and utterance, i.e. without harshness, guile, abrasiveness or manipulation.

I Cor. 1:17,

I Cor. 2:4-5,

II Cor. 4:1-3

The Spirit and suffering

Without seeking to find texts which declare explicitly the

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link between the Spirit and suffering, it should be clear that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Gospel and of its proclamation. Thus he must be linked with suffering. If the Gospel inevitably arouses opposition, then the Spirit is related to the suffering that follows. That is why Paul can say to the Christians at Thessalonica:

I Thess 1:5-6

'... our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction....you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit'.

Again, at Antioch in Pisidia:

Acts 13:49-52

'...the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas. and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit'.

Matt. 5:12

The Spirit and suffering are linked, but so then are suffering and joy, or the Spirit and joy. This figures, of course, because Jesus said that when his people were persecuted for the sake of the Kingdom, they must rejoice and be glad, 'for your reward is great in heaven'.

Acts 5:41

In Acts, the story of the proclamation is related to rejection and suffering. At the same time, it is full life in the Spirit. Suffering and joy are one together. The apostles, when they had been beaten (doubtless with rods) by the Sanhedrin, '...left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the [Christ's] name'. They looked upon suffering as a privilege.

Phil. 1 :29-30

In this vein, Paul tells the Philippians, 'For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine'. Suffering, then, is a gift!

I Peter 4:13-14

Peter adds to this understanding by saying, 'But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you'. Suffering, the Spirit and glory are all linked. The Spirit is there to

glorify Christ, but he does so through the sufferings of his people whose glory comes in the sharing of sufferings. Part 6.44

This thought is very Pauline. He says, '...provided we suffer with him. . .we may also be glorified with him'. Suffering is *the way* of glorification, but not *the cost* of it, lest we should think we have earned glory! The process of glorification is going on now, in this world, within us: '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*'. Rom. 8:17
II Cor. 3:18

When we ask how this processive (and progressive) glorification is presently happening, Paul tells us, ' . . . this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison'. Suffering, we repeat, is the way of glorification. We are tempted to say, 'No suffering, no glory.' Of course, we must be careful not to think that suffering is something which qualifies us for glory. It does not, but when we see the suffering of Christ, we also see that suffering is at the heart of love. In the Cross the Son suffers, but so then do the Father and the Spirit.¹ Obviously we will know little or nothing of God apart from the affinity of suffering. If suffering is at the core of love, then we will not be able to love without suffering, or to suffer authentically without love. II Cor. 4:17

Man's suffering

We know that man suffers by reason of the fall, and his own personal guilt. We know from personal experience something of the distortion which has come into the spirit of man because of his rejection of God. In one sense that suffering is pointless, because it does not have to be. In another sense, it leads man to considering the world in which he lives. History is filled with the thoughts of mankind about it. In so many ways, man has tried to rationalise suffering, and these

¹ The Anglican Article (number one) says, 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body parts or passions . . . ' When we speak of God suffering i.e. having passions we mean he is the subject and not the object of such. Passions sway and control human beings, but when we speak of the Spirit being grieved or God being angry, we do not equate this with similar human emotions. God's passions are unique-of a different order.

rationalisations are not all necessarily religious. Much reasoning has to do with the nature of the universe as the dualist sees it, and as the monist views it. Evaluations of good and evil, and utilitarian views of good and evil fill many volumes and a great deal of human conversation. Even the nature of the weather is seen as significant, and views of God are deduced by its seeming vagaries.

Above, we have seen that suffering has some rationale when one suffers because of one's faith, or one suffers along with, or on behalf of, others. In fact, such suffering is seen, in essence, to be love, and thus makes some sense. Theodicy—the justification of God in the light of the presence and action of evil in the universe—is the attempt to show that God is good even though evil exists in creation. Theodicy is expected to give some meaning to suffering. In practical fact, there are some humans whose suffering simply increases their anger with God, creation and fellow humans. Others are awed by the depth of suffering and come into a revelation of God as love. In this latter case, 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Unaccountably, some persons suddenly undergo this kind of change during deep distress or terminal illness, whether that sickness is their own or that of someone close to them.

The Spirit's suffering

When we realise that the Spirit is the Spirit of (all) life, and of creation, then we can understand how he views the dislocation and perversion which is given to that life and creation by reason of man's evil, and the evil workings of the powers of darkness. It may well be that the Spirit was withdrawn from man because of his evil, prior to the Flood, but certainly men have 'vexed his Holy Spirit'. Israel's idolatry in the wilderness did this, and today believers can 'grieve' or vex the very Spirit who has sealed them for redemption. Also they can 'quench' him, i.e. the very Spirit who is likened to a flowing river!

However, it is the Spirit's suffering which we are considering here. His task is to get us to glory because he is the Spirit of glory. In fact, he gives us a preview of all that that

glory will be: ' . . . God has revealed them [these things of the eschaton] unto us by his Spirit'. Meanwhile, believers groan as they share in the cosmic convulsions of suffering. What do we mean by, 'Cosmic convulsions of suffering'? We mean that 'the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies'.

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Rom. 8:22-23

In other words, because of sin and the subsequent curse, because of the evil of Satanic powers and the evil of man, corruption abounds in this universe. No *one is ever fully at home in the creation*. The creation knows it has been subjected to futility, i.e. to temporary non-fulfilment of its functional being. It is, of course, 'subjected in hope', which means that one day it will be released from futility. It groans, looking for that day. Those who are human also share this groaning, and those who are believers have tasted what it is to long with pain for the great day of total release.

But what of the Spirit? Is he 'without passions'? Yes—and No. As creator, he must grieve at what has happened within the creation. However, his grief must not be compared with ours. The Spirit is not subject to his own passion, for—as we have said—he is subject and it is object. Even so, his grief is real. Paul says—concerning prayer in these last days—that when we do not know how to pray as we ought (the direction is unknown, the elements for prayer undiscernible by us), 'the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'. That they 'cannot be uttered' must mean that human ears could not tolerate and sustain any such vocal groan. It would convey such suffering as to unseat us all. The Spirit is both the author and medium of this intense suffering. His beautiful world has become so ugly, so vicious under the handling of evil powers, that the perversion and impurity of it all becomes intolerable to all who long for the (promised) eschatological purity and perfection.

Rom. 8:26-27

This grieving is similar to Jesus' burst of weeping over Jerusalem. We are told that great sobs racked his breast as he cried, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . How often would I

Matt. 23:37

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John 11 :33

have gathered [you] as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!'. On another occasion, we are told that Jesus 'groaned in the spirit and was troubled', and later was 'again groaning in himself'. Others translate it, 'being deeply moved in spirit', and, 'he gave way to such distress of spirit as made his body tremble'. It seems he suffered because of the unbelief around him and the death-mourning which should have been rejoicing in the presence of the Lord of life. Whatever its nature, it was of the same quality as the suffering of the Spirit. In a sense, he suffers when the creation suffers. He, as its creator, suffers *for it*. The statement above, 'he. . . groaned in the spirit', is capable of being translated 'he...groaned in the Spirit', since on another occasion 'he rejoiced in the Spirit'. Whether or not this translation is correct does not greatly matter. The Spirit is the Spirit of suffering no less than the Spirit of love, joy and peace, and Jesus lived in the Spirit.

The Spirit of Christ

We saw, many sections ago, that as the Spirit of Christ, he shared in the life and actions of the man in Galilee. At no one place did he share less than at another. This would also mean that, at the Cross, he shared with Christ, even enabling him in the work of redemption. Now it was at that Cross that the Son cried, 'My God! My God! Why did you forsake me?'. This is the most *unutterable* cry of all history and *it had to be uttered!* When the psalmist recorded, 'Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!' he was saying that his voice came from his hidden depths. We can believe it was in the same kind of way that the Spirit aided Christ in that most terrifying cry. He was at one with Christ in his suffering. Now he himself has 'unutterable cries' on behalf of his creation and its human creatures, because he is the Spirit of love, and so of suffering. This is all related to him as the Spirit of glorification. Not until the creation is renewed will his inarticulate cries cease and his peace be over all the earth.

Psa. 130:1

No, until that time will believers be released from the obligation and privilege of suffering for his sake. This is part of life in the Spirit, for, as was indicated at the begin

ning of our section, life in the Spirit is not all ecstasy.

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There is no more fitting conclusion to a section such as this than to quote from the prophecy of John:

'Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Rev. 14:12-13

'And I heard a voice behind me saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," *says the Spirit* "that they may rest from their labours for their deeds [works] follow them!" '

THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL

45. THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL (1)

THE MEANING OF REVIVAL

Why should we consider the matter of revival?

It may seem curious that, in a book such as this, whose main subject is the Holy Spirit, a section should be given over to the theme of revival. To understand the reasons, we must first see that the people of God have always known an ebb and a flow, so that at the ebb-tide we need that change which will bring in the flow. It is only because of our apathy that revival is needed. Israel as a nation would grow in the blessing of God and his covenant, only to come to self-satisfaction and pride, which almost inevitably led to participation in idolatry.

Whatever the cause or causes of the ebb may be, we know that we need the Spirit to renew life. Shortly, we shall see the promises of renewal which came to exiled Israel. Prior to the chastisement of Israel, God warned—many times—that he would bring judgements to his land and people, but the prophets were scorned for the most part and looked upon as nuisances and spoil-sports.

Today the church is in need of revival. Whilst we must not idealise the days of the apostolic church, and whilst also we must see how faulty it was, yet there was, in it, enough of life and vitality to shame many of our churches, and much of our present activity. We really do need revival, and throughout history the Spirit has been the one to bring this renewal, naturally enough. Because we need—time and again—the fresh blowing of the Divine Wind, we ought to

be open to every insight of the Bible—as also the lessons of church history—regarding the nature of revival, and the ways in which the Spirit brings it to God's people.

The meaning of revival

Although the link is not directly stated in the Old and New Testaments, yet, undoubtedly, the Spirit is strongly related to the work of revival. Setting aside for a moment the movements in church history which have been given the name 'revival', let us look at the meaning of the word and the principle it embodies in the Scriptures.

The Hebrew root verb *chayya* has a basic meaning relating to the idea of life, and, as a verb, can be translated 'to have life', 'to remain alive', 'to sustain life', 'to live well', and 'to live forever'. It also has meanings which are best expressed as 'be quickened' or 'be revived'; this quickening is from states of dispiritedness and death. Some of its uses are quite graphic:

'I kill and I <i>make alive</i> ':	Deut. 32:39
'The Lord kills and <i>brings to life</i> ':	1 Sam. 2:6
'But when they told him [Jacob] all the words of Joseph. . .the spirit of their father Jacob revived';	Gen. 45:27
shall I now die of thirst? . . . and when he drank, his spirit returned and he revived';	Judges 15:18-19
. the soul of the child came into him again and he revived . . and Elijah said, "See, your son lives" ';	I Kings 17:22-23
'. and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood on his feet';	II Kings 13:21
'Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?'	Neh. 4:2

Looking at the events with which the above references are connected, we see from the first two that God kills, but brings back to life. Jacob had long ago given up believing he would see Joseph again, for he thought him dead. Note the fascinating language: ' . . . the spirit of their father Jacob revived'. The fourth reference is to Samson, who after having slain many Philistines was totally exhausted and dying from thirst. God opened up a spring to him and 'his spirit

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returned and he revived'. His spirit had not actually gone from him. This figurative language tells of the state of desperation to which he had been brought. Then, suddenly, he was renewed to his full self. The account of the healing of the dead child by Elijah is clear enough; one who had been dead was restored to life. The next story is quite remarkable. Some Israelites were burying a man, when a Moabite band of marauders was seen. In haste, they cast the body into Elisha's grave (a cave, presumably), and when the corpse touched Elisha's bones, the man revived, i.e. came to life and stood up! Finally, we have the incident where the enemies of the returned Jewish exiles scoffed at them as they sought to use the stones for rebuilding the walls. It seems that even stones can be revived, i.e. used to *renew* the walls once destroyed.

Psa. 138:7

We see, then, that revival is the renewal of someone or something from being dead or useless. The thought of stones being 'dead' in the eyes of Nehemiah's opponents is a natural one. Revival of stones meant their being used again in the building of the walls of Jerusalem, i.e. coming back into their true functional use. A psalmist (possibly David) says, 'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou shalt preserve my life', i.e. 'thou wilt revive me', or 'thou keepest me alive'. This means 'You will not let me lose my life'. The prophet (Hosea) exhorts his listeners to return to God. He says, 'After two days he will revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him'.

Hosea 6:2

Hosea 14:4.7

In one of his most beautiful utterances, God promises to renew Israel: 'I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them . . . they shall flourish as a garden. . .' One version has 'they shall revive as the corn', and another 'they will be grown corn that flourishes'.¹ Whatever the precise choice of the translator, the thought is that everything will become fresh, the dead as the living.

This is borne out with other Old Testament uses. Isaiah promises, prophetically, that God, who dwells in the high

¹ The first reference is from the Authorised Version (King James); the second from *The Jerusalem Bible*.

and holy place, and who is lofty and inhabits eternity, will dwell with the humble one, to 'revive the spirit of the humble, and . . . revive the heart of the contrite'.

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Isa. 57:1 5

In the New Testament, the word 'revive' (Gk. *anazao*) has a similar idea. In the parable of the lost son, the father says, . . . my son was dead and is alive again. . . your brother was dead and is alive'. In the Book of the Revelation, we are told that 'line rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended'. A potent use of the word is in Paul's account of the psychological working of sin: 'I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin *revived* and I died'.

Luke 15:24, 32

Rev. 20:5

Rom. 7:9

Sin was never dead, but it could have no power over one ignorant (innocent?) of law. With the confrontation of the law, sin came into full power, bringing death to the person now under its condemnation and power. Guilt, then, is the power of death, whilst grace is the power of revival.

The need for revival

The theme of revival has been the darling of many enthusiasts, and the *bête noir* of those who abhor disturbance in the life of the church.¹ Many of the former have developed a complicated theology, and—sometimes—methodology of revival; but the matter is so simple. Any human being at certain points of life becomes stale, depressed, exhausted, apathetic. Likewise, God's people go into decline. At such times and in such states, persons and churches need revival. Israel as a nation needed revival. Hence the prayer of the psalmist, 'Wilt thou not revive us again' that thy people may rejoice in thee? Show us thy steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation'. And again, 'Thou who

Psa. 85:6-7

Psa. 71:20-21

¹ There is a vast reading list on the subject, from the days of the Montanists (fourth century A.D.) to those of the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century Wesleyan and Anglican (Evangelical) revivals, enthusiasm—as it was called—many thoughtful theologians and churchmen. Jonathan Edwards' *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* ('Select Works of Jonathan Edwards', vol. 3, Banner of Truth, London, 1961) was an attempt to come to terms with the true and false elements of revival. Two modern works are Ronald Knox's *Enthusiasm* (Christian Classics, Maryland, 1983) and Benjamin Warfield's *Perfectionism* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971).

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hast made me see many sore troubles wilt *revive* me again; from the depths of the earth thou wilt bring me up again. Thou wilt increase my honour, and comfort me again'.

Psa. 80:18

Linked with this is 'Give us life, and we will call on thy name', or 'Revive us and we shall invoke your name'. In these cases, the joys and rewards of being renewed are the motivation for the cry. However, with the prophet Habakkuk, the problem arises in the terrible context of judgement. Hence his cry becomes the *focus classicus* of the principle of revival:

'O Lord, I have heard the report of thee,
and thy work, O Lord, do I fear.

Hab. 3:2

In the midst of the years renew it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy'.

He is really saying,

'O Lord, we your people deserve judgement, and it is now to come upon us. We know what you did in olden days, especially in bringing Israel out of Egypt. Now, at this very moment in which we live—with impending judgement—do such a work again. This time it is we who must experience judgement, but then we deserve it. Renew us by this judgement, make us a living nation again, but in your judgement also deal with us, not after our sins, but according to your mercy'.

In other words, revival arises out of judgement, and the very judgement is a liberation from the guilts and sins of the past. The revived people will move freshly into the overwhelming grace of God.

The Spirit and revival

What part does the Spirit play in revival? The answer is that the spirit of a person cannot be freshened or brought to life apart from him who is called the Spirit of life, or the lifegiving Spirit: '...when thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground'.

Psa. 104:29-30

It is an interesting fact and principle that God sends his Spirit when the nation is at the end of its tether. Revival only

came to Israel in Habakkuk's time when the nation was ripe for judgement. The Spirit, we know, is the Spirit of judgement. Yet the Spirit is not the Spirit of destruction. Thus when judgement has done its work, the nation is revived. In the light of this, some of the Isaianic prophecies are potent:

' . . . I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people...' Isa. 43:20-21

' . . . I will pour water on the thirsty land, and
streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and
my blessing on your offspring'; Isa. 44:3

'When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,
and their tongue is parched with thirst,
I the Lord will answer them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
I will open rivers on the bare heights,
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water'.

We may then adduce a principle of revival, namely, that it is God who renews a person or people when they have become faint or dead because of their sin and (or) need. This he does in conformity with his nature, in which are wed the elements of judgement and loving kindness, wrath and love, purification and liberation. Nor was this fact ever hidden from Israel. Moses had declared the principle of life as set out by God.¹ Obedience in love to God would ensure his protection and his flow of gifts. Disobedience would result in chastisement and judgement. When these had done their work and the nation repented, then God would visit them, quicken and revive them, raising them up as his people and giving them a new lease of life, a new flow of the Spirit. This is the nature of his true revival. This principle posits the

¹ The last chapters of Deuteronomy, which set out this principle, were the basis of the writings of the former prophets (Joshua to Nehemiah). They trace Israel's history—blessing and chastisement—in the light of this. The latter prophets also pursue the same theme and predict the revival God will bring.

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immediacy of God in his relationship with his people. He does not leave them to their own devices or demise! He is always visiting them.

46. THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL (2) VISITATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

The Spirit with man by creation

One of our problems with an atomistic view of Scripture—or even a certain kind of dispensational view—is that we see the Holy Spirit as working differently in different epochs. There is, of course, more than a grain of truth in this view, but as we have said, we must see him working 'from creation to (the new) creation'. We must see his work as progressive and processive. He works and builds from generation to generation, epoch to epoch, with the climactic epoch—the eschaton—in view all the while.

Again, if we divorce what we call the creational work of the Spirit from the redemptional, then we miss the significance of the Spirit's entire work because we do not have it in its right perspective. Man created is as 'man-in-the-making', i.e. man not yet completed, not yet matured by history, man who will be needing redemption and also man not yet glorified. Man, from the point of creation (or birth), is always in a state of becoming, which means that his life is (or should be) dynamic. By this we mean that he is in that dynamic state of development and (healthy) self-realisation. We must see that it is the Spirit who has created man and who is with him in redemption to renew what he has lost of his creational being by his fall into sin.

If we believe that created man was man-with-the-Spirit, then we can understand that man is natively a creature of the Spirit. When he sinned against God and was no longer truly a man of the Spirit, then he was dead: ' . . . in the day you eat of it [the tree of knowledge of good and evil] you shall die'. Even so, the Spirit remains with man in his creational sustaining power. Front the statement of God prior to the

Gen. 2:17

flood, 'My Spirit shall not always dwell in man', we conclude that, whatever this means, the judgement of the flood was about to make a difference. In other words, man was not going to have the Spirit working with him as he had previously known. The judgement of the flood effected this; but it was man's growing corruption and violence which was the cause.

The quenched Spirit

Why was there no prophet between Malachi and John the Baptist? Why the long silence because of no prophetic word? We can only conjecture. The fact is that there were no prophets and this was recognised in the first book of the Maccabees.¹ Jeremias says that Jewish thinking—especially of the synagogue—was that the Spirit had been quenched in Israel when it had committed sin with the golden calf. From that time, God only put his Spirit upon special people such as prophets, high priests, kings and necessary artificers like Bezalel and his companions. From then on, God only spoke through 'the echo of his voice', i.e. *bat qol*.²

Biblically, we would have to say that men of faith were also men and women of the Spirit, especially as the writer of Hebrews speaks of them. Jesus' statement about the prophets being 'from Abel to Zechariah' also needs understanding. Whether we can accurately speak of the Spirit being quenched or not, we can see something of such a principle always present in Israel's history. It is true that in the wilderness 'they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit'. It is also true that Haggai's prophetic words must have been

Heb. ch. 11

Luke 11:50-51

Isa. 63:10 11

¹ See I Maccabees 4:46, 9:27, 14:41, as follows: '...they pulled down the altar, and laid up the stones in the mountain of the house in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to give an answer concerning them' 'And there was great tribulation in Israel such as not since the time that no prophet appeared unto them'; 'and that the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet'.

² *New Testament Theology*, vol. I, pp. 80-85, 'Joachim Jeremias' (SCM, London, 1971) The prophets and the psalmists look back with deep regret and horror to this failure of Israel in the desert. It was not just one of many intermittent failures, but a basic and principial failure and the sort of thing which gave Stephen substance for his sermon in Acts 7—that Israel had always been idolatrous and therefore had always resisted the Holy Spirit.

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Hag. 2:5

reassuring to Israel in its return to Israel after the exile: 'My Spirit abides among you; fear not'.

If the A.V. translation is correct, then God had promised that his Spirit would always remain with them. Ezekiel seems to indicate that there was a point when the glory of God left Israel,¹ and that would mean, for the prophet, that the Spirit had left them. Whatever the merits—or demerits—of this kind of reasoning, it is certain that the Spirit was with Israel in every major situation. Following the exile, it was by the aid of the Spirit that the temple was rebuilt: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts'.

Zech. 4:6

There is a sense, then, in which we can speak of the 'quenched Spirit', just as also we must think of him as nevertheless sovereign. From one point of view, as God is vexed by the evil of man, so also he is sovereign over man's rebellion. Thus the Spirit does not retire hurt; his action is part of his purpose to revive the nation which has rebelled and which is thus made ready, through judgement, for revival.

The Spirit of revival

The days of John the Baptist heralded the sovereign purposes of God through his Spirit and his Son, i.e. the restoration of the Kingdom, not merely to Israel, but to his creation. This was the thrust of the coming of the Spirit—witness to Messiah in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Here was no simple revival of Israel² and a renewing of her within the limits of Palestine, but *a renewal of mankind!* It is true that, through John the Baptist, Israelites looked to total forgiveness, the coming of the Kingdom and the outpouring of the Spirit, but probably

¹ Ezekiel 11:22-24. It is not that the glory left Israel permanently, but left the temple and the city at the time of its pollution and destruction.

² When we say 'It is no simple revival of Israel', that is true. It is intended to be a revival of mankind. Even so, it is also intended to be the dynamic revival of Israel. Acts 2 and Ezekiel 37:1-14. are surely parallels of 'prophecy and fulfilment'. Nothing but Pentecost could renew the nation. Pentecost in this sense is of enormous significance. Whilst only the true remnant responded then, there was set a time when the whole nation would respond. See Romans 11:15ff.

only the great-minded among them saw it as universal. Simeon was one of those, for 'inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple', and taking up the child Jesus prophesied over him:

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'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word;
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation
which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to thy people Israel'.

Luke 2:29-32

Israel badly needed revival. It was 'dry and thirsty ground'. It was 'dry bones' and it was a tree at which the roots of the axe were being laid for judgement. These two conditions of revival—judgement and dire need (dryness)—were being met by the Spirit through the Messiah. Even so, the revival was not only for an exigency in Israel, but for the exigency in which the whole world was involved. If, at the fall, and more so at the flood, the Spirit was quenched and withdrew much of his operations, now, with the coming of Messiah, the Spirit was fulfilling his universal task in being sent by the Father, through the Son, to bring life to the whole world.

The action of revival

In relation to the temple as the place of their prayers and his own hearing of them, God had said to Israel,

'When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land'.

II Chron.
7:13-14

That was a promise given primarily to Israel, and on such a basis, John the Baptist (in line with the other prophets) could call for repentance. Because the advent of Messiah was immediately imminent, he could give his threefold promise of the Kingdom, the forgiveness of sins, and the outpouring of the Spirit. This would revive not only Israel, were all that nation to respond; it would revive the whole world .

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We must, then, see baptism in the Spirit as the principle of revival, and—even more—universal revival. God, in the last days, would pour out his Spirit upon *all flesh*. There would be grace for all, forgiveness, the Kingdom and the Spirit for all. Of course, where there was no sense of need, where there was no will to listen to the proclamation, and where judgement was opposed, the blessing would be rejected; there would be no universalistic Gospel into which all men would be conscripted. Only when the heart opened and the will saw the grace of God would there come a response. In that sense, universal revival is limited to the elect, but then do not let us force that word 'elect' into a doctrinaire strait-jacket.¹ God's promise of salvation and renewal is a genuine one. The ultimate mystery lies in God, and not in the logic of our minds. The point we stress is that, to the elect, God's revival through the Spirit is intelligible.

We must then conclude that the coming of the Spirit fulfils the principle of revival. He, who, like Jacob, has become dead in his spirit is brought to life. He, who, like Samson, is utterly exhausted and swooning to death, is raised up to full life. He who has been dead, like the widow's child under Elisha, has now come back to life. This new life is very different from what it was like, prior to revival. The old stones that had been tumbled from the old wall have now become 'living stones in the temple of God'. They are dynamic in their usefulness; they are new in their being and function.

The spreading revival

Ezek. 37 11

The image of Israel in Ezekiel's prophecy—set in the drear waste of the desert—is a paradigm for, and a parable of, Pentecost and God's people. The prophet sees the dry bones of lost Israel—that great but defeated army of God. Israel's complaint is, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost;

¹ We cannot deny the truth of predestination and election, but neither may we distort or subvert it. Acts 13:48-49 holds this truth in healthy balance: 'And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region.'

we are clean cut off'. God's promise is:

'Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people...And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it'.

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Ezek. 37:12-14

When we look at the event itself we see the scattered bones and then hear the command of God to the prophet that he should prophesy to the bones. This he does, first giving them God's promise of what will happen, and so the response to the prophetic word is the renewal of the nations. The bones come together, the flesh upon the bones, and Israel as slain is seen, but yet without life. Then the prophet prophesies (as commanded) to the wind, i.e. the *Ruach*: ' . . . Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live'.

As at Pentecost, so then; as then, so at Pentecost. A great wind comes and the slain stand on their feet '*an exceeding great host!*' This is what we must see, although not merely from the point of view of 'the numbers game'. It is a vast army!

Ezek. 37:9-10

We remember that in his post-resurrection discourse with the disciples, Jesus told them clearly that the point was not the immediate restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, but the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom being proclaimed to the whole world. So it was that it was Israel who first heard the message of renewal, and then Samaria, and following that, the Gentiles. The message is still proceeding outward to the nations. The great army of the revived people of God is required to carry its spiritual message and warfare into all the world.

It is only in the light of Messiah and Pentecost that we understand what God is about. His plan is universal and its connotation is eternal. Man, fallen, has become as 'without breath', deficient and demeaned and scarcely man at all. Only with the coming of the Spirit and the Word can he be restored, i.e. 'by the washing of regeneration and renewing in the Holy Spirit'. As we have said, this is really the action of the Spirit applying the work and power of the Cross in its

Titus 3:5

benefits to man. Application of the atonement is made inwardly upon man, thus affecting his entire being.

47. THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL (3) **THE EBB AND FLOW OF REVIVAL IN HISTORY**

Church history is often too emotive in its nearness and our personal involvement in it, for us to be able to read it objectively. There are those who have chronicled the revivals the church has known down through two thousand years, and this kind of study is fascinating. The New Testament also describes enough of the ebb and flow of revival to stand as some kind of paradigm, and to be used as such.

Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit to Samaria, and the descent of the Spirit upon the Gentiles at Caesarea and an odd little group of John the Baptist's followers at Ephesus, are sufficient for us to see the first fruits of the first renewal of humanity. They were great days and great events. So were the days when the apostles moved out into Asia, Asia Minor and Europe. Great renewals took place in Palestine, Asia Minor and Europe and, doubtless, in similar fashion, in western, central and eastern Asia. The flow went on as 'rivers of living water' making their way across many lands and peoples.

The remarkable thing is that they of the apostolic church could say, with Christ, 'He that comes will never hunger, and he that drinks will never thirst'. They could make this wonderful offer universally. Those that hungered and thirsted after righteousness could rest assured that they would be filled. And so they were! The yeasty first days left no one in doubt about the renovating and renewing power of the Spirit and his Gospel.

We have dwelt on what it meant for human spirits to be flushed with Holy Spirit, for human life to be flooded with the life of the Spirit, and for the children of God to look up to him as Father, and to live in the new family of men. What perhaps we do not always see is that this was no new, sudden

or violent movement of God. It was 'in the fullness of time' that Christ came and changed the order of things. It was equally in the fullness of time that the Spirit came as the Spirit of grace and glory to substantiate the work of the Father. No new Spirit came to Israel which had not already been in Israel. In the old economy and under the old covenant, men and women had known regeneration through the Spirit. They had also understood forgiveness and justification. Many had known their lives filled to fullness, but the world necessarily awaited the redemptive work of Christ, and then his *alter ego*, his 'another Paraclete', to come to man in his dryness, and to pour water on thirsty earth and floods on the dry ground, making streams in the deserts of man and his spirit. There was now a constantly available Spirit to fill man initially, and then keep him filled according to his desire, faith and obedience.

The tendencies to ebb

We say that the New Testament—Acts, Epistles and the Revelation—present a paradigm for the ebb and flow of life in Christ and the Spirit. The tendency to ebb is seen very early in the piece, when Ananias and Sapphira were about to corrupt the church. We see it in Simon Magus, seeking to purchase the giving of the Spirit. It was present in the threatened divisions—those which began to emerge because of the law, Jewish rites such as circumcision, and the attempts to make Gentile Christians proselytes of the Jews.

There were moral elements linked also with ebbing. The old Gentile ways still exercised some tug upon new Christians. The old Jewish ways threatened to pull back some, such as those to whom the Hebrews Epistle was written. Paul had troubles with those who were fascinated by various 'gospels' or who were caught up in germinal Christian heresies such as Gnostic rationalisations of the Gospel, and perhaps Docetic ones also. John the apostle was aware of the spread of antichrists in his day, and sought to counter them by good advice and teaching.

Put more simply, Christians constantly felt the tug of the flesh, whilst others overbalanced into antinomianism on the

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one hand or legalism on the other. These elements are just as alive today as then. They are still causal elements in the present ebbing of Christian life. We have seen that Paul constantly urged his converts and hearers to know, daily, a renewal of the mind, thus countering the influences that flowed about believers in the world of their day. He also gave positive teaching on mortification of sin, vivification *of* one's being, and the positive life of obedient love. His exhortations are still relevant.

It is when we come to the Revelation that we see the true extent of the ebb in the church's life. Chapters two and three are strong in their condemnation of what is in the churches, such as lack of love, idolatry, involvement in the occult, false prophecy, heresies of serious and even immoral nature, spiritual pride, apathy and indolence, all of which make a surprising survey of human spiritual ebb. It is pertinent that both Christ and the Spirit speak to these situations. The demand is for recognition of their state, clear repentance, and total renewal. These churches—or at least five of them—are candidates for revival.

The Book of the Revelation is also a full warning against the evil and persecution which the church will encounter. The entire prophecy is addressed to the seven churches, and not otherwise. This sevenfold (whole) church is one which is not only located in the centres nominated, but which stretches across the whole church age, until the Parousia. That is why it must see, recognise and be concerned about the threatened ebb and flow of God's people. It must understand that history is prophecy, and prophecy is 'the testimony of Jesus'.

After the apostolic age, the tug and tendency towards ebb was strong. The apostolic fathers were clear enough in their teaching, but there was a noticeable shift from such teaching in the sub-apostolic fathers. Soon faith and practice became separated, and the chronicles of church history tell us the rest. There was the 'Tunnel Age' of the church, of which we know so little. With the acceptance of Christianity as a legally permitted religion, the secularity of the State invaded the church, which was then drawn into the darkness of political action. The rise of Islam, the Crusades, the support

of the Papacy by the False Decretals, the scholasticism of theology and the growth of corrupt churchly practices are undeniable in history and were partly causes and partly expression of the sad ebb of the life of the church. Not, of course, that there were not those whose lives were filled with the Spirit, and who persisted in love and proclamation of the Word. As in old Israel, so in the new church there has always been the faithful remnant, the true holy seed.

The tendencies to flow

The tendencies to *ebb* are understandable in the light of our humanity, its bodily desires and the imaginations of the mind. In addition, there are the personal evil powers who seek to wean us from God and the truth by deceit, seduction and threats. The presence of sin in the world, and the seeming security of being part of the majority are also powerful factors. However, we have to say that the thrust to flow is stronger than the tug to ebb. Even when we lived in the lie, we had a consciousness—somehow, somewhere—that it was the lie. To be created means that to live authentically is innate to us, and true living has its own intrinsic thrust. Our *needs* remind us of the Source of supply. Our contingent creaturely being will not let us rest easily in the self-sufficiency into which we repeatedly and habitually retreat.

Further, there is always the thrust to flow because, in believers, *the Spirit is always present*. We do not have to pray, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me'. He would no more do that than recall forgiveness. When we continue to live in humility—i.e. without presumption—then the flow of grace continues.

The thrust to flow is strong because of the presence of the Spirit, of our being members of Christ's body, and fellow members in the family of God. This thrust also arises in the functional working of God's plan, the liberty we know when we obey, and, most of all, in the dynamic obligation to love because we have had God's love poured into our hearts. All of these elements undoubtedly have their own inbuilt rewards; we genuinely can enjoy obedience, loving, obeying, sharing the plan, fellowship-ping together, worshipping and

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praising God.

There is also a curb on the tendency to ebb, in that, when it happens, much of our peace and joy becomes suspended, if not lost. We find that our loss of well-being because of the ebb, makes us require the flow. Life is lived almost unconsciously in the flow, but missed greatly in the ebb! Hence backsliding is unpleasant; spiritual torpor brings boredom, vibrancy is missed in our languid states and in our hatred and anger, whilst evil brings dark states of guilt which themselves act as goads to get us moving properly again. Sometimes we are greatly surprised to find we have been deceived. Sometimes we are shocked. Whatever it is, we soon find a nostalgia gripping us, for the good life—the life of the Spirit. This is especially so if we are versed in grace. If we feel we are *too* guilty to be forgiven again, and to be received back, then we will drift until the drift becomes intolerable. One way or another, our Father, our Elder Brother and our Paraclete—and perhaps our brethren, too—will draw us back.

There are times when the ebb is extreme, and it can happen in a wide variety of circumstances. There may be the invasion of a deficient or hostile theology, or the penetration into leadership of the church of bland or foolish or evil men. Then the church loses its power, its holiness of life, its thrust to obedience, and again goes into some kind of tunnel. John Bunyan portrays this superbly in his book *The Holy War*.¹ The Spirit does not depart, but—so to speak—withdraws into himself—as a lover does when unappreciated, but only in order to draw back and revive the affection of the one who has drifted from love.

These are the times when we know the soil to be thirsty, the ground to be parched, the bones to be dry. We cry,

'Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?

Where is the soul-refreshing view

Of Jesus and his word?"²

The time is then ripe for teaching the truths of revival, the

¹ *The Holy War*, John Bunyan (The Sovereign Grace Union, London, 1968)

² From the hymn of John Cowper, 'Oh, for a closer walk with God'.

principles of turning away from evil, repenting afresh, seeking the face of God, being humbled, and praying. The latter may be for oneself who has sinned, or it may be—as in the case of Daniel¹—one's identification with the sins of the nation, and a vicarious prayerful repentance. Whatever the means by which we seek revival, we have to remember that on the one hand it will be a sovereign act of God, and on the other it will call for repentance and faith. Whilst God promised Israel a heart of flesh in place of the heart of stone, and a new spirit (from the Spirit) in place of the old, he also said,

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways. . . Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!".

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Ezek. 18:30-31
cf. 36:25-27

The seeming tension here between God's sovereignty and human responsibility is resolved by Jeremiah's prayer, 'Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned'!

Lam. 5:21

Conclusion

This, then, is the ebb and flow of life in the Spirit which we find described within the pages of the New Testament, the era of the apostolic church. What we need now to do, in order to see the practical value of the materials of this book, is to discover how life can be lived today in the light of the ever-present fact of *the ebb* and *the flow* of life in the Spirit.

48. THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL (4)

CONTINUOUS REVIVAL

The term 'continuous revival' was coined during the 1950s as it related to the revival in East Africa, and in particular in Ruanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The form which revival took was that of confession through brokenness,

¹ Daniel, although a man of faith and the Spirit, identified himself with his errant people—Israel—and with all their sins and wickedness. He repented vicariously for his people, calling upon God to revive them. See Daniel 9:3-19.

accompanied by repentance. Daily fellowship by groups of Christians was based upon the principle of 'walking in the light' together, having no darkness. This was accomplished by allowing God to search the heart and to bring to the surface anything of darkness. There was then public repentance of these things. Forgiveness was sought through confession and repentance, for confession was made both to God and those sinned against. In this way, continuous love was maintained towards God and fellow believers. There can be no doubt that this revival has produced fine men and women of God in East Africa, including most of the leaders of present churches. It has also had a deep impact on other churches in the Third World. For the most part it still operates.

The thesis that this revival has worked on is that God has laid down certain practical principles for daily living, and when these are followed, then life will be maintained at a certain vital level. Such living is a prophylactic against spiritual and moral recession. In one sense, this cannot be called continuous *revival* but rather *vival*, i.e. living in the true spiritual norm. We might call spiritual recession *devival*. Although these two latter words are not dictionary terms, they help to make clear what continuous revival is all about. Strictly speaking, revival simply renews the church to its proper norm, and godly living helps to both maintain and sustain that norm. Thus 'godly living' i.e. 'continuous revival', is equated with brokenness, repentance, confession and cleansing.

The term 'continuous revival' then, whilst not strictly correct, makes the matter clear: one can keep one's self fresh in the renewing of the Spirit continually by devotional life, fellowship, the exercise of humility and the constant use of the means of grace. The word 'revival' should be kept for those people, or those churches, which have spiritually declined and need wholesome renewal. An example of such revival would be the churches to whom Christ wrote and to whom the Spirit spoke in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. If they had heeded the admonitions and responded, then they would have come into revival. Likewise, any church in history which has drifted into coldness, pride, deadness, legalism or antinomianism could likewise

be revived if it were to hear the voice of Christ and the Spirit, and respond.

Strictly speaking, the life of the church and the life of the person-member of it should begin with regeneration, which is 'life-from-the-dead' or conversion through repentance and forgiveness with the accompanying gift of the Spirit. This is generally called 'becoming a new creation', i.e. 'the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit'. In this case the word 'revival', which is never used of the initiatory conversion complex, is not technically correct; but then, in the sense in which the prophet Ezekiel uses it in the vision of the valley of dry bones, it is valid. Man is revived from his state of death, and his spirit comes alive through the Spirit. Thus, from that point onwards, the term revival should not need to be used. However, as we have pointed out, there is often—though there need not be—an ebb in life which requires a revival to make it flow again.

Over the centuries, Christians have rightly discerned that this ebb and flow should not have to happen and have sought ways to prevent it. Such attempts, even though from worthy motives, have often led to confusion, conflict and cultic movements. Some have devised methods or formulae by which spiritual life can be kept regular and habituated. The East African 'continuous revival' pattern—as described above—is but one of these, and it is quite true that a Christian should be able to live at a steady level of obedience and personal growth, thus attaining progressive maturity. All of these systems tend towards what is called 'pietism'.

During the Reformation, the great doctrine of grace, as it relates to forgiveness and justification, was a revival point in the life of the church. Luther's famous 'by faith alone' became a sort of battle-cry. Man is not justified by works but by faith. This truth, rightly understood, is dynamic, but if not fully understood, it is open to abuse. Some folk fell into the camp of thinking that faith was enough and even that works of any kind were likely to make the person feel he could accomplish something of himself, i.e. that in some way he could justify himself. Law also was despised; (a) for its condemnation, and (b) as a way of bondage. Out of this thinking came a life of loose living. Faith was conceived as

mere intellectual assent, and that was enough.

Reacting against this grossness of life lived by some antinomians, the pietists insisted on definite marks and evidences of actual regeneration. Whilst this demand was not unreasonable, it tended to regard good living, high morality and spirituality as the hallmarks of a redeemed person. Hence there came to be a strong emphasis on such things as prayer, Bible reading, worship, good works and almsgiving. All of these things are commendable, but it was often insisted that the very doing of them maintained a high level of spirituality and morality, which in fact is not the case. The emphasis on justification by grace through faith tended to become 'justification by sanctification—synergistic rather than monergistic.

Any of these spiritual exercises may be done from the motivation of guilt. They may—and in some cases do—engender spiritual pride. None of these wrong approaches invalidates the exercises themselves, but the danger of reading them as proofs of a regenerated life is high. Thus, at this point, legalism establishes itself. Pietists themselves have seen the dangers and have added the requirement of humility and lowliness of mind. Even this, in its turn, can become an added good work which may lead to further pride.

Some pietists have delineated strictly what is right and what is wrong for a Christian to do, thus creating a cultus. Usually, things which bring pleasure are considered to be not in order, and things which bring high demands of abstinence, pain and even suffering are thought commendable. Whilst in some situations this may well be true, it is not necessarily so as a principle of life. In this case, pietism disregards the truth of creation, and the teaching that all things created by God are good and to *be enjoyed*.

Asceticism displaces faith and grace, and the ascetic believer is now in legal danger through his conscience. He can be immolated in a conscience which compounds guilt for failure, and drives the subject on to ever-increasing demands for self-sacrifice and works. All the joy and blessedness of grace and love are submerged in a view of God as one who is severe and demanding. Such measures do not at all keep the subject in a level of 'continuous revival'. He who believes that by these spiritual exercises he is keep-

ing himself at the required level of true Christian living, may be deluding himself and rejecting—unwittingly—the truth of creation and the grace of God in freedom.

Life in the Spirit Is constant spiritual life

We have seen in previous sections that to abide in the Spirit is to maintain a reasonable level of godly living. We do not have to develop formulae, techniques and cultic observances for that to happen. It is living in grace, and having the law internalised. Thus obedience is from love, and the true way of life is taught by the word of God and discerned by the Spirit, especially as that is done in the context of the whole body of Christ. There is a certain spontaneity in the new life. It is a fountain springing up and satisfying the person. It is a river flowing out, satisfying others. The church is concentrated on the world and its needs, so that it keeps proclaiming the Gospel to all mankind. In this action of proclaiming, fellowshiping, loving, suffering and battling with evil powers, it is kept firmly in life. It needs no revival. It needs no 'continuous revival'. It is alive and kicking!

The dying of the churches

We need to repeat the fact that churches are found, many times, to be dying. It is a fact of history that North Africa was once the seat of a great church. We need not go into the causes for its decline. It is enough to observe that it succumbed first to internal strife as it maintained rival views on the person of Christ. Then Islam overran it. Likewise the politicising of the church within the Roman Empire, following the Edict of Emperor Constantine, helped to secularise it, and even to some degree to paganise it, thus weakening it immeasurably. Students of church history know many of the causes for the decline of churches. Where there is a dying, a decline, a dryness, then revival is needed.

The revival of churches

Church history also records remarkable revivals of churches

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that have been sunk in apathy. Somehow—in these churches—there have been faithful souls who have prayed, and their prayers have been heard, although in some cases many years later. Within the bosom of the Western church—generally known as the Church of Rome—there have been powerful spiritual movements both prior to, and also following, the Reformation.¹ Those who have made a study of revival perceive that, on such occasions, there has been the need for the renewal of the church, and that this need has been recognised by a remnant of the faithful within the community. These, exercised by the deficiency of the church, whatever form or forms it may take, have applied to God to revive his people. Generally this follows (consciously or unconsciously) the principles which are set out in God's injunction to Solomon:

II Chron. 7:14

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land'.

Faithful prayer will eventually cause God's people to recognise something—if not all—of the state of the church, and so basic humbling, repentance—turning from evil and turning afresh to God—will result. In his sovereign way, in such situations, God will visit his people and revive them. However, this is not a formula which works mechanically to restore a church. A study of revivals shows that there is nothing stereotyped about God's action in history. The grace of renewal flows along many channels, and often along those which are least expected to be useful.

49. THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL (5)

THE EVOCATION AND MEANS OF REVIVAL

The Spirit the Evocator

The purpose we have in discussing revival is to show that the Spirit never leaves the church, which must always be listening

¹ The history of church revivals is a study on its own. It is partly covered in *History of Evangelism* by Paul Scharpff (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966). The bibliography is comprehensive and makes a useful reading list.

to what he is saying to it. Christ indeed rebuked the church at Ephesus, telling it that he would take away its candlestick, i.e. its light and witness. We have no record that he did such a thing immediately, although eventually the church at Ephesus did lose its life. It became extinct. We so often idealise the early church, but it was by no means perfect, as we have already seen. Yet the Spirit, though grieved and quenched from time to time, is not a squeamish or hurt Spirit. He is the Spirit of power and of judgement, as also of love and unity, and he continually works away at keeping the church in life.

Without him, there would be no sense of failure, no sorrow at sin, and certainly none of the hungering and thirsting that eventually draws a church to its knees to pray for revival. The Spirit then evokes the church into seeking revival when it is in need.

Human efforts at reviving the church

Even when the Spirit moves within the churches and there is a response, man will seek to bring revival by human effort. There is often loose talk about 'the cost of revival', when it is more fitting to speak of 'the cost of not having revival'. All suffer when the church is not in full life. Some earnest souls seek to bring revival by striving for it, through efforts which are so human that they can only be called 'fleshly'. When guilt is in the human spirit, there is a dark form of evocation which comes. It has to do with a tearing sense of guilt, a dark oppressiveness which has none of the joyous tones of grace and love. Men, moved almost to screaming pitch in prayer, will come almost to grovelling before God as though they see him as one who is severe and grim, who will only give revival when the church has sweated and gone through torrid vigils of prayer.

These oppressive elements are so close to the real demands of God as given to Solomon, that men of discernment are required in leadership of the church so that they will not unwittingly fall over into these dark works. No one can compute the many ways in which guilt can affect the church which has realised its failure, but which does not wait in

trust upon the sovereign will of God. It is also true, of course, that others err in the opposite way. They have so mistaken the character of grace as to become light-hearted almost to the point of flippancy: 'God will do what he will do, and nothing we do or say will alter that!' This too is an error. We find nothing of light-heartedness or carelessness in the rebukes and injunctions to the seven churches. We do, however, find excellent promises, and it is always the promises of God which evoke a genuine response, and which set up a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

The attempt to induce revival

We have already mentioned some attempts by churches to induce revival. Others have set about induction in other ways. They believe there is a formula, and that it is necessary to study the Scriptures, to see what patterns are indicated so as to follow them. There is something commendable in this approach, but, at the same time, it is not wholly correct. No principle of Scripture operates, or works out, apart from the Spirit of God. He cannot be conscripted into human action. Nor for the matter can he be methodologised. 'The Wind blows where he wills' is the principle by which his sovereignty works. Certainly, revival cannot be methodologised. When 'revival meetings' are announced, we do not consider the organisers offenders just for their use of the term, but we do insist that only the Spirit can make meetings 'revival meetings'. We await his pleasure and plan.

It seems that, as human beings, we often feel forced to accomplish ends by our own actions. Also, what may be called the physical aspects of our humanity are prone to manipulation. We can induce fear, feelings of guilt, a sense of obligation, and similar elements. So it is that groups and audiences will follow the dictates and manipulations of demagogues and persons with 'charisma'. Often this is not done by evil men, or calculating speakers, but by those who feel the use of such means is legitimate—justifying the ends—and would be surprised to know that they are employing devices which do not allow the truth to work.

Every evangelist knows he is expected to produce results!

No wonder he is tempted to take the dynamic way of swaying emotions and using persuasive methods. Within all human beings are remarkable powers, especially when they are sparked off by emotions and situations. My wife and I shifted a very heavy bed when we discovered a venomous snake at the side of it. Having disposed of the snake, we had no power to replace the bed! I have seen a paralysed man jump off his bed, run the distance of a long verandah, descend the steps and then wave to the 'plane which had come to take him from a prison camp. After that he collapsed. Later he died. So powerful are these elements which incite us to certain actions.

In meetings where mass feelings sway people, great deeds are sometimes witnessed. Hitler moved his masses by demagogic motions. Some people have summoned up every nerve and power in a faith-healing meeting, and have had temporary remissions of their illnesses, only to fall back into the same illness at a later time.¹ It is certainly possible to induce feelings which appear to indicate repentance, when in fact they are those of remorse. People will pray out of guilt or shame or even an induced spirit of conformity, and later will drift from their seeming states of spirituality into apathy and carelessness. The attempt to induce revival is a dangerous one. In fact it can even be a counterfeiting of the work of the Spirit.

The coming of revival

Those who have been in genuine revival know how demanding it is in the early stages. It is both demanding and promising at the same time. A sense of the holiness of God brings to man a sense of his sinfulness. In fact, an unusual sensitivity to both holiness and sin often ensues and brings genuine repentance, hatred of sin, a turning away from what is wrong and a turning gladly to God. This generally results in a tidying-up process. Relationships with God and man—even oneself—are cleansed, healed and renewed. Often the desires to make restitution for wrong acts, deceit, theft and

¹ This is not, of course, to discredit legitimate uses of true gifts or the genuine cases of healing which have happened.

hurt is so strong that the subject cannot rest until this is done. We must not think these things are foreign to the coming of the Spirit in the Book of Acts. They were all present. Revival is not something which goes beyond the canon of Scripture. It is just that, when it comes, it seems so strange because it is so different from the way we usually live life daily in the body of Christ and from our experience in our present local churches. Some churches are, of course, quite dynamic, and we must not assume that they are not. The dynamism may differ from church to church according to the particular emphasis of each. It may be liturgical renewal, charismatic renewal, biblical renewal or some other variety. No dynamism is necessarily authentic. To be authentic it must arise from the Word, obedience and the work of the Spirit.

Sadly enough, the coming of revival also brings problems, some of these being quite deep. The atmosphere of revival seems to loosen people psychically.¹ In the depths of group feeling which is intense, an element of psychic induction takes place, and there is unconscious mimicry or imitation. It is difficult to sort the genuine from the imitative, albeit the latter is not always deliberate. Groups tend to cultic conformity and revival is far from being an exception to this principle. After all, it can only work through the given faculties of our humanity.

Even so, revival is worth the problems that it brings and which require sorting out. It seems that at a time of revival under the Holy Spirit, the word of God is sharp and clear, so that within a few minutes, lifelong impressions may be indelibly imprinted. The effects of revival may seem to be temporary but can be traced, in some cases, as having lasted for a lifetime. This should not astonish us if we believe in the power of the Word and the Spirit to effect radical changes and impressions. We repeat that revival is really a recovery of true life, and needs to be supported, consolidated and sustained by worship, fellowship, the teaching of the word

¹ Reference to psychical phenomena presenting itself as authentic spirituality is made in many books on revival, particularly Jonathan Edwards' *Treatise on the Religious Affections* ('Select Works', Vol. 3, Banner of Truth, London, 1961). The bibliography on revival in this present volume is useful.

and the continuity of truly prophetic ministry.

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The misunderstanding of revival

The goal of revival is the restoration of the church (or churches) to their true norm. It is when we ask 'What is the true norm?' that problems arise, because many of us have different images relating to it. In one sense, there is no calculable and immutable norm. New Testament churches varied from place to place. The church at Jerusalem had an ethos which contrasted with that of the church at Antioch. Again, both Jerusalem and Antioch differed from the church at Corinth which certainly was in a charismatic ferment. Elements of culture must cause differences of expression in life, faith and worship, but the Lord is the same, the Father is the same, and the Spirit is the same. Paul points out the things which unify in more than one of his Epistles.¹

The norm to follow was 'the truth as in Christ'. Proclamation of the Gospel was the telling of the truth. The life of the church was the living of the truth. The Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Spirit were factors which unified the church. We certainly have a sense then, and even a consensus, about what a living church is.

Often the expectancy of revival is for something over and beyond what the church really is. For example, the demand of perfect love is certainly valid, but the pressures upon the members for such love-unity are enormous. Evil powers are always seeking to subvert the fellowship of the church, hence they very cleverly attack this love-unity and seek to demolish it.

Other demands are made, some of them quite out of the ethos of the New Testament, such as requiring life to be

¹ The classical teaching on basic unity is in Eph. 4:1-6. Paul shows that the one Spirit, the *one* Lord and the *one* Father, along with other elements, hold us to that basic unity, whatever the diversity of our personalities may be. In I Cor. 12:4-13, he shows that diversity is what aids the unity of the people of God. In Gal. 3:26-29, Christ is the power of true unity.

wholly on the level of 'the age to come'. The writer of Hebrews does say, 'We have tasted the powers of the age to come'. Whilst this is true, we are nevertheless not wholly in the age to come, or *hope* would be *sight*. Extraordinary demands are made by some for miracles, healings and even railings from the dead. In other words, they are demanding literally that the church on earth—the church militant, the church maturing—be as the church glorified! Such church members are looking for a miracle-faith rather than a faith-faith. Where faith must now work, sight is demanded! By nature of the case, this is impossible. We must remember that the present life of the church is penultimate and not ultimate. Such an understanding would take away unnatural demands and intolerable pressures.

There are other such demands which we cannot here discuss, but these comments—and further research into revivals—should alert us to those misunderstandings that can obtain before and during revival. Yet—we repeat—given in the problems that generally attend revival, we should not shrink from seeking the renewal which is needed.

The need for, and value of, revival

It is an interesting fact that the occurrence of revival is found today mainly in countries in which there is poverty, oppression and suffering. It does not take much discernment to see that adverse circumstances and situations cause people to think and consider 'the eternities', i.e. matters of life, death and human suffering. Affluent societies tend to become complacent and sedated. It is true that affluence brings its own problems and discontents, but the prosperous society seems to concentrate on either ignoring these or seeking to cope with them, and so does not press on to the recovery of genuine spiritual living. Often, the cycle is that a nation which has been through revival attains to affluence; then human pride and complacency ensue with an attendant decline in morality. Then, once again, there is a need of revival to change its altered mores. This is not to say that impoverished countries do not need revival. The fact is that they do have revivals, and so, obviously, a great need is met

by and through them.

The value of revival has already been pointed out. Churches are renewed to their true norm of living. The lives of renewed people make their impact upon the community. The community is enriched and the church is made ready to communicate the liberating Gospel; so witness is made to Christ. The triumph of Christ proceeds towards its appointed end when the victory of the Cross will have been worked out through the obedience of the church. Then the end will come. This is not to say that the world will come voluntarily and wholly to the feet of Christ, but it does mean that the proclamation of the Gospel will have polarised the world, bringing it to decision one way or the other.

If this is the goal of revival, then we should be persistent and even urgent in our pursuit of it within the compass of the sovereign will of God.

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Phil. 2:1 1

50. THE SPIRIT AND REVIVAL (6)

THE SPIRIT EVOCATOR AND LORD OF REVIVAL

If any given revival is not of the Holy Spirit then that is its own judgement. It must fail to achieve true results. The question is, 'How can we know and be really sure that a revival is of the Spirit of God?'. The answer is not simple. As we have said, one of the most gifted and skilled commentators on revival is Jonathan Edwards. His *Treatise on the Religious Affections* is a classic on the subject of revival. It should be read along with his account of the New England revivals, entitled *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*.¹ Edwards was no mean theologian and had a powerful pastoral ministry. He is known as a Calvinist, but even more as the man who unlocked Calvinism and let its dynamic get free, especially in the service of Gospel proclamation. In the second volume cited, he has a section on 'The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God'.

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions* ('Select Works', Vol. I, Hammer of Truth, London, 1965).

He classifies the marks in two sections. The first he calls *Negatives signs; or, What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work—and especially, What are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God*'. Under the first heading he insists on the points that are listed below.

- (1) The occurrence of strange and extraordinary things is not a criterion by which we can judge a work to be false: ' . . . it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced'.
- (2) 'A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body or the failing of bodily strength'. He says that Scripture gives us no rule on these things so that we are not in a position to judge, for such phenomena could be indication of true revival or otherwise.
- (3) A great deal of noise does not invalidate the work as being of the Spirit of God.
- (4) Having deep impressions upon one's imagination does not invalidate the work as being of the Spirit of God.
- (5) The fact that example (human actions) affects people does not invalidate the revival as being a work of the Spirit.
- (6) That those affected should manifest certain 'great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct' does not invalidate the revival.
- (7) The revival is not- invalidated because there are many errors in judgement, and some of Satan's delusions are intermixed with the work.
- (8) The failure of some who fall into gross error and 'scandalous practices' is not infallible proof that the work is not of the Spirit of God.
- (9) 'It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness'.

His second section of this work is headed, *What are Distinguishing Scripture evidences of a work of the Spirit of God*'. He then lists them.

- (1) When a spirit confesses that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh, and confesses him before men, and confesses him as Lord—as against those spirits who do not confess these things—then the work is of the Spirit of God.
- (2) When the spirit that operates works against the kingdom of Satan, then it is a sure sign that it is a true and not false spirit i.e. the Holy Spirit is working.
- (3) When the spirit that operates does so in such a manner as to cause men to have a greater regard for the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, then that spirit is the Spirit of God.
- (4) There is a spirit of truth and a spirit of error. By certain criteria we can judge which is which, and the spirit that brings men into light is the spirit of truth, i.e. the work is of the Holy Spirit.
- (5) 'If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and men, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God'.

Edwards' *Treatise on the Religious Affections* is a powerful expansion of these principles. He discerns between what he called the true and false use of the affections. Commencing with Peter's warm and personal statement, 'Jesus Christ . . .without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy', Edwards then proceeds to show from Scripture that true man is a creature of what he calls 'affections', i.e. of joy, pleasure, peace and happiness, as also sorrow and suffering. The word '**affections**' is a richer word than 'emotions' and he distinguishes between 'affections' and 'passions', the latter having a lustful connotation, and the former being right and healthy. They are found in the very human stories which the Bible contains, as well as in the frank portrayals in the Psalms. Edwards, having experienced such affections throughout his life, and having seen them operate powerfully in revivals, was sure that the authentic believer lived in what he called 'true religion', and that such affections were the signs of the presence and working of the Spirit.

He also discerned that these affections could be simulated

and imitated, in which case, they were not genuine and not of the Spirit of God.

The value of the work of Jonathan Edwards

Because Edwards was deeply interested in the Scriptures, was a theologian of the first order, and had experienced revivals of the eighteenth century, he is of great value in distinguishing between the true and false elements which appear in them. It is a great pity that students of Scripture are not always students of history, including church history. Much more research needs to be given to seeing the movements of the Spirit of God in the last twenty centuries, and by this we do not mean only those movements which we call 'spiritual'. We need to see his work in the affairs of all mankind, in the rise and fall of nations, and in the personal affairs of human beings—in their strivings after affectional fulfilment. Sometimes the canon of Scripture is so esteemed that the children of God do not venture outside its hallowed precincts; yet the Book of the Revelation (as indeed other prophetic books) indicates that the action of the Spirit of God is to be seen in history in the many visitations of God for blessing and for cursing, for admonishing and encouraging.

We have stated previously that everything that is contained in the story of the early church is a pattern for churchly life today, although not, of course, a stereotype. However, there is much that we are not told explicitly. We may not at first see religious affections in the New Testament, probably because our minds are not searching for them, and also because we have not considered that they are of any great value or hold special significance. Yet when we look at *the Gospels*, for example, we are struck with the joy, delight, amazement, awe, gratitude and love that greet the liberating acts of Jesus.¹

Acts chs. 2-8

In the Acts, too, we have plentiful descriptions of

¹ Jesus himself is the true affectional person, for we see him as a man of feeling and affections. He is serene, peaceful, joyful, and deeply moved in spirit, rebuking, exhorting, admonishing, sad, angry—but in it all, most compassionate. He is not, however, a man of passion in the sense that he is not in possession of himself. He is self-controlled and is really the true affectional person.

Edwards' religious affections, namely in such statements as:

- . . . they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people...';

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'And all the people saw him walking and praising God';

'Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul . . .';
'and great fear came upon the whole church. . .';

'. . . they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. . .';

'For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city'.

The Epistles are filled with descriptions and expressions of 'the religious affections', and these arise from salvation, brotherly love, and the joy of living in the truth and proclaiming it. Indeed it is from all Scripture—both Old and New Testaments—that Edwards draws his references and examples of the true affections. To cap it, of course, the fruit of the Spirit is 'love, joy, peace. . .' and these among other similar elements are certainly affectional.

So then, revival in history must be taken seriously. In seeing excesses and freak happenings, in witnessing induced psychic phenomena and occultic happenings, we must not be put off the pursuit of revival as it is brought to man by the Holy Spirit.

- What then does revival mean for the person and the church?

The answer to this question is simple. 'Revival is the Spirit of God coming to the deadened, apathetic, and recessive spirits of men. He flushes them with his energy and renewal, bringing them into the fullness of life that is for them to enjoy as they are invested with the gifts of God. Doubtless, the primary work is to renew them in the grace of cleansing and forgiveness, and then to flush them with full life, so establishing them as wholesome members of Christ and as loving brethren within the household of God. This means that the church will be restored to its life and power to take up afresh

the proclamation of the Gospel, to share in the suffering which is involved in doing that, and to use the weaponry of the Spirit to defeat—under Christ the Lord—the enemies of God and the Gospel. It is to bring the church to true normalcy of living, which in its turn is not static, but dynamic, because innate to it is the life and action of the Spirit.'

This then is the meaning of revival. It is no wonder that it occupies a great deal of attention throughout the history of the church and Gospel.

THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

51. THE LIFE, STRUCTURES AND ACTION OF THE CHURCH (1)

The life of the church

Viewed from three angles we can see that the life of the church is in the Father, in the Son and in the Spirit. In that sense, it is a Trinitarian originated life.

Firstly, the church is in the Father. Grace, mercy, peace, love, faith and glory all come from him.¹ 'Every good giving and every perfect gift' comes from him, too. This is important to note because the New Testament speaks of the gifts of the Father, the gifts of the Son, and the gifts of the Spirit. The church, before ever it gives, is a receiving church. The Father *gave up* or 'delivered up' his Son for the church, and with him must have given us all things.

Secondly, the church is in the Son. He founded it: 'I will build my church'. He himself taught that it must abide in him. The Pauline phrase is 'in Christ'. The Son gives gifts to the church. Rightly speaking, the church has no life apart from him. He gives to it *his fullness*. So grace, mercy and peace also proceed from him as from the Father.

¹ Acts 13:48 and Rom. 6:23 make it clear that the Father is the prime Giver: 'As many AS were ordained to eternal life believed', and 'the free gift of God [the Father] is eternal life'. Rom. 8:32 makes it clear that the Father has given to us all things in his Son: 'He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?'

James 1:1 7
cf. Luke 11:13

Rom. 8:32

Matt. 16:18

Eph. 4:8

Thirdly, the church is in the Spirit. The Church is in the Spirit if the Son of God dwells in the believers. As we have seen, every element, such as life, love, prayers, praise, worship and the like, derives from the Spirit. Paul speaks about

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1 Cor. 12:4f.

'the gifts of the Spirit'. He also talks about 'workings' and 'services' which come through the Spirit. Those fruit which show themselves in the church are the gift of the Spirit. Hence the church lives in the Spirit, walks in the Spirit and is led by the Spirit.

The life of the members

Whilst seeing that the life and action of the church derive from the Father, the Son and the Spirit, we must also see that the gift of eternal life comes first to each person who believes: '. . . the free gift (*charisma*) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus'. That is why John says, 'He who has the Son has life'. To have the life of Christ is also to have the life of the Father and the life of the Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit, the Father and the Son would dwell in those who proved to be obedient to Christ's word.

Rom. 6:23

1 John 5:12

John 14:16-23

What does this mean? For a moment let us leave aside the life of the Father and see—as we saw in part before—that Christ is present to and in the church by means of the Spirit. The Son was to go from the disciples and the world to the Father, so that the Spirit would come. When the Spirit came, he would glorify the Son and thus glorify the Father. Christ, as head of his church, would always be present, but then he would be present through the Spirit, both personally to each believer, and collectively to the whole church. Rightly understood, the life of the church is the life of Christ, but then his life as it is made present by the Spirit. This means that we cannot think of the life of Christ being the church itself, without also seeing that it is the life of the *Spirit*: '*...the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom*', and 'this comes from *the Lord who is the Spirit*'. Here is total identification of Christ and the Spirit, but in no sense a merging of their discrete persons.

11 Cor. 3:17-18

The gift of life, with the gifts

The *charisma* of eternal life is Christ himself. Within that *gift* of the Father to man is all of Christ. We do not simply receive life from him or even through him, but we receive his

life when we receive him as the gift offered by the Father. In receiving him, we receive not only the *charisma* (gift) of life, but we receive also the *charismata*, i.e. the gifts which are essential to the expressed life of the church. The *charismata* are present and innate in the *charisma* of life.

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Looked at from one angle, the *charisma* of Christ is also his fullness: 'the church, which is his body, *the fullness of him* who fills all in all'. When we examine this fullness, we see it is dynamic, i.e. it is constantly filling all things. Its goal is the fullness of creation, or we might say, a refilling of that which was once—in the Son, the Word—creationally full. Since all things were created by him, through him and for him, then they must have been full. Man lost his fullness in the fall, and the creation was thus subjected to futility. Its comparative emptiness is to become an absolute fullness in the end age. Creation is to realise the fullness of itself through Christ the Cosmocrator. Thus Christ has first shared this fullness with all members of his body as they then share with him actively in the regeneration of the creation. One side of that active regeneration is the mortification of all evil, and the other side the vivification of all that is in Christ. We have observed that 'filling all things full', 'harmonising all things' (through love), and 'reconciling all things by the blood of his cross', are just different ways of saying the same thing, namely that 'God's plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in him [Christ]'.

Eph. I :23

The church is here to share in the action of that filling, harmonising, reconciling and unifying. Christ does not do this apart from the church and he does it by his own (essential) fullness. He has actively constituted the church to be that fullness. This fullness acts in, through and by the gifts described in Paul's writings by the Greek words *pneumatika*, *charismata* and *domata*. The word *dorea* is used mainly for the Holy Spirit ('the gift of the Holy Spirit'), but also—at least in one place—for 'Christ's gift'.

Eph. 4:7

The nature and significance of the gifts

We must see, first of all, that a human being, of himself or herself possesses nothing, and, in fact, is nothing, apart

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from God's gifts. That 'he gives to all men life, breath and everything' covers the whole of man, at least creationally. When 'God breathed into man the breath of life', he gave man all that he is and has. We have seen that man, then, is a contingent creature. At the fall he was 'unthankful', i.e. did not acknowledge that all he was and had was received giftwise from God. Because of the fall, he began to use the gifts for himself. However, he lost the gift of full life, and certainly did not, of himself, even by creation, possess eternal life.

Paul says that the purpose of Christ's coming down from heaven was to then ascend, so that he might fill all things. Paul links this filling all things with the gifts. First he says,

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men" !

Eph. 4:7-8

Psa. 68:18

What Paul says here is a quotation from a psalm which, in fact, says that God *received* gifts among men. Paul is saying that the Victor, whilst leading his enemies captives, *gives* gifts to his friends. It is possible that these gifts were the spoil of the battle, and, in fact, Jesus said that when one stronger than Satan (called 'the strong man') overcomes him (Satan), then he 'takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his spoil'. In this sense we may think the gifts Christ gives are the spoils of the Cross and Resurrection, and (or) that such spoils are gifts which man possessed originally but which he lost to Satan at the fall. It does not matter; the significant thing is that Christ gives gifts.

When we look closely at the Pauline passage under consideration—'But grace was given to each of us *according to the measure of Christ's gift*'—we see, (a) that Christ's total gifts are distributed throughout the body, and each gift is given specially to this one or that ('gifts that differ according to the grace that is given to us'); and (b) that the grace (or faith) needed to know and exercise that gift is also given with it. Christ measures out his gifts, i.e. distributes them to whom he will. This is equivalent to saying that the life or fullness of Christ, whilst sufficient generally for the whole

Eph. 4:7f.

Rom. 12:6

body and for each member in particular (so far as is needed for corporate and personal life), is at the same time distributed through the whole church in the form of gifts.

When we see this, then we understand the nature of the church, and the gifts that are part of its active life. Gifts, in one sense, cannot be static,¹ and in any case they are not given for mere possession, but for use. The idea that gifts are objects given to be stored and to be drawn upon at certain required times is not true. The gifts are only gifts in *actu*, i.e. at the point of use. In fact, at the point of their use, they are manifestations of the Spirit, i.e. manifestations of Christ and his Lordship. Their use is really the active life of Christ in his Lordship, outworking itself in and through the church.

What then are these gifts?

The gifts of Christ

In the passage before us, Paul says, 'And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers'. Eph. 4:11-16

The purpose of these gifts, then, is 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ [which] . . . when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and *upbuilds itself in love*'. The gifts are for growing into maturity and building up the body of Christ through love. For Paul, the use of gifts in love and for love is the overriding purpose of their distribution. However, whilst these are clearly the gifts of Christ, they are also the gifts of the Spirit, and this is what we would expect if Christ and the Spirit are one in their work, and especially in their Lordship of the church. We need to say time and again that the life of Christ is that of active Lordship, and every exercise of the gifts is the manifestation as well as the actuation of that Lordship within the fulfilment of the plan of the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24-28

¹ Kasemann says, 'The Spirit is our present participation in eternal life, but we can possess him and participate in his gift only as he possesses us. Eternal life does not encourage sleeping partners or uninvested capital'. (Essays on *N.T. Themes*, p. 65, S.C.M., London, 1971).

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The gifts of the Spirit

First there is the gift of the Spirit, a gift so dynamic that we cannot direct or control it (him). We can, however, be led by him, and so we follow him. He does empower us to do his will although we—for our part—cannot use him, cannot have him under reins, so to speak! All the gifts of Christ are in the Spirit, and Christ has appointed him to distribute them:

1 Cor. 12:8-11 'To one is given *through the Spirit* the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another {the gift of} faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, *who apportions to each one individually as he wills*'.

Heb. 2:3-4

The writer of Hebrews also refers to gifts of the Holy Spirit:

'... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will'.

'Gifts of the Holy Spirit' here could mean either that God had given apportionments *of the Spirit* to various persons, or that he had given to various persons the gifts which come *through the Spirit*. In any case, in this passage the Father is the primary giver, and the Spirit the secondary one.

I Pet. 4:10-11

Peter, in speaking of the gifts, says,

'As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ'.

I Pet 1:12

Peter does not here speak of these as being the gifts of the Spirit but of the Father. However, he also talks of 'those who preached to you the good news through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look'. It is important to note at this point that the gifts of the Father,

Christ and the Spirit—roughly speaking—have two functions; that is they are used in two situations. The first is that the gifts are used by the church to face the world and preach the Gospel to it, and the second that the gifts are used for the building up of the church. We may then speak of their external and internal uses.¹ In saying this, we must keep in mind that these gift resources are out of the *charisma* of Christ, i.e. his person and fullness.

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We must remind ourselves that *the use* of the gifts is also according to the will of God and ought not to be arbitrarily exercised. Thus in Mark's (debated) Gospel ending, the use of gifts is linked with the preaching of the Gospel and its effects:

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. . . . And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it'.

Mark 16:17ff.

This must mean that the gifts are functional for proclamation and are not to be used willy-nilly at the impulse of those who possess them.

In the Book of Acts, the term 'the Lord' sometimes refers to Christ, and sometimes to the Father; it is used many times. It is the Lord who adds new believers to their number, as it is the Lord who opens Lydia's heart to believe. It is the Lord who ordains to eternal life and thus people believe. We are told in one case, 'And *God* did extraordinary miracles by the hand of Paul so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them'. We *are also* told that at Iconium Paul and Barnabas 'remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the *Lord*, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands'.

Acts 19:11-12

Acts 14:3

We see, then, that the gift of Christ is the gift of the

¹ By 'infernal' and 'external' use of the gifts we mean the gifts which build up the church infernally (cf. Eph. 4:7-16, I Cor. 12:7, 1 Peter 4:10-11) so that it is strong and healthy and can minister externally, i.e. to the world into which it is sent to proclaim the Gospel and witness to Christ and the Father.

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Father; yet in a tertiary way it is also the life and activity of the Spirit. Paul can talk of 'the supply of the Spirit', meaning 'that which the Spirit supplies', and of God supplying the Spirit and accompanying miracles: 'Does he who supplies [goes on supplying] the Spirit to you and works miracles [goes on working miracles] among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?'

Gal. 3:5

We are forced to conclude that the gift of God (including the gifts innate in the gift) is at the same time the gift(s) of Christ and the Spirit, and that the use and actions of these gifts is the one work of Father, Son and Spirit.

52. THE LIFE, STRUCTURES AND ACTION OF THE CHURCH (2)

The gifts and Christ's Lordship

The fact and nature of the gifts is so intriguing, that we could be forgiven if we were caught up in the interest they create. Even so, we must keep referring back to the fact that the Father gives the *charisma* of life, and in that life of the Son are contained the gifts, whether we call them *pneumatika*, *charismata* or *domata*. What we need to see is that they are not only part of Christ's fullness, but that they are functional in their purpose as they relate to the outworking of God's plan for the fullness of time. Another way of saying this is that they not only aid the Lordship of Christ; they also express it. As they express it then they *are* it. All the life of the church is an active expression of his Lordship.

1 Cor. 12:1-3

In introducing the gifts, Paul first of all refers to an aberration in the church at Corinth where, in the utterance of glossolalia, it seems that some had been saying, 'Jesus is curse!' or 'Jesus be cursed!'. Paul shows that this cry was not of the Holy Spirit, but of (an) unholy spirit. He adds, 'No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit'.¹

¹ Although any human being can say 'Jesus is Lord', yet he cannot say this in truth apart from the Spirit (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). Acts 2:36 and 10:36 show Peter proclaiming Christ's Lordship in the power of the Spirit. This understanding and confession of Lordship is indispensable to salvation (cf. Rom. 10:9, Col. 2:6).

Having placed the Lordship of Christ and the inspiring Holy Spirit together, Paul now proceeds to speak of gifts, services and workings—all of which are by the Spirit. What we must not miss is Paul's major point that the variety of these elements, far from being disunifying, is the actual expression of unity. Doubtless, Paul had witnessed the disunity which had come in the Corinthian church through the gifts, the services and the workings of the Spirit. We need not pause to ask how this happened, except to comment that pride and rivalry had been engendered because of a deficient understanding of these elements of the Spirit.

The unity of the Spirit Is paramount

Under the unifying Lordship of Christ, the Spirit distributes—it appears—three things, namely gifts, services and workings. Rightly seen, these are the one. Verses four to six of this passage link the gifts (*pneumatika*: 'spiritual gifts', i.e. *charismata*) with the Spirit, the service (*diakonia*) with Christ (the Lord), and the working (*energema*) with God (the Father). In fact these three are one. The spiritual gifts derive from grace (*charis*) and, as such, are used to serve the community; they are able to do this by virtue of their working, i.e. the power that operates dynamically. We see, then, how vitalistic are the gifts (*charismata*) which have been called 'concretions of grace' (*charis*).¹ That we have to realise is that grace is never separated from the Giver. It is God in the action which we need. That action is via gifts, their service and working. Thus the gifts are the Son and the Spirit in action—no less than the Father. I Cor. 12:4ff.

In the passage under study, Paul is saying that the very *variety* of the gifts is what constitutes the unity of the church. All gifts, services and workings are to profit withal, i.e. to profit all the church. We may say that there is 'unity in diversity' and marvel at it, but in fact variety is *the way* of unity. Uniformity, which may be mere conformity, has very little to do with unity. The Spirit brings the endless variety

¹ Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces* p. 20 (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1967) says, ~ The term *charismata* denotes the source of the gifts, i.e. divine grace (*charis*) becoming concrete'. He refers to Kasemann, op. cit. p. 63f.

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of the Godhead to bear on the human scene, especially in that life which is the action of the church.

When we look at the gifts in their services and workings, we can see why they bring unity. Firstly, they arise from the unity of God, from the Triune Godhead. Secondly they are very 'down to earth' things, i.e. they minister to man within the creation. The gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophetic utterance, discernment and other elements are necessary for the well-being of the church as it lives and acts in the world. The working of miracles is never a point of self-display but of meeting *further human need*. If people are healed or liberated from demons, it is because human needs are being met in a world invaded by evil. So their operations in serving others all contribute and draw towards unity.

Eph. 4:1f.

Thirdly, the Spirit is called 'the one Spirit'. This 'one' is not a mere arithmetical adjective, but an ontic matter. The third member of the Trinity could be called 'the one-ness Spirit'. That is, anything which is not to do with unity is both foreign and abhorrent to him. All his work is to dispose things towards unity. Hence when the Spirit distributes gifts, he gives them with a view to the unity of the church, which is essentially an integrated whole. Paul does not ask us to *create* the unity, or work towards it, but to *maintain it*. As the human body is 'one' with all its members, *its* component parts, so is the Body of Christ. The unity is actually *felt* ('better felt than tel't!') in both joy and sorrow, in honour and suffering.

The action of the unity

We have seen from many angles why the church must operate in unity. It is the only conceivable state for that entity which is the creation of God, whether we are thinking in terms of the Kingdom of God, or the people of God, or the family of the Father. The church must witness to the unity of God himself. Without unity, any attempted witness to Christ would be incongruous. The witness to God is the witness to love and so must be the witness of love. There can be no successful warfare with evil apart from love, for love

is that most deadly weapon which evil fears. In this unity, the power of the Father is seen and known. It is the unity of Christ's Lordship, and the unity of the unifying Spirit. That is why Paul says (paraphrased),

'For by the oneness Spirit we were all baptised into the oneness body—whether we were Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, males or females—for differences of colour, race, and life situation have no power to alter this essential oneness—and all of us drank of the same life-giving, life-energising water, namely the oneness Spirit. Hence we can be nothing other than one, an essential unity.'

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I Cor. 12:13

The Spirit working unity

We have seen that when the gifts are used in the service of unity which is a quality native to them, then all elements become effective in building love and unity in the body. Through what we might call grace-energy, they receive grace-action and grace-service. These are practical things, touching men and women where they are, and building up practical relationships. Kind acts, loving aid, competent awareness of needs, and discerning awareness of attempted intrusion by evil, all comport towards a maintained unity of the body.

The unity is the unity of love

This action brings us back to a thesis we stated formerly, namely that behind the delusive facades raised by evil, love is working out its plan both processively and progressively. There never has been a moment in history when love has not been working. There can be no doubt that *only love builds* in the ultimate. Evil never has built anything, nor has it created the essential being of any thing. Outwardly, its record of horror and dreadful achievements seems impressive, but in the last analysis *nothing remains*, and certainly nothing which has essential and lasting being.

This is why Paul sees the gifts (their services and their workings) as of no value whatever, *apart from love*. The fascination of the gifts—most particularly of the gift of tongues—was enough to excite some of the Corinthians to

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1 Cor. 4:7

novelty, rivalry and boasting. Paul sought to show them that the *charismata* were *gifts*, not personal abilities or skills. 'What do you have,' he asks, 'that you did not receive? If then you have received it, why do you boast as though it were not a gift?'

We can understand their fascinated preoccupation with gifts. The dynamics of faith seem out-distanced by the dynamics of sight! Tongues can be heard, miracles seen, healings felt, for—so it seems—the supernatural has broken through into the natural. Of course, this fascination with the gift, an entity in themselves, means a lack of understanding of the nature and meaning of love. The Spirit is present and active in history for love:

'Not where I breathe,
But where I love, I live',

sang the poet.¹ Gifts, then, are present in and for the service of love. Of themselves they are not love or unlove. In action, they are certainly intended to be the concretions of grace; they are the true concretions of love. This is what the Spirit is about because God is love! We know it is a fact that nothing can be built apart from love, and only that which love builds lasts.² The Spirit always has his eye to the future, for the future shows what will be there at the last, that which has been built for the glory of God. This can be nothing less than the City of God, with all its glory and beauty. It has been fashioned by God, yet all its elements have come from love, i.e. the actions of love, the actual works of God and man together. The sum of the ages is the works of God and men, effected through the gifts. The City of God is the perfected shining glory of the unity, the wholesome reflection of the innate unity of the Triune God.

1 Cor. 12:31

We know, then, why Paul, in his three Corinthians chapters on the gifts, the services, the working and love, insists on love. That is why he says, '...covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show unto you a more excellent way'.

¹ Robert Southwell, a sixteenth century English poet.

² See 1 Cor. 13:1-3, 1 Cor. 8:1, Eph. 4:16, Rom. 14:15. 19, cf. 1 Cor. 3 15. Love is the one test as to the quality of permanency of the works we do.

That is to say,

'I show you a way beyond all ways, higher than the highest ways known to you. It is not the way of gifts, although gifts are used in this way. It is the way of love. What do I mean when I say the way of love? I mean that love is free of all false motivations. It knows no motivation but itself—love itself. Useful as are the gifts and fascinating as they are, they are wholly pointless *unless in the service of love*. The gift, service and working concretises love, in that love is the deed which meets the need. Love in the abstract is merely for contemplation. Love in the concrete uses the resources for the needs of man. Tongues without love is pointless gabbling. Tongues with love is edifying music. Faith may actually accomplish quite incredible and seemingly useful works, such as removing mountains, but without love these works are of no value, and I, who have set such great store by these works of faith which I do, *am nothing!* Gifts are only to be used in the service of love'.

53. THE LIFE, STRUCTURES AND ACTION OF THE CHURCH (3)

Conclusion as to the gift and the gifts

Reviewing what we have discussed in the past two sections we see the following:

- (1) At Pentecost is born the church, the new people of God, although this body of people has continuity with the old congregation of Israel.
- (2) The church receives the *charisma* of Christ; that is to say, his life. This is in fact his own fullness, by means of which he will fulfil the plan of the Father by defeating the powers of evil, taking back from them that which they have filched from the creation.
- (3) When the church receives the *charisma* of Christ, it does so by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the church and of its members can be seen as (a) the fullness of Christ, and (b) the fullness of the Spirit.
- (4) The *charisma* of Christ—that is the *fullness* of Christ—contains all the gifts of Christ. These gifts are also known as the gifts of the Spirit because they are distributed (sovereignly) by him.

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- (5) The gifts are not *objects*—so to speak—which are received and then possessed by members of the body. Members receive the *charisma* of Christ, which gives eternal life to them, but they are also given that participation in the gifts which the Spirit dictates.¹ For this reason they need constantly to be led by the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and to be (continually) filled with the Spirit.
- (6) The use of the gifts is an activity led by the Spirit. Since the *charismata* are at the same time services (*diakonia*) and workings (*energema*), gifts are only gifts *in actu*, i.e. in operation. This is logical, since they are the fullness of Christ *at work*.
- (7) The working fullness of Christ (operating by the Spirit through the body of Christ) is the expression and concretion of his Lordship. This Lordship is working to put down every form of (evil) authority, to rescue captive man, and to restore the unity of creation to its original structure and functions, with a view to the maturation and glorification of all things. It is at the same time to bring revelation of the Father, his plan and his goals.
- (8) All that man—even redeemed man—'possesses' is that which has been given. Thus any use of the gifts must never be exercised in boasting, in proving oneself, in any form of self-justification, or in any appeal to the superstitious and gullible elements of human beings, for these uses go against the gifts of justification, forgiveness, cleansing, regeneration. Such action would turn minds to the novel, the esoteric and the bizarre, and so create forms of 'sight' as against the realities of faith. The actions of gifts which make them appear 'sightful' need to be understood by faith, i.e. the faith which works by love, for this is the way the Spirit reveals them.
- (9) All gifts, properly understood and exercised, are the present working of love, i.e. the love of God—Father, Son and Spirit. Gifts are not themselves love, but the means by which love concretises itself in the creation. Love concretising itself is Christ's Lordship manifesting itself. These manifestations of Christ are at the same time the manifestations of the Spirit, i.e. Christ's active Lordship manifested by the Spirit

¹ There is a tension between I Cor. 12:11, 'the . . . Spirit . . . apports to each one individually as he wills' and I Cor. 14:1, ' . . . earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy'. This may not be an actual tension if the Spirit leads the one desiring to the place of that yearning. Doubtless this is what he does

Whenever gifts are not the concretising of love, they are valueless, misleading and wrong.

- (10) The *test* of the right use of the gifts is, first of all, whether they are used in love, for love, i.e. to build up the church (its members) and proclaim grace to man; and secondly, whether they *serve* in their operation. The *context* of the use of the gifts is being led by the Spirit, i.e. living by him, and walking in him. If it is not 'faith that is working by love', then it is not authentic faith.
- (11) The goal of God is the City of God—with all that it means. The building up the City is by the love-works and love-service of the saints from the very beginning to the great climactic conclusion. Nothing that is done out of the love which God has given will ever be lost. This is the same as saying that the working fullness of Christ by the Spirit enables Christ and his body to build the ultimate City of God, thus fulfilling God's purposes which have existed from before time.

The people of Christ and the Spirit who are now building the city

Throughout our studies, we have seen that, before time,¹ God had a plan for creation. It included creating his own people, and presenting them, holy and blameless, to himself as his children, in the image of his own Son. This would mean in history that he would have to redeem them from the evil into which they were to fall through the temptation in Eden. His own grace, which is part of his nature, would effect this redemption through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of his Son. The ultimate effects of this grace would be to raise the children from the dead, give them inheritance in the Kingdom of God and of the entire creation, and so to glorify them, making them eternally to be a royal priesthood. Such were the great goals God had for history, goals which would most marvellously delineate his own glory.

We saw that both the plan and its outworking are

¹ It is an interesting insight in Jude's benediction-doxology that he adulates God with 'glory, majesty, dominion, and authority *before all time* [i.e. 'before the age']'. This is an unusual thought and expression.

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Trinitarian. The Son and the Spirit are one with the Father in the counsel of God's will, before time. They are one with him in creating the world, sustaining it by continuous providence, redeeming it through the Cross, renewing those who believe, subjecting all this, at last, to judgement, and bringing the real things, which are in Christ, to ultimate glorification. We cannot really consider the work of the Spirit apart from the works of the Father and the Son. The three persons of the Godhead work as one, in the unity of love.

When for our purposes we seek to follow the ministry of the Spirit, we see that he is the one by whom both Father and Son are present to the people of God. He is the one by whom the fullness of Christ is presently working to achieve the ultimate purpose of God. As we have seen, Christ has constituted the church to be his present working fullness under the aegis of the Spirit of life.

What we now need to see are two things. The first is the fact that the people of God, through the Spirit, are a people of works, a people building that which will not be reversed. The second is the structure or authority under which this work proceeds. Both of these are relevant to us, for the building which is proceeding is the church's true vocation. Sense of vocation and working within it are what give man purpose, goal, direction, hope and his awareness of true dignity.

Building by love through the Spirit

When Paul speaks of God flooding our hearts with love by the Spirit, we think of it mainly in terms of an agreeable affection. Yet, as one theologian commented, 'Love is the most theological thing of all'.¹ Both Paul and John make it clear that there is no truth apart from love, and that love is the truth. This is like saying 'God is light' and 'God is love' in the one breath, which of course they are. Love, then, is not given to us merely for its pleasurable nature—though that too is part of God's gift—but for the work of unifi-

¹ It was W. Norman Pittenger; unfortunately I cannot trace the reference.

cation of all things, filling up things with their true content, and building the ultimate, namely the people of the Father, who are the City of God. Having said that, we must not only think of love as utilitarian. Love is life itself. As Robert Southwell's words, quoted in the last section, tell us: 'Not where I breathe but where I love I live'.

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Before we look at the building power and function of love, we should see whether, in fact, the people of God constitute the city of God. John declares the people of God to be the Holy City, the dwelling place of God. He says,

'And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." '

Rev. 21:2-4

The New Testament figures of the church comport with this. The church is the Bride of Christ, it is the temple (shrine: *nags*) of God. Paul says,

'So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the *household of God*, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and *grows into a holy temple* in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a *dwelling place of God* in the Spirit'.

Eph. 2:19-22

Peter has a related figure: 'Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house'. In these and Paul's words we see (a) that the building of the church is going on, (b) that God is building and we are material for the temple, i.e. 'living stones', and (c) this building is also the household (family) of God.

1 Pet. 2:4-10

Elsewhere we are told that we too are building. Paul shows us that we are fellow workers with God at the same time as we are God's building. He adds, 'For no other foundation can any one lay than *that which is laid*, which is Jesus Christ'. The Ephesian passage has already indicated that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

1 Cor. 3:9-11

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i.e. the truth given by them. So we lay materials on the true foundation, just as we also are material to be laid on these foundations. As God builds, so we build and are built. Paul points out two things: that poor materials¹ will ultimately be destroyed in the fire which tests their quality, and that what a person has built—especially if he has built properly—will be seen in the day of testing. Elsewhere this testing is called judgement, and it relates to 'losses and rewards'. For our purposes, we speak of building truly or building falsely.

II Cor 5:10, cf.
I Cor 3:10-15

The New Testament writers are really saying, 'Whatever is built from love will stand, and whatever is not built from love, i.e. falsely, will be destroyed'. We can draw one simple but powerful conclusion from all this: 'Whatever has been truly built will remain for all eternity. That which is truly built is that constructed from love; nothing else!'

The building up by love

I Cor. 8:1

I Cor. 3:10

Rom. 15:20

Paul says plainly, ' "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up'. Building was a rich principle in Paul's life. 'According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it'. He adds, 'Let each man take care how he builds upon it'. In another place he says, of himself, '. . . it [is] my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation'. Perhaps because he was an apostle, he felt he must always plough in virgin soil. Building has many connotations, but for him the means of building was love, as we saw at the beginning of this paragraph.

Eph. 4:16

When he is speaking of the gifts given by Christ and their purpose for ministry and so the growth of the church, he talks about the church 'building up itself in love'. There is no other way it can build itself. Likewise, in speaking on the vexed question of the weaker brother—weaker in faith,

¹ By 'poor materials' we mean those which do not stand the final test, i.e. the test of love. Radical examples of this are seen in Matt. 7:21, 25:31ff., but the believer may think that all his works are good when many of them do not have the motivation and quality of love. They spring from 'imitation love', desire for spiritual self-display or even from some unresolved inner guilt, i.e. self-justifying works.

weaker in conscience—he says, 'If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love', and adds, 'Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for *mutual upbuilding*. Do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God'. To this good advice he further adds, 'We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbour for his good to edify him [build him up]'. Rom. 14:15—15:2

Paul informs us that worship is an edifying means of building. 'What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification'. He has already said, 'He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church'. Prophecy is a means of building, but again it must be prophecy in love. All the gifts edify, provided that they operate through love. 1 Cor. 14:26

We conclude that love never tears down what is good, but builds up that which is needed. This is why the love of God has been poured into our hearts. It is the resurrection life of Christ working in power for proclamation, regeneration, sanctification, relationships, and true use of the gifts. Another way of saying this is that the people of God are a people of works and a people who bear fruits that never fail or corrupt. These we must now see, for they come from 'love undying', i.e. 'imperishable love', for 'love never fails'. Eph. 6:24

54. THE LIFE, STRUCTURES AND ACTION OF THE CHURCH (4)

The Spirit and a people zealous for good works

The life or gift of Christ, we saw, is the life of action. In history, men have mostly mistaken moralism for morality, obedience for mere law-keeping, action as self-justifying works rather than living Christ's life. The true works of redeemed man are love-works. Indeed they are primarily the works of Christ himself, and only secondarily the works of

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man, although they are truly accredited to him.

Works are done by means of the gifts given to man; some of these gifts we designate 'natural' and others as 'supernatural'. That they are primarily the works of Christ and the Spirit is seen by the words of Christ to his apostles on the night of his betrayal:

John 14: 10-11

'The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves'.

He is saying he can do no works apart from the Father, and that the works ought to convince them that he is in the Father, for otherwise he could not do these works. He then adds,

John 14:12-14

'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me *will also do the works that I do*; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it'.

Doubtless Jesus means that when he goes to the Father, the Spirit will come and aid them in the works they will do, all of which will be carried out on the basis of what he (Jesus) has done. Even so, it will be Christ doing the works through them, just as the Father does his works through the Son and through his children; hence, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see *your good works* and glorify your Father who is in heaven'. In the ultimate, the works we do are ascribed to the Father.

Matt. 5:16

The people of God, then, are doers of works. Some protagonists of justification are so aware of the danger of doing self-justifying works that they shrink from doing any kind at all! For them, the very term has such a dangerous connotation that they over-react. Without doubt the point we have made time and again in this section is an important one: Christ is working through his people and so they are working with him, doing love-works. In most cases, these are done unconsciously. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the sheep are surprised: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink. . . naked

Maul 25:37-38

and clothe you?'. They had done it unconsciously. Love's finest works have this guilelessness about them.

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True works proceed from grace. Paul's very passage which speaks against being saved by works is the same passage which says God's purpose in saving us is to get us to do good works:

'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ *Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in I hem'.

Eph. 2:8-10

Paul shows that good works spring from grace:

'For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds [works]'.

Titus 2:11-14

Peter is also on the same theme:

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'.

I Pet. 2:9-10

The writer of Hebrews speaks of considering how to stir one another to love and good works. Paul adds, 'And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart'. James spends most of his Epistle on the demand for, and nature of, these good works.

Gal. 6:9

The Spirit and love-works

We would expect the Spirit to be linked with the doing of works, since it is through him that there come to us the gifts, by means of which the works are accomplished. In the Old Testament, the promises are that, when God shall cleanse his people of all their idols and their uncleannesses, he will put a new heart within them, and with the new heart a new Spirit, which brings the new human spirit to life. The result of this will be, 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes and be

Ezek. 18:30-32,
36:25-28, cf.
Jer. 31:31-34

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careful to observe my ordinances'. This parallels the principle given to Jeremiah with the promise of the new covenant, i.e. the covenant of forgiveness: 'I will write my law in your heart and I will put it in your inward parts'. This, in turn, links with Paul's confession, 'I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self...' In other words, true obedience in doing the will and works of God springs from love to God, for this love has been inspired by his love for us. Jesus says, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments', and John comments, 'And his commandments are not burdensome'.

Rom 7: 22

John 14:15
I John 5:3

Rev chs. 2-3

When we come to the Book of the Revelation, we see the prophetic nature of true works. In the seven letters to the churches, one of Christ's first comments is, 'I know your works', i.e. 'works good or bad'. These letters call for some close scrutiny. True works, the works done out of love, have high commendation. It is at them that the Lord looks, and by them judges the life of the church. Calls for repentance are given where true works are not forthcoming. It seems that churches do either good works or bad works, living works or dead works. Christ utters the warning, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit* says to the churches'. The Spirit is calling for good works.

Rev. 2:29,
13:9-10

Rev. 14:12-13

The high regard which the Spirit has for these works is seen when a call is made for the endurance and faith of the saints. In the midst of the fierce persecution by the beast and his system, the saints must continue with good works:

'And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says *the Spirit*, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!"'

II John 8

That is also why John exhorts his readers, 'Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward'. At the judgement seat of Christ, the deeds we have done will have great significance, for there will be losses and/or rewards.

11 Cor. 8:10, cf.
Rev. 20:11-15,
1 Cor. 3:13-15

Whilst this will have nothing to do with judgement for life or death, it means that the accounts of what we have done, or not done, are most important.

The jewels and the joys of the eternal city

John the Seer is greatly struck by the beauty of the Holy City. His descriptions—figurative as they undoubtedly are—are of a glorious metropolis. Are these beautiful things merely the affluence of God, he who can create such beautiful things? Or are they the things which God has effected in his creation-history? Are they the works of love effected by Christ and his Spirit in and through the lives of the true people of God? Jesus exhorts us to lay up treasure in heaven, saying, 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'. He says that the King will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. . . enter into the joy of your Lord'. He speaks of the Kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for the true sheep, those who have so guilelessly done good deeds. 'You can't take it with you!' may be countered by, 'Yes, but you can send it ahead!'.

Matt. 6:21

Matt. 25:21, 23

It is indeed a beautiful thought that God has fashioned the Holy City out of the materials of love-works. The building of which the Epistles speak is not experimental, nor is it merely a practising which has no effect on the eternal reality. What is built must remain for ever. 'The Day will test it.' When the fire has gone through, the rubbish will alone be consumed; love's work will remain forever.

It is fascinating to hear the prophetic word concerning the City:

'By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it...they shall bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean shall enter into it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood'.

Rev. 21:24-27

What is this glory of kings and nations? What is this luggage, this glory, of redeemed humans and races? Is it something of their history, their cultures, things which are unique and honourable in their history? Is it the moral dynamic, the treasures gleaned through love's operation and building? We do not know, but the answer must be exciting. Nothing has been lost in time. At the last, it is all brought together. This is the reconciling, the harmonising, the filling full of all things, the ultimate and irreversible unification of all things in Christ; this is the true unity of the Spirit.

History then has been—via the gift and gifts of Love—an action both processive and progressive. The apocalyptic convulsions, the great prophetic disturbances and the radical judgements have not caused this purposive action to falter or alter. The plan has moved to its ultimate and great *denouement*, because of the work of the Creator-Father, the Redeemer-Son and the Holy Spirit, 'the Lord and giver of life'.

55. THE SPIRIT, AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION (1)

Pressed to apologia

There can be little doubt that the subject of authority, largely speaking, is anathema to many, if not all, of us who are human. It is a highly emotive word and theme. That is why we who are Christians are pressed to rationalise it, we are forced to explain it as being authentic, and in this case why I set it out in the form of *apologia*; otherwise the mind and will continue to be at loggerheads with it.¹ But of course, *apologia* of itself will not heal man's rebellion against God, his law and his will. We oppose authority simply on the grounds that it is restrictive of our freedom and that anything which seems to subordinate us is wholly unacceptable.

The principle of authority

Some theologians see authority as a matter of dire but regrettable necessity in a world in which man has rebelled. That is to say, the rebellion of men and angels against God has necessitated law and authority, which intrinsically is not

¹ Our problem in developing the subject, and in pressing even these thoughts that I have set out, is that we have a certain mind-set towards authority which precludes us from accepting it as a principle; hence what I have argued will seem like special pleading.

of the *essential* order of God's creation. Rightly enough, they say that the true creational order is love. Yet even love itself presupposes law, the law of love itself. Loving is always commanded. It could be pressed that love is only commanded because of rebellion, without which there would have been no need for any authority at all. But that would be to ignore the fact that there are other commands of God which are not necessitated by rebellion. For example, there is the command, 'Let there be light'. In fact, all creation comes from 'Let there be. . .' and 'Let us. . .' The subjunctive form of the verb 'let' contains the imperative (command). When God said, '*Let* there be lights in the firmament. . . and *let* them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth', the intention was benign; hence 'God made the two great lights, the greater light to *rule* the day, and the lesser light to *rule* the night'. There is no oppressiveness in the thought of *rule* (i.e. *authority*). The ministry is benign, the authority is functional. In fact, it is true love.

Gen. 1:14-15

The Father is the true paradigm of authority, that authority which is at the same time love. Paul's statement is, 'There is. . . one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all'. '*Above all*' must surely indicate authority. It is superordination, but with a view to fulfilling true Fatherhood. It is benign without being weak. Hence Israel can say, '...thou, O Lord, art *our Father, our Redeemer* from of old is thy name', for exiled Israel sees both God's Fatherhood and his Redeemerhood as innate, and both being 'from eternity'. One cannot be a true father without also being a redeemer when the need arises.

Eph. 4:4-6

Isa. 63: 16

Paul's '*through all*' must mean imminence, but an imminence which is relational and functional. God is present *to* all things. The phrase 'in all' also contains the idea of immediacy, of a relationship that is personal and dynamic. God's superordination with his creation and his family is also his identification with it. Just as Jesus called him Father, he also called him King: 'Father, Lord of heaven and earth. . .' He—Jesus—was not afraid to mention authority, for his whole life demonstrated his total acceptance of it. He was obedient up to death—even death on a cross. The

Luke 10:21

Phil. 2:8-10

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Titus 1:15

lens of his conscience was clear, pure, gladly submissive.

Authority, as it is set out in Scripture, must be seen through the eyes of the principle, 'To the pure [in heart] all things are pure'. So we say, 'Authority is that exercise of given superordination which has in mind the serving of all that is subordinate to it. True authority is the exercise of love as it serves. It is not for its own sake, but for the sake of others. It does not dominate but in fact constantly liberates. Where required, and where appropriate and indispensable, it uses the required devices of chastisement and judgement, but always with the well-being of its subjects in mind. Its true goal is the maturation of those committed to its oversight. It never understands its superordination to be for other than service, nor makes the mistake of thinking that that which is subordinate to it is inferior. Superordination and subordination are not matters of essence or nature, but of function. Both carry the responsibility for fulfilling the functional intentions and goals to which they are directed, and for which they are created'.

This, the true principle of authority, can be summed up in Jesus' own words: '. . . whoever would be great among you must be your servant'. Sadly enough, we do not easily accept this for what it is, even though Jesus wholly displayed and expounded it, as he 'learned obedience by the things which he suffered'. If we can accept it, we will easily comprehend the sections which follow.

Mark 10:43. cf.
Luke 9:48.
22:26

Heb. 5:8

The principal rejection of authority

Rev. 12:1-10

The rebellion of Satan against God, as described in John's Apocalypse, does not give the 'why?' of it, i.e. its purpose and goal. This, however, is indicated in various other passages of Scripture. Man's rebellion has the same principle and reason, i.e. to be free of God! To be *'as God'*. This, the original temptation to man by the serpent, means, 'To be free of God, to be oneself, not to have the constraint of authority, however loving it may be! To be able to live in the freedom of making one's choice, deciding from one's self what is good and what is evil.' It means, in fact, autonomy—human self-rule.

Gen. 3:5

It is as simple as that—this principle of self-determination—and we need not complicate it by describing it further. However, it is this simple fact which complicates everything, and which prejudices the true nature and function of authority in the eyes of the (rebellious) beholder.

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The functional authorities

'The authorities that be are ordained of God'. This was Paul's statement and claim. The Scriptures depict celestial beings as given authority in the universe. On close examination, it would appear that all creatures have function in some way or another—none excepted. Some celestial creatures rebelled under Satan's leadership, as did also the human race in Adam. Hence the twisted view of true authority. Fallen celestial authorities still retain their status of authority, but they are responsible for the (wrong) use to which they put that authority.

Rom. 13:1

In John's Apocalypse there are four living creatures who have authority and function. Likewise, the four and twenty elders are gladly subordinate to God. Angels have various functions to perform in both the celestial and terrestrial spheres. On earth there are hierarchies of authority also.¹ We need not therefore reject authority simply as something brought about by rebellion. It is just that rebellion has forced functional authority to take on tasks of judgement, rule and discipline which would not be required were rebellion not to exist. The true nature of authority is obscured and prejudiced by the rebellious attitude of creatures.

Rev. 4:6ff.

Rev. 4:4, 10-11

The functional paradigm

When 'the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy' at creation, then there was true harmony. When all things were created in him, by him and for

Job 38:7

¹ The word 'hierarchy' is an emotive word, especially where there is non-acceptance of authority. However, it is a word intended to indicate a functional ordering of things and the right use of authority to prevent disorder and anarchy which are prejudicial to the good order and conduct of a useful and functional universe.

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him, then that creation was a simple unity, which is the paradigm for functional authority. Since, however, man's mind is rebellious, it requires revelation to understand it. The revelation of grace through predestination and election means that it is grace alone which gives a mature attitude of acceptance of authority, because through grace the nature of God is understood. Where God is opposed, then there can be no objective or rational understanding of the whole subject. Sin inevitably brings distortion of human thinking, and because of it, the nature of God is misunderstood. Every form of authority which is presented to man is rejected, because it seems to confine and limit him. The primary objection to authority is just that—that man feels he is prevented or restricted from fulfilling himself.

Therefore, when Christ comes as the man of obedience, and reveals the truth of authority, he must come as the Son of the Father, for obedience is primarily filial and then creaturely. When Christ presents the principle of God as Father, he immediately draws fire from the crowd. The Jewish structures of Christ's day, especially those of politico-religious authority, were not slanted for the filial or even the creaturely, but were authoritarian, which means that authority existed mostly for its own sake. The idea of God's Fatherhood evoked uneasiness, because it was foreign to the current hierarchical thinking. They had made the mistake of attributing transcendence to God without, at the same time, according him intimate Fatherhood.

Often today the pattern differs from that and may even be reversed. God is allowed to be Father without being King; or he is made to be remote and the Son to be near, warm and intimate. Indeed, in some thinking, the Son is the genial rebel [*sic!*], pacifying the irritated Deity [*sic!*] and bringing him to terms with man, especially via the suffering of the Cross. The Scriptures, of course, show that this view is false. They reveal the Father as the Initiator of redemption and as sharing this salvific work with his Son.

In truth, Christ is the man of obedience, who knows the nature of true authority and is glad. He is said to have been obedient in becoming incarnate and in suffering 'even [to] the death of the Cross'. Also it is said, 'he learned obedi--

Phil. 2:8-10
Heb. 5:8

ence by the things which he suffered'. It is not said 'He learned *to be obedient* by the things which he suffered'. No, he learned the nature, the demands and the actions of obedience by what he suffered. The Roman centurion acknowledged Jesus' innate authority and said, in effect, that it was because he, Jesus, was himself under the authority of God that he could exercise authority. He who is under authority speaks, and acts, with authority.

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Luke 7:8

Christ, then, is the true paradigm of both submission to authority and (so) the exercising of authority. It is this living paradigm that the Spirit brings to believing man, thus assisting him to become someone who is under authority, and so able to exercise that authority committed to him.

The Spirit and authority

We now need to see the function of the Spirit in regard to authority. When we remember that first it was Jesus who was 'the man of the Spirit', and then that the Spirit was 'the Spirit of the Man', we realise that living under authority, and having authority oneself, depends on the Spirit. We submit to being led by him, to following him and to walking in him.

Let us now see how the Spirit and man relate in Scripture, especially in regard to authority and submission.

56. THE SPIRIT, AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION (2)

The Spirit and authority

Created man is contingent upon the Spirit for life and full being: 'When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created'; 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth'; 'The Spirit of life has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life'. This is why 'the way of man is not in himself'. Even the direction of his life must be shown to him: he must be led:

Psa. 104:30

Psa. 33:6

Job 33:4

Jer. 10:23

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'...it is not in man...to direct his own footsteps'. 'All my springs are in you' is the language of confessed—and joyful—contingency.

Psa. 87:7

If God withdraws the breath they die, and the breath of man is by The Breath. Yet the Spirit is there to give life, not to withdraw it. Only the angry, rebellious spirit of man rejects the idea of his contingency. He imagines his freedom lies in autonomy. This is the great insult against the Spirit.

Gen. 6:3

When the earth is spread with the violence and corruption of man, God says, 'My Spirit will not always dwell with man', i.e. man, without the restraining Spirit, will be even less man. He will die physically sooner than otherwise. When the Spirit withdraws, the judgement of the Flood comes to man.

Gal. 4:21-31

We have seen the rabbinic claim that the patriarchs were men of the Spirit, and Paul verifies this. Isaac was born of the Spirit and Ishmael of the flesh. Isaac was obedient to his father, but Ishmael was not. He hated his father's son. So Ishmael refused the authority of the Spirit.

Isa. 63:10

Israel as a nation was liberated through grace, but their tug to autonomy, or at least to idolatry—which is worship once removed from God—is the sign of rebellion against the Holy Spirit. Isaiah recounts that idolatry in the wilderness was rebellion against (the authority of) the Spirit: 'But they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them'.

Speaking of that idolatry, Stephen said, in the hour of his martyrdom:

Acts 7:41-32,
51-52

'And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands. But God turned and gave them over to worship the host of heaven. . . You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you *always resist the Holy Spirit*. . . Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?'

Heb. 3:7-12

The writer of Hebrews links this rebellion with the message of the Holy Spirit: 'Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness. . . " ' By contrast, Jesus, who is the man of the Spirit, is the man of obedience; as the man of obedience, he is the man of the Spirit.

The authority of the Spirit is again seen in John the Baptist's proclamation. In line with all the prophets, he sees the Spirit's coming in two aspects: the first is judgement ('the Spirit and fire'); and the second is the fullness of the Kingdom ('he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit'). The Kingdom is the reign and rule of God. No one submits to that reign but by the Spirit, and no one has the Spirit but he who obeys, for he gives his Holy Spirit to them that obey. Acts 5:32

The first in the Kingdom is Jesus, for he is the King, yet, as man, he obeys the Spirit, wholly. He is led by the Spirit. He is contingent upon the Spirit. He demands repentance before the Father, but that repentance is submission to the King, the Father. It is repentance which is evoked by forgiveness of sins and the promise of the Spirit. Rebellion is stifled in and by the goodness of the Kingdom. 'For the Kingdom of God is not [matters of] food and drink but righteousness, peace and joy *in the Holy Spirit*'. There is no Kingdom of God for the man who is not 'in the Holy Spirit', who has not submitted to the Spirit via his submission to the Father-King and the Son-King, who is 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. Rom. 14:17

The Spirit evokes repentance, faith and submission

We have seen that Jesus secures the Kingdom in its irresistible and irreversible form by his death and resurrection. He breaks the weapon of Satan—fear of death through guilt—and so liberates man. Yes, but it takes the revelation of the reality and significance of this to evoke the required response in man. At Pentecost, the Spirit witnesses to the Son and so to the Father. As against his own hate, man sees the love of God. He receives the gifts of redemption, and the *charisma* of life, and so the gifts. So significant is this to man, that Paul has said, 'Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, *that we might understand the gifts bestowed upon us by God*'. Heb. 2:14-15
1 Cor. 2:12

We have seen that the receipt of gifts by man breaks his (imagined) autonomy. In fact he has (and is) nothing but what he has received. Now, however, the gifts are intelligible. They tell man that the grace of God is overwhelming.

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Only such revelation and such receiving of gifts will dissolve the enmity and rebellion, and place man consciously in the love of God.

Hosea 14:4

'I will love you freely' is the unconditional grace that captures the citadel of the human heart. Now—to coin a phrase—man is all gifts! The new man learns obedience by the things that he, Christ, suffered:

Heb. 2:10

'For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering'.

11 Cor. 5:14

Conversion is the reversal of direction just as preceding repentance is the change (reversal) of mind or attitude. Thus rebellion becomes submission, and the dynamic which previously moved *against* God, now moves *for* him. Now we can cry, 'The love of Christ constrains [controls, overwhelms, keeps us hemmed into a given goal] us'.

I John 4:18

God, for his part, has broken the proud spirit of man, not with threats, but with love. Godly fear is the beginning of true wisdom, but it is fear which has love in view. 'Perfect love casts out fear', i.e. fear of death fear of doom, fear that is slavish and deadly.

The new obedience

I Peter 1:8

'whom not having seen you love. . .'

John 4:19

'We love because he first loved us...'

John 5:3

'His commandments are not heavy'.

Rom. 8:15

'Abba! Father!'

I Tim. 1:5

These, and many more are the new cries in place of the old anger and rebellion. So, 'the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith'. So we live in the law of love, the law of Christ: 'Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass...restore him *in a spirit of gentleness*. . . Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'.

Gal. 6:1-2

Matt. 28:18-19

Where now is the authority? To submit to the Father, and to Jesus as Lord, is to share in their authority. 'All authority...has been given unto me. Go ye therefore...

He spoke with authority because he was under authority. The new people of God speak and it is the very word of God! They have joined the hierarchy of love.

The hierarchy of love is not a merely figurative term. 'For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living'. Life comes to the man who passes through the gateway of submission to the Gospel, which is a command that we can choose to obey. Many, whose stories are told in the New Testament, made that choice. For example, '...a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith'. If we do submit, there is the gift of 'the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey'. But there are also examples of those who made the opposite choice: ' . . . they have not all obeyed the gospel'.

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Rom. 14:9

Acts 6:7

Acts 5:32

The apprenticeship of obedience

Rom. 10:16

Jesus, in one sense, went through his apprenticeship. Such training was not to get him to be obedient or even to give him reasons for obedience, but to show him the way of obedience, revealing what it entailed. The injunctions to obey would not be so many were obedience not a learned matter, given in that the new inflow of love would provide the needed motivation. The new man enters into a new hierarchy. It is that the Father is head of Christ, and Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman. Nothing must be said to deny or alter this. To break this functional hierarchy is to invite anarchy. It is to re-introduce the old rebellion into the new situation.

1 Cor. 11:3

If 'justification starves the ego', then it must be this grace of God which keeps man out of rebellion. We have seen that the Spirit is given, 'that we might know the gifts of God'. All depends on continuous, realised contingency. Our way is not in ourselves. Now we can cease our nervous forms of self-justification, which would otherwise remorselessly drive US to prove ourselves, and keep alive the fears of failure. All our springs are in him, the Spirit, for it is he who is the spring of life which flows up in us, becoming the rivers of living water which flow out. The first initial joy, which comes through the release given by repentance, must lead to the steady, perpetual joy which comes from habituated obedience, the glad acceptance of loving authority.

It must be seen that habituated obedience has its own

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Psa. 119:20, cf.
Psa. 19:7-10, 1:2,
Rom. 7:22

inner motivation for continuing obedience. One act leads to another. Forgiveness dissolves the guilt of any remiss act, and the gratitude of grace fires our rockets afresh. In obedience, we have experience of God that keeps us fresh. It is this warm, relational link that causes dread in the hearts of evil powers. Their fires must be fuelled by human disobedience. They see no hope for the disintegration of creation where man abides in God, and where man's heart breaks with longing after his commandments, where man delights in the law of God after the inward man!

The apprenticeship begins at conversion and continues until death. Beyond death the obedient person becomes one of authority, inducted into a royal priesthood. The apprentices become masters, for 'he maketh the rebel a priest and a king'.

57. THE SPIRIT, AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION (3)

The vocative¹ of submission of submission

Psa. 46:10
Isa. 40:31
Isa. 28:16
Prov. 14:30

We have seen that the highest cry of the human heart is 'Abba! Father!' for it is the cry not only of relationship but of submission. It is the broken spirit, the broken and contrite heart which heeds the comforting command, 'Be still and know that I am God!' It is the same heart which ceases its restless quest for the gods—its own constant self-stimulated flow of adrenalin—and receives the promise, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength'. The same heart takes comfort in 'He who believes will not be in haste'. It is the tranquil mind which gives life to the flesh, and it is the passionate (envious, jealous, guilt-compelled) mind which rots the bones! Only when the prodigal heart is moved by paternal love memories, and consequent love nostalgia, will

¹ The word 'vocative' has the same kind of meaning as 'invoke'. It is used to describe those occasions when we make a direct request or command or call to some one.

there be rest for its spirit.

To tumble into the arms of God who loves us freely is the highest point of human experience. 'Abba! Father!' is the cry which indicates the return of one's true humanity. This is no less true when we cry, 'Lord Jesus!'. No man can *say* that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit, for no one can *see* that Jesus is Lord apart from the Spirit's revelation. 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' was the cry of Stephen's heart. Jesus' word of glad submission is 'Father, Lord of heaven and earth...' He is followed by the church: 'Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea. . . now, Lord . . . grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness'.

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1 Cor. 12:3

Acts 7:59

Matt. 1 1:25

Acts 4:24-29

It is the vertical vocative which determines the horizontal vocative. 'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ' is an injunction given by Paul who first calls for his hearers to 'go on being filled with the Spirit'. This fullness of man's spirit, by the supply of the Spirit, is what causes man to come to praise, to mutual exhortation and upbuilding, and so to thanksgiving. Only then can believers be subject to one another. Only then can a wife be subject to her husband, children to their parents, servants to their masters, and masters to their Lord.

Eph. 5:21

Eph. 5:18

Eph. 5:18—6:9

Only then, too, can a wife say, 'Oh, husband!' and the children 'Oh, father! Oh, mother!'. Only then can the servant say, 'Oh, master!' and the master, 'O, Lord!'. The vocative of obedience follows the indicatives (stated truths) and (thus) the imperatives (demands) of grace. What is always extant in the celestial sphere becomes paralleled in the terrestrial sphere. Above, the heavenly creatures are in perpetual praise of God, and in continuous, glad obedience. The Father is worthy to receive glory and honour, praise and power, because he has created all things, and the Son is worthy of these things, because he has redeemed nations and peoples and kindred and tribes and tongues, by the shedding of his blood. But all praise God for creation and the grace of redemption, for the planned climax of all history in the regeneration of creation, and for the eternalising and harmonising of all things. This revelation alone will make the vocative spontaneous, for the vocative is evoked.

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Submission one to another another

Our problem is that we tend to romance, so that our view of our love-relationship with God may be fanciful or sentimental. We can believe our love to him is full; in fact, it can only be so if it totally satisfies the criterion which the apostle John gives us when he says that the test of love is that we obey his commands. He also says that love is itself obedience to such commands. God promised Israel that he would circumcise their hearts and give them a heart to love him. Obedience must be from *the heart* or it is not true obedience at all. That is why God must give a new heart, and a new spirit, by putting the renewing Spirit within. This is the same as saying that God internalises his law by the indwelling Spirit. Thus Paul can say, ' . . . you have obeyed *from the heart* that form of teaching to which you were delivered', and ' . . . the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart, and a good conscience and sincere faith'.

Rom. 6:17

I Tim. 1:5

The test, then, of our submission to God is submission to man, to those placed in authority over us. We have said that superordination is not superiority any more than subordination is inferiority. It is impossible to change the essential nature of persons and make them superior or inferior one to another. We all have the equality of *substance*, although—happily—not a homogeneity of personality. Jesus was not inferior to his Father. His statement that 'the Father is greater than I' did not mean 'greater in nature', but 'greater in functional order', so that he could still say, 'I and the Father are one'. No one is greater in nature than another, albeit the functional order differs from person to person in the context of the *charis* of gifts.

John 14:28

John 10:30

Eph. 5:21-32

1 Thess. 5:12-13

I Tim. 5:17

Paul then tells us, as wives, 'Wives, be subject to your husbands', and as husbands, that we are to be subject to Christ, for he is subject to the Father. He speaks to the church concerning its leaders: 'But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work'. He adds, 'Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching'. The

writer of Hebrews says,

'Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith... Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you'.

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Heb. 13:7, 17

There is, then, in the family and in the church; an hierarchical order. In the recognition of the innate family order is seen in Paul's injunction which links family and church to the same family order:

'Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity. Honour widows who are real widows'.

1 Tim. 5:1-3

With, and harmonising, all these functional orders, is the concept of mutual submission: 'Be subject to one another'. No one person is ever wholly superordinate to any other human being. In different elements, any given person will—at one and the same time—be both superordinate and subordinate. However, it is the voluntary acceptance of the service of love which shows the real greatness or poverty of a person. A legalistic observance of commandments and obligations is not true obedience. He who is superordinate will know the obligation of love to serve the subordinate person.

Eph. 5:21

These principles of love and submission—for true submission can only issue from love—show us that such living is not possible apart from the Spirit. He is the Spirit of love, submission, humility and service. If submission is not present in the internal life of the community of the Spirit, then it is not going to be so in the wider life of the world.

Submission to the powers that be

Paul and Peter are both insistent that believers should obey the secular powers. They are not secular in essence, because they are ordained of God. What is Caesar's is primarily God's, but in the order of things, the authorities may be ungodly. The same principle of serving those who are subordinate is present: '...he [the ruler] is God's servant for

Rom. 13: 1-7,
1 Peter 2 13-17

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your good'; '...he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer'; '...the authorities are ministers of God'.

Rom. 13:2

God has ordained such powers, and put them in the place of governing. Neither outside nor inside the church—in God's creational order—are there egalitarian structures. The only egalitarianism is that of love. 'Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment'. At the same time, rulers have a responsibility to fulfil in their governing. God turns the wrath of man to his praise on those occasions when he overturns authorities because of their insubordination to him: '...whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down'. Hannah and Mary—Jesus' mother—both agree that

I Sam. 2:7-8

'...he brings low, he also exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honour'.

Luke 1:51-52

'... he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,'
and exalted those of low degree'.

We assume from these statements that the business of enthroning and dethroning is God's, even if he does it via the rebellion or anger of man. It is not for man to decide to dethrone. This raises the matter of rendering *unquestioning* obedience to powers that often work evil. Are we being obedient to God by being obedient to authorities which demand that we do evil? The answer must be that when the commands of powers conflict with, and oppose, the commands of God, then we must refuse to do that evil. However, we must submit to the punishment we will bear by reason of our refusal. This is clearly exemplified by the attitude and actions of the apostles as they faced the Jewish Sanhedrin: 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard'.

Acts 4:19-20

The apostles must obey God before men, but then they

must submit themselves to the judgement that will come to them for doing so, and of course this is what happened. On the other hand, of course, where governments demand evil doing they are going outside the mandate given to them by God and are reprehensible whether they recognise this or not. God will certainly judge them even if only in the ultimate.

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There are generally two causes for opposition to constituted authorities and they are (i) a desire to get justice, either in the form of requital or of fair government, and (ii) the desire for personal power. Neither of these reasons is valid, and indeed, at rock bottom, the first may often be an excuse for the second.

A third reason for revolution is often put forward, namely the hastening of the Kingdom of God, at least in dispensing justice to as many as possible, and with it the righting of wrongs relating to people who are oppressed. This seems commendable enough, but the prophetic word does not include effecting such a state by these human endeavours. The whole creation is groaning, and only the Parousia will liberate it. This is not to say that the obligation to live justly and to seek justice is invalidated, but it does mean that it is not the primary way in which the Kingdom of God will be established.

Our discussion of submission to authorities, some of whom we cannot accept as godly, leads us to the wider question, namely the bringing of the whole creation into obedience to God. This is *vis-a-vis* Paul's statement, '...every knee [shall] bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'.

Phil. 2:11

58. THE SPIRIT, AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION (4)

The ultimate obedience that the Spirit effects

Obedience for the redeemed person must touch all relationships, both vertical and horizontal, both those which are called 'spiritual' and those which are called 'secular'. These

are familial, churchly, and worldly in the sense of being universal. Man's responsibility is first to God and then (and so) to the entire creation. What we must see is that submission is not a lowering of man's created dignity, but a recovery of it. Man loses his true dignity by sin and rebellion. If his so-called liberty is simply the self-oriented use of his faculties, then his (imagined) autonomy is self-destructive. Certainly, to be master of himself is to be exposed to all hostile powers, and the inner perversions and dislocations of his true self. We have seen that man is only man when he realises his union with God and his dependence upon him.

Perhaps what we should explore is the incredible relief and joy that comes to the prodigal when he returns home; to the crucified thief when he finds himself back in the Garden, man's true Paradise. We should research the areas of man's self-living where he experiences terror, loneliness, uncertainty, disharmony, personal disjunction and boredom. We should see the contrast between self-rule and security under the Father. We should understand the thrust for the 'Godshaped blank' to be filled with God himself, especially in his Fatherhood. All of this would help us to understand the sheer relief and joy of a human being who returns to God and knows him, knows the sweetness of contingency and the security of not having to make primary decisions. 'Be still and know that I am God' takes from man the terrible load of (imagined) human godness. The return to creatureliness is the return to human sanity, and it is resettling into true dignity.

When we look at the universal obedience that the Spirit sets out to effect, we must not view it as a conscription of all creatures into enforced submission. God is not totalitarian—not anyway in the dictatorial sense—for he has no passion for power. He has no such need. Nor can we rightly speak of him having emotional needs. It is simply that he is love and light, so that whatever totalitarian rule he may appear to have is not for self-aggrandisement, nor is it like the way a man plays 'God' to his fellows. It is the true intention that God has for the display of his glory, for the manifestation of his true glory means he has redeemed the universe.

Obedience is the true way of life for all things.

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The historical mission of the Spirit

Paul has a statement about bringing all things to the obedience of Christ:

'We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete'. II Cor. 10:5-6

The apostle is writing to the church at Corinth, where there have been ' . . . false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ'. They are those who 'disguise themselves as servants of righteousness'. Some of the believers were in danger of being seduced by these counterfeit apostles, and the attack of those false apostles was on the minds of the believers. Paul speaks of battling with these enemies, saying '...the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds'. The strongholds are the high towers of man's lofty thinking, the same Satanic pride with which Adam let himself be infected. These opponents of the Gospel seek to prevent men from knowing God. Like the rebels of the first chapter of Romans, they do not wish to retain the knowledge of God, nor do they wish others to know him. Yet Paul says they cannot defeat the spiritual weapons he has at his disposal. He means that the truth will unmask them, that in spite of themselves they will be exposed. II Cor. 1 1:1 3, 15 II Cor. 10:3-4

Doubtless, he is speaking, first of all, of defeating these false apostles in their onslaughts upon the Christian Corinthians, but secondly, he is saying he will defeat the counterfeit messengers also. When he has rescued and rehabilitated the affected believers, he will then—so to speak—close in for the kill; he will bring punishment to the offenders.

The New Testament leaves no doubt that, ultimately, all things—men and creatures—will be brought to bow the knee, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, whether from the heart, or from the convicted mind. We do not mean that all will submit out of love, but all, nevertheless, will submit, many of them convicted beyond and in spite of their opposition to

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Christ, whom they are forced to recognise as indeed Lord of all.

Something of this principle is shown in the Revelation of John, where

Rev. 6:15-17

' . . . the kings of the earth and the "real men and the generals and the rich and the strong...hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" '

Here the power and the glory are undeniable, as is also the sinfulness of those who have become afraid. They acknowledge the Lordship, even in their rebellion. The historical mission of the Spirit, in the face of all opposing evil, is to reveal the triumph of the Father and the Son in their plan for creation, history and eternity.

From creation to (the new) creation creation

We have traced, in some measure, the mind of the Spirit prior to creation in the counsel of God's will, and in the naming of his intentions for his creation. We have seen that the Spirit does not work piecemeal in various epochs, but labours steadily through the whole course of history as its various stages require, in those works by which the will of God is implemented and fulfilled.

We have seen that the plan is Trinitarian. God's plan is in conformity with his being as Creator, Father and King, for it springs from that Being. The plan is also in conformity with the nature of the second person of the Trinity as the Son, the Word and the Lord. The Spirit who works with both Father and Son ministers as the Spirit of creation and life, and as the Spirit of the Father and the Son. He persists in aiding the fulfilment of their purposes.

If Paul can use weapons which will break down the high strongholds of heady men and women who revel in their pride, then the Spirit must have weapons which are no less effective. Paul's weapons must really be the Spirit's weapons. He—the Spirit—must have powers which enable him to do that work in history which will bring evil powers

and evil humanity to their knees. The Spirit, too, must be able to say that he ' . . . destroys arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and takes every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when the obedience of the saints is complete'.

The Spirit and redemption history

We may be tempted to think that the Spirit has special powers of his own which are privatised within his own (discrete) being. Yet this is not the case: he uses the powers of the Father and the Son along the lines of his personal and functional ministry.¹ All history is the history of redemption, and it is in that context that we need to review the ministry of the Spirit, beginning with the creation, passing through the judgement of the Flood, affecting the patriarchs, bringing Israel to birth, saving that nation from Egypt, and giving it its identity as it wandered in the wilderness and then settled in Canaan. These are some of the works of the Spirit. He who knows the deep things of God seeks to communicate them through the law and the sacrifices, the priesthood and the tabernacle. No other nation knows such revelation and teaching.

Then we can say that the Spirit comes into his own with the prophets. All history is moving towards the great event of Messiah, when, with only the immediate warning of the Baptist, suddenly the Kingdom has come upon Israel in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It is this person upon whom the Spirit attends, coming upon him as an anointing, being given to him without measure, sharing with him the powers he needs to effect the descent of the Kingdom upon men. By this anointing Spirit, he liberates the captives of evil, and proclaims the Kingdom to all Israel. The same Spirit prepares him for the 'exodus which he is to accomplish at Jerusalem'. By the same Spirit he moves into the mystery of the Cross, achieving victory there over evil, and, using the

¹ We do not mean it is incorrect to speak of 'the power of the Holy Spirit', but we do mean that he does not have an absolute power, of himself, that he uses to accomplish his own will. Rather, he works with the Father and the Son and shares that power which is theirs also.

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death of the Cross as the springboard of his resurrection, he knows the mighty power of the Spirit to raise him from the dead.

By the same Spirit, the Man gives to the disciples commandments about world conquest. He has brought back the creation from any legal control and right the evil powers may have claimed they had upon it by reason of man's rebellion and its own connivance at counterfeit reigning. Thus the Spirit—if we may put it this way—uses the victory of the Cross and Resurrection (in which he has assisted) to unmask, unseat and disarm the powers of evil of their deadly weapons.

This review helps us to see that the gaze of the Spirit is focused upon the end-time and the hour of the whole revelation of God's glory. How then does he do more than Paul and disarm the whole creation—especially where its evil has affected it—and bring all things to the feet of Christ? How does he fulfil this mission to unseat evil and reveal the glory of God as history draws to its predicted end? That he accomplishes this in concert with the Father and the Son is the assured climax of which the prophets speak, but we wish to know how he does it.

The truth that triumphs

The truth is God, his being, his actions, his plan and the working out of it. To oppose the truth is to oppose reality. Thus opposition to the truth cannot ultimately be successful. No matter how much evil may try to thwart what God is about, it cannot finally defeat him. This is not because evil lacks power in the sense of energy, might and working ability, but because God is love and light. Just as darkness cannot live where there is light, so evil cannot live where there is love. Cleverness, political cunning and connivance may gain a momentary advantage, but they must fail if they are not of the truth.

Now the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. This statement is of such depth as to be beyond immediate comprehension. We may comprehend the principle readily enough, but not the reality. Paul says, ' . . . the Spirit searches everything,

1 Cor. 2:10

even the depths of God'. He is not suggesting that the Spirit *is seeking* truth, or seeking to compass truth's parameters. He is really saying that the Spirit knows all the depths of God, for, in any case, he himself is God. So then Paul is saying that *from our point of view* he is making the truth of God (i.e. the truth which is God) available to man. Moses had said that the things which are secret (hidden) belong to God, and the things which are revealed belong to us to do them. Now Paul is saying that even hidden things become revealed when the Spirit communicates them.¹ Yet every revelation is dynamic, and every opening of the truth to man places him under obligation to obey it.

Deut. 29:29

Pentecost, as the coming, in a new way, of the Spirit, is also the coming, in a new way, of truth. That is why three times in the one evening Jesus calls him 'the Spirit of truth' and prays to the Father, 'Sanctify them [the disciples] in the truth; thy word is truth'. We thus glimpse that the power by which the Spirit fulfils the mission of history is the truth. He himself is the witness to the truth, because *he is the truth*. Christ said he was a witness to the truth; now the Spirit likewise is a witness to the truth.

John 15:26
John 17:17

I John 5:7

The way he witnesses to the truth is to reveal Christ (who is 'the truth of the Father') and thus, also, the Father. The Father has given everything into the hands of the Son, hence Christ can say of the coming Spirit, ' . . . he will take what is mine and declare [reveal] it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you'. To reveal the truth of the Son is to reveal the truth of the Father.

John 14:6

John 16:14-15

We have previously covered this ground in speaking of the Spirit as the Spirit of truth, and have pointed out that man originally exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Now we see that men and evil spirits cannot get away with the hoax. They can no longer say that the truth is the lie, or the lie the truth. The Spirit descends upon the race, and just as Christ proclaimed his victory 'to the spirits in prison', so the Spirit proclaims the truth of God everywhere. All rebellious

I Peter 3:19

¹ We are not referring to that which is hidden by God for our good, or to the satisfying of our esoteric and occultic curiosity. What God reveals is what we need to know, i.e. 'we shall know even as we are known'. This, for us, will be full knowledge.

creatures fight desperately—as rats which are cornered—when the truth comes upon them. It is not the church which has its back to the wall, but the forces of darkness, of secularity and of deceit.

The spiritual weapons

When Paul said the church does not use fleshly or worldly weapons, then that was exactly what he meant. We, God's people, use spiritual weapons—weapons that are mighty—to pull down strongholds of evil. This is not mere spiritual jingoism, a kind of Sunday bravery that flags on a secular Monday. It is the use of truth which is lethal to evil. In Paul, the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. That word is the truth, and nothing can stand before the truth. In the Apocalypse of John, truth is the sharp two-edged sword. It proceeds from the mouth of Christ. It is the very word of God, the tongue of the 'true and faithful witness'. John's statement is that this is the weapon 'with which he shall smite nations'. We have talked of the pen being mightier than the sword, but here the word and the pen are one, and they are the sword, for behind the inscripturation of the truth is the truth himself. So the inscripturated truth is not static but is one with the living word. It is marvellously dynamic. We must not distinguish these two except in their modes of communication. Communication is not the truth, though even the mode of communication must be truthful, i.e. comporting with what it communicates.

Rev. 19:13-15

We need not be particularistic and puzzle ourselves as to what are the weapons. At the best we can describe them using the figures of human weapons, but whatever form they may take, they are all the truth, and truth is the damning power to evil and the redeeming power to the penitent. In the ultimate, spiritual warfare boils down to this one thing: the truth must finally and inevitably triumph, and truth has worked its truth in the dynamics of holy love by means of the atonement.

These then are the means by which the Spirit presses forward to fulfil the mission of God. It was not possible that Christ should not have been incarnate and die, rise and

ascend, reign and return. By nature of the case, truth had to be this way. Truth then is not static dogma, nor merely the sum total of comprehended research into the nature of things as they are. The truth is God in his being and his action, purposed within his own wisdom. He who searches the depths—i.e. the Spirit—is able to reveal the truth, and it is this truth which makes men free as it emancipates them from the lie.

59. THE MEDIUM OF THE TRUTH: THE CHURCH (1)

Ultimately, authority the true goal

We must keep the theme of this section in mind, that the Spirit puts down all that opposes itself against God. The authority—God as Father, Son and Spirit—is not merely benign, but is Ruler of all things—heavenly and earthly, seen and unseen—in his holy love. God's final intention for creation—as we have seen time and again—is for its wellbeing, its ripening to full maturity, and its reaching the goal that God has planned for it in his grace. Thus the completion of his holy people will be the manifestation of his glory as their Father, Creator, Redeemer and Glorifier. They, for their part, will manifest the dignity and honour of God in their ministry as a 'royal priesthood, a holy people', and this in turn will show 'the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus'. It is not merely that his people are lost creatures saved from their own sin-induced weakness and defeat, but that they are his creatures, whose destiny he had fixed beforehand, i.e. that they should come to that stature of being which is 'a little less than God'!

I Peter 2:9
Eph. 2:7

Psa. 8:5, cf.
Heb. 2:7

Their stature is not only a thing of the end-time; it is also something of the now-time. It is now that they are covenant partners with God. It is now that they are one with the Spirit in bringing the nations to the feet of Christ, and destroying the weapons and strongholds of evil. It is now that they are building 'The City of Tomorrow'. There will be no such

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City and no defeat of evil if what happened on the Cross, and at the Tomb, is not now worked out in an operation which defeats all evil. The question is, 'How does the people of God do this?'

We might easily think that God has enough power of his own deity to accomplish what he wills, but a reasoning such as this fails to understand the nature of God. He does all things in conformity with his own nature, which itself creates, rules, redeems and glorifies only in accordance with its own self. Another way of saying this is that God works in accordance with his own moral being, and in this being, holy love must win the wills, affections and loyalties of human beings. So-called 'sheer force'—whatever that may be—cannot accomplish this. God is true moral Being and man is a moral creature. His will cannot be conscripted. It must be won by love, and this through the atonement.

The people of God and the power

In destroying the apocalyptic city of Babylon, and building the Holy City, the people of God use both trowel and sword, as did the people of Nehemiah's day, in restoring the walls of Jerusalem. The difference is that the people of God use their weapons not only in defence, but also in destroying the enemy. When we ask what the trowel is, and what the sword, we are told that they are both the one, namely holy love. Whilst holiness and love constitute the two attributes which describe God, yet the two are the one, i.e. holy love and loving holiness. This last statement is not merely a pious cliché or truism. It is deeply theological. 'God is light' and 'God is love' are rare statements made in Scripture, and they are not mere definitions. They are statements of the dynamic and active nature of God. 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it', speaks not only of the history of creation, but of the outcome of the eschatological action. Ultimately darkness is defeated. In John's first letter, darkness and hatred are the one. Love then moves into the darkness of hatred and overcomes it. This is also the eschatological outcome.

Taking all this into consideration, let us now see how the

I John 1:5

I John 4:8, 16

John 1:5

process of triumph works out in history. We have suggested above that truth is the essential and indestructible weapon in the hand of the Spirit. It is not mere playing with words to say that the truth is light, and that the truth is love. To light a lamp is to receive truth. To live in truth is to live in love: 'to truth it in love'. If we can nod our heads and hear this matter clearly, then we understand that the people of God work in power through the love and light that is God in them and among them. There is no sense in which love which is not God's love can ever accomplish anything. Likewise light that is not God's light will also lack the ability to achieve true goals. True love is holy, and true holiness is loving. Both are irresistible.¹ By irresistible we do not mean that they overcome all opposition, but that they cause a polarisation; there will be either unreserved acceptance or clear-cut opposition. It is impossible for them to be at work without provoking one or other of these reactions.

The sword and the trowel

We have already seen that, in the people of God at work, there is a twin-action in the use of sword and trowel. The former defeats evil by opposing it, and the latter defeats evil by what it is and what it builds. The goal is not merely the defeat of evil, but the building of that which is eternal, namely the Eternal City, the City of Tomorrow.

The word of truth which is the sword is likened prophetically to a fire and a hammer that shatters the rock. For the new people of God, this word is the proclamation of the Gospel, the command and exhortation to believe the truth as Christ has spelled it out in his incarnation, life, atonement and ascension. It is the word which is spoken by weak people who are filled with the power of the Spirit. They wield no sword of their own making. The apostolic church believed it was speaking the word of God. The apostles claimed that they said nothing but what Moses and the prophets had spoken. They saw 'Christ in all the Scriptures'. The word of John the Baptist was of the same ethos. The

¹ For the irresistible nature of the truth, the word of God, see Isa. 55:10-11, and John 6:63-65, 5:39 40. 45-47.

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word of Christ was the true word of God. The apostolic word was in this vein also. When we look at its effects, we see its power. Whilst the Spirit-given and the Spirit-communicated word was the word of power, yet it was the power of the truth—the truth given in word—which defeated its opponents and demonstrated the Kingdom of God. It was the word of truth by which the apostles built the foundations of the temple, the dwelling place of God.

Cf Eph. 2:19ff.

The Book of the Acts is filled with examples of acts of the sword. The whole group of believers was dynamic at Pentecost, and their words made a deep impression. Peter, filled with the Spirit, was irresistible. His message polarised the Jewish audience. The same word continued to polarise the community of Jerusalem as the days passed. This initiative was taken up by others. Stephen is a case in point: he spoke with such power that his opponents were helpless, unable to reply. While Peter and other disciples confounded the frustrated Sanhedrin, Stephen spoke the word which infuriated them and moved them to destroy him. Doubtless, Saul of Tarsus also was unable to answer him. Peter's word not only confounded those external to the church but also the couple, Ananias and Sapphira, within it, as they were about to introduce hypocrisy and corruption into the church. The word brought the chastisement of death to the lying pair.

Acts chs. 4-5

Acts chs. 6-7

Acts 5:1-11

Acts ch. 8

Acts ch. 13ff.

The word of Philip brought relief from sickness and demons, and, at the same time, led many to Christ and the Kingdom. The word of Paul had a cutting edge from the beginning. This was so whether he was preaching to a whole city, opposing a magician, or being indicted by the Jewish Council. Yet for Paul, the uttered word was not divorced from the word as it was lived out. It was the word of witness, the word of sound action, the word of proclamation, and the word of service. Paul himself says,

11 Cor. 6:4-10

' . . . as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute...as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything'.

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It was against this lived and proclaimed word that evil could not stand. Elsewhere Paul puts it in different terms:

'In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God, For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, *by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that. . . I have fully preached the gospel of Christ*'.

Rom. 15:17-19

Paul's two lists really describe the same thing, namely using the sword and the trowel together The word of truth is not really that word unless it is also lived. For example, at Thessalonica they did not distinguish between the word proclaimed and the word lived; as Paul himself states,

' . . . our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and **with full conviction**. You **know what kind of men** we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much afflictions with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit'.

I Thess. 1:5 -6

Gripped by the word, they too (the Thessalonians) became flames lit at the flame: ' . . . so that [they] became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. . . but [their] faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything'. This is what Roland Allen calls 'the spontaneous expansion of the Christian church'.¹

I Thess. 1:7-8

It is that, without doubt, but it is also holy warfare. It is the pulling down of many strongholds and the liberating of the captives. It is, in Paul's words from Romans 15, the winning of 'obedience from the Gentiles [nations]'.

The sword going out of the mouth

Paul's 'sword of the Spirit' is Christ's sharp two-edged sword which issues from his mouth', the sword that ultimately smites the nations. It is the sword of the people of God, for they are the mouth of Christ. An example of this is seen in the Revelation of John the Seer, where the two witnesses

¹ Roland Allen was an Anglican missionary in China at the turn of the nineteenth century, and wrote two books, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Christian Church*, and *St. Paul's Missionary Methods or Our?* His thought was revolutionary for his day, and only in the past few decades has it come into its own.

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 Rev. 11:5, 10
 Rev. 18:8
 Rev. 19:3
 Rev. 20:8-9

prophecy for the whole church age, namely for 1,260 days:
 'And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if anyone would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed . . . these two prophets had been a torment to all who dwell on the earth'.
 Some exegetes see these two witnesses as two-fifths of the sevenfold church, i.e. the seven churches, the complete church throughout the church age. The fire is the word as Jeremiah described it. The truth is what holds the world in thrall and in dread. The truth confronts their lie. It is the same fire of the word which destroys Babylon: '. . .so shall all her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her'. The 'smoke of her burning' causes her erstwhile devotees to mourn, but the celestial multitude thunders out its joy: 'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever'.¹
 The final pages of the Revelation show us those 'who had conquered the beast', and the saints who fight with Christ. Confronting them are the forces of Gog and Magog, surrounding 'the camp of the saints and the beloved city'. These opposing forces are not defeated by literal weapons of destruction. No, 'but fire came down from heaven and consumed them'. This fire is the divine word, the same word by which the saints prevail. This is the ministry of the Spirit in bringing ultimate victory to the creation of God and accomplishing it via the people of God and their Lord, Jesus Christ.

60. THE MEDIUM OF THE TRUTH: THE CHURCH (2)

The triumph of the trowel

Light is not present only to overcome and destroy darkness. It is there to bring light where there was darkness. Paul's

¹ Because the language of Revelation is apocalyptic we should be wary of literalising it. Much of the action, if not all of it, may in fact be spread across the whole period of the church age. Yet 'one hour' of Babylon's destruction may be the climactic point of a long process in time.

famous statement is most powerful: 'When anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light'. Exegetes warmly debate the meaning of this verse. Does it mean that when the light comes the things of darkness are exposed for what they are? It is self-evident that they are. But perhaps Paul means something more. Maybe he is declaring that when the light comes, all things are converted to light because darkness cannot now exist. Perhaps he may even mean that when the light comes, the things of darkness are either judged and destroyed by the light when impenitent, and (or) converted to light itself when they respond.

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Eph.5:13

From the point of view of darkness, the light is to be dreaded. Jesus said, 'For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed'. By this Jesus showed that light—when it falls on darkness—exposes it. Darkness cannot possibly overcome light. It is also clear that when, in the sovereign grace and drawing power of the Gospel, the darkness is induced to come to the light, i.e. the light shines upon it, then the light does convert that which is darkness so that it becomes light. It is also self-evident that when light comes, that which is darkness becomes exposed, i.e. is made naked and shown for what it is. It is also rendered powerless and its identity as darkness is destroyed, even though it does not wish this. This is a form of judgement. At the judgement seat of Christ, that which has been darkness, and which may have masqueraded as light, will be seen for what it is, just as the good will also be shown for what it is.

John 3:20

In order to understand fully what Paul means, we need to read the context of the verse. When we do, we find that we are to walk in love and walk in light, and that the two are the one! This is not surprising. Surely the thrust of the passage is that where there is a will for light, even in the midst of darkness and spiritual sloth, the light, when it comes, will make all darkness into light. It will also destroy that which is darkness, even if this judgement of light must wait for its full accomplishment until the final judgement. Yet now, in this time, the same principle will operate. Hence the admonition, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and

Eph. 5:13

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Christ shall give you light'.

The sleeper who *hears* the voice has been reached in his stupor by the Spirit and the Word. He who does not have an ear to hear is marked down by the light for judgement. So then, light must triumph either way, i.e. for renewing the spirit of a person, or for bringing it to judgement. When this principle is applied to the whole creation, it can be seen how powerful a weapon is light, i.e. the nature of God and his holiness. When it is also seen that there is no light apart from love, no love apart from light (i.e. no truth which is not at once both light and love), then the weaponry proves wholly formidable to evil. Ultimately, the Babylonish system—the principle of egoism, both celestial and terrestrial —must crumble before the onslaught of love and light.

Another way of saying all this is that no power—human or superhuman—can stand before the simple reality of love and holiness.

The trowel that builds

Now, as we come to consider building, we need to refer back to the material we have already used in Section 53 (pages 269-71). We saw there that love is that which edifies, or builds up. Each person is built up as a member of Christ's body. The whole body is built up in love. Disregarding the weaker brother—weak in faith and conscience—is dangerous, for he can be broken down by those of strong faith and conscience, who do not consider him in love. In thinking of the weaker brother before ourselves, we build him up. That is, we help him to grow stronger and grow towards maturity. What matters is not that we ourselves are successful, but that we build up our brother, in love.

We saw also that the secular man thinks in terms of outward actions and success. The things of faith are to him insubstantial. He walks by sight and not by faith. The true Christian person walks by faith and not by sight. The building which is going on is unseen. The natural (secular) man receives not the things of the Spirit for they are foolishness to him. He believes the (natural) gifts which he has are not given but acquired, and that his skills spring from his own

See Rom.
14:1—15:12,
esp. 14:15, 19

II Cor. 5:7, cf.
Gal. 5:5,
Heb. 11:1

determination and habituation. The spiritual man has already received the Spirit in order to know the gifts that God has given him, for the gifts are the true aides of love.

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So then, behind the scenes and facades called 'sight', the City of Tomorrow is being built. In another way of speaking, it is 'the Temple of God'. In yet another way of speaking, it is the edifying and ennobling of the Bride of the Bridegroom. Whatever figure it is we use, the building is going on. Even if not one sound of nail-knocking or stone-chipping reaches the ears of the natural man, the vast Temple is being built in the silence of faith, in the beauty of holiness.

Another way of saying this is that nothing but God's love can unmake a man and then remake him. Sooner or later, he must see the love of God in the Cross, and best of all see it in the wrath of the Cross. To understand the wrath is to see the love. When he sees that God is love, then the trowel of the Word has done its primary task. When the new man proceeds to be a lover himself—lover of God, lover of all—then that new man begins to build. He is built into the holy edifice, as he also builds the same edifice. Nothing that he does in love—be it outwardly humble or clearly significant—will ever be lost. In fact, it will be there for all eternity. Paul said that the key to all doing must be love, otherwise it is valueless. We repeat the thought that only that which is done out of love will stand the test of love's fire in the day of judgement.

Cf. I Cor. 13:1-3
Gal. 5:6
1 Cor. 3:12-15

We cannot say that man who is not in Christ does not do acts of love, but we must say that only as he knows God's love for him can he truly love, and do true acts of love. Acts where God's love is not present are not acts of absolute love. This then is what protects the truth from error. Evil is incapable of love, but it is not incapable of counterfeiting or mimicking it, because it knows the enormous dynamic that is in love. It wishes to have access to this dynamic and so often uses the principle of love, but there is nothing of love inherent in evil, which therefore must ultimately fail and fall. Because God is love and his children the children of love, they cannot fail. 'Love never fails' is an eternal principle, working itself out in the context of creation. All

1 Cor. 13:8

things were created by love and their essential foundation is love.

Love and the gifts

We saw that the gifts are for the purposes of love and are used as aides. The gifts are the ways of concretising love. Indeed, love is never an abstract thing. Since God is love, then love must always be actional. We also saw that the gifts are not the gifts except in *actu*. Behind them, and in their application, is the ever-present Spirit. Each time they are used, they are manifestations of the Spirit as ministrations and as exercises of true energy. In every way their use must be good. Paul shows that the gifts can be used wrongly, in which case they do not edify, and are dangerous. They are then manifestations of human ego.

They can also be exercises of super-human evil. Christ warned against the works which antichrist would do: 'For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect'. They are shown to John the Seer as 'demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty'.

Matt. 24:24

Rev. 16:14

Evil, then, uses gifts, and by so doing, certifies that they are powerful. However, it cannot use them in love, and so such gifts do not assure a final victory for evil. The true gifts are the gifts of Christ through his Spirit and they guarantee the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom. The unseen, unnoticed acts are building bricks and materials in the construction of the City of God. However, to sight they are either never seen, or, if momentarily seen by the natural man, are laughed at as inconsequential in the history of creation. To the contrary, they are the deeds by which the battle is won. Some wayward human spirit will be captured by them, and thus another stronghold of spiritual evil will fall.

In practical fact, we see that the gifts of ministry—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—are God's gifts to the church that it may be built up in love. The

other gifts, not always dissociated from the ministry gifts, are also for *diakonia*, i.e. mutual ministry. They are lethal for evil, but life-giving for (penitent) man. No one in all the system of evil suspects or dreams that the seemingly inconsequential acts of love will one day show themselves in triumph over evil, and as the glorious City of Tomorrow. Evil builds nothing real or durable, and what it seems to have constructed is quietly being dismantled by holy love behind the scenes. In fact all that evil does is self-destructing. The things which are seen are temporal, but faith looks at the unseen things which are eternal. Such faith enables us to endure 'as seeing him who is invisible'. This kind of faith can only work by love.

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II Cor. 4:18

Heb. 11:1.27

The outcome of the war, then, is never in doubt, and the building to be unveiled must be completed, for, as Paul says, 'Love never fails'. The aides, or gifts, will one day pass away, when they are no longer needed, but love itself shall never pass away.

'Love never fails'. That is why Paul speaks of 'love undying', or, as some have translated, 'Love imperishable', 'Love incorruptible'.

Eph. 6:24

61. THE CHURCH, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE SACRAMENTS (1)

We have seen how significant is the church as the people of God, working under the Fatherhood of God, under the Lordship of Christ and under the power and guidance of the Spirit, in order to effect the plan and purpose of God. Its true import is often not discerned because of the near-sightedness through which we conduct our ecclesial operations. We are unfortunately myopic in regard to the end goal, and, as we have seen, the City of Tomorrow. Whilst greatly emphasising the fact of the church, we have often missed its greatness, and its highly important function as the means which God uses to complete his plan.

Church history tells us the sad story of divisions within the body of Christ. These divisions come more often through our

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views and practices of the church, ministry and sacraments, than through doctrine itself. Of course, doctrine is greatly concerned with the church, ministry and sacraments, but it is thought by most that differences in understanding the doctrines of God, man, sin and salvation are what bring primary divisions. This is not wholly true. Whilst we cannot divorce these salvific elements from ecclesial matters, yet the latter seem to be more emotive of division.

Acts 4:33, 20:32,
13:43, 14:26

Realising that the unity of the Spirit was the primary note or mark of the church, and that the church, 'holy, catholic and apostolic', was always under 'great grace', i.e. 'the word of his grace', we need then to discover afresh and in depth the whole matter of the church, its ministry and its sacraments. Especially we need to see the part that the Spirit plays in these. With this in mind we now go to the heart of the matter, the sacraments.

The Spirit and the sacraments

The two sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper. There can be little doubt that they are linked in some way with the ordinances of circumcision and the feast of the Passover in the Mosaic economy. Paul refers to circumcision and baptism in the one breath, although we do not have to conclude that they are strict parallels:

Col. 2:11-14

'In him [Christ] also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross'.

1 Cor. 5:7

The closest Paul comes to linking the Passover and Christ is to say, 'Christ our paschal [passover] lamb has been sacrificed'. The writers of the Synoptic Gospels do identify the Last Supper with the feast of the Passover, and John sees Christ as dying on the day of the Passover. In some measure, the Cross is identified with the Passover and the Lord's Supper in the minds of the Synoptists, and certainly

his became the mind of the early church.

To whatever extent baptism may—or may not—be identified with circumcision and the Cross with the Passover, the fact stands clear that, for Israel, circumcision and the Passover were linked with the Kingdom of Israel, whilst for the apostolic church, baptism and the Lord's Supper were linked with the Kingdom of God. In fact, the themes of Kingdom and Covenant are themselves inseparably coupled, and—as we shall see—it is the Spirit who relates to both of these elements. He is the Spirit of the Kingdom. He is the covenant Spirit.

God and the covenants

The subject of covenant in Scriptures is far-reaching and deeply significant. It is really God's unilateral dealings with man, the expression and proof that he is the God of grace. We may rightly speak of the grace of creation, since man does nothing to warrant being created. We may even speak of an *implied covenant* with man as created. Certainly, many Reformed theologians see an obligation upon man to be obedient because he was created and because of the warning of judgement in the event of his eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.¹ The same scholars see the mandate, given to man for vocational obedience, as the promise of blessing as man is covenant partner with God in his plan for the world.

Many students of the Old Testament see Genesis chapters one to eleven as simply being pre-Abrahamic history with a view to providing the setting for God's covenant with Abraham. The writings certainly do this; but there is more. Within these eleven chapters themselves are the records of earlier covenants, even if we omit the one implied in creation. We still have there *God's covenant with Noah* to save his family: 'I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your

Gen. 6:11-22

¹ Many Reformed scholars insist that God made a creation-covenant with Adam which was a covenant of works, and that Adam broke this at the fall. There is no explicit covenant revealed in the text or Genesis chapters one to three unless the command Or Gen. 1:28ff and the prohibition of Gen. 2:17 constitute a covenant.

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1 Pet. 3:20-21

Gen. . 6:8

Gen. 9:9-17

sons' wives with you'. Later Peter uses this event to point to the significance of baptism. God had chosen Noah: 'Noah found favour [grace] in the eyes of the Lord'.

Then there is the *post-flood Noahic covenant* which is famous as the true example of covenant, for it was all of grace, i.e. unilateral, not carrying any conditions with it whatsoever: 'Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you'. There will be no more flooding the earth to the point of total inundation. The rhythm of the seasons will not be impaired. Man will not fear rain, thinking it might be another judgement. Rain will simply be a blessing of God.

Ex. 2:23-25

Ex. 6:7, cf.

Jer. 31:31-34

Deut 29:13

The Abrahamic covenant, rightly seen, embraces not only the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but also what have been called the Mosaic, Palestinian and Davidic promises to Abraham. When Israel had become—so to speak—a proletariat in Egypt, 'God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. . .' The theme saying of covenantal promises was, 'I will take you for my people, and I will be your God'. Hence Moses says to the people, '...that he [God] may establish you this day as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob'.

The covenant with Abraham has two aspects:

Gen. 12:3

(i) it is universal: 'I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves';

Gen. 15:18-20

(ii) it is localised to Palestine: 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river of Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites'.

Psa. 89:3 4, cf.

II Sam. 7:12-17

Psa. 89:26 27

The covenant regarding Palestine is renewed with Moses, and with David. In regard to the latter, God says, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations." ' All Israel is filial, and David also is filial: 'He shall cry to me, "Thou art my

Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." And I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth'. Here the Palestinian promise takes on a universal note. This Davidic promise is linked with both covenant and the kingdom of Israel, and so the Kingdom of God. The prophets weave together these strands and make a prophetic tapestry of the coming Messiah, the Davidic king.

We shall deal with *the New Covenant* under a separate heading,¹ but it is sufficient here to say that Israel in exile knew that whilst God would not revoke his covenant with his people, yet Israel had broken it, and there must—somehow—be a renewal of that covenant for Israel. It would require repentance on their part and grace on the part of God. Even in their worst states of mind, they clung to God's unilateral promises.

The new covenant is found very strongly and richly in the prophets. They are sure that God will renew the Abrahamic promises, for God's promises, like his gifts (of which they are part), 'are without repentance', i.e. 'without recall'. This is why Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, in his Messianic prophecy (given over John), can refer to God's sure action 'to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham. . .'

Rom. 1 1:29

Luke 1:68-79

Without doubt, all the covenants are linked together and this by the common element of God's grace.

One pertinent comment we ought to make here is that all theology, in the ultimate, is covenantal. This does not mean that we look at theology from a covenant-reductionist point of view, and see it as only covenantal. However, not to see God as consistently the God of covenant is to make grace a specific thing, without its generic perspective. It is to make grace a side issue, when in fact God cannot be known apart from grace, since grace is never apart from him. Therefore, the brevity of this introduction to covenant should not be taken to indicate that the theme is of limited importance. It pervades the Scriptures, since God's intention within history

¹ This is seen when we relate Gen. 12:1-2 (and related covenantal promises) with Luke 1:72 (passim) and so Matt. 26:28 and Jer. 31:31-34, cf. Luke 1:77. It was the covenant of forgiveness and Paul pursues this thought in Gal. ch. 3.

is to show his grace, and—even more—to display it to all eternity.

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The Spirit and covenant

In examining the history of man, we have noted that, of the members of the Triune Godhead, it is the Spirit who is predominantly present. He dwells with man before the Son is incarnated. He is present to all creation as the Spirit of life and renewal. We have seen that man's increased violence and rebellion prior to the Flood causes a hiatus in man's experience of the Spirit. Certainly, the patriarchs were men of the Spirit, so that the Spirit and the Abrahamic covenant are truly related.¹ Isaac was a child born of the Spirit and so a free person. It was by the Spirit that Sarah conceived. In the story of God's action with them, and their part in his plan for establishing his covenant people, there may be some allegorical elements, but the reality of the life of the Spirit is not to be doubted. Paul reads history as covenantal and places the Spirit, God's promises (the covenant) and grace in juxtaposition.

Haggai 2:5

However, it is in the life of Israel that the statement of Haggai emerges as a general principle: 'My Spirit abides among you; fear not'. The context indicates that God promised this at the exodus from Egypt. There is plenty of evidence that he kept his promise; we have already traced the gifts to the artificers of the tabernacle and its furniture on the one hand, and the Spirit endowment to leaders such as Moses, Joshua and the seventy elders on the other. The writer of Hebrews calls him 'the Spirit of grace', and notes his activity in a passage which refers back to the significance and the didactic ministry of the tabernacle and its furniture. We could say, from this, that the judges of Israel were charismatic, or pneumatic, but the true reading of this book is that the Spirit, then, was maintaining the covenant blessings promised by God to Israel.

Heb. 10:29

Heb. 9:8-10

His ministry in the prophets also indicates that he was conveying the judgements of God where there was covenant

¹ In Gal. 3:13-14 Paul seems to imply that the Spirit—and not only justification—was meant and prophesied to be a covenantal gift.

breaking in Israel. Through them we find the Spirit seeking, most of all, to keep people to their covenant promises and so covenant conduct. They knew no dichotomy between law and prophecy. Prophecy is not curious prediction but relevant exhortation. Predictive prophecy simply underlines the hortatory, and must be seen in relationship to it.

However, it is with the new covenant that the Spirit is most active. Israel in the face of judgement was puzzled and shocked. The presence of the temple meant to them that God was surely present, yet they had not read their own history aright. The Deuteronomic warnings and promises had been neglected. The history of the split kingdom and the rise and fall of idolatry had left them with a deficient view of *chessed* (grace). Also they refused to read the rhythm of prophecy as it pronounced on loyalty and disloyalty, pure worship and false worship, true community and human selfishness, and so they remained bereft of understanding. The prophets warned against wrong thinking and wrong action. When the warnings were not heeded, then they spoke of judgement as a prolepsis. Beyond the judgements lay the new appearance of grace. This was the new covenant.

62. THE CHURCH, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE SACRAMENTS (2)

The Spirit and the new covenant

There are at least two streams to the prophetic teaching of the new covenant. *The first is* that it relates to a covenant mediator. He is the one who comes and establishes covenant, really renewing God's covenant with his people, but in the form predicted. *The second is* the action of the covenant which relates to the Spirit. First, we will look at the Spirit and the new covenant.

Christ associates himself with the new covenant by saying, ' . . . Matt. 26:28 this is my blood of [or, in] the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'. He is specifically linking himself with Jeremiah's prediction of

that covenant:

Jer. 31:31-34 'Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shalt be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more'.

Jer. 32:38-41 **Jeremiah repeats this with no less emphasis on the grace of God who says,**

' . . . they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul'.

The prophet also predicts the response that will come from chastisement, namely that Israel will seek for the covenant:

Jer. 50:4-5 'In those days and in that time, says the Lord, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come; and they shall seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned towards it, saying, "Come, let us loin ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant which will never be forgotten." '

Ezek. 34:25ff. **Jeremiah and Ezekiel are at one in this thought. Both predict the renewal of Israel after the exilic judgements. Ezekiel calls it 'the covenant of peace' and speaks of it much in the same way as Jeremiah:**

Ezek. 16:59-63 'Yea, thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. . .and you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord God'

At least four times Ezekiel links the restoration of (new covenant with) Israel with the Spirit. At least twice he says,

'And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God..

Ezek. 11:19-20.
cf. 36:26-27

We note the covenantal signature statement, 'They shall be my people and I will be their God'. At the same time, the responsibility is upon the nation to repent. They must not wait for God to move in grace; they must repent.

'Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit) Why will you die O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone says the Lord God; so turn, and live'.

Ezek. 18 31-32

Ezekiel pursues the matter of judgement: 'I will enter into judgement with you, says the Lord God. I will make you pass under the rod [or, I will bring you into the bond of covenant] and I will let you go in by number'.

Ezek. 20:36-37

Not only does the Spirit speak through the prophet; he also predicts the giving of the gift of the Spirit. The scene in the desert valley of the dry bones which are hopeless, but which are brought into a resurrection by the Spirit as a mighty host, is a figure of Israel being resurrected by the *Ruach* of God:

'And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land..

Ezek. 37:13-14

After predicting the reunion of Israel and Judah, he says of the unified nation, 'I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore'.

Ezek. 37:26-27

Finally—in connection with restoration—there is the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit: '...and I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God'.

Ezek. 39:29

The prophecies of Isaiah link the outpouring of the Spirit with the restoration of Israel in terms of Kingdom. Hence

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Isa. 32:1

when the prophet says, 'Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice', he first pictures the desolation of ruined Judah, portraying it as having come to this pass because of its evil. But the scene when changes when

Isa. 32:15-17

`. . . the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.
Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
And the effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness,
quietness and trust for ever'.

In another place, the action is Messianic:

Isa. 35:1, 2, 5-7

'The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing. . .
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a hart,
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes'.

Isa. 41:17-20,
43: 19-21. 44:1-5

These pictures of fecundity and moral uprightness become more frequent in the second part of the prophecies. At a time of need, God will bring water to the thirsty and plenty to the hungry. These promises, for the most part, are linked with the Suffering Servant, who himself is Messiah, the Davidic King. The terms that Ezekiel knows, such as 'everlasting covenant' and 'covenant of peace', are in use in the Book of Isaiah, too. God promises renewal of the covenant he has made with Israel, but this time through the Servant, for he has put his Spirit upon him. As a result of this anointing, he will preach 'justice [*mishpat*] to the nations', and 'bring good tidings to the afflicted. . . bind up the broken-hearted' and 'proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound'. The renewal of the covenant is also the restoration of the

Isa. 24:5. 54:10,
55:3, 61:8

Isa. 42:1, 61:1-4

Kingdom.

The direct promises of outpouring of the Spirit are also there: 'For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring'; ' . . . until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high'.

Isa. 44:3

Isa. 32:15

There are two other promises of the Spirit connected with the Servant of Yahweh, who himself is sometimes Israel as the nation, and sometimes a particular, special person. *The first statement is* by the Servant. Yahweh has just testified to him with the words, 'I, even I, have spoken and called him, I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way. Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there'. The Servant's words are 'And now the Lord God has sent me and his Spirit'.

Isa. 48:15-16

Isa. 48 16

The second statement is by Yahweh himself, but it cannot be fully understood unless we read it in its context. The context is that Yahweh has seen the evil and expressed himself as astonished and highly indignant that there is no intervenor to change the situation in Zion. Well, then, he himself will come with anger and judgement and execute justice. 'So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives'.

Isa. 59:19

Following this description Yahweh speaks:

'And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore'.

Isa. 59:21

The Servant, then, is to bring the Spirit, and impart the Spirit and the word of God to his people. The words and actions are covenantal, but the covenant is of a new order with new creational connotation. The prophet has already said of this Servant Israel, 'And I have put my words in your mouth, and hid you in the shadow of my hand, stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, "You are my people." '

Isa. 51:16

Finally, Joel is the prophet who links the coming of the

Part 8.62Joel 2:23-32,
cf. ch. 3

Spirit with God's covenantal care. Following the judgements that Israel deserves, he will send again the former and latter rains and give them great prosperity. His promise is, ' . . . my people shall never again be put to shame'. How will this be? The answer is, ' . . . I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'. Following this great epochal outpouring shall come apocalyptic happenings, and then shall come 'the great and terrible day of the Lord', but not before God brings full restoration to all Israel.

Malt. 26:28

We conclude, then, that the coming of the Spirit is inextricably related to the renewal of covenant with Israel, and that the renewed covenant is in fact 'the new covenant', the same of which Jesus said, 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'. As we have quoted, it is also the new expression of the old covenant with Abraham. Zechariah indicates this in his Benedictus, and he is followed by Paul:

Gal. 3:13-14

'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree"—that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith'.

63. THE CHURCH, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE SACRAMENTS (3)

John and his baptism

Mal. 3: 1-6

As we have just indicated above, the prophecy of Zechariah links the coming of John, his son, with the ancient Abrahamic covenantal promise. John will 'go before the Lord to prepare his ways, and to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins'. John is also called 'the messenger' by Jesus, who himself is 'the messenger of the covenant'. In one sense, John is a messenger of the covenant, in that he is 'the messenger of the messenger of the covenant'. This relates to Malachi's direct prophecy of covenantal judgement followed by covenantal grace.

John's message contains the three 'universals' to which we have often referred, i.e. universal forgiveness of sins, universal baptism in (or with) the Spirit, and the universal Kingdom of God. The forgiveness of sins and entrance into the Kingdom are linked with 'a baptism of repentance with a view to the remission of sins'. John would not have claimed that his baptism could actually give the forgiveness of sins. That would be to bypass completely the sacrificial cultus. However, the new covenant was linked with the forgiveness of sins, and this was understood by the scribes and rabbis. They looked to a time of covenant and kingdom without sacrifices. The ideas of covenant and kingdom (i.e. the Kingdom of God and its restoration to Israel) are greatly merged in the Gospels, as indeed they are in the prophets. In one sense, God's covenant is about a kingdom, i.e. the kingdom of Israel which the Jews saw as the Kingdom of God (or of heaven). This Kingdom would be acknowledged eschatologically, for all the world would recognise that it was headed up at Jerusalem. At the point of the coming of John and Jesus, the Jews were looking for immediate relief from Rome's oppression, and whilst many would understand the Kingdom as ethical and even as 'spiritual', they nevertheless saw it as being on earth, being political, and having national connotation with Israel's universal triumph. Thus baptism, associated with forgiveness, covenant and the Kingdom, was an important ritual.

Jesus' baptism

John's baptism, if it was of God, related to the Kingdom and to forgiveness and had in mind the coming of Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit as promised in the prophets. John's recognition of Jesus as Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, and who would also baptise in the Spirit, meant that John's baptism could not be the ultimate sacrament of the Kingdom, although it was the penultimate ritual. By rights, all John's disciples—made thus by baptism—should have followed Jesus when John acclaimed him.

Jesus' baptism signified the Kingdom, forgiveness and the

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gift of the Spirit although Jesus himself gave very rare emphasis to these points. He rarely mentioned the Holy Spirit, did not speak of universal forgiveness until the Last Supper, and although he expounded the Kingdom, did not appoint it to his disciples until the time of the Last Supper. It was on this same evening that he referred to the forgiveness of sins and spoke largely of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 28:19

Following his resurrection, Jesus gave a clear mandate to his disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. The text certainly means that nations are to be baptised into Christ, thus becoming his disciples. Those who had been baptised by John were his disciples, much the same as Paul speaks of the Israelites being baptised into Moses in the Red Sea, i.e. into becoming his followers and espousing his ways. So also the nations—in the corporate sense—are to become disciples of Christ. Doubtless, this meant that *persons* within the nations were to be baptised and become disciples, but the perspective is wider than that. Doubtless, too, the apostles commanded baptism as an act of obedience incorporating faith, repentance, the forgiveness of sins, cleansing and the gift of the Spirit. The norm of demand and promise would be the exhortation of Peter on the day of Pentecost: 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

The meaning of Christian baptism

Acts 2:38-42

In Acts, baptism is the rite of initiation into the headship of Jesus Christ. By baptism, one comes into the community of believers. Peter sees it, at the same time, as separation from 'this crooked generation', i.e. those who had (amongst the Jews) rejected Jesus as the Christ. Baptism also assured believers that they were recipients of the covenant (i.e. new covenant) promises.

This understanding of baptism is regular throughout the Acts. At the same time, it is linked with the promise and gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, salvation and eternal life. There can be no question about baptism (a) arising from the

prevenient work of the Spirit, (b) being effected in its significant elements by the Spirit, and (c) bringing with it the gift of the Spirit. It has been an unfortunate happening of history that we have separated water-baptism from Spirit-baptism. One should presuppose the other, although not on an *ex opere operato* basis. We have seen elsewhere in this book, that the Spirit brings hearers to conviction of sin, to faith, conversion and the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, new birth, sonship and eternal life. Peter, then, can say that he could not deny baptism to the Gentiles at Caesarea because they had already received the gift of the Spirit. On the other hand, whilst those at Samaria had been baptised in water, the coming of the Spirit upon them was missing. This was not taken as the norm by the apostles at Jerusalem, and they came *to fill up the deficiency*. Had it been the norm not to receive the Spirit at conversion, they would doubtless have left the matter to its own working out. Paul's baptism of the disciples of John, discovered at Ephesus, was in the name of Jesus, after which, or at which, they received the Spirit by the laying on of hands.

The significance of baptism for cleansing is pointed out by Peter, especially in regard to the Gentiles: 'And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith'. It is this to which Paul refers when he speaks of 'the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour'. Peter refers to baptism as cleansing, although he does not explicitly link this with the Holy Spirit: 'Baptism...now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ'.

Acts 15:8-9

Titus 3:5-7

1 Pet. 3:21

Historical theology reveals to us the way in which the church has sought its doctrinal rationalisations of the sacraments down through the centuries. These have greatly influenced our views of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but a directly biblical research of the subject does not validate sacramentalism as such. Even so, we must keep in mind that baptism does relate to the new covenant via Christ's promise

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Acts 2:38

of the forgiveness of sins, and its significance is reiterated by the apostles. For example, '. . . be baptised . . . for the forgiveness of your sins'.

11 Cor. 3:6

What is more difficult for us to ascertain is the subjective ministry of the Spirit in baptism and in the Lord's Supper. The preventient work of the Spirit relating to the conversion (initiation) complex, and the basic principle of forgiveness in both baptism and the Lord's Supper, should lead us to see that he is present and effective in these sacraments. Paul gives us a magnificent commentary on this in his second letter to the church at Corinth. His third chapter compares and contrasts the dispensations of law and grace. By inference, he speaks of the former (Mosaic) covenant as the old agreement and the present dispensation of grace as the new covenant. He speaks of the transitory nature of the old and the permanent nature of the new. The old was of law, the new of grace, but then the new is of the Spirit, 'for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life'.

1 Cor. 12:12-13

There are other elements we see in regard to baptism and the Holy Spirit. We are baptised in one Spirit into one body and made to drink of one Spirit. This means that the element in which we are baptised is the Spirit. Although some translators render part of verse 13 as 'by one Spirit, we were all baptised into one body', it is not likely that members are baptised by the Spirit as *agent*. That would be inconsistent with the rest of the New Testament. Grammatically, the form of the words can best be described as a doubtful dative, more likely to be locative than instrumental. Thus the emphasis is on oneness, and to be baptised in the Spirit points to the unity of the community and probably, too, to the inflooding love that accompanies the gift of the Spirit. When Paul speaks of 'one baptism', it is again in the context of the unity of the body of Christ, i.e. the unity of the Spirit. This unity is elsewhere attributed to the putting on of Christ by baptism, so that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, slave nor free person.

Eph. 4:1-6

Gal. 3:26-28

Baptism and circumcision

We have already seen that Paul makes some sort of parallel

between circumcision and baptism. Without circumcision, there was no participation in the covenant given to Moses. Abraham's faith was sealed by circumcision, and Paul is anxious to show this rite not as a saving ordinance,¹ but as a sacrament of faith, God being the one who works unilaterally. He is also anxious to show that circumcision has been made redundant in respect to faith, since it signifies the law to a Jew. Justification cannot come through the law—not that it ever had—but through faith. Justification is itself a free gift, coming by the grace of God.

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Even so, Paul sees the parallel of the two. Circumcision is primarily of the heart, and, in fact, had been in the old covenant where God had said he would give them circumcision of the heart so that they would love him. Paul sees this principle as obtaining with baptism:

Rom. 2:25—3:2
cf. Deut. 30:6

'...a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses'.

Col. 2:11-13

This leads us deeply into the fact that baptism effects this spiritual circumcision, so that Paul can say, ...we are the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit [or, in spirit] and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh'.

Phil. 3:3

We have seen that the dynamic of the Cross (the atonement) is brought to us by the Spirit. Thus baptism is not merely a rite, but a working of the Spirit as he applies the Gospel; it is an objective work of God although subjective in this application. In the atonement, an active work of God is revealed to us by the Spirit, who thus evokes a subjective response in us. The principle of baptism, as Paul works it out with the Romans, is a death to *the penalty* of sin, through co-crucifixion (with Christ) and co-resurrection into the new life. Baptism thus unites us with Christ in his

Rom. 6:1-10

¹ Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances or sacraments *relating to* salvation. They do not *of themselves* (i.e. *ex opere operato*) give us salvation. We are saved by grace and not even by faith. However, faith is needed for salvation, and once we are saved, the significance of the ordinances now becomes alive to us.

death and resurrection, bringing with that union all the power of God which effected the atonement, and the power which consequently (and subsequently) flows from it. In this sense baptism is dynamic, but *not without the Spirit*.

Baptism, then, is not simply an initiatory rite, although the principle of initiation in itself is quite dynamic. It is also an action setting the way of life in the new covenant and in the Kingdom. This new life can only be lived in the Spirit. Whilst Paul never nominates the Spirit explicitly as the Spirit of grace, he is, in fact, just this. The word 'grace' (*charis*) is related to the word 'gift' (*charisma*), which in Romans is the gift of life (Christ's life, in fact), but elsewhere is a gift such as:

Rom. 6:23

I Cor. 12:28

I Tim. 4:14

I Pet. 4:10

'God has appointed in the church...gifts of healings....

'Do not neglect the *gift you have*, which was given you. . .';

'As each has received a gift, employ it for one another'.

The plural of *charisma* (gift) is *charismata* (gifts). These are commonly called 'the gifts of the Spirit'. In this active sense then, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace. Baptism is the point of receipt of these gifts, as also the charge to live in them. 'He that believes and is baptised shall be saved' does not make baptism—*ex opere operato*—a saving ordinance, but via the Spirit it certainly becomes the means of salvation.

I Cor. 12:7-11,

Heb. 2:4

64. THE CHURCH, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE SACRAMENTS (4)

The new covenant and the Lord's Supper

There are many indications in the Gospels, especially John's, that Jesus was seen as the new Moses. He was 'greater than Moses', as the writer of Hebrews explains. At his transfiguration, Moses appeared in glory with Elijah and they talked with him of '*his exodus* which he was *to accomplish* at Jerusalem'. The Cross and Resurrection were to effect the exodus of God's people from bondage. In this sense, Christ was the paschal lamb. He was also the new

Heb. 3:1 1-6

Luke 9:30-31

Moses.

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It is against this background, of the old exodus with the portent of the new, that Jesus takes the bread and wine at the Last Supper. *The meal looks back* to the exodus under Moses, but *also to the present Cross*, where the forgiveness of sins will liberate the slaves of sin, and the new covenant, the promise of God pronounced through Jeremiah, will be fulfilled. At the same time, it *looks forward* to the Kingdom. Jesus, at this very feast, appoints to them the Kingdom, and tells them that he will not drink the wine until he drinks it new in the Kingdom of God. In this sense, the feast is an eschatological one. Some manuscripts of Luke have the words, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me', and Paul incorporates this thought when he describes Jesus as saying (both of the cup and of the bread), 'Do this in remembrance of me'. Paul also looks forward to the eschatological aspect, in the words ' . . . until he comes'.

Luke 22:28

Mark 14:25

Luke 22:19-20

Because the covenant is 'everlasting' and is seen as a renewal of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant, the whole covenant embraces the new people of God. The Lord's Supper, then, is an important meal. Whilst the Book of Acts does not amplify the matter, it certainly pictures the new community as having a fellowship meal, and this right from the very beginning. It is possible to gain two impressions of their eating: (a) that 'they broke bread together' means simply they met each other over meals; and (b) that, whilst they certainly did this, 'the breaking of bread' was the eucharist, for it is linked with 'the apostles' teaching, fellowship, and the prayers'. The two are not mutually exclusive. Probably they ate meals together and remembered the Lord's death (and resurrection also) in the simple act of breaking bread and drinking wine.

Acts 2:42.

cf. 2:46

Paul and the Lord's Supper

Paul certainly sees the Lord's Supper as an important, if not the important, fellowship meal. He says, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation

1 Cor. 10:16-17

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in the body of Christ?'. This saying is capable of two interpretations: (a) that we share the benefits of his blood shed and his body given, i.e. redemption; or (b) that we share the benefits of his death (the cup) and now the fellowship of his body, i.e. the church (the bread), for as he goes on to say in the next verse, 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of that one bread'. Certainly, in all this, Paul is emphasising fellowship which is both vertical (with Christ) and horizontal (with the brethren). What is more, he links it with the sacrificial principle of fellowship in the old covenant. He contrasts 'the table of the Lord' with 'the table of demons'. We derive the idea, then, that the Lord's Supper is very much a new covenant meal.

1 Cor. 11:26

Paul also sees the soteriological significance of the Lord's Supper: 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you *proclaim* [set forth] *the Lord's death* until he comes'. The death to Paul is salvific and nought else. In one sense, then, the Lord's Supper is a declaration of his salvation through Christ and the Cross. This being the case, it is inseparably linked with the baptism, for both proclaim and offer the forgiveness of sins. To remember the death is to recall the forgiveness already given. To proclaim his death is to make an offer of forgiveness. This may not be what Paul means, however. He may simply be saying that the participants in the meal may be reminding themselves of the event of the Cross, and if they see it as the *new* Passover and the *new* Exodus, then it will be a reminder of the grace of God that has liberated them.

Whatever Paul is seeking to convey, he certainly judges the Lord's Supper as of extreme importance. To eat or drink unworthily—whatever that may mean—is to invite sickness and even death. The eucharist is no formal rite, no inconsequential sacrament. It is one of dynamic realism, presenting the redeeming act of God in Christ, and must not be observed unworthily.

The Lord's Supper and the Holy Spirit

As the Holy Spirit can be said to be the Spirit of baptism, so the Spirit can be said to be the Spirit of the Lord's Supper.

This is not because he is necessarily linked with it, by explicit texts, but because he is the Spirit of the Lord, and in a number of passages, Paul links the Spirit and Christ together. Christ comes to the church through the Spirit, and in another sense Christ is the church through the Spirit, since it is his body and he is its head. Further, the Lord's Supper is a covenant meal and the Spirit is the Spirit of the covenant. We gather from the New Testament, that the early church was vividly alive to its new exodus and redemption experience. If the breaking of bread was a daily happening, then it was so because the community thought of itself as the eschatological people of God, and anticipated the sudden return of Messiah. For them, the Lord's Supper was a dynamic matter. To walk in the Spirit was to walk in Christ. To look back to his Cross and Resurrection, and to look forward to his coming, was what constituted the present time.

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Cf. Gal. 3:14

There was no sense in which the people of God thought of their era as only that of Messiah. They could not separate Messiah and the Spirit in their thinking, and they knew very well that it was also the era of the Spirit. The days were vital because of redemption, and because of the active presence of the Spirit. Leaving aside the later liturgical development of the *epiclesis*—the calling down of the Spirit on the bread and wine to effect the change called transubstantiation—there is no way in which the Spirit could be absent from the memorial of Christ's death.

Whilst the whole Gospel constitutes what Paul calls 'the mysteries of God', and in one sense, by faith, is open to willing sight, yet there are mysteries in the Gospel, and they require revelation for their understanding. We need not press the point that the Latin *sacramentum* was the equivalent of the Greek *mysterion*, but simply understand that the institution of the Lord's Supper and baptism by Christ required the Spirit to unveil their meaning to the worshippers. By 'meaning' we do not indicate an intellectual comprehension or a theological rationalisation, but what was practically signified to the worshipper. Such matters of faith are made intelligible by the Spirit. Paul's *rationale* of the Lord's Supper is partly soteriological, partly eschatological, and fully relational for those who participate in it. In other words, it

is a covenant fellowship meal, made possible by, and signifying wholly, the death of the Lord for the sins of the world.

Some may be disappointed that we have not here discussed the psychological aspects of baptism, whilst others may regret the omission of historical theology which examines the developments of the eucharistic liturgies. There is no need to feel that way. It is a pity if we approach the biblical practice of the sacraments merely from the vantage point of history, or see it only through the lens of a developed theology or psychology. The sacraments were undoubtedly given to aid us in our humanity, and we are prone to fall into the trap of finding in them only that which *we feel* meets our needs. As we come to them, we may also be loath to surrender our theological and liturgical presuppositions or predilections. These are not necessarily wrong, but they can prevent us from a simple understanding and experience of the sacraments.

There is something most healthy and objective about baptism and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. Their obvious links with covenant and Kingdom, and their immediate promises of salvation and participation in the new community—the new covenant community—are highly practical. As we have seen time and again, it is the Spirit who makes their meaning clear and who comes as the Spirit of grace in relationship to them, to give us the gifts which first redeem and then sustain us in the new life. So little of a theology or rationale is developed in regard to them, yet they mean so much to their recipients. It is the Spirit who makes it so.

65. THE CHURCH, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE SACRAMENTS (5)

The sacraments and the human spirit

How does man come to see and understand—so far as he needs to do so—the nature of God? How does he come into personal relationship with God—if that is what a man ought to do, and needs to do? Given the word of God and its

various media which bring it to man, how does man concretise its information, its demands, its commands and its promises?

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The answer is that he cannot, unaided, do it at all. God's word speaks to him as someone created in the truth, having some aspect or area of inner response. Having exchanged the truth for a lie, he has, in a sense, abdicated himself as a creature of truth, and so cannot hear God. Even so, the truth presses upon him and his conscience, which is a gift or faculty that he cannot ultimately deny.

It is without doubt that God works in the sacraments, and that they very much concretise the word of God to man. Not, of course, without the Holy Spirit! He is the secondary mover in the ordinances where the Father is the prime initiator. The subject of the sacraments is Christ, through whom forgiveness and the other gifts are brought to sinful man.

Taking thought, then, for the eternal Being of the Sovereign Creator-Father, the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity—how can we know him? How can we be still and know that he is God? When we hear of the 'everlasting covenant' how can we possibly comprehend that? Or if poetically we conceive of what it is, how can it be that to us, in operation? ' . . . he who believes will not be in haste' is comprehensible only to him who believes, and even then his faith must be sustained. When we speak of the Abrahamic covenant and of the eternal nature of God's Kingdom, how can we—so to speak—get inside the truth of all this? If one could fully comprehend with one's whole being the eternal nature of God, his covenant and his Kingdom, then one would be thoroughly at peace, genuinely grounded on the eternal truth, and so would be immovable. The stability and security it would bring to the human spirit would be marvellous.

1sa. 28:16

When God breathed into man the breath of life and made him a living soul, then he was, in this way, given affinity with God and deep could call unto deep. The draining away from him of life at the event of the fall, and the pall of doom that has ever since been over the human race, has quenched the fullness of creational joy. When *man feels—if* he cannot comprehend—the blankness of human existence, he has no

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understanding of God, and so lacks the necessary understanding of himself. Then when the Spirit of God begins to work and he has immense sorrow at his fallen state, what will speak to him? What will give him comprehension? The answer must be, 'Both the word and the Spirit; the word and the Spirit as one'. This must be understood, of course, to be the word of God the Father coming to man as the living Word, the Son himself.

If it were possible, and if it were natural for man, under the conviction of the Spirit, to perceive the truth of the prophets and then comprehend that it meant in one way Christ, and in another way all the love of the Father towards the human race, moving constantly to it in grace to do it good, then how could the recipient of such revelation come to grips with its wonder? The answer must be, 'By the sacraments'. For Israel, the Passover was a tangible feast, celebrating the concrete acts of God in fulfilling the centuries' old covenantal promises, and liberating the proletariat in Egypt from its cruel and humiliating master, Pharaoh. It was not a matter of conceived religion, or sentimental striving towards Deity, but resting in the personal and covenant love of Israel's Creator-Father-King.

Likewise, the initiation ceremony of circumcision was not a cultic device to develop a national pride, although it certainly aided in that. It was to them the sign and seal of the universal promise given to the covenant-father Abraham, and renewed and perpetuated in every generation by the cutting away of 'the body of the flesh', so bringing a heart circumcised to love its Covenant Lord. The very act of the cutting was sufficient to concretise Israel's relationship with God. Thus, where there was covenant faith, the nation lived day by day and moment by moment in the awareness of the Lord who is eternal, the covenant which is everlasting, and the people-identity which is the very essence of true human living. Given the aberrations, the pride, the elitism of a people, the sin and idolatry, the chastisements and punishments, this people—Israel—had retained its identity, even in much of its lostness. The other side—vivid faith, the joy at creation and covenant grace, the worship and the law, the sonship and the promises, and the hope of Messiah—is the

side of faith's reality. There was never a time when there was no remnant, and the remnant always knew these things for it lived in promise and hope. It lived in faith and obedience.

The human spirit and reality

The renewal of this covenant love, symbolised and actualised in and through the sacraments, is what the new people of God should so highly regard. When we think again of man's sorrows which come from his sin, his degradation of spirit, his pollution of heart and mind, and his loss of true identity—millions of prodigals wasting their beings in restless action, living in their rags and feeding in the pigsties of the world—then baptism comes with such beautiful assurance. The waters which wash, the bath which purifies, the cleansing which signifies the Father's acceptance and forgiveness, and the going down into the death of Christ and rising to his resurrection glory, are inestimable in their reality, in their efficacy, in their eternal durability.

This glorious revelation of God's love is stamped and sealed by the ritual act. Luther would have us continually 'creep back to our baptism', i.e. day by day, and even moment by moment, reckoning upon the reality of Golgotha's hill, not only for our eternal redemption, but also for the power, daily, of death to sin and living to righteousness. We died with Christ, hence we live with him He dismembered sin, hence we let not our members be members of evil. We have gone through our Red Sea to the other side. As surely as Israel was baptised into Moses, so we have been baptised into the new Moses. We belong to Messiah. He was baptised in order to fulfil all righteousness. We have been baptised into him for the same work as it has its outworking in the concrete situation of history and, in particular, in salvation history (heilsgechichte).

Our Passover is Christ, our feast is kept in joy and purity. We look at the great act of the holy exodus—sin and death and all evil defeated on the stark timbers of Golgotha—and eat the feast with joy. Our humanity has come from dust and God's breath insufflated. So our humanity can handle water, feel the texture of bread, sip the wine with its mouth.

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It is real to us, even to creational sight, but it moves all of us—in every fibre and filament of our beings—to know the objective reality of his love. Whilst our emotions may fluctuate, our affections are gripped by his compassion in Christ.

We live, then, in *the givenness* of the sacraments, in and through water and bread and wine. We are not religionists striving upwards by our own impressions, contemplations and acts. Out there—away from the concrete covenants—are millions who endeavour through human striving to reach God. That is what they say, and that is what they would have themselves believe. They have created their own sacraments, their own ritual acts, their own deeds of holiness, their own strivings against the gifts of creation and worship, as they expend human endeavour to reach salvation. It is not for us to judge, condemn, or pour scorn upon their endeavours. But we see the pitiful nature of any sacraments which do not rise from the creative and prophetic word, which are not rooted in the eternal grace of God, and which do not symbolise the reality of God. On the one hand, such sacraments only mirror the insistence of man that he can save himself, and on the other, may even reveal hatred of the true God because of his imagined betrayal of creation and humanity.

Rom. 9:4

Here, in fact, is a world in which there is the turmoil of human suffering, sorrow, anger, bitterness, high-minded human pride, and egoistic brilliance that is religious on the one hand, and anti-God on the other. Man, then, lives either in the cosmos of his being which is away from God but assures itself it is not so, or he is self-worthy in his religious endeavours. What he needs, and can have, is true life—actualised in the great sacraments—which rests upon the solid foundations of grace and redeeming love. This life now has all the gifts of God, and so to it—as ever to Israel—belong 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law [now the law of love, of Christ; the internalised law of the Spirit] and the promises'. To them—the new people of God —also belong the patriarchs, for Abraham is their father in covenant. As the Covenant-Head over all their race is Christ, their true Messiah. Were there no sacraments, it

would be as if there were no word of God, no acts in history which concretise his love and bring his people through a great washing and to a great feasting, a celebration—time and again—of his unchanging love.

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The Spirit and his people of the eschaton

Finally, we see that *it is a whole people* which goes through the Red Sea to liberation through their Covenant-Head, Christ. It is a whole people which is washed as the Bride of Christ. Baptism is not a privatised affair, pandering to human individualism. It is a public matter, even if its primary intention is not witness to the world, but rather God's witness to repentant man in the midst of the body of his people. On earth, baptism is also the act of the community, assuring the recipients and the community of the present action of grace. Likewise, the feast of the Lord's Supper is a corporate feast. It is not just man in his private thinking seeking to establish himself in redemption, or to rise to emotional heights by stimulating and raising the levels of his feelings, but it is the people of God met together to celebrate their deliverance from ancient and cunning Egypt under its 'prince of darkness grim', a prince who is eternally humiliated by the humility of Calvary's 'proper man'.

This people of God looks to the end, or rather the beginning beyond that end—to the Messianic banquet. Once they have tasted the wine of God, nothing else will satisfy their palates. They look forward eagerly to the future, for the future belongs to them and not to evil. They anticipate with ever-growing wonder the sight, 'face to face', of their noble Prince, their 'King of kings and Lord of lords', as they are seated with joy in the great Messianic banquet. They desire to sit down at the victory feast, and are assured that it shall be so.

Cf. Lk. 22:28 30
Mark 14:25,
Matt. 26:29

It is in these dynamic sacraments that the truth, both symbolised and actualised by them, is brought to man's understanding and wonderment by the Holy Spirit. We do not say that apart from him they lie inert. We say that *they are never apart from him*. He does not give them meaning and substance. God and his Christ have already done that,

but he—the Spirit—who knows these deeps of God, reveals them to us. Where there is simplicity and a quiet trust, his revelation comes as simply and quietly, and with great power.

66. THE SUBMISSION OF ALL, THE TELOS OF GOD

The contrasts of the ends

The ultimate nature of the two spirits is now apparent: the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) and the unholy spirit (the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience). The ultimate nature of the two kingdoms is also apparent: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. The nature of the two forces is self-evident: the hosts of love and the hosts of hatred.

What has been accomplished by the two variant powers is also unmistakable. The City of God stands forever, but the city of Babylon has been destroyed in one hour! The first has been created by the love and holiness of God and the second has never had true created being. It is not even the shadow of the real. It is a counter city built from all that is negative and hostile to God's created reality. It is the lie posing as the truth, the unreal posing as the real.

The two spirits who have been at work are both dynamic. It goes without saying that the Spirit of life can produce only life, and, in the end, eternal life. Likewise it is self-evident that the spirit of evil, Satan himself, can produce only death. Nothing created by God can fail to be active and powerful, and as a created spirit, Satan has his allotted powers. What he has done with them has been tragic. But what the Holy Spirit has done with his divine powers is glorious. At the beginning he moved powerfully across the deep and over the vast waters. He was the agent of light at this beginning, and he is still being the agent of light as it breaks across eternity with matchless glory. He is the Spirit of splendour, whereas Satan is the lord of fragmentation

and fissiparous unbeing.

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The power of the Holy Spirit

Satan is a creaturely spirit, whereas the Paraclete is the Creator-Spirit. Satan is like a thief purloining the given gifts of God. He 'comes to steal and to kill and to destroy'. He cannot, then, build towards the eternal or take part in it. He is a thief, seeking to steal what is not his. He is dealing in purloined goods which belong only to God and his Kingdom.

We saw that Christ was the mediator of God to fill all things full, and that God gave to him, in his humanity, his own fullness. Thus, Christ, in giving his fullness to the church whilst at the same time keeping it under his headship, directs it to use that fullness in filling all things. The emptiness, the vainglory, the futility and pointlessness of godless human beings is all changed to the fullness of Christ. This plenitude is given to the members—and the body as a whole—by the Spirit. The Father gives him to the church through his Son, and the Spirit keeps up that supply to the members, the supply of love and holiness with its concomitants of goodness, righteousness and truth. Thus the church, partly seen but mostly unseen, does its dynamic work in the affairs of creation. By these means, history moves towards its given end, the appointed consummation of the age. The consummation of this age is also the consummation of all the ages, as it is the precursor to the 'age to come', i.e. the genuinely 'new age'.

The goal of authority is achieved

Time and again, we have seen that this age in which we live is called 'the last days', i.e. the days between Pentecost and the Parousia. In this period, Christ is working out his victory which was formerly won on the Cross and at the Tomb. Paul thus speaks of Christ putting down all rule and authority and power until it becomes subject to him, and in this is achieved what Jacob Gen.. 49:10 prophesied: '. . .to him shall be the obedience of the peoples [nations]'. At that point, as Paul tells us, he shall turn and give the 1 Cor. 15:24 Kingdom to the Father,

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that God may be all in all.

John the Seer gives us the prophetic picture. The Slain Lamb, alive, glorified and reigning, opens the seals of the scroll of history and activates the judgements of the seals, of the trumpets and of the bowls. All history flows from his victory until finally the kingdoms of this world have come under the reign of him and his Father. The judgements of evil follow, and bring history to a conclusion. At that point of victory, Christ's marriage is consummated with his Bride, the church, the Holy City, in contrast to the unholy city, Babylon, which is the whore (the evil counterpart of the pure Bride), and which is destroyed by God.

What must not be lost sight of is that this victory of Christ in the now-time is the victory of his Spirit and his church. The outworking power of his Cross to reconcile all things by its blood is a reconciliation worked through the members of his body:

' . . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors of Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.'

11 Cor. 5:19-20

This reconciliation is first to God by the Gospel and then to one another in the body of Christ. This is because of the love which the Spirit floods into our hearts, thus causing 'the unity of the Spirit', i.e. 'the fellowship of the Spirit'. In this way we 'put on love which binds everything together in harmony'. This harmony is not a small domestic matter within a local church, but is the most important matter on the universal scale for which it is designed. Ultimately, it becomes cosmic harmony, not by some imagined pantheism of which God is the unifying factor, but the harmony which is rooted in creation and renewed in redemption. This is the way of unifying all things in Christ, giving them the content of his fullness.

Whilst the call for submission to God and subjection to one another is always there, it is not so much objectivised as an injunction as it is achieved within us by the workings of love and holiness. As we have seen, submission and obedience carry their own inner stimulation and motivation to

further action. The satisfaction that comes with their action draws us on to further submission and obedience. In this way, we are not aware that we are subject to God's authority, for it seems primarily that we are subject to his love, and that anything of authority is not heavy and demanding, but, in fact, liberating and fulfilling. It is apt that the church be likened to the Bride and her Lord to the Bridegroom. In this relationship, the true wife actually revels in her partnership of vocation, and does not see his headship as onerous. As the Son does not see the headship of the Father as domineering but only dominative, so man sees Christ's headship as giving security, support and direction. He responds with gratitude and with a sense of holy fear and reverence, and this is an aide to maturing. In this atmosphere and context, it is easy for the saint to bend the knee. True obedience is now voluntary, but, in a sense, there can be no other response.

The backward glance to authority

As children love to hear the same old story time and again, so we look with joy and some wonder at the beginnings of the story which is the saga of our race. We see creation come into being under the command and authority of the word. The authority of the Father is present in calling creation into being. The Son mediates the vast structures which now emerge from the unknownness of 'before time'. The Spirit is present in his authority as the Spirit of creation and life.

The word continues to exercise authority, both in covenant and judgement. In Israel the prophetic word is enlarged, and is a power over all history. By it, God speaks to the fathers and the commonwealth of Israel, but in Christ the word is spoken to all succeeding generations. This word is spoken through the church, so that never again will there be a *bath qol*—'the echo of the Voice'. God leaves no age without his direct word, for the people of God are the prophetic community.

Finally, as the prophetic word ripens and is the word in churchly action, the age, of necessity, draws to a close. The final *denouement* comes when his Lordship, which has been

exercised throughout the age, returns visibly to this world, and all history is climaxed and sealed. The new age now opens, and the royal priesthood begins its ministry to the creation as it serves the Father and the Lamb. Now as always, and then as now, the Spirit is at the core of this history, this 'old old story', this narrative of life and grace.

No wonder that at the last of this age he is seen saying, 'Come':

"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."

And let him who hears say, "Come."

And let him who is thirsty come,

*let him who desires take the water
of life without price'.*

Rev. 22:17

EPILOGUE: THE SPIRIT'S CONTINUING WORK

AN OVERVIEW OF REVIVAL

In our section on the Holy Spirit and Revival, we looked at the work of the Spirit in the life of man and the continuing creation. Now, as we come to the end of our study of the Spirit, we need to see—in an overall way—how the Spirit is presently working, and how we, too, should be working with him, for without doubt there is a daily need for revival in the church. At the same time, there is a level of life we may—and should—live, which does away with the kind of pattern Israel knew, namely its ebb and flow in godly living. There surely is no need to drift from faithful obedience to idolatry, and then have to come back to repentance, brokenness, confession, restitution and so to renewed faith and godliness. Revival ought not merely to be a device for renewing the church. There is a certain and constant source of life to which the church and its members may constantly apply and know that the life of faith will steadily continue, and be evenly sustained.

In other words, we need an intelligent understanding of revival. We need a *rationale* of this paramount work of the Spirit. In order to have this, we require a brief but comprehensive overview of revival as we can research it in the Scriptures, and, perhaps, verify it in church history.

If we start at Genesis and the creation of man, when God breathed into man the breath of life—be it *nephesh* or *ruach*—we see that man became a living being, i.e. a

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spiritual being. Earlier, we used the term 'viva!', meaning 'given life' or 'enlived'. Man, then, was in a state of life.

The fall and loss of life

Cf. 11 Cor. 5:15,
(the reversed
death)

With the fall, man died. We saw that this death can be understood in terms of relational dying and relational living. Man 'lived' to himself, and 'died' to God. He was then like the widow Paul described who 'is dead while she liveth'. In the Proto-Evangel of Genesis 3:15, God prophesied that there would be a seed of woman which would crush the head of the seed of the serpent, albeit he, the true seed, would be bruised in the heel.

Heb. ch. 11

With the appearance of a man of faith such as Abel, and his substitute Seth, the line of faithful men and women came into view, and these may well be what are called 'the sons of God'. They comport with the 'roll-call of the faithful' of the writer of Hebrews. They were men of the Spirit.

The grace of covenant and life

Gen. 49:10

When God made his covenant with Abraham, he promised that, in the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the earth would find blessing. Through Abraham came Isaac to whom the promises were reiterated, and then Jacob (Israel) received these covenant promises also. Israel was to be the means by which life would come to the dead. It was to be the means of the revival of man. Judah's Ruler was to bring the nations to universal obedience.

Haggai 2:5

Sadly enough, Israel failed in this task, although at the core of the nation was what we might call the true Israel, 'the Israel of God'. These of the holy remnant were the faithful ones, the people of the Spirit. The Spirit always dwelt with Israel, and in the sense of God's grace-covenant with them, the faithful within Israel knew life. We saw that Jacob's spirit 'revived within him' when he heard Joseph was still living, and that Samson's spirit returned to him at the point of exhaustion when God opened a spring of water before him. Both these men are examples of spiritual exhaustion or inertia, but also of revival, the kind of life

that comes out of death when the Spirit gives revival as a gift.

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Israel and its ebb and flow

In his sermon to the Sanhedrin, Stephen stated two things of extreme importance, and without doubt it was for these he was killed. His first statement to Israel was, in essence, 'There has never been a time when you were not idolatrous', and the second, 'You do always resist the Holy Spirit'. God's solemn words at the time of covenant, and the amplification of these words in Moses' last address to Israel, warn of the barrenness, sickness and judgements which will come to Israel if it ceases to love and obey God. The 'former books of the prophets' (Joshua to Nehemiah) as the Hebrews called them, are a powerful setting out of the decline of Israel, until at last it is taken into exile—first as the kingdom of Ephraim and secondly as the kingdom of Judah. The decline started seriously when Solomon introduced, along with his wives, 'strange gods' to the nation of Israel. Both Ephraim and Judah suffered greatly through idolatry.

Acts ch. 7

Although the decline was steady, yet, at times, there were revivals. In fact renewals seemed to be used as a desperate remedy for the sinful state of the nation. A keen student of Kings-Chronicles will see these revivals, and detect the pattern that lies in them. Time after time, the people of God declined, came to the end of their tether, were turned to God—even if only temporarily—by the prophetic word, and at their lowest ebb, God caused revival. It came through a prophet like Elijah, when hundreds of prophets of Baal and the Ashteroth were destroyed, and through a king like Josiah, who made a thorough destruction of the idol shrines. Each time, the flow soon dried up; life waned, and the ebb repeated itself, after which revival was again desperately needed.

I Kings ch. 18

II Kings
chs. 22-23

The great coming revival

During the gradual apostasy of the nation, in the time of exile and the period of return from exile, the prophets spoke

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Amos 9:11-12,
Acts 15:16-18;
Isa. 11:10, cf.
Rom. 15:8-12

from God in warning, in compassion, and in promise. The restoration of the Kingdom to Israel was spoken of in rich terms; promises of a new covenant, of a Messiah, and of the outpouring of the Spirit in an unprecedented manner made a thrilling renewal imminent. It would revive not only Israel, but all the nations of the earth, for it would be—in effect—the blossoming of the covenant made with Abraham.

The revivalist prophet and the Messiah

The Gospels give us the good news of Messiah. John attests him, promising through him the forgiveness that the nation needs, the coming of the Kingdom with its high state and power, and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the people. What becomes clear is that the Mosaic covenant lacked the power to meet the total needs of the people, i.e. to keep them permanently in a state of life, first by reviving them and secondly by stabilising them in 'viva!'. Israel's sad history had been a repeated cycle of vival, devival, revival, vival, devival. Whilst Messiah, in his Palestinian ministry, showed the Kingdom in action, he was nevertheless about something which was wholly hidden from his followers. It was to provide the death of death and ensure life. This work was the atonement, involving his death, resurrection and ascension.

This work was completed, the stage was set for 'the greatest revival of all times'. The vision of the valley of dry bones was about to be enacted in reality. Pentecost was about to break upon Israel, and following that, upon the entire world.

The great revival

We need to study the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel. The outcome of the reviving power of the Spirit was that the slain army, which had been reduced to dry bones, was renewed to its former state, but with this addition: it was now 'a mighty host', and set for powerful warfare. As the wind came rushing up that valley, so at Pentecost there came the sound of a rushing mighty wind, the baptism with

Ezek. 37:1-14

the Spirit and fire, out of which came the word of fire, the fiery word, the word of power.

If we fail to read the second half of the vision of dry bones and their renewal, we will miss the amazing truth that Israel, once dreadfully divided and lost, will be wholly united—one true people. This will be the revival of the nation, for

'they shall be . . . no longer divided into two kingdoms. They shall not defile themselves any more with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God'.

Then it will be a new and powerful kingdom, under its Davidic king, the true Messiah. Once these things have taken place, Israel will prove to be the sanctuary of God. This accords with Paul's statement concerning the church: '...Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into *it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*'. It also accords with the vision of John in the Revelation:

'And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. . . "'

In other words, the great revival which will come, according to the prophets, will make God's true people his holy sanctuary, his temple. This truth is important, for in the Old Testament the temple epitomises the people; in a very real sense the temple is the people, the people the temple. However, something quite powerful must happen to make them such.

This then, brings us back to the great revival—Pentecost. In seeking to see the meaning of Pentecost, we must realise that the valley of dry bones first represented Israel *specifically*. Of this there is no doubt. Possibly, this vision was in the mind of the disciples as, after Christ's resurrection and before his ascension, they discussed the Kingdom and the coming outpouring of the Spirit. Doubtless other—and similar—prophecies were in their minds. They linked the coming of the Spirit with the restoration of the Kingdom,

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Ezek. 37:15-28

Ezek. 37:22-23

Eph. 2:19-22

Rev. 21:1-5

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and they were correct. They only lacked knowledge that the Kingdom would not be limited to Israel, but was for the nations also. Pentecost, then, contained and fulfilled the *generic* meaning of the Ezekiel vision.¹

Cf. Rev. 5:9-10,
7:9

This being so, Pentecost becomes a highly significant and powerful event. *It signifies God's movement to revive the world.* By 'revive the world', we do not mean other than the ultimate unification, reconciliation and harmonising, when Christ shall have filled 'all things'. This means the gathering in of his elect from every nation and people and kindred and tribe and tongue. We do not mean a universalistic ingathering of people irrespective of whether they repent or not, have faith or not, or obey the Gospel or not. No, Pentecost is the means whereby man may be redeemed.

The elements of the great revival

John 1:17

We suggested that the Mosaic covenant—grace-covenant as it was—was not dynamic enough to meet the basic needs of man in redemption, i.e. in his recall from death to life. 'The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ'. It was the 'grace and truth' which was needed, and that grace and truth was fulfilled dynamically in the atonement. In other words, when the Spirit came at Pentecost, he came bearing the victory and fruits of Calvary. He had the liberating, redeeming power of the Cross and Resurrection to bring to man. Man now could be taken out of a state of death, into a state of life. He could now live in 'vival' which represented his true state of life. The power to bring the human race back to life lies within the atonement, especially as it is applied to man through the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is sufficient not only for Israel, but for the whole human race.

Man living constantly In the great revival

We come now to the close of our book. Time and again we have repeated the facts of the Holy Spirit. We have seen his

¹ In accordance with what we have said elsewhere, Pentecost was the epochal outpouring of the Holy Spirit—firstly to the Jews but with a view to the Gentiles—whilst the outpourings of Samaria (Acts 8) and Caesarea (Acts 10) were—so to speak—the extensions of Pentecost although also contained in Pentecost.

participation with the Father and the Son before time as the ninefold plan was—so to speak—worked out. We have seen his persistent patience in history to aid both Father and Son in the fulfilment of that plan. We have seen that he is present, powerfully and effectively, in every epoch, as 'he who has begun a good work' and 'will go on completing it right up until the day of Jesus Christ'. So the Spirit works.

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Phil. 1:6

Taking all this into account, it is the fact of Pentecost which is so wonderful. Pentecost is the initiation of that action of God which will ultimately revive both the human race, and the very creation of which humanity is a significant part.

In this sense then, we need never look for local or temporary revivals of the church. These are needed, and sovereignly God will give them; of this there can be no doubt. Church history is the clear proof of this principle, but what we need to see is that the Comforter, Christ's *alter ego*, is at work continually. The power of Pentecost is no less present today than when it happened originally. The same salvific power of Christ is present to redeem men, anoint the church, fire it with power, guide it in the use of gifts, sustain it in spiritual warfare, and aid it in dynamic proclamation of the true word.

What we have said about the church living in the power of the Spirit, and what we have said about its members walking in the Spirit and being continually filled by him, underlines the teaching of revival. The source of revival is Pentecost, which itself has the supply of the atonement.

This is the work for which history was shaped and planned, and this is what the Holy Spirit of God has always been about, and is presently executing. The day of fulfilment is ahead, but we, in this moment, are the true people of God, the family of faith and the community of the Holy Spirit.

An evaluation of the work of the Spirit

It is tempting to attempt an evaluation of the work of the Spirit, but as human beings we are not competent to do that. However, a survey of his work as set out in Scripture, and as scanned, discerned, detected and seen in history, can prove

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quite valuable. It is impossible to look at the work of the Father and of the Son apart from their persons, or to look at their persons apart from their work. This is the case also with the Spirit. Because the work of God is a Triune work, one of the persons of the Godhead cannot be seen apart from the working of the whole Godhead. Indeed, this very unity of God defies individual evaluations of any member of it.

What we can survey or scan is the plan of which we have continually spoken, and which is the true action of history. We have seen that the church is the people of God in this age. What began at Pentecost was the new, true people of God, but then it (they) had continuity with the old—the ancient *qahal* of Israel. At the same time, it had discontinuity because Israel officially—through the Sanhedrin which was its constituted leadership—rejected Jesus as Messiah and forbade his followers to preach in his name. Does this, then, mean that Israel has been rejected? The answer must be 'Yes' and 'No'. In three chapters of the letter to the Romans, Paul shows that there is a temporary rejection of Israel 'until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, after which Israel will be accepted, and all Israel will be saved, for 'the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable'. The domestic olive branch, once broken off, will be grafted back into true stock, along with the previously engrafted wild olive branch, i.e. the Gentiles.

For our understanding, this means that *Pentecost has not passed the Jewish nation* by. Its supply is sufficient for Israel. True Israel—in the ultimate—will be Jew and Gentile as one. Paul's passionate declaration of God's (now) unveiled mystery is that 'the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel'. This is 'the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God. . .' When Paul says that, in Christ Jesus, 'there is neither Jew nor Greek', he means this—that all are one in Christ Jesus.

This is the triumph of Calvary—Pentecost. Recon-ciliation with God is reconciliation with one another. The triumph of the Cross and Christ's Lordship is at the same time the triumph of Pentecost and the Spirit. As in Ezekiel 37 the

Rom. chs. 9-11

Rom. 1 1:29

Eph. 3:6, 9

Gal. 3:28, cf.
Eph. 2:14-16

whole nation was to be joined together into a new unity, so are all the people of God. Uniting all things in Christ does not come from a quick flash of remedial power, executed in a sudden moment, but rather the end-time—the climax of all things—simply reveals what has been going on through the ages in process and progress. The executed triumph is finally unveiled. That is when God's splendour is seen, as the glory of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Isa. 11:9,
Hab. 2:14

Conclusion as to the work and person of the Spirit

Human evaluations and surveys are limited in depth and restricted in scope, by nature of the case. Even so, we can begin to understand the person of the Spirit when we have this panoramic vantage point of all history. To see his patience down through the millenniums of time, and his thoroughness in attention to the plan of God, reveals to us the holiness and love of God.

To hark back to our main theme, the full evaluation and survey of the Spirit's work and person will be made when the entire family of the Father stands before him, in thunderous worship and unceasing gratitude for what he has done. That is when we will see the true nature of the Spirit, i.e. in the gathering of the entire family, the full community of the Spirit.

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