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From Shadow to Sunshine (Dec 1956)

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Paul’s letter to Philemon has three outstanding values for the Lord’s people today: the historical, the evangelical, and the practical.

The Historical Value:

Here is a most interesting page from the life story of the writer of this unique piece of sacred literature. Eleven names appear in these twenty-five verses. Paul and Timothy salute Philemon and Apphia, probably husband and wife, together with Archippus, just as probably their son. Onesimus is named as the reason for the letter, while five of Paul’s associates in service, Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, unite in sending greetings to Philemon. Paul is seeking by letter the reinstatement in the home and employment of Philemon one who had wronged him, but who, having emerged from the thraldom of sin by the grace of God, was willing to return to the master he had treated so injuriously. This priceless little document has in it all the tenderness and skilful-ness of this large-hearted servant of Christ. He writes to Philemon in terms of intimacy not paralleled anywhere else in the New Testament.

The Evangelical Value:

No plea for the use of this letter and its background as the basis of a gospel message is needed. It is only necessary to present its salient features to discover its correspondence with the sinner’s folly and the Saviour’s provision.

Shadows In The Story:

Onesimus was a bondslave: Forget for the moment that he was the bondslave of Philemon for there was something infinitely worse. He was a bondslave of Onesimus. He discovered active desires and actuating motives within, which he had no power to control. Covetousness, greed, and dishonesty held sway and led to sin against a good master. Christ declared, “Whoso committeth sin is the servant (bondslave) of sin” (John 8:34). “Serving divers lusts and pleasures,” is the tragic record of every man and woman since the Fall.

Onesimus was a thief: He robbed and ran. Man, who derives being, health of mind and body, the use of every faculty, and every creature blessing, yet appropriates them to his own personal use and selfish ends, without regard to the will and rights of Him Who gave them, his Creator God, is a thief.

Onesimus was a misnomer: How strange to be called “Profitable” for so his name means! A profitable thief! The misappropriation of the name “Christian” by rebels and sinners against the Christ of God is purely far more incongruous.

Onesimus was a fugitive: His sin put him on the run. He quickly put distance between himself and Philemon. He reflects the attitude of everyone that sin has alienated from God. Just as the disobedient Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of God, man, conscious of sin, seeks to put distance between himself and the holy God. These are the shadows that darkened the past history of Onesimus.

Sunshine In The Story:

There was one to intercede for him: What loving pleas Paul presents to Philemon on behalf of the thief! His love, “For love’s sake;” his age, “Paul the aged;” his circumstances, “a prisoner of Jesus Christ;” these are compelling pleas, but they fade into insignificance as we hear the Man of Sorrows plead with God for those whose wicked hearts had sought His death, and whose cruel hands had nailed Him to the tree, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). “He made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12). It is for love’s sake, that is for Christ’s sake, that God forgives the sinner (Eph. 4:32).

There was one to accept liability for him: Paul must have this matter resolved upon righteous grounds, “If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account, I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.” The acceptance by the Lord Jesus Christ of responsibility for the sins of men was the only means by which God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly. Christ paid the price in full when He laid down His life, and having risen from the dead, now both the Surety and the sinner are free. This becomes effectual when it is appropriated by faith.

There was a measure for his acceptance: Paul now asks that the erstwhile robber, the unprofitable Onesimus, be received as himself, “Receive him, that is mine own bowels” (V. 12). “If thou count me a partner, therefore receive him as myself” (V. 17). “As myself” was to be the standard of welcome. The counterpart can be traced in all the wonder of God’s acceptance of unworthy men and women in the glorious worth and perfection of the Son

of His love. “Accepted in the wellbeloved, near to God’s heart we lie.”

There was a means for his assurance: This is derived from the precious documents Onesimus carried in his hands, for it seems that, with Tychicus, he carried it and the letter to saints at Colosse back to the meeting place of the Church in Philemon’s home (V. 2). The transcending greatness of the Word of God to all who believe in the Lord Jesus is indicated by the words of John, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:9-11).

There were evidences of triumphant grace: The changes that took place should not be passed over lightly; a change of relationship, the slave has become a brother, yea, a brother beloved; a change of condition, the thief has become profitable; a change of direction, the prodigal is returning; a change of outlook, he is obviously in perfect sympathy with the act of reinstatement as a matter of righteousness.

In God’s dealing of saving grace conscience is always renewed, the will subdued, and the mind given a Godward direction, all resulting in a sympathy with practical righteousness. Where these are absent it can be said unhesitatingly there has been no saving work of God in the soul. Here then is the sunshine of Divine love that transformed and radiated from the thief who came

back. What an adornment it is of the grace of God (Ti. 2:10-11)!

The Practical Value

Five special marks of a well-developed believer are traceable in the writer of this little missive.

He is the devoted loyalist: In verse one he introduces himself as “Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” He repeats that description in Verse 9. He speaks of “my bonds” and of “the bonds of the gospel,” while his reference to Epaphras is his fifth allusion in the letter to his imprisonment. In every instance it can be seen that the chains are hallowed. He is the prisoner, not of Rome merely, but of Jesus Christ. For him to live was Christ, so that every circumstance, dark or bright, must bend to that. The prison cell lights up with the knowledge that Christ has ordered it; it comes in the way of His will and there can be no mistake in His scheme of things. There is but one secret to rising above and glorying in the limitations and hardships that life imposes on the child of God. It is found in the words of this devoted loyalist. “For to me to live is Christ.” Such a passion for Christ leads to the acceptance of everything in life as from Him, to be used by Him. There are not wanting today those who have endured infirmities, suffering reproaches and persecutions for the One who is altogether lovely, the Alpha and Omega of their being.

He is the tireless soul winner: “Whom I have begotten in my bonds” are words that pay tribute to the earnestness of this great lover of souls. Handicaps of age and circumstance cannot quench his fervour or hinder his activity for Christ. We can only guess how these two men were brought together, but we can be sure that the

Apostle bought up the opportunity and the patience, prayers, and efforts of the soul winner had a big recompense in the salvation of Onesimus. It is a sight to send us back with renewed determination to woo and win for Christ that individual He has permitted to cross our path in some special circumstances.

He is the kindly shepherd: Paul's allusions to the spiritual state of other Christians shows the care that he felt for them, and some of these are found in this letter (Vv. 5-7), where he thinks with joy and gratitude of one who so ministered to the church of God in Colosse that the saints were refreshed in the Lord. It is this same pastoral love and concern that moves him to seek, not merely the reinstatement of the bond-slave, but the reception to the fellowship of the saints one who has given good evidence of being born again. A great deal can be inferred from the optimistic words (Vv. 20-21), "Being confident of thine obedience I have written to thee knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say." Surely that envisages the spiritual treatment that would await brother Onesi-mus. Deep interest in the welfare of God's people and practical sympathy with their difficulties are not found in the mere aspirant to power in the assemblies.

He is the Christian gentleman: Although the Apostle Paul possessed rights and powers as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, there was nothing of the dictator about him. "I might" he says (V. 8), "be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee (command thee) that which is convenient, yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee." He was conscious of the power to command, but he used the stronger lever, love. He greatly needed the services of such an aide-de-camp as the new convert, but another's claim must be

considered, so he declared, “Without thy (Philemon’s) mind I would do nothing.” What lovely courtesy! What Christian consideration! What Christ-likeness of conduct! What a glowing example of the Christian gentleman, for these days in which that which is rough and uncouth frequently passes as faithfulness to Christ and His truth! Lording it over God’s heritage is expressly forbidden (1 Peter 5:3), and even were such dictatorial powers present in the Church it is clearly manifest that there is no higher or safer principle of action towards other believers than that which impelled the Apostle here, “For love’s sake.”

He is the tactful mediator: What has been said already emphasizes the presence of a very delicate situation between a man and his master, between the erring one and the wronged one. The wise handling of the case by the writer of the letter calls forth our admiration and inspires our emulation. The structure of the little epistle shows that everything that could be appreciated in Philemon is alluded to. His personal devotion to Christ and His people (V. 5), his great usefulness in the Church of God (V. 7) are placed in the foreground. Then follow references of a personal kind that would rouse Philemon’s love and sympathy for his friend in Rome. The age, imprisonment, and love of Paul, all are thrown into the argument before ever Onesimus’ name appears in the letter. The conversion in such condition of the bond-slave, and the Apostle’s deep affection for him are next in order in the mediator’s appeal. Moreover, what a masterly stroke it is to waive his apostolic rights. How can Philemon do otherwise than relinquish any claim he may think he has. Every other thought that might have influenced the wronged master against his slave is

swept away as Paul recalls their partnership together, offers to liquidate the debt, and reminds him of his own personal indebtedness to Paul which one cannot but interpret as referring to Paul's instrumentality in the salvation of his soul.

Personality of the Holy Spirit (May 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 5, May 1958.

How do you think of the Holy Spirit? This is a reasonable question, when asked reverently; for many think of Him as a holy influence from God or as some good quality of God.

To clarify our thinking, we must consider the fact of Godhead as presented in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, God reveals Himself in the unity of His being, although not without reference to the plurality of persons in the Godhead: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). Thus, the unity of Jehovah as Israel’s God is set over against the numerous false gods of surrounding nations. Nevertheless, we hear the same God say: “Let US make man in Our image” (Gen. 1:26); “Let US go down” (Gen. 11:7); “Who shall I send and who will go for US” (Isa. 6:8), a remarkable combination of the singular “I” and the plural “US.”

These indirect references to the blessed Trinity take on clarity and meaning in the New Testament, when, at the outset of Christ’s mission on earth, all three Persons are brought together and are seen working in unison for the redemption of men. The Son of God in humble guise accepts the Father’s program, and is immersed by John the Baptist before the multitudes at Jordan. The Holy Spirit descends in bodily shape like a dove upon Him, anointing Him for the work to which He is committing Himself in the baptism, while the Father speaks from

Heaven about the One who is thus being baptized and anointed (Matt. 3:13-17).

Our first deduction, therefore, concerning the Holy Spirit must be that He is a Person and just as truly a person as the Father and the Son, despite the fact that our acquaintance with human personality clothed in a tangible, physical frame tends to modify our appreciation of the true personality of the Divine Spirit Who can exist with or without any such concrete form.

The Holy Spirit is credited with all the powers and activities of intelligent personality. Christ declared that when He would come, He would instruct the disciples, refresh their memories, testify of their Saviour, convince men of sin, and unfold the secrets of God — none of which could be said of a mere influence or attribute. It is noticeable also that in making all these pronouncements about the Comforter, the Lord Jesus refers to “He”, “Him”, “Himself”, and places Him on equality with Himself (John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-14). When He says “another Comforter”, Christ intends “another of the same sort”; that is, One Who can fill all those needful offices and perform all those gracious ministries that the personal presence of the Lord Jesus had meant to the Disciples. The Spirit of God is rightly said to be Christ’s only “Vicar” on earth, for He alone can do those things which Christ would do if physically present, and He alone can make Christ real to believing hearts.

It is unfortunate that on three occasions, the translators of our excellent Authorized Version have connected the name of the Holy Spirit with the pronoun “Itself”. This, of course, was a strict adherence to the laws of grammar, but not to simple reasoning. The word “spirit”

is a neuter noun, and normally requires the neuter pronoun (itself); but since the name “Spirit” is applied to a living Person, the neuter significance is nullified, and a masculine pronoun (Himself) is required. The devout and intelligent reader of the New Testament will want to do honour to this blessed Person in both thought and speech.

The Word of God, moreover, teaches that not only is the Holy Spirit an intelligent Person, but that He is a Divine Person, having equality as well as union with the Father and the Son. His Name is used on equal terms with that of the other members of the Godhead in the baptismal formula of Matt. 28:19, “baptizing in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Similarly, His Name appears in the words of the Apostle’s benediction in 2 Cor. 13:24, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” The outstanding characteristic of each Person of the Trinity is beautifully expressed. The grace of condescension and sacrifice in Christ that interpreted the love of God can only be shared by us in the communion or partnership of the Holy Spirit. The inter-relation and inter-dependence of the offices of all three must be clear to the youngest Christian.

Whatever you may have thought of the passages already referred to, there is no room for doubt regarding the title given to the Spirit in 11 Cor. 3:17, “Now the Lord is that Spirit” and in verse 19, “The Lord the Spirit” (New Trans.) Again in Hebrews 9:14, He is named “the eternal Spirit.” It is not surprising then to find this Divine Person associated with the carrying out of God’s manifold purposes. As the “Executive of the Godhead”,

He must needs be eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient; and all of these attributes to Deity are traceable to Him in the Scriptures. He who acted in the vast work of creation, brooded over earth's desolation, and garnished the heavens, could He be otherwise than God? (Gen. 1:2. Job 26:13. Ps. 139:7).

And who can view the mighty operations of the Eternal Spirit in redemption and salvation without having the firm conviction of His Deity and Lordship brought home to the heart? Who can convey the life of God, eternal life, to souls dead in trespasses and in sins? Who can regenerate and place one in God's family as a child of God, but the Spirit of Sonship whereby we cry "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:4-6)? "This is the Word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit', saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

In conclusion, let us think very practically about this gracious, loving, holy, and Divine Person. The knowledge that He resides within, will have a revolutionary effect upon mind and character, upon thought and action. Here is One Who can be blasphemed, resisted, or done despite to by the unsaved person; Who can be lied to (Acts 5:4), quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), or grieved (Eph. 4:30) by the child of God. Therefore, let those in whose hearts He dwells, cultivate acquaintance with Him in every spiritual exercise, in the teachings of the Word of God, and in service for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us yield ourselves without reserve to His instruction, to His impulses, and to His leadings, that He may magnify Christ in and through us, whether it be by life or by death.

The Program of the Holy Spirit (June 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 6, June 1958.

The Holy Spirit has been aptly called “the Executive of the Godhead.” He guards the interests of God, and promotes the best interests of men. He has been executing that program in at least five spheres; namely, inspiration, the Incarnation, the world, the Church, and the believer. As to the first, the production of the Holy Scriptures is a work of the Holy Spirit. No purely human document contains the idea of a divine-revelation of God’s mind, nor the idea of a reliable interpretation of God’s ways; yet it is just this that the Bible contains. An infallible revelation of God and His purposes could only be supplied by the agency of the Holy Spirit working with men of God, divinely chosen, inspired, equipped, and controlled.

No reasonable mind can question the Scriptures’ claim: every original word was Spirit-inspired. “Thus saith the Lord” (Isa. 66:1), “The Holy Ghost saith” (Psa. 95:7-11. Heb. 3:7), and similar terms repeated frequently, represent the Scriptures as direct communications from God. Inclusive statements covering all the books of the Bible, are just as definite that “holy men of God spake as they were ‘borne along’ by the Spirit of God” (11 Pet. 1:21), and that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable” (11 Tim. 3:16).

There are only two alternatives: the acceptance of the original writings as the Word of God, or the rejection of them as false and unreliable. However, one has the right

to this latter, drastic attitude only after considering honestly the evidences of Divine authorship.

There is the evidence of unity in diversity. The diversity in Scripture is obvious: the writers were many and varied. They wrote in different times and places. Most were unknown to each other. There was no possibility of collusion, and yet no occurrence of collision. Despite diversity, there has been perfect unanimity. They enunciated the same, high, spiritual principles and adhered to a SINGLE MESSAGE. Their prophetic pronouncements in every case converged upon a single, glorious, messianic Personality. Who is this that stalks the corridors of Holy Writ, in promise, type, prophecy, and figure? It is the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the King of Israel (Gen. 49:10), the Redeemer of mankind (Ruth 4:9-15), the Governor of the nations (Ps. 22:28). What these men of diversified times and circumstances envisaged in the Old Testament became in the New, the living Jesus in the Gospels, the Christ of experience in the Epistles, and the expected King and Lord of the Revelation.

It is evident that these writers did not fully comprehend the meaning of the Divine Scriptures which they wrote; nevertheless, they wrote them. “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow” (1 Pet. 1:10-11). Peter makes clear that these penmen of God were under the power of the Spirit of Christ (as was he); their message was Christ, and God’s grace and salvation. They could not reconcile the

one part of their message, “the sufferings of Christ,” with the other, “the glory that should follow;” but they still recorded it. What a testimony to the fact that no prophecy of old came by the will of man but by the Spirit of the Lord!

The authenticity of the Spirit-inspired Writings is further demonstrated by fulfilment. A prophet’s recognition as the Holy Spirit’s mouthpiece, depended upon the fulfilment of his predictions (Deut. 18:22). This principle also covers the veracity of the whole Book of God. The downfall of nations like the Amorites (Gen. 15:14), Babylon (Jer. 27:5-7), Medo-Persia, etc., have been foretold and their doom has confirmed the prophecies (Dan. 2:31-45; 5:30-31). A look at the chequered story of God’s national people should convince the most doubtful, of the accuracy of the Word of God. Their experiences in Egypt are gathered up in embryonic form in God’s predictive words to Abram (Gen. 15:13-16): “thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance … but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” The growth, persecution, and eventual emancipation of Israel from Egypt are predicted in these words many years before they became history. In the same way, their present dispersion and sufferings, and their future blessings are in the prophetic Word. Present and future fulfilment offers further confirmation of the inspiration of the Spirit’s message.

In messianic prediction, however, we see scriptural accuracy and veracity in its highest glory. The virgin birth of Christ is taught in Genesis 3:15, and Isaiah 7:14. The Scriptures reveal the place of His birth (Mic. 5:2); the tribe of His birth (Gen. 49:10); His character as the Man of Sorrows (Isa. 53:3); the time of His arrival and death in Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-27). The scenes in the judgment halls are graphically anticipated. He is to be crucified; men are to gamble for His apparel, while they mock Him with vinegar and gall (Ps. 22:18; 69:21). The very cry of His orphaned heart forms the opening of a Psalm which could have no complete fulfilment in any mere mortal (Ps. 22:1). Neither accident nor coincidence can play a part here; the only solution possible is that the mind who indited these passages foreknew these coming events. It is more fantastic to doubt than to believe such a revelation.

The Holy Spirit's place in inspiration is also evident in the moral tone of the Scriptures; their standards of divine righteousness and holiness are to be found in no human production. Sin is unveiled in its friends and foes and denouced for what it is. God is seen in all His majesty of purity and integrity; provision is made for sinning man to escape the terrors of a sinner's punishment and the wrath of a sin-hating God. God's requirements from all who enjoy relationship with Himself are very plain: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). As man-made books proclaim the mind and character of their authors, so this God-breathed Book pays tribute to its Author, and shows it could emanate from no human source.

Think too of the performance and power of this message of God. The human heart has always feared and resisted

the Word of God. As a consequence, there have been many attempts to discredit and destroy it. Despite human rebellion, the knife, the fire, the higher critic, and the Devil, God's Word is still with us as operative and energetic as ever. It is "alive and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb. 9:12); "the Word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Pet. 1:25); "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Truly, God's testimonies are wonderful (Ps. 119:128)!

We have in the Scriptures a true, inspired, completely reliable body of truth, through the sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit. He chose human instruments, restrained and constrained them by His power and wisdom, yet retained their natural characteristics. Now the servant of God possesses everything which God wants man to know, and he is equipped for any order or sphere of service. "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, fully furnished unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

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Holiness is the one divine attribute in which we can be like God. He does not say, "be ye almighty, for I am almighty," but He does say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Holy Spirit in the Incarnation (July 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 7, July 1958.

As the Israelite of old opened his tent in the early morning, he saw the manna, the promised bread from Heaven, lying on the desert. “When the dew…was gone up, behold. upon the face of the wilderness…a small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground” (Ex. 16: 13-14). The dew was thus the vehicle by which the manna was conveyed to earth and preserved from immediate contact with the earth. When the dew was gone, the manna was seen. So in bringing to a heart-hungry world the Bread of Life, the Holy Spirit was the sole agency in conveying the great Gift, and in preserving Him from any defiling contacts with the human instrument used by the Spirit.

While needful details about Christ’s birth are given, yet one is impressed by the dignity of the divine reticence. The wondrous event is traced to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, both for the reassurance of Joseph, and for the information of Mary. The natural conclusions of Joseph are not ignored, but the Angel of the Lord appears opportunely to withhold him from his design of putting away Mary, his espoused wife. All doubts and fears are swept away by the Angel’s message, “Joseph … fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:20-25). Then follows the inspired explanation of this unprecedented conception, “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, “Behold a virgin shall be with child, and

shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Thus angelic and prophetic testimony declare that Mary's child is none other than God made manifest in flesh.

The visit of the Angel, Gabriel, to Mary was of necessity one of explanation and cheer. Her problem too was solved, and her heart gladdened as the wonder and character of the predicted birth was disclosed. To her, His name, His greatness, His deity, and His kingship were announced, but it still remained to trace the origin of this unique and blessed happening. Mary herself was swift to sense this and her modest but honest inquiry elicited the Angel's revealing message: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:27-35). This was undoubtedly supernatural; this was divine. Mary was to be God's chosen vessel for the bringing of His Son into union with mankind. Heaven's own interpretation of the event points to this child as unique in conception and character. "That holy thing" indicates the sinlessness of His nature, while "He shall be called the Son of God" marks Him as the eternal and only begotten Son of the Father. The inescapable logic of the passage is that the sovereign Spirit preserved the Holy Child from all taint of Mary's sin.

Had this been a completely natural birth, Jesus would have been born out of wedlock, born in sin, possessed of a nature like Mary's, capable of sin, incapable of being our Saviour, needing salvation Himself. How vitally important therefore is the information which Gabriel brought regarding the agency in this great event, the

alternative to which is too blasphemous to be entertained for a moment by any true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, or any spiritually intelligent reader of the Word of God.

The implications of this event are also important and precious. The incarnation was love's only plan. To reach its objective, love had to come right where we were, lying broken and dying by reason of sin, on the highway of time. So, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Identification with the human race by One qualified to atone for its guilt was the only answer to our tragic plight. No other scheme could have met man in his sin and raised him, cleansed and justified, to realms of glory. "A body hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb. 10:15) are the words with which He leaves the glory and we see the grand intention in the words of Hebrews 10:10 — "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." Here is the perfect Man Who at one and the same time can meet the sinner's need and all the claims of God.

The incarnation was love's revealing plan. What a display it was of all that lay in the heart of God! The magnificence of creation had revealed His arm, but only His Son could reveal all His heart. In the special language of love, the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14). In the Lord Jesus Christ, God's interpretation of Himself is complete. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). All the qualities demanded in Deity

are expressly seen in our Lord Jesus Christ: He is full of grace and truth; His wisdom is sublime; His purity, unsullied; His peace and equanimity, unbroken; His love and compassion, a depthless sea! He can and does claim that “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The incarnation was love’s inclusive plan. Via Bethlehem and Calvary, it reaches the very throne of God. Love’s plan includes not only the miracle of His presence as the Son of Man, and the value of His presentation of His body as a sacrifice for sin, but also the abiding benefits of His session at the right hand of God. The life He laid down, He took up again, and in that same body in which he sojourned and sacrificed, He appeared to the disciples on the resurrection day. “Handle Me and see,” He said, “for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have” (Lk. 24:39). In that body, He returned to Heaven to be for them all that saved sinners need before God and man. The offices He fulfils are essentially His by virtue of the humanity He assumed when by the power of the Spirit He entered into union with the human race. It is this that makes His representation valid; His High Priestly work, intimate and sympathetic; His advocacy, effectual and real (Heb. 4: 14-15; 6:20; 1 John 2:1).

Tests of Christian reality appear in this connection in the New Testament, and in days of Christ-dishonouring rationalism, these need to be restated. No one can be a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who has erroneous views about His tabernacling in the flesh. “Hereby know ye the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the

flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:1-3). It is essential, therefore, to saving faith to accept first of all Christ's miraculous assumption of humanity.

The second phase of the Spirit's work in the incarnation was introduced at Christ's baptism at Jordan. As He emerged from the baptismal plunge, the heavens were opened to Him and the Spirit of God descended and abode upon Him. The immediate accompaniments of this enduement became apparent. Objectively, John had indisputable evidence of His identity. He declared, "I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:31-34). Subjectively, the Saviour abandoned Himself to the sway and power of the Spirit. Thus Jesus took His place as Jehovah's perfect Servant, (Isa. 42:1-4), and in the unction of the Spirit, set out upon that ministry which will culminate in the complete glorification of the Father. He was filled by the Spirit as He was led by the Spirit to be tempted of Satan. He met the enemy having no armoury but what is available to every Christian — faith in God, the Word of God, and the power of the Spirit of God. He returned from the temptations "in the power of the Spirit," and thus victorious, as the Spirit-filled Man, Christ Jesus entered the synagogue of Capernaum and publicly appropriated the language and program of God's Anointed One — the Christ. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-21). As He concluded Isaiah's portrait of Messiah's mission, He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in our ears." All through that

life of amazing miracle, of remarkable utterances, and of perfect obedience, we can trace the holy oil of Jordan. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). This attitude of dependence upon, and co-operation with, the Spirit is discernible in Christ’s last great act of mediation for sinful man, for we read that He “through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). In some undefined and mystical way, the Holy Spirit associates with the presentation to God of that eternally acceptable and efficacious sacrifice.

May the same Spirit of Christ so possess us as to reproduce in measure the walk of purity and obedience and the work of love with power which so adorned the life and labours of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit and the World (Aug 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 8, Aug 1958.

How impressive are the words of Christ when He spoke of the Holy Spirit's coming and work! "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:7-11).

Note that the Holy Spirit reaches the ungodly world through the Lord's people: "I will send Him unto you," Jesus said to His disciples. Earlier in that upper-room discourse, Christ declared that the Father would give "the Spirit of Truth; whom the world Cannot Receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him" (John 14:16-17). The invisible presence of the Comforter is vividly real to faith, but entirely incomprehensible to unbelief.

Christ's statement also implies that the Holy Spirit's character as Spirit of Truth makes Him undesirable to men in their sin. However, in this same aspect of His holy character, He takes up His abode in the Christian heart, and makes the Christian a medium of expression to those who are incapable of direct communication with Him. It is a sobering thought that the sovereign Spirit of God should choose us as the mouthpiece of His message

to men. This calls for a sanctified yielding to His impulse, and an increasing sympathy with His intentions.

Now, what of the expedience of Christ's absence from this world? Those who heard His words had accompanied Him for over three years; had seen His signs and wonders; had witnessed His moral perfections; and had revelled in His loving presence and gracious ministry. How could it be possible that His departure should be profitable? How could it be advantageous for these trembling disciples to lose Christ's physical presence?

The answer is found in the advent of the promised Paraclete, and in the prophesied sphere of His operation. By the Spirit, Christ's somewhat confined labours would be universally extended. The Lord Jesus Christ limited His ministrations almost completely to areas populated by Jews and Samaritans. But here is One Whose presence would be known in believing hearts — north, south, east, and west; Whose sphere of operation would make Christ available to all the sons of men.

It is the Spirit's supreme function to vindicate and glorify the absent Christ. The Spirit's presence is a constant reminder of the treatment which the world has accorded to its rightful Lord and King. Day by day, He is pressing home upon men and women Everywhere, the claims of the crucified One Who is now in heaven for a time, but Who awaits the day when the restraint and grace of the Spirit will be removed with the raptured Church. Christ shall then return to assume the government of all the nations (2 Thess. 2:5-8).

This work of vindicating the rejected and absent Lord is carried out by the Spirit in a threefold way: first, by bringing home to men their greatest sin; second, by demonstrating the truth and character of the absent One; and third, by indicating the judgment of the world ruler and his kingdom.

Conviction Of Sin

The spearhead of all human sin and rebellion against God is man's refusal of the Son of God. The Spirit reproves the world of sin because they believe not on Jesus. Man can offer God no greater insult than to reject the Son of His love. Hence, the Spirit of God — by the Word of God and through the people of God — lays upon the unbelieving conscience this super-sin: the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anyone who refuses to accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, assents to, and acts in complicity with, that act of the world whereby Christ was assigned to a cross of shame. To remain in unbelief after the facts concerning Him are known is to be guilty with the world that slew its Lord. The Spirit takes up the cause of Christ with the individual worldling and leads him to a sense of his guilt, and thence to a full conviction of the gravity of remaining in unbelief and of continuing to reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vindication Of Christ

In another direction, the Spirit espouses the cause of the absent Lord. He convinces the world of righteousness because Jesus was going to His Father. This is essentially a work of vindication. The Spirit acts as Christ's Advocate as well as ours. It is His work to make

clear the truth and character of Him Whom cruel men maligned, slandered, and crucified in a vile and baseless assault upon his righteous character.

Inspired by Satan, man has sought to stain and reproach the Name of Christ, but God has seen to it that His Son is fully vindicated in the hearts of all who desire the truth concerning Jesus. The very presence of the Spirit on earth is then a monument to Christ's personal rectitude. The Spirit is present here because Christ is received in heaven.

This is also indicated by the Pentecostal message of the Spirit-filled Apostle, Peter: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear … Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ'' (Acts 2:32-37). Christ's rejection by man on earth and reception by God in heaven —as demonstrated in dynamic fashion by the coming of the Holy Spirit— are the salient features of this witness which resulted in pricked hearts and penitent suppliants desiring to know the way of salvation.

Condemnation Of Satan

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit brings to logical demonstration the condemnation and overthrow of the prince of this world. He convinces the world of judgment "because the prince of this world is judged." The very act in which the world disowned its Saviour, became the occasion of its defeat. Our Lord Jesus met Satan at the cross and vanquished him and his whole empire.

Even before His death, the Saviour anticipated that glorious victory. “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me (John 12:31-32). The prince and his dominion would fall together before the mighty Son of God. Now, praise God, this event is past history, and He Who is stronger than the strong man armed, has invaded Satanic territory and made a show of him openly!

This reveals two highly important propositions: there is emancipation from Satan’s kingdom and tyranny for all who link with the Conqueror; and all others will share Satan’s doom and punishment as members of his empire. What a call is this to every Christ-rejector, to abandon the ranks of his evil prince, and to own allegiance to the mighty Victor of Calvary!

This threefold approach of the Spirit to the needs of sinful men in the world, indicates the preparation which is essential for salvation; a preparation for which human reasonings and pleadings can never substitute. The Spirit of God must quicken the conscience by making real the sin of unbelief in Christ. This quickening cannot be accelerated by human agency either, and it becomes every servant of Christ to yield to the Holy Spirit Who, in His own time and manner, will bring the willing sinner to an intelligent consciousness of sin, and to an equally intelligent choice for or against the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the secret of His presence, how my soul delights to hide!

Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus’ side.

Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;

For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.

* * *

The capacity for knowing God becomes enlarged as we are brought by Him into circumstances which oblige us to exercise faith; so, when difficulties beset our path, let us thank God that he is taking trouble with us, and let us lean hard upon Him.

The Holy Spirit in Salvation (Feb 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 2, Feb 1959.

S. Jardine

This article is the first in a series being written by Samuel Jardine. His previous contributions may be found in the issues of May. June, July and August, 1958.

A wide field of rewarding investigation opens before us as we begin to learn how the Holy Spirit brings a man into salvation and makes his blessings good to him in daily experience.

Regeneration

NECESSITY. Regeneration may be described as the operation of the Spirit in translating a soul from the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God … Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit” (John 3:3-7).

The simplest definition of “God’s kingdom” is “the realm of God’s rule”. But the natural man is a rebel against God, and therefore a citizen of an alien empire. Man’s paramount need is to be brought into the dominion of God’s will.

However, man can provide no preparation from within himself to enter God’s kingdom. Jesus’ words to Nicodemus are staggering if rightly comprehended: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” A man’s nature

as received by natural birth can only produce after its kind, and that kind is wholly depraved and degenerate. The flesh is incapable of producing after the Spirit. Nicodemus—with all his wealth, religion, ancestry, and education—is thus classed with the darkest Gentile sinner, requiring a spiritual birth that will automatically transfer him into the realm of God's rule.

INSTRUMENTALITY. The repenting sinner experiences the second birth by water and the Spirit. In other words, the cleansing power of the Word of truth (Eph. 5:26) is applied in the power of the Holy Spirit to the unregenerate soul.

This is the greatest event whichever can occur in any individual's earthly life: brought from death unto life, the child of wrath and disobedience becomes a son or daughter of the heavenly Father (1 John 3:1).

SIMPLICITY. We are not asked to comprehend this miracle; just to experience it. Note the unsophisticated terms that tell how it may be known: "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:11-13, R.V.).

"RECEIVED Him" —does that represent a difficulty or a theological intricacy? Hardly! You can receive Him, you can rest upon this divine assurance that you have the right of sonship, the authority to be a child of God.

The outcome of your reception of Christ is explained both negatively and positively. "Born, not of blood"; that is, not by the physical birth which brought you into this

world. “Born, not…of the will of the flesh”; that is, not by any personal resolution or mere reformation, “Born, not…of the will of man”; that is, no outside human agency, however good or holy, can assist you to enter the family of God.

“But of God;” here is the origin of life on any plane, and the absolute source of spiritual life. As the sinner trusts the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit breathes God’s own eternal life into the soul, which then becomes a child of God. (John 3:14-16).

REALITY. Although the second birth is as inexplicable as the wind, its effects are quite as evident. “Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). The unseen wind is evident by its effects, and where Christ has been welcomed, the manifestations of the God-breathed life will soon be revealed.

The sovereign rule of God will be limited, and some measure of subjection to that will expressed. Sin will become abhorrent. Christ will become precious. God’s people will become the associates of the newly born one. God’s Word will have a new attraction.

Where none of these signs is evident, it may be safely assumed that the wind of God’s Spirit has never been vitally active in that life.

Indwelling

FACT. Contrary to much erroneous teaching, the Scriptures indicate clearly that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers immediately and unconditionally.

“Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having BEGUN in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:2-3). “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?” (1 Cor. 6:19).

Could language be clearer to show that the hearing of faith brings the Spirit of God into the life as the beginning of the work of grace, as the evidence of family relationship, and as constituting the believer’s body the dwelling and temple of the Spirit? There can be no such thing as a Christian devoid of the indwelling Spirit: there are no empty temples in this economy of grace. Let this fact be once grasped with all its sublime and hallowing influence, and the child of God can never be quite the same again.

With all their unspirituality, the Corinthian Christians were yet regarded as possessing the Spirit. Their trouble was that the Spirit was not fully possessing them.

PURPOSE. Christ promised His disciples “another Comforter,” i.e., another of the same kind. The promised One would be to the disciples all that Christ Himself would have been if present with them. “His other self” is the descriptive phrase which someone has coined for the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

How terribly the followers of Christ would miss their absent Lord! but the loving presence and Christ-like functions of the Spirit would relieve and comfort their

orphaned hearts. Literally, the Comforter (Paraclete) is "one called alongside to help", and in every necessary way, the Holy Spirit acts in this wonderful capacity.

The Lord Jesus gave a broad outline of the Paraclete's comforting, helping ministry, when He declared that "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). "He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26). "He will guide you into all truth… He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-15).

The scope of the Spirit's resources named here are too important to be lightly passed over. "All things that the Father hath"; this is a wealthy treasure-house, to be explored and enjoyed. It all belongs to Christ, and the Spirit now unfolds to God's people the limitless wealth of our Lord. When in His light, we see light, what a foretaste of future glory is ours!

"All truth" (John 16:13) has a relation to Him Who said, "I am…the truth" (John 14:6). The vast circumference of truth includes facts that are awe-inspiring and heart-searching, as well as those that are cheering and constructive. God has ordained that every event of time and eternity should revolve around that sacred Person, and so every part of revelation in the completed Scriptures glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Col. 1:16-17). He is the Revealer of the Father (Matt. 11:27). He is the Lamb of God, the sacrifice for sin (John 1:29). He is the King Who will bring universal peace and

righteousness to this distracted world (Isa. 9:6-7). He is the Judge Who is to be honoured by men, even as the Father is honoured (John 5:22-23).

The apprehension of all this Christo-centric truth is only possible where the blessed Paraclete has come in to renew, to indwell, and to illuminate. However, it remains to remind ourselves that while the great Interpreter dwells within every believer, the secrets of God are shared only with hearts that are prepared and consecrated. It is the pure in heart that see God (Matt. 5:8), and His secret is with them that fear Him (Ps. 25:14).

* * *

If thou art willing to suffer no adversity, how wilt thou be the friend of Christ? — Thomas a Kempis.

* * *

Teach me the glory of my cross. Teach me the value of my storm. Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbows. — George Matheson.

* * *

No more I ask the reason why.

Although I may not see

The path ahead, His way I go;

He’ll choose safe paths for me.

The Holy Spirit in Salvation (Part 2) (Apr 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 4, Apr 1959.

S. Jardine

We regret that through circumstances, it has not been possible to insert consecutively each of these helpful articles on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The last insertion will be found in the February number, 1959.

Over 100 Years Ago, Dr. Octavius Winslow penned these striking words: “The doctrine of the personal inbeing of the Spirit has been reduced in the creed of some to a mere poetical conception. Assimilation of the character and disposition of the Spirit in that which is amiable, sympathizing, and generous has been made to take the place of an ACTUAL and PERSONAL RESIDENCE of the Holy Ghost.”

As opposed to such error, the Scriptures teach that the Spirit of God actually and personally dwells within the believer, who is thereby richly blessed by the Holy Spirit Himself.

A New Disposition

The Spirit of God introduces a new disposition into the life of every true child of God. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). The unregenerate man and the natural bent of his life are lucidly depicted in the first part of this statement,

while the new-born man and his distinctively new mind are as succinctly portrayed in the second part.

The incoming of the Holy Spirit brings a new outlook coupled with new desires consistent with the character of the Indweller. He is the Spirit of holiness, and every prompting to purity and godliness emanates from Him. He is sensitive to all that is unclean and unrighteous, and where such is tolerated, the Christian becomes aware of having grieved the Holy Spirit of promise within him (Eph. 4:29-30).

In this Ephesian passage, the enumeration of lying, unholy anger, stealing, corrupt speech, and bitterness shows the reason for the Spirit's grief. Increasing acquaintance with the Spirit's ways will beget an increasing tenderness of conscience on the part of those who are His dwelling place.

The Spirit of Love

The indweller is the Spirit of Love, and this essential trait of character will betray His presence (Rom. 15:30. Col. 1:8). The affections of the Spirit-born person gravitate spontaneously towards higher levels. The Father, the Son, the Word of truth, the people of God, the souls of the perishing become the objects of tender and loving thought, and this is nothing less than the minding of the Spirit, which is life and peace (Rom. 8:6).

With the advent of the Spirit also comes the awakening of vital communication with God as Father, and this in general terms is the beginning of true prayer in a believing soul. The words of Galatians 4:6 seem to acquire increasing sweetness the more we reflect upon them: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the

Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The dawning sense of God's Fatherhood draws out the filial exclamation, "Father, Father!" It is the Spirit of sonship Who makes us conscious of the Father and of all that is in His loving heart towards His child.

He it is Who dissipates the bondage of fear which held us at such a distance when we were unsaved, and He it is Who now puts us perfectly, yet always reverently, at ease in our Father's presence. Thus, approach to God in a practical way is begun and this is the true life-centre of prayer.

The Spirit and Prayer

This work, however, the Spirit seeks to encourage and expand. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27).

The desires and yearnings of a Spirit-born man or woman are something of an entirely new and distant kind. They pay tribute to the divine presence and work in the soul. The mind of the Spirit is in process of expression so that the Christian finds longings arising for which there seems no adequate language. A sigh, a groan, a lifting up of the troubled spirit Godward, these, betimes, are the mind of the Spirit and the intercession of the Spirit within us.

Fatherly Answers

Our gracious Father, with omniscient eye, can read the full meaning of the unuttered groanings, and answers accordingly. In every case where communication with the Lord is cultivated as a daily habit of the believer, everyone else feels the results in spiritual character and Christian influence.

It is encouraging also to know that our loving Father has provided every facility for us to draw near and enjoy His presence; to drink deeply at the well-springs of His love; and to experience gracious answers to our petitions. There is a prevailing Name to plead, Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:1314). There is a faithful promise to assure us: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). There is a token of access, the precious blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19). Moreover, there is a mighty Helper to inspire the willing petitioner with desires according to the will of God, the Spirit of grace and supplication.

Christ-Likeness

That the main objective of the Spirit's residence in the Christian is the reproduction of the life of Christ is learned from 2 Corinthians 3:17-18: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The removal of the veil under the law, done away in Christ, has left room for the ministration of the Spirit, which is rather glorious (1 Cor. 3:8). The illuminated soul now beholds the glory of the Lord in the mirror of

truth, and gazing constantly, is being transfigured into the same image even as derived from the Spirit of the Lord.

The contrasted results of the ministration of condemnation (i.e., of the law) and the ministration of the Spirit, serve to bring home to the reader the wonderful end in view of the Spirit's indwelling. The old brought death; the new brings life. In the old, the glory had to be hidden; it could not be gazed upon. In the new, this is just what is required: the glory of the Lord should be contemplated. The old was transient, while the new is permanent.

Thus we are led up to the primal purpose of the ministration of the Spirit. The unveiled face eloquently tells of a heart where Christ was once unknown and unwanted, but now is known and loved (2 Cor. 4:6).

The "beholding in a mirror" is the believer's gazing into the Word of Truth in which Christ has been revealed. The change "from glory to glory" is the certain, progressive outcome of the Christian's occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ. The moral and spiritual transfiguration into the likeness of Christ is the result of the Spirit's movements in conjunction with the beholding of the Lord's glory. Here is the gracious process of producing a Christ-like character. It is intended to be carried on from stage to stage of growth in grace, "from glory to glory".

After His Kind

Very early in the pages of Holy Writ, an abiding and inclusive principle of character is enunciated. "And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after

his kind" (Gen. 1:12). The latter phrase is repeated for other types of life, "and God saw that it was good".

Life on the highest plane is governed by the same principle, the Holy Spirit begets life consistent with Himself. All the virtues of the fruit of the Spirit can be traced to the man Christ Jesus, Who was so perfectly Spirit-anointed, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-directed. "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23) when taken together, present a lively portrait of the highest attainable in spirituality.

Love flowed in every movement of the Christ of God. Joy abounded in the fulfilment of His Father's pleasure. Peace lifted Him above life's disturbances. Longsuffering marked His treatment of friend and foe. Gentleness adorned His words and deeds. Goodness revealed the bounty and integrity of His heart. Fidelity He showed to God and man. Meekness betokened the strength of His character, and self-control was in constant and unfailing evidence.

Here is what the Spirit designs to produce in each of us, so that in the most practical fashion, the life of Jesus may be manifest through our lives. Anything inconsistent with the above nine graces can be tabulated at once as a work of the flesh, and when discovered, should be turned over to Him Who alone can enable us to mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13).

To co-operate further with Him, the believer must seek a constant engagement of mind and heart with Christ, and a faithful obedience to every unfolding of Christ in God's Word by the Holy Spirit. Then will the believer manifest the image of the Lord Jesus Christ in practical Christian

living, and thus will be fulfilled the Spirit’s primary purpose and work in salvation.

The Spirit in Life and Service (May 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 5, May 1959.

The Spirit of God is the One Who I produces Christian character; the One Who reproduces the Christ-life in the believer. And where the graces of the fruit of the Spirit are in evidence, Christian service has truly begun.

E. M. Bounds once said, “The world is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.” God finds them in the disciples of Christ who know the Spirit’s mastery, and in whom Christ is being formed and expressed.

God sets before us the perfection of service in our Lord Jesus Christ. “Behold My Servant, Whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in Whom My soul delighteth. I have put My Spirit upon Him” (Isa. 42:1). Similarly in Isaiah 11:1-5, Christ’s character is portrayed first and then the effects of His ministry.

John 3:34 refers primarily to the Lord Jesus, but there is also encouragement here for every child of God. “For He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure.” God’s giving always honours the greatness of His character — “without measure”.

Our Saviour received the Spirit in fullest measure, being uniquely capable of this. And in the energy of that infilling, He carried out the works of Him that sent Him.

The Spirit, however, has also been given to us, and still without measure. But, of course, the extent of the Spirit’s operation in each case depends on the place we

are prepared to give Him. If we make room for Him to the limit of our capacity, He is quite prepared to give Himself to us in His fulness. The little girl prayed wisely who said, “Fill me, Lord. I can’t hold very much, but I can overflow a great deal.”

References to Spirit-filled Christians are frequent in Scripture. Some were characteristically full of the Spirit, while others were specially and temporarily filled.

John the Baptist is an outstanding example of the first, and the man’s ministry proved the prophecy (Luke 1:15). Furthermore, where the Spirit fills, Christ predominates and self abdicates: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Soon after the foundation of the Church, Spirit-filled men were needed for a delicate task in Jerusalem. So Stephen and six others were designated to care for the poor widows. Barnabas is in the same category: “A good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith” (Acts 11:24). This was his character, and as to service, he was found ministering encouragement to God’s people — a type still needed today — a true “son of consolation”.

The filling of the Spirit is not optional to the Christian; a specific command has been left for each of us: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). There must be a continual opening up of the life to the Spirit, in full consistency with the purity of His being, the righteousness of His activities, and the strength of His love. In return, He will bring a new exhilaration, a holy intoxication that will result in song and service glorifying to Christ.

The risen Lord promised His disciples ere He left them that they would receive power with the Holy Spirit (Acts

1:8), and that furthermore, this would be their power for witnessing to the ends of the earth. If the program was extensive, the power was equal to the task. And we today also need to learn dependence upon Him, to adjust our thoughts and ways to His, and to claim for each fresh service, the in-filling of the Spirit of power.

The thousands who thronged Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were awakened and subdued because simple Galilean believers were filled with the Spirit and enabled by Him to speak in several languages (Acts 2). This was a remarkable intervention of God, for the launching of the Church.

Shortly after, Peter and John were arraigned before a religious court, but they found special enduement in the hour of crisis (Acts 4:7-8). The Spirit of God took over to meet the demands of the emergency. Similarly, Stephen was specially fortified by the Spirit at his trial and execution (Acts 7:54-60).

In contrast, our lack and leakage of spiritual power in Christian service demands the closest possible investigation. First of all, we need sound teaching about the Person and mission of the Holy Spirit. But in addition, we need to know how to maintain right personal relations with the Spirit, so that His power can be released through us.

Due regard must be paid to the character of the One Who only can give us the desired success in our life and service. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness, and every taint of sin is abhorrent to Him. The Christian can never afford to play with sin. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

We must also take special care to be in line with the Spirit's program. Plans may be good in themselves but they must be made according to the mind of the Spirit. To those who sincerely wait upon the Lord, there surely comes the indication of His leading, bringing the servant of Christ to his proper sphere of labour.

Another factor adversely affects the success of every child of God who seeks to serve the Lord in any way whatsoever: wrong motives which would rob the Master of His full glory. Pride, for example, operates most insidiously, intruding itself into our holiest moments and "best" efforts for God. A constant process of self-judgement is necessary for happy harmony with the mighty Indweller whose business it is to make us increasingly Christ-conscious rather than self-conscious.

Have we all grasped the divine intention of our amazing partnership with the Spirit of God? The Holy Spirit waits for us to fulfil the duties of this unique partnership. If we respond, He is ready and willing to demonstrate His still-prevailing power to promote love amongst the saints, to propagate the gospel effectively, and to prosper the personal service of every saint who is yielded to His divine influence.

The Spirit in the Church (June 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 6, June 1959.

The Holy Spirit of God is exceedingly active in the corporate life of the Church of Christ. His activities occupy an important place in the New Testament, where we see (1) how this Divine, invisible Presence clothed Himself, that the purpose of His coming might be fulfilled; and (2) what tremendous potential has been placed at the disposal of those with whom He resides. That the Spirit provides the sphere of the Church's existence, is evident from a study of the baptism in the Spirit.

Baptism in the Spirit

John the Baptist introduced the idea of a Spirit-baptism (together with its solemn alternative, a baptism of fire) as being the work of the coming Messiah (Matt. 3:11-12). Those who submitted to immersion by John, signified their penitent readiness for the rule of God's Anointed.

To all who recognized His claims, the promise was, "He shall baptize you with (or in) the Holy Ghost". (The baptism of fire is reserved for rejectors.)

The risen Christ took up John's prediction, and showed that part of it would be fulfilled in a few days —meaning, of course, the mighty effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5). (The reference to fire is significantly omitted here, because its fulfilment awaits the day when the chaff shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire.)

In writing to Corinth, Paul spoke of the baptism of the Spirit as a past event. “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks” (1 Cor. 12:13, R.V.).

Hence, we can say that on the day of Pentecost, Christ’s promise was implemented, the work of the Messiah was carried out, and the body of Christ was formed. The Spirit Himself, present in all His fulness, constituted the living bond that united all believers in one body. It is He Who united the members on earth with the Head in Heaven, and thus He is the sphere and realm of the Church’s being.

Headship of Christ

In Ephesians 1:20-23 Paul wrote that God gave the resurrected exalted Christ to be the Head of the Church which is His body. Here was something attained by personal worth and mighty conquest (and something unknown till then) — the triumphant Saviour elevated to the highest plane and given the Headship of that unnumbered host that would eventually be comprised in His body.

The Father has demonstrated Christ’s Headship by raising Him from the dead and subjugating to Him every kind of empire, both in this age and in that which is to come. A hint of the great intention is discernible in the words, “The Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Just as in His incarnation, He assumed a body in which He could express His Divine-Human personality, so in this age (while physically absent) the Lord Jesus has

assumed a body, a mystical body, through which He can give expression to Himself.

The relationship of Head to body is one of a spiritual identification so close that it is said, “The body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). The absent Lord would meet the needs of the world and manifest His love to it through the members of His mystical body.

The Spirit’s Activities

The Holy Spirit protects the rights of the Lord and Head of the Church (1 Cor. 12:1-3).

If we remember the former association of the Corinthians with pagan worship and vileness, we shall more readily understand the words, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12:3).

Evil spirits were evidently seeking to take advantage of their pre-conversion practices in order to deceive, and to dishonour Him Who had saved them from spiritism and impurity. The Holy Spirit always exalts Christ as Lord, and any contrary or lesser confession of Him is manifestly not of the Spirit of God. All true ministry upholds and guards the supremacy and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ amongst His people.

Christendom has yielded to the evil that threatened these early Christians, until now Christ is often ousted from His control and directorate of His Church. In any gathering of saints for worship or service, where the

Holy Spirit has sway the evidence of it is always seen in the prominence the Spirit secures for the Lord Jesus Christ in the ministry of God's Word, in the affections and praise of the Lord's people, as well as in the ordering and control of the gathering.

The second main value of the Spirit's presence in the Church is that He provides the gifts of its members.

It is the province of the Spirit to enrich the body of Christ with suitable gift (1 Cor. 12:4). "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Then these are called manifestations of the Spirit, nine of which are enumerated (I Cor. 12:7-11).

Any gift in function was intended to bring profit to all present, so that the most useful gifts are found to be heading the list: "the word of wisdom," and "the word of knowledge."

Let us pause to recall that the church at Corinth was not the whole body of Christ, but most decidedly it operated "body-wise". There was a reflection there of the greater in the less; of the universal in the local. The same principle operates everywhere: the function of any gifted believer is for the edification of all. "Covet earnestly the value of lesser gifts (such as speaking with tongues) to the detriment and practical exclusion of the more profitable ones — those which could convey gems of wisdom and knowledge to the household of faith (1 Cor. 12:31).

Tongues and interpretations were by their very nature and purpose of transient value, while direct communication and instruction in the word and mind of God are an abiding necessity to us all (Cf. 1 Cor. 14:3-4, 19, 31). The Church's infancy required such sign-gifts,

but the presence of the complete Canon of Scripture makes their exercise unnecessary.

Anyone who rises today to address the church should ask himself these questions, “Am I acting under the Spirit’s impulse?” “Does my communication carry something for the good of God’s people?” There is often a failure to distinguish between the thoughts we should share with our Lord alone, and those we should share with others publicly.

Thirdly, the Spirit’s presence and control also make for a harmony of function amongst the members of His body, the Church. There should be no monopoly, no isolation, and no schism. “For the body is not one member but many” (1 Cor. 12:17). No servant of Christ has been endowed with all the gifts. The Spirit distributes them as He wills, but never concentrates them all in one individual.

Scripturally, an assembly is reduced to its poorest condition when all its ministries must be conveyed through one channel. God’s plan secures the greatest possible enrichment of the assembly. When all gifts are in operation under the Spirit’s direction, there is the communication of truth in its widest variety and so in its most profitable form. It should be appreciated too that a fixed or limited ministry impoverishes worship Godward as well as sustenance manward.

There should also be no isolation; i.e., no witholding by a member of what is due to others. The writer adds, “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the ear, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” (1 Cor. 12:15-16).

There is a counterpart to this in almost every assembly; it is the brother who isolates himself from all public ministration or worship because of an exaggerated view of others' gifts and because of an underestimation of his own. Were he to grasp the idea of the body, he would see that his little part is essential to the harmonious working of the whole, even though his contribution might be only the announcing of a hymn (which, while not requiring great gift, demands spiritual discernment and leading).

Furthermore, the members of the body should be so vitally and intimately connected that there is a sharing of mutual joys and sorrows. "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:25-26). Sympathy of this sort is vividly illustrated in the physical body — a hint as to the love which should be the actuating principle of all our relations as members of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul described the indispensable love which is greater than all gifts, and which gives value to every Christian activity. It produces strong Christian character; self is abnegated, others are considered. It remains when prophecies, tongues, and knowledge have ceased. It excels even in the presence of faith and hope. "The greatest of these is love."

The foremost fruit of the Spirit, love breathes the life of Christ from first to last. Read 1 Corinthians 13 again with the thought in mind of a body where no schism exists, where member weeps for member, where love sings when a fellow-member is exalted. Into such

blessedness the Spirit of God and the Spirit of love could lead us all if only we were yielded to His blessed Person, His will, and His ways.

From a Prophet’s Diary (Aug 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 8, Aug 1961.

The great appeal of Psalm 73 is n its note of personal experience. It is the record of a man’s encounter with life’s realties, and therefore it finds a responsive chord in our hearts.

The sincerity and forthrightness of Asaph’s confessions pay tribute to his strength of character. Without any embroidery whatever, his great mistake is detailed and the lessons of a great recovery are penned for the benefit of succeeding generations.

There is a sure way back to the sunshine of communion with our Lord: it is that of honestly dealing with ourselves and frankly confessing our failures. We too can rediscover that “God is good to Israel, even to such as be of a clean heart” (v. 1).

It was with this mighty conviction of God’s goodness that the Psalmist emerged from his time of temptation and experienced all the accompaniments of restoration.

Moral Stability Recovered

How much this stability was needed! The picture of stumbling feet and “steps well-nigh slipped” showed how he had staggered as he paused to contemplate the ungodly around him.

The Christian is only safe when “looking off unto Jesus.” Peter could walk the waves of Lake Galilee while his sight was fixed on Christ; but occupation with surroundings resulted in his sinking beneath them (Matt. 14:29-30).

The hesitating servant of Jehovah left faith for reason when he began to compare the present condition of believer and unbeliever. The ungodly seemed to have all the benefits while God's people had sorrow and trouble.

But reason divorced from faith in God can only operate on its own limited earthly level, and for the moment, Asaph imagined that all his strivings after holiness had been in vain. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency" (vv. 13-14).

While he travailed with this distressing thought, he nevertheless kept his counsel to himself. He made no parade of his doubts and fears. Furthermore, his motive for the secrecy was a laudable one — the fear of stumbling the generation of God's children.

Too often confidence is obscured and doubt exposed to the double detriment of the weak in the household of faith.

Normally, Asaph was a man of the sanctuary (Ps. 50 and Ps. 77), and when in the turmoil of doubt he visited the place of the presence of God, a great revelation awaited him. "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places" (vv. 17-20).

The shock-treatment of seeing things from the viewpoint of the sanctuary brought him back to his spiritual senses. Those very things which he had coveted now appeared as the instruments of doom for their possessors. The ungodly with their riches, health, and apparent immunity from trouble, seemed to be firmly entrenched against every emergency; but a moment in the holy places dispelled the illusion.

The “slippery places” will precipitate the proud, presumptuous, and prosperous unbeliever into desolation and the terrors that consume. In that moment of illumination, Asaph left the low level of reason for the higher level of faith; hence, recovery was assured.

A Sensitive Spirit Recovered

“Thus my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee” (vv. 21-23). To the conviction of God’s goodness is now added that of his own folly. There is deep grief of heart for his ignorance and unbelief, and also a ready confession of his sin.

Such God-given glimpses of divine and eternal values are humbling to the Heaven-bound pilgrim. They are needful, however, to remind us of the vanity of those things to which we are prone to aspire and which destroy our usefulness for God.

Spiritual Powers Recovered

It is inspiring to trace the renewed operations of the sister graces, faith, hope, and love in Asaph, the restored servant of God.

Faith is active, claiming the place of nearness and security. “Nevertheless, I am continually with thee” — although he had digressed. “Thou hast holden my right hand” — the secret of his recovery (vv. 23-24).

Hope is quickened and its vision clarified. “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory.” The future pilgrimage is assured by his Counsellor and Guide, and he can gladly anticipate the

welcome His Lord will give him in the better land. What a contrast to the fate of the ungodly!

Love, too, is throbbing afresh in his heart. Its warm confessions ascend like incense from the golden altar in the holy place. He must tell the Lord of His unrivalled sufficiency to meet every longing and not only the supreme, but the exclusive place in his soul's affection. "Whom have I …? none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." And He is sufficient too, to dispel every fear and destroy every foe (vv. 26-27).

Place of Service Recovered

"It is good for me to draw near unto God. I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell all Thy works" (v. 28). This concluding verse (from the Revised Version) shows that Asaph's sanctuary experience included not only a vision of the doom of the perishing, a realization of his own ignorance, and a conviction of God's abounding goodness to His people, but also a determined and holy resolve.

Right there in the sanctuary, he made the Lord Himself his hiding place, with a view to being equipped to tell out the wisdom of God's ways.

There is absolutely no problem of the Christian life that will not yield to this treatment. In all our perplexities, griefs, disappointments, and losses, let us recall this illuminating episode. "When I thought to understand this, it was too difficult in my eyes, until I went into the sanctuary of God." It is by faith we understand, and are enabled to say, "Truly God is good!" This then brings a fresh determination to draw near unto God, to hide in

His strength, and to go forth to bear witness to His works.

“Alas that I should ever

Have failed in love to Thee,

The only One who never

Forgot or slighted me.

O for a heart to love

Thee More truly as I ought;

And nothing place above Thee,

In deed, or word, or thought.”