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Holiness Writers

**THE QUEST OF
THE SPIRIT**

By

Ralph Earle

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

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Prelude:

THE QUEST BEGUN

But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry —
O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me!"

— The Holy Grail—

Alfred, Lord Tennyson has immortalized for us the ancient legend of the Holy Grail. He pictures to us one of King Arthur's brave knights, now with cowl instead of helmet, seated near the monastery in conversation with a fellow monk, Ambrosius by name. Questioned the latter:

"Tell me, what drove thee from the Table, Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?"

There, under the old yew-tree, Sir Percivale related the tale of the quest for the Holy Grail. The opening lines are beautiful and full of significance.

"Nay," said the knight; "for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vain glories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls, and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to heaven."

Percivale went on to tell the old legendary tradition that Joseph of Arimathea brought the cup of the Last Supper to Glastonbury. There it had stayed, working miracles and healing all who touched it. But the times grew evil, so evil that one day the "holy cup was caught away to heaven, and disappear'd."

At Sir Arthur's court there was a very godly nun, "a holy maid." She claimed to have seen the Holy Grail, and related the vision to Percivale, her brother. But it was Galahad, the noblest knight of the Round Table, who was arrested by the maiden's story. Soon after, while the knights were seated one day in the hall, there was vouchsafed to him also a vision of the Holy Grail. In his vow to seek till he found it he was joined by many of the knights who were present. After one last combat of arms they rode away in quest of the sacred cup.

The spirit of Sir Galahad is well expressed in the closing lines of Tennyson's poem bearing the name of that noble knight. The entire poem breathes the atmosphere in which he pursued the quest.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
"O just and faithful knight of God!
Ride on! the prize is near.
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the Holy Grail.

It was on a beautiful hillside in northern Vermont. Below us stretched a lovely valley, with a little village hidden in its midst. Far away to the west we could see range after range of hills — the foothills of the Green Mountains — reaching as far as eye could see. The August sun pursued its way down the sloping sky toward the distant horizon.

My friend and I were in close conversation. Not fellow monks were we, but fellow ministers. He opened his heart to me. He was dissatisfied, disillusioned. The spontaneous joy of his early Christian experience and the eager expectancy of his seminary days seemed to have turned to dust and ashes. He said he lacked power in his ministry and pleasure in his prayer life. He felt that what he needed was the Holy Spirit, filling his heart and thrilling his soul.

I had listened in amazement the previous Sunday morning as he made the same confession from his own pulpit to his little flock. I felt he had diagnosed his difficulty correctly. He needed the Holy Spirit in his life in a larger measure than he had yet found Him.

I told him of the vision that had come to me when I surrendered my heart and life fully to the Divine Personality, to be used of Him in whatever way He desired. I told him of the joy and blessing that I had experienced in my life and ministry from that hour on. And I urged him to begin the quest — the quest of the Holy Spirit. To my reader I would quote the words of the maiden to Sir Galahad:

"Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee King
Far in the spiritual city."

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Chapter 1

GLIMPSES OF THE DAWN

Pitch darkness covered the landscape as we drove along the highway in central New York. The crescent moon had already set in the west, and now nothing could be seen outside the range of our headlights except the little stars twinkling overhead. It was the first experience of my brother and myself, still in our teens, in long-distance driving at night.

As we drove along, talking bravely in the effort to keep ourselves awake, we watched eagerly for the first signs of dawn. After what seemed ages, streaks of gray began to appear on the eastern horizon. Rapidly these widened and brightened until they seemed to call aloud as heralds of the approaching day. The fields and farmhouses now stood out in bold relief. Soon the gray was tinged with rose, and then the sun pushed its smiling face over the rim of the earth. Night had surrendered her scepter to day.

It was thus at the dawn of creation. Written over the abysmal void was the one word — chaos. But the Spirit of God, Herald of better things, brooded over the face of the deep. Soon the voice of the Eternal was heard, "Light be!" — and, quick as the turn of a switch, light was.

It was thus again at the dawn of revelation. Men's minds had been darkened by sin and disobedience, until night had resumed its sway. Men's consciences had become hard and callused, until they were no longer pricked by the sense of sin. The lights had gone out.

But once more the Spirit of God brooded, this time over the human mind. Moses heard the voice of God at the flaming bush. And then the Spirit illuminated his mind and moved him to write, so that others might hear that same voice speaking to them. The sacred scriptures of the Hebrews began to make their appearance.

A millennium of intermittent revelations went by. Once more the lights grew dim. Four hundred years of apparent silence passed into history. But God had not forgotten. He spoke again.

It was certainly as a herald of the dawn that the angel appeared to Mary. He announced the soon coming of the Sun of Righteousness, who would arise with healing in His wings. How was it to come to pass? "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God." ^[1] Joseph had this truth confirmed to him when the angel assured him, "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." ^[2]

The picture portrayed here is similar to that which we have noticed in the early story of creation, a scene described for us beautifully by Milton.

Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like, sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And madest it pregnant.

It is that of which the Psalmist wrote: "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created." The Holy Spirit is "the quickening energy of the Divine Nature." He it is who brings life into being.

As soon as we pass on from the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, we meet a most significant statement with regard to the Holy Spirit. It is found in the preaching of John the Baptist and is recorded in all three of the Synoptics. We give the briefest form, as found in Mark 1:7, 8 (A.S.V.): "There cometh after me he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I baptized you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

In the light of this statement made by John the Baptist concerning Jesus mission, it is hard to see any justification for the considerable emphasis in the Christian Church at large on water baptism and the almost complete absence of any teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We are very careful to see that all of our prospective members receive water baptism, but we say nothing to them about being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Are we not in danger of following the Pharisees in their absorption with the outward and their neglect of the inward? Jesus once said to them, "These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." We are not to neglect our duty with regard to water baptism; but neither have we any right in the sight of God to pass over in silence the much more vital subject of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

But someone will say that all Christians are, of necessity, baptized with the Holy Spirit. In a recent conversation with the minister of another denomination he said that among his people it seemed to be assumed that all the young people growing up in the church were automatically Christians. No effort was made to ensure their definite conversion. I asked him if he did not think that was an assumption which amounted to presumption. He assured me that he did.

I would give the same answer to any who might state the position referred to above. As we look at the average Christians in our churches everywhere, is it not presumption — or blindness — to say that they are all baptized with the Holy Spirit? Do we not empty this language of all meaning when we make such a claim?

When Jesus was baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him "in a bodily form, as a dove." This fact, again, is recorded by all three of the Synoptic writers.

One other question confronts us in the study of this passage. It is this: If Jesus did not begin His public ministry until the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him, what right have we to hurry out in His service without the consciousness of the Spirit's power in our lives? It seems like another case of rushing in where angels fear to tread." We are told of Jesus that, after His baptism and temptation, He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." If Jesus needed this power for His ministry, how sorely do we!

There is one more passage, also recorded by all three Synoptics, which we should notice before we conclude this chapter. It is the statement of Jesus that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would never be forgiven. ^[3]

It appears that Jesus here uses the term Holy Spirit as equivalent for Deity. ^[4] The Holy Spirit is the power of God, the Spirit of God, who was operating through Jesus in miracle-working power. They might look upon Jesus as a man and be forgiven for insulting Him. On the cross Jesus prayed that they might. But to call the work of the Holy Spirit the work of Satan was an insult to God which could not be forgiven. It will be remembered that Peter charged Ananias with lying to the Holy Spirit and then with lying to God. They were evidently equivalent ideas in his mind. The deity of the Holy Spirit is thus clearly indicated. He has come to earth to save men, and it is suicide to reject Him.

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Chapter 2

SUNRISE — AND AN ECLIPSE

As we open the pages of John's Gospel we gaze upon the sunrise of Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit. There are the rosy lines at first — for John quotes the Baptist as saying: "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him"; and this is the one "that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit." ^[5]

The sun seems to be peeking above the horizon as we listen to Jesus talking with Nicodemus. Here was a man who was religious in his thinking and scrupulous in his outward life, "the teacher of Israel." ^[6] But Jesus confronted him at once with a statement which well-nigh hurled him from his religious pedestal: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ^[7] When Nicodemus expressed his incredulity, Jesus explained that by the new birth He meant that one should be "born of water and the Spirit." And then He enlarged His explanation by the use of an analogy. "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

One cannot help venturing the question as to whether our average church member is truly "born of the Spirit," to say nothing of being baptized with the Spirit. Is there any evidence of such an experience? Jesus indicated that the new birth would be an observable phenomenon. It is true that one does not see the wind; but it is also true that one may see the effects of the wind. And where there is wind there will be some manifestation of it: there will be a consciousness of its presence on the part of the observer. Jesus said that it was so with everyone who is born of the Spirit. There will be a manifestation of the Spirit's presence in the life of the born-again individual. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Spiritual life in the heart comes only by means of the new birth. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can create a new moral and spiritual nature in the human soul. And that new nature will manifest itself in the life. God give us more "twice-born men"!

Jesus also indicated that there was an element of mystery in the new birth. "Thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Every real Christian is a true mystic: he is in touch with Deity. And for that very reason he is a mystery, an enigma to once-born souls. The true Christian must ever remain incomprehensible to the man of the world.

One more passage we want to examine in our search before we come to the last discourse of Jesus. It was on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus gave to the assembled crowd the same invitation that He had given to that lonely soul by Jacob's well. "If any man thirst, let him come

unto me and drink." And then He added: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." ^[8]

To the woman at the well Jesus had said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well [Greek, spring] of water springing up unto eternal life." ^[9] To the weary, thirsty soul Jesus made the offer that He would install within her a bubbling fountain of pure, living water. And with such resources she need never thirst again.

In Jesus' earnest call to the crowd, He enlarged the figure used in His conversation with the woman. This water of life is not alone for our own personal satisfaction and refreshment; it is for the blessing of others. Out of the Christian's heart should flow rivers of living water.

The hermit who seeks the solitude of his own thoughts far from the haunts of men has missed the true Christian path. Jesus did not say, "Follow Me into the desert, and bury yourself there in oblivion" — an oblivion which is oblivious to the crying needs of the hordes of hungry humanity. He said, "Follow me"; and He proceeded to lead the way down roads made dusty by the hurrying feet of the multitudes, and through thoroughfares made busy by the assembled pilgrims at the feasts and the buyers and sellers at the market place. His was no monastic life. Selfishness and self-satisfaction had no place in His heart — and should have no place in His Church. His was the outpoured life.

They only love who serve.
And love's service is measured by love's sacrifice:
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine outpoured.

But how may we, too, live for the blessing and helping of others? The explanation of the Evangelist gives the answer. "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." ^[10] The Spirit-filled life is the life of blessing and of loving service for others.

We are faced with the two alternatives; we must make our choice. It is either the Spirit life or the selfish life. As we look at the lives of the great saints and servants of God and marvel at the richness and power of their ministries, we are compelled to recognize that it was the Spirit pouring himself out through their personalities that made them a blessing to humanity. But the Spirit can only flow out in life-giving streams from the hearts of those who have received Him. We must be filled with the Spirit before we can overflow. And it is the overflowing experience that reaches others.

How are we to gain this experience? How may we be filled with the Spirit? In exactly the same way that Paul did, and every Pauline Christian in modern times. Self must be crucified; Christ must be crowned. Then, and then only, can we be filled with the Spirit.

Emptied of self, and filled with Thee;
Spirit of God, abide with me.
Help me to die to self and sin.
Spirit divine, come in, come in.

It is at the scene in the Upper Room that the sunlight at last seems to break over the landscape in warmth and beauty. Here we do not have only glimpses of truth concerning the Holy Spirit. Rather, in the solemnity of His last hours with His disciples Jesus opened His heart to them and told them about the One whom He would send to take His place with them. He told them so clearly and definitely that the disciples exclaimed, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no dark saying."^[11] Sunrise had come at last.

Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to the disciples at this time as another Comforter." He was about to leave them and return to the Father. But He would not leave them orphans; He would send the Holy Spirit to take care of them. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you."^[12]

The Greek word Paraclete means Helper, or Advocate. "Another" here signifies another of the same kind, not of a different kind.

Jesus' use of the term "another" (Greek, *allos*) would of itself militate strongly against any doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a divine influence rather than as a person. Jesus was a personal Friend and Companion of His disciples. He said that the Spirit would be another Helper of the same kind. To the disciples that could mean nothing less than a personal Associate and Leader. They would have been left "orphans" if the new Comforter were not a person.

"The Father . . . shall give." Christ was God's great gift to the world; the Holy Spirit is God's special gift to the Church. Christ was given to save the world; the Holy Spirit was given to keep the Church. The Spirit was to be Christ's Successor on earth as the leader of His disciples.

The time had come for Jesus to exchange His earthly ministry for a heavenly one. The need of this is apparent at once when we visualize the growth of the Church into a large world community. Obviously, it would be physically impossible for Jesus Christ to be present everywhere with His disciples if He were still in the flesh. His promise to be with us always can be fulfilled only in the spiritual realm. And that is exactly why He returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, "that he may be with you forever." The Spirit, as such, is not subject to material laws; space holds no difficulties for Him.

And yet the Holy Spirit's coming did not mean the cessation of fellowship with Christ. Jesus said, "I come unto you" (v. 18), and this statement is universally interpreted as applying to the coming of the Spirit. It was by means of the Spirit that Jesus returned in greater fullness and power to His disciples. That they were fully conscious of His presence is indicated by the history of the apostolic Church.

The Holy Spirit is an unknown Stranger to people outside the Kingdom. Jesus said of Him, "whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him." The world is incapacitated for the reception of the Spirit. This is not an arbitrary dictum of divine sovereignty; it

is a moral and spiritual impossibility. It is not that God withholds; it is rather that men do not have the capacity to receive.

The world "beholdeth him not." How true that is! Sin clouds the vision. It is the pure in heart who see God — and they alone. Sin in the heart is like dust in the eyes. If we would see God, we must ask Him to cleanse away the sin that walls us in and hides the vision of the Infinite. Sin separates. It is a barrier over which we cannot climb and through which we cannot see. But God, in answer to our cry for help, can remove the partition that separates us from His presence. Then shall we behold Him.

Why is it, then, that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit? Jesus' answer is that "it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him." Its eyes are closed to everything of the spiritual Kingdom. How utterly oblivious is the average man of the street to the presence of the Spirit of God! Talk to him about spiritual things and he looks at you blankly, or hurries on. No eyes to see. No heart to feel. To spiritual things he is dead. The Spirit of God is near, just as truly as the air is filled with radio waves, but he has no receiving set. An empty wooden box cannot catch the waves from the ether and convert them into beautiful music. And no more can the unawakened soul catch the whispers of the Spirit and translate them as music from heaven or a message from God. The impossibility lies on the human side, not on the divine.

Three times in the last discourse of Jesus — once each in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John's Gospel — the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth." ^[13] As the Spirit of Truth there are three things which He will do: "He shall teach you all things"; "He shall bear witness of me"; "He shall guide you into all the truth." ^[14] He is the personal Tutor of the Christian.

It ought to be sufficiently evident without further argument that all these things attributed to the Spirit are functions of personality. An impersonal force does not perform the activities which are here predicated of the Spirit of God. Jesus told the disciples that this new Advocate would be to them a Teacher, a Witness, and a Guide. We cannot imagine the disciples envisioning anything less than a personal presence with them as the fulfillment of Jesus' words. And He evidently intended to convey just that conception to their minds.

The first and third statements quoted above refer definitely to the Spirit's ministry to the Christian. They are closely related in meaning. With the Spirit of Truth as our Teacher we need not err in our thinking. But it is not only negative protection from error; it is also positive guidance into all truth. What a wonderful promise! If Mark Hopkins on the opposite end of a log from a student constituted a university, what could be said of the continual abiding presence of the Spirit of Truth in a human heart? If ever there were a royal road to knowledge, this would be it.

But these two statements of Jesus do not imply infallibility in the Spirit-filled Christian. Right here is where many a person has gone astray. To claim such an inspiration from the Holy Spirit that we assert the impossibility of our being mistaken is sheer fanaticism.

The difficulty here lies in a failure to recognize the essential nature of education. One might have the best teacher in the world and yet have a limited understanding of the truth. Jesus himself had to

say to His disciples (literally, learners) at the close of three years as their Teacher: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." The limitation was not on His side; it was on theirs.

But there is no limitation to what the Spirit can teach us if we are content to be taught. It is "all things," "all truth." But — it takes time to learn. If we are willing to recognize that fact and submit patiently to the Spirit's guidance, He will not disappoint us.

Education requires not only a teacher, but application and attention on the part of the student. May it not be that we are not apt pupils of the Spirit because we fail to apply ourselves seriously to the task of learning of Him? Do we think that other things in life are of greater importance and value than the privilege of learning "all things" from the Spirit of Truth?

But the teacher may be earnest and the student eager, and yet the result be failure. The environment plays a considerable part in education. We do not stand on a busy street corner to study our lessons, especially if the subject matter is profound. Rather, we seek the quiet and seclusion of a library or study room.

It should be so in our spiritual education. If we would learn the deeper things of divine truth, there must be times of unhurried meditation, periods when our souls are either isolated or insulated from the world. Let us include such times in our quest of the Spirit.

The aged mother of one of the saintliest preachers of the last generation once remarked to a friend of mine, "It takes time to learn the things of the Spirit." That statement has stayed with me as one of the most significant truths about Christian experience. If we took as much time for our spiritual education as we do for secular learning, might there not be a possibility of producing some spiritual giants even in our day? But — it takes time.

"He shall bear witness of me." The context suggests that the primary reference of this statement is to the Spirit's ministry toward the world. He would witness to a world which crucified Jesus that their victim was the Son of God, the Messiah.

But the declaration may also be taken as referring to a ministry of the Spirit toward the disciples. He would witness to them that Jesus was really the Christ. Then, too, the Holy Spirit would witness through them to the world. As He witnessed to their hearts, they would testify to the world.

The Spirit's subordination in office to the Father and Son is revealed in three of Jesus' statements. He says, "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name"; "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father"; and again, "I will send him unto you."^[15]

It will be noted that the pronouns referring to the Spirit are sometimes masculine, sometimes neuter. Considerable confusion has resulted from this and no little discussion with regard to the bearing of this fact on the question of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Is the Spirit "he" or "it"?

The facts of the case are that anyone who reads these three chapters through carefully in the Greek will discover that the neuter forms are used only when grammatical usage absolutely requires it. The Greek word for spirit (*pneuma*) is a neuter noun. Pronouns, then, which have *pneuma* for their immediate antecedent must necessarily be neuter in form. But whenever grammatical usage permits it at all the masculine gender is always used for pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit.

It has sometimes been asked how the Evangelists could remember Jesus' words and quote them at such length as we find them, for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount.

The complete answer to the question should take account of Jesus' own statement in John 14:26 "He shall . . . bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." Part of the work of the Spirit as Inspirer of holy writ was to bring again to the minds of the apostles the words that Jesus had spoken to them years before.

But not only is the Holy Spirit a Helper of the memory; He is the only infallible Revealer of the future. "He shall declare unto you the things that are to come." Probably this statement should also be taken as referring primarily to the inspiration of the New Testament scriptures.

But I think it is fair to assume that we have here also a reference to the Spirit's ministry in warning us of dangers ahead, preparing us for trials and severe crises, and even giving us certain glimpses of God's plan for our future lives. Every Spirit-filled Christian has at times been conscious of this gracious and wonderful ministry of the abiding Comforter.

One of the interesting passages in Jesus' last discourse is that which describes the Holy Spirit's ministry toward the world. "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." ^[16]

The rendering of the Authorized Version here is unquestionably weak. The picture engendered by the term "reprove" is a very different one from that suggested by "convict." The former may be a mild word from mother to child; the second is a courtroom scene.

Everyone who is interested in evangelism should pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit shall convict men's hearts of sin. That is one of the crying needs of the hour. We have church programs and activities of almost every kind. And yet hundreds of churches every year report no conversions to Christ. What is the reason for this failure? Is it not because we are depending too much on our own efforts and plans and too little on the effective work of the Spirit? When we waken to the fact that we are utterly powerless to rescue men from the blindness and bondage of sin until the Holy Spirit convicts them, then, and then only, we may look for souls to be saved and the work of God to prosper. The sinner will never sue for pardon until he stands condemned, conscious of his sin and guilt as the result of the Spirit's conviction.

Many leaders today are declaring that what we need is a recovery of the sense of sin. But most of them seem unable to tell us how such a result may be achieved. Jesus has given us the only solution to the problem — "He, when he is come, will convict the world." When He is come, fully, into your

heart and mine; when He is come, powerfully, into our church services and programs; when He is come, He will do things.

We have said that in the Last Discourse we have the sunrise of Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit. But that sunrise was followed quickly by an eclipse — a total eclipse. To the horror and amazement of the eleven disciples their Leader was arrested in the dark of night and hurried away to be tried by the highest tribunal of the nation. Trial followed trial in bewildering succession, until finally Pilate handed Jesus over to those who were thirsting for His blood. The darkness that covered the landscape that momentous afternoon was no deeper than the darkness that filled the souls of the distracted disciples. Their Sun had gone into eclipse.

But, fortunately, the eclipse did not last long. After hours that seemed ages — when the disciples felt as though they had been left "orphans" — Jesus appeared on the scene again. It was like a new sunrise for them.

The disciples — ten of them — were gathered together in a room when that joyful meeting took place. The doors were shut for fear of the Jews. But suddenly, without warning, Jesus stood in their midst. Mingled feelings of fear and joy overwhelmed the disciples as they saw their supposedly dead Leader standing before them. But a comforting "Peace be unto you" calmed their fears and filled their hearts with gladness.

It was then that Jesus reminded them that theirs was to be a life of service. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." What transcendent honor, yet tremendous responsibility! Paul caught this vision when he said that we are "ambassadors for Christ."

But those disciples were not fit yet to represent the high court of heaven. Jesus knew what their need was. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." ^[17]

Little did the disciples at that time realize the significance of that simple act and those few words. But they were soon to find out. God's promises are not always fulfilled the same hour or day that they are given to us. Habakkuk the prophet was instructed by Jehovah: "For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay." ^[18]

And so it was with that small group of disciples on that Resurrection evening. Fifty days, and then the Feast of Pentecost — and their Pentecost. Simon of the weak knees and those of the fleeing feet were transformed into spiritual giants — when He, the promised One, came. Then, and not until then, was it true that from within them there flowed rivers, floods, of living waters to bless the thousands that gathered to hear their message.

"When he is come." Has He come — to you?

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By
Ralph Earle

Chapter 3 THE BRIGHTENING DAY

There is something fresh and flowing about Christianity, something powerful and pervading, something pleasant and purifying. Man is always prone to throttle and bottle it, until it becomes static and stagnant. But as it comes direct from its source in God it is spontaneous, living, life-giving.

Christianity is neither a creed nor an organization. It is a life — a new life to be received within and a new life to be lived without. Too often we want to force this new life into grooves and molds. But we pay an awful price for the process. To still it is to kill it. What was alive, pulsating, vibrating becomes stiff, rigid — and dead.

Every great religious movement has had three stages in its history. In the first it is truly a movement. "Progress" is its watchword; "Advance!" its war cry. Fervency, zeal, intensity — these mark its adherents. Consciousness of divine leadership is strong; human leaders take second place. The moving of the Spirit — this is the central thing.

In the second stage the movement becomes an institution. Regimentation takes place increasingly, until organization overshadows everything else. The creed becomes settled, the organization fixed. Interest centers more and more in buildings. Human plans and programs take the place of the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

But what is the result of all this? The early enthusiasm and spontaneity begin to wane. Testimonies become stereotyped; sermons are dry and dusty. Instead of "Thus saith the Lord," it is the opinions of philosophers and scientists that are fed to the people in the pew. Psychology takes the place of pneumatology — we have found a way to explain all the phenomena of Christian experience on a purely naturalistic basis; there is no longer any place for the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. And last, but not least, the preacher reads the news commentators with avidity, while his Bible commentaries collect dust on the shelves of his study.

"Institution" is defined in the dictionary as "that which is established." The story is told of one good church member who sent his little daughter to Sunday school, while he sat in his easy chair at home reading the Sunday paper. One day the little girl begged her father to accompany her; "Why don't you go to church, too, Daddy?" "Oh," answered the complacent father, "I'm established."

The next day daddy and daughter were riding along in the old democrat wagon when Jim, the mule, decided to cease his perambulating. He planted his four feet firmly and refused to change his mind with regard to the matter. When the irate father had about exhausted his stock of persuasive methods, the little girl offered a timely suggestion. "Daddy," she said, "it looks to me as if Jim's established."

One summer we walked through that beautiful gorge in the White Mountains known as Lost River. It seems that once a glacial stream flowed that way, eating its way through rock and soil. As we followed the winding path of that ancient river — crawling into eerie caves and gazing at amazing potholes — we were impressed with the tremendous piece of work done by that one stream. It was almost incredible.

But today Lost River is just an institution. The river itself is gone, and the deep gorge it cut remains as a monument to its labors.

Is it not true that many churches have already lost that mighty moving of the Spirit of God that convicts and converts? Where once were heard the groans of penitent sinners and the cries of newborn souls, now everything is quiet — and lifeless.

But we mustn't forget to finish our sermon! Thirdly, the institution becomes a museum — a place where we gather to worship the past. We visit the collection of mummies and gaze reverently at the statues of the heroes of history. The bygone days — in those days there were giants in the earth! And we forget what made those men great, the Spirit of God coming upon them mightily; forget that we, too, may have that same power today.

Is it not true that every religious movement sooner or later reaches the stage in which it worships the bones of its dead? Its display cases are filled with dead men's bones rather than living infants and growing children. We celebrate the epoch-making conversion of a John Wesley and the Spirit-empowered evangelism of a D. L. Moody; and rightly so. But do we realize that our greatest need today is for multitudinous repetitions of that heartwarming experience, and for Spirit-filled evangelists, men whose hearts are aflame with the love of God and a passion for lost souls? We have substituted education for evangelism; and we have produced civilized sinners. It is high time we learned that we cannot educate sin out of the human heart; it must be purged, cleansed, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Our greatest need today is for Him.

It was so with the disciples of long ago. They were being left with the staggering task of evangelizing the world. Just a handful of humble fishermen and common folk — how could they do it?

Jesus, the One who assigned them the task, knew what was the solution of the problem. And so "he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father . . . for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." ^[19]

They needed this not only for power, but also for understanding spiritual things. In spite of listening to Jesus' teachings for three years and associating with Him closely, these disciples were still looking for an earthly Messianic kingdom. "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" The resurrection of Christ and His post-resurrection ministry had not clarified their thinking on this point.

Jesus' answer to their question was: "It is not for you to know times or seasons . . . But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

The late President Floyd W. Nease, of Eastern Nazarene College, used this passage as the text for his last baccalaureate sermon, shortly before his untimely death. His subject was "Not Knowledge, but Power." For his closing illustration he told an imaginary story which I should like to repeat.

A man had just purchased a mill property. He hired his help, enough to man all the machines. He had his raw materials in stock, and all was ready to begin. But — nothing happened.

The man studied the situation a bit, and then decided that the property looked a little dilapidated. So he called in carpenters and painters, and soon the buildings were beautiful and clean. Once more the levers were thrown; still no results.

After a consultation with some friends the proprietor decided that what was needed was the presence of some musical talent. So he hired an expensive quartet and installed a vested choir. Soon the mill was filled with beautiful music; but still the machinery wouldn't run.

Finally an old man came along, dressed in greasy overalls. He saw the mill owner pacing up and down in front of his factory, evidently very much distressed. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Well, let me look around a bit. Perhaps I can help you. Where's your powerhouse?"

The old man made his way down to a small building which had been neglected till now. He opened the door and looked in. No signs of life. But soon the boiler was full of water and a hot fire roaring underneath. After a while steam began sizzling in the pipes. "Now," said the old man, "try your machinery." And soon the place was bustling with activity and the proprietor had products to sell.

A perfectly ridiculous illustration! Yes, but what about the church that tries every kind of man-made plan and scheme for running its work and neglects the divine plan — the baptism with the Holy Spirit? One is no more foolish than the other.

When we increase our organization we do not increase our power. More organization means simply more machinery. But unless we add to the power in proportion as we add machinery we are in danger of a standstill. Over-organization is like loading down the horse so heavily with harness that he can't walk. What we need today is not more gilded harness, but more horse. The Early Church had very little organization, but it had a power for which we might well pray today.

Acts 1:8 is one of the clarion calls of Christianity. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

This verse gives us both the power and the program of the Church. Its power — the Holy Spirit upon the Christians. Its program — world evangelism. The Church has lagged in the program whenever it has lacked in the power.

1. PENTECOST AND PETER

The Book of Acts is a demonstration of the truth of Jesus' statement in 1:8. This demonstration began on the Day of Pentecost. It was then that weak-kneed disciples were transformed into fearless witnesses. And the witness which began there was, in a few short years, carried to the uttermost part of the then-known world.

How did the Holy Spirit come? Just as Jesus' teaching was confirmed to the Jews as divine in origin by means of miraculous works, so the coming of the Spirit was validated to the waiting group by certain accompanying signs. There was evidence for the eyes — tongues of fire appearing and one flame sitting on each person. There was evidence for the ears — a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind."

But all of this was peripheral. The central thing was: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Even the speaking in tongues was simply an accompanying sign. And let it be remembered that it was the Jews who required a sign, not the Gentiles. We are doubtless assuming too much when we take it for granted that these signs, or any one of them, were intended for all time.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was well timed. A large crowd had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. When the day of the feast came, the Spirit fell on the group in the Upper Room. Evidently there was considerable demonstration taking place, sufficient to draw a crowd of curious spectators. Many of these began to mock the actions of the disciples.

It was then that Peter took his true place as leader of the group of disciples. He had often been outspoken before. But too frequently he had said the wrong thing, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, and when he urged Jesus not to go to the Cross. Then, too, he had proved to be a weak coward when he faced the accusations of a mere maid. He had denied his Lord.

But something had taken place. Two things Peter had gained from that experience in the Upper Room — courage, and wisdom. There he stood, facing the contemptuous mockers and making his defense of the disciples. Their actions were not due to drinking. God had poured out His Spirit on them, in fulfillment of His promise through Joel the prophet.

One of the offices of the Holy Spirit is that of Interpreter. Peter began at once on the Day of Pentecost to manifest a clear insight into the meaning of Old Testament scriptures. Philip was able to show the Ethiopian eunuch how Christ, the suffering Messiah, was portrayed in the fifty-third of Isaiah. Paul quotes frequently from the older scriptures and interprets their Christian application and fulfillment. The Epistle to the Hebrews is saturated with Old Testament types and symbols, going back to Sinai and the building of the Tabernacle, with the priestly system inaugurated there. Without the illumination of the Spirit it would be difficult to understand the Old Testament and its relation to the New. The Holy Spirit is the best Teacher of Bible hermeneutics.

One of the prominent points in both of Peter's sermons, recorded in the second and third chapters of Acts, is the direct and fearless way in which he charges the Jews with the murder of their Messiah.

The Greek here is emphatic. "You, you are the ones that crucified the Christ." [20] "You asked a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life."

Bold words these! Something happened to Peter's backbone when the Holy Spirit fell on him. Jelly was turned to steel. Why? Because he had a Helper within. It was not that Peter was dehumanized, or that his personality was altered radically. Rather, he had a divine Presence within him now which helped him to meet all emergencies and come off victorious.

Jesus had said that the Paraclete would convict the world of sin when He came. And now He had come. Would the promise prove true? The record of the Day of Pentecost more than answers the question. Such conviction struck the assembled crowd that no more preaching was necessary. The listeners began to cry, "What shall we do?" And that day three thousand were converted.

Those who disdain mass evangelism must, perforce, argue against the Scriptures and reject God's appointed method for the salvation of souls. How can anyone fail to see this, when the Holy Spirit so mightily honored Peter's strong evangelistic preaching by pouring out conviction on that vast crowd?

Brethren, let us face this matter squarely. There is a great deal of criticism today of mass evangelism. We are told that camp meetings and revival services are a thing of the past. Our present stage of culture and learning has outmoded them. Religious education has forever supplanted revivalism.

Let me ask one question, friend; give it your careful consideration. If we refuse to allow any place for evangelistic preaching to the masses, are we not effectually — and criminally — hindering the Holy Spirit from reaching the people with salvation? Are we not shutting the door in His face as He comes forward to speak conviction to sinners? He is here to convict and convert, but He works through the preaching of the gospel.

Three thousand converts on the Day of Pentecost — the number soon increased to five thousand, and multitudes more later on! How? By mass evangelism. Why? Because the Holy Spirit was thus given an opportunity of moving on the hearts of great numbers of people, as they listened to the preaching of God's Word. What a terrific responsibility for the loss of men's souls is incurred by those who, in the face of these facts, oppose mass evangelism! It is bad enough to reject the offer of salvation for one's own soul. But it is a thousand times worse to shut the door of salvation to hungry, weary, sin-sick humanity.

The question may be asked fairly whether the Church has ever made any marked progress spiritually and numerically without mass evangelism. Study the pages of early church history, up to the time of Augustine, and see the crowds being reached with the gospel. What was one of the main characteristics of the so-called Dark Ages? Was it not the absence of preaching? Was not the success of the Protestant Reformation due largely to the revival of preaching? And where else on the pages of church history do we read of such remarkable growth and rapid enlargement as in the case of the Wesleyan movement? Was it not because Wesley and his co-workers majored on evangelistic preaching, made that the heart of their movement?

It seems to me that we have had plenty of demonstration, from the Day of Pentecost to the present hour, to convince any open mind that God has always used mass evangelism to extend the kingdom of Christ. Other phases of Christian work have their place. But both the New Testament and Christian history since the first century declare with united testimony that evangelistic preaching is God's chosen method for reaching the lost with the news of salvation. What a pity that men have to cavil and argue while millions of souls pass by our doors — without Christ, without God!

The new-found boldness of Peter not only enabled him to face a mocking crowd of thousands, but it also gave him courage to stand his ground before a small, but powerful, group of ecclesiastics. There was no body more feared by the Jews of that day than the great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. It is true that the Roman government had deprived this official body of its prerogative of capital punishment. But it is also true that this same council had succeeded in securing the death of Jesus. Peter had been sufficiently afraid of its power that he had become panic-stricken when his association with Jesus was mentioned.

But now Peter stood face to face with those who had crucified his Lord. There were the high priest and his seventy councilors, seated in a semicircle, facing Peter and John. The two apostles were prisoners at the bar.

Peter, as usual, took the witness stand. There was no mistaking the attitude of the members of the council. No impartial jurors, these. They were all eager to play the part of a prosecuting attorney. There they sat with dark, foreboding frowns. The sentence of cruel punishment was already written across their foreheads, easy to read at a glance. There were the twenty-four priests — wealthy, powerful Sadducees, concerned mainly with guarding their religious and political prestige. There, too, were the twenty-four elders, representing the different shades of opinion in contemporary Judaism. And lastly there were the twenty-two scribes — proud, narrow, intolerant Pharisees Peter's prospects did not look very pleasant.

But Peter did not stand alone that day, as he faced a hostile judge and jury. He had an Advocate to plead his cause, an Attorney for the defense. In answer to the imperious demand, "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" Peter, "filled with the Holy Spirit," allied himself boldly with the crucified Christ. He said in substance:

"We are not malefactors, but benefactors. Why do you hale us into court for doing a good deed to an impotent man? But if you want to know by what means he was healed, I will tell you. It was through the power and name of Jesus."

Peter was not only unafraid before this group of Christ-haters. He was willing to take his stand before the whole Jewish nation. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole."

What an indictment! Here the Sanhedrin had summoned these "unlearned and ignorant" fishermen to answer the charge of heresy, and teaching without proper credentials. And now the prisoner has arraigned the judge and jury on a much more serious charge, that of murder.

It was a master stroke. But it was not the genius or native courage of Peter that effected it. The explanation of the matter lies in that phrase, "filled with the Holy Spirit." It was not Peter alone now. It was Peter plus God.

There is one cure for weakness in the Christian life that carries with it the guarantee of Deity. The Spirit-filled man is never a weakling. "Be filled with the Spirit"; that is the Great Physician's prescription for weakness.

But Peter was not the only one who needed this infusion of divine strength for those strenuous times. The entire Christian Church would soon be under the fire of the enemies guns. So when the two apostles reported to their own group the attitude of the Sanhedrin, a special prayer meeting was held.

Several features of this prayer meeting are worth noting. In the first place, it is recorded that the disciples "lifted up their voice to God with one accord." Here was united praying. Jesus once said that if two believers were agreed in asking for a certain thing, their request would be granted. But here was a whole company of consecrated Christians praying "with one accord" for the same thing. They were united in both spirit and petition.

But for what were they praying? That is the second thing we wish to note. The occasion of this prayer meeting was the severe persecution which was just beginning for the infant Church. We should expect the object of their prayers, then, to be protection from danger, or cessation of hostilities. But was it? No! Here are men who have higher concerns than personal protection and prosperity. Their cry is not for personal needs but for Kingdom interests. Listen to their praying: "And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness." Not, "Take care of our skins"; but, "Give us boldness to keep on preaching, even when our lives are threatened." Not personal protection, but gospel propagation. Was there ever more unselfish praying heard from human lips? Did ever a king have more loyal subjects than these? Lord, help us to seek first Thy kingdom!

Was their prayer answered? Let us drop down a verse or two. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

They had asked the Lord if He would grant them "to keep on speaking [present infinitive] thy word with all boldness." And now it is recorded that they "kept on speaking [imperfect tense] the word of God with boldness." Their prayer was literally and completely answered. The preaching of the gospel and propagation of the faith went on in spite of all threatenings.

But how did God answer prayer? How did He give them boldness to keep on in the face of opposition and danger? In the same way that He gave Peter boldness to face the Sanhedrin and become the accuser instead of the accused. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

The question may well be asked: Would the Early Church have survived its swaddling clothes except for this infilling of the Spirit? Would it not have been strangled in its cradle? With all the

artillery of Judaism opening fire on it, could it have continued to exist without this supernatural power?

Wherein lies the greatest safety of the Christian Church today? Is it not in receiving fresh outpourings of the Spirit of God? "When he is come," then come power for prevailing prayer and power for pregnant preaching.

The superintendency of the Holy Spirit over the Church receives a striking illustration in the incident concerning Ananias and Sapphira. These two hypocrites — may their tribe decrease! — thought that they were deceiving the church. But they found to their consternation that the one in charge of that first Christian church was not Peter, but the Holy Spirit. Peter was only the visible leader; behind him, guiding him, inspiring him, was the Spirit of God. And nothing was hidden from the Spirit's gaze. He laid bare the whole miserable conspiracy to deceive the apostles. The exposed hypocrites met a swift and fearful judgment. It was one of the sternest lessons taught to the Early Church, and it did not go unheeded.

We cannot help wondering if every Christian who has read this story in Acts has realized its full implications. What does it tell us? Does it not cry out against our little deceptions, our so-called "white lies"? Does it not sound a warning alarm against our feeling of false security when we know that what we have done was hidden from human eyes? Does it not remind us that there is One who is watching us constantly, who misses nothing?

Someone has said that "our thoughts are heard in heaven." That, to me, is a challenging, gripping thought. Not only must I guard my actions and words, but also my thoughts. I must be absolutely sincere in my thinking — and pure, and loving — if I am to pass the inspection of heaven. When we read Peter's challenge to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" we are reminded of the words which Saul heard that day on the road to Damascus, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." It was a great surprise to young Saul to learn that the sufferings of the Church were registered in its Head, Christ. Doubtless Ananias received as great a shock when he learned that instead of dealing with men he was dealing with God. The Church, he found, was an organism, whose very life was the indwelling Holy Spirit. He discovered, too late, that he was tampering with a live wire, not with dead metal. The voltage was too high. The shock killed him.

The results of the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira were at least twofold. It gave the Church a great deal of publicity, so that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." But it also brought a salutary fear on the people: "Great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things." The result was that "of the rest durst no man join himself to them"; hypocrites kept at a safe distance. The Church seemed protected, for the time being, by an electrically-charged fence, for which the people entertained a wholesome respect.

But none of this seemed to affect the members of the Sanhedrin. Soon we find them "filled with jealousy" — what a contrast to being "filled with the Holy Spirit"! — and a worse storm against the Church appeared in the offing.

When Peter found himself again facing that semicircle of scowling countenances — now grown more cruel and bloodthirsty — he, on his part, was more stern than before. Once again he charges them with the murder of the One whom God has vindicated by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him to be a Prince and a Saviour. He tells them that there is a witness to this fact, "the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him." ^[21] If they would obey God, they could receive the Holy Spirit, and then they would know the truth concerning Jesus. But they would not. Instead they "were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them."

John Wesley, so we are told, used to ask two questions commonly of his preachers when they came to annual conference. First, "Have you had anyone converted under your ministry this year?" If the answer was negative, he asked the second question: "Have you had anyone get angry under your preaching this year?" If the reply was still negative, he informed the young preacher that there was no place for him in the Methodist ministry.

A "milk and water" gospel, preached by "soft soap" methods, will never convict and convert. We do not need in the pulpits of America more men who are afraid of hurting people's feelings. We need more men who, like Isaiah of old, have had a vision of God's holiness, and so have been made conscious of their own sinfulness.

If obedience is a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit, may we not assume that it is also requirement for keeping the Spirit? Will the Holy Spirit remain in the heart of one who deliberately disobeys God? Can we claim His presence when we are consciously refusing to do something that we know to be the will of God for us, or when we are doing something that He has forbidden us to do?

The first internal problem that arose in the Early Church was both an economic and a social one. The Hellenists complained that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of food. That was an economic problem. But they murmured against the Hebrews. That was a social problem. The Hellenists charged the Hebrews with unfair discrimination.

The stage was all set for a real church "fuss." The Greek word for "murmuring" reminds one of the buzzing of bees. The Church was progressing splendidly, and on the surface there was a beautiful harmony and fellowship. But underneath there was barely audible a buzzing noise — the buzzing of a whispering campaign. Fortunately, the buzzing became loud enough so that it registered on the apostles' ears.

What did they do? Ignore it? If they had, there would soon have been a church split; no question about it. But the matter was a delicate one, and needed to be handled with great wisdom and tact.

In the solution of this problem the apostles showed not only a fine Christian spirit, but keen common sense as well. They first decided that a distribution of labor was needed if all the work was to be cared for properly. They suggested that the Church select seven men to wait on tables, while they gave themselves to prayer and preaching.

The Church also showed wisdom in its selection of "the seven." The Greek names would seem to indicate that Hellenists were chosen. This was a master stroke of diplomacy to conciliate the murmuring Hellenists.

But this was not the only qualification for these "deacons." The apostles specified definitely what type of men must be chosen. They must be men of good reputation, "full of the Spirit and of wisdom."

All of these early servants of the Church had to meet high qualifications socially, spiritually, and mentally. Socially, they had to possess a good reputation. Spiritually, they had to be filled with the Spirit of God. Mentally, they had to be full of wisdom, or tact. No wonder, with such men in service, that we read, "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly." [22]

What were the duties of these good, godly, Spirit-filled, tactful men? To wait on tables! But they needed all these qualifications for their work, to keep things going smoothly. How much more do we need men of such character as officials in our churches today! God help us to realize that all the work of the church is sacred and should be done by holy hands.

The first man chosen as one of the seven was Stephen, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." He seems to have been head and shoulders above the rest of the people, spiritually; for nothing specific is said about the character of the other six. Evidently Stephen was the unanimous first choice of the Church for this new type of service.

Combining verses five and eight of the sixth chapter we find that three characteristics marked Stephen. This man who was full of the Holy Spirit was also — and, may we not say, by virtue of that fact — full of faith, full of grace, and full of power. Could these things be said of a man who was not full of the Spirit?

The indwelling Holy Spirit encourages our faith, by making God more real to us. He helps us to become gracious, by giving us fellowship with Christ, the One who caused people to wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And the Spirit of God furnishes the dynamic for Christian life and service. Personality power will not take the place of Holy Spirit power.

We can hardly conceive of a man of Stephen's caliber confining his labors to waiting on tables. Though not ordained to preach, he must needs be a lay preacher. And doubtless in that capacity he surpassed some of the apostles themselves in eloquence and effectiveness.

There are at least three groups of people in the Christian Church. There are those who do not have much ambition, who are content with doing little or nothing to help God's cause. Their lives are pretty much a failure, and they don't care. The last item constitutes the real tragedy of the situation.

Then there are those who say they would like to do big things; they have lofty ambitions for spectacular success. But fate is against them. Their superiors won't give them a chance to display their great abilities. If they only had a high position or a large city church, then they could

demonstrate what they really could do. But in this barren field, in this insignificant position, nothing can be accomplished. They just haven't been given an opportunity to do anything. And so they sulk, and grow sour and useless, blaming others for their failure.

Then there is the third group, to which Stephen belonged. He may have felt that he could preach as well as some of the apostles. But instead of complaining because his gifts were not recognized more fully, he did well the task assigned to him. He displayed his graciousness and tact in dealing with the murmuring Hellenists. And soon the murmuring ceased.

But he did not stop there. He began to speak in the synagogue. His consecrated abilities overflowed the boundaries of the task that had been given him. He was too big for the job to which he had been assigned. But instead of growing smaller to fit the job, shrinking in his soul, he just went ahead and overflowed. In other words, he made a place for himself. Instead of decreasing himself, he increased his job.

There is plenty of work around for all of us to do. But some lean on their shovel handles and complain at their lot, while others go ahead and do with their might what their hands find to do. And these are the ones who win the crown.

It was not long until Stephen's preaching provoked opposition. Some stood up and disputed with him while he was speaking. It was a tense situation. But Stephen, with the Holy Spirit, was more than a match for them. "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit [capitalized in Revised Version] by which he spake." The Holy Spirit prompted Stephen as to what he should answer his opponents. Stephen alone they might have defeated. But Stephen Spirit-filled, Spirit-guided, Spirit-empowered came off victorious. The Holy Spirit knows no defeat. And neither do we when we depend on Him.

It is interesting to conjecture that Paul was among those of Cilicia who withstood Stephen in the synagogue. It was young Saul's first contact with the Spirit of God, and probably his first defeat in public disputation. But this brilliant young student of Gamaliel found himself no match for the Spirit of God. While he probably did not take his defeat very gracefully, he had to admit to himself that here was something, or Someone, that he had not met before. But the very impossibility and insurmountability of it all just enraged him and caused him to kick furiously, but futilely, against the goads. Poor Saul! He had no peace from that time until the day he surrendered to this divine Spirit and accepted Christ.

Finally, things came to a climax. Stephen was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. There they charged him falsely with blasphemy. But instead of being angered by their slanderous conduct, his face shone like that of an angel. It could be said of him, in a measure, that like his Master "he was transfigured before them." The first martyrdom was a transfiguration scene.

But before the actual stoning took place, the members of the Sanhedrin were to hear one sermon that would make their ears ring for days to come. After giving a resume of God's dealings with the children of Israel, Stephen turned abruptly on his hearers and charged them with betraying and murdering the Righteous One. Doubtless Stephen sensed a growing resistance to his message.

Perhaps a threat of physical coercion may have precipitated his sudden attack. At any rate, he broke off right in the midst of a quotation from Isaiah and cried out: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." ^[23]

Pretty strenuous words those, coming from the lips of a Spirit-filled man, one who was gracious and tactful! I wonder how acceptable such preaching would be to the average modern audience. Would not the people say that such a preacher was "rude, unrefined, impossible"? When John Wesley preached powerfully under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, he was informed in one English church after another that he could not preach there again. Is not too much of our preaching today like giving soothing syrup to the people when they need a strong medicine that will cure their spiritual ills? When a person has a cancer or a tumor, we do not pour on scented rose water. How much worse is it when a preacher administers flowery phrases to an audience of sinful humanity! A physician would be imprisoned for such conduct in dealing with men's bodies. And yet, instead of seeking to cure the sin of men's immortal souls, too often rose water is applied and the disease is left untouched.

With Stephen's death a foregone conclusion, it was not to be expected that the angry Jewish rulers would waste much time in getting into action after the indictment he had just pronounced against them. So we are told that "they gnashed on him with their teeth," like a pack of wolves snarling around their prey. What a picture of these long-robed, long-bearded, long-faced, sanctimonious Pharisees gritting their teeth with rage and acting like wild animals half-crazed with hunger! It looked for the moment as if Judaism were turning out to be a religion of the jungle. Behold these proud, self-righteous religionists gnashing their teeth with rage, crying out with a loud voice like madmen, stopping their ears, and rushing furiously upon their helpless victim. Casting him outside the city, they hurled their stones at him in a mad frenzy, until his body lay battered and bleeding before them. Only when their fury had spent itself did they cease from their murderous work.

But how was Stephen reacting to such treatment? How was he behaving under such circumstances? Here was the greatest test that Christianity had yet endured. Would it carry him through victoriously, or would it fail?

We do not have long to wait for the answer. Instead of meeting rage with rage, this man of God "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." ^[24] Because he looked up in faith, instead of around in wrath, he was given a vision, one which blotted out the horrible and terrifying sight of those madmen around him. He was lost in the vision of the glory of God. What mattered it now what men did to him, when he could see his Lord standing up eagerly to receive his martyr soul? Earth was receding; heaven was beckoning him to come home.

But the rapture of the vision was broken by the rudeness of his enemies. As Stephen testified in tones of triumph and ecstasy of what he was beholding, he felt himself grasped roughly by cruel hands and hurled outside the city wall. There the stones were soon flying at his head.

What did Stephen do? He had time for only one prayer. Was it for himself, for the forgiveness of his sins? No, that had been taken care of long before. In the moment of death he prayed aloud for his enemies, asked God to forgive his murderers. And then he "fell asleep" — from which we derive our

word "cemetery," the place where Christians sleep in Jesus. The Jews had carried the day. But which religion had won?

What a contrast between that howling, raving group of religious maniacs and Stephen, calm, poised, prayerful, kneeling in the midst of that pack of wolves and committing his soul to God! What a triumph for Christianity!

But what was the secret of that victory? The answer is given to us in the fifty-fifth verse. It says that Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit." What experience short of this could have carried him through that crucial hour? It was more than enduring the sufferings inflicted by his enemies. Stoicism endures. But Christianity triumphs. Christianity rejoices! There is something majestic, wonderful, about a religion that can make a man act as Stephen did in that hour. Christianity was not on parade that day; it was in the test tube. And there, heated seven times hotter than usual, it proved to be pure gold. It met the test.

The immediate result of the stoning of Stephen was that the home nest at Jerusalem was pretty well shaken to pieces "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles . . . They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word."^[25] The "laymen's missionary movement" of the first century was under way.

What made it possible for these laymen to become preachers? Was it not the fact that they had been filled with the Spirit? We are told specifically that the apostles did not leave Jerusalem at this time. It was the laity that was scattered abroad. But this group of laymen went out to evangelize far and wide. How? It was the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives that enabled them to do it.

Philip, one of the seven deacons, took Stephen's place as lay preacher. He held a big revival in Samaria, which shook the city. Many were converted and baptized. Then Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and laid their hands on these Samaritan Christians. The result was that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the group.

In the midst of this great revival Philip was commanded by the Lord to leave the city with its crowds and Christians and go out to a wilderness road. What a strange command! I can imagine that any one of us would have argued with the Lord about it, instead of going. We would have told the Lord that we were doing too great a work to leave it and go out to a desert place.

But not so Philip. The use of the aorist tense here implies that he got up at once and went on his errand. He did not stop to dispute the command; he obeyed it.

What was the result of this prompt obedience? He met the Ethiopian eunuch and sent him on his way rejoicing in a new-found faith in Christ. It is claimed that the Christian church in Ethiopia, planted probably at that time, has had a continuous existence to the present time. Judaism introduced there by the Queen of Sheba, after her visit with Solomon; Christianity introduced by the treasurer of a later queen; the emperor of Ethiopia still calling himself the Lion of Judah and professing Christianity.

Think of how much depended on Philip's obedience that day when God spoke to him. If he had stopped to argue about it for an hour or two, he would have missed his interview entirely. The eunuch would have been far on his way. How wonderfully God times things when we follow His leadings carefully!

A striking incident that occurred some years ago will illustrate this truth forcibly. A Quaker lady named Mrs. Talbert was visiting some friends in New York City. One day in prayer the Spirit spoke to her very definitely and said, "Go to such a number on such a street. Someone there needs you."

She tried to shake off the impression as preposterous, but it persisted. Finally she went down to the drawing room and asked her host if he would carry her to that address. He protested that that particular street was the worst in the city. No man's life was safe in that neighborhood. She declared that she would go alone. So finally the man ordered his carriage and drove her down into the slums of the great city.

When they arrived at the head of the street, however, he refused to go any farther. They had secured the services of a policeman on the way, and now Mrs. Talbert asked him if he would accompany her to the number that had been given her. He refused to do so until she started out alone, and then he went along, still protesting the folly and risk of such a move. He went cautiously forward, revolver in hand, and keeping well to the outside of the sidewalk for safety.

Finally they came to the number for which she was looking. The policeman stepped back and said, "There's the door, madam, but your life won't be worth one cent inside that hell hole."

Mrs. Talbert opened the door and stood on the threshold. It was a few moments before she could see anything, the air was so blue with smoke. Gradually she discerned swaying forms and found herself facing an unspeakable orgy of carousing and wickedness.

And then she saw something right ahead of her that made her heart leap. There was seated a beautiful, innocent girl, with a look on her face like that of a hunted deer. Quickly Mrs. Talbert beckoned to her. The girl jumped up and rushed into her arms and out into the street with her savior. The much-worried policeman hurried them back up the street and into the waiting carriage. Soon they were safely back home.

This was the girl's story. A young man had appeared in her little town and showered his attentions upon her. She was overwhelmed with his flatteries and his promises of a great future for her. So when he finally asked her to go with him to the great metropolis, she fled from home with him.

Her disillusionment was as terrible as it was sudden. She found herself a slave in a nest of human vipers. In agony of soul she cried to the God of her pious parents and He heard. How good God is! She had sat there, unprotected and yet unharmed, in sheer desperation looking toward heaven until that moment when the door was opened and she knew her prayer was answered.

Some may scoff at such an incident, true though it is. But such do not know, firsthand, the workings of the Spirit of God. He is still as able to speak clearly and definitely to the human soul as He did in the first century.

If one were to raise the question, "What is the most important single event in the Book of Acts?" probably there would not be much dispute as to the answer. All would agree in saying, "Pentecost." Obviously, if it had not been for the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost the Book of Acts would never have been written. There would have been nothing to write. Acts is a record of the deeds of Spirit-filled men. Without this experience they would never have accomplished what they did. The reason the Christian Church has not had a continuous history like that recorded in Acts is that this experience has been relegated largely to a place of oblivion. Out of the thousands of sermons preached every Sunday in the churches of America how many contain an admonition to the Christians to be "filled with the Holy Spirit"? And yet that is the key phrase and keynote of this earliest record of church history.

If we were to ask what is the second most important event in the Book of Acts, there might be some room for debate. But I think that careful consideration would lead us to give that place to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Chapters thirteen to twenty-eight are devoted entirely to a record of his travels and missionary labors. He was not only the greatest preacher and founder of churches in the first century, but he was the greatest Christian theologian of all time. It is not alone that he has given us thirteen out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. His writings have influenced all the theological thinking of the past nineteen centuries as that of no other man. The late Professor Cell, of Boston University School of Theology, used to tell us that the epistles of Paul have been the "ferment" for every great revival movement in the Christian Church since the first century. A study of the lives of such outstanding leaders as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley will confirm this fact abundantly.

The conversion of Saul was considered by the author of Acts to be of sufficient importance that he has recorded it for us three times. Jesus had told His first followers that He would make them "fishers of men." I like to think that Saul of Tarsus was such a big fish — a veritable whale — that none of the fishing tackle of the Early Church could catch him. Jesus Christ himself had to land this big fish, and He did on the road to Damascus. But what a catch it was! Paul was worth a hundred ordinary mortals.

But even this man of intellectual genius and powerful personality had to have this experience we are discussing before he could be of use in God's service. The proud, high-spirited, ambitious young Pharisee had to be humbled in the dust before God. It was only after three days of blindness, spent in agonizing prayer and earnest petition, that Saul was raised up and given back his sight. But this was not all. He was "filled with the Holy Spirit." With this experience Paul became the great pioneer missionary, church organizer, and theologian. He laid the foundation well, and the Church which was built upon that foundation has stood firmly for these many centuries. Our debt to Paul, "filled with the Holy Spirit," has never been fully calculated, and never will be.

The young convert Saul was too big a man for the narrow, legalistic environment of Jerusalem and Judea. He was so big that he almost upset the baby carriage. The brethren at Jerusalem hastened

to send him home to Tarsus, and then "the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied." ^[27] Saul was too big for Palestine. God had greater plans for his life.

It is interesting to note here that the whole group of Christians in Palestine proper is spoken of in the singular as "the church." Divisions that really divide the church are not scheduled on God's program. The Church as the body of Christ cannot be divided and still retain that relationship. But a united church, walking "in the comfort of the Holy Spirit," is bound to grow and multiply.

The so-called "Gentile Pentecost" took place in the house of Cornelius. Peter had to be prepared for the event by a special vision, that of a sheet filled with clean and unclean animals. He had to learn that God made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in His plan of salvation.

As Peter was meditating on the meaning of the vision, "the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting: for I have sent them." ^[28] Not only was Peter taught by the vision that God is no respecter of persons, but he was also led definitely by the Spirit to go to Cornelius' house and preach to a Gentile audience.

Jesus had promised that the Spirit would guide the disciples, and now His promise was being fulfilled. There are a number of such instances in the Book of Acts. And yet the Christian Church has ever been prone to neglect this doctrine of the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Quakers of the seventeenth century and the Methodists of the eighteenth century emphasized it strongly. But aside from these two movements, the doctrine has been confined largely to individual writers, who are generally classed as mystics. But I think we are justified in assuming from the promise of Jesus and the practice of the Early Church that God intended for this to be the common experience of all Christians, at least when important decisions are involved. If this is God's will for us, how much we are missing when we neglect it!

Peter began to preach to the group assembled in Cornelius' home, taking as his text the lesson he had learned from the vision. But his sermon was suddenly interrupted. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." ^[29]

In reporting the incident to the Jerusalem Christians Peter said, "The Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning." ^[30] Evidently what took place in Cornelius' house reminded Peter strongly of the scene in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost. In both cases the Holy Spirit fell on them, was poured out upon them, so that they were filled with the Spirit. Such terms signify profusion, abundance, overflowing, if they mean anything at all. Once more we ask the question: Is this the experience of the average Christian in our churches today? How many could witness to having been definitely and wonderfully "filled with the Holy Spirit"?

What we need in America today more than anything else is a repetition of Pentecost in our midst, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church of Christ everywhere. That would do more for us than ten thousand ununctionless sermons and all the plans and programs that human minds can contrive.

II PAUL AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

In the first twelve chapters of Acts Peter is the prominent figure, with Stephen and Philip holding important places. But in the rest of the book the story centers in Paul and his missionary labors. The first part of the book tells the story of Pentecost and details its results in the rapid development of the Christian Church. It recounts the spread of the new movement throughout Palestine, with the mother church at Jerusalem as the headquarters. Christianity was still very much a religion of the Jews.

It was Paul more than anyone else who freed the Christian Church from its swaddling clothes of Judaism. The story of this important development is told in the second part of Acts. The method which worked most effectually in producing this result was nothing less than foreign missions.

We first met Paul at the stoning of Stephen, though he had probably taken part in the disputes with Stephen in the synagogue. Then we saw him laying waste the Church, like a wild boar rooting up a vineyard. Finally God arrested him on the road to Damascus. He was converted to Christ and filled with the Spirit. He preached at Damascus and at Jerusalem, but was sent home to Tarsus because he was a storm center.

To some men that would be equivalent to saying "sent into oblivion." But you couldn't bury a man like Paul. He was too much like the proverbial horse that his owners wanted to get rid of. The story goes that they dug a big hole and pushed him in. Then they shoveled the dirt in on top of him as fast as they could. But the old equine kept shaking the dirt off his back and trampling it under his feet. The result was that all their labors only provided him with the means of reaching the surface again.

We don't know much about what Paul did during this period when he was supposed to be "on the shelf." But he gives us a hint of it in his epistle to the Galatians. He says, "Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia." Evidently Paul spent these years of obscurity in preaching campaigns, working out of Tarsus. Paul could not be idle. He was no rocking chair Christian. When it seemed that there was no opening for him, he blazed a trail where he could. They never found Paul sitting under a juniper tree, sucking his thumb and complaining that he didn't have a chance. Every man has opportunities. The question is whether he will grasp them. Paul did.

While Paul was lost from sight — and perhaps from memory on the part of many — there was being established a new church which proved to be the successor to Jerusalem as the most important center of Christianity. Some of the less prejudiced of the early believers preached to the Greeks as well as Jews at Antioch, in Syria. The result was the rapid development of a large Gentile church in that important city. Barnabas was sent down from Jerusalem by the apostles to investigate the situation. Instead of suppressing the revival he encouraged it. "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." ^[31]

The fullness of the Spirit in Barnabas' heart not only gave him faith and power, but it also made him large-hearted. Barnabas was not a man of such outstanding genius and achievement as Paul. But he rendered a service of incalculable value to the Church when he went to Tarsus and hunted up

Paul. He took the young ex-Pharisee under his wing and, bringing him to Antioch, started him on his matchless career of service.

The inauguration of the foreign missionary enterprise might well be listed as the third most important event in the Book of Acts. The story is recorded in the thirteenth chapter. The most striking item, and one that is of major importance for our study, is that the Holy Spirit was the Instigator of foreign missions. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Whenever we hear any professing Christian say that he does not believe in foreign missions, we are tempted to ask if he has ever read this passage. Such a critic has a controversy, not with us, but with the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit who called and commissioned the first foreign missionaries. It was not a human scheme or a mere church program: it was the divine plan and program. If we quarrel here, we are quarreling with the will of God.

The Holy Spirit not only inaugurated the enterprise of foreign missions; He also named the workers. He asked the church to give up two of its best preachers and teachers, to let Him have them for this important undertaking. God always asks for the best for His service.

One of the interesting points in the record is the close and complete co-operation of the church with the Holy Spirit in the sending out of these first missionaries. It is stated that the church sent them away and also that they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit. The church recognized the Holy Spirit as its Superintendent and co-operated fully with His suggestions and plans.

Where did the foreign missionary enterprise begin? In a prayer meeting. And prayer is the only thing that will keep it going. Prayer meetings are not very popular in the Church today. As "Billy" Sunday used to say, most churches have substituted the supper room for the upper room. It is appalling to note how few churches have a prayer meeting on their weekly schedule. How can we expect a church to get anywhere when the prayer room is empty?

Why is it that we do not have the Holy Spirit definitely leading the Church forward to great achievements and conquests? Is it not because we do not tarry in prayer until He can speak to us? Read the lives of J. Hudson Taylor, of C. T. Studd, of A. B. Simpson, of Jonathan Goforth, of Charles Cowman, and of a host of other modern apostles of Christ. Were not prayer and obedience to the Spirit the secret of their success? What the Holy Spirit did that day in the Antioch prayer meeting He can do again today. And He is doing it wherever He is given a chance. We have a classic example of this in the famous "haystack prayer meeting" which marked the beginning of the American foreign missionary enterprise.

The two missionaries had not gone far until they met strenuous opposition on the part of a jealous sorcerer. When he sought to turn aside Sergius Paulus from accepting Christ, Paul, "filled with the Holy Spirit," rebuked him and decreed blindness for his resistance.

Here was a manifestation of the power of the Spirit. Paul was confronted with a very difficult situation, a seemingly impossible one. But he found that the indwelling Holy Spirit equipped him

for every such emergency. With a burst of spiritual power he completely smashed the opposition with one blow. The power of the Holy Spirit not only helped the missionaries in their preaching, but it also enabled them to overcome the resistance of the enemy.

The Holy Spirit also helped them when they met with rejection and persecution. At Antioch in Pisidia they were cast out of the city. But we read that they were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." They had an experience that was irrepressible.

The Council of Jerusalem, described in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, might well be listed as the fourth most important event in that book. The Jerusalem church had faced a difficult racial and economic problem, as we have seen. But it was only of local significance. There was now appearing a problem which involved very definitely the whole future of the Christian Church throughout the world.

We can hardly overestimate the importance of the crisis which resulted in the meeting of this first church council. Paul and Barnabas had just returned from a successful missionary campaign among the Gentiles. They had preached the free gospel of Jesus Christ, without reference to the Jewish law. They brought a glowing report of Gentile salvation back to their home church. God had "opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles." ^[32]

But while they were still rejoicing in the many victories won, some Judaizers appeared at Antioch and "threw a wet blanket" on the triumphant spirit there. Said these men from Judea, "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved." ^[33]

Paul and Barnabas recognized immediately the issue at stake and its tremendous importance. If the Gentiles were going to be compelled to keep the Jewish law, foreign missions would be a failure. The issue was clear to these men. It was the question of whether Christianity would be a universal religion, free to all upon acceptance of Christ, or whether it would be a modified form of Judaism. The acceptance of the Judaistic theory would have spelled the doom of Gentile missions.

Paul and Barnabas had worked too hard at Antioch and elsewhere to see the entire structure, which they had erected at such cost, topple over before the onslaught of these narrow-minded Jews. So they fought desperately for the preservation of Christian liberty. After the debate had gone on for some time, the Antioch church sent Paul and Barnabas up to Jerusalem to secure the judgment of the apostles and elders in the matter.

It was a crucial hour indeed. James, the pastor of the church at Jerusalem, was at least claimed by the Judaizers as their leader. Peter had not entirely freed himself from Jewish prejudices. Paul and Barnabas were the most liberal leaders the Church had with regard to this matter, and Paul still did not "rate" too high at Jerusalem. The outlook appeared a bit dubious.

But right at this point the superintendence of the Holy Spirit in the Church proved to be the saving factor. The decision of the council was embodied in a letter which freed the Gentile Christians from bondage to the Jewish law. In writing this letter the apostles and elders recognized the guidance and leadership of the Spirit. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." ^[34] In other words, the

decision reached was the mind of the Spirit and had been conveyed by Him to the human leaders in the Church. The result of this happy judgment of the mother church was that on Paul's second missionary journey, as he delivered everywhere the decrees of the council, "the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in numbers daily." ^[35]

But the guidance of the Holy Spirit was not only needed for the settlement of the theological questions; it was also needed for the directing of the missionary activities of the apostles. Paul and his party had started across Asia Minor. They expected, naturally, to evangelize the territory as they went along. But, strange as it seemed, they were "forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia." They passed on to Bithynia, planning to preach there. But here again "the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not." ^[36] God closed these doors to them because He had a larger open door ahead for them.

Suppose these early missionaries had not been subject to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Suppose they had not had their ears attuned to hear His voice speaking to them. We can only conjecture here. But this much is certain: the evangelization of Europe would at least have been postponed for a while, and perhaps would not have taken place for a considerable time. How much we need today the leadership of the Holy Spirit to beckon us on to new fields of conquest!

We have studied the coming of the Holy Spirit on that first memorable Pentecost and also the coming of the Spirit at the house of Cornelius in what is sometimes called the "Gentile Pentecost." Now we notice a third such event, named (after the city where it took place) the "Ephesian Pentecost."

Paul came to Ephesus soon after Apollos left. There he found a few disciples, but evidently he observed that there was something definitely lacking in their Christian experience."

So he asked them a question: "Having believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" (literal translation).

Their answer is rather surprising. In fact, if one were to follow the King James Version here, their answer would be practically inexplicable. But the Revised simplifies the problem somewhat by translating: "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given."

That is evidently the meaning of the passage. As disciples of John the Baptist they could hardly fail to have heard about the Holy Spirit, for we know that in his preaching he foretold the coming of the Spirit to baptize Jesus' followers. It appears that they simply had not received any report of what had taken place in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

And so the Holy Spirit "came on them." It was just a small group — only twelve men. But the results of the day were to be seen in the development at Ephesus of one of the strongest and most spiritual of the churches founded by Paul. It was here that the beloved apostle John labored during the latter part of his long life, and Paul himself spent a longer time here in pastoral work than in any other city. What a privilege this church had in sitting so long under the ministry of these two great men! If we were to judge by the influence of their writings, we would have to call Paul and John the

two greatest men of the first century. Our richest source of theology today is found in the Pauline epistles and the Johannine literature.

But the great future that was to be in Ephesus was born that day when the Holy Spirit fell on that small group of a dozen men. After all, it is not how many men we have, but how much of God we have.

Speaking in tongues is mentioned here, as in the case of the other two "Pentecosts." But it is worth noting that in the entire Book of Acts, with all its emphasis upon the coming of the Holy Spirit, this speaking in tongues is mentioned only three times, and all three of these were of epochal significance. This fact must be placed against another — that the Holy Spirit is mentioned over fifty times in the Book of Acts.

The essential thing here, as in the first Pentecost, is that the Spirit came on them. The phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" (or "full of the Holy Spirit") occurs nine times in this book. That is the central thing in the account of the Early Church. It should be the central thing in the Church of today.

One of the touching scenes in Paul's life was his farewell interview with the Ephesian elders at Miletus. The busy apostle had had ample opportunity for observing the changing vicissitudes of church life. He had seen changes take place very quickly at Corinth and in the churches of Galatia.

But prophetic insight warned him that crucial hours lay ahead for his beloved church at Ephesus. Even in such a spiritual group of elders there were a few followers of Judas. And so Paul charged them, with tears in his voice: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops."

Paul had ordained these men as bishops by the laying on of his own hands. But he wanted them to feel keenly the fact that it was the Holy Spirit who had appointed them and ordained them to their work. A clear consciousness of this, he knew, would keep their ministry sacred and holy. They would realize whose they were.

Professionalism in the ministry is one of the greatest curses that ever struck the Church. When men plan and pull for place and position, it is time to close our church doors and write over the entrance the epitaph "Ichabod" — "the glory is departed."

I hope that our study of Acts has bred in each one of us a divine discontent with regard to our present status in Christian experience and service. The challenge of this early church history is tremendous — if we get in front of it, so that we can feel it. It is enough to drive every minister of the gospel to his knees with an earnest prayer for a Spirit-filled ministry that will have a rich fruitage in the salvation of souls.

But the challenge is not only to the ministry, or to the Church at large. It is to each individual who professes to be a follower of Christ. It is to you, as a fellow disciple, that I make the closing plea. Have you received the Holy Spirit? Have you been filled with the Spirit? Are you conscious of His

presence and power in your daily life and in every service that you attempt to do for your Master?
That is your privilege. Is it your possession?

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By

Ralph Earle

INTERLUDE: THE QUEST INTERRUPTED

"And the quest faded in my heart"

Sir Percivale had sought far and wide for the Holy Grail. He had slept so many nights in field and meadow, "a bedmate of the snail and eft and snake," that he had become "wan and meagre" and still the vision had not come. Just when he was feeling wearied with the way, he chanced upon a town with its towering castle. To his surprise he found that the princess of that castle was the sweetheart of his youth. She had married a prince of great wealth and power, and now all that had been his was hers. Here Sir Percivale met the great test of his search.

And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me, for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.

.
And the quest faded in my heart.

The people of the beautiful princess came to Sir Percivale on bended knee and pledged him their loyalty and love. He would be as King Arthur in their land. It would seem that the knight had forgotten his quest and his vow. He settled down to a life of ease and splendor. But the vision could not down.

O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wailed and wept, and hated mine own self,
And even the holy quest, and all but her;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her nor anything upon earth.

And so the quest, interrupted for one threatening hour, was begun again by Percivale, this time with a grim determination to keep on until the moment of victorious discovery. And ride on he did, till one night the vision seen by Galahad was unveiled to him. He saw the Holy Grail.

Not so was it with Sir Gawain, the one who had vowed more loudly than all the rest. When the knights — all but Galahad — had returned to report at Arthur's court, the king questioned him,

"Gawain, was this quest for thee?"
"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the quest was not for me;
For I was much a-wearied of the quest,
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

Gawain had failed, miserably, disgracefully. He had sold out, and at a much lower price than that offered to Sir Percivale. His soul was small.

Jesus one day was walking down a dusty road in Transjordan. Suddenly He was confronted by a handsome young man who came running eagerly to meet Him. Falling down on His knees and looking up earnestly into Jesus' face, the rich young ruler asked a burning question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" When Jesus reminded him of the commandments given on Mt. Sinai, the ruler replied, "All these things have I observed."

And then he asked a question seldom voiced by human lips: "What lack I yet?" Here was a noble knight indeed, in search of the best. He was not content to be like other men. He must go the second mile. Mark tells us that Jesus, looking upon him, loved him. And no wonder! What promise seemed wrapped up in the soul of this youthful aspirant for the highest good in life!

But the young man was not equal to the test. Jesus said to him: "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. The young man went away sorrowful; he could not hurdle his riches.

How quickly did the Vision cloud over! The quest faded in his heart. His riches had completely obscured the face of God, and for him there was no rift in the clouds.

Dear reader, let me ask you a question. Has the Vision dimmed, has the quest faded from your heart? Have the glitter and glamour of this world, its boasted glory and proffered fame, absorbed your gaze and gripped your soul? Are you grasping vainly for shimmering soap bubbles, bewitched, fascinated by their transient beauty, while you pass by the solid lumps of pure gold? Are you content, like Gawain, to settle down in a silk pavilion with merry maidens, while Christ and His noble knights ride on to fields of battle and conquest? Has this world embraced you and kissed you and offered you its kingdoms, because you have turned aside from the quest to linger in the shadow of its castle-walls? Has its sweet and fragrant nectar infused your soul until you have died to higher things? Have you now forgotten that vow made long ago, when you promised God that He could

have your heart, your life, your whole personality to be indwelt by Him and directed at His will? If such be your plight, I pray God that the vow shall once more burn you within until you, too, as Percivale, shall rise and flee from the prison of this world's web woven round your soul, and take up the quest, to pursue it till the end.

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By

Ralph Earle

Chapter 4

A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

It was a hot summer's day. The noontide Syrian sun beat down relentlessly on a band of travelers headed across the plateau toward Damascus. Finally the ancient city itself came into view, shimmering in the heat of the plain. Its narrow streets and closely adjoining houses held many an interesting secret of its hoary past. Nestling there beside the river Abana, and close to the edge of the desert, Damascus was a thing of beauty, a thrilling sight.

But the leader of this small group approaching the city had no eyes for its beauty, no ears for its stories, no heart for its charm. Within his bosom a mighty battle was raging. His soul was tossed on a sea made rough by the crosscurrents of his own turbulent thoughts. The world, that had seemed so certain, so fixed, was rocking violently under his feet and swaying dizzily before his eyes. Saul, the Pharisee, the young student of Gamaliel, was caught in a quagmire of question marks.

For seven long days the little party from the Sanhedrin had plodded along the one hundred fifty mile route from Jerusalem to Damascus. Night after night Saul and his companions had slept out under the stars. And in the quietness of those hours the problem which was vexing the leader's mind had increased its intensity.

It had all started with that fanatical heretic, Stephen. Before that Saul had faced a promising career in the rabbinical profession. No one could outdo him in keenness of thought or cogency of argument — no one until Stephen came along. Then for the first time the young lawyer had swallowed the bitter pill of defeat.

He had thought that Stephen's death would be a sweet morsel of compensation. But somehow it had become like gall within him. Saul was suffering from an acute case of indigestion, that kept him tossing on his blanket at night.

Nonsense! Stephen was all wrong. He was a dangerous enemy. It was right that he had been killed and that the Jewish nation and religion should be saved from the scourge of this new sect of the Nazarene.

But that face! The vision would not down. There it hung in the gallery of his memory, clear as the day he first saw it. It haunted his dreams. It pursued him to Damascus. The face of an angel. Could this one be an enemy of God and His people? Could it be that perhaps Stephen was right after all? Was the crucified prophet of Nazareth really the Messiah? Certainly a religion that would make a person act as Stephen had acted in that hour of death — a religion like that couldn't be all bad. Might it be the true religion?

But no, he wouldn't believe it! Away with such weak surrender. The Christians must die. On to Damascus!

Suddenly, like a lightning bolt from heaven, a flash brighter than the midday sun struck Saul and left him prostrate in the dust. And then he saw the face again — but no, it was the face of Another. And this one opened His lips; He spoke: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." It was the face of Jesus, the despised Teacher from Nazareth. The Galilean had conquered.

Years afterwards Paul was writing to the churches he had founded in Galatia. His gospel was being called in question by the Judaizers who were following in his wake and undoing his work. They said that Paul was no apostle. It was to Peter and the eleven that the keys had been given. Paul had never seen Christ.

The apostle to the Gentiles had already answered the last objection in his epistle to the church at Corinth. "Last of all . . . he appeared to me also." Paul had seen Jesus, on the road to Damascus. And Jesus had appointed him as His apostle.

But what of his message? It was a strange innovation. Where did he get such ideas? Paul must answer; and he did so, definitely, clearly.

"For I made known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ."

Not only had Paul been arrested and caused to surrender by the lightning-like flash near Damascus. That had made him a servant of Christ. But in order that he might preach Christ and salvation through Him, it was necessary for the student of Judaism to have a fresh revelation of divine truth. It had come to him — a "revelation of Jesus Christ." His gospel — found in his epistles, to which we now turn — was also "a light from heaven."

FIRST THESSALONIANS

Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. It was his first stop after Philippi, where he had been thrown into prison, into the inner dungeon. Paul had been forced to leave that city without getting a church organized. But he had left Luke, the beloved physician, to shepherd the little flock that was meeting in the house of Lydia.

When Paul and his party arrived in Thessalonica, the prospects looked a bit more pleasant. Here there was a Jewish synagogue, a feature they had missed in the Roman colony of Philippi. Here Paul had a pulpit already awaiting him. For three weeks he taught in the synagogue, demonstrating the fact that the Old Testament scriptures foretold the sufferings of the Messiah and His resurrection, and declaring that the crucified Jesus was the promised Messiah.

But the Jews of Thessalonica were not willing to accept this message. A few believed, but the rest opposed. When a large number of Greeks and many "chief women" followed Paul, the unbelieving Jews were consumed with jealousy. They instigated a mob uprising of the city rabble, with the result that Paul and Silas had to escape by night.

After an unsuccessful venture at Athens, Paul came to Corinth, where he waited eagerly for news from Macedonia. Finally Timothy and Silas arrived with a report of conditions at Thessalonica and Berea. Paul sat down immediately and dictated his first epistle, directed to the Thessalonian Christians.

In this epistle he reminds them that "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." ^[37]

Paul was not a preacher who only said words. There was power in his ministry. We have plenty of wordy preachers, too few powerful preachers.

But what was it that made Paul's preaching powerful? It was the fact that it was "in the Holy Spirit." Paul was a man who sought the inspiration of the Spirit in preparing his messages and the unction of the Spirit in presenting them. The result was that souls were being won to Christ under his preaching, and revivals broke out on every side.

But these young converts at Thessalonica had faced persecution for their faith in Christ. Paul's teaching had been branded as treason. The few believing Jews and the many believing Gentiles had suffered from slander and violence. But they had kept the faith. Why? Paul tells us. "Ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." ^[38]

This last clause gives us the secret. They were able to endure "much affliction" because the indwelling Spirit filled their hearts with joy.

Toward the close of this epistle Paul gives a number of short, pointed commands. One of them is, "Quench not the Spirit." ^[39]

What does this word "quench" mean? The use of the same Greek word in Matthew 25:8 may shed some light on the subject. There we read that "the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out" (lit., being quenched).

How may the light of the Holy Spirit in our lives be quenched? By carelessness and neglect. By failing to watch and pray. By being content with a shallow experience, instead of tarrying until our hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit. The foolish virgins had some oil in their lamps, but they did not have oil in their vessels with their lamps. The result was that their experience did not stand the test of time. They finally lost out entirely.

But the setting of the text in Thessalonians suggests another application to the situation in that church. For in the very next verse Paul says, "Despise not prophesyings."

It would appear that there were two attitudes being taken in the church at Thessalonica. Some, like the Corinthians, were setting the minor gifts of the Spirit above the supreme gift of prophesying, or preaching. Instead of desiring to proclaim God's message clearly for the salvation of sinners and the edification of believers, they considered it more "wonderful" to speak in tongues. Perhaps some of the Corinthian over-emotionalism, with consequent confusion in the church services, was to be found here at Thessalonica also.

The result was that some of the Thessalonian Christians were experiencing a reaction. They were calling for a suppression of these excesses. To such Paul said, "Look out. There's danger there. Be careful that in your efforts to keep the fire in the fireplace you don't put it out altogether."

In fact, the literal Greek (of verse nineteen) means, "Stop putting out the fire of the Spirit." Evidently some were already throwing water on the fire. Paul didn't want the fire to burn the house down by getting out of bounds. But neither did he want the fire to be put out entirely and let the Christians freeze to death in Thessalonica.

One of our big problems is to maintain a spiritual fervor without fanaticism. Some — I should say many — advise that we avoid emotionalism in religion pretty much altogether. "Let's not run the risk of fanaticism by creating an atmosphere of fervency in services. Let's be staid and formal."

Such argument is just as unjustifiable as it would be to say, "Let us avoid the risk of burning our house down by having no fire in the home this winter." That would be a safer policy, perhaps, but certainly not a saner one.

Is there no middle ground between cold formalism and wild fanaticism? Must we all be candidates either for the cemetery or for the asylum? Is there no middle of the road — a place of progress — so that we may escape being stuck in the gutter on one side or the other?

I am very sure that there is. And if that be true, it is our duty as ministers and laymen to find "the way" and stay in it.

SECOND THESSALONIANS

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in Paul's second letter to the church at Thessalonica. In 2:13 we read: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

"Spirit" here is in the subjective genitive. Paul is speaking of a sanctification which is wrought by the Holy Spirit in the human heart. The Holy Spirit is the sanctifying Spirit.

Sanctification is not some formal, theoretical experience. It is a work done in our hearts by the Spirit himself. It is His presence that sanctifies. We are sanctified only if and while the Holy Spirit is dwelling in our hearts, unquenched. As long as He is allowed to operate freely, as long as we are susceptible to His influence, as long as we seek His guidance and blessing in our thinking, feeling,

and acting — so long, and no longer, are we sanctified. It is the province and purpose of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the Christian. But He can do so only with the active co-operation of our wills. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." ^[40] But is it our will, also? That's the deciding factor; that is what determines the result.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Paul had a rather trying time at Athens. He sought to reach this city of philosophers with the gospel of Christ. But he had been accorded a cold reception. All his efforts to make a philosophical appeal seemed to have been a failure.

When he came to Corinth, therefore, he laid aside his philosopher's robes and preached the simple gospel of salvation. Reminiscent of this, he wrote one day to the Corinthians: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

". . . And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." ^[41]

In his preaching at Corinth Paul was not depending on philosophical wisdom or eloquent oratory. He was depending solely on the gospel message, given in the power of the Spirit. And the results proved the wisdom of his policy. A strong church was established at Corinth.

Paul did not rely on human persuasion in reaching men for Christ. He realized that nothing we can do or say will produce that conviction without which people are not saved from sin. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul then goes on to contrast human wisdom with divine wisdom. The contrast becomes all the more acute when we remember that the Corinthians were unjustifiably proud of their really superficial philosophy. They used the terms of Athenian philosophy without grasping their meanings. Paul was doubtless fully aware of this Halloween parade of false faces, and it may have lent point to some of his utterances.

The one thing that Paul insists on is that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually judged. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God." ^[42]

It is no wonder, then, that so many professing Christians show such gross ignorance concerning spiritual things. The things of the Spirit cannot be fathomed by human reasoning, however keen. One does not have to be an intellectual genius to understand the Bible. But one does have to have the Spirit of God in order to comprehend its truths. Here is the fatal gap in most religious education.

The church at Corinth had many faults and failings. The type of Christianity in evidence there was not of the highest. Carnal pride, strife and divisions, dullness of moral sensibility, confusion and disorder in church services, even drunkenness at the Lord's Supper — these were some of the besetting sins of the Corinthian church.

And yet these Christians belonged to Christ. Paul sought to shame them by reminding them of their high privilege. "Know ye not that ye are a temple [sanctuary] of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye." ^[43]

Paul is not speaking here of the individual Corinthian Christians, but of the church as a whole. It was a sanctuary, because God was in its midst. It was the presence of the Holy Spirit that made the church holy. This does not necessarily imply that every individual in the church was holy, or indwelt by the Spirit. It was the church as a whole which was a sanctuary of God.

The context must be our guide in interpreting the reference here to "destroying" the sanctuary. The problem which Paul discusses in the first four chapters is that of division. He who divides the church of God is destroying it. Paul is sounding a solemn warning to those at Corinth who were factious and schismatic. If they destroyed the unity of the church, God would destroy them. The sin of schism was a mortal one.

The teaching which Paul applies to the church here he individualizes in 6:19: "Know ye not that your body is a temple [sanctuary] of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God?"

It is interesting to note that in this context he is discussing, not division, but immorality. The former will destroy the church; the latter will destroy the body.

How utterly opposed to Gnosticism is this teaching of Paul! The body is not evil, something to be destroyed in order to free the spirit. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and as such it is sacred. How ennobling is this conception! It lifts our physical life out of the sordid and makes it a sacrament.

In chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen Paul discusses the problem of spiritual gifts, or gifts of the Spirit. But before entering into a discussion of the subject itself he reminds the Corinthian Christians that they were once idolaters. In connection with that he writes: "Wherefore I make known unto you, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." ^[44]

This statement seems strange, at first sight. Perhaps the best way to interpret it would be in the light of Jewish persecution of the Christians. Paul's own words before Agrippa are pertinent to the situation. He says: "I strove to make them blaspheme." ^[45] Probably he had tried to get them to say, "Jesus is anathema." But here he declares that no one speaking in the Spirit ever uttered those blasphemous words.

But what of the other statement? What does Paul mean by declaring that no one can say, "Lord Jesus," but in the Holy Spirit?

Here again the history of the persecutions helps us. It would take the help of the Spirit to enable a man to acknowledge Jesus as his Lord when he knew it might cost him his life to do so. Peter is an outstanding case in point. Before Pentecost he denied his Lord. After that he boldly took his stand before the Sanhedrin itself.

The later persecutions by the Romans furnish many illustrations of this little paragraph from Paul. It was the custom for the Roman magistrates to demand that accused Christians should do two things: first, curse their Christ; and, second, worship the emperor. Polycarp was told to say, "Lord Caesar," but each time he responded, "Lord Jesus." It meant the stake for him, but the Spirit supported him in that hour and enabled him to be true to his Lord.

Thus Paul reminded the Christians at Corinth that they needed the Holy Spirit for something besides their church services. They needed Him most when facing cruel death at the hands of their persecutors. But the Spirit would not fail them then.

Then Paul returns to the question of spiritual gifts, concerning which they had written to him. He begins with a general summary statement, a fact that the Corinthians needed to remember. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." ^[46]

That is just what they were forgetting at Corinth. They were looking so much at the gifts that they had lost sight of the Spirit. They cared more for the gifts than for the Giver. And this very thing had been one of the causes of the divisions in the church. What they needed was to become united again in the Spirit.

Paul states that the Spirit distributes gifts in the Church, "dividing to each one severally even as he will." If He can have His way fully, there will be no clash or conflict.

Here is a picture of an ideal church. Each one in the church has some gift from the Spirit. As he uses that gift, under the guidance of the Giver, he ministers to the edification of the believers. Everything is harmonious, happy, and helpful.

But it didn't work that way at Corinth. These very gifts of the Spirit became the occasion for envy, jealousy, and strife. Spiritual pride entered in, spoiling the atmosphere of the services, poisoning the attitudes of the people. Why? Again we say, it was because they had become absorbed in the gifts and their manifestations, instead of being concerned only to be used of the Spirit for the glory of God. They wanted to use the Spirit and His gifts, instead of letting Him use them.

It seems unfortunate that the charismatic ministry of the first century had to give way to the institutionalized ministry of the third and later centuries. It seemed that the whole Church could not keep under the leadership of the Spirit sufficiently well to avoid conflict and trouble. There are always some, even in the Church, who cannot enjoy liberty without license.

It is noticeable in Paul's discussion of the Corinthian problem that pride and division go together. Humility is requisite to unity. It is impossible to have a battle when everyone keeps humble. But when one says, "I can do it all myself. We don't need you," then the fight is on.

And so it was at Corinth. Human leaders and spiritual gifts had divided them. Why? Because, instead of using these gifts for the blessing of one another, they had made fetishes of them. As the brazen serpent later became an idol to the Israelites, though once a means of salvation, so these spiritual gifts had become a curse to the Corinthians.

We often hear the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians quoted. But seldom does one point out the setting of this beautiful gem. It is set, all sparkling with love, right in the midst of this controversy and confusion over Spiritual gifts. Chapters twelve and fourteen give us the problem in all its sad reality. Chapter thirteen gives us Paul's solution for the problem. Perfect love — that would end the conflict at Corinth.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians is the most personal of all his letters. In it we see the passionate love of an offended pastor, one who had been wronged by his own children in the faith. The words pour like molten lava from the heart of the greatest of apostles. While his first letter discussed the problems of the church, this discloses the pulse-beat of the apostle himself.

In the first chapter, verses twenty-one and twenty-two, Paul writes: "Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Again in chapter five, verse five, he writes: "Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And in Ephesians, chapter one, verses thirteen and fourteen, we read: "In whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession."

In all three of these passages the Holy Spirit is called an "earnest." The Greek word means a "part payment in advance for security, a first installment."

God has promised us a wonderful inheritance in heaven, a life of bliss and blessing beyond anything we have conceived here. But He has not left us waiting empty-handed while in this world. He has given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a sort of "down payment" in advance.

There has been a great deal of speculation as to the nature of our existence in the next life. Do we not have a hint here? Life in heaven will be of the same kind as the experience here of being filled with the Spirit, only in unlimited measure. The quality will be the same; the quantity will be infinitely greater.

What is heaven like? It is primarily a place of unhindered, unveiled fellowship with God. While childish minds may revel in the materialistic concepts of streets of gold and gates of pearl, the mature Christian realizes that these expressions are only symbols for the spiritual realities of heaven. The glories of the heavenly realm will be infinite love, infinite joy, infinite peace! There faith will be turned to sight, prayer to praise, hope to realization.

A person's conception of heaven is the touchstone of his character. Tell me what you think heaven is like, and I will tell you what you are like. Our idea of heaven is at one and the same time a

revelation of our character and a powerful influence in molding our lives. Is it our greatest desire and aim in life to be Christlike — to be holy, compassionate, loving, as He was? Do we crave closer fellowship with God more than we crave the vain riches of this world? If so, heaven will be for us a place of complete satisfaction of these noble, spiritual desires and aspirations.

What is heaven like? It is like the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts, without any restrictions or restraints from the infirmities of the flesh. It will be the fulfillment of the deepest longings of the Spirit-filled soul.

But the word translated "earnest" has also another significance. It is used in the Greek papyri of the time of Christ for a dowry given to a wife. Do we claim to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ? If so, we are a part of the bride of Christ. But He has given to His prospective bride a rich dowry, the greatest spiritual gift that could be given to humanity, the Holy Spirit.

We have noted the meanings of the term "earnest" in classical and Koine Greek. It has also an interesting usage in modern Greek. Here it is employed for an "engagement ring."

This thought opens to us a wealth of material for meditation. Christ has betrothed us unto himself. He has gone to prepare our home for us. But He has given us an engagement ring to keep until He comes back for us.

What fiancée does not treasure her engagement ring? It is to her a constant reminder of the love of her friend, and of the fact that she belongs to him. She is not any longer free to accept the advances of other suitors. She has pledged her heart and hand to one man, and she may not now squander her affections on others. She is bound to him, but it is not an irksome bondage for the one who truly loves.

Hosea, one of the earliest and greatest prophets of Israel, brought the charge of spiritual adultery against God's people. We cannot help wondering what Christ would say to the Church of our day, if He could get its ear. Perhaps we should hear Him saying: "I betrothed you unto Me forever. But your love for Me has grown cold. You are following other lovers. You are flirting with the world; untrue to Me. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you."

Do we have the engagement ring? I like to think that we become engaged to Christ when we say that full and final "Yes" — the answer to the proposal of our heavenly Lover. When we surrender ourselves entirely to His love, then He "seals" us for His own. The Holy Spirit is the sign and seal that we belong to Christ, that we are betrothed to Him. If we keep this signet ring, someday we shall be united to our heavenly Bridegroom.

In chapter three, verse three, Paul writes: "Ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh."

Our hearts are to be tablets on which the Holy Spirit may inscribe the image of Christ. Our lives are to be epistles, where men may read the inscription wrought within. The Holy Spirit writes; we

are to translate that writing into actions and attitudes. Christlike character — that is the finished product of the Spirit's operations.

Why is it that we do not see the image of Christ more frequently and more clearly as we look at His followers? Is it not because the Holy Spirit has been thwarted in His work by the lack of human willingness to let Him have His way?

This same line of thought is expressed in the eighteenth verse. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."

The last clause of this verse is admittedly difficult. While the Revised Version gives the order of the Greek words, probably the meaning is that given by the Authorized — "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." That is, it is the Holy Spirit who operates in this work of transforming the believer into the image of Christ.

It is interesting to note that the word translated here as "transformed" is found only four times in the New Testament. It is used by both Matthew and Mark in their accounts of the transfiguration of Christ on the mount. ^[47] There it is rendered "transfigured." But in Romans 12:2 it is translated as in this passage: "Be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

It seems to me that these two passages from Paul should be studied in the light of the transfiguration scene. What caused Christ's face to shine with a heavenly light? Was it not the divine nature within shining forth luminously through His body, even as X-rays penetrate the flesh? So, Paul seems to say, if the Holy Spirit dwells within in His fullness, He will shine out through our lives.

But the verse suggests another method of transfiguration — that of the "Borrowed Glow." "Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord," we are changed into the same image.

In the verses immediately preceding the one we are studying, Paul is discussing the case of Moses. When he talked with the Lord face to face, Moses' countenance shone so that he had to put on a veil when he came back to the people.

Paul used this as an illustration of what should take place spiritually in our lives. If we commune with God face to face, our own faces unveiled, we shall reflect the glow of His glory.

Probably all of us have had some experience with luminous-dial alarm clocks. We have found that when the figures faded we could restore the phosphorescence by holding the face of the clock up to a bright light.

So it is in our experience. When the radiance of the borrowed glow becomes dim there is one way, and only one, by which we can restore its brightness. That is by tarrying in God's presence until the glory of His face is again reflected in our lives. The reason our lights shine so dimly — though we

may not wish to admit it — is that we pray so little. The men who have had the glow of heaven on their countenances — and we have seen such — were those who spent much time in the secret place, where their souls were bathed with divine glory.

The seventeenth verse of this chapter has a statement often quoted, and often misused: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

In the immediate context Paul is talking about the veil that was upon the hearts of the Jews, so that they did not understand the Scripture. He says that whenever one turns to the Lord this veil is taken away.

So what Paul intended by the statement quoted above is evidently that the Holy Spirit gives us the liberty of direct access to God. That meaning agrees with what precedes and what follows the verse. Through the Spirit we have access into the holy of holies.

But if we were to take the statement in an absolute sense, without regard to its context, there are still some observations that might be made. What is meant by liberty? What kind of liberty does the Holy Spirit give? Does He give me liberty to walk all over my brother's feelings, and to do as I please? Does He give me liberty to say harsh, unkind things, to speak the truth without love, to "take liberties" with the things that belong to someone else?

True liberty obtains only when everyone keeps out of everyone else's way. I may claim that my operator's license gives me liberty to drive my car as I please — but I may find that I was mistaken. My rights end where the other person's begin.

The liberty of the Spirit does not give me the right to behave in a disorderly or unseemly way as a Christian. Liberty is a freedom found in obedience to law. Christian liberty is found, then, in obedience to the New Testament, to the law of love, and to the voice of the Spirit. The soul that is controlled most fully by the Spirit is the soul that enjoys the greatest liberty.

In the sixth chapter Paul mentions a number of ways in which we should commend ourselves as ministers of God. One of them is in the Holy Spirit." One does not show himself fully equipped for the ministry without the Holy Spirit.

The last mention of the Spirit in this epistle is in the closing verse, in the much-quoted benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

This benediction not only confirms the doctrine of the Trinity; it also gives us the relation of each member of the Godhead to the Christian. It was the love of God that provided the plan of salvation, and still makes it available to humanity. It is the grace of Jesus Christ that gives us forgiveness for our sins against the love of God. And all of these blessings we share through the Holy Spirit.

It is not only communion with the Holy Spirit which is meant here, but communion with God through the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts and gives us real fellowship with God.

GALATIANS

This epistle was written to combat the Judaizing teaching that was gaining a foothold in the churches of Galatia. To the narrow legalism of the Judaizers Paul opposed the doctrine of Christian liberty. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Holy Spirit is mentioned frequently.

The epistle naturally divides itself into three parts: the first two chapters are personal (autobiographical); the middle two are doctrinal; and the last two are practical. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the first two chapters, but He is named sixteen times in the remaining four.

It appears that the Judaizers were teaching two theories: first, that we are saved by the law; and, second, that perfection could be attained only through the keeping of the law. To the first Paul opposed the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith; to the second, the complimentary doctrine of sanctification by the Spirit.

Next to Second Corinthians, this epistle manifests the strongest personal feeling of any of Paul's letters. "O foolish [senseless] Galatians, who did bewitch you?" Then he proceeds to ask some other questions. "This only would I learn from you, 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 perfected in the flesh?" ^[48]

Paul did not beat around the bush. His first question went right to the point. Did you experience the coming of the Holy Spirit into your lives as a result of keeping the law, or as a result of hearing the gospel of Christ and believing it? The argument was unanswerable. They knew full well that it was faith in Paul's message that had filled their lives with spiritual blessing.

The question is still pertinent. Has anyone ever been filled with the Spirit, and manifested that fact, as the result of a legalistic or purely ritualistic type of religion? Does it not take personal faith in the Christian message of salvation to give one a truly spiritual experience, an experience of the Spirit of God?

The second question Paul asks is of almost equal importance with the first. There are many today in orthodox circles who affirm that one must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, but who teach that sanctification comes only by the gradual overcoming of the flesh. Paul's question implies that, just as the new birth is the work of the Spirit, so also is sanctification. The New Testament teaches plainly that we are born of the Spirit and sanctified by the Spirit.

Paul emphasizes the fact that the Holy Spirit is a free gift from God, and cannot be earned by any works of our own. This gift is promised to those who believe and obey. Christ died for us "that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." ^[49]

Is it not a fair deduction from this passage that the blessing promised to Abraham included the reception of the Holy Spirit? In other words, this is God's highest blessing for humanity. What a shame that so few find "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" by surrendering themselves completely to Christ to be filled with His Spirit.

The Holy Spirit not only does the actual work of regenerating our hearts, but He also witnesses to the fact that the work is done. "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son." ^[50]

The truth of this passage received classic illustration in the case of John Wesley. For thirteen years he was a bondservant, seeking for salvation through rigorous adherence to all the regulations of the strictest religion of his day in England. But he found neither joy nor peace. On that memorable evening, May 24, 1738, the light of salvation through simple faith in Christ struck his soul. He believed and became a son. The witness of the Spirit to his adoption was ever afterwards a favorite teaching with him. The doctrine of assurance was one of the main emphases of early Methodism.

The witness of the Spirit is not intended to be an intermittent experience, but a constant one. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son — the same Spirit that indwelt Jesus during the days of His ministry — crying in our hearts, "Abba, Father."

There is something warm and comforting about those words. "Abba" is the Aramaic word for father and was probably more familiar in the family life of the Jews. Jesus in Gethsemane, crying out of the depths of His soul, used the same expression as here, combining the Aramaic and Greek words. ^[51] Evidently Paul here wanted to stress the feeling of sonship that comes to the newly adopted soul. It is natural to call God "Father" when we have been actually adopted into His family.

Paul's teaching on the Holy Spirit in this epistle centers in the latter half of the fifth chapter, where he shows the practical ministry of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. How are we to live a successful, victorious Christian life? Paul gives a sufficient answer here, in verses sixteen to eighteen. "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

It is not by trying to keep the flesh down that we find our victory as Christians. It is rather by letting the Holy Spirit have His way. As long as we are led by the Spirit, He safeguards our feet and keeps us. The tense used for being led by the Spirit signifies being led continually. That is God's plan for us. And it is our only way of safety.

In verse sixteen a strong double negative is used in the Greek. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye will not by any means fulfill the lust of the flesh."

It is hard to see how anyone could quote verse seventeen as giving a picture of the normal Christian experience, a continual conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Paul says, "Walk by the Spirit, and the flesh will not trouble you. But if you do not walk by the Spirit, there will be a constant struggle raging within you between the flesh and the Spirit, each striving for the mastery. Let the

Spirit have His way and the struggle will be ended in victory." The seventeenth verse should never be quoted apart from the sixteenth and eighteenth, both of which mark out clearly the path of victory. We need not go on with an up-and-down, defeated life, if we will "walk by the Spirit" and be "led by the Spirit." God has something better for us than a mixture of defeats and victories. Paul himself wrote that we are "more than conquerors [lit., super-victors] through him that loved us." ^[52] That does not sound like a life of defeat.

One of the most beautiful passages in Galatians is that which lists "the fruit of the Spirit." What a Contrast it forms to "the works of the flesh"! As we read over the nine characteristics of the Spirit-filled life, we would do well to check our own lives on each point. We are not to expect fruit full-grown from the young convert. But if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in His fullness in our hearts, there should be an increasing manifestation of this fruit. It takes time to grow fruit, but we expect the fruit to appear in due season.

Let us look at this fruit, then, for a moment. Love, joy, peace — inward blessings resulting from the abiding presence of the Spirit. Long-suffering, kindness, goodness — the Holy Spirit governing our social life, our attitudes and relationships. How much we need Him here! Faithfulness, meekness, self-control — those more quiet and retiring virtues, which are yet essential to the highest Christian character.

It is no wonder that Paul, after such a contrasting picture of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, says that "they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified [aorist tense] the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." ^[53] No one could gaze at the two lists of fruit without desiring the flesh to be crucified, that there might be no hindrance to the growth of the fruit of the Spirit. That is just what Paul says may take place.

The apostle adds one more admonition in this passage. In the twenty-fifth verse he says: "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." The word translated "walk" here is a different one from that in verse sixteen above. There it is the common word for walking. Here it is a word which means to "keep in line." It is used of soldiers marching to battle. Paul says: "If we profess to live in the Spirit, let us keep step with the Spirit in our lives."

It seems in some ways that the climax of the teaching of this epistle comes in chapter six, verses seven and eight: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life."

The word "mocked" occurs only here in the New Testament. It means literally to "turn up one's nose at." We cannot turn up our noses at God and think we can break His laws at will. There is a law of life in the spiritual realm, just as in the physical realm. We must reap what we sow. We cannot escape it. But we can bow to it, sow to the Spirit, and reap a rich harvest here and hereafter.

ROMANS

This greatest of all Paul's epistles has exercised a profound influence on the history of the Christian Church. It was an important foundation for Augustine's theology. It was here that Luther found not only complete emancipation for his own soul, but the basic principles of the Protestant Reformation. It was while listening to the reading of Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans that John Wesley received his great illumination, which made him the leader of the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century. In this preface Luther says: "This epistle is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, the purest gospel." Calvin said of it: "It opens the doors to all the treasures of the Scriptures."

What has made this writing of the first century the powerful force that it still is today? It is not alone the human element — the revelation of Paul's own soul in its struggle for victory over sin, and its final triumph. It is more the Holy Spirit, not only outwardly present in the words — He is mentioned some twenty-seven times in the epistle but invisibly present as the hidden dynamic behind the words.

One of the most striking features of this letter of Paul is that it is experiential rather than theoretical. Paul was not talking in platitudes. The hot lava of his own experience in the search for salvation pours through its pages. One feels that here is fact, not theory; that here is life, not form. The vitality of this document is attested fully by its effects on its readers.

We have here the story of Paul's quest of the Spirit, and the glorious results of his finding. May this study of the epistle aid some reader in his search, and result in joyous discovery.

Our study of the Holy Spirit in Romans will center almost entirely in the eighth chapter, where He is mentioned no less than nineteen times. This is the greatest passage on the Holy Spirit next to Jesus' last discourse, which is recorded in the Gospel of John.

In the eighth chapter we learn that there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Why? "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death."

In the seventh chapter Paul has given us a very vivid piece of autobiography. We have a graphic picture of his struggles under the law. Condemnation, a sense of guilt — these were the fruits of that unhappy existence. He sought to do good, but evil was always present with him. He discovered a law in his members which was constantly warring against the law of his mind, his nobler desires. It was the law of sin and death, in a very real way, bringing to him a continual consciousness of sin and the resultant spiritual death. No wonder that he cries, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?"

But was there no deliverance? Is this a picture of the normal Christian life? The eighth chapter answers that question fully and finally. There is freedom, through the Holy Spirit. There is a new law which abrogates and annuls the law of sin and death. It is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

What does Paul mean by "law"? He evidently means a principle which operates in the human personality, which governs and dominates it. The Christian is subject to a new force in his life which nullifies the operations of the former principle. This new principle is life.

Life is a positive force. Death is simply the absence of life, as darkness is the absence of light. But life is more than the absence of death, of inability to act. Life is a powerful, pulsating, progressive force constantly in motion. It not only can act; it must act.

Two things are stated about this life; its source and its sphere. Its source is the Holy Spirit, the life-giving Spirit. Its sphere is "in Christ Jesus."

There is no life apart from the Spirit of Life. We have a striking example of this in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. Surely that was a place of death, if ever there was one. Not only was the valley filled with dead men's bones, but these bones had dried until all signs of life were gone.

It was a great challenge which met the prophet. The situation certainly looked utterly hopeless. But, in spite of all the abundant evidence of death, Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy that those bones should live. And prophesy he did. At once an earthquake took place. Bone joined itself to bone, until the pile of scattered bones became a row of skeletons. Soon flesh appeared on the bones, and it, in turn, was covered with skin. There lay an army of corpses. But they were still only candidates for coffins.

And then the Lord spoke to the prophet again. Here were splendid specimens of humanity. But all that had taken place was of no avail whatever unless these men could be made alive. So Ezekiel prophesied the second time, calling for the breath to come into them. When the spirit of life entered the bodies, they stood on their feet, a great army of living men.

It is not enough to get our lives well organized, so that we move harmoniously in society. It is not enough to become human, more gentle and kind, more philanthropic and thoughtful of others. All this may take place, and we may still be dead spiritually. Only the Spirit of Life can make us alive.

But this life, bestowed by the Spirit, is "in Christ Jesus." Outside of Him there is no life. All that the Holy Spirit does in us is dependent upon what Christ has done for us. A Spiritless sacramentarianism and a Christless mysticism will never save from sin nor give spiritual life. We must not allow the outward ceremony to take the place of living contact with the Spirit of God. Neither can we allow the immediacy of mysticism to exclude the mediation of Christ. Any belief in the life-giving power of the sacraments in and of themselves is sure to be deadening. And any search for fellowship with God apart from Jesus Christ is sentenced to failure. Christ himself has pronounced its doom. He that "climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."^[54]

One of the keynotes of the eighth chapter of Romans is the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. The old Mosaic law failed through the weakness of the flesh. Christianity succeeds because it is not based upon law but upon life — a new life bestowed by the Spirit of Life. It has been demonstrated times without number that real reform demands something more than legislation; it

requires a new motivation in human lives. This is what the Holy Spirit brings — new desires, and a new power to fulfill those desires.

The fourth verse tells us that only those can meet the requirements of God's law "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." But what does it mean to walk after the flesh? Paul tells us. It means having our minds filled with, our attention centered upon, "the things of the flesh." To walk after the Spirit means that we "mind" the things of the Spirit.

In the fourteenth and sixteenth verses the Holy Spirit is declared to be both the condition and the evidence of our sonship with God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." That certainly does not take in the whole human family, nor even the entire membership of the Christian Church. But if we are led by the Spirit, then "the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

This was a favorite text with John Wesley. After spending some thirteen years in searching vainly after a consciousness of acceptance with God, Wesley received the witness of the Spirit that his sins were forgiven and he belonged to Christ. This doctrine of assurance, or the witness of the Spirit became one of the dominant features in Methodism and one of the main secrets of its success. Multiplied thousands received the joyous assurance that they were children of God.

Mention is made in this chapter of one other important function of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life. In verses twenty-six to twenty-seven we find the relation of the Spirit to the prayer life of the believer. "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray 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."

We need the aid of the Holy Spirit, then, for an effective prayer life. This is not only for the devotional aspect, where the Spirit makes possible close fellowship with God. It is especially true in the realm of intercession, as this passage indicates.

The ministry of intercession has never been appreciated fully by the Church of Christ. It is a ministry which is at once the most universal in its scope and the most far-reaching in its effects. Not all Christians can be ordained preachers; but all can and should be intercessors. Not all can be foreign missionaries; but all can and should circle the globe with their prayers.

Herein lies one of the great weaknesses of the Church and one of the main causes of its paralysis in the face of a world need. We delegate all the work of the ministry to an ordained clergy. That God never intended for such to be the case is demonstrated fully in the Book of Acts. Paul called the layman Philemon his "partner." A sense of complete and coequal partnership between clergy and laity would go far toward solving some of our greatest problems in the Church today.

But how may we expect the Church to be stirred to more intercession, and how may we as Christians intercede more effectively? The answer to both questions is the same — a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the people of God. It is the Holy Spirit who stirs us to pray, and

who helps us to pray the effectual, fervent prayer that avails much. Praying in the Holy Spirit is never wasted effort because it is praying in the will of God.

We need the Holy Spirit not only for power in the public ministry of the Word, but also for power in the private ministry of intercession. Weakness in the latter may not be so obvious, and hence so humiliating, as in the former. But it will become apparent sooner or later. And certainly weakness in intercession is fully as tragic as the other. In fact, weakness in prayer must inevitably result in weakness in preaching. It is only as the Spirit enables us to intercede effectually with God that we can hope to intercede effectively with men.

In the fourteenth chapter of Romans, and the seventeenth verse, we have one of those summary statements of Paul which are full of significance. He writes: "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The context of this passage indicates clearly that Paul here is using the phrase "eating and drinking" for all externalities in religion. Rules and regulations for conduct, forms and ceremonies for worship, observance of certain holy days — these do not constitute Christianity.

What is Christianity? The author of Romans goes right to the heart of the matter. Religion is not an external thing at all. It is an inner experience with God. Therefore, we do not find the answer to our question by studying the institutional life of the Church, its organizations and creeds and ceremonies. If we would know the real nature of Christianity, we must seek for it in the heart of the believer in Christ. His simple, brief testimony is of more value for us here than all the weighty tomes of church history. In fact, any intelligent student of the so-called history of Christianity will realize that what he is reading is not the story of true Christianity, but rather of that which passes for such.

But let us look at Paul's statement again. He centers the Kingdom of God in the Spirit of God. In the eighth Chapter (verse nine) he declares: "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But here he goes further. He makes the Holy Spirit both the center and circumference of the Kingdom. A Christianity which is not saturated with the Spirit of God bears a false label. It may be a religion, but it is not Christianity.

Paul names three essential features of true Christian experience. First comes righteousness. This is the foundation upon which everything else is built. A professing Christian might appear to be an ardent believer in Christ. But if he was not fundamentally righteous, this fact alone would give the lie to his whole confession. We have many different types of Christians in our churches. But an unrighteous Christian is a misnomer.

But this righteousness is not only the absence of stealing, lying, immorality, or any other outward sins. It is righteousness "in the Holy Spirit." That means inner, spiritual righteousness. The Pharisees prided themselves on their outward morality and religious observances. Yet Jesus said to His disciples: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." ^[55] Paul is speaking of a righteousness which is inwrought by the Holy Spirit. It is something that makes our hearts righteous, as well as our outward lives. It means right motives, right attitudes, right thoughts and feelings. But, above all else,

it means a right relation to God. To be righteous in the Pauline sense is to be right with God. It means that our sins have been forgiven and that we stand justified before the Judge of the universe, through our acceptance of Christ.

The subjective result of this righteousness is peace. It is first of all "peace with God" — a quiet sense of security, a calm assurance that all is well with our souls.

But we have another scriptural phrase: "Peace of God." Jesus said to the group of disciples in the Upper Room, "My peace I give unto you." ^[56] The same peace that had controlled His life was to dwell in their hearts. It is not only a peace which God gives, but the sharing of a bit of His own experience with us.

But this peace in the Holy Spirit may have a further connotation. In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, verse fourteen, we read, "Follow after peace with all men." The Christian who is always fussing and quarreling is a poor example of his profession. The Holy Spirit not only would give us peace with God and the peace of God, but He would also help us to keep peace with men.

There is a third feature of Christian experience which Paul mentions in our passage. It is the emotional element, joy.

At once I see hands raised in horror at the very mention of emotion in religion. The cry of "Fire, fire!" is heard. We must be reverent — which is, being interpreted, calm and cool.

But the modern study of psychology is leading us to recognize more clearly the very important place of the emotions. We know today that the emotional life is one of the determining factors in personality.

The religion of the Old Testament and that of the New both give a prominent place to the emotions. We are beginning to recognize a little better the truth of the statement, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." A joyless Christian is a weak Christian. A joyless church is a defeated church. If we would save our young people to the church, we must not drive all joy out of our religion.

But how are we to have this peace and joy? Paul answers the question in chapter fifteen, verse thirteen: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit."

God does not do anything halfway. He is not straitened in circumstances, as men are. And neither is He limited in His giving. If we have barely enough religion to keep us miserable, and none to keep us happy, it is not God's fault. The limitations are not in the giving but in the receiving. God has promised to us the Holy Spirit. And with Him, and through His presence in our hearts, He designs to "fill" us with "all" joy and peace.

PHILIPPIANS

We come now to the third group of Paul's epistles. The chief topic of the Thessalonian letters is eschatology, or the doctrine of future things. The Corinthian epistles, Galatians, and Romans discuss the doctrines of salvation, or soteriology. We turn now to the prison epistles, whose chief subject is Christology. All four letters in this group appear to have been written from Rome, while Paul was waiting there for trial before the emperor.

It is interesting to note that this epistle, written from prison and to the place where Paul had had an unpleasant prison experience, has joy as its keynote. Here is the triumph of Christianity, not only enduring sufferings but actually enabling the sufferer to glory in tribulations. The victim becomes victor.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only twice in this short letter. But I think we may fairly say that we have here clear evidence that Paul was enjoying the experience which he described to the Romans in the last passage we studied. He was filled with all joy in believing, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The first mention of the Holy Spirit is in the nineteenth verse of the first chapter. Moffatt's translation reads: "The outcome of all this, I know, will be my release, as you continue to pray for me, and as I am provided with the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Paul valued the prayers of his friends at Philippi. He felt that the Holy Spirit would be supplied to him abundantly in answer to their intercessions for him. Is this not a hint to us to pray that God will give His Spirit graciously to those who are in particularly difficult circumstances?

In the first verse of the second chapter we find the phrase "fellowship of the Spirit." We may well feel that that expression meant something in those lonely days of imprisonment, when he was kept from active missionary work.

COLOSSIANS

When Paul sent the runaway slave Onesimus back home, he gave him a little personal note to take to his master Philemon, asking the latter to receive Onesimus and to forgive him. At the same time Paul wrote a longer letter to the Colossian church, which evidently met in Philemon's house. This was sent by Tychicus, who accompanied Onesimus on his return home.

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the little note to Philemon, and only once in the letter to the Colossians. This may not seem so strange when we remember that Paul was writing against incipient Gnosticism in the vicinity of Colossae. He met this heresy in a positive way by defining the person and nature of Christ, who is the "image of the invisible God." It was not so necessary to treat of the Holy Spirit in opposing the teachings of the Gnostics.

So it is in a passage of personal greetings to the Colossians that Paul mentions the Holy Spirit. He says that Epaphras told him of their "love in the Spirit." This doubtless encouraged Paul's heart at this time.

The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of Life but the Spirit of Love. God is love, and He supplies love to us through His Spirit.

EPHESIANS

After Paul had written the brief note to Philemon and the letter to the Colossian church, he evidently wrote a longer epistle to be taken to Ephesus and then to be circulated among all the churches of Asia Minor. It has much in common with Colossians but is more profound and has more emphasis on the Church.

It is not surprising, then, to find the Holy Spirit mentioned eleven times in this epistle. Christology alone does not require much reference to the Spirit. But in the relation of Christ to His Church the Holy Spirit plays the vital part. He has been likened to the life-giving sap which flows through the vine out into the branches. Without this sap the branches are dead and worthless. With it they bear the fruit of the vine.

After his usual salutation, Paul begins this epistle with a great paean of praise, taking in verses three to fourteen, inclusive, of the first chapter. It is a hymn in three stanzas. Verses three to six extol the Father; verses seven to twelve, the Son; verses thirteen and fourteen, the Holy Spirit. It certainly would be postposterous for anyone to claim that Paul did not believe in the Trinity.

It does not fall within the scope of our present work to treat the passages relating to the Father and the Son. So we must confine our discussion to the last part of the hymn. Speaking of Christ, Paul says: "In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, — in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's possession, unto the praise of his glory."

We have already discussed the significance of the term "earnest," which occurred twice in Second Corinthians, as also "sealed," which was in one of the two passages there. We might just add the thought here that the seal was sometimes a mark of ownership, stamped upon a slave. So the Christian is "marked and authenticated as God's heritage," by the presence of the Spirit in his life.

In chapter two Paul discusses the relation of Jew and Gentile under the new dispensation. He says (verse 18) that "through him [Christ] we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." Christ is the way to the Father, the open door of access, but it is the Holy Spirit who brings us near. He is the medium of our fellowship with God.

The same thought is carried a step further in the twenty-second verse: "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." When the Holy Spirit has left, God is gone. The Book of Ephesians is especially rich in the prayers of Paul. Probably the two greatest recorded by his pen are those in the first and third chapters of this epistle. In the second one (3:16) he mentions the Holy Spirit: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man."

Paul knew what it was to be weak physically. Some type of malady appears to have been his constant thorn in the flesh. But the great apostle was not weak spiritually. Though perhaps of small and unimposing stature, he was a spiritual giant. Here he tells us the secret. He was strengthened with power by the Spirit in the inward man.

What is included in that phrase "the inward man"? It takes in the seat of our affections and desires. These the Holy Spirit purifies and strengthens toward God and spiritual things. It takes in our intellect. We are given "the mind of Christ" to govern our thought life. It also includes the will. The Spirit-filled Christian is not weak-willed. Any young Christian who is naturally weak at this vital point should ask God most earnestly to strengthen him here by the Spirit, till he shall become powerful to will the right and to stand by his convictions.

After taking us for an airplane ride in the first half of this epistle and giving us a vast panoramic view of God's great eternal purposes in Christ, Paul, in the fourth chapter, brings us down to earth again and says: "Now walk. Walk in the light of what you have seen. Walk straight."

Though Paul almost seems to get lost in the clouds as he talks of sitting together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, he never failed to find his way back to earth. In his absorption in spiritual truths he never forgot to be practical. In fact, he never divorced the two. He taught that one can be a practical Christian only as one is spiritual.

So he writes, in the fourth chapter: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling."

The matter of church unity is a very practical problem today. There is a great deal of discussion of this question in our religious journals right now. But much, if not most, of what is written seems to me to be wide of the mark.

What is the one possible basis of unity? History furnishes ample demonstration of the fact that neither man-made creeds nor human organizations can ever unite the Church of Christ. There is one, and only one, basis of unity. That is the Spirit of God.

An important warning is sounded in the thirtieth verse of chapter four: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption."

How may we grieve the Spirit? The most logical way to answer that question would probably be to study the context of the passage. Here we find Paul exhorting the Christians to shun the heathen practices of immorality, to avoid lying, stealing, and corrupt speaking, to put away anger and to have a forgiving spirit.

Evidently, then, we may grieve the Spirit by indulging in conduct or conversation unbecoming to a Christian, or by manifesting an unforgiving spirit. The seriousness of the matter is indicated by the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who seals us unto the day of redemption.

A brief command, which might be taken as the motto of our study, is found in chapter five, verse eighteen: "Be filled with the Spirit."

This injunction is placed in contrast over against drunkenness. Paul says: "Don't get drunk and participate in the riotous orgies of the heathen festivals about you. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."

Why do people get drunk? It is often to escape reality, to find a release from the burdens and problems of life. Many get drunk to be happy, forgetful of the dregs of bitterness at the bottom of the cup.

But Paul says, "If you want to be happy, don't get drunk; be filled with the Spirit! If you want to be lifted above the pressing cares and burdens of life, be filled with the Spirit." And there is no morning-after feeling.

But what are the effects of being filled with the Spirit? These are indicated in the verses immediately following, and we challenge anyone to compare them with the effects of drinking. "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ."

What, pray tell, is there obnoxious or out of the way about that? What could be more beautiful than the Christian life pictured here? Melody within and harmony without. A continual celebration of thanksgiving, instead of faultfinding and complaining. Who would not like to associate with a group of people who had that type of Spirit-filled experience?

In the last chapter of this epistle the author describes the Christians' armor. The last two items are related to the Spirit. "And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit." ^[57]

Our main weapon for waging offensive warfare is the Word of God. It is called the Sword of the Spirit because it was given by inspiration of the Spirit and because He uses it most frequently in vanquishing the enemy. The preaching of the Word of God is still our mightiest weapon in the warfare against Satan and for Christ. We may rely on the active assistance of the Spirit of God when we preach the Word of God.

Someone has suggested that prayer here is the buckle that holds all the armor together. Certainly it is true that we may have everything else mentioned here and still be defeated through lack of prayer. It is in praying that we "pull ourselves together" and prepare to face the enemy.

But it is not just any kind of praying that will serve this purpose. It is definitely "praying in the Spirit." We have noted already that prayer in the Spirit is sure to be effective, because the Holy Spirit causes us to pray in the will of God.

Paul would teach us, then, that our whole life is to be influenced and molded by the Spirit of God. We are to walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit, sing in the Spirit, love in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit,

preach in the Spirit. The Spirit-filled Christian is the victorious Christian. He not only keeps victory in his own heart, but he wins victories for Christ and the Church.

Paul left no place for weaklings in the army of Christ. He says: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might." There is no excuse for weakness, for God offers us the strength of His might. If we fail, it is because we have not appropriated His Spirit.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

These three epistles were written to two young pastors, one at Ephesus, the other in Crete. They were probably written by Paul shortly before his death at the hands of Nero. They are in the nature of manuals, or handbooks, for pastoral use.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in each of these epistles. In First Timothy (4:1) we read: "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith."

The reference here is not clear. It may refer to Old Testament prophecy, or to Paul's own words in Second Thessalonians, or even to the words of Jesus in the Olivet discourse. But the point is that the Holy Spirit has warned of a latter-day apostasy. How much fulfillment of that there has been in the history of the Church already!

In Titus (3:5) we are told that we are saved "through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." This is another description of the new birth and tallies closely with Jesus' words to Nicodemus, as recorded in John's Gospel.

In Second Timothy (1:14) we find the injunction: "That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." The Greek of the first part simply says: "Guard the good deposit."

What is meant by this deposit? The immediate context would suggest that Paul has reference to a body of doctrinal truth, more or less definitely fixed, which has been committed to the care of young Timothy. He is to guard this carefully and to pass it on uncorrupted to his successors.

This is a message which is needed in every age. It is the duty of each generation to give the truth to the succeeding generation in the same purity as it was received. It is also the duty of each generation to guard the fire of God's presence and power, to see that it does not go out, and to pass it on to the next generation burning as brightly as when it was received.

But how are we to guard the deposit? Again the answer is plain: "Through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." That is certainly the only way we can guard the fire of divine love and power. And it is also the only way we can guard the deposit of truth. Someone has said that the Holy Spirit is the "best conservator of orthodoxy." And that is true. He is the One who gave the revelation of divine truth. He alone can interpret it correctly and so preserve the real truth.

What is the best contribution, then, that we can make to the onward progress of the Church? It is the personal experience of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our hearts, keeping us true in our doctrines and fervent in our souls. Thus only can we guard the good deposit and pass it on to our children. We owe it to them to do it.

It seems to me that these words of Paul are highly instructive for us today. In the verse immediately preceding the one we have been discussing, we read: "Hold the pattern of sound [literally, healthful; Greek, hygienic] words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

We often hear it said these days that we should "scrap" all our creeds and get back to the simplicity of the teachings of Jesus. We are told that our creeds are shackles, that they hinder the progress of the Church.

It must be confessed that the student of Christian history is apt to feel some sympathy with these views when he reads the story of creed-making in the Early Church. We know that truth can never be fixed by legislating the authority of certain phrases and terms. Words change so much in meaning and even allow of such a variety of connotations at any time that we cannot hope to preserve truth by means of words alone.

And yet Paul says to "hold the pattern of sound words." This seems very much like a plea for a certain amount of credal emphasis. At least it does not agree with the sentiment of those who say that we should discard the phraseology of traditional orthodoxy in favor of a more modern vocabulary. Such words as "sin," "atonement," "hell" are taboo in many religious circles which are supposed to be evangelical.

What is to be our attitude in this matter? Shall we join the iconoclastic crusade against all credalism? Shall we add our voices to the cry, "Down with the idols of traditionalism"?

Before we do so we had better face the facts of history. The late Professor Cell, of Boston University, used to remind us that it was John Wesley's emphasis upon the clear, simple teaching of the New Testament that brought about the great revival of the eighteenth century in England. And then Dr. Cell would say something like this: "You young preachers scorn to speak of the blood of Christ and of being born again. But remember that John Wesley used these terms, and he stirred the world. It is time for us to confess our weakness today in the pulpit. If we would rediscover the power of John Wesley in our own preaching, we must learn again what he meant when he said that the blood of Jesus Christ saves from sin. We are weak because we have substituted human opinions for divine truth."

It all reduces to the fundamental question of whether we consider the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God. That is the crux of the whole dispute in theology today. Granted that the New Testament is of divine authority, then such phrases and terms as those mentioned above must have meaning and importance for us which we cannot afford to ignore.

The last words of great men are always of peculiar interest to us. We grasp eagerly for the mature thoughts of those who have molded human affairs for good.

That is one thing which makes the Second Epistle to Timothy of special value. It was written by Paul "the aged" shortly before his death, which probably took place in the autumn of A.D. 67 or the spring of A.D. 68. It is his "swan song" dedicated to his young son in the faith.

What was the particular concern of Paul's heart, as he waited there in Roman prison for the death which he knew would soon overtake him? If we read this epistle carefully we shall see that it was the preservation of his gospel message, as well as its propagation, which concerned him most at this time.

We can almost hear the pathos in Paul's voice as he says: "This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me." ^[58] Here is an old man who had given his very life for the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman world. He had concentrated his efforts on the province of Asia at one time. It was in its capital city, Ephesus, that he had spent three years of his busy life. And now he writes, "They have all turned away from me."

That was a bitter pill for the aged apostle, now weak in body, and without human companions except his attending physician and close friend, Luke. How the ingratitude of his converts must have cut him! Evidently the anti-Paulinists had done their deadly work in Asia, as elsewhere.

What is Paul to do about it? He can only urge his son Timothy to conserve the foundations which he himself had laid. "Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." ^[59]

Again he writes: "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, holding a straight course in the word of truth." ^[60] And still again: "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." ^[61]

We are faced very definitely today with the problem of conserving orthodoxy in the Church. Some would be impatient with that statement. It is Christianity, not orthodoxy, that must be saved. But may I be so bold as to affirm that unless we conserve orthodox teaching we cannot hope to save Christianity itself. The Christian religion is a supernatural religion, based upon supernatural revelation. Orthodoxy does not mean Calvinism or Arminianism or any other single interpretation of the Scriptures. But it does mean an acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God and an adherence to its plain, obvious teachings.

But how are we going to conserve the faith? For one thing, our preachers must "hold a straight [Greek, *orthos*] course in the word of truth." If we have deviation in the preaching, we shall have decline in the living. Heterodoxy in the pulpit will result in "heteropraxy" in the pew. The main

burden of responsibility for guarding the deposit lies with our pastors and seminary professors. If they go astray, "these sheep, what shall they do?"

It seems to me that Paul's admonition to commit the gospel "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," ought to strike home with tremendous conviction to those who are guiding the thinking of the next generation of preachers. We who have young candidates for the ministry in our classrooms day after day will, I fear, be held accountable to God in a special way for the future of the Church. If we fail, the cause of God will be jeopardized. May it not be said of us that we were traitors in the camp of Christ!

Paul mentions a third suggestion to young Timothy. He says, "Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." Have we learned simple faith in Christ and in the Word of God? Have we been assured of the validity of our faith by the transformation which the gospel has wrought in our hearts and lives? If so, let us abide in these things.

But we must get back to our text again: "Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." No amount of creed-making or use of orthodox ritual will preserve the truth of Christianity to the Church when the light of the Holy Spirit has gone out.

We are faced today with crucial problems in Protestantism. Many are asking whether evangelicalism can survive. Personally, we are not concerned as to the final outcome. Christ will triumph ultimately. But we do wonder how much will be lost while the struggle goes on. We are concerned for our generation, that it may have the light of truth.

But the best way to conserve orthodoxy is to have Spirit-sent revivals. They will do more to answer the cavils of the critics than any amount of argument and debate.

I believe that our greatest hope for evangelical Christianity today lies in Holy Spirit evangelism. Evangelicalism without evangelism is sure to fail. Evangelicalism with evangelism is sure to win. It will not perish, because it is alive and active. Paul "kept the faith" by preaching it in the power of the Spirit.

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By
Ralph Earle

Chapter 5 THE SUNSET TRYST

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even tide. — Genesis 24:63.

One of the best-loved pictures which has come down to us from the past is that called "The Angelus." The workers in the field are standing with bowed heads, as the bell of the near-by church rings the call to prayer. It is a beautiful scene. The honest toilers have reached the end of another day. Eventide has come, and with the approaching dusk their minds are turned upward to the One who made them. The quiet of the country is enhanced by the softness of the mild rays shed by the setting sun. Only the sweet, musical chimes from the church can be heard in the stillness, as hearts everywhere pause to worship God. It is the evening hour of prayer.

A prominent keynote of the First Epistle of John — which has as many references to the Holy Spirit as all the other General Epistles together is fellowship. The word suggests to our minds the eventide with its setting sun, the time for meditation. At the close of the day, when the tasks are done — it is then that the heart seeks repose, and the mind longs for rest and quiet. Then it is that we seek the fellowship of Him who said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" — rest you with My presence.

HEBREWS

The theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews appears to fall about midway between that of Paul and that of John. Hence, the study of this book is receiving increased attention among scholars, as portraying an Early Church situation a little different from that of either Paul or John. We shall seek to learn what it has to say about the Holy Spirit.

In the second chapter, verses three and four, we read: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will."

What are these "gifts of the Holy Spirit"? The word "gifts" is literally "distributions." So Westcott, in his commentary, translates it "various gifts." Evidently the reference is to the gifts which were distributed by the Spirit to the different members of the Early Church. Paul lists some of these in First Corinthians and in Ephesians, as we have already seen.

While the main purpose of Hebrews seems to be to show the great inferiority of Judaism as compared with Christianity, yet no New Testament writer more definitely ascribes divine authority to the Old Testament scriptures than does the author of this book. He quotes those sacred writings as the Word of God, and does so frequently.

One of such instances is to be found in the seventh verse of the third chapter: "As the Holy Spirit saith." Whatever modern scholars may say about the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, the author of Hebrews certainly believed in it! He did not consider the older sacred scriptures to be what an outstanding Christian scholar of our day has called "simply a source book for the study of the religion of the Hebrews." To him, it was the Holy Spirit who spoke the words recorded there. Either he was mistaken, or our modern critic is wrong.

In chapter six, verse four, the author describes some who have heard the gospel message and then fallen away from it. One thing that he states concerning them is that they were made "partakers of the Holy Spirit."

The meaning of the word "partakers" may be clarified somewhat by reference to the same Greek root in 5:13, where it speaks of those young converts who partake of milk. Certainly this does not mean that they looked at the milk, or examined it otherwise, but that they drank it. Any other interpretation would be manifestly absurd.

I think we are justified in holding, then, that our passage describes one who has received the Holy Spirit, at least in a measure. It would seem to confirm the teaching of Paul that every Christian has the Spirit of Christ, or is a partaker of the Holy Spirit. The question is: To what extent have we become partakers?

An interesting phrase occurs in the ninth chapter, verse eight: "the Holy Spirit this signifying." The author is discussing the spiritual meaning of certain items in the worship of the Israelites. He goes so far as to say that the explanation he is offering is that which the Spirit intended.

This raises the question as to the place of the Mosaic ritual in the divine economy. We recall that the pattern of the Tabernacle and the worship forms connected with it were given to Moses directly by God. They had divine authority for the Israelites; but their function was temporal, not permanent. For us they are types; they have spiritual significance, but they are not literally binding upon us. Yet these religious ceremonies were ordained by God and enjoined upon the Israelites as divine commands.

May not these facts shed some light on the question of the inspiration of the Old Testament scriptures? The same Holy Spirit who gave the Israelites their ceremonial laws also gave them the words of the prophets and poets. Such is the teaching of Hebrews and of the entire New Testament. The testimony is too strong to be ignored.

Just as the worship forms of the Israelites are not binding upon us, so many of the ethical teachings of the Old Testament — such as "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" — are not of literal application to us today. But the Holy Spirit has spiritual lessons in them which He would teach us. We have a classic example of this in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus took certain Old Testament teachings and gave them a higher spiritual significance for His disciples. Rather than denying the inspiration of the older scriptures, we should seek to ascertain what lessons the Holy Spirit would teach us by means of them. This has always been the attitude of devout souls, those whose lives have been a benediction to humanity.

Without the Holy Spirit to help us, the Old Testament is full of problems. With Him, it is full of promises. Faith does not feed on question marks but on exclamation points. A lot of the higher criticism of the Bible is like the husks with which the poor prodigal would fain have filled himself starvation diet.

We have another statement of the divine authority of the Old Testament in chapter ten, verse fifteen. The author has just interpreted a passage from Psalms 40 as applying to the new covenant made by Christ and sealed by His death. Then he says, to support his interpretation: "And the Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us." In what way? He goes on to quote a passage from Jeremiah as the words of the Holy Spirit. That is, he finds in the prophets an authoritative confirmation of his interpretation of the Psalms.

In the twenty-ninth verse of this tenth chapter we have another striking passage on the subject of apostasy. And in this passage, also, the Holy Spirit is mentioned. "Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

We wonder what will be the fate of those who sneer at the blood of Christ as belonging to a "slaughterhouse religion." The most outstanding leader in a certain evangelical denomination recently made a slurring remark about the "blood-rusty key of the atonement." Does not such a one have his sentence already pronounced in the passage before us?

The climax of apostasy is doing "outrage" to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word occurs only here in the New Testament and means literally "to insult." He who begins by denying the deity of Christ and rejecting the Blood of the atonement ends by insulting the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is here called "the Spirit of grace," because it is through Him that the grace of God comes to our souls. The one who insults the Holy Spirit shuts off the only means by which he can receive the grace of forgiveness and cleansing.

There are not many references to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. The reason seems to be that the emphasis of the entire book is on the person and work of Christ. Westcott has summarized it well in his excellent commentary on this book. He says, in connection with this passage: "It will be observed that the action of the Holy Spirit falls into the background in the Epistle from the characteristic view which is given of the priestly work of Christ."

JAMES

There is only one reference to the Holy Spirit in the Epistle of James, and that is in a rather obscure passage. In the fourth chapter and fifth verse we read: "Think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?"

The first difficulty in the rendering of the Authorized Version is that it makes the second question a quotation from scripture — "the scripture saith." This is evaded in the Revised, as quoted above.

Most translations, however, give this as a scripture quotation. But the difficulty lies in the fact that those words are not to be found anywhere in the Old Testament.

The second problem centers in the meaning of the word "spirit." Does it refer to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit? Both the Authorized and Revised Versions, as well as Moffatt's translation, make it the human spirit. But Weymouth and Wesley consider the references to be to the Holy Spirit. A. T. Robertson also favors this view.

Some of these translations are suggestive. Moffatt reads: "He yearns jealously for the spirit he set within us." Weymouth has: "The Spirit which He has caused to dwell in us yearns jealously over us." John Wesley translates: "The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth against envy."

The thoughts expressed by Moffatt and Weymouth are both very beautiful. Whichever way the verse is taken, the meaning is much the same. God yearns jealously over us, and we know that it is through His Spirit that He does this.

FIRST PETER

The Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in First Peter ^[62] The first reference is found in a Trinitarian passage, the second verse of the epistle: "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

"Spirit" here is in the subjective genitive: it is the sanctification which is wrought by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification means the act or process of making holy. It is the function of the Spirit of God to make believers holy. Every true Christian longs to be made holy by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. A professed follower of Christ who does not desire to be holy is a stranger to the work of the Spirit.

In both epistles which bear his name Peter emphasizes the divine inspiration of the Old Testament scriptures. He writes: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven." ^[63]

This passage sheds interesting light on the work of the Holy Spirit in both the old and new dispensations. The prophets of ancient Israel wrote as the Spirit directed them, without always knowing fully the meaning of what they wrote. But it was revealed to them that they were ministering to a future age.

It is rather striking to note that the name used here is "the Spirit of Christ." This seems to tie up with the Logos doctrine which was popular in the Early Church. It was the Spirit of the pre-existent Christ who moved the prophets to foretell His sufferings and glory. The fact that the Holy Spirit is called interchangeably the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ is at least an argument in favor of the deity of Christ.

Not only was the Spirit needed to reveal to men of old what would take place in the coming of the Messiah, but we need the Spirit just as truly to interpret Christ and His death to the world today.

SECOND PETER

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in this epistle. But it is one of the most definite passages on Biblical inspiration to be found in the New Testament. For that reason we quote it at length.

After mentioning the transfiguration scene and the voice of God from heaven testifying to the fact that Jesus was His Son, the author says: "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."

Here we have a strong and definite assertion of the divine origin of the Old Testament scriptures. None of it came by the will of man. It was given through human instrumentality, but in every case it was initiated by the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament men speak from God. It is not only for God. The statement is even more definite: it is "from God." God is the source of the message of scripture.

What was the method of inspiration? Here we are told that the writers were being "borne along" by the Holy Spirit. That is, there was a special and powerful moving of the Holy Spirit on the authors as they wrote. The inspiration was not at the point of the pen nor in the movements of the hand, but in the minds of the writers. God's Spirit bore them along in their thinking and enabled them to record divine truth.

JUDE

The Holy Spirit is mentioned twice in this short letter of only twenty-five verses. In the nineteenth verse it is said of certain mockers that they do not have the Spirit. Then a contrast is drawn in the verse following: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

"Praying in the Holy Spirit." We have already noted the Spirit's help in intercessory prayer, as set forth in the eighth chapter of Romans. But here the emphasis is on praying in the Holy Spirit as a means of building up ourselves in the faith. In other words, if we wish to become strong, well-established Christians, we must learn to pray in the Spirit.

There is no such thing as growth in the Christian life apart from prayer. We may increase in our efficiency as preachers or lay workers; we may improve our outward lives; we may take a larger place in the church — and do all this without prayer. But we cannot "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" unless we pray. The only way to become more like Christ is to dwell more in His presence.

But it is not every kind of praying that will build us up. It is "praying in the Holy Spirit." Thousands of people say prayers every day or repeat a formal prayer on Sunday; but their lives do not become more Christlike. If we would make our prayers effective, we must seek to be "in the Spirit" when we pray.

FIRST JOHN

The first century was drawing to a close. All of the twelve apostles of Jesus had passed from the scene — all but John. The beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom still lived on, to bless and guide the Church. He was left to form a link between the Church of the first century and that of the second. For in Polycarp and in his disciple, Irenaeus, the Johannine tradition was carried through the second century.

It was in Ephesus, according to the testimony of Irenaeus, that John the apostle remained until about A.D. 100. Here, Eusebius tells us, his body was laid to rest.

A beautiful story has come down to us regarding the closing days of John's life. It is preserved in Jerome's commentary on Galatians, written in the fourth century. Inasmuch as this incident is often referred to, we quote the account verbatim, for the sake of accuracy.

"When the holy Evangelist John had lived to extreme old age in Ephesus, he could be carried only with difficulty by the hands of the disciples, and as he was not able to pronounce more words, he was accustomed to say at every assembly, 'Little children, love one another.' At length the disciples and brethren who were present became tired of hearing always the same thing and said: 'Master, why do you always say this?' Thereupon John gave an answer worthy of himself: 'Because this is the commandment of the Lord, and if it is observed then is it enough.'" ^[64]

What a contrast this is to the narrow sectarian spirit and the ambitious self-seeking of the young son of Zebedee! A change had certainly come into his life. What was it? It was the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life that had transformed the son of thunder into the apostle of love. The love of God had been shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, who had been given to him on the Day of Pentecost. The years since then had brought a ripening and a mellowing of John's spirit, until he became the great exponent of love.

It is not surprising, then, that John should have bequeathed a rich legacy to the Church in the way of writings from his own pen. Next to Paul, he is the most important writer of the New Testament, while Luke takes third place with his histories of Jesus and the Early Church.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned six times in the First Epistle of John. Two of these references (3:24 and 4:13) are very much alike. We quote them first. "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us." "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

At first thought, this might seem to refer to the witness of the Spirit, which we noticed in Paul's writings. But these passages seem to go further than that. They appear to speak of an evidence to us

which rises out of the consciousness of the Spirit's presence in our hearts. It is not that the Spirit speaks to us, assuring us that we belong to Christ, as in Paul. Here it is a constant demonstration of the fact that we are Christians, because God's Spirit dwells in our hearts. It is the best proof we could have of the fact that we are actually God's children.

In the fifth chapter, verses seven and eight, we read: "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one."

John has a number of favorite terms, which occur frequently in his Gospel and First Epistle. Outstanding among them are love, light, life, a beautiful trilogy of ideas. All three of these may be predicated of God and, in the highest sense, of Him alone. God is love; God is light; God is life. He is the eternal source of these things, and we find them only in Him.

John has three other prominent terms, and they also form a trilogy, closely connected in thought. These are believe, know, and witness. Belief is an especially prominent idea in the Gospel, but it is also outstanding in the Epistle. Knowing seems to be a little stronger in force. But both of these are conditioned on the witness which is borne to us.

Who is it that bears witness? John says that it is the Spirit. We are convinced that no one really believes and fully knows the truth of the divine message without the witness of the Spirit. How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is our Saviour? How may we, in an age of skeptical criticism, believe that the Bible is the Word of God? Is it not true that, in the last analysis, a positive certainty comes to us only as the result of a conviction wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit? When He witnesses to us definitely, then we know with certainty, and not until then.

If we have difficulty in believing, then it would seem that the best procedure would be to ask the Holy Spirit to witness to our hearts clearly as to what is true. It is His function to do so, and such a witness leaves no place for doubt. The Holy Spirit is thus the Supporter of our personal faith, as well as the Conservator of the faith of the Church.

It is stated in this passage that "the Spirit is the truth." This declaration may seem a little odd, until we remember that Jesus said, "I am the truth." Truth is summed up in God, who has manifested himself in His Son and in the Holy Spirit.

To know the Holy Spirit, then, is to know the truth. Not to know Him is to fail of knowing the truth. For "the truth" is more than a set of intellectual propositions. If we would learn what philosophers and scientists of every age have sought in vain — the secret of the universe — we must seek it in God. The personality of God is the explanation of His universe.

The sunset tryst — the quiet witness of the Spirit to our hearts that we belong to Christ. The fellowship of the Spirit, that in the stillness of the evening hour draws our minds to meditate on the meaning of the universe about us and above us. The soft breathing of the air around us; the hushed notes of the birds, as beaks are tucked under wings for the night; the twilight which comes noiselessly across the fields; the peace of heaven that steals over our souls, and wraps us as in a

mantle. Lo, God is here. We have seen His face. We have heard His voice. We have felt His presence. And our hearts are at rest.

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By
Ralph Earle

Chapter 6 ONE CLEAR CALL

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me.

— Tennyson —

The Spirit and the bride say, Come.
— Revelation 22:17 —

It was sunset in the life of the Apostle John. The shadows were already beginning to gather. Soon the world would be wrapped in a cloak of darkness.

But ere the shades of night are drawn the aged apostle takes one last look. Above the fading glow of the sunset there appears a star — an evening star of hope. Lo, it brightens, it enlarges. Suddenly it becomes a telescope through which John may gaze into the celestial city itself. "Behold, a door opened in heaven." And then a call — "the first voice that I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter." [65]

It was the climax of revelation. In Luke we have the great historian of the past. In Paul we have the mighty theologian of the present. In John we have the exalted prophet of the future. "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter."

The cornerstone of revelation was laid on a rugged mountain peak of Sinai. The capstone of revelation was placed on the rocky isle called Patmos.

The conditions were much the same in both cases. Moses and John both stood alone in the presence of God. While the children of Israel feasted and frolicked below, Moses spent forty days in the mount fasting alone and forging out at new kingdom on the anvil of communion with God. It was a momentous occasion. The future of a nation, the destiny of God's people depended on the revelation which Moses received there as he talked face to face with God.

Some fifteen hundred years later the last remaining apostle of Christ stood alone on a barren island in the Mediterranean. Under his feet was nothing but stony ground. Around him was nothing but open sea, with the waves beating ceaselessly on the shore of his island prison. Above him nothing but the blue sky, which seemed at times to mock his searching gaze.

Things were not going so well. The church at Ephesus had left its first love. The venerable patriarch and foremost pillar of the Church was in exile. The forces of the enemy were seeking to

wear out the saints of the Most High. Those were crucial times for the struggling Church which had been founded on the Day of Pentecost, less than seventy years before.

It was a long call back to those days when John and the other apostles walked with Jesus by the lake of Galilee. Those were days bright with promise and full of hope. Here was a Leader who could still the storm and feed the multitudes with a handful of loaves. Nothing was impossible for Him. They would follow Him to the ends of the earth, confident of sure and speedy conquest.

But dark and ominous clouds began to appear in the sky. They gathered thick and fast. Quickly the storm broke over their Leader's head, and He was stricken down before their eyes. The world suddenly went black, and blank.

But to the sorrowing, yet wondering, disciples in the Upper Room the risen Lord himself appeared. He quieted their fears and confirmed their faith. He demonstrated to them the reality of His resurrection. He talked with them of His coming kingdom.

John had seen that Kingdom come, for this age, on the day of Pentecost. He had taken active part in the growth of the Early Church at Jerusalem. He had gone with Peter to Samaria and confirmed the revival which Philip had started there. He had concurred in the decision of the apostles at the Council of Jerusalem, in granting liberty to the Gentile Christians. He had seen the great work of Peter and Paul. But now they were gone, and he was left alone. He only, of the original founders of the Church, had lived to witness its varying vicissitudes down through the closing decades of the first century.

It was Sunday, the Christian day of worship. John, no doubt, was in a pensive mood; he had plenty of time to think and much to think about.

But meditation was to be changed to revelation. Suddenly the apostle heard behind him a voice "a great voice, as of a trumpet," announcing to him that something special was about to take place. He turned to see the speaker and found himself gazing into the face of "the Living One," his risen Lord, the Christ of the Galilean road.

But what conditioned the reception of this vision? It was not alone the pensiveness of the apostle. John himself gives us the secret: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."^[66]

We cannot help wondering how much more we might see as Christians if we were more frequently and fully "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Six days of our week are taken up largely with the affairs of this life, and necessarily so. But God has in His wisdom, given us one day for the resting of our bodies and minds and the refreshing of our souls. We have ample demonstration of the necessity for physical and mental relaxation especially in the strenuous, complex mode of life of our day. But do we realize fully the equally urgent need for the renewal of our spirits? Are we breaking down spiritually because we fail to heed this law of life?

Our hospitals and psychopathic institutions are filled with sufferers from physical and mental breakdowns. But is it not also true that our churches have their increasing problem of spiritual

breakdowns? In fact, psychiatrists are coming more and more to realize that many cases of mental illness are mainly caused by spiritual maladjustment. We need today our Sabbaths for rest for our souls.

But it is not alone for ourselves that we need to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. It is only when we are in this state of mind that we can hope to hear God's voice and see visions of His plan and purpose. Is the Church missing much of God's blessing because too many of its members are not in the Spirit on the Lord's day? Certainly we can afford to take one day for spiritual things. The fact that we do not shows that we fail to appreciate our heavenly citizenship. I fear that too often our conduct belies our confession. We profess to believe in the supreme value of eternal things, and yet we give practically our whole attention to temporal affairs.

In the call to John to visit heaven, which we have already noted, there is one word that has a message both of warning and of promise. It is the little word "must." "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter."

A considerable part of the revelation which was given to John consists of a vivid description of the terrible judgments which are to befall the world because of its rejection of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Book of Revelation is very largely a portrayal of apocalyptic judgments.

But God has warned us carefully that these things must come to pass. Why? Because the wickedness of men will necessitate them. God's foreknowledge of the future course of human history enabled Him to reveal to His apostle the fact that the world would go on increasingly in its rebellion against Him until the age would climax in judgment.

But there is also promise in the "must." We are not left in doubt as to the final outcome of the struggle between the forces of God and the forces of evil. We do not, in Christianity, have two eternal beings in perpetual conflict, as in Zoroastrianism. There is a basic optimism in Christian teaching which saves us from pessimism and fatalism. We know that Christ will ultimately triumph over every foe and that His kingdom shall be established, to last eternally.

There are many things in the Book of Revelation that we do not understand fully. We do not profess to be able to give the meaning of every sign and symbol in this vivid series of apocalyptic pictures. It seems to us that an intelligent humility — or a humble intelligence, if you prefer — will save us from dogmatizing here, in view of the veritable morass of conflicting interpretations.

But there is certainly one clear lesson that the Book of Revelation does teach us. On this point there can be no dispute. It is that God and the righteous shall, without fail, triumph finally and completely. All the forces of evil, all the hosts of the evil one, are to be banished forever from the scene of action. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and nothing else. No wonder that we read so much in the New Testament of patience. That is what we need, patience to wait.

How did John make his visit to heaven? He uses the same phrase which describes the circumstances under which he received his first vision, that of the glorified Christ. In the second

verse of the fourth chapter, he says: "Straightway I was in the Spirit." The Holy Spirit was the medium by means of which John was able to look into heaven.

What did he see there? It is interesting to note that the central Figure in the first vision was the same as that in his second vision. There it was Christ in the midst of His Church. Here it is Christ on the throne. The first vision related to John's own day. The second appears to belong more especially to the future.

We should not fail to note that it was through the Holy Spirit that John was enabled to see Jesus Christ in such clear vision. Jesus himself said that the Holy Spirit would take of His things and reveal them to the believers. If we would see Jesus more clearly, we must cultivate a closer fellowship with the Spirit.

The most frequent mention of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation is in chapters two and three. Here in connection with the message to each of the seven churches we have the recurring admonition: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

The close connection between the voice of Christ and the voice of the Spirit is rather striking in Revelation. It is Jesus who speaks to each church; yet we are to "hear what the Spirit saith." May we say that it is Christ who speaks but that His message is conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit? Let us not be deaf to the voice by noise and activity. If we would hear Him speak to us, we must be quiet in His presence.

As might be expected, the church at Ephesus was an unusually fine example of apostolic Christianity. Founded and pastored for three years in its infancy by Paul, guided and fed by John in the period of his maturity, much would be expected from a church so privileged.

And we are not disappointed. This church was noted for its activity, its steadfastness, its orthodoxy, its zeal, and its strength. It was just about a model church.

Yet there was one thing wrong. It seemed small; but it was vital. This group had left its first love. Here was a church that had majored on activity and orthodoxy, but it had fallen down on devotion.

Right here lies one of the gravest dangers in the life of the zealous Christian. We can become so busy that we have no time for prayer and meditation on the Word. And then we wonder why our efforts seem to yield so few results. We are like the bride in Solomon's Song, who cries: "They made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

When we say that we are too busy to pray, we imply that we are busier than was Jesus during His public ministry on earth. In the times when He was engaged with the crowds most constantly, He took time to pray. After one busy evening spent in healing the multitudes that flocked at His door, He rose very early in the morning, before daylight, and went out to a solitary place to pray. After teaching and feeding the five thousand, He spent all night in prayer. If Jesus needed thus to pray, if He felt the need of communion with the Father, how can we get along without it? The truth is that

we can't! We may try to, but we shall soon find that we are not going ahead. There is no progress without prayer.

What instructions did Jesus give to this church that had left its first love? He said, "Repent and do the first works." What does that signify? Does it not mean that to lose love is to lose all? Can we separate love and life in Christian experience? Someone has said, "He who loves not, lives not." Certainly that is true of life in its larger meaning. Jesus said, "Begin all over again. Recover first your lost love."

This interpretation seems to accord with the promise made here to the overcomer: "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life." Those who recovered love, and kept it, would be eligible for eternal life.

The church at Smyrna was undergoing tribulation and suffering. It is the typical church of the persecuting era. Jesus introduced himself as the One "who was dead, and lived again." He reminded them that He had been put to death by His enemies, but that He had also risen again. For all His faithful martyrs there would be a resurrection morning.

Here was a church that was poor in this world's goods, but God's estimate of it was, "Thou art rich." How often do human judgments go exactly contrary to the divine view! Poor in material things, but rich in hidden, spiritual treasures, the things of eternity.

We are reminded of the bishop in Italy who was demanded by the Germanic invaders that he produce the gold and jewels of the church. The bishop asked for time to make them available. At the appointed hour he presented some humble peasants. When challenged, he said: "These are the true treasures of the church." Certainly in God's sight they are.

What did Jesus promise to this persecuted church? Immunity and safety? No, but comfort, and final reward. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." For the overcomer He offered the assurance that he would "not be hurt of the second death." Their bodies might be destroyed, but their souls were safe in God's care. Jesus did not promise them physical safety, but He did assure them of spiritual protection.

The church at Pergamum was reprov'd for allowing false teacher in its communion, the Nicolaitans and Balaamites. These were actually encouraging immorality in the name of religion. There have been "free-love" exponents in Christendom since their day.

But Christ evidently considered it a sin that the church had harbored false teachers. He warns it to repent, or He will come quickly in judgment. We wonder how the Church is going to fare today with its teachers who tear down the faith of many.

Somewhat the same condition existed at Thyatira. Jesus commends the church for its works, love, faith, ministry, and patience. But all of this is spoiled largely by one fact. They had a Jezebel in the church. In fact, some old Greek manuscripts read "thy wife Jezebel," which would make this wicked woman the wife of the "angel" or pastor of the church. She claimed to be a preacher, too, but actually

she was seducing the men in the church to sin. Jesus held this against the pastor. He should not have allowed it to go on.

But there were a faithful few at Thyatira, and they are urged to hold fast to the end. To those who do hold true, the promise is made that they shall have authority over the nations.

The church at Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but Jesus said it was dead. Yet even here there was a faithful remnant. "Thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

It would appear that here was another case of a despised minority. Probably these few godly ones were called "religious cranks" and "fanatics." But Jesus championed their cause. They, and only they, were worthy to walk with Him. Why? Because they had kept their garments undefiled, unspotted by the world.

The story is told of a party of visitors who were about to descend the shaft of a coal mine. They were advised to dress appropriately for the trip.

But there was one young maiden in the group who was wearing a beautiful white dress. She remonstrated with the guide. "I can wear my white dress into the mine if I want to." "Yes," replied the man quietly, "but you can't wear a white dress out again."

That ought to settle the problem with regard to many worldly amusements that are often considered "harmless." They leave their spots.

The churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia seemed above reproach. In the city of Brotherly Love was a church doing her Master's business. The message to this group may be needed by us more than we suspect. "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."

Laodicea was a city famed for its riches. The spirit of pride that prevailed in the city had permeated the church. Here was a deceived church. It thought it needed nothing. Jesus said that it was "the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked." How sad to be in that condition and not know it!

How beautiful the closing message to Laodicea! "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne."

We come now to the last reference to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. It is the last chapter of the last book (22:17). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Just before closing the pages of divine inspiration, the Spirit gives one clear call; and the call is, "Come." It is the call of the Spirit to the Church, and it is the joint call of the Spirit and the Church to those who are in the world.

Before the world will ever hear the call of the Spirit through the Church, the Church must first hear and heed the call herself. Revival must always begin in the Church, before we can look for sinners to be saved.

This essential principle has been recognized by all successful evangelists. It was the truth which Moody and Finney emphasized in their campaigns. It has been demonstrated time and again that the greatest hindrance to a revival is the Church itself. It is because we, as His people, are unwilling to pay the price that souls perish all around us untouched. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."^[67] That is still the only way to have a revival.

But for what should the Church pray? Is not our greatest need that of being filled with the Spirit? Those who have been most keenly alive to the spiritual conditions around them have always sounded this call.

Spurgeon was certainly not a wild enthusiast. Yet he wrote: "If we have not the Spirit of God, it were better to shut the churches, to nail up the doors, to put a black cross on them, and say, 'God have mercy on us!' If you ministers have not the Spirit of God you would better not preach, and you people would better stay at home. I think I speak not too strongly when I say that a church in the land without the Spirit of God is rather a curse than a blessing. If you have not the Spirit of God, Christian worker, remember that you stand in somebody else's way . . . This is a solemn work: the Holy Spirit or nothing and worse than nothing. Death and condemnation to a church that is not yearning after the Spirit, and crying and groaning until the Spirit has wrought mightily in her midst."

How are we to gain the outpouring of the Spirit that is so much needed everywhere in the Church today? These last words of Spurgeon give the answer. It is when the Church realizes its supreme need for the Holy Spirit, and cries for this more earnestly than for anything else, that the Spirit will come.

We have a remarkable example of this in modern times in the great revival which swept through Pyeng Yang, Korea. In the fall of 1906 groups of Christians began to meet each day for prayer. It was common for a thousand to fifteen hundred people to gather at one time in the Bible classes which were held in the winter months.

In January of 1907 the people gathered at Pyeng Yang for the annual Bible study classes. Suddenly, one day the Holy Spirit fell on the seven hundred students with heart-searching conviction, leading to confession of sin. What was the result? "Sinners were converted, backsliders reclaimed, Christians got a new vision of God, confessed their sins, failures, and shortcomings, adjusted their differences, made apologies and restitution, and were filled with a new love for Christ and souls and new power for service."^[68]

A revival like that would be a welcome sight in America. We could have it if enough of God's people were willing to humble themselves, and pray, and seek God's face earnestly for an outpouring

of His Spirit. But we shall never have it until we feel our need of it strongly enough that we are willing to pay the price for it.

When the Church has heeded the call of the Spirit and has sought His presence and power, then sinners will begin to hear the call to them. Then, too, the Church will be able to unite in the call of the Spirit.

It is this united call which is effective. It is when the gospel is preached with the definite purpose of winning the unconverted to Christ that the Holy Spirit co-operates in this working by striking conviction home to the hearts of the hearers.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: and he that will, let him take of the water of life freely."

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By

Ralph Earle

POSTLUDE: THE QUEST ENDED

But now — the quest,

This vision — hast thou seen the Holy Cup?

The twelvemonth and a day, the period of the vow, had passed, and all the knights had returned — all but Galahad. King Arthur turned to Sir Percivale and put to him the question quoted above. In reply, Percivale told of his earnest search, its nearly fatal interruption, its zealous continuance, and its final success.

The faithful knight had been given his vision of the Holy Grail just before the ascent of good Sir Galahad to the Celestial City. The latter, like Elijah of old, had given a challenge to his companion just before being miraculously translated to heaven.

It happened at a lonely hermitage in a vale in the mountains. While the hermit was celebrating the mass in the little chapel, Percivale saw only the holy elements. Not so Sir Galahad. Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,

The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine.

The pure-hearted Galahad then went on to tell how the vision of the sacred cup, given him first in Arthur's hall, had never left him. Day and night, while on his quest, it had been at his side. Because his heart was pure his vision had been unobscured. And it had lured him constantly on.

And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go, and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go.

And thus it happened. Sir Galahad rode off upon his steed over hill and dale, with Percivale in hot pursuit. Amid the flashing and roaring of a furious tempest Percivale saw his companion embark for "the spiritual city."

And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.

And so Percivale, too, saw the Holy Grail. He had almost missed it. Just before he met Galahad for the last time, he was warned by the hermit:

O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;

. . .

Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad.

But in that momentous hour of opportunity he had not failed. He lost himself and so found himself, in the unveiled vision of the Celestial City. From that time forward he gave himself to spiritual things. He had found the higher life.

And so our quest is ended. We have sought for the Holy Spirit in the pages of the New Testament.

THE QUEST OF THE SPIRIT

By
Ralph Earle

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

- 1 Luke 1:35, A.S.V.
- 2 Matthew 1:20, A.S.V.
- 3 Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10
- 4 So Broadus, Commentary on Matthew, in loco

CHAPTER 2 NOTES

- 5 John 1:32, 33, A.S.V.
- 6 John 3:10, A.S.V.
- 7 John 3:3, A.S.V.
- 8 John 7:37, 38, A.S.V.
- 9 John 4:14, A.S.V.
- 10 John 7:39, A.S.V.
- 11 John 16:29, A.S.V.
- 12 John 14:16, 17, A.S.V.
- 13 John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13
- 14 John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13, A.S.V.
- 15 John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, A.S.V.
- 16 John 16:8, A.S.V.
- 17 John 20:22, A.S.V.
- 18 Habakkuk 2:3, A.S.V.

CHAPTER 3 NOTES

- 19 Acts 1:4, 5, A.S.V.
- 20 Acts 2:23, 36; 3:14, 15
- 21 Acts 5:32, A.S.V.
- 22 Acts 6:7, A.S.V.
- 23 Acts 7:513 A.S.V.
- 24 Acts 7:55; A.S.V.
- 25 Acts 8:1, 4, A.S.V.
- 26 Acts 9:17, A.S.V.
- 27 Acts 9:31, A.S.V.
- 28 Acts 10:19, 20, A.S.V.
- 29 Acts 10:44-46, A.S.V.
- 30 Acts 11:15, A.S.V.
- 31 Acts 11:24, A.S.V.

- 32 Acts 14:27, A.S.V.
- 33 Acts 15:1, A.S.V.
- 34 Acts 15:28, A.S.V.
- 35 Acts 16:5, A.S.V.
- 36 Acts 16:6, 7, A.S.V

CHAPTER 4 NOTES

- 37 I Thess. 1:5, A.S.V.
- 38 I Thess. 1:6, A.S.V.
- 39 I Thess. 5:19
- 40 I Thess. 4:3
- 41 I Cor. 2:1-4 A.S.V.
- 42 I Cor. 2:14, 10, 11, A.S.V.
- 43 I Cor. 3:16,17, A.S.V.
- 44 I Cor. 12:3, A.S.V.
- 45 Acts 26:11, A.S.V.
- 46 I Cor. 12:4
- 47 Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2
- 48 Gal. 3:1-3, A.S.V.
- 49 Gal. 3:14, 15, A.S.V.
- 50 Gal. 4:6, 7, A.S.V.
- 51 Mark 14:36
- 52 Rom. 8:37
- 53 Gal. 5:24, A.S.V.
- 54 John 10:1
- 55 Matt. 5:20, A.S.V.
- 56 John 14:27
- 57 Ephesians 6:17, 18, A.S.V.
- 58 II Timothy 1:15, A.S.V.
- 59 II Timothy 2:1, 2, A.S.V.
- 60 II Timothy 2:15, margin, A.S.V.
- 61 II Timothy 3:14, 15, A.S.V.

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

- 62 Five times in the King James Version
- 63 I Peter 1:10-12, A.S.V.
- 64 Ayer, Source Book for Ancient Church History, 10

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

- 65 Revelation 4:1, A.S.V.
- 66 Revelation 1:10
- 67 II Chronicles 7:14

