



Holy Spirit

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Introduction and Forward

The following work started as a result of a discussion that I had using text messaging on mobile phones between myself and two Brethren in Tanzania. It quickly became clear that even amongst the most knowledgeable Brethren in Tanzania the subject of Holy Spirit was only vaguely understood and that cultural beliefs still hold a strong influence. In fact, I found that I had to question my own beliefs and my own understanding and that of my peers before proceeding further.

The historic background beliefs and culture of Africa is that of the spirit world, magic and occultism; belief in the spirits of plants, animals, trees and nature itself. Belief in ghosts, spirits and the magical power of the witch doctor within the ancient cultures of the Nubia, Buganda, Bunyoro, the Swahili coast, Zulu, Almoravid, Almahad, and the Bantu can be traced back for millennia to cultures that existed hundreds of years before this area even became known as Tanzania. These beliefs are deeply imbedded into African culture even in the 21st Century, and despite turning from these things at baptism it is hard to dispel them completely. Often it is found that individuals attempt to continue with these traditional ideas side by side with the Truth despite the total and complete incompatibility.

Consequently, as I have travelled around Tanzania over the past 25 years, one of the most common questions that have been posed to me is “what is the Holy Spirit?” More often than not I have retorted with the quick answer “the power of God”. This is completely the correct answer in almost all cases, but it is incorrect and incomplete in others. I have used a broad brush, so as to answer the question quickly due to time constraints brought upon me by circumstances. An astute scholar should then ask the follow-on questions “but what is the power of God?” and “how does the power of God work?” These questions I have heard far less often and they are much harder questions to answer. This small book is an attempt to correct the misunderstanding that may be held by the reader upon this so often misunderstood topic, and it attempts to provide a fuller answer to rectify the quick answers that have previously been given by

missionaries.

Consider the following statement “this man is full of spirit”. Do I mean, the man has spirit gifts, the man is happy, the man is full of zeal, the man is enlightened, the man is controlled by a spirit, the man is energetic, or the man is drunk? Without the context we will never know. Language is a strange thing at times, and translation makes it much worse. In our Kiswahili language we have 24 characters. With all words restricted to just four characters long there is the possibility of over 330,000 different words. Yet, the Kiswahili language has fewer than 15,000 words, and many much longer words than four characters. In fact, the whole language could be written with just three characters per word! Compare this with languages like English that contain over two million words. It is unsurprising therefore that a single Kiswahili word can have multiple meanings; the meaning being dependent upon its contextual usage.

Consider the usage of the word “Bwana” in a Biblical context. It can mean a man in the street, a master, a teacher, an angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, or God the Father. All are translated by this word “bwana”. Is it surprising that readers are confused? In some Bibles the translators have attempted to mitigate this problem with the use of capital letters. In our example “BWANA” is indicative that God the Father is meant or “Yahweh” as the original Hebrew text would have it. Whereas “Bwana” would indicate Jesus and “bwana” would indicate a man from the street. This helps a little. But despite these efforts many have been led astray by misinterpreting passages due to words having multiple usages or meanings. Not least, this problem has led in part to the false doctrine of the doctrine of the Trinity, which despite being believed by millions is not a Bible doctrine at all. In fact, the word Trinity is nowhere found in the Kiswahili Union Bible. Kiswahili Bibles were largely translated based upon English versions of the Bible. For example: The Union Bible is based upon the King James or Authorised English version. This has actually made the issue even worse than it would have been if the Kiswahili had been derived directly from the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. English translations were made by men that were biased towards prevalent beliefs at the time of translation. Also, in Hebrew and Greek there are a number of words that are all translated into the English word spirit or worse still ghost.ⁱⁱ Returning to the original words will help us greatly in our considerations.

Much of what I write here is nothing new. In fact, large chunks are

just copied and pasted from the works of others with little changes by the current author. I am proud to plagiarise the works of others. Not because I want to take praise for their efforts, but because I cannot improve upon what they have already written. These sections are annotated and indexed at the end. This is my way of acknowledging that their words are far better than what I could have written. So, my thanks go to the great writers such as Dr. John Thomas, Robert Roberts, Ron Abel, H.P. Mansfield some of whom I have established great friendships and have extensively copied from them all.

Whilst maintaining at all times the theme of “Spirit” it will be noted that I have interspersed the text with contextual exhortations. This I believe helps raise our text above an academic exercise and brings it into reality. When we “stand before the judgement seat of Theos” (Romans 14:10) we will be judged by the Word (John 12:47-49, Rom.2:12). We cannot be saved by our works (Ephesians 2:5, 8) but we can be saved by our manifestation of Deity in us (Romans 14:12). Understanding what spirit is, and having the Spirit Word indwelling in us, is going to be pivotal in our hearing those words “well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

I am also very grateful to the two Brethren Kim Mnsava and Jonathan Nkombe who helped greatly pulling together the “best practice” appendix of this book. They have devised a mechanism that will help us all when attempting to differentiate between the different meanings of the Kiswahili words contemplated during our studies. Hopefully through using this “best practice” we will avoid confusion and quite possibly disputes amongst us. I take no credit whatsoever for this appendix, but wish to congratulate them on some very useful advice.

The God – Head

As we have said, the Holy Spirit is the power of God. (Luke 1:35). Consequently, what the Holy Spirit does is really what God is doing. For example, the "Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit... shall teach you all things" (John 14:26) means simply: "God will teach you all things through his divine power." Similarly, although the Scriptures cannot literally "say" anything, it is written: "For the Scripture *saiith* unto Pharaoh." (Romans 9:17). God said this, and His human penman, guided by Holy Spirit power, reliably recorded it. In this quotation there is a merging of what "God says" with what "Scripture says". Likewise, the Holy Spirit is said to "speak", "bear witness", and to be a "comforter" when in actuality it is God doing the speaking, bearing witness and comforting, *by* His power - the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26ⁱⁱⁱ

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit... he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 15:26

"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, he shall testify of me."

John 16:13, 14

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Acts 5:3

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"

Acts 5:9

"... How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?"

Acts 5:32

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

Acts 8:16

"(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)"

Acts 10:19

"While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee."

Acts 13:2

"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."

Acts 15:28

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."

Acts 16:6

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia."

1 Corinthians 12:11

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Hebrews 3:7

"Wherefore (as the Holy Spirit saith, To day if ye will hear his voice ...")

On the basis of the passages above trinitarians argue that the Holy Spirit is a co-equal and co-eternal Person within the Godhead.

1. The Holy Spirit can be shown to be a power by a careful comparison of the following passages:
 - a. Gen. 1:1, 2 - "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . . And the *Spirit* of God moved upon the face of the waters." But other references to creation attribute the work to God's power. Consider the following:
 - i. "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great *power* . . ." (Jer. 27:5).
 - ii. "He hath made the earth by his *power* . . ." (Jer. 51:15 cp. 10:12).
 - iii. "By the *word* of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the *breath* {Heb. "ruach", spirit} of his mouth . . ." (Psa. 33:6). The latter is understandable if the Holy Spirit is a power, but the language is inappropriate if,

in fact, the Holy Spirit is a mighty, omnipotent, and omniscient Personage within the Godhead.

- b. Heb. 6:4, 5 - "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the *Holy Spirit*, And have tasted the good word of God, and the *powers* of the world to come . . ." The Holy Spirit is associated with the "powers of the world to come."
 - c. Luke 1:5 - " . . . The *Holy Spirit* shall come upon thee, and the *power* of the Highest shall overshadow thee . . ." The parallel structure indicates that the "Holy Spirit" is equivalent to "power of the Highest".
 - d. Isaiah 11:2 - "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him . . ." This is interpreted in the New Testament to be "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Spirit* and *power*". (Acts 10:38).
- 2. It was the *power* of the Highest which "overshadowed" Mary. (Luke 1:35). But if the Holy Spirit were a Person within the Godhead, then the Holy Spirit, and not the Father, is the real father of Jesus.
 - 3. Jesus breathed on the disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22). This language is understandable if a power were conveyed, but inappropriate if the Holy Spirit were a divine Person.
 - 4. Similarly, the Holy Spirit was transmitted by the laying on of hands. (Acts 8:17-19). Was this the transmission of a divine Personage within the Godhead?
 - 5. The Holy Spirit was given "without measure" to Jesus. (John 3:34). "Without measure" is an appropriate description of Holy Spirit power, but it is not the kind of language ordinarily associated with a person. (Cp. Acts 10:44, "The Holy Spirit *fell* upon them which heard the word". Also Acts 2:17, "I will *pour out* of my Spirit".)
 - 6. God sent the Holy Spirit to anoint Jesus. (Matt. 3:16; Luke

- 4:18). Is it credible that "God the Father" sent "God the Holy Spirit" to anoint "God the Son" with "God the Holy Spirit"?
7. In 17 epistles opening with an invocation of grace and peace, in only one is the Holy Spirit referred to, and then as the *means* of sanctification (1 Peter 1:2), and not the source of grace. Why the invocation to God and Christ, and not to the Holy Spirit, if the latter were a Personage within the Godhead? Similarly, in the 11 occurrences of thanksgiving or blessing which follow the invocations in the epistles, not one contains any mention of the Holy Spirit.
 8. The divine order is set out in 1 Cor. 11:3. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Why is there no mention of the Holy Spirit if he were a person?
 9. Jesus gave commandments by the Holy Spirit, (e.g. Acts 1:1, 2) Was this one "co-equal" commanding another "co-equal"?
 10. Although it is stated that the Holy Spirit (i.e., the "Comforter") would make his abode in the disciples, (John 14:16, 17), this does not necessarily imply the personality of the Holy Spirit, since both the Father and the Son (in the same context) were also to make their abode in the disciples. (John 14:23). Clearly then, God and his Son would abide through the Holy Spirit power. As Jesus said, "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, he shall testify of me." (John 15:26).
 11. The Holy Spirit appeared as a "dove", (Matt. 3:16), as "cloven tongues of fire", (Acts 2:3), and was accompanied by the sound of a rushing mighty wind, (Acts 2:2). If the Holy Spirit were a Person, why are the theophanies so unlike those of the Father? (Exod. 33:18-23; 34:5-7).
 12. Why is the Holy Spirit not shown as sitting on God's throne? (See Rev. 7:10 - "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Also Acts 7:55, 56) Why no mention of the Holy Spirit?
 13. The personality of the Holy Spirit is sometimes inferred from Luke 12:10 - "And whosoever shall speak a word against the

Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven." But this passage proves too much. Orthodox trinitarians claim that the Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son, but their interpretation of this passage places the Holy Spirit *above* the Father and the Son, since it is a greater offence to sin against the Holy Spirit, than against either the Father or the Son.

The Athanasian Creed reads as follows: " . . . But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal . . . But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal." Reproduced in Percy White, *The Doctrine of The Trinity: Analytically Examined and Refuted*, (London: "The Dawn" Book Supply, 1937), pp. 49, 50.

14. The word "spirit" (pneuma) in the Greek text is neuter in gender, and does not therefore, in itself, denote personality. This point can be illustrated in the text of Acts 8:16: " . . . who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for *it* had not yet fallen on any of the, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (R.S.V.) The immediate antecedent to the pronoun is "spirit" which is neuter in gender, hence the neuter pronoun. Many other translations give "it" rather than "he" (as does the A.V.). See for example: N.W.T., Diaglott, Rotherham's, *The Emphasized Bible*.

So according to the Bible, the Holy Spirit is not part of the Godhead. In fact, the word Trinity is nowhere found in scripture. The whole concept of the Trinity is unscriptural and the Athanasian creed found to be erroneous.



Chapter 1 - Holy

The word Holy simply means “set apart” or “separate” - see English Words.

For many "holiness" conjures up musty images of revival meetings, gospel trios, and old-time religion — along with stern prohibitions against drinking, dancing, and playing cards. Many are happy to leave these notions of holiness in the past. Yet even in our era of techno-savvy mega-churches and postmodern emerging churches, holiness (when it is discussed at all) is often associated with moral behaviour such as sexual purity, financial honesty, and commitment to private prayer.

While we've cast off old, legalistic notions of holiness, we've merely replaced them with private, moralistic notions. We act as if holiness were either outdated or something that characterizes only a small (if important) part of our lives.

This is partly due to our quest for cultural relevance, which is defended in the name of winning others to Christ. If we talk about holiness with unbelievers, won't that present just another hurdle for them to overcome on their way to Christ? For this and other reasons, we are rapidly forsaking our historic commitment to holiness. Recent polls show that many self-described religious people march in moral lock step with mainstream culture in practices of divorce, spouse abuse, extramarital sex, pornography consumption, materialism, and racism, just to name a few. While we tip our cap to the importance of holiness, many in our culture don't view us as morally different in any meaningful way—except to see us as hypocrites.

I believe one crucial ingredient to healing our moral confusion is the recovery of the biblical idea of holiness, which includes private morality but so much more—the very life of God in us. Holiness is not just for advanced Christians but stands at the beginning and centre of God's call on all of our lives: "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:14; 1 Peter 1:16). We are supposed to be separate and different to those around us.

Relationship-driven

Biblical terms translated "holy" or "holiness" (*qadosh, hagios*) carry a strong secondary connotation of moral purity. But moral purity is not, first and foremost, what Scripture is talking about. Instead, the most basic meaning of the word is to be "set apart" or "dedicated" to God—to *belong* to God. "I will be your God, and you will be my people," says Yahweh (Lev. 26:12; Heb. 8:10). Thus, prior to any consideration of morality, biblical holiness describes a unique *relationship* that God has established and desires with his people. This relationship has moral ramifications, but it precedes moral behaviour. Before we are ever called to be good, we are called to be holy. Unless we rightly understand and affirm the primacy of this relationship, we fall into the inevitable trap of reducing holiness to mere morality.

If we read the biblical understanding of holiness through the lens of our relationship to God, Jesus, as the unique revelation of God, becomes pre-eminent. Too often, our notions of holiness are lifted from the Old Testament without understanding them in light of God's self-revelation in Jesus.

Those who have responded in faith to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ have been united with Christ. To be a Christian means far more than merely to *believe* in God—as if the Christian faith were reducible to a system of beliefs. Rather, it means to be *united* with Jesus in and through the Holy Spirit. In Christadelphian terminology - "God manifestation".

"I have been crucified with Christ," says Paul, "and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Elsewhere, Paul tells us that our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3) and that we have been "seated with [God] in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). Passages like these convey the mysterious, yet utterly real fact that, by virtue of our union with Jesus, we participate in the life of God: He dwells in us, and we dwell in him. As such, we can say that in Christ, God's holiness is our holiness. In Christ, we are already holy. Any and all subsequent notions of what it means to be holy must be predicated on this truth. We manifest God in our lives by acting God-like.

Staggering Implications

With these thoughts in mind, we begin to see how much more God is asking of us than mere morality. As long as our notions of holiness are limited to doing certain things and not doing other things, we can go through our entire lives obeying the rules (or at least maintaining

the appearance of doing so) without dealing with far more fundamental questions: Whose are we? To whom do we give our first love and loyalty?

At bottom, God's call to be holy is a radical, all-encompassing claim on our lives, our loves, and our very identities. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ requires nothing less than death to our fallen, egocentric selves in order that we might live in and for him. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it," says Jesus, "but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:35-36). To be holy means that all we are and all we have belongs to God, not ourselves, and that every aspect of our lives is to be shaped and directed toward God.

"Be holy, because I am holy," (1 Peter 1:15-16) says Yahweh. Holiness is not primarily about moral purity. It's primarily about union with God in Christ and sharing in Christ's holiness. It's about manifestation. It's secondarily about life in grateful service to God and others. Only a biblical, Christ-centred holiness will safeguard believers from the trap of moralism and help us recover our spiritual footing in today's world.

Set apart

When we speak then of the Holy Spirit, by using the word "Holy" we speak of power that has been set apart to do work that is morally good, but primarily a work that brings us into unity with the Father. There is no trinity, there will be a multiplicity of beings that manifest God (John 17:11, 22). The Holy Spirit can work in us, but not in the sense that many in the world see it as working. The purpose of God's power is not to exalt human self; it works in a way far more profound. God has chosen us to be His kings and priests (Rev. 5:10) and during our probation He is bringing about events in our lives that will prepare us for our future work (Phil. 2:12). He is also preparing our minds for that day (Romans 12:2). He is bringing all that to pass using Holy Spirit. Be that using His angels; be that the Words we read in the Bible, an earthquake, a rainy day, an event of chance or even His influencing those we meet in the street. God's power is at work everywhere and infinite. Events that may appear to many as random will occur in our lives that "leads us to God". These events may be grievous and painful, but they are a school master that change our characters (Gal. 3: 24-25; Hebrews 12:8). This is why when we have trials that we rejoice; not because we are following some rule that

says we should not grumble, but because we can actually see God moulding our characters with the events that happen to us (Romans 9:21). We can see God's Holy Spirit acting in us, not I hasten to add in the sense that those around us understand that phrase, but in the scriptural sense outlined here; we see the outworking of the Holy Spirit.



Chapter 2 – Uses of the Word Spirit

Uses of the Word Spirit in the Spirit Word

At the beginning of our series of articles we acknowledged that the word spirit is used in numerous ways throughout our Bibles. For us to gain a full understanding of the Bible description of spirit it is necessary for us to innumerate these usages, so that we can separate out the different meanings. Some of the differences are subtle, some of the meanings far more obvious. This may at first seem like an exhaustive and unnecessary exercise, but once completed it will provide us with a complete picture, a comprehensive, clear understanding of what spirit is. All the meanings differ, yet there is a predominant theme that cements all the ideas together, and which ultimately provides a commonality and a set of beliefs for the True believer to grasp. As we go through these, many of the falsehoods of both mythological and traditional Christian belief systems will be revealed and correct interpretations exposed.

Spirit – meaning 1 – a ghost or a phantom

A Ghost is a reference to a dead persons' continued essence after death here upon the earth. (See English word ghost).

Often in older English bibles you will see the praise “Holy Ghost”, this is a completely inaccurate translation from the Hebrew and Greek.

One example of correct translation is found in Matthew 14:25-26

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.”

The disciples were troubled - They were afraid. The sight was remarkable. It was sufficient to awe them. In the dark night, amid the tumultuous billows appeared the form of a man. They thought it was a spirit an apparition, a ghost or phantom. It was a common belief among the ancients that the spirits of people after death frequently appeared to the living.

They were troubled, saying it is a spirit: a nocturnal apparition, a

demon in human form. The Jews, especially the sect of the Pharisees, had a notion, from whom the disciples might have theirs', of spirits, apparitions, and demons, being seen in the night. Hence that rule (T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1. Sanhedrim, fol. 44. 1.)^{iv} - "it is forbidden a man to salute his friend in the night, for we are careful, lest, it should be a demon".

The Pharisees say a great many things of one "Lilith", that has its name from "the night", a she demon, that used to appear in the night, with a human face, and carry off young children, and kill them. Such frightful notions had possessed the minds of the disciples: and they cried out for fear, as persons in the utmost consternation, in the greatest danger, and in want of help.

Chweziⁱ

A small boy stops to watch us. I open my hand to show him a piece of pot and he says 'Chwezi' and disappears into the undergrowth. I am reminded that in some people's minds the Chwezi tribe are ghost-like spectres who are celebrated as part of local mythology.

The fear of spirits or ghosts arises from the fear of the death state. We as humans fear what is unknown to us. No man can tell you about the death state, unless of course he has been arisen from the dead. Of which there are but a few (John 12:1; Acts 3:15).

There are common fallacies myths and stories that originate from mythology regarding ghosts. This invokes fear from the uncommonness of their supposed appearance; from their asserted superiority to men in power and strength; from the professed enmity there is between men and evil spirits; and from a general notion of their doing hurt and mischief: hence, demons are, by the Jews, called "hurtful", or "hurting", all their study being to do hurt to men.

Add to all this, that the fear of the disciples might be increased, through a vulgar notion among seafaring men, that such sights are ominous, and portend evil to sailors; and they might the more easily be induced to give credit to this, and fear, since they were already in such imminent danger.

The death state

The true status of the dead according to the scriptures is that the dead man is unconscious, knows nothing and is as though he had never lived (Ecclesiastes 9:5-9; Psalm 6:4-5; Psalm 146:3-4; Isaiah 38:18-

19). His body corrupts (Psalm 49:9-14; Psalm 30:9; Psalm 88:10-12; John 11:39). The soul also perishes at death (Joshua 10:28; Judges 16:16; Job 7:15; Ezekiel 18:20). So, no part of a man continues to exist after his death. A man must await the resurrection from the dead to be judged.

The idea of ghosts is often connected with the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory.

1 Corinthians 3:13ⁱⁱⁱ

"Every man's work shall be made manifest for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

This passage is used to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of a discipline in purgatory, which takes place immediately after death, and endures for an unspecified and varying period.

1. Note the context; the passage is speaking about a "day" (although likely longer than 24 hours) and not a period of long duration. See the use of the same Greek word, "hemera" in Matt. 7:22; 12:36; John 9:4; 11:9; 12:48; 2 Cor. 6:2. This "day" is defined in Mal. 3:2; 4:1-3; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8-10.
2. The Roman Catholic argues for the burning up of the "wood, hay, stubble," (1 Cor. 3:12) as the purging of man's soul of all that is unworthy. A man in purgatory should be glad to get rid of these impurities, to be fit for eternal happiness, but Paul says he "*SHALL SUFFER LOSS*". (1 Cor. 3:15).
3. What the passage does mean:
 - a. There were divisions in Corinth and Paul discusses the relationship of a man and his converts to Christ. (1 Cor. 1:10; 3:3-8).
 - b. "Every man's work shall be made manifest." *The Day of Judgment* will reveal the spiritual quality of a preacher's converts, whether gold, silver, precious stones, for the eternal temple of God or cheap (wood) unenduring (hay, stubble).
 - c. "If any man's work abide [if his converts endure to eternal life] he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3: 14) - the reward of seeing, in the Kingdom of God, the

fruits of his labour and travail. (see 1 Thess. 2:19).

- d. "If any man's work shall be burned [if his converts are unworthy before the Judge of all] he shall suffer loss" (1 Cor. 3:15) - the loss of seeing his labour come to naught.
- e. "But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3:15). The same fire of judgement that devoured his converts will have to be endured by the preacher also. And even though all his converts should perish, he himself may yet stand approved, because of the faith and zeal with which he has lived and worked in all good conscience before God.

Matthew 12:32ⁱⁱⁱ

"It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

This passage is sometimes quoted by Roman Catholics to support the idea of purgatory. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the undying souls of men leave their bodies at death. The wicked (those who die in mortal sin) go to hell for eternal torment. The righteous, dying with unforgiven venial sin or undischarged temporal punishment, go to a painful purification before being fit for heaven.

1. Purgatory presupposes the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. If there is no immortal soul then purgatory becomes an invention.
2. If sins are not forgiven, either now or in the future, why send the sinner to purgatory? (Matt. 12:32)
3. See the parallel passages in:
 1. Mark 3:29 - "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."
 2. Luke 12:10 - " . . . but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven."

These are conclusive, there is not even a hint of purgatory.

John 20:23ⁱⁱⁱ

"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose

so ever sins ye retain, they are retained."

The Roman Catholic Church uses this passage to justify its teaching that the key of purgatory lies in the hand of the priest. In this unseen region of suffering he is said to open and shut, bind and loose. It is also held to lie within the priest's power to lessen the duration and severity of the suffering.

1. This passage has specific reference to the apostles. This is indicated by Jesus "breathing" on them. (vs. 22).
2. The promise of this passage was to the apostles. (vs. 20). If the Roman Church has any claim to the promise it must first demonstrate the existence of apostles. Paul instructed the Corinthians. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. 12:12). Where is the R.C. priest who can, in God's name, strike an Elymas blind, (Acts 13:11); raise a Eutychus from the dead, (Acts 20:10-12); or suffer no harm after being bitten by a viper, (Acts 28:3-5)? These were the signs of an apostle.
3. When claims to the tremendous power outlined in the problem are vested in the hands of ordinary men or as may happen, in the hands of mercenary and unscrupulous men, imagination can scarcely exceed the historical abuses.
4. The New Testament refers to only one sacrificing priest, Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:12) and to a "royal priesthood" of all believers. (1 Pet. 2:9). There is no exclusive order of priests officiating for a laity in New Testament arrangements.

The true Bible doctrine concerning ghosts therefore is that man or woman cannot become a ghost or phantom spirit. This is complete rubbish made up over millennia as part of the myths and legends that men have made up because the death state has not been understood.

Ancestors

The veneration of the dead, including one's ancestors, is based on love and respect for the deceased. In some cultures, it is related to beliefs that the dead have a continued existence, and may possess the ability to influence the fortune of the living. Some groups venerate their direct, familial ancestors; some faith communities, in particular the Catholic Church, venerate saints as intercessors with God, as well as

praying for and to departed souls in Purgatory (See “The truth about our nature” and “The death state”).

In Europe, Asia, and Oceania, and in some African and Afro-Diasporic cultures, the goal of ancestor veneration is to ensure the ancestors' continued well-being and positive disposition towards the living, and sometimes to ask for special favours or assistance. The social or non-religious function of ancestor veneration is to cultivate kinship values, such as filial piety, family loyalty, and continuity of the family lineage. Ancestor veneration occurs in societies with every degree of social, political, and technological complexity, and it remains an important component of various religious practices in modern times.

Ancestor veneration is prevalent throughout Africa, and serves as the basis of many religions. It is often augmented by a belief in a supreme being, but prayers and/or sacrifices are usually offered to the ancestors who may ascend to becoming a kind of minor deity themselves. Ancestor veneration remains among many Africans, sometimes practiced alongside the later adopted religions of Christianity (as in Nigeria among the Igbo people), and Islam (among the different Mandé peoples and the Bamum) in much of the continent.

Once our ancestors are dead, they “know not anything” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).



Chapter 3 – Alcoholic Drink

Spirit – meaning 2 – distilled alcoholic drink

Distillation of alcoholic drinks in by no means a new idea; this process has been going on for hundreds of years. These drinks acquired the name of spirit due to the affects that consuming large quantities will have upon the human body. The drink influences the way that we act. Compare this with the ideas around daemonic possession that were the result of not understanding illnesses that affect the mind (like schizophrenia, Mark 5:1-5; epilepsy, Mark 9:17-27; lunacy, Matthew 17:15-18). Today we know that the effects of alcohol are not caused by spirit possession, they are caused by an imbalance in the blood stream. But the ancients seriously believed that through drinking these potions you would permit daemonic possession or induce a trance state. Simply drink plenty of water and/or strong coffee and many of the adverse effects will dissipate. Such a cure would surely not work if the traditional notion of spirits were correct. However, the ancient name has remained, and today we still call distilled alcoholic drinks by the word spirit. The absurdities of the ancient ideas surrounding alcoholic drinks help us a great deal to understand some of the other usages of the word spirit. In particular this concept of influence or alteration of the mind will return on many occasions.

The Bible makes no reference to spirit using this meaning, instead it substitutes the phrase “strong drink” (Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3, 28:7; Deuteronomy 14:26, 29:6; Judges 13:4, 7, 14, 1 Samuel 1:15, Proverbs 20:1, 31:4, 6, Isaiah 5:11, 22, 24:9, 28:7, 29:9, 56:12, Micah 2:11, Luke 1:15).

Alcohol is not always as some believe spoken against, in fact in Numbers 28:7 it is even used as an offering to Yahweh (This was called “Holy Spirit” is the Mishnah)^v; and the Lord Jesus Christ permitted himself alcoholic drinks, even using it during a symbolic miracle to represent his blood (John 2).

What is spoken against is drunkenness (1 Samuel 1:13, Job 12:25, Psalms 107:27, Ecclesiastes 10:17, Isaiah 19:14, 24:20, Jeremiah 13:13, 23:9, 51:7, Ezekiel 23:33, Nahum 3:11, Luke 21:34, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 15:34, Galatians 5:21, 1 Peter 4:3).

In the Old Testament, Aaron and his sons, the priests, were strictly forbidden to drink either wine or strong drink when they went into the tabernacle to minister before Yahweh (see Leviticus 10:9). Nazarites were likewise forbidden to use wine while under their vow (see Numbers 6:1-3, 20; Judges 13:4-7). The Rechabites lived as noteworthy examples of permanent abstinence from wine, adhering strictly to the command of their ancestor, Jonadab, to refrain from it (see Jeremiah 35:1-8, 14).

The Bible book of Proverbs is filled with warnings against indulging in wine and strong drink (see Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:29-35; 31:4). Wine mocks those who use it (see Proverbs 20:1) and rewards them with woe, sorrow, strife, and wounds without cause (see Proverbs 23:29, 30). "In the end it [wine] bites like a snake and poisons like a viper" (verse 32, NIV). The prophet Isaiah declared, "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks" (Isaiah 5:22, NIV). Daniel and his companions set a worthy example by refusing to drink the king's wine (see Daniel 1:5-16). When fasting later in life, Daniel abstained from wine (see Daniel 10:3).

In the New Testament, the usual word for wine, whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic, is οἶνος (*oinos*). Jesus likened His revolutionary teaching to new wine, which would burst the old bottles of tradition (Matthew 9:17). Paul warned believers against drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18), and declares that deacons should not be "addicted to much wine" (1 Timothy 3:8). He counselled Titus that the older women should not be "slaves to drink" (Titus 2:3).

Yet, Paul did recommend that his friend Timothy should "use a little wine" for relief from a digestive ailment (1 Timothy 5:23, NIV). Let's take a look at this counsel more closely. In those days, as many parts of Africa today, physical ailments, such as dysentery, were common occurrences—often due to contaminated water. Consequently, other ways of quenching thirst were often recommended. In this verse Paul was advocating the temperate use of fermented wine for medicinal purposes, through the centuries wine has been used in this way.

Obviously, Paul wanted Timothy to be healthy and physically fit for the heavy duties that rested upon him as administrator of the churches in Asia Minor. Mental and moral alertness are closely related to physical fitness.

The Bible is clear that our bodies are temples of the living God. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in

you, whom you have received of God? ... Therefore honour God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19, NIV). God is concerned with how we treat our bodies, including what we eat or drink. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV). The wise Solomon said, “Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1, NIV). “Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper” (Proverbs 23:31, NIV).

Find the Abundant Life

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV). By using alcohol we participate in destroying not only our own life, but often the lives of others. Even in moderation, alcohol use can cause significant problems—physically, mentally, and spiritually. It’s no wonder the Bible consistently warns against it. God says, in Isaiah 1:18, “Come now and let us reason together.” With alcohol use we temporarily and permanently stupefy our reasoning powers.

Spirits

Few today will struggle to understand this meaning of the word spirit, and there is now little confusion regarding this aspect of our subject. This would not have been the case even 100 years ago. Anything that altered the mind was considered to be spirit.

The guidance is “moderation in all things” (Philippians 4:5).



Chapter 4 – Filled with Zeal

Spirit – meaning 3 – to be filled with zeal

An example of this usage may be found in Acts 17:16 where we find that the Apostle Paul was waiting in Athens for the others. He saw that the city was full of idols (Acts 17:16-17). Instead of continuing to wait his enthusiasm got the better of him, and he commenced preaching in the synagogues on his own. This is described as “his spirit was stirred within him”. In the case of the Apostle this may have been the direct effect of the Holy Spirit within him, however we have all experienced what it is like to have a burning desire to do something. The Greek word for spirit has a root meaning of 'energy' (See pneuma).

Lesson from Davids' Life

David is described as “a man after God’s own heart,” and a consideration of such a character will help us. Looking at the life of David we are not looking at a faultless character, but we are looking at a man who acknowledged God, who was zealous in His service and who was ready to confess his wrongdoing when guilty of sin. Having a spirit of zeal in no way makes us faultless.

Perhaps the first thing that strikes us, looking at the life of this man, is David’s selection by God. Saul had disobeyed God and Samuel told him that the kingdom for him would not continue, for Yahweh had sought Him a man after his own heart. Later on, when Samuel was sent to Jesse, and David was brought in, Yahweh said to Samuel:

“Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” (1 Samuel 16:12). Yet we find that time passes, not weeks nor months but years, before David ascends the throne, and during those years he suffered exceedingly and for most of the time was an exile in fear of his life.

Bro. Roberts explains it in this way: “Experience is necessary to ripen goodness of character: and to be a ripening experience it must be an evil experience. Prosperity enfeebles: adversity braces up and purifies.”^{vi} David, as the years passed, understood this and he could say: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” (Psa. 119:71).

However, during the actual experiences of trouble which he endured his mind was expressed in the words: "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." (1 Sam. 27:1). And again, "Mine heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me." (Psalm 55:40).

We can recall similar cases. For instance, Joseph went down into Egypt as a slave and languished in prison. He did not know that he would one day be the second ruler in the land, but afterwards he could say: "God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20). Again, when Daniel went down into Babylon and purposed in his heart not to defile himself, he did not know that he would be elevated to a high position in the land.

We read that "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). "It pleased Yahweh to bruise him, to put him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." (Hebrews 5:8). Thus, we learn our first lesson from the life of David. Like him we have been called to kingship, but like him we must first suffer a time of probation, a cross before the crown. This fact helps us to understand much which happens in our lives, which otherwise would be meaningless to us. God's ways are not our ways. Doubtless we can all say that we have had experiences in our lives which we would not have chosen had we been able to make the choice. These experiences are designed by a loving Father, One who is wisdom and love, and who never makes a mistake.

It is true, of course, that sometimes our own foolishness takes us into trouble, but even then, so long as we do as David did, recognise our foolishness and come before the Father for forgiveness and help, then God helps us according to our needs.

Our trials are for our eternal good if we are rightly exercised by them. The worthies of old, we read, "through faith" and "out of weakness were made strong", but "had trial of cruel mockings and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tried, were slain with the sword... being destitute, afflicted, tormented." (Hebrews 11). Well, our experiences are nothing like that, and yet when we do experience trouble then it is a real issue with every one of us, and every heart knows its own bitterness.

But looking at those characters well might James say: "Take the prophets for an example" (James 5:10); and thus Paul says: "If we suffer, we shall reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12); and the Lord Jesus

Christ exhorts: “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10); and Paul again: “The tribulation of this present time is not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:35).

Of course, we feel our experiences when there is trouble, and we are distressed by them very often. Sometimes we get depressed and out of spirits; we wonder why certain things happen: if our loving Father is really with us and moulding our lives why does He allow these experiences? These are the times when our faith is sorely tried. Let us not be down-hearted. What is faith? It is a complete confidence in God. It is something we cultivate and the growth is sure if we try to develop it. It is something like trusting a friend. You meet someone. The more you know of that person you learn that he is to be trusted and so your confidence grows. In the same way, the more we learn of God and His ways—and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;” (Romans 10:17) the illustrations of faith which we have in the Scriptures help us to develop our own characters—we learn to trust God and to realise that ultimately all things will work together for our eternal good; that because God is all-wise and all-powerful He can and will operate in our lives and ultimately He will perform all that He has promised in regard to salvation.

Then there is another aspect of this thought. We read that David sent presents to various people so that they would regard him with favour when he came to the throne. Why should David have done that? He had been promised the kingship. God had said he would be king, so why should he have done that sort of thing? The lesson for us is that if our desire is to attain the kingship then we can do things to help ourselves. Our object in life should be to work with the kingdom in mind, and when we have to make decisions in life, or if we contemplate taking certain steps, then let us make it a matter of prayer. If we then have done what we can we must leave the rest in the hands of our loving Father and His over-ruling providence.

Having taken those steps in sending presents, David next asks of God whether he should go up to any of the cities of Judah, and God directs him. We, of course, have not that particular privilege accorded to us, but we do have the privilege of prayer, and Bro. Roberts again writes, saying: “Have we no guidance then? Yes, but not of that sort accorded to David. God has not changed... the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and His ears are open to their cry: our heavenly Father knows what things we have need of, and will direct our steps in the attainment of them in the ways best suited to our needs as His

children.”^{vi} “Meanwhile,” says Bro. Roberts, “it is ours to pray, and in faith commit our way to God; it is not our privilege to receive explicit guidance as in the case of David... Our wisdom is to recognise the exact measure of our privileges, and embrace them to the full.”^{vi}

Well then, in the case of David God worked in his life; David did what he could to help himself, but all the way through God was in control. For example, that incident when David went down to the camp of Saul with Abishai and took Saul’s spear and water, and came back again. It was a dangerous thing to have done in the ordinary way. There would be sentries, men on guard. But the record says that God “caused a deep sleep to fall upon Saul and his men,” (1 Sam. 26:12) and thus David was able to carry out safely that which he set out to do.

There was another incident when Saul was on the point of capturing David, and we are told that Saul suddenly had a message that the Philistines had invaded the land and away he went to defend his country. God again had intervened. Although Saul set out to kill David, David would not raise his hand against Yahweh’s anointed. He bore those conditions which were thrust upon him. He suffered, and in the end, it was God Himself who removed Saul by the Philistines killing him, and He set David upon the throne. Though those and other incidents seem to be quite natural, at the end of his days David could acknowledge: “Yahweh liveth that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress” (1 Kings 1:29).

These things are recorded for our edification and comfort. We cannot always see the road ahead, or at the time realise the reason for certain things in our lives; but we learn to have faith, trusting although we cannot always see the outcome. The Proverb is our guide which says: “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:6) “In all thy ways” means exactly what it says; not just occasionally or when we think we are in trouble and want a way out, but whatever we contemplate doing, whatever our wishes in life, make it a subject of prayer and ask for God’s guidance and help in that which we intend to do. We should be led by the spirit.

David showed complete zeal for the things of God. He was the type of his greater Son, of whom it is written: “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (Psalm 69:9). We observe the mind of David in this matter in the case of Goliath, for instance. When David came into the camp and heard the challenge of that man he asked: “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living

God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). David had no contentment until he was able to carry out his intention of opposing this man, and God helped him. There is no doubt that when David slung that stone, God directed it into the forehead of Goliath.

We see his zeal in many other ways recorded in his life, and particularly in his desire to get the material together for God's temple, though he himself was not allowed to build it. Again, Bro. Roberts says very aptly that this is an illustration of working with God. He was "up and doing to be worked with." ^{vi} Yes, that was the mind of David.

Now then, how far does our zeal carry us in the work of the Lord? We cannot, of course, assess one another in this matter. We each have a work to do according to our age, our health and our circumstances. There are those who come week by week to the breaking of bread, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and who might well be entitled to have a rest at home; but they are there with us and their presence is an example to us and an encouragement. There are others who are handicapped by circumstances of home life and are limited in what they can undertake, but who nevertheless do what they can, as many of us well know.

It is all an individual matter, but let us be sure that we are alive to our responsibilities. There are so many ways in which we can serve God and show our zeal in His service. It is our responsibility to see which one or how many we can undertake. There is attendance at the meetings, not merely on a Sunday morning but to support the lecture if it is possible. There is also the Bible Class, the giving out of lecture leaflets, speaking to others about the Truth, being given to hospitality, fetching and carrying, visiting where it is needed, or writing letters to those who qualify for that service, giving to the collections according as we have been blessed and not merely putting a token offering into the bag as it comes round.

It is a trait of human nature that we can always do what we want to do. In that case it is no trouble, there are no difficulties. Well then, if we want to have the mind of David, if we want to serve God, then there will be no difficulty. It may not be easy always, but that is a different thing altogether; there will be no difficulty in our minds. We shall each take stock of ourselves and see if we are really pulling our weight in ecclesial life in the doing of those works which show our faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). We must have faith and we must show our faith by our works.

There is one final lesson which we can take from the life of David. He was a man after God's own heart, but he was not faultless. God forgave his sins because he acknowledged them when he was wrong and repented of what he had done. We are not faultless, even if we have this type of spirit. We are all conscious of shortcomings in one direction or another, but if we are conscious of them then it is well, for it means that we confess them and endeavour to forsake them and endeavour to do better. In this respect we have the privilege of one who is our Mediator before the Throne of Grace, and who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities because he was tempted in all points as we are, although he was perfect in regard to his obedience to God. Let us then join our voices with David as need arises: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving Kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1). David also goes on to say: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). Sometimes we do all this, and after a while find ourselves falling back and doing the same things again; the same weakness overcomes us. Nevertheless, let us try, and go on, and if we fall let us rise again and make the matter a subject of supplication before God. That is pleasing to the Father, and in His mercy, He will help us and eventually bring us into His kingdom.

The spirit of zeal then is brought upon us by a complete trust in God, and all that happens in our lives is brought upon us as part of our probation. This type of zeal is gained through knowledge and experience of the great mercy and care from the Heavenly Father. We have this zeal because we really believe in God. This belief is not just an acknowledgement of His existence, nor just an acknowledgement of His promises, but total and complete trust to the point that we place our entire lives into His hands. At this point it does not matter whether we live or die, because God will raise us. All that we do will be an attempt to learn the lessons that God is trying to teach us during our probation. This is a godlike spirit (Micah 7:18).



Chapter 5 – Happiness

Spirit – meaning 4 – to be happy

When we speak of a person as being “in good spirit” or “in high spirit” we usually mean that they are happy and cheerful; chipper, positive and looking toward the future, despite unhappy circumstances. As this idiom did not come into use until the early 1700s A.D. we will not find it anywhere used in the scriptures. But the concept of a happy attitude and outlook is most definitely brought out in the scriptures not least in the beatitudes.

The origin of this meaning is the oblivious happiness that is brought on through drinking alcoholic spirit to excess. Related to this is the idea of “Dutch courage”. This idiom alludes to the reputed heavy drinking of the Dutch, and was first referred to in Edmund Waller's *Instructions to a Painter* (1665): “The Dutch their wine, and all their brandy lose, Disarm'd of that from which their courage grows.”^{vii} The Dutch were given gin and tonic water to prevent disease during battle. Hence the common drink “G&T” seen today.

The Beatitudes.^{viii}

The personality the Lord Jesus Christ describes in the Beatitudes (the “blessings” of Matt. 5:3-11) is essentially his own, but others are envisaged, for he speaks of “theirs”, “they” and “ye”. The characteristics are not meant to be shown one by one in **different** individuals, but depict a **single personality**. Moreover, the Sermon bears no relationship to those outside the Hope of Israel. It portrays the moral qualities of a people ALREADY IN covenant relationship with God. But if, in the Beatitudes, the Lord Jesus Christ describes the different facets of his character, he also describes the DEVELOPMENT of that character, and from that, the development of any character that would seek to be patterned on his. In each one of the eight Beatitudes, the person of whom he speaks is pronounced “blessed” — or happy — not only because of the prospect set before him, but also because of the continuing tranquillity of mind of those who know and do their Lord's will (cp. Jn. 13:17). Again, in the first and last Beatitudes, it is said of those blessed that “theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. This does not mean that they are already in the Kingdom. The present possessive tense is used because the people of

God are bound by the covenant to the Kingdom. This class cannot fail to attain it. The Kingdom is said to be "of heaven" because it will be the Kingdom of Him who is enthroned in heaven, and will be governed by His principles.

The eight Beatitudes are as follows:—

1. **Blessed are the Poor in Spirit—Matt. 5:3 cp. Isa. 66:2 Psalms. 34:18-19.** . Such a mind has renounced all that the flesh finds attractive. A choice has to be made to begin with. One cannot travel two roads going in opposite directions. One can not begin to accept the gifts of God until prepared to give up the prizes the world has to offer. One must renounce human wisdom, and "tremble at the Word". But at the end of such "poverty", or renunciation of the world and its ways, there are great riches — an eternal abiding place in God's Kingdom.
2. **Blessed are They That Mourn—Matt. 5:4; cp. Isa. 61:3.** This is the natural outcome of a renounced spirit. In those who have bid "good-bye" to what the world offers to the senses, temporal ambition has been resolved. Such people are linked with the Truth. They view the world from God's position, and they lament a society that either has no interest in, or actively opposes the things of Zion. The Lord Jesus Christ's words are drawn from Isaiah 61:3, where those who mourn are said to "mourn in Zion". They mourn the absence of their Lord (Matt. 9:15), and await "the times of refreshing" referred to in Acts 3:19-21.
3. **Blessed are The Meek—Matt. 5:5; cp. Psalms. 25:9-14; 37:11.** Such are **teachable** — mouldable in the hand of the Potter. "The meek will he guide in judgment: the meek will he teach his way" (Isa. 61:1-2). To the world they are weak and tasteless, but in fact this quality is only to be found in the strongest characters (e.g. Moses—Num. 12:3) and is the hard-earned reward of a purging experience for which courage and self-control are required. They have no confidence in the flesh, but rejoice in the Word and emulate its precepts (Phil. 3:3).
4. **Blessed are They which do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness—Matt. 5:6; cp. Isa. 55:1.** Finding life

by letting it go is an emptying process. It empties the disciple of the ingredients that give satisfaction to the carnal mind. But life cannot remain empty. A man who is satisfied by the world has no interest in spiritual food. The poor in spirit, meek, etc., are blessed for qualities already possessed, but Christ does not bless "the righteous". Rather he has in mind those who have an unsatisfied longing for righteousness — a longing for the days when God's righteousness will be seen in the earth and, furthermore, a desire that even now, our character and conduct might express God's justice Peter said: "As new born babes desire (or long for) the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). It is in the Word we receive satisfaction of our hunger after righteousness. "I am the bread of life" said Jesus, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35; 7:37-38).

5. **Blessed are the Merciful—Matt. 5:7; cp. Psa. 18:25.** Righteousness represents the sterner element in the ideal character. Rigorous self-discipline can produce a harsh attitude to the failings of others. "**Severity**" must be balanced with "**Goodness**" as it is in Yahweh himself (Rom. 11:22; cp. Ex. 34:6-7). Nothing is more inspiring than righteousness matured by sympathy and mercy, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13). Whence comes the motive for mercy? The "love of God", once we really come to know its generosity and its outflowing character, creates within us a responsive love — a desire to do something for Him who has done so much for us (cp. Lk. 11:42; 2 Cor. 5:14; Matt. 23:23). Love of God finds expression in love of brethren. We cannot give like God, but we can and must learn to forgive like Him, and be merciful. This quality is found in those obedient to the second great commandment (Matt. 22:39; cp. James 2:8-13).
6. **Blessed are the Pure in Heart—Matt. 5:8; cp. Psa. 24:4-5; 18:26.** The character is not yet complete. Attention is now turned from the circumference to the heart. Unless our heart is pure, our lives cannot be, however much actions and words might seem to suggest it is (Tit. 1:15). "Pure" means "unmixed". Gold is only

pure when there are no alloys present. The Lord Jesus Christ does not have in mind the exclusion of one form of grossness, but all such forms. The heart is not pure if one's own private interests are mixed up with God's. But naturally, the "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). How then can it be purified? By the developmental steps of the Beatitudes and by a sincere concentration on Him who is pure and holy. Only such can "see his face", i.e. find acceptance in His presence and be made "like Him" physically. Note the same thought sequence in 1 Jn. 3:1-3 and Heb. 12:14.

7. **Blessed are the Peacemakers—Matt. 5:9.** This quality is a product of the perfect character. Before the disciple can possibly make peace, he must quieten his own restless spirit (cp. Pro. 16:32; 25:28). Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). James repeats the thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ when he says that "Wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable". The opposite is true of those who have bitter envying and strife in THEIR hearts (James 3:14-18). The pure MAKE peace, and are not merely peaceable. They are constructive and bind up that which is wounded (Isa. 58:12). Peace is so difficult to maintain that it is to be "made", "pursued" and eagerly desired (James 3:18; Psa. 34:14; Eph. 4:3). Peacemakers are the "Sons of God". They reflect in degree the quality in which the Lord Jesus Christ their elder brother is forever supreme (cp. Eph. 2:4; Rom. 5:1; Isa. 9:6).
8. **Blessed are they which are Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake—Matt. 5:10-12; cp. Isa. 66:5.** The character of the Saint is not attractive to the world. The Lord Jesus Christ's disciples would fellowship his sufferings and share the impact of hatred and cruelty with him. The measure of their faith would be the measure of their persecution. Suffering would develop trust and strength of character. They, too, would be made "perfect through suffering" (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9). Note particularly in v.10 and v.11 that "for righteousness' sake" is equivalent to "for my sake". In the Lord Jesus Christ the righteousness of God is declared. In these words he speaks personally: "Blessed are YE". They

were the ones who would bear his name to the world and would suffer for it (1 Cor. 4:9-13). Yet their persecutions would align them with the Lord Jesus Christ and the prophets. This would give them incentive, for they would be assured of reward in the Kingdom. Rather than be sad, they had cause to leap for joy (cp. Acts 5:41; 1 Pet. 4:13-14; 3:14; Phil 1:29).

The character revealed in the Beatitudes is that of the complete man of God found in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It is a spirit that we need to possess if we are to inherit eternal life. In addition, they describe the process whereby a man grows from stage to stage in seeking to attain the Lord Jesus Christ's example.

The steps are:—

1. Renunciation of the world;
2. Mourning for Zion's fullness;
3. Teachableness — a readiness to receive God's Word;
4. A longing for God's ways to be upheld, or vindicated;
5. A readiness to forgive—as sternness must be balanced with kindness;
6. True inward motivation—a heart unalloyed, undivided in its loyalty, into which God is free to enter, and out of which He may be seen;
7. A man, himself mended by exclusion of sin, who seeks to restore, or mend, others;
8. Character, weak and insufficient by the world's standards, but which is its own criticism of the world, and for which one may expect to suffer, as the Lord Jesus Christ did.

The roots of the Beatitudes are found in the soil of the Old Testament. In these brief statements is found the essence of the prophets—the distillation of the Hope of Israel.



Chapter 6 – Energetic

Spirit – meaning 5 – to be filled with energy

We speak quite often of “spirited children”. We can use our energy for good or for evil. We remember how that Saul before he became Paul was full of energy for God, but it was misguided energy.

When we consider the many characters which are brought before us in the Scriptures for our guidance and our warning, we tend in our minds to divide them into two rigid and opposed classes; we tend to think of them either as good examples to be admired and followed, or as bad examples to be abhorred and avoided. Yet, in fact, rarely, if ever, is a man or woman either wholly evil or wholly good. Ultimately, of course, all men and women who have come within the scope of the divine purpose and become responsible to the divine law will be divided irrevocably into two classes, but by divine judgment, the judgment which will consider all aspects of every character in a way which we cannot possibly do. But that will be God's assessment of the final development of that character. Until the day of one's death that character is being formed, one facet strengthened and another eradicated. Until the time comes for the final assessment to be made at the judgment seat of Christ, it cannot be said that one is wholly bad or another completely good.

We make a mistake, and we rob ourselves of valuable lessons, if we simply look back on the characters of the Scriptures and dismiss them as evil or admire them as good. We shall be helped more in the development of our own characters if we pause to assess and to analyse them as far as we can do from what is recorded concerning them. We shall then find that the good characters were not so by nature; they had their lessons to learn, their fight to put up, their sins to be forgiven. Likewise, the bad characters were not necessarily those who were naturally weaker or worse than others, but they were those who failed to learn the lesson, who were unwilling to put up a fight, who had not the humility to recognise their faults, to confess them and turn from them.

So, we would like to reflect now upon three of the characters mainly upon Hezekiah but also briefly upon the apostles Paul and Peter. They were three outstanding men, each of whom, as far as we are in a

position to judge, we are convinced will be found upon the right hand of the judgment seat of Christ. But they were men—men with their weaknesses, their struggles, their failures and their victories. They were, as James wrote of Elijah, men of like passions with us.

Hezekiah

Take king Hezekiah, for example. We marvel at the way in which, at the age of twenty-five, he immediately, as soon as he ascended the throne, set to work to root out the evil in the nation which had been wrought by Ahaz and the kings which preceded him. As we read from the record in 2 Chronicles 29:2: "He did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that David his father had done". His first work was to purge, to repair and to reopen that temple which had been despoiled and neglected during the idolatrous reign of his father Ahaz. An outstanding feature of his reformatory work was the removal of those high places which had been tolerated even by many of the good kings of Judah, high places originally built, though contrary to the Law, for the worship of Yahweh but profaned by the worship of images. As we have said, otherwise good kings had tolerated these high places up to this time, but not so Hezekiah.

Another outstanding feature was his destruction of the brazen serpent. To describe contemptuously such an object of veneration by the people as "a piece of brass" showed the strength of his character, his energy, his zeal and his courage, and also his very clear spiritual perception.

In addition to these just reforms to the spiritual life of God's holy nation, Hezekiah accomplished much to make the city of Jerusalem more able to defend itself against the foreign invaders, and in particular the great nation of Assyria. The work included the strengthening of the city and, as we well know, the improving of its water supply. During his reign he became very prosperous, "And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels: storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover, he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works" (2 Chron. 32:27).

He organised that wonderful Passover. Not since the time of Solomon had there been the like in Jerusalem, as we are told in the record. It was not held strictly in accordance with the letter of the Law, but it was accepted by God because of the spirit behind it. Hezekiah, as we read, even attempted to win the northern tribes back to the worship of Yahweh. It was their last opportunity for repentance before the Assyrians took them into captivity in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign. His reign is well summed up in the words of the previous chapter of the book of Chronicles: "Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before Yahweh his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered" (2 Chron. 31:20). Or, as it is written in the book of Kings, "He did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh according to all that David his father did... He trusted in Yahweh God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to Yahweh, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Yahweh commanded Moses. And Yahweh was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth" (2 Kings 18:6-7).

With such testimony to an obviously remarkable man, the question arises in our minds: Did he then always do the right thing? Was he a perfect man? The obvious answer is, No. Only one man has ever been perfect, and for us to think of any other man or woman living or dead as perfect, or even to expect perfection, is to put such an one on a pedestal, which no person of human nature deserves, and maybe unwittingly blind ourselves to valuable lessons which we could learn from their experiences.

In the life of Hezekiah, the records in Kings and Chronicles and the prophet Isaiah record one moment of weakness on his part, a weakness which was strongly reprov'd by God through the mouth of the prophet. It is recorded: "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31). This occurred just after the recovery from that sickness which was unto death. We know from the record in Kings what was in his heart, for the record clearly tells us, "His heart was lifted up" (2 Chronicles 32:25). As a result, he displayed all those riches which God had given him before the princes of Babylon. It has been suggested that he did

so in order to impress the king of Babylon: that in fact these messengers had come from Babylon in order to form an alliance with Hezekiah against Assyria, an alliance which Hezekiah was disposed to accept. It is very noticeable that when the prophet Isaiah asked him what the messengers said to him, he did not reply to the question. Whatever Hezekiah's motives might have been, he was severely reproved by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Yahweh" (Isaiah 39:6).

If it is indeed true that Hezekiah was thinking of forming an alliance with Babylon against the then more powerful Assyria, such a warning would have been singularly appropriate. One thing we can say is that this incident and Isaiah's reproof show that Hezekiah was inclined, at this time at least, to be too self-reliant, too sure of himself; as the record says, "His heart was lifted up" (2 Chron. 32:25).

Hezekiah was clearly of a strong-willed, determined and energetic disposition or he would never have accomplished what he did in changing the whole outlook and way of life of his nation, not only of the common people but also of those in positions of authority, the priests and the Levites. But such men have always been needed in the purpose of God, men capable of taking clear, firm decisions and of acting upon them with complete assurance, often against the wishes of the majority; men not afraid to stand alone, if need be, for what they believe to be right in the sight of God. Yet at the same time, such must inevitably be especially prone to the danger of seeking to solve problems in their own way and by their own strength; not consciously leaving God out of account, but in practice, under the stress of particular circumstances, their actions might almost amount to that.

Paul

As we have observed an obvious example was the apostle Paul before his conversion. He was a strong character. He pursued a determined course in life, a course in which he thought that he was doing the will of God perfectly; yet because he relied too much upon his own strength and his own wisdom, a course which in fact was completely wrong. By that vision which he received on the road to Damascus he was taught complete submission. No longer was it a question of what he thought was the right thing to do, but rather, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). It may well be that that thorn in the flesh from which Paul suffered, "the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2

Corinthians 12:7), as he described it, was permitted by God to control this very tendency to trust in his own strength. We shall recall his words to the Corinthians concerning his pleading with God to remove that affliction, how God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). So the apostle could add, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:10). Then he could say, with that power, the power of Christ, not his own, "when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

It is not to the naturally strong that God looks for the working out of His purpose. Ultimately such, unless they learn also before God true humility, will rebel against His will. But He looks to those who, acknowledging their own weakness and their own lack of wisdom, are prepared to go forward in that strength which the Creator alone can give. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5). Those who recognize this are not weak; indeed, they immediately become the truly strong. They can say with Paul, "I can do all things"—but not now in their own strength, but as Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Return to Hezekiah

So, we return to Hezekiah, for it would seem that this was a lesson which he also needed to learn, especially in dealing with the powerful enemies of his nation at this time. Wise provision was necessary, and he wisely expended money and energy in providing for the defence of his people; but did he rely too much upon his own efforts? We have three records of Hezekiah's life—in the Book of Kings, the Book of Chronicles and the prophecy through Isaiah. In the last book we have not only several chapters clearly devoted to Hezekiah's life, but in addition many other references which must be seen as a reflection of Hezekiah's policies in ruling the people of God; and on the basis of such references it would appear that that weakness which Hezekiah showed when the messengers visited him from Babylon was also revealed on two other occasions, when he tended to seek his own way out of his problems rather than put implicit trust in God.

The Assyrians under Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem on two separate occasions, both clearly recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles. The first occasion is recorded in the first eight verses of the 32nd chapter of the second book of Chronicles. In these verses we read of the first siege of the Assyrians against Jerusalem, and as

Hezekiah prepared for this siege his words to the people reveal the spirit of a truly godly man. "And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah" (2 Chronicles 32:6).

No words could express more clearly or more beautifully the attitude of a man prepared to place his confidence completely not in himself but in the power and strength of God. Yet in the event, as the record in Kings tells us, under the pressure of the siege, that siege was lifted by Hezekiah stripping the temple—undoing all the work of restoration which he had accomplished—and emptying his treasure-house to pay to the king of Assyria. What happened? Did his faith fail? Did he rely in the end upon his own efforts and insufficiently upon the help of God? — for we cannot believe that it was wholly acceptable to God that he should thus strip the temple of the riches which he had placed in it. Well, we are not told and it would be unwise to speculate. If indeed his faith did fail momentarily, how true it would be to our own experience; how often we enter into difficulties determined to act wisely and in accordance with the law and principles of the Truth, and then under the pressure of the circumstances are compelled to yield in some way or other.

The relief which Hezekiah thus obtained proved to be only temporary. He found himself besieged once again, and this time he put his trust in help from Egypt. You will recall that one of the taunts which the Assyrian captain hurled at the people was that they trusted in the staff of a broken reed, even upon Egypt, and this would indeed appear to have been true, for the prophet Isaiah reproved just such an attitude when he wrote: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith Yahweh, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore, shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion" (Isaiah 30:1-3).

It may well be that in thus seeking the help of Egypt Hezekiah was yielding to the advice of such counsellors as Shebna, who was later

removed from his high office by command of the prophet Isaiah; but in yielding to such counsel, again we think we notice the tendency on the part of Hezekiah to seek his own way of deliverance rather than to trust implicitly in the strength of God.

Now in saying this it is not a question of finding fault or criticising, still less of condemning so outstanding a character. We should not expect perfection in any of these men. What we should be able to do is to learn from their weaknesses, weaknesses shown even by such men as Hezekiah; and so, learn the weaknesses of our own nature and be warned by their failures, and be led to examine ourselves in the light of the record of their lives. Hezekiah was an outstanding character and for that very reason we can learn from the record of his life the dangers to which the strongest amongst us must be exposed, dangers to which we must inevitably succumb if we trust too much in ourselves.

Hezekiah learned his lesson at the time we are considering. Egypt did provide a measure of relief by furnishing a temporary distraction but it was not long before Hezekiah was forced to recognize that he was now completely powerless. At the same time, he came to appreciate that Assyria was not simply challenging *his* power or the strength of *his* people but that he was challenging the might and the power of God. Guided by the prophet Isaiah he came to appreciate that this was in truth not his battle, for the outcome of which he was dependent upon his own strength, but that it was God's battle.

Again, it is a lesson which we do well to heed. Our battles, whether they be against the weakness of our own flesh, our own nature, or our contention for the faith without and within the Ecclesias, none of these battles is in fact our own. They are the battles for God. No words could better convey the sense of complete dependence upon God which Hezekiah now felt than that picture which is given us in the record in the Book of Kings. "And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers" (2 Kings 19:14 - those messengers from the captains of Assyria encamped around the walls of Jerusalem) "and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of Yahweh, and spread it before Yahweh". Now there was no question of seeking his own way. He spread the letter before Yahweh. Verse 19: "Now therefore, O Yahweh our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Yahweh God, even thou only". Then the record goes on to tell us how deliverance came. Man played no part in it whatsoever. How easy it was for God to

overthrow the power of Assyria; as the apostle wrote, "The weakness of God is stronger than man" (1 Corinthians 1:25). In the presence of divine power how foolish it was for Hezekiah to seek a way out, either by his own power and wisdom or by that of another man or nation. Not that it is enough to sit back and wait for God's strength to be revealed: it is necessary for a man or woman to show the firm intention and the determination to do what is right, and wherein we must inevitably be lacking in the faith, the strength and the wisdom to accomplish it, we must first actively seek for divine guidance and help and then be ready to accept it and rely implicitly upon it.

Thus Hezekiah, through a period of extreme testing, learned to put his trust in God and not in the strength of man. He learned by experience the truth of that proverb: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). It is a lesson which all God's servants down the ages have had to learn.

Peter

The apostle Peter was another such. None of the other Apostles had the energy of Peter. Yet, how meekly he obeyed the vision which he received, and went forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, entirely contrary to his own feelings and wishes and what he would have done if he had been left to himself. But he had not always been so willing to be guided in this way. There was a time when he was very, very sure of himself, of his wisdom and of his strength. That remarkable confession of faith and understanding which he made before Jesus was a sign of his strength of mind and his quickness of perception. But Jesus was careful to point out to him that this understanding he had was not entirely his own: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). But Peter at the time was too sure of himself to appreciate this. A little later he went so far as to reprove Christ for speaking truly of God's purpose in him, and we know how strongly Jesus rebuked him. But still he failed to learn; still he was very sure of his strength. We recall his words to his Master at that last supper: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death" (Matthew 26:33). It was only in the moment of his greatest weakness that he found the true source of that strength which alone would enable him to carry out the work which God intended him to do. Jesus had foreseen this, the complete change which would take place in him when he had learned

not to trust in himself but in God. We recall the words of Jesus: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

There could be no more powerful reminder of the weakness of man, and the power of God operating where human power was absolutely useless, than we have in the bread and the wine. "When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Not only do the emblems direct our minds to the power of God, strong to save, but they remind us that in Jesus we have one who is fully conversant with the weakness of our nature. During the closing hours of his life he came to know by bitter experience the utter weakness of human nature when left to itself. In that terrible cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) we see the anguish of one who was tested to the full of the frailty of human nature.

But we remember not only his death but also his resurrection, and in the resurrection of Christ we see the power of God revealed to affect that which no man could accomplish.

We must then have an energetic spirit, but we must ensure that we use it to full effect towards the purpose of God.



Chapter 7 – Influence

Spirit – meaning 6 – influence

One of the most common ideas we see emanating from the ideas around the words translated as spirit are the ideas of influence, stimulus, encouragement and guidance. Understanding this aspect of our subject brings us much closer to understanding what this aspect of the power of God really is. God could have created a race of automatons that do exactly what He wants them to do. But that was not Gods great plan. God could cause earthquakes and fire to come down from the heavens that force us to follow His will. But that too is not Gods way. God gave us free will to live our lives exactly as we wish. God desires willing obedience to His directives. The spirit power is that which nudges our will towards that obedience; this is the “outworking of His Holy Spirit”. As we said in our opening remarks, He is bringing all that to pass using Holy Spirit. Be that using His angels, be that the Words we read in the Bible, an earthquake, a rainy day, an event of chance or even His influencing those we meet in the street. Gods power is everywhere and infinite. Events that may appear to many as random will occur in our lives that “leads us to God”. They influence us continually.

This idea of Gods influence working in our lives is key to our understanding of what Gods power is. The power seen here is not a power that overwhelms our freewill it is a power that convinces our freewill that the right way is Gods way and therefore (it is hoped) the freewill chooses to follow Gods way. There is a subtle difference. The power we see exhibited here by God is much greater than had he chosen merely to force us to follow His will.

The Parable of The Life and Times of Jacob^{ix}

The life and times of Jacob, independent of the influence of Isaac and Rebekah, are recorded between Chapters 28 to 36 of Genesis. Jacob is revealed as the man whom God remade. His character was purified by the adverse circumstances of his life, as is invariably the case with godly men. Therefore, writes Paul, God is not ashamed to be surnamed the God of Jacob (Heb. 11:16). Whereas, typically, Isaac

represents the seed of Promise, Jacob represents both individuals who are called to the Promise and whose lives are necessarily reshaped to conform to God's requirements, and, also that nation (Israel after the flesh) which is the selected channel of Yahweh's purpose. Notice how his life's experiences foreshadowed those of the nation of Israel. Hosea (Ch. 12:12), referred to Jacob's flight into Syria as typical of the nation in dispersion and the state of extremity to which it would be brought.

1. His destiny was proclaimed before his birth (Gen. 25:20-23) —so also was that of Israel.
2. The contrast between him and his brother was clearly defined (Gen. 25:24-34) — so also is that between Israel and the Gentiles.
3. He deceived his father and was driven from the land (Gen. 27) —so also did Israel.
4. Nevertheless God proclaimed His intention to restore him there again (Gen. 28) —so He has in regard to Israel.
5. He attempted to become assimilated among the Gentiles (Gen. 29) —so also has Israel.
6. He prospered among the Gentiles (Gen. 30) — so also did Israel after the flesh.
7. He experienced growing hostility from Gentiles (Gen. 31) — so also has Israel.
8. He returned to the land in fear, after wrestling with the angel (Gen. 32) —Israel still wrestles with Providence.
9. He and his brother were reconciled in the land (Gen. 33) — this shall yet take place between Israel and the Gentiles.
10. He worshipped at the altar of Shechem (Gen. 33) —typical of Israel's ultimate conversion to Christ.

A large section in Genesis is devoted specifically to the Life and Times of Jacob (Chapters 28:1-36:43), it can be divided conveniently into three parts:

1. Jacob's Family Life in Haran — Ch. 28:1-30:43.
2. Jacob's Return to the Land of Promise —Ch. 31:1-33:20.
3. Jacob as a Pilgrim in the Land —Ch. 34:1-36:43.

God used His power to influence Jacob, just as He tries to influence Israel today.

Peace

We live in a restless age. Mentally, physically and spiritually it seems that men and women must be always on the move, seeking out new ideas, new ways of life, new places, new fashions, new models and standards of conduct, new forms of art and music, a new approach to every aspect of their life. Modern life seeks continually to satisfy this restlessness of human nature, and in seeking to satisfy it, it succeeds only in stimulating it. But this of course is inevitable with human nature as it is at present constituted. Man imagines that he can satisfy his needs and his desires in a variety of ways. In reality, whilst he might obtain passing satisfaction, that very satisfaction itself quickly stimulates the desire for more of that which appeared to satisfy. Inevitably he becomes more and more dependent upon that which he fondly imagined would deliver him from his bondage to his desires and passions.

Restlessness. How we see it in the continual coming and going, the rushing hither and thither, the continual changing of fashion and art, the putting forward of new scientific, economic and philosophic theories, the dreaming up of new ways to amuse and to entertain. There is nothing stable about modern life, and whilst men and women are reluctant to admit it, there can be little doubt—there can be no doubt in our own minds—that this restlessness is largely due to the lack of the influence in their lives of any real stabilising influence. And there can be no doubt that the greatest stabilising influence in any life is a faith and a trust and a submission to God and the influence of His Word.

We find ourselves inevitably to some extent caught up in the restlessness of modern life. Life is a restless thing, a thing, as we often say, of ups and downs, comings and goings, a mixture of joy and sorrow, of happiness and depression, of turmoil and peace. And inevitably, the more sensitive we are, the more we feel this lack of calm and peace. We long for peace and for rest, and it is right that we should so desire these things. But we should be wrong if we expected to find them in perfection in this life. We can find peace in no small measure if we go the right way about it, but we shall not find it in perfection.

Our God, as the Apostle reminds us in Hebrews (Heb. 13) is a God of peace. His desire is that His children should find peace, in great measure now, but in perfection in the future. Peace is one of those fruits of the spirit which the apostle Paul listed in his letter to the Galatians. Many times, in his epistles he expressed the hope and prayer that his brethren and sisters might find the peace of God. Most of his epistles open with those very well-known words: "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2). To the Philippians he wrote: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7). To the Colossians: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." (Colossians 3:15). To the Thessalonians: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means." (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

Man naturally, as we have said, is a creature of unrest, of tension, of turmoil, and—on the international scale—of war. Such a state is very largely of his own making. Indeed, all lack of peace is ultimately traceable to man's folly, for he introduced sin into the world in the first place, and there can be no perfect peace while sin remains. That is a Divine decree (Gen.3:15; Isaiah 48:22, 57:21). Yet that being recognised, it is still true to say that each individual—and we are no exception—introduces into his or her own life much that causes unnecessary unrest and lack of peace through his own folly or weakness, and through individual members or leaders the same lack of peace is to be found even in communities where harmony and peace should prevail.

Yet that Hebrew word, *Shalom*—peace—was always on the lips of prophet, priest and people. To this very day it is the common greeting of one Jew to another: "Peace be with thee." The false prophets spoke of peace when there could be none. The true prophets warned of lack of peace. Yet again and again they looked forward to a time when humility and submission would bring a peace both individual and national, a peace beyond man's wildest dreams. "In this place (Jerusalem)," said God "will I give peace." (Haggai 2:9).

For a short time in the early part of Solomon's reign the nation experienced that peace which God had promised. Under his reign, in accordance with God's promise, He gave peace and quietness to Israel. It is recorded that "there was peace on all sides round about." (1 Kings 4:24). But it was very short-lived. Obedience brought peace,

individual and national; disobedience brought trouble and unrest. Yet, though Israel thus lacked peace, they were very slow to appreciate why, as men and women are today. They allowed themselves to be deceived into thinking that they could find peace on terms other than those decreed by God. They were deceived by those very ones upon whom they should have been able to rely for sound counsel and guidance—their princes, their priests and those claiming to be their prophets. It was against such false leaders as these that the true prophet Micah was inspired to address those words which we read from the 3rd chapter of his prophecy.

"And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." (Micah 3:1). Scathing words of condemnation, continued in verse 11 of the same chapter: "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon Yahweh, and say, Is not Yahweh among us? none evil can come upon us." (Micah 3:11).

Peace for Israel was dependent upon remembering God's law and keeping His commandments. Only a few in Israel appreciated that and realised the need for a change of heart. Jeremiah was one such. He spoke on behalf of his people, "Why hast thou smitten us and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold, trouble! We acknowledge, O Yahweh, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee." (Jeremiah 14:19-20). And God said "I have taken away my peace from this people." (Jeremiah 16:5).

Peace, like all other blessings which man can enjoy, can only come from God. True peace is God's peace, bestowed upon those who trust and obey Him allowing Him to influence their lives through submission to His will. And so, the time came when peace was taken from Israel as a whole. "Night shall be unto you" (Micah 3:6) said the prophet Micah, "that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them." God brought upon them that which He said He would: "Yahweh shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other... and

among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest." (Deuteronomy 28:64-68) "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isaiah 48:22, 57:21, Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11, Ezekiel 13:16).

Yet though peace for the nation as a whole came to an end, the suffering of the nation was not incompatible with individual members of it experiencing a deep peace of mind in their trust and obedience to God. Indeed, the sufferings of an individual need never militate against peace of mind; on the contrary, a true peace of mind and heart is often born of that deep trust in God and submission to His will and commandments which comes only from trial and tribulation. It is this peace of heart and mind which God has promised us. Israel was promised peace as a nation, but from their failure to experience that national peace we can learn why we in our day fail to receive in full measure that peace of heart and mind which is of God.

Let us then for a moment or two look at this peace that we may see what it is, how we can have it, and in the light of scriptural counsel examine ourselves to see why we so often fail to experience it to a full degree. First, what do we mean by it, and how is it revealed in our lives and our hearts? It is not easy to define; rather is it easier to think of the characteristics which we might expect to find in one who enjoys this peace of God. Calmness, confidence, serenity, an equable temperament, an ability to rise above the moods, the stresses, the strains, the monotony and the sufferings of life; not an unfeeling, insensitive stoicism, a dogged refusal to be moved by anything, either our own experiences or those of others; nor is it a peacefulness which will look calmly upon injustice, unrighteousness or corruption. Yes, these are some of the qualities which we might expect to find in one who experiences the peace of God.

Calmness, confidence, serenity, an ability to rise above the moods, the stresses, the strains and the sufferings of life. Now to say this is at once to make us all realise to what extent we all fail to enjoy this full peace of God. We suppose that we can all think of brethren and sisters who seem continually to show these characteristics, at least in public, and yet we know not what they experience in their hearts nor what they might display in their unguarded moments.

Let us then look at this peace which is of God. Let us see on what basis we can find this peace, and see why we might be to any degree failing to find it. Look back again for a moment at Israel. Israel's great failure lay in turning from the only way of peace ordained by God:

peace through trust and obedience. They turned from God's way to another way, a way in which their false prophets had encouraged them that they thought they could obtain peace. From this, then, we can learn a necessary lesson.

We live, as we said, in a restless age, and inevitably we are affected by it. We are tending ourselves to rush hither and thither, always on the move, hardly pausing sometimes to reflect why. In our jobs, perhaps, we work under conditions of nervous strain and tension. These things to a large extent we cannot avoid, they are part of modern life. Yet we need to ask ourselves, we believe, three questions. Firstly, are we unnecessarily caught up in its restless activity, making it unnecessarily difficult for ourselves to experience the peace which God has promised? Then again, in seeking to overcome the tensions which modern life tends to induce, are we inclined to emulate the ways of the world? Are we at all inclined, as Israel were, to seek peace of mind outside the life and principles of the Truth? Or again, are we, by total submission to the demands of life in the Truth, placing ourselves in a position to experience the true peace which the Truth alone can bring? Or are we perhaps, by holding back our service and submission in some way, not experiencing the full peace of God and seeking to find peace in other ways?

These are very real questions and not academic ones. Israel's experiences, and probably our own experiences also, teach us that. There is only one true peace, that peace of which Solomon wrote in those words: "Let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee." (Proverbs 3:1-2). We notice the emphasis: "Let thine *heart* keep my commandments." Only an observance from the heart will bring this peace. No mere external conformity, no mere reluctant obedience: this will not bring peace; on the contrary, it will bring only unrest and frustration—even more unrest than no knowledge or conformity at all. Under such circumstances we may well be led more and more to seek satisfaction outside the sphere of the Truth. Mere knowledge of God's law will not bring peace. It is written: "Great peace have they which love thy law." (Psalms 119:165). Knowledge without application will lead to a worse state than no knowledge at all. But knowledge rightly applied—that is, of course, wisdom—will bring peace, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace." (Proverbs 3:17).

The world seeks to escape the strain and frustration of life and to find peace in a variety of ways. We have to recognise that some, though

probably very few, appear to find a measure of peace of mind, "fulfilment" as they might say today, in their jobs, their families, their homes, or in social work on behalf of others. But they must be very few, and how little it takes to upset that peaceful life; an accident, a financial blow, a twist of circumstances, and their world could collapse in a moment. Most people need a form of escape in hobbies and other interests—their houses, their gardens, their bicycle, their television, their hi-fi, their phone, their football and so forth. Some of these we may be able to use, but only to a very limited degree, and with a clear mind as to what we are doing and why we are doing it. What we must never do is to become dependent upon these things for our peace of mind. If we continually need our jaded spirit to be revived by some form of relaxation, by some new thing, new ideas, new additions to our homes, new places for our holidays, new hobbies, alcohol, new forms of amusement or recreation, if we are to any degree dependent upon these for contentment, may it not be because we are not allowing the Truth to bring into our lives that peace of mind which it should? If, when we are deprived of these things or are unable perhaps to afford them, we become restless and dissatisfied, what then? Where is that peace which Jesus promised us?

We need to be very careful lest through failure to allow the Truth to bring peace into our lives by complete submission to its principles and precepts, we then begin to look outside for other ways and other means. It is so easy to bring things into our lives to fulfil a part which the Truth alone should be able to occupy. We may find all sorts of plausible reasons for having this, or doing this, that and the other, but if we honestly examined ourselves we might well find that to confess our need for them is to confess our weakness in not allowing the Holy Spirit (meaning the Truth - we do not mean this in the Evangelical sense) to have its full effect in our lives, guiding, controlling, comforting, encouraging, edifying and stimulating, satisfying our every need, giving us peace.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you: Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27). It is very noticeable that Jesus said "My peace I give unto you." It is that peace which was his; that is the peace which is to be ours. What then was the nature of the peace which Jesus enjoyed, and whence did he derive that peace? Certainly, it was not from a life of ease and comfort, nor from any of the modern amenities which we have. It came firstly from complete confidence in his Father; secondly, from a clear conscience, a sincere conviction

that he was doing his Father's will, keeping His commandments, carrying out his appointed mission; and this is the peace which Jesus promises us. These are the only terms upon which peace has been promised.

God has made perfect provision for our complete peace of mind, provided we on our part do not ignore His will or rebel against Him. But at once it might be said that though we desire to trust implicitly on God and obey His commandments from our hearts, yet we are weak, we often fail, and this very feeling of failure and weakness detracts from our peace of mind. Yet in fact, our weaknesses need only detract from our peace of mind if we seek to excuse them. If we do that, we shall never find peace. But if we genuinely fail through weakness, we need no excuse, and we can still have perfect peace, for God has made full provision for our needs in this respect, as in all others. Is it not written in the prophets: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4-5). The only real and humanly insurmountable barrier to peace—our own weakness and consciousness of sin—has been removed through the sacrifice of our Master. Through his work and our own trust and diligence it is possible for us to be "found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter 3:14). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1).

These words, emphasise the fundamental truth that without peace with God there can be no peace in our hearts. Conversely, if we truly have peace with God, what else can possibly disturb that peace? If we always appreciated the full value and significance of reconciliation to God, surely, we should need nothing else to make us happy, to give us peace and contentment. This is the true peace which Christ came to give us, the peace which the world cannot know, which nothing in the world can possibly give us. This is the foundation of true happiness. None have such reason to be glad as reconciled to God. Without it, we could find no peace; with it, we ought not to be dependent on other things for our peace of mind.

We sometimes fear that we are more dependent upon other things than we would like to think—our comfortable homes, our good food, our pleasant gardens, our lovely music. These and other blessings are truly things to be accepted thankfully and joyfully if used wisely, but

let us never forget that they could be taken in a moment; indeed, the time will come when they *will* be taken in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and in that day of judgment our peace of mind will depend solely on the extent to which we have now found peace with God.

Happy are we if we can find that true peace now. If we can—and there is no reason why we should not—then we shall have nothing to fear in the day of judgment. We shall enter joyfully into that time of perfect peace when even the nations shall at last know the meaning of peace, when, as the prophet Micah wrote, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3).



Chapter 8 – Following God

Spirit – meaning 7 – to be following God

We do not need to be influenced by others or convinced from reading Gods Word in order to follow Gods desires – although the origin of our desire will have originated from our understanding of Gods’ Word whether read or expounded to us. This is often described as having a “spirit of Truth” (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1 John 4:6).

Through our Lord Jesus Christ each one of us has been called to an understanding of God’s Truth. We have believed in the name of the one who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and as we are knit together in the bonds of fellowship, of communion, in truth and love.

Truth and love

As we read the words of the apostle John in his Epistles, that disciple whom Jesus loved, I feel that the two words, truth and love, seem to form the very essence of John’s writings. John expounds truth and love. It is the theme of all that he wrote, and it certainly seems to be the theme of that short epistle, the 2nd epistle. What a priceless little gem that short epistle is; very short, but it contains so much profound spiritual teaching, warning and comfort; and throughout those few verses is breathed the very spirit of truth and love, the spirit of love in the bonds of truth.

John describes himself as “The elder unto the elect lady.” (2 John 1). The elder - Well, when this epistle was written we do not know, and it does not really matter a great deal. I would imagine, and I think it is generally felt, that it was written fairly late in the apostle’s life. It appears that it would have been prior to his imprisonment in Patmos and his receiving of the Revelation, else he would not have expressed his hopeful intention of shortly seeing the sister to whom he was writing.

So, it was addressed to “the elect lady,” and that is a rather unusual mode of address. The lady is not named and perhaps we wonder why this is so. This word ‘lady’ is the Greek word ‘kuria’, and this is the only place where it occurs in the New Testament. It is the feminine form of ‘kurios’, a word which occurs hundreds of times in Scripture and which is most commonly translated Lord. It is a word which is

used to refer to God Himself and to Jesus Christ. It is the word which appears in the 3rd verse of this chapter: "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." It is also on occasion translated master, sir or lord with a small 'I'.

It would seem, then, that the unique use of this feminine form 'kuria' by John would indicate that he was writing to a female person of high rank in society, one who would normally be so addressed 'lady.' Whether this is so or not we cannot be certain. It may be, of course, that John used the word, not in relation to her position in worldly society, but as an indication of the very high regard he had for her in the society of the Truth; and of that high position which this sister held, there can be no doubt at all. She is described as the elect lady. Whatever her position may or may not have been in the world, she had been elected, she had been called, chosen by God to be His servant, separated to His service, and she must have been a remarkable sister of outstanding character for the Spirit to move John to write this letter to her. This is the only letter in the New Testament written personally to a sister, a personal letter written by the great, beloved apostle to a sister whom he loved in the Truth.

We note from verse 1 that she was not only beloved of John but of the household of faith generally: "...whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." This little letter is preserved for our learning, whether we be sisters or brethren today. God, by the Spirit, used, in His wisdom, this little personal letter to reveal His will to us.

Let us then read again those beautiful opening words: "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." What confidence there is in those words! "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."

Perhaps we should first notice that the letter is addressed to the elect lady "and her children," children whom, we are told in verse 4, walked in truth. "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth." There is no mention here of a husband or a father and we can only assume that he was no longer alive, but it would appear that it was largely due to the faith and work and example of this lady that her children walked in truth. Surely there is here a lesson and comfort for our sisters, for wives and mothers! What an important

part mother plays in the bringing up of a family in truth, and what a great joy indeed it is when the children walk in truth. There is no greater joy in this life.

Now as we read those first three verses, I am sure we all noticed the recurrence of those words “truth and love” – “all they that have known the truth.” We each one, in God’s mercy, know the Truth. John, in his gospel record, recorded the incident when Jesus stood before Pilate: “Art thou a king then?” (John 18:37) asked Pilate. “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” Pilate asked that scornful question: “What is truth?” (John 18:38) and it is a question which has been asked in the world ever since, and philosophers and thinkers and theologians of all sorts have sought an answer and have found none. The world in its wisdom can never find truth. “Thy word is truth,” (John 17:17) and that word of truth was manifested in Jesus. He was the Word made flesh. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). There is truth in no other.

But not only did God express His truth in Jesus; He also expressed His Divine love. “God is love,” (1 John 4:8, 16) and that Divine love was manifested in His Son. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:7). Yes, God is love, and He manifested that love through His Son, who died for us.

Now what comes out very clearly from John’s writings is that truth and love are inseparable. There can be no love without truth, and truth without love is a denial of the truth. John in this epistle states very clearly the fundamental nature of truth and love. “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.” (2 John 4).

So, then, truth and love are based on fundamental commandments. The Truth is not something of our own devising just to suit our convenience. It is what God has commanded, and so is love — “that we should walk after his commandments.” (2 John 6). Divine love is not some sort of vague sentimental feeling, a sort of benign aura which surrounds us, an easy-going amiability. O no, far, far from it. These words of John, “This is love, that we walk after his commandments,” echo the words of Jesus which John himself recorded: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15). Truth and love are matters of Divine command, and anything claiming to be truth or purporting to be love which is not based on Divine command is not truth and love at all. It is a humanly-devised deceit.

Now, to emphasise just that, John continues with what may seem to be some very severe words. Let us continue reading in verse 7: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

Now some may say—in effect, some have said — ‘Well, there does not seem to be very much love in words like that. It seems to be very hard way of dealing with offenders. Should we not show just a little bit of love, be a little bit kinder, more forbearing, perhaps try to understand more another one’s point of view?’ Well, of course, how we deal with offenders does obviously depend upon the offence, but it is clear from these words of John that when fundamental truth is violated, where the commands of Christ are clearly contravened, then there is no basis for love. That would be love without truth. Love is the keeping of the commandments, and where the commandment is broken then love is broken.

John, of course, is here dealing with a specific heresy which was prevalent at his time, but surely the same principle must apply to all departure from the Truth whether in doctrine or practice. Truth and love are inseparable, but if the Truth dwells in us (Holy Spirit in the non-evangelical sense), if we do walk in truth—walk after the commandments—then there is no bound at all in the love that exists

between us. Love then flows freely. That love which God has manifested to us through His Son, we manifest to each other. Turn to that 4th chapter of the 1st epistle again and continue reading at verse 11: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” Well, I do not suppose that any one of us feels that Divine love is perfected in us. God’s love through Jesus was indeed perfect. “Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end.” (John 13:1). “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13). “Hereby perceive we the love of God” (1 John 3.16) —those words “of God” should not appear; they are not in the original; it should read: “Hereby perceive we love, because he (Jesus) laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” John goes onto speak of love in practice, the practical manifestation of love: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:17-18). Here again we see how closely truth and love are combined. Yes, and yet when we should show that love to each other, how often we all fall short! We fall short of that Divine perfection of love. He laid down his life for us. We ought also to lay down our lives for our brethren and sisters. In John’s day this was done very literally. Probably by the time John wrote this epistle most of his fellow apostles had done just that, they had laid down their lives. We do not today, and yet we can and we should make very real sacrifices for our brethren and sisters, make our lives a living sacrifice for each other. Just as Christ’s sacrifice was a perfect manifestation of Divine truth and love, so will our sacrifices be in service to our brethren and sisters in truth and love, and perhaps the greatest love that we can show each other is to help one another to walk in truth, to walk after his commandments.

To love the world will not unite us, it will pull us apart. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15). If we love the world, we are not showing love to our brethren and sisters, we are not laying down our lives for them. “This is love, that we walk after his commandments.” Let us then be united together in love, helping each other to walk in the Truth. 1 John 5:2: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” No, the

commands of Christ are not grievous. They are not there to hurt and to harass us. They are not contrived to make it as hard as possible for us to enter the Kingdom. They are the expression of the love of God. They are given to us because God loves us and is by this way preparing us for His kingdom and glory

Far from being grievous, they are really a great blessing. Yes, they are a blessing even now in this life. For example, we are commanded to live moral and clean lives, and to live such lives brings a happiness and a contentment and a peace of mind even now in this life, quite apart from the glorious reward held out for us in the future. The more we appreciate God's love in the commandments, the more will we reciprocate that love and walk in truth, and the closer will we be knit together and rejoice the heart of each other in the bonds of truth and love, just as John rejoiced greatly when he found the elect lady and her children walking in truth.

Now John had many things to write to this dear sister whom he loved in the truth but he did not write them. I suppose we all wish he had but it was not the Spirit's intention. Enough had been said for the Spirit's purpose to instruct and warn and exhort and comfort all the elect who would follow, right down to you and to me. John trusted that he would soon be able to see her, verse 12: "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that our joy may be full." What a lovely expression that is— "that our joy may be full." I wonder if we feel like that when, perhaps, after a long absence, we see a beloved brother or sister again. We should do.

Whether John's wish was fulfilled we do not know, but we do know that he will see this elect lady again. He will see her, not in the weakness of human flesh but in the power of an endless life; and if we continue to walk in truth and in love, so shall we. We shall see this elect lady, we shall see the beloved apostle John, we shall see the faithful of all ages who in their day have walked in truth and love. We shall see our own loved ones whom we have laid to rest in the Truth, and above all we shall see our beloved Master, the perfect manifestation of Divine truth and love, the one who died for us, the one who rose again. We shall see him face to face. Surely our joy shall then be full!

There is a very close link between the ideas of having a holy spirit, living the Truth and spiritual love. Wanting even our enemy to be in the Kingdom (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27).



Chapter 9 – Visions

Spirit – meaning 8 – to be experiencing a vision, a dream state or trance

John was “in the spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10) – the meaning seen in the context is that he saw visions, and he was either in a dream state, or a trance. The meaning of this phrase is unmistakably illustrated a little further on. At the close of the first series of things shown to him, John heard a voice addressing him thus: “Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be hereafter” (Rev. 4:1). “And” says he, “immediately I was in spirit, and beheld a throne...”. To be “in spirit”, then, is to be seized, covered, or held by the spirit (power) of God for the purpose of seeing a vision or revelation. Now for John to be “in the Spirit on the day of the Lord”, was to be present on that day in vision by the spirit. He was watching these things happen, as if he were there.

It is important to note that the difference between a vision and a dream is that a vision is given when a person is awake while a dream is given when a person is asleep.

Can God give visions to people today? Yes, of course He could if He wanted to. If God desires to communicate His message to a person, He can use whatever means He finds necessary—a missionary, an angel, a vision, or a dream. Of course, God also has the ability to give visions in areas where the gospel message is already readily available. There is no limit to what God can do.

The question should be does God give visions to people today? The answer to that question is currently no, He chooses not to. Should we expect visions to be an ordinary occurrence then? No. As recorded in the Bible, God spoke to people many times by means of visions. Examples are Joseph, son of Jacob; Joseph, the husband of Mary; Solomon; Isaiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Peter; and Paul. The prophet Joel predicted an outpouring of visions, and this was confirmed by the apostle Peter in Acts chapter 2.

We must be careful when it comes to visions and the interpretation of visions. We must keep in mind that the Bible is finished, and it tells us everything we need to know. The key truth is that if God were to give

a vision, it would agree completely with what He has already revealed in His Word. Visions should never be given equal or greater authority than the Word of God. God's Word is our ultimate authority for Christian faith and practice. If you believe you have had a vision and feel that perhaps God gave it to you, prayerfully examine the Word of God and make sure your vision is in agreement with Scripture. Then prayerfully consider what God would have you do in response to the vision (James 1:5). God would not give a vision to a person and then keep the meaning of the vision hidden. In Scripture, whenever a person asked God for the meaning of a vision, God made sure it was explained to the person (Daniel 8:15-17).

The Bible teaches that, in ancient times, God relayed His messages through the power of the Holy Spirit, to His chosen servants by visions and dreams. These messages were also given to the apostles and prophets (Amos 3:7, Eph. 3:5).

There are many dreams, visions or premonitions that people experience. Their sources are not as easily determined. Therefore, we must think twice before assuming they are from God, even if they appear supernatural. In 1 John 4:1 God instructs us to "*try the spirits* whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Almost everyone assumes that dreams and visions bear messages from God. This is a very dangerous assumption.

In situations in which visions, dreams or other such experiences result in sickness, fear, anxiety, or similar adverse effects, one should seek God's intervention and healing. In most situations, dreams and visions are derived from one's own day-to-day activities and problems.

Many believe and teach that God does indeed speak to men directly today in the form of dreams and visions. Groups that teach this include the Catholics, Pentecostals, Charismatics, and most "Christian" cults.

Most of the cults were formed when their supposed prophets received special visions, visitations or revelations from God, and they supposedly were told to form special churches or movements. Among those groups are the Mormons, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventist. Each claims God spoke or appeared to them directly and now they represent God and men should follow them.

This presents the believer with a problem? How can a person determine that what is being presented is really coming from God?

Among the revelations the cults say they received there is great contradictions and yet each claim that what they saw or heard was from God. If their "revelation" came from God why does it contradict the teaching of Bible and also of others who make the same claim to receiving authentic revelation from God? The point is that dreams and visions are subjective. How can one determine they came from God and how can one interpret the dream?

On examination the dreams, visions and revelations men receive can be divided into two groups. The first group would include the cult leaders of false religions that are clearly not doctrinally sound and their revelations contradict the Scripture. The modern-day revelations of this group are clearly not from God because God would never contradict Himself.

Often the "dreamer" is perpetuating a hoax intended to deceive people into following them. They claim their visions or visitations from God gave them special authority to form their new movements and teachings. A prime example is Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, who claimed God and Jesus appeared to him and told him all the churches on earth were false. He was to form a new church and preach the "restored" gospel. However, the church he formed and its teachings are wholly unbiblical which proves Smith received no visitation from God. God does not contradict Himself.

The second group would involve those who have had experiences in which they believe God or Jesus appeared, spoke to them in a dream or vision. In the second group are also those who had strange, vivid dreams that left them very emotional. This group is very sincere. Although we can dismiss the revelations of the first group as being spurious, what about this second group? Some among these are people who profess to be Christians and are very sincere in believing or wondering that what they experienced was from God.

We must ask by what biblical standard, principle or criteria are we to determine that what was experienced came from or was a revelation from God? In seeking the answer, we must go to the Bible to determine what, *"Thus saith the Lord."* The only standard that God has given to us that does not change and is totally reliable is His written word. If the vision came from God then He would have given us guidelines to determine it is truly from Him. So, we all understand what are visions and what are faked, or those that did not come from God. The key is to let the Bible be the judge and not our speculation.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 explains that, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

This passage plainly tells us the word of God is sufficient for meeting all our needs for instruction from God. Further Hebrews 4:12 says, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* God proclaims emphatically that His word is to be the *"discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Therefore, God has given us the tool or the means to determine if our experiences are from Him or not. His word sets the absolute criteria God tells us to use. Further in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus explained that many would come in His name preaching, casting out devils and doing many wonderful works when in fact they were actually workers of iniquity. This tells us that everything done in the Lord's name does not come from Him and warns us about those doing "wonders."

Does God give special revelation to individuals in the form of dreams, visions or special experiences today in this dispensation? God does not in this age speak to men through dreams, visions or any direct communication apart from the Word of God, and that it is through the Holy Spirit illuminating God's word that believers are given understanding and direction for their lives. God's revelation is complete as contained in the sixty-six Books of the Bible. That means He does not have further things to reveal to nations or individuals that are not in the Bible. Yahweh guides and instructs us in our daily lives from His written Word. Further, the Bible is all sufficient in directing a person to finding and carrying out the will of God for their lives, without the need of a dream, vision or special communication from God in that manner.

God did in fact, revealed himself to men in the Old Testament in dreams, visions, experiences, symbols, and a host of other means. During most of the Old Testament times the people did not have the written word of God, therefore God directed them through the prophet who recorded what God told them and that became the written word. *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirt."* (2 Peter 1:21)

However, God is now revealing Himself through His written Word,

and that age of God speaking in visions and dreams has pasted. Hebrews 1:1-2a says, *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..."*

This does not mean that God does not work in a believer's life in directing him toward maturity and carrying out God's specific and unique will for that believer's life. It further in no way impedes a believer in His spiritual relationship to the Lord or of God guiding him to His perfect will. The power of God is not hindered in this dispensation, but to the contrary gives power to the believer that no other dispensation has experienced. In no prior time did men have the completed word of God to instruct them, to illuminate their minds and hearts to God's truth. If we want to know God's will we can find it in the principles of His word. A principle is a truth that is unchanging and is applied in many ways in different situations. Today we can know everything that God wants us to know.

Many use Peter's quoting of Joel 2:28 in the message he preached on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:17. Their premise is that Peter is saying that there would be a great outpouring of the Spirit of God in this dispensation and God would speak to men in dreams and visions. Let us then examine these passages and seek the truth on the matter letting the Bible interpret the Bible.

Joel 2:28-31

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem."

Acts 2:16-21

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out

in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

First let us examine Joel 2:28. The first thing we must determine is when is God telling Joel that there will be a pouring out of His Spirit? The first sentence states that, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." This means the pouring out of the spirit will come "after" something. An examination of Joel 2, clearly shows that the events preceding the "pouring out of the spirit," happens after the Great Tribulation, and after the destruction of the northern army, (Joel 2:20) which is the Northern Russian confederacy (Ezekiel 38). The major theme of the Book of Joel, is of the coming of "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31). The Bible tells us that the coming Day of the Lord, includes the seven-year Tribulation, Christ's Second Coming and Christ ruling in the following Millennium.

The chronology of the events seen in Ezekiel 38, and Daniel 11:36-45 indicate that the Russian confederacy will be destroyed during the last half of the Tribulation. The destruction of the nations in the campaign of Armageddon is followed by the Millennial reign of Christ. Thus, the pouring of the Spirit of God occurs after the destruction of the northern army and in the time of blessing promised of God.

There are several New Testament references to visions or dreams, but all are in the Gospel or the transitional period between the Old Testament dispensation and the full implementation of the dispensation of the present age when God is working with the Gentiles. Historically one can see the transition through the New Testament in which the sign gifts and miracles gradually ceased as God by inspiration was giving the New Testament to the early churches.

There is no mention of visions or dreams being used by God in any of the Epistles to the churches. The Epistles were written to instruct the early churches in all matters of doctrine and practice. 2 Tim. 3:16, states that in the early church pastors and members were instructed to seek their teaching and guidance from the Scriptures. If dreams and visions were operable then they would have been included.

What other evidence is there that God stopped using visions and dreams to communicate to men?

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

The context of verses 8-10 of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is God's instructions concerning the spiritual gifts. Prophecy was a temporary gift of foretelling the future. Likewise, the gift of knowledge was the ability to know information that was given directly by the Holy Spirit to the individual. Both of the gifts were the means by which Yahweh gave us His written word the Bible. These two gifts were rendered inoperative when the New Testament canon was closed in 95-96 AD because with the completion of the Book of Revelation by the Apostle John the Bible in its entirety was complete. No one today has the biblical gift of prophecy in that God is not giving new revelation to us. The last written Scripture was the Book of Revelation. One must now study the Bible in order to acquire knowledge. In the Scriptures preaching is often referred to as prophesying. However, the prophecy referred to here cannot mean preaching the word of God because preaching will not cease (see Matt. 24:13-14) and also there will be teaching of the Word of God in the Millennium. (see Isa. 2:3) Thus prophecies and knowledge which are said to cease or will be rendered inoperative "when that which is perfect is come."

The word for "perfect" is a neuter adjective used as a noun. This word "perfect" cannot refer to Christ because it is in the neuter gender rather than in the masculine gender. Christ is never in the New Testament referred to by a neuter pronoun. The masculine gender would have been used if the word "perfect" was a reference to Christ, but that is not the case so it must be referring to something else.

Thus, the word "perfect" must refer to a complete "thing" and not to a person. Some teach that the word "perfect" is a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This would mean that the gifts of prophecy, knowledge and tongues are operative today and will continue until the end of the Tribulation. However, the context of 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, beginning with 1 Corinthians 12 and ending with Chapter 14 is not speaking of the Tribulation or the Second Coming, but is addressing the matter of the sign gifts. Thus, this statement is certainly related to the subject of this passage which is the sign gifts.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2 establishes the subject of the chapter and begins with "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy..." Chapter 14 begins, "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him..." Clearly the subject is gifts, and nothing in these four chapters refers to the Second Coming in any way.

The context of 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 is plainly referring to the completion of the canon meaning the completed Word of God. Bowman^x says "It is interesting to note that "perfect" is used of the word in James 1:25 (cf. the Hebrew for "perfect" in Psa. 19:7). In this same connection, tongues shall cease when the New Testament canon was completed. Notice that verse 8, includes tongues along with prophecies and knowledge. Two of these shall be rendered inoperative and one shall cease "when that which is perfect is come." All three gifts were temporary and ceased at the completed New Testament." (*The Charismatic Movement*, Dr. Hoyle Bowman, Piedmont Bible College, Winston-Salem, page 23.)

Thus, the significance of 1 Cor. 13:8-10, in the matter of the question of dreams and visions is that these special gifts of tongues, prophecies and knowledge were a part of the dispensation of the Law, and of God working with Israel. They were used by God to reveal and verify His truth to the Jews. Several things should be noted:

- (1) In the church age, these special gifts of communication are ceased. God used them to communicate with Israel. When Israel rejected God, He ceased communications with them (2 Kings 17:23).
- (2) The reason they ceased, according to 1 Cor. 13:9-10, when the completed Word of God was present, there was no longer any need for God to communicate through these mediums any longer. God chose now to speak through the written Word. In 95-96 AD, when John finished the Book of Revelations the New Testament canon was finished and complete.
- (3) A believer in the church, has something the Jews did not have. The Christian today has the complete Bible. Outside the Gospels and the Book of Acts and Revelation no one is recorded as having a vision or dream from God to direct him.
- (4) The apparent fact of history is that now God has chosen to reveal

Himself to man, to guide and lead the believer by and through the Word of God, which is the written Bible. It is the new nature of the believer that enables him to understand the things of God.

(5) Christ does not today appear to man nor does God.

(6) Dreams and visions in the Old Testament required many times an interpreter. By the very nature of what a dream or vision is is not as clear a means of communication as is written instruction from God. God has chosen to communicate in a clearer way to the church, that by having the written record of his revelation to man.

One significant passage of Scripture that has an important bearing on this matter is Hebrew 1:1-2. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in the last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

First note who the Book is addressed too? It is written specifically to the Hebrews. These were not lost Jews but those who had believed in their Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ. Next note what is the first statement made. God in the past spoke to the prophets in many different ways (dreams, visions, visitations ceremonies, laws, ritual and directly) is now in these days speaking to us through His Son.

The opening statement to these Jewish Christians was that God now had a better way, that was through the Lord Jesus Christ. God was saying I am going to speak to you now in a different way; a more direct way. The Old Testament saints looked to the Coming of the Messiah and God in the past had revealed Himself mainly to them by symbols, examples and illustrations. Now there was no need of that. The Truth was come, that is the Lord Jesus Christ.



Chapter 10 – The Bible

Spirit – meaning 9 – Gods Word

Sustained by Scripture

The entrance of the Truth into the mind and heart is as a flood of light into a very dark place. Usually it takes considerable time to penetrate. Sometimes there are many obstacles to be removed. But gradually as the Word is received the darkness is dispelled. We face prophecies which cannot be explained away; God's witness, the Jew, in the earth; the preservation of the Bible and its lofty ideals and beautiful theme; the answer to the problem of death; the clear explanation of creation. All these things and many others combine to impress the mind in such a way that at last we are ready to confess the Truth with all its beauty and purity.

Even those among us who during the whole of their lifetime have known little else but the Truth from young days have to face a time when their growing maturity awakens in them a meaning of life which requires them to search and to realise that those things which they have been brought up with and learned as theory are indeed facts; more than facts, that they need to be a force in our lives by which we are controlled. Once wholeheartedly received, life takes on a new meaning and a new interest too. It is written: "The entrance of thy word giveth light" (Psalms 119:130). Yes, it is by the entrance of that light that we are conscious of our natural helplessness and of our real needs in life. We learn to trust, not in ourselves, but in God, and as we do so we learn to face the problems of life with purpose, our personal crises with trust in God, and the economic and international chaos about us with a quiet confidence in God's purpose, knowing that in due time He will realise His plan.

Perhaps above all we learn to see God in everything. We see Him in the vast heavens, in the beauty and wonder of creation, the earth with its seasons, animal and plant life, the singing of the birds, the colour of sunrise and sunset, and we see Him also in those plans which are being worked out in the earth amongst men, even in our own lives. Not in the sense that those objects are gods, but we see the beauty of His handiwork. We should be able to exclaim with all sincerity, as did the Psalmist, "O Yahweh, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom

hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psalms 104:24). This is an unqualified confession which all of us should be able to echo. It expresses an enjoyment of what we see and experience in nature, and it also expresses our quiet trust that in all things God sees and knows, and He guides.

One writer has referred to that Psalm (104) as a record of the creation in verse form, and if we think about some of the expressions in it we shall find that this is true. Our meditation on the Word should be sweet. But in all those things which are mentioned in this very beautiful Psalm there is one aspect of creation which is mentioned which only the knowledge of the Truth enables us to understand. It emphasises our dependence on God in a very special way. Verse 29: "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth."

This Spirit or power of God is, as we know, the power which keeps us alive. Our breath, our life we owe to Him now. Any little ability or talent which we may have is His and of His providing. When we first learnt the Truth we were told of this as a first principle. This verse was used as a proof that the Spirit is the power of God. What marvels have been worked by it! It is a fact behind creation which only the brethren and sisters of Christ can really understand. We also have learnt that the Holy Spirit is the power of God set apart for special purposes; not a different Spirit but, as we sometimes say, concentrated, a concentration of power for a special exhibition of the Divine glory.

Now Jesus said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63, 14:10). The creation of the world by the Spirit of God is beautiful, it is magnificent, but the life-imparting words, the Holy Spirit words, insofar as they are absorbed by us, become part of the mind of God working in us, influencing us to follow a pattern of life which is after the image of God's dear Son. It does not make us inspired, of course; we can err in what we say and what we do; but if the words are absorbed in our mind and heart it should help us to develop the spiritual man in us, God's character reflected in some small way in our manner of life.

The apostle Paul wrote: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14). He also wrote: "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15). So, then the words of the Spirit which enter into our

mind and heart that are then applied in our lives, are as powerful, in one sense, as the Spirit by which we are kept alive physically is in another sense. They form, when applied, a way of life, which will lead eventually to the possession of the Divine nature, when we have "escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4).

Love

Two very familiar chapters from Paul's letter to the Corinthians (ch. 12 and 13) are well known. They are very beautiful and it contains for us all very much searching exhortation. Chapter 13 is the famous chapter on love. It is very often quoted by our brethren but usually it is considered in isolation. We want to consider it in its setting. What, then, is its setting? It follows the development by the apostle of thoughts and explanations on the gifts of the Spirit which were handed out to various selected disciples in the first century. Moreover, it is followed, by arguments to show that even these special privileges needed care in their use, otherwise it would lead to friction, and between those two aspects of exposition on the gifts of the Spirit we have this beautiful chapter 13 on love. Let us then look a little at the development for a moment. 1 Cor. 12.1: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." We notice first of all that the apostle emphasises the fact that these idols were dumb, they could not speak. The way in which they were worshipped, therefore, depended upon the superstitious powers attributed to them by their devotees, or, to use the words of the apostle, "even as ye were led," or "however ye may have been moved." The worshippers of those idols would only have been moved by them by what they were told or what they thought about them. The idols themselves were dumb, they could not speak. Corinth was full of them and the worshippers could pick which or as many as they liked and they could reject those which did not appeal to them.

But, says the apostle, the Truth is different. First of all, God speaks, and secondly, there is only one way in which brethren and sisters of Christ can be properly moved; verse 3: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." The Truth is one. Everything must be considered in relation to that unity. The idolatry from which these Corinthians had been called led to rivalry in worship. Various groups in the city and

throughout the pagan world formed themselves together, depending upon the idol which they chose to worship. You will remember how, at Ephesus for example, their pride was the great goddess Diana, and you remember the fervour with which they defended the existence and influence of that god. The apostle came amongst them as one trying to introduce another God and they were not going to have it.

It was this attitude which had been familiar to those Corinthians before they entered the Truth, and was still lingering amongst them and was causing this friction amongst them. These were attitudes which had been developed by ignorance and the apostle was saying, in effect, that all partisan spirit in worship must now be dropped. The time when men's opinions counted was gone and there was only one standard, whatever they might claim themselves to be. No man calling Jesus accursed could claim knowledge of the Spirit-Word, let alone the gifts of the Spirit. The purpose of God in Christ is revealed to all by the Word, or the Word preached. If apparent miracles were performed backed by other teaching—and apparent miracles were performed from time to time—they had to be rejected.

The conviction that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord, can only come from what God has revealed. It is something which the human heart could not possibly conceive. Not all the philosophers in the world could ever have conceived a plan of salvation like this, and a man who would not accept Jesus as taught by the Word was an impostor. When the apostle Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus said: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." (Matthew 16:17). It was the words and the works of Jesus which showed his Divine origin. It was this evidence which worked in the mind of Peter and led to that conviction. Then Paul turns to consider the gifts of the Spirit, what they were and why they were given. Verse 4: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." There at the outset is the emphasis on that oneness, the oneness of the Spirit. Verse 5: "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." That profit was not to be for themselves, those who had the Spirit, but "to profit withal," or "for the common good." For the use of that power which they had, they had to consider not themselves but the building up of the ecclesia as a result of its use. The same should be true of Arranging Brethren.

There should, therefore, be no disagreement, no self-advertisement, but the use of these gifts for the work of God. The gifts did not make those who received them infallible in every respect by any means. When the gift of teaching was given and used then what was taught, of course, was infallible, inspired, but that did not make those brethren completely immune from criticism of weakness in other respects; one has only to consider the faults and misjudgements of the best, men like Peter, Paul and Barnabas. We go on in verse 11: "But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink **into** one Spirit."

So, then the gifts of the Spirit were a privilege but they were a secondary matter, it was important to recognise why the recipients had been given them. So, at this point we turn to think of ourselves. We, like all those brethren and sisters, whether given the gifts of the Spirit or not, have been drawn to the Truth by the foolishness of preaching. We have each been separated by the Word. Paul wrote: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Now notice the order—sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. God worked, and then we believed.

Today there is no need of the Spirit gifts among us; we have the completed Word to guide us; but "by one Spirit we are all baptized **into** one body... and have been, all made to drink **into** one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). So, the grace of God is one, the communion of the blood of Christ. All of us need it. However young or inexperienced, however old or mature, we have all been called of God through the work of the Spirit. "God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14). It sets aside all human standards. I have bolded the Word into as this is the true meaning of the original. We must manifest God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

But further, the body is not one member but many. The apostle proceeds with that beautiful analogy between the body of Christ and the parts of the human body. Verse 18: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Again, we notice, "as it hath pleased him." Not as it has pleased the members, but as it has pleased God. So, we are set in our various

situations in the world and in the ecclesia because God has been pleased to have it so. Not only should this make us humble but for those who may be discouraged surely is an encouragement. There is not one brother or sister who is either unnecessary or unnoticed. All are necessary for the work of God. Verse 22: "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." They may not be talked about so much, they may even be passed over, hardly known; but there they are, members there making the body work.

Paul then sets the gifts of the Spirit in order. They are listed in verse 28. It is interesting to notice that the most spectacular are well down Paul's list, and the gift of tongues, which some of our religious friends around us claim most, is right at the end, which shows how easily we can all get a wrong sense of values. Now it was these special blessings which were given to some in the first century which led to friction, and the friction was particularly amongst those who had them. That thought carries a lesson for us today. We need to be careful, very careful. We live in the last days. As time goes on and greater opportunities are given to everyone to develop natural abilities in the world there is a growing tendency to place more emphasis on natural abilities in the Truth's circles too. They are blessings to a point, provided they are humbly channelled to God's service, but let us remember that on their own they are not helps, they are hindrances to our service to God.

What is needed first is evidence, clearly seen by our brethren and sisters as a whole, that the Word is influencing our attitude and our conduct. God does not want an exhibition of ability or efficiency. He can give that, as He did the gifts of the Spirit in times past. He has said to us: "My son, give me thine heart." (Proverbs 23:26). That is what He wants from us. Chapters like this are not only a warning to those who carry out particularly prominent duties in ecclesial life but they should be used by all of us in the judgement of the worth of others in ecclesial influence when we have to choose. We need, for the correct spiritual tone, not only in the ecclesia but in the brotherhood too, brethren and sisters who will quietly study the Word and apply it first in the development of their own characters, brethren and sisters who are prayerful, showing patience and earnestness and willingness to serve. This 13th chapter is very beautiful but we wonder sometimes whether we do not drop into that weakness of treating it as a lovely song. We love to hear it read and we perhaps think to ourselves sometimes, if only brethren and sisters could

remember that; but it is more than a song, it is for us, every one of us individually. There are probably some among us who can take much encouragement as they read this 13th chapter. How happy they should be, because it shows that they are well on the way to mastering self. But for most of us, we need to think very carefully and searchingly about our own way of life. We are a close-knit community. We love to hear news one of another. We come together and we talk about one another. In proportion, I wonder, how often is it the bad points which are talked about? You may have noticed that in this chapter love is defined not by work but by attitudes, not by what is done but by the way in which the love of Christ is viewed. It is not a question of wondering how our service is being received, or the influence which we may have on others through those things we do. It is not the thankfulness of others to us, or how we are seen by others. This is only a reflection of the old spirit which every disciple has to put under—"Who is to be the greatest in the kingdom?" (Matthew 18:1). We may do much work, we may even produce wonderful results, but the test comes with ourselves. It is possible to spend so much time 'doing' that we have no time to try to see ourselves as God sees us. How are we benefiting our ecclesia by our life together? Spiritual harmony is as important as work done. We may feel sometimes that we cannot speak to some because of the friction between us. Is there any little rivalry in the achievement of work in the ecclesia? Are we resentful because someone takes a different point of view from ourselves? Are we sometimes rude or even aggressive in pressing our point of view? Are the older ones impatient of the young, or the young unwilling to respect old age and experience as is so clearly commanded in the Word? It is the characteristics of love listed in verses 4-7 of this 13th chapter which we are required to watch. As we read them, let us notice that there are more things listed here which love is not than which it is — the things which we have to keep under which are natural to ourselves and call for the crucifying of the flesh. Let us read them. We will take another version just to try to sharpen up our understanding of the phrases. Verse 4: "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (NIV).

Can we try this time to let those words be more than the repetition of a beautiful song, but something which we really try to do in our daily life? Jesus has warned us that when he comes many will say, "Lord,

Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matthew 7:22). We notice these are references to the gifts of the Spirit. "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23). Why? Because there was no love there, and it is love which covers a multitude of sins.

In our ecclesial life probably most of us lead a very busy life. This is good but it does need to be kept in control. It is sometimes profitable, we think, to ask ourselves, if all these interests were denied us, would we still hold the Truth and love it? Let us remember that when we were first called to the Truth we knew very little of the busyness of life in the Truth, but we saw in all things God; God in creation, God in His purpose, and above all, God in the hope of life through Jesus, and it was because of that, that we stepped aside from the world.

How is Gods' Word Spirit?

To the ancients' words on a page could be magical. Chant the right words in the right order, with the right incantations and you would cast a magical spell. This is still considered to be true by many in Africa. The Sharman still exist and many adhere to the ancient belief that words on a page can hold some form of magical control over animals, events, and ultimately the human. Is this how we should view the Word of God? That the words on the page hold some kind of magic, such that when we read them, we are forced to do Gods bidding? That through the chanting of Psalms somehow magical things will come to pass that will improve our lives? Workers in the Tanzanian fields still chant the spiritual songs. Soldiers as they train, particularly as they run long distances still chant. These both share origins with the magical chants of the Sharman.

This idea of Gods' Word being magical in some way isn't just restricted to the African culture. Just google the phrase "The sword of Moses" and you will find Moses Gasters' work of translating "Moses' magic spell book". This is no joke, and there are thousands that believe in and follow such teachings.

The actual words on the paper of our Bibles are not magical, but they are powerful, and can alter our entire lives. As we read God's Word it influences us towards change. The Word is influencing our attitude and our conduct and ultimately it provides us with the knowledge whereby we can accept or reject God's gift of everlasting life (2 Timothy 3:15). Herein lays the true power of God's Word. Those

changes in our life are the means whereby we can receive eternal life (Numbers 14:21). It is a process through which we can choose for our mind to become as God's mind. We can come to know God (Titus 1:16), to manifest God and we can become one with God (John 17). The Word can come to sustain us just as the spirit sustains our life (John 6:63, 14:10).



Chapter 11 – Creative Power

Spirit – meaning 10 – the Creative power of God

Creation

The Earth was created "in the beginning" (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 1:10), at an unspecified time before the creative work of the six days. Then the earth was "without form and void" (Gen. 1:2). It was waste and empty, shrouded in darkness, covered with water, and lifeless. It was God's plan to people the earth with inhabitants who would show forth His glorious characteristics in their lives (Num. 14:21). This necessitated the preparation of the earth for habitation.

The work of the angels

God, through the angels, fitted the earth for habitation and filled it with life. Though this work is attributed to God working through His Holy Spirit power in Genesis 1, the Hebrew word is "elohim" and refers here to the angels as the messengers of God (see Psalm 8:5, where "elohim" is translated "angels"). The angels do God's bidding (Ps. 103:20-21). God spoke and the angels performed His will (Ps. 33:6-9). All was done according to God's predetermined plan. He is therefore rightly called the Creator (Prov. 3:19-20; Isa. 40:28; Acts 17:24). At the conclusion of their work, the angels rejoiced (Job 38:4-7).

The work of the creation week began about 6,000 years ago, when God's Spirit, or power (Ps. 104:30; Job 33:4), "moved upon the face of the waters."

- **DAY 1 (Gen. 1:3-5):** God caused the light to shine forth to dispel the darkness. The first day, like every subsequent day of creative activity is described as "an evening and a morning", i.e. a period of 24 hours.
- **DAY 2 (Gen. 1:6-8):** God created the atmosphere. The Hebrew for "firmament" (v.6) means "an expanse", and is translated "air" in Gen. 1:26. God called this "heaven" (v.8). It divided the waters above (i.e. a ring layer) from the waters beneath (i.e. the seas).

• **DAY 3 (Gen. 1:9-13):** The dry land emerged from the waters which had covered the globe. At God's command, it produced grasses, plants and trees, each possessing the power of reproduction.

• **DAY 4 (Gen. 1:14-19):** Sun, moon and stars were set in the heavens to give light upon the earth. Times and seasons were arranged according to the earth's relationship to these heavenly bodies.

• **DAY 5 (Gen. 1:20-23):** The oceans were filled with marine life and the atmosphere with fowl.

• **DAY 6 (Gen. 1:24-31; 2:7, 21-22):** Cattle, reptiles and beasts were created out of the ground (2:19). Man was formed in the image and likeness of God, i.e. the "elohim" or angels (1:26 "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"). "Male and female created He them" (v.27). Adam named the animals and fowl, and was given dominion over every living thing.

• **DAY 7 (Gen. 2:1-3):** God completed His creative acts in six days and on the seventh day He rested "from all the works which he had made". The Hebrew word translated "rested" is "Shabath" from which the word "Sabbath" comes. This day is distinguished from the others, being "sanctified" or set apart by God (v.3). We are told that God "blessed" this day. It was "blessed" in that blessings would accrue to man when he ceased from his physical labours and thought about God's works, and it was also blessed in its prophetic significance pointing to the "rest" which would come in Christ (Matt. 11:29-30), and the glorious rest of his millennial reign on earth (Heb. 4:3-5, 9-11).

The incompatibility of evolution

To attempt to reconcile evolution and creation is to detract from clear Bible Truth. Evolution denies the Creator's existence. It claims that man evolved over millions of years from lower forms of life (note Ps. 100:3). The Bible reveals that man was specifically created from the dust of the earth. Evolution is a man-centred doctrine. Creation is God-centred. Creation and Evolution, as ideas, are mutually opposed.

A theory which does away with the Creator automatically removes man's responsibility to Him. All restraint is thus removed from man's conscience. It is little wonder that we live in a world sunk in unchecked immorality and vice. The world with all its wisdom is but foolish before God (1 Cor. 1:20-28). A life lived in spirit and Evolution are opposites.

Heed Paul's warning!

How God's foreknowledge far outshines the forecasts of the so-called 'wise' of the 20th century! God foresaw that the days would come when men would ignore both revelation and reason (Rom. 1:19-20), and would seek to "dethrone" Him from the place He should occupy in the minds and affections of men. He revealed this would lead to the complete break-down of society with man destroying himself in his new found liberty (Rom. 1:21-31). But man, still remains ignorant of the root cause of his trouble — his rejection of God (Rom. 1:18, 32)! Because it suits him to continue indulging his own lusts, he continues to "educate" his youth with the fanciful "probabilities" and "perhaps" of an unproved and impossible theory!

True wisdom comes from God and relates to His Son and His glorious purpose in him (1 Cor. 1:18-31). Human learning which contradicts this is folly. Paul encountered human philosophy in Corinth and he wrote, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He has taken the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore, let no man glory in men" (1 Cor. 3:18-21).

Let us then heed Paul's advice to Timothy: "Keep (guard) that which is committed to thy trust, avoid profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

Genesis is Literal

Attempts to harmonize creation and evolution usually involve the question, "Are the Genesis records (Chapters 1 to 3) literal?" Do they mean exactly what they say, or are they figurative in some way and need interpretation?

The natural reading of the Genesis account of Creation leads one to accept its details literally. This is what God intended. The fact that Jesus Christ believes in Creation and took its details as read, proves conclusively the case for Creation. He refers to Adam and Eve (Mk. 10:6-8), and the Creation (Mk. 13:19).

The inspired apostle Paul likewise accepted Creation without question. He referred to Adam and Eve (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22), the serpent (2 Cor. 11:3), etc.

Some have suggested that the days of creation could be figurative of periods of 1,000 years, or even longer. This suggestion makes room for the false idea of "theistic evolution", i.e. that God began life and evolution completed it. The Bible however, leaves us in no doubt as to the principles it consistently follows and how it is to be understood. There is the natural or literal first, then the spiritual or figurative application which follows (1 Cor. 15:46). So, it is in Genesis. Without doubt, many figures and parables are founded on the literal Genesis record, but that establishes the literality of the record — not the opposite.

Further, the days of Genesis 1 are specified, "and the evening and the morning were the first (or, second, etc.) day" (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Moses understood these to be normal days (Ex. 31:17). God's power was all-sufficient to complete the creative work in six literal days each of 24 hours. In any case, what plants could have survived a night of 500 years? And how would Adam's life of 930 years (Gen. 5:5) fit into a '1,000 years equals a day' concept? Undoubtedly Genesis 1 to 3 is an account of literal events.



Chapter 12 – Life

Spirit – meaning 11 – the essence of life

Creation is sustained

There are many evidences in the Bible about the work of God in creation. He alone by His wisdom conceived the wondrous plan, and it was executed by His Almighty power, His Spirit. In this case in the form of using His ministering spirits the angels. God is Spirit (John 4:24, RSV), and whatever He does is by His Spirit.

How is creation sustained in existence? Is it a huge clock, wound up by the Almighty and left gradually to run down? Or is Yahweh still involved and concerned with what He has made? The Bible in all its parts tells us that creation is upheld by God and He is everywhere present throughout and within all that He has made. Without Him nothing could exist or continue to exist:

“God that made the world ... giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ... in him we live, and move, and have our being.” (Acts 17:24-28)

“If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.” (Job 34:14, 15)

“Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: Yahweh is his name.” (Amos 5:8)

God fills His creation. All of its activity is because of His wise and sustaining Spirit, the divine energy working out His gracious purpose. The Spirit is not a “separate” or “other” person. It is God’s own radiant power, ever outflowing from Him, by which His omnipotence (“everywhereness”) is achieved. The Spirit is personal in that it is of God Himself: it is not personal in the sense of being some other person within the Godhead.



Chapter 13 – Living Soul

*Spirit – meaning 12 –
that which some believe goes to heaven at death*

The Truth About the Nature of Man

In Genesis 2:7 we read,

"And the LORD God formed man *of* the **dust** of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a **living soul**."

From this we learn that man's basic element is dust and this is what compromises his body. This body is lifeless without the "breath of life" which is given from God. It is this which animates the body and makes it into a "living soul". Genesis puts forth the simple equation:

Dust + Breath of Life = A Living Soul

Let us examine each of these terms as they apply to the nature of man.

Dust

That man is dust and that he returns to dust at his death is obvious from what God tells Adam later on in Genesis 3:19,

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou **return unto the ground**; for out of it wast thou taken: **for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return**."

There have been many men in the Bible who have recognized this fact such as Abraham in Genesis 18:27,

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto Yahweh, which *am but* **dust and ashes**:"

and Job in Job 10:9,

"Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into **dust again**?"

It is important to keep in mind that our bodies are made of dust and that they return to dust when we die. It should change our whole attitude before God because He is our maker. He has formed us and

given us life, and he can take it away. God is the only source we can look to for life and immortality (1 Timothy 6:16).

Breath of Life

The Hebrew words for breath of life are "neshema chay" which is also termed the spirit or "ruach" of God (see Genesis 7:15, 22). The breath or spirit of life is what gives life and therefore we find that when the scriptures speak of death it is when the breath or spirit of God is taken away.

Job 34:14-15 "If he set his heart upon man, *if* he gather unto himself his **spirit (RUACH)** and his **breath (NESHEMA)**; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto **dust**."

Psalms 104:29 "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their **breath (RUACH)**, they die, and return to their **dust**."

Ecclesiastes 12:7 "Then shall the **dust** return to the earth as it was: and the **spirit (RUACH)** shall return unto God who gave it."

Living Soul

The Hebrew word for living soul is "nephesh chay" and interestingly enough the first usage of the word is applied to animals in Genesis 1:20-21,

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath **life (CHAY)**, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every **living creature (NEPHESH CHAY)** that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good."

It is also used that way in Genesis 1:27 and 2:19. These verses tell us that both man and beast have something in common which is the breath or spirit (see Gen. 7:21-22) which makes them a living soul. Once we know this then the verse in Ecclesiastes 3:18-20 becomes quite clear,

"I said in mine heart concerning the estate of **the sons of men**, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that **they themselves are beasts**. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, **they have all one breath (RUACH)**; so that a

man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. **All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."**

This is very plain. Physically man is not above the beast. They are both made of the dust, they have the same type of breath or spirit which is given by God, and they are all living souls, but when God withdraws his breath, they both return to the dust.

One thing is different though between man and beast. Man is the only one to have been made in the "image and likeness" of the Elohim (Gen. 1:27). This gives him the ability to be a partaker in the promises of God and to attain unto eternal life which is the gift of God. For proof of this compare Psalm 49:20 and 2 Peter 1:3-4 and it is seen that the knowledge of God and his ways is what distinguishes us from the beasts.

In summary, we have seen that the word "living soul" is used both of man and of beasts and could be described in the following way,

NEPHEESH - A body made of dust that is animated by the breath or spirit of God. This breath makes it alive and thus it is "nepheesh chay" or a living soul. Without this breath the soul, body or life is dead (Ezekiel 18:4) and the body returns back to dust.

Immortal soulism ⁱⁱⁱ

1. Some questions:
 - a. How can it be said that Christ brought immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10) if man has been immortal since Adam?
 - b. How can immortality be sought for (Rom. 2:7) if it is already a present possession?
 - c. If Adam had an immortal soul, why was he thrust out of the garden that he might not "live forever"? (Gen. 3:22)
 - d. If the souls of the righteous go to heaven at death, why a resurrection? (Usually the reply is, "for the purpose of Judgment," but this implies that souls are rewarded first, and *then* judged!)
2. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul destroys the arguments whereby the New Testament writers affirm the resurrection of the dead.

- a. "If Christ be not raised . . . then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15:17, 18). But how can these dead saints be said to be sleeping if their souls (the *real* saints) are already in heaven, and how can it be said that these saints would perish unless Christ be raised, if their immortal souls go to bliss at death?
- b. The apostle Paul said, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" (1 Cor. 15:32). If the soul is immortal (and hence can enjoy heavenly bliss separated from the body) why does the apostle stress "if the dead rise not"? Why the concern for the body if the soul can enjoy bliss without the body?

Matthew 5:12 ⁱⁱⁱ

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

This passage is understood by Evangelicals and Pentecostals to teach that the righteous go to heaven at death, or are rewarded later in heaven.

1. If the reward is in heaven, then there are two possibilities:
 - a. The righteous go to heaven to obtain it.
 - b. The reward comes from heaven to the righteous (here on earth).
2. The following passages are conclusive - the reward comes to the righteous:
 - a. The reward is "*reserved* in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4) "and *when* the chief Shepherd *shall appear*, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. 5:4).
 - b. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and *then* he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:27).

- c. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. 22:12).
3. See also 1 John 5:11 cf. Col. 3:2-4 and Rev. 22:12.
4. The phrase "in heaven" may simply be a reference to God. The Jews often exchanged the word "God" with the word "heaven" (Mat. 5:34, 23:22). Examples of this are found with Matthew's use of the term "kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 13:11) whereas Mark and Luke use the term "kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10). What Jesus may have been referring to may be found to more clearly expressed in Matthew 6:1-4, which also describes a reward for the righteous. There the reward is linked not to "heaven," but to "your Father who is in heaven": "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
5. Luke 12:33 describes how by giving alms in this life one can fill up an eternal purse which is kept in heaven. The picture is that of a secure repository which cannot be robbed or pilfered, since it is overseen and protected by God ("heaven"). It will serve as a source of reward at some future date.
6. Philippians 3:20 states: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (NAS). Phil. 3:20 explains that despite a Christian having his/her citizenship existing in heaven, it is from heaven that a Christian's expectation will come. Christ is the king of the kingdom to which our citizenship belongs, and it is when Christ comes from heaven that Christians will have part of that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), that "city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22), "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). That city is

to come to saints, from heaven, where it is currently being prepared (Mat. 14:2-3). The saints do not need to go to heaven since the city will come to them.

Genesis 35:18 ⁱⁱⁱ

"And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died)."

It is argued from this passage that at death the soul departs. Since it must depart *to* somewhere, the somewhere is said to be either heaven or hell.

1. To say that the souls of dying persons depart is to say nothing about whether or not the soul is immortal, or where, if any place, it might depart.
2. In everyday speech it is appropriate to say "X lost the sight in his right eye" or "X lost his hearing after the accident." To use these expressions is not to imply that the eyesight was removed to another location or that the hearing departed to another abode. Likewise, "her soul was in departing" does not imply that the soul went to heaven, hell or anywhere else. The expression is synonymous with "her life was ebbing".
3. The Hebrew word, "nephesh" rendered "soul" in this passage is translated "life" in one hundred other passages, E.g. Ex. 4:19; 21:23; 21:30.

1 Samuel 28:8-15 ⁱⁱⁱ

The Witch of Endor and Samuel

This passage is used by Spiritualists to give Scriptural support to their idea that living people can communicate with the souls of the "departed"

1. This passage provides evidence for neither "heaven going" nor "immortal soulism".
 - a. Samuel (a righteous man) came "up" out of the earth, not down from heaven. (vs. 15).
 - b. The witch saw an old man, not an intangible soul. (vs. 14).
 - c. Samuel said, "Why hast thou disquieted me...?" This indicates that he was not enjoying the bliss of

heaven, but rather the sleep of death. (cf. Job 3:17; Ecc. 9:5,10; Jn. 11 esp. vs. 11,24,25,44).

2. Some have suggested that this passage in Samuel is really a fake séance. The following evidence is usually given:
 - a. The king saw *nothing*.
 - b. The witch said that she saw an old man with a mantle. (vs. 14). This was an ambiguous description. Was Samuel the only old man to wear a mantle?
 - c. Samuel was buried at Ramah, not Endor. (1 Sam. 25:1).
 - d. This explanation, however seemingly plausible, cannot be accepted because of its inability to explain the predictions made by Samuel, vs. 19.
3. A more convincing explanation to the events in this chapter is the following:
 - a. God raised Samuel for the occasion in order to rebuke a fool according to his folly.
 - b. This accounts for the precise predictions of verses 15-19, as well as the surprise of the witch (when "she cried with a loud voice", vs. 12), when suddenly confronted by an *unexpected* Samuel.
4. Two objections to this explanation must be considered:
 - a. Would God raise Samuel in these circumstances after instructing Israel: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them, I am Yahweh your God"? (Lev. 19:31). God could have used the witch as He did the lying prophet of Bethel. (1 Kings 13). In so doing, it no more implies sanction to the witch's activities than it does to Beelzebub in Jesus' allusion, (Matt. 12:27) or to the belief of the Pharisees in Luke 16:19-31.
 - b. Samuel was buried at Ramah, not at Endor where the resurrection would have taken place. The rejoinder to this is simply that for God, there is no

more difficulty in reassembling Samuel in Endor than to transport Philip from the Gaza Road to Azotus. (Acts 8:39-40).

1 Kings 17:21 ⁱⁱⁱ

"And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto Yahweh, and said, O Yahweh my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."

Only the hard-pressed resort to this passage to prove the immortality of the soul. It is argued that when the child's soul left him, his immortal entity departed to heaven.

1. The passage neither states nor implies that the soul described is immortal or that it would depart to heaven. Such views must be read into this passage. They are assumptions for which this passage offers no support.
2. The personal pronoun "him" describes the lifeless body. If the real child was the immortal soul tabernacling in a mortal, earthly body, then the pronoun should have been descriptive of the soul and (as it is) of the body.
3. It was not the child that had departed, neither was it the child which returned. The child was dead. He died when life was lost, he became living when life was restored. The Hebrew word, "nephesh" translated "soul" in this passage is translated "life" in Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11; Deut. 12:23.
4. If, as some argue, that the soul of the child went immediately to bliss in heaven, would it not have been better for the prophet to have left the soul of the child to enjoy bliss in heaven rather than to recall it to the travail of earthly life, and possible later consignment to the fires of hell?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 ⁱⁱⁱ

"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

This passage is cited as evidence that man's immortal spirit (or soul) leaves the body at death and returns to God.

1. The passage makes no distinction between "good" and "bad" spirits.

2. If the spirit is to return to God, it must have come from God. But who would suggest one has a *conscious* existence before the earthly life begins? Therefore, there is no reason to expect a conscious existence when this life ends.
3. The word "spirit" (Hebrew "ruach") is the same as in Ecc. 3:19 (Heb. "ruach", translated "breath"). could any argue that beasts have, or are, immortal "spirits"?
4. The writer of Ecclesiastes emphatically teaches the mortality of man. (See Ecc. 9:5,6,10; 3:19,20).

Matthew 10:28 ⁱⁱⁱ

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

This passage is cited by Pentecostals and Evangelicals as the foundation proof that man is really an indestructible soul clothed with an earthly body.

1. "Rather fear him which is able to *destroy* both body and soul in hell" is proof that the *soul* is destructible and therefore, not immortal.
2. Since both soul and body can be destroyed in hell ("Gehenna" - the garbage dump outside the walls of Jerusalem), this indicates that the soul is as destructible as the body since both can be destroyed in the same place. Is this what the immortal soulist wants from this passage?
3. What is meant by "not able to kill the soul"? Simply, "Fear not (for an instant) them which kill the body, but are not able to destroy you utterly and finally." For the disciple, his life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3) and although men may kill the body, in the resurrection this life will be given back to the body. (See Col. 3:4).
4. The Greek word, "psuche" translated "soul" in this verse has the meaning of "life". In Matt. 16:25, "psuche" is translated "life": "For whosoever shall save his life ["psuche"] shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life ["psuche"] for my sake shall find it." (In the R.S.V. "psuche" is translated "life" in vs. 26: "For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole

world and forfeits his *life*." The similarity of context suggests that "life" in Matt. 10:28 should be read for "soul".

Acts 7:59-60 ⁱⁱⁱ

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

It is frequently understood from this passage that Stephen expected Jesus Christ to immediately receive his "immortal soul" in heaven.

1. If the *real* Stephen was the spirit, what is the "he" of verse 60 which "fell asleep"? The personal pronouns are associated with the body, not something inside the body. This use of the pronouns is fatal to the idea that the real Stephen was an immortal essence within the body.
2. "Sleep" is a scriptural expression describing the unconsciousness of death and implying the waking at the Resurrection Day. For this there is unimpeachable evidence in John 11; esp. vs. 11, 14, 24, cp. Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:6,18. The fact that Stephen fell asleep indicates he did not immediately go to his reward. (See 1 Thess. 4:13-16.)
3. One could handle the problem of what Stephen meant by the expression "Lord Jesus receive my spirit" by taking the following approach;
 - a. Show scripturally *when* the righteous (and hence Stephen) will receive their reward, e.g., 1 Cor. 15:22-23.
 - b. Indicate the uses of spirit - e.g., that the "spirit" is not the immortal part of man, but the life-power which God gives. (Job 34:14, 15; Gen. 7:21, 22 - "the breath of the spirit of life" mg.).
 - c. Then finally show that Stephen had the confidence that as God sent forth His Spirit and raised Jesus, likewise he would be raised. In the death state Stephen's life would be "hid with Christ", and when Christ appears the second time, then Stephen would appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:3,4).

4. Jesus uttered similar words to those of Stephen, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit". (Luke 23:46). But Christ went to hell, not heaven. (Acts 2:27; cf. John 20:17 -- "I am not yet ascended to my Father").



Chapter 14 – Baal

Spirit – meaning 13 – mother earth, the tree inhabitant, baal

Origins

The term earth religion encompasses any religion that worships the earth, nature or fertility gods or goddesses. There is an array of groups and beliefs that fall under earth religion, such as paganism, which is a polytheistic, nature based religion; animism, which is the worldview that all living entities (plants, animals, and humans) possess a spirit; Wicca, who hold the concept of an earth mother goddess, as well as practice ritual magic; and druidism, which equates divinity with the natural world.

In nature worship, a nature deity is a deity in charge of forces of nature such as water deity, vegetation deity, sky deity, solar deity, fire deity or any other naturally occurring phenomena such as death deity or fertility deity. Accepted in panentheism, pantheism, deism, polytheism, animism, totemism, shamanism and paganism the deity embodies natural forces and can have characteristics of the mother goddess, Mother Nature or lord of the animals.

An example of this belief found across Tanzania is Aja believed to be an Orisha, the spirit of the forest, and the animals within it and herbal healers. As found within the Yoruba religion (found primarily in southwestern Nigeria and the adjoining parts of Benin, and Togo, commonly known as Yorubaland).

An orisha (spelled *òrìṣà* in the Yoruba language) is a deity that reflects one of the manifestations of the Supreme Divinity (Eledumare, Olorun, Olofi). Orisha are said to have existed in the invisible world (*òrun*) and lived as humans beings in the planetary world (*ayé*). Others are said to be humans who are recognized as deities due to extraordinary feats. Many orishas have found their way to most of the New World and the Swahili coast as a result of the Atlantic slave trade; and are now expressed in practices as varied as Santería, Candomblé, Trinidad Orisha, Umbanda, and Oyotunji,

among others.

Yoruba tradition often says that there are 401 orishas, which is associated with a sacred number.

Practitioners traditionally believe that daily life depends on proper alignment and knowledge of one's ori. Ori literally means the head, but in spiritual matters it is taken to mean a portion of the soul that determines personal destiny and success. Ashe is the life-force that runs through all things, living and inanimate. Ashe is the power to make things happen. It is an affirmation which is used in greetings and prayers, as well as a concept of spiritual growth. Orisha devotees strive to obtain Ashe through iwapele or gentle and good character, and in turn they experience alignment with the ori, what others might call inner peace and satisfaction with life. Ashe is divine energy that comes from Olodumare, the Creator and is manifested through Olorun, who rules the heavens and is associated with the sun. Without the sun, no life could exist, just as life cannot exist without some degree of ashe. Ashe is sometimes associated with Eshu, the messenger Orisha. For practitioners, ashe represents a link to the eternal presence of the Supreme God, the Orishas, and the ancestors (See ancestor worship).

The concept is regularly referenced in Brazilian capoeira. "Axé" in this context it is used as a greeting or farewell, in songs and as a form of praise. Saying that someone 'has axé' in capoeira is complimenting their energy, fighting spirit, and attitude.

The origins of nature worship can be traced back for thousands of years. According to Marija Gimbutas, pre-Indo-European societies lived in small-scale, family-based communities that practiced matrilineal succession and goddess-centered religion where creation comes from the woman. She is the Divine Mother who can give life and take it away. In Irish mythology she is Danu, in Slavic mythology she is Mat Zemlya, and in other cultures she is Pachamama, Ninsun, Terra Mater, Nüwa, Matres or Shakti.

In the late 1800s, James Weir wrote an article describing the

beginnings and aspects of early religious feeling. According to Boyer, early man was forced to locate food and shelter in order to survive, while constantly being directed by his instincts and senses. Because man's existence depended on nature, men began to form their religion and beliefs on and around nature itself. It is evident that man's first religion would have had to develop from the material world, he argues, because man relied heavily on his senses and what he could see, touch, and feel. In this sense, the worship of nature formed, allowing man to further depend on nature for survival.

Neopagans have tried to make claims that religion started in ways that correspond to earth religion. In one of their published works, *The Urantia Book*, another reason for this worship of nature came from a fear of the world around primitive man. His mind lacked the context for processing and sifting through complex ideas. As a result, man worshiped the very entity that surrounded him every day. That entity was nature. Man experienced the different natural phenomena around him, such as storms, vast deserts, and immense mountains. Among the very first parts of nature to be worshiped were rocks and hills, plants and trees, animals, the elements, heavenly bodies, and even man himself. As primitive man worked his way through nature worship, he eventually moved on to incorporate spirits into his worship.

Another perspective of earth religion to consider is pantheism, which takes a varied approach to the importance and purpose of the earth, and man's relationship with the planet. Several of their core statements deal with the connectivity humans share with the planet, declaring that "all matter, energy, and life are an interconnected unity of which we are an inseparable part" and "we are an integral part of Nature, which we should cherish, revere and preserve in all its magnificent beauty and diversity. We should strive to live in harmony with Nature locally and globally".

The earth also plays a vital role to many Voltaic peoples, many of whom "consider the Earth to be Heaven's wife", such as the Konkomba of northern Ghana, whose economic, social and religious life is heavily influenced by the earth.

Baal

There is very little doubt that the Baal of the Bible is a reference to such orisha. Baal was a title and honorific meaning "lord" in the

Northwest Semitic languages spoken in the Levant during antiquity. From its use among people, it came to be applied to gods. Scholars previously associated the theonym with solar cults and with a variety of unrelated patron deities, but inscriptions have shown that the name Ba'al was particularly associated with the storm and fertility god Hadad and his local manifestations.

The Hebrew Bible, compiled and curated over a span of centuries, includes early replacement of the name Yahweh with the word Baal (See. Ineffable Name), this transferred into the English bible as Lord, and later into the Kiswahili bible as Bwana.

The proof of the non-existence of Baal as a god was unquestionably settled by Elijah upon Mt. Carmel in the incident recorded in 1 Kings 18.

Christmas

The celebrations that are seen at Christmas in Christendom are clearly directly taken directly out of Paganism. When people gather around the Christmas tree or stuff goodies into a stocking, you're taking part in traditions that stretch back thousands of years - long before Christianity entered the mix.

Pagan, or non-Christian, traditions show up in this beloved winter holiday, a consequence of early church leaders melding Jesus' nativity celebration with pre-existing midwinter festivals. Since then, Christmas traditions have warped over time, arriving at their current state a little more than a century ago.

Early Christians had a soft spot for pagans

Ronald Hutton, a historian at Bristol University in the United Kingdom says you'd be wrong to believe that Christmas is a modern phenomenon. As Christians spread their religion into Europe in the first centuries A.D., they ran into people living by a variety of local and regional religious creeds. Christian missionaries lumped all of these people together under the umbrella term "pagan," said Philip Shaw, who researches early Germanic languages and Old English at Leicester University in the U.K. The term is related to the Latin word meaning "field". The lingual link makes sense, he said, because early European Christianity was an urban phenomenon, while paganism

persisted longer in rustic areas. Early Christians wanted to convert pagans, Shaw said, but they were also fascinated by their traditions. "Christians of that period are quite interested in paganism," he said. "It's obviously something they think is a bad thing, but it's also something they think is worth remembering. It's what their ancestors did." Perhaps that's why pagan traditions remained even as Christianity took hold. The Christmas tree is a 17th Century German invention, but it clearly derives from the pagan practice of bringing greenery indoors to decorate in midwinter; it can be found as far back as the time of Jeremiah the prophet (Jeremiah 10:3). The modern Santa Claus is a direct descendent of England's Father Christmas, who was not originally a gift-giver. However, Father Christmas and his other European variations are modern incarnations of old pagan ideas about spirits who travelled the sky in midwinter.

We all want that warm Christmas glow

But why this fixation on partying in midwinter, anyway? According to historians, it's a natural time for a feast. In an agricultural society, the harvest work is done for the year, and there's nothing left to be done in the fields. "It's a time when you have some time to devote to your religious life," said Shaw. "But also it's a period when, frankly, everyone needs cheering up." The dark days that culminate with the shortest day of the year - the winter solstice could be lightened with feasts and decorations, Hutton said. "If you happen to live in a region in which midwinter brings striking darkness and cold and hunger, then the urge to have a celebration at the very heart of it to avoid going mad or falling into deep depression is very, very strong," he said. Stephen Nissenbaum, author of the Pulitzer Prize finalist "The Battle for Christmas" (Vintage, 1997), agreed. "Even now when solstice means not all that much because you can get rid of the darkness with the flick of an electric light switch, even now, it's a very powerful season".

The Church was slow to embrace Christmas

Despite the spread of Christianity, midwinter festivals did not become Christmas for hundreds of years. The Bible gives no reference to when Jesus was born, which wasn't a problem for early Christians, Nissenbaum said. "It never occurred to them that they needed to celebrate his birthday."

With no Biblical directive to do so and no mention in the Gospels of

the correct date, it wasn't until the fourth century that church leaders in Rome embraced the holiday. At this time, Nissenbaum said, many people had turned to a belief the Church found heretical: That Jesus had never existed as a man, but as a sort of spiritual entity.

"If you want to show that Jesus was a real human being just like every other human being, not just somebody who appeared like a hologram, then what better way to think of him being born in a normal, humble human way than to celebrate his birth?" Nissenbaum said. [Religious Mysteries: 8 Alleged Relics of Jesus]

Midwinter festivals, with their pagan roots, were already widely celebrated, Nissenbaum said. And the date had a pleasing philosophical fit with festivals celebrating the lengthening days after the winter solstice (which fell on Dec. 21 this year). "O, how wonderfully acted Providence that on that day on which that Sun was born - Christ should be born," one Cyprian text read.

The actual date of Christ's birth is now believed to have been September 11th BC 3.

The Puritans hated the holiday

But if the Catholic Church gradually came to embrace Christmas, the Protestant Reformation gave the holiday a good knock on the chin. In the 16th century, Christmas became a casualty of this church schism, with reformist-minded Protestants considering it little better than paganism, Nissenbaum said. This likely had something to do with the "raucous, rowdy and sometimes bawdy fashion" in which Christmas was celebrated, he added.

In England under Oliver Cromwell, Christmas and other saints' days were banned, and in New England it was illegal to celebrate Christmas for about 25 years in the 1600s, Nissenbaum said. Forget people saying, "Happy holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas," he said.

"If you want to look at a real 'War on Christmas,' you've got to look at the Puritans," he said. "They banned it!"

Gifts are a new (and surprisingly controversial) tradition

While gift-giving may seem inextricably tied to Christmas, it used to

be that people looked forward to opening presents on New Year's Day.

"They were a blessing for people to make them feel good as the year ends," Hutton said. It wasn't until the Victorian era of the 1800s that gift-giving shifted to Christmas. According to the Royal Collection, Queen Victoria's children got Christmas Eve gifts in 1850, including a sword and armour. In 1841, Victoria gave her husband, Prince Albert, a miniature portrait of her as a 7-year-old; in 1859, she gave him a book of poetry by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

All of this gift-giving, along with the secular embrace of Christmas, now has some religious groups steamed, Nissenbaum said. The consumerism of Christmas shopping seems, to some, to contradict the religious goal of celebrating Jesus Christ's birth. In some ways, Nissenbaum said, excessive spending is the modern equivalent of the revelry and drunkenness that made the Puritans frown.

"There's always been a push and pull, and it's taken different forms," he said. "It might have been alcohol then, and now it's these glittering toys."

Mary worship

The Lady of the Jesuits is not even an invention of Jesuitism, but an adoption of a pagan conception which cursed Babylon, the prototype of the modern Babylon, centuries before Christ appeared as the son of Mary. Pictures of the mother and child were then worshiped. In almost all the devotional books of the Roman Catholic Church, the mother of God is crowned, sceptred and enthroned as the Queen of heaven. ["She has been appointed by God to be the Queen of heaven and earth", Pius IX, 1854, but not made "official" till 1954 by Pius XII.] "I can never," said the Rev. M. Hobart Seymour, in his *Evenings with the Romanists*, page 254, "forget the shock I received when I first saw in their churches in Italy, the Virgin Mary crowned as Queen of heaven, seated on the same throne with Jesus crowned King of heaven. These were the God-man and God-woman enthroned alike. There was nothing to distinguish the one above the other."

The origin of this idolatry had its root in ancient mythology. Astarte of the Assyrians, Ashtoreth of the Sidonians and Bowaney of the Hindoos held the place that Mary occupies in the church of Rome.

Greece had her Venus and Rome her Juno. The Diana of the Ephesians was a female, from whose body in every part there seemed to be issuing all the various animals of creation, symbolizing the conception and creation of all things.

The Egyptians on the one hand and the Etrurians on the other had their Isis, the same symbol, a female divinity whom they regarded as "the mother of the gods." Jeremiah describes the Jews who had rebelled against God as making cakes to "the queen of heaven" (Jer 7:18; 44:17), the title given to Juno in the Scandinavian theology. Rome has adopted this element of heathenism, this product of the carnal heart. In all its essential elements the Roman Etrurian and the Romish Mary brought from Babylon and adopted by papal Rome are in accord - Romanists are idolaters. In their churches are pictures of the Virgin that are worshiped because of the wonderful things professedly done by them. In St. Peter's is a picture of the Virgin bearing the inscription that it had miraculously shed blood when struck by a stone. A picture of the mother and child is at Lucca, of which it was affirmed that when someone flung a stone at the face of the child, she transferred the child to the other arm and thus saved it from injury. The Jesuits defend this.

It is claimed by Romanists that the mother and child sustain the same relation in heaven which they have assigned them on earth, and that Jesus is more the mediator with Mary than Mary is the intercessor with Christ. From Babylon, this worship of the mother and child spread to the ends of the earth. In Egypt, in Assyria, in China and in Greece and elsewhere, this form of worship suited to the carnal heart gained sway. Circe, the daughter of the sun, taken from Pompeii, has the nimbus or circle surrounding the head in the very same way as the head of the Roman Madonna is at this time adorned in the pictures given of this mistress of Rubens, this lady of the Jesuits. Can anyone believe this coincidence accidental?

Mariolatry encourages sinners.

Christ's worship is built on the teachings of the Scriptures. To obtain forgiveness of sins through Christ there must be a change of heart, a new birth, a new life. Old things must pass away, all things must become new. Romanists believe that they can be saved more easily through Mary. Christ requires repentance, Mary devotion. Faith in Christ demands submission to the will of God, reformation of life, and

devotion of heart as required by the gospel; while devotion to Mary consists in prayers to her or some external practices in her honour. Liguori teaches that damnation is impossible where there is devotion to the Virgin. Hence the worship of Mary encourages sinners and multiplies sins. Pius Nono (Pius IX), after decreeing the Immaculate Conception, made the cornerstone of the Romish faith to believe and to teach that salvation is received solely and alone through Mary. It is ours to refute this blasphemous assumption by proclaiming Christ as the way, the truth, and the life.

When Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ her [unique] mission ended. The dream that haunted the imagination of the Jewish maiden was fulfilled; Mary had given birth to Jesus. The world worshiped the being born, not the one who gave birth to the Son of man and the Son of God. They did it then. True believers do it now as they will do it in the kingdom. That Mary will walk with the redeemed in white. "The assumption of Mary" [bodily into heaven, Pius XII, 1950] is a Popish assumption, and it is nothing more. Mary has not risen and will not rise until the trump shall sound, when she will come forth and cast herself at the feet of Christ, with the countless throng that no man can number. Mariolatry, the perpetual virginity of the virgin, is a popish lie and calculated to deceive millions, while it is an insult to our Lord and Saviour. It declares that Christ lacks compassion, is wanting in knowledge and depends for information upon Mary, and is without willingness to help and save the lost.

As a virgin, Mary became the medium through which the ever-blessed Christ came into the world. Because of this she was blessed among women. She was not worshiped by those who knew her in the flesh, and she is without any claim to worship at this time, or any time.

Jesus Christ is the Stone which is being set at naught by Romanists, but as Peter said "He is the head of the corner; neither is there any salvation in any other, for there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12) Hence in our hearts and with our lips we glorify Christ, and reject Mariolatry as dishonouring to God and destructive of faith in Christ, and we glorify the one Mediator between God and man (1Titus 2:5), Christ Jesus our Lord, who was crucified, dead and buried, and who rose from the dead and ascended up on high (Ephesians 4:8) and was welcomed into heaven by the multitudes that no man can number and is worshiped by the redeemed as the being by whom and for whom all things were made.

(Colossians 1:16).

Is Mary the "Mother of God"?

The cult of the Mother Goddess entered the Christian Church in typically Christian categories, such as the Ecclesia, represented as the spiritual mother of Christians, or as "the Second Eve," whose divine motherhood is responsible for mankind's rebirth. It was through such Christian concepts that the idea of the divine feminine took root in Christianity, and it was a long and often confusing process until Mary was declared to be the Mother of God. But it is the primordial mystery of generation and childbirth, the appearance of life, and the age-old belief that motherhood is part of a cosmic order upon which both the pagan and the Christian versions of the cult of the theotokos ["God bearer", i.e., "Mother of God", Council of Ephesus, 431 A.D.] rest. This reverence for motherhood and childbirth is the basic principle of Mariology, a principle which Christianity inherited from its pagan forerunners.

The Lateran Council of 469 under Pope Martin I: "if anyone does not confess in harmony with the holy Fathers that the holy and ever virgin and immaculate Mary is really and truly the mother of God, inasmuch as she in the last times and without semen by the Holy Spirit conceived God the Word himself specially and truthfully, who was born from God the Father before all ages, and she bore him uncorrupted, and after his birth her virginity remaining indissoluble, let him be condemned." The perpetual virginity of Mary thus became an official teaching of the church: Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus. In 1555, the Council of Trent confirmed this dogma in the Constitution of Pope Paul IV known as "Cum Quorundam." Here the pope warns against teaching that "the same blessed Virgin Mary is not truly the Mother of God, and did not remain always in the integrity of virginity, i. e., before birth, in birth, and perpetually after birth."

18 times in the Encyclical "Munificentissimus Deus" (1950), Pope Pius XII entitles Mary, "Mother of God". But was she the "Mother of God"?

Jesus was not divine during his human incarnation: "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he

humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:7-8). "Jesus was made a little lower [or, for a little while lower] than the angels for the suffering of death." (Hebrews 2:9). "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." (1 John 4:2)

Since Jesus was not divine during his incarnation, Mary was the mother of a human being, not the mother of "God".

The only conclusion that we can draw from this is that worship of Mary is a form of idolatry perpetuating the myth that mother earth is to be worshipped.



Chapter 15 – Pixies & Fairies

Spirit – meaning 14 – nymph, pixies, fairies, sprites and the like

Nymph

A nymph (Greek: νύμφη, *nýmphē* [nýmphɛ]) in Greek mythology and in Latin mythology is a minor female nature deity typically associated with a particular location or landform. Different from other goddesses, nymphs are generally regarded as divine spirits who animate nature, and are usually depicted as beautiful, young nubile maidens who love to dance and sing; their amorous freedom sets them apart from the restricted and chaste wives and daughters of the Greek polis. They are beloved by many and dwell in mountainous regions and forests by lakes and streams. Although they would never die of old age nor illness, and could give birth to fully immortal children if mated to a god, they themselves were not necessarily immortal, and could be beholden to death in various forms. Charybdis and Scylla were once nymphs.

Other nymphs, always in the shape of young maidens, were part of the retinue of a god, such as Dionysus, Hermes, or Pan, or a goddess, generally the huntress Artemis. Nymphs were the frequent target of satyrs.

Pixies

Pixies (also pixy, pixi, pizkie, piskies and pigsies as they are sometimes known in Cornwall) are mythical creatures of folklore, considered to be particularly concentrated in the high moorland areas around Devon and Cornwall, suggesting some Celtic origin for the belief and name. Akin to the Irish and Scottish Aos Sí, pixies are believed to inhabit ancient underground ancestor sites such as stone circles, barrows, dolmens, ringfort or menhirs.

In traditional regional lore, pixies are generally benign, mischievous, short of stature and attractively childlike; they are fond of dancing and gather outdoors in huge numbers to dance or sometimes wrestle, through the night, demonstrating parallels with the Cornish plen-an-gwary and Breton Fest Noz (Cornish: troyl) folk celebrations

originating in the medieval period. In modern times they are usually depicted with pointed ears, and often wearing a green outfit and pointed hat although traditional stories describe them wearing dirty ragged bundles of rags which they happily discard for gifts of new clothes. Sometimes their eyes are described as being pointed upwards at the temple ends. These, however, are Victorian era conventions and not part of the older mythology.

In modern use, the term can be synonymous with fairies or sprites. However, in folklore there is a traditional enmity, even war, between the two races.

Fairies

A fairy (also fay, fae, fair folk; from faery, faerie, "realm of the fays") is a type of mythical being or legendary creature in folklore, a form of spirit, often described as metaphysical, supernatural, or preternatural.

Christian mythology

According to King James in his dissertation *Daemonologie*, the term "faries" was used to describe illusory spirits (demonic entities) that prophesy, consort, and transport individuals they served. In medieval times, it was believed that a witch or sorcerer who had a compact with a familiar spirit to serve them could receive these types of revelations or use them to perform various tasks.

One other Christian belief held that fairies were a class of "demoted" angels. One popular story described how, when the angels revolted, God ordered the gates of heaven shut: those still in heaven remained angels, those in hell became demons, and those caught in between became fairies. Others suggested that the fairies, not being good enough, had been thrown out of heaven, but they were not evil enough for hell. This may explain the tradition that they had to pay a "teind" or tithe to hell: as fallen angels, though not quite devils, they could be seen as subjects of the devil. For a similar concept in Persian mythology, see Peri.

Demoted pagan deities

Another theory is that the fairies were originally worshiped as minor goddesses, such as nymphs or tree spirits, but with the coming of Christianity, they lived on, in a dwindled state of power, in folk belief.

In this particular time, fairies were reputed by the church as being 'evil' beings. Many beings who are described as deities in older tales are described as "fairies" in invented Victorian writings. Victorian inventions of mythology, which accounted for all gods as metaphors for natural events that had come to be taken literally, explained them as metaphors for the night sky and stars.

Yet another belief was that the fairies were demons entirely. This belief became much more popular with the growth of Puritanism. The hobgoblin, once a friendly household spirit, became a wicked goblin. Dealing with fairies was in some cases considered a form of witchcraft and punished as such in this era. Disassociating himself from such evils may be why Oberon, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, carefully observed that neither he nor his court feared the church bells.

Spirits of the dead

One popular belief was that they were the dead. This noted that many common points of belief, such as the same legends being told of ghosts and fairies, the *síde* in actuality being burial mounds, it being dangerous to eat food in both Fairyland and Hades, and both the dead and fairies living underground. Diane Purkiss observes an equating of fairies with the untimely dead who left "unfinished lives". One tale recounted a man caught by the fairies, who found that whenever he looked steadily at one, the fairy was a dead neighbour of his. This was among the most common beliefs expressed by those who believed in fairies, although many of the informants would express the belief with some doubts.

A hidden people

At one time it was a common belief that fairy folklore evolved from folk memories of a prehistoric race. It was suggested that newcomers drove out the original inhabitants, and the memories of this defeated, hidden people developed into the fairy beliefs we have today. Proponents of this theory claimed to find support in the tradition of cold iron as a charm against the fairies, which was viewed as a cultural memory of invaders with iron weapons displacing inhabitants who had only flint and were therefore easily defeated. Some 19th-century archaeologists thought they had found underground rooms in the Orkney islands resembling the Elfland in Childe Rowland. However, the idea of a fallen vanquished race in hiding has fallen out

of favour with scholars.

In popular folklore, flint arrowheads from the Stone Age were attributed to the fairies as "elf-shot". Their green clothing and underground homes were credited to their need to hide and camouflage themselves from hostile humans, and their use of magic a necessary skill for combating those with superior weaponry. In Victorian beliefs of evolution, cannibalism among "ogres" was attributed to memories of more savage races, still practicing it alongside "superior" races that had abandoned it.

Elementals

Another belief is that the fairies were an intelligent species, distinct from humans and angels. In alchemy in particular they were regarded as elementals, such as gnomes and sylphs, as described by Paracelsus. This is uncommon in folklore, but accounts describing the fairies as "spirits of the air" have been found. The belief in their angelic nature was common in Theosophist circles.

Sprites

Sprite (creature), legendary creatures such as elves, fairies and pixies a spirit being, a ghost, the spirit of a deceased person or animal that can appear, in visible form or other manifestation, to the living , water sprites, such as the Neck (water spirit), Sprite (lightning), a large-scale electrical discharge that occurs above thunderstorm clouds.

A sprite is a supernatural legendary creature. They are often depicted as fairy, ghost and/or elf-like creatures.

The word "sprite" is derived from the Latin "spiritus" (spirit). Variations on the term include "spright" (the origin of the adjective "sprightly", meaning "spirited" or "lively") and the Celtic "spriggan". The term is chiefly used in regard to elves and fairies in European folklore, and in modern English is rarely used in reference to spirits or other mythical creatures.

Belief in sprites

The belief in diminutive beings such as sprites, tree spirits, elves, fairies, pixies, gnomes, Japanese yōkai, the Spanish and Latin-American duende and various Slavic fairies has been common in many parts of the world, and might to some extent still be found

within neo-spiritual and religious movements such as "neo-druidism" and Ásatrú. The belief in spiritual beings, particularly ghosts, is almost universal to human culture (See ghosts).

Sylph

In some elemental magics, the sprite is often believed to be the elemental of air. Sylph (also called sylphid) is a mythological spirit of the air. The term originates in the 16th Century works of Paracelsus, who describes sylphs as invisible beings of the air, his elementals of air.

Since the term sylph itself originates with Paracelsus, there is relatively little pre-Paracelsian legend and mythology that can be confidently associated with it, but a significant number of subsequent literary and occult works have been inspired by the idea. Robert Alfred Vaughan noted that "the wild but poetical fantasies" of Paracelsus had probably exercised a larger influence over his age and the subsequent one than is generally supposed, particularly on the Rosicrucians, but that through the 18th century they had become reduced to "machinery for the playwright" and "opera figurantes with wings of gauze and spangles."

Water sprite

A water sprite (also called a water fairy or water faery) is a general term for an elemental spirit associated with water, according to alchemist Paracelsus. Water sprites are said to be able to breathe water or air, and sometimes, can fly. They are mostly harmless unless threatened. These creatures exist in mythology of various groups. Ancient Greeks knew water nymphs in several types such as naiads (or nyads), which guarded the fresh water bodies for the gods. These fairies are joyful, spirited and cannot be insulted or emotionally hurt, while Slavic mythology knows them as vilas. In elemental classifications, water sprites should not be confused with other water creatures considered to be "corporeal beings" such as selkies and mermaids. Elemental sprites include those of the water, fire, earth, air, and even many plant types as well.

Should we believe in mythology?

In antiquity, Africa much like the Greeks has developed complex religious systems filled with gods, goddesses, demigods, and

mythological creatures. They often recount the stories of their gods in songs, poems, and dramas, as we see in Greek works such as Sappho's poetry, Homer's *Odyssey*, and Euripides' *Hippolytus* (Cp. *Beneath the Rainbow: Stories and Poems from Kenya*)^{xi}. Because of these, the stories of African and Greek mythology have passed down through the centuries and have largely remained intact. We will use the Greek mythology as our reference point as the Apostle Paul specifically speaks out against such false beliefs (Acts 17). We can then apply our findings to African mythology. For the sake of simplicity, we draw our examples from the *Odyssey* as emblematic of the general tradition of African and Greek mythology. Through this comparison between Greek mythology and the Bible, it will be shown that the themes of both Greek and African mythology are part of a broader system that sees God as a being that has flaws and vices. In contrast to this, Christianity presents a God who is perfect in all ways and who is greater than human beings.

The multitude of gods.

One of the most striking aspects of both Greek and African mythology is the number of gods. The most important of all the Greek gods are the twelve Olympians (Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Hephaestus, Hermes, and Dionysus), who came to power after overthrowing the Titans. In addition to these twelve are a host of other minor gods and goddesses—such as Helios and the Muses—as well as many mythological creatures—such as Cerberus and the Minotaur. The Greeks had a divine creature for every aspect of life. These range from Athena, who is the goddess of wisdom, to Ares, who is the god of war, and from Eos, who is the goddess of the dawn, to Atlas, who carries the heavens on his shoulders. The Greek religious system was unabashedly polytheistic.

Whereas the Greeks believed in a multitude of gods, the Bible teaches that there is only one God. The Bible teaches that God is one—that Christianity is monotheistic rather than polytheistic. God does not change his form,

The flawed natures of the Greek gods.

To a large degree, the Greek gods share the same vices as humans, proving themselves to be as fallible as mortals are. For example, the gods often argue with each other. In the *Odyssey*, Zeus and Poseidon

argue over Odysseus' fate. Zeus wants to bring Odysseus safely home to Ithaca, but Poseidon, angered that Odysseus had blinded Polyphemus, wants to kill him. While Odysseus travels, Poseidon sends storms to try to kill him, and each time Zeus must intervene. In the end, this conflict among the gods delays Odysseus' return home for ten years.

At the heart of these conflicts and the drama of Greek mythology is the principle that the Greek gods are not and indeed are not expected to be just: they are strikingly similar to super-powered human beings, filled with the same imperfections of will. Indeed, they frequently cause the noble to suffer or die for petty, all too human reasons. If we return to the example of the Odyssey, we see that although Zeus and Poseidon fight over Odysseus' fate, their argument bears unfortunate consequences for many other people. During the course of the story, Poseidon's wrath leads to the death of all of Odysseus' men, even though those men had not offended him. Likewise, because of Odysseus' delayed return home, his wife and son must live for ten years while the suitors mock them and feast on the stores of their house. The gods' treatment of Odysseus indirectly leads to the anguish of his family and the death of his companions. Here, as in many other Greek stories, the gods treat mortals unjustly, for they act according to their personal wills.

In contrast, the Bible teaches that God is perfect and does not share the same flaws that humans do. For example, whereas the Greek gods argued, with Yahweh and Jesus there is no such conflict. The will of the Father is the same as the will of the Son, which is the same will of the angels which is the same will of the saints (John 17:22). They always work in unison. In John 6, Jesus tells a crowd of people at Capernaum that he came to do the will of the Father. Even though he knows that this will lead to a painful death by crucifixion, he tells the people that he does not strive to usurp the Father's will, but that his will is the same as the Father's.

Likewise, the Bible teaches that, unlike the unjust Greek gods, the Godhead always acts with perfect fairness and justice. One of the titles that the Bible gives to God is that of Judge, and it teaches that His judgment is always made rightly. Ultimately, God will judge all people at the judgement seat (Romans 14:10). To those who are sinners (and the Bible teaches that all are sinners by nature, Romans 3:23, 5:12), God will sentence to punishment, and to those upon

whom he looks favourably, God will grant eternal life (Matthew 7). In this aspect, as in every other aspect of His nature, God is perfect and without flaw. If God is a perfect judge and brings judgment on sinners, however, how does one stand in his good graces? How does one avoid eternal punishment in the grave? To answer these questions, let us consider the Greek treatment of the afterlife and compare it with what the Bible teaches.

The Greek concept of salvation by works.

In Greek mythology, the only hope for long life and happiness on earth is to live a heroic life and to offer many sacrifices and libations to all of the gods, in the hope of appeasing them all and offending none. If through their actions, people are fortunate enough to stand in the good favour of the gods at the time of their death, they will live for eternity in Elysium, but if they have offended the gods, they face worse fates in the depths of the underworld. Thus, in the Greek tradition, all hope of salvation lies in one's works.

The Bible, however, does not teach that salvation is by works in this manner. Rather, to stand in God's good graces on judgment day, one must do so by faith, for as Ephesians 2:8 says, it is "by grace you have been saved through faith."

Contradictory

By comparing Greek mythology with the doctrine of the Bible, we find two contrasting understandings of the divine. Greek mythology, although unique in terms of its specific deities, rituals, and customs, shares fundamental aspects with the African mythological philosophical position. Namely, this position sees God as merely an exalted human being, sharing the same vices that are common to all mankind. With the case of African mythology, although the gods are powerful and eternal, they often argue, fight, act unjustly, and treat people according to merit, and because of these characteristics, they are not all that much greater than ordinary people.

Christianity presents an understanding of God that is radically different from this worldview. The Bible teaches that the divine is never divided in interest, is never unjust, and grants eternal life through faith. God does not share the same vices as humans but remains perfect and holy. Because of this radical distinction between God and man, Christianity differs from not just Greek mythology but

from many other religions and worldviews including the African superstitions.



Chapter 16 – The Witch Doctor

Spirit – meaning 15 – those that help the witch doctor

Christian views on magic vary widely among denominations and among individuals. Some Christians actively condemn any form of magic as satanic, while others simply dismiss it as superstition. As Christadelphians and Bible followers we know that belief in Satan is false and that God condemns followers of witchcraft.

Contrary to the Bible stance, some branches of esoteric Christianity actively engage in magical practices.

Medieval views

The Germanic Council of Paderborn in 785 explicitly outlawed the very belief in witches, and the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne later confirmed the law. Among Orthodox Eastern Christians concentrated in the Byzantine Empire, belief in witchcraft was widely regarded as deisidaimonia—superstition—and by the 9th and 10th centuries in the Latin Christian West, belief in witchcraft had begun to be seen as heresy.

However, towards the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period (post-Reformation), belief in witchcraft became more popular and witches were seen as directly in league with the Devil. This marked the beginning of a period of witch hunts among early Protestants which lasted about 200 years, and in some countries, particularly in North-Western Europe, thousands of people were accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death.

The Catholic Inquisition had conducted trials against supposed witches in the 13th Century, but these trials were to punish heresy, of which belief in witchcraft was merely one variety. Inquisitorial courts only became systematically involved in the witch-hunt during the 15th century: in the case of the Madonna Oriente, the Inquisition of Milan was not sure what to do with two women who in 1384 and in 1390 confessed to have participated in a type of white magic.

Not all Inquisitorial courts acknowledged witchcraft. For example, in

1610 as the result of a witch hunting craze the Suprema (the ruling council of the Spanish Inquisition) gave everybody an Edict of Grace (during which confessing witches were not to be punished) and put the only dissenting inquisitor, Alonso de Salazar Frías, in charge of the subsequent investigation. The results of Salazar's investigation were that the Spanish Inquisition did not bother witches ever again though they still went after heretics and Crypto-Jews.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther shared some of the views about witchcraft that were common in his time. When interpreting Exodus 22:18, he stated that, with the help of the devil, witches could steal milk merely by thinking of a cow. In his Small Catechism he taught that witchcraft was a sin against the second commandment and prescribed the Biblical penalty for it in a "table talk".

On 25 August 1538 there was much discussion about witches and sorceresses who poisoned chicken eggs in the nests, or poisoned milk and butter. Doctor Luther said: "One should show no mercy to these [women]; I would burn them myself, for we read in the Law that the priests were the ones to begin the stoning of criminals."

Modern views

During the Age of Enlightenment, belief in the powers of witches and sorcerers to harm began to die out in the West. But the reasons for disbelief differed from those of early Christians. For the early Christians the reason was theological—that Christ had already defeated the powers of evil. For the post-Enlightenment Christians, the disbelief was based on a belief in rationalism and empiricism.

It was at this time, however, that Western Christianity began expanding to parts of Africa and Asia where premodern worldviews still hold sway, and where belief in the power of witches and sorcerers to harm was, if anything, stronger than it had been in Northern Europe. Many African Independent Churches developed their own responses to witchcraft and sorcery.

The situation was further complicated by the rise of new religious movements that considered witchcraft to be a religion. This view does not claim that witches actually consciously enter into a pact with Satan because Satan is not believed to exist in Wicca and other

modern neo-pagan witchcraft practices.

Christian opposition to witchcraft

Several Christian groups continue to believe in witchcraft and view it as a negative force. Much of the criticism originates among Evangelical Christian groups, especially those of a fundamentalist tendency, who believe that witchcraft is a danger to children. The 2006 documentary *Jesus Camp*, which depicts the life of young children attending Becky Fischer's summer camp, shows Fischer condemning the Harry Potter novels and telling the students that "Warlocks are enemies of God". While Fischer's summer camp has sometimes been incorrectly identified as Pentecostal, Fischer is most closely associated with the neo-Pentecostal movement known as the New Apostolic Reformation. NAR prophet Lou Engle, who serves in the NAR apostolic group The Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders, makes an extended appearance in *Jesus Camp*.

Among Christian tendencies, the NAR is especially aggressive in efforts to counter alleged acts of witchcraft; the NAR's globally distributed "Transformations" pseudo-documentaries by filmmaker George Otis, Jr. show charismatic Christians creating mini-utopias by driving off "territorial spirits" and by banishing or even killing accused witches. During the 2008 United States presidential election, footage surfaced from a 2005 church ceremony in which an NAR apostle, Kenyan bishop Thomas Muthee, called upon God to protect Sarah Palin, as Muthee laid hands on Palin, from "every form of witchcraft".

Witchcraft and divination in the Bible

There are several references to witchcraft in the Bible that strongly condemn such practices. For example, Deuteronomy 18:11-12 condemns anyone who "...casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to Yahweh, and because of these detestable practices Yahweh your God will drive out those nations before you", and Exodus 22:18 states "Do not allow a sorceress to live".

Some adherents of near-east religions acted as mediums, channeling messages from the dead or from a familiar spirit. The Bible sometimes is translated as referring to "necromancer" and "necromancy" (Deuteronomy 18:11) However, some lexicographers,

including James Strong and Spiros Zodhiates, disagree. These scholars say that the Hebrew word kashaph, used in Exodus 22:18 and 5 other places in the Tanakh comes from a root meaning "to whisper". Strong therefore concludes that the word means "to whisper a spell, i.e. to incant or practice magic". The Contemporary English Version translates Deuteronomy 18:11 as referring to "any kind of magic".

Early Christianity

The Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatians includes sorcery in a list of "works of the flesh". This disapproval is echoed in the Didache, a very early book of church discipline which dates from the mid-late first century.



Chapter 17 – God Sustained

Spirit – meaning 16 – God’s sustaining influence

Sustained by God in the dessert

The children of Israel were in a state of great excitement. They were on their way back to the land of their fathers! But they were not very well organized, and they had to struggle along in family groups. The going was tough and it tried their faith. Like Israel of old, we tend to feel sorry for ourselves when things go wrong or the way seems hard. Though the children of Israel complained bitterly at times, Yahweh's love never left them. He gave them enough manna to eat, protected them from their enemies and brought them to Him at Mount Sinai.

Water to drink (Exodus 15:22-27)

Free now of Egyptian bondage, the people were led by Moses south toward Sinai. They had to pass through the wilderness of Shur which was a weary, barren desert of low rolling sandhills. They were going to be "proved", to know what was "in their heart" and to be "humbled" to learn to depend fully on God and His Word. That was the purpose of the wilderness wanderings (Deut. 8:2). For three days they trudged along without finding any water. Finally, they came to Marah where there was an oasis.

But Marah means "bitter" and that was the condition of the water — undrinkable! The people were angry and complained to Moses saying, "What shall we drink?"

Yahweh gave the people a wonderful sign of His care for them by causing the waters to be healed when a tree was cast into the water. This is a "type" of Christ who when he was cut down (his crucifixion) made the bitter sinfulness of mankind sweet by giving them the hope of salvation. God could and would sustain His people through all their trials. He further promised them blessings if they obeyed His Word. He promised them freedom from the diseases of Egypt if they would—

- Listen to God;

- Do what is right in His eyes;
- Take notice of His commandments and keep His statutes (v. 26).

The people then moved on to Elim where they were refreshed by such a pleasant place with its 12 wells of sweet water surrounded by 70 palm trees. This represented the Kingdom when all the nations (70 palms) shall gather around the twelve tribes of Israel.

Food to eat (Exodus 16)

The huge company of Israelites now entered the wilderness of Sin. The character of the country altered. Rugged granite mountains thrust steeply upwards, and the people were forced to travel through narrow winding ravines. Their progress was difficult, communication was a problem and food was running short. Despite the pillar of cloud above them, a sign of God's presence, they felt lost and bewildered.

They began to grumble. They longed for the flesh pots and fullness of bread in Egypt, completely forgetting the agony of their slavery. Note the "ye" of v.3. They blamed Moses and Aaron for their problems. God pointed out through Moses that it was He who had brought them there and He would now demonstrate once more His mighty power and care. He would provide flesh and bread to eat. That evening the people beheld a miracle. Vast flocks of quails came to the camp and the people were able to gather them for food.

Next morning after the sun had risen, and the dew had evaporated, the ground was covered with a white substance, small and round. The people said, "What is this" (i.e., "manna" see margin v. 15).

Moses explained that this was what God provided for their need. They were to gather enough for their families each day and to use it all. It would not keep. Trying to do so, some found that it bred worms and stank. However, on the sixth day they were permitted to gather twice as much and to keep it overnight for there would be no manna on the sabbath.

Aaron was instructed to put some in a golden pot and place it in the Ark. This manna did not rot, although later the ark itself disappeared (cp. Rev. 2:17). This incorruptible manna represented the immortal risen Christ.

During all their wilderness wanderings God fed them with manna and it ceased only when Israel entered the promised land (Josh. 5:12).

A type of Jesus Christ (John 6:31-38).

Israel ate manna to save their natural lives from hunger and starvation. It was designed also, to teach them spiritual lessons. Moses taught them "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh" (Deut. 8:3). They were therefore, to seek after God's word as they did their natural food (cp. Matt. 5:6) — keenly and daily.

Jesus later pointed out that he was "the true bread", for anyone who ate of the bread that he could give would live for ever (John 6:51). This "bread" is the example he showed of loving God's Word and doing his Father's will at all times. We need to have a "taste" for the Word of God. To "eat" and "digest" this bread is to be more satisfied than with any amount of natural bread (Isa. 55:1-3; John 6:56, 57). By it we can live spiritually growing and gaining strength.

The Israelites had to gather the manna every day, and so we must study daily the word of God. The manna kept them alive during the wilderness wanderings, and the word of God is able to strengthen our "spiritual man", and give us eternal life in the Kingdom of God. The Israelites who ate the manna are now dead, but Jesus said that those who eat the "true bread from heaven" shall live forever (John 6:33, 40, 49).

We can keep our natural man alive with natural food. To reach the kingdom of God we need to feed daily on the food which God provides — His Word.

Water from the rock (Exodus 17:1-7)

The cloud moved on and the people followed until they came to Rephidim where it rested — but there was no water! Once again Moses received their complaints, and once again took it to God in prayer. God instructed Moses to go to a particular rock and smite it in the sight of all Israel. Moses did so and miraculously water flowed out, by which their thirst was satisfied.

Paul says that this rock pointed forward to Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). He has been "smitten" by God in being put to death. But God raised him,

and as a result, life-giving "waters" have flowed out to all nations (in the Gospel). Those who drink of this "stream" will be refreshed and strengthened in their wilderness journey (John 4:14).

The Amalakite attack – The power of Prayer – (Exodus 17:8-16)

Suddenly Israel faced a new danger. At Rephidim they were attacked from the rear by the cowardly Amalekites (Deut. 25:17-18).

Moses appointed Joshua as captain of an army which he sent forth against the enemy. They were unskilled in war and would certainly have suffered defeat if God had not helped. Moses took Aaron and Hur and on a high look-out point held up his arms in prayer to God on high.

Immediately the tide of battle turned and Israel was successful, but as soon as Moses' arms drooped through weariness the Amalekites started to win. So, Aaron and Hur sat Moses on a stone and held up his hands until Israel had achieved a victory over Amalek. For their attack on His people, God declared an unending hatred of Amalek and towards those who like them would seek the opportunity to take advantage of Israel (Exod. 17:14-16). The action of Samuel against Agag, the king of all the Amalekites illustrates God's judgment against this nation (1 Sam. 15:2, 3).

The lesson for us from Rephidim is that prayer is powerful. We can gain strength from Yahweh when we ask Him to help.

Even now, Jesus sits at God's right hand to help those who will put their trust in him, believe his word and pray for strength (James 5:16; 1:5-6; Luke 18:1). God will deliver those who trust in Him and grant them the great victory over sin and death (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Phil. 4:13).

There is a time coming, too, when Christ with his saints as the all-powerful commanders of Israel will subdue the nations to the rule of Christ (Isa. 55:4; Zech. 9:13, 14).

Summary

From what happened at Marah we learn that by obeying God's commandments we will obtain spiritual health and sweetness in our wilderness journey.

"Man does not live by bread alone but by every word of Yahweh". God has provided us with that food which, if we partake daily, will bring us into His Kingdom. The manna is a symbol for God's Word.

Jesus styled himself "The true bread". The eating of this true bread will give eternal life. This is done when we read his Word and obey it, thus developing a Christ-like character in our own lives.

Moses brought water out from the smitten rock which was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Living water (the Gospel) has flowed to all nations for them to drink and be healed.

The defeat of Amalek points to the time when Christ will finally overcome all evil and establish Israel as the centre of the Kingdom.

We must recognise our dependence upon God and pray continually for His guidance.

God Sustains

Hebrews 1:3 - And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Job 38:33-37 - Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, So that an abundance of water will cover you? Can you send forth lightnings that they may go And say to you, 'Here we are'?

Psalms 104:1-35 - Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind;

Psalms 135:6-7 - Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasures.

Psalm 145:16-17 - You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds.

Matthew 10:29-30 - Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Colossians 1:17 - He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Acts 17:28 - for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

Job 33:4 - The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Psalm 36:6 - Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep O Yahweh, You preserve man and beast.

1 Corinthians 8:6 - yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

Genesis 8:22 - While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.

2 Peter 3:7 - But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men

How does Gods Spirit sustain us?

As human beings, we take the predictability of the created order for granted. When we go to bed, none of us expects that the sun might not rise the next morning. We plan for the future and expect the future to be there when it is time to act. We take steps and never think that we will disintegrate into millions of whirling atoms and fly off into space when our feet hit the ground. Everyone expects the world to hold together today, tomorrow, and throughout the rest of their lives.

Despite its claim of scientific infallibility, naturalistic materialism (the

physical universe is all that there is) provides no basis for any of these assumptions. If everything arose by chance, everything could fall apart tomorrow by chance. One random atom or “maverick molecule,” as Dr. R.C. Sproul has said, could throw everything back into chaos. Naturalistic materialists who rely on the continuing existence and regularity of the natural order for their study and experiments betray an awareness of God that they are suppressing (Rom. 1:18–32). Only Yahweh’s sustaining hand gives us reason to depend on the regularity of the natural order.

Believers have long recognized this point because of the clear teaching of Scripture. God’s work to sustain all things is just one aspect of His providence, which is a necessary outworking of His nature as the self-existent Creator of all. If all things come from His hand (Gen. 1:1), all things depend on Him for their continued existence.

Understanding the importance of God’s sustaining providence should make us profoundly grateful for all things. Every moment we are alive to experience the joys and blessings He brings our way is a gift of His grace. Therefore, we should know not to take any moment for granted. We have a theological reason to be thankful for our lives, and we should never live as if our tomorrows are guaranteed.

Ultimately it is this sustaining influence from God that is able to give us everlasting life through the process of purification (1 Peter 1:7).



Chapter 18 – A Frog Age

Spirit – meaning 17 – the spirit of an age

In Revelation 16:13, under the Apocalyptic symbol of the pouring out of the 6th Vial we have the Apostle John's vision of "three unclean spirits". Regarding these three unclean spirits it is stated, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Believing that we are very near to Christ's return and to that prophesied "battle of that great day of God Almighty" (identified as Armageddon in verse 16 – i.e., "heap of sheaves in the valley of judgment"), the symbols found in this passage are of current relevance to us as we look with extreme attention at the signs we see in the political heavens that indicate to us the nearness of our Master's return and the pouring out of Divine and unfettered judgments upon the nations of the earth. In this verse 16 we have reference made to three primary political players that are responsible for influencing the nations in preparation for this great Battle against the will of Deity – the dragon, the beast and the false prophet.

Frog Spirits, The Dragon, and The Beast

It is not our intention to deal in depth with the frog like spirits or with the identity of the Dragon or the Beast. But to briefly review:

Frog Spirits

It has long been held within the Christadelphian community that the three frog spirits, symbols which originally represented the French people, came to characterize the democratic socialistic influences that arose out of the French Revolution. The cry of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity is a doctrine that changed not only France but changed the face of Europe both politically and ecclesiastically and is a powerful, humanistic and "unclean" influence that is stronger than ever. Some of its influences have even come into the brotherhood including the

habit of democratic voting which Brother Roberts in his later life regretted introducing.

The “dragon”

- was an historical and prophetic symbol of the Roman power and eventually of the military or eastern division of the Roman Empire with its headquarters in Constantinople. It is understood that a Russian led confederacy (with a domineering presence over eastern / south-eastern Europe and parts of Asia) will play the latter-day role of the “dragon”, with a controlling influence and probable occupation of Constantinople / Istanbul previous to its invasion of the Land of Israel.

The “beast”

There are two “beasts” mentioned in the Apocalypse (chapter 13) – one being the “beast of the sea” the other “the beast of the earth”. Based upon verse 10 the context is of the Beast of the Earth which in the past related to the Holy Roman Empire and for the present day relates to those nations of central / Western Europe.

“The False Prophet”

Christadelphians have long believed that the symbol of the False Prophet was an identification of the Papal System. But in recent years there has been a drastic rise in the influence of what is termed as “Militant Islam” on world affairs, which has led some to conclude that the symbol of the False Prophet should be applied to the Islamic element. But at the same time there has also been a dramatic rise in the power and influence of the Papacy, with both Islamic and Papal influences struggling for control over the matter of Jerusalem and the “Holy Land”. This may create difficulty as we attempt to come to a conclusion as to the identity of the third frog like influence. It is this writer’s conviction that the symbol of “false prophet” as used in the Apocalypse is to be identified with the Catholic influence, but we also understand what may move others to view an Islamic identity – which necessitates this consideration of the subject for review and comparison of the two varying applications. The scriptures say very little regarding the “False Prophet”, though the identification of the plural form “false prophets” is used several times in the Old and New Testament, which helps us to better understand how it is applied in the Apocalypse. The “false prophet” symbol is used three times with all

of them in the closing chapters of Revelation (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). But in the context of Revelation it is important to note that as a book of signs and symbols it is a book that reveals events down through the ages since 96 A.D. that are of relevance to the believers.

The believers are warned of and shown the development, fortunes and misfortunes and eventual destruction of the Apostate System that would arise out of the true Ecclesia and became the primary antagonist of the True Believers.

In contrast to this the believer is given a wonderful view of the Divine manifestation to come and the reward reserved to them “who overcometh” - those who remain true to the One Hope. These are the overriding themes of the Apocalyptic message and provide the foundation as to how we understand the subject at hand. Other critical prophetic matters, for example that of national Israel’s scattering and return, find detailed and lengthy explanation in other portions of the Scriptures.

The role of a prophet and of a false prophet

In 1st Corinthians 14:3 we read, “he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” A prophet is not necessarily one who foretells the future but can apply to one who speaks of Truth in general as a teacher for the edification, exhortation and comfort of the believers.

In contrast to a good prophet the Apostle Peter warned the believers, “there were false prophets among the people (Israel), even there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter, along with Paul and John, spoke of a false religious system that would arise out the true Ecclesia itself. The Spirit through Paul referred to this “falling away” as the “mystery of iniquity” (2 Thess. 2) that was already beginning to develop during the 1st century. Paul also foresaw that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Tim. 4:3) 1st John 4:1 warns the believers to not be naïve but to “try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Before the work of the apostles

began Christ himself warned of such influences – “For there shall arise false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible they shall deceive the very elect.” And in Matt. 7:15 – “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves”. It is important to realize that such “false prophets” that they were being warned of were those who originated from out of the Ecclesia –pretending to be harmless but in fact just the opposite. Christ and the Apostles warned of the need for great spiritual discernment in order to see the more deceitful influences that would arise from out of the Household.

In the history of Israel the false prophets arising from the people played a devastating role on the spiritual understanding and health of the nation eventually leading both Israel and Judah astray. It was the advice of the false prophets (“a lying spirit”, 1 Kings 22:22) that influenced Ahab to go up against the king of Syria - to his own death and utter defeat of the Israeli armies. Hananiah is another example of the influence of the false prophets (Jer. 28), who influenced the court of Zedekiah and opposed the truths that Jeremiah spoke. As Jeremiah stated to Hananiah – “Yahweh hath not sent thee; but thou makes this people to trust in a lie.” (Jeremiah 28:15). Such false prophets claimed to speak the word of God but did nothing more than speak to the people what they wanted to hear. As God proclaimed – “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My People love to have it so...” (Jer. 5:31).

Before we move on it is important to emphasize that the influences of false prophets on both national Israel and the early Ecclesia were ones that originated out of the Body of Believers. This is a spirit pretending to be the voice of God when in fact they were nothing more than peddlers of deceit. It is with this in mind that we need to look closely as to where this line of falsehood led and what developed from the early Ecclesia.

Development of the False Prophet

In his grave warning of the apostasy to come in 2 Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul referred to the revealing of “that man of sin”, “the son of perdition”. It is interesting to note that the word “perdition” (Greek – apoleia) is defined by Strong’s Concordance, “From a presumed derivative of G622; ruin or loss (physical, spiritual, eternal)”. Webster’s Dictionary (1828 Edition) defines the word as “entire loss

or ruin". In referring to the development of apostasy from the Truth it was recognized that as a son of perdition this man of sin would be a system of belief that would be a corrupted and destroyed version of the One True Faith.

This corruption of the Ecclesia, as brought about by the false teachings of her professed friends, is well documented throughout history and more importantly in the prophetic writings of Scripture. We read in Acts 11:26 that the disciples "were called Christians first in Antioch", but due to the corrupt form that Christianity would take on true believers are extremely hesitant to fully identify themselves as "Christian" due to the false meaning and identification it now has. The name has been completely corrupted from its original implications. This is why many Christadelphians prefer to identify themselves as Messianic Jews rather than Christians.

The books of Daniel and the Apocalypse give us the most detailed documentation of the rise of this Apostate system of worship; a mixed, illegitimate system that arose out of the early Ecclesia, and with great irony melded into and took on the political, military, and even many pagan religious aspects of the Roman System it once was at enmity with. With the rise and victory of Constantine in the 4th Century A.D, an already severely compromised form of Christianity once persecuted by Roman authority was thrust into a position of unrestricted acceptance and influence (Rev. 12). This we know came known to be the Catholic (or "universal") Church.

The rise of Catholicism and the Papacy did not stop with mere acceptance. Around 550 A.D. the Emperor Justinian issued the "Pragmatic Sanction" giving the Bishop of Rome (or Pope) control of Municipal and Provincial Governments and in 606 A.D. the Emperor Phocas made an official decree establishing the Bishop of Rome as the "Universal Bishop" of the Catholic religion. The Pope would oversee not only a religious empire but one of material and political might. A period of 1,260 years was prophesied regarding this power's ability to persecute the saints during its time of absolute religious and political domination over "Christian" territories. (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5).

When the time period came to a close in the 1860's the Pope had been stripped of all temporal power and basically became a prisoner within the walls of the Vatican. But this was not the end of the Papacy and

we have seen a strong and remarkable rise in its religious and political influence in the last few decades.

A New Period

The Scriptures identify the rise and continuance of the Catholic / Papal system through history with various symbols and detail given. In Daniel 7 it is introduced coming out of the 4th Beast (Roman) of Daniel's vision as a "little horn" having eyes and a mouth speaking blasphemous things concerning God. Revelation 12 refers to the work of Constantine and the transfer of the dragon symbol from Pagan Rome to the new religious power that would take on the Roman characteristics. Revelation 13 refers to the "beast of the sea" that would develop out of the Roman Empire, with connection to the four beast elements found in Daniel 7, as well as the blasphemous characteristics of the "little horn" with eyes and a mouth. Revelation 13 also makes reference to the "beast of the earth" which represented the formation of the Holy Roman Empire as a protectorate and enforcer of the "Image of the Beast" or the Papal system.

Though temporal power has been taken away and the Holy Roman Empire has collapsed, the Papal system still stands (as it always has) as a teacher of great deception and falsehood – in other words a false prophet or teacher. Not only deceiving its followers but the world and its "Christian" daughters as well. Though claiming to be "Christian" in nature, scriptural Truth witnesses just the opposite. It is therefore most fitting, especially since 1870, that this blasphemous system would be symbolized in Biblical terms as the False Prophet.

The Papacy no longer has power over temporal dominions (except for a few acres inside Rome, known as the Vatican City) but continues to act as a mouthpiece or voice of abominations that deceive while claiming to be God's representative ("Vicar of Christ) on earth. It is interesting to note that when a new Pope is coronated these words are spoken when the crown is placed on his head – "Receive this tiara adorned with three crowns; know that thou art the father of princes and kings, victor of the whole world under the earth, the vicar of our Lord, Jesus Christ".

Even though the Papacy no longer has the same level of power, it teaches and influences with a self-appointed authority that makes the world stop and listen. In 1870 when Papal dominion was coming to an

end, out of prideful indignation Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of Papal Infallibility.

Considering the long list of falsehood that has been introduced into Christianity by this system and its popes such is obviously an incredible claim. But such is only further confirmation of its identification as the False Prophet System. With real dominion all but stripped away from the Papal system the term False Prophet is a most fitting description of it in this current age as it continues to influence and deceive the nations – even having an official position in the United Nations.

As a voice piece for the frog like spirits, during this time period of human history the Papacy has also had to change with the times to stay relevant to current world attitudes. During its 1,260 year period as the “Beast of the Earth” and the “Image of the Beast” (Rev. 13) it had no concern for the frog like concepts of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and did everything possible to oppress any thoughts or actions that were opposed to the Church’s beliefs and interests. In a major turnabout to stay relevant with the times, in recent decades (especially under the work of Pope John Paul II) the Catholic Church took on the mantle as a champion for human rights. “The Vatican - once a resolute foe of human rights, but nowadays all too willing to become involved in European politics”. And as was observed by a report from the Catholic Bishops conference of England and Wales (1998) “human rights have become central to the Church's mission in the world.” The same report goes on to give a list of specific rights including (and we are only providing a small sample) – “freedom to investigate the truth, and freedom of speech and publication; freedom to pursue a choice of career; the right to receive a good general education; the right not only to be given the opportunity to work but also to enjoy the exercise of personal initiative in that work; the right to a just wage; the right to the private ownership of property including that of productive goods; the right to meet together with others and to form associations; the right to freedom of movement; and the right to take an active part in public life, and to make a contribution to the common welfare.”

Fundamentally, little has changed regarding the religious views and self-centeredness of the Catholic system but this new facade has allowed “The Church” (as it calls itself) to be perceived as more in tune and sympathetic with the needs of the people in these modern

times, which feeds the humanistic tendencies of present world attitudes. As we learn from the scriptural examples of false prophets, the False Prophet is willing to tell the people what they want to hear in order to preserve a place of acceptance and continued influence, while at the same time claiming Divine authority to speak and teach what it does.

False Teaching / Prophecy

Year	Teaching
124	Immortality of the Soul
325	The Trinity
375	Veneration of angels and dead Saints
431	The worship of Mary
593	Doctrine of Purgatory
600	Prayer directed to Mary
788	Worship of relics
1079	Celibacy of the priesthood
1215	Dogma of Transubstantiation
1229	Bible forbidden to laymen
1585	Jesuit Francisco Ribera promotes “Futurism” view of the Apocalypse
1834	Immaculate Conception
1870	Dogma of Papal infallibility
1950	Assumption of Mary to heaven.
1996	Pope endorses Evolution

What about Islam?

The main thrust of argument that we have seen that promotes the belief of an Islamic identification of the False Prophet centers around the fact that Mahomet is referred to as “The Prophet” by his followers. Knowing that he certainly was not a true prophet of God, and considering the apparent impact that Islam is having on the world scene, especially in relation to a united hatred for Israel, some make a direct link between Islam and the False Prophet symbol. There is a certain degree of logic and plausibility on the surface, but when the nature of the False Prophet religious system is considered in its entire scriptural context then there is no real Biblical basis for such a conclusion.

There is no question that the Islamic religion is playing a high-profile role in world events as we speak and truly it is a false religion, but it is not the only false world religion either. Mahomet established Islam in 622 A.D. and with this in mind it is extremely important to realize that Islam did not originate out of the 1st Century Ecclesia and therefore was not a “false prophet” spirit that would arise out of the Ecclesia and lead people astray; it did not have a hand in distorting and apostatizing the One True Faith. Catholicism came out of the True Ecclesia, and in fact claims to be the one original “Christian” church based on Peter as its foundation. (This lends to it as also being identified as a “Harlot” in Revelation 17 – yet another appropriate symbol to identify and give further detail and perspective to the “mystery of iniquity”.)

In considering further whether or not Islam is the “False Prophet”, if we turn over to Revelation 19:20 we are given more detail to help us understand his identity. There we read of his destruction - “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worship his image.” This is a direct reference to Revelation 13 where the development of the Apostate (Catholic) system and her tell-tale characteristics of identification are given. Connecting Rev. 19:20 with Revelation 13 shows that there is a clear and unmistakable connection of the False Prophet to the Apostasy (Catholic System). Linking Revelation 16:13 to the passage

here in 19:20, we do not see any possible connection with Islam to the False prophet symbol. (And as a side note, no religious system has wrought fraudulent “miracles” on the scale that Catholicism has claimed and still claims in its attempts to deceive the masses.)

The impact of the rise of Islam and its militant characteristics does find a place in the Prophetic word. In Revelation 9 we see it spoken of as used by God as a punishing and destroying element on both the Eastern and Western portions of the Apostasy. Islam came to be a counter balance and a painful thorn in the side of Catholicism and the Holy Roman Empire for centuries, having a profound effect on the course of history. But though still being a false system, it was a system that was violently opposed to Trinitarian doctrine, Mary worship, and the idolatry that characterized the Catholic system – a hatred that continues today. Christadelphians have much in common with Islam not least the hope of the Abrahamic promises and the belief in one God rather than a Trinity.

By no means can we or do we wish to minimize the role of the Islamic religion, or the role that some of the Arab / Islamic nations are playing in current events and will play at Christ’s return. But that does not mean that we can force an interpretation on the symbol of the False Prophet that just does not fit the clues and evidence that the Scriptures themselves give us. It cannot be forgotten that the Catholic System is specially targeted in the Apocalypse for its blasphemy against God, its adulteration of true Christianity, and its supreme hatred and persecution on Spiritual Israel as well as against the natural Jews. It also cannot be taken for granted that the Catholic system has a remarkable degree of influence over the religious and political world as we speak. The sins of the Catholic Church against the Believers and Jewish people over the centuries are utterly profound, and its crafty political and religious manoeuvrings and influence against current Jewish interests cannot be ignored; its anti-Israel and humanistic policies (unclean spirits), along with the “dragon” and “beast”, are bringing the world ever closer to the Armageddon that is promised in Revelation 16.

Catholicism is the False Prophet - indeed and we have to be careful not to lose sight of the Scriptural, historical and present-day facts that support such an understanding. It is true that Islamic countries such as Iran and Syria as well as the “Palestinian” people continue to promulgate a savage hatred against Zion and act as “pricking brier”

(Ezek. 28:24). There is no question as believers that we are to have a natural and spiritual inclination towards the Israeli / Jewish plight in her struggles with all of her enemies. We are to look with longing expectation when, “ten men shall take a hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew” (Zechariah 8:23). We can have no doubt that Yahweh through Christ and the immortalized saints will appropriately deal with such nations that “curse” the natural seed of Abraham. Such matters are dealt with in other portions of scriptures, including the destruction of nations such as Iran (Persia) and other “Islamic” nations that will be confederate with the Gogian Host. (Ezek. 38)

The Arab/Islamic neighbors of Israel have had over 50 years to “drive Israel into the sea”. They talk about, and they have attempted it several times, but they have not been able to accomplish it. The time is coming for larger and even more arrogant world players to “think an evil thought” (Ezekiel 38:10) in the attempt to fulfil their desires on the “burdensome stone” (Zechariah 12:3) that is Jerusalem, and to take care of the Middle Eastern question once and for all – but to their own destruction.

False Prophesying

Attempting to identify Islam as the False Prophet is nothing new. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica – “When Islam was founded in the 7th Century as a new, higher religion; it considered the revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad to be superior to the former levels of Old and New Testament revelation. Christianity fought Islam as a Christian heresy... this new threat was seen as the fulfilment of the Apocalypse concerning the coming of the False prophet.”

It was the Apostasy who first identified Islam as the “False Prophet”, which is not surprising that they would be very quick to identify the symbol with someone else rather than themselves. Serious consideration needs to be taken to the fact that identifying Islam as the False Prophet began as a Catholic diversion.

False prophecy (in reference to prophetic interpretation) has been a long practice within the Apostasy. Early “church fathers” such as Hyppolytus (170-236), Irenaeus (120-202), and Cyprian (200-258) taught of a “Futuristic” view of the Apocalypse, pushing the majority

of its interpretation to the time around Christ's return, and taught of a literal interpretation of symbolic time periods – denying the “day for a year principal” as well as promoting the idea of the rise of “The Antichrist” at the time of the end.

The Apostasy continued the practice of clouding or falsifying prophetic interpretation, since so much of it was in fact in reference to them. This was dramatically seen in the formation of the Jesuit sect during the Reformation to defend the honour of the Papacy and to divert attention from the accusations of the rising Protestant movement who were loudly and correctly pointing the finger at the Catholic Church as the “False Prophet”, “Harlot”, “Man of Sin”, “antichrist system” etc. Efforts by Jesuits such as Ribera, Alcazar, Bellarmine and Lacunza were used to promote teachings that would divert attention away from the Catholic Church. It is interesting to consider that Ribera (who promoted “Futurism” – the view that the majority of the book of Revelation applies to a latter day 3½ time period) and Alcazar (who promoted “Preterism” – the view that the majority of the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) both taught two opposing interpretations of the Apocalypse at about the same time, but since they were both intended to divert attention away from negative application of the Catholic system in the Apocalypse both interpretations were allowed promotion. What confusion; truly the “The Great Catholic Diversion”!

The “Futurism” teachings of the Jesuit Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) were translated and promoted in 1825 by the Scottish Presbyterian Edward Irving (1792-1834) who was the forerunner of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, and has profoundly influenced the prophetic interpretations of the Protestant / Evangelical movement today. While the more “liberal” branches of Protestantism adopted “Preterism”, it is the conservative elements of the Evangelical movement who have adopted “Futurism”. The views as found in the “Christian” world regarding the rise of “The Antichrist” who will establish rule in Jerusalem and conquer the world during a 3 ½ year period of “tribulation” can be traced to Ribera's work. Not only has Catholicism influenced and deceived the “Christian” world regarding doctrine but they have deceived the world on the “sure word of prophecy” as well.

When Christ returns many will believe him to be the anti-Christ because of these interpretations - Catholicism is truly a False Prophet

in all aspects of teaching, yet they call themselves Christians!

The End of the False Prophet

Leading up to the great crisis at the End Time - the Dragon (Russia), the Beast (Europe), and the False Prophet (Catholicism) will be working very closely in their influence to turn the world on Israel. The Dragon and her allies (Ezekiel 38:1-6) – some of which will be Islamic in nature - will be soundly defeated and destroyed “upon the mountains of Israel”. We have already referred to it but we are told later that God’s judgment will then be turned on the “beast and false prophet”: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered to make war against Him That sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” (Rev. 19:20, 21). And in 20:10 we have further emphasis that both the beast and false prophet as being held in this “lake of fire” “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” – indicating utter and eternal destruction and death.

The Milestones 2005 yearly update (by Don Pierce, published by the Christadelphian Scriptures Study Service) makes the interesting observation as to the subtleties in interpreting the destruction of the “Harlot” as found in the Revelation 18 and the destruction of the “false prophet” in Revelation 19: “We must therefore see a subtle difference between the harlot woman and the false prophet. The Roman Catholic Church has a worldwide network of archbishops, with bishops and priests under them. When Babylon falls as described in ch 18, this will be the destruction of the harlot rider – the Vatican, the Pope and the physical buildings associated with “the Holy Sea”.

Although the heart is taken out, the world-wide network of priests will continue to resist, and may have to be rooted out step by step. The “false prophet” will then have come to its end.” When one considers the horrendous evils that have been committed by the False Prophet for his corruption of the Truth and the horrific injustices he has committed in the name of “Christianity”; as the great enemy of Christ and His ecclesia as well as the enemy of the Jewish people it can be of no mystery as to why this system, with the use of various symbols and detail, is described with such utter disdain by the Spirit Word.

We look forward to that great end when all enemies of Divine Truth are utterly destroyed and the remnant of the world that remains is brought under complete subjection of Christ and the saints. "He which testifieth these things saith, "Surely I come quickly." Amen.

Why describe these as Spirit?

The actions of the Catholic Church (1 John 4:3), democracy (Revelation 16:13), and the effects of the age in which we live (Ephesians 2:2) are all referred to as spirits within the scriptures. This has nothing to do with evil beings, or ethereal entities; these are all things that over history have influenced and directed the steps of believers. They "teach" the ways of wickedness and falsehood, and oppose the doctrines of Christ.

Translated us into the Kingdom

The task of living in the world but not of the world seems to be becoming increasingly more difficult with each succeeding generation, and even brethren and sisters who are most unworldly in their own life style seem to be failing to influence their own children, because what they cannot get at home they can so easily find elsewhere these days. We do not say this to excuse ourselves or to make us feel any better about the situation, we merely observe it as a fact. The world has never had so many means at its disposal for putting its own message across to us. We are living in the age of information technology. Information can now be compiled and stored and distributed in alarming quantities, overwhelming quantities, and it can hit us from all sides. Today there are not only newspapers, there is radio, television, videos, computers, compact discs, tape cassettes, and of course magazines, books, seminars, courses—the list seems endless; and circulating around all these things there is the advertising world that is hyping it all up and making it as appealing as possible to us. How often do we hear the ring of a mobile phone at even the breaking of bread service?

Yes, the world's information is all-pervasive; it pushes into our lives the ideals, the standards and the morals of the world; and it is impossible really to escape from all this: while we are in the world, we are going to be subject to it. Of course, it has to be admitted that it is not all bad; there are some good things that can be taken from it; but in the main the vast mass of it is not good. Among our brethren and sisters at least we should be able to feel that we are free from this

intrusive worldliness that we meet outside. Sadly, we cannot even guarantee that today, though, can we?

We read: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1.12). We can, and surely, we do, give thanks to God that He has called us out of this world of darkness and has considered us fit to partake in a new world, a world of light, together with all the saints who have that same inheritance. We are thankful that Jesus has shed his blood and brought forgiveness and redemption to us all.

Reading those words from Colossians puts us in mind of similar words that we find in Galatians 1, where we read that Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:4). We have two very different worlds set before us, a world of darkness and evil, and a world of goodness and light: the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God; and we give thanks because, as this chapter says, we have been delivered from this present evil world of darkness and we have been translated into the kingdom of Christ.

But how do we understand that? What can it mean, that we have been translated from this kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, of Christ? Some would say that it means that this is now the kingdom of God. The kingdom will be in this world, indeed, but only when the kingdoms of this world are removed from it. The meek will inherit the earth when the present possessors have passed from the scene. Bro. Thomas, writing in Eureka, put it in his characteristically clear and robust fashion when he wrote about the brethren at Smyrna. He said: "They were 'heirs of that kingdom,' in which they believed; and, as every intelligent person, who is not spoiled by the clerical traditions of the Nikolaitans, knows, an heir is one who is to obtain possession of a thing after the present possessor dies; so the Smyrneans were not present possessors of the kingdom, but living in hope of sometime or other coming into possession of 'the kingdoms of this world,' when 'the Satan,' the present and actual possessor of them, shall be forcibly ejected... The Smyrneans did not entertain the silly and absurd notion, so characteristic in our day of clerical craziness, that they were either

the kingdom itself, or in the kingdom!"

So, to get back to our original question, how are we supposed to think of ourselves as having been translated from the power of darkness, the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of Christ? That word 'translated' is a very unusual one. It means removed or transferred or carried away. We do not come across it very often in the Scriptures. That word immediately reminds us of the translation of Enoch, who, we remember, "by faith was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Hebrews 11:5). The full meaning of what actually happened to Enoch will probably not be grasped by us this side of the kingdom, but it clearly involved a removal of some sort and an escape from death (see Questions and Answers, current author), and both these things, we see from Paul's writing in Colossians, relate to us, to our translation. Our translation to the kingdom of Christ is linked with salvation through Christ's blood. So, we can see Enoch as being typical of all of us. We have all been in a sense translated that we should not see death, and perhaps his case also tells us something about the nature of our calling, because before his translation he pleased God.

How we are to understand our translation to the kingdom of God is surely explained in something else that the apostle Paul said, something he wrote in his Letter to the Philippians. He said there: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20). As you may know, that word conversation is better translated as citizenship. It is the Greek word *politeuma*, from which we have politics and political. Our politics, one might say, relate to heaven. That is where our citizenship lies. We are "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," (Ephesians 2:19). Paul said.

So, this translation of ourselves from one kingdom to another entails, as we can see, a transfer of citizenship; and although the kingdom of God does not yet exist; we are still able to be citizens of that kingdom before. We are to consider ourselves as belonging no longer to this present order but already belonging to the next order, and that, of course—that we have been translated, living now as citizens of the kingdom to come—has to be very much a matter of faith. We remember that it was by faith that Enoch was translated, and so it is with us by faith. We could not live in this world as if we belonged to a

world that we could not see, unless it was by faith, and this is how our living in the world but not of the world works. We consider ourselves now to be citizens, not of this world, but of the kingdom of God.

We do not view it as a negative thing, as what we are not and what we cannot do, but who we are and what we are and what we can do. We are citizens of the kingdom of God and we act accordingly now. It is no good thinking, O, I'll be different in the kingdom. It is now that we have got to make the change to the sort of people we are going to be then. We should think of it perhaps as Christ confirming our citizenship when he comes, rather than bestowing it, because the Spirit power in that day will not be making our characters fit for immortality, only our bodies if our characters are already suitable.

So, it is now that we must become citizens of the kingdom of God. We should not consider ourselves or act in any way as if we were citizens of this world. "Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2). That is it — the transformation of our minds, of the way we think. Our eyes are above now, on heavenly things. We are not preoccupied with the things that bother the people of this world. Paul maintains this theme throughout the Letter to the Colossians, this idea of crossing over from one kingdom to another, from one life to another. He says that we are to consider ourselves dead with regard to this world. We rose from baptism to a new life with Christ, as citizens of a new world yet to come. We are "dead with Christ" (Romans 6:8, Colossians 2:20) he says "from the rudiments of this world," (Colossians 2:8, 20) that is, from the principles that govern the way this world conducts itself.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3. 1-4). Paul then goes on to tell us to "Mortify your members which are upon the earth," (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5) and he elaborates there by giving us a list of a lot of things which should now find no place in our lives—the things which belonged to our life before we became citizens of the kingdom of God. Now we are citizens. We think of ourselves as being totally new people, and all those things like covetousness, anger, evil desires, evil speaking and so on, should be dead now, along with the person that we once were. The citizens of

the kingdom of God won't have those characteristics, will they? We can't be people like that in the kingdom, can we?

"...ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3.10). Then come all the good qualities, what we might call Paul's 'how to be a citizen of the kingdom of God' section. We put all those things off, all those horrible things—or at least we are trying to — and now here are some things to put on: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies (that is, tender mercies) kindness, humbleness of mind (not an external appearance of humbleness but real humbleness of mind), meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, forgiving one another." (Colossians 3:12).

Now as soon as we read the list of all those wonderful attributes, we recognised immediately what Paul was talking about. It was "the fruit of the Spirit," (Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9) that one fruit that has within it all the good attributes that God looks for in us. We have it from Paul in Corinthians. He mentions it again in Galatians, and now, consistently, here it is again in Colossians 3. Having mentioned these attributes of kindness, meekness and so on, Paul says: "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." (Colossians 3:14). Charity is, as we might expect, love—the word 'agape'. This 'agape', love, is the fruit of the Spirit, the unselfish love which encompasses all the good that we might possibly do.

Here Paul tells us that it is "the bond of perfectness," the bond of completeness. It binds together and combines all these elements of longsuffering, humility, forgiveness and so on. They are all parts of 'agape' that come together and make it complete. This high form of love, the very highest form of love, God-like love, is the hallmark of the citizen of the kingdom of God, and we can only develop this sort of love today by reading the Word of God, filling our minds with the mind of God, and then the fruit of the Spirit will emerge. The Word of God "effectually worketh in them that believe," (1 Thessalonians 2:13) to produce this fruit, this 'agape' form of love that makes us God-like, that makes us citizens of the kingdom of God.

So, Paul continues his 'how to be a citizen' remarks by saying: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Colossians 3:16). Then he adds: "teaching and admonishing one another in

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Paul is really stressing the 'plus' factors of being a citizen of the kingdom of God. It is something to be grateful, thankful, happy about, something to lift up our hearts about, make us sing. "Admonish" there does not mean to tell one another off. We imagine someone wagging a finger at us, don't we? That really carries the wrong idea altogether. It means to remind one another gently, lovingly. We should not be browbeating one another about how we should conduct our lives but encouraging one another gently, reminding one another from the Word.

As citizens of the kingdom of God we can all sing with "grace in our hearts," happy and content in the knowledge that God's grace is directed to us; not that it might be, but that it is directed to us. If only we could put as much faith and confidence in God's grace being directed towards us as we sometimes have in His displeasure! We know, of course, that our salvation is conditional—we are not trying to deny that; Christ will "present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." (Colossians 1:22-23). Yes, our salvation is conditional; but look at the condition closely—that big "if" that might seem rather unsettling. Paul is saying, "Stay faithful, and don't move your hope, and Christ will then present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight"; not that we will not have anything that we could be blamed about, or that we will be perfect; but if we keep the faith and never lose our grip on our hope despite our failings, believing firmly in God's grace and forgiveness and never doubting it, no matter what shame we might feel at how wrong we go sometimes, in Christ's sight we will be blameless, unreprouable. Continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22, Colossians 1:23); "Do not be moved away from your hope." If we understand anything at all of 'agape' love, then we will know something of the quality and the grace that is extended towards us. "God is love," (1 John 4:8, 16) and that word is 'agape'. He is this highest form of love.

Now when we were reading through that section 'how to be citizens of the kingdom of God'; in Colossians 3, we jumped over one of the verses because we wanted to keep it until last, and we read it now, together with the preceding verse, verses 14 and 15. Paul writes: "And above all these things put on charity (agape), which is the bond of perfectness." Now this is the verse: "And let the peace of God rule in

your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Colossians 3:14-16). Does it ever occur to us that we were called so that God's peace might rule in our hearts? That in being translated from the kingdom of darkness and becoming citizens of God's kingdom, our lives could be so changed by this agape—in ourselves and coming from God—that we would know peace, the perfect peace of God, in our own hearts? How frequent or rare is the experience of that sort of peace of mind for you and me? Only you and I can know that for ourselves. Are we generally troubled by many things? Paul tells us on one occasion to "joy in tribulation." (2 Thessalonians 1:4, 6). It is as if we have a quiet centre in ourselves that outside events do not disturb.

Let us remind one another gently that there really is nothing to worry about. God would prefer His peace to rule in our hearts, and that is why He called us; but our hearts need not be troubled, and certainly not in the world to come, of which we are citizens. Let us take Paul's counsel to ourselves about singing with grace in our hearts. Let us remember the love of our heavenly Father, "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13-14).



Chapter 19 – Holy Water

Spirit – meaning 18 – Holy water

Catholic beliefs

Holy water is water that has been blessed by a member of the clergy or a religious figure. The use for cleansing prior to a baptism and spiritual cleansing is common in several religions, from Christianity to Sikhism. The use of holy water as a sacramental for protection against evil is common among Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

In Catholicism, Anglicanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy and some other churches, holy water is water that has been sanctified by a priest for the purpose of baptism, the blessing of persons, places, and objects, or as a means of repelling evil.

The use of holy water in the earliest days of Christianity is attested to only in somewhat later documents. The Apostolic constitutions, which go back to about the year 400, attribute the precept of using holy water to the Apostle Matthew. It is plausible that in earliest Christian times water was used for expiatory and purificatory purposes in a way analogous to its employment in Jewish Law. Yet, in all cases, the water used for Baptism was flowing water, sea or river water, and it could not receive the same blessing as that contained in the baptisteries in the view of the Roman Catholic church.

In the Middle Ages the power of holy water was considered so great that in some places fonts had locked covers to prevent the theft of holy water for unauthorized magic practices. The Constitutions of Archbishop Edmund Rich (1236) prescribe that "Fonts are to be kept under lock and key, because of witchcraft (sortilegia). Similarly, the chrism and sacred oil are kept locked up.

In Catholicism, holy water, as well as water used during the washing of the priest's hands at mass, is not allowed to be disposed of in regular plumbing. Roman Catholic churches will usually have a special basin (a Sacarium) that leads directly into the ground for the purpose of proper disposal. A hinged lid is kept over the holy water

basin to distinguish it from a regular sink basin, which is often just beside it. Items that contained holy water are separated, drained of the holy water, and then washed in a regular manner in the adjacent sink.

As a reminder of baptism, Catholic Christians dip their fingers in the holy water and make the sign of the cross when entering the church. The liturgy may begin on Sundays with the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water, in which holy water is sprinkled upon the congregation; this is called aspersion, from the Latin, *aspergere*, to sprinkle. This ceremony dates back only to the ninth century. An *aspergill* or *aspergillum* is a brush or branch used to sprinkle the water. An *aspersorium* is the vessel which holds the holy water and into which the *aspergillum* is dipped, though elaborate Ottonian examples are known as *situlae*. Blessed salt may be added to the water "where it is customary."

This use of holy water and making a sign of the cross when entering a church reflects a renewal of baptism, a cleansing of venial sin, as well as providing protection against evil. It is sometimes accompanied by the following prayer: "By this Holy water and by your Precious Blood, wash away all my sins O Lord".

Holy water has also been believed to ward off or act as a weapon against mythical evil creatures, such as vampires, evil spirits and ghosts. In eastern Europe, one might sprinkle holy water onto the corpse of a suspected vampire in order to destroy it or render it inert. Thereafter, the concept proliferated into fiction about such creatures.

Christening ⁱⁱⁱ

Mark 10:14

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Matthew 18:4

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

These references are cited to justify the widespread practice of "baptizing" infants. The United Church of Canada puts it this way:

"...if the Kingdom belongs to little children, they cannot be denied

baptism which is the sacrament of initiation into that kingdom... If even adult candidates for baptism have to become like little children, how can baptism be refused to the children whom they are supposed to imitate?

Infant sprinkling is not mentioned in this text or any other in the New Testament.

If the United Church interpretation were the correct one, then the doors of the kingdom would be shut to all but baptized infants since Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark 10:15).

"Of such" and "as" ("like", see R.S.V., Mark 10:14, 15) indicate that Jesus is making a comparison. Unless the adult has child-like qualities the doors of the kingdom will be shut. Child-like qualities are stressed elsewhere in Scripture, e.g., "Brethren be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." (1 Cor. 14:20); "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Peter 2:1, 2).

The Matthew account leaves no doubt as to the intent of Jesus' words: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3,4). See verses 10 and 14 - "little ones" are the disciples.

In the Mark account Jesus refers to his disciples as "children." (Mark 10:24).

A means of spiritual wealth?

A sacramental that remits venial sin? "Because of the blessing attached to it, Holy Church strongly urges its use upon Her children, especially when dangers threaten, such as fire, storms, sickness, discord and other calamities."

"Every Catholic home should always have a supply of Holy Water.

Did we realize now, as we shall after death, the many benefits which may be derived from Holy Water, we would use it far more frequently, and with greater faith and reverence. Holy Water has its great power and efficacy from the prayers of the Church.”

Following, are some of the petitions the priest makes to God when he blesses water: "O God... grant that this creature of Thine (water) may be endowed with divine grace to drive away devils and to cast out diseases, that whatever in the houses or possessions of the faithful may be sprinkled by this water, so that health which they seek by calling upon Thy Holy Name may be guarded from all assaults."

“The devil hates holy water because of its power over him. He cannot long abide in a place or near a person that is often sprinkled with blessed water. Holy Water, sprinkled with faith and piety, can move the Sacred Heart to bless your loved ones, present or absent, and protect them from all harm of soul and body. When worry and fear take possession of you, give your dear ones the benefit of the Church's prayer. Only in Purgatory can one understand how ardently a poor soul longs for Holy Water. If we desire to make a host or intercessors for ourselves, let us never forget them at the Holy Water font. The holy souls nearest to Heaven may need the sprinkling of only one drop to release them.”

Needless to say; the annual income from 'the offerings to our lady' through the sale of Holy water amounts to millions of dollars and nowhere in the scriptures will you find any reference to such practices. It makes money from a completely made up doctrine not found in the first century.



Chapter 20 – Miscellaneous Spirits

Spirit – meaning 19 - an evil spirit

The phrase “an evil spirit” is found twice in scripture (Judges 9:23, 1 Samuel 16:14-15). It is a phrase that simply means the individual was grumpy and in a bad mood. There is no real connection to be found with the “spirit world” with such phrases.

Spirit – meaning 20 – a cleaning fluid

This use of the word “spirit” is unlikely to be confused by anyone, nor is its use found anywhere in the Bible. However, for completeness we include it here.

Modern White Spirit is neither white or based upon alcoholic spirit as you might expect from its name. It is a petroleum-derived mixture of aliphatic and alicyclic C7 to C12 hydrocarbons with a maximum content of 25% of C7 to C12 aromatic hydrocarbons. A typical composition for mineral spirits is 65% C10 or higher hydrocarbons, aliphatic solvent hexane, and a maximum benzene content of 0.1% by volume. White spirit or mineral spirits (US), is also known as mineral turpentine, turpentine substitute, petroleum spirits, solvent naphtha (petroleum), varsol, Stoddard solvent, or, generically, “paint thinner”. It is a petroleum-derived clear liquid used as a common organic solvent in painting and decorating. It is the most widely used solvent in the paint industry. In households, white spirit is commonly used to clean paint brushes after use, to clean auto parts and tools, as a starter fluid for charcoal grills, to remove adhesive residue from non-porous surfaces, and many other common tasks.

Interestingly the reason we call it white, or spirit is completely lost to the annals of time. It is supposed that in the past white coloured alcohol may have been used for similar purposes. But knowledge of such is completely lost to us. One suggestion is that the cleaning fluid is supposed to “spirit-away” dirt, but this is pure speculation.



Chapter 21 – Angels

Are there spirit beings?

God is a spirit (John 4:24), and angels are spirit (Hebrews 1:14). So, yes, there are spirit beings; but not in the sense that the world would have us believe. As we have repeatedly shown in the preceding pages the origins of these many false ideas of what a spirit being is date back millennia.

Both God and the angels are described to us in detail throughout the scriptures, so we should really know what true spirit beings are really like (Genesis 18:2).

Angels

The angels are described as Gods “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14). This has often been confused with the mythical ideas surrounding ghosts. That the angels are ethereal entities is a myth. In fact, when seen they normally appear just as men (Genesis 18:2). Although they can be hidden from our eyesight. (2 Kings 6:17).

The story has been told of how the first Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, was instructed by Soviet premier Khrushchev to watch out for angels when he went into space in April, 1962. On his return he reported that he had seen no angels. Khrushchev is said to have replied, "Good, I knew you wouldn't. There are no such things!"

It is all too easy to assume that what you do not see does not exist!

Do *you* believe in angels? Do you know who they are or what they do? Are they just figments of the artist's imagination in religious paintings down the centuries? Is there really something out there we ought to know about? Is it important to know if they exist?

Back to the Bible

Positive answers to such questions are to be found only in the Bible. We have no other source of reliable information. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and contains a whole library of information on the subject: so, where better to look?

Let us go straight to the Bible to remarkable evidence about these heavenly beings. The example we are to look at first is not the earliest occasion when angels are mentioned, but it is a particularly illuminating one. In the days when the kingdoms of Syria and Israel were at war in the 8th century BC, the king of Syria was much frustrated by the constant discovery of the whereabouts of his advancing forces (2 Kings 6:8-11). Being told that the informer was Elisha the prophet of God, his agents tracked down Elisha and his servant to a small hill town in northern Israel. He dispatched a large army to capture the prophet, and surrounded Dothan with chariots and horsemen under cover of night. When Elisha's young servant looked out the next morning and saw this great host, he was terrified: "Alas, my master! How shall we do?"

The Man whose Eyes were Opened

It was a natural response. Totally outnumbered by a cruel and sadistic enemy who would show no mercy, he might be excused for being terrified. Yet his master's reaction was quite different! Calm and confident, Elisha's response was: "Don't be afraid!" Not be afraid? Who would not be, in these circumstances? The reason was: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." (2 Kings 6:16). What did he mean? Could Elisha see something that the servant could not? All became clear when the prophet prayed to God:

"Yahweh. I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17).

Elisha was a man of God, and Yahweh had sent his protective forces in the service of His prophet. Elisha had already experienced a similar thing a short time before, when his predecessor Elijah was taken up from him and Elisha had cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2:12). Elisha knew from that experience that the angels were there, but the inexperienced young steward had not yet learned where true strength lies. His spiritual eyes were closed.

God Works Through His Servants

The Dothan experience is an instructive revelation of how God works on man's behalf through His hosts of messenger servants. They were more numerous than the chariots of the Syrian army: they were powerful and like a consuming fire, and they were invested with the

authority of the "King of kings" (Ezra 7:12, Ezekiel 26:7, Daniel 2:37, 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:16) who sent them. Did their presence at Dothan achieve anything? Certainly, it did, for in addition to saving the two men and the town's inhabitants, the Syrian army was neutralised, their soldiers temporarily blinded and led away from Dothan into the hands of the king of Israel.

The chariot and horsemen revealed to Elisha's servant were the angels of God, concerned for those who feared God. The incident demonstrated what another "man of God", king David, well understood and which he described in the following Psalms:

"The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them *that fear him*, and delivereth them." (Psalm 34:7).

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: Yahweh is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." (Psalm 68:17).

"Bless Yahweh, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye Yahweh, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure." (Psalm 103:20, 21).

"Bless the LORD ... who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire." (Psalm 104:1-4).

The Hosts of God

Here are all the elements of the Dothan experience: the chariots, as a symbol of strength; the surrounding army, a mighty protective force around those who put their trust in God; the symbol of fire, holding back or destroying the enemy. We note the impressive numbers, telling us of the great host at God's disposal. Jesus told Pontius Pilate that he could summon "more than twelve legions of angels" (over 72,000) to his help, against which the Roman governor's legions would have had no power at all (Matthew 26:53). We observe, too that these forces are God's forces. They are "*his* angels", "*his* hosts", and they are "*his* ministers", doing *His* pleasure. In other words, the LORD God has total control over them. They "excel" in strength they have more than enough power to complete their commissions.

With the evidence of this important Bible event, it is clear that there are such beings as angels, and that they have been at work on behalf of God and man. If we wish to know more about them, we must start with a simple question.

Who are the Angels?

The English word "angel" comes from the Greek *angelos*, which means 'messenger'. In the Old Testament, with two exceptions, the Hebrew word for "angel" is *malak*, also meaning 'messenger'. The prophet Malachi took his name from this word. He was himself a messenger, and he prophesied about the coming of "the messenger of the covenant", Jesus Christ (Malachi 3:1).

Although the word "angel" in the Bible, meaning a messenger, nearly always applies to heavenly beings (or aliens if we prefer to use that term), it can occasionally apply to human messengers. Malachi himself said a priest was a messenger (*malak*) of Yahweh of hosts (Malachi 2:7), and in the Book of Revelation the elders of the seven churches of Asia were called angels (1:20; 2:1 etc.). But when we meet messengers doing supernatural things, there is no doubt they are heavenly beings - God's messengers, working for Him and for the ultimate benefit of mankind.

The Creator of the Universe

Yahweh is the Creator of everything in the universe, and He made the angels. Of course, atheists and agnostics do not see the need for angels. If (as they believe) everything around them has come about by chance rather than by design they will be indifferent to how God works. But there is overwhelming evidence of a Supreme Designer who not only created, but is in control of a master plan for the earth and the human race. The sympathetic reader will therefore understand why the Creator will wish to explain His purpose to the intelligent beings that He has created.

Yahweh has always been there, and He always will be there, so that the Bible describes Him as being "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). He is a living God (in contrast to all other so-called "gods"); the source of all power, all life and all things necessary for life to continue. In creating the galaxies, the stars, the planets and everything else in space. He singled out the earth for a special purpose, with the intention that it should become the home of a race of beings who would reflect His own glory and emulate His own characteristics. "All the earth shall be filled with my glory" (Numbers

14:21) is His promise. Although He is a spirit power, He is not some kind of automatic machine or a ghost.

God did not create robots with automated responses for life on earth; rather, He desired to generate a willing response to His will from men and women who revere and obey Him:

"Thus saith Yahweh. The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool ... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my word*." (Isaiah 66:1, 2).

Why did God Create Angels?

The Creator Himself is so powerful and glorious that He cannot be approached in person by human beings. He alone "hath immortality, dwelling in the light which *no man can approach unto*: whom no man hath seen, nor can see (1 Timothy 6:16). Angels do not have man's shortcomings, and can therefore act for God and represent Him when communicating with men and women. They bridge the huge gap between the holiness and perfection of God in heaven and the shortcomings of dying people on this planet. Angels were made *immortal* (that is, never to die). Their eternal quality was spoken of by Jesus when he said:

"They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: *neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels*; and are the children of God being the children of the resurrection." (Luke 20:35,36).

Jesus was saying that, in the same way as the angels (the children or "sons" of God) live for ever and are of one gender, so those who will be called the "sons" and "daughters" of God when Jesus returns will also live for ever and will not marry.

The "Sons of God"

Having been brought into existence by God, the angels are called the "sons of God". In an example of this, God described to the patriarch Job the creation of the earth, and asks him:

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7).

These "sons of God" were there working for the Almighty. The Creator commanded, and the tasks were carried out. As Psalm 33 says, "For he spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast" (33:9). Yahweh only had to speak the word and the angels responded; and what they did, they did well - which is why the record in Genesis 1 repeatedly says that "God saw that it was good". Good, because "a faithful messenger refreshes the soul of the master who sends him" (Proverbs 25:13).

Man Made Lower than the Angels

When the first man was being created, the angels gave him a form resembling their own:

"Let us make man in our image after our likeness... So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

This does not mean that the first of the human race had exactly the same physical nature as the angels, for the angels were made to live for ever. Adam and Eve were *not* made never-dying: they *did* sin, and they suffered death as the punishment for it. That is why the whole human race has been dying ever since. The fact that man was created in the image of the angels speaks of God's ultimate intention for His creatures.

Psalm 8 is a Psalm in which the creation of the earth is extolled. Here we are told that man's position is lower than the angels:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ... For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." (Psalm 8:4, 5)

The New Testament quotes this passage, and tells us that mankind - including the Lord Jesus himself - was made a little lower than the angels, "*for the suffering of death*" (Hebrews 2:9). Angels do not die, but men and women do. Even Jesus, the Son of God, was mortal, but has now received the glory and honour which was his due when, as he said after his resurrection, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

The "Mighty Ones"

Psalm 8 is also very helpful because here the original word for "angels" is not *malak* ('messenger'), but *elohim*, a plural word meaning 'mighty (or powerful) ones'. *Elohim* is the Hebrew word

which is most often rendered "God" in the Old Testament. Although there are exceptions to this, it is useful when reading the Old Testament to note the intended connection between God and those who represent Him.

This introduces an important aspect of the angels and their work. As God's representatives, they bear His name and carry out His will. They are glorious because He is glorious. Yahweh is the Almighty. and the angels are "the sons of the mighty" (Psalm 89:6). Another of God's titles is "Yahweh of hosts (or armies)" (Yahweh Tz'vaoth) because, as we have seen, He has such extensive forces at His command.

We have seen that the angels execute the LORD God's commands, they were involved at the creation of the earth, they act as messengers and they operate in the name of Yahweh. We shall now look at how they guided, led and protected God's people, the nation of Israel.

Angels in Old Testament History

There was the notable case of Abraham, who "entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). One day "Yahweh appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him" (Genesis 18:1, 2). The "men" were provided with a meal, but they turned out to be angels and they had come on a double mission: firstly, to tell Sarah that she would have a son, and secondly, to talk about the fate of the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. After the meal, Abraham left the tent to set "the men" on their way. Two of them went down to Sodom, where "two angels" came into the city at evening, while the other man, who is referred to as "Yahweh", stayed to listen to Abraham's plea for mercy on the town where his nephew Lot lived.

Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, witnessed several angelic manifestations. On his flight into Padan-aram from the wrath of his brother Esau he had a dream, when he saw "the angels of God ascending and descending" a ladder going up from earth to heaven (Genesis 28:12). It was a dramatic representation of how communication between heaven and earth is maintained and how the angels are watchful over those who put their trust in God.

Jacob returned to his homeland some 20 years later, but was fearful of meeting Esau who was approaching with 400 men. The divine encouragement and protection was there again: "The angels of God

met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host" (Genesis 32:1, 2). But belief in the presence and power of angels does not eliminate the need for action on our part, as Jacob found out when he wrestled with a "man" in a painful night-long encounter. His opponent proved to be an angel, who did Jacob the honour of changing his name to "Israel", meaning a 'prince with God'. Jacob declared, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:24-30).

The Angel that Bore the Name of God

When the Israelites were released from their slavery in Egypt and started their journey back to the land of promise, it was the angel of God who led the tribes of Israel (Exodus 14:19). Arriving at Mount Sinai some months later, the congregation of two million people gathered at the foot of the "holy" mountain (where Moses had seen the angel in the burning bush) and were terrified by the manifestation of divine power in the thunder and lightning, smoke, fire and earthquake. Moses was called up to Sinai to meet with God's representative in all his glory, and the tables of stone with the famous ten commandments were "written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18, Deuteronomy 9:10). A rebellion by the Israelites during his absence almost brought about the breaking of the covenant that God made with this nation; but Moses interceded and pleaded with the LORD God to lead the people, personally, on their journey to Canaan. Yahweh replied that He would not go in person, but:

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him." (Exodus 23:20, 21).

The Angel of God's "Presence"

Observe the authority given to this angel! God had put His name into the messenger: the angel would guard them on the journey, but he must be obeyed or he would punish them. Yet Yahweh Himself would "not go up in the midst of thee" but would allow His "presence" to be with them (Exodus 33:3, 14). The divine power, glory and authority would be wholly vested in this angel. It does not mean that the angel would be seen by the people, but the evidence of his presence would be there in the pillar of cloud in the daytime and the pillar of fire that would be over the tabernacle at night. If they had "eyes to see" (Deuteronomy 29:4, Ezekiel 12:2) they would know that he was there,

looking after their interests. Moses and the High Priest would be able to get closer than anyone else. But none of the people, only the High Priest on one day in the year (the Day of Atonement) was able to experience the brilliant glory which resided between the wings of the gold "cherubim" over the ark in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle.

The cherubim are first mentioned when Adam and Eve were driven from Eden. They guarded the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24), and were modelled in gold on the Ark to represent God's protection and care.

Again, when Moses on Mount Sinai desired to see the face of God Himself he was not permitted to do so, only to witness the glory of Yahweh passing by: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). The Lord Jesus confirmed this when he said, "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). The angels therefore brought divine information to men and women, which they could not otherwise receive because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness.

Angels with Names

Only occasionally are the angels given names. "Michael", for instance, was "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (Israel)" (Daniel 12:1). Undoubtedly, among the most significant of angelic appearances were those by the angel whose name was "Gabriel". He was sent twice to the prophet Daniel. On the second occasion Daniel was at prayer, and Gabriel, "being caused to fly swiftly, touched me ... and talked with me" and proceeded to prophesy the date of the first coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Daniel 9:21-27). There was therefore great expectation among the Jews at the time when Jesus Christ was about to be born, and this was heightened by the personal appearance of Gabriel again, firstly to Zacharias the priest while on duty in the temple, and then to Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph. To Zacharias, the angel announced. "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee" (Luke 1:19). We notice that angels can stand in the glorious presence of Yahweh whereas men cannot, and angels are sent to do whatever God wishes. His mission here was to announce the miraculous birth of John the Baptist.

Six months later, Gabriel appeared to Mary, who was in the royal line of King David. Her prayer, said the angel, had found favour with God, and she would be the mother of the expected Messiah. Gabriel told

her that she would conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit and her son would be Jesus, the Saviour, and he would be the Son of God and would occupy the royal throne of David (Luke 1:26-33). It was an extraordinary meeting because Mary was not yet married. Nothing is impossible with God! Joseph, her husband-to-be, also received angelic messages advising him what steps to take in this unique situation.

When Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem, the birth was the signal for a glorious witness of divine approval, seen by shepherds:

"An angel of Yahweh (could this have been Gabriel?) appeared to them, and the glory of Yahweh shone around them, and they were filled with fear ... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!'" (Luke 2:9-14, RSV).

Angels Preach the Gospel

In this majestic event we observe first the specialised work of the one angel, appearing in the divine glory: secondly, the enormous numbers of his colleagues who are involved in the fulfilment of the promise - all, in unison, proclaiming the glory of the supreme God; and thirdly, the proclamation of the Gospel of the coming kingdom of God on earth, and peace among "them that fear him" (Psalms 22:25, 25:14, 33:18, 34:7, 9, 85:9, 103:11, 13, 17, 111:5, 145:19, 147:11, Luke 1:50) and "who tremble at his word" (Isaiah 66:5). It was an exciting confirmation of how the Almighty God conveys His purpose through His messengers.

When Jesus grew up, he was ever conscious of the part that angels played in his life. We read that at the end of his lonely six-weeks trial in the Judean wilderness, when he was very hungry and suffering from the stress of his temptations, and needed support and company, "angels came and ministered unto him" (Matthew 4:11). Again, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the angel was there, a personal companion with whom Jesus could commune and share his feelings. When even his closest disciples could not bear the pressures of the situation, the angel was a friend indeed!

The Angels in World Affairs

When Jesus prayed: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2), he was testifying to the

efficiency of the angels' work in the universe. It is they who, with the power generated by God, keep the stars and planets in precise order. When Christ is here again, the arrangements on earth will be like that. Meantime, as Daniel said, "The Most High rules in the kingdoms of men" (Daniel 4:17), and uses his servant-angels to bring about His will among the nations. They bear His characteristics: they are, for example, His "eyes". An angel once described his fellow angels to the prophet Zechariah as, "they whom Yahweh has sent to patrol the earth... the eyes of Yahweh, which range through the whole earth" (Zechariah 1:10; 4:10, RSV). "Eyes" seems a fitting description, when these messengers are out on patrol!

Angels at the Second Coming of Christ

Powerful as they are, the angels do not know everything. For example, their knowledge of the precise time when Jesus will come back is limited, for Jesus said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36). But it is certain that they are going to be greatly involved with the events of his second coming and the setting up of the kingdom of God. Theirs will not be a passive role. Their tremendous energy and ability will be much in evidence when:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven *with his mighty angels*, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ... when he shall come to be glorified in his saints." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

"The tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And *he shall send his angels* with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:30, 31)

The heavenly aides will be there with Jesus when the dead are raised:

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first..." (1 Thessalonians 4:16, RSV)

They will be present, as witnesses, at the great judgement, when the Son of man will confess those who confess him, "before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8). They are the "reapers" of the harvest when "the Son of man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his

kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity" (Matthew 13:39-41). Thereafter, they will remain in the service of those followers of Jesus who will be given eternal life and who will rule the world of the future as God's representatives here on earth.

Can Angels Help Us?

All that we have considered from the Scriptures demonstrates that angels have existed since the foundation of the world, that they exist today and that they will be there in the Kingdom of God on earth. They have been given tremendous power, they maintain the universe and they bridge the gulf between the unapproachable glory of the LORD God and those human beings on earth who are prepared to reverence Him.

Yet the very fact that they are not visible to us may lead us to discount their presence and their effectiveness in our lives. The truth is that since the writings of the Bible were completed at the end of the First Century AD there has not been what the Bible calls any "open vision", as there had been at certain times before that. The completed Bible is sufficient to supply all information necessary for salvation, and we are invited to read it, to accept its direction and to live by faith. Faith is not blind acceptance of things we know nothing about, but it is built on the evidence of God's word and work and is an essential requirement for believing the truth.

We are asked to "open our eyes" to all the evidence around us that God's plans are being fulfilled. If we do this, we shall have the confident expectation of the return of Jesus Christ very soon. But we can go further than this: we can say quite positively that, for those who trust God and are prepared to follow and obey Jesus in readiness for his kingdom, there is angelic help at hand - for each disciple personally. Do you remember Psalm 34? "The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him". With our limited eyesight, we may not see him; but he is there! Are you ready to believe that?

Guardian Angels?

Because angels work on behalf of those who seek to be God's children - His sons and daughters - many people ask if there are personal "guardian" angels. When Peter was released from prison by an angel (Acts 12:7-15) and arrived at the door of the house where the brethren were staying, they could not believe it was Peter in person but said, "It is his angel". Before that, Jesus had told his own followers that those

who in simple, child-like faith obey and reverence God would have the services of His messengers: "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). These are powerful indications of how much personal care and comfort God is prepared to provide for those who truly fear Him.

Followers of Jesus are left in no doubt when they read the Letter to the Hebrews. The early chapters demonstrate how God has communicated with man, how the angels are His servants and how Jesus, the Son of God, is now superior to the angels and commands their obedience. Likewise, those who become the "sons of God" and are destined to be the rulers in the coming kingdom of God will be above the angels. In chapter 1, the writer says that God spoke in the past in many different ways (for example, by angels conveying God's word to patriarchs and prophets) but He now speaks directly through His Son, who is "the express image of his person... being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they". The Son is greater than the servants. Yet, he says, the angels still have their work to do:

"Of the angels he says, 'Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire... Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?' (Hebrews 1:7, 14, RSV)

"The whole family in heaven and earth"

The angels are presently part of what the Apostle Paul called "the family in heaven" - God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the angels. Soon that family will be completed by the return of the Son of God to earth and the addition of the "sons of God" - Christ's faithful disciples - who will rule the earth with him: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14, 15). The Creator lives in unapproachable light, and may seem very remote from us at times. But the family of God has breached the gulf, and the day will come when, by the end of the Millennium, all sin is removed, death is conquered and "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

How Can the Angels Serve Us Now?

For the believer knowing that the angels are there for his or her benefit is itself a great help. Just as we can have complete confidence in a skilled surgeon when undergoing a major operation (although we may never see him while our "eyes are closed" under the anaesthetic).

So, to understand the work of the angels is to be confident in God's care for us and in the ways of providence that surround our lives. Indeed, in practice it is something more than that. If we are sincere, we pray to God and God answers our prayers in harmony with His will. He sends His angel who, unseen, orders the circumstances and situations around us, so changing our lives: "The steps of a man are ordered by Yahweh: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23).

The place of the angels at the Judgement ^{xii}

The angels will play an active and important part in the judgement of the household and the development of Yahweh Tz'vaoth (He who shall become armies) or the Multitudinous Christ who will then relieve them from their duties for the duration of the Millennium. (Hebrews 2:5).

First - The angels will accompany Christ when he returns as Judge. (Matt.16:27, 25:31, Mark 8:38).

Secondly - The results of the judgement will be declared in the presence of the angels. (Luke 12:8-9, Rev.3:5).

Then thirdly - The angels will be involved in the removal and punishment of the unworthy (Matt.13:49-50).

The angels as ministers to the saints

That the angels will be involved in the judgement of the saints is particularly appropriate in view of their close involvement with those saints during their probation. The scriptures teach that Yahweh appoints an angel to minister to and overshadow those who become heirs of salvation

Hebrews 1:14 - "Are they not all ministering spirits" - The word 'ministering' is LITOURGIKOS signifying that which pertains to the public service, especially of the Temple. This is a most appropriate word for the work of the angels, for they are indeed servants for the general good and well-being of 'a Temple' - the Temple of the living God composed of living stones; the Ecclesia.

They are 'spirits' or immortal messengers.

Roth. — "Are they not all spirits doing public service - for ministry sent forth for the sake of them who are about to inherit salvation".

The Greek for the words 'sent forth' is APOSTELLO - to send forth, equip and despatch upon a certain mission. That mission is to

'minister' - Greek EIS DIAKONIA - Literally with a view to service. The task of the angels is to serve those who are the heirs of salvation. This is a remarkable and sobering fact in itself and should provide a greater sensitivity to divine things, but there is the added fact that the position of the angels in relation to the saints admirably fits them for the work of judgement. It also appears from a number of scriptural passages that each individual saint has one particular angel who is appointed to minister to him. (Gen. 48:16, Matt. 18:10, Acts 12:15).

Sometimes the word 'angels' in Acts 12:15 is interpreted as simply meaning a messenger. This is one explanation which is satisfactory, but it does not ring as true as the alternative interpretation in view of the absolute incredulousness of the disciples in the house of John Mark. The damsel Rhoda insisted that it was Peter's voice that she heard at the door and that there was no mistake. In the face of this insistence only one thing seemed feasible - divine intervention - it must be Peter's angel! It is interesting to note that Peter's angel was instrumental in releasing him from prison (Acts 12:7-10).

Let us sum up: Yes, angels *do* exist and they are there to help us, if we fear God. Truth does not depend on what you can see. That was the big mistake made by Mr. Khrushchev: The things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18, RSV).

When the heavenly hosts are sent to gather together the "elect" for judgement at the return of Jesus, the elect may meet and see the angels for the first time. The invitation may well be, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee!" (John 11:28). Now is the time to believe in the LORD God and His angels and to prepare for this great event:

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm 119:18)



Chapter 22 – Inspiration

Inspiration in Gods Word

We have previously defined God's spirit as His power, but it also includes His thoughts and disposition, which He reveals by the actions which His spirit performs. It is His thoughts and disposition that the spiritual man should emulate.

God's spirit can be seen in the creation: "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13) - the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters to bring about the present creation (Gen. 1:2). Yet we also read that "by the word of Yahweh" the world was made (Ps. 33:6), as exemplified by the Genesis narrative recording that "God said" things were to be created, and it happened. God's spirit, therefore, is very much reflected in His word - just as our words express our inner thoughts and desires - the real "us" - very accurately. Jesus wisely pointed out: "Out of the abundance of the heart (the mind) the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). So, if we would control our words, we must firstly work on our thoughts. God's word, then, is a reflection of His spirit, or thoughts. It is such a blessing that in the Bible we have God's words written down so that we might understand God's spirit or mind. God achieved this miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of inspiration. This term is based around the word "spirit".

IN-SPIRIT-ATION

"Spirit" meaning "breath" or breathing, "Inspiration" means "in-breathing". This means that the words which men wrote while under "inspiration" from God were the words of God's spirit. Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget the wonder of the fact that it is the words of God's spirit, and therefore provides all that we need in order to have a true knowledge of God.

"From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished ('thoroughly equipped', N.I.V.) unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

If the inspired Scriptures can provide such a totality of knowledge, then there is no need for some 'inner light' to show us the truth about God. But how many times do people speak of their personal feelings and experiences as being the source of their knowledge of God! If an acceptance in faith of God's inspired word is enough to completely equip someone in the Christian life, there is no need for any other power of righteousness in our lives. If there is such a need, then God's word has not completely equipped us, as Paul promises it will. To hold the Bible in our hands and believe that it really is the Word of God's spirit takes quite some faith. The Israelites were reasonably interested in what Gods Word had to say, as are many "Christians" today. We all need to carefully reflect on Heb. 4:2:-

"Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel in the wilderness); but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it".

Instead of rising up to a complete faith in the power of God's spirit word which is received, it is far more attractive to take a spiritual short-cut: to reason that a power of righteousness suddenly comes upon us, which will make us acceptable to God, rather than having to experience the pain of consciously bringing our lives into obedience to God's word, and thereby letting God's spirit truly influence our hearts.

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God's word has led many "Christians" to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God. They have suggested that much of what we read in the Bible was just the personal opinions of wise old men. But Peter effectively disposes of such woolly reasoning:-

"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it... above all, you must understand (this is vital!) that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21 N.I.V.).

We must "above all" believe that the Bible is inspired. For this reason, we have made this the foundation clause of the Christadelphian Statement of Faith (See BASF).

The Writers Of The Bible

A solid belief in the total inspiration of the Scriptures is therefore vital; the men who wrote the Bible were irresistibly carried along by the spirit which inspired them, so that their words were not their own. The Word of God being the truth (Jn. 17:17) and providing rebuke and correction (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), it is not surprising that with many people it is unpopular - for truth hurts. The prophet Jeremiah suffered much opposition for speaking forth the words God inspired him with, and so he determined not to record or publicize the words which he was given. But because the writing of God's Word is a result of God's will rather than human desire, he was "carried along by the Holy Spirit" so that he had no choice in the matter. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me... Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:7, 9).

Likewise, when Balaam was determined to curse Israel, the spirit of God made him speak out a blessing on them instead (Num. 24:1-13 cp. Deut. 23:5).

A surprising number of the men whom God inspired to speak His word went through periods of reluctance to do so. The list is impressive:-

- Moses (Ex. 4:10)
- Ezekiel (Ez. 3:14)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:2,3)
- Paul (Acts 18:9)
- Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-14)
- Balaam (Num. 22-24)

This all confirms what we learnt in 2 Pet. 1:19-21 - that God's word is not the personal opinion of men, but the result of men being inspired to write down what was revealed to them. The prophet Amos reflected: "The LORD God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" (Amos 3:8). At times Moses lost the sense of his own personality, so

strong was his inspiration by God: "All these commandments, which Yahweh hath spoken unto Moses..." (Numbers 15:22, 23); these words were actually said by Moses (v. 17).

Another strand of evidence for this is that the writers of the Bible realized that they did not fully understand the things which they were writing. They "searched" for the correct interpretation - "unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things" which they wrote (1 Peter 1:9-12). The actual words they recorded were not their own interpretation, seeing it was that which they searched for. The following provide obvious examples: Daniel (Dan. 12:8-10); Zechariah (Zech. 4:4-13); Peter (Acts 10:17).

If these men were only partly inspired, we do not have access to the true Word or spirit of God. If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then it follows that they had to be completely taken over by God's spirit during the period of inspiration - otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in purity. An acceptance that God's Word is completely His, provides us with more motivation to read and obey it. "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Ps. 119:140).

Thus, the books of the Bible are the work of God through His spirit, rather than the literature of men. The truth of this is shown by considering how the New Testament refers to the Old Testament writings:-

- Matt. 2:5 (R.V. mg.) speaks of how it was "written through the prophets" - God was writing through them. The R.V. margin always uses the word "through" when describing how God wrote by the prophets.
- "The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake..." (Acts 1:16 - This is how Peter quoted from the Psalms: cp. Heb. 3:7).
- "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias" (Acts 28:25 - this was how Paul quoted Isaiah). Lk.3:4 speaks of "the book of the words of Esaias" rather than just, 'the book of Isaiah'.

The human authors of the Bible were therefore relatively unimportant to the early Christians; it was the fact that their words had been inspired with the Spirit of God which was important.

We will conclude this section with a list of verses which show that

God's Spirit is revealed to us through His written word:-

- Jesus plainly stated, "The words that I speak... are spirit" (Jn. 6:63); He spoke under inspiration from God (Jn. 17:8; 14:10).
- We are described as being re-born by both the spirit (Jn. 3:3-5) and the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).
- "The words which Yahweh of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the... prophets" (Zech. 7:12).
- I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:23) associates a true understanding of God's word with the action of His spirit upon us - reading the Book without understanding is of no avail, seeing that the spirit/mind of God is not being revealed to us.
- There are parallels between God's Spirit and His word in many passages: "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth..." (Isa. 59:21); "For Thy Words sake, and according to thine own heart (spirit)" (2 Sam. 7:21); "I will put my spirit within you (your heart - see context)..." ; "I will put my law... in their hearts" (Eze. 36:27; Jer. 31:33).



Chapter 23 – God's Word

The Power of God's Word

God's spirit referring not only to His mind/disposition but also to the power by which He expresses those thoughts, it is to be expected that His spirit-word is not just a statement of His mind; there is also a dynamic power in that word.

A true appreciation of that power should make us eager to make use of it; any feelings of embarrassment associated with doing so should be overcome by our knowledge that obedience to God's Word will give us the power which we need to accelerate out of the small things of this life, towards salvation. Out of much experience of this, Paul wrote:-

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel (the word) of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Luke 1:37 (R.V.) harps on the same theme: "No word of God shall be void of power (spirit)".

Bible study and applying it to our lives is therefore a dynamic process. It is quite unrelated to the cold, academic approach of theologians and also to the 'feel-good' Christianity of many churches, whereby a few passages are briefly quoted, but no effort made to understand or apply them. "The word of God is quick (living) and powerful"; "the word of His (God's) power" (Heb. 4:12; 1:3). "The word of God... effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). Through the Word, God is actively at work in the minds of true believers, every hour of the day.

The basic message of the Gospel which we are learning is therefore the true power of God; if you allow it to do so, it can work in your life to change you into a child of God, showing the spirit/mind of God to some degree in this life, preparing you for the change to God's spiritual nature which will come at Christ's return (2 Pet. 1:4). Paul's preaching was "in demonstration of the spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

We are surrounded by those who have a semi-faith in the Bible as God's word, despite their claims of commitment to Christ. Similarly, they claim to believe in God, and yet fail to accept that He is a real person. By denying the total inspiration of Scripture and its supremacy over our personal feelings and convictions, they are denying God's power. The words of 2 Tim. 3:5 come to mind: "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof", i.e. the power of the word of the Gospel.

Our fundamentalism is mocked by the world ("You don't believe it like that, do you?!"), and so was that of Paul and his band of preachers: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Bearing all this in mind, can't we each hold the Bible in our hands with an ever-greater measure of respect, and read it with ever more eagerness to understand and obey?

The Attitude of God's People to His Word

A sensitive reading of the Biblical record indicates that the Bible writers not only recognized that they were inspired, but they also treated other Bible writers as inspired. The Lord Jesus is preeminent in this. When Jesus quoted from the Psalms of David, he prefaced this with the words, "David in spirit..." (Mt. 22:43), showing his recognition of the fact that David's words were inspired. Jesus also spoke of Moses' "writings" (Jn. 5:45-47), showing that he believed Moses to have literally written the Pentateuch. The so-called 'higher critical' Christians have doubted whether Moses could write, but the attitude of Christ clearly contradicts their approach. He called Moses' writings "the commandment of God" (Mark 7:8, 9). The same group of dishonest doubters claims that much of the Old Testament is myth, but never do Jesus or Paul treat them like that. Jesus spoke of the Queen of Sheba as an accepted historical fact (Mt. 12:42); he did not say, 'As the story goes about the Queen of Sheba...'.^{xiii}

The attitude of the Apostles was identical to that of their Lord. It is epitomized by Peter who said that his personal experience of hearing Christ's words with his own ears was eclipsed by the "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Peter believed that Paul's letters were

"Scripture" as much as the "other Scriptures", a phrase normally used about the Old Testament writings. Thus, Peter saw Paul's letters as being as authoritative as the Old Testament.

There are many allusions in Acts, the Epistles and Revelation to the Gospels (e.g. cp. Acts 13:51; Mt. 10:14), indicating not only that they were all inspired by the same Spirit, but that the Gospel records were treated as inspired by the New Testament writers. Paul in 1 Tim. 5:18 quotes both Dt. 25:4 (in the Old Testament) and Lk. 10:7 as "Scripture". Paul hammers home the point that his message was from Christ, not himself (Gal. 1:11, 12; 1 Cor. 2:13; 11:23; 15:3). This was recognized by the other apostles; thus James 4:5 quotes Paul's words of Gal. 5:17 as "Scripture".

God "has spoken" to us in Christ; there is therefore no need for any further revelation (Heb. 1:2). It can be observed that the Bible alludes to other writings some of which are now not available (e.g. the book of Jasher^{xiv}, the writings of Nathan, Elijah, Paul to Corinth, and John's third Epistle implies that John had written an unpreserved letter to the church which Diotrephes had refused to obey). Why have these writings not been added to the Bible canon? Evidently because they were not relevant to us or inspired. We can therefore rest assured that God has preserved all that is relevant for us.

It is sometimes claimed that the New Testament books were gradually accepted as being inspired, but the fact that the Apostles treated each other's writings as inspired surely disproves this. There was a miraculous Spirit gift available to test whether letters and words which claimed to be inspired really were so (1 Cor. 14:37; 1Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2). This means that the inspired letters were immediately accepted as inspired. If there was any unguided human selection of what went into our Bible, then the book would have no authority.



Chapter 24 – Talent

Gift – meaning 1 – talent

A man traveling into a far country: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told a parable about preparing for the kingdom: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called together his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods" (v14). From this he gave to each servant a large sum of money; to one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one. He knew what each servant was capable of, and while he was away, he expected them to work hard with what he had given them.

As soon as their master had gone, the man with the five talents and the man with the two talents set to work. They each used what had been left in their care. So faithful were they that both doubled the number of talents which had been given to them by their master. The one who had five talents gained another five and the one who had two talents gained another two.

However, the other servant, who had been given one talent, did nothing useful with his at all. He went and dug a hole in the earth and hid his lord's money there.

THE MASTER RETURNS

After a long time, the lord returned, and called his servants to give an account of how they had served him while he was away. The servant who had been given five talents was able to show his master five more talents that he had gained in his absence. His lord was very pleased. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (v.21).

When the servant who had been given two talents came and showed the two extra talents he had gained, the master was just as pleased and rewarded him in the same way.

When the third servant came, however, it was obvious how lazy he had been. He had shown no interest whatever in serving his master. He had thought that his master was a hard man and expected too much. So, he did nothing with that talent placed in his care. He was a faithless and disobedient servant. The lord was angry with that "wicked and slothful servant" (v.26), and ordered him to be thrown out of his house "into outer darkness" (v.30). That servant had not realised how just and fair his lord was, but now he got what he deserved.

THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

The man in this parable who went into a far country is the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been in heaven at the right hand of God for over nineteen hundred years. He has been away "a long time" (v.19), but he has promised to return. Meanwhile, we who are his servants, have been told to be busy in his service until he comes. He expects each of us to be faithful and will reward us all with everlasting life in his kingdom, as long as we are diligent while he is away.

The lord gave his servants "his goods" (v.14). So, we have been given the Bible to read and to understand. Each servant was given a different number of talents. So, God has given us varying abilities but expects us all to use them to the best of our ability in His service.

The word for talent in the parable has the meaning of money. A talent was a coin. Interestingly the word came across into English with the meaning of an ability almost certainly because of the parabolic meaning found within this parable.

In the Bible we are told that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, whatever "talents" have been given to us by God, must be used in His service, to bring honour to Him.

LESSON FOR US

Jesus had said, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household?" (Matt. 24:45).

He told this parable to show his disciples what he expects of them, and to encourage them. We must take careful note of the meaning of

this parable, for we know that Christ our Lord is soon to return.

The parable teaches us to be faithful servants while he is away. We cannot expect the gift of eternal life if we have not shown ourselves to be willing and diligent. There are so many ways in which we can be faithful servants. The first thing we must do is to believe that God means what He says. Then we must obey His commandments.

The apostle Paul always taught: "Servants, obey your masters". As the servants of Jesus Christ, we must do the will of God "from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). "Whatsoever ye do", says Paul, "do it heartily, as to the Lord... for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24).

A living sacrifice - Romans ch. 12

It was the apostle Paul who wrote in his Letter to the Corinthians: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," (1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1) a claim that was fully justified by the Divine revelation that there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him. What a help that must have been to him as he faced that ultimate penalty for being a follower of Christ.

Romans chapter 12, can stand on its own, such is the force of the various practical duties listed in those few verses; but if just for a moment we glance back at what has gone before, and see how the apostle leads up to this part of his letter, we think that can give us even more help.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren" (Romans 12:1) —and, of course, that is an inclusive term, brethren and sisters — "I urge you" in view of God's mercy. What mercy? The mercy of which the apostle had been reminding those in Rome earlier in this letter. We find that he wrote the letter to "all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints" (chap. 1:7). This he wrote after introducing himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Yes, that was the apostle Paul. The letter continues very forcibly—it is a forceful letter, we will have noticed that — describing the wrath of God against sin, and the corruption of the Gentiles.

Then the apostle moves on to deal with God's impartial judgment of Jews and Gentiles and to show that no flesh is justified by the deeds

of the Law, that is, the Law given through Moses. There is considerable comment on Abraham's wonderful faith in chapter 4, and building upon that example the apostle describes and confirms the advantages and the strength of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. This is followed by the explanation of the significance of baptism, chapter 6. There is the warning that the wages of sin is death, alongside the message of hope and the promise that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord—always the light and the shade in the Scriptures. To help with the problem of Jews and Gentiles walking together in the hope of the gospel, there is the teaching that those in Christ are made free from the condemnation of the Law given through Moses. In that same chapter 8 the apostle speaks of the ground and assurance of the Christian hope, firm as a rock.

He then speaks of his sorrow for his own countrymen: he had great reason to be sorry for their actions. He speaks of the sovereignty of God, the calling of the Gentiles, and there is a reminder that salvation is open to Jew and Gentile alike. In the 11th chapter there is specific warning to the Gentile believers not to become careless because, as Paul reminded them, if God did not spare the Jews, the natural branches, then surely, He would not hesitate to cut out those branches which had been grafted in.

Now, bearing all that in mind, said Paul, "I beseech you." It is what he besought, what he urged upon the believers at Rome which we would like to think about just for these few moments. The apostle, at this point in his letter, turned from reviewing the wider spectrum of Jew and Gentile, believers in general, to believers in particular, and he does this in such a way that we can now transport ourselves from the first century situation which we have reviewed so briefly to the present, to the here and now, to the you and me. Wondering what manner of persons we ought to be, should be an ever-present thought with each one of us, though in reality, of course, it is very difficult to maintain that thought through every waking moment; but today we are again able—and what a blessing it is—through the Word to concentrate our thoughts on this all-important theme.

The whole ideal is expressed in the words, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy (separate), acceptable unto God." Here is embodied the ideal; but of course, it is not just our bodies but our whole way of life, our thoughts, our words, our actions that is our

reasonable service. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, this order of things. How often we speak of being in the world but not of it. It is so easy to let statements like that slip off our tongue — “O yes, I am in the world but not of it”—but let us look more closely at what the apostle is saying.

“Be not conformed to this world.” Do not allow ourselves to appear in the same configuration, is the thought behind it—the same mode of arrangement, the same outline, as those in the world. Of course, outwardly our bodies are much the same as theirs; but let us think of it, surely, in the sense that the apostle had in mind. He was comparing the configuration, the outline. Those in the world all look much the same when you compare one with another in that sense, but compare one of them with a brother or sister of Christ and the outline must be different: the outlook on life, the aspirations, the attitude towards the various situations with which we are faced as we go through our lives.

Now, not surprisingly, we find that the Spirit guided the apostle Peter to say much the same thing in his 1st Letter, where we read these words: “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves” (1 Peter 1:13) —not conforming, not having the same configuration, he is saying, as you had before you were called to the gospel truth. Go back to the apostle Paul. We find what is always refreshing. He states the negative, “Be not,” and then presents us with the positive alternative, and here it is: “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Well, we might say, was not our mind renewed, were we not transformed when we repented and were baptised? Yes, of course, but that was only a start. There has to be the faithful continuance in well doing. We cannot let up for a moment, otherwise we revert to type. We will go back to being what we were.

This made me think of an illustration. We have an acer tree at the side of our house. I am no gardener, I do not know about these things, but I am told that it is a hybrid and it has dark and light shadings on the leaves. A couple of years ago the leaves on one branch were all dark green and it was pointed out to me that if I did not cut that branch out, and any others that appeared with the totally dark green leaves, the tree would soon be like that all over. It would revert to type; it would go back to being what it was. I have since seen this elsewhere, a number of similar trees which have not been pruned are in fact going

back to type.

We feel the lesson is clear. We can only be transformed by the constant renewing of our minds, by pruning if necessary, by constantly keeping ourselves in the right configuration. This renewing has to be a continual process. It is not a once only event, and it has a specific purpose; as the apostle Paul writes: "... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2). When we look behind this it seems that the meaning is the proving to ourselves that it is so, so that we can discern the will of God and then we can know what is good, what is perfect, what is acceptable.

Our conformity must be in the direction of following the pattern, the outline laid out for us in the life of our beloved Master, and who is brought so vividly to mind by the apostle in his letters. Being reminded of the high ideals that we must strive to live up to should never leave us in a state of depression. What it should do, if we look at these words with the right mind, is to help us to lift our sights and impel us to live more closely to the perfect life of our Master.

Only a few paragraphs before, in this letter, the apostle warns about being wise in our own conceits, or, as we read in Prov. 3:7: "Be not wise in thine own eyes." We feel that we have to ask ourselves, What, am I capable of doing? How am I using my abilities, not only to form my own character, but to sustain and to help my brethren and sisters? Sadly, most Ecclesias seem to have some who stay on the side-lines, who do not seem to become too involved, who seem to let others get on with all the things that need to be done. Many are happy for the white man to pay for everything, so they can get off with doing nothing. Well, to say that they are the losers is partly true, but the rest of the ecclesia suffers in some way by any lack of effort on our part, with any under-utilisation of our talents, whatever those talents are.

Apparently, the apostle Paul was not a great figure to look at. He was not an orator, but his written words are powerful, if we allow ourselves to feel the force and the enthusiasm of those words. When you are giving, he says, give liberally; do not be stingy—that is the sense behind it; and we hardly need to be reminded that giving is by no means restricted to putting more money into the bag each Sunday or sending donations in response to the many appeals that come our way in these days. That may be, and is, a vital part of our work, but

even so we need to keep in mind the salutary lesson of the widow's mite.

Giving, of course, can be extended to our time and in many other ways, and whenever we are using such talents let us remember that that is what they are, that they are given to us to trade with. We have them on loan for the time of our probation. How are we ruling over whatever it is that we rule over (moving on to another of the apostle's thoughts), the ecclesia, the home; it should be done diligently, says the apostle; hardworking, steady in application, industrious, attentive to duty, that is the thought behind this "ruling" which Paul speaks of.

We wonder whether the apostle had in mind Jesus' instructions about forgiveness even unto seventy times seven when he spoke of showing mercy with cheerfulness. This can show up in so many ways—chastening a child so that they know you mean what you say, but then letting the matter rest and never bringing that particular incident up again. These are matters, though, that are not restricted to dealings with our children, they extend to our dealings with brethren and sisters and they must inevitably spill over to all areas of our lives. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." (Matthew 6:12). We are promised mercy and forgiveness and we see how it was manifested to saints of old as we read the Scriptures. "Yahweh hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13) - what a great comfort to that great king came from Nathan, we feel sure, although of course David suffered for his misdeed.

Then the apostle in our chapter moves straight on to another point. He uses the word "dissimulation." That is not a word we come across much in these days, but he says our love has to be without it. It has to be without hypocrisy, that is what it means, or to put it in another way, love has to be sincere. We have to mean it. Expressions of sympathy are fine, but they need to be backed up, when needed, with practical help. The apostle does not actually say so, but by inference we get the idea that insincere love is nothing short of being evil. It has to be rejected.

As we look down these verses let us keep in mind the obvious fervour of the apostle, this man who had seen Jesus as one "born out of due time." His is a prime example of how we ought to follow Jesus. "Not slothful in business," (Romans 12:11) he writes. That does not refer only to how we go on at work. It is all-embracing. We must never be

lacking in our zeal. We have to keep on with unflagging energy to serve the Lord. O dear, that is just what happens sometimes, we flag, we flop. We need to try to overcome those feelings when they come upon us. Think of the trials and the difficult experiences of the apostle Paul—sleepless nights in jail, sleepless nights on the ship in disaster when it seemed inevitable that they would all be drowned. The apostle Paul followed Jesus because he knew that Jesus kept on when he was tired.

Then we get a little pick-me-up in this chapter — “rejoicing in hope.” (Romans 5:2, 12:12). What hope? we ask. Well, it is the hope of Israel, what was and still is the hope of Israel. That hope is that the Messiah will come and save them from all their troubles and relieve them from the threats of their enemies. That is the hope to which we are joined, and if we have read this chapter thoughtfully; we have been reminded of rejoicing in hope. Through Jesus we know we are related to the promises to Abraham and we believe that they will soon be revealed to us. “Patient in tribulation.” There are many trials. Some we know about. There must be many others borne in silence, unknown to others. This was brought home to me very recently when a sister mentioned that her husband had been ill for twenty years, the brother suffering, the sister and others caring for the brother for twenty years, and still it goes on today. That is just one example, there are many others. The hope is that throughout those periods of affliction brethren and sisters will be able to rejoice in hope, and at the same time remember how men like the apostle Paul held up under the strain, and in particular how our Master himself never complained, but managed to cope with the strain and at last stood uncondemned by the weakness of the flesh, so that he now stands for ever as our Mediator, as our help in time of need.

The apostle’s pen raced on, as we see in this chapter. He realised and knew the benefit from the power of prayer and so he wrote those words, “continuing instant in prayer.” Persist in prayer, that is what he was saying. The words of Jesus recorded by Luke are these: “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Luke 18:1). On another occasion Jesus said: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye maybe accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 21:36). He was referring to specific circumstances but they are timeless words, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always,” because we hope to be able to stand before the Son of man and we hope and pray that we will be

accepted when that time comes.

These are the words of the one who was known to continue all night in prayer; and so, in four words the apostle Paul gives us a reminder of the importance and the necessity of prayer: “Continue instant in prayer.”

The chapter continues in the same way, line by line, reinforcing in the reader’s mind the pattern to which we must conform. In fact, much of the rest of the letter is given over to specific instructions which leave us in no doubt as to how we must conduct ourselves. These things show us clearly “what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.” (2 Peter 3:11).

There is just one more thought from this chapter which I would like to mention. Many brethren and sisters lead stressful lives. Even though we strive very hard to make it otherwise, it always seems that time is of the essence. We have to live by the clock. Of course, it is often due, at least in part, to our involvement in ecclesial duties, and we have heard brethren and sisters now retired say that they are so busy that they wonder how they ever went to work! So there is good work that we can do to keep ourselves busy, but the experience of the apostle, backed up by what he knew of the way in which Jesus dealt with this problem, is reflected in these words: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” (Romans 12:18). “If possible, as far as depends on you” is the way in which we have to think on this matter—as far as it depends on us, live at peace with everyone. Well, it does depend on us individually a great deal. “A soft answer turneth away wrath.” (Proverbs 15:1). Abigail’s wisdom in the way she spoke to David saved him from committing acts he might have regretted when his anger cooled down. It is very easy to create strife by speaking harshly. It is not difficult, though, to avoid it by speaking gently. But above all, this thought of living peaceably with everyone helps us at this moment to project our minds forward. Let us think forward to the great period of peace which is soon to descend upon this earth. Let us think of the perfect peace of mind and body that will be ours in that day, God willing. For the present, let us be thankful for the Spirit-word, and let us rejoice in the peace of mind that is ours now, because in God’s love and mercy our eyes have surely been opened to the way of life; because in our hearts we have responded to the call to come out from the world and not be conformed to the age in which we live.



Chapter 25 – Offerings

Gift – meaning 2 – a present or offering

Cain and Abel ^{ix}

The two sons of Eve: Cain and Abel, typically represent the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Though both were religious and prepared to worship God and offer sacrifices unto Him they were motivated by different principles that led to enmity and hostility that finally erupted in murder. Cain desired to worship God according to the dictates of the flesh; Abel did so from the requirements of the Spirit Word. The result of this division of attitude and understanding was tragic, and the first blood was shed in religious controversy. It illustrated the bitter hostility that is manifested by the seed of the serpent towards the seed of the woman. The following statement from "Elpis Israel", p. 102 is to the point: "There can be no friendship between these parties. Death or victory is the only alternative. There can be no peace in the world till one or other be suppressed. The 'enmity' is the essential hostility betwixt sin and God's Law, which is the truth. Either truth must conquer sin, or sin must abolish truth; but compromise there can be none. I have great faith in the power of truth, because I have faith in God. He is pledged to give it the victory; and though deceivers in church and state may triumph for the time, and tyrants 'destroy the earth', their end is certain and their destruction sure." It is significant that Cain and Abel were of one family; and that both were worshippers of God. But one sought to sacrifice self in worship; and the other offered only the worship of self.

The Worship of Cain and Abel— Genesis 4: 1-4

Both sons of Adam and Eve desired to worship God and were prepared to offer a sacrifice. But their offerings differed. One brought of the labour of his hands; the other brought of the provision of God, with which he became identified. God showed respect towards the offering of Abel but rejected that of Cain.

VERSE 1

"And Adam knew Eve his wife" —This expression describes the most

intimate action possible between a man and his wife; one which produces seed to the glory of the father (see also vv. 17, 25). It is also used to describe the tangible results that come from the implantation of the Truth, the seed of Yahweh (1 Pet. 1:23-25) in the heart of the believer. The Word is designed to produce a new life, and to develop a son of God. Thus, Christ taught: "This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God" (John 17:3). On the other hand, it is stated of the wicked sons of Eli that they were sons of Belial, "they knew not Yahweh" (1 Sam. 2:12).

"And she conceived, and bare Cain" — The word is the Hebrew *Qayin* is from a root signifying that which said to mean Gain or Acquired (see AV margin).

VERSE 2

"And she again bare his brother Abel" — Hebrew: *Hebel*, signifying, breath, a vapour, metaphorically that which is frail or transitory. The word is rendered "vanity" in Ecclesiastes 1:2 and elsewhere. Abel came to recognise the vanity of this life, and that true substance is found only in God's way. Like Paul, he was moved by faith, setting his eyes on the unseen as revealing the tangible realities of life (Heb. 11:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:18). His short life on earth illustrated the observation of James: "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

"And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" — The two brothers were evidently different in physical condition, different in occupation, different in attitude, different in worship. Abel, perhaps, was so named by his parents because of his frailer condition. He was the first shepherd of the Bible, and as such was a type of Christ. The word "keeper" is *ra' ah*, to tend as a shepherd, to pasture, to rule. He thus learned to lead the sheep, with his eyes ever upwards, seeking out lush pasture for them, and caring for the animals under his control. On the other hand, Cain was a "tiller" of the ground. The word *abad* signifies to serve as a bondservant, a slave. Apparently, he became enslaved to his labour, so that his eyes were constantly centred on the earth, to which, in due course, he was destined to return.

VERSE 3

"And in process of time" — The literal Hebrew is "at the end of days" (see margin). This implies a set time when it was appropriate to present a special offering at the Tabernacle referred to in Genesis 3:24. Perhaps this offering was made when they attained a certain age; the age of responsibility. In latter times Jewry followed the practice of Bar mitzvah, the Son of the commandment which conferred a responsibility to understand and obey the law upon a child of 13 years of age. Significantly it was on the eve of this age that the Lord Jesus presented himself to the leaders of his day in the temple (Lk. 2:42).

The same word is rendered "spear" in 2 Sam. 21:16, and is applied to the weapon wielded by Goliath. The meaning of "acquisition" is implied from the idea of fixity, as of a lance striking fast so as to be fixed into the object to which it is directed. What Cain had he was going to keep!

"I have gotten a man from the Lord" — The word "gotten" is kained in Hebrew, so that there is a play upon the name of Eve's firstborn. Rotherham renders her statement as: "I have gotten a man even Yahweh." She evidently imagined that the birth of her firstborn was the fulfilment of the promise of Genesis 3:15. She saw him as He who shall be (Yahweh), and thus used language indicative of this without recognising the significance of the Yahweh Name (Exod. 6:3). In fact, she made a mistake. John declares that "Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother" (1 John 3:12). He was the "word of the serpent made flesh," as, later, the Lord Jesus became "the Word of Yahweh made flesh." Commenting upon 1 John 3:12, Brother Thomas remarks: "There is precision in this language which is not to be disregarded in the interpretation. Cain was of the Wicked One; that is, he was a son of sin — of the serpent-sin, or original transgression. The Mosaic narrative of facts is interrupted at the end of the sixth verse of the third chapter. The fact passed over there, though not implied in the seventh verse, is plainly stated in the first verse of the fourth chapter. These texts conjoined read thus: "And Eve gave unto her husband, and he did eat with her. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived. And the eyes of them were both opened, and they knew that they were naked." Now, here was a conception in sin, the originator of which was the Serpent. When, therefore, in the 'set time' afterwards, 'Eve bare Cain', though procreated by Adam, he was of the Serpent, seeing that he suggested the transgression which ended in the

conception of Cain. In this way, sin in the flesh being put for the Serpent, Cain was of that Wicked One, the pre-eminent sinner, and the firstborn of the Serpent's seed" (Elpis Israel, pp. 93,94).

"It came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground" — He had enslaved himself to the labour of the ground, and now brought what he had personally laboured to obtain.

"An offering unto Yahweh" — Hebrew minchah, to apportion, bestow. This was usually bloodless and voluntary. In Lev. 2:1, the minchah was flour with the oil of frankincense. It was a gratitude offering by which a person expressed his thanks to God for blessings received, and declared that he would use the strength derived therefrom in Yahweh's service. In bringing this offering only, Cain ignored the fundamental and primary principle set forth in Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood is no remission." This had been clearly revealed to Adam and Eve when they were provided with the covering that hid their nakedness. Now that the time had come for Cain to acknowledge his need, and seek a covering for sin in the approved manner, he brought what he desired, and not what Yahweh decreed. Cain imagined that the sweat of his brow was a more adequate offering than the blood of the Lamb. We all do that when we substitute grace with works. Both are needed, but works must be built upon, and developed out of faith — and not the reverse. We can only effectively labour for God when we have first been covered by the atoning sacrifice of grace that has been provided (see 1 Cor. 3:10; cp. 1 Cor. 9:27).

VERSE 4

"And Abel, he also brought of — The construction of the Hebrew implies that Abel brought both forms of offerings. Kennicott renders: "Abel brought it also" — implying that he brought the firstfruits as well as the firstlings; he brought the offering of gratitude and also the sacrifice of dedication. The Concordant Version expresses the literal Hebrew thus: "Abel also is bringing, he, moreover, from the firstlings of his flock." The Interlinear has: "And Abel he also brought of the firstlings..." Paul declares that Abel offered "a more excellent sacrifice" (Heb. 11:4). The Greek *pleion* signifies "more properly of number, but also of magnitude, and in comparison, expressed or implied" (Bullinger). He brought more than one offering, being moved by faith (Heb. 11:4), expressing his thanks to God for the

benefits received, recognising that his life was but a vapour (Psa. 90:6; Jas. 4:14), and dedicating himself to the way of righteousness.

"Of the firstlings of his flock" — Thus, at that early age, the right of the firstborn was known. Later, under the Law of Moses, the firstlings of the flock and herd were always given in sacrifice to Yahweh (Num. 18:15-17). Yahweh laid claim to the firstborn as particularly His (Exod. 13:2, 12-13); for He has a right to the first fruits of our increase (Prov. 3:9). The firstborn had triple rights:

- (1). Birthright, he received a double portion of the inheritance of his father (Deut. 21: 15-17; 1 Chron. 5:1; 26:10).
- (2). Priesthood; he represented the family to Yahweh (Num. 8:4-18).
- (3). Authority; he was held next in honour to his parents (Gen. 49:3), and succeeded in the government of a family or a kingdom (2 Chron. 21:3).

The position of firstborn could be forfeited through misconduct or incompetence (e.g. 1 Chron. 5:1; 26:10; Gen. 25:31; Gen. 48:5, 13-14), in which case, a younger son could be elevated to the position. However, the legislation of the Law guarded against abuse in such cases (see Deut. 21:17).

The law of the Firstborn pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Though born after the first Adam in point of primogeniture, he was elevated to the status of "firstborn" (Psa. 89:24-28; Col. 1:15-19), because his perfect obedience showed him to be more qualified for the office than sinning Adam and his race. Thus, he was consecrated to God (Luke 1:32-33), was granted a double portion of inheritance (Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3-4), given the authority vested in the Father (John 5:23). In Israel, the Levites were appointed instead of the family firstborn (Num. 3:45); and today saints are incorporated into the "Ecclesia of Firstborns" (Lit. Gk., Heb. 12:23; Jas. 1:17-18; Rev. 14:4). The context of Genesis 4 reveals that these principles, as well as the significance of sacrifice and atonement, were known to the family of Adam. Abel's offering of the "firstlings of his flock" implies that he had been taught, and recognised the need of blood-shedding as a covering for sin, and also the part that the firstborn "seed of the woman" would accomplish in the work of atonement. Eve had imagined that her firstborn son of the flesh was the promised seed, but she had to learn that a younger son would be elevated to that position.

"And of the fat thereof" — The firstlings of the sheep and goats (see mg.) were first slain, and the blood poured out. In doing so, Abel acknowledged the need of crucifying the flesh (Gal. 5:24) and of dedicating his life (Lev. 17:11) unto Yahweh. The fat was then consumed upon the altar, by which he acknowledged that the stored energy of flesh should be expended in doing the will of God. In sacrificing the firstlings of his flock, Abel confessed his belief in the coming Redeemer, the Firstborn Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15). Thus, Paul declared that "by faith Abel offered unto God," and that "faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1).

"Yahweh had respect unto Abel and to his offering" — Not merely to the sacrifice, be it noted, but also to the offerer. Abel's heart was with his offering, and the one conformed to the other. Paul declares that "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts" (Heb. 11:4). How was this done? Possibly by the touch of the flaming sword. In later times, Divine fire consumed sacrifices, thereby witnessing that Yahweh was pleased with them (Lev. 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Chron. 7:1), and this may well have been the case on this occasion.

Abel's life-history illustrates the meaning of his name. It is derived from the same source as is the word "vanity" that appears so frequently in the Book of Ecclesiastes. His name signifies that which is vain or fleeting. He saw the vanity of this life, and fixed his vision on the reality of the kingdom of God, which, at present, is only seen through the vision of faith (Ecc. 1:2-3; 12:8; 2 Cor. 4:18). No word of Abel's is recorded in Scripture, yet his actions were more eloquent than his words, so that he, though dead, "yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). How powerful is the example of a life given in service to Yahweh! How lasting is the character of a man who recognises the vanity of human life and aspirations, and seeks a more permanent lot in that which Yahweh has set before humanity.

Abel was a shepherd, a possessor of flocks and herds (Gen. 4:4). As such, his eyes were always on that which was before him, seeking out rich pastures for the animals under his care. His brother, Cain, was a tiller of the ground, with his eyes ever turned earthwards. Both brothers, educated in the home of Adam, had been brought up to revere the Creator, and when they came to the age of responsibility, both became worshippers at the Tabernacle over which the Cherubim presided.

But Abel sought out what God required of him; whereas Cain thought that God should have been satisfied with what he offered. God had respect unto the offering of Abel (Gen. 4:4), and testified to that fact (Heb. 11:4). This aroused the jealous anger of Cain, who, governed by the flesh, murdered his brother. Thus, the first drop of blood was shed in a religious controversy, and the full extent of that enmity that God predicted would exist between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman was dramatized in this frightful incident at the dawn of creation.

Despite the temporary success of the seed of the serpent in ridding himself of his more righteous brother, the final triumph was with Abel, because Cain was banished from the presence of God, and Seth was raised up to take his place. Nevertheless, a mark was placed on Cain, and a warning issued lest any should molest him.

The events of Abel's life foreshadow those of Christ. The appointment of Seth typified the resurrection of the Lord; the punishment on Cain pointed forward to the judgment of A.D. 70 extended upon guilty Jewry who crucified the Lord (Matt. 23:35). Nevertheless, the record is careful to state that Christ's blood speaketh better things than that of Abel (Heb. 12:24). Abel's blood cried out for vengeance; but, in addition, Christ's blood cries out for mercy on those who base their faith in it. Abel's blood, though that of a righteous man (Matt. 23:35), cannot atone, but Christ's blood is ever efficacious (1 John 1:7).

What can we give?

When we think of the supreme greatness of our heavenly Father, of His omnipotence, of His absolute excellence, of His might. The whole wealth of the universe is His. Everything is in the hand of our eternal Father. Everything we have originates with Him. Because of the truth of that, it seems incredible that we might have anything that He might want, that there is anything at all that we could possibly give Him as a present to cause Him pleasure. Now the opportunity of being able to give anything at all to Christ or to his Father, if it were possible, would be eagerly seized upon by anyone of us, and we might be sure that whatever it was, it would be the very best that we could give.

Yet it has not always been so. There was a time in Israel's history when God had to totally reject the offerings for which He had asked.

They were an offence unto Him. What a terrible thing that must have been. Imagine us giving a gift that caused offence to the one receiving it! He had to say to them through the prophet: "... offer it now unto thy governor and see if he would receive it of thee," so bad was the condition of the offerings they were making. In reality God has not any need for anything that we could possibly give. "The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine." (Psalm 50:10). Yet that slain lamb, offered from the heart in an attempt to attain forgiveness, meant everything to their Father, it pleased Him to receive of their hands the best that they could offer, as it does of us today.

It is the Psalmist who declares: "...my goodness extendeth (or reacheth) not to thee; but to the saints (whom thou hast) on the earth." (Psalms 16:2-3). David recognised the principle that there was nothing he could possibly give to God, but in his giving to the saints God had, he was in effect giving to God, and it is this principle that Christ takes up. So, we can give, incredible as it might seem, we can give acceptably to Christ and to his Father. It is written: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." (Matthew 25:40).

You remember that when Saul of Tarsus was stopped in his tracks by Jesus he said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me" (Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14). Likewise, our gifts, our services for our brethren and sisters count as giving to Christ, giving to God. What honour this makes available to us. It follows obviously as a matter of course. Nothing that we do must ever be by constraint or of necessity. Eagerly, willingly, cheerfully is the only acceptable way of giving to Christ or to God. What a pleasure therefore it is to read such words as those in Exodus 36. So often is the theme in God's relationship to Israel one of disobedience and punishment and rubbishy gifts, that the incidents in this chapter stand out in stark contrast.

How encouraged Moses must have been as he heard those words spoken to him: "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which Yahweh commanded to make" (Ex. 36:5). "And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So, the people were restrained from bringing." They would have kept on giving had it been necessary, but the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work, to make it, and too much. It was not just enough that they gave, it was

not even more than enough that they gave, but much more than enough. The Rabbinical Commentary says that this phrase contains the idea of an abundance of everything needed for the work of the sanctuary; not just of one commodity that one might be able to afford. The need was for a great diversity of material, and the people brought too much of everything. Young and old, men and women, prince and people, were all fired by an enthusiasm which caused them to keep on giving.

Was this giving to God? If you turn back to chapter 35 you will see that it was by direct command. God wanted them to give. Verse 4: "Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring..." Nothing by constraint or a cause of irritation would have been acceptable to God. It all had to come from a willing heart. Did God need it? Had He wished, that tabernacle could have been erected in an instant of time and far better than even the work of Bezaleel and his fellow-workers. Young and old, they all made their contributions.

In ecclesial life it is important to recognise the contributions of all the members, and to include all, even the least capable in the work. If an Ecclesia is financially well blessed, or where an Ecclesia can rely on the contributions of rich Europeans it is easy to call in professional builders to complete projects, but this is rarely a wise path. Experience has shown how much more an Ecclesia appreciates and cares for a hall that they have built with their own hands compared to one received from beneficiaries at no or little personal expense.

We say, this incident is without parallel in the history of Israel. God was pleased to dwell among them, and they were anxious that they should be the willing participants in making that dwelling possible. The whole nation wanted it; not just a fanatical few (of which some of the meetings are never short) but the whole. Now the lessons arising from this touch each one of us. God has always demanded open-hearted, open-handed generosity. There has never been any hope or excuse for the mean-minded or reluctant or selfish. God Himself is the perfect example of such and He expects this open-handed generosity. The whole of creation testifies to the abundance of the gifts He gives to His children. The deserving and the undeserving— our Father makes no distinction, as we must not. His gifts were not begrudged

nor were they rationed, thank God! He has plainly declared that in response He loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

But what is it that we Africans can possibly give in our circumstances? We are not well off. Many of our members are not too far short of the poverty line. Many are frail, many lack physical strength. What is there, therefore, that we can give by way of our contribution to the work of the house of God?

Whether it be a widow's mite or the wealth of those with many talents and the blessings of current Europe, God takes equal pleasure in it all, for it is an old Hebrew saying that only the Jew who gives counts with God. That is also scriptural. It finds its basis in the command that every Israelite had to present himself before the sanctuary and contribute half-a-shekel. He could not send someone else to do it; and woe betide him if he absented himself or forgot to do it.

If you did not give, you were not reckoned among the total number that made up the people of God. This is a truly frightening thought when you apply it to our own service to God; the generosity, the willingness, the eagerness with which we must contribute to our work amongst us. There may be some who are not aware of the telling way in which it comes out in chapter 38 of Exodus and verse 25. It is something that might possibly be passed over by some: "The silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary." That was the collection of those that presented themselves to the sanctuary to give their half-shekel. So, we can double that amount, for that was a full shekel reckoning, and they only gave a bekah, a half-shekel. A talent is three thousand shekels. So, we come to 603,550; that was the total number of those who contributed as ordered.

Now turn, please, to the book of Numbers and the 1st chapter—and it is this that is so telling. Verse 46: "Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty." This is not coincidence. It is a fact. Only those Jews were counted who had given their half-shekel. So, any who failed to give were just not of Israel. So, the duty of true citizenship, belonging, was inculcated, strongly taught to every Israelite. It is an attribute insisted upon throughout the Law. Monasticism, the practice of a secluded, selfish existence, was forbidden under the Law. So, when the

judgment is set and the books are opened, only those will be found to have been written up who have rightly appreciated their responsibilities to their ecclesia in particular, and to the brotherhood especially in general.

We say, this makes us very conscious of what God expects of us. We are not allowed personal feelings, we are not allowed to believe that whatever we are doing is not appreciated, we have just got to give and to keep on giving for the benefit of our brethren and sisters. We should not expect the white man to pay for everything. In fact, we should prevent them from trying to do so. Our minds go instinctively to Paul's letter to the Ephesians ch. 2.19 because this is the counterpart in its application to ourselves: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers (ye, that is, those who are baptised believers) and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

There have been those in the past who thought that they might serve God better in seclusion. They thought that they could study better away from the meetings, in the quietness of their studies, and the meetings were the poorer for their decision. We are the household of God, not just an only child, "and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building (603,550) fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:21-22). This is the spiritual application of that half-shekel contribution, the open-hearted giving to the work of the sanctuary. Take the fellowship of the saints in which we are spiritually born by baptism. The total contribution of the character and the services of each member is causing a sanctuary to be erected in which Christ and his Father are pleased to dwell. There is no room here for beginning to think that we have got nothing to do. "The rich shall not give more, nor the poor less..." (Exodus 30:15). God had set the contribution at an amount which every single member of that congregation could afford. The brother or sister who might think they have no talent could not be more wrong. So, what is demanded is this enthusiastic, this generous giving of all our talents and blessings so that the brethren put in charge have to say, Stop, we have got more than enough for the work of the Truth. Numbers have never counted for much in God's sight. More often they have been a snare and encouraged physical and spiritual laziness if there are too many to do the work. That is why God requires something from us all, rich and poor, strong and weak,

to give to God; it is within the ability of all.

Think of some of the ways in which this can be done. If it is only restricted to praise, to thankfulness, to appreciation, that is giving. We are of Israel, we have so much for which to praise God, for the blessings that citizenship entails, and this we must express in our daily living. We must never walk away from the citizenship of the saints, never voluntarily go away from the community of the children of God.

Spiritual apathy is the greatest plague ever to come amongst us, this nominal membership of an ecclesia, contributing nothing, and even daring to criticise those who have enthusiasm and zeal and are doing the work. The land of promise was a reality to Israel, a very near reality, yet their carcasses fell in the wilderness. It was because their enthusiasm was not maintained. This is a very real danger with us. With the Kingdom of God so very near, we must not fall back to a standard of service that can only be compared, at the best, to hiding our talent in a napkin, and at the worst, to not caring at all for giving anything. "Ye wicked", "ye slothful", was Christ's condemnation. We say again, it is in the mercy of God that we can all give acceptably. In our service always there is the principle: To whom much is given, of them much is expected. We can all encourage each other in our individual efforts. We can build, we can help our labourers, and we must never lose sight of the truth that we are each one a member in particular, a constituent part of the whole. There is no exception to that principle. The weakest, the most impotent among us, is just as much a constituent in the sight of God as those who are virile, with enthusiasm and zeal, that we need so much in the Truth. This is emphasised in connection with that tabernacle that was built in the wilderness, and especially is it true of the house of God, "whose house are we." (Hebrews 3:6). The corner, the foundation stones have long since been laid, and it is a mighty building, composed of innumerable parts; and it is one of those parts that we are being prepared to be. The plans have long since been drawn up, and will not be altered to conform to what we might consider our individuality—permission to be different. God will not grant such permission. We must alter ourselves to fit in with the whole.

So now consider the quality of the gifts we are bringing to the service of the work, and remember, it is the work which the Lord has commanded to be made. Only our very best is good enough. Anything

less is unacceptable and should be unthinkable. Imagine the condemnation which would have been spoken through Moses if all the Israelites had brought when ordered, was a load of unsuitable rubbish. Rejection of their gifts and of themselves would have followed; yet this is what we might do in our work amongst us. Our lives are a means to an end, and each one is working out their salvation. The service of the Truth demands that we all give to its upkeep, and keep on giving to its upkeep. It is most unlikely that there will ever be too much, and certainly never much too much in our case. Our meetings can never be overcrowded. It is a pleasure to see the seats filled. Just attending them is a service. It is not always easy to be carried out, especially in inclement weather. Those in charge of the preaching effort never have too much help or encouragement offered them. Our Bro. Treasurer is most unlikely to come to us and say, "Tell the brethren to stop giving".

The sick and those in isolation will never receive too many letters or visitors. Any who have been in hospital must know the value of that pile of cards and letters that arrive by the bedside. It is a wonderful feeling of belonging. And we can never love our brother or sister too much. There is no possibility that there will ever be a surplus in our total of contributions, but if every brother and sister can be fired with willing-hearted zeal, then our ecclesia, and others, will be lightstands, approved and blessed by God, who is pleased to accept of our gifts, as little as we may think He might be.

Now we have only to think of Christ and how much he gave, and the quality of his gifts, to be utterly humbled and ashamed. Thank God, he did not keep back any of the price. Had his service been qualified or in any way inferior, we should have been without hope.



Chapter 26 – Miracles

Gift – meaning 3 – the ability to perform miracles

Jesus promised his disciples that they would be given the Holy Spirit. He said to them:

"These signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17,18).

The disciples had been promised that they would be given the Holy Spirit with special powers to help them in their work. They had been told not to leave Jerusalem, but to *"wait for the promise of the Father"* (Acts 1:4). So, they waited as they had been told.

We have already seen how one day (it was the day of Pentecost), when they were all together, a wonderful thing happened. The house where they were was shaken, and there was a sound *"as of a rushing mighty wind"*.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

Why were special gifts of the spirit given to the disciples? They proved that the message of the disciples was from God. Jesus had been crucified; God had raised him from the dead. He had gone into heaven, leaving his little band of disciples to *"Go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). It was a big task. Would people listen to them? Surely, they would never believe the story of a man brought back to life after being dead three days. The New Testament was not yet written. So, the disciples were given the power to work miracles and speak in tongues as a sign that their message was from God.

On that day of Pentecost, they went out immediately and preached to the Jews in languages which the Apostles had never learnt, and could not have spoken but for the power of God. No wonder it says of the people who heard them:

"They were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another.

Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:7, 8)

There were people of many different nationalities there in Jerusalem on that day. They had come to keep the feast of Pentecost.

The Spirit Gifts helped to guide the church

As a result of the preaching on the day of Pentecost, about 3,000 men and women joined the disciples, and became Christians (Acts 2:41). And so, the Christian church had made a good start.

But imagine the difficulties there would be. Such a big family of Christians would need someone to guide and teach them, and to give them advice about the arrangements they would have to make for worship. They could not learn from the New Testament, because it was not yet written. So, the gifts of the Spirit were sent, not only to convince outsiders of the truth of the apostles' message, but also to help and teach the early Christians, and to set the first churches in order.

What were these gifts?

We have already seen that the apostles could speak in languages which they had never learnt. They could also heal the sick. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-22 the apostle Paul shows how different members of the church possessed different gifts, and how each member was to work for the good of the others. Then in verses 28-29 he gives a list of the gifts:

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues"

God's gifts cannot be bought

The disciples immediately, having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, set about the work of preaching. A follower of Jesus called Philip went down to Samaria and began to teach the people there. Many who listened to him believed his words about Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God, and they were baptized. Among those baptized was a man called 'Simon the Sorcerer'. He was a wonder-worker who had deceived the people of Samaria for a long time by his clever tricks. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard about the new converts in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to help with the work.

Now Peter and John, being apostles, were able to give to others the powers of the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on them. (This was something only the first apostles could do.) Simon, looking on, saw these two men laying their hands on the new disciples, and passing on to them the Holy Spirit. He was amazed. He probably thought to himself: 'What wealth and power I could have, if I could pass on this gift.' – So, he actually offered to buy the gift from Peter. This was a terrible thing to do! No wonder Peter said to him: *"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity"* (Acts 8:21-23).

Then Simon was afraid, and asked Peter to pray for him. We are not told what happened after this.

The story shows us the early disciples using the powers of the Holy Spirit when they preached to the people about Jesus and the Kingdom.

Read Acts 8:15-25 and note the following points:

1. Verse 18 says that it was through the laying on of the **Apostles'** hands that the Holy Spirit was given.
2. Simon did not receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit when he was baptized.
3. The Apostles Peter and John gave these newly baptized believers the Holy Spirit gifts after they had prayed and laid hands on them (this was a way of blessing).
4. Even after Simon had received the Holy Spirit in this way, he could not pass it on to others. This is what he wanted so badly.

This shows that it was only the **Apostles** who passed on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When they died the gifts could no longer be passed on and would disappear with that generation of people.

The end of the gifts

We have already seen that in the days of the first Christians, there was no New Testament—it had not been written; and we have suggested that is one reason why these gifts were so necessary. Today, we can read about the life of the Lord Jesus, and we can read the letters that

the apostles wrote to the churches of their day. But *they* had no written record, so that apostles, prophets and teachers with special powers from God were a very necessary help to the first churches.

When the writing of the New Testament was finished, there was no longer any need for this special help from God. All that Christians need to know is written down for them in the Bible. So, the Spirit gifts were taken away.

The apostle Paul said this would happen. In 1 Corinthians 13:8 we read:

"Charity (love) never faileth: but whether there be prophecies (that is, the gift of prophesying), they shall fail (or be done away); whether there be tongues (that is, the gift of being able to speak in tongues), they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (the gift of knowledge), it shall vanish away."

It would seem that the gifts were not suddenly taken away, at the exact time when the New Testament was finished: but that as time went on, those who possessed these gifts died, and they were not passed on to the Christians who followed them.

Does anyone possess these gifts today?

Some people do claim to have the gifts of the spirit. In particular they claim to be able to speak in tongues, and to heal the sick. How can we test those that claim to work miracles by the Spirit of God?

1. We remind ourselves that the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, that a time would come when the spirit gifts would cease. When did this time come, if not soon after the New Testament was completed? It cannot be with the coming of the Kingdom, because there will be more gifts than ever then. (The Holy Spirit gifts are, in fact, called "*powers of the world to come*" (Hebrews 6:5), and the early disciples had the 'firstfruits' of these gifts which will be freely given in the Kingdom.)
2. We note that the Holy Spirit gifts were given to help the true church. The true church believes and preaches the Word of God. Most of those who claim to have these powers today—if not all—preach things not taught in the Word of God. We must, therefore, reject their claims.

3. We have to confess that we are not impressed by many of the so-called miracles. Many of the cures are soon seen to be no cures at all; and others of them can be explained scientifically. Hypnotists can often get the same results. None of them can raise the dead.

God can, and still does, work through His Spirit today, but ***He does not allow people to use His Spirit.*** Those who believe all that is written in the Bible will not claim to have the Spirit gifts. They know that these gifts were to vanish away soon after the writings of the New Testament were complete.

God is still working

We no longer have the power to work miracles and speak with tongues. God's Holy Spirit is still at work today as, for example, when God answers prayers; and God also still speaks to us through His Word. When we read the Bible, we are, in a very real sense, being taught by the spirit of God.

If we want to please God, then, let us show that we appreciate all that He has done for us by reading His Word, and learning all we can from it.

Faith healing

Mark 16:17, 18 ⁱⁱⁱ

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

These verses are quoted by Pentecostals in support of their belief that the Holy Spirit gifts operate within the Pentecostal movement. Testimonies of "divine" healing are cited in proof of the existence of the gift of healing. Individuals said to possess this gift are sometimes referred to as "faith healers".

1. God has (and still can if He wishes) answered the prayer of faith to heal the sick. What is not evidenced, is proof that Spirit-gift possession (e.g., the gift of healing, 1 Cor. 12:9) is available today. The Mark 16 passage states that the following signs would accompany those who believed:
 - demons could be cast out

- believers could speak with new tongues
- serpents could be taken up without hurt
- deadly poison could be taken without hurt
- hands could be laid on the sick for their recovery

What is required is proof that the gift of healing can be demonstrated by these signs.

2. To deny the present-day existence of the Spirit gifts is *not* to deny that cures are affected at faith-healing meetings. Given sufficient mental excitement "miraculous" cures are not impossible, but this is not evidence of God's intervention, but rather to the "faith" of the patient. Roman Catholics and Pentecostals, with mutually antagonistic teaching, both claim miraculous hearings, and both have admitted that some "miracles" claimed divine are, in effect, not so. This is a significant admission. Recourse to *divine* healing is not needed to explain *all* claims.
3. Pentecostals often catalogue testimonies of paralytics, the deaf, and drunkards as indications of the curative powers of the "Holy Ghost". The following comments by a medical doctor indicate that such examples are not proof of *divine* healing:

"Diseases may be divided into three classes: first, those which are entirely mental; second, those which are physical but tend to cure themselves; third, those which are physical but do not tend to cure themselves. Eighty to ninety per cent of all diseases belong to the first two classes. A man with a paralysis of his leg of mental origin, [or] with a head cold . . . gets well under the attention of a faith healer, a chiropractor, or even by taking patent medicine, and all but the paralytic will get well if nothing were done. On the other hand, such diseases as diphtheria, malaria, syphilis, cancer, diabetes, tuberculosis, and pernicious anaemia do not get well with faith healing, chiropractic treatment, or psychoanalysis . . . Under the ministrations of a faith healer these patients would die. But even if they did, the faith healer's result would be still 80 or 90 per cent effective."

"None of the parts of the body is superlative or independent; they are all dependent and correlated. Each organ of the body when disordered manifests a characteristic disturbance, and this disturbance involves all of the parts of the body which are dependent upon the functioning

of that organ... The basis of faith healing lies in the influence of the mind on the activity of the body. The mind is a function of the brain and through the brain is a constant communication with every part of the body by means of the nerves which extend to and from the brain. The activity of every organ of the body is controlled by the nervous system."

"Paralysis of a limb and lameness are common symptoms of hysteria; the limb may be drawn up in a deforming contraction, or palsied. Persons with hysteria may become mute or blind, their sensations may be perverted, they may vomit obstinately or lose their appetite and waste away. Hysterical women may believe themselves pregnant and show all the signs of that condition, suppression of the menses, colostrum in the breast, morning sickness, and swelling of the abdomen. This may continue until the time for delivery has long passed and their minds have turned to some other manifestation."

"Not all men and women who have responded to faith cures are hysterical. There are numerous cases of bedridden invalids crippled by rheumatism and unable for years to put a foot on the ground, who nevertheless under some great stress, such as the house burning down around them, have shown remarkable returns of activity. The rheumatism which had crippled them had been real in the beginning, but during a long illness they had got into the habit of believing themselves crippled even after they were well. They had lost confidence in themselves."

4. Apparently "miraculous" results have been reported without the patients affirming belief in God. Some warts may be "charmed away" by pretending to pass under a ray, or simply suggesting to the patient that they will go away.
5. Even in the time of the apostles, some who failed to understand the truth in Jesus Christ, did not hesitate to falsely claim miraculous powers in his name: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." (Acts 19:13). Warning that such would be the case is explicitly indicated in the following references:
 - Jesus - "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many

will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23).
 - "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt. 24:24).

- John - "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 Jn. 4:1).
 - Paul - "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come . . . But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:1, 13).
6. Modern "faith-healers" cannot tell which of their patients will be healed and which will not. The miracles of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles were not apparently subject to any such doubt.
 7. This passage in Mark indicates that God confirmed the Word with signs. Today, the Word is complete and has been such since the completion of the New Testament. Spirit gifts such as healing have, therefore, been withdrawn, as Paul said they would (1 Cor. 13:8-12), and now the believer walks by faith in the perfected Word of God.



Chapter 27 – Pentecost

Our value of the Word of God enables us to look upon the Acts of the Apostles as a most fascinating book in every way. It is a book full of many interesting events that daily took place among the apostles of our Lord, incidents of all kinds to teach us about the way of the Lord regarding those who were commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel. But it is also a book full of teaching to do with some unusual events of the times, which were taking place in that age immediately following the resurrection of our Lord. Luke, the probable writer of this book, seems to continue the narrative of the gospel that bears his name. The beloved physician and companion of the apostle Paul was the first historian of the early Christians, and his wide experience and association with Jesus gives his writings a special interest for every one of us.

Sometimes the Acts of the Apostles is referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit, because the words “Holy Spirit” or “the Spirit” occur some fifty times in this book. Many such incidents come specially to mind in this book and one particularly so in the nd2 chapter. Many received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. On other occasions some were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and on several other occasions, being led by the Spirit. So, the book is of the highest importance because it is the only record with details of what happened at the end of those forty days following the resurrection of Jesus, and the beginning of the early Christian communities and the development and acceptance of the Truth in those days.

For forty days, we are told in chapter 1, the risen Lord had been teaching the apostles and instructing them regarding the things to do with the Kingdom of God; but one point he left untouched—the time when he would restore again the kingdom to Israel. Hence the apostles’ question in that chapter: “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). They asked that question. He did not rebuke them, for it was quite a valid question, but his reply was in harmony with many of the Scriptures to do with the same matter, showing that the exact time of the coming Kingdom is God’s secret. They would have known the value of the promise: “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you,” and the reason follows: “and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in

all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).

Yes, the work they were to perform would require power, special power, in order to convince the people of that day. The Jews, mainly through lack of faith, had in those times lost all hope. They had been instrumental in crucifying the Lord and they had been cast off, cut off from the olive tree; and now the time had almost arrived, in fact it had arrived, for the grafting in of the Gentile branches. “Seeing ye put it from you... Lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). This would require that special power, and it was about to be given.

So, they were gathered in this one place. Thus Ch. 2 opens, and continues by telling us exactly what happened. There was a rushing sound from heaven like a strong wind. A gale-force wind it would be, to make such an impression. It filled the house where they were sitting, and there appeared a fire like vision sitting upon each of them—God’s Spirit descending upon them, God’s gift for a special occasion poured out to give them that power for the preaching of the gospel with conviction. Today our power lies in the Word of God, and that Word has gone out into all languages, in every spoken tongue. Here is the connection with that event when they heard them speaking in every language. Today the Word speaks in every language, filled with the Holy Spirit, to teach men and women and convince them of the Kingdom of God and the purpose in Jesus Christ.

The immediate effect on that day of Pentecost was to cast doubts and suspicion upon the apostles. Is that again like it is today? It certainly is. They cast doubts upon this Word. In those days the apostles were accused of being full of new wine, intoxicated and unable to know what they were saying and doing. But that, as we know, was far from the case. They were filled, not with wine, but with the special miraculous power of God, filled with the Holy Spirit to enable them to preach the gospel in every language.

From verse 14 onwards we have the record of how Peter stood up among the eleven to remind his audience that this event was in fact the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, and telling them explicitly that whosoever should call on the name of the Lord should be saved. Then follows Peter’s wonderful exhortation, the preaching of the gospel in many of its features, a message full of hope to those who now knew that Jesus was not only risen from the dead and was alive for evermore, but that he would come again and receive them unto himself, and restore the kingdom to Israel. Those among them who

had been somewhat instrumental in disbelieving the Lord, and who may have given their voice to his crucifixion, were pricked in their hearts, and in panic asked Peter, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). There was only one thing they could do. “Repent,”—change your mind—be converted— “and be baptized... for the remission of sins.” Then follows the power of Peter’s words, recorded in verse 41, the effect of all this upon the people. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

The chapter closes with the lovely picture of this united community of believers “continuing stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Truly, the Holy Spirit was performing its work among men and women.

We pass over many centuries now and come to our own times, the 21st century. There is no miraculous Gift Spirit today. Paul said it would cease. Prophesying would finish, would vanish away, would come to an end, and there is no record, after John’s visions recorded in the Revelation, of any further manifestation of the gift of the Holy Spirit. So today not one of us can lay claim to having any special miraculous powers whatsoever. If we do, we are taking away the power of the Word of God. The Scriptures were completed to give to mankind all they would need for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Or again, speaking of Christ, we remember that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And Jesus said, “I will give you another Comforter” (John 14:16).

This is recorded in John’s gospel record, chapter 14, and we might look at this passage because it is an important one in regard to this matter of the gift of the Spirit. Here Jesus in verse 15 declares: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Then verse 26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

That refers to the Day of Pentecost, when it was fulfilled. Then came

the end of its work and it was withdrawn, and so our Comforter that Christ said would dwell with us for ever is the Spirit Word. Herein is the power of the Holy Spirit which testified that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” (2 Peter 1:21) and from this comes the power of the Spirit.

So, we today have as much of the Holy Spirit in us as we have of the Spirit Word, no more, no less. If the Word dwells in our hearts by faith, and if we have a good knowledge of that Word of God, we know the Spirit’s teaching and we are able to preach the gospel of salvation by that understanding and knowledge. We have a gift still with power today, the gift of this Word, given to us freely by God to use in the spreading of the gospel in any language, for its line is gone out through all the earth, says the Psalmist and here we are today with this Spirit Word, filled with its knowledge, able to teach men concerning the coming Kingdom of God. It is a gift which we all gratefully receive and, although we have this gift in a small measure, it is not because of anything we have done but simply by the power of God through His Word. Herein is all our power, all our enlightenment. God has written and provided this Word for our knowledge and given us the privilege of an understanding of His purpose.

He has enlightened us, He has given us the gift of the Truth, and it is now our obligation to seek to know more of this Word and be filled with its teaching, that we all may be made wise unto salvation. Paul wrote: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).

Now from time to time we come across those who say that they have the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some even claim to be able to perform miracles or to speak with tongues. We ask for a demonstration and as yet we have never seen one. The apostle Paul brings it all into perspective when writing to the Corinthian believers when he deals with this matter. Shall we look again then at what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:8: “Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” And in chapter 14:19 the apostle goes on to speak about the effect of those speaking with tongues; “Yet in the ecclesia I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten

thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

What is the point of speaking with tongues if no-one can understand that which is spoken? “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33).

So, we come back to the Word of God’s grace, the Word of God’s providing by His power exercised over men, that moved them to record His Word, His message, His purpose, and provide us all with a knowledge of salvation. Our responsibility today lies in believing that Word and obeying it, in seeking a deeper knowledge of the Word; because all the time we are imbibing the Word, the knowledge, the power of enlightenment, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in a sense, in the Word is entering into our hearts and minds to teach us about God and His purpose, so that we may preach the gospel and convince as many as God may call, and furnish ourselves with the knowledge of salvation. The Word is vitally important. We shall remember the words of Bro. Roberts: “Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the Divine ideas, principles and affections exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the Gospel, but is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment.” Those words are perfectly true in every sense.

That is our blessing and our privilege that we imbibe as much of the Spirit Word as we can and fill our hearts and minds with its teaching. Therefore, we are told: “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Then we saw this multitude on the day of Pentecost, along with the apostles; and we, with them, stand united in fellowship together, in fellowship with the Divine ideas, knowledge, principles, all contained in the Word of God; and just as they gladly received Peter’s words and continued steadfast in doctrines and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, with all things common, giving unto all men, seeking thereby to relieve the afflicted and the poor, doing the will of God from their hearts, so we will endeavour to the best of our ability to follow that example, that we may learn to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and serve Him in these final and evil days in which we live.

So, our privilege and our blessing lie in the gift that we have the Word of God. We are told that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Or again, the words of Solomon: “The

fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). There were scoffers then—“these men are full of new wine”—there are scoffers today, fools who despise wisdom and instruction. But soon the reality of the gift of the Word will be reached. Christ will be back in this earth and will bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit upon men and women who have waited for the promise of the Father, waited just as those apostles did for the gift of that promise that Christ said would come among them. Then, when the gift of the Holy Spirit from on high is bestowed on the saints, they will have power over the nations, power to heal the sick and the afflicted, to relieve those who today are comfortless and lonely and sad and indeed desire to know what the rule of Christ will mean, the blessing of all nations from the promises of old. They will have power to put down all power and authority and bring the nations into subjection to Christ that he may rule in righteousness.

To those who claim nowadays to have the gift of the Spirit, let them remember that by so saying they are taking away the power of the Word of God, belittling God’s Word, which God has said He has magnified above His Name. They should think about it most carefully.

So, we wait, and in our waiting, we walk in faith and hope for the fulfilment of the promise of God.

What descended upon Jesus when he was baptised?

One of the remarkable incidents in the life of our Master was when he was baptized by John in the River Jordan and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. (Matt 3:16).

The dove provided an outward sign of the fact that Jesus had been given the power of the Holy Spirit without measure.

The presence of this unlimited power was so much that Jesus was driven into the wilderness. He spent 40 days resisting his temptation to abuse the power he had been given. (Matt 4).

Jesus used this "gift" of the Holy Spirit to perform many miracles and signs during his ministry. He always glorified his Father with the power. (John 6:38, 8:29)

The Word – Logos

John states that "in the beginning" was the Word or Logos (John 1:1). Logos signifies the outward expression of inward thought or reason. It

represents more than a mere word, for it incorporates the thought behind the word expressed. Elsewhere, we learn that wisdom was with God in the beginning, and was manifested in His acts.

The English word *logic* is a word that originated from this Greek word *logos*. Logic is concerned with a way of thinking, a thought process. From the very beginning God had a plan and purpose. All that He has done since then has followed this plan. His will is to fill the earth with those who have a knowledge of Him (Isaiah 11:9, Habakuk 2:14).

The word knowledge in those verses is the word *Dah'-ath* which according to Strong has meanings of knowledge, perception, skill, discernment, understanding, wisdom, awareness and cunning. In other words, Yahweh wants us to know His plan and His mind, and to act upon that knowledge. To make His plan our plan, to share His thoughts, and disposition; and to act as He would act. In fact, He wants us to act so much like Him that we become like Him (1 John 3:2).

God's spirit is His power, but it also includes His thoughts and disposition. So, we can see that the ideas of God's spirit and the logos are incredibly closely linked. In fact, on close inspection we can see that the logos is an aspect of Yahweh's spirit. Through logos we have salvation and we can become one with Yahweh even as Christ was one with Yahweh (John 17:22). We are called upon to have the same mind as Christ and as Yahweh (Philippians 2:5), such that we might become part of that multitudinous Christ body.

The Logos or Dabar Yahweh is a title of Deity, manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ in whom it became flesh (John 1:1, 14). In other words Jesus was brought into the world to complete part of Yahweh's plan. In the Logos was "life and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). There is an excellent exposition of this subject in Eureka vol. 1, pp. 89-124.



Chapter 28 – Baptism

Baptised into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

There seems to be a question regarding the practice of most Christadelphians who say that a baptism is being done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This practice is outlined in the Ecclesial Guide, along with some clarifying statements that remove any connection with a belief of the Trinity.

The false teaching of the Trinity is not supported by the use of this wording; it is not taught in scripture, and therefore not by the Christadelphians. The doctrine of the Trinity is a confusing doctrine to say the least; it is totally a myth of man's making. It dates not only from the rise of modern Catholicism, but existed in the pagan doctrines of ancient Babylon, where many of the modern worship practices of so called "*Christianity*" originated. The book, "*The Two Babylons*" ^{xv} by Alexander Hyslop, published in New York by Loiseaux Brothers, Inc., brings this out very clearly.

Bible Teaching is clear

The Bible is so clear on this matter it is a puzzle as to how anyone can conclude anything about a godhead consisting of three beings, acting independently of each other yet still together, as one single being. The idea that the three were co-existent as well as co-equal and each a part of the Supreme Being destroys the beauty of the Father/Son relationship that is so emphatically detailed in the Scriptures. The statement by Christ that he and his Father are one (John 10:30) declares just how close they had become in their relationship and purpose; they were in absolute unity in accomplishing what was necessary to bring about the fulfilment of God's purpose. In John 17: 22 Christ prays for this same closeness between God, himself, and his Body of believers. This in no way indicated that they were to actually become one person in a literal sense. If Christ had been co-equal and co-eternal with God how could the statement that he had come to do the will of God have any meaning? (See Heb. 10:7-9).

The only place in the Scriptures that may appear to support the Trinity is found in 1 John 5: 7-8. The confusing language in these verses has

been proven to be spurious. These passages were not in any of the manuscripts until the 5th Century AD; they were authored and added by a Latin writer of no reputation.

The Apostle Paul plainly teaches: *"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* (1 Corinthians 8:6).

His thoughts are simple and pure. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"*(1 Tim. 2:5)

One God

Paul's words to the Ephesians show without any doubt his belief in the one God. *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* (Ephesians (4:4-6)

We should also consider the clear statement by Christ: *"Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God."* (Luke 18:19) Another verse showing that God and Christ are two separate persons is John 3:35, *"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."* This follows vs. 34, which states: *"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."* How could one coequal give a second coequal to a third coequal?

Hopefully this brief review of Bible teachings on this subject will remove from the mind of anyone that any reference to the Trinity is implied in the use of the words; "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." (See opening remarks on the Godhead).

On Baptism

Our doctrine of baptism is as found in Acts 10:48, *"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..."* and in Acts 19:5: *"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."* Our belief is that we are baptized into the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The use of the words, "the Father and the Holy Spirit" helps to show the authority by which it is done. One brother who is now deceased used these words: "Baptized in the name of the Father who was manifested in the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit."

The Ecclesial Guide suggests the following form: "Upon this public confession of your faith, you are baptized, by God's commandment, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for the remission of your sins," and then let the act of immersion be performed."(Par. No.8)

Paragraph No.9 of the Ecclesial Guide offers the following thoughts:

"As regards the form of words, it is better to say, 'baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,' than simply 'baptized into the Lord Jesus,' for this reason; the first form of words keeps the truth concerning Christ in the foreground - that he is the manifestation of the Father by the Holy Spirit and that what he did, he did not of himself as a man; whereas the latter leaves the way open for the idea to grow up that Jesus came in his own name, (which he expressly says he did not) and not in his Father's name (which he expressly says he did)."

Another paragraph in section No.8 of the Ecclesial Guide says:

"Nothing depends upon a set form of words. It is the believer's submission to the commandment of God that is counted to him for righteousness and union with Christ. Still, it is more seemly that a Scriptural and appropriate description should accompany the act performed. The use of the form suggested secures the exhibition of some features of the institution easily lost sight of; and that are important always to hold in view: (1) that it is from the commandment of God, and not from the officiation of the immerser, that the act derives its validity; (2) that the essence of the act is the submission, to burial on the part of the baptized, and not the performance of the burial by the immerser; (3) that there is, in the act, a public profession of the name of Christ: (4) that, until that moment, a man is "in his sins"; (5) that after immersion his sins are forgiven, and that he is called to newness of life."

It is very sad that at the time of writing the Ecclesial guide is not currently made freely available in Kiswahili.

The Man, Christ Jesus

The immersion process used by the Christadelphians, with references to the Father and the Holy Spirit, in connection with Jesus' name shows that we do not believe in the false doctrines that are currently being taught in "*Christendom Astray*." Christ was born as a man with like nature as all of us. He achieved exaltation to the divine nature

only after the most terrible sacrifice that a man has ever made. When our understanding of the nature of the man Christ Jesus is consistent with Bible teaching, there will be no confusion with the fallacious teachings of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit - God's power

To teach that the Holy Spirit is a person is another error of grave magnitude. The Holy Spirit is the concentrated power of God that He uses to do things beyond what we refer to as the norm. It is ridiculous to even think that one person (Holy Spirit?) could have entered into the angels, the prophets, and even into Christ himself, as the false teachers suggest. The Bible teaches that God granted the Holy Spirit Gifts to them, so that they would have special power, to allow them to do certain works necessary to the carrying out of His plan and purpose.



Chapter 29 – Magic

Magic formulae

Magic has exercised the deepest influence upon mankind from remote antiquity unto our own days. It either formed part of the religion of the country, as it was the case in ancient Egypt and Babylon and as it is now in some forms of Buddhism (Tibet), or it lived an independent life side by side with the recognized religion. In some instances, it was tolerated, or rendered less obnoxious, by a peculiar subdivision into white or beneficial and black or evil magic, or was downright persecuted. Wherever we go, however, and especially if we turn to the popular beliefs that rule the so-called civilized nations, we shall always and everywhere find a complete system of magical formulas and incantations. The belief in the witch and wizard, and their powerful filters and charms, holds still stronger sway upon human imagination than appears at first sight.

Much of ancient times has disappeared; in fact, there is a profound gap between antiquity and modern times which is not by any means bridged over by the literature of the Middle Ages. In these times magical art and practice were ruthlessly persecuted by the Church, and the Councils teem with denunciations against the work of the Evil One. Moreover, it was connected in a certain degree with the teachings and practices of the various heretical sects, and the pursuit was anything but harmless. Thus it comes about that an exhaustive study of the origin and development of Magic is still a wish for the future, and the full influence which it has exercised upon mankind cannot be investigated in such a manner as to have a scientific value until at least a portion of the ancient literature will again have come to light.

The syncretistic character of the Gnostic teachings shows itself also in the adoption of Magic, and in the spiritual interpretation with which they invested the forms and formulas of Magic. The adherents of the various teachings of the Gnostics, and especially those that lived in Egypt and Palestine, adopted all the ideas that were floating about and transferred them into their system of superior Gnosis.

If anything of the teachings of the Gnostics has survived, it is the thaumaturgical portion of it. This has always been popular with the masses, as it afforded them those means which they wanted to defend themselves against the attacks of unseen evil spirits, and to the more speculative minds it afforded a clue to the mystery of the universe. It gave them the means to subdue and to put to their service the unknown forces of nature. This lies at the root of the general acceptance of magic formulas and enchantments, and gives to this practice the popularity which it still retains.

Gnostics

Being the most formidable sects that assumed an anti-Christian character, although some are anterior to Christianity, the Gnostics were the first to be attacked by the Fathers of the Church. Most of the ancient writings of the Fathers are filled with polemics against heretics, of which these are the foremost. The result of this campaign, which lasted for centuries, has been the absolute destruction of all the writings of the Gnostics. Sparse and incoherent fragments only have come down to us, and we are now compelled to study their systems and superstitions, from the writings of their antagonists, Irenæus and Hippolytus, Tertullian and Epiphanius. A single exception is the work known as "Pistis Sophia," the date of whose composition is variously assigned to the second or fourth century. It certainly seems to belong to a later stage in the development of the Gnosis, as it contains some of the later ideas. It has come down to us in a very bad state of preservation.

Egypt

Within the last few years, the soil of Egypt has rendered some more fragments of this kind of literature, and magic Papyri have now enriched our hitherto very scanty stock of genuine ancient literature. These belong to the second and third century, and, being exclusively of Egyptian origin, throw an unexpected light upon the form which Magic assumed under the influence of the new order of ideas. It is a fact that nothing is so stable and constant than this kind of mystical literature. The very nature of a mystic formula prevents it from ever being radically changed. As there is no other reason for its efficacy than the form in which it is pretended to have been fixed or revealed to the Select by the Divinity itself, any change of *that* form would immediately destroy its efficacy. Dread preserved the form intact, at least as long as the practitioner stood under the influence of those divinities whose power he invoked for protection, or as long as he

believed in the power of those demons whose malignant influence, he tried to avert by means of that form of enchantment. This explains the uniformity of a number of such charms in whatever language we find them and almost to whatever time they may belong; as long as they are the outcome of one and the same set of religious ideas, which is the determining factor. But with the change of religion the charms also undergo changes, not in the *form* but in the names of the divinities invoked, and these bring other changes with them. To take a modern example, the charm against the Evil Eye will contain the name of Christ or of a Saint in a Christian charm, the name of Muhammad in the Muhammedan, and that of an angel or a mysterious name of God in the Jewish formula, though all the rest would be identical. The same process happened also in ancient times, and the Papyri mentioned above assist us in tracing the change which the new order of ideas had introduced in the magical formulas of the Christian era.

Essenes and Therapeuts

If we trace the first impulse of these changes to the Gnostics, we must at once associate it with the sects of Essenes and Therapeuts that swarmed in Egypt and Palestine, and with the most important sect of Gnostics which produced the greatest impression, i.e. that represented by Valentin. His is the one against whom most of the polemics of the Fathers of the Church were directed. He is the author of the most profound and luxuriant, as well as the most influential and the best known, of the Gnostic systems. He was probably of Egyptian-Jewish descent; and he derived his material from his own fertile imagination, from Oriental and Greek speculations, and from Christian ideas. In his system entered also the mystical combinations of letters and signs known under the name of cabalistic formulas, and he moreover favoured the permutations and combinations of letters to express divine names and attributes. To him we owe the theory of Æons and the Syzygies, or divine creative pairs, of which the two first form together the sacred "Tetraktys." I believe this to be the Gnostic counterpart of the sacred "Tetragrammaton," and not, as has hitherto been assumed by others, the Tetraktys of the Pythagoreans. For one can see in his system, and more so in the mystical part of it, the direct influence of the Jewish mystical speculations of the time. Valentin lived, moreover, in Palestine, and nothing would suit him better than to manipulate that mystical, Ineffable Name of God, round which a whole system had been evolved in the service of the Temple.

Angelology and mysterious names of God and His angels are, moreover, intimately connected with the above-mentioned sects.

Ineffable Name

The mysterious Ineffable Name of the divinity which is invoked seems to be the centre of most of the ancient and even modern Magic. By knowing that Name, which is assumed to be the name by means of which the world was created, the man or exerciser in Egypt pretended to constrain the god to obey his wishes and to give effect to his invocation if called by his true name; whilst in Chaldea the mysterious Name was considered a real and divine being, who had a personal existence, and therefore exclusive power over the other gods of a less elevated rank, over nature, and the world of spirits. In Egyptian magic, even if the exercisers did not understand the language from which the Name was borrowed, they considered it necessary to retain it in its primitive form, as another word would not have the same virtue. The author of the treatise on the Egyptian mysteries attributed to Jamblichus maintains that the barbarous names taken from the dialects of Egypt and Assyria have a mysterious and ineffable virtue on account of the great antiquity of these languages. The use of such unintelligible words can be traced in Egypt to a very great antiquity.

It is necessary to point out these things in order to understand the character of the new formulas which take now the place of the old. To the old and in time utterly unintelligible names, new names were either added or substituted, and the common source of many of these names is Jewish, mystical speculation. The Ineffable Name of God and the fear of pronouncing it can be traced to a comparatively remote antiquity. We find in those ancient writings that have retained the traditions of the centuries before the common era, the idea of a form of the Ineffable Name composed of 22, 42, or 72 parts, or words, or letters, of which that consisting of 72 was the most sacred. It is still doubtful what those 22, 42, and 72 were -- either different *words* expressing the various attributes of God, or *letters* in a mystical combination; but whatever these may have been they took the place of the Ineffable mystical name and were credited with the self-same astounding powers. By means of these every miracle could be done and everything could be achieved. All the powers of nature, evil the spirits and demons could be subdued, and in fact there was no barrier to human aspiration. The heavens were moreover peopled at a very early age with numberless angels arranged in a hierarchical order and each endowed with a special Name, the knowledge of which was

no less desirable for working miracles. I need only allude to Dionysius Areopagita to have mentioned a complete treatise of such a divine economy recognized by the Church, but we can go much higher up and find these divisions and subdivisions of the celestial hosts recorded in books that belong to the second era before Christ. In the *Book of Enoch*^{vi} (ch. vi) we have a long list of such names of angels, and in a book, the date of which has been differently put, the names of angels are still more numerous, to which there are added also various names of God. The book in question pretends to be a vision of the high Priest Ismael, and is a description of the heavenly halls. Modern scholars who knew nothing of the Gnostic and other heretic literature put it as late as the ninth century, simply and solely because they could not find early traces of it in the old literature, and because it seemed to appear first in those times. A comparison of it with the *Ascensio Iesae*, and still more with a chapter in the "*Pistis Sophia*," easily convinces us, however, of the fact that absolutely similar treatises were known as early as the first centuries after Christ, if they were not, in fact, later re-makings of still more ancient texts. The Greek Papyri already alluded to have also this peculiarity in common with these texts, that they abound in similar lists of names of angels and demons borrowed from Egyptian, Christian, and Jewish sources. Among these we find also numerous forms of the Name of God consisting also of a number of letters, 7, 27, and others, and also most curious combinations of letters.

The Jewish idea of a mystical Name of God

The Jewish idea of a mystical Name of God rests thus upon the interpretation of the Tetragrammaton, or the word YHVH, that stands for God in the Hebrew text, which from very ancient times the priests first and then the whole people refrained from pronouncing in the way it was written. A substitute was found for it, so as to avoid a possible profanation of the sacred Name. But it is an object of millenary speculation what that substitute really was. As already remarked, it is represented by a changing number of elements, letters or words. The original miraculous, powerful Name, however, was the Tetragrammaton known as the "*Shem ha-meforash*." This word has presented great difficulties to the following generations. It can be translated either as meaning *explicit*, the "explicit" Name of God, whilst the others are merely substitutes, or *separate*, the name which is used exclusively for the designation of the Divinity. These two are the best known and most widely accepted interpretations of the "*Shem ha-meforash*." In the light, however, of our study it will appear that

another translation will henceforth be found to be the only true one, at any rate for ancient times. Later on, the true meaning of this expression was lost, and one or the other of the first-mentioned philological translations was adopted. So, we find in the Testament of Solomon^{xvii}, e.g., "the angel called Aphoph, which is interpreted as Rafael." [This expression proves that it is based upon a Hebrew original, and that the word "perush" was taken to mean "*interpretation*"] Considering that this name was believed to be the only True Name of God, the all-powerful name which was never pronounced, "Shem ha-meforash" can only mean the Ineffable, as we find it also in the "Pistis Sophia," and all throughout the ancient tradition. It is a euphemism; instead of saying: it is the "Ineffable" unutterable name, they used the word which meant: it is the "explicit" name, just as they said for a "blind" man -- he is "full of light"; other examples can be easily adduced. In this way an ancient mystery and a stumbling-block for the translator of such texts disappears.

As the Tetragrammaton, or "Shem ha-meforash," was the Ineffable Name, and could by no means ever be uttered, others were substituted and were used by the priest when blessing the people. These also were endowed with a special sanctity, and were revealed only to the initiated. These substitutes were considered to be no less effective for miracles, and the knowledge of these mysterious Names was no less desirable than that of the true Tetragrammaton, for they were believed to represent the exact pronunciation of the forbidden word, and thus to contain part, if not the whole, of the power with which the Tetragrammaton itself was invested. Rab, a scholar who had studied in Palestine towards the end of the second century, says of these substituted names, and more especially of that of forty-two elements (Tr. Kiddushin, fol. 71a): "That this Name is to be revealed only to a man who stands in the middle of his life, who is pious and modest, who never gives way to anger and to drink, who is not obstinate. Whoever knows that Name and preserves it in purity is beloved in heaven and beloved upon earth; is well considered by man and inherits both worlds." What these forty-two may have been has thus far been the object of speculation. When comparing the ancient tradition with the new texts in the Papyri, and in the mystical texts of Hebrew literature, there can no longer be any doubt that the Name of forty-two, or more or less, elements could not have been originally anything else but *words* consisting of that *number of letters*, which were substituted in the public pronunciation for the Ineffable Name consisting of one word and only *word* and only *four letters* -- the

Tetragrammaton! In time these substitutes were also forgotten, or not divulged, and thus arose a series of new substitutes and variations for the divine Name. There was also the fear of profaning the name of God when writing it down in the way it occurred in the Bible, and therefore they resorted to manifold devices on the one hand to avoid a possible profanation, and on the other to obtain sacred or mysterious substitutes for the Ineffable Name.

Angelology

Another element that came within the purview of this activity of coining new names was the new and greatly developed angelology that flourished at that time in Palestine and Egypt. The angels had to be provided with appropriate and powerful names, and the authors resorted to the same devices, of which I mention the most prominent, and which are the cause of many of the barbarous forms and names that abound in the magical rites and formulas and in the so-called practical Cabbalah. The biblical names of Michael, Gabriel, and others with the termination *-el* = God served as a model for some of the new angels, such as in the *Book of Enoch* ^{xi} and in other similar writings. The first part was, as a rule, taken from the characteristic attribute connected with the activity of that new angel: so, *Raphael* = the healing angel, in the *Book of Tobit* ^{xviii}; *Raziel* = the angel of the mysteries; and in the same manner a boat of similar names. Then came into requisition the system of permutation of the letters of the divine name: one standing first was placed at the end, and so on. Much more extensively were the change in the order or the substitution of other letters resorted to. In the Alphabet of R. Akiba no less than five different systems of this kind of substitutions are enumerated; either the last letter of the alphabet stands for the first (A-t; b-sh, **vbṭa** etc.), or one letter stands for the one immediately preceding such, as b for a; or the eighth and fifteenth stand for the first, and so on (A-h-s; b-t'-a, **stb shə**, or first and twelfth are interchangeable (A-l; b-m, **mb la**). One can easily see how differently the same name could be written and employed in the same amulet, and all these various forms representing only *one* and the same name. The Tetragrammaton appears, therefore, either as **HWḤD** any number of permutations and substitutions unlimited. However, to these four systems enumerated; they are innumerable, and it is almost impossible to find the key for all met with in these mystical writings, and especially on the amulets.

Other means employed for the purpose of devising new variations and protections for the sacred name, belonging to the very eldest times, were the combination of *two* words into *one*, of which one is a sacred name and the other an attribute, but the letters of these two words are intermingled in such a manner that it is not always easy to decipher them. An example, which has hitherto not been understood, we have already in the Talmud. The High Priest Ismael is said to have seen *Iah Irtka Akriel* in the Temple. This word, which stands for the mysterious name of God, is nothing else than the combination of the two words *rtk* Ktr = Crown and *Ariel*, from Isaiah 29:1. In the text, which I publish here, we have the name *zhdkSkdhzi* = *ds* and *kzhHzk* = mighty, powerful. Names were further formed by leaving out one or two letters from the Tetragrammaton or from other sacred names of the Bible, the primary reason always being to avoid the possibility of profanation, as the profane utterance of the divine name brought heavy penalty upon the culprit. In this manner is the obscure exclamation in the Temple to be understood, *lv ma Ani vhu*, instead of the usual "O Lord" (help us): in each of these two words one letter has been left out -- the *d* in the first, *Adni*, and the second *h* in the second word. On other occasions strange letters were inserted between those of the divine name, and thus we get the puzzling form (Tr. Synhedrin, 56a = vii, 5) which is mentioned when the blasphemer who had blasphemed God was brought before the judges. The judges ask the witnesses to repeat the blasphemy uttered by the accused, and they say, instead of mentioning the Divine Name, the words, which may have obtained this form in our printed texts through popular etymology, meaning "Jose beat Jose!" But originally, we have here clearly the Tetragrammaton *hwhy* and a strange letter inserted after each letter of that word.

This process continues still unto our very days, but from the thirteenth or fourteenth century onwards a change has taken place in the system of the formation of these mysterious words, considered to be so efficacious in amulets. The initials of the words of a biblical verse are combined into a new word without any meaning, or the letters of a verse are so arranged as to form uniform words of three letters without meaning, the commencement of each of these words being the letters of the Hebrew words arranged consecutively. The most celebrated example is the use to which Exodus 19:19-21 has been put for many a century. But these are a mark of more recent origin, and not a trace is to be found throughout the whole ancient mystical literature, and also not in our text.

So, in the bibles versions of today we do not see the true name of God, Yahweh. Instead we have what is actually a name of Baal; Lord and LORD. It is not the written words, nor the calling upon the name Yahweh that has the power. It is the message that has power.



Chapter 30 – Purgatory

The Roman Catholic church teaches that the souls of God's people may go to a place called 'purgatory' after death, which is a half-way house between 'heaven' and 'hell'. They teach that it is a place of purging, in which the soul will suffer for a while before being fit to gain salvation in heaven. The prayers, candle-burning and financial gifts to the church of a person and his friends is supposed to shorten the length of time that the soul suffers in 'purgatory'. The gross error of such ideas should be established from the following:

The Bible is silent concerning the existence of such a place.

The soul refers to our body, rather than to some immortal element within us, and 'hell' is the grave rather than a place of punishment. The righteous are never promised salvation in heaven. The granting of salvation will be at the judgement seat at Christ's return, rather than at some time after death when we supposedly leave 'purgatory' (Matthew 25:31-34; Revelation 22:12).

All the righteous receive their rewards at the same time, rather than each person gaining salvation at different times (Hebrews 11:39, 40; 2 Timothy 4:8).

Death is followed by complete unconsciousness, rather than the activities suggested by the doctrine of purgatory.

We are purged from our sins through baptism into Christ and developing a firm faith in his work during our present life, rather than through some period of suffering after death. We are told to "purge out therefore the old leaven" of sin in our lives (1 Corinthians 5:7); to purge ourselves from the works of sin (2 Timothy 2:21; Hebrews 9:14). Our time of purging is therefore now, in this life, rather than in a place of purging ('purgatory') which we enter after death. "Now is the day of salvation... now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Our obedience to God in baptism and development of a spiritual character in this life, will lead to our salvation (Galatians 6:8) - not to the spending of a period in 'purgatory'.

The efforts of others to save us through candle-burning and other donations to the Catholic church, will not affect our salvation at all.

"They that trust in their wealth... none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him... that he should still live for ever" (Psalm 49:6-9).

The idea then that a spirit can exist in this half way house is completely a false doctrine. Along with this false idea we can also rid ourselves of the idea that a Priest can banish a ghost from our homes with the use of "Holy water", a cross, payments of money to the Church and chanting of prayers. Obviously if ghosts do not exist, then nor can they be banished.



Chapter 31 – Words

The Hebrew words

The following are a list of Hebrew words that have been translated as “*spirit*” within English versions – the numbers are Strong’s references, should you wish to study these words in greater detail.

ruach: wind, spirit (7308)
yiddeoni: familiar spirit (3049)
qaddish: holy (6922)
paam: to thrust, impel (6470)
nake’: broken (5218)
neshamah: breath (5397)
shaphal: low (8217)
ob: a bottle (made from animal skin), a necromancer (178)
ataph: turn (5848)
qinah: ardor, zeal, jealousy (7068)
reuth: longing, striving (7469)
sheqer: deception, disappointment, falsehood (8267)
yattir: preeminent, surpassing (3493)
Koresh: a Persian King (3566)
zenunim: fornication (2183)
atsal: to lay aside, reserve, withdraw, withhold (680)
siach: to muse, complain, talk (of) (7878)
baath: to fall upon, startle, terrify (1204)
chokmah: wisdom (2451)

The Greek words

The following are a list of Greek words that have been translated as “*spirit*” within English versions – the numbers are Strong’s references, should you wish to study these words in greater detail.

tapeinos: low-lying, fig. lowly, hence lowly in spirit (5011)
sunanapauomai: to lie down to rest with, fig. to be refreshed in spirit with (4875)
daimonion: an evil spirit, a demon (1140)
pneuma: wind, spirit (4151)
akathartos: unclean, impure (169)

pneumatikos: spiritual (4152)
 zeó: to boil, be hot (2204)
 zóopoieó: to make alive (2227)
 hágiasmos: consecration, sanctification (38)
 méte: neither, nor (3383)
 plérés: full (4134)
 psalló: to pull, twitch, twang, play, sing (5567)
 arrabón: an earnest (a part payment in advance for security) (728)
 hagiósuné: holiness (42)
 phantasma: an appearance, apparition (5326)
 puthón: Python, a mythical serpent slain by Apollo, divination (4436)
 eiper: if perhaps (1512)
 tarassó: to stir up, to trouble (5015)
 hágios: sacred, holy (40)
 stoicheó: to be in rows, figurative - to walk by rule (4748)

The English words

Holy

Set apart, separate, blessed, sacred, consecrated, hallowed, implying possession of a sanctity that is the object of religious veneration. Holy refers to the divine, that which has its sanctity directly from God or is connected with Him: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”. Something that is sacred, while sometimes accepted as entitled to religious veneration, may have its sanctity from human authority: a sacred oath. Something that is consecrated is specially or formally dedicated to some religious use: a life consecrated to service. Something that is hallowed has been made holy by being worshipped: a hallowed shrine. Endowed or invested with extreme purity or sublimity, devout, godly, or virtuous.

Spirit

noun

1. the principle of conscious life; the vital principle in humans, animating the body.
2. the incorporeal part of humans: present in spirit though absent in body.
3. the soul regarded by some as separating from the body at death.
4. conscious, incorporeal being, as opposed to matter: the world of spirit.
5. a supernatural, incorporeal being, especially one inhabiting a place,

object, etc., or having a particular character: evil spirits.

6. a fairy, sprite, or elf.

7. an angel or demon.

adjective

8. pertaining to something that works by burning alcoholic spirits: a spirit stove.

9. of or relating to spiritualist bodies or activities.

verb (used with object)

10. to animate with fresh ardour or courage; inspirit.

11. to encourage; urge on or stir up, as to action.

12. to carry off mysteriously or secretly (often followed by away or off): His captors spirited him away.

Idioms

13. out of spirits, in low spirits; depressed: We were feeling out of spirits after so many days of rain.

Soul

noun

1. the principle of life, feeling, thought, and action in humans, regarded as a distinct entity separate from the body, and commonly held to be separable in existence from the body; the spiritual part of humans as distinct from the physical part.

2. the spiritual part of humans regarded in its moral aspect, or as believed by some to survive death and be subject to happiness or misery in a life to come: arguing the immortality of the soul.

3. the disembodied spirit of a deceased person: He feared the soul of the deceased would haunt him.

4. the emotional part of human nature; the seat of the feelings or sentiments.

5. a human being; person.

6. high-mindedness; noble warmth of feeling, spirit or courage, etc.

7. the animating principle; the essential element or part of something.

adjective

8. of, characteristic of, or for black Americans or their culture: soul newspapers.

Hell

Noun

- 9. the place or state of punishment of the wicked after death; the abode of evil and condemned spirits; Gehenna or Tartarus.
- 10. any place or state of torment or misery: They made their father's life a hell on earth.
- 11. something that causes torment or misery: Having that cut stitched without anesthesia was hell.
- 12. the powers of evil.
- 13. the abode of the dead; Sheol or Hades.
- 14. extreme disorder or confusion; chaos: The children let both dogs into the house, and all hell broke loose.

Informal

- 15. something remarkable of its kind (usually used in the phrase a hell of a or one hell of: That was one hell of a great game.

Interjection

- 16. (used to express surprise, irritation, disgust, etc.)

Verb phrases

- 17. hell around, Slang. to live or act in a wild or dissolute manner: All they cared about was drinking and helling around.

Idioms

- 18. be hell on, Slang. to be unpleasant to or painful for: These shoes are hell on my poor feet.
- 19. to be harmful to: These country roads are hell on tires.
- 20. for the hell of it, Informal. to see what will happen; for adventure, fun, excitement, etc.: For the hell of it, let's just get on the next bus and see where it takes us.
- 21. with no particular purpose; for no special reason: I called him up for the hell of it, and he offered me a job.
- 22. get /catch hell, Slang. to suffer a scolding; receive a harsh reprimand: We'll get hell from our parents if we stay out late again.
- 23. give someone hell, Informal. to reprimand or reproach severely.
- 24. go to hell in a handbasket, Informal. handbasket.
- 25. hell on wheels, Slang. extremely demanding, fast-paced, aggressive, effective, or the like: The new job is hell on wheels. Our sales staff is hell on wheels when it comes to getting the most out of

every account.

26. like hell, Informal. with great speed, effort, intensity, etc.: We ran like hell to get home before the storm. She tried like hell to get him to change his mind.

27. (used sarcastically or ironically to express the opposite of what is being stated): He says the motor will never break down? Like hell it won't!

Ghost

The English word Ghost is a reference to a dead persons continued essence after death here upon the earth. The idea is often connected with the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory.

Noun

1. the soul of a dead person, a disembodied spirit imagined, usually as a vague, shadowy or evanescent form, as wandering among or haunting living persons.

2. a mere shadow or semblance; a trace: He's a ghost of his former self.

3. a remote possibility: He hasn't a ghost of a chance.

4. (sometimes initial capital letter) a spiritual being.

5. the principle of life; soul; spirit.

6. Informal. ghost writer.

7. a secondary image, especially one appearing on a television screen as a white shadow, caused by poor or double reception or by a defect in the receiver.

8. Also called ghost image. Photography. a faint secondary or out-of-focus image in a photographic print or negative resulting from reflections within the camera lens.

9. an oral word game in which each player in rotation adds a letter to those supplied by preceding players, the object being to avoid ending a word.

10. Optics. a series of false spectral lines produced by a diffraction grating with unevenly spaced lines.

11. Metalworking. a streak appearing on a freshly machined piece of steel containing impurities.

12. a red blood cell having no hemoglobin.

13. a fictitious employee, business, etc., fabricated especially for the purpose of manipulating funds or avoiding taxes: Investigation showed a payroll full of ghosts.

Verb (used with object)

14. to ghostwrite (a book, speech, etc.).

15. to haunt.

16. Engraving. to lighten the background of (a photograph) before engraving.

17. Informal.

a) to suddenly end all contact with (a person) without explanation, especially in a romantic relationship: The guy I've been dating ghosted me.

b) to leave (a social event or gathering) suddenly without saying goodbye: My friend ghosted my birthday party.

18. Digital Technology. to remove (comments, threads, or other digital content) from a website or online forum without informing the poster, keeping them hidden from the public but still visible to the poster.

Verb (used without object)

19. to ghostwrite.

20. to go about or move like a ghost.

21. (of a sailing vessel) to move when there is no perceptible wind.

22. to pay people for work not performed, especially as a way of manipulating funds.

23. fabricated for purposes of deception or fraud: We were making contributions to a ghost company.

Idioms

24. give up the ghost, to die. To cease to function or exist.



Chapter 32 – The Last Chapter

What is Gods Power?

When we think about Gods power, we tend to think of magical powers that cause things to happen outside of nature. This does not paint a particularly true picture of Gods power. Whilst it is true that God created all things, even the laws of physics themselves it is also not true that all of the times God uses His power that He alters the fabric of physics in some way. Much of what He does using His power is completely understandable within the laws of physics. For example, He may cause the earth to split and swallow men up (Numbers 16:32). He does not need to break any laws of physics to do that. He could just cause an earthquake. Indeed, many of the punishments that He brings upon men and women involve what we would describe as *natural occurrences*. God can and does command, and even the elements obey Him. We do not need to understand this in any magical way. Man, today can equally create an earthquake (albeit a small one); for example, small tremors are created when fracking for oil through injecting water into the rocks.

God also uses the Angels to do His bidding (Hebrews 1:14). When He created the earth, the plants and the animals upon it, He did not just click His fingers and there it was. He commanded the angels and they created the earth for Him (Gen. 3:15). Afterwards He looked at their handiwork and behold it was good.

Even what at first seems to be miraculous cures, do not necessitate God altering nature in any way. Consider the cure of a blind man of his blindness. This is truly amazing, but man can in this technological age perform similar amazing eye correction with the use of lasers and similar devices. Do we not believe that God is infinitely more capable than man at such things?

We are not belittling Gods power in any way by speaking of His power in this way. Ultimately God can if He so wishes alter even the laws of physics – He created them in the first place. What we are saying is that very often He does not need to. Part of Gods power is His knowledge and the resources available to Him. Look at the

advances that we have made with the discovery of electricity, and compare that with Gods infinite knowledge. When the white man first came to Africa they used to light matches, and the natives thought they were sorcerers. Now even the Masai use the white mans “*magic sticks*” to make fire.

When we speak of Gods power, we are not only speaking of His capability of doing or accomplishing something but also His sway and persuasive capabilities, His rule and sovereignty.

The most powerful of all Gods powers is Gods power to save man from his sin, and we too can have this power. We can have the Holy Spirit. NOT, that we can have the Holy Spirit gifts but we can gain the Mind of God, the characteristics of God, by manifesting Him in our daily lives. We can become persuaded by Him and we can persuade others (Acts 18:4). We gain this great power through reading His Holy Word and allowing that to influence our lives. In turn we may influence others in exactly the same way as God influences us.

Summary

We have counted at least 25 different meanings of the word spirit, as it is used within the Bible. This makes it very difficult for us to determine what is actually meant by many scriptures unless the context is well known. We started by considering this sentence: "this man is full of spirit" - do we mean he has the spirit gifts; he has been worshipping a baal, he is energetic for Gods work, that he is a lunatic, has daemon possession or is he full of alcoholic drink? Without the context we cannot say.

Sometimes we might avoid discussions of the Holy Spirit as we feel we should fully understand this as a first principle and we can be seen by others as a non-believer if we are seen to struggle in understanding such a fundamental topic.

Many around us believe that the spirit gifts are available today, this we know is incorrect (1 Cor. 13); there are those that believe in ghosts, this cannot be correct as the dead know not anything (1 Samuel 28, Matthew 14:25, Ecclesiastes 9:5); there are those that believe that spirits inhabit trees and animals, this is also an unacceptable belief, and God demands we withdraw from such (1 Kings 14:23, Exod. 34:13); then there are those who believe in the

witch doctor and voodoo from which again God demands withdrawal (Exodus 22:18, Duet. 18:10).

On the other hand, we read chapters like Romans 8, and we see that we must be led by the spirit and that the spirit must dwell in us. This is not speaking of spirit gifts but of our attitude. Individuals are influenced by the Holy Scriptures (another expression of the Holy Spirit) to display the fruits of the Spirit in our lives (Matthew 5:1-13, 2 Timothy 3:16, Galatians 5:22). This is not because the Bible is magical in any way, but it directs our path (Psalm 119:105).

We need to get rid of all those mythical ideas about magic, gods, baal, and spirits of the undead and ancestors they are simply myths and relics of superstitions. We also need to rid ourselves of the false beliefs of those around us who profess to be Christian but are in no sense followers of Christ.

The true Bible usage of the word Spirit talks about those things and persons which influence our minds, whether for good or for bad.

God's spirit is His power by which He commands even the elements and they obey but it also includes His thoughts and disposition, which He reveals by the actions which His spirit performs. It is His thoughts and disposition that the spiritual man should emulate. We need to become manifestations of His character. Jesus said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63, 14:10). The creation of the world by the Spirit of God is beautiful, it is magnificent, but the life-imparting words, the Holy Spirit words, insofar as they are absorbed by us, become part of the mind of God working in us, influencing us to follow a pattern of life which is after the image of God's dear Son. It does not make us inspired, of course; we can err in what we say and what we do; but if the words are absorbed in our mind and heart it should help us to develop the spiritual man in us, God's character reflected in some small way in our manner of life.

Through the Word (logos) we have salvation and we can become one with Yahweh even as Christ was one with Yahweh (John 17:22). We are called upon to have the same mind as Christ and as Yahweh (Philippians 2:5), such that we might become part of that multitudinous Christ body.

We today have as much of the Holy Spirit in us as we have of the Spirit Word, no more, no less. If the Word dwells in our hearts by faith, and if we have a good knowledge of that Word of God, we know the Spirit's teaching and we are able to preach the gospel of salvation by that understanding and knowledge. By imbibing the Word, the knowledge, the power of enlightenment, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in a sense, in the Word is entering into our hearts and minds to teach us about God and His purpose. We are not able to manipulate the elements through the Holy Spirit power but we can have the Mind of God and stand united in fellowship together with Yahweh, in fellowship with the Divine ideas, knowledge, principles, all contained in the Word of God.



Appendix: Best Practices

As can clearly be seen from our considerations of the usage of words like spirit, gifts, god and lord throughout the scriptures of truth and the somewhat unhelpful translations that have been provided for us by the translators of our Bibles we thought it prudent to provide some measure of guidance on how Bible students can avoid such confusions as are universally found throughout Christendom.

A method that has been adopted in Australia, America, Canada and a number of Ecclesias in the United Kingdom and is also widely adopted in Christadelphian literature is outlined below. This is not meant to be prescriptive, but we do think that it is helpful.

When a reader finds one of these words then it is always to the originating Hebrew and Greek words that the scholar should be directed. So, whilst reading in public, praying in public or writing articles or books concerning the Truth it is recommended to substitute Kiswahiliarised equivalents. The following table indicates the recommended best practices:

Swahili	Meaning	Substitute	Swahili	Meaning	Substitute
Roho	Ghost	Kivuli	Maji ya roho	Holy water	Maji matakatifu
Roho	Alcohol	Pombe	Roho	Angels	Malaika
Roho	Zeal	Bidii	Roho	Magic	Uchawi
Roho	Happiness	Furaha	BWANA	God the Father	Yahweh
Roho	Energy	Nishati	Bwana	Jesus Christ	Yashua
Roho	Influence	Ushawishi	bwana	The boss	Bosi
Roho	Following God	Akili ya Mungu	bwana	A man	Bwana
Kwa roho	Visions	Maono	Roho	Inspiration	Msukumo
Neno la roho	The Bible	Biblia	Roho	Gods words	Hotuba ya Mungu
Roho	Creative power	Nguvu ya ubunifu	Zawadi	Talents	Talanta
Roho	Life	Maisha	Zawadi	Offerings	Sadaka
Roho	Living Soul	Mwili ulio hai	Zawadi	Miracles	Miujiza
Roho	Baal	Baali	Roho	God sustained	Mungu alidumisha
Roho	Pixies & fairies	Hadithi	Chura kama roho	Frog like	Njia ya umri
Roho	Doctor spirits	Roho ya mchawi	Mungu	An angel	Mwakilishi wa Mungu
MUNGU	The Father	Baba	mungu	An idol	Sanamu



Appendix: Reference Books

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- ⁱ The lost kingdoms of Africa – Gus Casely-Hayford
ISBN 978-0-593-06814-4
- ⁱⁱ Word studies on the Holy Spirit – E.W. Bullinger
ISBN 978-0-8254-2246-1
- ⁱⁱⁱ Wrested Scripture – Ron Abel
ISBN 978-0-8518-9194-1
- ^{iv} The Talmud of Babylonia, Tractate Sanhedrin –
http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_44.
- ^v Mishnah – ISBN 978-1-5781-9353-0
- ^{vi} The ways of providence – Robert Roberts –
ISBN 978-0-8518-90326
- ^{vii} Instructions to a painter – Edmund Waller's -
ISBN 978-1-1704-0618-2
- ^{viii} CSSA Sunday school lessons
- ^{ix} Genesis – H.P. Mansfield – ISBN 978-0-4087-0465-6
- ^x The Charismatic Movement, Dr. Hoyle Bowman, Piedmont Bible
College, Winston-Salem
- ^{xi} Beneath the Rainbow: Stories and Poems from Kenya –
ISBN 978-9-9668-8460-2
- ^{xii} Events subsequent to the return of Christ – Jim Cowie
- ^{xiii} The Kebra Nagast – ISBN 978-1-9097-3501-9
- ^{xiv} Ancient book of Jasher – ISBN 978-1-4382-6675-6
- ^{xv} The two Babylons - ISBN 978-1-4662-1644-0
- ^{xvi} The book of Enoch – ISBN 978-8-5620-2245-6
- ^{xvii} The Testament of Solomon – ISBN 978-0-9556-9322-9
- ^{xviii} The book of Tobit – ISBN 978-5-5184-8251-7

The historic background beliefs and culture of Africa is that of the spirit world, magic and occultism; belief in the spirits of plants, animals, trees and nature itself. Belief in ghosts, spirits and the power of the witch doctor within the ancient cultures of the Nubia, Buganda, Bunyoro, the Swahili coast, Zulu, Almoravid, Almohad, and the Bantu can be traced back for millennia; cultures that existed hundreds of years before this area even became known as Tanzania. These beliefs are deeply imbedded into African culture even in the 21st Century, and despite turning from these things at baptism into Christianity it is hard to dispel them completely. Often it is found that individuals attempt to continue with these traditional ideas side by side with their beliefs in the Bible despite the total and complete incompatibility. Consequently, as I have traveled around Tanzania over the past 25 years as a missionary, one of the most common questions that have been posed to me is "what is the Holy Spirit?" More often than not I have retorted with a quick answer. I have used a broad brush, so as to answer the question quickly due to time constraints brought upon me by circumstances. Unsurprisingly upon my return to an area I find a reversion to the ancient belief systems. This small book is an attempt to correct the misunderstanding that may be held by the reader upon this so often misunderstood topic, and it attempts to provide a fuller answer to rectify the quick answers that have previously been given by missionaries. A comprehensive "must read" for all faith based organizations and workers that attempt to preach the Christian gospel message contained in the Bible. Whether lay preachers, or full time missionaries. We examine the context into which Christianity is being delivered, penetrate into the historical background of Africa, appreciate with respect religious and global developments and the motives of individuals to convert from the religions of antiquity.

