

HOLY SPIRIT IN JOHNS WRITINGS

by Jean Muller

Muller's scholarly examination of the Holy Spirit's role in John's Gospel and writings, discussing the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a foundational event and its relationship to Pentecost and Christian initiation. He traces the pneumatology of the Johannine literature.

11 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.2. Introduction
2. 01. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Joh_1:32-33)
3. 02. The gift of eternal life (Joh_3:3; Joh_3:5; Joh_3:8; Joh_3:14-16)
4. 03. The gift of the Spirit, a well of living water (Joh_4:14; Joh_4:23-24)
5. 04. The Spirit, rivers of living water (Joh_7:37-39)
6. 05. The other Comforter (Joh_14:16-17; Joh_14:26; Joh_15:26-27; Joh_16:7; Joh_16...
7. 06. The inbreathing of the Spirit of a risen Christ (Joh_20:19-23)
8. 07. An unction from the Holy One (1Jn_2:20; 1Jn_2:27)
9. 08. The Spirit, a proof of God's presence in us; the sure criterion to distingui...
10. 09. God's testimony: eternal life in His Son (1Jn_5:6-8; 1Jn_5:11-13)
11. 10. The Spirit in the Book of Revelation

00.2. Introduction

Introduction The apostle John's writings contain an abundance of revelations on the Holy Spirit: His divine Person, His presence, His attributes and His operations. Such teachings complement in a marvellous way those of the apostles Paul and Peter. Paul reveals the Holy Spirit's Baptism of the Assembly to be one body, the Unction of the Spirit, the Seal of the believer's heavenly calling, the Earnest and the Firstfruits of his inheritance in Christ. Also, the Assembly (collectively) and the body of each christian (individually) are the Habitation of God by His Spirit. Finally, the Spirit's gifts are sent upon earth by a glorified Christ for the edifying of the Assembly, His body. For his part, Peter reveals that the Old Testament prophets were directed by the Spirit to testify about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow: David, the sons of Korah, Asaph, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah and many others announced beforehand, through their own experiences, the great events of the great mystery of godliness concerning Christ: His Names (Son of God, Son of Man, King of Israel and Son of David), His coming in the world, His birth from the virgin, His death, His resurrection, His elevation in glory, His sitting at God's right hand, His second coming and His future Kingdom. Further, the Christians, as living stones, are built up upon Christ, the foundation stone, to be a holy priesthood (in the likeness of Aaron's) and a royal priesthood (after the order of Melchisedec). The manifold aspects of the Holy Spirit given in John's writings are different and worth close attention. Before reading the corresponding Scriptures, it would be appropriate to summarise the various points that can be distinguished in that respect. Six will be found in John's gospel, three in John's first epistle, and five more in the book of Revelation; fourteen in all. We would not venture to say that it makes a double fullness of revelation (twice seven), although it is complete in itself.

First, in the gospel:

- (1) The baptism of the Holy Spirit by Christ; ch. 1.
- (2) The gift of life and new birth by the Word and the Holy Spirit; ch. 3.
- (3) The gift of the Spirit and worship in spirit and in truth; ch. 4.
- (4) In ch. 7, the stream of living water flowing forth to others.
- (5) In ch. 14-16, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples about the gift of another Comforter (the Lord Jesus is the Comforter while the Holy Spirit is the other Comforter) bearing witness to the world and to the believers.
- (6) Finally, in ch. 20 the Lord Jesus, on the eve of the resurrection day, breathed forth the Spirit of the risen Christ into His disciples. The first epistle develops three more aspects of the Spirit.
- (7) In the Cristian family (1 John 2:1-29), the unction of the Holy One is the key to access the knowledge of all spiritual things.

(8) The Spirit testifies that God dwells in us (1 John 3:24); He is the only criterion to distinguish spiritual things, whether they originate from the Spirit of truth or from the spirit of error. (1 John 4:1-21)

(9) Ch. 5 gives the testimony to the fact that eternal life is in God's Son, and that whosoever has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son does not have eternal life. The five aspects of the Spirit in the book of Revelation are (10) The Spirit takes John to see various prophetic scenes he will in turn reveal to us.

(11) The Spirit is seen outside of the church (considered as a responsible body on earth to carry God's testimony), to give a judgment of appreciation upon its walk seven times; ch. 2 and 3

(12) The seven Spirits (ch. 4 and 5) are those of the Lord Jesus - much on Old Testament ground - as the spirit of wisdom, of prophecy and of glory.

(13) When saints, after having gone through the last tribulation, die in the Lord (ch. 14) the Spirit pronounces a blessing upon them and assures them of rest.

(14) Finally, the most touching mention, when the revelation is sealed, shows the Lord Jesus entering personally into the scene to present Himself as the bright and morning star to His church; then, the Spirit works in the believers' and in the church's heart to call upon the Lord's return.

01. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Joh_1:32-33)

(1) The baptism of the Holy Spirit (John 1:32-33) The baptism of the Holy Spirit is found seven times in the New Testament (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13). This most significant event is mentioned prophetically in the four gospels (it is one of the few scenes concerning the Lord Jesus which are recorded in all four gospels). The Lord confirms the coming down on earth of the Holy Spirit and of the baptism therewith to His disciples just before leaving them for heaven (Acts 1:5; Acts 1:8): the fulfillment of "the promise of the Father". This baptism took place effectively on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), although the word baptism is not formally mentioned as such. The coming down of the Holy Spirit upon the assembly in Jerusalem starts the dispensation of grace, in which we still live. The apostle Peter refers to this baptism when he reports to his brethren in Jerusalem his visit to Cornelius (Acts 11:1-30), to recognize God's sovereign will to grant "repentance unto life" to the believers from the Nations and to bestow them the same gift of the Spirit that to the believing Jews. The last mention of the baptism of the Spirit (by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31) reveals its true spiritual import: all Christians (regardless of their natural origin or position in the world) have all been baptised by one Spirit into one body, the body of Christ. The seal of this wonderful truth is by the Holy Spirit. This baptism implies the fact of being associated with Christ in His death to be thereafter risen with Him; the two examples of Moses and the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-33) and of Israel going through the River Jordan (Joshua 4:1-24) confirm this spiritual meaning. The baptism with the Holy Ghost of the Christian company (the 120 believers assembled in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost) took place once and marked the birth of the assembly on earth. It has not been repeated. Henceforth, any believer brought to the Lord as a Saviour is joined to an already baptized body, the body of Christ, of which he becomes a member.

It may be noticed that the four gospels associate the promise of the Spirit's baptism by Christ with the water baptism for repentance of John the Baptist to which the Lord submitted willingly, when associating Himself with the excellent on earth in whom was all His delight (Psalms 16:3). Death, even the Lord's death, seen figuratively in the waters of Jordan (through which the Lord passed), opens the way to the earthly blessings of the future repentant Remnant.

Then, on the bank of the River Jordan, the heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon the Lord Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, when He was approximately thirty years of age. The apostle Peter reveals that the Lord Jesus received the Holy Spirit a second time, after His ascension (Acts 2:33). Consequently, Christ, now the glorified Man in heaven, as Head of the church, sends on earth all gifts for the well-being of His assembly. Having received gifts (Psalms 68:18), He gives them in turn to His church (Ephesians 4:8). These spiritual gifts are of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew and Luke, the baptism of the Holy Ghost is associated with the baptism of fire, a symbol of future judgments. Fire is also mentioned on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3) as a display of glory and power in grace, and not of judgement. This judgement will take place later, at the end of the dispensation of grace. The prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32) mentioned by the apostle Peter (Acts 2:17-21) received only a partial fulfilment at the day

of Pentecost: it was the rain of the early season, while the rain of the latter season will take place on earth only after the church has been raptured in heaven and the judgments completed.

02. The gift of eternal life (Joh_3:3; Joh_3:5; Joh_3:8; Joh_3:14-16)

(2) The gift of eternal life (John 3:3;John 3:5;John 3:8;John 3:14-16) The Lord Jesus receives at night the visit of Nicodemus, a ruler and a doctor in the law, and He reveals to him the fundamental truth that to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3) and to enter therein (John 3:5), any man must be born again. To see the kingdom, the eyes of the understanding must be enlightened (Ephesians 1:18), while to enter the kingdom, the door must be opened, and Christ is the door (John 10:7; John 10:9). The new birth must be (spiritually speaking) by the water (emblem of the Word of God) and by the Holy Spirit. This necessary condition, thanks be to God, is all sufficient; nothing more is required. Likewise, the Lord Jesus says of Himself that He must die, the Son of Man must be lifted up. Again, this necessary condition - the death of our Lord - is all sufficient for our salvation by faith (). The first truth (the new birth) refers to God's work within the believer, while the second truth (the Lord's death) refers to Christ's work for the believer, in favour of him. This distinction is fundamental; the Scriptures distinguish always between propitiation and substitution. Salvation is offered "unto all" men, because of the allsufficiency of Christ's work, but imputed in righteousness only "upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:22). The Lord refers here to declarations of the Old Testament which Nicodemus should have known (John 3:10). Ezekiel had prophesied to Israel on behalf of God: "I will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean...A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put in you" (Ezekiel 36:24-26). Thus, the same instruments (the Word of God and His Spirit) will be at work on earth in the future to bring the people of Israel into a moral state in which God will bless them. But here, the Lord's words reveal a more fundamental truth, the eternal salvation of soul. And further, the promised blessings, "heavenly things" (John 3:12) are not for the earth, but now in relation with heaven, the eternal dwelling place of our beloved Saviour. The new birth implies the communication of a new nature, not the improvement of the old one: that which is born of the flesh (the adamic nature in any man) remains flesh, whereas that which is born of the Spirit is and remains eternally spirit. That new nature is the gift of eternal life which has been promised before the world began, or before the ages of time (Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9). The truth of the new birth by the Word of God and His Spirit is later confirmed by the apostles: First, by Paul: "He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5); Then, by James: "Of his (God's) own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18); Finally, by Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Eternal life is God's gift, the highest expression of God's love towards a lost world, the ruined mankind. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). God gave His only Son, "the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13) who came down on earth to die on the cross, so that whosoever (not only Jews, but any man from the nations) now believes in Him has eternal life. Such is the most simple and powerful message of the Gospel.

03. The gift of the Spirit, a well of living water (Joh_4:14; Joh_4:23-24)

(3) The gift of the Spirit, a well of living water (John 4:14;John 4:23-24) A new revelation about the Holy Spirit is given by the Lord to the Samaritan woman. Expelled from Judea by the hatred of the unbelieving Jews, our lonely Lord was crossing Samaria en route to Galilee, where He would accomplish most of His miracles (John 4:4). At Jacob's well in Sychar, He then meets a lonely woman, reduced by a merciless world to occupy the lower end of the social ladder, as compared to Nicodemus, a respected ruler of the Jews. Humanly speaking, she would have been deemed less qualified than Nicodemus to receive the Lord's message; But, how true is it that "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). Despised by the Jews as were all Samaritans, this woman had looked for happiness in the world, but had reaped utter misery. The Son of God, Lord of all creation, "wearied with his journey" (John 4:6), meets her at the well and asks from her something to drink, as though He, the Son of Man, was dependant upon her to quench His thirst (it was the heat of midday). This simple request was the occasion for the Lord to reveal the marvelous gift of God of the well of living water. Here, this is not essentially the gift of eternal life in God's only-begotten Son (John 3:16). This living water characterises more the gift of the Holy Spirit as a source of refreshment for the believer's heart. Consequent upon the gift of eternal life (ch. 3), God adds now the energy for the divine nature (ch. 4). This remarkable scene shows how God gives freely, while the Son of God stoops in humiliation and the Holy Ghost becomes a living source of energy and joy for the heart. At a difference with man's material needs which constantly repeat, God's spiritual gift is constantly renewed in the believer's soul: the Spirit becomes in him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Although implied in the Lord's words, the work of redemption is not specifically mentioned. Also, the gift of living water relates here to the blessed effect of the Holy Spirit, while the coming down on earth of the Person of the Holy Ghost (the third Person of the Godhead) is not yet in view. The Lord will reveal this great fact only when speaking about His departure to heaven (ch. 14).

Immediately thereafter, the Lord Jesus reveals to the woman of Samaria the true purpose of God concerning His worship: God has saved us to gather for Himself a people as a company of worshippers. The apostle Peter confirms that we are built up as "an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). So if God has saved us and given us eternal life with the Holy Spirit, it is because He, the Father, seeks worshippers. God seeks such because He is spirit, and "they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). The hour for the accomplishment of God's eternal counsels had now come; it was consequent upon the coming of another hour, the solemn hour of Christ's death. Christian worship is now solely spiritual, and all former material display and decorum are out of place: neither Garizim (for the Samaritans) nor Jerusalem (for the Jews; John 4:21) were any more the place of worship. But christian worship is also in truth: away from mysticism, it is the earnest but sober

outpouring of hearts overflowing with joy in the Father and the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. The last revelation the Lord Jesus gives to the woman in this astonishing scene is that He was the Messiah, the Christ, God's Anointed One (John 4:26; cp. John 1:42).

04. The Spirit, rivers of living water (Joh_7:37-39)

(4) The Spirit, rivers of living water (John 7:37-39) The following revelation about the Spirit is when the Lord was in Jerusalem at the last day of the feast of tabernacles. That feast was the last one (the seventh one) in the succession of the Lord's feasts in Israel. It was celebrated in the fall of each year during the second half month of Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2) (), and took place after the harvest and the vintage, two emblems of God's judgment and wrath (Leviticus 23:34-36; Deuteronomy 16:13). It lasted seven days (emblem of a complete period in itself) but included an eighth day, a special day of rejoicing (emblem of the Lord's resurrection). While the sabbath spoke of God's rest in the first creation (Exodus 20:11), the feast of tabernacles announced God's rest in redemption in the new creation. But this rest implied the Lord's death, and this is why He speaks about His departure (John 7:32-33).

Now, in the temple, Jesus cries (John 7:28; John 7:37). His declaration is twofold:

(1) An earnest call to come to Him to all men: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink". Christ is the source of the water of life, and man must come to him to have eternal life. God reveals Himself through man's needs, and His light enters his heart through the conscience, as the example of the woman at Sychar had proven: "Come unto me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). And all men are in the same need of a Saviour, in spite of all apparent differences. The Lord's call to come to Him is repeated again in the last page of the Scriptures: "Let him that is athirst come" (Revelation 22:17).

(2) He that believes on Christ will experience the Holy Spirit to become in him rivers of living water. Springing from its heavenly source, Christ, the well of living water within the believer (John 4:14), becomes now rivers flowing from him to others in the world. The believer now becomes an instrument, a channel of blessing to others. The expression: "the Spirit was not yet" (John 7:39) doest not refer to the eternal existence of the third Person of the Godhead, but to the fact that He will come to dwell on earth (in the Christians and in the assembly) only after Christ entering into heaven. The moral order of the Lord's teaching is important:

(1) Firstly, there is a work of the Spirit in a person's heart, individually, for new birth, and the gift of eternal life;

(2) Secondly, there is a moral exercise in the believer as to the operation of the Spirit to bring us in relation with the Son and the Father and setting us as worshippers: Such is the holy priesthood, in the likeness of Aaronic priesthood for worship (Deuteronomy 33:10; 1 Peter 2:5);

(3) Thirdly, the believers may become channels of blessings to others. This is the royal priesthood, a priesthood of blessing, in the likeness of Melchisedec's (1 Peter 2:9). The royal priesthood (towards men) comes after (and is consequent upon) the holy priesthood (towards God). We should remember that God comes first; worship is the only Christian service accomplished now on earth by faith which will continue eternally in heaven. Nevertheless, the work of the evangelist during the period of grace, keeps all its value.

05. The other Comforter (Joh_14:16-17; Joh_14:26; Joh_15:26-27; Joh_16:7; Joh_16:13)

(5) The other Comforter (John 14:16-17; John 14:26; John 15:26-27; John 16:7; John 16:13) In chapters 13 to 16 inclusive, the Lord Jesus assumes His heavenly position: He looks Himself as a heavenly Saviour, having finished the work the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). Ch. 13 starts with a remarkable statement: the love of Christ for His own unto the end. It was just before the feast of the Passover (the anticipation of Christ's sacrifice) and "Jesus knew that his hour was come" - the solemn and glorious hour of His death - "that He should depart out of this world unto the Father". He then proves the love for His own in a marvellous way through the provisions of His grace for the time where the disciples (and us after them) would be deprived of His personal presence with them on earth. Yet, thanks be to God, we are never deprived of His permanent presence for us in heaven. The Lord Jesus had been (and still is) the Comforter for His own. He is our Advocate (Paracletos) with the Father (1 John 2:1). The first expression of the Lord's love for His disciples is to wash their feet: a symbol of the cleansing of their soul by the Word of God, to bring them into the suitable moral state where they might receive His communications for the time of His absence. But now that the Lord is in heaven, there is another Comforter, the Holy Spirit who would abide with the believers for ever (John 14:16). While the Lord's words (in ch. 3, 4 and 7) had presented several aspects of the operations of the Holy Spirit, this new revelation concerns now His divine Person. The Spirit has been sent by the Father in Jesus's Name (John 14:26); and, as proceeding from the Father, the Spirit of truth was also sent by the Son (John 15:26; John 16:7). There is a most remarkable unity in the three divine Persons to answer all our needs: God the Father is "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). God the Son is the Comforter, and God the Holy Spirit is the other Comforter, who provides "the comfort of the Holy Ghost" to the assemblies (Acts 9:31) and brings also to every Christian the consolation in Christ, the comfort of love and the fellowship of the Spirit (Php 2:1). But there is more: the Holy Spirit takes that which is the Lord's to give it to the disciples (and in turn to us), for the Lord's own glory (John 16:14-15); He guides us into all truth (John 16:13). He teaches us all things (in the NT epistles; John 14:26); He brings all things to our remembrance, whatsoever the Lord had said (in the gospels; John 14:26); He testifies also of Christ (in the Acts of the Apostles, which are in fact the acts of the Holy Spirit; John 15:26); finally, He will show us things to come (in the book of Revelation 16:13). Altogether, the Spirit bears witness concerning Christ, the rejected Son of Man, but now glorified in heaven (John 15:26). As a consequence, the disciples will bear witness about Christ, being themselves eyewitnesses of His sufferings. The last revelation about the Holy Spirit concerns His witness towards the world (John 16:8-11). The world here is not the lost mankind, the object of God's love (John 3:16), but rather the evil system organized by man on earth away from God since Cain's offsprings. After Christ's rejection, Satan is called the prince of this world, where there is nothing for Christ (John 14:30). Again mark carefully the relative moral order: the Holy Spirit first comforts the disciples, then brings to them the truth on behalf of the Lord Jesus, and finally pronounces the judgment of the world. He will "convince the world of sin, and of

righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

(1) First, the conviction of sin: sin was in the world since Adam's fall; Israel added the transgression of the law, and all men were guilty. But now in the consummation of the ages, Christ had been manifested (Hebrews 9:26): "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19), and man refused it; man did not believe in Christ: such is sin as declared by the Spirit's witness.

(2) Then, the conviction of righteousness. "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of (God's) throne" (Psalms 89:14). But at the Cross, never had they been so far apart, when Pilate - the guardian of judgment - committed the supreme act of unrighteousness in condemning Christ, the only innocent man on earth. Henceforth, righteousness left the world with Jesus Christ, and is in heaven with "the Righteous" (1 John 2:1), He who sits on the Father's throne, now invisible for the world (John 16:10), which has lost his Saviour and will see him only as a Judge.

(3) Finally, the conviction of judgment. There will be a future time where "Judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Psalms 94:15), when the Son of Man will judge the world in righteousness (John 5:27; Acts 17:31). Now the world is already judged, together with his prince, Satan, the great adversary (John 12:31). God's judgment is sure and final, although it is not immediately carried out.

06. The inbreathing of the Spirit of a risen Christ (Joh_20:19-23)

(6) The inbreathing of the Spirit of a risen Christ (John 20:19-23) The last revelation about the Holy Spirit in John's gospel is connected to the Lord's resurrection. On that glorious day, the Lord meets first Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre; while instructing her not to touch Him (John 20:17), Jesus reveals to her that He was ascending unto His Father and His God, now by grace our Father and our God. The work of redemption places us in the same glory and in the same relations with God that the Lord Himself has. Precious thought indeed !

Then, on the eve of the resurrection day, He meets His disciple in the upper room to call peace, "shalom", upon them twice (John 20:19; John 20:21). Firstly, there is peace of the conscience - peace with God - consequent upon the blood of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 1:20). Only John had reported about the blood shedding at the cross (John 19:34-35), and mentions now that the Lord showed His hands and His pierced side to the disciples (John 20:20), while Luke reports about the Lord showing them His hands and feet (Luke 24:40). Secondly, there is peace of the heart, the Lord's own peace (John 14:27). The disciples are glad when they see their Lord. The day of the Saviour's death had closed with mourning and weeping for those that had been with Him (Mark 16:10). And now, their sorrow is changed into joy unspeakable: "At even weeping cometh for the night, and at morn there is rejoicing" (Psalms 30:5).

Immediately thereafter, the Lord sends His disciples into the world, as the Father had sent Him (John 20:21). At that remarkable moment, the Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples the breath of new life in the new creation: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). This does not refer to the sending down of the Holy Spirit as a divine Person, a fact which took place only fifty days later (Acts 2:1-4); it is the inbreathing of the Spirit of a risen, resurrected Christ into the born again disciples. It is the counterpart in the new creation of what had happened in the first creation for the first man, Adam. Man is a creature absolutely apart from all animal creatures because his creation was consequent upon a decree of God: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Then, "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" (Genesis 2:7). An animal possesses a soul and is driven by its instinct. Man only has a body, a soul and a spirit which makes him a responsible creature before God. The counterpart in the new creation is the breath of life of the resurrected Christ, the Holy Ghost breathed into the born again believers, by Christ Himself, who is "the last Adam, a quickening (making alive) Spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). Such is the power to make us free from sin and death, by the law (the moral principle, not Moses's law) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). The good Shepherd's sheep have life "more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Finally, this scene closes with the Lord entrusting His disciples with the capacity to remit or retain sins (John 20:23). A comparable authority of binding and loosing on earth was given to Peter in the kingdom, when receiving the keys thereof (Matthew 16:19), or to the two or three in the assembly (Matthew 18:18). In none of these cases, is there the power to forgive sins, which

remains the divine prerogative of the Son of Man (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10). The capacity entrusted to believers (whether to Peter individually or to believers collectively in the Christian assembly) pertains to governmental administration, in particular through ecclesiastical discipline. The six mentions of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel close with that last scene of chapter 20. Let us now turn to John's first epistle where three more mentions are found.

07. An unction from the Holy One (1Jn_2:20; 1Jn_2:27)

(7) An unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27) "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20).

"The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you" (1 John 2:27). The apostle John introduces here the spiritual growth of the believers in God's family as one proof of divine life. In this family, three categories of persons are addressed twice: the fathers, the young men and the little children. The fathers know Christ, He "that is from the beginning" (1 John 2:13-14), the ultimate result of christian experience. The young men are engaged in a conflict with Satan. They are strong in the Lord and have overcome the wicked One. But they should remain on their guard (like each one of us): "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:13; 1 John 2:15-17). The little children begin their Christian life. It is remarkable that they receive much more detailed exhortations than the fathers and the young men. For them, the world is dangerous and it is the last time (1 John 2:18). Before the manifestation of the Antichrist (in a time still future for us), there were already in christendom many antichrists, who were active to spread deceitful teachings whereby the little children were in danger to be carried away (Ephesians 4:14). To face such danger, there are two provisions of God's grace:

(1) The word of God (1 John 2:24-25): it is "that which ye have heard from the beginning".

(2) The Holy Spirit (1 John 2:26-27). The Holy One gives the key to all spiritual knowledge (1 John 2:20). It is truly encouraging to realize that regardless of our spiritual advancement or moral position, God's provisions of grace are equally available to anyone. Even the youngest babe in Christ has that unction and may know all things, because the Holy Spirit gives him spiritual intelligence. Isaiah reports about the whole vision being compared to a sealed book delivered to a person; either that person knows how to read, but the book is sealed; or he does not know how to read (Isaiah 29:11-12). Contrariwise now, the Spirit opens God's Word for us and instructs us how to read it. God's message reaches our heart for our encouragement and enjoyment. The apostle Paul presents also that important truth to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 2:10-16). Revelation of the deep things of God is by the Holy Spirit. Communication of spiritual things is also through the Holy Spirit. Finally, reception into our heart and conscience is by the Spirit. The operation of the Spirit is likened here to an unction, a probable reference to the anointing of oil poured over the meat offering (Leviticus 2:4). The unleavened cakes were first mixed with oil and further anointed with oil (a usual emblem of the Holy Spirit). When coming on earth as Man, the Lord Jesus was, first, begotten of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35); then, at the beginning of His ministry, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him (Luke 3:22). The unction is mentioned also by the apostle Paul in reference to the believer (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). The Spirit of God is poured over the Christian to guide him into all truth (John 16:13).

08. The Spirit, a proof of God's presence in us; the sure criterion to distinguish between truth ...

(8) The Spirit, a proof of God's presence in us; the sure criterion to distinguish between truth and error (1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:2) The believer dwells in God (in fellowship with Him) and God dwells in him (as witness); God abides in us. Such is the testimony of the Holy Spirit in us. The Apostle Paul confirms that the Spirit bears witness that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). Such a blessed assurance does not come from us; it is given through a divine operation in our hearts. However, we should keep God's commandments (His Word) as obedient children in order to enjoy the reality of God's presence in us.

There follows strong recommendations from the apostles as to the departure from God's truth in the world. A twofold religious apostasy (Jewish and Christian) will develop. Already during the apostolic times, there were many false prophets in the world (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:3). How distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error? John states here that we should not believe every spirit (v. 1); similarly, Paul speaks also about various spiritual manifestations (1 Corinthians 12:1). Both apostles reveal the sure criterion to judge any spiritual manifestation, whether it originates from God or from Satan: the Holy Spirit abiding in us. To confess Jesus as Christ (God's Anointed) having come in the flesh proves the divine origin of a spirit. Moreover, "greater is he that is in you" (the Spirit) "than he that is in the world" (the devil). The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the secret of the victory of Christian faith. Finally, "He that knoweth God, heareth us" (the apostles). The inspired writings of the apostles (the epistles) are authoritative. To accept them will practically guard us from the deadly influence of the spirit of error.

09. God's testimony: eternal life in His Son (1Jn_5:6-8; 1Jn_5:11-13)

(9) God's testimony: eternal life in His Son (1 John 5:6-8; 1 John 5:11-13) The last mention of the Holy Spirit in this epistle is about God's testimony concerning eternal life who is in His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus came in the power of water (1 John 5:6). The emblem of water in Scripture is manifold and must be interpreted with caution: it may represent death and judgment (like the Red Sea or Jordan) or life eternal and blessing (the waters of life, particularly in John's writings). Here, the text seems to refer to the fact that water which flowed from the pierced side of our Lord after His death is the powerful testimony that life is not to be found in the first Adam, but only in Christ who must die (or else He, the true corn of wheat would have remained alone in glory; John 12:24) in order to communicate life in resurrection. Purification is by death alone. But the Lord Jesus came also in the power of blood. Atonement for our sins was also necessary, and it was achieved by the shedding of the precious blood of God's Lamb at the cross. Atonement is also by death alone.

Remarkably, John alone reports in his gospel about water and blood shedding at the cross (John 19:34-35), and his writings display its marvellous results. In that respect, the first nineteen chapters of the Gospel are complemented by his three epistles, while the last two chapters of the Gospel are continued in the book of Revelation. The Holy Spirit, characterised here as being the truth (1 John 5:6), is the third witness. It is placed here first in the order of the testimony (1 John 5:7), because His power in our hearts enables us to comprehend the value of the two other witnesses (the water and the blood). Historically, however, the water and the blood came first and the Spirit afterwards (at the day of Pentecost).

These three witnesses agree on one single testimony: life eternal is in the Lord Jesus, in the Son of God. In His infinite grace, God gives us eternal life, and that life is in His Son (1 John 5:11). Without Jesus and His finished work accepted by whosoever believes in Him, there is no life, but rather eternal condemnation: such is the most simple and powerful message of the gospel, the good news of salvation. It is in fact the true subject of the epistle.

Mark again how this record about eternal life by the three witnesses (the Spirit, the water and the blood) had been already stated at the cross and at the resurrection day (John 19:35; John 20:31), a proof of the remarkable harmony prevailing in the inspired writings of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

10. The Spirit in the Book of Revelation

The Spirit in the Book of Revelation

Finally, there are five different aspects in Revelation under which the Holy Spirit is mentioned. Owing to the prophetic character of this book, the revelations about the Spirit are closer to the Old Testament than the New. The Spirit is not seen essentially as dwelling in the assembly or in the believer, the voucher of our place in Christ before God. He is more presented in His operations in the world. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).

(10) Revelations to John (Revelation 1:10; Revelation 4:2) The Spirit acts sovereignly in favour of the apostle John, while isolated in the Patmos isle, to introduce him into a spiritual scene or entrust him with a new revelation:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). Here, John contemplates the glorious Son of Man, and receives the revelation of the prophetic history of the assembly on earth.

"And immediately, I was in the Spirit" (Revelation 4:2). After these things (the completion of this story of the assembly), John is taken by the power of the Spirit to witness the heavenly scene, which opens the prophecies about the world.

(11) The Seven Spirits In four occasions, the Spirit appears as invested with the fulness - "the seven Spirits" - of His attributes of wisdom, power and light, much in line of the character of the Old Testament. This does not contradict His inscrutable unity as revealed in the New Testament: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4).

(1) "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:4). John's salutations to the seven churches in Asia is on behalf of the three divine Persons: the eternal God (the "I AM THAT I AM"; Exodus 3:14), the Spirit and Jesus Christ. Here, the Spirit is the direct agent of God's power in the sevenfold perfection of His action: He stands before God's throne.

(2) "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (Revelation 3:1). The Lord presents Himself to the church in Sardis with having:

(a) the seven Spirits, the fulness of the perfection in which He governs the universe, and, (b) the seven stars (the angels of the seven churches), because He retains the supreme authority over the assembly, in spite of the pretensions of an unfaithful church who had a name to live but was dead. The next two mentions of the seven Spirits are connected to the two aspects of the heavenly scene John is invited to contemplate (chapters 4 and 5).

(3) "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Revelation 4:5). The

Lord is seen as the Creator, and the seven Spirits are likened to seven lamps, the emblem of God's attributes in His judicial action to bring light in the world. The heavenly saints have royal crowns like kings and cast them before the throne in adoration and submission to the King of Kings.

(4) "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6). The Lord is now seen as the Redeemer. As Lamb of God, He has seven horns, the fulness of God's power over the earth. The seven Spirits are likened now to seven eyes (and no more to seven lamps) an emblem of the fulness of God's government. It was already revealed during the times of Israel: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). The heavenly saints, in their priestly office, are now given golden vials (of prayers) and harps. They sing the new song to the glory of the Lamb, the Redeemer.

These four mentions of the seven Spirits confirm beautifully Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah: "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall be fruitful; and the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:1-2). In the tabernacle, the golden candlestick (symbol of God's light in the world) had six branches coming out of the centre stem, three on either side; seven in all (Exodus 25:31-37). Likewise, in the Lord Jesus - true light of the world (John 8:12; John 9:5) - there is the fulness of the seven Spirits of God, but one Spirit.

(12) A message of rest to the martyrs (Revelation 14:13).

Chapter 14 presents seven successive scenes; the fifth scene, where the Spirit of God is mentioned, is a very comforting one. A voice coming from heaven pronounces a blessing upon those who die in the Lord (Revelation 14:13). They have reached the end of their life on earth, most probably through martyrdom, in the period between the rapture of the church and the millennial kingdom of Christ. The Spirit gives those martyrs the assurance of rest after their labours. Furthermore, their works will follow them: in any dispensation, the Lord Jesus will never forget anything done for Him. This is confirmed by the apostle Paul: while writing to the Corinthians about the first resurrection and the Lord's coming, he concludes by exhorting all Christians to abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labour is not vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

(13) A sevenfold message to the Assembly (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22)

Seven times, the Spirit addresses a call to the hearing ear. Unlike Paul's epistles, the book of Revelation does not consider the Spirit as abiding in the church or in the believers, the divine instrument of spiritual blessings, but rather outside the church, speaking to her and pronouncing a judgment of value upon her moral state. Then, the Lord will judge the church, as responsible to carry His testimony in the world. Seven times (for each one of the seven messages to the seven churches) this solemn call is repeated: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". A similar call was addressed by the Lord Jesus in relation to the seven parables of the Kingdom of heaven: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9; Matthew 13:43). The

two parallel histories of the Kingdom and of the Church deserve our utmost attention! In each message to the angel of the assembly, the call to hear is associated with a promise to the overcomer; and this call is addressed personally to an individual, not to the assembly; likewise, the promise to the overcomer is also made individually. Moreover, the seven messages form a whole and they contain what the Spirit says to the seven assemblies. Obviously each assembly, as such, has also the responsibility to listen, because the angel of the assembly (to whom the message is addressed) is the mystic representative of the entire assembly. However, there remains that the call is individual and that the seven messages form a indivisible whole. The first four churches (chapter 2) present prophetically the history of the church as founded by the apostles, which goes to the end, the Lord's return. Then, the last three churches (chapter 3) describe the history of Protestantism after the Reformation. Thyatira is the centre church: last of the first four churches, it is the foundation and root of the last three. And for Thyatira, precisely, there is a change in the relative order of the call to hear and the promise to the overcomer. To the first three churches (Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos), the call to hear precedes the promise to the overcomer. To Thyatira and thereafter (Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea), the order is reversed: the call to hear follows the promise to the overcomer. For the first time, a remnant is distinguished from the assembly seen as a whole, and a special message is delivered to that remnant. In fact, Thyatira is the church whose history is the longest (fourteen centuries up to now), and most significant. In spite of the sad corruption prevailing in her midst, she carried in herself alone, all through the middle ages, God's testimony in the world. The judgment of the ecclesiastical system (Romanism) as such - identified with Jezebel (Revelation 2:20-23) - is already pronounced, although it is not yet carried out. But, for the joy of His heart, the Lord has maintained a rest (or remnant) in Thyatira, to the end (Revelation 2:24). Against the gates of hades, the very power of the devil (Matthew 16:18), and through fierce persecutions, faithful witnesses insured the perennity of the assembly on earth, at the cost of their comfort and even of their own lives. And Christ keeps in His book of remembrance the names and the works of those faithful ones who are so precious to Him.

We should take heed in particular to one aspect of the Spirit's messages as it predicts the constant decline of affections of the believers and of the church for the Lord Jesus. First, Ephesus left its first love (Revelation 2:4); then, the Lord Jesus allowed Smyrna to go through ten successive persecutions from the Roman Empire to regain the church's heart for Him; in a large measure, this discipline of love produced its effect: the Lord has nothing to say against Smyrna, but rather encourages her not to fear and be of good courage. However, the leaven of wrong doctrines had started to infiltrate the assembly in the Smyrna period and produced later its sad effects. Pergamos loved the world rather than Christ and set herself as a religious power; moreover, even Satan's throne was in the assembly. This moral state was far worse than leaving the first love like Ephesus. Finally, Thyatira replaced Pergamos, to be declared guilty of fornication, the utmost in unfaithfulness. Sadly, this constant decline of affections for Christ repeated in the history of Protestantism: Sardis, full of pretensions, has the name to live, but represents globally a dead system. although there were some in Sardis that had not stained their robes. There is no question of Philadelphia loving the world, but rather that the Lord loves Philadelphia. Is there something more precious than to know that we are the objects of the Lord's love ? Finally there is a complete lack of love in Laodicea, the worst evil. The book of Revelation does not finish on this sad note, although we should commit our hearts to listen intently to the call of the Holy Spirit speaking to the assembly.

(15) The Spirit and the bride say: Come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:16-17; Revelation 22:20-21) The last mention of the Holy Spirit is found in the conclusion of the book. After a series of major events leading the eternal state (Revelation 21:1-8), there follows a retrospect on the church in the millennial times (Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 22:1-5). Then, a quick epilogue (Revelation 22:6-15), before the conclusion of the book (Revelation 22:16-21). In the beginning of the book of Revelation, the chain of transmission of the divine message is remarkable (Revelation 1:1): God, the Lord Jesus, the angel, the apostle John (Christ's servant) and finally, us. Now, when the revelation is complete, the Lord Jesus comes personally into the scene: "I Jesus" (Revelation 22:16). Assuming the Name of His humiliation - Jesus - He presents Himself as the root and offspring of David (for His earthly people of Israel) and like the bright and morning star (for His church). When the Pharisees had come to the Lord in Jerusalem to embarrass Him, He reduced them to silence by asking them a question about Himself nobody could answer: "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:45). God alone fathoms this mystery about the Person of Christ, because: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matthew 11:27). However, in adoration, we see Jesus, as Son of God and Creator, to be the root of David, and as Son of Man to be his offspring. It is as bearing His title of Son of David that the Lord Jesus came into the world to receive His glory as King of Israel. And it was rendered Him for a very brief moment, during His only public appearance in Jerusalem the week before His final rejection and death, in the fulfilment of the prophetic promise (John 12:13; Zechariah 9:9). A few days earlier, Lazarus's sickness and death had declared the glory of Jesus as Son of God (John 11:4). Finally, His glory as Son of Man was rendered Him when the Greeks came to Jerusalem for the feast; And, such glory was solemnly confirmed the night when He was betrayed immediately after Judas had gone into the night (John 12:23; John 13:31-32). Only John records these three glories as Son of God, Son of Man and Son of David (King of Israel) (). How awful to realize that these three glorious attributes of our adorable Saviour were used by His enemies (both Jews and from the Nations) against Him to mock Him and to justify their crime:

"He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7); "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40).

"Behold the man ! "(John 19:5) and, "Hail, King of the Jews !... Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews (John 19:3; John 19:19). The time was not come for God's answer to man's insults against His Son. Judgment will surely come at the appropriate moment when it will return unto righteousness (Psalms 94:15). On the cross, Jesus was the Saviour, not the Judge !

While the Lord Jesus is for Israel - and particularly for the repentant remnant among the nation - the root and offspring of David, He presents Himself to His church as the bright and morning star. This title is mentioned only three times in Scripture:

(1) In connection with the prophetic light shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19);

(2) As a promise to the overcomer in Thyatira (Revelation 2:28), a precious emblem of Christ's joy in heaven;

(3) and finally, here, to announce the coming of the everlasting day, the time of the Lord's return. The introduction of the book of Revelation contained a salutation from the three divine Persons (Revelation 1:4-5), and the simple mention of Jesus Christ's Name had arisen in the Church a

song of worship: "Unto him that loved us...". Similarly, after all revelations are closed and when the Lord Jesus calls Himself "the bright and morning star", the Church recognizes His voice and answers immediately: "Come". This movement of the heart in the Church is by the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:17); and such is the last and marvellous mention of the Holy Spirit in all of John's writings. Further, those in the church who are cognisant of the soon coming of the Lord Jesus are naturally thinking of the believers who might have lost sight of His coming, and add: "Let him that heareth say, Come". Finally, the church turns to the world to address a final appeal: "And let him that is athirst come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely". It is the same moral order as found in the teachings of John 3:1-36; John 4:1-54; John 7:1-53. Knowing that the Lord is coming soon and that the door of grace will then be closed forever, the immediate movement of the believers' hearts should be in testimony to the lost world. The beginning of the book had shown the glory of Christ as Son of Man, and now the closing message presents Him as the Church's Bridegroom. The Lord Jesus completes His own testimony by saying for the third time: "I come quickly" (Revelation 22:7; Revelation 22:12; Revelation 22:20), and the church answers finally: "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." May the Lord keep our hearts and affections true to Him in the enjoyment of His grace and the expectation of His soon return.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen." (Revelation 22:21).

Jean Muller

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