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## The Corporate Company

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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### **Notes of the Concluding Address at the December Conference**

There are some passages we should read together, first in John 1:32-34: "And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and *it* (the dove, but "He" the Spirit) abode upon Him. And I knew Him not (that is, did not *recognise* the Christ), but He that sent me to baptise in water, the same said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is He that baptiseth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

This was the confirmatory testimony of John the Baptist, and it is of an amazing character when we come to think of it, the heavens opened! The Spirit in His totality coming to rest in and upon this One! See John 3:34. Therefore this One, possessing, and possessed by, the totality of the Spirit of God would baptise in the Spirit of God. And this is the clear evidence of His Deity. For who can baptise in the Spirit of God but God Himself? "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God", Son of God in that supreme sense that we have by revelation: not the Son of God as detached or dissociated from God, but the Son of God as *One* with God the Father, this in One Spirit. For there is only One God - God the Father and God the Son related in the Life of One Spirit as the everlasting and unchanging God. We do not therefore dissociate the Son from the Father; much less do we not dissociate the Spirit from either. They live in and by One Spirit.

Therefore, if the Spirit came upon Him as Man in His totality, then He is none other than God Incarnate. And He baptises in the Spirit, which is His own Spirit as well as the Spirit of God the Father.

*But not yet!* Calvary, and His triumphant Ascension into the Godhead, must come first. Nevertheless, even at this early stage it is thus revealed to John the Baptist that this is the otherwise unrecognisable One who shall baptise in the Holy Spirit of God when He as Man shall have been glorified. And we press it home to our hearts for faith. How can a Man baptise in the Spirit of the Everlasting God unless that Man be God Himself?

We find this testimony of John the Baptist confirmed in that familiar passage of John 7:37-30: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth *on* Me (into Me), as the scripture hath said, out of his inner being shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet *glorified*."

Turn now to the 14th Chapter of John, and we need to remind ourselves that the central truth of the 14th to 16th chapters of John is that of the Spirit - Paraclete or Comforter - in verse 16 we read, "And I will pray the Father (I, the Son of Man, Glorified, Ascended into the Throne of Deity, will pray the Father, Who shares One Life with Me in the Spirit), and He shall give you *another* Comforter...." We need here to recognise, as we have so often in these "Fellowship gatherings," that the first Comforter Who came from the Father was the Son. Jesus Himself in His Presence here on earth as man in the *similitude* of sinful flesh, that is, not an effulgent being like Adam was before he fell, but a being like unto ourselves in outward form, veiling His glory, that He was the first Paraclete of God, God Himself present in Man-form among us. Now there shall be another Paraclete, another Presencing of God; but this will not be in a limited sense, nor in an external experience, but in a universal sense, and in an inward experience, as He shall come to dwell *in* them who believe upon the Name of the Ascended Son of God. Jesus, limited and local here on earth shall become Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent in His Ascension: He shall fill the heavens, and the universe shall subsist through Him, and He shall pour forth the Spirit of the Father Who is also His own Spirit in the glorified Man, "that He may abide with you *unto the age*."

This is a very important reading of the verse, "for ever" is literally "unto the age." The Holy Spirit is given for an age purpose. He could not have been so given in any former age, for "Jesus was not yet glorified." He will not be so given in any future age, for a certain purpose is to be achieved in this age, which is a parenthesis among the ages, being called the "Today" of the Holy Ghost; and when this purpose is accomplished, "the ages to come" are ushered in. We already should know that purpose, it is the building of a Habitation for God. The Spirit therefore is released out from the Godhead as in the Ascended God-Man for a certain work and working in this age. Reading on, "He is the Spirit of the Truth (the Truth of God in the Man, Jesus the Christ, the Truth of the Incarnation, the Truth of the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh) Whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him (He says to the disciples), for He abideth with you. Now, in My Presence, the Comforter is already here. I am God present among you through Him, and he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. You have recognised the Presence of God in Me, the first Comforter. It is the same Spirit Who is in and upon Me Whom I shall send to be in and upon you. I, here and now, am the Comforter come in the flesh: He shall be the Comforter, the same Comforter in fact, but in the Spirit, My Spirit, the Father's Spirit, but in you as your life and as your God, Who shall reveal Me as in the Godhead, and working in and upon you shall build you up with all such heaven-born ones into my very Body!" Oh, the marvels of this Sovereign grace of God. What things are these that the Saviour-God of mankind and of Israel is saying to these future members of His Body? And, beloved, He is saying them to us also. He shall be *in* you. "I will not leave you as orphans, as these who are cut off from the Presence and Sustenance of Parenthood, as desolate, separate in life-essence from God the Father." God in heaven, far away; and you on earth

trying to nourish a desperate faith. Yet how often is this the character of what is called "Christian experience"? Children of God, desperately lonely, cut off from all spiritual resources apparently, trying to hold on to some mental assent, and all the while having a very hard and lonely time of it. No, this is not what the Lord declared should be our state. The Spirit-Comforter shall come, as really as Jesus the Christ came as Comforter in His flesh, and the same Presence of God as was in and upon Him shall be in and upon us, *in measure*, for He was in and upon Him *without measure*.

Notice how the interchangings of the Persons in the Tri-Unity come in these words, "I will come; We will come (The Father and the Son); He (the Spirit) shall come." You cannot dissociate the Persons in the Trinity, for God is One. But this coming of the Fulness as out from the Ascended Lord is to be the *consequence* of Calvary's Triumph, the result of the Glorification of the Son of Man in the Godhead through the Passion of the Cross. "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend-up where He was before?" But not as Son of Man in His self-imposed limitation but the Son of Man Who is Son of God in the Infinite Power and Glory of Deity, a Man baptising in the Divine Spirit, baptising His church into His own Life and Being, and therefore providing proof of His Deity, proof of His Triumph, "I come unto you. I, Jesus, with the Father, and in the Spirit, as One God with them, come!" Marvellous words!

Previous to these chapters He had been saying what seemed to His disciples to be a strange and mystic thing, for in reply to Peter's earnest protestations of utter devotion even unto death, He had said, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow afterwards." Whither was He going? Not only to the Cross, but back to the Godhead *through* the Cross, and this as Man, He was going to meet in His lonely and God-forsaken *soul*, for it was in His soul, His self-consciousness as man, that there in the garden and upon the tree, as the representative Sinner, as the Lamb of God, that He met both the accusation and power of the enemy and the judgment of the Divine Nature upon sin. He tasted a spiritual death for all men, namely that essential separation from God in His soul. But that having been met and overcome He dismissed His pure Spirit to take its everlasting Home in the Bosom of the Father.

Thus we see that we have in the Passion of the Lord Jesus, not only the saving of *man*, as He takes upon Himself the burden of our iniquity, "God causing to meet in Him the iniquity of us all," but we have also a vindication of the Divine Nature before the enemy, the justification of God Himself. Satan himself shall have no accusation to make against the Almighty. You have to recognise that in the Cross there is a vindication of God as God. This is what we read in 1 Timothy 3:16, that the mystery of Godliness is not only the fact of God being manifested in the flesh, but that He also is justified in the Spirit, and it is thus that He is now seen by angels, etc. The marvel of the Cross is that *God* was in the Christ doing all this. It was through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself. It is God Who is coming through His creation in the Self-vindication of His sacrificial love. Thus Paul says in Romans 3:4, quoting from Psalm 51: "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged." God Himself is cleared. Satan will be obliged to confess with all sinners before an assembled universe in the great Judgment that God is Holy, Pure, entirely Love - without taint of character upon which any accusation can fasten, for it is He Himself Who passes this way in the Passion of the Christ, and as Man ascends into His Throne "justified in the Spirit". Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Jesus as Lord, and this to the Glory of the Father, Who, by the Spirit, dwells in and upon Him.

The WAY therefore that He is treading which no flesh can follow is the WAY through the Cross into the Ascension that He may be glorified in the Godhead. We must see far more in the resurrection than its mere physical aspect; we do stress this constantly. It is not the mere re-animation of the body of our Lord, but something far more than that, though it includes it. The resurrection from

among the dead is the glorification of the body to become a shrine of Deity, a habitation of God by the Spirit. It is the revelation of the Infinite nature of the resurrection that we need to have, namely, that it is the point of our Lord's accomplished Passion where He breaks back through into the Godhead as the Son, but now as Man. There is an Infinite expansion of the relationship of His Person at this point. He Who became, as it were, limited and local upon this little planet; He, the Creator Who subjected Himself to creaturehood, breaks back through to Infinite Deity raised by the Glory of the Father into the Godhead. This the Glory of the Resurrection as an infinite Act of God, and this is the point noted in Hebrews 1:5, "Thou art My Son, *this day* have I begotten Thee." Have you noticed how from that point He is addressed as Deity in the chapter, "Thy Throne, O *God*, is for ever and ever" : "And Thou *Jehovah*," verse 10. Thus the Resurrection is seen in its climax as the Ascension of God in Christ, and the word to Nathanael is fulfilled, "Thou shalt see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Infinite Creator!

But we are speaking of His unique and only WAY whereby He the Son of Man, made sin for us, might triumph in that Cross so as to wrest authority from the devil over the race of men, and re-enter the Glory of the Godhead as Man. That was the mystery the disciples could not understand. Do we understand it?

And so He says, Chapter 16, "But now I go MY WAY to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? ...Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter (His Spirit) will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you."

Thus we see that the consummation of the Victory of Calvary is the release of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus to those who accept His death.

And we need further to see that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an act of God commensurate to this Life. It is not an isolated individual experience to be enjoyed here on earth so as to give us some self-satisfaction in our faith, but an immersion into the Life of Him Who is in the Throne. It therefore brings us into a oneness with Him and with all others who are thus in Him. The expression of the Spirit, and the consummation of the Spirit's purpose is *Unity*. But to accomplish this, self and personal interests must be swept out of the heart, ah, but this is the Cross; and the baptism into His Life brings of necessity a baptism into His death. His life is only possible as we consent to die, and to die continually. The Cross is made actual in us through the Spirit. And this is the manifestation of His Victory before principalities and powers, that you and I are brought to a place where we willingly lay down our lives (souls) continually, we consent to that death of Calvary being wrought out in us, so that His Life may be manifested in us also. For we have known and have believed the Love of God as revealed in the Cross.

We see that Calvary was an act of God in that consummate Man Who embraced in Himself all the creaturehood of God, and has thus reconciled all things to Himself, things visible and invisible. And so while Calvary was enacted upon this little planet, it spans the universe and beyond. It is presented in time and space, and we see it thus, but it is infinitely greater than what we can see or measure. It is God Himself coming through His universe, fulfilling the Passion, and then breaking back through to His Throne in the Man. As we have said more than once recently, it is the wonder of wonders that the Eternal God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, should make this little planet the scene of a universal victory. But so it is, and the opening words of scripture are surely not without significance in this respect, "In the beginning the Triune God united to create the heavens *and the earth*," the earth being brought into significant relationship with all the heavens. The more one knows of the vast ranges of this universe with its incredible distances and spaces and multitudes of stars and constellations, the more marvellous is this mighty Gospel, that tells us that

here upon this little tiny world, and in this form of human life which you and I share, God Himself should have come and registered a Victory that has brought back the universe into that purpose of His Divine Love which the mystery of iniquity had seemed successfully to frustrate.

But, oh, how we need to be humble and teachable; how we need to be constantly crying to God that He would look in mercy upon our native ignorance, to lighten our darkness, and to bring us into the counsels of His Spirit so that we might know the things that He is seeking to do in the earth, and might co-operate with Him, and not hinder Him with our blundering and business.

Let us consider God's poor Man, this suffering, humble, poor One, Who here on earth was bereft of all but *faith*, and lived by that faith in humble obedience upon the resources of the Spirit, denying His pure and sinless soul. Oh, that humility of Christ! He was perfect in that self-renunciation continually. He Who had been rich in the Godhead became voluntarily the poorest of the poor. None of us so poor as He! But it was in His poverty of resources as in Himself that He was enabled by faith to draw upon the resources of the Father for all the work of grace. The Cross that denies the self-life was continually operative in Him, and Calvary was but the climax to that obedience of His faith.

He has given us an example that we must carefully follow. If ever there was a time when the Lord's children should entreat that they might be made truly humble and teachable it is now at the end of the age, for, believe me, beloved friends, God Almighty is seeking to do a thing at the end of the age that will be the marvel of eternity. As He gets now a people so consenting to the Cross, so abandoned to God, so prepared to allow that thing to work out in their lives that they cease to be, God the Holy Ghost shall sweep through and take that *corporate* company right through to His Throne. But it will be a *corporate* company (not individual translation, how Satan gets the *self* into a clutch upon the holiest things of God's purpose), and the triumph of its faith will mean the outbreak of all those who sleep through Jesus, and thus that crowning manifestation of God's own triumph shall come, the glorious Body of the Christ. He is seeking to work this mighty thing out in you and me as constituent members of that Body.

If the release of the Holy Ghost is the *consequence* of Calvary's Victory, the completion of the Body of Christ is the *consummation* of that Victory.

Without the indwelling and continual energising of the Omnipotent Spirit of the Christ you and I cannot enter into the process of that consummation; we shall not be contributory members. The enduement *from on high*, the clothing of the regenerate spirit with the Spirit of the Ascended and Glorified Lord is essential to the testimony of the church in this earth and in the heavens. The Comforter must come or the church does not exist as such. Individual believers there might be, but of what avail are these? Their faith, of its kind, perishes with them, or persists merely as a relic of an ancient creed. Are there not many examples of pseudo-Christianity in the world? But it is a *corporate* company persisting throughout this age as the instrument of the One Spirit that has been effecting any Divine world-purpose; and at the end, as at the beginning, this company must be manifest before principalities and powers. On the day of Pentecost 120 persons were swept by a mighty act of God into a oneness of Life with the Risen, Ascended Lord. By One Spirit they were baptised into One Body. There is no other baptism. And He is the Spirit *for the age*: He comes for an age purpose. We have already noted John 14:16: "that He may be with you for the age"; connect this with the concluding words of Matthew's gospel, literal translation, "Lo, I am with you all the days *even unto the completion of the age*." It is a consummation that God is seeking to bring about, and this can only be effected by the Spirit of the Triumphant Lord; but He again is limited to a *corporate* instrument on the earth, and this is the Body of Christ as found in the unity of the Spirit. How earnestly ought we not to seek and to pray for a realisation of their Oneness by the members

of Christ's Body, and of the fact that the Holy Spirit is not given so much for an individual experience as for the energising of us in selfless prayer unto a common end.

You will by this time know how the Lord has laid this need for Holy Ghost praying, as a burden upon one's heart, and one is continually emphasising it for one's own sake; for this passion of God in prayer is not in you or in me by any attainment of religious devotion. We cannot enter into this in our own desire. It is in the Holy Ghost, that is to say, it is in God, in the Divine Being; for it is *His Love, His Desire*, breaking through in our renewed spirits. It is not even in that born-from-above spirit as in itself, but in the Spirit of our Ascended Lord. Such praying is His praying. It is He Himself asking the Father in the Throne for the inheritance, but as king through the members of His Body, and these Throne prayers being uttered on earth.