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The Go-Between God
The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission
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Part One : Facts of Life

1. Annunciation

‘The chief actor in the historic mission of the Christian church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise. The mission consists of the things that he is doing in the world. In a special way it consists of the light that he is focussing upon Jesus Christ.’

The mandate to engage in mission was given simultaneously with the gift of the Spirit – John 20.21-22. Jesus’ own mission began after he was baptised with the HS (Matt 3) – how could it be any different for his followers?

Modern man cries out for a recovery of a significant doctrine of the HS – God working anonymously and on the inside: the beyond in the midst. We have relegated the HS to the merest edges of our theology; we have rarefied God out of existence. Only imagery can convey the experience of the HS. The word Spirit itself is metaphor – wind, breath. Even ‘ghost’ is linked with the Anglo-Saxon ‘gast’ (breath). ‘In other words, we are dealing with a double analogy. Something in the physical world – the fierce wind of the desert, the breath of a living creature – is used as an image of an incorporeal element in man which cannot easily be named in any other way; and then this human ‘spirit’ is itself used as an image of another ineffable force which man feels working upon him and believes to be divine.’

The OT distinguishes between *nepesh*, the life force, and *ruach*, the spirit. Life is associated in most early cultures not with breath but with blood. ‘*Ruach* is a different kind of power inherent in man, associated not so much with his being alive as with his being a person.’ My spirit is not uniquely mine, like my body, my individuality; it resides in relationship, ‘generates a certain quality of charged intensity which from time to time marks every man’s relationship with the world around him and with whatever reality lies within and behind that world.’ Sometimes something seems to come alive, to be charged in some way – so that what is happening is not seeing but encounter. ‘The fact that something, or someone, is *there* suddenly becomes important. Instead of simply being part of the landscape, part of existence, it presents itself, it becomes present, it commands attention.’ It happens when we fall in love; but then in a way we are falling in love at every turn of the road – eg Wordsworth, *The Prelude*. ‘The core of these experiences is the mutual recognition of seer and seen. I can best call them ‘annunciations’ – like the annunciation to Mary. What happens is this: ‘the mountain or the tree I am looking at ceases to be merely an object I am observing and becomes a subject, existing in its own life and saying something to me – one could almost say *nodding* to me in a private conspiracy... The truly numinous experience is not marked only by primitive awe in the face of the unknown or overwhelming, but occurs also when something as ordinary as a sleeping child, as simple and objective as a flower, suddenly *commands* attention’ – 11-12.

‘From a multitude of such experiences we come to understand that the source of a profound response of recognition, joy and wonder is not the responding person, myself, but the presence to which I am responding. What we call the object of our response is really the subject and activator. Or, to put it another way, the line we like to draw between subject and object, between that which calls and that which answers, grows faint and finally disappears. As soon as ‘being’ becomes ‘presence’ it has already become a part of that to which it is present.

See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, where he talks about the mutual giving between you and what you perceive to exist around you – through its comings and goings it leads you away to the Thou in which the lines of relations meet; it does not help to sustain you in life, it only helps you to glimpse eternity. ‘But what is this force which causes me to see in a way in which I have not seen? What makes a landscape or a person or an idea come to life for me and become a presence towards which I surrender myself? I recognize, I respond, I fall in love, I worship - yet it was not I who took the first step. In every such encounter there has been an anonymous third party who makes the introduction, acts as a go-between, makes two beings aware of each other, sets up a current of communication between them. What is more, this invisible go-between does not simply stand between us but is activating each of us from inside. Moses approaching the burning bush is no scientific observer; the same fiery essence burns in his own heart also. He and the thorn-bush are caught and held, as it were, in the same magnetic field.

I have already started to talk about this force of influence in very personal terms. I am bound to do so because the effect of this power is always to bring a mere object into a personal relationship with me, to turn an It into a Thou.

So Christians find it quite natural to give a personal name to this current of communication, this invisible go-between. They call him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. They say that this was the Spirit which possessed and dominated the man Jesus Christ, making him the most aware and sensitive and open human being who has ever lived - ceaselessly aware of God so that he called him, almost casually, Father, and fantastically aware of every person who crossed his path, especially the ones no one else noticed.

That is the Spirit which he promised to send to his friends and on the day of Pentecost that is the Spirit which came and possessed them just as he had possessed Jesus. And what was the first immediate result of his coming? – Communication. Awareness. They preached and everyone in that cosmopolitan crowd heard them speaking to him in his own language.’ 16-17

‘Every time I am given this unexpected awareness towards some other creature and feel this current of communication between us, I am touched and activated by something that comes from the fiery heart of the divine love, the eternal gaze of the Father towards the Son, of the Son towards the Father.’

‘The pre-requisite for this kind of knowing is attention. Every good teacher knows the futility of rapping on his desk and calling: Pay attention, please! True attention is an involuntary self-surrender to the object of attention. The child who is absorbed is utterly relaxed. The adult mind, also, must be unstriving, receptive, expectant, before there can be any creative insight. Again and again this is the state of mind in which new truth dawns. We do not work it out or think it out; rather, we have the sense of waiting for the disclosure of something that is already there. Attention means being in attendance. It is the recognition of the real presence of the other, quite apart from one's own self or one's own mental processes. To be 'in the Spirit' is to be vividly aware of everything the moment contains, the twigs of the thorn-bush as well as the presence of God.’ 18

‘The Holy Spirit is the invisible third party who stands between me and the other, making us mutually aware. Supremely and primarily he opens my eyes to Christ. But he also opens my eyes to the brother - in Christ, or the fellow-man, or the point of need, or the heartbreaking brutality and the equally heartbreaking beauty of the world. He is the giver of that vision without which the people perish. We so commonly speak about him as the source of power. But in fact he enables us not by making us supernaturally strong by opening our eyes.

The Holy Spirit is that power which opens eyes that are closed, hearts that are unaware and minds that shrink from too much reality. If one is open towards God, one is open also to the beauty of the world, the truth of ideas, and the pain of disappointment and deformity. If one is closed up against being hurt, or blind toward one's fellow-men, one is inevitably shut off from God also. One cannot choose to be open in one direction and closed in another. Vision and vulnerability go together. Insensitivity also is an all-rounder. If for one reason or another we refuse really to see another person, we become incapable of sensing the presence of God.’ 19

‘all faith in god is basically a way of ‘seeing the ordinary’ in the light of certain moments of disclosure which have been the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ ‘In these days more and more people are sick and lost because they do not know with any certainty who they are or what they are. They can find their identity and their role only when someone else sees them with love. It is useless to call or repentance or commitment until we have first given acceptance. No one can change unless he can first of all be. No one can give himself until he has a self to give.’ 22

That is the gift of the Go-Between God, the Spirit.

2. Conception – the Creator God and the Range of the Mission

‘Our modern, inductive patterns of thought have made us concentrate inescapably upon the material universe as the only object we may confidently claim to know. Hence it follows that if we are to rediscover God’s reality for ourselves we must start with his relation to this knowable universe.’ 25

Spirit is a better image than the earlier one of potter – it carries the sense of life-giving energy and inspiration.

So if we think of a Creator, we are to find him on the inside of creation, and in the processes (not the gaps). There is no evidence of a break; if the hand of God is to be recognised in this continuous creation, it must be found not in isolated intrusions or gaps, but in the very process itself. This won’t work if we think of the universe as a mechanism, but it will if we think of it as a life, with a disconcerting spontaneity and non-determinism in the most elementary components, and an equally disconcerting force of organization in each combination of components. Sir George Thomson: ‘we have been forced, some of us very unwillingly, to believe that at bottom the laws of physics are not statements of what *must* happen, but of the relative chances of a variety of alternatives.’

The whole is always greater than the parts; Professor Paul Weiss: ‘all living phenomena consist of *group behaviour*, which offers aspects not evident in members of the group when observed singly.’ Somehow the whole communicates to its parts a pattern which is not written into their individual structures – eg a human brain; an egg.

1. ‘As a believer in the Creator Spirit I would say that deep within the fabric of the universe, therefore, the Spirit is present as the Go-Between who confronts each isolated spontaneous particle with the beckoning reality of the

larger whole and so compels it to relate to others in a particular way; and that it is he who at every stage lures the inert organisms forward by giving an inner awareness and recognition of the unattained.' 31.

2. The Creator Spirit works by creating the necessity for choice in one situation after another; always the choice between actual and potential.
3. Creation has not been a series of clear fiats, but a series of experiments involving waste and suffering. It has to be so, if God's creativity is to be identified with love, and to allow freedom, not only at the highest but also at the lowest level of matter. Creation involves sacrifice.

Our engagement in mission is a participation in the continuing work of creation not just in the redemption of that which was long ago created. 'Mission means to recognise what the Creator-Redeemer is doing in his world and try to do with him.' 'The following that Jesus wanted was not that of man drawn by personal devotion to himself, or of those who were concerned about their own salvation, but of those who would share with him in his devotion to the finding and doing of the Father's will.' 37.

'We can see now the enormous breadth and range of the mission of the Creator Spirit. It embraces the plant-geneticist breeding a new strain of wheat, the World Health Organization team combating bilharzia, the reconstruction company throwing a bridge across a river barrier, the political pressure group campaigning for the downfall of a corrupt city council, the amateur dramatics group in the new cultural centre, the team on the new oil-rig, the parents' committee fighting for de-segregated schools in the inner city. The missionaries of the Holy Spirit include the probation officer and the literacy worker, the research chemist and the worn-out school teacher in a remote village, the psychiatrist and the designer, the famine-relief worker and the computer operator, the pastor and the astronaut. Our theology of mission will be all wrong unless we start with a song of praise about this surging diversity of creative and redemptive initiative.'

'Of course there is a great deal more to the Christian mission than this... But the basis I want to establish at the start is that we need to come off our religious high-horse and get our feet on the lowly, earthy ground of God's primary activity as creator and sustainer of life. We must relinquish our missionary presuppositions and begin in the beginning with the Holy Spirit. This means humbly watching in any situation in which we find ourselves in order to learn what God is trying to do there, and then doing it with him.' 39

How do we tell what is mission and what is not? He suggests three criteria:

- Which factors in this situation are giving people the more intense awareness of some 'other' who claims their attention or of some greater 'whole'?
- Which factors are compelling people to make personal and responsible choices?
- Which factors are calling out from people self-oblation and sacrifice?

3. Gestation

'We can never be directly aware of the Spirit, since in every experience of meeting and recognition he is always the go-between who creates awareness... You can never know the otherness of the Holy Spirit, only the aliveness that his presence brings, the inertness that comes from his absence. He acts anonymously and unnoticed.' That's why prayer addressed to the HS is unknown in the Bible and rare in the prayers of the early church. Prayer *in* the Spirit, not *to* the Spirit, is the pattern of the NT.

'To accept the primitive meanings in the symbols of our religion calls for a boldness which has been sadly lacking in Christian thought through the centuries. Though she proclaims the victory of her Lord, the church stays permanently afraid of paganism's power of recuperation. I am writing this book out of a conviction that nothing is more needed by humanity today, and by the church in particular, than the recovery of a sense of 'beyond-ness' in the whole of life to revive the springs of wonder and adoration. And, oddly enough to our distorted view, our retrieval of mystery is dependent on our reinstatement of the body, with its rhythms and dreams and ways of knowing. Of course we cannot hark back to a pre-rationalistic approach to reality. We must learn to meet the supernatural, if at all, not in discontinuous, 'vertical' interventions, in a universal, 'horizontal' pervasion. 'Supernatural' will no longer be the right word; 'sacramental' better conveys the idea of another dimension if it can only be freed of its narrowly ecclesiastical frame of reference. ... I said in the first chapter that our flash-points of recognition have a higher voltage than a flash of lightning. The impact with which awareness of another being breaks in upon us can be catastrophic even when it is quiet.' 46 eg Dante and Beatrice, from age 9 to l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle. Even as boy Dante seems to have recognised that he could either let this terrible power carry him on to transfiguration and beatitude, or draw back to something cheaper and shallower. The temptation to turn aside is immediate, swift, subtle and sweet; easier to desire to be lost permanently in the moment, to live only for its recurrence.' 47

Same with the Spirit, who also is love. The choice is there; life and a future, or failure to recognise the implications. 'Few are they who, after the first enraptured steps on the path of love, stick to it all the way to its heroic conclusion, allowing its power to humble, to discipline, to purify, to let in truth, to toughen responsibility, and so enable the lover, in Charles Williams' words, 'to become the perfection he has seen'; but there are many cannot bear to let love grow, and either deny that it ever began, t from one re-enactment of its beginning to another. Few are they who follow through to its logical conclusion a truth newly conceived in their imagination, for its unorthodoxy scares them, and to work out and verify all its implications is too exacting a task... Few are they who, after their first awakening, dare trust the Spirit to carry them by way of the wilderness and the dark night into a widening freedom and availability until the manhood of Christ himself is formed in them; but there are many who will either try to settle for religion without miracle, or try to live by a regular recurrence of the moment of their conversion. And all these drab infidelities are committed not because too little power is available to us, but because the power so far exceeds the petty scale we want to live by. He has made us little lower than gods, while our highest ambition is to be a little above the Joneses. We are looking for a sensible, 'family-size' God, dispensing pep-pills or tranquilizers as required, with a Holy Spirit who is a baby's comforter; no wonder the lord of terrible aspect is too much for us!' 48

The HS is like the sudden scorching wind of the desert; it is the breath of life; the wind which swept away the waves of the Flood, the gale which held back the waters of the Red Sea, the sudden wind which blackened the sky with clouds and brought the torrential rain on Ahab. In Ps 104 the ruach comes 4 times – vv 3, 4, 29, 30, and it's different each time.

We need to realise the spirit in man is not a rarefied element lying beyond his mind; 'it is the power of his personhood which holds body and mind in unity.. – the HS is just as likely to speak through our bodies as through our minds.' To think otherwise is to be Greek.

'Mission is often described as if it were the planned extension of an old building. But in fact it has usually been more like an unexpected explosion' – with the Spirit in charge. If it depended on human strategy it would be a constant growth; we've not seen that, but fits and starts.

To return to the analogy of love:

My second example is the love of a married man and an unmarried girl. Their falling in love was a moment of profound recognition, and the gladness of their infrequent meetings was such an unsought gift they had no urge to grasp it. For them to say either 'This cannot happen' or 'This ought not to happen' would have been forcing the truth into a prefabricated mould of unreality. There should have been a way which they could say 'Yes' to what was given to them without violating any part of the truth of their situation. Charles Williams envisages this 'freedom' in a passage arising out of Dante's love for another woman besides Beatrice.

The second image is not to be denied; we are not to pretend it is not true, or indeed to diminish its worth; we are only asked to free ourselves from concupiscence in regard to it.

That might be far easier than our calloused imaginations can allow if only the love of husband and wife were more daring and trustful. Williams goes on:

Natural jealousy and supernatural zeal - the zeal of the officers of the supernatural rather - have brought us to regard that great opportunity of the second image rather as a sin than as a goodness. If it were possible to create in marriage a mutual adoration towards the second image, whenever and however it came, and also a mutual limitation of the method of it, I do not know what new liberties and powers might not be achieved.

In the case I am recounting, however, the possibilities of the relationship were destroyed at the point where the husband began to offer less than the truth of himself. He knew, and had never concealed the fact, that he was indissolubly and at the depth of his being 'married' to his wife. But he found he was unwilling, or genuinely unable, to entrust her with the knowledge of his new love and a share in deciding how to take account of its reality. That inability also was part of the truth of him. And it was this which he would not face. He allowed the girl to believe that his wife knew more of their relationship than was the case, yet, while in her company, he gave more and more rein to the fancy that the marriage did not exist. The more he had to pretend and conceal, the more the affair lost its innocence and became for him a simple temptation to infidelity. She, with greater integrity, grew confused and hurt. In the end, when they decided to stop seeing each other, it was she who gave the verdict: 'If you had only been true to the facts, our delight in each other could have lived under any condition those facts demanded. But now it's gone.'

The Spirit, then, is quite likely to lead us into a savage and beautiful country but he will not lead us astray so long as we dare to live with the truth - our particular truth. That is our only guarantee of discernment by which we can 'test the spirits'. That, I believe, is what lies behind the frequent juxtaposition, throughout the Bible, of the parallel concepts of Spirit and Word. If the term Spirit (ruach) suggests the undifferentiated, all-pervading power of awareness and mutuality, the other term 'word' (dabar) expresses particularity and form, meaning and purpose.

We ought not to make too much of this, for the two are as closely related as breath is related to voice. In the parallelism of Hebrew poetry *ruach* and *dabar* are virtually synonyms.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made:
and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth (Ps. 33.6 R v).
He sendeth out his word and melteth them:
he causeth his wind to blow and the waters flow (Ps. 147.18 R v).

It is this same combination of Spirit and Word that God imparts to men in that unique phenomenon we call prophecy, the nearest thing to creation which man can ever experience.

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me:
and his word was upon my tongue (II Sam. 23.2 R v).
This, says the Lord, is my covenant which I make with them: My spirit which rests on you and my words which I have put into your mouth shall never fail you from generation to generation of your descendants from now onward for ever. The Lord has said it (Isa. 59.21).

In many of the narrative passages also these two words seem almost interchangeable. The divine interventions in the oracles of Balaam, for example, are described either as 'the Lord put words in Balaam's mouth' (Num. 23.5) or as 'The Spirit of God came upon him' (Num. 24.3). God's rejection of King Saul is affirmed identically in the two phrases: 'You have rejected the word of the Lord' and 'The spirit of the Lord had forsaken Saul' (I Sam. 15.26; 16.14).

The strict trinitarianism of orthodox Christian doctrine has probably led the church to draw too sharp a distinction between the Word or Logos and the Holy Spirit. In the minds of the earliest Christian apologists the two were inextricable. Charles Raven, in the series of his great Gifford Lectures, claimed that it was the identification of the two terms which enabled the early apologists to present the first coherent and convincing theology of creation and redemption for that Graeco-Roman world.

Logos was at once the divine agent in the giving of the Torah and the inspiration of the prophets, the rational principle whose guidance could be traced in the cosmos and in the ways of the animal creation, the reason which distinguished man from irrational beasts, the Son of God incarnate for us in Jesus and thus made Man, and the indwelling Spirit by whose presence the body of the Church was constituted. The simplest of all theologies, belief in a transcendent and 'wholly other' Deity manifested by an ever-present all-sustaining cosmic Representative was thus brought to the service of the Christian Gospel.

Raven went on to deplore the theological developments of the century.

When the Holy Spirit was separated from the Logos, no attempt made to define his relationship to the Word or the particular sphere of his activities. . . . As a result the Spirit, whose indwelling had been regarded as the essential and constitutive element in the life of the Church and the source of all value and virtue, became restricted in his operation implicitly, if not expressly, to certain ecclesiastical rites, baptism, confirmation, ordination and the like, which it was the privilege of the hierarchy to bestow.

Raven argued that these theological changes were inevitably accompanied by a separation of the secular from the sacred, and a restriction of religion to ecclesiastical and almost to monastic areas of life. God's sphere of activity had become limited to the church, experience of the Holy Spirit was the prerogative of pietism, Christ, having died for the world, was to have no more to do with it until he came again to be its judge. We needed the revolt of renaissance and the blossoming of inductive and experimental enquiry to restore the biblical doctrine of creation as the universal continuous activity of the divine energy. 57-59

'the Spirit represents the divine action in its total impact, while the Word represents the specific direction and form which the divine action takes at one point of time. Spirit is experienced as inspiration, Word as revelation. *Ruach* is the eternal lying in wait in every moment, but *dabar* commits itself to the uniqueness of a particular moment.'

4. Labour

Sir Alister Hardy, Gifford Lectures:

It is in this field that I believe science will come to make its second great contribution to natural theology by shewing the reality of part of the universe outside the world of the physical senses. It is in this apparently non-material part of the world that the power we call God must lie: some source of influence to which Man can have access in an extra-sensory way by the communicative act we call prayer. I have suggested that the power we call God may well have some fundamental link with the process of evolution. In saying this I hope I shall not be thought to be belittling the idea of God; I would rather appear to be saying that the living stream of evolution is as much Divine as physical in nature, which is what I believe.'

le the divine element is part of the natural process – not supernatural, so much as para-physical.

Taylor suggests that when mediums in Africa go into a state of trance, they are not discerning the voices of the ancestors so much as articulating the subconscious awareness of the community. Both trance and dance were used by the early prophets of Israel – to help prise up the normal barriers and release the springs of hidden awareness.

We are all about communication – but ‘what turned a man into a prophet was not eloquence but vision, not getting the message across but getting the message. Prophecy is essentially an act of recognition by which one sees the significance of an event as a revelation which must be passed on.’ 69. ‘No wonder the disciples must wait for the promise of the Spirit before setting out on their mission. For it is he alone, working in the deepest recesses of our being, who arranges the meaningless pieces of reality until they suddenly fall into shape... The main concern of any missionary training should be to help people to become more receptive to the revelations of God.’

‘The prophetic experience is a sudden encounter with the meaning behind events’ – 73.

5. Birth

What Jesus had, and shared, was not any new quality in the Spirit himself but a new mode of relationship with him. When the members of the new Christian fellowship in Jerusalem speak about the HS, it’s obvious that they are not speaking of moments of sudden possession, but of a permanent presence – not so much of a power as of a partner, not so much of an encounter as of a life in fellowship. 84

The name Holy Spirit is used just 7x in the OT and 88 in the NT. The terms ‘Spirit of God’ or ‘Spirit of the Lord’ come 67x in the OT but only 25x in the NT. Total references to the Spirit from Genesis to Luke number 126; from John onwards there are 196. O it’s only in the last 1/8 of the bible that the Spirit appears in the fulness in which the Church has always known him – and only the Church has known him in this way.

- Isaiah 11.2 – the Messiah will be filled with the Spirit, who will be continually joined with him
- Isaiah 61.1 – he will be the bearer of the Spirit
- Isaiah 42.1 – not only the Messiah but all Israel will share the Spirit in a new way (see also Ezekiel 36.27, Isaiah 44.3)
- Zech 6.1-8 – the Spirit of Yahweh will come over all peoples and into the 4 corners of the world
- Joel 2.28 – the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh

Why is Jesus comparatively silent about the HS?

1. His teaching about the HS was wrapped up in the metaphors of apocalyptic – because it’s about life at the end of the ages. EG John 7.37 he talks about water, and the comment is ‘he was speaking of the Spirit’
2. He must have known that the popular image of the Spirit was too far from the truth – it pointed to the cross, not to prophetic ecstasy
3. How far could one who lived totally in the Spirit be conscious of that Spirit?

What we see in Jesus is the Creator Spirit, focussed entirely into one human spirit. Or, the other way round, we see a man completely surrendered to, possessed by, the Spirit of God. “What sort of man is this?” – indeed! Even his disciples followed him with mingled amazement and dread.

[Question – maybe the fact we are able to minister healing only partially is akin to the way the Spirit fell only occasionally on the OT prophets – our capacity to receive is, unlike Jesus’s, limited.]

‘To live in the Spirit is to be agonizingly aware of the contrast between what is and what should be, and it is in the very nature of the prophet or the artist that the must at all costs bring this contrast home. The wrath of God is only another name for the divine dissatisfaction.’ (John 16.8). 96.

Another mark of the Spirit is found in Jesus’s insistence on choice. You are Simon; you shall be Peter: you are responsible for the contrast between what is and what should be. The one thing Jesus condemned was evasion of choice – cf parable of talents. To choose is to commit yourself; to commit yourself is to risk failure, sin, betrayal.

‘What most confused his critics was that he conformed to no pattern. What were they to make of the wandering teacher who typically carried no purse and had nowhere to lay his head and yet appeared to be fond of parties, particularly in disreputable company? How were they to tie him down to a particular breach of the law when his real fault seemed to be a general independence of all the ordinary pressures and claims which both bind and buttress the individual in society? His sense of property was casual and he expected men to lend boat or beast as unhesitatingly as he would have handed over coat and cloak to them. He steadily disobeyed the demands of what we regard as self-interest and self-preservation. He seemed to pass elusive and free as the ruach wind through all our interlocking structures of duty and obligation. His whole manner of life and even more the manner of his dying, was a challenge to necessity.’98

No rules, only God. No conditional merit, only forgiving acceptance. ‘In a world where there is no condemnation but a welcome to anyone who can accept the fact that he *is* accepted, goodness takes on an entirely new meaning.’ 100

In the epistles, the Spirit is the agent of Christ’s resurrection – strange how we lose sight of that.

6. Breath

Summary so far:

1. The Spirit is the Go-Between who opens our inward eyes and makes us aware of some 'other' beckoning and calling. He is the one who introduces us to Jesus and then enables us to begin to change into his likeness.
2. The Spirit acts on all things by compelling choice; he enables us with discernment, and then holds us responsible for our choices.
3. The Spirit urges all creatures to live by the principle of self-sacrifice instead of the natural drive for self-interest and dominance.

It's clear that the new relationship with the Spirit and that with Christ are the same – life in the Spirit is identical with life in Christ – Acts 2.38 (repent and you will receive). It is the gift of the Spirit which brings about the new birth of the Christian – John 3.6.

Pentecost – the Spirit was not in fact given to empower men for mission; the direct result of his coming was an outburst of praise to the Lord, of whose presence they had suddenly been made aware. 'As one by one people have their eyes opened to see the overmastering reality of Christ and put their faith in him, they are baptized in the HS and joined to the Spirit-filled society. For the Spirit's power, as well as his mission towards the whole world, operates always in the interactions of community rather than in the recesses of the individual soul', 112.

'After all, are we not the forgiven community and should we not forgive ourselves? It is of the essence of that healing which we call reconciliation that it always includes both the recognition and the containing of the wrong, and by a strange alchemy this happens both in the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven. Healing comes when one learns to say: 'This person is afraid of me and really hates me, I can understand it now and contain it in a real compassion, without fearing or hating in return.' And more often than not, though not always, this attitude liberates the other person so that he, in his turn, is able to say the much harder thing: 'I know now that I am afraid of this man and hate him for it, but I no longer have to hide or deny these things; because I can acknowledge them, the poison has gone out of them, and I can live with them' The very things which divided and destroyed are turned into a bond of sympathy and humble understanding which are the seeds of love. To accept forgiveness one must forgive oneself; and to offer forgiveness one must forgive oneself. And this is true of the church also.' 113

'So long as we remain in time, non-omnipotence and non-fulfilment are the raw materials with which we have to build up even the church of God. This also is a fact we have to contain and forgive. In the hope and the mutual forgiveness of the fellowship, rather than in its achievement, Jesus can be seen. It is this that makes it possible to look at the church with realism but without despair.' 118

We still have to face the fact that something went wrong from the start – it's not just that the church is associated with weakness, non-attainment and frustration, but that it went in for betrayal and panic. A movement has to become embodied in some organised form, but once Christians had begun to think of it as a structure like others, it became one of the very principalities and powers that the gospel was supposed to withstand – and the long struggle for privilege and control began. We institutionalised Christ and legislated for the HS. Of course we have to lay down norms for doctrine and practice, but we have to admit that we cannot command the wind. Albert van den Heuvel wrote a devastating analysis of how the fine statements of the post-war ecumenical gatherings in fact went nowhere. Lay training centres, built as places where Christians were trained for their lonely experiments of faith in the world, became instruction houses for the churches' middle class. The renewal movement was imprisoned in carefully defined and tentative experiments which were never allowed to become a strategy. While the world changed around us, the churches remained the same. 121.

Nietzsche said: "His disciples will have to look more saved if I am to believe in their Saviour."

'Not in our greater goodness, but in our openness to one another in Christ's name, the Spirit possesses us 127.

Part Two: Style of Life

7. Growing

'Only in their togetherness can Christians remain alight with the fire of the Spirit. That is the sole purpose of our visible fellowship – to be the fuel upon which the fire is kindled in the earth... Our theology would improve if we thought more of the church being given to the Spirit than of the Spirit being given to the church.' The Spirit is not a grant of superhuman power or guidance, given like a fairy sword or magic mirror to equip us for our adventures; the Spirit was given to fuse

individuals into a fellowship which at the same moment was caught up into the life of the risen Lord. They burst into praise, and the world came running for an explanation.

So – the HS is given to enable the 2 or 3 gathered together to embody Jesus in the world. To say ‘Jesus is Lord pledges us to find the effects of his cross and resurrection in the world, not just in our inner lives, nor in the church.

As Bonhoeffer said:

‘The space of the Church is not there in order to try to deprive the world of a piece of its territory, but precisely in order to prove to the world that it is still the world, the world which is loved by God and reconciled with Him. The Church has neither the wish nor the obligation to extend her space to cover the space of the world. She asks for no more space than she needs for the purpose of serving the world by bearing witness to Jesus Christ and to the reconciliation of the world with God through Him.’ 135

The Spirit requires a natural response [me], a fellowship response [us] and a world response [them]. That is, we have to actually articulate the promise and invitation Jesus articulated – we have to make an evangelical response, and share the gospel by creating the occasion for choice (but leaving people free to make it). And then we must work actively for a juster, more human society – because we *are* the new humanity, because we have been made one with Christ. We work not just for the relief of the poor, but against the structures of oppression, the economic and political network which drags people into war or unemployment. Jesus broke these ‘powers’. It’s no use looking for perfect solutions, for we will not find them this side of eternity; we need to learn to hold together the good and the bad, love and hate, creation and destruction, in oneself and in others. The task of the church is not in fact to solve the problems of society, but to make people more sensitive to the reality of other people. Political speeches and social action are not the issue for the church; the quickening of compassion by the Spirit through the scriptures, fellowship and worship of the church are. The church can no more be an organized structure over against other structures than God can be an entity over others. ‘What matters is not what the church does as the church but what Christians do as human beings.’ 147.

What does that mean for the form the church should take? Small units – small enough for members to find one another in mutual awareness, large enough for them to embody the life of the kingdom. Small groups. What should the groups do? Reflection, rather than discussion – too much Christian discussion is theoretical, talking about ideas not facts as we know them – and this applies particularly to group Bible study. If we want the Bible to be the living word of God we must read it always with reference to those situations for which we are responsible in our contemporary life. This is best achieved by requiring every group to look for some way in which it can meet a genuine human need. Otherwise it becomes sterile.

8. Exploring

The great disappointment for every young church is that before the first generation of converts has passed away, gospel has been turned into law. It all gets so complicated as the excitement of a new relationship with God has to be applied and lived out in context. We see it in Corinth. The problem is that ‘all too often legalism is a symptom not of growth but of the stultification of growth. It arises not from a quickening of a people’s conscience but from the imposition upon them of someone else’s conscience. Legalism is bound to appear wherever there is a wide difference between the morality which is preached in the pulpit and the morality which is felt in the community... Spiritual growth does not come from hearing and submitting to an extraneous regulation but from following the accepted pattern of behaviour until a distorted confidence begins to doubt whether it is really right, that is the moment of truth.’ 198

The church which is truly for others must learn to live in the freedom and truth of the Spirit in order to be the sign of that newness of life which the Lord has opened up for all men. So the distinctiveness of those who are set free does not consist in their facing different problems from their fellow men, nor does it mean that some actions are bad, or good, for Christians which are less bad, or good, for an ‘ordinary man’. The difference lies only in the motivation.’ Bonhoeffer:

The will of God is not a system of rules which is established from the outset; it is something new and different in each different situation in life, and for this reason a man must ever anew examine what the will of God may be.

‘The real problem of situation ethics is not that we substitute *ad hoc* responses for a system of regulations but that we lack a sound method of formation that will enable a developing person.. to find a moral identity that is both consistent and free. ... The new kind of formation, therefore, must have in view not a rule of life but a style of life, an authentic personhood which is consistent because it is under God, and free because it is under the forgiveness of God. To know deeply the truth of oneself – both what one is and what one might be – and to be true to that self without turning it into an idol or a tyrant, because one lets the love of God wash over one’s own good and bad, this is a morality of freedom which is in keeping with the gospel.’ 165. In the example of the married man and the girl, the corruption of their relationship grew from his failure to hold on to the truth of what he was and of what she was within the whole truth of their particular situation. We need to be able to say ‘No, that would not be me,’ or ‘Yes, that is my true response’. And becomes possible through the Spirit, who opens our eyes to the truth of the situation and of God.

The enemy of faith is not doubt but the repression of doubt; the enemy of grace is not guilt but repression of guilt (John Davies).

We ought to have understood that the Bible has no use so long as it is just treated as 'the Holy Bible'. We have to go beyond that and teach people to concentrate on it, not listen to it because it is a 'holy book', but just to listen to it. Similarly we need to tell people just to look at and reflect on the record of Jesus. . . We are, I believe, nearly at the stage when it will be possible to let the Bible speak for itself again because it no longer looks as if we are trying to bludgeon men over the head with it. If a man can attend to the Gospels in an unprejudiced manner, not supposing them to be holy books to be treated with caution and care, then it may well strike him how extraordinary Jesus truly is. But there must be unprejudiced openness to what is really there. – David Jenkins *Living with Questions*, SCM 1969.

'Life in the Spirit is then to be a ceaseless personal response to the call and claim of Jesus in each new situation by the individual disciple from within the Christ-centred fellowship. So the problem of ethics is the problem of how to abide in Christ. It is the problem of faith, and of prayer, and of the practice of the presence in the midst of a secular outlook. This does not mean that all depends on a recovery of pietism. 'Abide in me and I in you' is spoken to disciples in the plural. It will be by a deeper discovery of the resources of group discipleship that we shall be drawn nearer to a Christ-centred life in the modern world. Nor need we wait for that deeper experience before we can hope to know the touch and demand of the living Christ in each concrete moment of one day. He calls us to engagement now. He sends us to Galilee with the promise that we shall meet him there. Like Abraham we have to start obeying long before we know much of him we obey. At the end of the day it is not our following of him that gives us any value but his hold on us.' 177

9. Meeting

'Evangelism is inviting a man to become what he is, helping him to accept the fact that he is *already* accepted in the beloved.'

A religion should be thought of not as a body of propositions and regulations, but as 'a people's tradition of response to the reality the Holy Spirit has set before their eyes.' Each particular tradition of response creates a certain understanding of reality, a world view – which is always dynamic and developing, as it's a culture rather than a theology – a world view is sustained not only by the traditional certainties of a religion but also by the movement of ideas in society. 'Religion is a tradition of response' – it carries certain fixed convictions and attitudes, but it reflects and transmutes whatever movement of ideas is in the air. 'The test of any religion's vitality at a particular time is to ask not only how strongly its traditional convictions and patterns of life are still maintained, but also how positively it is responding ...to the changing influences and tensions which are affecting the society with which it is involved.' To respond does not mean to acquiesce, but to answer the call of god which comes through the new situation. 'So a religion is not the fabrication of priests and theologians but the tradition of a people's response, shaped, albeit, by the peculiar sensitiveness and courage of prophets and reformers and saints.' 183

Is 'scientific' truth as much at home in an Indian or Japanese world view as it is here – or is it peculiarly the *kind* of explanation that satisfies the western tradition?

10. Playing

'The whole weight of the NT evidence endorses the central affirmation of the Pentecostals that the gift of the HS transforms and intensifies the quality of human life, and that this is a fact of experience in the lives of Christians.' But most look on the HS too much as a supply of superhuman power and wisdom, and so miss the fact that he works primarily by generating awareness and communion, and that whatever power and wisdom he gives derive from that. They invite the individual to receive the HS almost as a private possession, whereas the NT emphasis is on his dwelling in the two or three. It's a misplaced emphasis on the singular instead of the plural.

The grace-gifts of the HS are not the essence of the Spirit-filled life; they are transient. What is permanent is the faith, hope and love of the Spirit-filled life, bringing a communal awareness of the reality of God and of Jesus, and a new communal sensitivity towards others. 'What we must *not* do is to think and speak of the Holy Spirit as a magical power which God gives to make us 'successful' Christians.' He puts us in touch, makes us see. Paul lumps together tongues and administration, exorcism and teaching, in complete indifference to the distinction we now draw between natural and supernatural. The whole lot are supernatural, and we need to recover the truth that every particle and process of material existence is alive with the activity of God, 202.

Exorcism and healing mark the first mission of the 12. Three emphases to note:

1. Healing is a demonstration of the total victory which Jesus won over evil itself – it encompasses sickness, sin, famine and apartheid
2. Healing is often linked with forgiveness of sin, and set in the context of a forgiven and forgiving community – James 5;

3. Healing is not the gift of individuals but of the Spirit-filled community - importance of laying on of hands. This got so lost, so subsumed into priestly control (by the C3 you could only use oil consecrated by the bishop, by the C5 only priests could anoint) that by the C12th anointing with oil was only for the dying... Once you institutionalise healing by making it a priestly ministry, you lose it – as we did, for centuries. In the NT the Spirit-filled life is not an individual attainment but part of the relationship of a community.

The result of institutionalising the experience of the HS was that his special gifts were entirely removed from the normal life and witness of the church and limited either to the aristocracy of transformed individuals (saints and mystics, and often posthumously) or to those persecuted minorities which had been forced to develop an abnormal degree of communal solidarity – sects like the Albigensians, Quakers.

The church fellowship should be a therapeutic community based on the free flow of Christian love. The dynamics of our relationships are the clue to much healing – much of the healing process consists of releasing the patient's power to heal himself.

Prophecy. Obviously highly rated by the apostles, but hard to determine what it was. It's clear that the NT writers weren't talking about an Amos or Jeremiah, but about things more akin to the primitive prophets of the days of the Judges, speaking under direct inspiration, but rationally and consciously. Prophecy and teaching is often paired – teachers gifted with interpretative insight?

Prediction was given greater prominence in the C2 Montanist revival. Gradually the same process occurred as with healing – the professionals took over. Prophecy burst out in sects – Anabaptists, Huguenots, latterly many Pentecostal/Adventist groups.

The NT evidence does not suggest that the prophets were normally founders of new churches; it seems to have been a teaching ministry, oracular and poetic in method. It was soon replaced by a more rational, analytical approach.

Tongues. Hard to make sense of – what's it for? ('Miraculously imparted speech in a foreign language is a different matter and has so rarely been alleged that it does not enter into the argument'). A letting go, perhaps. There is no suggestion Jesus spoke in tongues; it's mentioned just 3 times in Acts (Jerusalem, Cornelius and Ephesus). All were initiatory occasions when some outward confirmation of an essential principle was required. Then there's the end of Mark; and 1 Cor 12. Yet maybe it's the more powerful for not being under rational control. And it's clear that 'the vast majority of mankind is not going to find God through such a cerebral religion as the Christianity it has so far encountered.'

11. Loving

Prayer. We are so used to being told how important it is that we forget how new it was. The word 'pray' had to take on as much extra meaning as the word 'love' or 'church'. It was a completely new experience. 'Prayer is not something you do; it is a style of living.' Praying without ceasing is sustaining a style of life that is focussed on God – it's mission by being rather than doing. Even intercession is this – it means allowing ourselves to be caught in the current of communication which the Spirit gives between us and another, between us and God. True intercession is placing the person firmly in the arms of divine love; it's acknowledging that the mission is God's and not ours.

Two kinds of prayer the prayer of stillness and the prayer of movement. The prayer of movement ('meditation') focusses on scripture or on the needs of the world. The prayer of stillness seeks God himself; it can best be understood in terms of presence. It's not based on words – and often we have grown sick of words. Often we need a technique for stilling ourselves to start with, because the unceasing movement of our conscious minds, combined with the noise and stress in which most of us now live, have created such tension in us that we need a technique for relaxing the body enough for the mind to be still. Then we need to enter into awareness of something else – a candle, a flower – and then see it as a symbol of Christ. Then we need to move away from the object itself and just leave the Christ. It's easiest to do it in groups. It enables us to move away from our NT studies to Jesus himself, from the doctrines of salvation to the living Christ, from the civil rights movement to Christ in the neighbour.