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THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE TRINITY

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by D.B. Knox

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The Protestant Faith

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When the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung was in Australia last year, in one of his addresses he mentioned how long a time it had been for him to reach the conclusion that the Christian message is "Jesus, Jesus Himself". I expect we all agree in theory that this is the true message, but if we reflect on the preaching we hear and the way that our own thoughts run, we will recognise that Jesus, Jesus Himself, is not in fact the centre of our message as He should be, or the centre of our thinking about Christian things. Yet the biblical testimony of Jesus is so profound and exalted in concept that we must never think of ourselves or of God apart from Jesus. In a word Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, the almighty Creator with us in human flesh, in human life, in human nature. Jesus is to be the object of our divine worship. "He who honours not the Son, honours not the Father". (John 5:23) Jesus is the object of our faith. "You believe in God" He told His disciples, "believe also in Me". Jesus is the One to Whom we offer our prayers: "If you should ask Me anything I will do it" He promised (John 14:14). He is the One who forms His church, bringing His people into heaven where He is. "I go to prepare a place for you.... I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, you may be also" (John 14:2).

The words and works of Jesus are those of God the Father (John 14:10) He is one with the Father, and the Father with Him (John 14:11). Jesus promised His disciples that we would share in this unity with God and we share in it through Jesus' presence in our own life. "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (John 14:18). Or again He speaks of this same experience as the Father and the Son coming and making their abode with the believer (John 14:23). In His prayer which concluded the discourse in the Upper Room from which I have been quoting, Jesus prays for the unity of believers, that is, unity with the

Father and the Son. His words were "that they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21). This is no organizational unity, but the closest unity of persons, spirit with spirit. And a little later, He prayed similar words, "that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and thou in me that they may be perfected into one".

This presence of Christ in the believer which brings him into unity with God, Father and Son, is brought about by the presence of Christ in the inmost personality. As St. Paul puts it, "Christ in you". Another way of speaking of this, is saying that the Spirit of Christ is in the Christian. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit are all three names for God in His relationship to us in our spirit. It is important to recognise that the Holy Spirit is not to be thought of as a separable aspect of God, for the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, Jesus Himself. It is worth noting that in these chapters spoken in the upper room in St. John's gospel, Jesus speaks about Himself as going to the Father, not to the Father and to the Spirit. Again, we gather from Jesus' words that it is the Spirit who comes to the Christian when the Father and the Son come (John 14:23). Similarly, it is the Spirit Who unites us with Christ in that unity referred to in the prayer of the 17th chapter, though again it's worth noting that the Spirit is not mentioned in this chapter. We are not to think of the Spirit as a separate experience from the experience of Christ or of our relationship to God. It is the work of the Spirit to centre our thoughts on Christ Who is God with us, incarnate God (John 16:14). "He shall glorify me, for He will take of mine and declare it unto you. Whatsoever the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he takes of mine and shall declare it unto you." (John 16:14). It is the work of the Spirit to reveal the Father and the Son to the



Christian.

The Spirit has not any independent work, and thus there is not found in the Bible any prayers directed to the Spirit. Prayers are offered to the Father and the Son but never to the Spirit. We are not to think of the Spirit apart from the Father and the Son. The Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the Spirit of God, God Himself. Jesus speaks about the Father from whom He came and to whom He goes, and with whom He is one, and He speaks about the Spirit who will come in His name. The Spirit is Christ. This is plain when Jesus says "A little while and you behold me no more and again a little while and you shall see me." These verses refer primarily to the coming of Christ through His Spirit.

The work of Jesus was to do the will of the Father. In His prayer in chapter 17 He said "I glorified thee on the earth having accomplished the work that thou hast given me to do". The Christian has the same calling, to do the will of God and it is the Spirit in the heart of the Christian which enables him to fulfil this. St. Paul spoke about the fruit of the Spirit being love, joy, peace, and all the other virtues that it is God's will that our lives should reflect. The Spirit of God is the spirit of love. But our love for God is the same as our obedience to His will. It is a mistake to think that love is an emotional tingle, as it were, an excitement of our spirit. In the upper room when Jesus spoke at length about the Spirit there is no suggestion that this emotion would be the result of the Spirit's presence. Obedience to God is what the Bible calls love for God. St. John in his first epistle in chapter 5 verse 2 wrote "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey

His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments". Love for God, that is, obedience to God, is the fruit of the Spirit's presence. Love is not an ebullient feeling but the doing of your duty. As John wrote: "Love one another. And this is love, to walk after His commandments " (2 John 6).

The work of the Spirit may be summed up first of all as that of centering our thoughts on Christ, and secondly as producing in our lives the character of Christ so that we do the will of God. This will in turn lead to the conversion of the world for although the world cannot recognise the Spirit of Christ it can recognise the Christian character. Jesus said that when the Spirit of God comes to the Christian He will convince the world (John 16:8).

There is a third work of the Spirit and that is, bringing the believers into unity with God, Father and Son, through the Spirit, so creating fellowship. "I in them and thou in me" is a reference to this unity and relationship which the presence of God's Spirit creates between the believer and God. The Spirit's presence is our glory as it is the glory of our Saviour. Although the Holy Spirit is not mentioned by name in the prayer of Jesus, I believe that He is referred to when Jesus speaks about the glory which He Himself has received and which He has passed on to His disciples. "The glory that thou hast given me I have given unto them that they may be one even as we are one." The Holy Spirit who unites us with the Father is our glory. He is also referred to in the last verse of the prayer, though again not mentioned specifically. For it is the spirit of love which leads to obedience and the doing God's will towards others. Love, that is, obedience, is the result of knowledge of God, of his character and of His will. Christ is the source of know-



ledge and love. This is the same thing as saying that the Spirit is a spirit of knowledge and of love. Thus our Lord concluded His prayer: "I have made known unto them Thy name and will make it known, that the love wherein thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them. The Holy Spirit is the "I in them", to quote our Lord's last words. "I in them" means God's Spirit in us. And Jesus equates this with the love of God, saying "that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them".

When we think of the Holy Spirit, we must think of Jesus within us, uniting us to Himself and to the Father and to one another, and producing in us love, not excitement, or ebullience, but solid love, that is, the doing of the will of God in our daily relationships and living in His presence.

If we conform to our Lord's teaching in John chapters 14 - 17, we will not think of the Holy Spirit as a separable experience. Today is Whitsunday, the commemoration of the day when Jesus poured out His Spirit on all flesh, the day when the Father and the Son made their dwelling with the believer in a new way. The coming of the Spirit leads us to Jesus, who was in the Father and and the Father in Him. Our message is Jesus, Jesus Himself, and our experience is Jesus, Jesus Himself.

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