The Holy Spirit of Truth

"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."
—John 15:26

AS WE SAW IN OUR PRE-vious article, the Holy Spirit is the power of God exerted along any line that he may choose. God used his mighty power to create the universe, and to prepare the earth for the habitation of man, and to create man and give him life. Now we wish to examine the Bible's testimony concerning another manner in which God has been using his power in the accomplishment of his purposes; namely, through the influence of his thoughts over the lives of those whom he calls into his service, particularly during this present Gospel Age.

We recognize the power of thought. The life of each one of us is controlled by thoughts, either our own, or the thoughts of others, which we allow to influence us.

One of the manifestations of the Spirit, or power, of God, is the expression of his thoughts; these

thoughts being potent in the lives of those who are devoted to the doing of his will. It is this aspect of Divine power that Jesus refers to in our text as the 'Spirit of truth.' But how does God bring his thoughts, his mind, to bear upon the lives of his Gospel Age servants? The LORD has dictated his thoughts to many, and they have been recorded for the benefit of all who desire to know and do his will. The Bible calls them "holy men of God." Peter describes them as those who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."—II Pet. 1:21

The operation of God's Holy Spirit upon the minds of the prophets, who wrote the Old Testament, was miraculous. The prophets recorded the thoughts thus dictated to them, but only dimly understood their meaning. Peter explains that it was revealed to them "that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (I Pet. 1:12) We cannot understand how the prophets were caused to record God's thoughts. The Bible simply explains that it was by the Holy Spirit.

We can properly say that the Old Testament Scriptures are a product, or work, of the Holy Spirit. The thoughts of God are recorded in the Old Testament books to be read and pondered at will by his people. But no one could understand the real import of these recorded thoughts of God until his due time arrived, and then the meaning had to be miraculously revealed, which brings to our attention another accomplishment of the Holy Spirit.

The miraculous revealing of the meaning of the Old Testament messages began with Jesus. Doubtless throughout Jesus' childhood Mary had many times told him the circumstances in connection with his birth: that Joseph was not his father, that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. This would impress upon Jesus the fact that he was on the earth for a special mission, and therefore was anxious to learn what that mission was. So at the early age of twelve we find him in the Temple discussing matters with the doctors of the Law, and asking them questions. He probably learned from them that under the Law it would not be proper for him to enter upon any priestly service for God until he was thirty years old. (Luke 2:42-49; 3:23; Num. 4:23) So he returned to Nazareth and was subject to his mother and foster father until that time came.

Promptly when Jesus was thirty years of age he went to John the Baptist, at Jordan, and offered himself for baptism. Then a wonderful miracle occurred. The Holy Spirit came upon him. The record says, "The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22) The Holy Spirit, or power of God, is not a person, although the translators of the Bible have endeavored to give this impression by using personal pronouns in passages which refer to the holy power of God, such, for example, as in our text. Nor is the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove. The bodily form of a dove was merely an outward demonstration, principally for the benefit of John the Baptist to enable him to bear testimony to what had taken place.—John 1:32-34

In Matthew 3:16, we are informed that when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus the "heavens were opened unto him." Here was a functioning of the Spirit, or power, of God different from what had ever before occurred. The Holy Spirit had been operative in the creation of the universe, and had given life to all living things. The Spirit had enabled the prophets to pen their messages of God for the benefit of his people in a later age. Now, the same Spirit had miraculously revealed to Jesus the meaning of those things, which previously even the angels could not understand.

In this we see the further working of God's power, in communicating his thoughts to the finite minds of those whom he desired should, in his due time, come under their influence. However, God does not impose his thoughts upon anyone. He did not do this with Jesus. Jesus' attitude is described in a prophecy concerning him. In this prophecy Jesus is represented as saying, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Ps. 40:7,8) The 'volume of the book'—the Old Testament scriptures—contained a full expression of God's will for his beloved Son Jesus, who delighted to do his Father's will. He wanted his Father to reveal his will to him, and the 'heavens were opened.' The Holy Spirit revealed to him the meaning of what had previously been written.

Even before this, the perfect mind of Jesus had probably become well acquainted with the Old Testament scriptures. Perhaps he had even memorized much of what had been written. Now the Holy Spirit was revealing to him its true meaning

concerning his own mission on earth, and also the plan of God as a whole. The record states that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he remained for forty days. The miraculous revelation of Truth which the Holy Spirit had unfolded to him was seemingly so overwhelming that he felt the necessity of isolating himself from others for a time; that he might have an undisturbed opportunity to adjust himself to the flood of light—of Truth—on the Old Testament scriptures which had entered his mind; and thus be prepared to fulfill his agreement to do his Father's will.

JESUS' MINISTRY

Throughout the entire course of Jesus' ministry, he was unfolding the various aspects of Truth that had been revealed to him. While he did not himself write his teachings, yet, under the later direction of the Holy Spirit, his wonderful words of life were recorded by others, and thus made available for the instruction of all the LORD's people throughout the entire age. How clearly Jesus emphasized that his teachings were not his own! Referring to himself he said, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure."—John 3:34 [*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* omits "unto him"]

The giving of the Holy Spirit to Jesus as a power to reveal the thoughts of God, was not in limited measure. It came with such full and complete clarifying brilliance that Jesus understood the thoughts, the very intents of God's heart. This means that we can accept every word that Jesus spoke as reflecting the mind of God. Again Jesus said, "I have not

spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."—John 12:49

Toward the close of Jesus' ministry, Philip said to him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus' reply was, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."—John 14:8-10

Jesus did not mean by these words that he and the Heavenly Father were one and the same person. If he had meant this he would not have confused the fact by his further statement concerning the Father dwelling in him, for how can one dwell in himself? The meaning of his words is obvious. He was so fully controlled by the thoughts and will of God that everything he said and did reflected exactly what the Father would say and do were he to appear personally and minister to the people.

What this means to us is that in the words and works of Jesus we have revealed the meaning of the Spirit-inspired writings of the Old Testament, a bringing closer to us of the holy thoughts of God, that they might exert their intended influence in our lives. When we read the teachings of Jesus we may know that they reveal the will of God. When Jesus said that we should love our enemies it means that God wants us to love our enemies. When he said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), we know that it is the Heavenly Father who

expects us to be the 'light of the world.' When the Master commanded that we should "lay down" our lives for the brethren (John 15:13), we should realize that it is his Father who issued that command. And so it is with respect to all the "gracious words" which fell from the Master's lips.—Luke 4:22

MUCH TRUTH HELD BACK

But we do not have the full will of God revealed through the personal teachings and example of Jesus. He did not give expression to all the wonderful truths that were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he [it], the Spirit of truth, is come, he [it] will guide you into all truth." (John 16:12,13) The minds of the disciples were not then prepared to grasp all the marvelous truths that had been revealed to Jesus. Much, even of what he did tell them, was only vaguely understood by them; and many of his lessons they failed to remember.

In John 14:26, Jesus gives us another promise, that in his name the Father would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples, and that it would be to them as a wonderful "Comforter." The Spirit, he said "shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." What a wonderful promise! Jesus indicated to his disciples that there were many truths of the Father's plan that he had not told them, but later these would be revealed. They would be taught all things. Nothing that they needed to know in order to complete the Divine revelation through their oral and written ministry would be omitted.

Even the great truths that Jesus did relate to his disciples—the truths which they failed to understand, and in many instances did not remember—were to be unfolded to them by the aid of the Holy Spirit. It will 'bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,' is the assurance Jesus gave to his disciples. It was at Pentecost that his promise of the 'Comforter,' the 'Spirit of truth' mentioned in our text, came upon the disciples as they waited and prayed in the "upper room" in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of the Master's promise.—Acts 1:13,14

The disciples knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He had appeared to them on several occasions. It was at the last of these visits in their midst that he instructed the disciples that they "should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father"—the promise of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4) Jesus explained that the fulfillment of this promise would equip them to be his special witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8

When first promising the Holy Spirit and explaining that it would testify of him, Jesus added, "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:27) In this, again, we see the overruling providence of God; the working of his Holy Spirit in the revelation of his plans and purposes for the guidance of his people. Jesus' disciples, particularly his apostles, had, as Jesus said, been with him 'from the beginning.' They had heard his wonderful words of life, and had witnessed his marvelous miracles. They lived in the atmosphere of peace, and love,

and kindness; and loyalty to God that radiated from him. They noted his boldness in refuting the misleading teachings of his enemies. They knew him because they lived with him, and knowing him was a great step toward knowing the Father, when later the Holy Spirit came upon them as it had come upon him.

THE HOLY SPIRIT "SHED FORTH"

At Pentecost, the promise to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples was fulfilled. There was a mighty demonstration of power on that memorable day. Explaining it, Peter said that Jesus "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33) The Holy Spirit was 'shed forth.' There was no way the translators could distort this statement to make it seem as though the Holy Spirit was a third person in a trinity of gods. A person cannot be shed forth, but a power can; and it was the power, the Holy Spirit of truth, which came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost.

While all the disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit were richly blessed when it was shed forth, only the special apostles received from it a miraculous illumination of their minds. They were specially designated by the fact that the Spirit rested upon them, being visibly manifested by cloven tongues of fire. These in turn, through their oral teachings and their epistles, have made the "vision" plain for the remainder of God's people throughout the age. (Hab. 2:2) God does not miraculously and directly reveal his Truth to his people as a whole.

With what clarity the great truths of the Old Testament, enlarged upon and some of them made clear by Jesus, were now fully revealed to the apostles. The things which Jesus said he had withheld from them, and the truths he had taught them and they had forgotten—all took form in their minds, and they were ready at once to embark upon their ministry of witnessing for Jesus, and explaining his part, and their own, in the Divine plan of human redemption and salvation.

Notice a case in point. The Apostle Peter had tried, in different ways, to prevent the death of Jesus. When the Master told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem where he expected to be arrested and put to death, Peter endeavored to dissuade him from thus voluntarily surrendering to his enemies. Later, as the mob came out from Jerusalem to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword in an attempt to prevent the arrest. Although Peter was later assured that Jesus had been raised from the dead, he still did not understand the meaning of his death. Indeed, he had given up his hope in Jesus, and suggested to the others that they go back into the fishing business.

But when the Holy Spirit was shed forth upon the apostles at Pentecost the mystery was made plain; and we find Peter, in his Pentecostal sermon, quoting prophecies from the Old Testament to show that God had foreknown and foretold the Redeemer's death. (Acts 2:25-32) The prophecies of Jesus' death and resurrection had been in the Old Testament right along, but Peter did not comprehend their meaning. Now he did, for the Holy Spirit of truth had been shed forth to illuminate his mind,

and the minds of the other apostles, that they might be inspired witnesses of the great truths of the Divine plan as they are centered in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, in promising to shed forth the Holy Spirit, said that it would be a Comforter to his disciples. And how true this proved to be! When Jesus was taken from them and crucified, they were made sad of heart. It was much more than the loss in death of a beloved friend. They had accepted Jesus as the foretold Messiah. The disciples understood the surface truths of the Old Testament. They knew that the God of Israel had promised to send a Messiah through the line of David, and that this great King was to establish a kingdom, or government, which eventually would exert worldwide influence and control. They believed Jesus was this great King, and they believed that in associating themselves with him they would have a share in his kingdom.

With Jesus' death this hope was shattered; but only until the Holy Spirit was shed forth. Then they realized that the Messianic kingdom was to be more effective and more glorious than they had even dreamed it could be. They also now knew why it had been necessary for Jesus to die; that it was to redeem the world. They now knew that in his resurrection by Divine power, Jesus had been exalted to a height of glory beyond the comprehension of their finite minds; and that if they became conformed to his character likeness and faithfully laid down their lives as his witnesses, they would, in God's due time, share the glory of his kingdom; and the glory of his exalted position on the throne of God. How wonderful it is to be comforted by the Holy Spirit!

Jesus had said that when the Holy Spirit of truth came it would show them "things to come," and it did. (John 16:13) Shortly after Pentecost we find Peter preaching another wonderful sermon. It was prompted by a miracle which he had performed—the healing of a man who had been lame from birth. Peter explained that this miracle was accomplished through the power of the resurrected Jesus. He further explained that Jesus was to come again, and that when he did return there would be "times of restitution [or restoration] of all things." Then he added that this glorious feature of the Divine plan for saving a lost world from sin, sickness, and death had been spoken "by the mouth of all his [God's] holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) Not until the Holy Spirit of Truth was shed forth at Pentecost did Peter understand this great truth of 'restitution' for a lost world, nor realize that it was the theme of all God's 'holy prophets.'

The Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit completed the miraculous revelation which was given to Jesus at Jordan, and thus through his teachings, and theirs, the revelation of the Divine will was completed, and is now contained in the written Word. No further miraculous revelation is needed. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to Timothy, saying, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."—II Tim. 3:16,17

The 'all scripture given by inspiration of God' is what we speak of as the Old and New Testaments. In these two parts of the Bible, God has recorded

and revealed his thoughts. The thoughts, which he has designed, shall exert power over, and in, the lives of those who, during the present Gospel Age, are fully dedicated to him. In this wonderful arrangement, miraculously provided, is manifested the manner in which the power of God, the Holy Spirit of truth, operates in the minds and hearts of those who surrender to its influence, and thus accomplishes the Creator's designs in the hearts and lives of his people. ■