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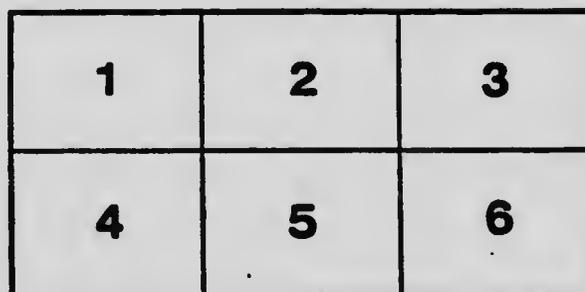
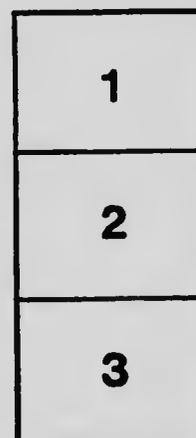
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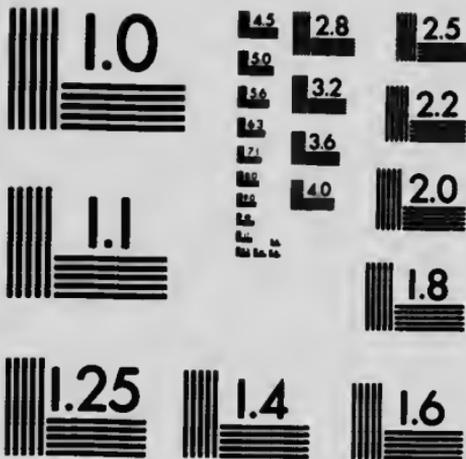
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53.

Christian Spirituality

....HOW TO BE....

One with Jesus Christ

John xvii.20,21,22. iJohn iv. 17.

-By-

REV. T. M. TALBOT

B.A. Toronto University
B.D. Wesley College Montreal
Ph.D. Boston University



Carroll, Manitoba.

1909

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CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Christian Spirituality is the state of being one with Jesus Christ or in harmony with Deity. John xvii, 21, 22.

Spirituality is here taken in the sense of disposition. When one's disposition is the same as the disposition of Jesus Christ, or when one's attitude is the same to God and man as that of Jesus Christ, when in the flesh, then the Master's prayer that his followers might be one with him is fulfilled and that person is enjoying christian spirituality. Our christian spirituality is the result of the Christ motive and is set forth by the life of Jesus Christ. We limit the study of the spirituality of Christ to the time he spent in the flesh, not that his disposition is different now from what it was while he was here on earth, but the historic Christ who dwelt with us, is more easily understood by us.

Christian Spirituality is not easily defined as it belongs to spiritual phenomena rather than to intellectual conceptions. Yet it is easily understood for it is often seen, readily recognized and has many synonyms viz:- The spirit of Christ, the spirit of Christianity, the Christian Spirit, the Christlike Spirit, Christlikeness, the Christ spirit, the Christ-motive, Christian loyalty, Godliness, holiness, the simple life.

The people of our day are beginning to recognize that Christian spirituality is the highway of salvation and a definite practical state that must be attained in this life. There are many people who do not seem yet to recognize that if one is not made acquainted with saintliness in childhood he will find great difficulty in its acquirements in later life.

Our Christian spirituality is not identical with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. These promptings are entirely for the spirit and must be translated by the soul into practical things of life and personal action before they will exhibit them-selves as our life and disposition. Neither can it be oneness with the life of Christ, owing to lack of power and similarity of environments on our part and for the same reason it cannot be oneness with Divine love. Neither is it oneness with the teaching of the church as the church reveals nothing but confirms, teaches and exemplifies Christian spirituality as it is disclosed by inspired lives.

It does not make us one with Christ in his relation to God in the Trinity for we are to worship Him as God. But our christian spirituality is the state of being one with the spirituality exhibited by Jesus Christ in the flesh and shows itself in love and the Christian graces, just as the maternal spirit in the child is one with that of her mother and shows itself in the care of her doings.

The difference between the Holy Spirit and Christian spirituality is that the former is a person while the latter is only the mood, attitude or influence of a person. The Holy spirit is the third person in the Trinity. Its influence proceeds from both the Father and the Son. It appeals directly to our spirit, while Christian spirituality is the spirituality of the life of Jesus Christ and proceeds from all and every action of his life; whether his bodily, mental, emotional, or spiritual life and appeals to every receptive faculty of our life, whether our bodily, mental, emotional, or spiritual life. These influences then enter the soul and become effective in forming our disposition or spirituality.

The influence of both the spirit of Jesus and the Holy Spirit originate in Christ and consequently are in perfect harmony.

Like the falling rain and rising mist neither can continue long without the other, while each is the others best help.

This christian spirituality is the one thing that Christ said was needful, that Mary had and the rich young ruler had not. It is the bond of common union not only of all true Christians but of God and the angels. It is the oneness the Lord Jesus prayed that his followers might have with Him and his Father.

There have been endless disputes about beliefs, doctrines and forms of service, but none about Christian spirituality.

Christians may differ in their beliefs and in their forms of worship but they must not differ from each other or from Deity in the spirit of their life. This is the common ground of brotherhood and is always the same in every real Christian no matter by what name he be known. Therein lies the unity and oneness of different Christian denominations. All Christians have the same spirit and as a consequence love and common sympathies.

Thus if two Christians who are strangers meet, each readily recognizes this spirit in the other, though they may not be of the same church, social standing, color, or even of the same race or speech.

What Christian spirituality really is, Christ while in the flesh has set forth most clearly. It is "the law of the spirit of life". Rom. 8. That he lived in heaven before his incarnation and after his ascension as well as the spirit of his life on earth and this life on earth was for the purpose of exemplifying to us the divine life, that we might live it, be one with Him and members of the heavenly Kingdom as Enoch, Mary, Wesley, &c.

To be in harmony with Him our lives must be distinguished by the spirit of faith in God and man, modest humility, patient endurance, sympathetic forgiving mercy, generous kindness. We must be brave without roughness and gentle without weakness, promoting the Kingdom in heroic righteousness, beauty and courteousness; bearing burdens for others: loving God; and our neighbors as ourselves.

Jesus had the spirit of rebuke for sin yet He was attractive to the sinner. When tired and thirsty at the well, He forgot his weariness and hunger to bless a sin-burdened soul and He rebuked the sin so as to cure the evil and win the sinner's love.

His whole life was an exemplification of the Divine life - Christian Spirituality.

In Moses, the Prophets, the Apostles and the Christian workers ever since the time of Jesus Christ, evidences of the same spirit have shown themselves. It was this spirit that guided to America the Karoo boy from whom his college chums caught the same spirit and became missionaries to Africa. A blind Chinaman became so possessed of this spirit by a few weeks sojourn at a mission station that he went back to his heathen home and successfully established a christian community without any other aid except that of the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality is the power of God unto salvation, in the home, the heathen hut, or civilized society.

The beauty and satisfaction of Christian spirituality is that the person enjoying it has the assurance of Gods spirit that he is living the same life on earth that he will live with God and the angels in heaven.

Death changes only ones environments, not the spirit of his life and any one who lives the Christlike life on earth will be perfectly at home when he finds himself with God and the angels in heaven, as the spirit of his life will be one with the spirit of their lives.

This assurance of ultimate triumph has enabled people in all ages to face torture and death rather than allow the

destruction of the harmony of their life with the divine life. It sustained the martyrs when being burned at the stake, boiled in oil, or devoured by wild beasts; sends forth and sustains the missionaries of our day amid the most dangerous and discouraging circumstances. This assurance is the power that bears the burdens of the church, social and private life in christian civilization of every age and country.

Our reading of the Bible and study of christian creeds should be for the purpose of making this spirit our own, rather than for the purpose of formulating our religion into orthodox beliefs.

Prayer or communion with the Holy Spirit, should be exercised not so much to get definite mental knowlege, as with a view to gaining that christian spirituality which will enable one to make the very best choice among the many environments and ways open to his activities. And the duty of the minister in his charge, is to so direct each exercise of his church service, prayer meeting and sunday school, that they will tend to cultivate and develop the different phases of christian spirituality. Responsive exercises are very helpful to this end. His ministerial visiting should be for the purpose of making his parishoners acquainted with this spirit and of developing and perfecting it where already introduced, our duty as christian

workers should be to use our powers to inculcate this spirit in our fellow men wherever we meet them, as Jesus did with the wine at the marriage, the money for tribute, the thirst at the well and the meal with Mary and Martha.

When a man is possessed of the Christian Spirit, he has the true requisite for membership in the Christian Church, a right to baptism and the Lord's supper. His prayer and christian experience would be helpful to any christian congregation, his life elevating to all. Yet he might not be able to explain his conversion or state his beliefs. He may even be not quite orthodox, as many Methodist local preachers of the last century.

Christian spirituality shows forth in as many ways as life in our bodies and it is no more necessary to be able to state all these to be saved and be sure of it, than it is to be able to state all the manifestations of life to live and be sure you are alive. But it is necessary to have the witness of the Holy Spirit that we have christian spirituality; the power which kept Paul's strong nature gentle, John's gentle nature active and Peter's impulsive nature temperate, and it will be sufficient to purify and beautify any man's nature whatever be his heredity and environments.

The importance of the influence of

the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the individual has been so long overlooked that some have gone to the other extreme and teach and practice the idea that if one will put away the bible and other christian helps and will rely entirely on the help of the Holy Spirit, they have the shortest and easiest way to salvation. The fact is, the Holy Spirit is very much dependent on christian spirituality for success, as is shown in heathen countries where God has been working for ages with the help of the Holy Spirit and yet it would appear without very much success. But as soon as christian spirituality was introduced by the missionaries we see wonderful success. The Jews during their whole history show little success, owing to lack of this spirituality, while the marvellous success of christianity has been owing to christian spirituality making the way easy for the work of the Holy Spirit. This spirituality is the result of the life of Jesus Christ on earth.

When one lacks spirituality, obedience to the Holy Spirit is very imperfect and salvation by that means is not to be depended upon. Just as a farmer cannot depend on a city bred man to do farm work, no matter how well instructed, because the instruction cannot be made clear without the necessary farm experience.

But one who has christian spirituality as well as the help of the Holy Spirit, can be depended on to do the right thing at the right time and do so habitually. The value of christian spirituality is that it establishes such a state of soul, that it enables the Holy Spirit to regenerate the divine life in the individual. This divine life places a person in the Kingdom of heaven while yet on earth and develops the noblest powers and possibilities of perfect manhood, no matter what ones environments may be, and if not opposed by the power of personal free will, the result will be salvation of his life and soul in all its beauty, by oneness with Jesus Christ.

When the home is governed by christian spirituality, it becomes the most powerful influence in establishing the child's character. Then the child will acquire such a taste for things divine, that the pleasures of sin will become repulsive, and no matter what he meets in the world outside, if converted, he will not be permanently drawn away from his fellowship with God. We see this truth illustrated in the lives of Peter and David. In such a home the Kingdom of Heaven is established on earth, and the child becomes possessed of the christlike spirit by intuition before his intellect is developed enough to understand it, indeed

it is a question whether the mind ever becomes able to fully comprehend the christlike spirit.

The development of christian spirituality is the object of christian religion. And our religion is able to develop this spirit in any man, no matter what his disposition, heredity, environments, or mental capacity. But to be efficient, our christianity must be more than outward form or mental contemplation, no matter how correct. It must be a spiritual exercise of the soul.

The christian religion may not always be successful. This is owing to the fact that the influences of its factors are dependent on the kind of reception which, under our free will, our faculties of body, soul and mind give them.

The love of God, the life of Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit may be understood and rejected and thus lose their power, as with Judas.

While God's providences may be made powerless by our refusal to accept the moral responsibilities that the environments, with which God has surrounded us, present to us.

God's goodness may even produce selfishness and pride as often with the rich, or an emotional thrill without spiritual content.

The revelation of truth may end in intellectual speculation; a belief without works which is the tendency

where it comes in contact with Greek Philosophy or modern scholarship.

Even when one has learned to put on many of the christian graces, the christian religion may fail to be a benefit, owing to a disposition that is ruled by sin. Any one is dominated by sin who has not set his heart to serve the Lord.

Righteousness, is the attitude of soul that habitually wills to be in harmony with God, while any lack of such harmony is sin, and we all have sinned.

Pardon for sin through the blood of Christ, is the free gift of God to every one who has the spirit of humility, so that humility and the attitude of righteousness, is the personal condition necessary to christian spirituality. Thus every one may put on the christlike spirit. Neither mental greatness nor absolute mental rectitude is necessary. No man need ever fail through weakness of mind, illiteracy or error in belief. He may believe the world was created in six days of twenty-four hours each, or in six thousand years. We may believe in verbal or non-verbal inspiration of the bible without destroying our christian spirituality. If we have this spirit we may play time-killing games to the glory of God and win souls for Christ while thus engaged, by taking the opportunity to reflect the christlike spirit, which is our great moral obligation.

We must distinguish between the consecrated man who is possessed of and reflects the christlike spirit as John the beloved, and the man who is only acquainted with and hence can only imitate the christian spirit as Judas, the hypocrite. A hypocrite performs his part without allowing the Holy Spirit to regenerate his soul. The work of the consecrated man is to accept the love of God, the life of Christ and the revelations of the Holy Spirit and immediately translate them into practical things of life and action. It is "working out your own salvation by allowing God to work in us and through us according to His good pleasure". This work is a personal obligation, taught not only in the bible and the life of Christ, but also in self-consciousness. If any man does not feel this work his duty, it is because he has seared and blunted his conscience and it is no more reliable, but needs educating and purifying by the development of the Christ-spirit.

The development of christian spirituality is characterized by faith, conversion, repentance, pardon, love, continual consecration, Spiritual birth and regeneration, though not necessarily in the above order. For its attainment one "must search for Him with his whole heart" by studying all that is written of Christ in the bible,

Meditate on his thoughts, imitate his actions if possible, dwell in his love and righteousness, commune with the Holy Spirit and abide in his spirituality. "We love him because he first loved us and we show forth his spirit because he first showed it to us. "We all with unveiled faces (receptive souls) reflecting as a mirror the Glory (spirituality) of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory". The christian religion founded in faith and following not perfectly at first, but closely, the spirituality exhibited by Jesus Christ in the flesh will perfect one's christian spirituality, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, realize salvation for every one exercised thereby. Moreover, it will exhibit itself in a life of perfect love and christian graces without which we are nothing

Christian spirituality does not antagonize men, but attracts and soothes violent natures and gains their good will. Physicians and missionaries with this spirituality when they are once understood, are safe in the worst slums of cities or among the most degraded heathens, and where Christians put on this spirit the Lord Jesus Christ will be lifted up and we will see wherever Christians are all men drawn unto him.

**Seek the graces of the Lord Jesus
Chrst by putting on his spirit.**

Rom.8.9.

