

The Experience of God by the Trinity

- 1 I praise Thee for Thy mystery,
That I may truly contact Thee;
In unapproachable light Thou wast
But now as Spirit nigh to me.
- 2 The Father, Son, and Spirit, Thou,
The triune God, my life fore'er;
In me Thou art the full supply
That I Thy holy nature share.
- 3 The triune God the Spirit is,
And comes as breath and wind to me;
'Tis thus I may experience
The Godhead's wondrous mystery.
- 4 All that the Father is and has
In His beloved Son doth rest,
And all the riches of the Son
Are by the Spirit now possessed.
- 5 The Spirit doth descend on me
And to my spirit enters in,
That He, the Father in the Son,
My blessed portion be within.
- 6 The Father is the fountainhead,
The Son expression gives to Him;
The Spirit is His very flow,
As my reality within.
- 7 The Father in the Son has come
That God to man Himself may show;
The Son as Spirit enters me
That God I inwardly may know.
- 8 The Father purposed that the Son
Should be the first in everything;
The Son the Father takes as Head
And over all His headship brings.
- 9 The Spirit perfectly desires
That Christ, the Son, be glorified,
And He reveals Him unto me,
That He be fully testified.
- 10 Thy final form the Spirit is,
Our worship to receive within;
If I Thy riches would enjoy,
In spirit I must contact Him.

- 11 If I in spirit worship Thee,
In spirit live, in spirit pray,
The Holy Spirit I will touch
And Thee enjoy in every way. (*Hymns*, #609)

Songs and hymns are a unique form of expression and communication which shape our thinking, influence our living, and may even have an impact on our eternal destiny. The form of expression in hymns and all manner of poetic writing is succinct and packed with short and expressive statements that carry a depth and breadth of beliefs and values in brief. A hymn expresses what is in the heart and soul of the writer; it reveals his philosophical orientation and his emotional depths; it also may be spiritual, soulful, or fleshly.

Hymns written by spiritual men often express rich depths of perception and high reaches of human feeling and aspiration. These hymns invite the appreciation and contemplative review of those who read, recite, and sing them. They contribute to the growth and maturity of those who are exercised to enjoy them. Conversely, some songs, written according to the spirit of the age of this world, expose the crooked, even perverted, minds of the writers; at the same time their emotions are shown to be shallow and bankrupt of proper human feeling. Such songs are worthless, empty, and corrupting influences on the community into which they are released. In between these extremes are a wide variety of songs designed to entertain, inspire, amuse, and divert the attention in many ways.

Songs and hymns are singular in their capacity to impact those who receive them. Concepts and ideas which form the character and intrinsic being of a man are conveyed through song perhaps more subtly and powerfully than by any other means. The thoughts and intentions of the heart are developed through what we hear, what we consider, and what we accept as truth; these are the things that determine how a man lives. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples that the defiling things of a man are the things that proceed out of his heart:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil reasonings, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy,

blasphemy, arrogance, foolishness. All these wicked things proceed from within and defile the man. (Mark 7:21-23)

Paul exhorts the believers to no longer think as the Gentiles think—in the vanity of their mind (Eph. 4:17). He reminds them that they have already put off the old man—their old manner of life based upon their old philosophy, logic, culture, and background with its shallow, empty, and darkened form of thinking. In the place of the old man they must put on the new man with its new culture and new way of thinking because it was “created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality” (vv. 18-19, 22, 24). Between the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man, Paul inserts the process by which this change in our essential nature is accomplished: “that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (v. 23).

This implies that the proper Christian life and conduct is the issue of a revolutionary change in our minds. Earlier in this same portion of his Epistle, Paul asserts, “But you did not so learn Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus” (vv. 20-21). The renewing of our mind is an ongoing course of practical education—the learning of Christ. This learning process is completed in a normal daily living through the reading of Scriptures, prayer, and a life of fellowship in the church. Included as an intrinsic part of the practical training in the normal church life are the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of the church (Col. 3:16).

The kind of songs and hymns we receive therefore is highly significant. It is disturbing to realize that among real believers a “catchy” tune full of shallow, imprecise, and often twisted lyrics may not only be tolerated but even welcomed into the personal or corporate times for listening and singing. Often the lyrics are not only banal, simple-minded writings, but they may even promote the default culture of our fallen human nature, espousing a philosophy of the world or religion void of any genuine experience of Christ. To pay our attention to such intellectual and religious pap robs us of our intended heritage in Christ. A song with its corrupting influence can stay in our conscious thoughts for hours, days, weeks, and even years. Some of these songs may be perceived as harmless “ditties,” that are attractive or helpful to young people, but the infusion of such vanity, even spiritual darkness, may permeate an entire congregation or society with the thinking that is according to the “age of this world”

(Eph. 2:2). Paul warns us elsewhere not to be fashioned according to this age but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). Yet because we find the tune of a song to be enjoyable, we may allow its fleshly or soul-ish words to seep deeply into our being. Perhaps we deceive ourselves into believing that it has value simply because it speaks of God and, we may reason, because it lifts our thoughts into a realm which we mistakenly label as spiritual.

For the proper growth and development in our Christian experience, we must learn to discern the sense of the Spirit of God in our human spirit concerning the things that we permit to become a part of our Christian experience. Our way of thinking—our perceptual orientation—determines our faith, our desires, our hopes, our aspirations, our commitments, and eventually our destinies. When we find a praiseworthy hymn, a hymn that communicates godly thinking and heavenly aspiration which matches the Holy Scriptures, we find a treasure worthy of serious contemplation. As we absorb the thoughts and spiritual leadings of the hymn, we

receive an impartation, an implantation, of the divine revelation from the hymn into our being, an unveiling which will shape and develop our godly character, experience, and living. All divine revelation is already in the Scriptures, which are defined as the breathing out of God (2 Tim. 3:16); however, there is still the need of a spirit of

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wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of our heart (Eph. 1:17-18) that we may know the things which have been freely given to us by God. The importance of hymns as a part of this enlightenment is confirmed in the Scriptures themselves (5:18-19; Col. 3:16). Revelation is an unveiling. We, like the sons of Israel described by Paul, often experience thoughts that are hardened, and a veil remains at the reading of the Scriptures (2 Cor. 3:13-14). We need our hearts to be turned. When we read, recite, pray over, reflect on, muse over, sing, and study a hymn or spiritual song that comes from the heart and soul of one who has been in contact with God through the Bible and by the Spirit of God, our hearts can turn and the veils can be taken away.

The hymn that we are now reviewing is such a commendable hymn. The thought of the writer, Witness Lee, is focused on the experience of God that we enjoy by the operation of the Divine Trinity. The experiences we have of God are determined by our perception of God. In other words, our knowledge of God determines the experience we have of Him, the life we live, the persons we become,

and eventually the destiny that is shaped for us. This hymn directs our attention to the mystery of the Triune God, not for doctrinal understanding but for our intimate and personal experience of Him.

The first two lines of the hymn immediately capture our attention: "I praise Thee for Thy mystery, / That I may truly contact Thee." Praise bursts from the believer when he sees God in His mystery because it is precisely this mystery that enables us to contact Him. The apostle Paul opened the vista of our contact with the God of mystery in his Epistle to the Colossians:

The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints; to whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:26-27)

There is the mystery of God (2:2) which is directly related to Christ, and the riches of the glory of this mystery is Christ *in you*. This marvelous fact should cause every believer to utter the praise that initiates this hymn.

The Christ who is in us is revealed in Colossians as the image of the invisible God and the Firstborn of all creation (1:15); He is the instrument through which all creation came into being and now all things in the universe cohere in Him (vv. 16-17). He is the preeminent One in all creation, all history, and all things; and all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him (vv. 18-19). He is the embodiment of all the fullness of the Godhead, and we are made full in Him (2:9-10). In his word study concerning these latter two verses, Kenneth Wuest writes that Lightfoot says, "*Being fulfilled* with a direct reference to the preceding *plērōma* [the Greek word translated "fullness" in the above two verses]; 'your fulness comes from His fulness; His *plērōma* (fulness) is transfused into you by virtue of your incorporation in Him'" (204). The mystery of the Triune God is thus interlinked with our contacting of Him. Christ, the mystery of God has come to dwell in us and to communicate into us all that God is, has done, and is doing. We thus become a part of this great mystery! If this becomes revelation to us, it will forever change the way we contact God. As the embodiment of God, Christ, as the mystery of God, has brought everything that God is and has into creation, and now we are able to receive all God's fullness into us in the way of transfusion through our incorporation into Him.

The second half of stanza 1 explains and expands the thought of contacting God: "In unapproachable light Thou wast / But now as Spirit nigh to me." God in the ages before the coming of Christ dwelt in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). Although "the invisible things of Him, both His eternal power and divine characteristics,

have been clearly seen since the creation of the world" (Rom. 1:20), in His divine person He was unknown and unknowable. Now in Christ the mystery has been manifested, and this Christ is made "nigh to me" as the Spirit. The following stanzas of the hymn expound on how God in Christ as the Spirit is made near to us and becomes available to us for our experience and enjoyment. This is the burden of the hymn.

The second stanza begins with the "Father, Son, and Spirit," introducing the fact that the mystery presented in the first stanza concerns God in His trinity. The Bible first speaks of God as Father, Son, and Spirit at the conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew, where the Lord in His resurrection instructs His disciples to go and disciple the nations, "baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19). Here we have only the title of the Trinity without explanation. Later, John tells us in his Gospel that the One who came and whom they beheld, Jesus Christ, was the Word of God who was with God and who was God (1:1). In Him was life (the life of God), and this life was the light of men (v. 4). The Word became flesh and dwelt among created men who had come into being through Him (v. 14). John testified that he and others beheld His glory, apparently referring to His appearance on the mountain when He was transfigured before them (Matt. 17:1-8), the glory as of the only Begotten from the Father. John concludes this section of his Gospel: "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (1:18). It was in the Son that the Triune God in His mystery began to make Himself available to us. He came that we who believe may have life and have it abundantly (10:10). Based on this move of God in the Son, the singer of this hymn can declare that God is now "my life fore'er" and in me the full supply so that "I Thy holy nature share," as Peter wrote in his second Epistle (1:4). What a mystery that the Triune God has become our life, our full supply, and that we have become partakers of His divine nature! "I praise Thee for Thy mystery, / That I may truly contact Thee."

Stanza 3 unveils the means by which the essence of the Triune God has been transferred into us for us to experience the wondrous mystery of the Godhead—"The triune God the Spirit is, / And comes as breath and wind to me." It is as the Spirit that God transmits His uncreated eternal life and His holy nature into us so that we "may experience / The Godhead's wondrous mystery." By the mercy of the Lord, if we are able to comprehend, appreciate, and lay hold on this divine means of transmission, we will experience a life-changing revolution in our walk with God. The fourth stanza gives further explanation to what is already revealed by pointing out that all that the Father is and has is the content of the Son, and all these riches of the Father in the Son are possessed by

the Spirit. This is a brief exposition of what the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion in John 16:12-15:

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you.

The three of the Divine Trinity are essentially one, but to accomplish and carry out the divine economy they are also revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit in a harmonious coordination. The Father planned, the Son accomplished redemption, and now the Spirit is the particular means by which all that He is and has is applied to and transmitted into us. How desperately stricken in spiritual poverty we are if we fail to apprehend the riches that are available to us and to all mankind through faith in this wonderful three-one God in His mystery! The revelation in this hymn demands our utmost attention.

The aim of the economy of God is discovered in the fifth stanza. The Spirit descends on me and *enters into my spirit*. Here the hymn touches another crucial vision which is essential to our experiencing what God in His mystery desires to achieve—the human spirit is the target of the Spirit of God for the accomplishment of the divine economy.

The creation of man was very different from all other creatures. As depicted in Genesis 2:7, God was intimately involved in man's creation. He formed man from the dust of the ground. Then He breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. The issue of the breath of life (representing the human spirit in man) being joined with the dust of the earth (man's physical body) was a living soul (man's psychological being—his person). Man is unlike all other creatures. He is a physical being belonging to the earth like all the animals created before him, but he is also a spiritual being, belonging to the spiritual realm. Throughout the rest of the Bible, we are slowly introduced to the purpose of man's creation in this unique way according to God's economy. The spirit in man is for the express purpose of contacting, receiving, and containing God that man may become an expression of the invisible God. This purpose is implied in Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our

likeness..." Man is made to be like God; he is patterned after God. In addition, man is the result of spirit combining with earth—he is not simply physical; he is also spiritual. All other creatures are either physical beings, such as the fish, animals, and birds, or they are spirits such as the angels and God Himself. But man is unique; he is both physical and spiritual.

Through our unique creation we have a spirit; therefore, we are able to contain God who is Spirit. The Spirit of God is able to enter into our spirit, conveying God's life and nature into us so that we become sons of God as disclosed in John 3:6 and Romans 8:15. Footnote 2 in John 3:6 of the Recovery Version of the New Testament is helpful here:

The first Spirit ["that which is born of the *Spirit*"] mentioned here is the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, and the second spirit ["*is spirit*"] is the human spirit, the regenerated spirit of man. Regeneration is accomplished in the human spirit by the Holy Spirit of God with God's life, the uncreated eternal life. Thus, to be regenerated is to have the divine, eternal life (in addition to the human, natural life) as the new source and new element of a new person.

The Spirit of God enters into the human spirit, begetting in man the divine life. We as physical beings contain God in our spirit and thus are able to express God in the physical

realm. God is Spirit (4:24); although He is magnificent, awesome, rich, and pure—He is love and light, righteousness and holiness—yet without entering into man, a physical being, God has no expression for His manifestation in creation. In God's economy man was made to express Him, but for four thousand years there was no expression in man. The Son as an incarnate being—both spiritual and physical—became a man to fulfill God's purpose by declaring the Father in all His human living. He lived out the life of the Father on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, died an all-inclusive death to accomplish the redemption of fallen creation, and rose to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). As the Spirit, He now comes to enter into those who receive Him. And because we are both spiritual and physical beings, we are able to receive Him, the Son as the Spirit, to be our "blessed portion" within.

The seventh stanza continues to open the vision concerning the Father in the Son coming to man to make God known, and the Son as the Spirit entering into His own so that they may know God inwardly. We must recognize

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the difference between knowing *about* God objectively and *knowing* God personally and intimately through contacting Him. The Son came with the Father—He repeatedly emphasized that He was not alone but that the Father was with Him—to make Himself known to man “face to face.” To know *about* God as the eternal Creator who remains remote in the heavens is far short of the eternal purpose of God as revealed in the Bible. The One whom we call Father must never be understood by us believers as an estranged person, One whom we have never seen, inaccessible, far off, a somewhat historical figure. When we apprehend by faith that the Father has come in the Son to make Himself known by indwelling us, we can begin to know Him personally and address Him affectionately.

Some may question how we can really know Him until we actually see Him. The hymn addresses this question in the second half of the stanza: “The Son as Spirit enters me / That God I inwardly may know.” To know Him inwardly is by means of the transmitting Spirit in our spirit. The apostle Paul says that “it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me” (Gal. 1:15-16); the preposition here is *in* me, not *to* me. This is the preciousness of the divine plan—He came not only to reveal Himself in the man, Jesus, but in the many believers as the many sons of God, who are fore-known, predestinated to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son, called, justified, and even glorified (Rom. 8:29-30). Hence, the Bible tells us in Galatians 4:4-6 that first the Son in the fullness of time came forth that we might be redeemed with the goal that we receive sonship, and now because we are sons, we have been given the Spirit of the Son, by which we cry, Abba, Father:

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, that He might redeem those under law that we might receive the sonship. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!

The tenth and eleventh stanzas of the hymn highlight the Triune God in His “final form” as the Spirit with the result that we may inwardly worship Him. Then we are told that the riches of this indwelling Spirit may be enjoyed by us if we contact Him in our human spirit. Finally, we are given the testimony that by worshipping God in spirit, living in spirit, and praying in spirit, the believer will touch the Holy Spirit and enjoy God in every way. The revelation of the two spirits in the Bible—the Spirit of God and our human spirit—is crucial to our experience and enjoyment of God’s full salvation in His economy. The Triune God has passed through a process to accomplish the goal of His divine economy. The eternal, uncreated, unique, and only sovereign God was incarnated as a genuine man, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, was crucified, buried, entered

into resurrection, and ascended triumphantly to the heavens still as a man. All true believers acknowledge these steps in the divine process. The Son entered into creation and passed through all of these developments in the process; nevertheless, the Triune God—Father, Son, Spirit—was fully involved. Because the three coinhere (mutually indwell one another), there is never separation. Each has His distinct role, but the three work as one. This may be called the divine incorporation—they are joined, intermingled, and incorporated by what they are and in what they do. The Lord Jesus in John 14 spoke clearly of this relationship and union of the three. First, the Lord declared, “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me” (v. 11); He also affirmed, “The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works” (v. 10). From these two statements we can discern that the Father and the Son mutually indwell one another and work as one. But what about the Spirit?

The Spirit is the “another Comforter” in verse 16; He abides with the disciples and will be in them (v. 17). This divine Spirit is the ultimate, the final, the consummate reaching of the Triune God to His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people—“the final form the Spirit is.” This is the wonderful Spirit with the bountiful supply (Phil. 1:19). To know and enjoy Him in His bountiful supply, we must learn to contact Him in spirit (our human spirit). As we turn our heart to the Lord, the all-inclusive Spirit of the Triune God dwelling in our regenerated human spirit works in our spirit to transform our entire being (2 Cor. 3:16-18). The two spirits are a mingled spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Christ is making His home in our hearts, and we are being filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19).

Stanzas 6, 8, and 9 focus on the relationship of the Divine Trinity in their accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God. In stanza 6 the Triune God is seen in His flowing as a stream of living water—the Father is the fountainhead, the Son is the expression, and the Spirit is the very flow. In stanzas 8 and 9 we are shown that the Father purposed that the Son would have the first place in all things, the Son eternally takes the Father as the Head and brings His headship to be fully established over all, and the Spirit glorifies the Son and reveals Him to us that Christ may be fully testified in us. Dear Father, Son, and Spirit, we praise Thee for Thy mystery!

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