

The Spirit's Incorporation of the Operations of God in Acts through Jude

by Kerry S. Robichaux

In this article I wish to continue a series of articles I began in the last issue of this journal (“Operation”) on what can be termed the incorporate operations of the Triune God. This series of articles itself follows two previous articles that were published in this journal in 2004 (“Johannine [1]”; “Johannine [2]”), which detailed the incorporation of the Triune God in the life of Jesus as seen in the Gospel of John. The term *incorporation*, adopted from Witness Lee (*Issue 21-22, 24-26, 40-42*) and as applied in my previous articles, is used to describe any action by the Father, by the Son, or by the Spirit that manifests the operation of one or of both of the other divine Persons. Thus, a manifest action of the Lord Jesus that clearly involves the operation of the Father, for example, is an instance of incorporation as I am using the term. The term *incorporation* can also be used to describe the similar action of the New Testament believers to manifest the operation of any or all the persons of the Triune God. In my two articles on the Gospel of John, the conclusion I came to, and hopefully affirmed persuasively, is that the more subtle message of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is not simply the incarnate Son of God who moved and acted for God’s interests during His earthly sojourn but more intrinsically the incarnate Son of God who *incorporates the operations of the Father and of the Spirit in His every manifest action* during His earthly ministry. Hence, the Jesus of the Gospel of John is not the incarnation of the Son of God separate from the Father and the Spirit, as many Christians today may casually understand, but the incarnation of the Son as the incorporation of the Triune God.

Perhaps a few verses will help here to illustrate the point concretely. In John 14:10 the Lord Jesus said, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.” Here two discrete aspects of the relationship between the Son and the

Father are explicitly referred to, and one is implied. These three aspects more finely define what I wish to describe by the term *incorporation*. The implied aspect is one of mutual interdependence of existence, whereby the Son is the Son in the Godhead because there is a Father in the Godhead, and the Father is the Father in the Godhead because there is a Son in the Godhead. In terms of classical (Latin) theology this mutual interdependence of existence is called coinherence or circuminsession. But also in this verse we explicitly see the mutual indwelling of the Son and the Father: “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.” This aspect of the relationship between the Son and the Father has more technically been called perichoresis (Greek for “mutual interpenetration”) in Greek theology and circuminsession in Latin thought. Here the point is not a mutual interdependence of existence but a mutual interpenetration of hypostases and a dynamic fellowship in the divine life that exists among the persons of the Trinity. Also, John 14:10 explicitly refers to the hidden mutual operation of the Father in the manifest action of the Son on the earth. When the Son spoke openly on the earth, He did so by virtue of not only His own agency but also the operation of His heavenly Father, who abides in Him. The Son’s action of speaking, and the effectual benefit of His speaking, occurred because the Father operated (“does His works”). The mutual operation of the three in every action of any one of the Divine Trinity is no doubt the most obvious aspect of incorporation to be found in the Gospel of John, because so much of the Gospel of John relates to the actions of the Son. But it should be noted that the mutual operation of the three in the Godhead manifests and depends on the other two aspects of incorporation—circuminsession (coinherence) and circuminsession (perichoresis).

In the last issue of this journal I began to examine the incorporate operation of the Triune God as conveyed in the Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament Epistles.

In turning to Acts and the Epistles, I wish to extend what I did in the Gospel of John; that is, I hope to gather as many textual indications as I can find of the incorporation of the operations of the Divine Trinity in the manifest actions of the three of the Divine Trinity as well as in the actions of the New Testament believers, including specifically the apostles. Hence, I wish to consider discretely, from Acts and the Epistles, the actions of the Son, the actions of the Spirit, and the actions of the believers, including the apostles, insofar as they manifest the incorporated operations of the Divine Trinity. In my last article, I attempted to demonstrate that in the life of the New Testament church, as depicted in Acts and the Epistles, often the actions of Christ Jesus the Lord manifest the incorporate operations of God more generally and of the Father more specifically. For example, at the head of my last article I quoted a verse that illustrates Christ's incorporate action: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). In praising God the Father for His operation on the believers, Paul declares that "spiritual" blessings (denoting the Spirit's operation) are given "in Christ," and in this we see that God operates in and through Christ in the many blessings that constitute the full compass of His economy for the believers. We can probably take Paul's word here as a general characterization of all of God's operation in His economy with the believers. All His operations are in Christ and through the Spirit ("spiritual"). Thus, in God's economy, as it relates to the New Testament believers, Christ incorporates the operations of God and applies these operations to the believers through the Spirit. I also tried to show that to a limited degree the activities of Christ, spoken of in Acts and the Epistles, incorporate the operations of the Spirit as well. Typically, after the resurrection of Christ, we find that the Spirit manifests the operations of Christ, but in some few instances in Acts and the Epistles, we also find Christ spoken of as manifestly acting by the Spirit's operation. In this article, I hope to consider from Acts and the Epistles the activities of the Spirit that incorporate the operations of God more generally and of the Father more specifically. In later articles, I intend to examine how the Spirit incorporates the operations of Christ within the believers, how the apostles incorporate the operations of the Divine Trinity in their work and ministry, and how the New Testament believers incorporate the operations of the Divine Trinity in their living and service.

After spending some months preparing, reading from Acts through the Epistle of Jude as carefully as I was able to, I

am quite struck with how pervasive the incorporation of the Triune God is in the thought and writing of the New Testament authors. Certainly, this notion is rarely the explicit topic of what they write, but it is astounding how fully they interweave the operations of the Triune God into their descriptions of how Christ, the Spirit, the apostles, and the common believers function in the church as the Body of Christ. My deep impression after reading Acts and the Epistles is that, according to the New Testament, the operations of the Triune God are paramount to the identity of the church in life and service. As I hope I have shown in the earthly ministry of Christ from the Gospel of John, I hope to show from Acts and the Epistles the incorporate operation of the Divine Trinity in the life of the church as well as the church's participation in, enjoyment of, and own activity by this divine incorporation. By extending my exploration of this divine incorporation into Acts and the Epistles, my intention is to suggest a way of Christian and church life that is intrinsically interwoven with the incorporate operations of the Divine Trinity and which thereby manifests the Divine Trinity corporately and visibly. Like the common, natural, and false notions

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regarding the Trinity that many hold today, the concept of the Christian life that many hold today is somewhat shallow and commonplace, portraying the believer as someone who lives and acts in a purely ethical realm and who faintly represents God somehow. To many Christians this is the essence of the Christian life, and to suggest anything

more than this is foreign and undesirable. But it seems that the writers of the New Testament speak of the believers in an altogether mystical way (to many even this suggestion repulses), describing them as the very extension of the incorporation that Christ was when He was on the earth in the flesh. It appears that in the view of the New Testament writers the believers are not independent ethical agents of God on earth, representing Him—usually poorly—to a world that is inferior to them in demeanor and behavior. Rather, the believers are to live, act, and even exist as believers by the operations of the Divine Trinity within them.

A short word on Acts and the Epistles as the scope of this series of articles is probably in order. Some readers may take exception to such a massive clumping of text for my study, as I seem to be flying in the face of all accepted distinctions of genre and authorship. But I am after a singular notion here, which I believe belongs to the common view of the New Testament writers and is not a distinctive notion of any one writer or a distinctive characteristic of any one genre of the New Testament. I do not

deny that there are individual strands of thought among the various New Testament writers, and in my articles on the Gospel of John, in contradistinction to the Synoptic Gospels, I implicitly acknowledged such, in that I described a “Johannine Jesus.” But I feel that what I am touching on is not particularly Johannine, Pauline, Petrine, or other, but more generally, new-testamental and literally Christian. Thus, I wish to suggest that behind the differences in presentation that we find among the New Testament writers there is a core understanding and experience that these authors, almost casually, interweave into their writing. This core is, I submit, their understanding and experience of the one reality of the Triune God operating in their life and labor, and this transcends their human and textual differences. It is, as it were, their common background “culture” of God’s operation in their life and labor. This assumption underlies the whole of my presentations.

As I have done previously, I will adopt a catalog-and-commentary format in which I will present groups of verses arranged by similar theme and, following each group, some comments which I hope will bring out the qualities of the incorporation of the Divine Trinity, particularly in this article as it relates to the Spirit’s person and work as He manifests the operation of God the Father. In each group I will arrange the verses thematically and not necessarily in the order in which they appear in Acts and the Epistles.

The Spirit’s Incorporation of God’s Operation

Most students of the Bible understand that in the Bible God is often said to operate through His Spirit in one way or another. And while the notion is common enough, we do not commonly understand that the biblical examples of this are indeed instances of the Spirit incorporating God’s operation. This may be due to a latent tritheism which seems to pervade our natural concepts of how God is and how He operates. But analogous to what we have seen concerning Christ’s incorporation of God’s operation, the Spirit’s activities among the believers in the church are also best characterized as activities in which the Spirit acts as the manifest Agent but in which at the same time He incorporates the mutual operations of either God the Father or God the Son, or both. Often this incorporate operation is only casually alluded to in the packed utterances of the writers of Acts and the Epistles, but upon some reflection the notion of the incorporate operation of the Triune God in the actions of the Holy Spirit can be easily detected. In the scriptural portions below I will attempt to bring this notion to the fore.

Incorporation in God’s Operation in Jesus Christ

Jesus, the One from Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about

doing good and healing all those who were being oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)

Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 1:4)

And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. (Rom. 8:11)

In Acts and the Epistles there is significant reflection concerning the life of Jesus in the flesh and, of course, His resurrection from the dead. In his gospel message to the household of Cornelius, Peter proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good and healing those who were oppressed by God’s enemy, for God was with Him. This speaks of Jesus incorporating the operations of God in His living and work. But there is more to the incorporation here, for Peter also implies that the efficacy of Jesus’ actions came through the operation of the Holy Spirit, with whom Jesus was anointed by God and by virtue of whom Jesus possessed the divine power for His ministry. While Peter indicates that Jesus was effective in His ministry because “God was with Him,” at the same time he ties God’s presence in Jesus with God’s anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Hence, we may say that God was with Jesus by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s operation in power in the activities of the God-man on the earth. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is seen to be incorporating the operations of God in Jesus and making God’s presence in Jesus manifest in power. I realize that this may be a far cry from the common notion that we may have about Peter’s testimony here, but I believe that in the person and work of Jesus Christ God’s presence is more intrinsic than in any other servants of God (e.g., the Old Testament prophets) and is bound up in the operations of the Triune God as they are incorporated in the actions of the divine Persons. Ultimately, it is God’s operation that made Jesus more than a mere human minister, and that is precisely the import of Peter’s gospel message. But God’s operation was incorporated in the operation, in power, of the Holy Spirit, whom God applied to Jesus for His ministry work, and the Spirit’s operation was further incorporated in the manifest activities of Jesus, “who went about doing good and healing all those who were being oppressed by the devil.” Unlike the Old Testament prophets, Jesus enjoyed God being with Him not in the way of separate invisible presence but in the way of incorporation. In His every action Jesus incorporated the operations of the entire Triune God—God in hidden operation, God in intrinsic power, and God in manifest action in flesh. Certainly Jesus was God by virtue of His own identity as the second of the Godhead, but He did nothing solely by virtue of His own identity as the second of

the Godhead; Jesus did what He did by incorporating the power of the Holy Spirit, who Himself incorporated God the Father in power in Jesus.

In opening his Epistle to the Romans, Paul declares that the gospel of God concerns God's Son, who in His humanity, out of the seed of David, was resurrected from the dead and designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness (1:1-4). The implied agent of the passive verb *designated* is God, who is the agent of the active verb *promised* in verse 2; thus, the operation of designation which occurred at the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord is an operation of God, and this operation was realized by the Spirit of holiness, which was in Jesus Christ. The reference to the Spirit of holiness here is probably not a personal reference, per se, to the third of the Divine Trinity but is rather a reference to the divine essence in Christ (cf. John 4:24). However, even if the reference is not strictly hypostatic, the Spirit's function as the essence of God in the Godhead is no doubt involved here, and as such, we see that the Spirit incorporated the operation of God to designate Jesus Christ as the Son of God in power when He resurrected Him from the dead. While the simple significance of the resurrection is that God enlivened the dead humanity of Jesus and raised Him from the dead, Paul here gives us a much deeper insight into what the resurrection means intrinsically for the humanity of Jesus. Certainly in His divinity Jesus was already the Son of God before His resurrection, but before His resurrection He could be viewed only as the Son of God by virtue of what theologians have called the *communicatio idiomatum*, whereby the properties and virtues of the divine Son of God can be ascribed to the humanity of Jesus, and thus, we can rightly call Jesus the Son of God. Through resurrection, however, something more intrinsic than an interexchange of predicates occurs; rather, the Spirit of holiness operates within Jesus to effect a real perfusion of the divine essence in the humanity of Jesus, and the result is that in His humanity He is designated the Son of God in power (not merely in predication). What is germane to our focus here is that this divine operation, this designation by God through His raising Jesus from the dead, is incorporated into the Spirit's involvement in the person of Christ during the resurrection.

Later in his Epistle to the Romans, Paul alludes to the Spirit's same incorporate operation of God in the resurrection of Christ. Romans 8:11 speaks particularly of the believers' experience of God giving life to their mortal

bodies through His Spirit who indwells them. Although he does not state it directly, Paul does intertwine the resurrection of Jesus with the Spirit's incorporate operation of God. On the one hand, he mentions that the Spirit who dwells in the believers incorporates the God who raised Jesus from the dead ("the Spirit of the One..."); on the other hand, he points out that the same God who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to the believers' mortal bodies through the Spirit's operation within them. I believe that we can safely assume that Paul here is trying to show a parallel in God's operations in the resurrection of Jesus and in the giving of life to the mortal bodies of the believers, and in each instance God's operation is incorporated into the Spirit's activity. In the resurrection of Jesus, God raised Him from the dead through His operation in the Spirit, and in giving life to the believers' mortal bodies, God dispenses the divine life through His operation in the Spirit.

It should be noted here that the many titles for the Spirit in the New Testament that follow the form *the Spirit of* usually point to the Spirit's incorporation of the operations of the Divine Trinity in one way or another. We will see this again and again in the sections that follow. It should also be noted that in examining the Spirit's incorporation of God's operation in Acts through Jude, we will often be viewing the apostles and the believers' living out of that operation in their daily lives and work. As they experience

the operations of the Triune God, the apostles and the believers can be seen to incorporate these operations in their own activities for God's economy, and this, I contend, is what gives Christian life and service its real significance and impact. But my present focus is particularly the Spirit's incorporate activity, not that of the apostles and the believers. In the future I hope to focus particularly on their participation in the divine incorporation. In the sections below I will often make the distinction between the Spirit's incorporation and that of the apostles and the believers.

Incorporation in God's Operation in the Early Church

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:33)

And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with

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the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

And God, the Knower of hearts, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit even as also to us. (Acts 15:8)

And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away; and the eunuch did not see him anymore, for he went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:39)

And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. (Acts 13:2)

But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to deceive the Holy Spirit and to put aside for yourself some of the proceeds of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? And when it was sold, was it not under your authority? Why is it that you have contrived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God...And Peter said to her, Why is it that it was agreed between you two to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. (Acts 5:3-4, 9)

The Acts of the Apostles is, as its title suggests, an account of the activities of the apostles in the early church. But the true impact of their activities depended on God's operation among them, and repeatedly His operation is noted in the record of Acts. In the verses above, God's operation is portrayed as incorporated in the Spirit's move among the apostles. The first three texts above relate to the Spirit's incorporation of God's operation in the apostles or the believers for the manifestation of His move among them. The first two refer to events among Jewish believers; the third, among Gentile believers. In all three events the believers manifest God's operation through their speaking, either in different tongues (2:4; 10:46) or with exceptional boldness (4:31). These are not instances of ordinary speaking but of speaking by the apostles or the believers which incorporates God's operation. Here what we should note is that in all three instances the Spirit incorporates God's operation. What God does in each instance He does by operating in the Spirit's work in the apostles or the believers. In Acts 2:33 Peter tells the Jewish congregation that God the Father has poured out the promised Holy Spirit and that what they both see and hear before them is the Holy Spirit's activity among the apostles. Thus, the moving of the Spirit among the apostles is at the same time the pouring out of the Spirit by God the Father, and in this sense the Spirit can be said to incorporate the operation of God among the apostles. It is the operation of God among them that gives the apostles their impact among their Jewish listeners, and this operation is incorporated in and manifested by the operation of

the Holy Spirit among the apostles. Similarly, Acts 4:31 tells us that the church people (v. 23) were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. The words they spoke with boldness were in reality the word of God, and thus, their speaking incorporated God's speaking. But their speaking the word of God depended on the operation of the Holy Spirit among them, and through the Holy Spirit's filling them, God was able to speak in their speaking. As at Pentecost, here the Holy Spirit incorporated the operation of God to speak through the apostles and disciples. The third text above relates retrospectively what had happened in the house of Cornelius when the Gentile believers first entered into the enjoyment of God's salvation (10:44-46). In Peter's testimony to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this event, he speaks of the Spirit's incorporation of God's operation to manifest God's new move among the Gentiles. The validity of what had happened among the Gentile believers in the house of Cornelius was sealed by God's own testimony to the genuineness of their hearts and of their faith, and this testimony was manifested through the activity of the Holy Spirit, whom God gave to them, even as He had to the Jewish believers. Thus, the Holy Spirit incorporated God's operation among the Gentile believers to manifest His approval of their faith and His determination to make His salvation available to all humankind, both to Jews and to Gentiles. Based on the Spirit's incorporate action of God's operation among the Gentiles, James, first among the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (cf. 12:17), took the lead to accept God's work among the Gentiles, characterizing the Holy Spirit's work among them as simply God's own visitation (15:14).

In Acts 8:39 we read of the direct activity of the Spirit to guide the evangelist Philip in his gospel work. Previously, in verse 26, the Lord, through an angel, spoke to Philip and directed him to travel along the road that leads south from Jerusalem to Gaza. Then, in verse 29 Luke tells us that the Spirit spoke to Philip and directed him to the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch, who soon believed in the Lord through Philip's preaching and was baptized immediately. After this, Luke tells us that "the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away" and that Philip was next found perhaps some twenty miles away in Azotus, to make his way up the coast to Caesarea, preaching the gospel along the way (vv. 39-40). In Luke's recounting of this journey, Philip's movements are said to be directed or controlled by "the Lord," "the Spirit," and "the Spirit of the Lord," and there should be little doubt that the Lord and the Spirit, though certainly distinct, are not acting separably here. What Luke seems to be saying is that in manifest action it was the Spirit whom Philip experienced but that it was the Lord who was in fact directing Philip's movements in the Spirit's activity. The Lord operated in the activities of the Spirit, and the Spirit incorporated the Lord's directing operation in His actions on Philip.

In Acts 13:2 a similar incorporation of the Lord's operation in the Spirit's manifest activity is seen. While prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke as the Lord to them, directing them to set apart for Him Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them. Elsewhere in Acts, Luke recounts that it was the Lord who called Paul to the work (9:15; 22:21); thus, here in 13:2 we should understand that the calling here is the Lord's calling, that the "Me" here is the Lord, and that the Holy Spirit's speaking here is the Lord's speaking. This is not a mere representation of the Lord by the Holy Spirit, as many may imprecisely understand, for the text here seems to deliberately interweave the operations of the Lord and the Spirit together. Rather, while respecting the distinction between the Lord and the Spirit, we should recognize the Spirit's incorporation of the Lord's operation in directing the apostles to their work.

The last portion above, Acts 5:3-4 and 9, does not recount an actual instance of the Spirit's incorporation of God's operation, but it does relay Peter's understanding that the Spirit incorporated the operation of God in the early church. In his mind to attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit (v. 3) was to attempt to deceive God (v. 4) and the Lord (v. 9). This indicates that while it was the Holy Spirit who was manifestly acting in the early church, God was operating in the Spirit's activity. Further, wherever the Spirit moved, the Lord could be said to be moving as well, and for this reason, the Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of the Lord. Keeping to the principle of the inseparable operation of the three of the Divine Trinity, Peter, probably without much conscious deliberation, spoke interchangeably of the Holy Spirit, God, and the Spirit of the Lord, not as three separate divine agents in the early church, but as one God in operation in the activities of the Lord through the Spirit.

Incorporation in God's Testifying to the Son in the Believers

In this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. (1 John 4:2)

This is He who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood; and the Spirit is He who testifies, because the Spirit is the reality...If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, because this is the testimony of God

that He has testified concerning His Son. He who believes into the Son of God has the testimony in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony which God has testified concerning His Son. (1 John 5:6, 9-10)

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father! (Gal. 4:6)

In his first Epistle, one of the apostle John's concerns is false prophets and teachers who have sprung up in the church (4:1-6), and he offers the believers a simple test to discern false prophets from genuine ones: "Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (v. 2). What makes a prophet genuine is God's operation in the prophet. The prophet must be "of God," and only a prophet who is "of God" will confess the divine conception of Jesus Christ. This confession is an action by the prophet that incorporates God's operation through the exercise of his or her spirit (thus, John's mention of "every spirit"), but in presenting this simple test, John characterizes God's operation in the prophet as an

activity of the Spirit of God: "In this you know the Spirit of God." While a genuine prophet confesses the divine conception of Jesus Christ through the operation of God within his or her regenerated spirit, John makes it clear that this inward operation is, in fact, an activity of the Spirit; thus, how God operates in the prophet and what makes the

prophet's confession "of God" is the Spirit's incorporation of that operation in the prophet. We may surmise that John refers to the Spirit particularly as "the Spirit of God" because of the Spirit's activity to incorporate God's operation in the prophet to make his or her confession "of God" (even if we, two millennia later, use more modern terms to characterize his understanding).

Later in the same Epistle, John speaks of the testimony that the believers have within themselves regarding Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Again, the genuineness of this testimony depends on the operation of the Father God; it is "the testimony of God" (5:9), "which God has testified concerning His Son" (v. 10). But John also makes clear that this testimony is at the same time the Spirit's activity: "the Spirit is He who testifies, because the Spirit is the reality" (v. 6). These are not two separate testimonies, one by the Spirit and one by God the Father; the texture of this passage is against this. John interchanges the Spirit's testimony with that of the Father, and because of that, we should understand that the Spirit's testimony is that of the Father. When the Spirit testifies,

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God operates in the Spirit's action and testifies to His Son through the Spirit, who is within the believers. The Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and at the same time He incorporates God the Father's testifying operation in His own action and gives to the believers a testimony greater than that of a human being. It is indeed a wonderful experience to perceive and believe the Spirit's incorporation of the Father's testifying to His dear Son's incarnation within ourselves; it is, in fact, the reality of our Christian faith.

Along a similar line, in Galatians 4:6 Paul speaks of the Spirit's action within the believers to make the Son real in their experience. What the believers experience here is itself a deep and rich instance of incorporation. But it is also important to see that the activity by the Spirit within the believers incorporates God the Father's operation of sending the Spirit. The Spirit's coming is by the Father's sending, and this touches one of the deep and fundamental distinctives in the Divine Trinity, whereby the Father is distinguished from the Spirit by being the Sender and the Spirit is distinguished from the Father by being the Sent One. The procession of the Spirit from the Father is one of the fundamental mutual operations in the Godhead and thus one of the fundamental evidences of the incorporation that exists among the Godhead. The Father sends, and the Spirit proceeds, and the mutual operation of each results in a single action of the Godhead, not only in an eternal sense within the Godhead immanently but also in an experiential sense within the believers' hearts economically.

Incorporation in God's Operation in His Ministers

Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh. (2 Cor. 3:3)

For I will not dare to speak anything of the things which Christ has not accomplished through me for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and by work, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Rom. 15:18-19)

The work of the apostles as ministers of the New Testament ministry owes its effectiveness to the operation of God within them. In the two passages above we see that God's operation within His ministers is incorporated in the activity of the Spirit. Paul viewed his New Testament ministry as a service that "inscribed" Christ into the believers, making them "epistles" that manifested who Christ was and what Christ does in human hearts. No doubt reflecting on the activity he himself was at that

moment absorbed in, Paul realized that the believers were the real epistles written by the New Testament ministers. Unlike their predecessor in the Old Testament ministry—Moses of old with his tablets of stone—the New Testament ministers inscribe their words in tablets of hearts of flesh, and the essence of their writing is not with ink, as Paul found himself using on one level of his service, but with the Spirit of the living God, which he understood himself to be ministering on the more intrinsic level of his service. The title *the Spirit of the living God*, like many of the compound titles of the Spirit in the New Testament, indicates the Spirit's incorporation of the operation of God. Here, because the "inscribing" is in human hearts and not on stone tablets, only the operation of the living God can have the effect that Paul describes, and this operation is incorporated in the activity of the Spirit, who is of the living God.

In Romans 15:18-19 Paul speaks of his gospel ministry as that which Christ has accomplished through him, and this is an explicit reference to Paul's incorporation of Christ's operation for the gospel. Paul also says that what Christ has accomplished through him was done in the power of the Spirit, and this refers to the Spirit's incorporation of Christ's operation in Paul for the gospel. But we should specifically note that the power by which Paul moved in his ministry was the power of the Spirit of God, the phrasal title indicating the Spirit's incorporation of God's operation for the gospel.

Incorporation in God's Blessing the Believers Comprehensively

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. (Eph. 1:3)

Paul begins his Epistle to the Ephesians with a tremendous praise of God in His triune operation for His economy among His elect (vv. 3-14) and offers a prayer that complements that praise, a prayer that the believers would fully enter into God's triune operation to make them the Body of Christ (vv. 15-23). Paul begins this marvelous compound of praise and prayer by lauding God the Father for His operation to bless the believers "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." The blessings he speaks of are comprehensive and should be understood to refer to the full compass of what God has done, does, and will do for the benefit of the believers that they may fully participate in what God has prepared for them. They are blessings that describe all that God does for His elect. These blessings are God's operations, which He performs in Christ; thus, Christ incorporates God's operations to bless the believers. But the blessings themselves are characterized as "spiritual blessings," and we should understand in this a clear reference to the Spirit, who incorporates God's

blessing operation in His activities within the believers. The blessings here are not physical (as many would hope) but spiritual, and they are spiritual not in the sense of being non-physical but of being of the Spirit (cf. Fee 28-31, 641-643, 666-667). Hence, God, in His every operation to bless the believers, operates in Christ through His Spirit, and thus, both Christ and the Spirit are seen to incorporate, no doubt distinctively, God the Father's operation. It may be precarious to speculate about the distinction in the incorporation that Christ and the Spirit each provide for God's operation here. But in what Paul offers later in his praise for the Divine Trinity's operation upon His elect, we can safely say that Christ incorporates God's operation in at least His work of redemption (v. 7) and that the Spirit incorporates God's operation in at least His function to be the seal and pledge of all that the believers will ultimately possess of God (vv. 13-14). Christ accomplishes the steps of God's operations in His economy, and the Spirit applies the benefits of those accomplished steps to the believers. The blessings of God's economy are "in Christ" in that God operates in Christ's accomplishments to fulfill God's economy, and they are "spiritual" in that their benefit relates to the life and organic nature of the Holy Spirit, who as Spirit can distinctly apply it to the believers in their spirit, as indicated in every chapter of this Epistle (v. 17; 2:22; 3:5; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18). Paul in this one verse, Ephesians 1:3, characterizes all that God does in His economy as an incorporation by Christ in His accomplishments and by the Spirit in His applications.

Incorporation in God's Sanctifying the Believers for His Salvation

But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers beloved of the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. (2 Thes. 2:13)

Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1 Pet. 1:2)

Both Paul and Peter understood that in eternity God chose the believers for salvation and that in time God's operates to save them through the Spirit's act of sanctifying them. For Peter God's salvation through the Spirit's sanctification practically results in the believers' obedience to Jesus Christ and their sprinkling by His blood; for Paul it practically results in their belief of the

truth. Both results we may view as the believers' responses to the Spirit's action to sanctify them, and His actions to sanctify them incorporate God's operation to save them. In time the Spirit acts upon human beings, according to God's selection in eternity, to set them apart from the rest of the human race—that is, to sanctify them—thus working out God's operation to save them to Himself. While salvation is of God (1 Tim. 4:10; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25; Psa. 65:5), it is by the Spirit's manifest action that God operates to accomplish His salvation; thus, the Spirit incorporates God's salvific operation when He acts upon God's chosen ones. To both Paul and Peter God's operation of salvation is manifestly the Spirit's activity to sanctify the ones chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, that is, to set them apart from the fallen human race and introduce them to a life and living that participates in God's holy nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Incorporation in God's Sealing the Believers and Giving Them a Pledge of Their Inheritance

In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30)

But the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God, He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Cor. 1:21-22)

In Ephesians and 2 Corinthians, Paul tells the believers of God's operation to seal them, an action modeled on the ancient (and sometimes modern) practice of applying wax seals to documents and other objects in order to validate ownership or authenticate authorship. In Paul's use of the image, he seems to indicate two distinct notions: (1) that the believers belong to God as His special possession, and (2) that the believers have a special inheritance in God Himself, which will, in time, be fully realized by them. In the portions above, the notions of seal as evidence of possession and seal as token part-payment are either expressed clearly (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22) or implied (Eph. 4:30). These three portions also make clear that God operates through the Holy Spirit to seal the believers. In the two places in Ephesians

God, in His every operation to bless the believers, operates in Christ through His Spirit, and thus, both Christ and the Spirit incorporate, no doubt distinctively, God the Father's operation.

where he speaks of this sealing action, Paul uses passive verbs (“you were sealed”) modified by adverbial phrases probably of means (“with the Holy Spirit,” “in whom [i.e., the Holy Spirit of God]”). The passive verbs imply an unmentioned Agent, whom we should understand to be God, and the modifying phrases, which explicitly refer to the Spirit, indicate the means by which the believers are sealed, that is, by, with, and in the Holy Spirit. For His own benefit, God operates to mark the believers as His special possession, and He does this through the Spirit, whom He gives to them as a seal. For the believers’ benefit, God provides a way for them to know assuredly that they will enjoy Him as their special possession (inheritance) in eternity, and again He does this through the Spirit, whom He gives to them as a pledge. The Spirit, in the heart of the believers, incorporates God’s continual operation to mark them out as His possession and to assure them that they will enjoy God fully in eternity. Indeed, through the Spirit’s indwelling activity in the believers, God possesses them now moment by moment, and they enjoy Him in foretaste now moment by moment. The Spirit is not within them as a separate representative of God—that would be tritheistic in concept—He is within them incorporating God’s special possession of them and God’s being a special possession to them.

In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Paul ties God’s sealing and pledging operation through His Spirit to another operation to confirm all His promises (v. 20) by attaching the apostles and the believers to Christ through the anointing, which is also, no doubt, by His Spirit. In 1:20 Paul declares that whatever promises of God there are, the real assurance and fulfillment of those promises are in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The believers can have the experiential assurance because of God’s operation to confirm His promises by firmly attaching the believers to Christ, and this He does through His operation to anoint the believers. God’s anointing is always through His Spirit (1 Sam. 16:13; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), and although the Spirit is not explicitly mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:20, He is certainly implied. To complete his thought of how assured God’s promises are, Paul then offers the declaration that God is also the One who operates to provide a seal and pledge to the believers, and this He does by giving the Spirit in their hearts, a parallel to the notion in Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30. Thus, the Spirit, moving in the believers’ hearts, is the reality of God’s operation both to ensure His promises (seal and pledge) and to offer Christ as the fulfillment of those promises (anointing).

Incorporation in God’s Application of His Virtues in the Believers

And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of

God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man. (Eph. 3:16)

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)

In the four verses above Paul relates the application of God’s virtues in the believers to the action of the Holy Spirit within them. The love of God, in the context of Romans 5:5-11, refers to God’s operation to manifest His love for His elect through the redemption and reconciliation that Christ accomplished. This love has now been poured out into the very hearts of the believers, not merely as gospel history but as intrinsic reality through the Spirit’s activity within them. Because God has given the Holy Spirit to them, the believers enjoy the application of God’s love within them and, motivated by His love, are able to endure all things (vv. 3-4), have hope in all things, and are not put to shame in anything. Here the Spirit incorporates God in His love within the believers and causes them to have overcoming hope in what God does within them. Near the end of his Epistle, Paul in his prayer recalls this hope (15:13), characterizing it as the operation of God Himself, whom he calls the God of hope and whom he describes as Him who fills the believers with joy and peace so that they may abound in hope, and this, through the action of the Holy Spirit in power. Joy, peace, and hope are reflexes within the believers of God’s operation in power through the Holy Spirit. God operates to fill the believers with joy and peace, but through this operation God intends for the believers to abound in hope, and this He accomplishes through the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Spirit, acting in power within the believers, incorporates God’s operation to fill them with joy and peace and causes God’s operation to abound as hope in the believers.

In Ephesians 3:16 Paul prays that the Father would grant the believers to be strengthened with power through His spirit according to the riches of His glory. The strengthening is an operation of the Father, but His operation is in the work of the Spirit, to whom the power of God is normally ascribed (Micah 3:8; Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8; 10:38; 1 Cor. 2:4) and who indwells the believers and functions in their inner man. It is interesting to note, even if it is not the particular focus of this section, that Paul prays for the Father’s operation in the Spirit’s work so that Christ

would make His home in the believers' hearts (Eph. 3:17). There can hardly be a clearer example from Paul's writings of his understanding that God operates in His Trinity and that the persons of the Godhead incorporate each other's operations in their own. The Father gives strength through the Spirit's work in power within the inner being of the believers so that Christ may make His home in their hearts. In Paul's concept here the Father's strengthening through the Spirit's empowering does not result merely in the moral fortitude of the believers; rather, it enables Christ the Son to operate in their hearts and find proper residence there. Thus, Christ's resultant operation to indwell the believers incorporates the operations of the Father and the Spirit.

In Romans 14:17 Paul makes it clear that the kingdom of God, for which all the believers should live, is not a mere show of behavior nor the keeping of ethical regulations or religious observances. Rather, in reality the kingdom of God is the manifestation of genuine virtues that the believers live out for their standing before God, for their harmony and oneness in the Body of Christ, and for their own happiness before God and in the church—righteousness, peace, and joy. In reality such a living by the believers results from God's operation to reign within them. Moment by moment God leads and guides the believers inwardly, not to adhere to regulations and ethical customs but to live, move, and act in full reflection of His righteous character and with full regard for what promotes the peace of oneness and the building up of others in the Body of Christ (v. 19).

Such a living out of God's inward reign results in the great joy that only the believers, among all human beings, can experience and sustain. In this sense, the kingdom of God is not an ethical realm realized by the believers' behavior, though outwardly it certainly appears as such; intrinsically, the kingdom of God is the active, inward reigning of God even in the minute activities of the believers in matters as mundane as their daily eating and drinking. Furthermore, God's operation to reign in this intrinsic way is through the work of the Holy Spirit. Righteousness and peace and joy are in the Holy Spirit, as Paul tells us, and by this we know that the experience of these virtues results from the move of the Holy Spirit within the believers. Thus, the believers' experience of these virtues issues from the operation of God's intrinsic reigning through the move of the Holy Spirit within them. The Spirit incorporates God's operation to reign within the believers, and the believers incorporate this

divine operation in their living to manifest these splendid virtues for the life of the church as the Body of Christ.

Incorporation in God's Operation in the Church for His Expression

But the one and the same Spirit operates all these things, distributing to each one respectively even as He purposes. (1 Cor. 12:11)

But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20-21)

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 Paul gives a description of the services of the saints in the church in terms of the operations of God in His Trinity. What the believers do in their shepherding and teaching, in their care for the needy saints, and in their meetings of the church (vv. 8-10) are manifestations of the functions of the same

Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God among them (vv. 4-7). And though there certainly are distinctions in how the Divine Persons function among the believers for their church life—the operations of God are the ministries of Christ the Lord that come as gifts of the Spirit—these functions are incorporated into the activity of

the one and same Spirit (v. 11). It is particularly interesting to note that in verse 6 Paul says that God, functioning distinctly in His way of operations, operates all things in all, yet in verse 11 he concludes by saying that "the one and the same Spirit operates all these things." We need not suspect Paul of confusing the functions of the Divine Persons or of running out of expressions for his rich notions of the divine operations here. Instead, we should understand that God operates all things in the Spirit who operates all these things in the believers, that is, that the Spirit incorporates the operation of God in the church, making the many services of the saints at the same time operations of God, ministries of Christ, and gifts of the Spirit. The passage is marvelous in its presentation of how the believers should serve in the church—not as ethical representatives of a separate and distant God but as members of His Body (cf. vv. 12-27) who incorporate the operations of the Triune God in their service to others in the church.

Paul concludes his prayer in Ephesians 3 with a final

The Spirit, moving in the believers' hearts, is the reality of God's operation both to ensure His promises and to offer Christ as the fulfillment of those promises.

praise of the God “who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us” (v. 20). “All that we ask or think” is all that Paul has prayed for in the preceding verses, a tremendously deep and spiritual request for the believers to experience Christ in an intrinsic way so that corporately they may be able to realize the fullness of God in all its vast dimensions in their existence as the Body of Christ. Knowing how God operates, Paul offers praise to Him as the One who can go far beyond even his own deep apprehension and do superabundantly more than what he can ask for. Paul understands that it is God who will work all these things out and that God will work them out through the Spirit who operates in power within the believers. Here he mentions only “the power which operates in us,” but earlier in this context he makes clear that the power operates through God’s Spirit (v. 16). Thus, God’s superabundant doing is incorporated in the Spirit’s activity within the believers as the power which operates in them. To this One, Paul ascribes “the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus” (v. 21), and from the prayer that has preceded we should understand that the glory in the church is precisely the outcome of God’s superabundant operation in the believers through His Spirit. God’s strengthening of the believers into their inner man so that Christ makes His home in their hearts, their being rooted and grounded in love so that they are able to apprehend with all the saints all the vast dimensions of Christ, and their coming to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ so that corporately they are filled unto the fullness of God, all result in a full expression of God among the believers, that is, His glory in the church, and this glory is realized through the Spirit’s incorporation, in power, of God’s superabundant doing. And yet while this glory is a glory that fills the church and a glory that expresses the fullness of God, it is not a glory that expresses God in full, for that glory is in Christ the Son alone. Paul is fully mindful of this. What God does superabundantly through His Spirit in the church can never be said to attain to what He is in Christ Jesus, who is His perfect image, expression, and glory. But it is certainly a great honor to humankind—the only honor and the only real honor—that God operates through His Spirit to glorify Himself in the church as the Body of Christ.

Incorporation in God’s Inward Revealing

But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God. But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)

What things God has prepared before the ages for the believers’ enjoyment and glory are, according to Paul, revealed to them by God directly, and this He does through the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-12). God’s operation to reveal these matters is no doubt different from mere mental teaching but depends on His inward operation incorporated into the Spirit’s work within the believers’ regenerated human spirits (v. 11). Further, God reveals these things through the Spirit because the Spirit alone can look into the depths of God, and this implies that the depths of God are indeed the things that God reveals through His Spirit and likewise the things that He has prepared for the believers’ enjoyment and glory. The depths of God, in this context, should refer to the many aspects of Christ as God’s very wisdom in operation for the accomplishment of His salvation (1:30; 2:6-9). Thus, God operates through His Spirit within the believers to reveal Christ as His own depths to them. This is akin to what Paul tells the Galatians about his own personal experience of God’s inward operation to reveal the Son within him: “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me” (1:15-16). However, to the Galatians he does not mention the Spirit’s incorporation of God’s revealing operation as he does to the Corinthians. All the believers should experience the divine and inward revelation of the Christ that God has prepared for them as His wisdom in operation to accomplish their redemption and full salvation. I believe that this is what Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to experience, and given the basic state that most of the Corinthian believers were in, we should understand that such an experience is basic and necessary for all the believers. This inward revelation is a direct operation of God that the Spirit incorporates in His activity within the believers’ regenerated human spirits, an incorporate activity that makes known and makes real God’s wise operation in Christ for the believers’ basic salvation, daily enjoyment, and ultimate glory.

Incorporation in God’s Inward Leading

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8:14)

Like His inward revealing, God’s inward leading within the believers is through His Spirit. Paul tells the Romans that those who are led by the Spirit of God are in reality the sons of God, and the interplay between the terms *Spirit of God* and *sons of God* implies God’s operation in the Spirit’s activity within the believers. As sons of God, the believers should reflect who God is in their living, and what God is doing should be manifested through them. As sons of God, the believers should incorporate the operations of God, as Christ Jesus, to a much higher degree, incorporated the operations of God when He was on the earth. This is altogether possible because the Spirit of God is constantly moving within the believers

to lead them moment by moment and to make them the sons of God not simply in name but in reality. In referring to the Spirit as “of God,” Paul implies that God Himself is in operation in the Spirit’s leading and thus in making the believers His genuine sons in life and living. While the divine life within the believers secures their status as children of God forever, God’s instant and constant leading through the Spirit’s activity within them and their following His incorporated leading within them enable them to live and move as the sons of God in manifest function. When they incorporate the operations of God in their own living, through the Spirit’s incorporation of the Father’s operation to lead them, they are in reality (and not only in name) the sons of God.

Incorporation in God’s Giving Life to the Believers’ Mortal Bodies

And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. (Rom. 8:11)

In an earlier section we considered Romans 8:11 as a reference to the Spirit’s incorporation of God’s operation in Jesus Christ’s resurrection. But Paul’s point in mentioning Christ’s resurrection here is that God’s operation in Christ’s resurrection is tied to His operation to give life to the believers’ mortal bodies.

The God who raised Christ from the dead also gives life to the believers’ mortal bodies, and the juxtaposition of the two operations invites us to understand that the two operations are indeed related. At first blush, it may seem that Paul is referring to the eventual bodily resurrection of the believers, and the immediate context would allow this understanding. The bodily resurrection of Christ is referenced, and the future tense *will give* seems to point to a future experience for the believers. But the whole preceding context of this verse demands a deeper understanding of God’s giving life to the mortal bodies of the believers.

Chapter 8 of Romans provides the solution to the agonizing problem that Paul expresses in chapter 7: as much as he would like to live according to the holy and righteous and good law of God, Paul found that sin warred in the members of his body and made him a captive to sin. In 7:24 he encapsulates the problem with deep emotion: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” It should be pointed out that in Greek the way Paul characterizes the body in 7:24 is

quite similar to how he later characterizes the body in 8:11, relying on the Greek root word for *death* in both places. The solution to the problem of “the body of this death,” which hinders Paul (and every believer) from living according to God, is the operation of the Spirit of life that he presents in Romans 8. Through the operation of the Spirit of life God gives life to these mortal bodies that hinder the believers from living according to God. It is an operation that is akin to His operation to give life to the dead body of Jesus in His bodily resurrection, but Paul is not holding out the future bodily resurrection of the believers as the solution to his and their very present problem. Instead, he is pointing to the intrinsic operation itself, which operated in the past in Christ Jesus to raise Him from the dead and now operates in the present in the believers to overpower the body’s deadening effects on their life according to God.

The body of this death, the mortal bodies of the believers, simply needs to be given life, and when it is given life, by the same life-giving operation that operated in raising Christ from among the dead, the believers are able to turn away from living according to the flesh and live according to God. Paul speaks of this in the future and says that God “will...give life” to their mortal bodies because he knows the actual present state of the believers in their living. He uses the future tense similarly two verses later, when he summarizes his entire presentation:

Inward revelation is a direct operation of God that the Spirit incorporates in His activity within the believers’ regenerated human spirits.

“For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live” (v. 13).

This giving of life to the mortal bodies of the believers is not, then, a bodily resurrection; that is not what is needed here and not what Paul offers as a solution. This giving of life to their mortal bodies is an experience of God enlivening them inwardly and empowering them to overcome the body of this death by the grace of the divine life so that they may live to Him. But what is most germane to our discussion here is that this life-giving operation of God, akin to His similar operation in Christ’s resurrection, is “through His Spirit,” who indwells the believers. God operates within the believers to give life to their mortal bodies and to empower them to overcome the hindrance of the body of this death, and He does so through the actions of the Spirit within them. The solution to the universal problem of the body of this death in Romans 7 is the Spirit of life’s incorporation of God’s operation to give life to the believers’ mortal bodies in Romans 8.

Conclusion

In the twenty-nine scriptural passages that I have examined in the preceding sections, I have attempted to show the Spirit's incorporation of God in a number of His operations to carry out His New Testament economy. My main purpose in this attempt is hopefully to demonstrate from the Scriptures that God, particularly God the Father, carries out His economy not through His direct or sole agency but through the Spirit's incorporation of His operations. While it is no doubt the case that the New Testament writers assign direct and unmediated operation to God frequently in their writings, we should take careful and considerate note that they also frequently indicate that God operates in and through the actions of Christ and in and through the actions of the Spirit. It would seem that this latter characterization of God's operation—as incorporated in the activities of Christ and the Spirit—reflects the finer and more sophisticated view of the New Testament writers concerning the operations of God. Thus, even though they may not indicate it everywhere in their writings, they describe the incorporation of the operations of God in the manifest activities of Christ and the Spirit enough to make it clear that this is a foundational notion in their understanding of how God works, and hence, we should adopt it in our own understanding. I have focused only on the Spirit's incorporation of the operations of God and particularly of God the Father, but a great part of all that the Spirit does is an incorporation of the operations of Christ in His heavenly ministry to the believers for the church. I hope to demonstrate this second aspect of the Spirit's incorporating activity in my next article in this series and thereby complete my consideration of the incorporation of operation

that occurs among the persons of the Divine Trinity. Such an understanding of God's operation is, I feel, crucial to our appreciation and experience of God. But beyond this understanding there is also the view that the believers themselves, with the apostles as their pattern and lead, enter into the incorporation of the operations of the Divine Persons in their own life, living, and service in the church as the Body of Christ. Hence, the believers extend this incorporation of the Divine Persons and become, in reality, the physical manifestation of God's activity in His Trinity on the earth. This, to my mind, is the intrinsic reality of the Christian and church life. **A^oC**

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Footnote from the Recovery Version of the Bible

"The **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14).

grace: The grace of the Lord is the Lord Himself as life to us for our enjoyment (John 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:10), the love of God is God Himself (1 John 4:8, 16) as the source of the grace of the Lord, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself as the transmission of the grace of the Lord with the love of God for our participation. These are not three separate matters but three aspects of one thing, just as the Lord, God, and the Holy Spirit are not three separate Gods but "three hypostases...of the one same undivided and indivisible" God (Philip Schaff). The Greek word for *hypostasis* (used in Heb. 11:1), the singular form of *hypostases*, refers to a support under, a support beneath, i.e., something underneath that supports, a supporting substance. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the hypostases, the supporting substances, that compose the one Godhead.

The love of God is the source, since God is the origin; the grace of the Lord is the course of the love of God, since the Lord is the expression of God; and the fellowship of the Spirit is the impartation of the grace of the Lord with the love of God, since the Spirit is the transmission of the Lord with God, for our experience and enjoyment of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with Their divine

continued on p. 71