

THIRD EDITION

1955

THE

Presence of the Holy Spirit

A TREATISE

Showing the Fallacy of the Claims Made by
Latter-Day Religious Professors
and Others

BY C. C. VREDENBURGH

Additional Copies Obtainable From:

Christadelphian Advocate Publications
P.O. Box 11701
Richmond VA 23230-0101

The Presence of the Holy Spirit,

*As in the Apostolic Ecclesias of the First Century, Not a Necessity in
the Ecclesias of the Nineteenth Century*

A PLEA FOR THE SUFFICIENCY OF NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION

BY C. C. VREDENBURGH

IN INTRODUCING the subject it may be proper to ask, What was the Spirit given for? Primarily because it was a necessity on account of the departure of Jesus from the earth. Having departed, it was but the fulfillment of the promise he made: "The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you ALL things, and bring ALL things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have told you" (Jno. 14:26). Also, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into ALL TRUTH" (Jno. 16:13). Observe it says, "He will guide you into ALL TRUTH," not a part merely.

Here the question arises, Did the Spirit do the work in and through the apostles Christ promised it should? When this question has been answered, the proposition will have been proved that forms the basis of these remarks. We repeat, therefore, What was the Holy Spirit given for?

Let Paul answer; for we cannot accept any other than apostolic evidence in deciding what is to some a very important matter. In Eph. 4:7, 8, and 11-16, it is written: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ; wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. * * * And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in ALL*

THINGS, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the *whole body* fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." For the object, in short, repeating verses 12 and 13, of "*perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God UNTO A PERFECT MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the FULNESS OF CHRIST.*"

There is no dubiety about the purpose for which the Spirit was given in such testimonies. But there is more. We read in I. Cor. 12:1, 4-11, as follows: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. * * * Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." These are further explained in verse 28: "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." How splendidly this fulfills a prophecy uttered ages before, Paul makes clear in I. Cor. 14:21, 22-39: "In the law it is written, With other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore *tongues are for a sign* not to them that believe, but to *them that believe not*, but prophesying serveth not for them that believeth not, but for them which believe."

As already intimated, these several offices had to be constituted and filled for the "perfecting of the saints," that they might attain to the "perfect man," even "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This is borne out by Paul, who says, in II. Cor. 13:9: "For this also we wish, even your perfection." Again in I. Thes. 3:9, 10: "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might *perfect* that which is lacking in your faith?" that they might be "*complete* in him, who is the head of all principality and power"—Col. 2:10.

Now bearing in mind what Jesus said the Spirit was given for, in John

14:26, viz., to teach the disciples "all things and bring all things to their remembrance," and in John 16:13, to "guide them into all truth," as well as the many texts from Paul to show what it was given for, and its operations when it came, in the "perfecting of the saints," we ask, Did it accomplish the purpose for which it was sent? If there were no other, the splendid and indubitable testimony of Paul, as recorded in Acts 20:17-32, would be sufficient to settle the matter once for all. It is written, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I KEPT BACK NOTHING that was profitable unto you, but HAVE SHOWED YOU and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For *I have not shunned to declare unto you ALL the counsel of God.* Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with the blood of his own (Son). For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace (which was revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles) which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Could one ask for a more practical and indisputable evidence of the work required of the apostles than that furnished in the record of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Referring to this in Rom. 10:15-18, Paul says, "How shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So, then, faith *cometh*

by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily their sound went into *all the earth*, and their words unto the ends of the world." Anything omitted here? If this is not complete and universal, how shall it be expressed? Matt. 24:14 reads, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *all the habitable* for a witness unto *all nations*: then shall the end come." Was this preaching and witnessing accomplished? we ask again. Look at the record of Acts 2. where is detailed those who heard, and who are described in verse 5 as "out of every nation under heaven." If this should seem insufficient, note what Paul writes in Col. 1:21-23, "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven."

These passages show that the work begun under the direction of the Holy Spirit was carried on throughout the whole Roman habitable, the Spirit fulfilling precisely what Jesus said it would, namely—"guide them into ALL the truth," and they prove also that the ALL TRUTH necessary to be spoken had free course, that *all the counsel of God had been declared*, and resulted as the Father had purposed from the beginning. Right to the point is the testimony of the Gospel of John: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but *these are written* that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (20:30, 31). These words are remarkable not alone for what they record, but for all they omit. What but inspiration could have suggested that some things recorded were essential to belief tending to life eternal? Such a record having been written that men might believe, proves not only the reliability but *the suwciency of that record*, given under Holy Spirit guidance, to insure the eternal life of any who may accept it and believe it. Can there be a shadow of doubt as to the completeness and sufficiency of the record written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, (I. John 5:10), in view of the statement that "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he believeth not the *record that God gave* of his Son?"

And here let us ask a question which, in view of the testimony, becomes most pertinent: What purpose would the miraculous presence of the Holy Spirit now serve? The work was completed, a complete record of it was made, and we have it in our own tongue. It is just at this point, and for these reasons, that we make bold to say that he who now claims to possess the Holy Spirit as Pentecostally given virtually renders the possession of the New Testament non-essential, and at the same time makes the

work of the Spirit accomplished in the first century incomplete. Let it be admitted that the work of the Spirit was complete—"perfect and complete, wanting nothing" (how can one do otherwise in the face of the record just produced?), and no difficulty will be found in understanding Paul's words in I. Cor. 13:8, "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, *they shall fail*; whether there be tongues, *they shall cease*; whether there be knowledge, it *shall vanish away*," which teach us that several offices served only for the time, and accomplishing their purpose, were finally withdrawn. This, however, was consequent upon apostasy, which as the "mystery of iniquity" had already begun to work in Paul's day, and at the time the Apocalypse was given to John in Patmos, had nearly sunk to such a degraded level that the Spirit threatened to set the ecclesial lightstands a-going out of their places. This light was the eldership which was clothed with the miraculous powders of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's departure probably occurred during the first century; and at no time since has the Spirit "guiding into all the truth" been present in the world apart from the Word which, having been spirit-spoken and spirit recorded, becomes as sufficient and infallible a guide as the Holy Spirit would be, even if it were miraculously present and visible.

This is the argument: Did the Holy Spirit guide into *all* truth? Did that truth received by those who *heard* it, save them? It is admitted that it did. It is also admitted that the New Testament is that truth divinely inspired and recorded. Does not Paul say that the Scriptures (the truth) make wise *unto salvation*? Does he not say they "are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God *may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*?" When the Scriptures do all this, is it possible to do more? Is it possible that a man can be *more than perfect*? Is there a point beyond being *thoroughly furnished*? Could the possession of the Holy Spirit do more than this? Did it do any more? Nay, is it not the fact rather that the Holy Spirit was given *that a record might be made* which would bring such happy results? If so, the possession of the Holy Spirit was simply a means to an end; that end being *accomplished, i. e., completed*, in the making of the New Testament record, it was withdrawn. The possession of the Spirit was not the end, but the means through which the *word of salvation* came. That word saved men then, it saves them now, and is sufficient for every good work, resulting in life eternal at the end.

The "prophecies have failed," the "tongues have ceased," the knowledge has vanished away;" for these gifts are no longer visible among men. If the Spirit-given word or record as we have it saved then, saves now, and is sufficient for every good work, and finally brings eternal life, it is but reasonable to insist that a word or record that will do all this meets every

requirement of a loving and intelligent faith. The visible presence and possession of the Holy Spirit could do no more—it did no more. As already stated, the Holy Spirit was simply the means through which the word *which saves* came, which word is the Gospel, “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”—Rom. 1:16. The Holy Spirit was not the word of salvation, but the vehicle of its transmission. “No man is led by the Spirit of God who is not led by an intelligent belief of the truth.” This startling statement has an unquestionable confirmation in the declaration of Peter, who says, “*Be mindful of the words which were spoken* before by the Holy Prophets, and of *the commandments* of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour,”—2 Pet. 3:2 and of John, who says, “He that knoweth God *heareth* us; hereby know we the spirit of the truth, and the spirit of the delusion.”—1 John 4:6. How utterly without foundation, in view of these facts, is the modern claim to the possession of the Holy Spirit by those who know not the truth. No more certain evidence of this need be furnished than that which becomes painfully clear the moment they are put to the test of “the law and the testimony,” of which they are totally ignorant.

It may be profitable at this stage, to briefly consider the doctrine, so-called of “apostolic succession,” entrenched so strongly upon the text found in Matt. 28:20, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” What a splendid prop this is when wrung out of its connection and made to do duty in the upholding of a notion far the mind of Jesus. In the first place it is an assurance of a decidedly limited character, for its scope does not reach beyond the end of the Mosaic age, that being the time referred to by Jesus. Let the fact be impressed that the original word for world is age, and that age the one to which they stood related, and no other, By what authority do men take a text and pervert it as this has been? If there were no other means by which Christ could be with his own, the conclusion might be admitted which the leaders of the people maintain. Let us admit that the promise of Jesus applies to all time, is it not sufficiently fulfilled, nay, is it not more reasonably and scripturally fulfilled in the promise of Jesus in John 14:23, where he says, “If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him?” What a delightful companionship, what a heavenly association. But how? Simply upon the principle enunciated by Paul, “Let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17), and “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). What use here of a miraculous presence? What use here of a suppositious presence, which would be but a matter of utility even if it were manifest openly? If these passages do not perfectly meet the requirements of the promise of Jesus, what will? If unqualified evidence, stripped of all constructiveness, is not sufficient, what sort of evidence will do?

For the reason, then, that the New Testament scriptures are a complete record of the Spirit's guidance, do we reject the conceit of "apostolic succession," upon which a vain-glorious and worldly-minded and presumptuous priesthood, the actual successors of an apostasy as old as it is corrupt, has based its claims. Explode the notion of a miraculous Spirit presence and down goes the prop of this delusive and fraudulent "succession."

Our plea, therefore, is strongly for the sufficiency of New Testament revelation, as a complete and infallible record of the "whole counsel of God" which, with the Old Testament scriptures, are declared to be "given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto *all good works*," "making wise unto salvation through (the) faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II. Tim. 3:15, 16, 17). The recorded work of the spirit being complete, it is, therefore, a sufficient rule of faith and practice, obviating the supposed necessity of priestly interference and interpretation, both arrogant and presumptuous, as well as absurd. This necessity is assumed from first to last, and is without a scintilla of evidence to support it. This fact is rendered all the more forcible when it is remembered that it is a hireling system that upholds it. The condemnation of this class of false teachers is strongly set forth by the Good Shepherd, whose sacrifice of life without money and without price, has brought us to God (see John 10:12, 13). No man today who freely proclaims the gospel as it was originally given, does so for a mere money consideration, and where this is done it may be set down as a fact that the gospel of Christ is not set forth.

FALSE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS AND OTHERS

There are so many phases of this subject, and new ones arising from time to time, that it would seem appropriate to devote some space to the consideration of the claim to the possession of the Holy Spirit made by Christian Scientists, faith curists, spiritists, etc., in these latter days. In support of their assumption Peter's words, uttered on the day of Pentecost, are sometimes quoted. * * * "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38, 39). Beyond question such a possession would be most desirable, affording consolation to erring and dependent mortals—a guide infallible, directing them into "all truth," a comforter bringing heavenly peace and abiding with them to "the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20); for where the Comforter is there is the Christ Spirit.

It is remarkable, however, that most of those making the loudest and strongest claims to the possession of the heavenly gift present striking

evidence of having in possession a spirit that is supposed to come from another direction than heaven, from a being who is by no means the Son of God.

To go into a review of the methods and supposed evidences offered by these presumptuous and deluded perverters of the word of God will not serve to demonstrate the truth of that Word nearly so well as the simple presentation of spirit-given testimony taken straight from the Word itself, and rightly divided.

This is happily accomplished if the investigator will make himself acquainted with the fact that Peter's words have a two-fold meaning and application. Let him read the words of Acts 2:38, last clause, "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," and those of verse 39, "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," in connection with verses 17 and 18, which are quoted by Peter from the prophet Joel (2:28, 29), * * * "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaids I will pour out *in those days* of my spirit; and they shall prophesy," and the investigator will at once discern the application Peter has made of the prophecy. It is thought by some that the beautiful figure of the "former rain," alluded to by Joel in verse 23, followed by the blessings of abundant harvests, when the "floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow wine and oil" (verse 24), has here a fitting application to the downpour of Holy Spirit on Pentecost, bringing forth "first-fruits of the spirit" (Rom. 8:23; James 1:18); also to the words of Paul, "God hath given unto *us* the EARNEST of the spirit" (II. Cor. 5:5), and again when he declares that the possession of the Holy Spirit "is the EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE (the inheritance of incorruptibility and endless life) until the *redemption* of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14).

Evidence of this character makes clear the fact that the first century presence and possession of the Spirit was the foretaste of a future manifestation in absolute fulness, to have its fulfillment or realization in the kingdom of God. This will be the season of the "latter rain," and will be followed by the harvest of redemption referred to by Paul as the "redemption of the purchased possession." "YE are *not your own*; for ye are bought with a price" (I. Cor. 6:19, 20) describes the "purchased possession" in language so definite, so precise, that any misapprehension or misinterpretation of its meaning is precluded, and enforces the fact that if there has been a past, though limited, manifestation of the Holy Spirit, there is to be a future one of great magnitude and glory, both fittingly typified by first-fruits and harvest.

The first century manifestation of the Spirit affected the mental and moral nature of those it abode with, the latter-day outpour will affect the whole being—the physical as well as the mental—for “mortality is to be swallowed up of life” (II. Cor. 5:4). The redeemed (the harvest) are to be made like the first-fruits of redemption (the Christ), for he will “change THE BODIES of their lowly (fleshly) estate, and fashion them like unto his own GLORIOUS BODY” (Phil. 3:21). This will be such an infusion of Spirit into their substance, that every atom of it will be transformed, and they will “die no more” (Luke 20:36).

In the vision of the company of the redeemed seen by John (Rev. 14:4) he describes them as “first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Although they are the harvest of the gospel dispensation and previous ages, they are but the earnest, or first-fruits, of the millennial harvest to be reaped at the end thereof. During that glorious period of Christ’s reign on earth the Holy Spirit will be all-prevalent and openly visible, and the administration of its power and influence, omnipotently exercised at the hands of the king and his spirit-born associates, the saints, will result in such a harvest of the saved that the spirit of God will finally be “all [things] in all [men]” (I. Cor. 15:28). Henceforth the whole earth will be peopled by a glorified humanity—living embodiments of the eternal spirit, consubstantial in nature with the great loving Father in whose favor they will bask throughout eternity’s endless cycle of years. What a redemption! what a salvation!

The manifestation of the spirit in the early ecclesias, as has been proved, took on many forms. Paul speaks of them as “the powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:5), and of the gift of tongues particularly as a “sign” (I. Cor. 14:22). This is equally true, however, of all of the other forms of spiritual gifts which are mentioned in detail in this chapter. But of what were they signs? First, they were evidence of a supernatural, a God-given power among men and in them, in visible manifestation, working “miracles and wonders,” etc. Second, they were the then present signs of a power that will one day again be openly manifest upon earth, when it will be in universal operation in every form essential to the well-being of the human race. It is only necessary to refer the reader to Matt. 10:7, 8 for evidence that these “world-to-come” powers were in operation in the first century. Jesus said to his disciples, “Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead.” When the Lord said, “If I cast out demons by the spirit of God, then *the kingdom* is come *unto* you,” and in Luke 11:20, “If I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the KINGDOM OF GOD is come *upon* you,” he was making most emphatic the fact that the kingdom, so far as its POWERS were concerned, was come and was present among them. The prophet Isaiah’s vision of coming glory was intensified by the discernment of the presence of these

wondrous powers again in the earth, and he describes in glowing language the effects of their operation, and shows that they will appear at the time of the blessedness Israel has long waited for, and hopes to soon realize. He says: "Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong; fear not: behold your God will come with with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. * * * And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:3-7,10). Let it be strongly impressed that the occurrences of verses 3 to 7 have their fulfillment in "the world (or age) to come." They are kingdom-of-God powers, and will be made apparent when the king of Israel "comes with vengeance, with a recompense, and for salvation" and not before.

The manifestation of these powers in the apostolic age served their purpose well as signs, as evidence that the spirit of God was the indwelling and inworking power in Christ and his disciples, and confirmed the glad tidings they came to proclaim to a lost race. As already stated, a record for the benefit of future generations having been made of this work, and attested by evidences which the martyred sons of God gave their lives to maintain, it was withdrawn, and has never since, in like manner, been visible upon earth.

The evidences are quite as convincing that the dervishes of Arabia and the theosophists of India are now possessed of the miraculous powers of God, as are those of the so-called Christian claimants.

Peter's declaration, "The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," covers two widely separated points of time, and are in no sense applicable to the dark ages of the past, nor the hardly less dark one of the present. God has sent upon those who have traduced his word a "strong delusion that they should believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," and he has given them all over to a belief in the "working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (II. Thes. 2:9, 10). From the lying wonder-working power of Rome and her emissaries down to the lowest form of fetichism, all are involved in the common delusion so far as their claims are concerned. If God's reprobation is upon "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:15), much less will he confirm a lie by a miracle;

and it may with reason confidently be asserted that the spirit of God will never be found among those who for hire or other selfish ends utter lies in his name. Without exception all modern-day claimants to the possession of that spirit are guilty of this crime.

If the honest student of God's word will compare the supposed miracles and wonders of these days with those found in the New Testament record, he will find no likeness between them; and he will likewise confirm the contention made herein that not only are the former false and delusive, but that even the latter ceased to be a necessity when the ends for which they were made manifest had been served (II. Cor. 3:8).

The future is full of hope and gladness in the thought that in the midst of darkness God will cause a "great light" to shine, and as the shadows of a long night, they will be dispelled forever. For God has declared, by the mouth of Isaiah, that He "will destroy in this mountain [Zion] the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations" (25:7).