

COMMENT: HYMN TO THE SPIRIT

On some grand occasions this hymn will be sung in full, but it will more often be used as a **resource** for selecting 'Holy Spirit' verses best suited to the day. Used this way there is hardly a time when it is unsuitable!

The hymn aims to pick up **all the major work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture**. Verses 1-2 being Old Testament; verses 3-6 being the life of Jesus; verses 8 and 10 being Christ's risen life and Pentecost, and verse 11 being a final doxology.

Inserted are two verses, 7 and 9, which I have marked for 'Holy Communion' and 'Confirmation'. The terms sound Anglican, but they are simply convenient short-hand terms

- a) for any service based on the **Breaking of Bread**, and
- b) for any service of **rededication**, or commissioning.

I would draw your attention to three uncommon themes.

- a) The Spirit's work speaking through God's **prophets** (v.2);
- b) The Spirit's work in driving Christ (and us) to the **desert** (v.5).
[See my article **WILDERNESS – THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE**].
- c) The Spirit's work in **healing** (v.6)

I usually write words to existing tunes, so that folk's existing associations of the tune strengthen the message of my new words. I felt that there is always a danger for folk who are sensitive and alert to the Holy Spirit's *work* to focus **on** the Spirit. The Holy Spirit never allows this, and always points *away* from himself to the **Father** and to **Jesus as Lord**. I chose, therefore the tune 'All for Jesus' which comes as the glorious climax of Stainer's *Crucifixion*. I deliberately did *not* want a tune associated with the Holy Spirit!

This hymn arose out of an interesting situation which I will share with you by way of encouragement.

I returned home one Sunday evening in 1978 after an exhausting weekend's ministry. I collapsed into a chair, knowing that my resources were drained, and I was in desperate need to get spiritually recharged. I played a record of the '**All for Jesus**' hymn, put up the volume and bathed in the Jesus-ness of it all! With tears streaming down my face in worship and healing, I thought "If *only* that hymn had some words to the **Spirit**!" I then wrote the entire hymn straight off in under an hour.

It was first sung at a Fountain Trust rally in the Central Hall Westminster, and I wrote a descant for it for the occasion.

[Earlier printings have had 'overshadowing' and 'empowering' written thus: *overshad'wing* and *empow'ring*. If you think anyone will have trouble fitting the words to the tune, do the same.]

HYMN TO THE SPIRIT

Suggested Tune: 'All for Jesus' (J. Stainer) 8.7.8.7.

- 1.
Spirit, working in creation,
bringing order out of strife;
come around God's gathered people,
giving harmony and life.**
- 2.
Spirit, speaking through the prophets,
so the voice of God was heard;
come, inspire, alert your people
to today's prophetic word.**
- 3.
Spirit, overshadowing Mary
as the Christ-child in her grew;
come, so that the Christ within us
may today be born anew.**
- 4.
Spirit, coming from the Father
as a dove upon our Lord;
come upon your favoured people,
may your blessings be outpoured.**
- 5.
Spirit, driving to the desert
even God's Anointed One;
come to us in trial and testing,
that God's will in us be done.**
- 6.
Spirit, bringing freedom, blessing,
help to poor, and health to lame;
come, anoint us, that such wonders
may be done in Jesus' Name.**
- 7. (*Additional verse for Holy Communion*)
Spirit, taking, breaking, making
bread and wine our heavenly food;
come, and take us, break us, make us,
live Christ's life in us renewed.**

8.

**Spirit, breathed on the disciples,
giving peace where there was fear:
come among us, touch us, send us,
making Jesus' presence near.**

9. *(Additional verse for Confirmation)*

**Spirit, coming to Christ's servants
to confirm, enrich, empower;
come upon us, and the churches,
for our witness at this hour.**

10.

**Spirit, wind and flame empowering
fearless witness to the lost;
come, unite, "renew your wonders
as of a new Pentecost!"**

11.

**Praise and glory Holy Spirit,
for your love on us outpoured;
giving honour to the Father,
and proclaiming JESUS - LORD.**