

# BOOK REVIEW ARTICLE

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## *Joy Unspeakable*

**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

**Kingsway Communications Ltd.**

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**Paperback, 475 pp.**

## **Introduction**

If this is not Martyn Lloyd-Jones' worst book, it must surely come close. This is sad, because the "Doctor," as he is affectionately known by some, is, generally, a good expositor and exegete of Scripture. For example, I found his work on Ephesians very helpful in studying the armour of God in Ephesians 6 and his treatment of original guilt in Romans 5 very helpful indeed in studying the doctrine of original sin. That is to say, I am not someone who *dislikes* Lloyd-Jones, hereafter abbreviated to MLJ. Nevertheless, *Joy Unspeakable* is a truly dreadful book. It is dreadful exactly because it is not exegetical. Although *Joy Unspeakable* purports to be a series of sermons on John, the "Doctor" strays from an exegetical treatment of John into flights of fancy, which continue for almost the entirety of the book. MLJ launches off from John 1:26, 33, takes the phrase "baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," and runs amok with it.

The book is also long and repetitive, which makes a concise review of the work difficult. Perhaps, MLJ imagines that, if he beats the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" drum long and hard enough, he will beat the reader into submission. Throughout the reading of the book, this reviewer kept waiting for the proof—the exegetical proof—of MLJ's central assertion: "baptism with the Holy Spirit" is a post-conversion experience available to all believers, but lacking in the lives of most believers, especially today in the age of declension in which we live; and, since "baptism with the Holy Spirit" is the church's only hope, we must all cry out for revival, for revival and "baptism with the Holy Spirit" are inextricably linked.

Egregiously, MLJ uses the old Pentecostal/Charismatic tactic of quoting repeatedly, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19), as if quoting (but not pro-

viding any exegesis of) this text were enough to shut the mouths of all those who disagree with MLJ's central thesis. MLJ offers a false dichotomy—either you believe in the “baptism with the Holy Spirit,” as he defines it, or you are a Spirit-quencher, which is dangerously close to being unregenerate! I counted at least thirteen references to I Thessalonians 5:19, but not one attempt to exegete the text!

### **MLJ's Plea: The Need for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

MLJ's first assertion is “It is possible for us to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ without having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (21). To prove his point, he appeals to the experience of the disciples in the early church. In so doing, he fails to comprehend the significance of Pentecost. The events of Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost are so significant that they cannot be repeated, anymore than the events on Golgotha or in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb can be repeated. Therefore, MLJ wastes a lot of time appealing to the events in Acts 2, 8, 10-11 and 19, as if Reformed exegetes had never encountered those passages before.

It is absolutely true that the apostles were regenerate before they were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same is true with respect to the Samaritans in Acts 8, the Gentiles in Acts 10-11 and the disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19. After Acts 19, although the gospel certainly went to other Gentile cities, there are no further examples of the “baptism of/with the Holy Spirit,” because the goal has been reached—the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles have all received the gospel, and, therefore, the Holy Spirit. No other distinct group needs to be reached. So momentous was the reception of the Samaritans and Gentiles into the church, for example, that not even the apostles would have believed it, if God Himself had not authenticated it with miraculous signs.

The physical phenomena associated with the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” (speaking in tongues, cloven tongues as of fire, the sound as of a mighty rushing wind, the Holy Spirit falling on people and such like) are no longer necessary to authenticate reception of the Holy Spirit. What happened to the apostles and to the first New Testament converts in their experience does not happen to subsequent generations of Christians and does not need to happen. For ex-

ample, we do not expect “cloven tongues like as of fire” to appear on our heads (Acts 2:3). We do not expect a “sound as of a mighty rushing wind” to fill our meeting places (v. 2). We do not expect to see miracles: miraculous healings (3:7; 9:34; 14:10; 19:11-12; 28:8-9), miraculous blinding (13:11), miraculous resurrections (9:40; 20:10) and other wonders (28:5). Why? Mainly because miracles are the sign of an apostle and we do not have apostles today (II Cor. 12:12).<sup>1</sup> We do not expect our meeting places to be shaken (Acts 4:31). These—and not only tongues, which, strangely are the emphasis of Charismaticism today—are the phenomena recorded in the New Testament.

What *is* normative for all New Testament saints is what Paul describes in I Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” MLJ tries to dismiss this passage by writing, “We see so clearly in the preaching of John the Baptist [that] the baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that is *done by the Lord Jesus, not by the Holy Spirit*” and “Our being baptized into the body of Christ is the work of the Spirit, as regeneration is his work, but this is something entirely different; *this is Christ baptizing us with the Holy Spirit*” (24; MLJ’s italics).

In response, we make the following observations. First, the contrast that John the Baptist makes is not between the Lord’s work and the Spirit’s work, but between what John—a mere man—can do (baptize with water) and what Jesus—the Lord—does (baptize with the Holy Ghost; see John 1:33 and Matthew 3:11). Second, one cannot separate the work of Jesus from the work of the Spirit. Jesus works *through* the Holy Spirit. Were the signs that occurred on the Day of Pentecost the works of the Spirit or of Jesus Christ? Both! Peter explains in Acts 2:33, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted,

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<sup>1</sup> Let the reader examine the Acts of the Apostles and let him record all the examples of miracles in that book. With the exception of miracles performed by Philip, Stephen and Ananias (all of whom were commissioned by the apostles or, in the case of Ananias, sent directly by Jesus to perform a miracle on an apostle), all the miracles in that book were performed by apostles. Besides, Philip was an evangelist (Acts 21:8), Stephen was the first Christian martyr (Acts 7) and Ananias was a prophet, for he received visions (Acts 9:10-17). On several occasions, the churches sent for the apostles, when healing was required. Apostles were present when the Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles and followers of John the Baptist were baptized with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 respectively. This was necessary, because they were the official witnesses.

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and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he [i.e., Jesus Christ] hath shed [i.e., poured] forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Similarly, when we are baptized into one body, the agent of that baptism is certainly the Holy Spirit (“by one Spirit” [I Cor. 12:13]) but the “worker” of that baptism is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ. Why separate what God has joined together?

MLJ refuses to accept I Corinthians 12:13 as decisive. He insists that the subject matter is altogether different. Nevertheless, the Greek preposition in Matthew 3:11, John 1:33 and I Corinthians 12:13 is the same—*en* [in] plus the dative case, which is an instrumental dative, best translated with “by [means of].” The reason, of course, why MLJ will not allow I Corinthians 12:13 to decide the matter is the use of the words “one” and “all” in that passage: “For by *one* Spirit are we *all* baptized into *one* body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been *all* made to drink into *one* Spirit.” If I Corinthians 12:13 be allowed to decide the matter, or if it be allowed to speak for itself, all New Testament Christians are baptized by/in/with the Spirit, and were baptized by/in/with the Spirit at their regeneration/conversion. Then “baptism by the Holy Spirit” is not a post-conversion experience available to all Christians but enjoyed only by some, which would be the death-knell of all Pentecostalism/Charismaticism and of MLJ’s entire thesis.

Much of *Joy Unspeakable* is taken up with describing the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” MLJ is at pains to demonstrate that it is something extraordinary, not something ordinary—as if Christianity can be called “ordinary”!

### **Appeal to Church History**

Before we look at MLJ’s appeals to Scripture, we should notice his appeals to church history. MLJ loved Christian biography and he cites many experiences of Christians in church history as examples of what is possible for us today, if only we are “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Especially important for MLJ is the history of “revivals.”

Sadly, however, MLJ, in his zeal to find the “baptism with the Holy Spirit,” shows a lack of discernment. In this, he contradicts his own assertion, “I am not interested in the experiences of a man who is still wrong in his doctrine”

(122). Yet, he cites the experiences of John Wesley, D. L. Moody, Thomas Aquinas and even Charles Finney! MLJ views every extraordinary movement in church history as a revival and a repetition of Pentecost. Therefore, he is keen to include as many as he can. This leads him to call Montanism and Donatism movements of the Spirit:

The church had become lifeless and had lost her power. Certain people were aware of this and they began to seek the face of God, and God answered. I am referring to what is called Montanism. I know there were excesses, and that they went wrong at certain points, but at any rate the church was alive again and there was power in her (469-470).

MLJ is willing to overlook *heresy* (Montanism was heresy) because “the church was alive again and there was power in her.” We are in grave trouble if heresy is required to revive the church! Next was Donatism:

It was denounced of course. The church always denounces every revival. The Montanists and the Donatists were both condemned ... people who are filled with the Spirit are almost invariably condemned by a dead formal church (470).

Donatism was schismatic! Since we are called to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), how could we call Donatism a work of the Spirit?

About medieval scholastic Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas, MLJ writes, “Aquinas shortly before his death had such an overwhelming direct experience of God that he wrote no more ... That is it! ... He knows, he has experienced; God through the Spirit has given it to him. He writes no more” (124-125).

MLJ cites other examples from the medieval period:

There was a man upon whom God laid his hand in Germany, John Tauler. He was a Roman Catholic priest preaching in a great cathedral but God suddenly took hold of this man and filled him with his Spirit and his whole preaching was transformed ... It is the only explanation of a man like Savonarola.

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You cannot explain him—or Martin Luther either—except in terms of being baptized and filled with the Spirit (139).

About the Anabaptists, MLJ writes, “Let me say quite frankly that I think those great Protestant Reformers were too severe on them and went astray themselves in their condemnation” (217). Why is MLJ lenient on the heretical and radical Anabaptists? Because they allegedly had the Spirit! Perhaps MLJ was ignorant of Luther’s famous retort: “I slap your spirit on the snout!”

Finally, here are MLJ’s remarks about D. L. Moody:

“I can only say [said Moody], God revealed himself to me, and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand.” It was so overwhelming, he felt he was going to be physically crushed. The love of God! That is what is meant by “the love of God shed abroad in your hearts.” That is the baptism of the Spirit (88).

If we test these things by the Word of God, the experiences (and, in some instances, the persons) will be found wanting. I agree with MLJ: “I am not interested in the experiences of a man who is still wrong in his doctrine” (122). Where does that leave MLJ’s examples from history?

MLJ’s view of church history was flawed but *Joy Unspeakable* must stand or fall on exegesis. To that we now turn.

### **Assurance: “Crying Abba, Father!”**

The first effect of baptism in/with the Holy Spirit is “an unusual assurance of our salvation” (41). Here, MLJ regurgitates the erroneous and noxious teaching of many of the Puritans, that assurance is not the normal experience of the child of God, a teaching, which, if true, would be very discouraging to many, if not most, Christians.

Consider how the *Canons of Dordt* explain assurance of eternal and unchangeable election:

The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the

secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God—such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion that they ever will continue true and living members of the church, and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life.

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable (*Canons* I:12; V:9-10).

Notice a couple of things about the teaching of the *Canons*. First, the Reformed fathers at Dortt insisted against the Arminians that the believer *can* know and *does* know that he is and shall forever remain a child of God. He can and does have assurance both of his eternal and unchangeable election (Head I) and of his final perseverance (Head V). The issue is not about the fact—whether a Christian knows that he is an elect child of God—but the manner—*how* does a Christian know that he is a child of God? It is normal for God's people to have assurance. They must have assurance. It is abnormal, unhealthy and even sinful not to have assurance. To lack assurance, however, is not the same as being an unbeliever. Not to have assurance is to struggle with doubt, something the *Canons* recognize. A child of God who doubts

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should be pitied, encouraged, gently admonished and instructed from the Word of God, but he must never be encouraged to doubt (Matt. 8:26, 14:31; Mark 9:24). There is, however, a qualifying clause in *Canons* I:12: “though in various degrees and in different manners.” There are different degrees of assurance, as there are different degrees of faith.

MLJ’s advice to one who struggles with assurance is to seek the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” *That*—and not the ordinary exercise of faith, and not the ordinary means of grace—is his answer.

In this connection, MLJ *mangles* Romans 5:5 and 8:15-16. His exegesis of these two passages, which passages he repeats throughout the book, is woeful! About Romans 8:15-16, MLJ writes,

Paul uses a word there which expresses this, that out of the depth of our being comes an elemental cry, “Abba, Father!” ... It is the highest form of assurance, an absolute certainty, a glorying and a crying out of “Abba, Father” (42).

Later, MLJ enthuses about the word “cry:”

Paul’s word “cry,” again, is a very strong word. It means something elemental. The term originally meant the croaking of a certain kind of bird, the noise that birds can sometimes produce with great intensity. That is the term: “We ‘cry’ Abba, Father.” We not merely believe that God is our Father. We all believe that as Christians. But here it wells up within us (77).

In another place, MLJ remarks,

The Spirit is working in you, and in you yourselves there is a Spirit of adoption, a cry in your heart to God saying, “Abba, Father.” You may not have it often, but you know what it is. As when a little child runs to his father or mother in trouble, you have known what it is to run to God and say, “O Father! Abba, Father!” “The Spirit of adoption!” (334-335).

Notice the derogatory word “mere” or “merely.” We do not “merely believe.” To believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that God is our Father is a miracle—one does not *merely* believe that!



The child of God, unless he is in a seriously backslidden and spiritual weak state, cries “Abba, Father!” often, yea, daily. What father would be pleased if his little children only occasionally called him “Father,” and most of the time were not sure if he was their loving father or if they should dare approach him as such?

Now, Paul uses the verb *krazoo* here, which is the normal Greek word for “cry” or “shout.” Of course, it is a significant word—all God’s words are significant—but its significance lies in the fact that *all* God’s children cry in this manner. And there is nothing in the context of Romans 8 to suggest that Paul does not apply this *krazoo* to all saints. *All* saints are “spiritually minded” (v. 6); *all* saints have “the Spirit of Christ” (v. 9); in *all* saints “the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell[s]” (v. 11); *all* saints are “led by the Spirit of God” (v. 14); *all* saints are the “sons of God” (v. 14); *no* saints have received “the spirit of bondage again to fear” (v. 15); and *all* saints “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (v. 15).

It is true, of course, that some believers struggle with carnal doubts and fears, but assurance *is* of the essence of faith (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 21). Such doubt is sin and belongs to the weakness of the flesh, but such doubt does not extinguish faith—no, not in the weakest believer! Since Romans 8 does not indicate a change of subject, verses 23-27 also refer to all saints. The Spirit “helpeth [the] infirmities” of *all* saints (v. 26); He “maketh intercession for [*all* saints] with groanings which cannot be uttered” (v. 26). *All* the saints, to whom all of the blessed promises of Romans 8 apply, are the elect (vv. 29-30, 33), the justified (v. 33), those for whom Christ died and rose again (v. 34), those for whom He makes intercession (v. 34) and those whom nothing can separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus (vv. 35-39). Nothing in the chapter remotely suggests that Paul had a special class of saints in mind or that he excludes from these blessings (common to all God’s children) those not favoured with the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.”

Moreover, Galatians 4, which MLJ does not treat, is a parallel passage of sorts, for Paul uses the word *krazoo* there also. Paul writes in verse 6, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying [*krazoo*], Abba, Father.” In that passage, Paul, referring to all believers, whom he calls “Abraham’s seed” (3:29), teaches that *all* saints “receive the adoption of sons” (4:5) by the redemption of the cross. *All* saints have the Holy

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Spirit. In the hearts of *all* saints the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of adoption, cries [*krazoo*] (v. 6). This, for Paul, is proof of their adoption: “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (v. 7). MLJ tries to inject into the word *krazoo* (cry) a meaning that is not there, with the result that he takes that blessed reality away from the majority of “ordinary” believers. How reprehensible!

MLJ quotes with approval the words of the Scottish Puritan, William Guthrie, who about his own experience remarks,

This is the thing which doth best deserve the title of “Sensible Presence” and it is not given unto all believers, some whereof are all their days under bondage and in fear, but here “Love (almost perfect) casteth out fear” (116).

Do you see Guthrie’s reference to Romans 8:16? Guthrie argues that some believers are given a spirit of bondage and fear *all their days!* But Paul says about *all* saints, “For ye have *not* received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:16). *No* saint has the spirit of bondage to fear! *Every* saint has the Spirit of adoption! Elsewhere, Paul says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). That was not true only of Timothy and Paul, but of *all* saints. The writer to the Hebrews explains our redemption from Satan thus: “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). The bondage of fear is the misery of the unbeliever, not the experience of the believer, not the experience of *any* believer.

Guthrie also alludes to I John 4:18 (“perfect love casteth out fear”) but again this is the experience of *every* believer. In verse 12, John writes, “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” The rest of the chapter declares that “he hath given us of his Spirit” (v. 13); that “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (v. 15); that “we have known and believed the love that God hath to us” (v. 16); and that “we may have boldness in the day of judgment” (v. 17). All of this, including “perfect love [that] casteth out fear” is the possession of *all* saints. Exegesis, not only experience, confirms that.

## **Assurance: The Love of God Shed Abroad**

Another passage, which MLJ mishandles as supposed proof that a “baptism with the Holy Spirit” is necessary to enjoy extraordinary assurance of salvation, is Romans 5:5. If in Romans 8:15 MLJ injects into the meaning of *krazoo* (cry) a meaning that is not there, in Romans 5:5 he pours into the word *ekcheoo* (shed abroad) a meaning that is foreign to the context. Listen to MLJ’s argument:

Now if you believe at all in the inspiration of the Scriptures you must believe that these men were guided to use the particular terms that they used, and the apostle Paul was not content with saying that the love of God is sent into our hearts. He says the love of God is “shed abroad” in our hearts, and he means what he says. It is a kind of gushing forth. It is a very strong term and it is the one that the apostle under divine inspiration was led to use, and we must not minimize these terms (76).

In another place, MLJ writes,

Now take that great term again, “shed abroad.” Do not put your little limit on it and say, “Oh yes, I love God.” Paul says that the love of God is “shed abroad” in great profusion, overwhelmingly in our hearts. Now that is what we should seek (385).

Again, he writes,

You can be a Christian, you can be a member of the body of Christ, you can be a part of this organism, without having received this baptism of power, without knowing this highest form of assurance, without having this overwhelming experience of the love of God shed abroad in your heart so that you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (456).

But how does MLJ apply this nugget of information about the Greek verb *ekcheoo*? He adds this: “There is a difference between knowing the love of God in that general sense and being overwhelmed by the knowledge of the love of God. ‘Shed abroad!’—in abundance, in profusion” (76)!

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Notice the language again—“general sense.” How can you believe in the love of God in a “general sense”? Surely, the love of God is a wonder, and to believe that God loves you personally in Jesus Christ is a miracle of grace!

Is it true that *ekcheoo* means to pour out? Yes, it does, but that is not the issue. The issue is, into *whose* heart is the love of God poured out or shed abroad? Into all believers’ hearts or into the hearts of only *some* believers, namely, into the hearts of those who have been “baptized with the Holy Spirit”? Let the context decide! *All* saints are justified by faith and have “peace with God” (5:1). *All* saints have access into grace, and *all* saints “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (v. 2). *All* saints “glory in tribulations also” (v. 3). In *all* saints, tribulation “worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (vv. 3-4). For *all* saints “hope maketh not ashamed” (v. 5), for into the hearts of *all* saints “the love of God is shed abroad [or poured out—*ekcheoo*]” by the Holy Spirit, who is “given” to *all* saints (v. 5). Moreover, Christ died for *all* saints, who were “ungodly” (v. 6) and “sinners” (v. 8), which is the commendation of God’s love to *all* saints (v. 8), *all* of whom are justified “by his blood” (v. 9), and *all* of whom “shall be saved from wrath through him” (v. 9). *All* saints were “enemies” and have been “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” and “shall be saved by his life” (v. 10). Therefore, *all* saints “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” by whom *all* saints “have now received the atonement” (v. 11). There is nothing in the context and nothing in the word *ekcheoo* that remotely suggests that Romans 5 is anything other than the blessed experience of *all* believers.

The verb *ekcheoo* (to pour out or to shed aboard) appears also in Titus 3:6, a text that MLJ does not treat. There, Paul writes of the common experience of all true converts on the island of Crete: “he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly [*ekcheoo*] through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (vv. 5-7). If anything, the description of salvation is richer in this passage, because Paul adds the adverb “abundantly” (*plousioos*, richly) to *ekcheoo* (“shed”), but is the salvation restricted to those in the congregation who were “baptized with the Holy Spirit”? Not at all! This abundant or rich outpouring of the Spirit occurs at regeneration, and is followed by the wonder of justification and becoming a spiritual heir. Of *all* God’s children these blessings are the possession.

## **Assurance: Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory**

Another text to which MLJ appeals is I Peter 1:8, which astute readers will recognize as the source of the title for his book, *Joy Unspeakable*. There, Peter writes, “Whom [i.e., Jesus] having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” By now, MLJ becomes sadly predictable: “rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory” is the activity of those only who have been “baptized with the Holy Spirit” and this extraordinary joy is missing in the lives of many, if not most, believers. To regain this joy is the crying need of the church, for “ordinary joy”—whatever that is—is not sufficient. (However, can the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) really be called *ordinary*?) MLJ writes, “There, then, is something which is always associated with the baptism of the Spirit. It leads to a joy and a rejoicing which is quite exceptional” (111). Notice that—“quite exceptional”! Having decided, without any exegesis of the text, that Christians should have this “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (as he understands it), and having determined that many Christians do not have this (something he assumes without proof), MLJ chides the reader for being satisfied as a Christian without it:

You must not reduce that statement. That is how these people were; that is what you and I should be. Therefore, I argue that seeing that and recognizing it, I should say to myself that I must become like that. I must not be content with anything less than that. If I allow myself to be content with anything less than that, I am sinful. I am deliberately sinning (366-367).

MLJ’s scare tactics about deliberately sinning aside, what does Peter mean and what does the context teach? First, this “joy unspeakable and full of glory” is the blessed experience of *all* saints. *All* saints are “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God” (I Pet. 1:2); *all* saints are “begotten ... again unto a lively hope” (v. 3); *all* saints have an “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled” (v. 4); *all* saints are “kept by the power of God through faith” (v. 5); *all* saints “greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, [they] are in heaviness through manifold temptations” (v. 6); the faith of *all* saints is tried as gold by fire (v. 7); *all* saints believe in Christ whom they have not seen, and in whom they rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (v. 8); and that is because

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*all* saints receive “the end of [their] faith, even the salvation of [their] souls” (v. 9). Exegesis—and not personal experience or lack thereof, and not the diaries, journals and writings of the experience of figures in church history—determines the meaning of I Peter 1:8.

In I Peter 1:8, the apostle encourages believers who were facing, or who were about to face, persecution. He tells them that their faith will be tried because it is more valuable than perishable gold. God delights more in His people’s faith than in all the gold in the universe. Because He delights in our faith, He is pleased to try it or test it. He is pleased to make it—and us—pass through fiery trials to show its genuineness or, as Peter puts it, “That the trial of your faith ... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (v. 7). These saints never saw Jesus Christ in the flesh—unlike Peter, who was an eyewitness (5:1; II Pet. 1:16)—yet they believed in Him and they loved Him.

That is true of all saints, and, therefore, Jesus’ benediction applies to all saints: “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Perhaps Peter had those words in mind here, for he had been present when Jesus spoke to Thomas. “Believing”—*because* ye believe—“ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (I Pet. 1:8). All saints believe. Therefore, all saints rejoice, yes, even with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The word “unspeakable” means unutterable or beyond human expression. Is that not true of all Christian joy? Of course, we can speak about it. We can write about it. We can preach about it. But can we *fathom* it? Of course not! Our joy comes from the knowledge of the greatness of our salvation (“Wherein ye greatly rejoice” [v. 6]) and, therefore, our joy deepens and increases as we grow in grace and knowledge. That joy, like all Christian joy, is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

All of our salvation is unspeakable or unutterable. Philippians 4:7 promises that “the peace of God, *which passeth all understanding*, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” That promise is given to us as we pray, which is the activity of *all* saints (v. 6). II Corinthians 9:15 even speaks of God’s “unspeakable gift,” Christ, who is the gift to all saints.

The other term in I Peter 1:8 is “full of glory,” one word in the Greek, the perfect, passive participle of the verb “glorify.” The literal translation is “glo-

rified.” A “glorified joy” is a joy that is heavenly in source and character and that gives the one who possesses it a foretaste of glory. *All* saints possess the joy that is “full of glory.” Do not let men like MLJ convince you that you do not have that joy, but, rejoice, even as you do (Phil. 3:1; 4:4).

### **Assurance: The Sealing of the Spirit**

MLJ links “the sealing of the Spirit” to “baptism with the Spirit” in that both, he alleges, are available to all Christians but only enjoyed by some. The seal of the Spirit is mentioned in II Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13-14 and Ephesians 4:30. MLJ writes, “What he [i.e., Paul] says to them [i.e., the Corinthians and the Ephesians], of course, can be true of all Christians—they can be ‘sealed’ with this Holy Spirit of promise” (322). Notice the slight difference—Paul says, “ye *are* sealed;” MLJ says, “all Christians *can be* sealed.” MLJ then quotes Charles Simeon with approval:

“This was vouchsafed to many of the saints at Ephesus”—notice he [i.e., Simeon] does not say all of them. And then he continues, “There shall always be some in the church who possess and enjoy it ... This higher state of sanctification and assurance is reserved for those who “after having believed” have maintained a close walk with God” (325).

Then he appeals to the reader again:

Have you been sealed with the Spirit? Has the Spirit testified with your spirit that you are a child of God? I do not mean that you deduce it from your sanctification or from your reading of the Scripture or prayer or services or any of these others ... I am asking, has he himself authenticated, attested, sealed it to you; let you know beyond any doubt or uncertainty that you are a child of God, and a joint-heir with Christ? Thank God for the very multiplicity of the terms, for they altogether, in showing us this same truth from different aspects, help to enhance its glory and its wonder (338).

My answer to MLJ’s question is: “Yes, I have been sealed with the Spirit, and so has every believer.”

## *Book Review Article: Joy Unspeakable*

Ephesians 1:13-14 is part of a long doxology in which Paul outlines the blessings that Christians enjoy “in heavenly places in Christ” (v. 3). These include election (v. 4), predestination unto adoption of children (v. 5), acceptance in the beloved (v. 6), redemption through Christ’s blood and the forgiveness of sins (v. 7) and the promise of an inheritance (v. 11). All these blessings are the possession of *all* Christians. Therefore, the blessing of verse 13 (“ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”) is also the possession of *all* Christians, and is an earnest (deposit, down payment) of the inheritance given to *all* Christians (v. 14). Again, exegesis determines that there is nothing in the context to restrict this (or Romans 5:5 or 8:15-16) to only some members of the church. Paul does not write, “some of you were sealed” but “ye were sealed” (Eph. 1:13).

An objection to this is found in the words of verse 13, “in whom also *after that ye believed*, ye were sealed.” Several of the Puritans, for example, made much of the word “after” and argued that the sealing of the Spirit takes place “after”—often months, years, even decades after—saving faith. Some in the church, although they believed, were never sealed this side of heaven. Doubting, miserable believers were not only common but the norm! Does the word “after” mean that? Actually, there is no “after” in the Greek. The original is a participle meaning “believing” or “having believed.” My translation from the Greek is as follows: “In whom also you hearing (having heard) the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also believing (having believed) you were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise” (v. 13). The issue is not time, but logical order. The order is “ye heard;” then, “ye believed; then, “ye were sealed.” There is a logical order—a man cannot believe before he hears; and we are not sealed before we believe. However, that does not require a long time lapse between believing and being sealed. And, certainly, the grammar of verse 13 demands that *all* who believed were *also* sealed. Therefore, every Christian can say, yes, even today, that he/she is sealed. The sealing of the Spirit is a mark of authenticity, ownership, genuineness and protection upon and in the believer that he/she belongs to God forever. In other words, the seal of the Spirit is assurance, which *all* saints enjoy.

### **Normative or Not?**

One possible objection to MLJ’s thesis is that all the saints in the New Tes-



tament were “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” If that is the case, why should only some Christians today be thus baptized?

MLJ argues that such joy and assurance were the norm because *in that day* “baptism with the Holy Spirit” was the norm! In our day, however, such joy, assurance and effusive love are not the norm because most of the church lacks the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Surely, he begs the question—he assumes what he needs to prove! He assumes that “baptism with the Holy Spirit” is not the norm today, contrary to what Paul teaches in I Corinthians 12:13. MLJ contends that, if “baptism with the Holy Spirit” were the norm today, we would see, hear, feel and experience things today, which we supposedly do not see, hear, feel and experience today—such as the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, the Spirit crying “Abba, Father” and joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Consider the following statements:

But do not the New Testament Scriptures suggest that at any rate all the early Christians, all the members of the early infant Christian church, were baptized with the Holy Spirit? ... It is, I admit, a difficult question, and I suggest that the answer is that the apostles, in writing these letters, obviously have to assume a kind of norm, a standard, a pattern. They always write in terms of the church as she should be. And therefore these descriptions which they give of the early Christians are descriptions of the church as she is meant to be in the purpose of God. There is no question at all about that. We find depicted in the New Testament the ideal Christian church ... It seems to me that the vast majority of the early Christians had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. So when the apostles come to write their letters to them they can assume that, they can act on that assumption and supposition—and so the difficulty is resolved ... (361, 362-363, 365).

But it is very dangerous to argue from that and to say, “Very well, then, is it not equally true now?” I say, “No,” because I apply the tests. When a man is baptized with the Holy Spirit, and when a number of people are, there is no difficulty about knowing it. You do not have to assume it or persuade yourself

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that it is true; it manifests itself as we saw earlier with those people in the household of Cornelius. And unless there is evidence of this kind of life and of experience it is not only dangerous, it is sinful, to assume that it is true of all, because we are reducing these great New Testament statements to our level (365).

The great question I would like to leave with you is this—Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed? Have you received him up to date? Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? That is the question. We all of us either have or have not, and we know exactly which it is. Has the love of God been shed abroad in your heart? Does the Spirit “bear witness with your spirit” that you are a child of God? I am not talking about deducing evidence, but the Spirit himself directly, immediately letting you know that you are a child of God. Those are some of the evidences, and there are others. He died for you; his body was broken; his blood was shed. Do you rejoice in him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory (378)?

What should we make of this? First, MLJ views the early church, as she is described in the Acts of the Apostles and in the New Testament epistles, through rose-tinted glasses. The early church was certainly not the “ideal” church. It was the infant church and, in many ways, the immature church. In almost all of the epistles, written, if MLJ is to be believed, to ideal churches filled with those “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” the apostles rebuke the churches for some doctrinal error or moral failing. Take the Corinthians as a case in point. Although the Corinthians were saints, Paul, in his first epistle to them, does not hesitate to rebuke them for disunity (1:11), carnality (3:1-4), boasting (4:6-8), laxity in discipline (ch. 5), litigiousness (6:1-8), fornication (6:15-20), idolatry (ch. 8), disorderliness in worship and in the Lord’s Supper (ch. 10-11, 14), misuse of spiritual gifts (ch. 12-14), lack of love (ch. 13) and heterodoxy concerning the resurrection (ch. 15).

Beloved saints of God? Absolutely! An “ideal” Christian church? Hardly!

In addition, MLJ does not judge whether one has been “baptized with the Holy Spirit” on exegesis of the relevant texts but on experience. But we are

assured of our salvation by faith and, whether we “feel” the love of God shed abroad in our hearts or not, we must believe that God has poured His love into our hearts. For MLJ, faith in the Scriptures is insufficient. He toys with mysticism: “I am not talking about deducing evidence, but the Spirit himself directly, immediately letting you know that you are a child of God” (378). The Spirit lets me know that I am child of God through Scripture—*only* through Scripture. If I leave Scripture, I am in danger of falling into a delusion. Besides this, MLJ is a poor pastor to his people. Those who listen to such preaching and read such books, will find their assurance *wounded*, simply because they cannot adduce the experience MLJ and others demand. Such preaching fosters *doubt*, which is detrimental to faith and is not the apostolic approach (I Thess. 1:5; Titus 1:1-2).

Sadly, MLJ was not satisfied with what we might call the “ordinary Christian life and experience.” He wanted more. He believed that more was available. He decried the church being satisfied with less. In his zeal for more, he went seriously astray:

New Testament Christianity is not just a formal, polite, correct and orthodox kind of faith and belief. No! What characterizes it is this element of love and passion, this pneumatic element, this life, this vigour, this abandon, this exuberance—and, as I say, it has ever characterized the life of the church in all periods of revival and reawakening (386).

Elsewhere, he writes,

You will find churches in an ordinary state and condition such as, alas, you and I have known in this present century. Oh yes, the people are Christians and they read their Bibles and they pray and they attend the services and God is pleased to grant a measure of blessing upon the preaching of the word. People are converted and added to the church and they are built up in the truth. All right! But there is no more than that. Many of them—perhaps most—cannot say that they rejoice in him with a “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” They cannot say that honestly. They are aware of a deadness within themselves, of having to force themselves and to press themselves.

They know nothing about abandon. They are unlike the early church “praising God with gladness and singleness of heart,” daily eating their meat from house to house. They know little about the thrill that you feel in Acts and in the remainder of the New Testament (364).

### **“Baptism With the Holy Spirit” Brings Power**

Extraordinary assurance of salvation is one of the signs that a person has been “baptized with the Holy Spirit” but, according to MLJ, there are others. One purpose, writes MLJ, is “to enable God’s people to witness in such a manner that it becomes a phenomenon and people are arrested and are attracted” (92). In addition, there is an extraordinary sense of the presence of God:

We believe the testimony of the Scripture and the Spirit applies it to us and we know that these things are true. But here is something over and above that: you know that you are in the presence of God ... When the Spirit comes, when we are baptized in this way with the Spirit, he makes all this thing vital and real to us, and there is a kind of luminosity and an immediacy. It is a great characteristic of being baptized with the Holy Spirit ... How often have you had that sort of experience? Have you ever had it? ... This is what happens when a man is baptized with the Holy Spirit—this immediacy. This is not reason, or faith; but action taking place upon us and to us. It is a manifestation—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—making themselves real to us and living in our very experiences (94, 96, 98).

Besides that, there is a boldness to speak, extraordinary joy and steadfastness, and even the luminosity of the face! “If your doctrine of the Holy Spirit does not include this idea of the Holy Spirit falling on people, it is seriously, grievously defective” (129).

Speaking of one woman during a revival, MLJ writes,

And the thing that led to her conversion was the sight of the face of a little child in that house. The woman suddenly saw

the face of this child shining, and that was the means of her conviction of sin, her need of a Saviour, her salvation and her being filled with the Holy Spirit (132).

One is tempted to point out that “if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though a child’s face shine like the sun” (cf. Luke 16:31)! “We are in urgent need,” insists MLJ, “of some manifestation, some demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit” (160). “We look at the New Testament church, we see this amazing life that was in it—this power, this joy, this abandon, this thrill, and we ask ourselves, ‘Are we like that?’” (381).

My answer to MLJ is simple. Yes, Christians *are* like that. *All* Christians *do* have power and joy, and MLJ errs grievously when he judges many of his fellow saints as lacking in this area because they have not been “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:19; 3:20; 6:10). The difference between the apostles and saints of the early church and today’s church (I mean the true church, not the many false, apostate and apostatizing churches, which plague Christendom) is not that they had power and we do not, but the way in which that power is manifested. In the early church, there were miracles to authenticate the gospel, which was a new message to the Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. Those miracles, recorded in the Scriptures, still authenticate the message of the gospel today. MLJ pined for the “good old days” of a bygone era, but failed to see that those days were foundational and not to be repeated in subsequent generations. By erring in this manner, MLJ opened his own congregation, Westminster Chapel in London, and other churches, over which he had considerable influence, to the dangers of Charismaticism/Pentecostalism. We see the bitter fruit of that influence in the church world today.

Besides, if our power, joy and other graces are weak, the answer is not to wait for the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” but to repent, believe and use the means of grace!