

# *The spirit of religion*

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## ***I. Introduction***

### ***What is the spirit of religion?***

The spirit of religion is an important stumbling block for a living relationship with the living God. Instead of a living relationship with God, this spirit of religion acts as a substitute. Through the religious spirit the enemy of our souls stimulates false religiosity. But this spirit also imitates the Lord and His work. In this manner it blinds people and keeps them from developing a relationship in 'spirit and in truth'. The operation of the spirit of religion is quite manifest in sects and pagan religions. But the spirit of religion is just as active within the Christian church. The religious spirit operates within the church of Christ more cunningly than outside the church. The devil sends his most clever imitations to people who know the Lord already in some measure. Through such imitations he attempts to undermine their relationship and life with God. Therefore it is of utmost importance to discern this spirit in order to be delivered from it and to arm ourselves against its operations. This discernment is important both for individual Christians and for the church as a whole.

### ***Animosity against the cross***

The spirit of religion especially hates the cross of Christ. For that reason this spirit tries to prevent people from living in the reality of the cross. We see a good example of this spirit of animosity already early in biblical history: Cain's sacrifice. Genesis 4:3 shows that Cain tried to please God by offering Him an agricultural produce. This produce was largely the outcome of his efforts in tilling the land. This implies that Cain tried to gain righteousness with God through his own efforts. But such a sacrifice can never be acceptable to God. His brother Abel, however, already had an awareness of the cross of Christ. Genesis 4:4 shows that Abel understood that he could never gain righteousness with God through a sacrifice of his own efforts. He understood that only the sacrifice of the life of something very dear and precious is acceptable to God. The sacrifice of this beautiful firstborn lamb was a prophetic reference to the death of Christ on the cross. Christ was God's firstborn son who was sacrificed as the perfect lamb.

### ***A false image of God***

The spirit of religion does not only suppress the significance of the cross of Christ but it also creates

a false image of God. He creates this false image by discrediting God. The devil already caused doubts about God's goodness during the seduction of Eve, as is written in Genesis 3:1-5. He poisoned Eve's thoughts by making her think that in a sneaky fashion God kept something very precious from man. Apart from that, the devil exaggerated God's warning to Eve about eating from the fruits of the trees in the garden, and told her that what God had said about the consequences of eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is nonsense. Up till this day many believers fail to achieve God's destiny for their lives because the enemy has sown an inaccurate image of God in their thoughts.

Furthermore, the Bible shows that the devil comes as 'an angel of light'. (2 Corinthians. 11:14) This means that the spirit of religion also deceives people by imitating God Himself, and in this manner pulls them away from Him.

### ***The degree of influences varies from person to person***

Like in the case of other demonic spirits the measure of influence the spirit of religion has on people would vary from person to person. Some people are more or less completely controlled by the spirit of religion, other people to a lesser degree. But the spirit of religion does not only operate in nominal Christians, but it can also influence sincere and committed believers in a subtle and unconscious way. These believers still serve the Lord, but the religious spirit inhibits them to walk in God's destiny for their lives. In the gospels Jesus warns against the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The term leaven refers to the teachings that were inspired by a spirit of religion and hypocrisy (Matthew 16:11,12; Marc 8:15; Luke 12:1). Moreover, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:6 and Galatians 5:9 that 'a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough'. Especially in the passage in Galatians Paul clearly refers especially to the influence of the spirit of religion. This implies that we should not tolerate even a tiny bit of influence from the spirit of religion. Even a tiny influence of this spirit may already exercise a devastating effect on our lives with God.

### ***The spirit of religion adjusts very well***

The spirit of religion is extremely flexible and changeable, and adjusts to its environment very well. A popular metaphor for this spirit is the chameleon. Like this animal the spirit of religion changes the colours of its skin in accordance with its natural surroundings. In actual fact the spirit of religion is the main ruler over a great number of highly diverse assisting spirits. There are Hindu spirits of religion, Islamic ones, but also many religious spirits with a Christian 'skin colour'. One may encounter catholic religious spirits, but also many spirits with a protestant cover. Charismatic Christians can be influenced by religious spirits as well. In such cases the religious spirits have adopted a charismatic skin colour.

### ***Spirits of religion may look like opposites***

Just because spirits of religion adjust to their environment very well, such spirits may look like complete opposites. Spirits of religious fanatics are quite well known. Such spirits regard some ideas and practices as absolute and allow no room whatsoever for new or different ideas or practices. People with such spirits persecute or even kill others with such new or different ideas or practices. Good examples are the Catholic inquisition during the middle ages and the renaissance,

and the persecution of the early church by the spiritual leaders during the time of the apostles. A more recent example of course is Muslim terrorism.

However, there are also spirits of religion that are by no means fanatical. Paul says in Acts 17:22 that the Athenians he was addressing were very religious. But in spite of their religiosity they were the opposites of narrow-minded fanatics. They were in fact sceptical, relativistic, and constantly searching for new ideas.

### ***Atheistic spirits of religion***

The spirit of religion can be manifest even in movements that appear to be non-religious and may reject every form of religion! Though the supporters of such movements do not believe in a god or gods, yet they stick to their ideals and codes of conduct in fanatical and dogmatic manner that resembles those of religious fanatics. For instance, old communists were often more dogmatic than many religious fanatics, and were more aggressive in the persecution of people with different opinions. One may find similar fanaticism and aggression among environmentalists. The environmentalist who assassinated the Dutch politician Pim Fortuijn in 2003 was inspired by such a religious spirit. Atheistic spirits of religion sound like a contradiction in terms but experience shows that they do exist!

### ***Overview remaining contents of the article***

The spirit of religion is the subject of this article. I will discuss the main characteristics of this spirits and the ways in which they influence people. I will also focus on the entry points through which this spirit gains access to our personal lives and to our churches and ministries. Furthermore, I will discuss various main forms of this spirit that Dutch Christians may encounter. Finally I will give some suggestions on how to get delivered from this spirit.

## ***II. False religiosity and piety***

### ***Legalism***

The spirit of religion is very flexible. But spirits of religion often inspire a very rigid and inflexible religiosity in people. Such rigidity and inflexibility are obviously manifest in legalism. A legalistic spirit inspires man to a strict adherence to an elaborate system of rules and codes of outward conduct; of do's and don'ts. A well known example is the Pharisees from biblical times. They tried to gain righteousness with God by a strict adherence to their explanation of the Mosaic laws. In a similar manner some Christians who are insecure about their salvation, try to gain acceptance from God by following a set of rules.

### ***Outward piety***

Another form of legalistic spirit that is very influential can be found among evangelical and charismatic believers. Evangelical and charismatic Christians quite generally accept that Jesus' sacrifice is the sole source of salvation. Nevertheless, these circles also face the threat of a legalistic

spirit that emphasises adherence to all sorts of outward codes of conduct. Such adherence is seen as evidence of a holy life that marks a genuine and mature Christian. This form of legalism may work just as restrictive as orthodox Judaism during the times of Jesus and the early apostles. This form of legalism ostracises believers who do not subject to these rigid codes of outward conduct. It criticises or looks down on those 'deviant' believers.

Such legalism has a strong discouraging impact on people who are not able to handle these rigid codes of conduct. Many people who grew up in such a legalistic environment have turned away from the gospel with pain and bitterness. One finds this form of legalism in all sectors of Protestantism, ranging from traditional reformed to modern charismatic. Of course every Christian is required to break with sin. But our lives can only be pleasing to the Lord if we surrender our lives to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The adherence to all sorts of rules which are mostly created by man, merely results in frustration, barrenness, and death. (Revelation 12:12). Many who live under a legalistic yoke have the conviction that they can never do anything right or are never good enough. This conviction undermines their joy and faith, and may result in despair and neuroses. But there are also legalistic people who believe that they are doing very well according to their strict religious requirements. They are proud and contented with themselves like the Pharisees during the time of Jesus. People may also become proud because of radical achievements in the areas of fasting, prayer or other spiritual disciplines that require personal sacrifice. As such these disciplines may be very useful and even quite important. But once the personal motives become impure the gate to a legalistic spirit of religion is opened.

### ***Religious forms, customs and habits***

There are also religious spirits that inspire outward religiosity out of habit. Many people follow certain religious practices and adhere to certain beliefs simply because this is customary in their culture or social group. One finds such people in all sorts of religions, Christianity included. With many nominal Christians, the religious forms are in place, but a genuine faith in God and a personal dedication to Him are lacking. In their hearts they are either completely ignorant or indifferent. Furthermore, many people who are nominally religious still live their lives according to their own will and designs, but keep a few religious forms or practices that do not take them too much effort. They do not have a deep or living faith in God, but practice something religious as a sort of insurance policy in case God turns out to exist after all. Apart from that, a strong emphasis on outward religiosity may very well go together with a corrupt heart, sinful life and rebellion. Paul warns against such a spirit of false religious piety in 2 Tim 3:1-5.

In evangelical and charismatic circles there are also people who are willing to participate in a number of religious activities but who still lack a living faith and personal dedication to the Lord. They comply with various religious duties which keep their family members or their church leaders happy. Nevertheless they still live their lives according to their own ideas and from their own strength. Religious spirits find outward religiosity no threat to their dominion at all, but they will do all they can to keep people from a living faith and genuine surrender to the Lord.

### ***Spirits of formalism***

Another type of religious spirits that focus on external matters fanatically is formed by formalistic spirits. This type of spirits defines detailed standard requirements to the form and procedure of

religious acts and events, such as the exact contents, forms and sequence of prayers, songs, liturgy, clothes, and symbols. People who are inspired by formalistic spirits regard a church service only as valid if it follows a standard pattern and contains standard elements and has a standard sequence. They will tend to put a strong emphasis on church order and rules that are codified in 'church law', and leave hardly any room for spontaneity and variation.

Moreover, they require that the service is conducted by a 'real' pastor or priest dressed in official clothing. The 'real' pastor or priest is supposed to have a specified formal schooling, title and supposed to have experienced a formal dedication lead by other clergymen. Such a pastor or priest acts as a sort of intermediary between God and man. People with a formalistic spirit will not consider the church service as a possible source of blessing if some of these strict formal requirements are not met.

### ***Formalism is magic***

Formalism is in actual fact a form of magic. It is based, consciously or unconsciously, on the idea that spiritual blessings come automatically if one sticks to the correct outward religious forms or procedures. The traditional catholic mass is a good example of this. In the traditional view the life of Christ is only released through the Eucharist if it is served by a 'real' priest, and in accordance with church procedures. The spirits of formalism, however, exercise strong influence on many Protestants as well.

People who are influenced by spirits of formalism fear in the back of their minds that failure to stick to 'obliged' outward forms or procedures produces a curse. For this reason the people influenced by this type of spirit are often compulsive in their attitude and may react aggressively to those who deviate from these 'obliged' forms and procedures. In Matthew 6 verse 7 Jesus warns against this formalism and calls it pagan. Literally he says that believers should not pray like the pagans who hope to have their prayers answered through 'vain repetitions' (the NSAV translates 'their many words'). Jesus refers to the belief that the continuous repetition of standard formulations will automatically produce answered prayer. Such standard repetition is a common way in which many pagans pray to their gods.

### ***Pious humanism***

Another group of religious spirits stimulate intellectual reasoning about God and following Him, but at the same time blinds the human mind for the light of the Holy Spirit. Obviously we need to use our minds in our service to the Lord. But those religious spirits tempt us to use the mind as the ultimate source of understanding God's truth. Such spirits are at work in Catholicism and liberal Protestantism. But these spirits also operate amongst well meaning Protestants who sincerely try to follow God and understand His truth. One could label these spirits as 'pious humanism' or 'pious rationalism'.

Academically trained believers are susceptible to such pious rationalism, and especially theologians. But this attitude of pious humanism is also present among people without academic schooling. The impact of ancient Greek on western Christianity further reinforces such pious humanism. As a consequence many religious beliefs, also amongst orthodox Protestants, are merely human ideas promoting itself as Christian beliefs.

A spectacular example of such pious humanism or rationalism is the demonic attack on Peter which turned him into the mouthpiece of the devil for a moment. (Matthew 16:21-23). Peter had good intentions when he acted like this. But his pitfall was that he thought he knew better what was good for Jesus than the Lord Himself. Jesus discerned the operation of a satanic spirit through the words of Peter. This spirit sounded very pious but worked through human reasoning, and not on the basis of the understanding of the will of God.

### *Spirits of dogmatism*

A form of the spirit of religion that is connected to pious rationalism is dogmatism. There are surely absolute core truths which every Christian has to agree with, like the cross, the resurrection, Christ's return, etc. But there are also various parts of God's values and truths that each of us understands only in part. Apart from that, our understanding of God's truths and values are always distorted by human factors. This is not necessarily a problem, as long as we honestly acknowledge the limitations of our own understanding of God and His truth. There is always a degree of difference between God's absolute truths on the one hand and our interpretations of them on the other hand. We need to allow the Holy Spirit continually to correct our own interpretations of God's Word.

Dogmatism, however, puts its own interpretation of God's truths on the same plane as these truths; they cannot perceive much difference between them. Dogmatic persons regard all their points of view as absolutes and are not subject to correction in any of those views. After all, in their experience there is no real difference between God's truths and their interpretations of these truths.

### *Spirits of traditionalism*

A common variant of dogmatism is traditionalism. A denominational tradition is a series of human interpretations of God's truths and commandments. This tradition is passed on to posterity through ancestors or through a sequence of denominational leaders. Traditionalism regards the interpretations and rules that are inherited from the ancestors as more or less equal to God's truths and values. Every new or deviant interpretation is regarded as heresy and consequently rejected or even persecuted. An example from the Bible is presented by the Jewish spiritual leaders during the time of Jesus. These leaders were not able to see any distinction between the laws of Moses on the one hand, and their interpretations of these laws according to their traditions on the other hand. Jesus refers to their lack of ability to see such distinction when He said in Matthew 23:2 that the scribes and Pharisees 'have seated themselves in the chair of Moses'.

In a similar fashion contemporary Christians can seat themselves in the chair of the Bible writers by confusing their own interpretations of the Bible, or those of their ancestors, with the Bible itself. Unfortunately this confusion has pervaded the entire history of the church, up to this very day. The doctrine of the Catholic Church is a good example of this confusion of tradition and God's truth, but Protestants have made similar mistakes. In the Calvinist tradition in which I was raised, many well meaning reformed believers could not see any actual difference between the content of the Bible and the content of their own confessions. But Christians who are not Calvinist may be just as dogmatic about their own traditional views and Bible interpretations. For instance it strikes me that some charismatic believers are very strict in their adherence to various eschatological views, especially about the rapture. Consequently they are not open to prophetic understandings which question the validity of some of their interpretations. The question then arises

whether there is something wrong with these new prophetic understandings or with the old interpretations of eschatology.

### ***Religious misuse of the Bible***

People who are inspired by spirits of pious humanism, dogmatism and traditionalism usually refer to the Bible when they talk about their own views. Some of them even claim that the Bible is their only guide, and nothing else. Therefore they tend to be very suspicious of new prophecy, in spite of the fact that the Bible says that we should not despise prophetic utterances or gifts (1 Thessalonians. 5:20). Because of the influence of religious spirits such people do not give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to make them understand what God really means when He speaks through the Bible. John 16:13 teaches that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth, ' who guides us in all the truth'. If we do not allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the understanding of the Bible, we will end up interpreting the Bible according to our own ideas and traditions. Consequently we will miss what the Lord really wants to say to us in the Bible, which is exactly the objective of the spirits of religion.

This predicament characterised the Pharisees during Jesus' life on earth. They studied the Old Testament very diligently and accurately. But they were not really open to the light of the Holy Spirit. Under the influence of religious spirits they read the biblical writings through the 'spectacles' of their own traditions. Consequently they did not understand that the Old Testament prophecies spoke about Jesus, which caused them to reject Him (John 5:39,40).

### ***Religious spirits and quarrel***

Judaism during the time of Jesus and the apostles in the Bible clearly manifested the characteristics of the spirit of religion as we find them in various sectors of Protestantism, and in some Catholic and orthodox sectors as well. Traditionalism, dogmatism, Biblicism, and the resistance against the work of the Holy Spirit are examples of this. In the biblical descriptions of these forms of Judaism we also find other characteristics of the spirit of religion that are manifest in Christianity today. Firstly, we notice that people with a religious spirit love disputes. A spirit of religion tries to resist the truth by continually devising pious objections to the truth. This form of a religious spirit is one of pious obstinacy. This spirit of religion also tempts believers, through series of pious questions and arguments, to be drawn into endless debates. Such debates are usually fruitless, and merely produce loss of time and energy, and cause much irritation and even quarrel. Paul refers to this temptation when he says in 2 Timothy 2:24 that 'a servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome'.

The quarrelsome nature of the religious spirit is further manifest in religious divisions and schisms. These schisms tend to be the consequences of struggles over differences in doctrine and rules that are usually hard to explain to outsiders. Other important factors that tend to play a role in such schisms are pride, absolute faith in one's own opinion, and self elevation in which one regards himself as more important than the other. Schisms and divisions have been epidemic in Dutch church history, not merely in reformed churches, but in Pentecostal and charismatic circles as well.

### ***Spirits of false judgment and accusation***

The spirit of religion is inspired by the devil who is the 'accuser of the brethren'. A spirit of religion

therefore tends to accuse, judge and condemn servants of God. For instance, the words from religious people in disputes often come down to one extended accusation. Through these words these people with a religious spirit place their opponents in the dock so to speak, and force them to defend themselves. And as soon their opponents produce a good counterargument, these religious people force them back in the dock with a new accusation. The spirit of religion further tempts people to slander and condemn others through letters, articles, gossip and other means of communication. People who behave like this act as prosecutor and judge simultaneously.

The attacks in such spiritual ' trials' are often highly personalised. A person or group is represented as a danger and lambasted as a heretic, whereas the church is 'warned' against this person. The Bible emphatically warns us about such accusing and condemning attitudes (James 4:11, 12). Whoever is guilty of such conduct acts as judge of other believers. However, this role as judge of the believers belongs to God alone. He is the Only One who knows all hidden motives of man's heart (1 Corinthians 4:5).

### ***Accusation and lies***

A spirit of accusation is related to a lying spirit. People who have a spirit of accusation seldom represent the ideas and practices accurately of the people they accuse. They tend to exaggerate opinions or events, quote points of view entirely out of context, or attribute opinions to other people that these people do not have, or are even contrary to what these accused people have said or written. Charismatic media also regularly display such accusatory practices. However, the Ten Commandments state that the Lord prohibits us 'to bear false witness against your neighbour' (Exodus 20:16).

Jesus refers to this spirit of accusation and lying when He said: ' Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me' (Matthew 5:11). The context of Jesus' words shows that He particularly refers to the slander and false judgments from people who are controlled by religious spirits. This further implies that we are not blessed when we are guilty of the practices of slander and false judgment ourselves. This does not mean of course that it is never allowed to correct other believers. But the Bible has clear guidelines for such corrections. It is very important to remain free from spirits of lying and accusation, both when we speak and when we listen to people's criticism of others.

### ***Spirits of persecution, inquisition and murder***

The spirit of accusation and condemnation is in actual fact a spirit of inquisition that condemns and sentences believers as heretics. In the Dutch protestant versions this sentence usually exists of character assassination and of undermining people's ministries by discrediting them. Furthermore, other believers are discouraged or even prohibited to have anything to do with the ministries thus condemned. In the past this protestant version of the inquisition spirit has also dismissed people from their jobs, exiled them from their home town, and confiscated their properties.

This spirit of inquisition also manifests itself in intimidation, violence and eventually murder. The catholic inquisition during the middle ages and renaissance is a very notorious example. In these times many Protestants were condemned, tortured and killed by special catholic courts. Such a spirit of inquisition may also cause large scale persecution, like in the case of the

New Testament church after the death of Stephen.

A spirit of religion can be very angry and offended. This anger and offence can result in intense hatred and animosity and finally in murder. The murder of Abel by Cain is a notorious example (Genesis 4:8). The case of Stephen is another example of religious anger resulting in murder. The people with religious spirits that listened to Stephen's defence were deeply offended in their hearts and 'began gnashing their teeth at him'. Subsequently they stoned him to death (Acts 7:54 ff).

### ***III. Gates and openings to false religiosity***

#### ***Pride and self-righteousness***

Religious pride forms a dominant gate. A major form of religious pride is self-righteousness which was also a characteristic of Cain. Deep in his heart a self-righteous man cannot acknowledge that his religious efforts are worthless. It is impossible for him to accept that he is fully dependent on Jesus' sacrifice, and that he needs to lay down his old self completely. But there are also other forms of religious pride that open the gate for spirits of religion. Examples are pride of the personal religious status or that of the group to which someone belongs. Pride of religious background characterised the apostle Paul before his conversion. Charismatic churches or groups may express this pride of their status as well. Sometimes they behave as if they are specially chosen vessels for a coming revival and are elevated above other churches or ministries. Pride of one's religious achievements, abilities or anointing are other potential sources of religious pride.

#### ***Obstinacy and hard-headedness***

A self-righteous person is not receptive to God's revelation about his own mistakes and sins. He may express religious lamentations about his own sinfulness and confess sins that are not really the core of his personal predicament. Furthermore, he will not accept responsibility for his own sins and failures, but will always shift the blame to others, whether this is the world, other believers, the devil, or circumstances. Spiritual pride and self-righteousness are therefore linked to a spirit of obstinacy and hard-headedness. People with such a spirit can neither be told nor corrected. Such obstinacy and hard-headedness open the gate for spirits of religion even further.

#### ***Fear, uncertainty and ignorance***

Fear of chaos and spiritual uncertainty form another gate for religious spirits. Many believers do not have the courage to really trust God. Deep in their hearts they doubt whether He is able and willing to guide them with a firm hand through all chaos and uncertainties in their lives. Therefore they resort to various pseudo certainties to which they cling with passion. They use these pseudo certainties to restrain the chaos and uncertainty of life, and fight everything and everyone that challenge these pseudo certainties. These pseudo certainties may consist of old and familiar religious forms, clear and simple rules and blind confidence in religious leaders. In the case of spiritual leaders, fear to lose one's position in times of change may also open the gate for a spirit of religion.

A spirit of religion may further gain entrance through spiritual laziness and empty routines. In such cases people adhere to some religious practices and customs to avoid the risk of being punished by God. But a relation with God is lacking, and so is the commitment to surrender the dominion of one's life over to Him. People may also stick to certain religious practices and customs because these are obligatory for the social group or culture to which they belong.

Ignorance is another opening for a spirit of religion. When people never have an encounter with the living God, all they may know are religious habits and customs. This makes them very susceptible for various kinds of spirits of religion.

#### ***IV. Imitations of God the Father***

##### ***The importance of God as Father***

God reveals Himself first and foremost as Father. Therefore the role of God the Father is of supreme importance in God's relation with us. The apostle Paul says that 'every family in heaven and on earth derive its name from the Father. (Ephesians 3: 14, 15). Because the name refers to identity Paul's statement implies that every part of creation derives its identity from God the Father. Moreover, it is God the Father who adopts us as His heirs. His affirming love calls forth our personal destiny. This love gives us the confidence that enables us to give shape to our calling in His strength and with His guidance. (Ephesians: 1:3-6; 3:16).

God the Father further leads us into growth toward spiritual maturity. He is a loving coach who challenges us and who gives us powerful encouragement to get the most out of our lives, even through difficulties (Hebrews 12:5-11). A personal, intimate relation with God the Father is therefore of crucial importance for our identity, destiny and maturity as Christians. However, such a relationship is merely possible if we have a correct image of God the Father. For that reason religious spirits try to inhibit or undermine a relationship with God the Father by creating a distorted image of Him. Consequently we will not experience His affirming love. As a result of all this we will not have the confidence to appropriate all the blessings that He has prepared for us nor the confidence to use these blessings for His kingdom.

##### ***Spiritual rebellion against the role of God the Father***

Religious spirits try to depict God the Father as a strict, demanding and distant being. According to this distorted image the Father is somebody who is always easily angry and who punishes any minor disobedience severely. The authoritarian behaviour of some male leaders and natural fathers reinforce this distorted image of God the Father even further. Such a distorted image of God the Father causes people to become fearful and insecure. They are afraid of God the Father and prefer to keep their hearts far from Him. Such people may develop feelings of rejection or perfectionism which opens the door for spirits of rejection. This distorted image produces rebellion against any form of authority and authority figures. Such a distorted image of God the Father is strongly present in strict religious environments, especially in protestant ones. One finds this distorted image to an even greater degree in various sects or in groups that strongly exalt leaders who act like dictators.

In the Bible the book of Job presents a good example of such a distortion of the character of

God the Father. This example concerns Job's friends who incorrectly interpret his suffering as a punishment for Job's sins. It is quite remarkable that God is angry at Job's friends for their misinterpretation of Job's misfortunes. We read in Job 42:7 that He is not angry with Job's friends because they have not spoken what was right of Job, but because they had 'not spoken of God what is right'. Elifaz and his two friends had incorrectly presented God as always angry and on the brink of punishing someone. Ironically we may infer from this passage that we really make God angry by representing Him as someone who is always angry and vindictive!

### ***Rejection and the doctrine of election and predestination***

Strict protestant circles reinforce the incorrect image of God the Father through an extreme version of the doctrine of election and predestination. According to this extreme version God has elected some people for eternal salvation and other for eternal rejection. God made His decisions before the creation of the world, whereas man cannot alter these decisions in any way. Even repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord does not guarantee that you have been or will be accepted by God. According to this extreme version the salvation by Jesus on the cross is only valid for those who have been elected for salvation. And one will only find out if he is part of the 'chosen' if he receives a special personal revelation about this. A believer who has not or not yet received such a revelation therefore has no assurance of salvation at all.

This extreme version of the doctrine of predestination is an instrument of a spirit of religion that portrays God the Father as an unpredictable God with personal favourites and outcasts. According to this image He shows no mercy to many people who desperately want to be accepted by Him, and still sends them to hell. This distorted image of God the Father may cause intense despair en depression, and opens the door for a powerful spirit of rejection.

### ***The influence of pagan supreme deities on the image of God the Father***

The influence of ancient pagan deities may reinforce the distorted image of God the Father. The Greeks, the Germanic tribes and the Vikings all knew authoritarian male supreme deities. Subconsciously the impact of these pagan gods lingers on in the minds of Europeans which causes them to attribute characteristics of these supreme deities to God the Father. Particularly the influence of the Greek supreme god Zeus has been substantial in the history of European Christendom. This deity was egoistic and vindictive. He threw a lethal lightning to anyone who would offend or upset him. This lethal lightning was delivered to its target by the horse Pegasus. Unconsciously many people project Zeus's vindictiveness incorrectly on their image of God the Father, which causes them to be unnecessarily afraid of Him.

This unconscious influence by ancient pagan supreme deities also affects spiritual leaders, especially in cases where leaders have absolute power and do not tolerate correction or testing from others. Some of them tend to pronounce curses over people who criticise them or who break collaboration with them. Such a practice resembles the hot-tempered and vindictive Greek god Zeus rather than the patient and long-suffering Father from the Bible. Moreover, a Zeus spirit also manifests through abuse and repression of followers, especially of women.

### ***Repression of the Father's role***

Another strategy from the spirit of religion consists of undermining the role of God the Father by introducing a divine or semi-divine woman person. The image of this woman is usually strongly influenced by various pagan mother goddesses. Such a female personality pushes the role of God the Father to the background. The Mary cult in the catholic and orthodox churches is the best example of the strategy of the spirit of religion.

Children who have a negative experience with their human fathers may also push the role of God the Father to the background. Negative experiences with absent fathers or fathers who are emotionally or spiritually open the door to religious spirits that create an image of an absent and indifferent God the Father. Consequently these children may have difficulty to learn to experience God the Father as a father who is close and really cares about them. The overall effect is that believers with such background remain insecure and immature, and search for affirmation in many various ways. But they fail to break through and flourish in God's calling for their lives.

## ***V. Counterfeits of Christ***

### ***The mystery of God incarnate***

The Bible warns against false imitations of Christ more emphatically and repeatedly than against false imitations of the other persons of God. The reason is that we can only come to God through Christ. Therefore, if the devil can deceive us through a demonic imitation of Christ, he can keep us successfully from a relationship with God the Father as well (1 John 2:23). The apostle John discusses the denial of Christ's incarnation as an important strategy of the antichrist (1 John 2:18-22; 2 John: 7). This strategy is by no means surprising. The reality of Jesus being both completely God and completely human is a great mystery that is hard to understand for all of us. Throughout history theologians have tried to explain this mystery, usually with no more than little success. The devil uses this mystery by sowing confusion through false ideas about the incarnation. These false ideas either do injustice to Christ's divinity or to His humanity.

### ***Denial of the divinity of Jesus***

Many religions honour Jesus as a specially enlightened or blessed person. Nevertheless, these religions emphatically deny that He is the Son of God and the only way to salvation. Islam is a good case in point. It honours Jesus as a special prophet, but denies vehemently that He is the Son of God. The denial of Christ's divinity is a well known characteristic of sects who have split off from Christian churches. The most notorious example in the western world is the Jehovah witnesses. Liberal Christianity denies the divinity of Jesus too. It only considers Jesus as an inspiring example or role model.

### ***Denial of the humanity of Christ***

Other religious spirits consider Christ especially as a divine being or principle, but deny His humanity. Some ancient heresies regarded Christ as a special divine anointing that rested on the man Jesus for some time, but which never became a true unity. After Jesus' death the Christ continued to exist apart from him. Similar ideas like this one we can find amongst current new age

movements followers. They regard Christ as a state of particular enlightenment that Jesus once reached but which is not limited to Him. In this kind of new age thinking everybody can reach this state of enlightenment in his or her own particular way.

### ***Human instruments of antichrist spirits***

Spirits that imitate Christ also make use of special human instruments. These are false prophets and saviours who pretend to come in His name (Matthew 24:24). This category of people consists of men and women with a magnetic personality and/or ministry with signs and wonders who claim to be a special instrument of God. Some of them present themselves as a new Christ. However, most false prophets or christs pretend to serve Christ, but their ministry is mostly focused on themselves. Consequently they receive most of the honour for the miracles and blessing in their ministry, and Christ is in actual fact pushed to the background. Followers of false prophets and christs become personally attached to them so strongly that they can hardly experience the difference anymore between the ministry of this prophet and Christ Himself. Apart from that, these prophets and christs make their followers entirely dependent on their personality and anointing. They will not encourage their followers to become spiritually mature in the Lord.

### ***Power and fruits of false prophets***

False prophets may have a genuine anointing from the Lord but abuse this for their own glory (Matthew 7:15-20). But false prophets may also draw from false demonic sources to work signs and wonders. In such cases the antichrist spirits collaborate with religious spirits that imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. The characteristics of these spirits will be discussed in the next section.

The Bible shows that demonic spirits cannot imitate Christ convincingly in one particular area. They cannot imitate the character of Jesus. That is why we can discern true prophets from the false ones on the basis of their fruits. Demons cannot produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit which reflect the character of Jesus. Especially humility, meekness and modesty are important characteristics of Jesus that are also present in true prophets, but not in false ones (Matthew 7:21-23).

### ***Unbiblical representations of Christ***

An antichrist spirit can also influence Christians who seek a personal intimate relationship with Christ. A false christ spirit may attack if we want to develop a relationship with Christ that is not fed, directed and corrected by the Bible. Exodus 20:4 forbids us to make an idol, or grave image, or any likeness of what is in heaven, on the earth, or in the water under the earth, and forbids to serve or worship such a likeness. This prohibition to make images of God goes beyond visible and tangible statues and pictures. We are forbidden to create any image of God that is against His revelation, including images that are based on our own desires, ideas and fantasy. When we create images of God according to our own desires, ideas and fantasies we also fall into idolatry because we worship an incorrect image of God.

The same principle applies to our relationship with Christ. We should not construct an image of Christ according to our own desires and ideas. The only way to develop a true relationship with Christ is to use the biblical revelation about Christ as starting point and guideline for this relationship. In addition, our image of Christ is not supposed to be based on our own experience alone. We can only know Christ fully together with all other believers (Ephesians 3:18,19). If our relationship with Christ is based on personal dreams and longings we can open the gate to the operation of a religious spirit that pretends to be Jesus.

## ***VI. Counterfeits of the work of the Holy Spirit***

### ***Lies and distortions***

Religious spirits that counterfeit the operation of the Holy Spirit are so influential in the church of Christ today that I will discuss these in another article. In this article I will mention some main points briefly. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth. On the other hand the devil is the father of lies (John. 8:44). Religious spirit that imitate the work of the Holy Spirit are lying spirits who pretend to be spirits of truth. Lying spirits do not merely provide information that are factually entirely incorrect. On the contrary, they give information that is partially correct and may even seem entirely right. But these spirits twist and manipulate this factually correct information, and repress facts that are important to interpret all the information properly. Consequently we end up with distorted half truths which are not very different from a total lie.

These lying spirits try to counterfeit the voice of the Holy Spirit or His power. In the first instance we speak of spirits of false prophecy, and in the last instance of charismatic witchcraft or sorcery.

### ***Spirits of condemnation and false sense of sin***

An important task of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin (John 16:8). The conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit by no means ends in condemnation. The Holy Spirit wants to produce remorse and repentance in people in order to truly deliver them from the burden of sin. The truth sets us free, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, plays a key role in this process (John 8:32). But there are lying spirits at work who actively try to convict believers of sin as well. Their purpose, however, is not to deliver them from their sins, but on the contrary to give them a deep sense of condemnation. As a result they lose their joy and confidence with the Lord which opens the door for spirits of heaviness and despair.

The sins these lying spirits focus on are sometimes real. But these spirits exaggerate the scope, frequency and intensity of these sins, and sometimes convict believers of sins they have not committed at all. Such lying spirit may also bring old sins to the believers' attention from which they have already repented long ago. These spirits whisper in the believers' ear that God is not going to forgive them anyway. Some lying spirits tell believers that they have committed the 'sin against the Holy Spirit' for which there is no forgiveness. Such lying spirits are very active in strict protestant circles, but they also target evangelical and charismatic Christians. It is very important to resist such lying spirits. Every voice that accuses us of sin and which sounds loud and aggressive, and which gives us a sense of heaviness, depression, or desperation, does not come from God.

### ***Counterfeit revelation and prophecy***

The Holy Spirit gives us revelation and prophecy. All through the Bible we can detect religious lying spirits that try to imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. Our time is not different. For instance, lying spirits regularly give false guidance to believers. In such case they tempt Christians to take drastic decisions that cause great problems but which were not required by the Lord. Some Christians end up in great need because a lying spirit told him to sell their house and give up their job. Others may even leave their family and, under false guidance, start a relationship with another partner who is supposed to be more spiritual than the former spouse.

Religious spirits of prophecy are in actual fact spirits of divination who impersonate the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Bible shows that false prophecy is linked to the spirit of Jezebel (Revelation 2:20). Spirits of false prophecy can provide information that is factually true, either partly or entirely, but it can also speak gross nonsense. Anyhow, these spirits of prophecy claim to give us direction about God's purposes for our lives, but they frustrate and undermine God's purposes with our lives in actual fact.

### ***Gates of counterfeit revelation and prophecy***

Sometimes Christians fail to purify themselves properly from spirits of divination that operated in their former lives and which they inherited from their ancestors. Consequently, these spirits of divination continue to influence them after their conversion by adopting revelation and prophecy as a religious disguise. Total cleansing from any occult influence is therefore absolutely necessary for every Christian. This need for cleansing applies to an even greater degree to believers with a special calling in the prophetic.

Spirits of false revelation and prophecy also gain entry when we are subjected to the ministry of false prophets. Such spirits may also gain entry easily in Christians who are mentally or emotionally unstable, or who are spiritually ambitious, bitter or wounded. A lying spirit will whisper into the ears of such unstable Christians the suggestion that they have a very high prophetic calling. Because of their ambition or inner wounds such Christians are very susceptible for such suggestions. This lying spirit subsequently eases this entry to give such believers false revelation. These Christians are not eager to have their 'revelation' properly tested because they are convinced themselves of their high prophetic anointing. Next, lying spirits may gain further entry when genuinely prophetic people stop testing their prophecies properly because in their pride they are so convinced of their own pure anointing that they stop subjecting their prophecies to testing.

### ***Imitation of the power of the Holy Spirit***

Apart from lying spirits who present themselves as prophetic anointing there are also lying spirits that counterfeit the power of the Holy Spirit. Such spirits are witchcraft or sorcery in a charismatic disguise. The apostle Paul calls sorcery a work of the human flesh (Galatians 5:20). Such work opens the gate for demons of witchcraft or sorcery, which provides spiritual power to a person from an unclean spiritual source.

One of the ways in which this spirit operates is through manifestation in the human body. It

is true that Christians may have strong physical reactions to the power of the Holy Spirit, like falling and shaking (I myself have been flung away several metres a couple of times) But intense physical reactions may also be caused by the operation of demons in a Christian, because these demons feel threatened by the presence of God's power. However, in such cases religious spirits try to convince people that these manifestations are the direct result of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This lie leaves the demons untouched and undetected and prevents them from being driven out of these believers.

Because some Christians regard intense physical manifestations as proof of the anointing of the Holy Spirit they are tempted to produce such manifestations, either consciously or unconsciously. The next phase in this misunderstanding is that they open themselves for religious witchcraft spirits who indeed produce such physical manifestations in believers.

Some ministries or movements practice signs and wonders through spirits of sorcery or witchcraft. But a religious spirit creates a powerful impression that these false signs and wonders come from the Holy Spirit. Many of the false prophets and saviours that the Bible warns about operate through such a deceptive demonic anointing.

### ***Religious spirits of witchcraft in prayer***

Intercession is an area of the Christian life in which charismatic witchcraft is rather common. The Holy Spirit often guides us into intense intercession which involves our entire body, spirit and soul. Unfortunately many Christians imitate the fire of the Holy Spirit because they believe that long and loud prayers, accompanied by intense physical movements, guarantee that their prayers will be answered. Such intercession, however, is fleshly sorcery which may give entry to a demonic pseudo anointing. Prayers through which we aggressively claim various concrete blessings, like a specific building, a certain sum of money, etc, may also qualify as witchcraft if the Lord has not really promised us these blessings. Such practices may open the gate for spirits of witchcraft.

Charismatic witchcraft may also manifest through cursing prayers. These are prayers in which we ask the Lord to punish somebody or to put him under strict discipline. Such prayers are in actual fact a form of black magic. The Bible clearly tells us that as Christians we need to bless others, and not to curse them (Romans 12:14). Controlling prayers are witchcraft prayers as well. Controlling prayers are prayers in which we ask the Lord to convince other people of what we believe these people should do. Especially leaders are targets of such prayers, for instance when intercessors ask the Lord to convince these leaders that the intercessors are right about the direction a church or ministry has to go and the leaders are wrong.

### ***Gates of religious spirits of witchcraft***

I have already said that spirits of divination from which a believer has not yet been delivered may pretend to be prophecy. In a similar fashion spirits of witchcraft which are still present in a believer can disguise itself as the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, it is very important that we bring our will under the cross of Christ. Many believers have not completely surrendered their will to the Lord. They still want to impose their will on others at all possible costs, and even impose their will on God Himself. Such desire which manifests in witchcraft prayers in such believers are in fact attempts to control God.

Religious spirits that imitate the power of the Holy Spirit may also gain entry through a hunger for spiritual power. Many believers intensely desire the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit and signs and wonders. Such desire is very legitimate and even commendable. However, the Holy Spirit is not merely concerned with power, but His main objective is to magnify Jesus Christ. If our focus on God's power is motivated by personal ambition or search for sensation, at the expense of our relationship with God Himself, we open the gate for deceptive spirits who try to imitate God's power.

Finally, the influence of ministries that are inspired by demonic imitations of the work of the Holy Spirit also form a major gate for the dispersion of religious spirits of witchcraft or sorcery in the body of Christ.

### ***Discernment of religious spirits of false prophecy and witchcraft***

To begin with we need to understand that God really demands from us that we test spiritual manifestations and prophecy. Unfortunately some Christians are very gullible and naive in this regard. They do not take discernment and testing seriously and may even believe that testing will grieve the Holy Spirit.

An important criterion is the consistency of a manifestation or prophecy with the Bible and the character of God. Such consistency not merely needs to apply to the content but also to the tone of prophecy. The voice of the Lord is authoritative and brings order, clarity and peace to our minds and hearts (Philippians 4:7). His voice is firm but also gentle. God seldom shouts to call our attention. We can actually miss His voice if we are not attentive and alert in listening. God's voice may bring discipline and correction, but always affirms the possibility of a new beginning as well. The voice of the enemy tends to be loud, intrusive, controlling and tends to bring confusion and disorder. Lying spirits often cause a sort of heaviness in our minds and feelings, and create a deep sense of unrest and even despair. Both spirits of false prophecy and spirits of charismatic witchcraft exercise such negative effects on the believer and his environment.

Another criterion for discernment is the question whether prophecy or powerful signs give glory to God, or in actual fact focuses the attention to the prophets or miracle worker. Spiritual discernment is also a part of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as well as a special gift the Holy Spirit gives to some believers in a special measure. Like in other areas of the Christian life the principle applies that the more we walk in this anointing or gift of discernment the more we will grow in it.

## ***VII. Deliverance from a spirit of religion***

### ***Repentance from personal openings***

Deliverance from a spirit of religion has many similarities with deliverance from other demonic spirits. As a starter it is necessary to repent from the sins that have provided the openings for this spirit. These openings may be, for instance, pride, fear, ignorance, involvement in antichristian sects. It is important to be as concrete and precise as possible. Do not merely confess pride in a vague and general way, but confess pride about one's own background, denomination, one's opinions, etc. Subsequently deliverance will be necessary, even though the degree of influence of

the spirit of religion varies from person to person. The proud versions of the spirit of religion tend to be connected to obstinacy, hard headedness or 'stiff necked' attitudes, and rebellion. Deep in his heart the religious person believes he knows everything even better than God.

### ***The deliverance from false religiosity***

Both in our experience and that of seasoned specialists in deliverance spirits of religion tend to manifest in the head. They express themselves through confusion, heaviness, pressure in the head, and a sort of fog. Such symptoms are related to the fact that religious spirits try to control the human thoughts and to inspire twisted ideas of God's truth in the mind. Furthermore, these spirits exult the religious reasoning of man above the Holy Spirit who guides in all the truth.

During deliverance spirits of religious pride and obstinacy often cause physical symptoms in the neck, throat, shoulders and upper back, such as stiffness, and uncontrolled movements. Such spirits tend to be further connected to spirits of death, heaviness, depression, sadness, mourning, anger and even murder. Mocking spirits are frequently involved too, as well as spirits of gossip and false judgement. These mocking spirits may target those in charge of the deliverance session by putting them down through derogatory talk. This way these spirits try to discourage the minister of deliverance and tempt him to give up.

Spirits of charismatic witchcraft often manifest like a kind of snake that is rooted in the lower back. A strong pressure in the forehead or around the head may be present as well, especially in the case of false visual revelation (dreams and visions).

### ***Deliverance from false prophecy and charismatic witchcraft***

It is important that each of us faces the possibility that we may have fallen in the trap of false prophecy and charismatic witchcraft ourselves. We need to honestly seek the Lord about this, and confess and repent if He shows us that we have fallen in this trap. When somebody has been involved in charismatic witchcraft of false prophecy, either actively or passively, deliverance is necessary, even though the degree of demonization varies from person to person. We further need to cleanse our hearts. Especially ambition, hunger for status or power, bitterness and resentment and rejection have to be addressed through repentance, inner healing and deliverance. Any power of divination and witchcraft that we have inherited from the generations need to be removed as well.

In case we have been subjected to the ministry of authoritarian leaders or false prophets we need to cut the soul ties with these people as well. Such ties serve as channels of charismatic witchcraft and other demonic religious bondages.

### ***Why deliverance from religious spirits may be difficult***

Deliverance from religious spirits is often tougher than deliverance from demons of the occult. This is because the entry points for these demons also allow blocking spirits to operate. For instance, when fear has been the entry point of a spirit of religion, this fear will tend to create fear of the deliverance process as well, and prevent the fearful person to be really open for deliverance. Pride may inspire the conviction in a religious person that he does not need any deliverance.

Next, religious spirits are often connected with spirits of obstinacy and hard headedness. These spirits of obstinacy and hard headedness are programmed to put up tenacious resistance against the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore block the process of deliverance as well. Such spirits operate as 'gatekeepers' who inhibit deliverance from any spirit, and often need to be thrown out first before one can proceed to the deliverance from other demons.

Another reason why religious spirits are often comparatively hard to exorcise is the fact that they tend to be intertwined with the minds of the people who are controlled by these spirits. During the deliverance these spirits will continually generate thoughts in the mind of a person who is being delivered, such as doubts and the idea that this deliverance is unnecessary and even useless. The person will not discern these thoughts as originating from the religious spirits and may believe these thoughts are authentically his own. Consequently the person may stop actively collaborating with his deliverance.

### ***Religious spirits and generational iniquity***

Like in other forms of demonization, the sins and openings may have been passed on through the generations. Therefore someone may not be aware of spirits of obstinacy and hard headedness, because the sins were not originally committed by himself but by some of his ancestors. People from backgrounds characterised by religious spirits may therefore suffer great hindrances in breaking through in intimacy with God and with His anointing, though they themselves are very sincere in their attempts to follow God. Believers from a background of 'black stocking' Protestantism or legalistic religion are likely to suffer the continual effects of religious spirits, even though they do not move around in such religious circles themselves.

The same principle applies to people with catholic ancestors. Most people from catholic or orthodox background inherit the influence of covenants with Mary and in many cases various saints as well. Such covenants are quite pervasive in such backgrounds. For instance, the first communion of catholic children involves an actual personal covenant with Mary. Such people have openings for spirits of divination and witchcraft, as well as other demons that fall under the domain of the queen of heaven. Without deliverance such familiar spirits will infiltrate our spiritual life under a new disguise.

### ***Some suggestions to remain free***

The following factors are important for continuing freedom after deliverance. The first factor is growth into maturity which includes a growing control over one's own spirit and the emotions and imagination, and growth in spiritual discernment and knowledge of the Bible. We further need to remain on the alert for attacks of pride and excessive ambition. Maturity also implies the willingness to subject oneself to correction by other, more mature Christians. If we do not subject ourselves to correction from other believers we will not subject ourselves to the correction from the Lord either.

We need to form our image of God on the basis of the Bible. Meditate on Bible verses that specifically talk about God the Father, verses that specifically talk about the character of Jesus, and verses that discuss the work and character of the Holy Spirit. Meditate also on Bible passages that discuss our freedom from condemnation and about walking in the Spirit. Books from good

Christian authors on these subjects are useful instruments in such meditation too. Furthermore, a living relationship with the Lord in prayer and listening is paramount, and a continuous filling of the Holy Spirit. Finally, Paul told the Galatians that they should not 'again subject to a yoke of slavery' (Galatians 5:1). Ask the Lord to keep you alert to the pitfalls of the spirits of religion that want to impose a new yoke of slavery on you. Exercise in resisting the attacks from spirits of religions and they will flee from you (James 4:7).

### ***Spiritual leaders and deliverance***

Finally I want to briefly discuss the relationship between the spirit of religion and spiritual leaders. Leaders are extra popular targets of spirits of religions since they have a comparatively big impact on other believers. Usually it is quite difficult to deliver leaders, and even more so to deliver them from spirits of religion. They need to overcome high barriers of pride before they acknowledge that not only their flock but also they themselves need deliverance from religious spirits. In addition, leaders may fear that public recognition or manifestations of their need for deliverance from demons will undermine their authority and status with their flock or colleagues.

However, the deliverance of leaders, including from religious spirits, is absolute top priority. Demonic bondages in leaders have a comparatively strong influence on the spiritual development of their churches or ministries. On the other hand, when spiritual leaders are willing to subject themselves to deliverance their flock will feel strongly encouraged to have deliverance too. Apart from that, a leader who is delivered from demonic bondages will become a pure and effective instrument in God's hand and a source of blessing for his church and ministry, as well as for the nation as a whole.

### ***VIII. Summary and final comments***

In this article I have discussed the spirit of religion. I have expounded on religious spirits that inspire religiosity that does not do justice to the cross of Christ. Examples of this type of religious spirits are legalism, dogmatism, pious humanism, traditionalism and formalism. I have also focused on spirits of religion that try to imitate the work of God. Some of these attempts to undermine the role of God the Father, others imitate Christ, whereas others counterfeit the voice or the power of the Holy Spirit. I have focused on the entry points for such spirits, and have discussed how we can be delivered from religious spirits and remain free from them.

We live in a spiritual season in which the Lord Himself emphatically seeks to develop an intimate relationship with us. He also wants to break through with His power in our lives and nation. The other side of the coin is that this is also a season in which religious spirits are strongly active in obstructing the work of the Lord in us through counterfeit. Let us diligently and honestly seek deliverance from all hindrances and contaminations from such religious spirits, and walk in the full liberty of a living relationship with the living God.