

THOSE TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO BECOME CHILDREN of God, and to be born from above of the Spirit, who have within them Christ shining and refreshing them, are led in many different ways of the Spirit, and acted upon by grace invisibly in the heart, in spiritual rest. Let us employ figures of tangible enjoyments in the world, to signify in some measure the dealings of grace in the heart. There are times when they are as if entertained at a royal banquet, and rejoicing with joy and gladness inexpressible. At another moment they are like a bride reposing in communion with her bridegroom in a divine repose. Another time they become like angels without bodies, they are so light and unencumbered, body and all. Another time they are as if drunken with strong drink, being exhilarated and intoxicated with the Spirit, with the intoxication of divine and spiritual mysteries. Another time they are as if in weeping and lamentation for the human race; and in supplication for the whole Adam they take up a mourning and a weeping, being consumed by the love of the Spirit towards mankind. At another they are fired by the Spirit with such rejoicing and love, that if it were possible they would take every man into their own hearts, without distinguishing between bad and good. Sometimes they are so humbled beneath all others in the humility of the Spirit, that they think themselves to be the last and least of all. Sometimes the Spirit keeps them in such *joy unspeakable** that they are wearied out. Another time they are like a mighty man who has taken the king's whole armour, and come down upon his enemies to battle, and fights against them powerfully, and has conquered; for, like him, the spiritual man takes the heavenly weapons of the Spirit, and comes down upon the enemies, and battles with them, and puts them under his feet. At another time the soul reposes in a certain great quietness and calm and peace, with no sense of anything else but spiritual pleasure, and repose unspeakable, and well-being. At another, it is instructed by grace in a kind of unspeakable understanding and wisdom, and the knowledge of the unsearchable Spirit, in things which it is impossible to utter with tongue and speech. So various are the dealings of grace in them, and in so many ways does it lead the soul which it refreshes according to the will of God, and exercises it in different manners, in order to restore it to the heavenly Father perfect and faultless and pure. But the operations of the Spirit of which I have spoken belong to the great measures which are near perfection.

* 1 Peter i.8

St Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, tr. Mason, Homily XVIII, 7–10, pp. 154–55

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