

the  
day  
of the  
Spirit

**PASTORS' SCHOOL 1999**

MORNING SESSIONS

*Published by*



NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
PO Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051  
1999

Published by  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC., AUSTRALIA  
PO Box 403 Blackwood South Australia, 5051

© Geoffrey Bingham 1999  
© Martin Bleby 1999  
© Noel Cannon 1999  
© Noel Due 1999  
© Rodney James 1999  
© Colin Jones 1999  
© Deane Meatheringham 1999  
© Robin Mitchell 1999  
© Hector Morrison 1999  
© Ian Pennicook 1999  
© Siew Kiong Tham 1999  
© Grant Thorpe 1999

National Library of Australia card number and  
ISBN 0 86408 228 2

This book is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Wholly set and printed at  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
Coromandel East, South Australia

[www.newcreation.org.au](http://www.newcreation.org.au)

# CONTENTS



<i>Study 1:</i>	<b>The Spirit Comes at Pentecost</b>	Deane Meatheringham	1
<i>Study 2:</i>	<b>The New Community of the Spirit</b>	Noel Cannon	5
<i>Study 3:</i>	<b>The Spirit and the Gospel Proclamation</b>	Noel Due	11
<i>Study 4:</i>	<b>The Spirit and the Universal Kingdom of God</b>	Ian Pennicook	13
<i>Study 5:</i>	<b>The Spirit of Christ the Son and the Lord</b>	Colin Jones	17
<i>Study 6:</i>	<b>The Spirit of the Cross and the Resurrection</b>	Robin Mitchell	21
<i>Study 7:</i>	<b>The Spirit of the Everlasting Covenant</b>	Hector Morrison	27
<i>Study 8:</i>	<b>The Spirit of Community—Unity and Communion</b>	Noel Cannon	31
<i>Study 9:</i>	<b>The Spirit of Worship and Prayer</b>	Siew Kiong Tham	37
<i>Study 10:</i>	<b>The Fullness of The Spirit</b>	Rod James	44
<i>Study 11:</i>	<b>The Sword of the Spirit</b>	Hector Morrison	51
<i>Study 12:</i>	<b>The Sword and the Pulpit</b>	Deane Meatheringham	57
<i>Study 13:</i>	<b>The Spirit Given, and the Gifts</b>	Grant Thorpe	61
<i>Study 14:</i>	<b>Being Led by the Spirit</b>	Martin Bleby	66
<i>Study 15:</i>	<b>The Spirit and the Prophetic Community</b>	Ian Pennicook	74
<i>Study 16:</i>	<b>The Eschatological Spirit</b>	Geoffrey Bingham	79

*Copies of the Evening Studies are available in a separate volume*

## STUDY ONE

# THE SPIRIT COMES AT PENTECOST

Deane Meatheringham



When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability (Acts 2:1–4).

What has got at these people, that in a world where every assertion is tested and received as problematical, they confess the man Jesus as the divine Lord and the Messiah (Acts 2:21, 36)? There was a dramatic meeting with God and humanity wherein the guarantee of that meeting was found not in themselves but in God himself. Within this encounter they were given the Spirit of faith so that in believing they spoke. They spoke out of an impartation of divine life, communicated into them by the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 4:13; cf. Ps. 116:10).

The Spirit gives us life, not as the source of it, which is the Father, not as the normative prototype of it, which is the risen Son, who is alive so fully and finally that he has done with death in all its forms for ever. The distinctive work of the Spirit is to communicate to us the life that is in the Father and the Son, so that we actually share and experience it in ourselves. In the Spirit the life that the Father wills and that the Son incarnates is brought over to our side of our relationship with them and begins to reach its destination in us as the first fruits of the whole of the human race for which it was intended.<sup>1</sup>

To understand what happened to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost we will look at the promises of the Spirit given by Jesus in his farewell discourses in John 14 – 16, and in the instruction which Jesus gave to the disciples after his resurrection in Acts 1:1–8.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tom Smal, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person*, (Dartman, Longman & Todd, London, 1994), p. 167.

## **JESUS IS THE WAY HOME**

In preparing the disciples for his departure Jesus said that he is preparing them a place in the Father's household. He also said that he would take them with him to that household, 'that where I am, there you may be also' (John 14:1–4). John the Baptist recognised Jesus as the man of the Spirit when he witnessed the descent of the Spirit in the shape of a dove. The Baptist stressed that the Spirit *remained* on Jesus and that he would baptise with the Spirit (John 1:32–33). Because Jesus has the Spirit without measure, he speaks the words of God (John 3:34f.). It would seem that Christ was the one to dispense the life of the Father's home to his disciples in such a manner that they would participate in the community life of that home which he himself enjoyed with the Father.

This is further expanded and reinforced when Jesus tells the disciples that in his going they will not be bereft of him, rather he will come to them: 'On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you', and, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them' (John 14:20, 23). 'On that day' refers to the coming of 'another Advocate' (John 14:16), the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on the Day of Pentecost. The knowing of 'that day', for the disciples, will be the result of their personal participation in the truth which the Father wanted them to know. The Spirit will bring them into the life of this home and he will bring the life of the Father's house into them. Knowing that the Christ is in the Father as the Father is in him, and knowing this after the events of Good Friday and the Resurrection, the disciples will know that the man Jesus who has wrapped their lives up with his is the divine Lord, and they will know the Father as their Lord knows him.

## **THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH**

The Advocate who Jesus will ask the Father to send and who will be with the disciples for ever is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16–17). The *paracletis* signifies the combination of reminding and consoling (II Cor. 1:3f.), and its meaning cannot be reproduced in English, but as a *counterpart* of Christ he is not identical with Christ, or with the Son, or the Word. But the Spirit is Holy because only God's Spirit is so and to him belongs the divinity of the Lord. What the Father chooses to reveal to Man he does so through the *paracletis* who from the intimacy of his relation with the Father and Christ creates in Man a relationship with him which is a revelation of God himself. God chooses to be present to his children not only from without, or above, but also from within. This revelation will be a subjective knowing of the truth, the truth of the holy community of God himself and of the recipient being a participant in this revelation of his/her relationship in God.

The Advocate is identical with the Spirit of truth who will testify on Christ's behalf (John 15:26) and will guide the disciples into all the truth (John 16:13). The instruction which the Spirit will bring will not proceed beyond Christ or beyond the Word, but he will awaken the disciples on behalf of the Word and declare all that belongs to the Father and to the Son (John 16:14f.; cf. I John 5:20; 2:27).

Humanity has a fatal problem with the truth, and this is that we know it but choose to repress it for the sake of a lie (John 8:31–38; Rom. 1:18ff.). Each person sees and responds according to their own perspective, making truth impossible for human society. A post-modern culture says that there is no mega-narrative, there is just our

## The Spirit Comes At Pentecost

experience in our culture: for example, 'The Truman Show'. Unaided, no one will come to know the truth. With the coming of the Advocate, Jesus promised a knowledge of the truth in a way that nothing will be problematical and nothing will have to be worked out by testing, but it will come from a meeting with God on the day of the Spirit.

### THE MAKING OF RECEPTIVITY

'Nevertheless it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you' (John 16:7). The Spirit would not be given until Jesus was glorified (John 7:39).

Two things which are all part of the one action would need to happen if men and women were to receive the Spirit of truth. First, as the truth concerns our being participants in the home of God and we are in the far country, we would need to be brought home in truth. Second, we could never and would never enter the holy sanctuary of God as corrupted mortal beings and our guilty alienation would prohibit our return.

Jesus was glorified when as our great High Priest he ascended to the Cross and offered himself to God for our sins. In his atoning death Jesus the divine Son judged our guilt and reconciled us to God. Through his resurrection Jesus ascended into the presence of God on our behalf and from the Father has received the Holy Spirit. For us it means that the mystery of God will be opened to all believers.

When the Spirit comes he will convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8–11). In short, the Spirit will convict the world of its lie in rejecting Christ and the homecoming he has made for us. Here we should see the integral connection between 'truth' and 'witness'. The Father himself witnesses to Jesus (John 5:36f.; 8:18; I John 5:9) and the testimony of the Spirit is the witness of the Father from whom he comes, and Jesus says the Spirit will witness on his behalf (John 15:26). This is God's own witness to his own truth as it is in Jesus. It is the authentication and interpretation of God to his own truth. Witness of this sort must be distinguished from the witness of the Baptist, the disciples, the Scriptures or even Jesus' works; for the Spirit's witness to Christ is the inner consistency of God's own being. The truth of God brings the sifting of judgment and the conviction of sin to the world.

### YOU ARE TO TESTIFY

Those who received the Spirit of truth were to testify (John 15:27). After his resurrection Jesus said that the disciples were to wait for the promise of the Father which Christ would receive and pour out upon them. With this empowerment the disciples would be witnesses to the truth *to all the creation*, but the work of the Spirit is now seen to be the action and goal of the reign of God *for all the creation* as prophesied in the OT (Acts 1:1–8).

### PENTECOST

Acts 2:1–41 gives the report of the once-for-all, universal event. The wind encloses the 140 disciples. Yet like the breath of Jesus upon the disciples after his resurrection, it goes out of the mouth of one living creature to reach another, so that God gives Man his breath and discloses himself to Man in his experience, illuminating him as a prophet

## The Spirit Comes At Pentecost

and apostle. The testimony of the Spirit makes the witness of the disciples to God in Christ a new revelation by their speaking in their language.

The divided tongues of fire become visible and a tongue rests upon each of the disciples so that they begin to speak in 'other languages'. The emphasis is that 'your sons and your daughters shall prophesy' (Acts 2:17). The effect is that the people who were present from all possible near and far nations hear the disciples expressing in their own languages the mighty works of God. Is this not the Spirit bringing to remembrance all that Jesus said and did, but now coming to them from the home of the Father which they have entered in the Son? The truth of God not only comes to Man, but in Christ the truth meets God from humanity's end. Not until the reception of the Holy Spirit do we know that the salvation of God is meant for us; for me. But the point is not for us to reduce the gift of the Spirit to personal experience, but in our speaking the wonderful works of God to the world. Here is an apostolate of human beings, distinct from Christ yet in communion with him, subordinate to him yet having been made an element in the revelation of Christ. They are commissioned by him to testify in human words to nations near and far.

In his speech Peter explains the event of Pentecost as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, showing that the risen and ascended Christ has received the promise of the Father and poured out the Spirit. The Spirit of truth convicts the hearers, leading them to repentance and baptism. Peter's faith has its origin in the coming of the Spirit causing him to confess that Jesus the man is the Lord from above.

Wonderfully, we can say that what was true for the day of Pentecost is true for all those who are in Christ, who are filled with the Spirit.

## STUDY TWO

# THE NEW COMMUNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Noel Cannon



It is arbitrary to distinguish what the Spirit does in the Church, and what He does in the believer, for neither the Church nor the believer exists without the other. The believer is necessarily a Church member. Someone once observed to John Wesley, ‘Remember you cannot serve Him alone; you must, therefore, find companions, or make them; **the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion**’. There is no Church apart from men of faith. W. H. Griffith Thomas, writing near the beginning of the twentieth century, said, ‘It must be constantly borne in mind that the true, full, vigorous, mature Christian life is impossible to any Christian who tries to live a solitary life’. When Griffith Thomas expressed his view of the community of the Church, his terminology ‘**true, full, vigorous and mature**’ expressed all that became manifest in believers when the life-giving Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.

There was a series of extraordinary happenings which heralded the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Sounds likened to that of a mighty wind that filled the house. The fiery tongues that parted asunder came to rest on the members of that little band. Physical phenomena. But there was something far more important than physical phenomena. The disciples felt themselves to be new men. The very Spirit of God was within them and that to an unusual degree—they were ‘**filled with the Holy Spirit**’. Those disciples, immediately, at Pentecost, became different people. They went down to the most public place they could find and there preached Jesus boldly. And this change from cringing cowards to fearless preachers was permanent. We do not again read of them hiding away for fear of men. From now on they were unbounded vehicles of the Holy Spirit proclaiming to men the message of the Gospel.

When the Spirit was given to them, their minds were illuminated with the full truth of God’s love in Christ. **Pentecost presupposed Calvary** and could have had no distinctive meaning without Calvary. Yet the meaning of Calvary became fully accessible

## The New Community of the Spirit

only through the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Geoffrey Bingham emphasises that the experience of the Cross and Resurrection must be at the heart of all that's being done if we are to utilise the true resources of Calvary through **Pentecost. Pentecost was with a view to Calvary. Calvary was not with a view to Pentecost.** It is Pentecost which opened up the mysteries of God's grace and released them. And the illumination of their minds transformed their outlook. Everything looked different. Everything was different. For with the descending stream of the Spirit came the **revelation of God's love.** That truth for which their soul had thirsted now refreshed them.

Peter was the chief speaker. His words showed a blend of courage, wisdom, and skill which is clearly distinguishable from his appearances in the Gospels. Such radical change was not confined to Peter. From that day forward, a new strength, which was not their own, marked all the sayings and deeds of the Apostolic Church. Peter had concluded his sermon with the proclamation, 'God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ'. The response of the hearers expressed their need and their conviction of sinfulness. They asked Peter and the Apostles, 'What shall we do?' Peter informed them to repent and to be baptised when they, too, would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And three thousand did more than stand up and be counted. They remained in the fellowship, studied the teaching (or doctrines) of the apostles and joined in 'the breaking of bread' and in 'the prayer'.

The Church, invigorated by the divine power and set on the path of work and worship, burst into existence on that day of Pentecost.

If someone had been able to catch a moment of Saul's time prior to his departure for Damascus and ask him to name the men of the Spirit, he would have given us a fine list of 'the greats'—Joseph and Moses, the Judges, Joshua, David, the prophets (especially Ezekiel), and Bezalel, and the noted artisans who worked on the ark of the covenant to name only some. Great men, moved by the Spirit. It had its impact on those who worked and laboured around them, but they were only ever working in the shadow of the infilling of 'the greats'.

But Pentecost was so different. Whereas before in Old Testament times it had been the ministry of notable men, now everybody was similarly moved, impelled with the primacy of the word and the urgency of the telling forth of the message and the accompanying signs and wonders. Everyone was **dynamic in the fullness of the Spirit.** And after Pentecost, it was not just Jews. The promise of the prophet Joel had only partially been fulfilled at Pentecost. Samaria and Caesarea were yet to come, where the 'all flesh' Gentiles would share in the manifestations and wonders of the Spirit.

Shortly after Pentecost, there had been at Jerusalem the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. And the ridiculous suggestion made by the Sanhedrin to Peter and John after that healing was that if, in fact, it had been by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that such healing had been brought about, then they were forbidden to use the name again; to which Peter filled with the Holy Spirit had only one response, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard'. And the Sanhedrin let Peter and John go because the Council could find no way of punishing the Apostles since the people all glorified God for what had been done.

When Peter and John reported back to their own companions, they all raised their voices to God with one accord and sought, not deliverance from further embarrassing arrests, but that they might be granted further boldness to speak the word of the Lord, asking that He might stretch out His 'hand to heal and that signs and wonders might be done through the same name of Jesus Christ'. Difficulties were not signs of the departure of the Holy Spirit. They were now living in the Spirit. And following this

## The New Community of the Spirit

prayer, the Spirit simply visited them again, shaking the assembly place and filling them afresh with the Holy Spirit. The result: they spoke the word of God with boldness.

And such freedom and liberty occasioned by the Holy Spirit did not set aside the order of the life of the Church. Jerusalem was the ‘mother church’, the home of the Apostles. And the leaders in Jerusalem were assiduously perceiving the manner and direction in which the Spirit was moving, especially in regard to those who had been driven from Jerusalem because of persecution. Philip’s ministry amongst the Samaritans, those half-Jews, had seen him preaching on, ‘the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ’. This was accompanied again by further baptisms as well as by signs and wonders.

It was the Church in Jerusalem that perceived the need to send the Apostles Peter and John to Samaria to those who had received the word of God, who had been baptised and were filled with joy. Now a good evangelical would consider his job well done at this outcome! Yet on arrival the Apostles recognised in the light of their new-found understanding and experience that the Spirit had not fallen on these people, and so they laid hands on the new believers who received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Later, in Joppa, Peter had been granted the vision that directed him to go to the Gentile, Cornelius, at Caesarea. There Peter ate with him, and preached the word.

Boldness is not used to describe Peter’s preaching on this occasion, but we recognise the same inspiration, and the effect is just as final. There comes the same mighty outpouring of the Spirit which descended at Pentecost. And Peter took this news back to Jerusalem where it was firstly received with caution and concern by some because Peter had eaten with the uncircumcised—Gentiles. With Peter’s recounting of the story, however, it was apparent that the message of the Gospel was for Jews and Gentiles alike. This convinced the leaders in Jerusalem that the message of the prophets truly embraced ‘all flesh’. ‘God *has given* “them” the same gift that He gave us!’—the gift of the Holy Spirit.

At Antioch, we have the first description of a church beyond the ‘mother’ church in Jerusalem. And it was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Those believers, scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen, travelled as far as Antioch and preached the word to Jews only. Those believers who came from Cyprus and Cyrene to Antioch spoke to Hellenist Gentiles, preaching the Lord Jesus amongst them. A great number of these Hellenist Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.

And there again the Church in Jerusalem stepped in, sending out Barnabas to Antioch. And Barnabas was witness to the dynamic events in Antioch—the evidence of God’s grace among the mixed believers, Jews who spoke Greek or Aramaic, and Gentiles. Barnabas, ‘a good man, full of the Holy Spirit’, acted true to his name, ‘encouraging them with purpose of heart to continue with the Lord’. At Antioch, the believers were first called Christians. All they had in common was the revealed Christ—not race, nor culture, certainly not language. Barnabas, with godly wisdom, recalled Saul from Tarsus and we are told they, ‘taught a great many people’. The gifts were at work—prophecy concerning the famine, love of the brethren in Judea who were deprived. Impelled by that love the Church at Antioch sent relief by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

As this charismatic worshipping community emerged out of Pentecost, it was not bound together by an historic memory of the Christ they knew in His earthly ministry. James Denney once commented, ‘it might sound too paradoxical to say no apostle, no New Testament writer, ever remembered Christ’. Yet it is true to say they never thought of Him as belonging to the past. He was present with them now in every moment of their life by faith. And they knew Him by His ministry of the Spirit to them. This same

## The New Community of the Spirit

one who had moved through the crucible of the Cross was now raised and present with them. Had not Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am actually present with you there'.

This in no way gainsays the truth of John 14:26: 'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you'.

There will never be another Pentecost. Yet Pentecost was never an event to be frozen in time. It goes on, with all its resources available to the people of God today. That faith granted to those believers still comes to us as a revelation of the grace of God, enabling us to believe that same dynamic life is ours now in Christ and in His Spirit. That promise 'to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off', is still the promise for all believers today who may have the fullness of the Spirit. We must believe that **fullness of life is the true order for the new community**.

And throughout history, and even down to today, the Church is never really the Church when it is out of communion with what happened at Pentecost. It is only as it is filled with the Holy Spirit of God that the Church can be said to be the Church in any meaningful sense. At Pentecost, God gave the Spirit to the Church in full measure. The gift has never been withdrawn. The 'Spirit falling upon us' is the assurance that God supplies every need of the Church.

The formation of the Church as the community of Christ is the work of the Spirit, a formation effected not by human intention or agency. John recorded in his Gospel, 'To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. And that is not only true personally, but also corporately in our being the Church because of the will of God. As a concrete, social, historical occurrence, **the Church is the reality of the Body of Christ** in its visible, not its invisible, nature. Christ is present, not as an idealised form of the Church, but in the concrete reality of the social relations and structure of its members.

Read in one sitting the first five chapters of Acts, and you will find you cannot avoid the deep sense of the love that followed the coming of the Spirit. It flowed forth in care for the under-privileged. The resources were released freely from those who had, to those who did not have, so that no-one went without. They shared all they had so that all could benefit from God's gifts. How tempting it is—particularly if we have material wealth—to cut ourselves off from one another, each taking care of his or her own interests, each providing for and enjoying his or her own little piece of the world.

When God's Spirit moves the heart again with agape love, that giving love constrains the person to joyously accept responsibility for others in every way possible. They loved to be together. Gathering together in temple worship, breaking bread from house to house, eating their food with gladness and in simplicity of heart, praising God and being held in favour with all the people. 'And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.' Our Lord had prayed, 'Father that they may be one...' There was no 'experimenting' here by the Church to achieve a working, functional structure. The Church was given all it needed from the beginning.

And I can testify to this. When God poured out His Spirit on our Church, these things sprang to life. It amazed many whose lives were engaged in their own interests. It posed a threat to their own personal space. Those who had been the recipients of this outpouring recognised that for them everything was different. And this discovery of Christ was bubbling within them at the focus of their lives. Living had an immediacy. People who previously carefully tailored their lives and their daily schedule came adrift from all these structures. Life had a new liberty. And above all, love of the brothers and

## The New Community of the Spirit

sisters was now expressed in so many ways. There was no guilty striving for outreach. God opened up mission to us in the form of desperate young people, and we ministered with a confidence that the work would be a work of the Holy Spirit. **We ministered in the name of Jesus Christ.** We did things that today would not get off the ground because of the restrictive laws of the 'rights' of people.

And in this retelling of it I am overcome by the memory of all that love expressed. And the driving, impelling thought was the word in the power of the Spirit to be proclaimed to the now desperately needy street kids that God had brought into our midst. Love—overwhelming love. Community, that is, corporate unity that arose from the very nature of the God we were rediscovering, reflected **the community of the Godhead.** It was a principle enunciated by Christ—Body, Temple, Vine, Flock, Family or Household. They all said the same thing—members of one another, living stones built together, Father and family, brethren. With it is the intrinsic and essential unity that comes from above, not from the horizontal, not man to man initially.

Paul had written to the Ephesians suggesting not that they **create** unity, but **maintain** it. This is what Geoffrey Bingham used to call con-corporate, together together. For he stressed we can so easily be together without being together. The true alternative to this superficial togetherness is the fellowship of the Spirit. Paul was to say it so beautifully in his letter to the Philippian Church:

*Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (Phil. 2:1–4).*

All of that became effective on the day of Pentecost. Forgiveness and justification and adoption took away the guilt. The grace of Calvary, God's image as love, people restored in new creational true selves, the constraint of love that could lead us to readily forgive others and to give them honour and to love what humanly speaking was the unlovely. This flowing together in unity and love and fellowship became the new shape of the Church after Pentecost. And it was functional, mutual care within the congregation, daily distribution of money and food, care of distant churches, widows cared for along with orphans and aliens, and the aged and the sick and the poor especially. The community was doing good to all men, but especially to those of the household of God. And they prayed for all men.

Recently the Premier of NSW proudly announced that it needed to be understood by all that his Government was founded on pragmatism as the only workable philosophy in politics. Unfortunately, we all in our humanity agree that whatever works has value. For the Modern Church, this means that needs and not grace determine the function of the Church. The perceived need is relationship, and therefore much that emerges is therapeutic provision of crutches for lame people, remedial in nature. The basis of the advice is humanistic. The Bible tells us that the source of grace is not found in the mind of Man, but in the atoning provision of Jesus Christ. Herein is life, the grace which is the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit present in helpful action.

Drift from this grace and you end up in the quicksands of temporary expedients. The pursuit of these expedients becomes an obsessive preoccupation with human relationships, church management, church growth and the like. The current popularity of mega-church processes highlight all this. Principles of management and formation called from the world can certainly enlarge 'church' membership. But it is all horizontal

## The New Community of the Spirit

success—man to man—where we love the praises of men rather than the praises of God.

So often we want to impress other men, especially the world of unbelievers. We want to impress them so that they will accept and not criticise the Church. As someone who has lived in Baptist circles for sixty years, I have witnessed the decline of a prophetic strength which was caused by this shift to respectability and acceptance.

In other areas of the Church, living together was pressed into service as an alternative path to being shielded from the effects of not being accepted. It was a pattern, a lifestyle, that emerged in the 60s – 70s. To use the modern parlance, it was cool to be community. It was viewed as something that could provide the comfort of human intimacy, and it was assumed to be derived from our vertical relationship with God. But living together is not the purpose of the Church. It is not an end in itself. It is therefore not sought, only discovered as a byproduct of the life of Christ among believers. It arises, as Jesus said, from the love with which the Father loved the Son, by Christ's indwelling of believers by the Holy Spirit. Such love and such attendant unity is itself the **witness of Christ to the world**. It is God being revealed as love because **His indwelling love is visible to the world**. The Early Church is no paradigm to be modelled today by those who want to live in the so-called 'New Testament' pattern. But you catch a breath of **the fullness of the Spirit** and don't be surprised if it starts to look perilously similar to the Early Church. The kind of intimacy in this love is holy agape love whenever or wherever it is experienced. The human intimacy we have mentioned, wherever it is experienced, is a derivative of this agape love and you can say that this is actually an expression of true human intimacy. It is this which is at the heart of the new community of Christ.

Let's face it. The primary spiritual distinctive of this new community is its possession of the Holy Spirit. Times of refreshment they call it, the kind which will accompany the return of Christ. But that lies in the future. Yet the day (days) of the Spirit has dawned, and we, the community, still enjoy the grace of God which is displayed in periodic manifestations of the Holy Spirit. It allows us to dwell constantly in the awesome knowledge of the Spirit's presence amongst us.

That presence is felt all the way through Acts as the driving force of their mission and the gifting for those who believe in Jesus. As disciples discovered, there was something clearly wrong with those who had not heard of the Holy Spirit: they were saying, 'You are part of an old order and need to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus and be received into the fellowship of the new community'. For Luke, **the Spirit is God's gift to all who believe in Christ**. And he had an actual expectation that the Spirit would be present and manifest Himself in the common life of the believers, in a staggering variety of ways. That is really what the **great grace is all about—the presence of the Spirit**. It is not so much a matter or ambition or vision, but of recognition, enjoyment, thanksgiving and cooperation. The prayer for the Holy Spirit which Jesus enjoins on his disciples (Luke 11:13) is better understood in its Gospel context as a prayer for the coming of the kingdom (when the Spirit would be poured out) than as a prayer for the Spirit to fill an individual believer. It is a prayer which was answered at Pentecost.

## STUDY THREE

# THE SPIRIT AND THE GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Noel Due



The events of the day of Pentecost cannot be considered in isolation from the great flow of salvation history, particularly as understood under the headings of intention, promise and fulfilment, about which we have been hearing over the course of the last few Monday Morning Studies. The harvest motif of Pentecost and its connections with the giving of the Law are both very significant in this regard.

Of greater significance for the present Study, however, is the very explicit link between the giving of the Spirit and the fact of proclamation so powerfully seen as its consequence. This is in fact what Jesus had promised.

The introductory section of Acts 1:1–8 tells us the following:

- Jesus, as the Man of the Spirit, does all he continues to do (the implication of Acts 1:1) by the power of the Spirit (1:2).
- He promises that the disciples would be baptised in this same Spirit (1:4–5).
- This baptism would empower them for witness (1:8).
- The questions relating to the restoration of the kingdom were not germane to the disciples' mission, and belong to the will of the Father (1:7).

In the light of these comments we are then told about the Ascension itself, which in 2:32–33 is linked clearly with the outpouring of the Spirit. The ascended Lord empowers the believing community for witness (which I suggest must be interpreted against the background of such passages as Isa. 43:8–13; 44:6–8), and this through the Spirit. This empowerment is both so that men and women may be able to witness (behold) the works of God, and then bear witness (testify) to them. This is indeed the mode of Jesus' own ministry (e.g. John 12:49f.).

## The Spirit and the Gospel Proclamation

This means that Jesus (the Man!) is seen to be the promised Messiah (anointed one), who anoints his people with the same Spirit whom he had received from his Father. Such indwelling brings the children into the true (ontological) joy of sonship, and also leads them to the proclamation of the Gospel, by which the rest of the Father's family is gathered in, and through which the enemies are defeated. The anointing and the proclaiming cannot be separated (see Isa. 61:1f.; Luke 4:14–15, 18ff.).

While we recognise that Pentecost is a Trinitarian event (in which the Father pours out his Spirit through the Son) the link between the Spirit and Word is in focus in this session. The fact that the Church becomes the prophetic community (the implication of Peter's use of Joel's prophecy) means that they share in the prophetic ministry: speaking the Word of God by the Spirit of God within them (cf. I Pet. 1:10ff.).

The link between Spirit and Word is seen clearly in a number of places. Besides the creation accounts (cf. Ps. 33:6), we must also see the 'oneness' of God's action by Word and Spirit through the prophets in places such as Isaiah 34:16; 59:21; John 3:34; 6:63; Acts 1:8; 5:30–32; I Thessalonians 1:4–6 (cf. 2:13); I Peter 1:10–12, and elsewhere. Taken together, these passages match with the important principle enunciated in Revelation 19:10, that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'.

In the light of this we can understand the apostolic connections between the Spirit's fullness and true proclamation. This is seen in the book of Acts itself (e.g. 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17–22; etc.), but also in other places. See, for example, the links in I Corinthians 2:1–5 and in Galatians 3:1–5, and the pastoral relevance of these passages for our own day; or the link between the Word and Spirit in the letters to the churches in Revelation chapters 1 to 3.

There are a number of 'types' we could use to analyse the nature and scope of Jesus' mission. Amongst others, he could be seen as:

- the last Adam, extending the borders of Eden to the ends of the earth;
- or the new Moses, leading the new exodus of his people out of the bondage of Satan;
- or the new Aaron, leading the worship of his people;
- or the new David, the great King of righteousness and eternal Shepherd, ruling over the nations;
- or the new Solomon, building a greater and eternal Temple;
- or the new Joshua, leading the flock of God to their eternal rest.

But whatever image we use, the Spirit and Word connection is central to each and all of them. The ascended Jesus is the one who guarantees the success of the mission, for he speaks with, and rules on his Father's authority. He has been appointed as King of the nations, who have ranged themselves against him and his Father, and this Father has appointed his Son's gospel as the means by which those nations will be both won and ruled.

## STUDY FOUR

# THE SPIRIT AND THE UNIVERSAL KINGDOM OF GOD

Ian Pennicook



In Acts 20:18–25, Paul identified three elements of his preaching: (i) ‘repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus’; (ii) ‘the gospel of the grace of God’; and (iii) ‘the kingdom’. These three we would understand to be aspects of the one proclamation. To preach the kingdom is to testify concerning the need for repentance and faith and concerning the gospel by which grace is known and through which it is active. But further, to preach the kingdom is to preach ‘the whole purpose/counsel of God’ (Acts 20:27).

### THE KINGDOM AND THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

All Israel were informed that God is King, both through their worship (Ps. 93:1; 97:1; 99:1; etc.; also 23:1; 80:1<sup>1</sup>) and through their experiences interpreted in the scriptures (as, for example, in I Sam. 8:7 and Ps. 44:1–5). It is the fact of the kingship of God which determines the course of history. ‘Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the earth’ (Ps. 74:12). This salvation was seen in the events of the exodus (Ps. 74:13–15) but is rooted in the action of creation itself (Ps. 74:16–17).

The kingdom, the reign of God, is revealed in creation. Creation was not grace but was the free action of God, the King. Coming from his goodness (generosity), creation is ‘very good’. However, the creation never has any status apart from God. Flowing from his immense generosity, so that it is fruitful and lush (Ps. 104:10–17), the whole of creation must continually ‘look to you to give them their food in due season’

---

<sup>1</sup> The title ‘shepherd’ is also used to denote kingship in the Old Testament (see also Gen. 49:24; Num. 27:17; I Kings 22:17; II Chron. 18:16; and Ezek. 34) as well as in the ancient Near East in general.

## The Spirit and the Universal Kingdom of God

(Ps. 104:27) and must recognise that the supply of their ‘breath’ (רוּחַ *ruach*) is always dependent on the supply of his spirit (רוּחַ *ruach*) (Ps. 104:29–30).

This is especially true of Man; Adam (*Man*) was created a ‘living being’ because God ‘breathed into [him] the breath of life’ (Gen. 2:7). His dependence on the Spirit of God is essential to his being. It is likewise essential to his role within the creation. Given dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:26–28; Ps. 8:5–8), he has this function only as he is dependent on ‘the Presence’.<sup>2</sup> He is, thus, God’s ‘vice-regent’, commissioned to bring all creation to the goal set by Eden, so that the whole of creation is brought to the point where it rejoices in the fact of the reign of God. To this extent we might say that creation was not perfect on the seventh day even if it was complete. Perfection relates to reaching the goal, whereas the completion of creation meant that it was now fully equipped to fulfil the plan of God under the administration of the vice-regent.

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM

If Man needed to live under the rule of the King and so needed ‘the Presence’, the Fall demonstrates his rejection and subsequent fear of the Presence (Gen. 3:8–10). At the same time, his need of the Presence is painfully clear (Gen. 4:13–14). Hence the statement that ‘God my king is from of old, working salvation in the earth’ (Ps. 74:12). The history of Israel is, ultimately, with the intention that Israel’s Messiah should be not a political deliverer but the fulfilment of all that God had intended in creation. In him, all the nations of the world would be blessed.

The description of Jesus in the Gospels is clear in this regard. He is ‘born king of the Jews’ (Matt. 2:2), being descended from David, Israel’s paradigm for human kingship, and from Abraham, whose ‘seed’ will bring rescue to the nations (Matt. 2:1; cf. Gen. 12:1–3, 7). Preparation for Jesus was by John the Baptist proclaiming that ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near’ (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus’ baptism was in order that he might be anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work of the Royal Son ruling the nations. Later, Peter put it that he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, that he went about doing good and healing those oppressed by the devil ‘for God was with him’.

Jesus was *the Man* filled with the Spirit, *the Man* living in the unmediated Presence. He is ‘the last Adam’, ‘the second man’ (I Cor. 15:45, 47). As such he is about the action of the Kingdom. He, like John, proclaimed that ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near’ (Matt. 4:17). He proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23), cutting through the accumulated traditions of Israel with the authoritative definition of what it is to live in the kingdom (Matt. 5 – 7). He told the disciples that unless their righteousness exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees they would never enter the kingdom (Matt. 5:20). He could say that, not because he was advocating a new spirituality but because he himself was about the task of fulfilling all righteousness (Matt. 3:15).

The amazing nature of his life of communion with God caused one of his disciples to ask him to teach them all to pray. John the Baptist had taught his disciples but this was beyond John. In reply he told them that prayer was to focus on the holiness of the Father’s name and the coming of the kingdom, with the accompanying dependence on the Father for everything (Luke 11:1–4). All that he did was by the Holy Spirit and so

---

<sup>2</sup> The use of רוּחַ (*ruach*) in the Old Testament is most often with this significance (see Ps. 139:7; etc.). Naturally, with the revelation which burst open via the Incarnation and Pentecost, we understand that the ‘Presence’ was the Holy Spirit himself.

## The Spirit and the Universal Kingdom of God

the kingdom was being effected (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20), but the disciples were to pray and live for the day when the kingdom, presently unseen by those around, would be evident in its great splendour (Matt. 6:33; 13:31–32; etc.).

Of course, such living and teaching exposed and confronted those who by their traditions were avoiding the reality of the kingdom (Mark 7:9) and locking people out of the kingdom (Matt. 23:13). Those people, instead of recognising that Jesus was doing everything by the Holy Spirit, actually attributed his activities to the power of evil. Plainly they could not see the kingdom of God; it would require a powerful action of the Holy Spirit to change them (John 3:3, 5–6). So they had him killed, claiming to have no king but Caesar (John 19:15). A dead man cannot be Messiah (see Acts 5:36–37).

### THE PRESENT REIGN

The matter of the resurrection of Jesus was not something to which the first Christians could appeal as common knowledge. Popular opinion concerning any resurrection was divided (see Acts 23:6–10) and even the claim that Jesus rose from the dead could not be substantiated by unbiased testimony.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, they freely admitted that Jesus appeared ‘not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses’ (Acts 10:40–41). The reference is to the apostles. ‘He presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God’ (Acts 1:3). As usual, his teaching was ‘through the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 1:2). Significantly, these apostles were not to go until *they* had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5).

These apostles had been taught to seek the kingdom and to pray for its coming; now the risen Jesus was teaching them about the kingdom. So, naturally, they want to know if this is the time for the kingdom to come to Israel. Jesus had already told them that they would receive the Spirit soon (Acts 1:5) so the question was understandable, but his reply focussed on their function (Acts 1:6–8). When they received the Holy Spirit, they would testify to *him*. Jesus, risen and ascended, would be the focus of their proclamation. And so it was.

The proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus means the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah. A dead man cannot be Messiah and God has raised Jesus from the dead! As Messiah and Lord (Acts 2:36) ‘he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name’ (Acts 10:42–43; cf 2:38). The amazing nature of that claim must not be overlooked. To the Gentiles, Peter was saying that Jesus is the judge of the living and dead so that there is forgiveness to those who believe in him. While there is a future aspect to judgment (see Acts 17:31), there is surely also a past aspect. There is forgiveness for the nations (Gentiles) *because* the judgment of the world has taken place (John 12:31).<sup>4</sup>

Whether it is the justifying action of God or the resultant status or even the consequent behaviour which is in mind (as if they could ever really be separated), Paul wrote that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness (justification),<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps contrary to the claims of some popular apologetics. See also the list in I Corinthians 15:5–8.

<sup>4</sup> In Acts 10:42 Peter does not claim that Jesus is judge because of the Resurrection.

<sup>5</sup> Both are translations of the same Greek word, *dikaioisunh* (*dikaioisune*) which, along with other related words, is central to the argument of Romans; see 1:16–17 onwards.

## The Spirit and the Universal Kingdom of God

peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit the restoration of the creation and the blessing of the nations has come, even though it is yet only known to faith.

This restoration of the nations, of men and women, is directly related to the fact of the reign of Christ. He is presently reigning and putting all his enemies under his feet (I Cor. 15:25). Whether this reign be through the proclamation of the Gospel or through the administration of the judgments, as described in the Book of the Revelation, the kingdom is in action. Furthermore, it relates directly to the fact that Jesus is the last Adam. If he reigns, it is because he is doing all that the first Adam was intended to do but refused to do. That is, Jesus reigns in submission to the Father. Indeed, the climax of his reign will be his handing over of his trophies to the God who gave him his reign (cf. Matt. 28:18). Man now reigns.

### **THE SPIRIT AND THE UNIVERSAL KINGDOM OF GOD**

It is one thing to make theological statements about the kingdom of God; it is quite another to proclaim the kingdom. So how does a person identify the dimensions of the kingdom and so declare the truth of it? The answer is that 'No one can say "Jesus is Lord" but by the Holy Spirit' (I Cor. 12:3). The gift of the Spirit from the glorified Messiah is the only way that a person can see and so recognise the kingdom. That is why the group who became believers at Pentecost (see Acts 11:17) could say that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. Jesus' statements to Nicodemus (John 3:3, 5) bear this out. No doubt this lies behind Jesus' response to Pilate in John 18:36–37. Jesus was *the* one on whom the Spirit descended and remained, *the* one who received the Spirit without measure (John 1:33; 3:34). Knowing the kingdom is dependent on knowing and living in the gift of the Spirit.

Pentecost brought into being a body of people who, through grace in repentance and faith (Acts 2:38; 15:11; etc.), had received the Spirit. They knew the presence of God without fear. As such, they knew the amazing nature of the kingdom of God, its power (I Cor. 4:20) and its universal scope (see the message of the Book of the Revelation), and so they proclaimed it (Acts 20:25). The kingdom was not a doctrine to be taught so much as the 'perfect freedom' in which they lived, moved and had their being.

## STUDY FIVE

# THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST THE SON AND THE LORD

Colin Jones



### **THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, PRE-ASCENSION: ENFLESHING, INDWELLING, MATURING, LEADING & EMPOWERING 'THE MAN OF THE SPIRIT'**

The Holy Spirit has—in one sense—always been the Spirit of Christ. From before the Creation His great desire was to be the Spirit of the Enfleshed Son. It was in the prospect of this that He—speaking of that One who was to come—‘breathed out’ the OT Scriptures as ‘the Spirit of Christ’ (I Pet. 1:10–12; II Tim. 3:16).

From the Creation onwards, He gradually, and relentlessly, built up all things in readiness for the coming of the Messiah. And then, in the fullness of time—when the Word was made flesh—He became, truly, the Spirit of Christ. Each element of the Messiah’s calling was initiated and sustained by Him, according to the will of the Father. As such—although eternally subject to His Father—Jesus was also now under the authority of Spirit, as any true human being would be. He was, in every way, ‘the Man of the Spirit’.

### **The Incarnation**

It was by the Holy Spirit that Christ took upon Himself our humanity (Luke 1:30–38; Matt. 1:20–23)—becoming the God–Man forever! And it was also by Him that He ‘grew in wisdom’ (Luke 2:52), so that even at twelve years of age He clearly had the mind of the Scriptures (Luke 2:46–47). This was nothing supernatural—simply true boyhood in operation under the illumination of Spirit.

### **The Baptism**

At His Baptism—His Identification with fallen humanity and His Coronation—He was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the fulfilment of His Messianic work (Ps. 2; 89:24–27; 110:1; Isa. 11:2; 42:1; Luke 3:21–22).

### **The Temptation**

In the desert, Jesus' moral authority as the 'Last Adam' (I Cor. 15:45) was put to the test. After the Baptism, the Spirit couldn't wait to get Him to the test-site, and 'drove' Him into that situation! (Mark 1:12).

### **The Ministry**

Christ did all things at the initiative of His Father's word, by the agency of the Spirit. He never once drew upon His resources of deity to do what a human being should do. He, in fact, required the Spirit 'without measure' to fulfil His redemptive work, and ministered in that power (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14–19; John 3:31–34; Acts 10:38).

### **The Atonement**

Jesus, no less, required all the power and enabling of the Spirit to accomplish the work of the Cross, as He offered Himself up—bearing the wrath of God and the curse of sin (Heb. 9:14).

### **The Resurrection**

The Resurrection was also by the powerful agency of the Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 8:11; Eph. 1:19–20).

### **The Ascension**

The Ascension, too, was effected by the Spirit's power (Eph. 1:19–20; Acts 1:9; cf. I Pet. 4:14).

## **THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, POST-ASCENSION: SENT TO REGENERATE, INDWELL, MATURE, LEAD & EMPOWER, AS 'THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN'**

### **Sent from the Father and the Son**

He who was 'the Man of the Spirit', now exalted to the right hand of His Father, received the promise of the Holy Spirit for us, and poured Him out! (Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:13). The Spirit—now subject again to the Son—has become 'the Spirit of the Man', imparting to us the life and ministry of our glorified Lord. The Spirit is the Son's 'Other-Self' (John 14:16–18; Rom. 8:9–11). Just as He was the Agent of the Father's Lordship to Christ, He is now the Agent of Christ's Lordship to us.

Although not confusing the Persons, we must say that the Lordship of Christ and the Lordship of the Spirit are quite inseparable (II Cor. 3:17–18; Rev. 1:4–5; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). They relate and work totally as One: the Son as Mediator and the Spirit as Agent of the Father's purpose.

### **Bringing Direct Divine Revelation**

The Holy Spirit is so eager to have Christ proclaimed! His engagement in all of history has been with a view to the dawning of this marvellous era of grace (Titus 2:11). Now His passion is to bring directly to the hearts and minds of human beings the revelation of Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:8–10; I Cor. 12:3). To know this saving Lordship is the great and pressing need of every person.

On the Cross, Jesus embraced all of the pangs and terrors of the heart and conscience; and in that act of Divine love—within His own holy being—exhausted the wrath of God upon all evil. Having made propitiation for sins (I John 2:2) Christ has broken the power of the devil, his hosts and the world-system (John 12:31; Col. 2:15), destroying his work (I John 3:8) and banishing all fear! (Heb. 2:14–15; I John 4:18). Jesus is Lord over everything that could keep anyone from the fullness of life that is in Himself. The Spirit's grand work is to bring testimony to this in the proclamation of the Gospel (John 16:14; Acts 5:30–32; I Pet. 1:12).

The joy of Christ's saving Lordship is known particularly through the great apostolic doctrines of grace. The danger of merely having an academic understanding of these—without knowing the life and refreshment they bring—is ever present. The Spirit's work is to impart them to us, in the depths (I Cor. 2:9–12; Eph. 1:3,17; Col. 3:16). Direct, blazing revelation!

#### **(a) The freedom of justification & forgiveness in Christ**

(Rom. 4:7–8; 5:1–2,15–21; 8:1–2; II Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 1:7; 2:17).

#### **(b) The intimacy of adoption & sonship in Christ**

(John 1:18; 17:13, 20–26; I Cor. 1:9; Gal. 4:1–7; Rom. 8:14–17; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:18).

#### **(c) The loveliness of immediate sanctification in Christ**

(I Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Acts 26:18; Heb. 10:10).

#### **(d) The hope of an eternal inheritance in Christ**

(Rom. 8:18–25; II Cor. 4:16 – 5:8; Col. 1:27; 3:4; I Pet. 1:3–5, 8, 13).

It is well worth adding that a key to enjoying the full impact of the above doctrines is to give emphasis to the great fact of Divine Election. The Holy Spirit often moved the apostles to rapturous doxology in declaring this stunning action of grace. To maximise the absolute centrality of God in our salvation, is to maximise our capacity to grasp more of the wonder of His love toward us in Christ (Rom. 8:28–39; 11:33–36; I Cor. 1:18 – 2:5; Eph. 1:3 – 2:10).

### **Enabling Dynamic Human Vocation**

Knowing the love of the Father and the Son by the Spirit, we have love for others: for our brethren in the Lord (Phil. 1:8; I Thess. 4:9; I Pet. 1:22), but also for those who are still in their sins. We see folk all around us who are in the most dreadful states, and want them to know the grace of God (Matt. 9:36; Rom. 10:1; Col. 1:28).

Jesus promised that we would do the ‘greater works’ (John 14:12–14). These are the works we do together with Him in the proclamation of the Gospel—seeing the regenerating power of grace in operation. Being, ourselves, people of the Spirit, we can say with Him in Luke 4:18–19:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.

The days in which we live are full of opportunity for the outgoing of the Gospel. The Church’s mandate is, in fact, to herald repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ’s name to all nations (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:16–34). He is Lord of them all. Their rise and fall is in His hands (John 1:51; Rev. 1:4–5; 17:12, 14). On the basis of His authority given to us, we are commanded, as He leads, to disciple them—whole nations! As we proclaim His Lordship by the Spirit, we actually participate in the powerful word that is going out from His own mouth; a confronting and convicting word (Luke 21:12–15; John 16:8–10; Acts 6:10)—a sword which smites the nations (Ps. 2:7–12; Rev. 19:15–16). It may well be that Christ will confirm His word with signs and wonders (Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3–4).

Bold, dynamic, telling out of the Good News will not be without its pain and struggle (Acts 14:22; 20:21–24), but the fruits of such vocation are to be eagerly desired (Acts 1:8; I Thess. 1:4–10; Titus 3:3–7). In it all, we know the wonder of the Father’s great love, the grace of the Warrior Son and the empowerment of His strong Spirit. How grand is the action prepared for Christ’s Spirit-led people, in whose hearts He dwells through faith (Eph. 3:14–21).

## STUDY SIX

# THE SPIRIT OF THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION

Reading: I Corinthians 2:1–16 (NASB)

Robin Mitchell



### A MIGHTY WORK—A LIFE-GIVING WORD OR A BORING SERMON

Paul declares:

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void. For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside' (I Cor. 1:17–19).

The Cross of Christ is the work of God by which we are cleansed, forgiven, justified, sanctified and reconciled to God. It is the one act in history in which God has finally and forever dealt with the sin of the human race (I John 2:2) and brought about reconciliation. It is a mighty work, and we like Paul have been called to preach the death and resurrection of Christ in such a way that it impacts upon the hearer as a Gospel which is indeed the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). We may preach of a life-giving work yet that proclamation must somehow be transformed into a life-giving Word which calls the hearer back from the dead.

Paul speaks of the cross of Christ being preached *in cleverness of speech*. As such, it may be an interesting and stimulating sermon or even a boring one, but it will only ever be a word of Man and not the Word of God. It will not bring life. Our concern then is to discover how this mighty, historical work of God can now in its proclamation

## The Spirit of the Cross and the Resurrection

become a dynamic life-giving Word of God, that calls into being a new creation. Preaching must be much more than a history lecture or a religious dissertation.

We then need to consider not only the message and the messenger, but also the action of God in the proclamation of the Word.

### THE MESSAGE

*And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:1-2, NASB).*

For Paul the central proclamation of the Gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul lived and breathed this Gospel. Christ was crucified, dead and buried, and on the third day he arose from death to life.<sup>1</sup>

This death of Christ was Paul's death. This resurrection of Christ was his resurrection.<sup>2</sup> He died with Christ to sin and its attendant guilt; he died to the law, its bondage, its condemnation, and to law as a way of life. In Christ he had been set free from the wrath of God. The Cross, God's atoning act cleansed his conscience; it freed him from the fear of death. It delivered him from the accusations and manipulations of Satan and the principalities and powers; it set him apart from the world, freed him from a life lived in the passions of the flesh, and set him up to live as a holy person, sanctified in Christ, empowered, engifted and led by the Spirit.

Released from the law, he discovered a new way of life in Christ. A life not governed by law and motivated by guilt, but a life lived in relationship with Christ and motivated by the love of Christ, and hence lived in the obedience of faith; that is, in covenant relationship with God. It is the Spirit who mediates this relationship to us. The importance of this 'breaking from law' and 'belonging to Christ', the new husband, cannot be stressed enough (see Rom. 7:1-6). It means that all of life for the people of God now flows out of a relationship with the person Jesus. Our living is not now determined by law and our compliance, but is a response to the love and grace of God demonstrated in the cross of Christ and in the love-union in which he has joined himself to us as his bride, and in the daily communion in which he delights to give himself to us and bless us.

### Beware

Understanding that the Cross and Resurrection is God's great saving act, Paul declares, 'But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed' (Gal. 1:8). Any so-called healing word, that does not have its roots in the Cross and in a relationship with Jesus, cannot liberate us from the things mentioned above. Such healing words and techniques might delude us into thinking that all is well, but in the end can only reinforce our bondage and lead to death.

---

<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians 15:1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 6:1-5.

### **THE MESSENGER—LIVING IN CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT**

Having experienced such grace, how could Paul not preach this Cross and this Christ? Such preaching was his passion. It takes a 'life-given' sinner to witness to a 'life-giving' Christ.

What do we have to say, apart from Christ and his cross? How can we preach unless this Gospel of love and grace have similarly seized us, and we know and live in Christ and in the liberty that he has won for us? We are called, then, to be witnesses to what we know, and all that we know of the Cross and the Resurrection is taught and mediated to us by the Holy Spirit.

For example: do you know that in Christ you are dead to sin? If you only know about it in your head and the Spirit has not given a revelation in your heart, then all of your life and ministry will be a self-justification, and you will gather everyone up into a whirlwind of dead works, driven on by guilt and the torment of an evil conscience.

Do you know that in Christ you are dead to the law? If you only know about it in your head and the Spirit has not given a revelation to your heart, then all of your life and ministry will be governed by a set of rules and regulations rather than lived out of a dynamic relationship of love and grace, both in and with Jesus Christ. Under law you will always be tempted to play God, imposing your own law and hideous legalisms on others, and your own bondage will then overflow to those whom you think you are serving; but instead of leading them to Christ and liberty, you bring them under your own authority, into your own church, your own kingdom, and into utter despair.

Do you know that in Christ you are not only justified but also sanctified? If you only know about it in your head and not in your heart, then both you and your people will ever be trying to be holy by your good works and religious observances, rather than rejoicing that you are now in Christ the Holy One of God. You are holy because he is holy and you are in him. Out of this we then live as God's holy people. Not striving for holiness by holy living and good deeds but living holy lives and doing good deeds, because we are holy people; saints, indwelt by the Holy Spirit who has sanctified us:

*And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (I Cor. 6:11).*

Do you know that God has in Christ by the Spirit:

- Transferred you out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of his dear son, so that you think and act from God's perspective not the world's?
- Set you free from the accusations of Satan and his minions, so that when you sin you can own your sin and know that in Christ it has already been dealt with? So that, when wrongly accused, you are secure in Christ and have no need to justify and defend yourself.
- Freed you from wrath and now seeks to bless you? You come to him, not with fear or out of duty, but with delight and joy.
- Delivered you from a life of serving the flesh, its comforts and passions, to serve in the new life of the Spirit?

It is time to take stock of all that God has done in Christ and to take hold of and live in these things. This happens as we yield to the Spirit, are filled with the Spirit and

## The Spirit of the Cross and the Resurrection

are led and taught by the Spirit. So we are prepared by God to share his great passion for proclamation.

### God's Part in Proclamation

Living in the Gospel by the Spirit we recognise our situation. Like Paul we declare:

*And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling (I Cor. 2:3).*

The extraordinary thing about our call to ministry is that we are called to something that we cannot do by our own innate powers and resources.

Our dilemma is this: we cannot effect a person's reconciliation, we cannot open the eyes of a person blinded by the god of this world, we cannot free a person who is under the condemnation of law, we cannot ease a conscience terrified by guilt and we cannot speak God's living Word but only echo it like a parrot. We cannot bring down God to meet a person, and yet all this and more is involved in the task of reconciliation and we discover that preaching may be dynamically effective, for God has chosen such foolishness to confront and change people's lives.

Yet Paul was able to say, and the Spirit teaches us to say, 'for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction' (I Thess. 1:5). The following text is most important for us as preachers:

*'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And [which] have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.' For to us God revealed [them] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the [thoughts] of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the [thoughts] of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual [thoughts] with spiritual [words] (I Cor. 2:9).*

Paul speaks of proclaiming the mysteries of God that are revealed to him through the Spirit who knows the mind of God and at the same time indwells us.

The Word of the Cross and the Word of the Resurrection fall upon the hearers as the Word of God only by the work of the Spirit who teaches and enlivens both the preacher and the hearer. Geoffrey Bingham writes :

*... the Word alone brings faith to birth and action, but for [Paul] there is no Word without the Spirit... He understands that the Word alone (i.e. with and through the Spirit) can save human beings.<sup>3</sup>*

To be effective fellow workers with Christ in mission we must first be filled by the Spirit, come under the revelation of God as taught by the Spirit, and be engifted and empowered by the Spirit for ministry. Only by the Spirit do we become the 'Prophetic Community',<sup>4</sup> and the word about God becomes the Word of God.

Even this is only part of the story. The Saving Word is never a word in isolation from the one who has spoken. It not a life-giving word that comes to us, but rather as the Word comes, God the creator and giver of life comes:

---

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Bingham, *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1989), p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Bingham, *Is Prophecy for Today?* (NCPI, 1982), pp. 13ff.

## The Spirit of the Cross and the Resurrection

The substance of 'the Gospel' is 'Behold your God.' It is a dramatic venturesome, oral exhibit of the God of Israel . . . now visible, engaged and triumphant.<sup>5</sup>

The context of the preacher, then, is all important.

### THE PREACHER IN CONTEXT—GOD'S MISSION

The Church Fathers spoke of the Missions of God—God sending his Son into the world, the Father and the Son together sending the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> We only know the Father as we know the Son, we know the Son and the Father as we receive and are taught by the Spirit. The Spirit has been revealed to us by Christ and we know him by his possessing us.

We speak of the Spirit of the Cross, but of course the cross is only a piece of wood. What we mean is that the Spirit is the Spirit of the crucified and risen Jesus. In coming, the Spirit brings the crucified and risen Jesus to us, we participate in his death and resurrection. As the Spirit and the Son come, so the Father comes to us. We are brought to life by the presence of God.

True preaching, then, is not delivering a moralistic sermon or proclaiming an historical act, it is an invitation for people at that very moment to meet the Christ who died and is now enthroned as Lord of all. In preaching, Christ is mediated to us by the Spirit as is the Father,<sup>7</sup> and together they call us into life through the Word. Understand that preaching is God's work. In the proclamation of the Word of God the Holy Spirit comes, Christ is there present, the loving Father stands waiting to welcome the prodigal home. God is on mission. God comes to us.

This is our context. It is his mission and he has graciously invited us to participate in it. We understand that God is the proclaimer, we are fellow workers (and not the other way around). God has given us a ministry of reconciliation<sup>8</sup> in that, by the Spirit, he is pleased to use us to prepare the way for his coming by the proclamation of the Gospel.

We must make sure that we are true to the written revelation, the Word; by working hard and prayerfully at our exegesis and hermeneutics; being workmen who do not need to be ashamed; handling accurately the Word of truth.

Walter Brueggemann who speaks of God coming as 'the Poet' to transform the Word says:

There are many pressures to quit the text, to silence this deposit of dangerous speech, to halt this outrageous practice of speaking alternative possibility. The poems, however, refuse such silence. They will sound. They sound through preachers who risk beyond prose. In the act of such risk, power is released, newness is evoked, God is praised. People are 'speeched' to begin again.<sup>9</sup>

### CONCLUSION

And so the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Cross and of the Resurrection, comes; and in his coming the Godhead comes, transforming historic work into life giving Word. By

---

<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles* (John Knox Press, Westminster, 1997), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> See Geoffrey Bingham, *Proclaiming Christ's Gospel in Today's World*, (NCPI, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> See John 14:23, 'Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."'

<sup>8</sup> See II Corinthians 5:18–19.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Fortress Press, 1989), p. 142.

## The Spirit of the Cross and the Resurrection

that Word, bringing us into Christ and so into his death, into Christ and into his resurrection and life.

We live in Christ as God's new creation, with a cry of thanksgiving on our lips as we declare with Paul:

. . . thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. *For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God . . .* (II Cor. 2:14–17).

*Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as [coming] from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate [as] servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (3:5–6, emphasis mine).

### Bibliography

Geoffrey Bingham, *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985), especially part 2.

———*Is Prophecy for Today?* (NCPI, 1982).

———*Proclaiming Christ's Gospel in Today's World* (NCPI, 1986).

Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*, (Fortress Press, 1989).

———*Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles* (John Knox Press, Westminster, 1997).

## STUDY SEVEN

# THE SPIRIT OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

Hector Morrison



I have to confess that I had some difficulty in knowing where to start with this study, but whichever tack I tried I found myself having to come back again and again to Genesis 1:2, a verse that has for long fascinated me and, I must confess, a verse whose theological truth and significance I have scarcely begun to grasp.

I don't know if you ever have the experience with a text of Scripture of coming to it, prayerfully studying it, getting some light and understanding, and yet feeling that somehow you're still looking at it from the outside and haven't really got into its truth. Well, that's the way I've felt for several years now with the whole of Genesis 1 and in particular with verse 2. But little by little I feel that God has been drawing me into the truth of these words, though I long for greater understanding and experience of their truth and power.

I want to begin, then, with the words of Genesis 1:2 and the description we find here of the Spirit of God. This is the earliest reference we have in Scripture to the Spirit and I hope we will be able to see that it would not be out of place to see here a reference to the Spirit of the Everlasting Covenant.

At the very dawn of creation, when the 'earth' was formless and empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep—that 'darkness' in which the hidden presence of God is often at work and ready to reveal itself—'the Spirit of God was [present and active] hovering over the waters'. And, as far as I can see, he was there in the midst of the formlessness, lifelessness and darkness of the embryonic earth as God's LOVE-GIFT to the universe and, in particular, to earth and to Man in his God-given royal role as ruler/ king of the earth.

Now, let me try to substantiate and fill out that claim by drawing a comparison with the early verses of the Book of Acts. In Acts 1, as the embryonic church community awaited the inauguration of the New Covenant promised from ancient times, the risen

(and soon to be ascended) Saviour gave this command to his apostles, ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the GIFT my Father promised . . .’ (Acts 1:4)—referring, of course, to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. This is one of the more striking places where we get a clear indication that the Spirit is ever, in one sense, the Father’s love-gift to his children. This is, of course, in line with Jesus’ own teaching. In Luke’s Gospel, in a context of teaching about fatherhood (and also about the Spirit), Jesus said, ‘If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him’ (Luke 11:13). It is of the very nature of divine Fatherhood to bestow the good gift, the love-gift of the Holy Spirit on his dependent children.

This was nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the person of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God become flesh. At the beginning of his public ministry at the River Jordan, having been baptised by John, we read that ‘heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I LOVE; with you I am well pleased”’ (Luke 3:21f.). It would appear that at the baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit was that ‘seal of approval’ of which John the Baptist spoke in his witness to Jesus, ‘On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval’ (John 6:27). As Sinclair Ferguson states in his recent book on the Holy Spirit, ‘the [Father’s] voice exegetes the significance of the Spirit’s manifestation. It means “You are my Son, whom I love”’. The descent of the Spirit served to assure Jesus of the Father’s love. The Holy Spirit, then, is the Father’s seal of approval, his pledge of love. ‘The Spirit seals and confirms the bond of love (and trust) between the Father and the incarnate Son’ (Ferguson).

But we may be able to say more than that, to go further than that. In talking these matters over with Dr Nick Needham—our recently appointed Church Historian at Highland Theological College—he is convinced that what we see being worked out in the *ad extra* relationships of the Trinity is a reflection of what is true in the eternal *ad intra* ontological relationships of the Trinity. Nick suggests that one deduction we can make from the Baptism of Jesus, is that ontologically the Spirit is the Father’s eternal and constant love-gift to the Son.

If that is so, then it has astounding implications when we read it back into Genesis chapter 1. Here we find the Eternal Father bringing the earth with Man its ruler to share in the fullness of the covenant life of the Trinity. The Father bestows the same love-gift upon the earth and Man as on his own eternal Son. Man, as king of the earth, is created for blessing beyond all imagining: created to share in the fullness of the blessing experienced by the eternal Son of God.

But it is important for us to recognise the place that—not only Man, but also—the earth has in this too. That the earth is included within the eternal covenant is seen clearly in the story of Noah in Genesis 9:13, ‘I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the EARTH’. And although the covenant word (*berith*) is not specifically mentioned in Genesis 1, I believe we should understand that the presence and activity of the Spirit of God in verse 2 is a pledge of God’s eternal covenant love and commitment to the earth; if you like, the Spirit is the ‘bond’ of the covenant, the bond of love between God and the earth, the One who guarantees the earth’s eternal future.

We see the outworking of this, for example, at the time of the Flood. In Genesis 7 we have an account of the outworking of the judgment of God upon the earth as a result of humanity’s sin. This judgment can be understood as an undoing of the process of creation depicted in Genesis 1, an act of uncreation. The form and fullness characteristic of the earth at the end of Genesis 1 is lost/undone as the fullness of the vast variety of

types of life (the product of the divine work on days 4–6 of the creation week) is taken away (particularly from the land) and the form constituted by the separations of days 2 and 3 of the creation week is gradually lost as these separations are undone: the waters above and those below come together with the result that the distinction between land and seas no longer obtains. The judgment returns the earth not to its embryonic state (Gen. 1:2) but rather to its state at the end of day 1, with the separation between light and darkness still evident. Through judgment God's covenant with the earth remains in place (cf. Jer. 33:20). And true to his own covenant life and his covenant intentions for the earth, God 'remembered Noah . . . and he sent a wind [*ruach*] over the earth, and the waters receded . . .' (paralleling the work of the Spirit [*ruach*] in Gen. 1:2f.). The rest of Genesis 8 goes on to record a new work of creation as, through the agency of the *ruach* sent from God, the earth returned to form and fullness through a process of separation and filling similar to that recorded in Genesis 1. The earth is renewed/'recreated' through the presence and activity of the life-giving *ruach* of God. The *ruach*, as we have already seen, is the seal, the pledge of the Father's eternal covenant love and the guarantee of the earth's eternal future.

(What we find as we go through Scripture is that the Spirit is never wholly withdrawn from any covenant situation, despite all the unfaithfulness and covenant-breaking of the non-divine partner. In addition to Genesis 8 we might cite Haggai 2:4f., 'be strong . . . and work. For I am with you . . . This is what I covenanted with you when I came out of Egypt. *And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.*' A further example would be David's prayer in Psalm 51:11 which was heard and answered, 'Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me'.)

But covenant, however unconditional, requires a response from the covenant partner. Such a response is given by creation in Genesis 1 – 2: the whole 'army'/the 'vast array' (2:1) of heaven and earth respond with (glad and) speedy obedience to the voice and word of God, and in so doing 'witness' (cf. Acts 1:8) to the glory of the covenant Creator God. Psalm 19:1f., 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.'

At first, Man too, responded with similar (joyful and ready) obedience and faith, but all that changed with Man's act of disobedience in Genesis 3, and immediately the covenant life they had known with the Triune covenant God and within creation was disrupted and dislocated. Now they began to discover for the first time in their own experience the 'darker' side of God's moral character, the fact that 'he does not leave the guilty unpunished' (Exod. 34:7). And for the first time the curses of the covenant were enacted: blessing gave way to cursing; life gave way to death; rest gave way to restlessness; communion was replaced with alienation; friendship with enmity; fruitful work with frustrating toil; and so on.

And it wasn't just Man who experienced this dislocation. The covenant earth was disrupted too and entered into the frustration (cf. Rom. 8:20f.) from which it will only be delivered in the eschaton. Here again we see the closeness of the tie between earth and Man, its king, who has been made from its dust. When Man lives in covenant love and faithfulness, earth experiences the consequent blessings: Man lives the abundant life on an earth filled to overflowing with the fruit of God's blessing. When Man breaks the covenant, it is not only his life that is disrupted but also the life of the kingdom over which he reigns. We see these principles being outworked throughout the OT: Noah, Abraham, Israel, David (and the dynasty which came from him) each failed to a greater or lesser degree in the role of covenant headship which was given to them. They failed to

walk in the loving obedience of faith and thus failed to be faithful and true witnesses to the glory of the covenant God.

But in the fullness of time, and in accordance with his own eternal covenant purpose and plan, God sent his own eternal Son to be ‘the faithful and true witness’, to be the faithful covenant Servant–King to us (the true Noah who would comfort his people and lead them into their eternal sabbath of rest in the new creation of the new heavens and the new earth; THE seed of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed with the gift of the Spirit and the fullness of salvation and of life which he alone can bring; the true servant Israel of God, through whose trusting, obedient, faithful, prophetic, priestly and royal ministry the nations would at last enter their eternal inheritance not made with hands; the faithful and true Messianic, Spirit-anointed King who would rule his universal kingdom in righteousness, justice and peace).

The prophet Isaiah more than any other in the OT predicted the coming of such a one in terms which bring together the concepts of ‘covenant’ and of ‘Spirit’. For example: ‘Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him . . .’ (42:1)—it could not be otherwise. The covenant-God promises, and gives, his covenant love-gift to his Servant who brings him great delight. ‘I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles’ (v. 6; cf. 49:8b). ‘The Spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor . . .’ Isa. 61:1f.; (cf. 59:21f.). This Spirit-endowed Servant of the Lord was to be the very embodiment of God’s eternal covenant to his universal people (drawn from not only Israel but also the Gentile nations).

As the New Man, the second or Last Adam, endowed with the Spirit of the everlasting covenant, he enfleshed covenant for us. He embodied perfectly what it was to live in covenant with the covenant God. He enfleshed love, faith, trust, obedience, faithfulness, righteousness, and so on. As a human being, he imaged perfectly the glory of his covenant Father and he did it for us, as our King. But more than that, through the Spirit, he also embodied—for us—the covenant curse; the sanctions of a broken covenant. He took upon himself the responsibility for the brokenness of the covenant when he became a curse for us on the Cross, in so doing drawing the sting from that curse and the eternal death it entailed and leaving the way open for his universal people to receive the gift of covenant life in all its fullness—covenant life that will be experienced not only by the New Humanity in Christ but also by the New Creation, the new heavens and the new earth which will be ruled by him and his brothers and sisters. As the original creation was dislocated and frustrated as a result of its first king’s covenant failure, so that it did not continue in its original, pristine state of covenant life, blessedness, fruitfulness, glory, and so on, so at last the new creation will be liberated from that frustration as a result of the Messianic Servant–King’s covenant faithfulness. ‘. . . the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom of the glory of the children of God’ (Rom. 8:21).

We still await that final climactic liberation movement, but we await as those with a hope which will not disappoint us for, through the Spirit of the everlasting covenant, the covenant has been kept by Man, our King, who now sends down upon us that same Spirit of the everlasting covenant who will gradually work that same covenant faithfulness into our experience, until at last, in resurrection life, the dust of our bodies will respond in obedience to the voice of our King, free for ever from the power of death and of the grave, then to be the glorious bodies of a glorified people in a freshly liberated universe—to begin a life of eternal covenant love in the fellowship of the blessed Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## STUDY EIGHT

# THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY—UNITY AND COMMUNION

Noel Cannon



It has been said that I am ‘wary of the use of the word “community” in a selective and elitist sense’. That I ‘perceive the community as the *ecclesia*, the Church, the Body of Christ, the people of God’. We as a people of God have lived with the description of our lifestyle as being ‘in community’ for many years, sufficient to recognise that we are not somehow different by being labelled in this manner. We live and breathe as just being the Church, being the *ecclesia*. We don’t find that we have to accommodate our thinking to those who define the Church in more orthodox terms.

In our earlier years, there were some who having come amongst us thought that they had to sell us as the valid and only expression of the people of God and sought to define us by our lifestyle. We do not think that way. In those earlier years, it could also be said that we desired a genuine experience of life in the Spirit, which has its times of ecstasy. But to live constantly in that expectation will bring disappointment. Living in the Spirit is an experience of unremitting warfare, much of which is attended by persecution, suffering and even confusion. Jesus told His disciples not to marvel if the world hated them, that they were to remember it hated Him before it hated them and it hated them because they were one with Him. And in the same breath, He said, ‘But when your Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father—the Spirit of truth that issues from the Father—he will bear witness to me. And you also are my witnesses, because you have been with me from the first.’ Suffering is part of the warfare, but then the battle is to win men and women back from the forces of darkness who hold humanity in their fierce grip. It requires all the weapons of God and His Spirit to prise captives free. Our service is firstly to redeem man out of his lostness.

Listen to these words of testimony received in the past few weeks. The letter followed an occasion when a ministry team came to visit us, to share with the elders and then to share the evening meal with the whole fellowship. This is a portion of it:

## The Spirit of Community—Unity and Communion

It would be very easy to allow the school and fellowship to succumb to the forces of gradualism and situation ethics. The stand that your church and school has made for righteousness will no doubt bring many critics out of the woodwork, it was certainly that way for Jesus. That however does not diminish the fact that truth is truth and we know that ultimately the truth will set us free. More than ever before we need a Church that will not seek ways to accommodate sin and compromise but a Church that will stand up and be counted. Christians who are bold enough to declare that walking with Christ, in His ways, is not a ball and chain of restrictions but rather a path to liberty and freedom . . .

I encourage you to stay strong in adhering to what you believe and know is right. We do appreciate very much the input you have into the lives of our children!

That letter spoke of ‘a path to liberty and freedom’. That expresses the battle to win men and women back from the forces of darkness, prising captives free. Really, that is what came to life at Pentecost. That was the witness that saw the proclamation as the expression of the fulfilment of God’s plan, to redeem Man out of his lostness, that was proclaimed by Peter that day. When human beings receive the gospel, the bastions of evil fall and men are transformed into the Kingdom of the Son who is life. The Spirit’s primary task that day when Peter spoke was to renew and restore the men who heard and who were made in the image of God. The Spirit in doing this was not only serving the Father and the Son whose primary task is redeeming Man, but He, the Spirit, was also expressing Himself as the Spirit of life and of creation and of new creation.

Our own fellowship had its first encounter with the Spirit in this new dimension as a Church. It prompted us to recognise that we share that mandate of redemption. Perhaps we thought, sometimes, that it was all up to us and thanked God for His bit of help. But we were starting to find our truest being in the area of serving. I spoke yesterday of the outreach ministry into which we were first led. We knew enough of conservative Christianity to recognise that this societal outreach was a frowned upon, constricted view of mission. Known as the social gospel, it was an expression of a liberal theology. Social justice and concern to serve is part but not the whole of the gospel. And we asked the Lord to preserve us from establishing an inadequate, lopsided expression of ministry.

As part of the early encounter with the Spirit, we had an Anglican layman, a member of The Parochial Ministry and Organisation Commission, come to us one Saturday morning at our leaders’ retreat. He addressed us on the then recently released Report ‘Looking into the Parish’. It was to be the *pièce de résistance* of our planned retreat. The Report had sought to examine the effectiveness of religious and parochial ministry and organisation in the present age, and to determine the means of increasing the effectiveness of ordained men and laymen. Note the separation.

In a summary of findings, the Report said that the underlying thing was for positive recognition of the local church as **a living fellowship of believers**, to be **marked by close and meaningful relationships, mutuality and interdependence** and participation based on a real **sharing of responsibility**. Another finding was that provision should be made for **strengthening interpersonal relationships** between members of the fellowship and for **fostering the New Testament concept of ministry to one another** and to **promote growth in Christian maturity**.

Now all this was from the Sydney diocese, strongly evangelical, and fairly aggressive in evangelism, and you could say their approach was programmed and organisational. But they were identifying a real problem in church life. The major finding of our visiting speaker was the fact that the church was so obsessed with its call to be the church in the world, penetrating it with the gospel, that it failed to pay **due**

**responsibility to building up the members of the fellowship** that they might **grow continually to greater maturity** in the Christian life.

What is the local church? That is difficult to define, said the Report, allowing for deeply rooted past associations with the historical parish concept. But the question that needed to be asked was, ‘**Does the local church life as presently held, satisfy the biblical criteria for *ecclesia*?**’ The church, it said, must be regarded as **the community of people who owe their existence** as such, and **their group solidarity** to one thing alone—the **call of God. Members constitute God’s people. His *ecclesia*.** And it is God’s call which is the basis of the *ecclesia* in which all Christian believers are seen as **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God** (Eph. 2:19). They share together in a **common inheritance**, they have a **common faith** and a **common salvation** and are **joint partakers of Christ** (Titus 1:4; Jude 3; Phil. 1:7). The community is established like a building is **established on a foundation stone which is Christ**.

The next outstanding feature to be observed was that of **Christian fellowship, *koinonia*, the community of God’s people**, those called by Him and living their lives in a special relationship with Him.

There were, it was said, three characteristics of this *koinonia*. **Firstly, there was a closeness and warmth.**

**Secondly, in *koinonia* there was a mutuality and interdependence between the members. Mutuality of the parts** was seen by Paul as an imperative to growth. The end-point for the individual, continued the Report, was seen by Paul as **mature manhood found only in relationship with Christ.**

**Thirdly, there was a shared responsibility and involvement** as it related to worship, witness, ministry, teaching and decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

Now the conclusion to the Report was a suggestion of formation of smaller cells, team ministries, and ‘controlled experimentation with new patterns of ministry!’ The Report was duly rejected by the Rural Deaneries. It didn’t make it to the parishes to whom it was addressed.

Yet, for where we leaders were at in our understanding of the Church, when that man addressed our leaders all that he had to say was pretty heady stuff for us as a people who had just finished the building program and were meeting to establish a church program. It was the first chink in the armour of our inculturated, institutionalised view of the church. In a matter of hours, God took that informative morning beyond the intellectual truth to which we had listened. And it was truth. God did this by descending in mighty power upon us, the gathered leaders of that church, that afternoon. And of all things, into the sleepy warm atmosphere of the dogwatch of the post-lunch session came a real visitation of the Spirit. And the first awareness of it was the frank and open confession of longstanding rancour and bitterness that had been masked with Christian terminology for years amongst those men. The men were humbled and broken. Then *koinonia* emerged spontaneously amongst us. And God confirmed His visitation that day by anointing us again that evening. And I have said here on another occasion, we came back to the church to say that God would have us inform them that we had no church program. That is a death knell to a Baptist Church.

I cannot tell you the sense of love, a love that had descended by the Spirit, that followed those men back to the church together in a newly discovered unity. The

---

<sup>1</sup> This sense of shared responsibility and participation characterises the early church, and in the seven men appointed to deal with the daily distribution, and the issue of circumcision to be resolved by the Jerusalem Church.

## The Spirit of Community—Unity and Communion

community of the Trinity, of the Father, Son and Spirit in their innate unity, was a love unity; a unity of life into which we were being drawn into full community with the Godhead. But then we didn't know very much about the details of *perichoresis* in those days. We just knew that something unique had happened.

This communion is the key to the whole life of the church. The Spirit, who is variously known as the Spirit of love, of unity, of fellowship and of prayer, maintains that unity as the Spirit of community, with the gifts which are for love within the community. There comes to us a Spirit of worship which keeps us in communion with the Father and with one another. What was the source of all that witness and unity? Paul wrote to the Corinthians telling them that '... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, there is freedom' (II Cor. 3:17). It was freedom against legalism of the kind that I quoted just before in that letter where it was said, 'The walk with Christ is not a ball and chain of restriction'. Liberty, over against the guilt and the bondage of law, has to mean a freedom to live and decide because we are living in the Spirit. Yet as evangelicals, we had been living in a bondage. Bondage to a truth that was incomplete. Now we were freed. Yes. Yet we did not recognise the price that we would pay for the revelation. It was the beginning of an intense loneliness. You yearned to just crawl back into the comfortable bed of orthodoxy. But you knew that you had finished with the past.

Let's face it. On the day of Pentecost, the watchers saw over a hundred liberated people extolling God there before their very eyes. They saw the living paradigm of a united community relating dynamically and those looking on were to become part of that community, through repentance and the gift of forgiveness by the Spirit. And what can they possibly do in their new inrush of freedom, but forgive everyone else. That's the fellowship of the Spirit.

Pentecost—the day of the 'oneness' Spirit, the day of the 'oneness' Body, the day of the 'oneness' drinking,<sup>2</sup> the day that the unity of the Spirit was evidenced in practice. As I have said, widows and orphans and the poor, the sick and needy, all loved and cared for.

And I know that I can testify to you that that is our daily life in our fellowship, in a large way. No-one goes to significant medical consultations without the sustaining presence of a godly man or woman to sustain that person in the news or treatment they might be receiving. No-one enters hospital for substantial medical procedures without the proper availability of a caring person day and night. And we are dealing with some very big medical matters of concern in our fellowship.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> ... bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:2b–6).

<sup>3</sup> In making this point, I am certain that each of you has the equivalent of such a list of specific ministries.

A woman whose prognosis was death from breast cancer and who has survived six years, has suddenly, after considering herself free of concern, found herself with deteriorating eyesight, close to blindness, which defies every medical insight and is only held in arrestment by trial and error medication.

Of two unbelieving husbands, of believing wives, for whom we have prayed, both of whom are afflicted with serious lung deterioration; the one who had a short period of vocational life as an accountant in an asbestos brake lining factory in America many years ago, and the other who has a family history of this kind of problem, with two of his siblings who have already died of emphysema. And in the midst of it, God came and God spoke by clear visitation in the night hours in hospital to each of them.

Of a small child who contracted a potentially fatal form of hepatitis which took her to what the doctor later said was within hours of death. She has been brought back to controlled health amidst long and careful assistance from dozens of people who have either supported the household in the long hospitalisation process or cared for the child in the numerous periods of isolation needed when the community had normal diseases that, in her condition, could prove fatal.

Of an Alzheimer affected senior woman who was sustained as long as possible in the fellowship and is met daily in Chesalon Nursing Home by one of our women for meals, the reading of the Scripture which she loves, and for singing and by just the presence of someone who can pray with her every day.

## The Spirit of Community—Unity and Communion

Relationship can be a very humanistic part of our modern church expression. And too often we seek to develop an emotional stance towards others that stimulates a false acceptance of one another, when all the time the real basis of unity lies in the work of the Cross. In the informal manner of our ministry and care, we needed to see that we were engaging in a genuine ministry of the Spirit, unclouded by a false piety being used as power over people.

One thing has been brought home clearly to us by Geoffrey Bingham's ministry to our fellowship. Emotional needs in relationships and the practical levels of everyday living are met in, and only by, the genuine love of the community. And a church that is high on this is low on therapeutic counselling.

God has a plan for His elect. It is that we be holy and blameless before Him, that we are to be sons, that we are to be to His glory by being glorified. What matters most is not simply what we **are**, but what we **do**. When God establishes us by His Spirit, He does not simply commend us for our state, but appropriately also for our activity. For God, to be is to do. And for Man also, to properly be is also to appropriately do. I am not talking about some perfection, nor some special accomplishment. I am talking about a Man living out in his personhood, a true righteousness, a wholeness, a goodness, love, and truth.<sup>4</sup>

God is community and the whole human race is created to reflect that unity. The community came by creation, but the fall into sin damaged all this. But in Christ it can be restored. The old—within creation—can become the new creation through Christ and through His Cross, through the Spirit and His work. Pentecost brought that unique miracle to pass, to stop all our theories of specialised or intentional communities and to look at what He has called us to be—community, the new people of God, free, sins forgiven. Guiltless, guilt erased, because His love has flooded our hearts. (Remember the Scriptures from John's Letter at the recent Royal Wedding).<sup>5</sup> And we have responded to that love. We have died to ourselves and come alive to God and also come alive to others. We put others before ourselves. We serve one another in love. And not one of our actions flows from a legal demand. We are not trying to piece together an ideal pattern of community. We are simply what we are, doing what we do. We are the unique community, living a life that distinguishes us among human beings—a life of love, unity, fellowship and witness. Above all, we know our identity. We are the community of grace. That is what allows us to be the people of love. We minister in prophetic, priestly and royal form.

---

<sup>4</sup> Where we recognise that a man is a gifted tradesman or a highly valued professional person, we can observe he is not living prophetically in the Spirit, yet very readily slant any personal ministry away from that man by secularising the offence—you know—'that's what "we" all do, given the same circumstances!' By such a response, we guarantee that the task in which he is engaged is not affected. That's pragmatism. We have to take a man who is entrenched in the idiosyncrasies of his trade or personality, you know, electricians who say, 'it can't be done' as a power over others; or a mechanic who personifies a nut and bolt so that 'those' becomes 'them'—the enemies—whose 'sin' is directly linked to the spanner which must be thrown when we don't get the required tightening or loosening action. I encourage such a person to believe that the habituation of our sins can be broken by the indwelling Christ, and pray with him and for him. That's inviting a man to live out his true righteousness, which is to live prophetically.

<sup>5</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love; and His love was disclosed to us in this, that He sent His only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love He showed to us in sending His Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another (I John 4:7–11, *NEB*).

## The Spirit of Community—Unity and Communion

We are the prophetic community, bearing witness by dynamic utterance given directly by God. And, by our way of life, we are all called to be prophetic.

We are the priestly community, representing God to the world and the world to God.

We are the royal community, redeemed from Heaven, sons of the King of the earth, created in His image, born of royal stock as a kingly people.

We are the servant community, proclaiming Christ to the nations and, at the same time, watching over the world with rich intercession.

We are a warring community, equipped to pull down strongholds of evil with powerful spiritual weapons.

We are the ministering community, committed to that call by means of love, enabled in that ministry by the power of the Spirit, and enriched in that ministry by the gifts entrusted to each of us by the Spirit whereby the church can be strong. We have been dynamically initiated through the death and resurrection of Christ. And with the flood and the fullness of that grace, we, the community, live, and we turn outward to the world. If the Spirit were not present, we would be no community at all, for it is the Spirit which guards and guides the church. Remember Ananias and Sapphira.

We are the church, the community, looking to the end-time in the now-time, knowing that the Spirit came at Pentecost with a view to the eschaton. We are the community that lives under the present apocalyptic judgment and actions of God: 'Christ with us to the consummation of the Age'.

Pentecost saw the advent of the miracle of community—the church community, established as God's functional unit.

God desires that human beings be brought together into this corporate whole, a fellowship of reconciliation which reflects God's own eternal reality and participates in that reality. Since the New Testament era the focal point of the reconciled society has been the church of Jesus Christ. People called to pioneer in the present the community of love and to participate in and reflect the eternal relation of the triune God.

We are the company of those who already have been brought by the Holy Spirit to share in the love between the Father and the Son. As we lay hold of and then speak forth clearly this vision of the church, we gain a renewed sense of the presence of God within the Christian fellowship of love. This in turn spills over into renewed worship 'in spirit and in truth' as we praise the triune community of love, the eternal Trinity who is our Creator and Saviour. Herein lies our unity.

This is God's ultimate purpose for creation.

## STUDY NINE

# THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Siew Kiong Tham



### INTRODUCTION

The title, ‘The Spirit in Worship and Prayer’, takes its cue from several texts: ‘worship the Father in Spirit and truth’ (John 4:23–24); ‘worship in the Spirit of God’ (Phil. 3:3), and ‘Pray in the Spirit’ (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). It involves discussing what is truth and its relation to the Spirit, and to do this I feel that I am sticking my head in the lion’s jaws, as Geoffrey Bingham says, ‘To write a book [or paper] about the truth is simply sticking one’s head in the lion’s jaws. It is—in a humorous sense—digging one’s own grave!’<sup>1</sup>

The phrase, ‘in the Spirit’, is used in several places in the New Testament in relation to the life we now live in the Spirit because the Spirit dwells in us (Rom. 8:9). The *NIV* tends not to translate the preposition *en* (Gk) as ‘in’ when used of the Spirit, but rather with ‘by’, such as ‘by the Spirit’. For example, in I Corinthians 6:11, while the *NRSV* reads, ‘you were justified in [*en*] the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in [*en*] the Spirit of our God’, the *NIV* reads, ‘you were justified in [*en*] the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by [*en*] the Spirit of our God’. I think the translators of the *NIV* were more concerned about the distinction between Christ and the Spirit, the Spirit being instrumental in the process, rather than their oneness.

When we speak of ‘truth’, we do so in many senses. We may refer to what is verifiable, with which we can speak with some assertion. We may refer to what is revealed or disclosed to us, and expressed in a doctrinal or dogmatic form. We may refer to a higher being as the embodiment of truth.

---

<sup>1</sup> G. Bingham, *Truth—the Golden Girdle* (NCPI, 1983), p. ix (parenthesis mine).

## The Spirit of Worship and Prayer

In brief, we may use the term in two specific senses. One is the Truth ('T') that refers to the Being of the Triune God. We may designate this as the 'Truth of Being'. The other sense is when we refer to the truth ('t') that we know and express. We may designate this as the 'truth of statement'. This usage is implied in the poem on 'Truth' in Geoffrey Bingham's book, *Truth—the Golden Girdle*:

There, in the beginning, was the truth,  
The Truth Himself, eternal, immutable  
But speaking the creative word, calling out  
The things unseen to seeness.  
The things unknown to knownness.  
This was the word bringing  
The fruits of Truth as the word,  
This the irresistible reality  
Of universal and eternal creation.

And in a later verse, Geoffrey wrote:

Gone far from truth man cannot know  
The truth of Truth, can only feel . . .  
Truth's army found its genesis  
In timbered cross, triumphant cry,  
And empty tomb. Truth poured itself  
In Spirit's power, anointing light,  
In Gospel's form—the word of truth . . .<sup>2</sup>

There is a distinction here between 'truth' and 'Truth'. This distinction between the 'truth of statement' and 'Truth of Being' will be used to make clear the Spirit's role in worship and prayer. It will also assist us in distinguishing between our understanding of truth ('t') and the Truth of the Being of the Triune God ('T').

### A PERSONAL JOURNEY

It has taken me a long time to come to appreciate what I am talking about here. This is due to the education and training I underwent. In mathematics, we were taught to work out the lowest common denominator. In chemistry, we were given a substance and set about to analyse it to find out the elements it contained. From this reductionist approach we can then reconstruct the reality of the events or substances. When I went to church I was taught about the God who is monotheistic and whose attributes are omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotent. He never changes and is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is also the true God.

I was taught objective truth and these truths are verifiable. With the natural science we can dissect, analyse and philosophise. With the spiritual truth we approach it through the infallible Word of God, the Bible, in similar fashion. So truth is objective, and if God is true, then the God we worship is a rational God and therefore an object of our investigation. This is how we come to know God. The statements that I hold true concerning God can be verified from the authoritative Word. Much of the debate engaging science with religion emphasises this objectivity.

I may refer to this as propositional truth. Armed with these precepts I then reconstruct a god that I worship. I am not arrogant, but submissive and conforming to

---

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* pp. xvi, xvii, xix.

## The Spirit of Worship and Prayer

the god of my reconstruction. The problem that I faced and which I did not know was my approach to the Truth. I did not start with the Truth, but sought to fathom the Truth with methodology derived from other disciplines—an impossible mission.

Yet, in my prayers, I addressed God as ‘our Father’. That is more a formal address taught from the Bible, much the same way as we say ‘Your Excellency’. I worshipped an objective god and had not learned to relate with the true God that He is.

### WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

To worship God ‘in Spirit and truth’ does not represent two aspects of worship. The expression is what we term *hendiadys*—an expression of a complex idea linked by two words connected with ‘and’. ‘It is impossible to separate the two notions’, commented C. K. Barrett.<sup>3</sup> The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and, as we shall see later, the Persons of the Triune Godhead are referred to as Truth.

‘To worship in Spirit and truth’ may be taken to mean ‘to worship in the Spirit through the mediation of Christ’, the ‘Truth’ taken to refer to Christ. While this may appear to separate the two notions, it still maintains the unity of thought as the Spirit and Christ are one in the Tri-unity of the Godhead.

Christ and the Spirit are sent by the Father with complementary roles of revelation and reconciliation. We cannot treat Christology and Pneumatology as if they are separate considerations. Our understanding in each of these areas must be directed by the Tri-unity of the Godhead.

### WHAT IS TRUTH?

This is a difficult question to answer in a short paragraph. It depends on the context in which we refer to ‘truth’.<sup>4</sup> I have referred to truth as we understand it in the objective world. It demands a certain approach and analysis. However, when we refer to the Truth which is the Being of God, then we cannot simply transfer those methods of study. Again, Geoffrey sums up the difficulty thus:

Truth is not a set of ideas, and not even good orthodox theology—useful as that may be. Truth is something which is lived out. It is life truly lived. One thing that it certainly is not is simply a set of facts or even a system of thinking. Whilst we may speak roughly of ‘scientific truth’, ‘poetic truth’, and ‘historic truth’, none of these categories is really *the* truth.

The truth must be God, who He is and what He does in our past, present and future. If this is so, then it is doubtful that man can discover the truth unaided.<sup>5</sup>

### TRUTH IS TRINITARIAN

If the Truth is in God, then Truth has to be Trinitarian, that is, in the Father, Son and Spirit:

---

<sup>3</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (SPCK, London, 1978, 2nd edit.), p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> It is not my brief nor within my capability to go into the philosophical consideration of truth. I shall simply refer to an article by The Rev. Prof. Robert J. Palma, ‘The Rehabilitation of Truth in Theology’, in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1975, vol. 28, pp. 201–26.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. viii.

## The Spirit of Worship and Prayer

- God is Truth (Rom. 3:4; I Thess. 1:9; John 17:3).
- Jesus declares Himself to be the Truth (John 14:6).
- The Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13; I John 5:7).

The Truth is the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and 'he will guide us into all truth', that is, lead us into the Truth of the Father and Son. Geoffrey Bingham sums this up succinctly:

This will not be fully real to us unless we comprehend that the truth is the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son, living in us. They do this, by the means of the third Person, the Holy Spirit. Christ lived the truth as man, and yet never without his Father and the Spirit. The truth he lived is clear for us to see and to follow. By the relationship which we have with the Father, Son and Spirit, we too can now live the truth, and do the truth.<sup>6</sup>

### TRUTH IS RELATIONAL

If the Truth is in the Being of God and we are beings of His creation, then Truth is relational, that is, it is subject-to-subject. We are not considering objective truth as we do with the created world. Neither is it the ability of our intellect to comprehend this Truth. To be able to enter into the Truth of God, the Spirit of God needs to engage our spirits and take us into Christ who Himself is the Truth. So do we know in order to relate or do we relate in order to know? This is the essence of all knowledge:

No less has the Holy Spirit led us into all the truth, for the truth is something which we know relationally, experientially, and in our minds.<sup>7</sup>

This is the practical reality of our knowing and living. It is relational and not cerebral. Quoting Geoffrey Bingham again, 'We may have the doctrine of angels and live like devils, or we may have little basic doctrinal 'truth' and yet live as people of the truth'.<sup>8</sup>

### THE TRUTH AND REALITY

The discussion needs to consider the use of words in expressing truth. This is relevant because the conversation with the Samaritan woman takes us into worship and the way we know the truth (John 4:23). In other words, worship is in the Spirit and truth, and truth is tied up with knowledge.

We use words to express what we know and what we understand to be the truth. So often the truth is dominated and constructed by our language. Our expression of the truth is not the Truth itself, but points to the Truth. Our expressions do not determine the Truth, but as we comprehend the reality of the Truth, it will cause our language to change in order to express this reality.

The reality is not in our truth of statement, 't', but rather in the Truth of Being, 'T'. Our truth of statement points to the Truth of Being which is the reality.

---

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> G. Bingham, *Truthing of the Truth* (NCPI, 1982), p. 13.

### **PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT**

In the hymn, 'I Know Not How to Pray',<sup>9</sup> half the verses begin with those words. When we come to God in prayer, we assume that we know what to pray for. More often than not, we don't. In our weak human flesh we often do not know the prayer that is in the will of the Father. We ramble on, asking for this and that. Paul says that we do not know what to pray (Rom. 8:26–27).

Though we are weak and do not know, the Holy Spirit assists us. He is our intercessor, interceding for us before God, just as Jesus Christ is doing for us now. Sometimes the prayers of our deepest need are not uttered by us, but by the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us just as Christ is doing that for us today (Heb. 7:23–25).

So, 'What should I do then?' Paul asked in relation to prayer. Are we going to be so immersed in the Spirit that we are not aware of what we are praying for. No, 'I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also' (I Cor. 14:15, *NRSV*). To be 'in the Spirit' is a participation or sharing (*koinonia*) in the Spirit (I Cor. 10:16).

This is the essence of communion—a sharing. While one is 'immersed' in the other, yet there remains a distinction from the other.

### **TRUTH OF BEING AND TRUTH OF STATEMENT**

We need to distinguish between the Truth of Being ('T') and the truth of statement ('t'). Our statement about God is *analogical* (Aquinas). When we call Jesus 'Lord', we do not equate what we conceive as Lord ('t') with His Lordship ('T'). That would be to use the term in a *univocal* sense. His Lordship is more than the sum of all that we can conceive of. In other words all our ('t's) do not add up to ('T'). The converse is equivocal, that is, the terms do not have anything in common at all.

We use the terms 'father' and 'Father' analogically, that is, from analogy. What is the relation between earthly fatherhood and divine Fatherhood? We cannot use the understanding of our earthly fatherhood to understand God's Fatherhood. There is a mystery. God uses human categories in His revelation but we must not project onto God our human categories.

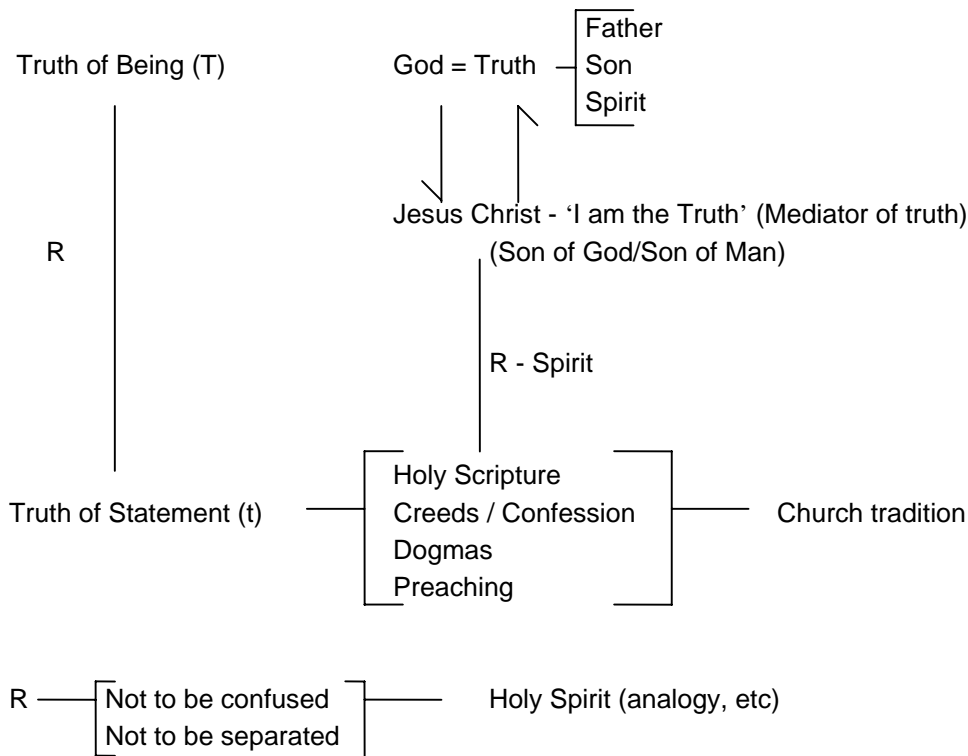
We must distinguish between ('t') and ('T'). We must not confuse the truth of statement ('t') with the Truth of Being ('T'), that is, we equate our truth of statement with the Truth of Being ('t'='T'), yet we must not keep them as separate.

---

<sup>9</sup> J. B. Torrance, *New Creation Hymn Book* (NCPI, 1996), vol. 2, no. 107.

## The Spirit of Worship and Prayer

The discussion is best represented in this schematic form from James Torrance:<sup>10</sup>



We must not detach our statements of truth ('t') from their ontological ground in the Trinity and the Incarnation ('T'), and then attach them to self, that is, to our subjective experience.

### THE SPIRIT IN PSALMS

David was well aware of the Spirit's role in his life. There is a hint of the Spirit of God moving and setting Man's spirit right with God, and taking him into the presence of God. This is well expressed in David's psalm of repentance:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit (Ps. 51:10–12, *NRSV*).

The psalmist is also well aware of the need to call on God in truth:

The LORD is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth (Ps. 145:18, *NRSV*).

This means that in calling on God we need to acknowledge the Truth of His Being. Otherwise we will be calling on a god of our construction.

<sup>10</sup> J. B. Torrance, unpublished lecture notes.

## The Spirit of Worship and Prayer

There is no worship that is true unless it is in the Spirit:

Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence? (Ps. 139:7–10, *NRSV*).

Answer me quickly, O LORD;  
my spirit fails.  
Do not hide your face from me,  
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit (Ps. 143:7, *NRSV*).

When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground (Ps. 104:30, *NRSV*).

### WORSHIP IN THE HOLY THREE

The psalmist is well aware of the worship in the Spirit. A modern-day psalmist puts it in these words:

Praise be to God whose Father heart  
Embraces all our race,  
Praise be to Son and Spirit too  
Who bring us to His face.  
Praise be for holy love that floods  
The sad, once orphaned heart.  
Praise be to Triune Family<sup>11</sup>  
In which we now take part.

\* \* \*

Holy! Holy! Holy! Father, Son and Spirit,  
Perfect in all ages unto eternity.  
Hearts now filled with glory tell the Endless Story,  
Live we and worship in the Holy Three.<sup>12</sup>

So much of our worship and prayer is initiated from the self and we wish that somehow it would ascend to God. While we remain in adoration, wonder and praise, it is not to a third person, but praise to the Triune God in whom ‘we are part of’, that is, part of the communion of the Triune Godhead, and it is from within the Triune communion that ‘we live and worship’. It is praise from within the communion as we are taken in the Spirit through the mediation of Jesus Christ into His communion with the Father. The life of praise starts from within the communion and not outside of it. Outside of the communion with the Father, the whole understanding of praise as we see in the Psalms just cannot be comprehended, try as we may. As the psalmists knew that it is only from within the communion that petition or lament can turn into a vow of praise and then to declarative praise (thanksgiving) and finally to descriptive praise (hymn), and there we remain in adoration, wonder and praise.

---

<sup>11</sup> G. Bingham, *New Creation Hymn Book* (NCPI, 1996), vol. 2, no. 54.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* no. 109.

## STUDY TEN

# THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

Rod James



In one of the TV advertisements for breakfast cereal a woman says ‘I’ll have what she’s having’. In similar fashion young people in the 1970’s were attracted to the Youth Group at the Coromandel Valley Uniting Church by the living faith of their school friends. They came seeking the same experience and presence of God that they saw in their friends’ lives. However, many had little idea of the origin, context or meaning of the ‘baptism’ which they sought. They just wanted to have what their friends were having. It is pastorally important to ground the experience of the fullness of the Spirit in the knowledge of the fullness of God, as that fullness is revealed in the Scriptures. Let us then locate this pneumatic fullness in the broader divine fullness that is both revealed and promised by God.

### ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD

#### The Fullness of the Father

Paul prays that through Christ the believers in Ephesus and elsewhere will ‘know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God’ (Eph. 3:19). As mortals we can only see, as ‘in a mirror dimly’ what constitutes the fullness of God. But the Scriptures make it clear that all things cohere in a universe that expresses the completeness or fullness by which the Creator is ‘all in all’ (I Cor. 15:28):

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen (Rom. 11:36).

One expression of that fullness is the harmonious union in which all things were created to resonate with the will and glory of the fullness of the Father, who is the *fons divinitatus* of all things. The beautiful reality and resonating harmony found in music

## The Fullness of The Spirit

demonstrates, for example, how deliberately all things have been made to express the fullness of the Father.

### **The Loss of Fullness**

Sin can be understood as the discord which has robbed Man of the resonance and fullness of the glory of God. Instinctively, Man's emptiness and craving for fullness resulted in a counterfeit fullness:

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice (Rom. 1:29).

### **The Fullness of the Father in the Son**

Viewed in the light of Man's loss, Paul's statement about Christ takes on salvific importance:

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Col. 2:9).

We cannot comprehensively define the nature of that divine fullness which dwells in the man Jesus. But we can understand that the fullness of God dwelling in a human being is God's means of overcoming the discord which has come through sin, and is His way of bringing fullness to humanity and restoring the resonance, unity and harmony of all things with Himself:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself (Col. 1:19).

### **The Fullness of the Son in Us**

It was God's purpose from the beginning to restore humanity to fullness through the fullness of Christ, and so Christ's fullness has been graciously lavished upon us by the Father:

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (John 1:16, *RSV*).

... and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Col. 2:10).

... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

... the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Eph. 1:23).

## **FULLNESS IN CHRIST**

Each of these passages lures us on to know more of the fullness that God has imparted to us mere mortals in the gift of His Son. Here are some aspects of the fullness that is in Christ.

### **The Fullness of Salvation**

It is not uncommon for followers of Christ to think of their discipleship in partial terms, for example, ‘Some of self, and some of Thee’, or, ‘I am trying to be a Christian’. However, salvation is not by degrees, but is a work with its own complete and perfect fullness. This is revealed in the fullness of Christ’s passion and atonement for us (Heb. 10:14; II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:32). A revelation of that fullness is necessary for the believer to have ‘life in all its fullness’ (John 10:10).

Full salvation! Full salvation!  
Lo, the fountain opened wide,  
Streams through every land and nation  
From the Saviour’s wounded side.  
Full salvation! Full salvation!  
Streams an endless crimson tide.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Fullness of Inter-Dwelling Union**

The matter of divine fullness includes the fullness of the inter-dwelling union of persons. Man was created male and female to experience a glorious fullness and fulfillment of relationship between one man and one woman. This and other intimacies of human relationship reflect the fullness of relationship union in the Godhead:

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:22, 23).

Life immortal, heaven descending,  
Lo! my heart the Spirit’s shrine:  
God and man in oneness blending,  
Oh, what fellowship is mine!  
Full salvation! Full salvation!  
Raised in Christ to life divine!<sup>2</sup>

### **The Fullness of Adoption into Sonship and Its Inheritance**

Adoption into sonship is a state which has no partial components. It is a full and final adoption into a full and complete sonship which has a full and unfading inheritance:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship [or, adoption]. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom. 8:15–17).

### **The Fullness of Truth**

Truth, like adoption, has no degrees. To be the truth it must be ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’. God’s uncompromising will for His people is that they

---

<sup>1</sup> F. Bottome, 1823–94, *New Creation Hymn Book* Vol. 1, (NCPI, 1990), no. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

## The Fullness of The Spirit

should dwell in the fullness of the Spirit of truth. This is the truth of merciful judgment and just mercy (Rom. 3:26):

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth (John 16:13).

### **The Fullness of Holiness**

Likewise, holiness demands its own fullness to be complete. And this fullness of holiness is God's work in us through our union with Christ:

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation (Col. 1:22).

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (I Cor. 7:1).

### **The Fullness of Time**

'All the fullness of God' includes His power to do all that He purposed in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). His divine intention, prophetic promises and gracious fulfillment fill out both the salvation history of the world and our own personal salvation history (Rom. 8:28):

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (II Cor. 9:8).

## **ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD IN THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT**

We have seen 'all the fullness of God' resonating in the creation, dwelling in Christ, and given to humanity in Christ. We now turn to see that God's restoration of human fullness is worked out through a complete immersion in the Holy Spirit. For the believers, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the fullness of God dwelling in them, and what we have seen so far assures us that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is God's will for each one of us. Here are some of the elements of that fullness of the Spirit.

### **The Fullness of Complete Immersion (or Baptism) in the Holy Spirit**

While Peter was speaking the word of God's grace to a Gentile household 'the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out' upon them:

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized [i.e. thoroughly immersed] with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 11:15, 16).

### **The Fullness of Love**

The revelation of the redemptive love of God in Christ baptises the believer in an overflowing love through the Holy Spirit. Such love is not just love, but is a fullness of

## The Fullness of The Spirit

love for God, for our neighbour, and even (or especially) for our enemies (Luke 6:27, 28):

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Rom. 5:5).

### **The Fullness of Obedience**

Although the sanctification of the believer has an ongoing and outworking aspect, the gift of the righteousness of Christ is a gift of full and complete obedience. The indwelling Holy Spirit is not content with anything other than a fullness of obedience. Anything else grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30–32):

And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4).

### **The Fullness of the Fruitage of the Holy Spirit**

The full-rounded, interpersonal moral character and integrity which is revealed in God's fullness of being—this is His gift to the believer in Christ. This fullness is realised as the fruitage of the Holy Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit [i.e. the full-rounded fruitage] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Gal. 5:22–23).

### **The Fullness of Power from on High**

At the critical moment of opportunity and accountability the believers were (and are) anointed with power through the Spirit to bear witness to Christ:

They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: 'By what power or what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: 'Rulers and elders of the people!' (Acts 4:7, 8).

The Spirit witnesses to the covenant of grace and gives an assurance of the full sufficiency of God's grace to accomplish all that the call of God requires of the believers (I Thess. 5:24; II Cor. 12:9):

I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure [lit. the fullness] of the blessing of Christ (Rom. 15:29).

### **The Fullness of Expectation**

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is also a fullness of assurance that 'the best is yet to be' in the final revelation and coming of Christ, which is the consummation and fullness of all things:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

## The Fullness of Harmony and Resonance with God

Geoffrey Bingham expresses this resonant fullness in his book *The Day of the Spirit*:

The French theologian F. Godet once said, 'Man is a vessel destined to be filled by God, and as he is filled, so he expands, and as he expands so he is filled'.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we can be filled with joy, abrim with love, flooded with praise, awash with adoration, and full of power to witness to Christ. In this, we are not going beyond what it is to be a true human being, but, in fact, reaching up to what is truly natural for us to be.<sup>4</sup>

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:18–20).

## THE WAY OF FULLNESS IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

We are well aware of the proliferation of 'how to's' in Christian literature, and of their potential for producing a wooden and lifeless prescription for Christian living. While such prescriptions are to be avoided, the Scriptures do give indications of the ways in which fullness of the Spirit came (and comes) to the believers. In summary, we may simply say that it is the way of entering fully into the fullness, that is, entering wholeheartedly and unreservedly into all the fullness of God which has been given to us in Christ. Some elements of that fullness of entering are as follows:

- **In full saturation in the word of Scripture** (Col. 3:16).
- **In hearing the word of Christ with full faith** (Gal. 3:2, 5).
- **In full repentance of sins and full, cleansing immersion into the name of Jesus Christ** (Acts 2:38).
- **In whole-hearted prayer and supplication** (Luke 11:13; Acts 4:31).
- **In the fullness of the congregation** (Acts 2:1–4).
- **In the fullness of worship and praise in the Spirit** (Acts 10:45, 46).
- **In fully yielding obedience to the great call of God** (Rom. 12:1; Acts 9:15–17).
- **In serving wholeheartedly as instruments of the Gospel of Christ** (Acts 5:32).
- **In entering courageously into the spiritual battle as the Lord leads** (Eph. 6:12, 13, 18).
- **In walking (or going about) in the Spirit** (Gal. 5:25).
- **In full immersion (baptism) in the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:5).
- **In going on being filled with the Spirit** (Eph. 5:18–20).

---

<sup>3</sup> G. Bingham, *The Day of the Spirit*, (NCPI, 1985), p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.

## The Fulness of The Spirit

The following from *The Day of the Spirit* expresses this way of fullness most vividly:

What then, is the simple recipe for being continually filled with the Spirit? The answer is, ‘Be sure that you are aware of what being filled with the Spirit entails, i.e. persecution, hardship, strong demands of suffering where one part of us longs for ease, pleasure and human acceptance. Know that the Spirit is present for power to witness to Jesus, to effect love, fellowship, unity, true sonship of the Father, true submission to Christ’s Lordship, fearless proclamation of the Gospel, untiring doing of good to all men, and the acceptance of the fierce hatred of sinful men and evil creatures. Know that the life of the Spirit will lead to the deep things of God, the encouragement of hope, the vibrancy of ministry, the character of Christ. Know, then, the difficult things and the wonderful things and say, “These are what I want. I shrink from nothing that brings suffering. I am glad of the good things of God”. It is in this context, when we are in this state of mind, that the Spirit comes to us habitually, and brings his vast supplies of power, love, and enablement for the difficult times’.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 170.

## STUDY ELEVEN

# THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Hector Morrison



We are most familiar with this phrase from Paul's use of it in Ephesians 6:17. The context is one of spiritual warfare (vv. 11, 12, 13, 16). Our goal in the context of this spiritual warfare is to stand (vv. 11, 13 [x2], 14). The means by which we are to do so: (v. 10) by being 'strong in the Lord and in his mighty power'; and (vv. 11, 13) by putting on the 'full armour of God', which includes, amongst other items, 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'. The reference to the 'full armour of God' reminds us that we are not on our own in this spiritual warfare. It is not simply personal to us but is part of the great cosmic conflict which has been waged almost since the beginning of time.

The battle is not primarily ours—it is the Lord's. The spiritual rulers, authorities, powers, etc. of which we read in Ephesians 6 have their argument not primarily with us but with the blessed and glorious Trinity. We are caught up in this conflict because we have been created and called to be children of the Father. The evil forces seek to 'get at' the Father through the children! And so it has been from almost the very beginning. We first encounter these attacks on the Father's children in the delightful surrounds of the royal pleasure garden of Eden (Gen. 3). It is in this context of spiritual warfare, then, that we are encouraged to wield 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'.

But, 'the sword of the Spirit', or at least the word of God as the instrument of the Spirit, was in action prior to there being any hint of cosmic conflict. The primary aspect of the 'sword's' function is creative, beneficent and edifying. It was in operation before there was any opposition, and will also continue to be in operation when all opposition has been put down, when the sword of the Spirit rests from the judgmental aspect of its function, and the creation enters its eternal Sabbath of rest which the Father has purposed for it from the very beginning.

Consider, firstly, the positive, creative, enlivening aspect of the word of God in the hand of the Spirit, the word as it is executed/put into effect by the Spirit.

## GENESIS 1

In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit moves with expectancy over the lifeless waste which is the unformed 'earth'. By the end of the chapter he has effected everything that God has intended, purposed, commanded and spoken. As a result of his activities the world teems with every kind of life. Everything has its own place. Everything functions and reproduces 'according to its own kind'. There is perfect order, wonderful beauty, myriad life forms, and all of it has been effected by the Spirit according to the word of God (cf. Ps. 33:6; Isa. 34:16). We might say that the Spirit has led the whole of creation from its initial darkness, emptiness and lifelessness to its God-intended completion, maturity and rest in the Sabbath. And there is nothing coerced or unwilling about creation's response. Every single aspect of creation, willingly, unhesitatingly—we might even say, joyfully and melodiously—responds to the voice of the King. The 'hosts' (= 'armies', cf. Gen. 2:1) of creation march 'in synch' with the Spirit as he wields the royal sword of his word. Having created all things by the word of his power, the King continues to uphold and rule his kingdom by the same authoritative word. From the very beginning, then, the will and intention of God expressed in his word is effected by the Spirit. The Spirit is the executive agent of the Godhead.

And throughout Scripture, and human experience, we see the outworking of this in a two-fold way (a double-edged way): those who oppose God's will—including, at times, his own covenant people, his church—are felled by the sword of his word; while those who respond to his will in loving obedience are established and blessed by it.

## GENESIS 1 – 3

Up until the end of Genesis 2 Man, made in the image of God who is King, ruled the earthly kingdom of God in the enlivening power of the Spirit and in accordance with the word of the Father. He and his wife were established and blessed in a wonderful web of relationships with one another, with every aspect of creation and, above all, with their Father. And there is only one slight hint/indication of another aspect to the function of the word (2:17) 'for when you eat of it you will surely die'. But, sadly, it was not long before they discovered the cutting edge of the Spirit's sword.

They discovered it through their sad experience of subtle seduction by the 'serpent', that 'Father of Lies' who was 'a murderer from the beginning'. He attacked the first human couple with the destructive sword of his mouth, cunningly disguised, however, until it had dealt its deadly blow. Compare Proverbs 5:3–4. The seduction focuses on the issue of the voice and word of the Father, 'Did God really say?', etc. Sadly, the first couple listened to the seductive speech/destructive tongue/voice of the 'stranger' rather than the familiar voice of the Father, with the result that they were separated from the 'tree of life' by the 'flame of the turning sword', and their life became one of conflict and frustration. And so began the age-long conflict between 'the seed of the woman' and 'the seed of the serpent' which we still find ourselves engaged in today.

But, in Genesis 3, we find a further aspect of the work of the 'sword of the Spirit', that which the writer to the Hebrews speaks of (Heb. 4:12f.):

## The Fullness of The Spirit

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates . . . it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

It took just the approach of the Father in the garden and the first hint of his 'voice' (Gen. 3:8f.) to penetrate the inadequate coverings the first couple had made for themselves and to uncover and expose to them the true state of their hearts.

But judgment is God's strange work, and in Genesis 3 and throughout Genesis 1 to 11—as with so much of the rest of Scripture—judgment is mixed with grace and mercy. God did not destroy Adam and Eve; he did not destroy the whole of humanity at the time of the Flood—though he went mighty close to it—he did not wholly destroy human society in Genesis 11, for his intention from the beginning, expressed in his word and executed by his Spirit, was to bless humanity.

### ABRAHAM

And that intention comes to the fore again when we read of the wonder of God's grace in his provision of the covenant of redemption instituted with Abraham and his 'seed' after him unto all generations, a covenant which has 'blessing' at its very core ('bless' appears 5 times in Gen. 12:1–3), not simply for Abraham and his family but 'for all nations' (12:3). A central promise of that covenant is: 'I will bless those who bless you and curse him who curses you'. To a large extent the story in the rest of Genesis, and to some extent in the rest of Scripture, is simply an outworking of that double-edged sword of promise and warning; of blessing and cursing. (Significantly, although the Spirit of God is not associated with Abraham in Genesis, he is regarded as a prophetic figure: 'the word of the LORD came to him' [Gen. 15:1, 4]. On the analogy of other parts of Scripture, not least Genesis 1, we should understand that it was the Spirit who effected the prophetic word in his experience and in that of his descendants, the children of Israel.)

### ISRAEL

In the Exodus we have a further movement of the Spirit of God in which he effects the promised, covenanted word. Hosea 12:13 reminds us that 'by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt'; while in Isaiah 63:11–16 Israel's wilderness journey is depicted (parallel to Gen. 1) as one in which they were led by the Spirit ultimately into their rest in the promised land. Often in the narratives (Exodus – Joshua) we see the 'sword of the Spirit' working for Israel and against their enemies: Exodus 17:16; Numbers 22:31 ('the Angel of the LORD standing in the road, with his sword drawn'); Joshua 5:13 ('Joshua . . . looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand'). As the Israelites walked in obedience to the word of God they saw the strongholds of the world toppling before them, sometimes (as in the paradigmatic case of Jericho) without any military effort whatsoever on their part. Joshua 24:12: 'I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you . . . You did not do it with your own sword and bow'; Judges 7 (Gideon); I Samuel 17:45ff. (David); (See also Isa. 31:8; 34:5; and Ps. 44:3–6.)

## The Fulness of The Spirit

But, as we have noted, the sword of the Spirit can operate against God's people too—when they walk in disobedience and prove themselves to be unfaithful, as in their experience against the city of Ai (Josh. 7). Other examples: I Samuel 19:18ff.; I Chronicles 21:16.

Whichever way, God's word is not frustrated. Isaiah 55:11: '... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it'. The Spirit prospers the word, regardless of human efforts to frustrate it. See I Kings 22:34 where Micaiah's prophecy concerning King Ahab of Israel was fulfilled despite the attempt by the king to hide his true identity and to remain inconspicuous in the battle. We are told that: 'someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armour'. Surely, we are to understand that the Spirit directed his 'sword'—that arrow—towards its God-intended target so that the word of God was indeed effected?

Throughout the whole of the prophetic sections of the OT we find a similar truth at work. The sword of the Spirit is wielded by God against his own disobedient and unfaithful people. Hosea 6:5: 'I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the word of my mouth', also Jeremiah 9:16, 12:12, 47:6, and Ezekiel 21:3f.

### MESSIANIC

While much of the OT prophetic scriptures express concern about the failure of Israel as a prophetic, royal and priestly society; and about the failure of her kings to be men of the Spirit and of the Word; there is another element of their teaching which looks forward to a perfect, Messianic figure who would prove faithful where Israel and her kings had failed. Isaiah 49:2 (servant): 'He made my mouth like a sharpened sword [the power to penetrate], in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow [to range far and wide] and concealed me in his quiver'; 50:4: 'the instructed tongue'; 11:1–4: the Spirit-endowed 'Branch . . . will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked'. 'The King needs no other display of power and no other weapon of enforcement than the bare word that he speaks . . . the King's word is full of divine efficacy.'<sup>1</sup> See also Psalm 45:3–5.

### JESUS

The fulfilment of these messianic prophecies is to be found in the ministry of Jesus. He is both the Man of the Spirit and the Man of the Word, indeed, the Word-become-flesh. John 3:34 : 'For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without measure'. In every action he undertakes he is led and empowered by the Spirit. Every word he speaks is inspired by the Spirit. And in his royal messianic role he 'rides forth' victoriously to engage not primarily with flesh and blood but with the Evil One and his legions. His mission is to bring in the Kingdom of God, by destroying the dark kingdom of the Evil One. Sinclair Ferguson in his recent book on the Holy Spirit says, 'the energy and power of the Spirit . . . advances the kingdom of God into enemy occupied territory; the Spirit . . . directs the Warrior-King to the strategic place of conflict'.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (IVP, Leicester, 1994), p. 123.

In the temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4ff.), he stood fast against the devil, brandishing the sword of God's word: 'man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'. This is the paradigm that, through the strength of the self-same Spirit, we are exhorted and enabled to follow (Eph. 6:17). Having won that battle, Jesus went forward in the power of the Spirit, healing the sick, casting out demons, and controlling the elements of nature by his powerful word, etc. In all these ways, he, again and again, slew the opposition with the sword of his word—a word which, at the same time, was bringing life to those who received it by faith, as Peter testified. Jesus (John 6:63): 'the words I've spoken unto you are Spirit and life'. Part of Peter's response (v. 68): 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

At last, in the ultimate battle of the war with Satan, this Man of the Spirit and Man of the Word, through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God. He bound himself to the altar of Calvary where he—the blessed, incarnate Son of God—became accursed for us. He threw himself as it were beneath the Father's sword (cf. Zech. 13:7). Yet the words he spoke from that 'barren' tree were Spirit and life for those who believed. Through his one offering there is both judgment and salvation: judgment for the world and its prince; salvation for all who would be drawn by Christ to faith.

## **THE BODY OF CHRIST**

And, prior to his ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus commissioned the church to continue the movement of conquest begun by him and secured by him on the Cross: conquest that was to come—as it is to this day—primarily through the ministry of the word. We see many examples of this in the Book of Acts through the preaching ministry of the apostles and other disciples of Jesus. The double-edged sword of the word pierces many hearts. In some cases this 'slaying' leads to healing and salvation: such fall to rise again (cf. Luke 2:34).

Acts 1:8: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'. At Pentecost, the body of Christ received its royal, prophetic and priestly anointing. The Spirit began to pour down from the Head upon the rest of the Body and that Body began its royal, prophetic and priestly functions, empowered by the very Spirit of the Head.

Out from the epicentre of Jerusalem the waves of the aftershock of Pentecost travelled—as they do still, and will do (to the ends of the earth) until all the nations submit to the kingship of Christ, the Messiah. And all in fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise and God's original intentions for the nations of the earth.

Empowered, then, by the Spirit of Christ, and loaded with the treasure of the word of Christ, we are to go forth to conquer the nations for Christ, by our witness to Jesus. That must ever be the way of conquering the world for Christ! Our weapons are not carnal (II Cor. 10:3ff.). Rather, 'they have divine power to demolish strongholds', because they are from God and of God. We do not fight with swords. Neither are we to fight by the principles of the world, business, etc. The world can only be conquered through the word, spread by a loving church in the power of the Spirit. The expansion of the church will come through effective witness, proclamation and service. The Church's royal, prophetic and priestly functions cannot be separated any more than they can be in Jesus (Acts 2:37, 41; 5:33ff.; 7:54, 57). There is a question of whether or not we receive the

judgment/criticism/exposure which the light of God's word brings into the darkness of our hearts—the light penetrates, but some love darkness rather than light for their deeds are evil (John 3:19). Resisting the Spirit = blocking the word/refusing the word (Acts 7:51, 57).

### **THE FINAL ESCHATOLOGICAL CONFLICT**

The Book of Revelation makes it as clear as the OT prophets, that the sharp sword of the Spirit can be brought to bear upon the professing church of Christ, every bit as much as on the world, if it refuses to repent of its sin (cf. 1:16; 2:12, 16).

However, as we near the close of Revelation, John reveals to us the content of a further vision he had concerning the climactic cosmic battle. Revelation 19:11: 'I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True'; verse 13: 'his name is the Word of God'; verse 15: 'Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations'; verses 19–20: 'Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast . . . and with him the false prophet . . . were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur'; verse 21: 'The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse . . .' (cf. Isa. 27:1). Christ conquers by the 'sword of his mouth [breath/ Spirit/word?]' . Here, the sword symbolises the irresistible power of divine judgment—the word of Christ will prevail (cf. II Thess. 2:8). This surely is the end of all who war against the Lamb? They will fall beneath the sword of his word, never to rise again!

In that case, the other side of the story is that the other aspect of the sword (sceptre) symbolises the irresistible power of the divine blessing of salvation/life, etc.

## STUDY TWELVE

# THE SPIRIT AND THE PULPIT

Deane Meatheringham



What is the justification for the strange activity of preaching when a congregation meets? Linguistically, Gerhard Friedrich takes us to the messenger of victory who occurs in the military history of almost every nation. This figure, who was found among the ancient Greeks, was known for his ability to relate their history and celebrate their heroes in song. The best known messenger was one who, after the battle of Marathon, brought the news to Athens of victory over the Persians, and who fell dead upon arriving. The messenger reported to the anxious citizens the outcome of battle. Upon reaching his destination, he raised his hand in greeting and with a loud voice said, ‘Greeting, the victory is ours!’ Even from afar his appearance betrayed his good news. His face beamed, the point of his lance was decorated with foliage, and he wore a wreath on his head. The Greeks called the messenger a euangelos (euangelos) or, a euangelistes (euangelistes). The good news which they bore was the euangelion (euangelion).<sup>1</sup>

The Pastor brings the good news of victory in Jerusalem: it is the victory of Golgotha, and the Word, ‘Christ is risen’ (I Cor. 1:23; II Tim. 4:1–5).

### **I BELIEVE, AND THEREFORE SPEAK**

‘But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with the scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak’ (II Cor. 4:13). With the Divine Spirit within our spirit, faith arises. With the Spirit of faith the pastor cannot but speak. Our speaking springs from sources which are faithful to the nature and purpose of God, that is, from his Word. Speaking which springs out of our own sources, or

---

<sup>1</sup> See G. Friedrich’s article in *The Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 2 (ed. Gerhard Kittel, Eerdmans, 1976, pp. 707ff.).

## The Spirit and the Pulpit

elsewhere, is heretical. Only when our hearing produces the consequence of speaking has the Word of God been truly heard.

Second Peter 1:20f. summarises the source of all prophetic speech, ‘. . . no prophesy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophesy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God’. The Spirit, who searches the depths of God in his fellowship with the Father and the Son, reveals to us what we cannot discover by religious reasoning or ecstasy (I Cor. 2:9–13).

Moved by the Holy Spirit the watchmen cannot keep silent day or night (Isa. 62:6). For the pastor this may not be self-evident (Exod. 4:10; Jer. 1:6). But speech there must be. Silence is impossible and there is an insistence to speak (Jer. 1:7; 20:9). The preacher filled with the Spirit cannot hold his/her peace (Luke 19:40; Acts 4:18–20). The robust confession of the preacher’s lips that Jesus is Lord springs from knowledge imparted to the heart by the Spirit that Christ has been raised from the dead (Rom. 10:9; Matt. 10:32f.; I Cor. 12:3). Just as Jesus bound himself to speak and still speaks to men and women, so too on their side, men and women are bound to speak of him. If they fail to do the former, then they risk the loss of the latter. How is it possible to do this thing? What is commanded is given by the Holy Spirit (Exod. 4:11f.; Matt. 10:19f.). As a minister of the New Covenant Paul says he does not preach from a bookish or humanist explanation which kills, but in the freedom of the Spirit of life. Paul’s reading of Moses is free of the deadly mask of unbelief. The Divine Spirit of the Lord is the Spirit of freedom who reveals the Lord’s glory to his servants. The letter of the law can only bring judgment and death. But the life-giving and grace-bringing Spirit brings freedom and life (II Cor. 3:6, 12–18). As an apostolic pastor of the Spirit, Paul identifies himself with Psalm 116 where suffering and stress, far from gagging him, brings out the irrepressible Gospel of *Christus Victor*.

## The Awakening Of Faith

Were Christ not at the right hand of the Father and daily pouring out the Spirit there could be no faith. If the Spirit were not our constant advocate and guard then not one of us would withstand the Devil and the flesh in our preaching of the crucified victor.

To get us to the place where we can hear our gracious God, our religious posturing and confected preaching has to be brought to be slain and brought to a dead end. The real sting of death hits us in our souls and spirits. It is an agony when the law throws us down to despair, and the fear of death and judgment overruns us bringing us to despair. The blindness of sight, the failure of the will, false speaking and the misuse of theology are farewelled when we feel the very presence of death. Paul says that the law frightens us to death and actually kills us. God brings an end to the old, in order that knowing we are crucified with Christ we will live by the life of Christ (Gal. 2:19–20). Having been made whole in Christ in his righteousness, we can hear the Word of God without having to justify ourselves and transmogrify the Gospel. With the fear of death withdrawn we can face our future and our people without seeking the glory of men or women. Faith is awakened from real death to life in our crucified and risen Lord. We have not reached faith, but faith has reached us and by this faith we speak.

### The Pastor Is One with the Message Preached

Our preaching will be in proportion to our faith (Rom. 12:6; *analogia fidei*). Here we have a correspondence of what we know with what is known. Our knowledge of God is converted into our being known by God (Gal. 4:8f.) Faith has its beginning in the pistis of God.

The trust of the heart makes both true and false gods. If our heart's perception of God is contractual, and not covenantal, then that's how we will see him and preach him. We will need to give people a challenge to attract their pride in order to draw them to a human commitment. In this same way people will then believe that God has accepted them on the basis of what they have done. Atonement will be made by our reaching up.

The music of the past looked at God, looked at me and tried to reconcile [the two] through my actions: 'I will lift my voice', 'I will worship', 'I will sing', 'I will bow down', 'I will not let go', 'I will hold on', 'I surrender'—all the stuff *I* will do.<sup>2</sup>

The kind of faith we have depends upon the kind of god we have.

When the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows us into knowing him, we are brought into union with God. Faith is really union with Christ. The action of God is not accessible to any mere theory or human decision. Where faith is based on a theory, then in like kind we shall preach, but not the Word of God. In Christ our lives are hidden in God. We become human beings who participate in the divine nature. 'As is the Word of God, so becometh also the soul by it, like as iron becometh glowing red like the fire from union with the fire.'<sup>3</sup> In saying that preaching comes in correspondence, or proportion to faith (Rom. 12:6), we draw from this that what is known by faith connects with our thought and speech so that the prophet proclaims the Word of God. '**The preaching of the Word is the Word of God**' (Helvetian Confession).

### The Continuing Gift Of Hearing

In the third 'Servant Song' of Isaiah the teacher has the tongue of one who is taught:

The Lord GOD has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he wakens—  
wakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.  
The Lord GOD has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backward (Isa. 50:4–5).

The preacher does not have an instant tongue. The recipe for godly and effective preaching is not psychological techniques, or the methods of mass appeal. No preacher has the power to summon the Word of God; he is distinguished from the sorcerer. In his

---

<sup>2</sup> Geoff Bullock, interview with Mark Evans, 'Briefings', 29/4/99, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Martin Luther's *Basic Theological Writings*, (ed. T. F. Hull, Fortress, Minneapolis, 1989), p. 601.

## The Spirit and the Pulpit

poverty the preacher will have his hearing awakened by the same grace which has justified him in Christ and regenerated him in the Holy Spirit. He or she will now seek that Word, believing that it will be given him. The servant of the Word first serves the Word in hearing and embracing it, then serves the Word by delivering what is heard.

To go to the pulpit the preacher has to go to the Bible. The prophetic and apostolic witness of the Bible will direct him to Christ from whence comes the Word of God. In this listening the Word of God directs the servant. The ensuing wrestling may come from our having to receive and do what it says. The ink of our notes is not necessarily the Word of God. We can't lift the ink from the page to imagine that our necessary proposition equals the Word of God. Our paper words still remain under our governance. But the Word of God is a preached and an auricular Word. Somewhere Luther says the Word of God is like a dream; it does its work on you, you know you have it, but you can't get your hands on it. The Servant who fears the Lord and obeys his voice trusts the Lord and walks in darkness without the light of verifications:

Who among you fears the LORD  
and obeys the voice of his servant,  
who walks in darkness  
and has no light,  
yet trusts in the name of the LORD  
and relies upon his God? (Isa. 50:10).

Paul asks for prayer so that when he speaks a logos (logos) may be given to him in the speaking of it (Eph. 6:19). And he asks for prayer for the opening of the door for the Word preached (Col. 4:3; also Acts 14:27; 16:14; 19:20–22; Rom. 10:17). In this action the preacher does not have control on the interpretation of the Word, and the congregation of many perceptions hears the Word of God as God interprets himself to both preacher and congregation.

Christianity is not a religion of a book, though it is a book religion. Nor is it the religion of a Church, though it is a Church religion. But it is the religion of a Gospel and a grace. These are the facts that make the Church. Doctrine as doctrine is a precious and indispensable possession of the Church, but it was not such doctrine that made the Church. Neither ideas nor truths could do that, but only persons and powers. Nor does such doctrine make the great changes of the Church. The Reformation was not a reformation of theology, but of faith. It is remarkable how little of the theology it changed in its first stage. It was the renewed action, not of truth, but of grace. It was the greatest of evangelical revivals. That is why it re-discovered the Bible. It was not the Bible that lighted up grace for Luther, but grace to his needy soul lighted up the Bible. Biblical preaching preaches the Gospel and uses the Bible, it does not preach the Bible and use the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

In coming to preach to a people we have to deal with our own disposition and the disposition of the people. We come to preach in the actual real presence of Christ. We and our people may feel utterly lame and impoverished. But we will come as those who are in Christ and as those in whom Christ dwells. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand the gifts which we have from God. We also have the fullness of the Spirit and in faith we will preach accordingly. The Spirit supplies us with the immediate power to communicate the Word, given to us in our own language. The medium becomes the message. A love and a boldness subdues our fear and our wimpishness: 'I believed, and so I spoke'.

---

<sup>4</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (NCPI, 1993), pp. 25f.

## STUDY THIRTEEN

# THE SPIRIT GIVEN, AND THE GIFTS

Grant Thorpe



The focus of this Study is God's giving of his Spirit and the gifts that witness to his presence and action. My main concern is not with the phenomena associated with the Spirit's presence but that we acknowledge the Gift and the gifts of God and so be men and women of the Spirit, looking to the Spirit himself to give what he chooses for each time and place.

### THE SPIRIT HIMSELF IS GOD'S GIFT

Jesus said the gift of the Spirit would be the gift of his Father to those who asked (Luke 11:13). He could not be given to us until Christ was glorified (John 7:39), but then he came with the fullness of the grace and love of God to convey to us. The Spirit was given to Jews and Gentiles who repented and believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:45). God was immediately present to his sanctified people. The glory of God had descended on his temple. He was their God; they were his people.

This created not only new persons but also a new people aware of their one life in Christ. It also created a new hope, because from this *advantage* point, the present could be viewed from the future surely coming and already present in Christ ascended. They knew the things given to them by God.

The gift of the Spirit was tangible to these believers, not as a 'face' but as a transparent witness to Father and Son, and the emboldener of their persons for access to the Father and witness to the world. Believers had no doubt of their receiving the Spirit. Some clearly spoke in tongues but all were aware of God, his Christ and of one another as brothers and sisters.

By this gift, many were brought to conviction of sin, regenerated and baptised into realities impossible to sinful flesh—Christ, the kingdom, the church. The love of God had been poured into their hearts.

**‘IF YOU KNEW THE GIFT OF GOD . . .’**

Jesus opened up this matter for us when he talked to the woman at Sychar. If she knew Christ, and asked, she would receive living water ‘gushing up to eternal life’ and would worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:10, 14, 24). Rather than live out of her emptiness and the vain attempts to compensate for the lack, she would be filled up from God’s fullness (cf. John 1:16; 3:34). Jesus proclaimed the same truth to Jerusalem’s festival crowd (John 7:37–39).

God’s action flows from his sovereignty in which he has no lack. Our doing, by nature of our sinfulness, tends to flow from deficiency and the attempt to supply the lack. But now we live by the outpouring of the love of God into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). This love looks to serve and so be a blessing in the world.

This fulfilled the prophecy given to Ezekiel (37:1–14) that Israel, reduced to abandoned bones of a defeated army, would be raised up to exalt the name of God in the earth again.

Therefore, we should receive and proclaim the gift of the Spirit as essential to our humanity and especially to our godliness and our future. It is a shameful thing for us who have been made in the image of God to craft a life out of our emptiness and present it to each other and to God as a real life. Rather, God has ordained that we should receive from his fullness so as to have love, joy, peace and the full harvest of his indwelling.

That such a gift is donated to sinful people is a source of never-ending joy. This, with righteousness and peace, is what the kingdom is all about (Rom. 14:17). Our mission has now become, not so much an insuperable task as an overflow of the abundance we know (e.g. Phil. 1:19).

**BY THE SPIRIT WE PARTICIPATE IN TRINITARIAN RELATIONS**

Jesus told us that he and the Father indwelt each other (John 14:11, 17). This expression at least signifies that the one is given to the other and that each embraces the other. It is a relation of love in which each person honours and serves, gives to and receives from the other.

Jesus said that he would come to us, and this in the setting of the Spirit coming to us (John 14:20). We would live because he lived. We would know that he was in the Father, and that we were in him, and that he was in us. The communion in which the Father and Son lived would now become our life.

This communion would be vital to the witness of the church. The Spirit from the Father, and by the Son, would bear witness. So would we (John 15:26–27). When the Spirit was sent to the church the world would be convicted (John 16:7–8). All this took place on the day of Pentecost.

When the church met and asked that they would proclaim God’s truth with all boldness (Acts 4:29–31), it received the strength which came from communion—they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They stood in the presence of God. They did not have to win a battle of wits or of political manoeuvring or of personal confrontation to have this boldness; they asked to receive it. They spoke from the perspective and power of God’s joy in his works. It may well have included a ‘hard forehead’ as given to Ezekiel (3:7–9), but would be more defined by its source than its opposition. In fact, *in situ*, the boldness of the church included her being aware of the prophecies that were being fulfilled, and it lead on to rich fellowship with one another.

## The Spirit Given, and the Gifts

Everything the Father possessed belonged to the Son (cf. ‘all that I have is yours’). Now, the Spirit would take all that the Son had and declare it to us, or guide us into it—that is, into ‘all the truth’ (John 16:12–15). Here is a whole new way of knowing and of having, the way of participation rather than of containing. We most truly have what belongs to Another, and do not have at all what we try to contain.

To proclaim these things will win us no accolades from the closet humanist who feigns to listen to divine things, but there is no other fullness than Christ (Colossians) and no participation in this other than by the Spirit. Therefore, we should be patient in proclamation and demonstration of these things.

### **THIS GIFT CANNOT BE ‘DISENGIFTED’ BY HUMAN ACTION**

The human actions of repentance or baptism, faith, asking, obedience, and so on, cannot be construed as a partnership in grace because they are but the willingness to participate in what God has promised and provided. It is the freeness of God’s gift which occasions repentance and faith. Ezekiel proclaimed that God would put his Spirit within the people who profaned his name (Ezek. 36:25–28; see also Isa. 44:3–5). Peter observed that his readers had been sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:2).

Turning an act of receiving into an act of facilitating is to read the narrative of grace ‘from below’, that is, from the perspective of fallen humanity. It does not penetrate the text of Scripture or understand the truth of creaturehood in which we live within the providing of God, as distinct from alongside it. In particular, it does not understand the wonder of God’s grace: he loved us when we were far from knowing or seeking him. It is this grace which enables us to read the Scriptures as they are. God’s call to repent and believe the gospel, along with his judgments and the jealousy stirred up by the witness of God’s people, all prepare us for receiving the Spirit as what he is, pure gift.

### **THE GIFTS: GOD’S WITNESS TO HIS PRESENCE AND GRACE**

The gifts of the Spirit (also gifts of God and of Christ) are referred to several times. They are a visible working of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of all (I Cor. 12 and 14) and are linked with serving and working. They are various functions bestowed by grace but within the one body (Rom. 12:6–8). They are the sign of Christ’s victory, given to each, but with some having leadership so that the whole can serve and build up the body (Eph. 4:7–12). They are God himself bearing witness to his great salvation (Heb. 2:4). They are God speaking and serving so as to reveal his varied grace through his servants (I Pet. 4:10–11).

*Giving is prominent in the Ephesian passage: Christ gives (vv. 7, 8), grace is given (v. 7), persons are given (v. 11), so, appropriately, each part working properly means building the body up in love (v. 16). This listing includes the whole church and not just the gifts mentioned, because ‘to each was given grace (v. 7).*

The Spirit’s purpose is to powerfully effect, through various gifts, servings and workings (I Cor. 12:4–6), the variegated grace of God towards his church (I Pet. 4:10), and through them to the world. It is not the church’s diversity that is being manifested but God’s. By nature of the case, the Spirit focuses the attention of the church on Christ

## The Spirit Given, and the Gifts

and the Father and the kingdom. This is with a view to the one end, that the glory of God might be shown in the grateful obedience of the nations. David Peterson writes:

Joel's prediction that 'all flesh' would prophesy 'in the last days' finds fulfilment in the giving of a whole range of charismata to the early Christians. These indicate and express a new level of communication between God and his people, through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not simply given as power for mission but as the initiator and sustainer of a new kind of relationship with God.<sup>1</sup>

### THE GIFTS: ACTS OF LOVE, ENABLEMENTS TO SERVE

Each of the references to gifts preserve both the diversity of the church's ministry and its unity. The need for care of others is emphasised. We may have thought that a gift like the Spirit, being such an effusion of grace and communion, should not have required such an exhortation, but we are sinful, and so the point is made. The Spirit does not automatically make unity, as though the church were composed of robots. He is the one Spirit and the Spirit of unity, but each believer is called to prefer others before themselves. Each one is called to strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Unity is given, but worked out through human compliance with God's command.

A gift received cannot truly become a source of boasting (I Cor. 4:7, *NRSV*). To the Corinthians, Paul said that others looking at them did not notice what they were boasting about. The problem was not just that human relationships were being marred by wrongful boasting, but that these Corinthians were not appreciating the graciousness of what had come to them. Gordon Fee says:

Their pride in persons reflects a lack of proper perspective, a lack of gratitude. The Fall has given us all too high a view of ourselves, with a correspondingly low view of others. Instead of offering humble thanksgiving for gifts received . . . the Corinthians have allowed the gifts to become a sign of status and a source of dissension. With these questions, then, Paul is trying to give them perspective.<sup>2</sup>

When Paul showed the Corinthians a more excellent way (I Cor. 12:31ff.), he was not belittling gifts but affirming their true nature. The 'greater gifts' are not defined by those at the top of the list in his previous passage, but by their usefulness to the body, and this is the way in which he develops the matter of gifts in chapter 14, after speaking of love. Gordon Fee says:

In that context one will still earnestly desire the things of the Spirit (14:1), but precisely so that others will be edified. Thus it is not 'love versus gifts' that Paul has in mind, but 'love as the only context for gifts'; for without the former, the latter have no usefulness at all—but then neither does much of anything else in the Christian life.<sup>3</sup>

It would be possible, Paul says, to have remarkable gifts and notable devotion and still be without love. Saying that he would be a clanging cymbal, or nothing, and be

---

<sup>1</sup> David Peterson, 'Acts and the Spirit of Prophecy', in *Spirit of the Living God*, pt 1 (no. 5 in 'Explorations' series), (Lancer, Homebush West, 1991), p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT Series), (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *ibid.*, p. 625.

## The Spirit Given, and the Gifts

profited nothing, comes close to saying that a spiritual gift without love is not a spiritual gift, or signifies nothing, or is not potent to effect anything in the kingdom.

On the other hand, if the Spirit conveys to us the things of Christ and fills us with his love, then the gifts he also gives enable the church to participate in this effusion of grace and be servants of all God's goodness to his people and the world.

### **THE LISTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE RATHER THAN COMPREHENSIVE**

The two lists of gifts given in I Corinthians show that Paul was not concerned with a definitive list, because he named the gifts differently within the chapter, ordered them differently, and mentioned offices in one place and functions in another.

It is also clear that the church, through its history and across denominations in the present, has variously defined how these various gifts appear. If the Spirit of God has blessed groups in certain ways, it is natural for them to understand the terms of Paul in a certain light. Given this factor, it remains that the terms are clear enough to indicate a range of things we may expect the Spirit to do, and the instructions are clear enough to prohibit things that would be outside of the purpose of the Spirit.

There is no indication that it is important to teach people what their gifts are, except that we would expect to encourage one another and be grateful to one another, and this will be useful to help people in knowing how they may serve. There is plenty to indicate that we should love and serve one another. Perhaps the best indication of a person's gifts is the way that person perceives the needs of others and acts to bring the grace of God to them.

But it remains that the gifts are gifts of the Spirit. Therefore, we pray to and expect from God rather than count our resources. The comment of William Gurnall is appropriate with regard to gifts:

Christian, take special care not to trust in the armour of God, but in the *God* of the armour. All your weapons are only 'mighty through God' (2 Cor. 10:4). The ark was the means of Israel's safety, but when the people began to glory in it instead of in God Himself, it hastened their overthrow. Just so, duties and ordinances, gifts and graces, are havens for the soul's defense; but they must be kept in their proper place . . . when the creature trusts more in them than in the Lord, he is on shaky ground.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, vol. 1, a modernised abridgement by Ruthanne Garlock, et al., Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1996, pp. 67f.

## STUDY FOURTEEN

# BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

Martin Bleby



### PERSONAL GUIDANCE

In 'being led by the Spirit', what comes most readily to our minds, and the minds of our people, is the matter of personal guidance, in the areas of both vocation and location. Each of us could tell wonderful and often detailed stories of how we came to be in the ministry, and how we came to take up each move that we have made from one ministry to another. Sometimes these stories can manifest a certain amount of egocentricity and self-indulgence. Nevertheless, these are real and valuable occasions when we learn and grow in our experience of God's guidance, of being led by the Spirit.

In the matter of guidance, there are two schools of thought: those who look for and embrace specific guidance (even down to small detail), and those who see guidance only in very general terms (even to seeing us being left largely to our own devices).

There is no doubt that the Spirit can and does give specific leadings, in both vocation and location:

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' (Acts 13:2).*

*And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas (Acts 16:6–8).*

But this is always to be seen in the context of God's great plan for His creation, in which the Spirit is operative.

## **GOD'S GREAT PLAN**

It is by no arbitrary whim that Geoffrey Bingham, at the beginning of his *magnum opus* on the Holy Spirit, nominates from the Scriptures nine major elements of God's intention from before the foundation of the world:<sup>1</sup>

- The chosen people of God.
- The holy people of God.
- His people are to have salvation.
- His people are to be His children, that is, sons.
- His people are to have eternal life.
- His people are to enter His Kingdom.
- His people are to be glorified.
- The whole creation will be brought into unity by Christ.
- All evil will be judged.

Full references are given, in which each of these elements is explicitly linked with 'the multiple intention of God'. All these strands woven together are 'the one rope of God's plan'. The rest of the book then expounds the active participation of the Spirit in the outworking of this great plan of God.

So any consideration of 'being led by the Spirit' must see how the Spirit leads us into all these things. Also, any specific instances of being led by the Spirit must be seen in relation to the Spirit's leading of us into all these things. This is thrilling indeed, and takes us far beyond personal and ecclesiastical preoccupations.

## **THE SPIRIT IN ISAIAH**

Scouring the Old Testament for references to the Spirit of God can be little more than an exercise in proof-texting, and so of limited value. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how the Spirit figures widely in these purposive actions of God in the prophecies of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:13 in its context sees the Spirit active in creation and in the sovereign rule of God in all history over the nations:

Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,  
or as his counsellor has instructed him?

Isaiah 11:2 and 61:1–3 see the Spirit as the one who rests upon the Davidic King, who is central in effecting God's purposes:

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD (Isa. 11:2).

---

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Bingham, *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985), pp. 12–14.

## Being Led by the Spirit

(We tend to see these as personal attributes, but it is better to see them as the Spirit bringing to bear all the things of the purpose of God in the life and actions of this one.)

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to bring good tidings to the afflicted;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified (Isa. 61:1–3).

In 42:1 and 48:16 this one on whom the Spirit rests is the Servant of the Lord:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him,  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his Spirit.

Note here how the Spirit accompanies the Servant on his mission of bringing about a deliverance deeper and more needful than political deliverance from Babylon: deliverance from sin and the establishment of God's righteousness in His people. So, too, the Spirit will accompany and maintain God's word in the lives of the redeemed (59:21):

And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore.

Isaiah 32:15 and 44:3 look forward to the time when 'the Spirit is poured upon us from on high' to renew not only God's people but also, it would seem, the creation as well. The Spirit is equally active in bringing judgment and desolation on evil, when in 40:7 it is 'the breath [*ruach*] of the LORD' that withers the flesh like grass, and in 34:16 it is the Spirit who sees to it that each of the wild animals and birds of prey have their place in the desolated landscape of the 'No Kingdom There'.

All of this no doubt played its part in the formulation of the apostolic understanding of the ministry of the Spirit in relation to God's great purpose in Christ for His creation. As far as being led by the Spirit is concerned, the most instructive passage is Isaiah 63:8–14:

For he said, Surely they are my people,  
sons who will not deal falsely;  
and he became their Saviour.  
In all their affliction he was afflicted,

## Being Led by the Spirit

and the angel of his presence saved them;  
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.  
But they rebelled  
and grieved his holy Spirit;  
therefore he turned to be their enemy,  
and himself fought against them.  
Then he remembered the days of old,  
of Moses his servant.  
Where is he who brought up out of the sea  
the shepherds of his flock?  
Where is he who put in the midst of them  
his holy Spirit,  
who caused his glorious arm  
to go at the right hand of Moses,  
who divided the waters before them  
to make for himself an everlasting name,  
who led them through the depths?  
Like a horse in the desert,  
they did not stumble.  
Like cattle that go down into the valley,  
the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.  
So thou didst lead thy people,  
to make for thyself a glorious name.

The picture here is of the Spirit being with the people even in their rebellious state (that is what makes it so horrible), and of God by the Spirit leading His people out of slavery to bring them to the place of rest and peace that He has prepared for them.

### **CHILDREN OF GOD, LED BY THE SPIRIT**

It is with this in mind that we now come to Romans 8:14–17:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Where the Spirit is leading us here is out of the fearful slavery we have known (the slavery of sin and death, see Rom. 8:6 and John 8:34—not to be taken lightly) into sonship of God, a direct and intimate relationship with the Father in the depths of our being, and to a life of suffering with Christ, with a view to our glorious inheritance. See this is in the context of the great plan of God, and see how this is prefigured in Isaiah 63:8–14, quoted above.

Other passages which speak of the present gift of the Spirit as the guarantee of our inheritance as children of God are II Corinthians 1:22 (in Christ who is the 'Yes' to all the promises of God) and Ephesians 1:13–14 (which is followed by a prayer that we will enter into the fullness of that inheritance in all its present dynamics). In I Corinthians 2:6–16 Paul says that the Spirit gives us even now an experience and understanding of these gifts of God that pertain to our glorification, as the word of the apostle comes to God's people, all the while being contested by 'the spirit of the world',

and being misconstrued badly by the ‘unspiritual’, who have not received the Spirit, and so have no access to the mind of Christ.

These are the realities into which we are being led by the Spirit.

### **FOOLISH NONSENSE: THE SPIRIT OF THE CROSS**

Just before the last passage referred to, in I Corinthians 2:1–5, the apostle Paul tells of this word that he brings. I take it that the ‘wisdom’ that he speaks of in 2:6–16 is not something special for the more advanced, but the same ‘word of the cross’ that he is talking about in 2:1–5 and 1:17–25. The ‘mature’ in 2:6 (*tois teleiois*) are meant to be all the believers, those who already belong to the *telos* (end goal) of God, those ‘upon whom the *telos* of the ages *has come*’ (I Cor. 10:11), those who are expected to be *teleioi* in thinking, with nothing to do with evil (I Cor. 14:20), and who are to be *teleioi* in love, as our heavenly Father is (Matt. 5:48). So this wisdom of I Corinthians 2:6–16 is nothing more nor less than the word of the Cross, which is foolish nonsense to those unsaved and perishing, but ‘Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (1:24) to those whom God has called. What greater ‘wisdom’ could there be than that?

In I Corinthians 2:1–5 Paul tells of how this word came through to the Corinthians:

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified . . . and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (I Cor. 2:2, 4–5).

Paul was thus entirely dependent on the Spirit for this true wisdom to be communicated. It is the Spirit that leads us into this truth and this experience. Both on the part of the speaker and also on the part of the listeners:

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit (I Cor. 2:13).

This corresponds with what Paul says in Romans 5, when he says:

God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (v. 5),

and then immediately goes on to say what constitutes this love:

While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation (vv. 6, 8–11).

This justification by God and this reconciliation with God through the death of Christ for us, with all that follows from that—the freeing from the wrath of God on the last day, and participation in the risen life of Christ for ever—is what the Spirit is leading men and women and children into. All of this, and nothing less. And there could not be anything more than all of that. Anything other than that would be hell, which is where we are left if we are not led by the Spirit out of it. So let us be led by the Spirit through that one narrow door, through which a countless multitude is passing.

## **INTO ALL THE TRUTH**

This is what Jesus had said to his disciples the night before he died. The Spirit would be given to lead them, first of all, into a full recalling and understanding of all that Jesus himself had been and said and done:

*But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26).*

By nature of the case, this could not be done until it all had been accomplished. The coming of the Spirit would await Christ's glorification (John 7:39), and then the whole box and dice could be communicated from him.

This work of the Holy Spirit to induct people into the saving work of God would centre on the action of the Cross:

*And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:8–11).*

He would thus bring them into all the reality of the full and free relationship of the Son with the Father, which has ever been God's purpose from before the foundation of the world:

*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (16:13–15).*

What the Spirit leads us into is all the things of the Father and the Son in their relationship with each other that issues in saving love. We are brought into that relationship and participate in its dynamic activity. The two things the Spirit gets us to say are 'Abba, Father!' (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), and 'Jesus is Lord!' (I Cor. 12:3). We are led to say these things in ourselves first of all, and then also out to the world. They cannot be said apart from the Holy Spirit.

## **THE LAW WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS**

A feature of the Old Testament promises regarding the Spirit of God is that the Spirit will bring God's people into an obedience from the heart to the law of God:

*I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Ezek. 11:19–20).*

*Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! (Ezek. 18:31).*

*I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ezek. 36:27).*

Compare also Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6 (circumcising the heart); Jeremiah 24:7; 31:33 (the new covenant); Psalm 37:31; 40:8; Isaiah 51:7 (God's law in the heart); which speak of the same reality, but without reference to the Spirit. This is taken up in the New Testament in II Corinthians 3:3 ('a letter from Christ . . . written . . . with the Spirit of the living God . . . on tablets of human hearts'), in Hebrews 8:10, and 10:16 (quoting Jeremiah 31:33), and in Anglican liturgy: 'Lord, have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit'<sup>2</sup> (though Paul in Rom. 7:22 says this has already happened to him, presumably through the coming of the Spirit at the time of his conversion).

This corresponds with the previous section above, in that the law of God is the law of God's own relational being, being out-worked in relationship with us.<sup>3</sup> So, of course, the fullness of this is exactly what the Spirit would lead us into. This is what we find with the command to 'walk in the Spirit' in Galatians 5:13–26. After introducing the law of God as love in verse 14, and setting out the terrible works which arise from the desires of the flesh opposed to the Spirit and the rule of God in verses 15–21, Paul speaks of the fruit which comes to be in the life of those who have been crucified with Christ and brought to life by the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22–23).

In saying 'against such there is no law', Paul is saying that this very fruit of the Spirit is 'the just requirement of the law' that is 'fulfilled in us, who walk . . . according to the Spirit' (Rom. 8:4).

This moral and very practical outcome will constitute the bulk of how the leading of the Spirit is experienced in the Christian life, and will have far-reaching effects.

### **THE WORLD-WIDE, ALL-EMBRACING SPIRIT OF REDEEMING LOVE**

Roland Allen, in what he regarded as his most important work,<sup>4</sup> made a detailed study of the action and effects of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles. He showed that in Acts, as distinct from the Epistles, the Holy Spirit is revealed primarily as the dictator and inspirer of missionary work, rather than the revelation of truth, holiness, church order or government, and that this is the whole character and purpose of Acts. This was Allen's particular interest and passion, and he pursued it with vigour. The point he made is a good one. The Spirit which came distinctively at Pentecost came as the Spirit of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ, by which Jesus was exalted and vindicated, not so much by the condemnation of those who crucified him, as by their conversion and salvation! This was what came through in the preaching of those who were filled with this Spirit (e.g. Acts 5:31: 'God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins'). This was the mind of Christ, from the heart of the Father, communicated directly by the Spirit. The gift of tongues at

---

<sup>2</sup> *A Prayer Book for Australia* (Broughton Books, 1995), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> See Geoffrey C. Bingham, *Sweeter than Honey, More Precious than Gold: The Law of Love and the Love of Law* (NCPI, 1995), especially pp. 3–15.

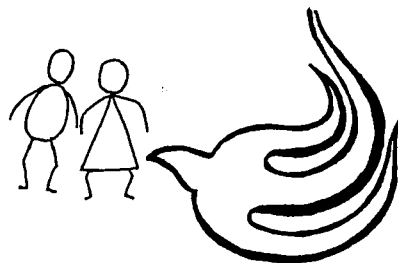
<sup>4</sup> Roland Allen, 'Pentecost and the World: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit in the "Acts of the Apostles"', in *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Roland Allen* (ed. David M. Paton, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972). See also Hubert J. B. Allen, *Roland Allen, Pioneer, Priest, and Prophet* (Forward Movement Publ., Ohio, and Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1995), p. 104: 'This little study of the Acts of the Apostles . . . was in Roland's opinion the best single piece of work he ever wrote'.

## Being Led by the Spirit

Pentecost signified the world-wide, all-embracing nature of this redemption, as the apostles discovered under the Spirit's impulse when they began to carry it out (e.g. Acts 11:18: 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life'. Note that Peter's willingness to go to the house of Cornelius was instructed directly by the Holy Spirit in Acts 10:19–20). This Spirit instilled an internal necessity to preach the gospel, with not only a profound desire to glorify Christ by the salvation of all in him, but also a profound conviction that men and women needed Christ, and that no other could suffice. Roland Allen saw the Spirit as being this Spirit of active redemption before he is the Spirit who works personally in the believer. This gift of the Spirit came to all who believed, without distinction, and was the sole source and test of any new forms of missionary activity (Acts 11:12, 15: 'the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction . . . the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning'), and the sole test of communion with other believers (Acts 15:8–9: 'God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith').

Thus, for Allen, the Holy Spirit is first of all the Missionary Spirit. We must embrace the world because Christ embraces the world, and Christ has come to us, and Christ in us embraces the world. This is what the Spirit leads us into. As we began by saying, all our experiences of 'being led by the Spirit', including any specific guidance we may have received with regard to vocation and location, must be seen in this context of God's great plan of love in Christ for the saving and renewing of His creation. We may ask, are we simply and entirely directed by this Holy Spirit in making known and living in this great love of God?

*For further reading:* Geoffrey Bingham, *God is a Goodly Guide* (NCPI, 1981), especially pages 33–40.



1. Fiery Dove, what are You doing here?  
Is it love, or do You come with fear?  
Have You come to unsettle our soul?  
Are we done? Or can You make us whole?
2. We are lost in a hell of our own.  
We are tossed, weather-beaten, wind-blown:  
Will You sink us, so we are no more?  
Will You bring us safe home to the shore?
3. 'I have come to convict you of sin  
And to run all the unrighteous in;  
Let them know that the judgement is past,  
And to show them the kingdom at last.
4. 'There is He, who has suffered your shame!  
Come and see how He wore all your blame!  
He's now Lord, with the Father above—  
I'm outpoured to fill you with His love.'
5. Holy Dove, come and set us on fire:  
With that love, burn up all wrong desire!  
Let us rest in the Father and Son,  
In the best, that their victory has won!
6. In Your praise let us take up our part  
All our days, with clean hands and pure heart!  
For Your comfort has settled our soul—  
We were done for, and now are made whole.

© 1997 Martin Bleby

## STUDY FIFTEEN

# THE SPIRIT AND THE PROPHETIC COMMUNITY

Ian Pennicook



On the day of Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit to the crowd resulted in them all being filled with the Spirit and speaking in other languages ‘as the Spirit gave them ability’. Luke defines their speaking as concerning the great things, the magnificence (τὰ μεγαλεῖα /*ta megaleia*) of God. When giving his *apologia* for their speaking, Peter quotes Joel 2:28–32a (with the addition of ‘in the last days, says the Lord’); he says that (i) this experience is the fulfilment of Joel’s promise of the Spirit; (ii) Joel’s promise was to do with the formation of a transformed *people* (‘all flesh’ as distinct from isolated individuals in Israel) who now prophesy; and (iii) this formation of a prophetic community is related to the shaking of the creation before the climactic judgment. With reference to ‘all flesh’, Joel was referring to Judah and Jerusalem (Joel 3:1), which may go some way to explain why there was such surprise when ‘the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles’. The evidence was the same as that at Pentecost: ‘speaking in tongues and extolling God’, indicating to Peter that they had ‘received the Holy Spirit just as we have’ (Acts 10:45–47).

I would suggest that this quotation from Joel has more significance than just explanation of the events. By specifying prophecy as the result of the gift of the Spirit, the agenda for the book of Acts, and indeed for the whole church, is established.

### PROPHECY AND HUMANITY

Definitions of prophecy are lacking in the Scriptures, though descriptions are not. Closest to a definition may be Jeremiah 23:9–32. The contrast is between those who ‘speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD’ (v. 16) and those (Jeremiah alone at that point) who ‘stood in the council of the LORD so as to see and to

hear his word' (v. 18). The genuine prophet stands in intimacy with the Lord, hears his voice and speaks what he hears.

The significance of this should not be overlooked when understanding the nature of humanity. Adam heard God's voice (*l/q/qol*)<sup>1</sup> in the garden (Gen. 3:8 ASV, AV). Is the implication that Adam heard the voice of God without fear prior to his sin? Jesus identified Abel as the beginning of the line of prophets who were killed because of their role (Matt. 23:34–35; Luke 11:49–51); may we not understand that Abel was as much a restoration of that which Adam had lost in the Fall? If so, then to say that Adam was created in prophetic intimacy with the Lord would be reflected in the nature of the primal rebellion. Instead of Adam listening to God, and so bringing that word to his wife and then to the whole creation, the whole structure is reversed. The serpent speaks to the woman and Adam listens to the voice of his wife. He dies because 'one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Deut. 8:3).

### PROPHECY AND ISRAEL

Israel the nation was formed by the word of God. Moses reminded them that, unlike all the other nations, they had 'heard the voice' of God (Deut. 4:12, 33, 36) and were to obey him (Deut. 4:30, lit. 'heed his *voice*'). If there was a fundamental problem in Israel, it related to the repeat of the response of Adam, as shown in the reaction at Sinai (Deut. 5:22–27), where immediately after hearing the character of God declared in the 'words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain' (v. 22), the entire congregation chose to avoid direct contact with 'the voice', preferring that Moses should hear on their behalf (vv. 25–27).

Israel's role as 'a priestly kingdom and a holy nation' was compromised at that point, since they chose not to stand in the presence of God. Their mediation of Torah to the nations was violated (cf. the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2–4).

All that we know of Israel, however, comes from the prophetic Scriptures. Moses was a prophet (Deut. 18:15–18) as was David (Acts 2:30), and of course the 'historical books' were recognised as 'the former prophets'. While unwilling to hear the word, Israel could not and may not escape the word. The word of God (God speaking) was a continual reality in Israel and the presence of God (the spirit<sup>2</sup>) was always at work to lead and instruct (see Neh. 9:20). Israel could not escape the spirit, the presence of God (Ps. 139:7–12; Isa. 63:9–10).

It was the spirit who came upon the individual prophets in Israel. Micah declared himself to be a man 'filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin' (Mic. 3:8); also Ezekiel identified himself as under the action of the word of the LORD, the hand of the LORD and the spirit (Ezek. 3:12, 16, 22). These prophets were the men and women who 'stood in the council of the LORD so as to see and to hear his word'. Equally, they suffered the fate of those who spoke out of that intimacy.

Yet from earliest times in Israel, there was the deep desire for the restoration of the full prophetic status of the whole nation. The account of Moses and the elders in

---

<sup>1</sup> The usual modern translation here is 'sound', but in the light of the obvious 'voice' in 3:17, 'Because you have listened to the *voice* [קול] of your wife . . .', is there a necessary reason to abandon the older translation? For a contrary view, see J. Skinner, *Genesis* (I.C.C. Series, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1930), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> See my study, 'The Triune God in Israel' in the 1994 Pastors' School notes.

Numbers 11:16–17, 24–30 highlights the situation: ‘Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his spirit on them’ (v. 29).

### **THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT**

While there may not be any reference to personal resurrection within the Old Testament, the restoration of the lost life and prophetic intimacy was anticipated with the promise of the spirit. Within the New Testament revelation, the spirit was later understood to be a person within the unity of God (and so we would use ‘Spirit’<sup>3</sup>), but the promise was nonetheless significant. When the spirit is restored, Israel will once again be nationally restored and Eden regained. Thus Ezekiel 36:27, ‘I will put my spirit within you’, and verse 35, ‘They will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden”’, and the following pictorial description of that in 37:1–14.

In Isaiah, the spirit will once again be on ‘the servant’ (42:1) and Zion will be comforted and the Lord ‘will make her wildernesses like Eden’ (51:3). Israel’s judgment will continue until ‘a spirit from on high is poured out on us’ (32:15) with the consequent renewal of creation (see 65:17). The word and the spirit of the Lord are the means by which this restoration will take place (34:16).

The promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34 is especially noticeable. Although the ‘spirit’ is not mentioned in this context, the restoration of Israel and Judah will mean the restoration of the intimacy, the law written on the hearts and ‘they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest . . .’ Is this similar to standing in the council of the LORD? Forgiveness and access to the presence (the spirit) are of a one (cf. Eph. 2:13, 18).

### **THE RESTORATION OF PROPHECY IN ISRAEL**

Malachi’s promise of the appearance of Elijah before the great and terrible day came (Mal. 4:5–6) was fulfilled in John the Baptist, who was ‘A prophet . . . and more than a prophet’ (Matt. 11:9). As ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness’, John was the messenger coming ahead of the Lord in anticipation of the day when Judah and Jerusalem would once again offer righteous sacrifices.

Even John the Baptist was not certain of the *form* of the fulfilment (Matt. 11:2–3), but the apostles came to understand that the supreme intimacy with God was known by Jesus. He not only heard the word, he was the Word become flesh (John 1:1, 14). All the prophets in Israel were fulfilled in the word of God through the Son (Heb. 1:1–2; see also II Cor. 1:20). Even if their understanding was wrong or inadequate at that point, he was the fulfilment of Israel’s hopes, ‘the prophet who is to come into the world’ (John 6:14; cf. Matt. 21:11), ‘a prophet mighty in deed *and word*’ (Luke 24:19). Of course, as a prophet, he was ‘not without honor, except in [his] own country and [his] own house’ (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; John 4:44) and consequently, when recognised as the heir, was killed as were the previous prophets in Israel (Matt. 21:38).

### **THE SPIRIT AND THE PROPHETIC COMMUNITY**

The death of Jesus, intended to silence the voice, was actually the means by which the voice of God is heard in all the world. His death secured the forgiveness of sins for

---

<sup>3</sup> This is a stylistic nicety not available to the original authors of either Testament.

Israel and for the whole world (Matt. 1:21; John 1:29). His resurrection ensured the restoration of life, and the ascension of this last Adam meant that he was the one to pour out the Spirit (Acts 2:33). If the intimacy is now his as the risen humanity, then he pours out the Spirit on those in him.

This is Pentecost. Now the believers, receiving the Spirit, have received the forgiveness of their sins and so now know and speak out of the intimacy which has been given (restored!). They declare the great things of God! They have seen them and heard them and cannot but speak (Acts 4:20). Hence Joel's anticipation of the Spirit and a new prophetic community have been fulfilled.

The picture of the church in Acts is of the answer to Moses' prayer that all God's people were prophets and that he would give them his Spirit. Now, being the community of the New Covenant, they all know him, from the least of them to the greatest (cf. I John 2:12–14, 20, 27). As a result, they all speak. Even though they are persecuted, they refuse to be silent, indeed they cannot.

The language in Acts is significant. While the book recounts all that Jesus continues to do and to teach (see Acts 1:1), the story describes the church as gripped by 'the word'.<sup>4</sup> Here is the community which speaks the word of God (see also I Thess. 2:13). Believers are those who welcome the word (Acts 2:41), hear it (4:4; 10:44), accept it (8:4; 11:1) and praise it (13:48). Then, filled with the Spirit, they speak it with boldness (4:31), proclaim it (15:35), serve it (6:4) and, in the face of fierce opposition, they 'gospel' it (8:4).

When the news of Christ was widely known it was because 'the word of the Lord spread' (6:7; 13:49), and when there was a great response in Ephesus it was as 'the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed' (19:20). The word was a fire in their bones and they could not keep it in.

Of course, with the true word there is always the false word and the church suffers from it. False prophets and false apostles will arise within the church. In Acts 20:28–32, Paul warns of the danger, while being content to commend the church to God and to the word of his grace. There are Balaams within the churches and Jezebels who call themselves prophets (Rev. 2:14, 20) and there is pressure from without to cease keeping the 'word of patient endurance' (Rev. 3:10). What is more, the prophetic community is made to suffer terribly because of 'their testimony to Jesus and . . . the word of God' (Rev. 20:4). They give their word under the protection of God, but when they have finished their testimony they sometimes suffer the vicious hatred of those to whom they have been a torment (Rev. 11:3–10).

The temptation to move out of the prophetic intimacy is great. There is apparent safety and security when the prophet's mantle is removed,<sup>5</sup> but without the living and active word of the risen Christ the church quickly becomes moribund, and sin just something we must live with. But we cannot live without the word and so must 'Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death' (Rev. 3:2). The nations must have the gospel of the kingdom and so the prophetic community must abide in the word, even if, and especially *as*, it pierces 'until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; [judging] the thoughts and intentions of the heart' (Heb. 4:12):

---

<sup>4</sup> I suggest that this is language of prophecy and not a cryptic way of referring to Jesus. Jesus is called 'the Word' in John, not in Luke, even though the conclusions drawn may be the same.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the temptation for some of us is to replace it with the gown of academic respectability? Could it also be that our delight in the written word may, at times, come to *replace* our intimacy with the Living Word? Greek and Hebrew may be mysterious, but they are hardly the language of the heavenly places.

## The Spirit and the Prophetic Community

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Peter 2:9).

These 'excellencies' can only be proclaimed as they are known, and they may only be known as we continue to stand in the council of the Lord, in prophetic intimacy with the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

## STUDY SIXTEEN

# THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SPIRIT

Geoffrey Bingham



### INTRODUCTION: 'THINGS TO COME'

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come' (John 16:12, 13). Jesus informs us of the principle that the Spirit will tell us the things to come which are the things the Father tells him. 'Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets' (Amos 3:7).<sup>1</sup> This has ever been the way with the Spirit who can be called 'the prophetic Spirit' or 'the eschatological Spirit'. It has been said that there has been no such thing as eschatology, that 'Eschatology is Christ', and this is true. It is also true that eschatology as truth is Trinitarian—it is the Father and the Son, too, at work. We will keep that in mind throughout this Study. We have seen that God has planned and shown His intention from before time.

The Holy Spirit was active at the beginning, in creation (Gen. 1:1–2), but the beginning is protological of the end, of the eschatological. It is the beginning of the end, as the end is the fulfilment of the beginning. The Spirit of God both gives life and sustains it.<sup>2</sup> As we have seen in other Studies in this School, he is the Spirit of creation, of redemption and of the eschaton-telos when all things will be glorified, sanctified and

---

<sup>1</sup> God has always told His people by His prophets what He is about. Amos 3:6–8 speaks of the effective prophetic word of the prophet. Likewise Jeremiah 23:23–32. God said that He would not hide from Abraham His friend what He would do (Gen. 18:17).

<sup>2</sup> Job 33:4; Psalm 33:6; 104:30. There can be little doubt that the Holy Spirit is the River of God, flowing through all history, and being found in the Pentecostal actions prophesied in the Old Testament and happening in the New Testament.

perfected.<sup>3</sup> In other Studies we have spoken of ‘The Spirit and the Universal Kingdom of God’, ‘The Spirit of the Everlasting Covenant’ and ‘The Spirit and the Prophetic Community’, and in our Studies which cover ‘The Holy Spirit and Glory’ we have covered much of the work of the Spirit of Glory in creation, redemption and the *telos*. So, then, we have embraced the ideas of the Spirit in the Covenant of God and the Kingdom of God.

This overview of all our Studies at this School permits us to make some general conclusions, namely: (i) the Spirit was present in creation, in Eden, in the creational mandate; (ii) in the battle of the serpent to foil God’s plan, in the life of creation, especially as it was to be in the modes of God’s Covenant and God’s Kingdom; (iii) in the Person and Work of Christ; (iv) in the Church as it was of the New Covenant and in the Church as it sets forth the Kingdom of God; and (v) in the continuing actions of the eschaton and the *telos*.

### THE PURPOSED CLIMAX IS ALWAYS COMING

We will understand the Person and Work of the Spirit in history if we see the line of Salvation History. Without doubt the intention of Eden needs to be understood not only as the proton in time, but the proton in God’s intention. Adam was created to be the Prophet, Priest and King of the human race, and in this dynamic relationship with God was called to Edenise that human race, and fill up the earth with all that was Edenic. The battle of the serpent was to oppose God’s intention. Man was a spiritual creature in the life of union and communion with God but was warned against courting death. To be spiritual as Man is at the very least to have the Spirit of God,<sup>4</sup> and for the Spirit of God to have the person. Death in Eden was to lose this communion with God which came through the Spirit, as it was to refuse the life of obedience to God and to live against God’s law—law which is the very transcript of the nature of God.<sup>5</sup>

With the theological development of the doctrine of the Trinity we see the place of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son, and so as the Spirit of love. Therefore we would expect him to be as the Spirit of creation, and if so, then the Spirit of the new creation, that is, to be in the work throughout history which eventually ushers in the *telos* and the new age. We see that as the Spirit of the Covenant he will be in the work of bringing the Covenant of God to its culmination, as also bringing the Kingdom of God to its culmination.

We now have to work out this thesis in the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, along with the Persons and Works of the Father and the Son.

### THE SPIRIT AND CREATION

We have seen that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of creation. Our interest here is in him as the one who is always concerned with sustaining creation and then the movement of

---

<sup>3</sup> Again we point to the book *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985) for a coverage of the Person and Work of the Spirit from the beginning to the end.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:9 makes it clear that some do not have the Spirit and are in the flesh. I Corinthians 2:14 speaks of ‘the unspiritual’ or ‘the natural man’, as similarly Jude 19 speaks of ‘worldly people, devoid of the Spirit’. They can be named as ‘Spiritless’.

<sup>5</sup> See my *Sweeter than Honey, More Precious than Gold* (NCPI, 1995) and my as yet unpublished *The Law of Eternal Delight*.

God's plan within that creation, until that creation comes to its transforming climax in the new heaven and the new earth. From the point that Man rebelled against God and became 'Spirit-less' apart from the grace of redemption which God exercised as early as Abel, the Spirit has been in action. Because God's people of faith were given what we would call 'eschatological insights', that is, saw it—the *telos*—'from afar and greeted it [the homeland] from afar' (Heb. 11:13–14), their orientation was the eschaton.

If we ask how they saw it from afar we have Revelation 19:10 stand out like a brilliant beacon shining from afar, "I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit [Spirit] of prophecy.' This verse has been interpreted variously but surely the heart of it is that whatever is the testimony of Jesus—that is, the testimony he has delivered, or the testimony to him—it is the subject of the prophets. With it are the prophets concerned to prophesy.<sup>6</sup> This leads us to the subject of the Holy Spirit and Prophecy.

### The Holy Spirit and Prophecy

Prophecy in Scripture begins with Abel (Luke 11:50–51). Enoch is mentioned as another prophet (Jude 14), and there is a stream of such until at least John the author of Revelation.<sup>7</sup> If one of the works of the Spirit is to tell 'things to come' then God's people know the intentions and promises of fulfilment by the prophets. 'Things to come' may be either at a distance or close at hand, immediate in fact. As we have seen, prophets did not commence with the establishment of Israel at Mt Sinai. In Malachi 2:7 God said, 'For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts', but where the priest failed, God always provided the prophet. Amos 3:7 says, 'Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets', and Micah 3:8 says, 'But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin'. Most powerful is the passage of Ezekiel 37:1–14 where the prophet is commanded to 'prophesy to the breath', that is, to the Spirit.

New Testament prophetic ministry is caught up in Revelation 19:10, 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit [Spirit] of prophecy', a point which we will later expand. In John 3:1–6 the Spirit is not commanded, but 'blows where he wills'. Note also that he is bringing into the Kingdom those he is bringing to new birth.

The stream of prophecy in the New Testament is linked with exhortation and paranetics, but also with hortatory prediction. It leads and directs us up to the *telos*.

---

<sup>6</sup> I suggest reading the essay 'The Testimony of Jesus in the Book of Revelation' in my *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (NCPI, 1993, pp. 222–9), especially the helpful interpretations of this verse by eleven commentators.

Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968, p. 849), has the following comment:

Acc. to Ac. 2:4; 4:31 all are filled with the prophetic Spirit and acc. to Ac. 2:16 ff. it is a specific mark of the age of fulfilment that the Spirit does not only lay hold of individuals but that all members of the eschatological community without distinction are called to prophesy. In Corinth there was obviously a greater number of prophets, for those who spoke at divine service had to be limited to two or three, 1 C. 14:29. In spite of this, Paul urges the Corinthians to strive after the *charisma* of prophecy, 1 C. 14:1, 5, 12, 39. It is not a gift for the chosen few. It can be imparted to any man even though in practice it may be limited to a comparatively small circle.

### **The Spirit and the Covenant of God and His Kingdom**

It is seen clearly that ‘The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy’ within our Morning Studies, but we pause to point out that Creation and the Spirit involve both God’s Covenant and His Kingdom. All Creation was covenanted by God to be in relationship with Him by gift, and when Man broke that covenant to be dealt with and restored through grace. The creational covenant went through the stages Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and arrived at what was to be Davidic and with this last one to be, in fact, the New Covenant. Also it was to be one with the Davidic Kingdom, which was to be known as the Kingdom of God or of heaven. This identification can be seen in the fact that the Mediator of the New Covenant was, and is, Christ, as also the King of the Kingdom was to be the Messiah, and the Kingdom is now known as ‘the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ’. All of these elements point to the climax, in history, of both the Covenant and the Kingdom.

John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets, spoke both of the Kingdom of God coming, and with the Kingdom the forgiveness of sins, and with both, the universal outpouring of the Spirit through the Messiah, the Lamb of God who was also to take away the sins of the world. In the matter of the New Covenant Jesus spoke at the last supper (Matt. 26:26–28) when he linked Jeremiah 31:31–34 and the forgiveness of sins with his coming death on the Cross, a fact which the writer of Hebrews takes up quite powerfully.

The matter of ‘the everlasting covenant’ is taken up strongly in the prophecy of Ezekiel. The cleansing of Israel’s national sin, and the personal cleansing of each heart is taken up in 36:22–28 where the gift of the Spirit into the hearts of God’s people is linked with their being cleansed from sin. In 37:1–14 the outpouring of the Spirit brings Israel back to life. Verses 15 to 28 deal with God cleansing divided Israel, making them one, and making with them ‘a covenant of peace’ which shall be ‘a covenant of everlasting peace’.

In both the New Covenant and the Kingdom of God the heart is significant, for in it is the presence and action of the Spirit, and the law of God inscribed livingly. In saying these things we need to keep in mind that both the Kingdom and the Covenant climax in the eschaton as it reaches the *telos*.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit, Christ and the Church**

The Spirit is known, in reference to Christ, as ‘the Spirit of Christ, ‘the Spirit of Jesus’, the Spirit of the Son’, ‘the Spirit of the Lord’, and in regard to the Father as ‘the Spirit of your Father’, ‘the Spirit of God’, and ‘the Spirit of the Lord’. Christ’s promised presence was by the work and ministry of the Spirit, as Christ himself had indicated,<sup>9</sup> so that in a passage like II Corinthians 3:17, 18 it is almost impossible to distinguish between the two Persons—Christ and the Spirit. Because other Studies have dealt with ‘The New Community of the Spirit’ and related elements, we do not pause to deal with these themes. Nevertheless we are aware that the Church was a church living very much in the way of faith, hope and love, and that hope was based upon the fulfilment of the intention of God. Faith, hope and love come to the Church by means of

---

<sup>8</sup> Readers of these notes are referred to ‘The Spirit and the Universal Kingdom of God’ and ‘The Spirit and the Prophetic Community’ by Ian Pennicook, as also ‘The Spirit of the Everlasting Covenant’ by Hector Morrison—all in this School Series’ Notes. The work of the Spirit in Christ in regard to both the Kingdom of God and the Everlasting Covenant must be noted.

<sup>9</sup> See John 16:16–24.

the Spirit. In fact we must recognise that the Church is Christ's eschatological Body. It is taught by a wisdom decreed for its ultimately glorification, and it is always occupied with its eschatological orientation. It looked to its Lord to return in great power and glory and complete the work set out in I Corinthians 15:24–28:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 'For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection under him,' it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

We know that the commission given to the apostles in Matthew 28:18–20 was one for the whole world, was spelled out in detail and then was closed off with Jesus saying, 'I am with you always, to the close of the age'. We know that to be true but we know that Jesus in Acts 1:3–8 had taught them that the times of the Kingdom were in God's hands, but as for them, 'you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth'. Here not only is the Kingdom linked with the ministry of the Spirit but the ministry of the whole church is dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Other Studies have shown us that the life and the ministry of Christ's Church are dependent upon the Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Battle against Satan and His Powers**

What we need to keep in mind is that the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world was always intended to climax in the eschaton and be the *telos*. We know this battle began when the serpent intruded in Eden. This battle first showed outside Eden in the matter of Cain and Abel, Abel being described by the apostle John as being 'of that evil one' (I John 3:11–13). In our Studies on 'The Sword of the Spirit' we have seen the unrelenting conflict that has taken place down through the centuries. In Creation, in the Fall, in the Patriarchs and in the Covenant, the Holy Spirit has always been present, strengthening God's people in the conflict. Because the conflict is of a spiritual nature it needs one such as the Holy Spirit to aid God's people to battle against the Devil.

We see how Christ was strengthened by him, not only in the temptations in the wilderness, but also throughout his ministry. Acts 10:38 tells that story, 'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him'. Later Paul speaks about the battle against evil principalities and powers in the heavenly places. The Church battles by means of the Spirit and especially by his sword, the word of God.

In the Book of the Revelation this whole battle is brought before us, and the Book is a complete prophecy given by the Holy Spirit to John the author. From chapters 11 to 20 we see both the battle of evil and then the conquest of it by the One who has the sword in his mouth and by it smites the nations. Prophetic power is in action as 19:10 reminds us, so it is the Spirit who helps to draw the age to its glorious climax. We must see the line of this battle stretching from Eden to the new Eden—God's Paradise.

## CONCLUSION: THE SPIRIT AND THE ESCHATON

We have many times emphasised the fact that just as God is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, so the Spirit as a Member of the Trinity is likewise eternal, and has been in the work of Creation, Redemption and the New Creation. The Spirit is working in the initial creation, and in Revelation 22:17 we read, ‘The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let him who hears say, “Come”. And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.’ The Spirit is one with the Bride, calling for the coming of the Bridegroom.

A final look at the process by which the Holy Spirit is glorifying us, as seen in II Corinthians 3:17–18, will be in order:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Along with this wonderful assurance that we are being changed from one stage of glory to another is the anticipation of full glory which we find in Romans 8:14–30. The passage is too long to consider here, but it takes in the sonship of believers, their intimate relationship with the Father, and then their suffering with Christ. Here we will look at verses 18 to 25:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Looking at this passage we remember that in I Corinthians 2:6–14 we were told of God’s decree of a wisdom which will bring us into a glory such as is outside any form of human comprehension, but the Spirit does impart this understanding of eschatological glory. In the Romans passage we see it is linked with suffering, and that its glory will be revealed to us and that this will liberate the creation which at present is in bondage to corruption, so that it will be liberated into the glory of the liberty of the children of God. This action which is happening within us is being carried through by the Holy Spirit. The final outcome of that will be that we will be conformed into the image of the Father’s Son (8:29). This is one of the major fruits of the plan of God for His elect humanity.

We spoke of the passage of I Corinthians 2:6–14, and in particular of the fact that the Spirit reveals to us the eschatological things outside human perception and understanding. The Spirit is given that ‘we might know the gifts of God’. This knowledge is implanted in us now by the Holy Spirit, but we will see with our own eyes what God has prepared for them that love Him. We do not here have space or time to deal with these wonderful things of the *telos*. They are the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb, the Holy City, God and the Lamb being the temple of the Holy City, and then the Paradise which is in that City with its River of Life, its Tree of Life and its perpetual fruit.

## The Eschatological Spirit

Knowing the Spirit and the Bride are saying, 'Come!' then perhaps the best note to conclude our Study is Revelation 22:3–5, describing our life in Paradise and our eternal communion with the Triune God:

There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.