

Keep in Step with the Spirit

Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God

Revised and Enlarged Edition

J. I. Packer

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
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Preface (1984)

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, the Lord, the life giver, who hovered over the waters at creation and spoke in history by the prophets, was poured out on Jesus Christ's disciples at Pentecost to fulfill the new Paraclete role that Jesus had defined for him. In his character as the second Paraclete, Jesus's deputy and representative agent in men's minds and hearts, the Spirit ministers today. *Paraclete* (*parakleptos* in Greek) means "Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Strengthened, Supporter." Jesus, the original Paraclete, continues his ministry to mankind through the work of the second Paraclete. As Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so is his Spirit; and in every age since Pentecost, wherever the gospel has gone, the Spirit has continued to do on a larger or smaller scale the things that Jesus promised he would do when sent in this new capacity.

It is well that he has! Had he ceased to do these things, the church would long ago have perished, for there would have been no Christians to compose it. The Christian's life in all its aspects—intellectual and ethical, devotional and relational, upsurging in worship and outgoing in witness—is supernatural; only the Spirit

can initiate and sustain it. So apart from him, not only will there be no lively believers and no lively congregations, there will be no believers and no congregations at all. But in fact the church continues to live and grow, for the Spirit's ministry has not failed, nor ever will, with the passage of time.

Yet the Spirit's work in this world is observably more extensive and apparently more deep in some periods than in others. Nowadays, for instance, it seems to be more extensive in Africa, in Indonesia, in Latin America, in the United States, and in the Roman Catholic Church than it seemed to be fifty years ago. I say *seems* and *seemed* advisedly, for only God knows the reality here, and Bible warnings against judging by appearance in spiritual matters are many and strong. When it seemed to Elijah that he was the only loyal Israelite left, God told him that there were still 7,000 others, which should give us pause when we try to estimate what God was doing before we ourselves arrived or is now doing all around us. However, for what the impression is worth, it looks to me (and not only to me) as if, while compromise Christianities are falling apart, there is today a fresh breath of life from the Spirit in many parts of the world. Its depth is another question: A widely traveled leader has said that Christianity in North America is 3,000 miles wide and half an inch deep, and suspicions of shallowness have been voiced elsewhere, too. But however that may be, it is out of the sense that the Spirit is stirring us that this book has emerged.

It should be read as a set of pointers toward what Richard Lovelace calls a "unified field" theory of the Holy Spirit's work in the church yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Its contents have emerged rather like a menu for a five-course meal, thus:

Chapter 1 moves to the conclusion that the key thought unlocking understanding of the Spirit's new covenant ministry is that he

mediates the personal presence and ministry of the Lord Jesus. This argument is meant to have the status of an appetizer.

Chapter 2 looks at biblical teaching about the Spirit from this point of view. It is, so to speak, the soup—thick, maybe, but (so I hope) nourishing. Perhaps, unlike other sorts of soup, it will manage to be both thick and clear at the same time; as the one who cooks it up, I certainly want it to be so.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 are the meat of the book—encounters with Wesley’s perfectionism, classic Keswick teaching, and contemporary charismatic spirituality, and alongside them a restatement of an older view of life in the Spirit, which seems to me to be more deeply biblical than these.

Then, for dessert (the part of the meal in which sweetness should predominate), I offer some thoughts about the work of the Paraclete revitalizing the body of Christ. You may find it bittersweet; that, I think, will depend on you more than on me.

The mellow-sharp flavors of cheese and fruit happily round off a good meal. As I hope that the meal will have proved good so far, I further hope that the Pentecost exposition of Romans 5:1–11, added for this 2005 edition, will have a similar effect.

The title, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, focuses the book’s practical thrust throughout. The idea of “keeping in step” reflects Paul’s thought in Galatians 5:25: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

Walk there is not *peripateō*, as in verse 16, signifying literally the walker’s moving of his limbs and metaphorically the activity of living, but *stoicheō* which carries the thought of walking in line, holding to a rule, and thus proceeding under another’s direction and control.

Faith, worship, praise, prayer, openness and obedience to God, discipline, boldness, moral realism, and evangelical enrichment are

the goals at which I aim. Says Paul again: “. . . Be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:18–21 ASV). My highest hope for this book is that it might help its readers to implement Paul’s series of directives in that tremendous sentence. So I ask you now to check before God your willingness to learn this new supernatural lifestyle, at whatever cost to your present way of living; for there is nothing so Spirit-quenching as to study the Spirit’s work without being willing to be touched, humbled, convicted, and changed as you go along.

To study the Holy Spirit’s work is an awesome venture for anyone who knows, even at secondhand, what the Spirit may do. In 1908 some missionaries in Manchuria wrote home as follows:

A power has come into the church that we cannot control if we would. It is a miracle for stolid, self-righteous John Chinaman to go out of his way to confess to sins that no torture of the Yamen could force from him; for a Chinaman to demean himself to crave, weeping, the prayers of his fellow-believers is beyond all human explanation.

Perhaps you will say it’s a sort of religious hysteria. So did some of us . . . But here we are, about sixty Scottish and Irish Presbyterians who have seen it—all shades of temperament—and, much as many of us shrank from it at first, every one who has seen and heard what we have, every day last week, is certain there is only *one* explanation—that it is God’s Holy Spirit manifesting himself. . . . One clause of the Creed that lives before us now in all its inevitable, awful solemnity is, “*I believe in the Holy Ghost.*”¹

“Inevitable, awful solemnity”: Does that phrase fit our present perception of the Holy Spirit and his work? What happened in Manchuria in 1908, when the Spirit attacked and overthrew self-righteousness, got down to specifics in people’s consciences, and robbed them of all inward rest and quietness till they confessed their sins and changed their ways, may be paralleled from the Acts of the Apostles. But where nothing of this kind happens, nor is even envisioned, claims that the Spirit is at work must be judged unreal. The Holy Spirit comes to make us holy, by making us know and feel the reality of God through his Son Jesus Christ—God’s hatred of, recoil from, and wrath against our sins, and his loving insistence on changing and rebuilding our characters while he forgives us for Jesus’s sake. Have we ever *felt* these things, that is, been stirred and shaken and altered by their impact? And are we inwardly ready now to embark on a study that may leave us feeling them?

“Reader,” wrote John Owen the Puritan at the start of a treatise that had cost him seven years’ hard labor, “if thou art, as many in this pretending age, a sign- or title-gazer, and comest into books as Cato into the theatre, to go out again, thou hast had thy entertainment; farewell.” At this moment I want to say that to anyone into whose hands this book has fallen. It asks for more than the casual glance that in this “pretending age” of ours is all that readers often give to the books whose pages they flip. Nor is it written to please those who are just curious to know what its author thinks these days about the Holy Spirit. It has been put together to help Christians who mean business with God and are prepared to be dealt with by him. It would be your wisdom, I think, quietly and prayerfully to read through Psalm 119 two or three times before going further. Stuffing our heads with idle thoughts, however true,

puffs up, not builds up, and it is building up that we need. May the Lord have mercy on us all.

I would like express my gratitude to the many over the years, on both sides of the Atlantic, who have helped me by their responses to earlier versions of this material and particularly to the faculty and students of Asbury Theological Seminary, to whom I ventured to present my encounter with John Wesley's teaching as the Ryan Lectures for 1982. Also I owe thanks to several gallant typists, most notably Mary Parkin, Nancy Morehouse, Ann Norford, and Naomi Packer, and to Jim Fodor for the indexes.

Let me finally say that this is not a technical treatise, and therefore footnotes and references to other material have been kept to a minimum; nonetheless, it is a study book, and as in other study books I have written, biblical references in the text are meant to be looked up.

Acknowledgments

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Getting the Spirit in Focus

MANY BOOKS HAVE ALREADY been written on the Holy Spirit: Why add to their number? Let me start my answer to this very proper question by telling you about my short sight.

Purblindness

If while looking at you I should take my glasses off, I should reduce you to a smudge. I should still know you were there; I might still be able to tell whether you were boy or girl; I could probably manage to avoid bumping into you. But you would have become so indistinct at the edges, and your features would be so blurred that adequate description of you (save from memory) would be quite beyond me. Should a stranger enter the room while my glasses were off, I could point to him, no doubt, but his face would be a blob, and I would never know the expression on it. You and he would be right out of focus, so far as I was concerned, until I was bespectacled again.

One of Calvin's rare illustrations compares the way purblind folk like me need glasses to put print and people in focus with the way

we all need Scripture to bring into focus our genuine sense of the divine. Though Calvin stated this comparison in general terms only, he clearly had in mind specific biblical truths as the lens whereby clear focus is achieved.

Everyone, Calvin thought, has inklings of the reality of God, but they are vague and smudged. Getting God in focus means thinking correctly about his character, his sovereignty, his salvation, his love, his Son, his Spirit, and all the realities of his work and ways; it also means thinking rightly about our own relationship to him as creatures either under sin or under grace, either living the responsive life of faith, hope, and love or living unresponsively, in barrenness and gloom of heart. How can we learn to think correctly about these things? Calvin's answer (mine, too) is: by learning of them from Scripture. Only as we thus learn shall we be able to say that God the Triune Creator, who is Father, Son, and Spirit, is more than a smudge in our minds.

To my point, now, and my reason for writing these pages. Great attention, as I said, is being given today to the Holy Spirit—who he is and what he does in the individual, the church, and the wider human community. Fellowship, body life, every-member ministry, Spirit baptism, gifts, guidance, prophecy, miracles, and the Spirit's work of revealing, renewing, and reviving, are themes on many lips and are discussed in many books. That is good: We should be glad that it is so, and something is wrong with us spiritually if we are not. But just as a shortsighted man fails to see all that he is looking at and just as anyone may get hold of the wrong end of the stick about anything, and so have only half the story, so we may (and I think often do) fall short of a biblical focus on the Spirit, whose work we celebrate so often. We really are too purblind and prejudiced in spiritual things to be able to see properly what we are looking at here.

Knowing and Experiencing God

We glibly assume that because we know something of the Spirit's work in our own lives, therefore we know all that matters about the Spirit himself, but the conclusion does not follow. The truth is that just as notional knowledge may outrun spiritual experience, so a person's spiritual experience may be ahead of his notional knowledge. Bible believers have often so stressed (rightly) the need for correct notions that they have overlooked this. But fact it is, as we may learn from the experience of Jesus's followers during his earthly ministry. Their understanding of spiritual things was faulty; their misunderstandings of Jesus were frequent; yet Jesus was able to touch and transform their lives beyond the limits of what had entered their minds, simply because they loved him, trusted him, wanted to learn from him, and honestly meant to obey him according to the light they had. Thus it was that eleven of the twelve were "are clean" (their sins were forgiven and their hearts renewed [John 15:3]) and others entered with them into Jesus's gift of pardon and peace (see Luke 5:20–24; 7:47–50; 19:5–10), before any single one of them had any grasp at all of the doctrine of atonement for sin through Jesus's coming cross. The gift was given and their lives were changed first; the understanding of what had happened to them came after.

So it is, too, when in good faith and openness to God's will, folk ask for more of the life of the Spirit. (Naturally! for seeking life from the Spirit and life from Jesus is in fact the same quest under two names, did we but know it.) To ask consciously for what Scripture teaches us to ask for is the ideal here, and since God is faithful to his word, we may confidently expect that, having asked for it, we shall receive it—though we may well find that when the good gift comes to us, there is more to it than ever we realized. Said the Lord

Jesus: "Ask, and it will be given you. . . . If you . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:9, 13). Many have been staggered at the wealth of God's answer in experience to this request.

But because God is gracious, he may also deepen our life in the Spirit even when our ideas about this life are nonexistent or quite wrong, provided only that we are truly and wholeheartedly seeking his face and wanting to come closer to him. The formula that applies here is the promise in Jeremiah 29:13–14: ". . . when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the LORD. . . ." Then comes the task of understanding by the light of Scripture what the Lord has actually done to us and how his specific work in our personal experience, tailored as it lovingly was to our particular temperamental and circumstantial needs at that time, should be related to the general biblical declarations of what he will do through the Spirit for all who are his. This task, as it seems to me, faces many of God's people just at present.

Now please do not misunderstand me! I am not saying that God blesses the ignorant and erring by reason of their ignorance and error. Nor am I saying that God does not care whether or not we know and grasp his revealed purposes. Nor do I suggest that ignorance and error are unimportant for spiritual health so long as one has an honest heart and a genuine passion for God. It is certain that God blesses believers precisely and invariably by blessing to them something of his truth and that misbelief as such is in its own nature spiritually barren and destructive. Yet anyone who deals with souls will again and again be amazed at the gracious generosity with which God blesses to needy ones what looks to us like a very tiny needle of truth hidden amid whole haystacks of mental error. As

I have said, countless sinners truly experience the saving grace of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit while their notions about both are erratic and largely incorrect. (Where, indeed, would any of us be if God's blessing had been withheld till all our notions were right? Every Christian without exception experiences far more in the way of mercy and help than the quality of his notions warrants.) All the same, however, we would appreciate the Spirit's work much more, and maybe avoid some pitfalls concerning it, if our thoughts about the Spirit himself were clearer; and that is where this book tries to help.

My mind goes back to a wet afternoon a generation ago when I made my way to the back-street cinema that we called the fleapit for my first sight of a famous Golden Silent that had come to town. This was *The General*, made in 1927, hailed by critics nowadays as Buster Keaton's masterpiece. I had recently discovered the sad, high-minded, disaster-prone, dithery, resourceful clown that was Keaton, and *The General* drew me like a magnet. I had read that the story was set in the American Civil War and, putting two and two together, I assumed that as in several of his other films, the title was telling me what Keaton's own role was going to be. Now I am not a war film buff, and I remember wondering as I walked to the cinema how fully what I was to see would grab me.

Well, *The General* certainly puts Keaton into uniform—lieutenant's uniform, to be precise—but to characterize it as a film in which Keaton is a soldier with leadership responsibilities would be inadequate and misleading to the last degree. For Keaton only gets his uniform in the final moments, and what unfolded before my wondering eyes for seventy magic minutes before that was not a Goon- or M.A.S.H.-type send-up of the military, nor anything like it, but the epic of an ancient steam locomotive—a dear, dignified,

clumsy, cowcatchered 4-4-0—which, by letting itself be stolen, pitchforked its dauntless driver into the clever-crazy heroics of a marvelous one-man rescue operation, out of which came as a reward the military identity that was previously denied him and without which his girl had refused to look at him. *General* turned out to be the loco's name, and the story was Keaton's version of the Great Locomotive Chase of 1863, when the real *General* was snatched by northern saboteurs at Marietta, Georgia, but was pursued and recaptured when it ran out of fuel before it managed to reach northern territory. Being both a slapstick addict and a train nut, I was absolutely entranced.

I am suggesting, now, that some of the things that are said today concerning the work of the Holy Spirit and the true experience of the life of the Spirit that many enjoy reflect ideas about the Spirit that are no more adequate to the reality than was my own first guess at the subject matter of *The General*. Look with me at some of these ideas, and let me show you what I mean.

Power

To start with, some people see the doctrine of the Spirit as essentially about *power*, in the sense of God-given ability to do what you know you ought to do and indeed want to do, but feel that you lack the strength for. Examples include saying no to cravings (for sex, drink, drugs, tobacco, money, kicks, luxury, promotion, power, reputation, adulation, or whatever), being patient with folks who try your patience, loving the unlovable, controlling your temper, standing firm under pressure, speaking out boldly for Christ, trusting God in face of trouble. In thought and speech, preaching and prayer, the Spirit's enabling power for action of this kind is the theme on which these people constantly harp.

What ought we to say about their emphasis? Is it wrong? No, indeed, just the opposite. In itself it is magnificently right. For *power* (usually *dunamis*, from which comes the English word *dynamite*, sometimes *kratos* and *ischus*) is a great New Testament word, and empowering from Christ through the Spirit is indeed a momentous New Testament fact, one of the glories of the gospel and a mark of Christ's true followers everywhere. Observe these key texts, if you doubt me.

“. . . Stay in the city,” said Jesus to the apostles, whom he had commissioned to evangelize the world, “until you are clothed with *power* from on high.” “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . .” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). When the Spirit had been poured out at Pentecost, “with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus . . .” (Acts 4:33); and “And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs . . .” (Acts 6:8; see also Peter's similar statement about Jesus, who was “anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and with *power* . . .” [Acts 10:38]). In these verses Luke tells us that from the first the gospel was spread by the Spirit's power.

Paul prays for the Romans that “. . . by the *power* of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Rom. 15:13). Then he speaks of “what Christ has accomplished through me . . . by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God . . .” (Rom. 15:18–19). He reminds the Corinthians that at Corinth he preached Christ crucified “. . . in demonstration of the Spirit and of *power*, so that your faith might . . . rest . . . in the *power* of God” (1 Cor. 2:4–5; see also 2 Cor. 6:6–10; 10:4–6; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:13). Of his thorn in the flesh he writes that Christ “said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my *power* is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses,” he

continues, “so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9; see also 4:7). He emphasizes to Timothy that God has given Christians “. . . a spirit . . . of *power* and love and self-control,” and censures those who are “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.” (2 Tim. 1:7; 3:4–5). Christ, he says, gives strength (*endunamoō*, *dunamoō*, *krataioō*), so that the Christian becomes able to do what left to himself he never could have done (Eph. 3:16; 6:10; see also 1:19–23; Col. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:17; see also 2 Cor. 12:10; 1 Pet. 5:10). And his own triumphant cry from prison as he faces possible execution is: “I can do all things [meaning, all that God calls me to do] through him who *strengthens* me” (Phil. 4:13). There is no mistaking the thrust of all this. What we are being told is that supernatural living through supernatural empowering is at the very heart of New Testament Christianity, so that those who, while professing faith, do not experience and show forth this empowering are suspect by New Testament standards. And the empowering is always the work of the Holy Spirit, even when Christ only is named as its source, for Christ is the Spirit giver (John 1:33; 20:22; Acts 2:33). So power from Christ through the Spirit is a theme that should always be given prominence whenever and wherever Christianity is taught.

For more than three centuries evangelical believers have been making much of God’s promise and provision of power for living, and we should be glad that they have. For not only is this, as we saw, a key theme in Scripture, it speaks to an obvious and universal human need. All who are realistic about themselves are from time to time overwhelmed with a sense of inadequacy. All Christians time and again are forced to cry, “Lord, *help* me, *strengthen* me, *enable* me, give me *power* to speak and act in the way that pleases you, *make* me equal to the demands and pressures which I face.”

We are called to fight evil in all its forms in and around us, and we need to learn that in this battle the Spirit's power alone gives victory, while self-reliance leads only to the discovery of one's impotence and the experience of defeat. Evangelical stress, therefore, on supernatural sanctity through the Spirit as something real and necessary has been and always will be timely teaching.

Power for Christians. The power of the Spirit in human lives, first taught with emphasis by seventeenth-century Puritans, became a matter of debate among evangelicals in the eighteenth century, when John Wesley began to teach that the Spirit will root sin out of men's hearts entirely in this life. This was the "scriptural holiness" that Wesley believed God had raised up Methodism to spread. Non-Wesleyans recoiled, seeing the claim as unbiblical and delusive, and they constantly warned their constituencies against it. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the pendulum of reaction was thought to have swung too far; and many felt, rightly or wrongly, that antiperfectionist zeal had left Christians simply unaware that God has power to deliver from sinful practices, to energize a calmly triumphant righteousness, and to give piercing efficacy to preachers' utterances. Quite suddenly the theme of power in human lives caught on as the topic for sermons, books, and informal discussion groups ("conversation meetings" as they were called) on both sides of the Atlantic. What was said by Phoebe Palmer, Asa Mahan, Robert Pearsall Smith and Hannah Whitall Smith, Evan Hopkins, Andrew Murray, R. A. Torrey, Charles G. Trumbull, Robert C. McQuilkin, F. B. Meyer, H. C. G. Moule, and others who spent their strength proclaiming the "secret" (their word) of power for believers was hailed as virtually a new revelation, which indeed the teachers themselves took it to be. A new evangelical movement was off and running.

The “secret” of what was sometimes called the Higher or Victorious Life has been most fully institutionalized in England’s annual Keswick Convention week. There to this day there operates, like a jazz band’s “head” arrangement, an agreed understanding that Monday’s theme is sin, Tuesday’s is Christ who saves from sin, Wednesday’s is consecration, Thursday’s is life in the Spirit, and Friday’s is empowered service by the sanctified, especially in missions. A Keswick periodical was launched in 1874, called *The Christian’s Pathway of Power*. After five years it changed its name to *The Life of Faith*, but this did not mean any change of character; faith is the pathway of power according to Keswick. Keswick’s influence has been worldwide. “Keswicks” crop up all over the English-speaking world. “Keswick teaching has come to be regarded as one of the most potent spiritual forces in recent Church history.”¹ Preachers “of Keswick type,” specializing in convention addresses about power, have become a distinct evangelical ministerial species, alongside evangelists, Bible teachers, and speakers on prophetic subjects. Thus institutionalized and with its supporting constituency of those who appreciate the Keswick ethos—equable, cheerful, controlled, fastidious, very congenial to the middle class—the Keswick message of power for sanctity and service is plainly here to stay for some time yet.

Nor is this the only way in which the power theme has been developed in recent years. The power of Christ, not only to forgive sin, but also, by his Spirit, to deliver from enslaving evil is becoming again what it was in the first Christian centuries, a major ingredient in the church’s evangelistic message. This is so both in the urban West, where the evil faced is usually the power of destructive habit, and also among tribal communities, where the evil is still often the power of malevolent demons recognized as such. Older evangelism,

with its stress on law, guilt, judgment, and the glory of Christ's atoning death, certainly had strengths that today's evangelism lacks, but on the whole it made little of the power theme, and so was to that extent poorer.

Since God's promise and provision of power are realities, it must be judged a happy thing that the topic should be highlighted in the ways I have described. Emphasis on it in one form or another now marks virtually the whole of mainstream evangelical Christianity, along with the worldwide charismatic movement, and this is surely a hopeful sign for the future.

The Limitations of Power. Yet pleasure in today's power talk cannot be unmixed. For experience shows that when the power theme is made central to our thinking about the Spirit and is not anchored in a deeper view of the Spirit's ministry with a different center, unhappy disfigurements soon creep in. What sort of disfigurements? Well, take the following for starters. Pietistic concentration of interest on the felt ups and downs of the soul as it seeks power over this and that tends to produce an egoistic, introverted cast of mind that becomes indifferent to community concerns and social needs. The Spirit's work tends to be spoken of man-centeredly, as if God's power is something made available for us to switch on and *use* (a frequent, telltale Keswick word) by a technique of thought and will for which *consecration and faith* is the approved name. Also, the idea gets around that God's power works in us automatically so far as we let it do so, so that in effect we regulate it by the degree of our consecration and faith at any one time. Another notion popping up is that inner passivity, waiting for God's power to carry us along, is a required state of heart ("let go and let God," as the too popular slogan has it). Then, too, in evangelizing, it is almost conventional in certain circles to offer

“power for living” to the spiritually needy as a resource that, apparently, they will be privileged to harness and control once they have committed themselves to Christ.

But all this sounds more like an adaptation of yoga than like biblical Christianity. To start with, it blurs the distinction between manipulating divine power at one’s own will (which is magic, exemplified by Simon Magus [Acts 8:18–24]) and experiencing it as one obeys God’s will (which is religion, exemplified by Paul [2 Cor. 12:9–10]). Furthermore, it is not realistic. Evangelists’ talk regularly implies that, once we become Christians, God’s power in us will immediately cancel out defects of character and make our whole lives plain sailing. This however is so unbiblical as to be positively dishonest. Certainly God sometimes works wonders of sudden deliverance from this or that weakness at conversion, just as he sometimes does at other times; but every Christian’s life is a constant fight against the pressures and pulls of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and his battle for Christlikeness (that is, habits of wisdom, devotion, love, and righteousness) is as grueling as it is unending. To suggest otherwise when evangelizing is a kind of confidence trick. Again Keswick talk regularly encourages us to expect at once too much and not enough—full freedom from the down drag of sin on a moment-by-moment basis (too much), yet without any progressive loosening of the grip of sin on our hearts at motivational level (not enough). This is bad theology, and is psychologically and spiritually unreal into the bargain. By saying as much in print in 1955 I gave great offense,² but my points would, I think, be more widely taken today.

The real need here, as we shall in due course see, is for deeper insight into what the doctrine of the Spirit is really about—insight in the light of which our twisted talk of inward power put at our

disposal can be set straight. That part of the argument, however, will be held back till my preliminary survey is complete. At present we should simply note that the power theme does not quite take us to the heart of the matter and move on.

Performance

In the second place, there are those who see the doctrine of the Spirit as essentially about *performance*, in the sense of exercising spiritual gifts. For these folk, the Spirit's ministry seems both to start and to finish with the use of gifts—preaching, teaching, prophecy, tongues, healing, or whatever it may be. They see that, according to the New Testament, gifts (*charismata*) are God-given capacities to do things: specifically, to serve and edify others by words, deeds, or attitudes that express and communicate knowledge of Jesus Christ. They see also that, as “. . . the manifestation of the Spirit . . .” (1 Cor. 12:7), gifts are discerned in action: Christians show what God enables them to do by doing it. Thus they are led to think of performance as the essence of life in the Spirit and to suppose that the more gifts a person exhibits, the more Spirit-filled he or she is likely to be.

The Ministry of the Body. The first thing to say about this view, or mind-set as perhaps we had better call it, is that here again is an emphasis—this time, on the reality of gifts and the importance of putting them to use—which is in itself entirely right. For centuries the churches assumed that only a minority of Christians (good clergy and some few others) had gifts for ministry, and they gave the whole subject of gifts small attention. Prior to the twentieth century, only one full-scale study of the gifts of the Spirit had been written in English, penned by the Puritan John Owen in 1679 or 1680. The current stress on the universality of gifts and God's

expectation of every-member ministry in the body of Christ was long overdue, for New Testament teaching on both points is explicit and clear. Here are the main statements.

“There are varieties of gifts [*charismata*], but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service [*diakoniai*], but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities [*energēmata*], but it is the same God who empowers them all *in every one*” (1 Cor. 12:4–6). “But grace was given *to each one of us* according to the measure of Christ’s gift. . . . We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body . . . *when each part is working properly*, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:7, 15–16). “As *each* has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet. 4:10). “For as in one body we have many members [*melē*, ‘limbs’: *Members* is always *limbs* in the New Testament], and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them . . .” (Rom. 12:4–6). It is not only clergy and office bearers who are gifted; all Christians are. Official ministers must recognize this and use their own gifts in preparing lay Christians to use theirs. “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11–12).

The King James Version (alas) masks Paul’s meaning here by making him say that Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” as if these three phrases are parallel statements of what the clergy are for. A sixteenth-century edition of Scripture, which omitted *not* from the

seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14), very properly went down in history as the Wicked Bible; with equal propriety we could speak of the Wicked (or if you like alliteration, Calamitous) Comma that the King James Version put after *saints*. For by thus restricting “the ministry” to what official leaders do, this comma not only hides but actually reverses Paul’s sense, setting clericalism where every-member ministry ought to be. (By *clericalism* I mean that combination of conspiracy and tyranny in which the minister claims and the congregation agrees that all spiritual ministry is his responsibility and not theirs: a notion both disreputable in principle and Spirit-quenching in practice.)

The Plymouth Brethren proclaimed the universality of gifts and the rightness of every-member ministry from the middle of the last century on, but because their thesis was bound up with a reactionary polemic against trained and salaried clergy in supposedly apostate churches, little notice was taken of it. Recently, however, both the ecumenical and the charismatic movements have seized on this aspect of biblical truth and made it almost a Christian commonplace, with some happy results. One effect has been to create in many quarters an unprecedented willingness to experiment with new structural and liturgical forms for church life, so as to make room for the full use of all gifts for the benefit of the whole congregation. With that has come a new seriousness in checking traditional patterns of worship and order to make sure that they do not in fact inhibit gifts and so actually quench the Spirit. This is all to the good.

Keeping Performance in Focus. Unhappily, there is a debit side, too: Three big disfigurements have periodically marred the new approach.

First, magnifying lay ministry has led some laymen to undervalue and indeed discount the special responsibilities to which clergy

are ordained and to forget the respect that is due to the minister's office and leadership.

Second, emphasis on God's habit of giving saints gifts that correspond to nothing of which they seemed capable before conversion (and make no mistake, that really is God's habit) has blinded some to the fact that the most significant gifts in the church's life (preaching, teaching, leadership, counsel, support) are ordinarily natural abilities sanctified.

Third, some have balanced their encouragement of extreme freedom in personal Christian performance by introducing extremely authoritarian forms of pastoral oversight, in some cases going beyond the worst forms of medieval priestcraft in taking control of Christians' consciences.

Plainly these developments are defects. But to call for their correction is not in any way to denigrate the principles of which they have been the less welcome by-products. The principles are right, and there is no high-quality church life without practical observance of them.

But something is deeply wrong, nonetheless, when attention centers on the manifesting of gifts (starting, perhaps, with tongues at a personal Pentecost) as if this were the Spirit's main ministry to individuals and hence the aspect of his work in which we should chiefly concentrate. What is wrong becomes clear the moment we look at 1 Corinthians. As the Corinthians were proud of their knowledge (8:1–2), so they were cock-a-hoop, or, as some would say, gung ho, about their gifts. They despised fellow worshipers and visiting preachers who struck them as less gifted than themselves and tried to outdo one another in showing off their gifts whenever the church met. Paul rejoices that they are knowledgeable and gifted (1:4–7), but tells them that they are at the same time babyish and

carnal, behaving in ways that for Christians are inconsistent and a cause for shame (3:1–4; 5:1–13; 6:1–8; 11:17–22). They were valuing gifts and freedom above righteousness, love, and service; and that scale of values, says Paul, is wrong. No church known to us received such wide-ranging apostolic rebuke as did that at Corinth.

The Corinthians thought themselves “spiritual” (*pneumatikoi*, 14:37) by reason of their knowledge and gifts. Paul labors, however, to show them that the essential element in true spirituality (assuming Spirit-given understanding of the gospel, which is basic to everything) is ethical. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (6:19–20). The “still more excellent way,” surpassing all the performances that the Corinthians most prized, is the way of love: “. . . patient and kind . . . not envy or boast . . . not arrogant or rude . . . not irritable or resentful. . . . Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (13:4–7). Without love, says Paul, you can have the grandest gifts in the world, and still be—nothing (13:1–3)—that is, be spiritually dead. Paul suspected that some in the Corinthian church were in fact “nothing” in this sense. “Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning,” he writes to them. “For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame” (15:34; see also 2 Cor. 13:5).

What the Corinthians had to realize, and what some today may need to relearn, is that, as the Puritan John Owen put it, there can be *gifts* without *graces*; that is, one may be capable of performances that benefit others spiritually and yet be a stranger oneself to the Spirit-wrought inner transformation that true knowledge of God brings. The manifestation of the Spirit in charismatic performance

is not the same thing as the fruit of the Spirit in Christlike character (see Gal. 5:22–23), and there may be much of the former with little or none of the latter. You can have many gifts and few graces; you can even have genuine gifts and no genuine graces at all, as did Balaam, Saul, and Judas. This, writes Owen, is because:

Spiritual gifts are placed and seated in the *mind* or understanding only; whether they are ordinary or extraordinary they have no other hold nor residence in the soul. And they are in the mind as it is *notional* and theoretical, rather than as it is *practical*. They are *intellectual abilities* and no more. I speak of them which have any residence in us; for some *gifts*, as *miracles* and *tongues*, consisted only in a *transient operation* of an extraordinary power. Of all others *illumination* is the foundation, and spiritual light their matter. So the apostle declares in his order of expression, Heb. vi.4. [where Owen identifies “powers of the age to come” with spiritual gifts]. The will, and the affections, and the conscience, are unconcerned in them. Wherefore they *change not the heart* with power, although they may reform the life by the efficacy of light. And although God doth not ordinarily bestow them on flagitious persons, nor continue them with such as after the reception of them become flagitious; yet they may be in those who were unrenewed, and have nothing in them to preserve them absolutely from the worst of sins.³

So no one should treat his gifts as proof that he pleases God or as guaranteeing his salvation. Spiritual gifts do neither of these things.

All through the New Testament, when God’s work in human lives is spoken of, the ethical has priority over the charismatic. Christlikeness (not in gifts, but in love, humility, submission to

the providence of God, and sensitiveness to the claims of people) is seen as what really matters. This is particularly clear in Paul's prayers for believers. He asks, for instance, that the Colossians may be "strengthened with all power, according to . . . [God's] glorious might, for . . ." what? Ministerial exploits and triumphs through a superabundant display of gifts? No, "all endurance and patience with joy" (Col. 1:11). Again, he asks that the Philippians' love may abound, ". . . with knowledge and all discernment, so that you . . ." what? May preach and argue with cogency, or heal the sick with authority, or speak in tongues with fluency? No, ". . . may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ . . ." (Phil. 1:9–11; see also Eph. 3:14–19).

This point touches not only those who are preoccupied with finding and using their gifts, but all who, betrayed perhaps by their own vigorous temperament, measure the Spirit's work in them by the number of Christian activities in which they invest themselves and the skill and success with which they manage to carry them out.

My argument is that any mind-set which treats the Spirit's gifts (ability and willingness to run around and do things) as more important than his fruit (Christlike character in personal life) is spiritually wrongheaded and needs correcting. The best corrective will be a view of the Spirit's work that sets activities and performances in a framework that displays them as acts of serving and honoring God and gives them value as such, rather than leaving us to suppose them valuable just because they are dramatic or eye-catching or impress people or fill vital roles in the church or transcend our former expectations from the person concerned. A framework of this kind will be offered shortly. Meantime, let us note that concentrating on gifts and activities does not take us to

the heart of the truth about the Spirit, any more than concentrating on the experience of power does, and proceed with our review.

Purity

In the third place, there are those for whom the doctrine of the Spirit centers on *purifying* and *purgation*, that is, God's work of cleansing his children from sin's defilement and pollution by enabling them to resist temptation and do what is right. For these folk, the key thought is of the holiness that the Spirit imparts as he progressively sanctifies us, enabling us to mortify indwelling sin (that is, put it to death: Rom. 8:14; see also Col. 3:5) and changing us ". . . from one degree of glory to another . . ." (2 Cor. 3:18). The heart of the matter for them is neither the experience of power as such nor the quantity or quality of Christians' public performances, but our inward conflict as we battle for holiness against sin and seek the Spirit's help to keep ourselves pure and undefiled.

Here is yet another emphasis that in itself is fully biblical. Unregenerate human beings are indeed, as Paul says, ". . . under sin . . ." (Rom. 3:9), and sin still "dwells within" those who are born again (Rom. 7:20, 23; see also Heb. 12:1; 1 John 1:8). Sin, which is in essence an irrational energy of rebellion against God—a lawless habit of self-willed arrogance, moral and spiritual, expressing itself in egoism of all sorts—is something that God hates in all its forms (Isa. 61:8; Jer. 44:4; Prov. 6:16–19) and that defiles us in his sight. Therefore Scripture views it not only as guilt needing to be forgiven, but also as filth needing to be cleansed.

Accordingly, Isaiah looks for a day when "the Lord shall have *washed away the filth* of the daughters of Zion . . . by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4; see also the call to wash, 1:16; Jer. 4:14). Ezekiel reports God as saying: "I will

sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be *clean from all your uncleannesses*, and from all your idols I will *cleanse* you” (36:25). Zechariah foretells that “. . . there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to *cleanse* them from sin and *uncleanness*” (13:1). Malachi warns that God “. . . is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will *purify* the sons of Levi and *refine* them like gold and silver . . .” (3:2–3; see also Isa. 1:25; Zech. 13:9). Sinful behavior, say these passages, makes us, as it were, dirty before God; sinful behavior disgusts and repels God as we ourselves are disgusted and repelled if we find dirt where cleanliness ought to be; and God in the holiness of his grace is resolved not only to forgive our sinful behavior, but also to bring it to an end.

All purity laws and purification rituals in the Old Testament point to this divine work of purging out what pollutes. So do all New Testament references to salvation, which describe it as being washed and cleansed (John 13:10; 15:3; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:25–27; Heb. 9:13–14; 10:22; 1 John 1:7–9), and refer to the Christian life as a matter of cleansing oneself from whatever makes one dirty in God’s eyes (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:3–5; 2 Tim. 2:20–22; 1 John 3:3). So in particular is it reflected in Christian baptism, which is neither more nor less than a symbolic wash.

To highlight the work of the Spirit in making Christians aware and ashamed of sin’s defilement and in stirring us to “. . . *cleanse* ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1) is thus to underscore a biblical emphasis—one that (be it said) needs a good deal of underscoring in a decadent age like ours, in which moral standards count for so little and the grace of shame is so much at a discount.

Moreover, it is equally right to stress that the Christian's present quest for purity of life means conscious tension and struggle and incomplete achievement all along the line. "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do" (Gal. 5:17).

Whether or not we read Romans 7:14–25 as a cross section of healthy Christian experience and so as illustrating this point directly (some do, some don't; we shall discuss the matter later), there is no room for uncertainty as to what Paul is telling us here in Galatians about the reality of conflict in the Christian life. You must realize, he says, that there are two opposed sorts of desire in every Christian's makeup. The opposition between them appears at the level of motive. There are desires that express the natural anti-God egoism of fallen human nature, and there are desires that express the supernatural, God-honoring, God-loving motivation that is implanted by new birth. Now because he has in him these opposite motivational urgings, one holding him back whenever the other draws him forward, the Christian finds that his heart is never absolutely pure, nor does he ever do anything that is absolutely right, even though his constant goal is perfect service of God springing from what the hymn calls "loyal singleness of heart." In this sense he is being prevented every moment from doing what he wants to do. He lives with the knowledge that everything he has done might and should have been better: not only the lapses into which pride, weakness, and folly have betrayed him, but also his attempts to do what was right and good. After each such attempt and each particular action, he regularly sees specific ways in which it could have been improved, both motivationally and in performance. What felt at the time like the best he could do does not

appear so in retrospect. He spends his life reaching after perfection and finding that his reach always exceeds his grasp.

This does not of course mean that he never achieves righteousness in any measure at all. Paul is envisioning a Christian life not of constant, total defeat, but of constant moral advance. “. . . Walk by [in] the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” is the direct summons of Galatians 5:16, a summons to which verse 17 is attached as a mere explanatory footnote. It is clear both here and wherever else Paul teaches Christian conduct that he expects the believer always to be moving forward in the formation of godly habits and the practice of active Christlikeness.

The Christian, Paul says, has been freed from slavery to sin so that now he may practice love and righteousness “. . . in the new way of the Spirit” (Rom. 7:6); and what he now can do he now must do, for this holiness is the will of God (Gal. 5:13–14; Rom. 6:17–7:6; 1 Thess. 4:1–8). The Christian can and must mortify sin through the Spirit (Rom. 8:13); he can and must walk in the Spirit, in a steady course of godliness and good works (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). This means that he will stop doing certain things that he did before and that unconverted folk still do, and he will start doing other things instead. The desires of the Spirit, felt in the believer’s own spirit (that is, his consciousness) are to be followed, but the desires of the flesh are not to be indulged. The Christian’s life must be one of righteousness as the expression of his repentance and rebirth. That is basic.

The point I am developing out of Paul’s words in verse 17 is only this: The Christian who thus walks in the Spirit will keep discovering that nothing in his life is as good as it should be; that he has never fought as hard as he might have done against the clogging restraints and contrary pulls of his own inbred perversity; that there

is an element of motivational sin, at least, in his best works; that his daily living is streaked with defilements, so that he has to depend every moment on God's pardoning mercy in Christ, or he would be lost; and that he needs to keep asking, in the light of his own felt weakness and inconstancy of heart, that the Spirit will energize him to the end to maintain the inward struggle. "You cannot achieve as much in the way of holiness as you want to achieve." Paul evidently sees this as belonging to the inside story of all human saintliness. Who, now, is going to say that he is wrong?

Certainly, since Clement and Origen mapped out the purging of the soul from the passions, and the desert fathers told of their fights against tormenting fantasies of wine, women, and song, and Augustine spelled out experientially the nature of sin and grace, the inescapability of conflict with temptation has been a fixed emphasis in Christian devotional teaching. Luther and Calvin made much of it, and Lutherans and Calvinists, the latter especially, have followed in their footsteps. Over many centuries the truth, realism, and healthiness of this point have been both called in question and vindicated in discussion over and over again, and no serious challenge can be brought against it now. Stress on the reality of struggle as by God's grace one's life is progressively cleansed and purged is fully scriptural and entirely proper.

Pitfalls of the Moral-Struggle Doctrine. But for all that, experience shows that pitfalls surround those who make moral struggle central in their thinking about the Holy Spirit. Their tendency is to grow *legalistic*, making tight rules for themselves and others about abstaining from things indifferent, imposing rigid and restrictive behavior patterns as bulwarks against worldliness and attaching great importance to observing these man-made taboos. They become *Pharisaic*, more concerned to avoid what defiles and

adhere to principle without compromise than to practice the love of Christ. They become *scrupulous*, unreasonably fearful of pollution where none threatens and obstinately unwilling to be reassured. They become *joyless*, being so preoccupied with thoughts of how grim and unrelenting the battle is. They become *morbid*, always introspective and dwelling on the rottenness of their hearts in a way that breeds only gloom and apathy. They become *pessimistic* about the possibility of moral progress, both for themselves and for others; they settle for low expectations of deliverance from sin, as if the best they can hope for is to be kept from getting worse. Such attitudes are, however, spiritual neuroses, distorting, disfiguring, diminishing and so in reality dishonoring the sanctifying work of God's Spirit in our lives.

Granted, these states of mind are usually products of more than one factor. Accidents of temperament and early training, meticulous mental habits turned inward by shyness or insecurity, a low self-image and perhaps actual self-hatred often go toward the making of them; so do certain in-turned types of ecclesiastical culture and community. But inadequate views of the Spirit always prove to underlie them, too, and that is my point now. These folk, like the other two groups we looked at, need a different focus for their thinking about the Spirit, to move them on from the somber spiritual egoism that I have just described. In a moment I will say what I think that focus should be.

Presentation

A fourth approach that must now be looked at views the Holy Spirit's ministry as essentially one of *presentation*; that is, in simplest terms, making us aware of things. This is the view of Bishop J. V. Taylor in *The Go-Between God*.

Taylor sees the Spirit (*ruach* in Hebrew, *pneuma* in Greek, each meaning “wind blowing” or “breath blown”) as the biblical name for a divine “current of communication” that produces awareness of objects, of oneself, of others, and of God as significant realities demanding choices that in some way involve self-sacrifice. It is by this awareness-choice-sacrifice behavior pattern that the influence of the Spirit, the “life-giving Go-Between”⁴ who operates (so Taylor urges) in and through all nature, history, human life, and world religion, may be known. The awareness, an immediate inkling of meaning and claim, is seen as both rational and emotional. The resultant choice and sacrifice are shaped each time by that of which one has become aware and to which one is responding.

The Spirit’s constant work since Pentecost has been to make individuals aware of deity in Jesus so that they will reproduce in their own lives the spirit of Jesus’s self-sacrifice for sins at Calvary. In evoking the responses for which this awareness calls, the Spirit acts most potently in like-minded groups where all may heighten the awareness of each and each may heighten the awareness of all. Taylor works this out in a series of reflections on the actual life of older and younger churches, which bodies he sees as both tokens and means of the divine mission around which all his thinking is ultimately organized.

Taylor is a gifted theologian, whereas most exponents of the other positions which we have reviewed have been pastors promoting what scholars fastidiously call “popular piety”; so it is not surprising that his level of reflection should be deeper than theirs. Much in his book is impressive. To start with, his viewpoint is consistently God-centered. Not only does his key thought (the “current of communication”) spring, according to the classic Trinitarian insight, from the Spirit’s “eternal employ between the Father and the Son,

holding each in awareness of the other,”⁵ he also sees further into the nature of the Spirit’s free lordship than do those who think of the Spirit as God’s power given to us to use or to make us perform and as released in us automatically once we remove the blockages. Taylor sees that the Spirit is not given to us as a kind of pep pill and that it is not for us to harness and control him. So he never slips into the shallowness of those who talk as if we let the Spirit loose in ourselves by means of decisions and acts of will that are not themselves his doing. In all that Taylor says about the Spirit as communicator and quickener, he never forgets that we are creatures—sinful, silly, varied, mixed-up human creatures—and that the Spirit is our divine Lord, whose work within us passes our understanding. Nor does he allow us the self-absorption of concentrating on our own inward battle with sin, for he sees the Spirit as constantly directing attention upward and outward to God, to Jesus Christ, and to others.

Hence, while Taylor underscores each person’s individuality before God (awareness being an individual matter), his overall approach is consistently group-, church-, and community-oriented and in no way individualistic. Yet with this he negates in principle all the restrictions that culture and convention would set on Spirit-led community, observing that as Jesus fitted into no established cultural mold in his own time, so the Spirit smashes any within which we try to confine him today.

Taylor also shrewdly theologizes charismatic “manifestations of spontaneity and unrational response”—ventures in healing, glossolalia, and prophecy in particular—in terms of the wholeness of man who is so much more than conscious analytical reason and whose total being is the sphere of the Spirit’s work. Yet with this he warns us against the egoism that is both a root and a fruit of

immaturity and as such always threatens the charismatic ethos with corruption. Again Taylor shows wisdom (though not, perhaps, quite all that was needed) in plumbing the dangerous truth that the Spirit's moral guidance will grow more creative as maturity increases, taking us beyond (though never, I think, outside) the realm of biblically based formal rules.

These are genuine excellences.

Defects in Taylor's Account. Two shortcomings, however, go with these strengths—shortcomings that should be seen as Taylor's failures to carry through his biblical approach with full biblical rigor.

First, he says too little about the word that the Spirit presents. In discussing this theme, having cited two references to God's words (Isa. 59:21; Num. 23:5), he goes straight on to speak of the Johannine and patristic *Word*, the personal divine Logos, as if words and Word were one.⁶ But both biblical usage and common sense assure us that they are not. Words that witness to, among other things, the personal Word are obviously distinct from that Word. (Karl Barth, whom Taylor may be following here, certainly claimed that these are two of the three forms of the one Word of God, but that claim itself was a theological conundrum: Nowhere in the Bible is any such thing said, and at half a century's distance it looks as if this was an unnoticed lurch on Barth's part into the kind of beyond-the-Bible speculation that he professed to abhor.)

What was needed to complete Taylor's account of Spirit-born awareness was an analysis of how the Spirit authenticates the revealed words of God, his teachings and messages both as received and relayed by prophets and apostles and then as written in the form of Holy Scripture; and of how as interpreter the Spirit brings us to the place where we actually grasp what God is hereby saying to us. But Taylor offers nothing on these questions.

Second, Taylor says too little about the Christ whom the Spirit presents. Surprisingly, he gives no systematic review of how Paul and John, the two great New Testament theologians of the Spirit, set forth the Spirit's many-sided mediation of Christ, and this greatly weakens his exposition. His own references to the Spirit making us aware of Christ, while centering admirably on the Jesus of history, fail to lay equal stress on Jesus's present reign and future return, his constant intercession for us, the reality of his friendship now, and the Christian's sure hope of being with him forever. The effect of these omissions is to dilute radically the meaning of awareness of Christ.

"It does not matter," Taylor writes, "whether the Christ who fills our vision is the historical Jesus, or the living Savior, or the Christ of the Body and the Blood, or the Logos and Lord of the universe, or the Christ in my neighbor and in his poor. These are only aspects of his being. In whatever aspect he is most real to us, what matters is that we adore him."⁷⁷ That is finely said; but it would have been finer doctrine had Taylor added something about the need to bring together all these aspects, and indeed more, if our vision of Christ is to be worthy of him and adequate to the reality of what, according to the Scriptures, he is to us.

In the last analysis, it does matter how we habitually think of Christ; our spiritual health really does depend in great measure on whether or not our vision of him is adequate. For to know Christ is not just to know his cosmic status and earthly history; rather it is, as Melancthon said long ago, to know his benefits—that is, to know how much he has to give us in his character as messenger, mediator, and personal embodiment of the saving grace of God. But if your vision of Christ himself is deficient, your knowledge of his benefits will of necessity be deficient, too.

I do not mean by this that no one ever receives more from Jesus than he knows about before receiving it. What I said earlier about the generosity of the God who can do, and does, for those who love him “. . . far more abundantly [NIV 1984 has “immeasurably more”] than all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20) should be recalled here. Jesus Christ is what he is to believers (divine-human Savior, Lord, mediator, shepherd, advocate, prophet, priest, king, atoning sacrifice, life, hope, and so forth), irrespective of how much or how little of this multiple relationship they have with him is clear to their minds. An apostolic theologian like Paul, for instance, had it all far clearer in his mind than did the penitent thief of Luke 23:39–43; yet Jesus’s saving ministry was as rich to the one as to the other, and we may be sure that at this very moment the two of them, the apostle and the bandit, are together before the throne, their differences in theological expertise on earth making no difference whatsoever to their enjoyment of Christ in heaven. “. . . The same Lord . . . bestowing his riches on all who call on him” (Rom. 10:12)—not just upon Gentiles alongside Jews, but also upon the theologically unskilled alongside the theologically learned. No one should question that.

But this is my point of concern: The less people know about Christ, the sooner it will be necessary to raise the question whether their response to the Jesus of whom they have only hazy and distorted ideas can really be viewed as Christian faith. The further folk depart or stand aloof from biblical categories of thought about Jesus (those listed above being perhaps the basic ones), the less real knowledge of Christ can they have, till they reach the point where, though they talk about him much (as Moslems, Marxists, and theosophists, for instance, will do), they do not really know him at all. For the biblical categories are all concerned with Christ as the

answer to questions that the Bible itself teaches us to pose about our relationship to God, questions that arise from the reality of divine holiness and our sin; and the further one stands from those categories, and therefore from those questions, the less knowledge of the *real* Christ and the *real* God can one have, in the nature of the case. A person who thought that England is ruled today by an ex-go-go dancer named Elizabeth who legislates at her discretion from a wood hut in Polynesia could justly be said to know nothing of the real queen, and similarly it takes more to constitute real, valid saving knowledge of Jesus than simply being able to mouth his name.

To put the matter another way: The givenness of Jesus Christ is bound up with the givenness of New Testament theology, which is (so I urge, following its own claim as mainstream Christian tradition has always done) nothing less than the Father's own witness through the Spirit to the Son. Surely there is no real Jesus save the Jesus of that theology. And New Testament theology, whether in Paul, John, Luke, Matthew, Peter, the writer to the Hebrews, or whoever, is essentially proclamation that Jesus Christ saves men from the bondage to false gods, false beliefs, false ways, false hopes, and false posturings before the Creator, into which all non-Christian religions and philosophies, impressive as they often are, are locked. New Testament proclamation diagnoses this whole kaleidoscope of falseness and falsehood as rooted in actual if unwitting suppression of general revelation, misdirection of man's worshiping instincts, and ignorance or rejection of the gospel God has sent. Romans 1:18–3:20, to look no further, is decisive on that; and certainly Emil Brunner was correct when he wrote: "In all religion there is a recollection of the Divine Truth which has been lost; in all religion, there is a longing after the divine light and the

divine love; but in all religion also there yawns an abyss of demonic distortion of the Truth, and of man's effort to escape from God."⁸

But if so, then the antithesis between the God-taught truth of the gospel and all other ideas of what is ultimately real and true must always be lovingly yet firmly pointed up and may never out of lax benevolence or courtesy be watered down. Otherwise, the New Testament account of the ". . . unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8), who saves from the guilt, power, and ultimately the fruits and presence of sin, will have to be watered down, too, so as to fit into alien molds of thought. And to do that would be to relativize the gospel in a radical and ruinous way. For though within these alien frames of reference some New Testament thoughts might be given some weight, the absolute validity, definitive status, and unqualified authority of New Testament theology as such would all the time be denied—denied, that is, by the very fact of not letting it criticize and amend the frames of reference themselves: Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Moslem, Marxist, or whatever they might be. For it is simply not true that all religions and ideologies ask the same basic questions about either God or man or look in the same direction for answers.

A vast difference exists between dialogue that explores the antithesis between Christianity and other faiths, the antithesis that ultimately requires negation of the one in order to affirm the other, and the sort of dialogue that looks for Christ in, or seeks to graft him onto, some other faith as it stands. It has to be said that despite Taylor's talk of the conversion, transformation, death, and resurrection of ethnic and post-Christian faiths through meeting Christ as presented by the Spirit,⁹ it is not at all clear that what he is after is the first of these rather than the second. This haziness is in fact a third weakness in Taylor's book, brought on by

the two weaknesses already pinpointed—namely, his omitting to reckon with the reality of “God’s Word written”¹⁰ and to observe that knowledge of Christ must be measured, among other texts, by how much of the New Testament teaching about Christ is or is not embraced.

The above, however, is no criticism of Taylor’s key thought of the Spirit as the divine Go-Between who presents realities, compels choices, and evokes sacrificial responses. To find the New Testament key thought in terms of which we should understand the Spirit’s ministry to Christians yesterday and today, we do not need to move far beyond the point at which Taylor stops. He has led us almost to our goal.

Tracing Our Path

Glance back for a moment at our path so far.

We started by noting that though the Holy Spirit is much spoken of today, and his influence is truly claimed for many different sorts of Christian experience, different key ideas about his essential ministry dominate different Christian minds. This shows (so I urged) that the Spirit is not always being seen in proper focus. Many think about the Spirit in a way that, though not wholly false, is certainly smudgy and not true enough. Hence spring all sorts of inadequacy and practical imbalance, sometimes threatening to stifle the Spirit whom in our incompetence we are seeking to honor. Getting the Spirit into better focus is, therefore, an urgent matter.

To take the measure of the contemporary situation, we looked at four key ideas round which currently influential concepts of the Spirit’s ministry have been organized: *power* for living, *performance* in service, *purity* of motive and action, and *presentation* for decision. This list of “sweet p’s” (a preacher’s ploy for pointedness.

Pardonable? Perhaps) is not, indeed, exhaustive. It could at once be lengthened by adding *perception*, and *push* (or *pull*), and *personhood*. For as we move out from the circles where living Christianity is found today (the circles on which our sights have been trained so far), we find folk who do in fact think that the Spirit's central and characteristic work is just to enhance awareness (perception) as such, so that any heightened state of consciousness, whether religious (Christian, Hindu, cultic, ecstatic, mystical), aesthetic (being "sent" by music, sex, poetry, sunsets, drugs), or idealistic (as in passionate patriotism, romance, or devotion to a group or a cause), is, so to speak, the Spirit's signature. We meet others who, forgetting what nature and Satan can do with the inordinate instincts and repressed reasonings and sick fantasies of mixed-up specimens of fallen humanity like ourselves, equate the Spirit's moving with inner urges (pushes or pulls) as such, especially when these are linked with visual and auditory images (visions, voices, dreams) that come suddenly and strongly and recur insistently. We run across yet others who will claim that to make folk realize the mystery of their own individuality (personhood) and the worth of other persons and the demands of truly personal relationships, is the Spirit's essential work, which he carries on among men of all religions and of none.

It would certainly be wrong to say that the Spirit of God never heightens consciousness, or communicates by inner urges of the now-do-this sort, or causes unbelievers better to appreciate personal values, and I am not venturing such denials. I would in fact argue against them all. But the idea that any one of these operations might constitute the Spirit's essential ministry today seems very wide of the mark. Central to the Spirit's ministry since Christ came, as we shall see, is the furthering of fellowship with him. Heightening

perception and sensitivity in secular and pagan contexts is no doubt something that in common grace the Spirit does, but it is not the heart of his work, nor ever was.

As for inner urges, it is surely enough to point out that some people have inner urges, strong and recurring, sometimes reinforced by voices, visions, and dreams, to rape, to take revenge, to inflict pain, to molest children sexually, and to kill themselves. Is any of that the leading of the Spirit? The question answers itself. Obsessiveness (which is what we are really talking about here) is no sure sign of a divine origin for thoughts; Satan can spawn obsessive impulses equally well, just as he can nourish and manipulate those our disordered natures spontaneously produce. So sudden, obsessive thoughts need to be very carefully checked (preferably by consulting others) before we dare conclude that they come to us from the Spirit of God. Their obsessiveness, indeed, indicates that they probably do not.

Presence

We return, then, to the world of living Christianity, where everyone at least looks in the right direction by linking the Spirit's work one way or another with the new life in Christ. Once more we pose the question: What is the essence, heart, and core of the Spirit's work today? What is the central, focal element in his many-sided ministry? Is there one basic activity to which his work of empowering, enabling, purifying, and presenting must be related in order to be fully understood? Is there a single divine strategy that unites all these facets of his life-giving action as means to one end?

I think there is, and now I offer my view of it—a view that I focus (still pursuing my path of *p*'s) in terms of the idea of *presence*. By this I mean that the Spirit makes known the personal presence in

and with the Christian and the church of the risen, reigning Savior, the Jesus of history, who is the Christ of faith. Scripture shows (as I maintain) that since the Pentecost of Acts 2 this, essentially, is what the Spirit is doing all the time as he empowers, enables, purges, and leads generation after generation of sinners to face the reality of God. And he does it in order that Christ may be known, loved, trusted, honored and praised, which is the Spirit's aim and purpose of God the Father, too. This is what, in the last analysis, the Spirit's new covenant ministry is all about.

The presence of which I speak here is not the divine *omnipresence* of traditional theology, which texts like Psalm 139; Jeremiah 23:23–24; Amos 9:2–5 and Acts 17:26–28 define for us as God's awareness of everything everywhere as he upholds it in its own being and activity. Omnipresence is an important truth, and what I am saying here assumes it, but when I use the word *presence* I have in view something different. I mean by this word what the Bible writers meant when they spoke of God being present with his people—namely, God acting in particular situations to bless faithful folk and thus make them know his love and help and draw forth their worship. Granted, God would sometimes “visit” and “draw near” for judgment (look at Malachi 3:5, for instance); that is, he would act in a way that made men realize his displeasure at their doings, as indeed he does still; but usually in Scripture God's coming to his people and granting them his presence meant their blessing.

Often this was expressed by saying that God was “with” them. “The LORD was *with* Joseph, and he became a successful man”—“a lucky fellow,” as Tyndale put it (Gen. 39:2). When Moses panicked at the thought of returning to Egypt, where there was a price on his head, and of bearding Pharaoh in his den, God said: “But I

will be *with* you”—a promise that was meant to shame out of existence all the butterflies in Moses’s stomach (Ex. 3:12; see also 33:14–16). God repeated the same promise to Joshua when the latter took on the leadership after Moses’s death: “. . . As I was *with* Moses, so I will be *with* you. . . . Be strong and courageous . . . for the LORD your God is *with* you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:5, 9; see also Deut. 31:6, 8). Israel was reassured in the same terms: “When you pass through the waters, I will be *with* you . . . Fear not, for I am *with* you . . .” (Isa. 43:2, 5). Matthew takes up this thought of God being present with his people to bless them when he starts his gospel by proclaiming Jesus’s birth as fulfillment of Isaiah’s Emmanuel prophecy (*Emmanuel* means “God *with* us”) and again when he ends it by recording Jesus’s promise to all his disciple-making followers: “. . . behold, I am *with* you always . . .” (Matt. 1:23; 28:20). For Jesus, the author and bringer of salvation, is himself God incarnate, and the presence of Christ is precisely the presence of God.

The truth of the matter is this. The distinctive, constant, basic ministry of the Holy Spirit under the new covenant is so to mediate Christ’s presence to believers—that is, to give them such knowledge of his presence with them as their Savior, Lord, and God—that three things keep happening.

First, personal fellowship with Jesus, that is, the to-and-fro of discipleship with devotion, which started in Palestine, for Jesus’s first followers, before his passion, becomes a reality of experience, even though Jesus is now not here on earth in bodily form, but is enthroned in heaven’s glory. (This is where the thought of presentation properly belongs: The Spirit presents the living Lord Jesus to us as Maker and Friend so that we may choose the path of sacrificial response to his love and his call.)

Second, personal transformation of character into Jesus's likeness starts to take place as, looking to Jesus, their model, for strength, believers worship and adore him and learn to lay out and, indeed, lay down their lives for him and for others. (This is where the themes of power, performance, and purgation properly come in. They mark out what it means to move beyond our natural selfishness into the Christlike path of righteousness, service, and conquest of evil.)

Third, the Spirit-given certainty of being loved, redeemed, and adopted through Christ into the Father's family, so as to be "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), makes gratitude, delight, hope, and confidence—in a word, *assurance*—blossom in believers' hearts. (This is the proper way to understand many of the Christian's postconversion mountaintop experiences. The inward coming of the Son and the Father that Jesus promised in John 14:21–23 takes place through the Spirit, and its effect is to intensify assurance.)

By these phenomena of experience, Spirit-given knowledge of Christ's presence—"elusive, intangible, unpredictable, untamed, inaccessible to empirical verification, outwardly invisible but inwardly irresistible," to borrow Samuel Terrien's description¹¹—shows itself.

An Awareness of God. Throughout the Bible, knowing God's presence appears as a twofold awareness. It is awareness, first, that God is *there*: the objectively real Creator, Upholder, Master, and Mover of all that exists in space and time; the God who holds one, for good or ill, completely in his hands. Second, it is awareness that God is *here*, having come close to address, question, and search us, to bring us low by exposing our weakness, sin, and guilt, yet therewith to raise us up by his word of pardon and promise. In the days before it was revealed that God is, in John Donne's words, "three-personed," knowledge of the God who was present

was undifferentiated. Now, however, through the revelation given in the Incarnation and elucidated in the New Testament, knowledge of God has become knowledge of Father, Son, and Spirit; and knowledge of God's presence has become confrontation by and communion with the Son, and with the Father through the Son, in virtue of the Spirit's activity. Knowing Christ's presence thus means finding in oneself this double awareness of God as real and close, centered upon the man from Galilee whom Thomas called "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Paul was describing this knowledge when he wrote that ". . . God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

That it is the special ministry of the Spirit since Pentecost to mediate Christ's active presence is clear in the New Testament. There, as exegetes often point out, the Spirit is always viewed as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, God's Son (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11). The Spirit who indwells us is the Spirit who was in and upon Jesus (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; John 1:32; 3:34; Acts 10:38). Jesus, the Spirit bearer, is also the Spirit giver (John 1:33; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22; see also 7:37–39; Acts 2:33; 1 John 2:20, 27), and the coming of the Spirit to the disciples after Jesus had been taken from them was in a real sense his return to them (John 14:16, 18–21). The indwelling of the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Christ, is described as the indwelling of Christ himself (see Rom. 8:9–11), just as the personal message of the exalted Christ is "what the Spirit says to the churches" (see Rev. 2:1, 7–8, 11–12, 17–18, 29; 3:1, 6–7, 13–14, 22).

Again, having said in 2 Corinthians 3:16, "when one turns to the Lord the veil [over his mind] is removed" (a verbal echo of

Exodus 34:34, which tells how Moses removed his veil when he spoke with God), Paul goes on:

Now the Lord [to whom that last statement referred] is the Spirit [so that “turn to the Lord” meant “embrace the new covenant, in and by which the Spirit is given” (see verse 6)], and where the Spirit of the Lord [Jesus] is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding [or *reflecting*: Both renderings are possible and profoundly true] the glory of the Lord [Jesus], are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:17–18)

What these passages show is not, as some have thought, that the New Testament writers saw no clear personal distinction between the Son and the Spirit, but rather that they saw the Spirit’s post-Pentecostal task as essentially that of mediating the presence, word, and activity of the enthroned Christ. It is by grasping this basic New Testament perspective that we get the Spirit in focus.

Program

This book takes the thought of the Spirit as charged and committed to mediate the presence of Christ as the clue to understanding some of the main facets of his ministry. Many existing surveys of the Spirit’s work fall short, in my view, through not integrating their material in this way. It is not enough to give a surface-level account of how the Spirit was manifested in New Testament times and of what New Testament writers said about those manifestations, without going on to ask how their statements fitted with their total view of God, his work, and his truth—in other words, their total theology—for failure here sentences us, more or less drastically, to

man-centered, experience-based, criterionless thoughts about the Spirit in our own lives. That is why so many otherwise excellent books on the Spirit have not helped their readers as much as was expected, nor as much as those readers thought they were being helped at the time. For the help we need nowadays in order to live in the Spirit is not exhortation to open our lives to him—we have enough and to spare of that already—rather, it is a thought-out theological perspective on the Spirit’s work, which will give us a coherent view of what his free, unfettered, multiform moving in churches, small groups, and personal lives (which is so marked a feature of Christianity today) is really all about and all in aid of. My hope is that by developing the thought of the Spirit as mediating Christ’s presence and fellowship—which is central to New Testament teaching on the Spirit—I may be able to provide such a theological perspective, in outline at any rate.

Biblically my aim and viewpoint can be expressed like this: On the night of his betrayal Jesus said of the Spirit: “He will glorify me . . .” that is, “he shall make me glorious in people’s eyes by making them aware of the glory that is mine already and that will be enhanced when I have gone back to the Father via the cross and resurrection and ascension to be enthroned in my kingdom” (John 16:14). That basic definition (as I take it to be) of what the Spirit was and is sent to do gives us a comprehensive directional frame of reference within which the whole of the Spirit’s new covenant ministry should be seen, and apart from which no feature of that ministry can be adequately understood.

Jesus then told how the glorifying was to be done: “For he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” What did Jesus mean by “what is *mine*”? He must have meant, at least, “everything that is real and true about me as God incarnate, as the Father’s agent in

creation, providence and grace, as this world's rightful lord, and as the one who actually is master of it [see 17:2] whether men acknowledge me or not." But surely he also meant, "all that is real and true about me as your divine lover, your mediator, your surety in the new covenant, your prophet, priest and king, your Savior from the guilt and power of sin and from the world's corruptions and the devil's clutches; and all that is true of me as your shepherd, husband, and friend, your life and your hope, the author and finisher of your faith, the lord of your own personal history, and the one who will some day bring you to be with me and share my glory, who am thus both your path and your prize." So the words "what is *mine*" come to mean "what is *yours*, by virtue of my relationship to you and yours to me."

From the crooner era in which I was brought up I recall a ballad, "All the Things You Are," which ended thus: ". . . and someday I'll know that moment divine When all the things you are are mine." The Spirit glorifies Jesus in Christian eyes by convincing us that all he is and has in his glory is really and truly for us—"for our glory," to borrow Paul's phrase in 1 Corinthians 2:7 (KJV)—and to know this is something even more divine than the romantic moment crooned of in the song.

"He . . . will declare it *to you*," said Jesus. Did this mean apostles only or all Christians with them? Primarily apostles, to whom direct revelations of these things were to be given; but secondarily all believers, to whom the Spirit would teach the same things out of the witness to them, spoken and written, which apostles would bear. Apostolic spiritual understanding was to be shared with all God's people, as indeed it still is.

Verse 15 was then spoken as, in effect, a footnote. In order that the full scope and implications of the word *mine* in the previous

sentence should not be missed, Jesus went on to say: “All that the Father has is *mine*; therefore I said that he will take what is *mine* and declare it to you.” The footnote was spoken to warn against supposing that what Jesus is and does is in any way exceeded by what the Father is and does, or (putting it the other way round) that the Father’s attributes, claims, powers, plans, prospects, and glories are in any way greater or extend further than his. “*All that the Father has is mine*”; coequality of Son with Father is a fact; the Father intends “. . . that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father . . .” (John 5:23). It is on joyful assent to this divine purpose that all true Christian belief, worship, and practice ultimately rest.

In the following pages I shall seek to interpret the Spirit’s ministry from this point of view. I shall present it in terms of his furthering the Father’s pleasure by leading us to glorify the Son in adoration as we respond to the Spirit’s glorifying of him by declaration. I maintain that no account of the Holy Spirit—no *pneumatology*, to use the technical word—is fully Christian till it exhibits all his many-sided work from the standpoint of, on the one hand, the Father’s purpose that the Son be known, loved, honored, praised, and have preeminence in everything, and on the other hand, the Son’s promise to make himself present with his people, here and hereafter, by giving his Spirit to them. My present agenda is to point out some of the main elements in a properly Christian pneumatology, meaning by that an account that builds consistently on the thoughts which Jesus himself expresses in John 14:16–23 and 16:14–15 and will not be drawn away from them. I hope the program is acceptable. I think it is needed, and I now go to it.