

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

THE TEACHING of the Bible about the Holy Spirit is bound up with its teaching about Jesus Christ and His redemptive work.¹ What was done in and through Him was and is continuously communicated and made effective through the Holy Spirit. This continuing appropriation of the Saviour's work could not be left merely to the mercy of man's unaided response nor even to the Church. Therefore, the Holy Spirit was sent to make that work effective from generation to generation within the Christian community. Moreover, the Holy Spirit had to be operative not as an independent force, but as the recurring divine witness to the redemptive purpose of God which was concretely and finally expressed through Jesus Christ our Lord. From the standpoint of natural theology there is no approach to the distinctively Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In order to follow and amplify these Biblical directives, we shall consider them first as they are found in the Bible itself. Then we shall proceed to use the directives of the Bible to evaluate certain theoretical and practical misconceptions of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.²

I. THE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

We shall not present any detailed account of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. The primary reason for this is that since the time for the unique work of the Holy Spirit had not fully come, there is no delineation of His work in the Old Testament that is here required. We may assert that He was a participating member of the Godhead at Creation and in the general governance of things—and in this way that He was making cosmic preparations for the coming Saviour—but this does not furnish the Christian mind with the proper insight into the uniqueness of the work of the Spirit. Looking backward from Jesus Christ, we may identify something of His unique mission, as the Nicene Creed does, in His work of preparing through the prophets the way for the coming Saviour of the world. But apart from this and the promise of outpouring (Joel 2₂₈₋₉), we do not find much in the Old Testament which illuminates the all-important mission of the Spirit. We encounter there primarily the rich background of preparation rather than the detailed delineation of a specific work.

The New Testament indicates that just as we understand the person of Jesus Christ through His work, so we come to a knowledge of the Holy Spirit through what He has done and continues to do. Here the uniqueness of the work of the Holy Spirit as centring in Jesus Christ, *the Saviour of all mankind*, becomes the key to understanding the Biblical teaching. The persistence and continuity of this theme in the New Testament may be seen first in the preparatory words of Jesus about the Holy Spirit, second in the event of Pentecost and in those events that followed upon it, and third in the inspired and judicious utterances of the Apostle Paul. To these, therefore, we must turn for a brief look at this most basic New Testament teaching on this subject.

Jesus was so deeply interested in the future of His followers after His own departure that He devoted Himself carefully to preparing them for whatever was to come. He told them of His death as a part of the divine purpose; He

spoke to them of His resurrection; He gave them the new commandment to love each other as He had loved them (John 13₃₅); He assured them of an enduring relationship with Himself (John 14₁₋₃); He warned them of the troubles that lay ahead of them (John 16₂₃); and in and through it all He promised them the Holy Spirit (John 14_{16, 26}, 15₂₆, 16₇). It is a basic thesis of this paper that, notwithstanding what some contemporary writers on the subject have said to the contrary, Jesus knew that the victory of His followers was to be made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. And though this whole subject is complicated by the relative silence of the Synoptic Gospels, there is good reason to accept the essential validity of the report of John's Gospel which is corroborated by Matthew 28₁₉₋₂₀, Luke 24₄₉, and Acts 1₄₋₅.

In the Fourth Gospel we encounter not only the definiteness of the promised gift of the Spirit but also a somewhat detailed explanation of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Comforter, or Holy Spirit (*παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*), would teach the disciples all things and help them to remember what Jesus had told them (John 14₂₆). The Holy Spirit was the Spirit of truth who would testify of Jesus (John 14₁₇, 15₂₆). He would guide the disciples into all truth (John 16₁₃). The phrase, 'into all the truth' (*εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν*), does not refer to the rich storehouse of the knowledge of the world and universe such as may be drawn from an encyclopaedia or from a library. It has to do with all truth pertaining to Jesus Christ which is pertinent to man's salvation. Therefore, in this same context Jesus said, 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you' (John 16₁₄). The Holy Spirit would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgement of God (John 16₈). That these functions were thought of as inseparably bound up with His own mission as Saviour is evident from the explanatory verses that follow (see John 16₉₋₁₁). In these ways, then, Jesus was preparing the disciples for the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom they were to proclaim the gospel to the world (Matt. 28₁₉₋₂₀) and through whom both they and the world would be convicted of sin and convinced of despair.

The supreme importance of the gift of the Spirit is seen not only in the Master's astounding remark that it is to the advantage of His followers that He should go away so that they might receive the Holy Spirit (John 16₇); it is seen especially in the risen Lord's renewal of the same momentous promise (Luke 24₄₉; Acts 1₄₋₅). This made a profound impression upon them and awakened in them the unflinching sense of expectancy. The tremendous cumulative impact of these words of Jesus, together with the overwhelming significance of the Resurrection itself, prepared the way for Pentecost.³

This brings us to the second major source of insight into the Biblical teaching concerning the Holy Spirit—namely, Pentecost.⁴ In order to see how the presiding purpose of the Holy Spirit to exalt Jesus Christ was concretely manifested in history, we must consider the presence of the Spirit with the apostles and others after the Ascension of our Lord. The first great work of the Holy Spirit was to answer the prayer of Jesus that the apostles might be bound to each other in the unity of Christian love (John 17). That is to say, the Spirit began His Christ-exalting work by founding the Church at Pentecost. The work of the Holy Spirit which thus began in the community of believers continues to operate within that fellowship wherein Jesus Christ could be exalted

as Lord; and a primary aspect of that work was to bind the followers of Jesus together into a living unity in Christ.

It may be asked whether the Holy Spirit might have been given to some other group of sincere seekers after righteousness instead of the one in which the apostles were gathered at Jerusalem. The answer would be that, in the light of the New Testament, such a thing could not have happened. For example, it would be fantastic to suppose that the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost could have taken place at Plato's Academy near Athens, or at Qumran, or at the temple in Jerusalem, or in a group today primarily interested in talking about the Thomistic arguments for the existence of God. It is not a question of spatial location, but of historical background and spiritual preparation and divine providence.

In recent years it has been suggested that 'the Spirit of truth' spoken of in John's Gospel (14₁₇, 15₂₆, 16₁₃) is similar to the 'Spirit of truth' referred to in the Dead Sea Scriptures; and it has been suggested that the latter may have had some influence upon the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit. Frank Moore Cross, Jr., goes so far as to say that the figure of the Paraclete of John 'is derived from' the complex of ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵ That there are some points of similarity must be recognized; but to carry the matter much further than this is to lose the basic insight into the teaching of the New Testament. The primary difference is that the Essene community of Qumran had no knowledge of the historically manifested Messiah to whom the Spirit bore witness. The efforts to find kinship there, other than of the most general sort, must therefore be regarded as academic ventures which have the fascination of novelty and of contemporary interest because of the exciting discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but which can succeed only on the assumption that the 'Spirit of truth' in John's Gospel has no organic unity with the work of Jesus Christ.

We are driven to the conclusion that the relationship between those particular individuals in the upper room and Jesus Christ was a necessary condition for their priority in receiving the Holy Spirit as they did. They and they alone were the ones who were bound to each other by their shared memory of Jesus' earthly ministry, by their concurring witness to the Resurrection, and by their common expectation. In all this we begin to understand the crucial significance of the four Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament for the life of the Church. We cannot be bound together under a Lord of whom we have no authentic report.

Far removed from the Biblical teaching, therefore, is the notion that the Holy Spirit breaks into history without rhyme or reason and chooses by arbitrary decree those He blesses. On the basis of the New Testament, we are not free to speak of the Holy Spirit in any other context than that which has to do with God's specific work of salvation through Jesus Christ and through the fellowship of those who bear His name. In this respect, the work of the Holy Spirit is not in the least degree original (see John 16₁₃₋₁₅). No new content is added to the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not create new affirmations; He illuminates the Word of God for the Church. For this reason the Church cleaves to the directives of the Bible as illuminated by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not definitive; He is dynamic. His mission is never

to re-enact what Jesus Christ has completed once and for all, nor is it to become a life-giving force independent of the Saviour's work (cf. John 17₄, 4₃₄, 5₃₆, 19₃₀). For this reason, the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit in the disciples had to await the completed work of Jesus Christ (see especially John 16₇, 7₃₉; see also Luke 24₄₉₋₅₁; Acts 1₄₋₅).

At this point we must avoid the error in some contemporary theology which, by stressing the New Being in Christ and minimizing the actual work completed by Jesus Christ in history, comes very close to advocating a kind of Christianity of the Holy Spirit without any genuine affirmation of the Incarnation and Atonement.⁶ According to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit gives the new life by virtue of what Christ has done. Therefore, to stress the New Being without placing a prior stress upon the work of Jesus Christ is to move toward a type of existentialistic Christianity which, in the interest of transcending the problems of history, seems ready to lay aside the work of Jesus Christ for that of the Holy Spirit or even for that of a kind of general providence. Only the directives of the New Testament can save us from shipwreck here.

Paul carries forward the redemptive purpose of God by working within the members of the fellowship to assure them that through Jesus Christ they are the children of God (Rom. 8₁₄₋₁₇; 2 Cor. 1₂₂; Gal. 4₆; Eph. 1₁₃₋₁₄). Or, as John puts it, they have 'passed from death to life' (John 5₂₄; see also 1 John 3₁₋₃), and the Holy Spirit seals this fact with the inner witness. Through the Spirit people are brought into the new dimension of power and existence (2 Cor. 5₁₇; Gal. 6₁₅). The new life-giving relationship to Christ mightily affects the believers (Rom. 5₅; Gal. 5₆) and enables them to bear certain identifiable fruits by a faith that works through love. Here again, the experience on the day of Pentecost is the point in Christian history from which this fruit-bearing power became the norm for the Church. The apostles and others were enabled first to identify Jesus Christ as Lord and to grasp the deeper meaning of His death and resurrection. Then they were empowered by the Spirit through the new relationship which is the authentic principle of Christian action. Their united witness became a force history, and what happened then marked the realization within the Christian community of the divine strategy for overcoming man's pride and subjecting the societies of the world to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost thus marks the advent of the new age, the realization of eschatology,⁷ because it meant the release into history of the new principle of victory over life and death through Jesus Christ and within the community of believers. The heart-principle of the Christian ethic is that the love of Christ becomes the master-impulse of life only through the illuminating and empowering work of the Holy Spirit within the fellowship of those who live by faith in the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit calls and inspires some to preach and teach the gospel. He works to bless through the preaching and hearing of the Word. And, while the Holy Spirit is never mentioned explicitly in the New Testament in connexion with the Lord's Supper (unless John 6₆₃ is an exception), the implication is that the effectiveness of this Sacrament comes neither from any human leader nor from any material elements but from the power of the Holy Spirit who works through the instrumentality of both. In the light of the New Testament, there is good reason for saying that the principle of apostolic succession should be expressed in terms of the apostolic succession of those whom the Holy Spirit has

chosen to use as His instruments for carrying forward the work of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible.

A third source of insight into the Biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit comes from the writings of the Apostle Paul, who, as we have already had occasion to observe, guided the thought of the Church and gave it balance. If it is true that no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12₃), it is also true that no man can genuinely belong to him who does not have the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8₉). The content of the work of the Holy Spirit is thus fixed by the quality of the life of Jesus. For this reason Paul, in one of his profoundest utterances, said, 'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2 Cor. 3₁₇). The fruit of the Spirit, in accord with the organic unity of God's redemptive work, had to be the living continuation of the Spirit of Christ. This is why Paul could write as he did about love (1 Cor. 13), and also about the fruit of the Spirit as 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control', against which there is no law (Gal. 5₂₂₋₃; see also 1 John 4₇₋₈).

According to Paul, the Holy Spirit moves like a mighty yearning within people, calling them to read aright, drawing them into the faith that justifies, persuading them in the life of prayer, and causing them to long for the dominion of Christ over all aspects of life. Sometimes the Spirit works slowly, like the movement of a deep river, sometimes swifter than a weaver's shuttle. But always His office is to magnify the Lord.

The Biblical teaching may be succinctly summarized by saying that the Holy Spirit performs the fourfold work (1) of preparing the way for the coming Saviour of the world, (2) of bringing mankind, through a proper understanding of the Bible and through faith, into the unique life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ, (3) of drawing the people of Christ together into a living unity, and (4) of causing this people to share a common concern for the souls of men, ever arousing them to the overwhelming task of evangelizing the world in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE THEOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

This teaching concerning the Holy Spirit stands, in varied ways, in contrast to a number of recurring modes of thought which bear to it certain traces of kinship.

The first mode of thought identifies the Holy Spirit with the higher endowments and expressions of the human spirit. The basic idea here is simply that of the divine immanence. The Holy Spirit may be identified with man's natural capacity for seeking and grasping the eternal realm, or it may be viewed as man's striving for the Good, or it may be dialectically conceived, after the manner of Hegel, as a moment in the self-realization of the Absolute Spirit. It is God in His nearness as He works even in the natural man to enable him to move toward the realization of ideal values. The Holy Spirit may also be identified with those processes which, in their togetherness, make for the realization and preservation of human values. It is not of special importance here to delineate in detail the various shapes which this general mode of thought has taken, whether pantheistic, or in terms of cosmic process, or in some other form. The point is to show that the thought is an expression of a type of immanentism,

and that, whatever the particular form, it derives its character not from the directives of the New Testament but from certain intellectual perspectives which cannot be grafted on to the Biblical affirmation.

Two considerations may be presented in support of this conclusion. First, this general view of the Holy Spirit departs from the New Testament teaching in that it focuses attention upon human endowments, aspirations and achievements rather than upon the divine gift. The Holy Spirit is mistakenly identified with man's *Eros* or with the higher expressions of human nature. This is not to deny a place to these; rather, it is to keep our distinctions clear. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit never functions in the capacity of man's nobler endowments and aspirations. These native God-given endowments and human aspirations are to be understood, so far as the Bible is concerned, as the outcome of the creative work of God and also as the products of man's God appointed initiative. But they are not to be understood as affirmations pertaining to the Holy Spirit in man. This mistake has sometimes been made by those who seek to expound the idea of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, and it represents an elemental confusion.

There is another objection to the immanent view. The general idea of Spirit as operative in man stands in contrast to the idea of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament because the latter is always associated with Jesus Christ. The Church was true to the Scriptures and therefore to its own nature when it insisted on the unique relationship of 'procession' from or through Jesus Christ. Without getting involved in the debate over the *filioque*, we may simply assert that both parties in the conflict were right in recognizing the profound relationship between Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit takes the initiative in using man's God-given capacities to the end of awakening him to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and of enabling him to enter into the life-giving relationship to God through Jesus Christ. But in no case can the directive power of these things be left to the initiative of man. The religious *a priori* is there,⁸ but it is neither constitutive of nor unresponsive to the great work of the Holy Spirit. If the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace is introduced here, it should never be understood as a divine operation in man which is independent of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. If prevenient grace is properly related to the Redeemer, then it becomes another manifestation of the determination of the Holy Spirit to magnify the Lord. If, on the other hand, prevenient grace is employed as a method of referring to the image of God in man, or to the 'divine spark' in man, etc., then the connexion with the work of the Holy Spirit is obscured and the topic of conversation has been changed.

A second mode of thought concerning the Holy Spirit which is at variance with the Biblical teaching takes its cue from the idea of transcendence. It has been supposed by some theologians that the Holy Spirit works in such contrast to the human spirit and so completely takes the initiative that He forces His way into human life without any genuine response on man's part. He works by thrusts from without rather than by persuasive illuminations and impulses from within. Somehow He impinges upon man's life, but since man's capacity for response is virtually cancelled out, the work of the Holy Spirit is rather an impersonal intrusion than a person-to-person encounter.⁹

On the human side, this transcendentalistic theory involves the supposition that man has no capacity so much as to accept the gift of God. This view, which played a role in reformation theology and which is revived in every generation of theologians, stands at the opposite extreme from the immanentism described in the foregoing paragraphs. There the Holy Spirit is identical with human aspiration; here there are no human capacities or aspirations which can figure in the Christ-sub-serving work of the Holy Spirit. Both of these extremes are to be avoided. This latter position, while following the Biblical demand of associating the work of the Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ, can stand neither before the tribunal of the total Biblical insight nor before the plain facts of Christian experience. Unless man had a nature capable of responding, a religious *a priori*, or whatever else this complex God-given endowment may be called, there would be no basis for the person-to-person relationship effected by the Holy Spirit.

The truth, therefore, seems to be that while man's natural faculties and aspirations cannot lead him into the proper understanding of Jesus Christ, they do become the instruments which the Holy Spirit uses, with man's assistance, for the purpose of communicating the reality and power of the gospel. Man's higher nature and aspirations always figure in the work of the Holy Spirit, but they figure in the capacity of instruments co-operatively used rather than as directives. For example, conscience is not the voice of God; it is an instrument, like the ear, through which the Holy Spirit may speak. At this point the only danger is that of allowing man's religious *a priori* or any of his higher aspirations for that matter, to usurp the office which belongs to the initiative of the Holy Spirit. But in order to avoid this danger there is no need to go to the extreme, which is unwarranted both from the standpoint of the Bible and from that of the Christian life, of denying that there is in the work of the Holy Spirit a genuine personal, as distinct from subpersonal, communication with man. This not only does a disservice to the Biblical teaching about man; it also misunderstands and in so doing belittles the all-important work of the Holy Spirit.

Another mode of thought, which also has a speaking relationship with the New Testament but which is essentially at variance with it, comes out of certain types of mysticism. Here the Holy Spirit is thought of as the unseen power which, through steps in the spiritual ladder, either causes the human spirit to be merged into the divine Being or to entertain an inspired vision of God. Contemplation of Christ may be a distinctive feature of the strategy through which the Holy Spirit works. But, in this mode of thought, the goal is either absorption through Christ into the Being of God or, possibly, the experience of the vision of God, and not the personal relationship of belonging in the family of God which characterizes the basic perspective of the New Testament.

This mode of thought, with all of its ramifications, is at fault in a number of respects. First, it introduces the alien idea of absorption. In the Bible salvation is never thought of as man's losing of his personal identity in the Being of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit can never be so conceived without the most evident veering away from the New Testament. To be sure, Jesus said that His followers must lose themselves in order to find themselves (Matt. 10₃₉, 16₂₅), but this has an entirely different meaning from the one under consideration. Paul said, ' . . . I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . . ' (Gal. 2₂₀ A.V.; see also

Phil. 1₂₁). But this has to do not with the loss of his unique self-identity but with the completeness of his allegiance to Christ and to the effectiveness of the living Lord within his own person. One of the most basic assumptions of the Bible is that because God is God and man is man the latter cannot be merged into the former. The mystical theory of absorption as the goal of religion, and as the work of the Holy Spirit, does a disservice both to the Christian understanding of God and to the Christian view of man. Individuality belongs both to God and man, to God in His infinite Being, to man in his finite and delegated selfhood.

This brings us to a second objection to the mystical view, namely, that it misconceives the function of the Holy Spirit and thus obscures man's whole approach to Christ. The Holy Spirit works to bring new life and power to people through Jesus Christ. While it is true that the Holy Spirit is thought of as a dynamic Presence within the members of the Christian community (Rom. 8₉; 1 Cor. 3₁₆, 6₁₉), there is no hint in this of a loss of personal identity by absorption or of a poetic vision of God. If this were the case, it would mean that the goal of the Holy Spirit would be to rescue man from his strivings in the world and from the clear call to duty so that he could repose passively, like a drop of water, in the vast ocean of God's Being. Here again the unique inner relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, which the Church has always maintained, must be reasserted; and by this we mean that Jesus Christ, as understood within the Church, must govern the theoretical statement of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The mystical view necessarily involves a misconception also of the work of Jesus Christ. It makes His work subservient to that of the Holy Spirit by turning His life and death into instruments of contemplation for the purpose of effecting the mystical union or vision. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to be thought of as stimulating the soul of man through the contemplation of Jesus Christ until it can climb the spiritual ladder to oneness with God or to a mystical vision of God. The work of Jesus Christ has been done. The Holy Spirit enables man to realize this and to accept the gift of forgiving and empowering grace with gratitude and obedience.

One more serious defect in the mystical view is that it is ineradicably individualistic and thus repudiates the Biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit does His primal work within the Christian community.

A fourth mode of thought which misconstrues the nature of the Holy Spirit has arisen from certain efforts, both scholarly and semi-popular, to explain the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Some have said that the mind of man is so constituted that sooner or later it had to come out with a trinitarian conception of God. The idea of the Trinity in the Christian religion, like the trinitarian ideas in other religions, was simply a product of the structure of the human mind. Others have urged that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity came from the feeling that there is something sacred about the number 'three'. Still others have insisted that the doctrine of the Trinity grew out of the influence of non-Christian trinitarian ideas upon the mind of the Church. In addition to these, some have sought to explain the doctrine of the Trinity by the practical demands of human life. Man needs a god who is both lord of the universe and of life and who is fully accessible. Therefore, he devised the idea of the Trinity to

answer his quest for ultimate spiritual security. It is a concrete expression of man's passion to accommodate God to himself.¹⁰

All of those theories pertaining to the Trinity are alike in that they move entirely outside the teaching of the Bible, whether explicitly or implicitly, concerning both the Trinity in general and the Holy Spirit in particular. They are, for the most part, ingenious theories fabricated by clever interpreters to make the unique doctrine of the Trinity fit into the preconceptions of a humanistic-naturalistic perspective. They all suffer from three basic defects.

First, they are not historically informed. This does not mean that they may not refer accurately to historical data, such as those pertaining to the trinities of the various religions; rather, it means that genuine historical insight into the Christian movement is lacking. Since the explanations begin with extraneous preconceptions, they lack the power of convincing the mind that they are valid, and the theories leave the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in only tenuous relationships to the historical Jesus and to the birth and historical development of the Christian Church. Whether the apostles and later Christians ever heard of other trinities or not becomes irrelevant. They were moved beyond measure by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and they could not explain His life and work without identifying Him as Lord. This was peculiarly clarified and authenticated by the gift of the Holy Spirit to them. Therefore, out of the experience of the first Christian Pentecost and out of subsequent continuing experiences in the Church, a further development in the Christian understanding of God became necessary. In this way the idea of the Holy Spirit became a part of the Christian mind, and, in trueness to the Master's promise, He had to be thought of as the continuing Presence who makes Christ's work real within the fellowship of believers.

The second objection to these various efforts to explain the Trinity is that they miss the organic relationship between Jesus Christ and the Spirit. Without this it is difficult to understand how the uniquely Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit would have been developed at all. From the standpoint of Christian history, threeness is nothing, other trinities are irrelevant and make no appeal, and man's practical needs are incidental to the primary facts of Christian experience. The point is simply that the great redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ had to be carried forward through the continuous divine initiative which was identified, on the basis of concrete events within the Christian community, as the third Person of the Godhead, or the Holy Spirit.

The third objection of these views is that they are all alike in being oblivious to the supernatural redemptive initiative of God in man's behalf, which alone gives validity and relevance to the teaching of the Bible about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Once the unity of the redemptive purpose of the Godhead—even in the midst of that distinctness of work which the doctrine of the Trinity implies—is clearly identified, through the reading of the Bible in the light of the apostolic perspective, the uniqueness of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity becomes evident and its later development becomes intelligible. The fact that this doctrine is marvellously suited to man's profoundest needs indicates not man's power of accommodating God to himself but God's super-abounding graciousness, in His own Being, toward man. There is no genuine insight here from a merely human or cultural or practical point of view. The

key to the understanding of both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit must be found in the distinctness of their work on the one hand, and in the organic unity of their work in the total divine redemptive purpose on the other.

III. THE PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

The New Testament teaching concerning the Holy Spirit has certain practical consequences which need to be understood with increasing clarity throughout Christendom. Each of these takes on a very special significance in view of the mission of the Holy Spirit to protect, quicken, and advance the cause of Jesus Christ through the Church. The Church must be protected against unbalanced and unwarranted notions concerning the spiritual life; it must have the power within itself to live the life that is in keeping with its gospel; it must be aware of the principle of its continuity in the Bible as illuminated by the Holy Spirit; and it must continue to grow and multiply throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. While many practical consequences relative to these important concerns of the Church might be mentioned, there are four in particular which, in view of the unique mission of the Holy Spirit, demand consideration here.

First, the Biblical teaching guards the Christian Church against impractical, unedifying, and even harmful conceptions of the work of the Spirit. Various dangers surround the Christians who make extraordinary ventures into the spiritual life; and Christian history has planted many markers along the way which indicate the excesses to which even the sincerely spiritual persons may go as they seek to do the will of God. Man's imagination and pride frequently mingle with the revelation of God and with the work of the Holy Spirit to misread and to misguide. This is particularly true when we have to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. The directives of the Bible, therefore, are nowhere more urgently required than here.

For one thing, there is the error of identifying the work of the Holy Spirit with certain outward events and modes of behaviour which have often accompanied His presence and power. This is a natural error, because it is at first sight justified by the Bible itself. In the account of that first outpouring of the Spirit, we are told of a sudden sound from heaven as of a mighty wind (Acts 2₂). Cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of the persons there (Acts 2₃). Then there was the strange phenomenon of speaking in tongues which immediately followed upon the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2₄; see also 10₄₆, 19₆). Some have stressed such outward manifestations so much as to insist that they are the surest signs of being blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The full insight of the New Testament on this subject does not suggest that 'wind' and 'fire' and speaking in tongues are fruits of the Spirit, and Christian history bears out this understanding of the matter. Outward accompaniments are one thing; inner relationships and power are another. But outward manifestations are not to be made light of, for such occurrences are often needed to communicate to people the full impact of the work of the Holy Spirit. We are not to quench the Spirit by artificial and imaginary restrictions regarding what may or may not happen when the Spirit comes upon people (1 Thess. 5₁₉).

The plain fact is that in this earthly situation, physical demonstrations of one sort or another accompany all momentous experiences. With Moses it was a burning bush (Exod. 3₁₋₆); with Saul of Tarsus it was a great light and a voice

(Acts 9₃₋₄); with Augustine it was the preaching of Ambrose and the voice of a little girl singing, 'take up and read'; with Francis of Assisi it was the vision of the crucified Saviour and the marks of the nails upon his own hands and feet; with Thomas Aquinas it was an experience which brought an abrupt halt to his lifelong habit of writing; with Pascal it was a great inner 'fire'; with John Wesley it was the strangely warmed heart. One person sees a vision, another hears a voice, another loses his sight, another stops writing, another starts writing, and so it goes on in unlimited diversity. The temperaments and backgrounds of people are almost infinite in their variety, and this leads us to suggest that God, knowing this, has used almost infinite varieties of accompaniments to communicate and seal the work of the Holy Spirit. But that work itself, which, by virtue of its centre in Jesus Christ, is always the same in its essential nature, is never to be confused or identified with these outward and occasional factors.

Another frequently unedifying and possibly even harmful conception of the workings of the Holy Spirit has to do not with outer accompaniments but with inner impulses and feelings. This may be called spiritism. One of the most common interpretations of the work of the Holy Spirit in this connexion is that He gives specific guidance in matters of daily life, however great or minute they may be. When rightly understood and prayerfully controlled, this view may assist people mightily in glorifying God through their daily living. But there are dangers which must be identified and avoided. A person feels guided to talk to a stranger about his spiritual life, or he has the urge to visit someone, or he feels led to open the Bible and read whatever happens to fall before his eyes. He buys or sells property or stocks on this basis. He attributes his sense of impending danger to the warning power of the Holy Spirit. He may take up every conceivable hunch or suggestion and think of it as a mandate from the Spirit.

The basic comment to be made about this view is that its connexion with the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit may be incidental and tenuous. To be sure, all this may be so understood and qualified as to be a genuine extension of Christ's work and therefore in harmony with the teaching of the Bible (see, for example, Luke 12₁₂; Acts 8₂₉, 13_{2, 4}; 16₆₋₇, 20₂₃, 21_{4, 11}; Rom. 8₂₆; 1 Cor. 12₇₋₁₁). But this general view of the Holy Spirit needs to be held in check continuously by the directives of the New Testament. Frequently it is not a development growing out of the organic unity of the Biblical utterance, but represents a view which comes out of a more or less piecemeal reading of the Bible. It sometimes even tends toward the pagan notion that the Spirit is a kind of *alter ego*, bodyguard, prompter, spokesman, whose primary mission is to follow certain chosen ones around in order to show them what to say and what moves to make in the midst of the shocks of accident and the humdrum recurrences of daily life. Except when entertained and expounded by those rare saintly souls who manifest a high degree of consecrated intelligence, this general idea leaves us with a peddling account of the Holy Spirit and does not fit properly into the directives of the Bible. His great office is not to ferry us about and do things for us that we ought to be doing for ourselves, but to quicken our plans and purposes, to illuminate our reading of the Word, to stir up the gifts of God that are within us so that we may be rightly related to Jesus

Christ, magnify Him, and show in our lives the deeds which are worthy of those who bear His name.

Moreover, spiritism tends to exaggerate the role of the individual in relationship to the work of the Holy Spirit. This runs counter to the directives of the New Testament, where the primary work of the Spirit is done in and through the fellowship or team of believers.

One more comment is in order. Spiritism frequently calls for an abandonment of common sense in the interest of a type of guidance whose fruits are not at all commensurate with the claims of those who believe that they are led by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, the claims often become comical, when they are not at the same time tragic. Almost every conceivable error of judgement and breakdown of intelligence has been attributed to the Holy Spirit; and there is probably no area of the Christian life wherein man has more readily allowed his imagination to play the fool with him than in this one. Because of these considerations we are enjoined to 'prove all things' (1 Thess. 5₂₁) and to 'believe not every spirit', but to 'try the spirits whether they are of God' (1 John 4₁; see also 1 Cor. 2₁₅, 14₂₉).

Though all this is true, it is also true that there are distrusting cliques of the cultivated and learned who fail to realize that the habit of halting before thought and action in order to consider the will of God as disclosed in Jesus Christ, or that the habit of waiting to be guided by the Holy Spirit, is as sound as it is rare. As long as it is informed by the spirit of Jesus Christ it has the salutary effect of raising people above the petty claims which tend to dominate their life and thought. Moreover, in the lives of the saints this mode of divine guidance has been so effective that it should commend itself, not only to the generality of mankind in whom it would obviously do good, but also to sophisticated intellectuals who in their own ways are the victims of prejudice and pettiness equally disastrous to the higher reaches of the spiritual life.¹¹

Again, the New Testament teaching concerning the Holy Spirit not only protects the Church against unedifying and sometimes harmful views of God's dealings with man, but it also enables the Church to be ever mindful of the true Christian principle of victorious living in all community relationships. People live with an increasing degree of Christian maturity and triumph neither by their own inner resources alone nor by the advantages of civilization. These have their important functions in the Christian life, but they do not get to the bottom of the human situation, nor do they provide sufficient power to see life through in keeping with the demands of Jesus Christ. It is the Christian conviction that people are not only forgiven by the grace of God; they are also empowered by it. The Christian principle of the moral life, therefore, is found in the empowering work of the Holy Spirit within the fellowship where the Bible is understood and where Jesus Christ is Lord. It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance that John Wesley attached to this thought.

In contrast to all other strategies for the improvement of mankind and for the conquest of sin and death, the New Testament teaches that no principle even approaches adequacy which leaves out the power of God in Jesus Christ working in and through the Christian community. The only power which can transform people and lead them toward the kind of living together which the world desperately needs and which Jesus Christ requires is that of the Holy

Spirit working within the fellowship of believers to comprehend and to exalt Jesus Christ as Lord. Perfection may never come to completion in a finite being. But by the power of the Holy Spirit who makes for righteousness there can be increasingly realized a kind of finite excellence within the community where Jesus Christ is Lord.

Man is made for ideal values, for Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and for the one true God in whom alone these values have their ultimate sanction. Yet man is so bewitched by his own beloved ego and so lured by the trifling parade of happenings right before his eyes that he falls victim to the tyranny of the immediate present. Then begins that long, monotonous, pathetic march down the highways of mediocrity that some people call living. But all the while it is as if the eternal voice of God were saying in the innermost recesses of his being that man was created for two realms, this realm of time and the other realm of an enduring relationship with God. This is the human situation. Man is frustrated at the very centre of his being because he does not know how to find the meaning of his existence in the face of this situation. Every alibi, every mode of escape, every cheap or refined trick, has failed him. In all this we can trace the long course of that contaminated stream which has polluted our age with the stench of meaninglessness and despair. Some of the contemporary theologians have done mankind a noble service by taking away the mask of human complacency; but, in neglecting the adequacy of the vast resources of God's great salvation, they have also taken away the breastplate of hope and courage.

We are now in a position to know that neither conscience, nor our natural sympathies and affections, nor our common civilities and refinements, nor our educational advantages, nor our engineering skills, nor culture, nor any other product of our own making, can by itself endue us with that power which our history, our nature, and our social situation demand. These may have their rightful places, but in none of them is there sufficient power to condemn us that we may repent, sufficient inspiration to strengthen us that we may win the battles with temptation, sufficient love to purify us that we may overpower selfishness in all social relationship, sufficient wisdom to guide us that we may direct our paths through our personal and social perplexities. By the power of the Spirit, both culture and the orders of creation have been and may continue to be transformed. And, incalculably beyond this, by the power of the Holy Spirit, man is given the joy of knowing that he passed from death into eternal life.

A third practical value of the Biblical teaching about the Holy Spirit is that it enables us to identify the authentic principle of the Church's power and unity. It is often supposed that this principle is to be found in the apostles and their successors. According to this theory, the principle of continuity in the Church is found in the Master's act of delegating His work to the apostles and their successors.

This cannot be squared with the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Holy Spirit. There the apostles are absolutely subservient to the work of the Spirit. Their being apostles was secondary to their being informed and empowered by the Spirit. The force that bound the various Christian communities together was not the presence of the apostles but the illumination and power of the Holy Spirit who exalted Jesus Christ as their one Lord. The apostles and all

others were the recipients of the grace of God on the one hand, and the original instruments for communicating it on the other. The organic unity of the total redemptive purpose of God is to be discovered, therefore, not so much in its continuation through the apostles—though that has its importance—as in its continuation through the never-ceasing determination of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the reading and preaching of the Bible and to magnify Jesus Christ from generation to generation. The clue to the understanding of the principle of the continuity of the Christian religion is to be found, then, in the Master's remarks on the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel, in the experience of Pentecost, and in the directives of the Apostle Paul.¹² Those who follow directly in the line of the apostles lose no genuine privilege because of this analysis. As ministers of Jesus Christ, they are the bearers of His standard, His witnesses, called and set apart to be His ambassadors, inspired and honoured by the power of the Holy Spirit who alone authenticates and prospers their ministry and brings them joy in the gospel. This means also that, in the light of the New Testament teaching about the Spirit, the Church is not merely biding its time before some eschatological age to come, but it lives and breathes and moves in the new era of the here and now to work redemptively in the world today.

A fourth practical consequence of the Biblical teaching may be mentioned and allowed to speak for itself in the contemporary theological situation. The central teaching of the New Testament saves the Church from being carried away with vain and extreme attempts at demythologizing and with unbalanced eschatological interpretations. These modes of thought usually misunderstand the mind and person of Jesus Christ, as the Church has understood them; they misread the nature of His salvation, and misconstrue the character of the Christian life. They manifest more of the passion to satisfy the preconceptions of modern sophisticated man than they do to follow the directives of the word of God.

The theology of the Holy Spirit guides the expectations of a waiting Church. But infinitely more important than the doctrine is the mighty *surging fact of the illuminating and empowering presence* of the Spirit moving within the body of Christ to magnify the Lord in our total life.

MACK B. STOKES

¹ For important recent studies on the Holy Spirit see C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), J. E. Fison, *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit* (London: Longmans Green, 1956), and George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956).

² It is the purpose of this study to clarify the Biblical directives concerning the Holy Spirit and to identify them as the proper instruments for theological elaboration and critique. Although this effort is carried forward in keeping with the spirit of Methodism, no attempt is here made to treat explicitly John Wesley's reflections on the Holy Spirit. Neither these nor any other later developments add new content to the Biblical directives, though they are instruments of very great value in understanding and communicating the full import of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The treatment of the contribution of the Wesleys and their followers to this topic, therefore, properly belongs to an additional study which presupposes that the Biblical directives have been fully clarified and that they have become normative in theological discussion.

³ On the significance of the Scriptural references to John's Gospel in the foregoing paragraph see *The Interpreter's Bible*, VIII.707-9, 711-13, 727-9, 730-3.

⁴ Cf. R. H. Strachan, 'The Gospel in the New Testament', in *The Interpreter's Bible*, VII.7-10.

⁵ Frank Moore Cross, Jr., 'The Dead Sea Scrolls', in *The Interpreter's Bible*, XII.661. He fails to pay sufficient attention to the distinctive relationships between the Paraclete and Jesus Christ which have always been maintained in the predominant thought of the Church. See also in this connexion *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, tr. Theodor H. Gaster (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1956), pp.43-6.

⁶ Paul Tillich appears to adopt this view, which, from the standpoint of the history of Christian thought, veers away from the directives of the Bible. See his *Systematic Theology*, II.97-180.

⁷ Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1952).

⁸ This has to do with man's native capacity for religious faith and experience which is present as a God-given potentiality within man.

⁹ At times Karl Barth seems to involve himself in such a position. Cf. his *The Holy Ghost and Christian Beliefs*, tr. R. Birch Hoyle (London: Frederick Muller, 1938), pp.18, 22, 23, 45. See George S. Hendry's decisive critique of Barth at this point in *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* pp.108-17.

¹⁰ For a statement and critique of this general approach to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, see A. C. Knudson, *The Doctrine of God* (New York: Abingdon, 1930), pp.370-85.

¹¹ The objections that some theologians, and particularly neo-orthodox theologians, raise against pietism illustrates this point. There is a difference between a genuine and a false pietism. That there is a kind of Christian piety, based upon the New Testament, which transcends a merely imputed righteousness is beyond reasonable question. God saves man not only in his sins but also from his sins. And this is not to be understood in such a manner as to imply that man is ever perfect. The prayer of repentance is relevant in the life of every Christian, and this is all the more true of those who come ever closer to God. Moreover, the surest sign of imperfection is to profess perfection. In a finite being the law of growth is absolute. For a very balanced and historically informed study along this line, see R. N. Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

¹² For a penetrating and judicious analysis of this interpretation see J. E. Fison, op. cit., pp.128-30.
