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The Role of the Holy Spirit in Enabling Believers for Ministry: an Adventist Perspective

Marcos De Benedicto

Andrews University

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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ENABLING BELIEVERS
FOR MINISTRY: AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Marcos Carvalho De Benedicto

July 2004

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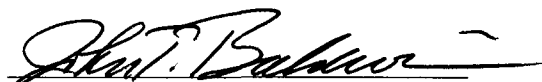
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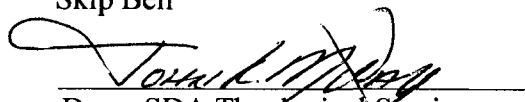
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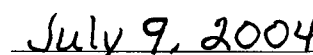
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ABSTRACT

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FOR MINISTRY: AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE**

by

Marcos Carvalho De Benedicto

Adviser: John T. Baldwin

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ENABLING BELIEVERS
FOR MINISTRY: AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE

Name of researcher: Marcos Carvalho De Benedicto

Name and degree of faculty adviser: John T. Baldwin, Ph.D.

Date completed: July 2004

Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil, although growing swiftly, has few published resources on the Holy Spirit and needs a better understanding of his empowering work.

Method

I employ an eclectic and topical approach combining biblical exegesis and pastoral insights. Among other aspects, six symbols, twelve kinds of enablements, the fruit, and the gifts of the Spirit are studied.

Results

The Holy Spirit, who must be viewed as divine and personal (since he is God), has a multifaceted enabling work, with a variety of effects. In a nutshell, he is life-giver, action-motivator, message-revealer, mind-illuminator, art-creator, gospel-communicator, Christ-witness, leadership-empowerer, truth-teacher, people-transformer, community-builder, and God-presenter. Even his images seem to be better understood from an enabling perspective. As the originator of

ethical life, the Spirit presents Christ or God himself as a model, renews the image of God in the believers (in a process I call “Imago-Dei-ization”), and causes them to live in love, which is the integrative motif in Christian ethics. As the giver of spiritual gifts, which must not be seen in a supernaturalistic sense in opposition to talents, he enables the believers to minister to the church, bless the world, and build up the body of Christ. The so-called miraculous gifts can be viewed from three perspectives, here called “Foundational Approach” (Cessationist Model), “Charismatic Approach” (Pentecostal/Charismatic Model), and “Continuous-Cyclical Approach” (Biblical/Adventist Model). The third model means that the miraculous gifts are available during the whole history of salvation, but have an uneven character and cyclical peaks, climaxing with a pre-parousial cycle. These cycles must not be seen in a dispensational fashion.

Conclusions

Adventism was more charismatic in its early history than it is in the beginning of the twenty-first century. With a popular claim of being a remnantal movement, the theological synthesis for the end-time, it should recover the biblical perspective on the multifold work of the Spirit. This means to bind together all streams of the biblical witness, granting space for the contemporary expression of the full spectrum of the Spirit’s empowerments, instead of focusing almost exclusively on the gift of prophecy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND DESIGN

In the opening of the Genesis story, we read that the “Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2),¹ a description that John V. Taylor has called “the most profound and evocative image of the Creator Spirit.”² In the closing of the Revelation story, we again encounter the same personage inviting “whoever is thirsty” to come and drink of “the water of life” (Rev 22:17), an invitation that may be called the last free-offer-for-all in the Bible.³

Who is this Spirit? Or, better yet for our purposes, what does he⁴ do in the other 1,187 chapters of the Bible?⁵ What has he done during the millennia of history? What can he offer to the church today? How does he interact with the believers? What does it mean to be “filled” with the Spirit? Do not we know enough about him and his work?

This study is on the work of the Holy Spirit—and there seem to exist reasonable motives to undertake it.

¹All Bible quotations are from the New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise indicated.

²John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), 26.

³Note that biblically/historically the first activity of the Spirit on earth relates to creation, and the last one to recreation. Imagine a planet involved in darkness and chaos. Empty. Who could illuminate, embellish, fill, and transform it into a cosmos? Now imagine a spiritually thirsty and endangered world. Full. Who could alert, help, satisfy, and turn it into a spring? “Spirit,” along with “God” and “Son,” is the most likely biblical answer.

⁴In order to maintain the pattern of the NIV, all pronouns referring to God (Father/Son/Spirit) will appear in lowercase, except those in quotations. For the Spirit, I will use the more conventional masculine gender.

⁵The Bible in the Protestant canon has 1,189 chapters.

The Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil has few current resources presenting the work of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers for ministry. In fact, the official Adventist publishing house of the country has only three books on the Holy Spirit in its catalogue.¹ Adventism is growing rapidly in Brazil.² This growth is, for sure, a work of the Spirit. Brazilian Adventists, then, would not say with those disciples of Ephesus, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). But with a fuller comprehension of the role of the Holy Spirit the increase can be even more significant.

Besides the lack of resources, there is the challenge of Pentecostal and charismatic theology. Churches from these traditions are also growing rapidly,³ and, with their emphasis on the

¹They are *A vinda do consolador* (Tatuí, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1988), by LeRoy Edwin Froom, almost out of print; *E recebereis poder* (Tatuí, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1999), by Ellen G. White; and *Seu amigo, o Espírito Santo*, by Morris Venden (Tatuí, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2001).

²Brazil has more baptized Seventh-day Adventists than any other country in the world.

³Brazil was one of the first countries in Latin America where the modern Pentecostal movement flourished in the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1910, the Congregação Cristã do Brasil (Christian Congregation of Brazil) was formed in São Paulo; in the following year, the Assembléias de Deus (Assemblies of God) were initiated in Belém do Pará, north of Brazil, led by the Swedish missionaries Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren. Since then, the phenomenon has not stopped growing. In the late 1990s, researchers calculated that the number of Pentecostals in the country was somewhere between 15 and 20 million—which means 10 to 15 percent of the Brazilian population, while the historical Protestant churches reach about 2 percent (Waldo Cesar and Richard Shaul, *Pentecostalismo e futuro das igrejas cristãs* [Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes; São Leopoldo, Brazil: Sinodal, 1999], 19-23). In fact, the number of Brazilian Pentecostals in 2004 may be as high as 25 million (IBGE’s official census indicated 17.6 million in 2000). The data are not precise. The Assemblies of God church, with 5 to 7 million members, is the largest group; but the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), which appeared in 1977, is the new phenomenon in growth. Researcher Ari Pedro Oro pointed out that such Pentecostal success caused the Catholic Church to face the “enemy” with the same strategies, investing particularly in mass media such as TV and supporting the action of the Charismatic Catholic Renovation (*Avanço pentecostal e reação católica* [Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes, 1996], 97-119). It is important to underline that Pentecostalism in Brazil is not homogeneous. Theologian Luiz Alberto Sayão sees at least four distinct groups: (1) classical Pentecostals, (2) Pentecostals of divine healing, (3) renewed churches, and (4) neo-Pentecostals (“Uma avaliação sociológica do pentecostalismo e do neopentecostalismo contemporâneo,” *Vox Scripturae* 9 [1999]: 83-94).

Holy Spirit,¹ faith healing, and the gift of tongues, some people wonder if they are the fulfillment of the promised “latter rain.” This success asks for a balanced theology on miraculous spiritual gifts and the latter rain. After all, churches influence and are influenced constantly.

The Task

The task of this work is to expound the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling Adventist believers for action in the world. This dissertation is a theoretical research presenting the biblical foundations for the practice of the enabling ministry of the Spirit. It must function as a kind of call to a personal and corporate empowered life.

Justification

In recent years, Christian leaders and scholars have emphasized the importance of the involvement and participation of all believers in the mission of the church.¹ But how can they

¹Pentecostalism in Brazil is basically the church of and for the poor—although neo-Pentecostals are eagerly seeking and conquering secular power. There is a sociological dimension behind the phenomenon. Analyzing Pentecostalism in Latin America, José Miguel and Stella De Angulo point out a context of poverty, injustice, migration to urban centers, and chaotic and unstructured society, among other factors. The Pentecostal movement comes and offers opportunities (1) to recreate the social group; (2) to develop a new identity; (3) to develop a new sense of dignity; (4) to get to know a closer and more accessible God; (5) to perceive the direct intervention of God as a new paradigm for changing the *status quo*; (6) to face the necessity of defining oneself clearly as part of the group; (7) to have new spaces/places for freedom and manifestation; (8) to express compassion and service toward the needy; (9) to feel the privilege of being sometimes persecuted and searching for power; and (10) to utilize new methodologies of popular education, which facilitate changes (“El movimiento pentecostal en América Latina,” *Boletín Teológico* 27 [1995]: 45-54). Pentecostalism is a kind of emergency hospital. In spite of this real sociological dimension, Pentecostalism strongly focuses on the immediate presence and power of God in daily life through the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing a series of blessings here and now (Cesar and Shaul, 177). Ricardo Mariano ascribes the success of the neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil to its capacity of “contextualizing,” flexing, and secularizing, as well as to the promise of miracles, magic, ecstatic experience, trance, and even manipulation of emotion (*Neopentecostais: sociologia do novo pentecostalismo no Brasil* [São Paulo: Loyola, 1999], 234). Pentecostalism opens a door, true or illusory, for talking with God, not about him. What Liberation Theology was unable to accomplish for having a too conceptual discourse, Pentecostalism is accomplishing. André Corten calls Pentecostalism “an emotional insurrection” of religious character; it is not a classical revolutionary power, but it is a power (*Os pobres e o Espírito Santo: o pentecostalismo no Brasil* [Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes, 1996], 12).

develop this work with both efficacy and efficiency? The ultimate and most profound answer, from a biblical perspective, comes in four words: “through the Holy Spirit.” Thus, this study is an attempt to expound the biblical understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers for ministry from an Adventist perspective.

There is a variety of specific studies on the person of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit,² but not from an integrated perspective. What occurs in theory, occurs also in practice: some Christian groups tend to underline the person and mystery of the Holy Spirit (especially in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions); others (in the Protestant tradition) emphasize the fruit; and still others (in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements) stress the gifts of the Spirit.

However, the work of the Spirit should be seen in its totality. When only one aspect of the work of the Spirit is emphasized or used, the result is also partial or unbalanced. This happens not because the Spirit is “incapable,” but because people do not permit the Spirit to complete his work. For optimal results, the maximum power of the Spirit is required. It is important, therefore, to study and permit the action of the Holy Spirit in a wholistic way.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil especially needs a study on the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers, in order to release its potential. Theologian Alberto R. Timm points out a shift in the Brazilian Adventism since the 1980s—from a biblical-doctrinal emphasis to

¹See, for example, A. Lindgren and N. Shawchuk, *Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980); R. Paul Stevens, *Liberating the Laity: Equipping All the Saints for Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985); Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone? A Model for Preparing Lay People for Lay Pastoring* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1987); and Douglas W. Johnson, *Empowering Lay Volunteers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991). For a recent comprehensive investigation of the role of the laity in the ecclesiastical arena, see Deryck W. Lovegrove, ed., *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

²Watson E. Mills, in *A Bibliography of the Nature and Role of the Holy Spirit in Twentieth-Century Writings* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993), lists 3,998 titles related to the Holy Spirit. A new edition, evidently, would include many other titles. Esther Dech Schandorff presents 6,990 titles in her *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: A Bibliography Showing Its Chronological Development*, 2 vols. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1995).

a biblical-relational emphasis.¹ However, this shift apparently is resulting in more theological superficiality, not in more experiential spirituality. In such a context, this study may be helpful to pastors, lay leaders, and believers in general, offering new insights and encouragement for a more empowered ministry. After all, as Lesslie Newbigin writes, “it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the Church.”² The Spirit is for all “standard” members, not only for a special category.³

Definition of Terms

Six terms in the title of the dissertation, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Enabling Believers for Ministry: An Adventist Perspective,” need definition. Other definitions, when necessary, will appear throughout the dissertation.

To begin, the word “role” stands for the attributions and functions that the Holy Spirit has as enabler. The term is singular, but it points to plural activities. Certainly, the Spirit plays many roles—as many as God is supposed to play. The multiplicity of roles leads to a variety of effects.

The name “Holy Spirit” is used within Christian orthodox parameters. He is assumed to be a divine person in relation to the Father and the Son, in the mysterious oneness of the Godhead. God in the fullest sense, the Spirit is “shedder” of light, giver of life, creator of beauty, transmitter of grace, supplier of gifts, igniter of love, “sparker” of joy, “uncoverer” of truth, arbitrator of justice, transformer of the world, and the Lord of the cosmos.

I share the biblical/Adventist view of the Spirit. Today, the average “Adventist” Holy Spirit is probably a combination of the Hebrew “Spirit of God” (creative, insightful, powerful) and

¹Alberto R. Timm, “Podemos ainda ser considerados o ‘Povo da Bíblia?’” *Revista Adventista*, June 2001, 14-16.

²Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (New York: Friendship, 1954), 98.

³For Paul, the indispensable hallmark of the Christian is the presence of the Spirit in his or her life. “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ,” writes the apostle (Rom 8:9). It is possible to read the expression “the Spirit of Christ” here in lower case, meaning a life in the same spirit or way of Christ, but Paul probably employs “the Spirit of Christ” as an interchangeable alternative to “the Spirit of God.”

the Christian “Spirit of Christ” (ethical, “sighing,” eschatological), who, although having slightly different accents, is one and the same Spirit. For Adventist mentality, the Spirit is not a metaphysical abstraction, but a tangible divine actor. He is essentially the Spirit of prophecy, a view that I will try to broaden in order to include other emphases. After all, the biblical picture of the Spirit is kaleidoscopic.

This tangibility of the Spirit is in consonance with the biblical witness, for neither *ruah* nor *pneuma* must be seen primarily as something immaterial, in opposition to the concepts of “body” or “bodily,” but as a dynamic, powerful principle of life that animates the body. As the Catholic scholar Yves Congar puts it, the “*ruah*-breath” of the Old Testament “is a subtle corporeality rather than an incorporeal substance.”¹

A material, divine effluence, however, is not the biblical understanding. This is closer perhaps to a pagan conception. The Jewish-Christian concept of Spirit seems to have differed significantly from the Greco-Roman idea of *pneuma*. Against Hans Leisegang, who influenced several scholars with his thesis that *pneuma* in pagan Greek usage could denote a sentient or self-conscious being and that the early Christian pneumatology was based on an archaic Greek mysticism,² Terence Paige confidently argues that *pneuma* in the Greco-Roman world did not have this meaning. According to Paige, *pneuma* was conceived of as something material, in a pantheistic way. The popular Greek word for what we would call a “spirit” was *daimon* or *daimonion*. “It was only when Greco-Roman paganism borrowed from Jews or Christians a non-Hellenic meaning for *pneuma* that it acquired the sense ‘spirit,’ ‘supernatural being,’ making it effectively equivalent to *daimon* or *daimonion*.”³ That a Judeo-Christian subculture could maintain

¹Yves M. J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 1:3.

²Hans Leisegang, *Der heilige Geist: das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1919).

³Terence Paige, “Who Believes in ‘Spirit’? *Pneuma* in Pagan Usage and Implications for the Gentile Christian Mission,” *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 417-436, citation from 433.

for a long time a different view about *pneuma* within the broader Mediterranean world is totally viable, especially if we assume that most Jews valued revealed truth and perhaps attributed their national misfortunes to syncretistic idolatry. Suffering modulates theology.

A decisive remark, in this context, is the presupposition that the Holy Spirit really can communicate with us. If he could not, we had to discard or re-elaborate a series of biblical concepts such as prophecy and intellectual enablement. The Spirit has a direct access to the human mind (or spirit), an idea supported by Ellen White (1827-1915), co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and shared by other Christian authors.¹

Is this believable in a scientific age? Paradoxally, science itself can give us a glimpse of this possibility. To use a modern analogy, just as a computer engineer can access the “brain” of a computer, so also the Spirit can access our brains/minds. Or, to change and refine the analogy, just as two remote computers can establish a wireless contact (via Internet) and share information, so the Spirit can establish spiritual contact with our minds. Like in a radio or TV transmission, a failure to receive his divine waves or signals may be in the receiver, not in the transmitter. Of course, the “waves” of the Spirit are personalized and much more sophisticated.

Above all, the work of the Spirit in our inner world is to be accepted by faith, for this is a revealed fact (see Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 2:10-16). It is a finely tuned interplay invisible as a process, but visible as effect (John 3:8). No doubt, in this process, the Spirit respects one’s individuality. Different from evil spirits, he is not invasive, but interactive. Instead of suppressing one’s personality, he preserves, enhances, and potentializes it.

The word “enabling” is employed in the sense of making one able to do, or to be, something. The Spirit enables not only because he confers authority or delegates power, but also

¹In one of her most important concepts, Ellen G. White stated that “the brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948], 2:247). James S. Candlish also writes that “the human spirit as breathed into man by God at the first, [*sic*] is akin to the divine, and the Spirit of God has access to that of man” (*The Work of the Holy Spirit* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.], 59). Psychic, spiritual, or devilish phenomena such as hypnotism, trance, and demon possession also help to envision the opposite phenomena.

because he gives qualities, abilities, opportunities, and means.¹ Modern theologians seem to prefer the verb “to empower,” but “to enable” perhaps expresses better the spectrum of the work of the Spirit as studied in this dissertation. In many instances, both verbs could be used interchangeably.

“Believers” denotes all people who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Here the term is synonymous with Christians. This does not mean that the Spirit is not working with people of other religions—or people without religion at all. Certainly he is working with them, although not always through them. This last instance can also be true for individual and corporate believers.

“Ministry” includes a variety of actions in the world, such as preaching, teaching, counseling, visiting, healing, feeding, and helping, within a spiritual framework. Ministry is the work done with love to help people to succeed in their search for good and for God. Ministry is not just the work within the walls of the church, for the benefit of ministers, because the church is not an end in itself. In his study about ministry, David Bartlett writes:

In various ways the New Testament writings we have studied bear this witness: God gives us the gospel, and then the church, and then the church’s ministers. Put the other way around: ministers serve the church; the church serves the gospel. Some contemporary ecclesiologies almost make it sound the other way: the church is constituted by its ministers; the church preaches the gospel for its own upbuilding.²

Finally, “Adventist” stands for Seventh-day Adventists, a group originated from the Millerite movement (1840s), with roots in a broad spectrum of Protestant churches, and a touch of biblical radicalism. Historian George R. Knight describes the Adventist heritage in the following terms: “While it is true that Adventism’s concept of salvation by grace through faith came through the mainline Reformers, the theological orientation of Adventism really finds itself most at home with what church historians call the Radical Reformation or the Anabaptists.”³

¹The verb “to enable” is used in Acts 2:4 (NIV) in connection with the glossolalic experience at Pentecost: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

²David L. Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 185.

³George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 30.

Adventism is a complex phenomenon, but in reductionist terms it may be classified as an evangelical church¹ with a sense of prophetic uniqueness and a few peculiar beliefs (for example, seventh-day Sabbatarianism and conditional immortality).² In Russell Staples's words, "Adventism is as much a way of life as a system of belief—a way of life that is informed by an Arminian piety in which the gospel has relevance for every dimension of life."³

Several early Adventist leaders, Staples explains, "held mildly antitrinitarian and semi-Arian views, which derived from an earlier Socinian influence."⁴ The adverb "mildly" must be understood here as a kind of euphemism; "strongly" would express more precisely the antitrinitarian position of Joseph Bates, James White, Uriah Smith, and others.⁵ However, today the "mainstream" Adventism is solidly trinitarian and orthodox—to the extent that orthodoxy is

¹The staff of the Christian Research Institute in Brazil has caricatured and labeled the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a non-Evangelical sect (see Marcos De Benedicto, "Movimento evangélico," *Sinais dos Tempos*, June 1998, 26-27). In this extreme position, they differ from the late Walter Martin (1928-1989), the founder of the Christian Research Institute in the United States. Walter Martin, who studied in depth the Adventist doctrine, expressed his conviction that "it is perfectly possible to be a Seventh-day Adventist and be a true follower of Jesus Christ despite certain heterodox concepts" (*The Kingdom of the Cults*, rev. ed. [Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985], 409). He did not agree with everything in the Adventist theological system, but his position was much more accurate, balanced, and fair.

²A few decades ago, in some Adventist circles, this sense of uniqueness was very strong, almost to the point of sectarianism; today, again in some circles, it seems to be very weak, almost to the point of pluralism. But when it comes to religious denominations, the synecdoche-style judgment, in which one takes the whole for the parts or vice versa, is not a good choice. Adventism is unique in its theological insights and prophetic role, semi-unique in theology and mission, and non-unique in the matter of salvation. Combining elements found in isolation in several Christian traditions, it intends to be a biblical synthesis for our time—a synthesis in which the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts. For a view stressing the "prophetic role" of Adventism, see Jack W. Provonsha, *A Remnant in Crisis* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993); and for a view underlining the "truth" in Adventism, see Clifford Goldstein, *The Remnant: Biblical Reality or Wishful Thinking?* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994).

³Russell L. Staples, "Adventism," in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 66.

⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

⁵See Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 17, 110-117; and Rolf Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 36-40.

biblical—regarding the Godhead.¹ Donald G. Bloesch recognizes that Adventism “began in unbalanced speculation” and “heresy,” but “has been moving to reclaim the treasures of Christian orthodoxy”—while “many mainline Protestant denominations today are moving from orthodoxy toward heresy.”²

To be more accurate, it is necessary to add that winds of antitrinitarianism are again blowing over the edges of Adventism. This fact motivated three Adventist scholars to write a fine book on the subject.³ Adventism, according to Jerry Moon, has gone through six periods when it comes to concepts of the Godhead: Anti-Trinitarian Dominance, 1846-1888; Dissatisfaction with Anti-Trinitarianism, 1888-1898; Paradigm Shift, 1898-1913; Decline of Anti-Trinitarianism, 1913-1946; Trinitarian Dominance, 1946-1980; Renewed Tensions and Continuing Debate, 1980 to the present.⁴

It is believed that the Adventist pioneers, by rejecting the Greek metaphysical presuppositions and the speculative Trinity, allowed a new reflection on God. Fidelity to the biblical framework, free from the rigidity of philosophical timelessness or arithmetical logic, resulted in a view of one God dynamically subsisting in three fully divine personalities engaged in

¹By the end of the nineteenth century, Adventism already had extensively swung to trinitarianism. This change, according to Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, “appears attributable largely to sentiments Ellen White expressed with increasing frequency” (*Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. and upd. ed. [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000], 162). For a more detailed analysis, see Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41 (2003): 275-292.

²Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works & Gifts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 162.

³Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationship* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002).

⁴Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41 (2003): 113-129. See also Whidden, Moon, and Reeve, 191, where Moon presents a slightly different historical chronology.

the affairs of the cosmos.¹ One could even make a case that this is one of the Adventist theological singularities, a real progress in relation to the classic trinitarianism of mainstream Western Christianity.

Another possible singularity, besides a biblical simplification of the intricacies of the Trinity, lies in a balanced view of the work of the Spirit. As a radical theological middle-way in several aspects, in the sense of trying to recover forgotten emphases and balancing paradoxical views, Adventism affirms both divine transcendence and immanence,² with perhaps a transcendent bias. It is neither sacramental (in the sense that the Spirit works primarily through ecclesial rites/structures) nor “panpneumatical” (in the sense that the Spirit is diffused in or confused with nature). Adventism holds a prophetic pneumatology—having perhaps a few points of contact with milder forms of process and ecological pneumatologies.³ In this prophetic perspective, the Spirit (along with the Son) bridges the gulf between God and the creation, but still remains distinct from the creative forces of life. On another front, Adventism is not dispensationalist/cessationist, nor it is comfortable with Pentecostal/charismatic theology. It travels a third way, emphasizing both the continuous work of the Spirit and the necessity of testing the spirits. It is likewise concerned with truth/ethics and mission/charisms.

Finally, in this triple series of semi-singularities, Adventism associates the Spirit with the last days in a particular way. Adventist pneumatology is influenced by Adventist eschatology—

¹See Fernando L. Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 148-150; Whidden, Moon, and Reeve, 201, 202; and Moon, “The Adventist Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” 127-129.

²Transcendence and immanence here must be understood in ontological terms, not in spacial categories.

³For two sources representing these new pneumatological reflections, which offer valid insights and at the same time extrapolate the biblical boundaries in some points, see Blair Reynolds, *Toward a Process Pneumatology* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990), and Mark I. Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

which, in a different manner, seems also true for Pentecostalism.¹ The words “conditioned” or “determined” would be too strong here, but surely the word “influenced” applies. Adventism envisions a powerful pre-parousial movement of the Spirit, which leads history to its climax at the second coming of Jesus.

For Adventism, the Spirit is basically revelational (the Spirit of prophecy), highly functional, and essentially eschatological. These pneumatological perspectives, although biblically correct, need to be expanded in order to include other emphases, which I directly or indirectly address. For example, the biblical picture of the Spirit as eschatological agent is broader than the concept of the Spirit as empowerer for mission, with an intensive presence in the beginning and the end of the messianic era. The Spirit is the divine restorer of the cosmic harmony, fueling the divine-human communion.

It must be made clear that this dissertation is written from an Adventist perspective, quoting Adventist authors. Yet I do not systematize the thought of Adventist scholars. Nor do I intend to interpret “Adventistly” every aspect addressed. If this study were a mere repetition of denominational concepts, it would probably be superfluous. Considering that Adventism claims to be a Bible-based faith, I am in constant dialogue with biblical authors. In fact, we might say that this dissertation is a reading of the biblical teaching on the work of the Spirit with Adventist glasses.

Method

The basic method of this study is literary research. It is an eclectic approach that combines exegesis, pastoral insights, and practical application. The dissertation focuses less on technical details, and more on the big picture. Theological significance, not background information, is the

¹For a study showing how the belief in Christ’s imminent return has been a motivating force for the Pentecostal movement, see D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). In Donald W. Dayton’s view, the four-fold pattern that expresses more clearly the logic of the Pentecostal theology is Christ as Savior, as Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, as Healer, and as Coming King (*Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994], 17-23, 173).

main concern. In order to reach a broader public, readability was privileged—to the point that my English as a second language allows! For this same motive, the diachronic¹ method was discarded. This approach is important, but, when it comes to pastoral theology, it is probably not the best option. The work of the Spirit is considered from a topical point of view rather than from a chronological perspective.

Common sense teaches that people of different cultures think differently. For example, to say that a typical German student is more likely to be interested in the strength of the organization/form while a typical American is more likely to be interested in the relevance of the content/meaning may be a blanket statement, but it also may have some truth. The same observation applies to professions. Whether we want it or not, our cultural/professional background influences our method of research. There is no such thing as neutral research.

In my case, as a Brazilian pastor/journalist/editor, I have to harmonize tendencies. As a Brazilian, I may be a little bit dazzled with novelties; but, as a Brazilian from Minas Gerais (the most British State of Brazil in humor and caution),² I am suspicious of novelty. As a journalist, I tend to look for the cutting edge; but, as an editor, I am trained to select what stands the test of time. I hope, as a pastor, to have found the balance.

In pneumatology, balance is a key factor because things are not so clear as in other theological fields. There are few black/white, or yellow/blue, topics here. Theologians have to work with shades to present an accurate picture. However, the shading-work is not exclusive to pneumatologists; it is an essential appeal in any serious theological enterprise. Theology is nuance—or at least nuance over outlined background. Theologizing is the art of qualifying, which requires humility and many “perhapses.”

¹Diachronic: the study of a phenomenon (as of language or culture) as it occurs or changes over time. On the contrary, “synchronic” means the study of a phenomenon/event in a limited period of time and ignoring historical antecedents.

²Alceu Amoroso Lima, *Voz de Minas* (São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1983), 18, 21.

Sources

Noted theologians have written on the subject of the Holy Spirit. We no longer can say that he is a forgotten figure. Robert P. Imbelli in fact comments that “the Spirit is fast becoming” the “most popular member” of the Trinity “and, in the hands of some, seemingly its sole member.” Western theology, already charged as “Logocentric” or “Christomonistic,” bends towards a “Spiritmonism.”¹

But this is not the complete picture. Until recently, pneumatology was a neglected field. In his applauded book, Clark Pinnock observes that our “language is often revealing—the Holy Spirit is a third person in a third place.” He adds: “On the other topics there is enough in the tradition to make one feel overwhelmed, but not here. On this one the offerings are relatively sparse.”² In the sixties, Hendrikus Berkhof complained that most publications on the Holy Spirit were “of a devotional or semi-theological nature.”³

According to Stanley Burgess, perhaps “the most likely reason for such disregard has been the difficulty of understanding and of defining the essence of God and, therefore, of his work within the Church through his Spirit.”⁴ The idea of the Spirit is so complex and awesome, due in part to a diversity of biblical usages of the terms *ruah* and *pneuma*, that one may feel impotent and give up. To do it justice, it is good to observe that in the Christian East “the Holy Spirit never had to be rediscovered,” as is happening currently in the Western churches.⁵

¹Robert P. Imbelli, “The New Adam and Life-Giving Spirit: The Paschal Pattern of Spirit Christology,” *Communio* 25 (1998): 234.

²Clark A. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 10.

³Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), 10.

⁴Stanley M. Burgess, *The Spirit & the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984), 1-2.

⁵Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 1.

Although the literary corpus on the Holy Spirit is growing, there are relatively few scholarly, balanced (not in all points or every detail), and really basic works in English. Some names, among others, are: Leon J. Wood (*Spirit in the Old Testament*), Lloyd Neve (*Spirit in the Old Testament*), Wilf Hildebrandt (*Spirit in the Old Testament*), James D. G. Dunn (*New Testament pneumatology*), Max Turner (*Spirit in Luke-Acts*), Gordon Fee (*Spirit in Paul*), D. A. Carson (*spiritual gifts*), Frederick Dale Bruner (*theological interpretation of Pentecostalism*), Clark Pinnock (*theological/ecumenical exploration*), Donald Bloesch (*dialogical approach on the work of the Spirit*), and Kilian McDonnell (*historical-theological reflection*).¹ Important articles can also be found in journals.

Wonsuk Ma, besides mentioning Wood, Neve, and Hildebrandt as authors of major works on the Spirit of God in the Old Testament, praises studies by German scholars Paul Volz, Robert T. Koch, and Manfred Dreytza, as well as by French Daniel Lys.² In his enlightening introduction to contemporary pneumatology, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen selects six leading contemporary pneumatologists as representatives of different traditions: John Zizioulas (“Communion Pneumatology”), Eastern Orthodox; Karl Rahner (“Transcendental Pneumatology”), Catholic;

¹Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972); Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); Pinnock, *Flame of Love*; Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*; Kilian McDonnell, *The Other Finger of God: The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville: Glazier/Liturgical, 2003).

²Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 20-25. See Paul Volz, *Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im Alten Testament und im anschliessenden Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910); Robert T. Koch, *Der Geist Gottes im Alten Testament* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991); Manfred Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von Ruah im Alten Testament* (Basel Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1990); and Daniel Lys, *Rûah, le souffle dans l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).

Wolfhart Pannenberg (“Universal Pneumatology”), Lutheran; Jürgen Moltmann (“Holistic Pneumatology”), Reformed; Michael Welker (“Realistic Pneumatology”), Reformed; and Clark Pinnock (“Systematic Pneumatology”), Baptist/evangelical.¹ If this dissertation does not explore these authors more extensively, it is due to its particular focus, broader scope, and practical character.

Unfortunately, there are no major scholarly pneumatologies written by Adventist authors. Invaluable insights are found scattered in theological or devotional books on the Holy Spirit and other topics, but I have not been able to point to a seminal, groundbreaking, indispensable work. If I were to indicate a representative place to begin, I would suggest a compilation of Ellen White, with a wide spectrum of topics typical of her pragmatic, sensible, and non-systematic theologizing.² Besides, due to pneumatological balance, I would mention a work by Jan Paulsen.³ This scarcity of sources certainly says less about pneumatological talents than about a theological agenda.

Authors of contrasting colors are cited in different contexts. My goal is not to harmonize their views. And it goes almost without saying that the fact of quoting an author in support of a specific point does not imply agreeing with his/her whole theology. Frequently, we find scholars with sound doctrine on one point and defective teaching on another point.

Use of Scripture

The Bible, as it appears in the Protestant canon, is assumed to be the revealed Word of God. It is authoritative, but needs interpretation. The whole Bible is used in support of the ideas/hypotheses here presented. Is this a valid method? Obviously, we must recognize the

¹Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 105-145. For the variegated works expressing the thought of these theologians, see Kärkkäinen’s bibliography.

²E[llen] G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power: The Person, Presence, and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995).

³Jan Paulsen, *When the Spirit Descends: Understanding the Role of the Holy Spirit*, new ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001).

different backgrounds, styles, literary genres, insights, purposes, and historic context of the many biblical authors. However, we also should admit that they belonged to the same people, shared the same worldview, held a common faith/theology, served the same God, and were moved by the same Spirit. One mind interconnected their minds. Therefore, this seems to be a legitimate choice, if we maintain a critical eye.

In relation to some topics (such as spiritual gifts), the New Testament is more explored, for its pneumatology is more developed. Luke (Gospel and Acts), John, and Paul are the leading pneumatologists. In the Old Testament, Isaiah and Ezekiel deserve the title of best pneumatologists.¹ Wonsuk Ma summarizes well the Old Testament treatment of the Spirit:

References to God's spirit in the Old Testament, especially among the "classical" prophets, do not appear frequently. However, this scarcity of use of the term in the "official" religion may not necessarily indicate that the idea is marginal in the mindset of the common people. As they have their own popular theology, or folk-theology, of the "day of Yahweh" (Amos 5.18-20), there is evidence that the early Hebrews had a rich understanding of the spirit. . . . Kapelrud may be correct, after all, that the idea of the divine spirit is so common that it is simply assumed without specific reference.²

In pneumatology, as well as in other areas, Old and New Testament must be seen as complementary sources, not rival ones. New Testament authors are in constant dialogue with their Old Testament peers. They take the previous statements as truth, and add new insights.

Scripture has a fundamental place in this study because it is more objective than our experience.³ First, the prophets had direct experiences with the Spirit that ordinary believers do not

¹The word *ruah* ("wind," "breath," "s/Spirit") appears 51 times in Isaiah and 52 in Ezekiel. In the whole Old Testament, it occurs 389 times (378 in Hebrew and 11 in Aramaic). Luke employs the term *pneuma* 106 times (36 times in his Gospel and 70 in Acts); John uses it 60 times (24 times in his Gospel, 12 in his first letter, and 24 in Revelation); Paul mentions it no less than 146 times in his letters. In the whole New Testament, the word *pneuma* occurs 379 times. These statistics are based on Roger Poudrier, *Sopro de vida: o Espírito Santo na Bíblia* (Aparecida, Brazil: Santuário, 1998), 113-117. Of course, so many usages represent a wide spectrum of concepts: anthropological, psychological, physical, theological.

²Ma, 14-15. For the reference to Kapelrud, see Arvid S. Kapelrud, "The Spirit and the Word in the Prophets," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1978): 40-47.

³Religious experience may be defined as one's perception of both the presence and the touch of the divine in one's life, without considering critically external references. Experiential awareness of God, as William P. Alston argues, "makes an important contribution to the grounds of

have. Second, biblical authors, with their sharp spiritual perception, offer the best tool to evaluate ambiguous phenomena. Third, the inspired Word is more trustworthy than our “inspiring” feelings. Unfortunately, according to Bloesch, there is a tendency to think of the Spirit while disregarding the Bible:

A natural theology of the Spirit is increasingly usurping the understanding of the Spirit shaped by the biblical revelation. In natural theology we begin with the ecstatic experience of self-transcendence and then try to link this up with an encounter with the Spirit. Or we begin with the experience of motherhood and then try to discover the motherly qualities in the activities of the Spirit. Or we focus our attention on the quest for justice and peace and then seek to discern the hand of God in this quest.¹

Respectable scholars would say that experience is fundamental to pneumatology. “The key to the entire history of the development of the idea of the Spirit is experience,” Irving F. Wood wrote in an important book at the turn of the twentieth century.² “The Spirit of God was used to explain certain phenomena in the life of man. It was a religious explanation of happenings in the life for which men saw no human explanation.”³ Hermann Gunkel suggested that Paul, who “was a pneumatic to an exceptionally high degree” and “united almost all the gifts of the Spirit in one person,” believed “in the divine Spirit” because he had “experienced” him.⁴

Lee E. Snook, emeritus professor at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, perhaps influenced by his contacts with the immanentist African culture, goes a step further. Holding a panentheist view⁵ and stressing the presence of the Spirit in the world as a pervasive and active power, he proposes a religious belief” (*Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991], 1).

¹Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*, 266.

²Irving F. Wood, *The Spirit of God in Biblical Literature: A Study in the History of Religion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), 261.

³*Ibid.*, iii.

⁴Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Philip A. Quanbeck II (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979; first published in German in 1888), 77, 100.

⁵Panentheism: literally, all things are in God and God is in all things. Pantheism (all is God, God is all) is a different concept.

revision of the Western way of thinking theologically. Instead of starting with the Father or the Son, what would happen if we follow the logic of experience and begin with the Spirit? “We *experience* the Spirit before we formulate any *thoughts* about God,” he writes. “In the order of the word and of being, of course, God the source is prior, but in the order of our primal knowing—our sensing, breathing, feeling of life—it is the Spirit of God that initiates life and breath.”¹ Snook explains that his view corresponds closely to the view of Elizabeth Johnson, for whom “God is first experienced by all creatures as the indwelling Spirit and only later thought of as the ungraspable and transcendent God whose mystery eludes all rational categories.”²

Apart from an improper emphasis on immediacy and immanence, something typical of our age, there seems to be nothing wrong with the link Spirit-experience-theology. “The Holy Spirit may be the last article of the Creed,” Newbigin observes, “but in the New Testament he is the first fact of experience.”³ Jesus himself may have valued the sensory perception of the Spirit. His wind metaphor in John 3:8 suggests that one cannot understand the essence of the Spirit, but can perceive the effects of his presence.

“Theology is essentially the logical formulation of the experience of the divine,” Paul Younger writes.⁴ Working on the Pauline view of the Spirit, he argues that theology should (1) “rediscover its roots in religious experience,” (2) understand religious life “in terms of its rootage in the whole life of man” (that is, it “must grow out of a cultural milieu”), and (3) “be an expression of that which transcends and transforms life,” interpreting our hope of, and longing for, a new

¹Lee E. Snook, *What in the World Is God Doing? Re-Imagining Spirit and Power* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 3, italics in original; see 4, 5, 20, 21.

²Ibid., 14. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

³Newbigin, 96.

⁴Paul Younger, “A New Start Towards a Doctrine of the Spirit,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 13 (1967): 131-132.

world.¹ Biblical and dogmatic theologians do well in paying attention to his wise words: “Theology divorced from religious experience may, over a short period, serve useful organizational or polemical purposes, but it is also in grave danger of either losing its vitality or becoming irrelevant.”²

The problem, then, is not with experience per se, but with the theological use of new experience dissociated from previous experience as recorded and interpreted in the sacred sources. The balance is not found by *opposing* text and experience, because both may come from the Spirit, but in *combining* Scripture and experience. The formula Scripture-experience, or sometimes experience-Scripture, hopefully allows us to do theology with a minimum of both soundness and imagination. To sum up, while it is legitimate to use experience as a tool to interpret and understand certain phenomena, it is not advisable to base a theological building upon experience alone.

Limitations

This dissertation deals with the mission of the Spirit, specifically his enabling/empowering work. Topics such as the mystery of the Trinity, the history of pneumatology, the gender of the Spirit, the *filioque* clause, the sin against the Spirit, and the history/doctrine of charismatic movements are beyond its scope. When one of these topics appears, it is only to illuminate the discussion or to make a specific point.

On the other hand, topics such as the personality and deity of the Spirit, the symbols of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, the characteristics of Pentecost, tests of the spirits, and the preparation of the church for the final empowerment are part of the study.

¹Ibid., 131-133, *passim*. For him, Paul “was a religious genius and is not to be explained in terms of his environment” (ibid., 130).

²Ibid., 131.

Overview

The dissertation is structured into five chapters. An effort was made to keep certain balance between the first-level subheadings. However, where the symmetry might imply any artificial arrangement, content took precedence over form. Some topics mentioned in chapter 2 are revisited in the following chapters as amplification, not repetition.

The introduction (chapter 1) contextualizes the subject, shows the basic approaches, and gives an idea of the content of the dissertation.

Chapter 2, “A Biblical View of the Holy Spirit as Enabler,” is the theological basis for the subsequent treatment. It begins with the person of the Spirit because the concept of personality and deity has direct implications for his work as empowering agent. In a somewhat innovative approach, the symbols are analyzed from an enabling perspective. The last section focuses on the work of the Spirit in enabling biblical and contemporary people for ministry.

At this point, one might argue that the Spirit works in different ways at different times. “On the whole,” Michael Green wrote, “you had to be someone rather special in Old Testament days to have the Spirit of God.”¹ William Barclay had a similar opinion: “In the Old Testament the tendency is for the Spirit to be the privilege of the prophet, and that sometimes in the moment of ecstasy. The experience of the Spirit is not an experience for the common man or for the every day.”²

The question is: Did common believers in Old and New Testament times experience the same kind of ministry of the Spirit? If the answer is “yes,” in what sense is the “age of the Spirit” (after Pentecost) new? If the answer is “no,” then how are we to explain phrases such as “Up to that time the Spirit had not been given” (John 7:39) and “Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you” (John 16:8)?

¹Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 25.

²William Barclay, *The Promise of the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 18.

Traditional views either assert/exalt the indwelling ministry of the Spirit in the Old Testament, equating it with his ministry in the New Testament, or deny/minimize it totally. Gary Fredricks suggests an alternative solution. He proposes that the Spirit has three “primary” ministries in the lives of the believers: (1) power for salvation, (2) power for holy living, and (3) power for service.¹ “The first two are common for all believers—OT or NT. The third was selective for OT believers but common for NT believers.”²

Fredricks seems to be heading in the right direction. It is quite obvious that, in face of the Messiah’s presence, there is a new dimension in the New Testament; but it is also true that, in many aspects, there is a continuum.³ How are we to harmonize the continuity/discontinuity, similarity/dissimilarity between the Testaments?⁴

We can say that in the New Testament the Spirit started working in new ways for having a new fact (Christ’s death, resurrection, and enthronement) to announce. The cross, followed by the exaltation of Christ to the heavenly sphere, was the turning point.⁵ Before, the cross was a glimpse;

¹Gary Fredricks, “Rethinking the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Lives of Old Testament Believers,” *Trinity Journal* 9 (1988): 81-104, especially 85-88.

²*Ibid.*, 88.

³Among others, the following texts present or suggest the ministry of the Spirit in the Old Testament: Gen 6:3; Exod 31:2-5; Num 11:25; Neh 9:30; Pss 51:11; 139:7-10; Isa 30:1; 63:11-14; Mic 3:8; Zech 4:6.

⁴Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., working with the concept of “promise” (*epangelia*) as the center of the Old Testament theology, stresses the link of continuity between the Testaments (*Teologia do Antigo Testamento*, 2nd rev. ed. [São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1984], 22-42, 271-277). Gerhard F. Hasel agrees that there is an interrelationship between the Testaments, but considers the promise-fulfillment scheme unable by itself to describe the complex nature of this relationship; thus he proposes a multiplex approach (*Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 172-193).

⁵New Testament writers link the sending of the Spirit with the glorification of Jesus, that is, his death on the cross, resurrection, and enthronement as King-Priest in heaven (John 7:39; 12:28-33; Acts 2:33). In the cross, the Son glorifies the Father; in the Pentecost, the Father glorifies the Son. While the Son reveals the character of the Father, the Father reveals the accomplishment of the Son. The Messiah was humiliated, but then came a time to be exalted (Phil 2:8-11). As the victor in the cosmic contest played on earth, the Son is “crowned [*stephanoo*] with glory and honor” (Heb 2:9). He receives “all authority [*exousia*] in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18). For the monotheistic Jewish society, the coming of the Spirit was also a powerful testimony of the deity

now, a reality. Good news in dramatic exhibition, the cross brought not only the right to an extra action of the Spirit, but also a sense of urgency, intensity, momentum. The Messianic Era inaugurated also a Pneumatic Age. First, the Messiah is empowered; then, he legally “transfers” his Spirit to the believers, and the church is empowered.

Yet this new era had to do with new scope and magnitude, not with quality or goal. In the ebb and flow that there is between the Testaments, the catalyzer/axis of the work of the Spirit does not change. The stream of the divine *Ruah* draws variations on the same theme—the redemptive action of God.

Adventist author Erwin Gane agrees that something happened at and after the cross regarding the work of the Spirit, but not in the sense of breaking the link with his previous work. When Jesus died and paid the redemption price, Gane comments, “he earned the right to pour the blessing of heaven upon believing hearts *to a greater degree than ever before.*” Thus, “the Spirit was commissioned to perform his enlightening, convicting, qualifying ministry with unprecedented power and effectiveness.”¹

Before the cross, as R. C. H. Lenski puts it, the Spirit was not yet present “as presently he would be.” We would not dare to “suppose that those who at this time believed in Jesus, like the apostles, did so without the Spirit.” But, after dying, rising from the tomb, and ascending to heaven, Christ could send the Spirit on a new basis, with good and actual news to proclaim, “and that Spirit would make rivers of living waters flow from the believers throughout the New Testament era.”²

of Christ. See Walter F. Specht, “Christ’s Session, Enthronement, and Mediatorial and Intercessory Ministry,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 326-361.

¹Erwin R. Gane, *Enlightened by the Spirit: Friend, Teacher, and Guide* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 41, italics in original.

²R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943), 579, 580.

We can put the issue as follows: As the anointing of Jesus at the Jordan was the authentication of him as the Messiah and the transfiguration was the confirmation of his identity and destiny,¹ so the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost was the validation of his “sacrifice of atonement” (Rom 3:25) and the inauguration of his reign.² A powerful presence of the Spirit on earth was necessary because there is an identity between the Messiah and his people when it comes to goal (the reign of God) and power for mission (the Spirit of God).³

At the light of these remarks, it seems justifiable to write about the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in both Testaments without the necessity of constant qualifications.

Chapter 3, “The Holy Spirit as Ethical Enabler,” is an exploration of the “being” dimension of the Spirit’s work. Beginning with God as the ethical model, it analyzes the process of change in the believers (sanctification, to use the older terminology, or “imago-Dei-ization,” to coin a new word), and discusses the result as expressed in the fruit of the Spirit, offering practical suggestions.

Ethical topics are timely among both secular and religious people, who are rediscovering spirituality, searching for virtues, and cherishing qualities of character.⁴ In his survey about the

¹For the accounts of his baptism, see Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34; and of his transfiguration, Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36.

²Enthroned in a position of honor at the right hand of God, Christ sends his Spirit as a means of ruling peacefully over the earth—an act that by itself is a confirmation of Christ’s high status. From his “throne of grace” (Heb 4:16; cf. John 18:36; 1 Cor 15:24-25) in the cosmic royal palace (the heavenly sanctuary), Christ reigns through the agency of the Spirit in the minds and hearts of the believers.

³Miroslav Volf and Maurice Lee, “The Spirit and the Church,” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 18 (2000): 28. “Were it not for the Spirit,” Volf and Lee write, “the relation between Christ and the church would be either one of sheer non-identity (the church as a society founded historically by Jesus and/or obedient to a transcendent Lord) or of sheer identity (the church as the continuation of Christ’s incarnation)” (29). For them, “God’s reign as proclaimed and inaugurated in the power of the Spirit is unthinkable without God’s people” (29).

⁴For an outstanding modern philosophical classic on virtue, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Other recent good sources are Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992); Mary Ann Glendon and David Blankenhorn, eds., *Seedbeds of Virtue* (Lanham, MD: Madison, 1995); and Jonathan Wilson, *Gospel Virtues* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

healthy church, Stephen Macchia found that the characteristic number one for those surveyed, the item placed at the top of the list, is “God’s empowering presence,” which means, among other things, seeking and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in daily life and ministry.¹

Seventh-day Adventists, besides stressing the gift of prophecy, are known for their ethical life. However, unconsciously and locally (not generally or officially), their ethical concern may still have some roots nourishing on grounds of the law. This is a risk assumed by every group that takes the law seriously. Pharisaism, George R. Knight points out, “is still alive and well,” because “it is a state of mind rather than a historic group.”² Or, as William L. Coleman wrote, “the Pharisees are our not-too-distant cousins.”³

Ancient Pharisees were a good people with a supreme love for the law. But Pharisaic ethic, with its external “do’s” and “don’t’s,” was not good enough (Matt 5:20). To turn the letter of the law into a live expression of love is a task for the Spirit (Ezek 36:26-27). Adventist (and non-Adventist) theology must pay more attention to the ethical life that comes from the Spirit, in order to promote genuine expression of faith and build authentic relationships in the community.

Chapter 4, “The Holy Spirit as Performing Enabler,” deals essentially with the spiritual gifts. Perhaps the central section, about the continuity of the miraculous gifts, is the most original part of the chapter. Normally, theologians set forth either cessationist or charismatic views. Here, besides listing arguments of these two sides, it is presented a third way, the continuous-cyclical approach. To my knowledge, no one has systematized the cyclical view before.

In the conclusion (chapter 5), besides summarizing the major points of the dissertation, I discuss some aspects related to the enablement of the church to receive the fullness of the Spirit. It

¹Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 27-39.

²George R. Knight, *The Pharisee’s Guide to Perfect Holiness: A Study of Sin and Salvation* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 27, italics in original.

³William L. Coleman, *The Pharisee’s Guide to Total Holiness* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1982), 123.

is a brief exploration of topics linked with Pentecost, charismatic expression, and the latter rain. It has to do with the pneumatic experience of the early church and that of the present church, including tests of the spirits. Here I touch a point dear to Adventist authors, namely, the empowerment of the church by the Spirit to finish the evangelization of the world.

Some scholars give the impression that the outpouring of the Spirit depends solely on the sovereignty of God. The church can do nothing. On the other hand, some charismatics seem to believe that they have a magical formula to manipulate the Spirit, hence all depends on the church. I try to find a biblical balance between both extremes.

This is the structure of the dissertation. But we can never forget that the Spirit himself cannot be structured, methodized, or limited. He is mysterious, unpredictable, and free as the wind. The Spirit is God, God is spirit.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS ENABLER

The Christian church exists to proclaim the love of God and his salvation to the world. This is a great task. It is safe to say that there is a New Testament consensus that this kind of mission will only be possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹ To try and to complete God's gospel commission without the power of the Spirit is like wanting to win the Grand Prix with a 1966 Volkswagen Beetle without fuel, or navigating the Internet with an AD² without a modem, or attempting to propel a sail boat by blowing on the sail with one's own breath. It is impossible.

"Men, gifts, methods, legislation, are all dead machinery unless vitalized and made effective by the Spirit of Pentecost," writes LeRoy E. Froom.³ What creates despair and overwhelms Christians is not the amplitude of the mission, but the absence of the necessary power to do it. If when a task is very easy a person loses his/her motivation, when it is very difficult a person becomes discouraged. The ideal state occurs perhaps when we experience what the researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow"—a state combining challenge and sense of control, in which we are so concentrated on an activity that nothing else seems to matter; an experience that leads to a new level of awareness and organizes the self.⁴

¹Since mission involves power, some of the greatest texts dealing with the mission of the church mention or imply the work of the Spirit: Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:48, 49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8; Eph 4; Rev 22:17. For the New Testament perspective on the role of the Spirit in mission, see Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 58-75.

²One of the first kinds of personal computers.

³LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956), 130.

⁴The original research and theoretical model of the "flow" (or optimal experience) appeared for the first time in Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975). Since then, many researchers have written on that concept.

Therefore, it is important to discover what the Bible says about the role of the Holy Spirit as enabler. This chapter indicates (1) that the Holy Spirit is a person with divine power leading to action;¹ (2) how his symbols indicate flexibility and conformity with the missions of the persons whom he enables; and (3) how he enabled persons in the past for action and can enable believers today.

The Nature of the Spirit: A Personal and Powerful Agent

While this study is not about the nature of the Holy Spirit, to better understand his work, we should first briefly examine some data about his nature. In this sense, I want to underline two aspects: (1) the Spirit has a *personality*; and (2) the Spirit is a *divine* personality, a view supported by Ellen White.²

Throughout the history of Christianity, some serious controversies have arisen about the nature of the Holy Spirit. In broad lines, Donald Dawe summarizes this development in three stages: (1) “the struggles in the patristic age to define the divinity of the Spirit over against the host of semi-divine spiritual beings which popular piety wanted to equate with [the] Third Person of the Trinity,” (2) “the efforts of modern humanistic religious liberalism to collapse the Holy Spirit into an aspect of the human religious consciousness,” and (3) “a new situation set by the rise of a *new* charismatic piety, the concern for ecology, for process theology, and the emergence of a feminist theology.”³

¹According to R. Albertz and C. Westermann, verbs associated with *ruah* are distributed “almost exclusively in two categories: (a) verbs of movement and (b) verbs of placing in motion” (“*Ruah* Spirit,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997], 3:1204). “Power in action is . . . the basic biblical thought whenever God’s Spirit is mentioned,” J. I. Packer states (*Keep in Step with the Spirit* [Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984], 57).

²In an important passage, Mrs. White argues: “The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God” (Ellen G. White, “Preach the Word,” manuscript 1437 [1906], in *Manuscript Releases* [Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993], 20:69).

³Donald G. Dawe, “The Divinity of the Holy Spirit,” *Interpretation* 33 (1979): 20.

To exemplify, in the third century, Paul of Samosata divulged a theory considering the Holy Spirit as an influence;¹ in the same century, Sabellius taught that there is one God who revealed himself in three different modes (for this reason, his movement is also known as Modalism); and, in the following century, Arius launched another theory recognizing the personality of the Holy Spirit, but denying his proper deity (he believed that the Holy Spirit was the first thing created by the Son).²

Putting it in perspective, the third-century trinitarianism of the great church was basically economic and mildly subordinationist, concerned with the mission of God's two agents (the Son and the Spirit) in the world. Modalism was an attempt to affirm the full deity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit by blurring the distinction between the three. In reaction to the modalist claim, Arius ultra-radicalized in the direction of what he understood to be the old standard orthodoxy, creating an ontological gap between the Father and the Son/Spirit. To restrain Arianism, the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) was forced to give a decisive step into the divine *ousia*, the very being of God, defining the Son-Father relation in terms of equality.³

That there was a Babel of views regarding the true identity of the Son and the Spirit is clear from the patristic literature. Insightfully rejecting the categories of "Arian" and "Nicene," Joseph Lienhard classifies the two major conflicting theological systems of the fourth century as "miahypostatic" (theology of one *hypostasis*) and "dyohypostatic" (theology of two *hypostaseis*). The dyohypostatic theology, which had little room for the Holy Spirit, emphasized God as a monarch. Their supporters thought "prereflectively" "in terms of the Greek notion of the great

¹This theory was revisited in the sixteenth century by Laelius Socinus and his nephew Faustus Socinus.

²Fine treatments of the Trinitarian controversy are found in R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988); Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993); and Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 35-61.

³Badcock, 45-51.

chain of being, a way of thinking or conceiving all that exists by situating each existent somewhere on a scale or in an order, with God Himself at the top and brute matter at the bottom.” The miahypostatic theology, taking a strict monotheism as its point of departure, recognized a fundamental difference between the uncreated (divine, eternal) and the created (finite, temporal) beings. The gap between God and his creatures is bridged not by a great chain of being, but only by a free, creative act of God, who “utters a Word, or begets a Son, and sends forth His Holy Spirit.” In terms of salvation, the miahypostatic tradition basically saw Christ as a moral model, emphasizing the free human response, while the dyohypostatic tradition viewed Christ as a savior, stressing the free divine offer. Neither system was truly adequate.¹

These and other kinds of factors placed the nature of the Spirit on the official agenda of the church, and the deity of the Spirit was “moderately” recognized at the Council of Constantinople (381).² Basil the Great (c. 330-379), one of the “three Cappadocians,” along with his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395) and friend Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-390), helped to clear the way for the official acceptance of the deity of the Spirit.³ If in the New Testament the revealed data about the Spirit are still a kind of uninterpreted raw material, the fathers of the church, pressed by circumstances and equipped with new philosophical categories, elaborated a workable theory with this material.

Therefore, according to R. C. Sproul, “since the fourth century his deity has rarely been denied by those who agree that he is a person.”⁴ Today, generally speaking, the personality and

¹Joseph T. Lienhard, “The ‘Arian’ Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered,” *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 415-437, citations from 424, 425.

²For a study of this development, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), especially 252-279. I said the council recognized “moderately” the deity of the Spirit because it did not apply the word *homoousios* (“consubstantial”) to the Spirit as the Council of Nicea had done in relation to the Son (see Badcock, 59-61).

³See St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980). For an anthology of key texts, see J. Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, eds., *The Holy Spirit, Message of the Fathers 3* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1984).

⁴R. C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1990), 25.

especially the divinity of the Holy Spirit are largely accepted by the Christian world.¹ In terms of Adventism, it seems that the early anti-trinitarians of the denomination during the nineteenth century had more difficulty in accepting the personality of the Spirit than his divinity, although they considered his divine nature only as “a reflection of the divinity of God,” “because the Spirit proceeded from divinity.”² Despite some contrary voices, current Adventists tend to accept both the personality and the divinity of the Spirit.

Of course, considering again Christianity at large, individual theologians can have particular views about the Spirit. They can see him just as a vital energy, or a mode of manifestation of God, or the presence of God, or God’s self, or God’s mind, or God’s self-awareness, or an extension of God’s personality, or a creative force in nature, or the collective conscience.³ However, biblical theology is primarily based on the Bible, not on theologians.

To summarize (or generalize), one can look to the mystery of the Spirit from three basic perspectives, using diverse tools, with three likely different results: (1) the metaphysical view,⁴

¹Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and Unitarians in some way deny the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit, but most orthodox Christians also deny to them the status of Christian churches. However, one should criticize their heterodoxy with love. As Fritz Guy points out, the proper meanings of “orthodoxy,” “heterodoxy,” and “heresy” “are all determined by the consensus of a particular community of faith, and a community consensus is not identical with ultimate truth” (*Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999], 24).

²Christy Mathewson Taylor, “The Doctrine of the Personality of the Holy Spirit as Taught by Seventh-day Adventist Church up to 1900” (B.D. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1953), 18.

³For example, Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, in his influential book *God as Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), certainly informed by the liberal tradition, sustains that the Spirit is just a religious concept for the relatedness of God to the people. For him, the Spirit is the way we experience God. Hendrikus Berkhof (115-121) also rejects the concept of person applied to the Spirit in a trinitarian way. He defends that the Spirit is God himself acting as a person. The Spirit “is a Person in relation to us, not in relation to God” (116). To cite one more example, Blair Reynolds identifies the Spirit with “the unitive experience of God”: “The Spirit is not a separate aspect of God alongside others; it is the synthesis of physical and conceptual feelings by virtue of which God is actual” (154).

⁴Metaphysics here must be understood as an imaginative or theoretical system that, following logical assumptions, claims to deal with the nature of the ultimate reality as a whole.

employing philosophical/speculative/mystical tools, which will conceive the Spirit as an effusion of the divine essence/energy; (2) the metaphorical view, combining literary/philosophical/theological tools, which will imagine the Spirit as a figurative synthesis of God's powers, sensitivities, or qualities as he relates to the world; and (3) the realistic view, using revelational/theological/experiential tools, which will see the Spirit as a personal divine being.

When it comes to these alternatives, I think the degree of biblical correspondence and theological fruitfulness, follows this increasing order: 1, 2, and 3. The metaphysical path is almost sterile, for it "mysticizes" or "superintangibilizes" the Spirit and disregards opposite evidence from Scripture. The metaphorical approach may be useful, but it takes the result for the cause and prioritizes portions of Scripture. The realistic view is brimful of possibilities, for it attributes the fullness of the Godhead to the Spirit and considers all the scripturistical data. In a sense, the realistic view is the only one that opens the door for an actual, intelligent, and effective mission of the Spirit in the world.

This, however, is not all. When one considers the Spirit as a divine figure, one can see him as (1) some kind of super-angelic, semi-divine, created being;¹ (2) another name/state for the glorified Christ;² and (3) a personalized expression of Godself. If we consider the whole of Scripture, including the light that Christ sheds on the nature of God, one should work with the hypothesis number 3 above. It explains better the body of data.

¹This hypothesis is, of course, totally unscriptural and would lead to polytheism. It is reasonable to say that the Spirit commands the angels and perhaps receives data from them. For example, during Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God, the Spirit was guiding the living creatures and bringing harmony out of the apparent chaos of the wheels (Ezek 1:12, 20; Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:752). No doubt, however, he belongs to another ontological category.

²"Very early, there was a tradition that identified the Spirit with the risen Christ, or held that the Spirit was the preexistent Christ or the divine Wisdom," says Dawe (20). Several modern scholars also make this association (see Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 831-838; Badcock, 20-26). For a recent source on Spirit-Christology, see Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Fee suggests that Paul uses the "genitive qualifier" (Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ) "when he wanted to emphasize the activity of either God or Christ that is being conveyed to the believer by the Spirit," that is, "'God' and 'Christ' in each case give 'identity' to the Spirit" (*God's Empowering Presence*, 836).

Yet the conundrum continues, for, when it comes to ontology, one can imagine God as (1) a being fully parallel to human beings (the familiar model), (2) a being partly parallel to human beings (the wholistic model), or (3) a unique being with no actual parallel (the divine or theological model). More precisely, God would be (1) a kind of spiritual family (the Father viewed as masculine, the Spirit as feminine, and the Son as the embodiment of God's love), without sexist connotations;¹ or (2) one indivisible being in his oneness, but, contrary to humans, with the power to present himself simultaneously as Father (the divine personal synthesis), as a ubiquitous Spirit (viewed as his invisible animating mind/energy/power), and as the embodied Son (seen as his visible image, a bodily manifestation/representation);² or (3) still three personal centers of consciousness forming the complex oneness of the "agapeic" Godhead, a mystery best grasped with the help of a weird word with a beautiful theological meaning: *perichoresis*.³

¹In order to counterbalance masculine imagery for God, some authors have proposed a feminine view of the Spirit (see below under the subheading "Images of the Spirit"). They remember that the word "Spirit" is feminine in Hebrew and Syriac (although neuter in Greek and English, and masculine in Latin and German) and that in the wisdom literature the Spirit is associated with wisdom. This approach is symmetrically closer to our experience (father/mother/son) and probably contemplates a psychological need. It also provides an interesting approach to the *imago Dei*. But would it be biblical? Although knowing that God transcends human sexual distinctions and that we must speak of God in human language, most Bible-oriented theologians would feel uncomfortable in going beyond an "it is written." Elizabeth Johnson favors the use of female images/metaphors for talking of God, but prefers the term Sophia or Wisdom, because supposed feminine traits associated with the Spirit would still perpetuate subordinate roles for women, based on the mystery of the Trinity (see *She Who Is*, 50-54, 94, 124-149).

²In this view, which is a kind of sophisticated modalism, one should be careful in order not to conceive God as a divided being, for he is indivisibly one. A variation of this model is the one in which the Spirit bears the same relation to God as the spirit/mind/consciousness bears to humans (see Rom 11:34; 1 Cor 2:11, 16). The Spirit, in this case, is God himself, in the same way that the spirit/mind of a person is the person herself. Were it not for other biblical data, this argument, sometimes used by the Unitarians, perhaps could make sense in the light of the biblical/Adventist wholistic approach to the mind/body relation. However, we still would have a binitarian formula, for the biblical witness about the eternal deity of the Son is clear. In sum, this is a false solution, unless we theoretically consider the Spirit as the mind of God and the Son as a kind of "body" (or bodily manifestation) of God.

³Some pneumatologists support the social model of the Godhead, stressing the *perichoresis* of the three divine persons, in a movement of mutual communion, interpenetration, love, and even *kenosis*. In this case, the ground for unity lies not so much in essence, but in relationship. The noun *perichoresis*, along with the related verb *perichoreo*, was first used in a christological context, in order to explain the relationship of the divine and human natures of Christ, and later was applied to

In what follows, I will attempt to substantiate this last view: the Spirit as an individual and personal center of consciousness in the uniqueness of the Godhead, with peculiar characteristics and roles. Yet, if one assumes one of the other possible views, should one be labeled as a heretic? I do not think so. Who, besides God, has seen the inner being of God to say dogmatically how he is? The Son is the final revelation of God's character, but only a tangential revelation of the divine ontology.

A biblical scholar should be careful not to presume to apprehend the infinite God in one's finite mind, adventuring through unrevealed territory as if he or she mastered all mysteries.¹ Some early scholars of the church such as Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386) and Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398) even feared to disrupt the imprecision or vagueness of the biblical language about the Spirit²—although Athanasius (c. 296-373) and Gregory of Nazianzus were more innovative in defending the deity of the Spirit.³ The patristic cautious attitude is reflected in the surprisingly pneumatological conciseness of the creed of the Council of Nicea, which simply states a bare belief “in the Holy Spirit.”

Perhaps this scarcity was providential, considering that recent research has revealed strong evidence that the important word *homoousious* (“consubstantial,” indicating the similarity of “substance” or “essence” between the Father and the Son) “came straight from Constantine's Hermetic background,” imported from the “theological language of Egyptian paganism,” and was

the Trinity, in order to underscore the full mutuality and intimate communion of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. *Perichoresis*, usually translated to Latin as *circuminsessio* (more static) or *circumincessio* (more dynamic) and to English as *coinherence*, is a key term to emphasize oneness and threeness, unity and distinction, symmetry and asymmetry in God. For a brief history and uses of the concept, see Verna Harrison, “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53-65.

¹In fact, God's mysteriousness is essential for his intelligent creatures. If we could master the secrets of God's self, in the sense of knowing everything about him and his work, then God would be finite. In time, we would exhaust his personality, and he no longer would nourish our selves and cause our growth. See Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:703.

²See McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 71-79.

³See Badcock, 53-59.

inserted into the creed by order of the emperor.¹ Deep speculation about the Spirit could have damaged significantly the future of pneumatology.

Ellen White also highlights that the full knowledge of the exact nature of the Spirit is both (1) an impossibility (it is a “mystery,” a matter not revealed, something “too deep for human understanding,” where “silence is golden”) and (2) a non-essentiality (for salvation and Christian life, it is enough to know who the Spirit is, what he does, and how to be used by him).²

Should we be more daring? Theology needs to be linguistically innovative to improve precision, thematically challenging to suscite interest, and dynamically pragmatic to make sense. This asks for fresh elaborations of tested motifs. To put it another way, the issue is not fidelity to words (biblical vocabulary), but to truth (biblical ideas). However, one should not be irresponsible, killing the divine mysteries or seeds instead of trying to reveal or grow them. Scandals and heresies are inevitable, but woeful are the scandalizers and heretics! Pneumatology, as well as theology and christology, must be approached doxologically.

The Personality of the Spirit

Now let us consider in more detail the personality of the Spirit. In doing so, it may be helpful to start asking, “What or who is a person?” Intuitively, we know the difference between persons and things, but we need to establish some definite criteria.

“Medieval thinkers emphasized rationality as the essential characteristic of persons,” explains S. C. Evans. “In the modern classical period John Locke, while not ignoring rationality, emphasized the quality of self-awareness over time as decisive for personhood, including particularly memory.” Now the tendency is “to emphasize activity, seeing persons as responsible agents whose decisions reflect values or caring concerns.” Evans, however, warns that these

¹Pier Franco Beatrice, “The Word ‘*Homoousios*’ from Hellenism to Christianity,” *Church History* 71 (2002): 243. “Constantine was deeply convinced of the possibility of interpreting the Christian doctrine of the Trinity by means of the categories he had inherited from the most sophisticated pagan theology of his day,” states Beatrice (269).

²Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 51, 52.

“different views should be regarded as complementary perspectives rather than as rivals.”¹ For our purposes, we can define a person as an agent with self-awareness, reason/emotion/will, and relatedness.

Does the Holy Spirit fulfill these requirements? Many of the greatest Christian theologians have taught that the Holy Spirit is a person. To use the words of Herbert Lockyer, he is not “a mere ‘Something,’ but a Divine ‘Someone.’”² There is strong biblical support for this teaching, especially in the New Testament. Although one could question the personalization of the Spirit in the Old Testament,³ Leon Wood says that the informed Old Testament people “seem to have made a distinction between the Spirit of God and God Himself and this in a way to characterize the Spirit as having qualities of personality.”⁴ In speaking of the Spirit, the Bible authors sometimes employ metaphors bearing impersonal tones, but this usage probably should be understood as imagery, figurative emphases on some characteristics of the Spirit or of his work.⁵ Here I will present three general arguments pro-personality.

¹C. S. Evans, “Personhood,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 861.

²Herbert Lockyer, *The Breath of God* (Cleveland: Union Gospel, 1949), 26.

³See, for example, Neve, 129. Paulsen makes a valid point: “The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament does not act as a personality separate from God, but neither is He in the New Testament conceived of as a gift separate from God” (21). The Holy Spirit is present in the Old Testament, but we distinguish better his personality by looking back at him through the lense of the New Testament.

⁴Leon Wood, 19.

⁵For example, believers are baptized with/in the Spirit (Matt 3:11; Acts 1:5); drink of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13); are anointed with the Spirit (Acts 10:38; 2 Cor 1:21-22); are filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4; Eph 5:18); and are sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1:13). Besides, the Spirit is poured out on them (Acts 2:17; 10:45). One should not rely on this metaphorical language to make a case for the impersonality of the Spirit, since the biblical authors also use similar language to speak of Moses or Christ. The Israelites were “baptized into Moses” (1 Cor 10:2) and drank from the rock/Christ (1 Cor 10:4); believers are “baptized into Christ” (Rom 6:3) and are “clothed with Christ” (Gal 2:27). For answers to some of the most common biblical objections about the personality and deity of the Spirit, see Max Hatton, *Understanding the Trinity* (Alma Park, Grantham, England: Autumn House, 2001), 109-120.

Argument 1: Attributes

The characteristics of the Spirit suggest personality. Positively, he knows (Isa 11:2; 1 Cor 2:10, 11), speaks (Acts 11:12; 13:2), wills (1 Cor 12:11; Acts 16:6-12), loves (Rom 15:30), and communes (2 Cor 13:14). Negatively, human actions show that he can be lied to (Acts 5:3), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Isa 63:10; Eph 4:30), blasphemed (Matt 12:31), and outraged (Heb 10:29). Even more specifically, Paul says that the Spirit has a mind (Rom 8:27).

Between the lines, but certainly, the sacred authors inform us that the Spirit has his own power. In John 16:13, Jesus explains that the Spirit of truth would “not speak on his own” authority. Luke reveals that Jesus was anointed “with the Holy Spirit and power” (Acts 10:38), and returned from the desert “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). As Edwin Palmer observes, “it would be a meaningless redundancy to say” the expression “power of the Spirit” “if the Spirit were simply an impersonal power.” He suggests trying to substitute the word “power” for “Spirit”—Jesus returned “in the power of the Power”?¹ It simply does not make sense.

Argument 2: Address

The use of personal pronouns suggests personality. In John chaps. 14-16, Jesus applies the pronouns “he,” “him,” and “whom” several times in relation to the Spirit.² Four times Jesus refers to the Spirit as “the Comforter,”³ and not as a mere “comfort.” Arthur Pink underlines that,

¹Edwin H. Palmer, *The Holy Spirit*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964), 12.

²Raymond H. Woolsey writes: “In the Gospel of John and in the remainder of the New Testament, personal pronouns are applied to the Holy Spirit 24 times. Twenty-five different titles, all of which indicate personality, are appropriate to Him. Twenty specific actions, which could be performed only by a person of intelligence and will, are attributed to Him” (*The Spirit and His Church* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970], 12).

³Probably John presents the concept of the Spirit as comforter (Greek *parakletos*) based on his theology, not on tradition. In John’s view, Jesus gives the Spirit because he is God. “The single most important feature of the Johannine Paraclete is its christological concentration,” Gary M. Burge claims (*The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 41).

although the word *pneuma* in Greek, like “spirit” in English, is neutral in gender, the meaning is masculine, and “the personal pronoun could not, without violating grammar and propriety, be applied to any other but a person.”¹

Commenting on the “crystal clear” text of John 16:13, where Jesus applies seven times the pronouns “he” (*ekeinos*) and “his” to the Holy Spirit, Sproul says that “there is no grammatical reason whatsoever to use the masculine pronoun *he* unless Jesus intends in this didactic passage to declare that the Holy Spirit is a person.”² The connection between the neutral noun *pneuma* and the masculine pronoun *ekeinos* is direct, and made by someone who knew the Spirit, both theoretically and experimentally, better than anyone else. Several modern theologians and New Testament scholars endorse the view that this text, along with others, offers a grammatical support for the personality of the Spirit, although recently Daniel Wallace challenged this philological assumption.³

In John 14:16, Jesus used the Greek word *allon* (“another” of the same kind, order, or quality; “other equal”) when speaking of the *Parakletos* (Counselor, Helper). Although the word *parakletos* covers a variety of roles difficult to describe with just one word, it basically means one’s supporter, “a legal friend,”⁴ an existential helper in the struggles and hardships of the spiritual life. If Jesus had a personality, as obviously he had, then the Spirit also must have one, because he is like Jesus. The Spirit would be for the believers the same kind of helper as Christ had been. In a sense, Jesus is the best revelation of the Spirit.

Paul also links the pronoun “who” with the Holy Spirit: “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance” (Eph

¹Arthur A. Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 12.

²Sproul, 18.

³Daniel B. Wallace, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13 (2003): 97-125.

⁴Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 576. See his “Additional Note F: The Paraclete” (587-591). Morris writes: “John is thinking of the Friend at court, but characteristically he fills the word with a specifically Christian content” (590-591).

1:13, 14). If the Spirit were a mere energy, or power, or thing, Paul should have used the pronoun “which.” Note also that in Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit applies the pronoun “I” and “me” referring to himself: “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”

Argument 3: Action

The work of the Spirit suggests personality. According to John Walvoord, this is the “most tangible and conclusive evidence” for his personality.¹ Among so many facts that indicate personality, we can point out that the Holy Spirit creates (Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30), empowers (Zech 4:6), intercedes (Rom 8:26), guides (Isa 48:16; John 16:13), commands (Acts 10:19; 16:6, 7), testifies or witnesses (John 15:26; Rom 8:16), appoints (Acts 20:28), leads (Ps 143:10; Rom 8:14), restrains (Gen 6:3), convicts of sin (John 16:8), and sanctifies (Rom 15:16).

In the Scriptures, therefore, the Spirit is presented with all the characteristics of a person: (1) self-awareness, so he is conscious of his identity; (2) intellect or intelligence, so he can know, think, and understand; emotions, so he can feel, like, and love; will, so he can desire, decide, and act; and (3) relatedness, so he can relate, interact, and maintain fellowship. He has all the attributes of God. As Griffith Thomas summarizes, “the Spirit is personal because God is personal, and Divine because God is Divine, and although it cannot be said that the Personality of the Spirit is made as clear as the Personality of the Father and the Son, yet it is impossible to think truly of the Spirit as impersonal.”²

A touch of flexibility or fluidity may be linked with the personality of God, in order to preserve the divine oneness, but one should not envisage the triune God as impersonal. Flexibility here stands for plus, not for minus. God has more intrinsic resources than humans, not less. As the

¹John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 6.

²W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 72.

Son and the Father have a personality, so the Spirit is a sentient and personal being, with an infinite capacity to think, feel, decide, guide, motivate, relate, and love. If we are to accept the biblical portrayal of God, no one can be more personal than God.

This is a key aspect for our study because only a person (that is, an intelligent being) is able to enable another person and maintain fellowship. If the Spirit is a person, observes Charles Ryrie, “then my dealings with him are on a person-to-person basis.”¹ If he were an impersonal energy, we should not pray to him. “Believers are not to address ‘things’ in prayer. To do so would be an act of idolatry.”²

Furthermore, “if the Holy Spirit is a mere influence or power, we shall try to get hold of and use *it*,” reflects Froom, using a well-known argument. “But if we recognize him as a person, we shall study how to yield to him, that he may use us.”³ Morris Venden explains the same point, but adds the question of pride/glory:

If the Holy Spirit were simply an “It,” we could approach the Holy Spirit as the heathen do their witch doctors or idols. We might think that if we could get more of “It,” we would have reason for pride, for we would be in control of a mighty power, becoming some sort of spiritual supermen. But on the other hand, if the Holy Spirit is a person, then instead of his being a power that we use, he is the One who uses us, to the glory of God. Instead of trying to get more of the Holy Spirit, we become interested in his getting more of us.⁴

The concept of a personal Spirit is fundamental for a correct comprehension of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit—and that seems to be the view which corresponds better to the biblical data.⁵ Even if the concept of the Spirit as a person were absent from Scripture, as some scholars contend, the language of personalization is omnipresent.

¹Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, rev. and exp. (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 20.

²Sproul, 18.

³Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter*, 40.

⁴Morris L. Venden, *Your Friend, the Holy Spirit* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1986), 7.

⁵Adventist scholar Arnold Valentin Wallenkampf is more radical in his verdict about the importance of the doctrine of the Spirit’s personality: “Anyone who knows God the Father and God the Son, but has not attained to the belief in the Spirit as a Person and as God, is not a Christian any more than are those who do not believe in the deity of the Son” (*New by the Spirit* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1978], 8).

The Divinity of the Spirit

The Bible teaches that the Spirit is divine, one person of the Godhead or Trinity.¹ In the New Testament, especially, the Spirit's divinity stands out with prominence. "Of the 379 occurrences of the substantive *pneuma*, . . . in approximately 275 instances *pneuma* must be understood as 'spirit of God'; of these, 149 are absolute."²

Sinclair Ferguson points out that it is doubtful whether "the Old Testament unequivocally clarifies that the *ruach Yahweh* is a distinct hypostasis within a Trinitarian being," but correctly recognizes that no doubt "the nature of the Spirit's ministry in the Old adumbrates the hypostatization which emerges in the New."³

The question probably has to do with progressive revelation. When we ask if the activity of the Spirit in the Old Testament is "divine" and "personal," the answer, says Ferguson, is surely affirmative; but the Holy Spirit (as well as the Father) "is fully revealed to us only in and through Jesus Christ," and his work "reaches its fullness only in the Messiah."⁴ Probably God wanted to avoid the idea of polytheism in that context.⁵

¹It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into theology of the Trinity. For the reader interested in this topic, two stimulating studies are *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), by Ted Peters; and *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), by Colin E. Gunton. For a history of the doctrine, see E. J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972). For different approaches to the Trinity, see William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982); Christoph Schwöbel, ed., *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995); Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); and Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, eds., *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²F. W. Horn, "Holy Spirit," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:265.

³Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 30.

⁴*Ibid.*, 28, 29.

⁵J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 166.

Studying theology is like climbing a series of mountains—the higher one climbs, the more one can see. Or, to use a comparison by Benjamin Warfield regarding the Trinity, the “Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted.” The fuller revelation of the New perfects and enlarges that of the Old, but does not contradict or correct it.¹ Regarding the Holy Spirit, if we use statistical data and longer statements as parameters, this is totally true.²

Paraphrasing the apostle John, we can say that in the beginning was the Trinity. All three were there—transcendent, infinite, absolute. But the Father was the recognizable expression of the divinity—God to us. Then the Son brought God to the world—God with us. Finally, the Holy Spirit started working in a new dimension—God in us. This phraseology is, in fact, an echo of an observation of Gregory of Nazianzus about the gradual manifestation of the Spirit’s deity: “The old covenant made clear proclamation of the Father, a less definite one of the Son. The new [covenant] made the Son manifest and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit’s Godhead. At the present time the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before.”³

Besides the progressive knowledge, there is the issue of transcendence. The infinite divine is beyond the finite human. God is a mysterious reality. It is biblically questionable whether the “idea of the Trinity arises from the paradoxical sense that the God in whom we put our faith must be both *beyond* and *intimate*,” as declares Ted Peters,⁴ but it is true that God seems paradoxical to us.

¹Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 141, 142.

²Let us remember that *pneuma* is used 379 times in the New Testament, against 389 occurrences of *ruah* in the Old Testament, but the New is only about one-fourth as long; 261 times out of these 379 uses of *pneuma* refer to the Spirit of God; and out of these 261 times, 94 employ the adjective “holy” with the Spirit. This means an increasing emphasis on this person of the Godhead (see Wood, 20).

³Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 31.26.

⁴Peters, 19.

The fact is that, after having debated the nature of God, in its trinitarian expression, orthodox Christianity concluded for the “threeness” of the Godhead.¹ It is true, some fathers dared to cross revealed boundaries (speculating on the very inner, mysterious being of God), their interpretative methods seem an outdated relic today, and many of their conclusions were pregnant with metaphysical presuppositions. Yet the result, seen far off, was generally valid. Orthodox patristic theology, as a rule, threw the arrows in the right target, although sometimes using wrong bows. We can summarize this belief in a clean, biblical fashion as follows:

1. God is three persons.
2. Each person is fully God, sharing nature, power, knowledge, action, purpose, love, and glory (or status).
3. There is one God, for in the divine ontological mathematics, which transcends numbers, $1 + 1 + 1$ is not 3, but $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$.²

Regarding the deity of the Holy Spirit specifically, what kind of data can we use to support such an idea? As in the previous section, let me present three general arguments.

Argument 1: Titles

The names and attributes of the Holy Spirit suggest deity. He is called “Spirit of God” (Gen 1:2; Rom 8:14), “Spirit of the Lord” (Isa 11:2), “Spirit of wisdom” (Isa 11:2), “Spirit of counsel and of power” (Isa 11:2), “Spirit of knowledge” (Isa 11:2), “Spirit of grace” (Zech 12:10), “Spirit of truth” (John 16:12), “Spirit of Christ”³ (Rom 8:9), and “Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2; cf. 11). Above all,

¹It is well-known among pneumatologists that the Western school, influenced by Augustine, stresses the *Deo Uno* (modalistic direction), while the Eastern school, influenced by the Cappadocians, emphasizes the *Deo Trino* (personalistic orientation).

²For further arguments in this line of reasoning, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 231-240.

³The concept of the “procession” of the Spirit (that is, the Spirit proceeds from the Father) was formulated in the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). The *filioque* clause (“and Son,” meaning “and from the Son”) was introduced at the Synod of Toledo (A.D. 589). This clause was at the heart of the schism between the Eastern and Western churches in 1054. Today Catholic and Orthodox theologians are in ecumenical dialogue about this issue. Gerald Bray, Anglican, thinks

he is presented as “holy” in several passages (for example, Luke 1:35; 11:13). The Spirit has the same attributes of God, being eternal (Heb 9:14), omnipotent (Job 33:4; Luke 1:35), omnipresent (Ps 139:7) and omniscient (1 Cor 2:10, 11). He possesses creative and divine wisdom (Isa 40:13). In the wisdom tradition, culminating with the Wisdom of Solomon, a work written in Greek in the first century B.C., probably in Alexandria, S/spirit and wisdom are virtually identified.¹ Of course, wisdom is not personal, but a personification of divine qualities.

Argument 2: Associations

The identification of the Holy Spirit with God suggests deity. In the baptismal formula, Jesus included the Holy Spirit in the tri-personal name of God (Matt 28:19).² Jane Schaberg proposes that this triadic phrase “is a development of the triad found in Daniel 7” (Ancient of Days, one like a son of man, and angels), which would have been adapted by a process of “organic growth”; that behind the triadic phrase there is a midrash; and that the evidence is insufficient to indicate a trinitarian concept.³ However, it takes more faith to accept her conclusions than to accept

the evangelical belief that each of the persons is *autotheos* (God in himself) is the key for reconciling traditionally opposing views (“The Double Procession of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology Today: Do We Still Need It?” *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 41 [1998]: 415-426). For a series of historical and theological reflections from an ecumenical perspective, see Lukas Vischer, ed., *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque-Controversy* (London: SPCK; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981). According to this document, “the original form of the third article of the Creed, without the *filioque*, should everywhere be recognized as the normative one and restored” (18).

¹See George T. Montague, *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 91-110.

²It has been debated whether the original baptismal formula comprised the threefold name of God as in Matt 28:19, or just the name of Jesus as evidenced in Acts 2:38; 8:12, 16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; and Col 2:11-12. Supporters of baptism only in the name of Jesus argue that Matt 28:19 was not meant as a baptismal formula, or was an addition from the second century to serve a trinitarian agenda. The original formula would be something like: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in *my* name.” Yet the doctrine of the Godhead is not dependent only on this text.

³Jane Schaberg, *The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981), 335-337.

the normal and traditional reading of the text. A strong evidence against her claims is that the Spirit of God is never listed among creatures, like angels, cherubim, and seraphim. When created spirits are mentioned, “the climax never ends with, ‘and the Holy Spirit,’ as we would expect it to do, if he were both a person and a creature.”¹

This is not the only passage presenting the divine persons side by side. A “series of ‘triadic’ passages link Father, Son, and Spirit together in the inseparable unity of a single plan of grace.”² In 1 Cor 12:4-6, Paul addresses the spiritual gifts from a trinitarian perspective, and he ends 2 Corinthians (13:14) with a triadic benediction. In Rom 15:30, the sequence is Son/Spirit/Father. In Rev 1:4-5, John places the Spirit between the Father and the Son, which suggests coequality.³

Also significantly, Paul says that the Spirit “searches . . . the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10). This is a powerful evidence. As George Smeaton observes, “He who can fathom the plans, the purposes, and deep things of God, must be distinct in person, yet divine in essence.”⁴

In some instances, actions of God and of the Spirit are interchangeable. For example, in Isa 6:9, God says, “Go and tell this people.” Quoting this text in Acts 28:25, Paul says that the “Holy Spirit spoke” through Isaiah. To him, saying that the Lord had said or that the Spirit had spoken was the same. The equation also is seen when we compare Heb 10:15-17 and Jer 31:31-34. Word of Yahweh = word of the Spirit. In Acts 5:3-4, to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. In Paul’s mind, we are temples of God because the Spirit dwells in us (1 Cor 6:19; Rom 8:9-10; Eph 2:22). The context shows that he is speaking in a real sense, not in a poetic sense.

¹Clarence True Wilson, *That Flame of Living Fire* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930), 14.

²Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 62. See 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 3:1-3; 1 Pet 1:2.

³Here and in other passages of Revelation (for example, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6), John mentions “seven spirits of God.” In the numeric symbolism of Revelation, this must be understood as perfection and completeness (Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 62), or as roles of the one Spirit, in parallel to the seven churches, or still as roles played by angels under the sphere of influence of the Spirit.

⁴George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 65.

Argument 3: Tasks

The works of the Holy Spirit suggest deity. The Spirit acted in the creation of the world (Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30); inspired the authors of the Scripture (2 Pet 1:21), which is “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16); acted in the generation of Christ (Luke 1:35), where he is equaled with “the Most High” (God); operates the regeneration of the believers (John 3:6); and sanctifies them (2 Thess 2:13). In an impressive passage, Paul declares that the Spirit has revealed the mysteries of God to us, because he has access to the mind and thoughts of God (1 Cor 2:10, 11). Besides, the Spirit connects us with God in a loving, interactive, filial relationship (Rom 8:15, 16). All these tasks belong to the divine sphere.

The central point in our perspective is that, by being divine, the Holy Spirit is totally qualified to enable persons for ministry. If he were a person, but not divine, his power to enable people might be put in check. He could not take God’s purposes to an end, unless God himself would empower him. Our relationship with him would be different. For example, we should not worship him. But, as he is a divine person, then the enabling power is granted.

Images of the Spirit: Pictures of the Enabler

After a brief discussion about the person of the Spirit, now I will focus on the symbols of the Spirit. This will help us to draft a biblical portrayal of the Spirit as empowerer.

We have a picture of God the Son in the Bible, and he himself is a real picture of God the Father. “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,” affirmed Jesus (John 14:9). But how about God the Holy Spirit? If “God is spirit” (John 4:24), the Holy Spirit is the most emblematic manifestation of God. We “know” him just as a spirit. There was no epiphany of the Holy Spirit with a face, observes the Catholic theologian Boaventura Kloppenburg. “The Holy Spirit came to us as a person without a human face.”¹ He is manifested only through symbols.

¹Frei Boaventura Kloppenburg, *Parákletos, o Espírito Santo* (Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes, 1997), 19.

Perceiving this lack of a personal image of the Spirit, Donald Gelpi tried to defend the legitimacy of “imagining the Holy Breath as the Divine Mother.”¹ In his opinion, the feminine archetype can “organize all those images traditionally associated with the third person of the trinity, thus providing Christian iconography with a needed personal image of Her reality,” and helping us “to take the adorability of the divine Breath seriously.”² He was not the first to think of the Holy Spirit as feminine, nor is he the last.³

Biblically questionable, this kind of attempt reveals the possibility of seeing the Holy Spirit in flexible ways. In fact, the divine *Ruah* is a flexible being; his nature is fluid and ambiguous. He

¹Donald L. Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 216.

²Ibid., 215, 216. Gelpi certainly goes too far when he tries to apply to the Holy Spirit the archetype theory of Carl Jung and suggests imagining the Son “as androgynous rather than as purely masculine” (ibid., 216).

³In the early Syrian tradition the image of the Spirit as feminine was familiar. See Susan Ashbrook Harvey, “Feminine Imagery of the Divine: The Holy Spirit, the Odes of Solomon, and Early Syriac Tradition,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 37 (1993): 111-139. In the fourth century, Gaius Marius Victorinus affirmed that the Holy Spirit is Mother of Jesus “on high and below,” in heaven and on earth (*Adversus Arium* 1.58, cited by Gelpi, 217). In 1741, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, or Count Zinzendorf, officially proclaimed “the motherly office of the Holy Spirit” in the Moravian Brethren community in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (London: SCM, 1992), 159, and his notes. In a well-researched article, Craig Atwood shows that Zinzendorf encouraged the American and European communities of the *Brüdergemeine* (called Moravian Church today) to worship the Spirit as the mother of the church; that the use of feminine/maternal imagery for the Holy Spirit was an essential point in Zinzendorf’s theology; and that the worship of the Spirit as mother played a vital role in the most active and creative period of this religious community (1738-1770), disappearing after the death of Zinzendorf to avoid public reproach. For Zinzendorf, the imagery of the Spirit as mother is biblical in an economical sense (the Spirit is not a goddess), and in three ways: (1) the Spirit, and not Mary, is the true mother of Jesus; (2) the Spirit is the mother of all living things, for he brings everything to life; and (3) the Spirit is the mother of the church and of all those who have been born again. Craig Atwood, “The Mother of God’s People: The Adoration of the Holy Spirit in the Eighteenth-Century Brüdergemeine,” *Church History* 68 (1999): 886-909. See also Gary Steven Kinkel, *Our Dear Mother the Spirit: An Investigation of Count Zinzendorf’s Theology and Praxis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990). German scholar Jürgen Moltmann also defends a feminine approach to the Spirit because it fits better with the metaphors of the new birth (we have to think of the Spirit as our spiritual “mother”) and of the Comforter (the Spirit comforts as a mother does), and reflects better the community of the Trinity and of the church (*The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997], 35-37). For a moderate Catholic view of the subject, with an analysis of some authors, see Jean Galot, “L’Esprit Saint et la féminité,” *Gregorianum* 76 (1995): 5-29

is like the wind, which “blows wherever it pleases” (John 3:8). Adapting to his missions, he penetrates the daily human routine, bringing cosmos out of chaos, and life out of death. His actions put him in intimate relationship with us. Yet, being God, he has to preserve his transcendence. It is here that the symbols enter.

A symbol is a meaningful sign representing a thing/object and revealing a reality beyond itself; it is “one thing that says many things,” to use Jacob Neusner’s words.¹ “Symbols, then, do not refer the percipient directly to the signified object,” explains Louis Dupré. “Instead they *represent* it in the double sense of *making present* and *taking the place of*.” They are essential to the mind’s “expression as the body is to its existence.”² In their polyvalent and paradoxical concealing/revealing character, symbols have a special power of making abstract truths more understandable, so the Bible uses many symbols.³ Regarding the Holy Spirit, there are six central symbols: wind, fire, water, oil, dove, and seal.⁴ Let us comment on each of them, from a perspective of enabling for action.

¹Jacob Neusner, *Symbol and Theology in Early Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 1. See also the classical discussion of Augustine about “signs,” in the context of interpreting biblical language, if literal or allegorical, in *De doctrina christiana* (“On Christian Doctrine”).

²Louis Dupré, *Symbols of the Sacred* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1, 3, italics in original.

³In oriental Christianity, which developed a rich “symbolic vocabulary to express both the nature and the work of the Holy Spirit,” symbols “are not merely pointers to understanding the reality of that which is hidden”; they are the “language of mystery, i.e., a vehicle to represent the hidden divine realities” (Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Tradition*, 5).

⁴From a spiritualizing and sometimes allegorizing perspective, F. E. Marsh (*Emblems of the Holy Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1957]) presented 14 symbols: dove, seal, holy anointing oil, anointing, oil, fire, rain, atmosphere, wind, rivers, dew, water, clothing, earnest. Taking a devotional approach, Leslie Hardinge discusses 18 symbols: dove, manna, salt, seal, earnest, oil, ointment, rain, dew, wind, light, fire, hand, breath, finger, eye, voice, sap (*Dove of God* [Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1972]). One could add rock and wine.

Wind

Spirit and wind (Hebrew *ruah*, Greek *pneuma*) are intimately related in biblical contexts. Of its 378 occurrences in Hebrew texts and 11 in Aramaic passages in the Old Testament, *ruah* is usually translated 180 times as spirit(s), 92 times as wind(s), and 32 times as breath(s).¹ The basic meaning of this probably onomatopoeic word² (that imitates the sound of something) is “wind” and “breath,” understood as “the power encountered in the breath and the wind,” and not as essence.³ In the New Testament, *pneuma* has basically the same meaning, but “among Christians it was tending rapidly to become an exclusively religious and psychological term.”⁴

In the very beginning of the Bible appears the expression *ruah elohim*, “Spirit of God” (Gen 1:2), whose better translation, according to Harry Orlinsky, is “wind of God,”⁵ but, according to Neve, is “spirit of God.”⁶ Gerhard Von Rad prefers “storm of God,”⁷ but does not give a solid reason. Victor P. Hamilton explains that it could be “either ‘S/spirit’ or ‘wind’ of God,” but, considering that the emphasis of the text is on *ruah* as a “beneficent force,” he favors “S/spirit.”⁸

¹Horn, 3:262. For a classification of the literary use of *ruah*, see Charles A. Briggs, “The Use of *Ruah* in the Old Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 19 (1900): 132-145.

²See Lys, 19-21.

³Albertz and Westermann, 3:1202-1203.

⁴William Ross Schoemaker, “The Use of *Ruah* in the Old Testament, and of *Pneuma* in the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 28 (1904): 47.

⁵Harry M. Orlinsky, “The Plain Meaning of *Ruah* in Gen. 1.2,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 48 (1957-1958): 174-182. He believes that *ruah* in Gen 1:2 started being rendered as “spirit” only in the post-biblical period, “under Hellenistic influence, and virtually pushed it out altogether as Christianity grew in authority” (181, 182). Nahum M. Sarna says that “‘wind’ is the most popular rendering of the word in ancient and medieval Jewish sources” (*The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 6).

⁶Neve, 64-71.

⁷Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 49.

⁸Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 112, 114.

Conciliatorily, Gordon J. Wenham says that “the phrase must be taken to involve some manifestation of God, whether as wind, spirit, or breath.”¹

Neve believes that the Hebrew concept of *ruah* was unique:

When Israel spoke of the *ruach* of God they were using a *concept* that was found nowhere else in the Ancient Near East. Certainly, the wind in the Mesopotamian cultures existed and functioned in the divine realm as a special instrument of the gods and in Egypt was even divinized as the god Amon-re. Yet no other nation in the Ancient Near East spoke of its gods as having a spirit. In a peculiar people with a singular Lord it was a unique concept.²

Certainly, for the Hebrews, *ruah* had the connotation of movement, power, and mystery. But William Schoemaker explains that, in the early Hebrew mind-set, “the two leading characteristics of the wind were energy and invisibility.” The idea of “air in motion” came much later.³ As Alasdair I. C. Heron observes, the driving/strong wind witnessed by the Israelites, like the one that divided the Red Sea (Exod 14:21), “is not identical with the *ruach* of God himself, but its elemental power made it a powerful image of divine strength”; in the mind of Old Testament people, *ruah* “conveyed a sense of devastating impact of God on men and on their world.”⁴

If in the Old Testament the image of the wind was applied to the Spirit, in the New the link becomes still clearer. The word *pneuma* appears 379 times in the New Testament, with a broad range of meanings, frequently recalling the idea of “wind,” “breath,” and “s/Spirit.” Christ himself used the wind as a symbol of the Spirit. After his resurrection, he breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). This is the so-called “Johannine Pentecost.” According to an Orthodox author, the Spirit is given here for inner transformation, “in order to consecrate, enlighten, and purify the disciples”;⁵ but, according to another scholar, he is given to

¹Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 17.

²Neve, 1.

³Schoemaker, 14.

⁴Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 4.

⁵Veselin Kesich, “Resurrection, Ascension, and the Giving of the Spirit,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25 (1980): 256.

enable relationality, being “the start of a new relationship with the Spirit or the start of a new nexus of activities by the Spirit in relation to a person.”¹ Later, when the Spirit came down at Pentecost, another more functional step of the same process, “a sound like the blowing of a violent wind” was heard (Acts 2:2).

This sound of wind apparently had the purpose of calling the attention of people in the city to the phenomenon that was occurring. It was a way of representing audio-visibly the action of an invisible force. Besides, it was a manner of showing to the disciples that the Spirit is powerful and would give them power. The wind normally blows and moves things. Here the divine Wind was blowing to impel people.

It is interesting that in the Lukan account this “violent wind came from heaven” (Acts 2:2). It was a power from on high. The wind normally blows horizontally, from East to West, North to South, or vice versa. Here it blows vertically, from heaven to earth. The specific direction of the wind—which fills “the whole house” and supposedly the believers sitting there—is a clue to understanding its source and purpose. This wind comes from God (vertical direction) to impel the apostles to the world (horizontal direction), in order to move people to God (again the vertical direction). This means that the church was initiated by an intelligent and purposeful Wind, not by fortuitous and blind winds.

Invisible in its essence, mysterious in its action, tremendous in its power (think of a whirlwind or a hurricane), and varied in its effects,² the wind revitalizes, refreshes, heals, moves, cleanses (think of a vacuum cleaner), and produces energy. It is, in short, a good metaphor of the enabling power of the Spirit.

¹Cornelis Bennema, “The Giving of the Spirit in John’s Gospel—A New Proposal?” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 74 (2002): 209-210.

²I am indebted to Froom for these adjectives (Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter*, 219, 220, 222, 224).

Fire

The symbolism of fire (Hebrew *es*, Greek *pyr*) was found in many cultures, such as the Chinese and Egyptian. “For most primitives, fire was a demiurge emanating from the sun, whose earthly representative it was,” J. Cirlot writes; “hence it is related on the one hand with the ray of light and the lightning, and, on the other, with gold.”¹

Fire could and can also symbolize the contact with the sacred, or be linked to spiritual mastery. In India, according to Mircea Eliade, “all kinds of people or acts involving any magicoreligious power are regarded as burning.” In archaic levels of culture, “access to sacrality is manifested, among other things, by a prodigious increase in heat.” And “mastery over fire finds its expression equally in ‘inner heat’ and in insensibility to the temperature of hot coals.”²

People from ancient times had skills to kindle fire by artificial means, such as the fire-drill and “the striking of flint on iron pyrites,” but they took great care “to preserve a burning fire to avoid the necessity for rekindling.”³ For this reason, apparently, Abraham “carried the fire” for his sacrifice on Moriah (Gen 22:6). Creator and Lord of all nature, Yahweh sometimes ignited supernaturally the fire of the sacrifices offered to him (Lev 9:24; 2 Chr 7:1-3). The most classic example is the “fire of the Lord” that fell over the sacrifice of Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:38).

Some theophanies of God were accompanied by fire. The “angel of the Lord” appeared to Moses “in flames of fire from within a bush” (Exod 3:2). God guided the Israelites through the desert, going ahead of them in a pillar of fire by night (Exod 13:21). At the time the Law was delivered, “Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire” (Exod

¹J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 2nd ed. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), 105.

²Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 86.

³T. C. Mitchell, “Fire,” *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 368.

19:18). And fire was part of the theophany of God to Elijah, although “the Lord was not in the fire” (1 Kgs 19:12).

Besides these “burning” theophanies, the image of fire is used in the Bible to symbolize the glory and power of God (Ezek 1:4, 13; Dan 7:9-10), holiness (Deut 4:24), purification, refinement, test (Isa 6:6-7; Mal 3:2-3; 1 Cor 3:13-15; 1 Pet 1:7), and protective presence (2 Kgs 6:17), among other things.

Fire is also seen as an expression of anger against sin (Isa 66:15-16) and an instrument of judgment (Amos 7:4). For example, Sodom and Gomorrah were burned (Gen 19:24). Isaiah pictures Yahweh coming in holy war against Jerusalem with “flames of a devouring fire” (Isa 29:6). The beast, the false prophet, the worshipers of the beast, the devil and his angels will be thrown into the “lake of burning sulfur” (Rev 19:20; 20:10). Finally, death and Hades themselves are “thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:14). Using a highly evocative imagery also known outside Israel,¹ the prophets describe the consuming power of God.

In extra-biblical Judaic literature, references to fire are also common. Angels are formed out of fiery matter (2 Enoch 29:3; 2 Bar 21:6; 3 Enoch 7:15). The body and weapons of Kerubi’el, prince of the cherubim, are described with impressive fiery images (3 Enoch 22:3-9). To destroy his enemies, the Messiah will use his fiery breath (4 Ezra 13:10-11). “The talmudic literature imagines all that derives directly from God to be represented in fire.”²

How did the link between fire and the Spirit first appear? It is difficult to say. One could argue that the connection came about because the fire has multiple functions. It consumes the dross, purifies, warms up, illuminates, energizes. Fire is a symbol of power. Others could suggest that, since the fire was associated with the divine presence in the world, and the Spirit came to be

¹“The motif of gods using fire against their enemies appears to have been more widespread [in the ancient Near East] than is sometimes recognized” (Patrick D. Miller, Jr., “Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 [1965]: 257).

²*Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), s.v. “Fire.”

perceived as divine, the link appeared naturally. Or perhaps the connection could have appeared through Elijah. This prophet was especially associated with fire, having been transported alive to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kgs 2:11), and at the same time was recognized as a man full of the Spirit (2 Kgs 2:9). We can also remember that in Isa 4:4 there is the expression “spirit of fire.” But these are not totally satisfactory answers.

It seems that it was John the Baptist who made the first significant and specific connection, when he said that Jesus would come to baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). But what did he mean?

For James Patrick, John uses the fire “as an emblem of the purity and intensity of the influence accompanying the baptism of the Holy Spirit which he foretold that Christ should bestow.”¹ Other theologians believe that John was speaking about purification of sins. The context points to judgment and wrath (see Matt 3:9, 12). René Pache, for example, sees the fire as an “allusion, not to the power of the Spirit, but to his purifying action, which judges and consumes all impurity.” If the person refuses to be purified, he/she “will be cast into eternal fire.”²

James Dunn argues that the baptism in Spirit-and-fire, involving at the same time gracious good news and an act of judgment and destruction, is only one baptism to be administered to all the people—for the repentant as a blessing, for the unrepentant as destruction.³ Jesus, inaugurating the messianic era, would minister this “baptism.”

Robert Menzies, however, comes to a different conclusion, arguing that this double baptism was a reference to the cleansing of the nation by “*the separation of the righteous from the wicked.*”⁴ Alastair Campbell agrees with Menzies that the cleansing is directed to Israel, not to individuals,

¹James Patrick, “Fire,” *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1907), 1:595.

²René Pache, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 23, 24.

³Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 10-11.

⁴Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 138, italics in original.

but goes a little bit further, pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem.¹ This connection of fire with judgment is strong, but we cannot ignore the empowering/anointing dimension for service or prophetic ministry. The fire of the Spirit appeared at Pentecost, and the Pentecost was also the fulfillment of John the Baptist's announcement.

Along with Passover and Tabernacles, Pentecost (meaning "fiftieth" in Greek, since the feast occurred on the fiftieth day after Passover) was one of the three national festivals of Israel. This agricultural event (also called Weeks), which gathered multitudes of pilgrim Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus, had a covenantal character. Its first celebration coincided with the giving of the Torah on Sinai (Exod 19:1).²

Judith 6:17-21 (c. 100 B.C.)³ links Pentecost with the renewal of the covenant, and apparently so does the Qumran community. In the first century A.D., the Jews celebrated the giving of the Torah during this feast.⁴ Certain rabbinic traditions "would make the giving of the law in Exodus 19 the lectionary reading of Weeks (see *b. Meg* 31a) and would recall that the word of God was split into the seventy languages of the nations (*b. Sabb.* 86b)."⁵

¹R. Alastair Campbell, "Jesus and His Baptism," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 (1996): 191-214, especially 195, 198-199.

²"In the Mishna and Talmud the feast of weeks is connected with the revelation of the ten commandments, which constitute the basis of the covenant," says Helmer Ringgren, in his book *Israelite Religion*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 189. This is confirmed by comparison of Exod 12:2-3 with 19:1, 10-11. Exod 12:2-3 shows that Passover occurred on the 10th day of the first month. Exod 19:1 says they arrived at Sinai on the first day of the third month, which would be 48 to 50 days later, depending on the precise length of the lunar cycle. God appeared on the third day (Exod 19:10-11), which by inclusive reckoning would be 50 to 52 days from Passover.

³The Old Testament apocryphal Book of Judith, which probably dates from the Maccabean period (second century B.C.), is widely unhistorical. The name Judith means "Jewess." She is described as a young, beautiful, rich, and very pious widow (Jdt 8:4-8), who organizes the resistance of the Israelites of "Bethulia" against the Assyrians.

⁴T. Powell, "Pentecost, Feast of," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 688.

⁵B. D. Chilton, "Festivals and Holy Days: Jewish," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 374.

Considering that the Sinaitic covenant was marked by literal fire (Exod 19:18), it was appropriate that the new covenant was followed by spiritual fire.¹ If the Law was originally written with fire on stone, now it would be written with fire in the heart (cf. Jer 31:33). However, this is just an attempt to explain why the Spirit came with fire at Pentecost.

Dunn has argued that the baptism in the Spirit is not primarily to equip for service, but to initiate the person into the new covenant. “What Jordan was to Jesus, Pentecost was to the disciples,” he writes. “As Jesus entered the new age and covenant by being baptized in the Spirit at Jordan, so the disciples followed him in like manner at Pentecost.”² The covenantal character of Pentecost seems to favor his point of view. But this interpretation, which is subject to debate, does not exclude the empowering aspect. A central purpose of the covenant, old or new, was to make a “kingdom of priests” (cf. Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:4-5, 9). As priests enter into a priesthood to minister, they need to be empowered by anointing.

Without considering the immediate context, it is tempting to make another inference. In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was sometimes confirmed with heavenly fire. Now, because the sacrifice offered by Christ is valid, God sends the fire of the Spirit as a testimony of his acceptance (see John 7:39). In this case, Passover would stand for the sacrifice at the cross, and Pentecost would symbolize its validity. Therefore, the fire at Pentecost empowers the apostles with authority to witness of the resurrected and glorified Son (Acts 1:8; 2:32-33). If one wills, they announce good news to those who recognize the validity of this sacrifice, and consequent judgment to those who do not accept it.

We still have the connection of fire with tongues. Luke reports: “They saw what seemed to be tongues [*glossai*] of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [*glossais*] as the Spirit enabled them”

¹William Clark, in *The Paraclete* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), 117, comments that the fire at Pentecost “was the new Law of the Church of God, given by fire, as the ancient Law had been given, but not amid thunder and lightning, but with the gentle light of love.”

²Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 40.

(Acts 2:3-4).¹ In chapter 4, we will return to the gift of tongues; here what matters is the shape of the flames and its possible meaning.

It is probably significant that the fire was not formless; and it is even more significant that it had the shape of tongues. If the mission of the disciples was to witness strongly of Christ to the world, they had to speak the language of the peoples with boldness.² However, they were almost illiterate. Solution? Each one of them received one tongue of fire. Ellen White clarifies that the *shape* of the fire (tongues) “was an emblem of the gift then bestowed on the disciples,” while the *appearance* of fire “signified the fervent zeal with which the apostles would labor and the power that would attend their work.”³ Enabled directly by the Spirit, they could now speak fluently and boldly. Their voice would be the burning voice of God; their prophetic/inspired speech⁴ would reach the poor and the rich, being heard in the slums and in the palaces.

Therefore, in one way or the other, the fire was a symbol of the empowerment of the believers. It must have caused a profound psychological impact on them, so that they might impact the world. They would transmit hot news with fiery tongues to burn the conscience of the listeners, set their hearts ablaze with desire for Christ/God, and illuminate their ways. Placing an obscure Jew of a despised region (Galilee), killed through the most ignominious method of the day, at the center of the Roman Empire and of the world is not a small exploit.

¹Notice that the ability to speak in other tongues was given, granted, or supplied by the Spirit; it was not an initiative of the disciples.

²Modern commentators tend to minimize the role of the gift of tongues for communication in the context of Pentecost, but this aspect seems to be relevant. Those who reject this quite obvious meaning carry on them the onus of a more solid explanation.

³Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 39.

⁴Against Max Turner, Robert P. Menzies asserts that Luke identifies the Spirit as the source of revelatory speech, and consciously distances him from direct or exclusive association with miracles. See Robert P. Menzies, “Spirit and Power in Luke-Acts: A Response to Max Turner,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993): 11-20. Turner or Menzies being right, there remains the fact that Luke emphasizes the role of the Spirit in prophetic speech.

Water

Palestine has a capricious climate. Some parts receive significant precipitation of rain (for example, the coastline of Lebanon and Syria, and near Bethlehem), while other parts are arid and dry or have annual periods of minimal rainfall (usually from May to September). Besides being badly distributed in space and time, the precipitation arrives during the cooler months, and the rain tends to fall in short and intense storms. Evaporation is high and retention in the soil is low. Through history, therefore, local populations have developed several kinds of water works, such as spring houses, wells, wadi barriers, conduits, cisterns, dams, and canals; and obviously learned to give a great value to water.¹

In the biblical world, water (Hebrew *mayim*, Greek *hydor*) was a symbol of Yahweh's blessings and spiritual refreshment.² On the other hand, the longing for water meant spiritual need (Pss 42:1-2; 63:1). Torah was often referred to as *mayim hayyim*, "living waters."³ The intertestamental Jewish literature, in addition to ideas of abundance, goodness, and grace, also presents water as a symbol of knowledge and wisdom (Ben Sira 15:3; 4 Ezra 14:47), and speaks of the salvific qualities of the "water of life" (1 Enoch 17:4).

Used in ritualistic ceremonies, water symbolized cleansing and purification (Exod 29:4; 30:18-21; Num 8:7; Lev 16:4). The immersion or ritual bath in the *mikvah* (a natural water source or an artificial pool) for spiritual purification is one of the most ancient and enduring rituals in Jewish life, being practiced by women before their wedding.⁴ In the New Testament, John the Baptist ministered the baptism as an expression of repentance for cleansing and forgiveness of sins

¹John Peter Oleson, "Water Works," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:883.

²This is supported by texts such as Ps 23:2; Isa 32:2; 35:6; 41:18; Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8; Ezek 47:1-11.

³Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992), s.v. "Water."

⁴*Ibid.*

(Matt 3:11; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:3). Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and started a symbolic ritual that stresses the need of humility, the acceptance of his sacrificial death, and continual cleansing of sins (John 13:1-17).

Above all, in the Bible is the very significant connection: God-water-life. Jeremiah described Yahweh as the “spring of living water” (2:13; 17:13). At Jacob’s well (John 4:10, 13), Jesus presented himself as the giver of the superior living/running water—a kind of water that not only satiates the thirsty, but also becomes in him/her “a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” And John saw “the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1).

How about the Spirit-water link? Considering the essentiality of the water for life, some immanentist cultures easily can attribute spiritual qualities to this liquid. “Water, in almost all African societies, is a product of divine action,” David Ogungbile says. “Rivers, lakes, springs and the sea are believed by the Yoruba to have spirits dwelling in them and cults are constructed for them.”¹ Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, rivers and water also were worshiped as the origin of life.² However, in the transcendentalist Israel the connection is unlikely to have appeared in this way. The prophets probably simply made a metaphorical use of a good motif that was available in nature.

The fact is that, around the eighth century B.C., overflowing water was or became a vivid metaphor of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah wrote, “For I will pour water on the thirsty land . . . ; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring” (44:3; cf. 12:3, 32:15). This is a promise of a new time for the dry and thirsty Israel in exile. As Wonsuk Ma observes, it involved “fertility through the power of the spirit” and “does not refer to vegetation but to people.”³ The prophet Joel

¹David Olugbenga Ogungbile, “Water Symbolism in African Culture and Afro-Christian Churches,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 12 (1998): 159, 160.

²E. A. Gardner, “Water, Water-Gods,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1919), 12:712.

³Ma, 86.

spoke about “abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains” (2:23), and presented the promise of God for the Day of the Lord, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (2:28), resulting in prophecies, dreams, and visions.

It must be said that, throughout Christian history, it became common to associate the autumn/“early rain” with Pentecost (Acts 2) and the spring/“latter rain” with the outpouring of the Spirit before the parousia. Ellen White made this connection.¹ Successful Korean pastor David Yonggi Cho also does, and sees the modern Pentecostal/charismatic movement as the fulfillment of the latter rain.²

In the New Testament, the association Spirit-water continues. Jesus, “the true Israelite whose repentance is perfect,”³ acknowledging the judgment of God upon Israel, comes to John the Baptist to be baptized in water as a representative of the nation. He receives the anointing of the Spirit at the border of the river. Water here is a symbol of a turning point in a personal or corporate history,⁴ commitment to God, purity, and disposition for service.

Later, Jesus himself linked water with the Spirit. He said that “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5).⁵ The Spirit, in this context, has a purifying function with a renewing effect. Craig Keener contends that the idea of the Spirit of

¹Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888, 1907, 1911), 611-612.

²David Yonggi Cho, *O Espírito Santo, meu companheiro* (Deerfield, FL: Vida, 1993), 45-46.

³William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, 1994), 54.

⁴“The motif of the wilderness dominates the prologue” of Mark, Lane writes. From the wilderness, a place for a new Exodus, a new Israel will emerge (ibid., 39, 54, 55).

⁵Theologians interpret this passage in different ways. Some distinguish the baptism in water from baptism in the Spirit; others consider water and Spirit just one experience. “The issue for Nicodemus is that to be reborn by the agency of the Holy Spirit involves forces and transformations far beyond human capacities or human understanding alone” (Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity 1998], s.v. “Holy Spirit”).

purification was widespread among the Essenes, a Qumranic stream of Judaism. “Although the image of cleansing by water representing the Spirit is not frequent in early Jewish texts, the idea of the Spirit purifying or empowering God’s people to do his will occurs more than any other Spirit-image except the Spirit of inspiration and revelation.”¹ In John, the transcendent symbolism of water-Spirit includes this cleansing emphasis, but goes beyond; the Spirit is the eschatological gift foreseen in the Old Testament prophets, which in Christ brings salvation, gives new life, and quenches spiritual thirst.²

There is another significant statement of Jesus. Preaching at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, probably six months before his last Passover, he made this invitation: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). This was the same invitation found in Isa 55:1, but now said in the first person by Jesus. Echoing Zech 14:8, Jesus adds that whoever believes and drinks of him will have streams of living water flowing from within him/her (vs. 38). In an editorial note, John says that by “this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (vs. 39).

According to F. F. Bruce, when “the people thanked God at the celebration of the Tabernacles for all the fruits of the past year,” “they did not forget his gift of rain, apart from which none of those crops would have grown.” The ceremony of water-pouring during this festival is well attested “for the two centuries preceding AD 70.”³ R. Lightfoot clarifies that, following a passage in the Talmud, “the Jews themselves regarded the libation of water at the feast of tabernacles as a symbol of the future outpouring of God’s Spirit, in connexion with the messianic age.”⁴ This must be the reason why John made the reference to the Spirit. For him, Christ was the source of the

¹Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 9.

²See Wai-ye Ng, *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 146-147, 176-177.

³F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 181.

⁴R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 184.

living water, a metaphor for the Spirit. As the eschatological fullness of the messianic age had arrived, the Spirit was a present reality.

Johannine comparison of the Spirit with water was an elaboration of a solid Jewish tradition. According to Dale Allison, “the key to unlocking John’s texts about the living water is to be found primarily—even if not exclusively—in an eschatological expectation.” Behind the “complex of ideas” associated with the motif of water-Spirit, “still preserved intact in Rev 21:6 and 22:1 [see also 22:17],” lies “the idea of the eschatological fountain of the new Jerusalem [see Ezek 47].” In “John’s gospel this image has been construed as a metaphor for the Spirit and moved from the future to the present,” being “colored by eucharistic experience.”¹ In John’s apocalyptic imagery of the New Jerusalem, perhaps we could see the tree of life as a symbol of Christ and the river of life as a symbol of the Spirit—delightful reminders of the constant dependence of the finite upon the Infinite.

Then, it seems that we have a pattern in biblical thought: (1) living water was/is a symbol of God; (2) prophets associated water with the outpouring of the Spirit; (3) Christ presented himself as the fountain of the living water, and opened the possibility for the believers in him to become springs of living water, certainly through the work of the Holy Spirit; and (4) John specifically linked water with the outpouring of the Spirit after the ascension/glorification of Jesus as evidence of his Messiahship.

Water is a good symbol of the Spirit because it flows as a river throughout our lives. It cleanses, satiates the thirst, refreshes, revives, nourishes, causes growth, and produces energy. But, above all, John stresses the symbolism of water as the gift of salvation in Christ, producing life, joy, fullness, and causing the believer to be a channel of salvation to others. This is possible only through the work of the Spirit. While the water metaphor may be applied to individuals, the

¹Dale C. Allison, Jr., “The Living Water,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 30 (1986): 143-157, citations from 145, 153, 155.

imagery of the rain is perhaps better applied to God's people as a movement, for being a collective phenomenon.

Oil

Oil was a primary product to ancient societies, including Jews and other peoples. In biblical times, oil was used for cooking, fuel for lamps, body lotions, and healing purposes.¹ This valuable commodity was derived from animal, mineral, and vegetal sources. Olives were one of the main sources of oil for the Hebrews. In Deut 8:8, "olive oil" is included in the list of blessings offered by the land of Canaan. Solomon exported large quantities of olive oil to Tyre during the construction of the Temple (1 Kgs 5:11).

Thanks to its qualities, oil gained several figurative meanings. Its presence was a poetic symbol of gladness (Isa 61:3) and joy (Ps 45:7). Oil could also indicate comfort and prosperity (Deut 33:24; Job 29:6). Above all, among the Jews, oil became an important element in religious ceremonies. In the Old Testament it "appears fundamentally as a source of strength, vitality and life," and "its various significations all derive from this idea."²

Oil was the fuel of the sanctuary lamps, which should be kept continually lighted (Exod 25:6; Lev 24:2). Priests were consecrated with anointing oil (Exod 29:1-7). In fact, everything in the tabernacle was anointed with fragrant oil, including myrrh, cinnamon, cane, and cassia, combined by perfumers according to a divinely revealed formula (Exod 30:22-33).

The Jewish anointing of priests, prophets, and especially kings became a quasi-sacramental rite. The anointing oil was a symbol of consecration and conferring of authority and charisma for special offices and tasks. Prophets, priests, and elders performed the act. Samuel anointed Saul (1

¹For a series of uses in the Bible, see Exod 25:6; Lev 8:26; Num 7:19; Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam 12:20; 1 Kgs 17:12-16; Ps 23:5; Isa 42:3; Zech 4; Matt 25:1-13; Mark 6:13; Luke 7:46; 10:34; 23:56; Jas 5:14.

²J. Roy Porter, "Oil in the Old Testament," in *The Oil of Gladness: Anointing in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell (London: SPCK; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993), 43.

Sam 10:1), the elders of Israel anointed David (2 Sam 5:3), Zadok anointed Solomon (1 Kgs 1:39), and Elijah anointed Jehu as king (2 Kgs 11:12), as well as Elisha as prophet (1 Kgs 19:16).

The anointing created a series of effects. It had the purpose of making someone holy, conferring inviolability to the Anointed of Yahweh (1 Sam 24:6; 26:11; 2 Sam 1:14), bringing power and might, giving honor and authority, as well as creating an intimate relationship with God.¹ The smooth, balming effect of oil also would be a fitting symbol of the comfort that the Holy Spirit brings to a believer as well as the comfort that the anointed believer offers to others.

If in some way Spirit and oil were associated in earlier Jewish imagery, this link became quite clear after the anointing of Saul. Samuel anointed the future first king of Israel (1 Sam 10:1), and announced, “The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them [a group of prophets]; and you will be changed into a different person” (10:6). In the same day, these things happened (vss. 9-11).

Some scholars have stressed that the pericope of this incident contains folkloristic elements.² However, there is no reason to question the historical character of the narrative. The central point of the incident is the command of Yahweh for Samuel to anoint Saul—and his consequent empowerment by the Spirit. Or, as Bruce Birch writes, one of the author/editor’s “organizing principles is Saul’s career as God’s anointed.”³

How do we know that the anointing is a key factor in this narrative? Note Samuel saying, “Do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you” (10:7). In chap. 11, the Spirit of God comes upon Saul in power (vs. 6), and he leads the rescue of the city of Jabesh. Then, in chap. 13, he disobeys God. In 15:1, before giving him a message from God, Samuel reminds him that he (Samuel) was the one who had anointed him as king. But again Saul rejects the word of God, and is

¹See *ibid.*, 35-45.

²See Bruce C. Birch, “The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul in I Sam 9:1-10:16,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971): 55-68.

³*Ibid.*, 66.

rejected as king (15:26). The Spirit of God departs from Saul (16:14), and he walks to his sad end. With the failure of Saul, God decides to anoint David (16:1). When Samuel anointed him, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (16:13). This shows us not only the relevance of the anointing in this narrative, but also a link between anointing/Spirit/success.

Later, the New Testament introduces the idea of anointing directly with the Spirit. Jesus reads Isa 61:1-2, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor,” and applies the concept to his experience (Luke 4:18-21). In Jesus’ consciousness, he is the eschatological figure of the Isaianic description—the speaker and the messenger of good news at the same time. With the enabling anointing, an appointment to the messianic office is understood, for the speaker adds: “He has sent me” (Isa 61:1).¹

As the Messiah, the “anointed one,”² Jesus will promote liberation for all “exiles” of the unjust system of Satan. If important priestly, royal, and prophetic figures were anointed with oil by humans, he is anointed with the Spirit directly by God, as his mission is greater than theirs. It is not surprising, therefore, that the early believers referred to the anointing of Jesus as a key element for his healings and powerful acts (Acts 10:38).

By indicating the fulfillment of the prophecy “today” (Luke 4:21) in Nazareth, Jesus “did not mean that the prophecy was exhausted on that particular day, but rather that the time had now come of which Isaiah spoke.”³ In a sense, the fulfillment of the messianic anointing continues—in Jesus’ achievements and in the derived anointings of the believers. A believer should be able to say, “The Lord has anointed me with his Spirit to preach good news and minister freedom.”

¹J. Ridderbos, *Isaias: introdução e comentário* (São Paulo: Vida Nova/Mundo Cristão, 1986, 1990), 488.

²J. B. Green and H. E. Heaton underline that *aleipho*, the verb most frequently employed for “anointing” in the New Testament, “refers to the external act of anointing and appears in a variety of contexts,” while *chrío*, “from which we derive ‘Christ,’ or ‘the anointed one,’ appears only once in the Gospels, of Jesus’ anointing by the Holy Spirit” (“Anointing,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992], 12).

³Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters XL-LXVI*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:460.

John, in some way, applies the anointing to all believers. “But you have an anointing from the Holy One,” he writes (1 John 2:20). This “real” anointing (vs. 27) opens the believers’ eyes, so they can perceive the truth and recognize Jesus as the Christ—the “anointed one.”

In the New Testament times, observes R. K. Harrison, the anointing of the sick (Jas 5:14) “had become a quasi-sacramental rite.”¹ But the use of oil in the ante-Nicene Christian liturgy was linked with baptism, not with services for healing. “By the third century,” John Halliburton says, “a baptismal rite that did not include anointing was unthinkable.”²

Anointing must have been highly valued around the fourth century, for there were pre- and postbaptismal anointings, with a variety of associations.³ For example, the oil of exorcism applied on the forehead of the candidate when he renounced Satan was to frighten the devil. “He does not dare to look you in the face when he sees the lightening flash which leaps forth from it and blinds his eyes,” John Chrysostom wrote.⁴

Documents of the late fourth and early fifth centuries show a shift in the prebaptismal rites from a pneumatic to an exorcistic emphasis, and “the explicit reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit gradually shifts from a prebaptismal or baptismal (Chrysostom) location to a postbaptismal one.”⁵ No doubt, however, one of the main uses of anointing in baptismal context in the sacramental traditions was (and still is) associated with the initiatory gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹R. K. Harrison, “Oil,” *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 843-844.

²John Halliburton, “Anointing in the Early Church,” in *The Oil of Gladness: Anointing in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell (London: SPCK; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993), 78.

³See Halliburton, 78-82; and Gabriele Winkler, “The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and Its Implications,” in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995), 58-81.

⁴John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 2.23.

⁵Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999), 107; cf. 123.

We can say, therefore, that the anointing oil is a strong symbol of the Holy Spirit. The oil heals, refreshes, produces energy, warms, and illuminates (when used in lamps). These are appropriate images for the work of the Holy Spirit. But, above all, the anointing oil symbolizes the consecration of a person, and the conferring of authority, inviolability, power, might, and charisma to him/her to accomplish a divine office/mission/task. While the water may be seen primarily as a symbol of corporate endowment, the oil is better seen as a symbol of personal empowerment.

Dove

Doves have an honorable history in many religious traditions. They “are mentioned in literal and figurative senses in the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish and Christian literature.”¹ Besides being used in the Jewish sacrificial cult (Lev 1:14), they symbolized suffering and mourning (Ps 74:19; Isa 38:14; 59:11; Nah 2:7), freedom (Ps 55:6), endearment (Cant 2:14; 5:2), and innocence (Matt 10:16).

It seems that in the Old Testament the dove was already considered a symbol of the Spirit, although some scholars would disagree. Gen 1:2 states that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” This can remind one of a dove in or next to its nest. One Jewish tradition in fact translates this verse as follows: “The Spirit of God like a dove brooded over the waters.”² The verb “hovering” (Hebrew *merahepet*) is used in Deut 32:11 to an eagle watching and caring over its young, probably teaching them how to fly. For a long time scholars have disputed if this verb in Gen 1:2 must be rendered as “brood” or “hover.” But Claus Westermann, following B. S. Childs, suggests that its meaning is settled in favor of “hover,” “flutter” or “flap,” and “so the earlier translation ‘brood’ no longer holds, nor does any reference to the world egg cosmogony.”³

¹*Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, s.v. “Dove.”

²Babylonian Talmud *Hagigah*, 15a.

³Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984, reprint 1990), 107.

We do not have elements to define categorically the nature of this hovering. But if we assume that the agent of this action is the personal Spirit of God, then it is plausible to suggest a conscious, purposeful movement. As the creative power of God, the Spirit shows an attitude of watchfulness, expectancy, and control, ready to bring cosmos out of chaos. Along with the Word, he will make effective in the domain of the matter the abstraction of God's mind.

It is in the New Testament, however, that the symbolism gains strength. The decisive link happened during or after the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan. This event is firmly anchored in the gospel tradition, being recorded in all four gospels. Matthew (3:16) says that Jesus was out of the water when "he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him." According to Mark (1:10), Jesus was coming up out of the water when he saw "the Spirit descending on him like a dove." Luke (3:21, 22) informs that he was "praying" when "the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove." John (1:32) adds that the dove remained on him. Ellen White details that the "dovelike form of purest light" descended directly from the throne of God upon the head of Jesus.¹ Why a dove? What is its true significance?

There are many interpretations—and no one definitive answer.² In 1970s, Stephen Gero wrote that "the characterization of the Holy Spirit as a dove" was still awaiting "a satisfactory explanation," and that "the exegesis of the text, as it stands, is seemingly intractable."³ Unfortunately, his own explanation was equally unsatisfactory. He proposed that the Markan collector/redactor amalgamated two separate baptismal traditions—one, represented by the Gospel of the Hebrews, reporting that the Spirit descended upon Jesus, but not mentioning the dove; the

¹Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 112.

²For a list of views, see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 1:331-336; and Leander E. Keck, "The Spirit and the Dove," *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-1971): 41-67.

³Stephen Gero, "The Spirit as a Dove at the Baptism of Jesus," *Novum Testamentum* 18 (1976): 2.

other, preserved in the 24th Ode of Solomon, mentioning that a dove flew upon the Messiah, but not identifying it with the Spirit.¹

Another possible explanation is that, since in the Jewish tradition the dove was a symbol of Israel (cf. Hos 7:11),² the gospel writers wanted to present Jesus as representative of the new Israel.³ Alfred Edersheim, in fact, states that “the dove was *not* the symbol of the Holy Spirit, but that of Israel.”⁴ Still an alternative answer is that, like the Spirit was “hovering” over the waters in creation (Gen 1:2), he hovered over Jesus in recreation. Water is a common element to both circumstances. The gospel narrative would be an echo of the Genesis narrative. In his somewhat allegorizing style, F. Marsh tries to link the dove of the Jordan with the dove of Noah.⁵

I. Howard Marshall, after classifying several explanations as unsatisfactory, says: “It may be best to assume that the thought is of the Spirit gently descending upon the head of Jesus as a dove might descend, so it looked like a dove.”⁶ His emphasis is on the “fly” of the Spirit. This is also the position of Leander Keck, who writes: “The point is not a dove-like Spirit descending but the Spirit coming with dove-like descent.”⁷ He defends that the story “belongs with the old Palestinian

¹Ibid., 19.

²Ellen Frankel and Betsy Teutsch (s.v. “Dove”) inform that the “persecuted dove, an indefatigable flyer, also symbolizes the Jewish people, who perseveres despite continuous suffering.” “Above Solomon’s throne perched a dove with a hawk in its talons, symbolizing the ultimate victory of Israel over its enemies” (ibid.). The dove has been depicted on Jewish tombstones.

³William Lane (50, 53-58) holds this view.

⁴Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, new upd. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 199.

⁵For example, he observes that the dove went from the ark three times, finding a resting place on the third time; and so the Holy Spirit “had gone to and fro from the presence of the Lord, in Old Testament times,” until finding rest on Christ. “The first three gospels mention that the Spirit descended or lighted upon Christ; but John adds, the Spirit ‘abode’ upon him” (F. Marsh, 13).

⁶I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 153-154.

⁷Keck, 63.

Jewish Aramaic Christian tradition,” and when it “was transmitted on Hellenistic soil, the ambiguity gave rise to a shift from adverbial to adjectival meaning.”¹ That is, the dove-like motion was changed for the dove-like form. However, his exegesis is not totally convincing, and his solution does not answer why a dove, rather than some other bird, appears in the narrative.

Theologically, without trying to establish the history of the account, it seems more consistent to say that the Holy Spirit came down “like a dove” because the dove expressed well the divine mission of Jesus as the Messiah. As Campbell defines, “the dove at Jordan, like the fire at Pentecost, is not there to tell us something about the Spirit, but about the mission of Jesus.”² Ellen White agrees that the dove was a “fit emblem” of Jesus, “the meek and lowly One.”³ She primarily associates the dove with the person of Jesus. Probably, the dove symbolized both: Son and Spirit, persons and missions. In which sense did the symbol meet reality?

For A. B. Simpson, this symbolic figure suggests motherhood, peace, purity, gentleness, and affection (the Spirit of Love).⁴ In fact, the dove symbolizes all this, plus vulnerability, fidelity, simplicity, beauty, and love.⁵ David Laird speaks of perfect innocence and holiness: “When the dove appeared to sit on the Saviour’s head, it denoted the Divine recognition of his holiness” and “his official consecration to the Messianic ministry.”⁶

¹Ibid., 62, 63.

²Campbell, 206.

³Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 112.

⁴A. B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit: Power from on High*, ed. Keith M. Bailey (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994), 3-9.

⁵“In the Near East the dove usually symbolizes the goddess of fertility by whatever name she is known,” Manabu Waida writes, “and in Greece it is especially an ephiphany of Aphrodite, the goddess of love” (“Birds,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade [New York: Macmillan, 1986], 2:225).

⁶David M. W. Laird, “Dove,” *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1907), 1:491.

Rodman Williams points out that the dove “often represents gentleness and innocence,” and mentions that because the dove was used in the Old Testament sacrifices it might “relate to Christ as he who came to offer himself for the sake of the world.”¹ This seems closer to the truth. It could even be suggested that a “covenantal” dove was sent by God to announce publicly the character of Jesus as the promised Messiah.²

Almost in the same line as Rodman Williams, Alastair Campbell suggests that “the Spirit took the form of the dove to convey to Jesus, or was so represented in the tradition on which the Synoptists drew to convey to the hearers/readers, that as Israel it was his destiny to suffer and die for Israel.”³ Perhaps this interpretation explains the art of the catacombs that presents the dove with the cross in its beak; or the fact that the early Christians considered the dove as a symbol of martyrdom.

There are two significant details that can link Spirit/dove/Jesus from a messianic perspective. First, doves (including pigeons) were the only birds that could be sacrificed (Gen 15:9-10; Lev 12:6-8; Num 6:10). The author of the fourth book of Ezra echoed this fact when he writes that “from all the birds that have been created you [God] have named for yourself one dove” (4 Ezra 5:26). As Maurice H. Farbridge says, “doves and pigeons hold the same symbolical position amongst birds which sheep and lambs hold amongst animals.”⁴ The dove was the sacrifice of the poor, the category to which Jesus belonged (Luke 2:22-24). Besides, as I have mentioned, the dove was a symbol of suffering. Second, the words that came from heaven at Jordan, “You are my Son,

¹J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and Christian Living* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1990), 146.

²In the ancient Near East, doves were used in treaty-making contexts, practice attested in the Sumerian “Vulture Stela” (of third millennium B.C.) and possibly reflected in Gen 15:9-10. The dove functioned as a treaty-messenger, or as a symbolical reminder that the treaty-breaker would not have “rest,” since the dove is a source of constant noise. See Christopher Begg, “Doves and Treaty-Making: Another Possible Reference,” *Biblische Notizen* 48 (1989): 8-11.

³Campbell, 208.

⁴Maurice H. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism* (New York: Ktav, 1970), 80.

whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22), are an echo of the opening Servant song (Isa 42:1). Note that in the same verse Isaiah says, “I will put my Spirit on him.” The text continues describing the mission of the Servant: he will not shout or cry out (vs. 2); he will establish justice on earth (vs. 4); he will be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (vs. 6); he will open the eyes of the blind and free captives (vs. 7).

The first aspect of Jesus’ mission as the Messiah, the sacrificial dimension, was to suffer silently and vicariously for Israel and the world. He did not come as an earthly warrior king, but as the pacific Messiah, although he paradoxically has come to bring division (Luke 12:49-53). The second aspect, the empowering dimension, was to bring blessing and freedom to the suffering people through miracles, and this was possible because God had anointed him with the Spirit (see Luke 4:18-21).

Then at the Jordan we have a twofold mission to be represented. The first aspect of it could be well symbolized by a lamb. In fact, John the Baptist employed this imagery (John 1:29). However, a lamb coming from heaven would not be natural, and this was an exclusive symbol of the Messiah. The second aspect had to do directly with the power of the Spirit. So a bird, namely a dove, coming from heaven was the best symbol.¹ It was a symbol of suffering, sacrifice, redemption, peace, freedom, and victory. It was at the same time a symbol of the Spirit and a symbol of the Messiah’s special character and mission. Through the divine dove, Spirit and Son, heaven and earth, were linked.

Seal

Seals were very common in biblical times. In Mesopotamia, seals took two forms: stamp and cylinder. Both types were engraved to produce impression when rolled or stamped onto a receptive surface (clay or wax). Made of different materials, such as bone, shell, soft stone, fired

¹According to Keck, “there was a Jewish precedent for comparing divine activity, motion and speaking, with movements and chirping of doves,” although “there is no fixed tradition in Jewish environs of dove-symbolism which is really germane to the thrust of our story” (Keck, 66).

clay, wood, and semi-precious stones (quartz, carnelian, chalcedony, a garnet, jasper, rock crystal), they might contain (and bear) either design or inscription or both. Besides being used as administrative devices, they were valued as amulets and ornaments.¹ Many thousands of seals have been discovered in the Near East, and more than 200 Hebrew seals bearing their owners' names have been recovered.²

The term "seal" (Hebrew *hotam*, Greek *sphragis*) could refer either to the object or to its impression. In the Bible, seals are used in both literal and figurative senses. Literally, for example, the tomb of Christ was sealed after his burial (Matt 27:66), in order to be protected against violations. Figuratively, Paul said that his converts in Corinth were a "seal" of his apostleship (1 Cor 9:2). Here the seal means evidence, authentication, or proof.

Seals carry the ideas of identity, ownership,³ authority, power, authenticity, quality, security, protection, mark, sign, character likeness, mystery, worthiness, and preservation, depending on the circumstance. For example, a king's signet on a document had the authority of the king himself. The decrees written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with his signet ring could not be revoked (Esth 8:8). God instructed Daniel to seal his book (Dan 12:9), which meant that the content of the book would remain involved in mystery until the time of the end. John received an opposite instruction (Rev 22:10; cf. 10:4), because the time was near. The Sabbath is a seal/sign between God and his people (Ezek 20:12, 20).

Biblically, all believers throughout history have had a seal, but in the end-time there will be a special sealing. The gospel seal of faith and love must not be confused with the eschatological

¹Bonnie S. Magness-Gardner, "Seals, Mesopotamian," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1062-1064.

²D. J. Wiseman and A. R. Millard, "Seal, Sealing (in the Old Testament)," *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 1070-1071.

³Some ancient people used to place an imprint of their seals on their objects, as well as to bear in their bodies a mark or tattoo of their gods.

seal of approval and protection.¹ The origin of the first leads to the second, which in turn authenticates the quality of the first. The Spirit accomplishes both sealings, but the latter is attributed to angels (Rev 7:2-4) probably as a narrative device to enhance our visual imagination of this important action in a context of intense spiritual polarization.

To particularize a little bit, every worshiper of the beast will “receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead” (Rev 13:16)—perhaps an allusion to the mark that, in ancient times, slaves and soldiers received on their foreheads and right hands, respectively. In opposition, the 144,000 will be sealed on the foreheads with the name of the Lamb and of the Father (Rev 7:2-4; 14:1). This is a spiritual sealing of a special people for a time of crisis.² Beatrice S. Neall points out that the purpose of the eschatological sealing is to fix the character of the saints and “to make them God’s own inviolable possession,” guaranteeing “their immunity to apostasy and their eternal security” during the events of the great tribulation that will “rock the church and the world.”³ Roy C. Naden complements: “In John’s end-time setting, God’s ‘seal’ symbolizes the love relationship between the believer and God, in contrast with the ‘mark of the beast,’ which symbolizes the coercive and manipulative relationship between Satan and his followers.”⁴

In terms of explicit references to the Holy Spirit, the idea of sealing appears basically in the letters of Paul. In 2 Cor 1:22, the apostle says: “He [God] anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” A more explicit connection is found in Eph 1:13-14: “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the

¹Hans K. LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation: The Biblical Drama of Armageddon* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1987), 169-173.

²Adventist scholars consider the Sabbath as a/the sign of loyalty and allegiance to God. In the end-time, this outward sign of an authentic inward relationship with the Creator/Redeemer will have a probatory role.

³Beatrice S. Neall, “Sealed Saints and the Tribulation,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 256, 278.

⁴Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb Among the Beasts: Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 126.

promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession." The next significant text is Eph 4:30: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

How did Paul's readers understand his metaphor about seal and the Holy Spirit functioning as a deposit? Did it make sense to them? Edward Bickersteth offers us a helpful comment about the Ephesians:

The allusion to the seal as a pledge of purchase would be peculiarly intelligible to the Ephesians, for Ephesus was a maritime city, and an extensive trade in timber was carried on there by the shipmasters of the neighbouring ports. The method of purchase was this: the merchant, after selecting his timber, stamped it with his own signet, which was an acknowledged sign of ownership. He often did not carry off his possession at the time; it was left in the harbour with other floats of timber; but it was chosen, bought, and stamped; and in due time the merchant sent a trusty agent with the signet, who, finding that timber which bore a corresponding impress, claimed and brought it away for the master's use. Thus the Holy Spirit impresses on the soul now the image of Jesus Christ; and this is the sure pledge of the everlasting inheritance.¹

What does it mean to be sealed by the Spirit? Some theologians, such as Oscar Cullmann, suggest that the baptism itself is the seal.² Likewise, Potterie and Lyonnet say, "The seal of the Spirit is a gift received *in the very act of baptism*, and not a post-baptismal gift."³ Reginald White defends that the gift of the Spirit acts "as the divine seal upon baptism."⁴ In his important work about initiation, G. W. H. Lampe sees the identification of the seal with baptism in the patristic writings as a correct reading of the term in the New Testament.⁵

¹Edward Henry Bickersteth, *The Holy Spirit: His Person and Work* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 176.

²Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM, 1950), 46.

³Ignace de la Potterie and Stanislaus Lyonnet, *The Christian Lives by the Spirit* (New York: Alba House, 1971), 85, italics in original.

⁴R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation: A Theology of Baptism and Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 203.

⁵G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and in the Fathers* (London: Longmans, Green, 1951).

This seal-baptism connection is not new; it has precedents in early tradition. Pamela Jackson tells us that the great Ambrose of Milan (fourth century) used an “elusive” spiritual seal connected with baptism (it was a post-baptismal rite), but we do not know “what ritual action—if any—accompanied the bishop’s prayer.”¹ According to Maxwell Johnson, “if Ambrose had any ritual gesture for his spiritual seal, then the most likely one would be an imposition of hands.”²

Baptism was/is an impacting event. But it is not an end in itself, nor is it a magical rite to bring the Spirit. “In the New Testament,” Kilian McDonnell insightfully comments, “faith is a corollary of baptism, and the two cannot be separated.”³ Baptism was part of the so-called “initiation process.”⁴ Initiation, which occurred when one opened his/her mind, heart, and arms to receive Jesus as Messiah and Lord, was a package including conversion and discipleship. Baptism in the Holy Spirit, as understood by the early church theologians, occurred in this broad context of becoming a Christian. It was not a separated or subsequent event, in the modern and narrower Pentecostal sense. Charisms were consequences, not the goal.⁵

Rejecting the connection baptism-seal and also the idea that the seal of the circumcision in the Old Testament was transferred to baptism in the New, J. K. Parratt suggests that the seal/earnest of the Spirit is “a charismatic effusion of the Spirit.”⁶ In this case, the “promised Holy Spirit” in

¹Pamela Jackson, “The Meaning of ‘Spiritale Signaculum’ in the Mystagogy of Ambrose of Milan,” *Ecclesia Orans* 7 (1990): 94, italics in original.

²Maxwell Johnson, 140. “As the ‘seal of the Holy Spirit,’” Johnson writes, “this post-baptismal chrismation has remained intimately connected to baptism itself in the Christian East and, as such, should never simply be equated with Western ‘confirmation’” (224).

³Kilian McDonnell, “Does the Theology and Practice of the Early Church Confirm the Classical Pentecostal Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit?” *Pneuma* 21 (1999): 116.

⁴See Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1990).

⁵McDonnell, “Does the Theology and Practice of the Early Church Confirm the Classical Pentecostal Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit?” 133.

⁶J. K. Parratt, “The Seal of the Holy Spirit and Baptism,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 23 (1969): 113.

Eph 1:13 (cf. Gal 3:14) should be seen at the light of Jesus' promise of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) and the Pentecost, with its charismatic manifestations. The term *arrabon* ("earnest") should be interpreted in the same sense that *aparche* ("firstfruits") appears in Rom 8:23, that is, as a foretaste of the future.

This interpretation is interesting because the Spirit is considered as a real experience, not just as an abstract concept. Besides, it does justice to Paul's already/not-yet theology, considering that the apostle seems to see the work of Spirit as "a partial and preliminary inauguration of eschatological blessings," a powerful operation being fulfilled in the present era and still to be fulfilled in plenitude in the future.¹ To use a non-Pauline expression, Paul wants to make clear that the messianic kingdom has arrived and anticipates an absolute and eternal reality. Now we are "becoming" temples of the Spirit/God, experiencing a foretaste of his action in our lives. In the future we will be "perfected" temples of the Spirit/God, experiencing the fullness of his presence in our lives.

What if the firstfruits refer to something else? Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., thinks so. His argument takes the following line. The eschatological realities, by their very nature, will endure. The firstfruits belong with the eschatological realities. Therefore, they will not cease or be removed. On the other hand, the miraculous gifts, such as prophecy, tongues, and healing, are temporary. They have ceased or will cease some day (1 Cor 13:8-13). To conclude, when Paul speaks about firstfruits, he is not speaking about gifts, but about something else, namely, faith, hope, and love, qualities that express the resurrection of the inner person, a *sine qua non* condition for the future resurrection of the body, and that will endure forever.² In terms of logic, it makes sense.

¹Paul R. Thorsell, "The Spirit in the Present Age: Preliminary Fulfillment of the Predicted New Covenant According to Paul," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 411.

²Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "'Life-Giving Spirit': Probing the Center of Paul's Pneumatology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 585, 586.

However, even if the exegesis of Parratt or Gaffin is correct, we should not exclude other aspects of the process of initiation—which, by the way, Parratt admits.¹ It seems that Paul is not identifying seal with baptism. At the same time, he would not discard baptism as the visible, outward rite that attested the inward spiritual reality. For the early Christian mind-set, faith in Christ, baptism, and reception of the Spirit were perhaps aspects of a sole experience. A more rigid distinction came later in church history—and can be misleading.

We also must keep the emphasis on the seal as assurance in Christ. The popular phrase “once saved, always saved” is unbiblical.² However, rightly understood, there is a sense in which the concept is biblical. Contextualizing the gospel to his non-Jewish audience, Paul uses the idea of adoption³ as a metaphor for the new status of the believers in Christ before God—sons with all the rights and privileges of natural children. The Spirit does not tattoo God’s name on our skin, but imprints his love in our minds. The eternal security position has a series of defenders influenced by the Reformed tradition. Adventists, closer to the Arminian tradition, prefer to think of assurance as grounded in God’s loving purpose to save all who are willing to be saved. All who choose to be “in Christ” are embraced in that divine purpose.⁴ A crucial difference between both theological systems is that while in Calvinism one can never infallibly know if one was “once saved,” in Arminianism (the biblical view) one can surely know that one is presently saved if one decides to continue in Christ (Rom 8:16-17, 38-39).⁵

¹Parratt, 113.

²The idea that nothing can jeopardize the believer’s salvation, no matter what he/she does, turns the concept of assurance into an absurdity. The doctrine of “eternal security” seems very weak at the light of texts such as Matt 20:22 (“he who stands firm to the end will be saved”) and 1 Cor 9:27 (“I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize”).

³This was a Greco-Roman technical term; only Paul uses it in the New Testament (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5). See Francis Lyall, “Roman Law in the Writings of Paul—Adoption,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 458-466.

⁴See Jerry Moon’s unpublished paper “Ellen G. White on Assurance,” especially Appendix A, “A Closer Look at the Popular Doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’”

⁵*Ibid.*, 16.

Protesting against a popular tendency since about 1873 of identifying the seal with sanctification, the preacher/theologian Martyn Lloyd-Jones defines the seal as “the assurance of the Spirit with our spirits that we are the children of God.”¹ Eldon Woodcock also argues pro-assurance in a learned article. Contextually, he says, Paul is “emphasizing the reality of salvation”; historically, “no suggestion of a connection between sealing and baptism was made until the early church fathers, who wrote decades after Paul.”²

The rationale for the assurance view is more or less as follows. God is faithful; he will fulfill his promises. Believers can trust him and go ahead. Despite this, God gives his Spirit as a seal and a gracious *arrabon* (“pledge”), that is, an initial partial payment used to confirm a purchase or commercial transaction.³ As the pledge was an expression of commitment and seriousness in business, so the Spirit is a guarantee of reliability and faithfulness in salvation.

It is no surprise, therefore, that *arrabon* acquired a high theological relevance. This word, according to Leonard I. Sweet, is part of a selected group of Hebrew and Greek words, including *shalom*, *hesed*, and *metanoia*, among others, that every believer should know.⁴ In the first century, the pledge could be used either for sale or service. A. J. Kerr has an insightful comment, which can illuminate Paul’s use of *arrabon*:

As a possible source of the metaphor a contract for services has an important advantage over a contract of sale, a point which seems to have been overlooked by commentators who mention only contracts of sale. In a contract for services the person who gives the *arrabon* is the one for whom the work is to be done; the person who receives it is the one who will do the work. In a contract of sale the buyer gives the *arrabon* and the seller receives it. It is easy to envisage God giving an *arrabon* to those who believe in him and serve him; it is difficult to think of a hypothetical transaction in which Christians sell something to God and receive an *arrabon* from him as the buyer.⁵

¹Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable: Power & Renewal in the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1985), 147, 161.

²Eldon Woodcock, “The Seal of the Spirit,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 149.

³See *ibid.*, 153.

⁴Leonard I. Sweet, *New Life in the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 107.

⁵A. J. Kerr, “Notes and Studies: *Arrabon*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 95; the word *arrabon* is Greek in the original.

The seal indicates that the believer is God's inviolable property, bought legally by Christ and guaranteed by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in his/her life. As God's possession, he/she must continue motivated to live a Godly life in an ungodly world.¹ Perhaps thinking of the dialectic between the now and the not-yet,² Paul seems to say to his scattered readers in space and time, "Do not give up when you sin, suffer, and feel discouraged. You have a future, as sons of God. The Spirit is here emotionally aligned with you. Enjoy your intimacy with God. After the groaning comes the ecstasy."

This image of the seal, therefore, has two poles, one objective and the other subjective: (1) the power/fidelity of God in his redemptive purpose and (2) the answer/assurance of the believer regarding God's offer. Probably, all persons of the Godhead are involved, since Paul speaks about the Godhead in Eph 1:13-14. God seals, Christ "legalizes" the sealing, the Holy Spirit is the seal, and the Christian receives the impression of the seal. All this is a warm interaction, not a cold transaction.

This dimension of the Spirit's work must not be underestimated. The believer will endure the struggles of the Christian life, working successfully for God, only if he/she can experience the assurance of his/her salvation. Only a son of God aware of his sonship can act as a son of God. And the Spirit warrants, "You truly are a son of God." Thus, the imagery of the seal is both a document of ownership, functioning as a pledge that sustains the believer even in the worst situations, and a psychological tool, creating in the believer a deep awareness of God's loving attitude toward him or her. It witnesses to the believer that he/she is a citizen of another world empowered to fulfill a mission in this world. Believers belong to the future, but act in the present.

¹The expression "do not grieve the Holy Spirit" indicates an ethical concern of Paul. This act of grieving the Spirit seems to occur in a communitarian context.

²"For Paul," says John A. Bertone, "it is precisely his view of the Spirit that gives shape and meaning to the tension between God's redemptive plan enacted but still not culminated"; in this plan, "the Spirit functions as *sustainer*" ("The Function of the Spirit in the Dialectic Between God's Soteriological Plan Enacted but Not Yet Culminated: Romans 8:1-27," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 [1999]: 76, 97, italics in original).

Assessment of the biblical use of symbols
relating to the Spirit

In closing this section, we can ask why the Holy Spirit chose to manifest himself through symbols. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman write: “Biblical images of the Spirit emphasize the senses, things known best by experiencing them: the force of wind, the intimacy of breathing, the instincts of a dove, the energy of fire, strong comfort and the fragrant balm of oil.”¹ This points to experience. For example, Rebecca Prichard wrote a book using the five senses as a metaphor to speak about the Spirit and a sense-making theology from a feminist perspective.²

Ryrie sees a practical reason for the Spirit’s representations to be related to “common, everyday things,” such as fire, seal, and water. “Perhaps this is God’s deliberate way of urging us to be thinking of the Spirit more than we usually do.”³ For example, when we seal a letter, we should remember that we are sealed for salvation; when we drink water, we can thank God for the water of eternal life and try to become a channel for that water.⁴ His interpretation is interesting and has pastoral value, but I prefer to emphasize another aspect.

My hypothesis is that the symbols show how the Spirit identifies with his mission. The symbols tell us something not about who the Spirit is, but about what he does. Only indirectly do the symbols shed light on the nature of the Spirit. In this case, these six symbols must be seen as expressions of his enabling power in concrete situations. Possibly, the flexibility of the symbols can be understood as a means of adjusting the role of the Spirit to specific missions. For example, at the Jordan, where Jesus was being anointed for a suffering/sacrificial mission, the Spirit came as a dove. At Pentecost, where the disciples needed energy, power, and ability to announce Jesus in other languages, the Holy Spirit came in the form of a strong wind and tongues of fire. Both

¹Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, s.v. “Holy Spirit.”

²Rebecca Button Prichard, *Sensing the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Feminist Perspective* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999).

³Ryrie, 36.

⁴Ibid.

necessity and symbols were perfectly fitted. The Spirit is such a wonderful enabling power that he can even take the symbolic shape of our mission.

It is important to notice that at the Jordan there was, so to say, a concentration of symbols of the Spirit. With a little effort and imagination, we find water (a river, indeed), the dove, an invisible oil (Messiah means “the anointed one”), the “lightning” (Matt 3:16) of the Spirit-dove descending on Jesus (this stands for fire), the seal of sonship (“this is my Son”), and the actual presence of the *Pneuma* (wind) agitating the air in his dovelike flight¹ and driving or impelling Jesus to the desert (Mark 1:12). Therefore, it is in Jesus and his mission that the symbols of the Spirit gain their plain significance.

The problem is that for many people today the symbols say little—or nothing. In 1965, Paul W. Pruyser wrote that “the Spirit’s traditional and historical symbols are dead and have been dead for a long time.”² Doves meant something for a rural society of the first century; they do not mean much for hurried people who contend with them for a place in the squares of a megalopolis in the twenty-first century. Symbols are born in a making-sense context, where they touch the day-to-day experience of real people. If we have to explain the meaning of a symbol, this is a sign that it may be dead—although symbols also become dead by neglect.

Can we recover the freshness, power, and meaning of the symbols? Or can we create new symbols for the Spirit? Pruyser is skeptical:

But since spontaneity is an essential quality of symbols we must take a dim view of all attempts at putting new life into old shells and discourage artificial constructions. The latter lead only to emblems and figures of speech. One must wait for the *kairos* in which the new symbol, if the reality to which it points is felt as abundantly alive, will announce itself, so to speak.³

¹Recalling a dove-experience of her own, John E. Taylor writes about Jesus’ baptism: “I can verify that a dove coming down on someone with wings flapping is something like a very powerful rush of wind striking one’s head, with a noise of windy flurry and flapping. It is quite a shock and is certainly not a gentle experience” (*The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 274).

²Paul W. Pruyser, “Life and Death of a Symbol: A History of the Holy Ghost Concept and It’s [*sic*] Emblems,” *McCormick Quarterly* 18 (1965): 5.

³*Ibid.*, 21.

Perhaps we do not need to be so negativist. Our modern society is again searching for meaningful symbols. A good metaphor, which “is in the sphere of words what the symbol is in the sphere of things,”¹ still causes impact. Recently, Charles Henderson speculated that, in a “networked world” in which God tends to be seen as relational, the Internet has naturally become a rich icon and may come to be considered as a symbol of God, “offering humanity a new window looking out upon the Infinite.”² But what if we use the brain as a metaphor (or analogy) for the Trinity?³

The brain has two hemispheres, each one controlling the converse part of the body.⁴ This “obliges” them to share information. Both are connected through the corpus callosum. In some cases, neurosurgeons disconnect them. A hemisphere can be experimented with separately in such a way that the other is not even “aware” of what is going on with its neural neighbor. Generally speaking, the left hemisphere is more specialized in logic and reason, and the right in emotion and imagination.⁵ Neurologist António Damásio suggests that emotion is a key factor to the process of

¹Farbridge, 16.

²Charles Henderson, “The Internet as a Metaphor for God?” *Cross Currents* 50 (2000): 77-83, citations from 80, 83.

³As common sense alerts us, God is a mystery beyond the human intellect, and our language is too poor to describe the riches of his complexity. But some analogies and metaphors can help us to organize our ideas about the divine. The metaphor of the brain in connection with the Trinity must be seen in this context. In its limitations, this metaphor seems too good for not having been explored yet. Of course, in his attempt to explain the operations within the Trinity, Augustine likens the trinitarian beings to the memory, understanding, and will (*The Trinity* 10.12, 14.8, 15.7). However, his approach was different. Here the focus is on the brain itself.

⁴The reader interested in neurological anatomy will find many good sources with the latest brain research available. See, for example, S. P. Springer and G. Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain*, 4th ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1993).

⁵Marc Dax, an obscure French country doctor, seems to have been the first to suggest, in 1836, that each hemisphere of the brain has its own characteristics; but his compatriot Paul Broca, who published a series of celebrated papers on brain function in the 1860s, was also a pioneer in the subject of the role of the left versus the right hemisphere in language. For the evidence of the priority issue, Dax or Broca, see R. Cubelli and C. G. Montagna, “A Reappraisal of the Controversy of Dax and Broca,” *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* 3 (1994): 1-12.

rational thought.¹ Damage to certain areas of the brain affects its functions, such as reasoning, decision making, and affective/social interaction.² The brain is not just the sum of its parts, but a complex synthesis. The cortex, a kind of “mantle” with 3 mm of thickness and multi-layers covering the hemispheres (in fact, the whole brain), expresses this synthesis.

In our imagination, we might think of the brain metaphor as follows: The left hemisphere would stand for the Son (Logos, Word), and the right hemisphere for the Spirit (Pneuma). The cortex, a kind of planner and decision maker, could represent the Father.³ In this figure, the brain would symbolize the Trinity. We could also compare the cosmos, the world, or the church to the body (cf. Eph 4:15-16; 1 Cor 12:27). As it occurs with a normal person, God has contact with us through both “hemispheres” of his brain. Each one has specialized tasks, and every part is necessary for a perfect functioning. In this metaphor, we can also imagine the Spirit as the band of nerves which transmits the impulses from the brain to the body and vice versa, or as the neurons which release neurotransmitters for spiritual synapses between us and God.

Theologians and worship leaders should invest their talents in creating or re-creating powerful metaphors for the Spirit’s action. We must be advised, however, that the best ideas are in the domain of nature,⁴ and the prophets have already used them! An alternative “symbol” is a powerful presence of the Spirit himself in the life of the believers, just as the Spirit anointed Jesus at the Jordan.

¹António R. Damásio, *O erro de Descartes: emoção, razão e cérebro humano*, 5th ed. (Mem Martins, Portugal: Europa-América, 1995), 178-211.

²Ibid., 87-88.

³See also the concept of the “triune brain” developed by researcher Paul D. MacLean (*The Triune Brain in Evolution: Role in Paleocerebral Functions* [New York: Plenum, 1990]). Working with evolutionary biology, MacLean ascribes three layers to the human brain: (1) the brainstem (hindbrain), responsible for bodily functions; (2) the limbic system (at the top of the brainstem), the seat of the emotions; and (3) the cerebral cortex (in the forebrain), the seat of reason. If we take this organization as an analogy for the Godhead, the brainstem would stand for the Son, the limbic area for the Spirit, and the cortex for the Father.

⁴“Through the creation,” Ellen G. White says, “we are to become acquainted with the Creator. . . . As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind” (*Christ’s Object Lessons* [Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1900], 24).

The Work of the Spirit: The Enabler in Action

Philip Rosato asserted that, “with regard to the Holy Spirit, all Christian theologians are almost necessarily novices.”¹ And Joseph Ratzinger sees “a certain danger” in speaking about the Spirit, who “withdraws from us into mystery even more than Christ.”² They are right. It is not easy to catch the “uncatchable” and to define the indefinable. For this reason, if theologians like to speak about the nature/person of Christ, they prefer to speak about the work of the Spirit. Today, when the trinitarian theology is moving from ontology to economy,³ it is still more stimulating to study the work of the Spirit, in his relations with the world.

But what does the Spirit do? In the Bible, the Spirit has an important role in realizing the plans of the Godhead. Some ancient theologians liked to distinguish the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. Abraham Kuyper, perhaps with undue dogmatism, declares that “in every work effected by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in common, the power *to bring forth* proceeds from the Father; the power *to arrange* from the Son; the power *to perfect* from the Holy Spirit,” who leads all creation to its final purpose.⁴

More flexibly, theologian Clark Pinnock professes, “I see the Spirit as the power that brings God’s plans into effect, communicating divine energies in the world and aiming at increasing levels of participating in the fellowship of love.”⁵ For him, the Spirit is the “perfecter” of creation.⁶ This is also the opinion of Leon Wood: “In general, the work of the Father is that of serving as supreme

¹Philip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 181.

²Joseph Ratzinger, “The Holy Spirit as *Communio*: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine,” *Communio* 25 (1998): 325.

³According to Badcock, “contemporary trinitarian theology is preoccupied with the involvement of God in the world and, correlatively, of the world in God” (171).

⁴Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1995 [originally published in 1900]), 20, 22, italics in original.

⁵Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 60-61.

⁶Ibid., 61.

planner, author, and designer; that of the Son as worker, carrying out the directives of the Father, and especially giving revelation of the Godhead; and that of the Holy Spirit as completer or consummator.”¹

Such distinction seems to be biblical, since the unity of the Trinity is not broken. Evidently, there is no division within the Godhead (John 16:14-15). All belong to all, and work together. Yet there may be a functional distribution of tasks, so to say. Eph 1:3-14 seems to picture these distinct functions regarding our redemption: the Father plans it (vss. 3-5); the Son works it (6-12); the Holy Spirit applies it (13-14). The same principle could be applied in relation to creation.

Obviously, that is a very generic characterization. The Spirit’s work is as vast as the work of God, but he also performs specific tasks in enabling God’s people, from past and present, as this section intends to show.

Enabling in Biblical Times

As mentioned above, the Spirit has a multifaceted ministry. Here I will list twelve aspects of his work regarding enabling believers. These roles must not be seen as a collection of isolated activities, but as an integrated ministry. There is only one Spirit, one mission, and one goal. This is a guarantee of unity in diversity.

The Spirit as Life-Giver

The Spirit gives life and renews all things. He is co-creator of the world, the humankind, the animals, and so on. Perhaps it is significant, as Herbert Lockyer observes, that “our first glimpse of the Spirit in Scripture is that of a Creator” (Gen 1:2).² According to Moltmann, he is “*the breath of God’s life,*” and, therefore, if God “withdraws the breath of his life, everything

¹Leon Wood, 16.

²Lockyer, 47.

disintegrates into dust.”¹ This aspect is implicit in the significance of the Hebrew word *ruah* (“spirit”): the mysterious and creative Spirit of God, the principle of all life.

We find a beautiful statement about this vital Spirit in Ps 104:30, a cultic psalm carrying similarities with the “Hymn of Aton,” probably due to their common themes and geographical traditions, but not literary dependence.² Says the Hebrew psalmist, “When you send your Spirit, they [all living things] are created, and you renew the face of the earth.” This verse presents the “continued activity” of Yahweh as the Lord of life.³ God is the “father-figure,” and all creatures are “members of his extended family,” depending on him. Yahweh’s breath/Spirit “is the secret of physical life.”⁴

In another poetic text, Elihu testifies: “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). In the light of Job 32:8 and 33:3, Elihu could be referring to an ability, and not properly to life. He seems to be presenting himself as a speaker of insights inspired by the Spirit, a young interlocutor who deserves to be heard.⁵ Inspiration and life, however, are not opposed. “In the exalted consciousness of having been endowed with life from the inbreathed breath of the Almighty, Elihu stands invincible before Job.”⁶ Besides, in Job 34:14-15 (a text similar to Ps 104:30), Elihu clearly ascribes to the Spirit a creating/vitalizing power.

¹Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, 24, italics in original.

²See P. C. Craigie, “The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry: Psalm 104 in the Light of Egyptian and Ugaritic Poetry,” *Semitics* 4 (1974): 10-21.

³Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 303.

⁴Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 21 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 34.

⁵In his comments about Job 32:8, John E. Hartley says: “Elihu seems to be asserting that having been inspired by the Spirit . . . he has insight that may be trusted despite his youth” (*The Book of Job* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 434).

⁶F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 2:218.

Ezekiel's famous vision of the valley of dry bones also expresses the vivifying power of the Spirit. First, the prophet paints a picture of extreme deterioration and dryness (Ezek 37:1-2). Apparently, there is no chance of bringing that heap of disjoined bones back to life. As Moshe Greenberg observes, "God's question about the reanimation of the bones highlights its improbability."¹ But then the Spirit/wind/breath² enters into action, and a "dead situation" is reversed. This passage, in Greenberg's words, "conveys a powerful, inspiring message of national restoration in a rhetorically perfect vehicle."³ The context indicates a time when Israel would leave the exile and gain new life. Ezekiel's metaphors are so vivid and the rhetoric so powerful that the early Jewish and Christian interpreters took the passage literally, as a reference to resurrection. The central point here is that the Spirit plays a decisive role in this oracle of re-creation, connecting it to the preceding oracle of re-formation (36:27).⁴ God clearly states, "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live" (vs. 14).

In the New Testament, as in the Septuagint, the word *pneuma* has a meaning similar to that of *ruah*. John stresses that it is the Spirit that operates the new birth of a person, giving him/her spiritual life (John 3:6; 6:63). For Marianne Meye Thompson, "the parallel between Jesus' 'breathing' the Spirit on the disciples [John 20:22] and God 'breathing' the breath of life into humankind [Gen 2:7] can scarcely be judged accidental, particularly in light of John's portrayal of the Spirit as the Spirit of Life."⁵

¹Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, Anchor Bible, vol. 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 742-743.

²These key words appear nine times (vss. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14).

³Greenberg, 747.

⁴Ibid., 747, 749-751.

⁵Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 172.

According to Thomas Marsh, however, “it was Paul who introduced into Christian thinking the concept of the *life-giving* Spirit,” being here “utterly original.”¹ This perhaps is true in terms of literary dependency, but not in relation to the Old Testament. In his masterpiece on the Spirit (Rom 8, a chapter that many theologians would like to have written), Paul introduces the Spirit as a principle of new life in connection with the work of Christ (vss. 1-2, 9-11). Here the Spirit is life because he legally applies Christ’s life to us. In 1 Cor 15:45, where Paul combats “the Gnostics on their ground, but in his terms,”² he presents the “last Adam” (Christ) as “a life-giving spirit.” In 2 Cor 3:6, he plainly states that “the Spirit gives life.”

Paul certainly knew the Hellenistic concepts on *pneuma*, but remains rooted in the Jewish/biblical pneumatology. “The prophets’ presentation of the messianic age as the new creation is Paul’s source for his concept of the life-giving Spirit,” Thomas Marsh says.³ Elaborating on his ideas of creation and new creation, Paul integrates theology, christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.⁴

A basic feature in Paul’s thought here is what James Dunn calls “Adam christology.”⁵ As the eternal Son of God, Christ creates Adam, who sins and loses the presence of God/Spirit in his life, becoming spiritually dead. But, in and through Christ as the Adam II,⁶ the process is reversed. The Spirit starts by renewing our minds in the image of Christ and ends by transforming our bodies. Paul’s line of reasoning may be graphically presented as shown in table 1.

¹Thomas Marsh, “Holy Spirit in Early Christian Teaching,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 45 (1978): 107, italics in original.

²James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 156.

³Thomas Marsh, “Holy Spirit in Early Christian Teaching,” 108.

⁴See Rom 5; 8:2, 11; 1 Cor 3:3-6; 15:45; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 1:15-20.

⁵Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Christology*, 231-233.

⁶For insightful Adam/Christ parallels, see Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

TABLE 1

PAUL'S CONCEPT ON THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT
IN CREATION AND NEW CREATION

Creation	New Creation
God is the creator.	God is the redeemer.
Christ is the agent of creation.	Christ is the agent of redemption.
The Spirit is the animator of Adam I, who becomes "a living being."	The Spirit is the resurrector of Jesus, who, as Adam II, becomes "a life-giving spirit," and the animator of the believers.
Adam I introduces sin and death into the world.	Adam II pours out the Spirit and life into the believers and the church.
Humanity in its natural state is lifeless and does not have hope.	The church in its "pneumatized" dynamic lives in and awaits for the new creation.

The life-giving character of the Spirit, then, must be seen in relation to nature and spiritual nature, or creation and redemption. As Kuyper says, "in nature the Spirit of God appears as creating, in grace as re-creating."¹ Here there is no contradiction with the idea of creation through the Son. The Son is the agent or principle of creation (John 1:1-3; Col 1:16-17); the Spirit is its animator (Gen 1:2; 2:7; Ps 104:30). The work of the Dabbar/Logos/Word (the pre-incarnate Son) and that of Ruah/Pneuma/Spirit appear in parallel in Ps 33:6. The author of 2 Baruch (21:4)² addresses God as the one "who created the earth, the one who fixed the firmament by the word and fastened the height of heaven by the Spirit." In fact, the creative act is shared by the Godhead. In this re-creative work, the action of the Spirit is linked with and conditioned by the Word (the

¹Kuyper, 50.

²Also called "The Syriac Apocalypse," this work, which claims to have been written by Baruch, secretary of Jeremiah, probably appeared after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

incarnate Word, Jesus, and the written Word, Scripture), without being limited in the world. Regeneration is the name that theologians give to the initial spiritual life-giving process.

The British preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) believed that the very first work of the Spirit in the person is to regenerate him/her.¹ By regeneration—which in his Calvinist view would occur only once, in opposition to conversion, which is caused by the former and can occur many times—he understood the act of the Spirit in breathing a divine influence into a sinner dead in sin to make him/her spiritually alive. No one knows how the Spirit works, Spurgeon explains, but the regenerated person feels that something is done. It is as if the person gained new eyes to see his/her situation. “He is brought into a new state; there is a change worked in him—as if a dead post standing in the street were suddenly to find itself possessed of a soul and to hear the sound of the passing carriages, to listen to the words of the passengers.”²

Besides, one could add, the Spirit frees us from the prison of sin, where spiritual life is exhausted. He makes the truth operative in our self, germinating, blossoming, and fructifying a divine principle of life. Edward Heppenstall writes: “The power of Christianity is the power of the Holy Spirit. Without spiritual power, religion is only a form. Sin in the life is a power, not a form. The form of religion cannot possibly meet the power of sin.”³

The idea of the Spirit creator, however, is not indiscriminately accepted by all theologians. M. Westall, for example, argues that the concept of the Spirit as a life-giving power, in a cosmic scope, is absent from the Bible, especially the Old Testament.⁴ He suggests that the Spirit acts almost exclusively among Israel, within the covenant. “It is only in the Greek Apocrypha where

¹Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on the Holy Spirit* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2000), 18.

²Ibid., 20

³Edward Heppenstall, *Salvation Unlimited: Perspectives in Righteousness by Faith* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 199.

⁴M. R. Westall, “The Scope of the Term ‘Spirit of God’ in the Old Testament,” *Indian Journal of Theology* 26 (1977): 29-43.

pneuma, sophia and *logos* are used almost interchangeably for God's all-pervading presence that a change occurs."¹

Westall's arguments are not unquestionable. Even if he would be correct in denying to the Spirit a cosmic role as creator, this does not mean that the Spirit has no role as an agent in animating physical beings and renewing moral life. The somewhat specialized work of the Spirit in the church should not induce us to limit the scope of his action in the world, just as the fact of ascribing a personality to the Spirit should not impede us of "seeing" his immateriality. As the mission of the Son to the earth was a specific response to a concrete need of the humankind, so the action of the Spirit regarding salvation is a specialized work.² The Spirit speaks in a defined direction (Christ), but he is active in influencing people of any religion. In fact, he is not limited to religious spheres.³ "No nook or cranny," says Pinnock, echoing Ps 139:7-12, "is untouched by the finger of God."⁴ In the light of Luke 11:20 (compare to Matt 12:28), the finger of God is a kind of metonymy for the Spirit of God, underscoring the directionality, penetrability, and effectiveness of God's work through his Spirit.⁵

One could argue that the specific/functional sphere of the Spirit is (1) Israel in the Old Testament, and within Israel the prophets and the charismatic leaders; and (2) the church in the New

¹Ibid., 39.

²New Testament emphasis on the Spirit's work in the church is understandable in light of the happenings of the first century. It is something natural. Unnatural would be an emphasis on the Spirit's work in the world when Christ had just died/resurrected and the church was being built as the new evangelizing community to the world.

³If a human father, though he is evil, is willing to keep in touch with a distant and wrong son, how much more will our Father in heaven be willing to communicate with those who are his lost sons! If a human father may use the telephone as a means of communication to advise his son, the Father in heaven uses his Spirit to convict his sons.

⁴Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 187.

⁵The puzzling expression "finger of God," which is part of a fundamental saying of Jesus, certainly has its background in the Old Testament (Exod 8:19; 31:18; Deut 9:10). Edward J. Woods supports this view, but links the phrase to God the Father, not to the Spirit (*The 'Finger of God' and Pneumatology in Luke-Acts* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 242-254).

Testament, and within the church the apostles and prophets. However, this is by no means a rigid pattern, nor the complete reality, for the Spirit reaches all humankind. Nor does it imply a limitation of the Spirit's pervasive presence and work in the world. Even when the Spirit selects people, he does it so that they may act in the world. He excludes in order to include, just as God is all-exclusive to be all-inclusive. A specialization or amplification of his actions does not mean a limitation of his nature or a cessation of his previous work. If the scope of God's action is cosmic, then the scope of the Spirit's action is also cosmic.

Therefore, if we want to talk about enabling believers, we have to start at the beginning: the life of and in the Spirit. Without life, spiritual life, there is no spiritual ministry.

The Spirit as Motivator

The Spirit gives motivation and enthusiasm. He is the source of power and action, the motivator of every gesture or movement with legitimate motives, means, and goals that affirm life. *Ruah* is wind, that is, air in movement. This wind can be strong or soft, but, when it blows, something happens. When a person has the Spirit, he/she is empowered, burns inwardly, and starts to act. Semantically, the word enthusiasm (from Greek *entheos*, *enthousiasmos*) means to be "full of or inspired by God."¹ Christianity is experience, the experience of God, through the Spirit. Without the Spirit, the believer would not endure his struggles and moments of weakness. Nor would he have ardent zeal or take audacious initiatives on behalf of the gospel.

When one reads attentively the book of Acts, it is likely the word "boldness" will jump out of the text and help to form one's mental picture of the early church. "The boldness of the Spirit was a mark of the Early Church," one author observed.² In fact, Luke reports that the believers "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31). He also

¹Here enthusiasm is used in the positive sense of having energy, disposition, audacity, and passion, not in a technical or negative sense. For different meanings of "enthusiasm," see Susie I. Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

²Charles Lewis Slattery, *The Light Within: A Study of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915), 66.

mentions that the church “was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit” (9:31). In the same context, Barnabas reports that Saul (Paul) “preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus” (9:27). In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spoke “boldly for the Lord” (14:3). In a synagogue of Ephesus, Paul again speaks “boldly” for three months (19:19:8). Besides boldness, Peter, Paul, and friends had a consuming passion. They loved Jesus with a whole heart, and put their hearts wholly in the service of God for all the people.

Stanley M. Horton stresses that the early Christians based their lives entirely on the power of the Spirit. “They did not claim external miracles every day, but every day was a miracle as they lived and walked in the Spirit.” He adds that the “personal experience” with the Spirit is a hallmark of Christianity. Other religions teach good things, but do not offer a personal power like the Holy Spirit. “They all leave people to do in their own strength the good things they ask. You might say they ask people to try to lift themselves out of the mire by their own shoelaces.”¹

One can argue that religious enthusiasts, with their emphasis on the immediacy of spiritual experience, tend to disregard the written Word, and to be perfectionist, sectarian, unbalanced, eccentric or even fanatic. That is true in many senses and instances. For this reason the word “enthusiasm” has acquired a technical religious meaning. People may be tempted to take nonsense and noise for the Spirit. But a negative behavior does not invalidate a legitimate experience.

For the somewhat rationalistic and cold Adventism of the twenty-first century, it might be of didactic value to remember that the early Adventists could be classified as enthusiasts. Besides, some groups mentioned and cherished in Adventist literature, such as the Waldenses, the Anabaptists, and the early Methodists, would fall into the same category.² Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and John Wesley (1703-1791) are examples of enthusiasts cited positively in the writings of

¹Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Springfield: Gospel, 1976), 12.

²From a critical point of view, Ronald Knox describes several enthusiastic movements in his classic study *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950).

Ellen White as defenders of the truth.¹ It must be said, however, that she condemned any kind of fanaticism—including strange bodily manifestations.² To solve the paradox, she suspected extreme euphoria, but praised a realistic enthusiasm. And, perhaps more significantly, in face of the Adventist claim to be a movement rooted in the Bible, James Dunn says that “Christianity in its beginnings can properly be described as an enthusiastic sect within first-century Judaism.”³

The word “power” synthesizes well this dimension of the Spirit’s work. God is power, the Son is power, the Spirit is power. This power is available to Spirit-filled people. The prophet Micah, in contrasting his experience with that of false seers, declares: “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might” (3:8a). Likewise, the Christian has a spirit of power (2 Tim 1:7).

However, as Heppenstall warns, one should not confuse the power of the Spirit with the “sensational,” an excitement detached from the everyday experience. “The basic Biblical meaning and use of the word [power] is adequacy for living the abundant life, the sufficiency of divine resources for every situation.”⁴ Also, even spiritual power tends to be corrupting (see Luke 10:17-20). Aware of the danger of the love of power, Jesus said to the disciples do not rejoice in power, but in the undeserved gift of salvation. Power, in God’s dictionary, is unstoppable love in action—a force that indirectly creates even when it destroys.

The Spirit as Revealer

The Spirit reveals God’s message to his spokespersons. Amos, the non-prophet prophet, the first spokesman of God to have his name on the top of a biblical book, stated that the Lord always

¹Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 254; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 598; idem, *The Great Controversy*, 253-264.

²Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 2:26.

³James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 39.

⁴Heppenstall, 196.

reveals “his plan to his servants the prophets” (3:7). Some of the best moments in the history of God’s people may be attributed to the prophets (cf. 2 Chr 20:20), which were inspired by the Spirit.¹ In a classical affirmation, Peter states that the source of prophecy is not the human will, but the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The letters to the seven churches end invariably with the chorus “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). This insistent call is at least an evidence that the Spirit is saying something—no matter how.

Sigmund Mowinckel has argued that the pre-exilic prophets, such as Amos, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, never attribute their prophetic message to the “Spirit of Yahweh.” They rather attest the genuineness of their call by associating it with the “word of Yahweh.” Only with Ezekiel do we find a certain change.²

Mowinckel explains that attitude as a repudiation of the “wild orgiastic ecstasy” of *nabhi’ism*. “In the eyes of the reforming prophet the common nabhi’ is usually a deceiver and a cheat[er], at best a self-deceiver, and always a person of low moral character,” he writes. “This disapproval is primarily founded on considerations of morality, . . . character and behaviour generally.”³

His perceptive analysis seems to be correct. We find a modern parallel to this phenomenon in Ellen White’s attitude of distancing herself from the ecstasies, mesmeric, and visionaries of the New England⁴ and other places in the nineteenth century,⁵ as well as her frequent warnings for Adventists to keep their distance from fanaticism and disorderly faith.

¹See Num 24:2; 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Chr 12:18; 2 Chr 15:1; Ezek 2:2; Zech 7:12.

²Sigmund Mowinckel, “‘The Spirit’ and the ‘Word’ in the Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53 (1934): 199-227.

³Ibid., 206.

⁴Along with the amplitude of her task and her refusal in self-naming herself with a pompous title, one of the motives why Ellen White preferred the title “messenger of the Lord” instead of “prophetess” was that the self-called “prophets” of her time were “often a reproach to the cause of Christ” (*Selected Messages*, 1:34-36).

⁵Ann Taves analyzes the ecstatic phenomena of that time (including the visions of Ellen White) and the discourses to explain them in her treatise *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing*

But, when the biblical prophets speak of the “word,” “voice” or “hand” of Yahweh compelling them to call sin sin, evil evil, good good, and justice justice, in a perilous ethical consistency, they are not necessarily distancing themselves from the concept of inspiration by the Spirit. It is just a kind of semantic strategy to avoid real misinterpretation.

But times change, words change, people change. In post-exilic Judaism, the link between Spirit and prophecy became so strong that “the *ruah Yahweh* came to be associated almost exclusively with the charism of prophecy.”¹ The Spirit was equal to “the spirit of prophecy”²—an expression so utilized by Seventh-day Adventists.³ Although this was not the only facet of the Spirit’s work known, it was probably the most visible and esteemed.

The prophets worked in a variety of ways (Heb 1:1), with multicolored talents and emphases, but they had something in common: the commitment to the same God, who spoke to them by the same Spirit. Using multiple methods of receiving and delivering God’s word, the prophets are trustworthy messengers. The source of their trustworthiness is the Holy Spirit, who “gives them actual, cognitive information which they had no access to before.”⁴

Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 37.

²George F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 1:237.

³Following apostle John (in Rev 12:17 and 19:10), Adventists link/equate the expression “Spirit of prophecy” with the expression “testimony of Jesus.” This testimony would be Christ’s self-disclosure through the prophets, the witness that comes from/by Jesus himself. As the self-entitled end-time remnant, Adventists believe to have received a special testimony through the agency of Ellen G. White, whose prophetic gift remains speaking through her writings. Gerhard Pfandl, “The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 7*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 295-333.

⁴Gerhard F. Hasel, “Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5 (1994): 80.

How does the inspiration process as part of the broader category of revelation happen?¹ Adventist scholars show different views on the nature of inspiration.² But nowadays they tend to accept mental or thought inspiration, in opposition to verbal inspiration. Alden Thompson, for example, supports the incarnational (divine-human) model, which “allows for human imperfections in the lesser matters.”³ This model stands between the rationalist/naturalist (Scripture is a human book) and the supernaturalist (Scripture is a divine book) models. For him, the Scripture “*clearly contains some codebook elements,*” but, “*on balance, it is more like a casebook.*”⁴

According to the mental inspiration model, God reveals ideas/thoughts, not words/phrases. Prophets receive/gather/research the message, integrate it into their personalities, and are free to communicate it in their own style. They are spokespersons, not stenographers, recording machines, or word processors. The Spirit supervises or directs the prophet’s mind, causing the message to be trustworthy, but he does not strictly control the prophet. In a mysterious interplay, he uses earthly devices—or, in Paul’s words, “jars of clay” (2 Cor 4:7)—for heavenly purposes. Consequently, there can be minor discrepancies in the Bible due to the human factor.

This understanding was directly influenced by Ellen White. She had a high view of the Bible, but at the same time recognized its human element. Her incarnational model for inspiration blends the human and the divine. God reveals the truth, but in our terms and cultural context, so that the Word is his and the words are ours. This flexible conception allowed White to make the classic statements that the men, and not the words, are inspired; that the Bible “is not God’s mode

¹The word inspiration literally means “God-breathed” (in Greek, *theopneustos*; see 2 Tim 3:16). Revelation may be seen as either the self-disclosure of God or the content of the prophetic message.

²Alberto R. Timm, “A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000),” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10 (1999): 541.

³Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 302.

⁴*Ibid.*, 99, italics in original.

of thought and expression”; and that “God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible.”¹

For us, the visible and definite result of the biblical inspiration is the canon, which must not be seen as a mere sociological product. The church does not create the canon, but just recognizes its inherent quality. Or, in Hasel’s words, “the Bible is canonical before the canonicity is recognized by any community of faith.”² This does not mean that the Bible must be seen as a kind of Qur’an.³

The Spirit as Illuminator

The Spirit enlightens the believer’s mind. He brings clarity and transparency, not obscurity and opacity. In their natural condition, fallen human beings do not understand spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14). They live in darkness (Eph 5:8) and cannot “see” the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Natural persons means spiritually blind persons, persons whose eyes of the mind have lost their functions by a “congenital” problem and disuse. But the Holy Spirit illuminates them (Heb 6:4). He gives them wisdom and religious knowledge (Wis 7:7; 9:17). In the light of the Spirit, believers see new light (Ps 36:9). The apostle Paul knew this very well, so that he wrote to the Ephesians, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (Eph 1:18). With new eyes, they could see their hope, the riches of their “glorious inheritance,” and God’s “incomparable great power” (vss. 18-19). To use a hyperbole, a Spirit-filled believer is someone whose neurons shine and

¹Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 1:21.

²Hasel, “Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible,” 98.

³For many Muslims, the Qur’an exists from eternity and is uncreated. In early Islam, challenge to this dogma meant torture and even death. In Islamic theology, the equivalent of Jesus is not the prophet Mohammad, but the Qur’an. Just as the Christians believe in Incarnation, so the Muslims believe in Inlibration (the incorporation of Allah in a book). Daniel J. Boorstein, *Os criadores: uma história da criatividade humana* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1995), 91-97.

whose eyes brighten, overflowed with light. But, as Palmer says, “it must not be presumed that the regenerate has 20-20 vision.”¹

This illuminating work is a top priority task, which benefits every believer. According to James Buchanan, the “illuminating work of the Holy Spirit may be said to be the groundwork of all his other operations; for it is by the truth known and believed that the Spirit fulfils all the functions of his glorious office.”² Above all, the Spirit helps people to see Christ in Scripture. “The first work of the Spirit is to enable people to understand the divine work of redemption,” comments George Ladd. “This is affirmed in Gnostic-sounding language that sets forth a very ungnostic theology.”³ But the Spirit’s illumination goes beyond cognitive knowledge of truth; it includes experiential understanding. The Spirit touches one’s whole mind, creating a clear perception and a tender reception.

A great part of the illuminating work of the Spirit occurs in connection with both interpretation and application of the Scripture. “Without the Holy Spirit,” William Barclay stresses, “even the Bible becomes a dead letter, and the credal statements of the Church becomes [*sic*] fossilized antiquities.”⁴ Ellen White has a similar view: “Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. . . . Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error.”⁵ Jewish experience shows that to possess the Scripture is not all. We need the same Spirit to interact directly with our minds, and reveal us the triple W (way, words, and will) of God.

¹Palmer, 55.

²James Buchanan, *The Office & Work of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1966), 46.

³George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 533.

⁴Barclay, *The Promise of the Spirit*, 109.

⁵Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 408, 411.

It is a common mistake to attempt to understand a spiritual revelation with unregenerate human tools (natural mind). About this, R. A. Torrey makes a good point:

In order to understand art, a man must have aesthetic sense as well as the knowledge of colors and of paint, and to understand a spiritual revelation, a man must be taught of the Spirit. A mere knowledge of the languages in which the Bible was written is not enough. A man with no aesthetic sense might as well expect to appreciate the Sistine Madonna, because he is not color blind, as a man who is not filled with the Spirit to understand the Bible, simply because he understands the vocabulary and the laws of grammar of the languages in which the Bible was written. We might as well think of setting a man to teach art because he understood paints as to set a man to teach the Bible because he has a thorough understanding of Greek and Hebrew.¹

W. Curry Mavis has some insightful remarks on the work of the Spirit in enlightening our minds to perceive truth in the Bible. The Spirit, says the author, “helps us to see Biblical truths that are new to us” and “aids us in seeing fuller meaning in familiar truths”; he increases our “*sense of need of spiritual truth*” and helps us to have “*courage to receive deep and radical truths that criticize us*”; he “increases our spiritual perception by enhancing our transcendental interests” and “shares the divine consciousness with us”; he diminishes our selectivity and “broadens our view of truth”; above all, he enables us to read beyond the superficial meaning of the words.²

Illumination seems to be a neglected topic in evangelical theology. Clark Pinnock comments that, in contrast to liberal scholars, who “gravitate toward reader-driven interpretations and celebrate unexpected insights coaxed from the text by the new literary approaches,” evangelical scholars are more interested in inspiration and exegesis (horizon one) than in illumination and openness (horizon two).³

But illumination is important—if we want new light, the Bible speaking to our generation. It is in his illuminating work, says Pinnock, that the Spirit “tailors Scripture to contemporary

¹R. A. Torrey, *The Person & Work of the Holy Spirit* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1996), 159-160.

²W. Curry Mavis, *The Holy Spirit in the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 62, 64, 65-67, 72, 73, passim, italics in original.

³Clark H. Pinnock, “The Role of the Spirit in Interpretation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993): 492, 497.

needs.” This happens when we dialogue with the sacred text, penetrate its world, formulate its original meaning, state its significance for today, glimpse God’s mind, enlarge our perspective, actualize our understanding, and open ourselves to change. This dialogue should be continuous and dynamic, as well as occur in community. “Evangelical theology,” Pinnock adds, “has to be pilgrim theology.”¹

In the instructive work of the Spirit, Ted M. Dorman observes, he does not provide “a hot line to heaven that conveys additional data to the interpreter of Scripture,” allowing him/her to read infallibly the mind of God.² However, the interpreter will do a better job with the light of the Spirit than without it. The Spirit does not dispense with historical/grammatical tools, but is not dependent on them. By the converting power of the Spirit, the mind of a believer becomes a Spirit-gifted tool of interpretation. The Spirit illuminates the Word, applies it to the individual life, probing deeply our thoughts and motives (Heb 4:12), and all of this almost completely apart from a formal academic method of exegesis. This is not “a hot line to heaven that conveys additional data,” but it certainly is (at its best) a hot line to heaven that imparts an inner peace and certainty regarding God’s will and his power to work that will in, through, and for us.

The Spirit as Art-Creator

The Spirit gives skill for creative work. For example, he enabled Bezalel “with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Exod 31:3), as well as his assistant Oholiab and “all the craftsmen” (vs. 6). He helped King David to plan details for the temple (1 Chr 28:11-12), and enabled Zerubbabel and Joshua with insights and vision in the second temple’s edification (Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6). Hiram, who worked at Solomon’s temple, was also a man of great skill (2 Chr 2:7, 13-14). Probably, he was not only skilled, but also filled (with the Spirit).

¹Ibid., 494-497, citations from 496.

²Ted M. Dorman, “Holy Spirit, History, Hermeneutics and Theology: Toward an Evangelical/Catholic Consensus,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 427, 437.

It is interesting that all these men received their gifts in connection with the construction of temples for God. Throughout the Old Testament, Wilf Hildebrandt writes, “the Spirit is present in some form during all sacred construction projects, be it the creation of Eden, the Mosaic tabernacle, the Solomonic or exilic temple.”¹ In each case, God wanted a beautiful building, for it was his own house. This work of the Spirit must be understood as a special enabling for very demanding tasks.

John McIntyre notes that the passages “connecting the Spirit of God with arts” and crafts, in the context of designing and embellishing the temple and the tabernacle, are an insight that does not reappear in the New Testament, “and appears all too briefly in the history of theology.” In his (correct) viewpoint, we must retain this idea, for otherwise “our final understanding of the full range of the influence of the Spirit is going to be diminished.” He declares himself to “be very anxious to include this kind of pattern of the activity of the Spirit of God in our theology.”²

Christian culture, defends McIntyre, could use this insight “as a medium of its interpretation of aesthetic presentations and events. To reject such interpretation is tantamount to confirming the secularisation of our culture.”³ He writes:

Yet if we begin from awareness that the imagination expressed in the arts—whether it be poetry or prose, drama or ballet, music or painting, sculpture or floral design—is the inspiration of the creativity of the Holy Spirit, then we have gone a long way towards retaining the insight of the Old Testament. This creativity in its turn constitutes a criterion for the art, and provides a corrective to the subjectivity which equates all taste with passable taste. But more positively, it opens up an entire dimension of worship and theology which begins to do justice to the God whom we adore “in the beauty of holiness.” The Greeks should not be allowed to have a prerogative of “truth, beauty and goodness.”⁴

The above quotation offers encouragement to Spirit-filled questions. As we must recognize that the Holy Spirit inspires art, so must we also allow the possibility that some art could be inspired by a different, unrighteous spirit. Some modern religious groups, including Adventists, have a

¹Hildebrandt, 47.

²John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 35, 36, 43.

³Ibid., 36.

⁴Ibid., 289.

certain caution against artistic expression. And some exalt “beat,” rhythm, or just plain noise—to the exclusion even of art and beauty! The worship of self and the “new” can supercede even the appreciation of beauty, as when musical masterpieces are set aside for innovative “music” and words have neither depth nor beauty.

The Adventist concern, then, is not totally unjustified. Today, art almost irrecoverably has lost its religious and transcendent character, becoming an end in itself. Arts, though having intrinsic value, may become altars to the goddess triviality or sexuality or materialism. “Art,” says Leonard Sweet, “is sometimes as liable to lead us to worship art as it is to lead us to worship God.”¹ One might observe that the perils of “erotization” and idolatry are everywhere—just as in the past.

The secularization of society created a huge gap between the sacred and the profane. But at the dawn of culture, as Louis Dupré observes, “art and religion were indistinguishable”; “art was religious art,” expressing life in its totality. “It was ‘religious’ in the sense that *all* life was, not in the sense that it expressed the religious *alone*.”² Perhaps it is time to rethink the subject. If Christians open a space for the Spirit to ignite their imagination and control their artistic taste, something remarkable could happen and something memorable could appear.

Glen Greenwalt, an Adventist artist and theologian, suggests that, although Western theology uses so many monarchical images of God (King, Judge, Conqueror, Lord), God may be thought of first and foremost as an artist. If God is an artist, then he loves and enjoys beauty, creativity, novelty, diversity, symmetry, harmony, balance, and freedom. As a lover of beauty, which may be defined as a state in which everything fits well and evokes in us a sense of pleasing awe, “God envisions a world where all things move and find their place like streams seek the sea, or like flocks of blackbirds swirl and turn in flight.”³

¹Sweet, 96.

²Dupré, 69, italics in original.

³Glenn Greenwalt, “Thinking of God as an Artist,” *Spectrum* 29 (2001): 12-17, citation from 14.

That God appreciates beauty we can infer from Gen 1. Here God is portrayed as an artist before an empty canvas (the earth). He expresses all his creativity and fills it. Finally, the divine artist looks at his creation and pronounces it “very good” (vs. 39).¹ The Israelite temple, including its sculpture and music, was a work of art.² The Bible itself is a literary masterpiece. “Passage after passage in the Bible shows a perfection of artistry that can scarcely be accidental,” says professor Leland Ryken.³

Worship services, especially, can be benefited by a living-creative-Spirit-inspired art. Beauty in worship—to the glory of God and the delight of the worshipers—is a work of the Spirit. If secular artists give their best in their shows, religious worshipers should do their maximum in their services—for the artists please fans, while the worshipers please God. Thus, let the Spirit create art and beauty in the church to take us to a state of holy ecstasy in the presence of God.

In this endeavor to create beauty in worship, it is important to include both aural and visual elements. Here the problem begins for many Adventists, for, even if they are not iconoclasts, they are not comfortable with visual arts in worship. Adventism is a mix of Greek and Hebrew mentalities—more precisely, it is Greek by environmental inheritance and Hebrew by spiritual affinity. The scholarly consensus (with a few dissenting voices) tells us that the classical Greeks were visually oriented (ocularcentrism), in contrast to the more verbally oriented Hebrews. This has philosophical implications, for sight, as Hans Jonas argues, is the sense of simultaneity and of the static thought.⁴ When it comes to theological mentality, Adventism is probably more Hebraic than the average of the Western religious traditions.

¹Leland Ryken, *The Liberated Imagination: Thinking Christianly About the Arts* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1989), 66.

²For a discussion linking temple craftsmanship and spiritual gifts, see chapter 3 under the subhead “The Purpose of the Gifts.”

³Ryken, 46.

⁴See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 21-26; and Hans Jonas, “The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses,” in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Adventism at its best has a deep love for truth, as John McDowell stresses. And truth has to do with the Word. Besides, Adventism has a special understanding of time (think of Sabbath and prophetic sequences). Thus, Adventist aesthetic values the Word/word, rhetoric, time, the sound, the rhythm, and not silence, drama, space, and visual art. McDowell feels that “the art understood and appreciated by most Adventists is art that is clearly illustrative: illustrative of a known and accepted narrative.” But the world has changed, and “the emphasis has shifted from the ear to the eye.”¹

Arthur W. Hunt III, in a provocative book, points out that the Judeo-Christian heritage is more word-dependent (content appeal), while paganism is more image-dependent (sensory appeal). He argues that words are particularly suited for communicating about the transcendental, and that our shift from word to image is a return to paganism. Christians walk by faith, not by sight. A strongly image-based culture would lead to a new Dark Ages.²

Hunt’s assessment deserves attention, but one needs not avoid every kind of visual artistic expression. In order to make sense of the truth to the new generations, visual art should also be explored—always under the influence of the Spirit, and keeping both eyes on the two first commandments. For, clearly, the problem is not art in itself, but the type and purpose of the art. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, all senses can be noble and appreciate/create noble art.

The Spirit as Communicator

The Spirit gives skill for communicative work. Peter and the other apostles, evidently, were not polyglots; but, when they received the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost, they were able to speak to foreigners and be understood (Acts 2:5-12). In a theological debate, Stephen, a man full of power, overcame his opponents; they “could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he

¹See John N. McDowell, “Looking for Visual Truth: At Play with the Aural and Visual in Adventism,” *Spectrum* 29 (2001): 25-32, especially 26-28, citations from 27, 28.

²Arthur W. Hunt III, *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Imagery in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003).

spoke” (Acts 6:9-10; cf. vss. 3, 5, 8). Paul attributed the effectiveness of his preaching to the power of the Spirit, in opposition to human knowledge, logic, and skills (Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5). Jesus himself promised that the Holy Spirit would teach the disciples what to speak in critical moments (Matt 10:19, 20).

The Spirit makes even our vertical discourse (prayer) more effective. In Rom 8:26, Paul implies that all of us (he uses “we,” including himself, presumably) are beginners in the matter of prayer, but we never pray alone. Climaxing a triad of groans, which starts with the groanings of the creation (vs. 22), being followed by those of the Christians (vs. 23), the Spirit interprets our souls and clarifies our sighs. His “groanings may be inaudible and perhaps even unuttered; and yet they are clearly known and understood by the Father.”¹

One role of the Spirit in helping the apostles had to do with memory activation (John 14:26). Russell Boatman, who calls this function a “memory-jogger,” writes: “The disciples did not carry notebooks and most certainly were without benefit of modern recording devices. The rabbinical method of rote memorization would suffice to a degree, but not to the degree provided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”² A ready mental access to the teachings of Christ would have a twofold utility: (1) to meet a personal spiritual/psychological need, bringing comfort and peace; and (2) to strengthen the preaching, giving boldness and assurance of accuracy.

Perhaps the most important communicative skill given by the Spirit is the prophetic power to speak with authority, and so move people. Christ had this ability at the highest level. When the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him, the guards returned with just a report: “No one ever spoke the way this man does” (John 7:46; cf. vs. 32). The Sermon on the Mountain is a fine piece of heavenly speech presented with prophetic authority. Its impact overwhelmed the crowds in amazement (Matt 7:28-29).

¹Curtis C. Mitchell, “The Holy Spirit’s Intercessory Ministry,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139 (1982): 236, 237.

²Russell Boatman, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1989), 18.

Jesus had authority in the sense of knowing what, why, when, to whom, and how to speak. He searched minds and read hearts. He made use of the same Scripture as the rabbis, the same language as the people, the same facts of daily affairs. But no one spoke as he did. His teaching was new and revolutionary. It flowed from God's mind to people's minds in a synapse of love. Every word, every gesture, every look, every act was an epiphany, a transcendental insight. He said what everyone recognized as self-evident or obvious but no one had thought of before. To culminate his excellence, his life corresponded fully with his words.

In a time when preachers are somewhat unsure about their role and authority, this aspect of the Spirit's work gains relevance. There must be a kind of partnership between the Spirit and the preacher. The preacher never can "operationalize" or "methodize" the Spirit, but he or she can open himself or herself to his dynamics. Klaas Runia summarizes the formula for this interplay with this phrase: "Man is co-worker of the Spirit (reciprocity), but the initiative remains with the Spirit (theonomous)."¹ In this "co-operation" (not of equals, for sure), "the Spirit does 100% and the person he takes into his service does 100% as well. And yet we cannot speak of a sum total of 200%. No, when the Spirit works through man and man is authorised by the Spirit, the unity is so deep that all arithmetic fails. Here 100% + 100% appears not to be 200% but it remains 100%."² It is like the incarnate Son of God—fully divine, fully human, and yet one.

The Spirit as Witness

The Spirit gives power for real and effective testimony. Jesus promised, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8; see also Luke 24:49). Therefore, we can speak of a twofold witness: "The Spirit testifies to us—we testify unto the world."³ This

¹Klaas Runia, "Preaching and the Work of the Holy Spirit—Part 2," *The Reformed Theological Review* 60 (2001): 32.

²Ibid., 36.

³Lockyer, 73.

was proven at Pentecost (Acts 2). According to Max Turner, “there is general agreement that the gift of the Spirit in Acts is above all a prophetic empowerment to witness to Jesus.”¹

In reality, the Spirit is the greatest witness of Christ (John 15:16). He is a forerunner and a post-runner of Christ. His ultimate task “is to plant the confession ‘Jesus is Lord’ at the center of every man’s being.”² Except by the Spirit, we do not even recognize Jesus as Lord (2 Cor 12:3). Thus, in an ultimate instance, G. Campbell Morgan might have been right when he wrote, “The Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus only. Only the Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus.”³ He argued that the “only reason that those who are born again of the Spirit are left in the world is that they may be his [God’s] witnesses.” A witness is a martyr, he explains. “The fires of persecution never made martyrs—they revealed them.”⁴

“Without the *Parakletos* Christ would continue being a historical person from the past,” Kloppenburg compares; “with him Christ is the Messiah enthroned at the side of the Father in order to pour out the Holy Spirit.” He adds, “Without the *Parakletos* the Mission would be propaganda and proselytism; with him it is Pentecost in action.”⁵ Peter concurs that the Spirit is the power inspiring the transmission of Christ’s gospel (1 Pet 1:10-12).

The problem today is that the Spirit has been seen as, let us say, an independent entity, alien to the witness of the Son. Here Donald Bloesch makes a good point: “For a growing number of scholars the Spirit is no longer . . . subordinate to Christ as a messenger carrying out his commands, but Christ now points to the Spirit as the transformer of nations and cultures.”⁶ In the

¹Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament Church and Today*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 46; cf. 38-39.

²J. W. MacGorman, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 26.

³G. Campbell Morgan, *The Spirit of God* (New York: Revell, 1900), 209.

⁴*Ibid.*, 208.

⁵Kloppenburg, 172.

⁶Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*, 265.

Pentecostal/charismatic arena, the chronic mania of viewing the Spirit as an end in himself seems to be still a challenge. We must keep in mind that the Spirit works in connection with the Father and the Son. On the other hand, one should be careful not to use a legitimate Christocentric approach as an excuse to avoid an empowered life.

The Spirit as Leader

The Spirit enables for strong and effective leadership. Joseph (Gen 41:38), Moses and the seventy elders (Num 11:16-29), Joshua (Deut 34:9), Othniel (Judg 3:10), Gideon (Judg 6:34), Jephthah (Judg 11:29), Samson (Judg 13:25; 14:19; 15:14), Saul (1 Sam 10:10; 11:6), and David (1 Sam 16:13), among others, received wisdom and strength from the Spirit to lead God's people. They faced challenges, and the Spirit empowered them. Israel was sure of this. Centuries after the Exodus, Isaiah credited the successful leadership of Moses through the wilderness to the guidance of the Spirit (63:11-14).

According to Wilf Hildebrandt, "the majority of references in the Pentateuch to *ruah* as Spirit deal with some kind of leadership ability given by the *ruah* for a particular task."¹ Why? In its pre-monarchical times, Israel lived a recurring cycle: (1) the nation sinned, (2) was subjugated by its enemies, (3) invoked Yahweh, and (4) was delivered by an exceptional leader.² It was the Spirit of God who stirred up the deliverer-judge to action, leading him/her to succeed in spite of the superior technology of the enemy. The presence of the Spirit turned ordinary people into extraordinary leaders.³ "The more unlikely the hero," as Jo Ann Hackett puts it, "the more understandable the message that it is Yahweh who rules."¹

¹Hildebrandt, 22.

²We find descriptions or lists of "major" and "minor" judges/deliverers in Judg 3-13. The "major judges" are Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. The "minor judges" are Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Shangar. Scholars have noted that apparently the author of Judges did not use chronological criterion to write the history of the major judges, but a geographical model (south-to-north, and the east).

³It is interesting that, in the *Antiquities*, "Josephus omits all references to the divine spirit in the book of Judges." He frequently emphasizes the human abilities of the Hebrew heroes probably to (1) commend his ancestors to his non-Jewish readers, (2) let it be understood that he was writing

This unique “regime” of the judges (Iron Age I, 12th-11th century B.C.) has been classified as “charismatic leadership,” a concept developed by sociologist Max Weber.² The charismatic leadership was different from the “traditional authority” and the “legal-rational authority”—other forms of leadership included in Weber’s classical typology of power. In fact, according to Ze’ev Weisman, it may be properly applied only to individuals, not to a political system.³ A charismatic leader had uncommon qualities, and appeared in times of distress. Working on Weberian and post-Weberian theories, Abraham Malamat draws a portrait of the Israelite deliverer-judge and his charismatic rule:

1. A context of major crises, especially subjugation by an enemy, was a prerequisite for the “maturing of the charismatic attribute.”

2. “The charismatic trait involves direct contact with transcendental powers and identification with the symbols held most sacred by a people” (the hero was associated with the Spirit or Yahweh).

3. “Sometimes the divine contact required public signs and acknowledgment prior to the act of deliverance, to affirm the authority of the charismatic person both in his own eyes and in the consciousness of the people.” Divine authentication, as seen in Gideon’s case, was essential for public acceptance of the charismatic leader.

4. The authority of the charismatic leader was spontaneous, personal, and non-transferable (the sole exception, Abimelech, was a case of usurpation).

history, and (3) avoid misinterpretation by his Graeco-Roman readers. John R. Levison, “Josephus’ Interpretation of the Divine Spirit,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996): 252-253.

¹Jo Ann Hackett, “‘There Was No King in Israel’: The Era of the Judges,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 182.

²Literature on Weber’s theories of leadership and authority is abundant. To begin, one can see Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

³Ze’ev Weisman, “Charismatic Leaders in the Era of the Judges,” *Zeitschrift für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977): 399-411, especially 401, 410.

5. “The authority of charismatic leadership, by nature, is not dependent on social class or status, nor on age-group or sex” (for example, Jephthah and Deborah).

6. “The rise and activity of charismatic leaders are not necessarily linked to important religious or civil centers” (Samson was from the insignificant Zorah).

7. The relationship between the charismatic leader and the people was based on emotion, affection, and religious faith, not on formal rules, administrative organization, or coercion.¹

Later, there was a change in the political system of Israel, but the Spirit continued to empower its leaders.² As suggested in the topic about oil (above), the major sign given to Saul that God had chosen him to be the first king of Israel was the coming of the Spirit upon him in power. In receiving the Spirit, he would prophesy and be “changed into a different person”; as a new leader, he should do whatever his hand found to do, for God was with him (1 Sam 10:5-7). He does not become a prophet,³ but he is now an empowered king and shares the Spirit of the prophets. The withdrawal of the Spirit meant the end of his reign (15:28; 16:13-14).

When prophet Samuel anointed David to replace Saul as king, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (vs. 13).⁴ Enthroned, David won many victories. But then he made the biggest, worst, and ugliest mistake of his remarkable life, and “displeased the Lord” (2 Sam 11:27).

¹Abraham Malamat, “Charismatic Leadership in the Book of Judges,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 161-163.

²For W. J. Dumbrell, the presence of the Spirit with Israelite leadership in the Old Testament “has in view the preservation of the concept of the theocracy; or otherwise stated, the theological function of the Spirit appears to be to implement and sustain the Old Testament notion of the Kingdom of God” (“Spirit and Kingdom of God in the Old Testament,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 33 [1974]: 1).

³The *mashal*/saying “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam 10:11, 12; 19:24) could be either a negative evaluation of the cultic prophets and a positive evaluation of Saul or vice versa. See John Sturdy, “The Original Meaning of ‘Is Saul Also Among the Prophets?’ (1 Samuel x 11, 12; xix 24),” *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (1970): 206-213. Based on the context, Sturdy plausibly argues that the most natural way of understanding the saying is to consider that “it is a good thing to be a prophet, but Saul is not one, and he is valued negatively for this” (211; see 210). However, unplausibly he conjectures that the *mashal* represents Davidic propaganda against Saul (211-213).

⁴Josephus (*Antiquities* 6.8.2) represents the Spirit as migrating from Saul to David.

The well-known Ps 51, beyond revealing his state of mind and regrets, records a request for a new chance. “Do not . . . take your Holy Spirit from me,” he asks (vs. 11).¹ If the immediate context points to relationship, the broader context points to kingship. He was preoccupied with his spirituality, but also with his royal function. Only staying in God’s presence would he enjoy God’s protection. He knew very well the story of Saul, and was convinced that *the withdrawal of the Spirit would mean the end of his reign*. In his mind, a Hebrew king rejected by God was a man in a bad spiritual situation. God gave him another chance.

Here we need to address another aspect. In an age of bloodthirsty warriors everywhere, charismatic leadership in Israel had a violent character. But, with time, there was a change. The superhuman element gave place to a more justice-based leadership; the violent feature was replaced by a peaceful monarchical ideology.² Monsuk Ma suggests that in the pre-exilic Isaianic tradition there was “either the refinement of kingship ideology, the spiritualization of *ruah* tradition, or both.”³

This shift supposedly took a long process, as Ma defends.⁴ Another possible explanation is that this refined concept of the Messiah as a Spirit-anointed leader to administrate justice and promote peace did not appear in Isaiah slowly through tradition, but suddenly through revelation. In any case, the fact is that the prophet announces a new kind of charismatic leader—the ideal king. “Although the ‘might’ is part of the royal endowment,” Ma writes, “the future king is portrayed in

¹Scholars are divided on whether we should capitalize “Holy Spirit” in this verse, or even if “Holy Spirit” is the best translation. W. Creighton Marlowe cites several renderings and proposes a literal one, “spirit of your holiness.” For him, what David fears is not the loss of the Holy Spirit in his life, but his personal interaction with God. See his article “‘Spirit of Your Holiness’ in Psalm 51:13 [51:11 in English Bibles],” *Trinity Journal* 19 (1998): 29-49.

²This becomes clear when one compares, for example, Judg 13:25 and 14:6, 19 and 1 Sam 11:6-7 with Isa 11:1-3 and 28:5-6. Zech 4:6 explicitly contrasts might and power with the Spirit.

³Ma, 68; the word *ruah* is in Hebrew in the original.

⁴Ibid., 68-69.

his spiritual piety.” The ideal profile of this eschatological figure “is intended to make a sharp contrast to the leaders Israel had throughout its history.”¹

A modern example of charismatic leadership

Certainly, the work of the Spirit in empowering leaders has continued in post-biblical times. A modern example of charismatic leadership is seen in the life and ministry of Ellen White, who is considered a prophetess by Seventh-day Adventists.² Receiving divine visions and dreams, White appeared in a time of distress among the Millerites of the nineteenth century, and helped to reunite and mobilize the scattered believers of the Second Advent. Walter Martin, a non-Adventist researcher, classified her as “one of the most fascinating and controversial personages ever to appear upon the horizon of religious history.”³ One can question her visions, writings, or worldview, but no one well-informed and well-intentioned can question her dynamic role as a charismatic leader. She instilled a sense of purpose/mission and gave direction to the Adventist movement. Herbert Douglass comments that “Ellen White and the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in thought and structure, are as integrated as the union of Anglo-Saxon languages in the formation of English speech.”⁴

Prophetic or charismatic leadership is, for sure, one of the most necessary qualities in the church today. A prophetic leader has sensibility, discernment, wisdom, belief, sense of justice, courage, imagination, communication skills, and authority. He/she appears in difficult times, at turning points, considers the old (tradition) and the new, mobilizes a group to adaptive work, and makes a way. He/she exercises his/her leadership as an ethical servant, not in his/her behalf, but for the sake of God and the people. He/she believes in the power of love, not in the love of power.

¹Ibid., 206.

²See Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998). Ellen White herself preferred the title “messenger.”

³Walter Martin, 438.

⁴Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 182.

Moses, King David, and Paul are just three representatives of this special and rare category, whose supreme model is Jesus Christ.

The Spirit as Teacher

The Spirit provides knowledge and wisdom. As a second Paraclete (John 14:16), the Spirit is a kind of “alter-ego for Jesus,”¹ although not another Jesus. Besides being an advocate in the forensic sense, the Spirit takes over Jesus’ role as divine teacher and reveals the truth to the believing community. Said Jesus, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things” (John 14:26). If Matthew, Mark, and Luke underscore power, John emphasizes revelation. “Pneumatology serves John’s christology,” “and the Spirit of power becomes the Spirit of revelation.”²

The title “Spirit of truth” (*pneuma tes aletheias*), highly valued by John and “unique to Johannine literature in the New Testament,”³ signals the importance of the Spirit’s work in communicating true knowledge. As Jesus promised, the Spirit would lead the disciples “into all truth” (John 16:13). The emphasis here, according to George R. Beasley-Murray, is on the term “all.” The task of the Spirit was to help the disciples to “comprehend the depths and heights” of the truth made known by Jesus and yet unperceived by them.⁴ The Spirit can flash an idea to the interpreter of Scripture to see a new connection, or a new application.

John, however, is not the only biblical author to portray the Spirit as a transmitter of knowledge, a teacher of truth, or, in the last instance, a source of wisdom. In the account of the choosing of the seven deacons in Acts 6, a clear connection between fullness of the Spirit and

¹Harry S. Benjamin, “Pneuma in John and Paul: A Comparative Study of the Term with a Particular Reference to the Holy Spirit,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 6 (1976): 34.

²Burge, 62.

³Benjamin, 38.

⁴George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 283.

wisdom is made (6:3, 10). In the Old Testament, Pharaoh recognized that Joseph had the Spirit of God, which made him “so discerning and wise” (Gen 41:38-39). Joshua “was filled with the spirit of wisdom” (Deut 34:9; cf. Num 27:18) supposedly because he had the Spirit—with a capital S. Hildebrandt points out that wisdom and the Spirit are often linked in the Old Testament. In analyzing Wisdom in Proverbs as a personified companion of God at creation, he concludes that in this role “Wisdom has more affinities to the work of the *ruah* in creation than it does to the preincarnate, only begotten Son of the Father.”¹

The prophet Isaiah (40:13) rhetorically asks, “Who understood the mind [or the Spirit] of the Lord, or instructed him as his counselor [at creation]?” The logical answer is “nobody,” for no one either was there or could serve as his counselor. “In ancient times,” Edward J. Young informs us, “it was the duty of citizens to counsel the king.”² Also in Eastern cosmogonies superior deities ask advice of inferior deities. But in the Bible we see an opposite pattern. God, as the original source of knowledge and wisdom (cf. Prov 8:22-31; Job 38, 39), is the counselor.

The Spirit shares this knowledge/wisdom, especially salvific knowledge/wisdom, with us. Paul said, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better” (Eph 1:17). The Spirit not only reads our minds and intercedes for us before God (Rom 8:26-27), but certainly interprets the thoughts, emotions, and feelings of God to us. He opens the eyes and sharpens the focus of our minds.

One of the most astonishing statements of Paul—“But we have the mind of Christ”—is found in a passage about the wisdom from the Spirit (1 Cor 2:6-16).³ First, the apostle compares

¹Hildebrandt, 43, 44.

²Edward Young, 3:45.

³The section about wisdom starts at 1:17, dominates chap. 2, and has developments in the following chapters (cf. 3:18, 19; 4:10). Apparently, Paul introduces the topic in order to correct a distorted self-perception of the false *pneumatikoi* of Corinth. At one level, he defends the wisdom revealed historically in Christ against the mysterious/speculative wisdom of the *pneumatikoi*. At another level, he defends his own apostleship. Paul is saying that the Corinthian *pneumatikoi* are not so wise as they think, nor is he (Paul) so unwise as it may appear. The opposite is true. His

“the wisdom of this age” with “God’s secret wisdom.” His verdict is that they are incomparable. God’s wisdom is infinitely superior. But it cannot be easily perceived or valued, for its way is not the way of esoteric or philosophical speculation. In fact, the world knows nothing about it. Evidence: the world crucified Christ. To have access to this wisdom means to penetrate into God’s mind. This seems impossible. Only the Spirit of God, because he *is* God, knows God’s deepest self. Here enters the principle of “like is known by like.” Natural people are self-conscious, but not God-conscious. Worldly minds are immature and distorted. However, believers “*have the mind of Christ*” and *share in God’s secrets*. The Spirit of God has revealed to them a special wisdom. This wisdom is nothing other than Christ himself (1:24, 30). When one knows Christ as “righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1:30), one has understood the logic of God and has the wisdom of God. Flesh and blood have not revealed this, but God has. To sum up in Gordon Fee’s style, the *what* of God’s wisdom is Christ, and the *how* this wisdom comes to us.¹

The Spirit as Transformer

The Spirit aids in people’s conversion and transformation. This is a key work, for human nature is notoriously sinful, and, spiritually speaking, no one can change oneself (Jer 13:23; John 3:5, 6; Rom 7:23). Changes happen through a power beyond our resources. The only effective power to fix our spiritual matrix is Christ working through the Holy Spirit. Ellen White writes: “The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.”²

Jeremiah (31:31-34) advanced the idea that the new covenant would bring an internalization of the law. In 17:1, the prophet says that the sin of Judah was engraved with iron and diamond on _____ preaching is consonant with the wisdom of God revealed in the cross of Christ. Therefore, they should not judge him, or judge each other, for they were not spiritually mature enough to do that. In all this issue, Paul is trying to unite the believers, for Christ is not divided (1:13).

¹Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 105. See 90-112.

²Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 671.

the tablet (*luah*) of the people's hearts. However, in the future, God would engrave his law upon their hearts. Notice that God himself, not a scribe, would teach the people. This immediate act of God would renew their religious experience in a radical way. No doubt, this work was fit for the Spirit during the messianic time (2 Cor 3:7-18; Heb 10:15-17). In Ezek 36:26, 27, a text in some way parallel to that of Jeremiah, God promises to put his Spirit within the people, with a similar ethical result—the renewing of their hearts.

In John 16:6-11, the Spirit is portrayed as one who acts in the minds of persons, convicting them of sin and guilt, and presenting Christ as the solution. Lenski explains that the verb “to convict,” used in John 16:8, “may mean ‘to convict’ so that the conviction is fully admitted by those convicted, or ‘to convict’ so that, whether the conviction is admitted or not, its reality is beyond question”; the latter sense is prevailing here.¹ “The work of Jesus is first,” an author remarks, “and the work of the Holy Spirit is to make effective in us what Christ has done for us.”² We turn toward God, and God turns us toward life.

Unbelievers do not know accurately the mystery of God; therefore, they evaluate it mistakenly (1 Cor 2:14). The Spirit, besides creating a new awareness of one's sinful state, reveals the true identity of Christ and shows why he makes sense to the sinner. If one allows, he illuminates one's perception, influences one's desire, alters one's attitude, and changes one's behavior. That is, the Spirit modifies one's moral center of gravity.³

Paul, particularly, stresses this ethical work of the Spirit. Schoemaker observes that “since no other writer, either in the Old or New Testament, elaborates this function of the Spirit, it may be

¹Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 1081.

²Walter Thomas Conner, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman, 1949), 87.

³In Acts 26:18, where the resurrected Jesus is instructing Paul to convert the Gentiles, we detect five basic steps, not necessarily in the exact order: (1) insight (“open their eyes”); (2) turning (“turn them from darkness to light”); (3) transformation (turn them “from the power of Satan to God”); (4) forgiveness (“so that they may receive forgiveness of sin”); and (5) a new identity (so that they may receive “a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me”).

called the unique Christian contribution to the conception of the spirit.”¹ In reality, Paul is the principal articulator of this concept, but the idea is not absent from other sacred writers (cf. Ps 51:10-11; John 3:5-8).

Conversion may be a radical turning back to God, or an intensification of a previous experience. To synthesize a complex experience in one phrase, religious conversion is a change of perception, belief, response, attitude, integration, behavior, and belonging (identity), with personal and social pre-and-post-impact. Lofland and Skonovd identify six motifs of conversion: intellectual, mystical, experiential, affectional, revivalist, and coercive.² The Spirit may employ some of these motifs, but in a free, harmonious, and interactive way, always preserving and enhancing individual freedom of moral choice.

In Job’s case, to exemplify, there was a new level of awareness, expressed in his classical words, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42:5). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus felt a fire burning within them (Luke 24:32). At Pentecost, people were touched, “cut to the heart,” and opened their lives to action, asking: “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). In Paul’s experience, there was literally a new vision of Jesus, beyond a simple insight, causing a redefinition of his entire theological system (Acts 9:1-19). The central point in conversion is that God, or Christ, becomes the center of our personal cosmos.

Paradoxically, conversion has a character of continuity and an element of suddenness. There is a period of preparation and a moment of decision, a stage of latency and a crisis of transition. As Paul Tillich expresses, “it is a process that becomes manifest in an ecstatic moment,” when somebody is “grasped by the Spiritual Presence in a fertile moment, a *kairos*.”³ Likewise, it

¹Schoemaker, 61.

²John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, “Conversion Motifs,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20 (1981): 373-385.

³Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 3:220.

includes both legal and experiential aspects. “Being ‘born again’ is not only something we *claim*,” Ed Christian has said, “but something we *live*.”¹

We do not know in detail how the Spirit acts to convert and change people. If William James is right, the Spirit unifies the self and adjusts its focus. Conversion, the famous American psychologist defined in his classic study of 1902, is “the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”² Cold beliefs become hot; peripheral religious ideas take a central place; spiritual emotions become one’s driving energy.³

Do we convert, or are we converted? Joanmarie Smith, following her model of “God as Sheer In-ness and Of-ness” saturating all of reality, proposes that “God has no specific role in conversion as God has no specific role in the cause of anything.”⁴ He does not need to interfere. In her view, conversion has “elements of effort, struggle, and strain,” but “happens” as gift, grace. “The so-called Ah Ha! moment is not within our control.”⁵ Therefore, she answers our question saying, amazingly, that we are converted by ourselves. For her, we create the climate, and the climax can happen.

Smith’s model seems to fail in a decisive point: in it, the “x” of conversion experience comes from circumstances, not from God. Now conversion has a paradoxical nature. If we can establish a human paradigm of change, we can also discern a divine pattern of action. Biblical

¹Ed Christian, “‘Are You Born Again?’: A Doctrine of Regeneration,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10 (1999): 233.

²William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, enl. ed. (New York: University Books, 1963), 189.

³*Ibid.*, 196, 271.

⁴Joanmarie Smith, “The Human Character of Conversion,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation* 15 (1994): 190.

⁵*Ibid.*, 193.

examples of conversion reveal an active God. In Peter's and Paul's cases, Jesus visibly led the process (John 21:15-19; Acts 9:1-18). The Spirit was presumably working as well.

Acting in our conscience, the Spirit perhaps alters our perception of reality and truth. Recently, some scientists advanced a hypothesis—scientifically plausible—that we search for God because our brains are biologically programmed to do so. An experiment utilizing high-tech equipment to monitor brain activities during meditation/prayer suggested that mystical experience is real.¹ It is possible, then, that the Spirit works at the very heart of our spirituality. Just as meditation and drugs may affect the mind, so the Spirit may act upon it and alter our response.

Conversion, however, is not a mere change in behavior; it is a shift in attitude, in personal paradigm. Using a series of circumstances, the Spirit leads the person to a state of awareness² of the right thing to do. When a catalyzing factor appears,³ a decision is made. The person goes toward God, the self is unified. Jesus becomes his/her referential. He meets his/her needs, illuminates his/her way, and expands his/her perspective. “When one's ego is completely illuminated and integrated,” writes Lynn K. Paul, “much less energy is expended in self-preservation and denial, leaving more energy for relating with others.”⁴

The Spirit causes one to see God and oneself in a new light. Converted, he/she accepts God and him/herself. Peace with God and self is the result. Imperfections remain, but now with a new meaning. The believer does not fear to look into his/her own eyes. Now he/she beholds the world

¹See Andrew Newberg, Eugene G. D'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine, 2001).

²Current research reveals that emotions reflect conscious and unconscious mental processes (Joseph LeDoux, *O cérebro emocional* [Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 1998], 39-65). Likewise, conversion probably is a conscious act reflecting unconscious perceptions. There occurs a kind of intuitive game of gains and losses in our brains.

³When it comes to conversion, certainly every person has both a particular history and a different rhythm. But in some cases, as seen at Pentecost, a common factor acting over collective unconscious may unleash a simultaneous grupal experience of conversion.

⁴Lynn K. Paul, “Jesus as Object: Christian Conversion as Interpreted Through the Perspective of Fairbairn's Object Relations Theory,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 27 (1999): 307.

in the mirror of eternity. Life in Christ liberates him/her to live in a new psychological dynamic. Knowing that his/her name is written in God's memory, he or she experiences a sense of being accepted, and no longer feels alone. Faith becomes a kind of aircraft to the infinite. This does not mean evasion, but reality. Christians are not earthly citizens feigning to live in heaven, but heavenly citizens still living on earth.

Theologians apply the dialectical concept of "already" and "not yet" to time and space. That means that Christians live simultaneously in the new age and in the old age, in heaven and on earth. But this rich concept may also be applied to psychology. Converted people live in tension—fragile and strong, poor and rich, finite and infinite, suffering and overcoming, always dying and living forever.

In a vibrant, almost poetic passage in 2 Cor 4, Paul focuses on such tension. Believers live in a world of darkness, but the face of Christ reflects the glory of God in their faces (vs. 6). They are "jars of clay," but filled with golden treasures (vs. 7). Their minds and bodies are under severe pressure, but survive victorious (vss. 8-9). Their secret is that they live in the light of eternity, fixing their eyes on what is unseen (vs. 19).

But this amazing change in the life of a believer does not mean a definitive conquest or perennial peace. In fact, the conflict may increase—before, the old and fragmented self fought itself, at an evil-evil level of struggle; now, the crucified, buried, and resurrected self fights the flesh (sinful nature), in a good-versus-evil style war.¹ If the Spirit is in control of the self, it wins; if not, the flesh wins. In other words, attitude rules over the behavior only when the Spirit controls the self.² The Spirit is the decisive factor in the struggle between the opposing forces within the believer.

¹Based on his own experience and speaking for every Christian, Paul described this war with great accuracy and realistic evaluation in Rom 7:14-24. "For what I want to do I do not do," he recognized with astonishing sincerity, "but what I hate I do" (vs. 15).

²Again, in Rom 8:1-17, Paul offers us the best description of the victorious life of those who are controlled by the Spirit. When we have our minds "set on what the Spirit desires," we "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (vss. 5, 14).

It is important to understand that our free will has a basic role in utilizing this spiritual resource. The believer takes the initiative along with God, under his will. John A. Ingram, professor of psychology at Biola University, puts the question this way: “The ‘Spirit mode’ is actually the cooperation of the regenerate self (or new aspect of self) with God’s Holy Spirit, a ‘we’ mode.”¹ It is up to every believer to hook up properly to the Holy Spirit and activate his awesome power—or not to do so. Psychologically, Ingram comments, acting “as if” the believer is dead to sin, as spiritually he/she really is, “can make a dramatic difference.”² A converted Peter or Paul is still Peter or Paul, but now is a Peter or Paul in the splendor of his unique self—not the old sinful self, now dead, but the new Spirit-born self in process of development.

The Spirit as Community-Builder

The Spirit enables believers to live in a community of love. Luke reports that at the Pentecost all “the believers were together and had everything in common” (Acts 2:44). The historian continues his description, “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (vs. 46). This is the picture of a loving community. As Matthias Wenk has shown, the Lukan pneumatology, beyond emphasizing inspired speech and missions, “also comprises a religious and ethical dimension.” In other words, the Spirit is pictured as the originator of a new social order, or the renewer of Israel, causing the pneumatic experience of the community/society of the Messiah.³

Paul, who “was in large part a theologian of community,” as James Jones expressed,⁴ also emphasized the importance of the Spirit for the Christian communitarian life. The “Spirit is given

¹John A. Ingram, “Psychological Aspects of the Filling of the Holy Spirit: A Preliminary Model of Post-Redemptive Personality Functioning,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 24 (1996): 108.

²Ibid., 110.

³Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 313, 315.

⁴James W. Jones, *The Spirit and the World* (New York: Hawthorn, 1975), 9.

for the common good,” he insisted (1 Cor 12:7). Community is the sphere of the Spirit. “The church is not, for Paul, merely a collection of individuals; it is a body ‘fitly framed together’.”¹ “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace,” the apostle wrote. “There is one body and one Spirit” (Eph 4:3-4).

In our time, whether it is the Spirit that builds community or the community that brings the Spirit, this has been debated. Why is this so puzzling? If the community brings the Spirit, it is a human-created phenomenon. Obviously, from a biblical perspective, the Spirit is prior, but there seems to exist a role for the community.² The role of the community is to surrender, both individually and corporately, to the will of the Spirit. Constant and total surrender is the human part; all the rest is by the Spirit.

Spirituality perhaps has to do more with community than our individualistic Western societies are willing to recognize. Evolutionary scientists assert that the self functions as a socially constructed space. This means that our spiritual life is made possible by social interdependencies. Supporting this view, John A. Teske writes: “Our brains internalize social practice in ways that, by virtue of our neuroplasticity and prefrontal hypertrophy, profoundly influence our psychological functioning, even so far as to our neurophysiology.”³ A biblical theologian hardly would agree with all evolutionary assumptions, but he/she might agree that the Spirit also works in community to create spirituality. Merely social or political communities may be built by humans, but true spiritual community is a creation of the Spirit.

In his theological agenda for the twenty-first century, Stanley Grenz recognizes that the concept of the kingdom of God is the predominant integrative motif⁴ in contemporary theology; but,

¹Ibid., 11.

²The Spirit/community topic will be revisited in the conclusion.

³John A. Teske, “The Genesis of Mind and Spirit,” *Zygon* 36 (2001): 102.

⁴Integrative motif: a concept/theme that structures a theological system, and gives unity and coherence to it.

despite this fact, he proposes a step further: community as integrative motif.¹ Such theological architecture can be thought of in trinitarian terms, because God is a community of love, but the role of the Spirit is vital. The Spirit is the bond of love between believers and God, as well as between believers and believers, creating a “we” of cosmic communion.

The Spirit as God-Presenter

The Spirit enables believers to feel the presence of God. Is there one aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit on earth that summarizes all his actions? Packer thinks so, and names it: the idea of “presence.” For him, this is “the core of the Spirit’s work today.” He is not speaking about the divine omnipresence, but about God really being with us, being felt, “acting in particular situations to bless faithful folk and thus make them know his love and help and draw forth their worship.”² Likewise, Gordon Fee insists that the church needs to recover Paul’s perspective: the Spirit as the return of God’s personal presence among us.³

The idea of God’s presence is really basic. During the Exodus, the Israelites had a visible sign of the presence of God with them. A supernatural pillar of cloud and fire⁴ guided, protected, fed, taught, and even judged them. It functioned as compass, shield, shelter, heater, air conditioning, clock, and court, among other things, until the pilgrims reached the borders of the promised land.⁵ Nehemiah (9:19-20) mentions this pillar and the Spirit in the same context, and Isaiah (63:9-11, 14) says that the Spirit led the Israelites. Besides, God came down in a cloud to pour his Spirit on the

¹Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 137-162.

²Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 47, 48.

³Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 843-845.

⁴Scholars have speculated about the nature of the pillar of cloud and fire, attempting to offer naturalistic explanations. See Thomas W. Mann, “The Pillar of Cloud in the Reed Sea Narrative,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971): 15-30. But the text itself points to the supernatural character of the phenomenon.

⁵See Exod 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 24:15-18; 40:34-38; Num 9:15-23; 12:5, 10; Deut 31:15; Neh 9:12, 19-21; Pss 78:14; 99:7; Isa 4:5-6.

seventy elders of Israel (Num 11:16-17, 25). However, it is not clear whether we should identify the pillar with the Spirit. Hildebrandt likens them, but carefully never says they are the same thing.¹

Later, the symbol of God's presence is transferred to the tabernacle. When Solomon built a magnificent temple for God, a cloud representing the glory and presence of God filled it (2 Chr 5:13-14). The presence of God was a holy pride for Israel.² Then came the idolatry, followed by the tragedy of exile, and the reluctant departure of the glory (Ezek 10). Israel would never rebuild a temple with the same splendor of the original. But, as a kind of compensation, God promises to fill the temple with a greater glory (Hag 2:9).

In the rabbinic literature, according to Michael Lodahl, the title *Shekinah* (literally, "dwelling") was the word "most often utilized to refer to God's presence." The term "referred not to a divine or semi-divine being alongside the God of Israel, but was a way of alluding to that God as present and active among, and even intimate with, God's people."³ The Jewish view of the *Shekinah* perhaps oscillated somewhere between a metaphor for the divine presence and the personification of God. Following J. Abelson, Lodahl suggests that this rabbinic preference for *Shekinah*, especially in an earlier period, is "quite possibly due to the Christian adoption of 'the Holy Spirit.'"⁴

In the New Testament, God finds another kind of temple on earth to manifest his presence. First, his glory is supremely manifested in Christ (John 1:14). Then, Paul announces that the believers themselves are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). Beyond this astonishing

¹Hildebrandt, 72-76.

²The temple, dwelling of God, became an obligatory point of reference for later Jewish historians, who used to relate events to the epoch of the First Temple, or the Second Temple, etc.

³Michael E. Lodahl, *Shekinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York: Paulist, 1992), 51, 52..

⁴Lodahl, 56. See J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature* (New York: Hermon, 1969), 379.

statement, there remains only the final goal: the face-to-face contact with God (1 Cor 13:12; Rev 21:3, 22; 22:4).

While we await the face-to-face interaction, it is the Spirit who makes God/Christ real to us. It is not surprising that Matthew starts and ends his Gospel with the idea of God's presence with us (Matt 1:23; 28:20). Before his departure, Christ promised: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." But where is he? It is impossible that this promise "can refer to anything other than his presence in the Spirit," observes George Hendry; "and there is no evidence that the Early Church ever thought otherwise."¹

In and through Christ, the Spirit gives us a new awareness of the presence of God. If it were not for the Spirit, we might have only a distant, vague, and conflicting memory of Christ. As Raymond Brown expressed in his famous dictum, "the Paraclete is the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent."² In commenting on this paradox, Arden Conrad Autry correctly states that "the Holy Spirit is not simply Jesus in spiritual form, but in his special role as 'paraclete' the Spirit makes Jesus present."³ But the process is not that simple. Johannine theology of God's presence indicates that the Spirit and the Son bring the whole Trinity near us.

First, we know/experience the Spirit. But the contact with the Spirit is not an end in itself, for the work of the Spirit is to make Christ alive to us (John 16:13-15). This means that through the Spirit we experience the Son. But, likewise, the contact with the Son is not all, for he came to reveal the Father (John 1:18; 14:7, 9, 11; 17:26). Then, through the Son we intimately know the Father. In a sense, the Spirit is the first person whom we feel/know; in another sense, the first is the

¹George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, rev. and enl. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 22.

²Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, Anchor Bible, 29A (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1141.

³Arden Conrad Autry, *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament and in Christian Thought of the Second Century: A Comparative Study in Pneumatology* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 87.

Son; and in a third sense, the Father is the first one. In this dynamic and interactive process, Christians experience closely all the persons of the Godhead.

Evidences of Enabling Promises for Today

By analogy, all the previous points can be applied to modern Christians. The Spirit is the same, because God does not change (Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17); God wants to give us the Spirit (Luke 11:13); and Paul says that the presence of the Spirit in one's life is a decisive criterion to determine one's link with Christ (Rom 8:9). But how do we really know whether the Spirit may enable contemporary believers in the same way he did in the past? Five general and brief evidences will be suggested.¹ More specific arguments about the continuity of the miraculous spiritual gifts will be presented in chapter 4.

The Evidence of the Jesus Paradigm

Jesus was/is unique, but he is also the supreme model for Christians. If Christ, the Son of God, needed to be anointed and filled with the Spirit in order to accomplish his mission,² how much more do we! In a remarkable article, Walt Russell demonstrates satisfactorily that "Luke uses Jesus' explanation in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:16-30) as a paradigm for the rest of his ministry, and as a paradigm for Luke's pneumatology of the Christian life."³

Gospel writers, as we can easily see, do not picture Jesus as an ecstatic figure. There is no sign of eccentricity in his life. We could expect this non-charismatic picture from the theologian John, who underlines the interior work of a personal Spirit; but not from the historian Luke, who

¹In order to demonstrate the universality of the Spirit's baptism, Suk Woo Chung used seven arguments: (1) the testimony of Peter in Acts, (2) the "Pentecost of the Samaritans," (3) the "Gentile Pentecost," (4) the Ephesus-Pentecost, (5) Paul's command for Christians being filled with the Spirit, (6) New Testament examples, and (7) the universality of the Great Commission ("The Baptism of the Holy Spirit" [Ph.D. dissertation, California Graduate School of Theology, 1975], chap. 6.

²See, for example, Luke 4:1, 16-20, comparing with Isa 11:1-5, 42:1-4, 61:1-2.

³Walt Russell, "The Anointing with the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts," *Trinity Journal* 7 (1986): 47.

stresses the external manifestations of a powerful Spirit.¹ Even in Luke, when Jesus rejoices in the Spirit, his joy is directed to the Father (Luke 10:21). Jesus spoke little about the Spirit, or less than we would like.

C. K. Barrett suggests some reasons for this paradoxical silence. First, the evangelists were not interested in prophetic/charismatic phenomena as such, for this was a commonplace. For them, the presence, identity, and status of the Messiah were perhaps the exciting issues. Second, Jesus may have purposely kept a distance from the ecstatic non-moral “prophets” of that time, for his prophetic ministry had an ethical dimension, calling people to a conscious, radical, and faithful commitment to God. Third, Jesus may have had no opportunity to talk about the Spirit. In the beginning of his ministry, the gift of the Spirit was inappropriate, for it would betray the messianic secret (besides, that gift was a mark of the fully realized Kingdom); in the end, the expectancy was with the parousia. Finally, the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah were decisive events in the eschatological scheme; the interval between the resurrection and the parousia was the best time for an unprecedented endowment of the Spirit.²

However, Jesus manifests the Spirit in a unique way. From his conception to his ascension, the Spirit played a decisive role in his life.³ He made clear that his power came from the Spirit. When accused of working miracles by the power of demons (Mark 3:29), he warned about the danger of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This was an indication that “the power behind his miracles is that of the Spirit.”⁴ Then, Jesus was a charismatic figure par excellence. He was full of the Spirit in the fullest sense. Two key events accentuate his Spirit-filled life.

¹For a contrast between both writers, see James McPolin, “Holy Spirit in Luke and John,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 45 (1978): 117-131.

²C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1958), 157-161.

³See G. F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991).

⁴Ernest F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), 76.

One event occurred at the Jordan, A.D. 27. Following his baptism, Jesus is dramatically proclaimed as the promised prophet/Messiah. In a cosmic and eschatological scene heaven opens,¹ a voice proclaims him as the beloved Son of God, and the Spirit descends visibly upon him.² The voice was an echo of the opening of the Servant Song (Isa 42:1), proper for an official and public pronouncement from the Father's perspective.

James Dunn suggested that the words heard at the Jordan were an "allusion to, if not a complete citation of" Ps 2:7, which would indicate "that the *gift of the Spirit was understood to be Jesus' adoption as Son.*"³ However, as Walt Russell points out, the complete scene asks for another interpretation. First, the humble posture of Jesus was that of a humble servant. Second, the "context is primarily rooted in Old Testament prophecy, not kingship." Finally, the voice is in closer parallelism with Isa 42:1.⁴ This means that the heavenly statement was inaugurating the Messiahship of Jesus.⁵

Therefore, baptism/anointing was not a ritual to make Jesus Son of God, for he already was the eternal Logos.⁶ But, as Autry correctly observed, the "anointing was not superfluous, even in

¹The agent of this phenomenon is God himself, although Matthew apparently employs a "divine passive" to avoid a direct reference to God.

²This scene is recorded by the three synoptic gospel writers (see Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23). John mentions the testimony of John the Baptist about the coming of the Spirit on Jesus as a God-given sign of his (Jesus') sonship (John 1:29-34).

³James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 65, italics in original.

⁴Walt Russell, 49.

⁵For Joan Taylor, the voice was accounting Jesus "righteous, like a parent acknowledging the good behavior of a child," and "does not necessarily imply that he was the King-Messiah" (269). But she may be wrong. Next time God proclaimed Jesus as his beloved Son, in the accounts of the transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35), Jesus is clearly presented as a suffering messianic figure.

⁶Marshall states: "The opening words are certainly reminiscent of Ps. 2:7, but the order has been changed to stress the fact that it is Jesus who is God's Son, rather than that the dignity of Sonship has been conferred on the person addressed" (*The Gospel of Luke*, 155). According to Lane (58), the phrase may be read as follows: "Because you are my unique Son, I have chosen you for the task upon which you are about to enter."

the eyes of one who saw in Jesus the pre-existent creator of all, the Logos.”¹ This event was doubly important: (1) as a public/cosmic announcement/confirmation of Jesus as the Messiah, who is to initiate the messianic era; and (2) as an internal testimony for Jesus himself. About this last dimension, Autry writes:

For Jesus personally it must have marked the beginning, at least, of a more intense awareness of his mission and status, even though we cannot know Jesus’ self-consciousness before this point with any certainty at all. Along with consciousness of sonship there comes understanding, full-blown or incipient, of his role as the Spirit-anointed Servant of Yahweh (cf. Isa. 42:1). Perhaps for the first time Jesus perceives what kind of Messiah he is to be and what will be the price for him personally.²

The other event occurred in the Nazareth synagogue, perhaps in the spring of A.D. 29. Jesus reads the Isaianic theme of the jubilee year (Isa 61:1-2), proper for a pronouncement from the Servant’s perspective, and applies it to himself (Luke 4:16-20). He reaffirms his Spirit-anointing and establishes his identity as the Messiah. Besides, as Russell says, he announces the prophetic nature, the universal scope, and the positive tone (good news) of his ministry. For Luke, in Russell’s view, Jesus culminates a long line of Old Testament prophets, inaugurates a new era, and establishes a model (or archetype) for Spirit-anointing and prophetic ministry.³ However, Luke clearly viewed Christ as unique, at least in terms of a Davidic/messianic figure (Luke 3:22; 4:16-22; 24:26, 46; Acts 2:22-36).

When we consider these two critical events in connection with the work of the Spirit in Jesus’ birth, miracles, and resurrection, there is no doubt he was a true pneumatic figure, though not of a common type. Jesus’ promise of sending his *Parakletos*, as he was sent by the Father, is the ultimate literary argument that he was full of the Spirit, and that future believers would be also.

¹Autry, 31.

²Ibid., 33. Autry adds that, “although there is no record of it, Jesus would almost certainly have later discussed the impact of this event with his closest disciples” (ibid.).

³Walt Russell, 52-53.

Mission-Scope Evidence

The Great Commission is universal in scope. Jesus said that the good news of salvation should reach all nations, by his power (Matt 28:18-20). To accomplish their mission, the apostles (or perhaps all believers¹) would have the assistance of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). The original apostles died, but the original mission did not. Other “apostles” assumed the task, and the mission is still in process. A corollary is: If modern mission is the same original mission to/through other people, the same original power must follow modern mission to/through other people. What changes is the people, who serve as instrument and/or channel. The means and the goals are the same. In other words, if the demands of discipleship and the goals of mission are for all, the promises must be also.

At the time of his ascension, Jesus had acquired the right to do what he pleased with the earth (Matt 28:18). But, instead of judging immediately the world, he had a better plan. He envisions a worldwide church conquered by the power of love. So he empowers a group of people to preach his good news, under his authority. In announcing his plan, Jesus suggests its all-inclusive scope: (1) he has all authority, (2) in all places (heaven and earth), (3) to make disciples in all nations, (4) baptizing them in the name of all persons of Godhead, (5) teaching them all things, and (6) having his presence/power at all times. In face of this series of “alls,” it seems inadequate to think that modern apostles are not meant to have all the power of the Spirit.

Spirit-Democratization Evidence

Peter and Luke universalize the promise of the Spirit. They do not portray the Spirit as exclusive to a particular group during a foundational event—decisive and unique as that moment might be. While explaining the phenomenon of Pentecost to his critical mixed audience, Peter said it was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:14-21). The risen Jesus, now at the right hand of God, had sent the Spirit (vs. 33). Peter explains that the promise of the Spirit was valid to his

¹R. C. H. Lenski says that “the Great Commission was given, not to the eleven alone as apostles, but the entire 500 as the church of Jesus” (*The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* [Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1932], 1158).

listeners as well as to all future believers. He uses the phrase “all who are far off” (vs. 39) to emphasize the scope of the outpouring. Apparently, in Peter’s view, this phrase had a spatial dimension and applied primarily to the Jews scattered throughout the world;¹ but, in Luke’s view, it might also have a temporal dimension and be applied to us.² If Christ was a divine offer to all those who were “far off” in ethnicity, geography, sin, and time, then the Spirit also should be an offer to them.

In chapter 4, we will turn back to the Joel/Pentecost topic. Here it is sufficient to say that the expression “all people” (or “all flesh”) of Joel 2:28 may really mean “all people.” The whole context of Joel 2 points to Israel/Judah as the audience of the prophet, but vs. 32 (“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”) gives us a clue that Joel glimpsed something beyond the boundaries of his people. We also find God promising to pour out his Spirit on “servants” (vs. 29), which could be an allusion to strangers among the restored Israel. Therefore, the promise must include all people, Israelites or not, in contact with God and in consonance with the promise.

The possibility that Joel thought exclusively of Israel as the receiver of the blessing of the Spirit must not be ruled out, of course. Willem S. Prinsloo, summarizing a more or less restrictivist view, says: “The entire nation consists of fully authorized media of revelation.”³ But the scope of the outpouring, if there is any limitation, has to do with association with God’s people, not with gender, age, social status, or ethnicity. Considering that in the New Testament the people of God are those who accept the Messiah, all members of the messianic community can receive the Spirit.

¹That Peter still was Judeocentric at this time is seen in the episode of Cornelius (Acts 10). But if Peter spoke under inspiration, could his words have also included the contemporary Gentiles?

²I. Howard Marshall observes that the phrase “all who are far off” (cf. Isa 57:19; Eph 2:13, 17) certainly includes all scattered Jews, and, in Luke’s eyes, also the Gentiles (*Atos: introdução e comentário* [São Paulo: Vida Nova/Mundo Cristão, 1982], 81).

³Willem S. Prinsloo, *The Theology of the Book of Joel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 126.

Even if Joel or Peter had not in mind the Gentile world, the Lukan widening of the scope of the Spirit experience in Acts 8, 10, and 19 justifies including it—and us. “From the listing of different lands represented at Pentecost to the words used in the narrative,” Daniel J. Treier writes, “Luke weaves together a masterpiece that prepares us for what is to follow in Acts.”¹ Russell is even more specific, considering the point in discussion here: “The multiplicity of languages present at Pentecost foreshadowed not only the universality of the *message* of the gospel, but also the universality of the *messengers* of the gospel.”²

For Luke, the gift of the Spirit was not restricted to prophetic or apostolic categories, nor to old times, or to his own time (first century A.D.), nor yet to Jewish people. Inspired, Luke expands the experience of the Spirit in space (to everybody) and in time (now and future). In the light of Acts, starting with Peter’s discourse, it is difficult to exclude any believer in any time period from the sphere of the Pentecost. Repentance and acceptance of Jesus (Acts 2:38), not ethnicity, gender, geography, or time, are the enabling conditions for receiving the Spirit. As we will see in chapter 4, this does not mean that every believer has to reenact the events of Pentecost in his or her personal experience, with the same historical phenomena; however, it does mean that all believers should experience the power of the Spirit.

Pentecost-Replication Evidence

Believers from different ethnic backgrounds had their own “Pentecosts.” A phenomenon similar to that of Pentecost was experienced by the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), by the Roman official Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-47), and by a group of men in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). In every case, the Spirit was freely given, though we do not see a rigid pattern. As a rule, those baptized in the name of Christ also received the Spirit (Acts 2:38). Two exceptions only draw attention to the general pattern.

¹Daniel J. Treier, “The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 22-23.

²Walt Russell, 60, italics in original.

In Samaria, there was a delay. The Samaritans believed Philip's preaching, but did not receive the Spirit until Peter and John arrived, prayed for them, and placed their hands on them. The problem, however, apparently had not to do with hierarchy or laying on of hands. If there were only this incident, we might be tempted to question whether Jerusalem held control of the Spirit, or whether Spirit baptism is separable from water baptism. But there are parallels pointing in another direction.

George Montague suggests two possible explanations for the Samaritan delay: (1) there was something missing in the Samaritans' faith, which would be attested by their fascination with magic and infatuation with Philip; (2) the mission of Philip to Samaria was not official, and Luke uses the episode as a sign that Christian community should work in unity with the apostles. He prefers a combination of both explanations.¹

Perhaps the motive was not so negative. Samaria, representing the first step of the church toward the world, was special. "Samaria was both a bridge to be crossed and a base to be occupied," Frederick Dale Bruner writes. "A bridge to be crossed because Samaria represented the deepest of clefts: the racial-religious. A base to be occupied because the church no longer resides in Jerusalem or among Jews alone, but becomes a mission."² Therefore, this case required a special intervention of the apostles.

F. F. Bruce plausibly suggests that "some special evidence may have been necessary to assure the Samaritans, so accustomed to being despised as outsiders by the people of Jerusalem, that they were fully incorporated into the new community of the people of God."³ Being welcomed by the official leadership, they could be sure that they were not second-class believers in the new Spirit-empowered Israel.

¹Montague, 294.

²Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 175

³F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 170.

Still more perceptively, Michael Green believes there was a divine veto on schism that caused the delay of the Spirit on this particular occasion. “If the Holy Spirit had been given immediately upon profession of faith and baptism by the Samaritans this ancient schism [between the Jews and the Samaritans] might have continued, and there would have been two churches, out of fellowship with each other.” In this case, the converts of both sides would have “found Christ without finding each other.”¹

Obviously, the same evidence fundamental to the Samaritans was important for the ethnocentric leaders of the Jerusalem church. If Christ had started opening the ethnic/religious horizons of the disciples, now the Spirit is completing the task. He is insistently saying, “God has a place for the Gentiles in the church.”

The apostles, however, continued in their shell. Therefore, God uses a more dramatic appeal. He gives a vision to Peter, interpreting it as a sign that the Gentiles are not to be considered unclean, and pours the Spirit upon a Roman family, even before baptism (Acts 10). All circumstances involving Cornelius’s case show that the gift of the Spirit poured out on this non-Jewish household had didactic purposes. Max Turner is correct when he writes: “The Cornelius episode is in a sense the crux both of the mission in Acts and of its ecclesiology.” It “in principle redefines the nature of ‘the people of God’, who are thereby no longer simply the Torah-centred Israel of fulfilment, but some transformation of Israel.”² Finally, Peter and his colleagues decipher the code and accept the new reality—first with reluctance, then with joy (11:18).

In Ephesus, the manifestation of the Spirit occurred when Paul rebaptized a group of men “into the name of the Lord Jesus” and “placed his hands on them” (Acts 19:5-6). The point here, again, is not the lack of apostolic presence or of laying on of hands (this gesture apparently was a normal part of the rite of baptism). The problem was that they had received the Johannine rather than the Christian baptism. As Bruner says, “their faith was not in Jesus who had come but in a

¹Michael Green, 138, 139.

²Turner, *Power from on High*, 378.

Messianic figure who was yet to come—the character of the message of John the Baptist.”¹ When they believed in Jesus and were baptized into his name, the Holy Spirit was manifested.

In the three examples (Samaritan, Cornelian, and Ephesian cases), Luke seems to emphasize that the manifestations of the Spirit were of the very same nature of that of the Pentecost. He indeed records Peter twice saying that the Gentiles received the Spirit “just as” the 120 did (Acts 11:15; 15:8). These replications of the Pentecostal phenomenon testify of the ever-growing character of the Spirit-anointed community.²

Any attempt to deny that the gift of the Spirit is also for the contemporary church falls in the same category of mistake made by the early leaders, only the other way around. It means Jewish-centrism in one case, and Apostle-centrism in the other. If Peter were here, he might say, “We had ethnic blindness; you have historical myopia.” In the first century, the Spirit acted as a cross-cultural power; in the twenty-first century, he has to act as a cross-epochal power.

Ministry-Inclusiveness Evidence

The biblical concept of the priesthood and ministry of all believers presupposes an experience with the Spirit. All believers not only have direct access to the Father, through Christ (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25; 10:19-22), but also are called to be gifted ministers in the church. “In the New Testament,” Russell Burrill says, “the church does not *have* a priesthood—it *is* a priesthood.”³ The basis for this ministry is Christ. As he was the true great priest, so the believers are priests of his priesthood. As he was anointed with the Spirit to perform his mission, so the Christians are anointed to perform theirs. As he gave his body for a redemptive purpose, so must the believers

¹Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 209.

²Walt Russell, 61.

³Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church: Unleashing the Awesome Power of Lay Ministry* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993), 24.

offer theirs (Rom 12:1; 1 Pet 2:5). In this concept, the work of the Spirit is basic, for a priesthood/ministry without authority or power is nonsense.¹

The emphasis on call-for-all, and the consequent lay ministry, is found in several New Testament passages.² But the clearest theological foundation for the concept is set by Peter and John. Addressing his “Gentile Christian readers as if they were Jews,”³ but not in an anti-Jewish sense, Peter qualifies them as a “chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9).⁴ Although he primarily thinks of the church as a collective body, a “corporate unity,”⁵ the individual believer is implicitly included. In the same line, John says that Christ “has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” (Rev 1:6; cf. 5:10, 20:6). His tone is eschatological, but a priest who will serve the King in the future must also serve him now.

Burrill points out four parallels between the initiation of Christian believers and the ordination of Jewish priests. In distinct ways, both (1) recognize that a sacrifice is made for their sins; (2) are washed or cleansed in water; (3) are clothed with a symbolic garment of righteousness; and (4) are, or should be, empowered for ministry (with anointing for priests and laying on of hands for Christians).⁶ The point here is that every believer is a priest, has a ministry, and should receive the power of the Spirit to perform it.

¹In an analogous manner, Gunkel wrote: “Every kingdom exists so long as there is a power to preserve it.” When it comes to the kingdom of God, this power is the Spirit of God. “Where the Spirit is, there is the kingdom of God” (72).

²See, for example, Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12; 2 Cor 5:18; Eph 4:8-13, 16; 2 Tim 1:9.

³J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982, 1988), 107.

⁴Peter took these titles from the Old Testament (cf. Exod 19:5-6; Isa 43:21; 61:6), and applied them to the new Israel.

⁵Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 91.

⁶Burrill, 81-83.

We are told that the early church turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). The prowess to achieve this was not characteristic of only a few names figuring in the “Who’s Who” of the New Testament, such as Apollos, Barnabas, Paul or Peter, but also of a multitude of anonymous believers. As we clearly perceive in Acts and Ephesians, all this work was done with power—the power of God.

Every believer was a minister, playing a part even in the liturgy. After all, Christianity is not a religion of show, but of experience. The difference between clergy and laity was functional, not based on status.¹ To quote Rex Edwards, “the Holy Spirit imposed an equality on priests and layman alike.”² This equality, we can say, is not punctiliar, uniting classes in the first century, but also linear, linking people of the first century with their peers of the twenty-first century. Thus, any privilege with the Spirit the early believers/ministers had, we also are supposed to have.

Closing this section, we can say that the Spirit was not a possession of an exclusive club of the first century that used to engrave the name “Apostle” on ID cards of its associated members. The Spirit is a gift of Christ to the whole church, so that the church may announce that Christ is for all. There is no expiration date stamped on this gift.

Summary

This chapter presented three aspects of the role of the Spirit in enabling believers for ministry.

First, the Bible presents the Spirit as a divine person, with intelligence and power to enable believers. If in the Old Testament the personality and the deity of the Spirit are strongly suggested, in the New Testament they become quite clear. The biblical authors do not theorize about the identity of the Spirit (as they likewise do not do about God), but assume that he is the powerful personal presence of God. In consequence, he is able to purposely enable believers for ministry.

¹Ibid., 27.

²Rex D. Edwards, *Every Believer a Minister* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 68.

Second, six symbols of the Spirit (wind, fire, water, oil, dove, and seal) express the abilities given to certain people by the Spirit to enable them to fulfill their mission. My hypothesis is that the invisible Spirit embodies or “mimetizes” symbolically the basic feature of the task/function to be performed by the believers he is enabling. A symbol of the Spirit, therefore, tells us something not about the Spirit as a person, but about him as related to a given function or mission.

Finally, an analysis was made of twelve ways in which the Spirit worked in biblical times. The Spirit animates life, motivates to action, reveals messages, enlightens the mind, gives artistic skills, helps to communicate the gospel, strengthens the witness, stirs up leaders, teaches truth, changes lives, creates community, and makes real the presence of God. This analysis was followed by five lines of evidence showing that what the Spirit did in the past he also can and wants to do today. The Spirit was not an exclusive possession of our ancient biblical forebears.

These findings support the conclusion that, although the Holy Spirit has a multifaceted ministry, his essential function in the sphere of the church is to assist, qualify, and empower believers to accomplish God’s purposes. The next two chapters will examine in more detail two dimensions of the work of the Spirit: enabling to be (ethical aspect) and to do (charismatic aspect).

CHAPTER 3

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS ETHICAL ENABLER

This chapter, dealing with spirituality and ethics in a Christian context, outlines a picture of God as the indispensable living ethical model for believers, analyzes the process of transformation of the believer by the Spirit, and explores each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit.

I presuppose that the work of the Spirit in enabling believers to be ethical ministers must be seen in connection with God's character. At first sight, to speak of the divine perfections and of the image of God in a chapter dedicated to the work of the Spirit may seem out of place. However, the Spirit acts in consonance with God's nature. Otherwise, there would occur an inadmissible rupture in the oneness of the Godhead, or at least a split between God and the universe. It also must be said that we only can approach indirectly the invisible work of the Spirit in character change (John 3:8).

The Model for Being: The Qualitative Goal

Throughout history, atheist philosophers have made attempts to build ethical systems apart from God.¹ For them, morality, responsibility, and character are purely human conventions and achievements. Postmodernism has reinforced this idea, since it denies the existence of absolute truth and universal ethics, considering "standards of right and wrong" as "power issues."²

¹See Charles E. Scott, "Morality Without God?" *Soundings* 82 (1999): 505-517; and Kai Nielsen, *Ethics Without God*, rev. ed. (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1990).

²Larry Pettigrew, "Theological Basis of Ethics," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 11 (2000): 148. I am not totally comfortable with the label "postmodernism," even because our age could likewise be called "Ephemeral Age," or "Global Age," or "Age of Knowledge," or "Age of Excess," or "Age of Anxiety," or still "Hypermodern Age," and so on; but, for the sake of conventionality, I will keep it.

Yet humanity in and by itself can at its best create only a merely human morality.¹ At a deeper level, ethics, character, and goodness are all rooted in God. “Morality has to be discovered, not invented.”² God is the source and the power of ethics. For this reason, in this section, he plays a central role as a model. It is virtually impossible for the Spirit to deal with free moral beings created in the image of God without any reference to God’s character; and perhaps it would be illogical and unfair to exhort humans to a higher moral ideal if there were not an Ultimate Being embodying and standardizing that ideal.

Defining the Attributes of God

We can better grasp the biblical picture of God by understanding the ancient Hebrew mindset. Contrary to the Greek mode of thought, which was static, abstract, dichotomic, and analytic, the Hebrew mode of thought was dynamic, concrete, wholistic, and synthetic.³ Therefore, biblical authors portray God as a personal agent who interacts with the real world. Yahweh relates to and reigns over everything. There is no reality apart from him. Yahweh is the source of life, and the loving/faithful one responsible for the cosmic peace. For him, the universe matters.

Real in the most profound sense, the God of the Bible is a God who stands far and near. This tension is seen in the very beginning of the Bible. If the name Elohim (from the root *alah*, conveying the idea of “strength” and “preeminence”) used in the first creation story (Gen 1:1-2:4a) stresses the transcendence and majesty of God as the God of gods, the name Yahweh (from the

¹In a different context, Jesus spoke about a similar principle: a “brood of vipers” cannot say anything good (Matt 12:34). Of course, atheist people can live highly moral lives. However, even when they do not recognize the existence of a Supreme Being, the Spirit is still subtly influencing their ethics—through conscience or cultural values.

²Göran Bexell, “Theological Interpretation of Biblical Texts on Moral Issues,” *Studia Theologica* 51 (1997): 8.

³James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 10-13. See also the highly recommended author Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, trans. Michael Francis Gibson (New York: Desclee, 1960), and T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

semitic root *hwh*, “to be,” “to speak”) used in the second creation story (Gen 2:4b-25) underscores the immanence and closeness of a God who involves himself in human affairs.¹

Associated with the Hebrew mode of thinking, there is the issue of anthropomorphism.² Hebrew Scripture is starry with anthropomorphic imagery—including psychological anthropomorphism, or anthropopatism (that is, the attribution of human feelings to God). Biblical authors comfortably describe God as loving, hating, or changing his mind. In a remarkable article, E. Cherbonnier has said: “The prophets do not charge the pagan deities with being anthropomorphic, but with being insufficiently anthropomorphic. At their best, they are counterfeit persons. At their worst, they are frankly impersonal.”³

When Hebrew prophets dare to present Yahweh in anthropomorphic terms, they are not diminishing the mystery, transcendence, power, and glory of God. On the contrary, they are affirming God’s essentiality to the cosmos. They are saying that God makes sense. Only an anthropomorphic God may be seriously understood by an *anthropos*. In other words, God is intelligible to us because he discloses himself in human categories—which makes anthropomorphism an indispensable tool.⁴

We cannot explain God in terms of himself, for we are not God. He is beyond formulas, or even theologies. All language about God is necessarily analogical, because, as Dorothy Sayers

¹Jacques Doukhan, “*Ha-Shem*, the God of Israel,” *Shabbat Shalom*, Autumn 1999, 19.

²Anthropomorphism, from Greek *anthropos* (“human being”) and *morphe* (“form”), is a term that describes a virtually universal tendency to think or experience the divine in human categories, employing shapes and metaphors of this world. For a short overview of the concept, see R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Anthropomorphism,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 1:316-320.

³E. Lab. Cherbonnier, “The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 187.

⁴The noted rabbinic scholar Arthur Marmorstein (1882-1946) remarks that we cannot separate religious thought from anthropomorphic conceptions and at the same time establish a relationship with a personal God. Therefore, anthropomorphism, far from degrading a religion, is a basic equipment (*The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature; and The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God: II. Essays in Anthropomorphism* [New York: Ktav, 1968], 1).

points out, “all language about everything is analogical; we think in a series of metaphors.”¹ However, the God of human experience, known through anthropomorphic language, is the real God.

In a sense, the New Testament is less anthropomorphic than the Old, for it presents a God who “is spirit” (John 4:24), and speaks less about God’s ears, eyes, arms, hands, and fingers. Yet, in another sense, it is more anthropomorphic, for it describes a God who “became flesh” (John 1:14).² Scholar Jacob Neusner maintains that “the incarnation of God formed part of the unfolding of the inner logic” of the Judaism of the dual Torah. According to him, “anthropomorphism forms the genus of which incarnation constitutes a species.”³ If he is right, then the idea of a God who is willing to walk in human shoes is deeply rooted in the Hebrew heritage.

What kind of God is this? Considering the Hebrew mind-set and the biblical anthropomorphism, what is the moral tone of God? Do modern views of God do justice to his personality?

Thomas Jenkins observes that during the twentieth century, in the American context, “the character of God came to seem flat and vague.”⁴ God became monochromatic—or, to use an unholy expression, “boring.” This divine characterization, he notes, did not come straight from the Bible. Protestants were influenced by doctrinal theories, biblical criticism, science, morality,

¹Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), 23.

²After reminding us that “the Old Testament does not exhibit a clear line of conceptual development which leads from ‘crude’ forms of speech about God to more ‘refined’ and ‘spiritualized’ ideas,” Ulrich Mauser states: “In Christ, God has acted anthropomorphically. Far from being the document of the highest peak of spiritualization with regard to the concept of God, the New Testament is the unsurpassable testimony to the anthropomorphous nature of God” (“Image of God and Incarnation,” *Interpretation* 24 [1970]: 337, 343).

³Jacob Neusner, *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), xi, 11.

⁴Thomas E. Jenkins, *The Character of God: Recovering the Lost Literary Power of American Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

politics, and especially literature. The phenomenon has complex causes. But “there are some hopeful signs that a more complex characterization of God may emerge from a renewed theological interest in the Bible and literature.”¹

Well, the God of the Bible is in fact complex, intriguing, and not at all boring. The biblical repertoire of adjectives for God is large. Depending on the translation, one can start with the A of almighty and end with the Z of zealous, finding many occurrences in certain letters of the alphabet.² God is eternal, glorious, holy, kind, loving, sensitive, wise, and so on, infinitely.

These qualities of God have traditionally been classified as attributes, or perfections. Integrated into a perfect unity, God’s attributes are not a kind of appendix to his essence, but aspects or facets of his very being. What he is, he wills; what he wills, he does; what he does, he is. “The attributes are permanent qualities,” Millard Erickson comments. “They cannot be gained or lost. They are intrinsic.” For this reason, an excessive analysis of God’s attributes, “in which God is submitted to a virtual autopsy,” is an error.³

Some older theologians used to differentiate between the metaphysical and the moral attributes of God (such as eternity and holiness, respectively); others classified them into negative (such as immutability) and positive (such as power); others distinguished between absolute (divine essence considered in itself) and relative (divine essence in relation to creation) attributes; and still others spoke of immanent or intransitive and emanent or transitive attributes.⁴

“The most common distinction,” especially in Reformed circles, says Louis Berkhof, “is that between *incommunicable* and *communicable* attributes.” The incommunicable “are those to

¹Ibid., 3, 200.

²God, for example, is “almighty” (Isa 1:24), “compassionate” (Exod 34:6; Ps 111:4; Joel 2:13), “faithful” (Deut 7:9; 1 Cor 1:9), “gracious” (Exod 34:6; Ps 111:4; Joel 2:13), “good” (Pss 34:8; 145:9), “holy” (Lev 19:2; 1 Pet 1:15), “jealous” (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9), “mighty” (Ps 24:8), “perfect” (Matt 5:48), “righteous” (Pss 7:9; 119:137), and “upright” (Pss 25:8; 92:15).

³Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 1:264, 265.

⁴The reader interested in the subject will find these classifications in virtually all textbooks of systematic theology.

which there is nothing analogous in the creature,” as self-existence and infinity; the communicable are “those to which the properties of the human spirit bear some analogy,” as mercy and righteousness.¹

In a sense, the classification of God’s attributes into communicable and incommunicable is somewhat artificial, for God shares with us all his attributes. In Christ, we have eternal life, glory, power, wisdom, holiness, love, and everything else. The difference between divine and human attributes has more to do with originality and absoluteness than with exclusivity. In another sense, however, such distinction has a didactic value, signaling to limits and perils.²

When we talk about the attributes of God, we tend to think of a God absolutely perfect. William Power suggests that “a being who is worthy of unconditional admiration and emulation is one who is epistemically, morally, productively, and affectively perfect in all possible worlds.”³ This kind of God knows (directly, not inferentially) all that is possible to know, creates with aesthetic perfection all that is desirable, loves all that is possible to love, and does all that is necessary to maximize good and minimize or eliminate evil.⁴ Could it be different?

However, it is interesting that the biblical God, although having all imaginable perfections and being the pattern of perfection, is not portrayed as a static embodiment of perfection. Yahweh, says Adventist scholar Hans K. La Rondelle, “is nowhere qualified as the *perfectissimum*, as being

¹Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new comb. ed, part 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 55, italics in original.

²This is one of the hardest lessons of Gen 3. Humanity has paid a high price for seeking a higher kind of power. It is necessary to be God to have the power of God. Creatures do not have the structure to deal with absolute power. In a moral cosmos, power and love are not twin towers; rather, the tower of power is built on the foundation of love.

³William L. Power, “Imago Dei—Imitatio Dei,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 42 (1997): 135.

⁴*Ibid.*, 136-137.

perfect in Himself.”¹ God’s perfection is described in terms of relationship with humanity. La Rondelle writes: “Perfection as an abstract, self-existent ethical idea or norm is a Greek philosophical concept, which stands in fundamental antithesis with the Old Testament witness of perfection as the dynamic, historical self-disclosure of God to Israel and its patriarchs.”²

If we had to select a few words from a vast set of qualities to synthesize the divine perfections, which should we choose? Bloesch alerts us to the perils of minimizing or denying any of God’s perfections. Yet he sees a biblical warrant for speaking of five essential attributes: holiness, love, wisdom, power, and glory.³ It seems a good choice. But here, due to space and specific purposes, I will highlight two of them: holiness and love. In some way, they represent to humans all the moral attributes of God, when it comes to how he relates to us and how we are supposed to relate to God and the neighbor. But these words are by no means to be regarded as exhaustive definitions of God. After all, God is above any vocabulary.

Today, some theologians are inclined to consider love as the quintessential attribute of God,⁴ the perfection that summarizes all other perfections. There are, indeed, some biblical texts that may be used to support this assumption. A famous Johannine statement, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), is one of them. James (2:13) also suggests that love surpasses holiness. However, other scholars criticize this kind of synthesis.⁵ To sum up the attributes of God in just one word is a

¹H. K. La Rondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism: A Dogmatic-Ethical Study of Biblical Perfection and Phenomenal Perfectionism*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1975), 38.

²Ibid., 39.

³Donald G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 41.

⁴Generally speaking, theologians from Calvinist tradition tend to stress the holiness and the glory of God, while theologians from Arminian tradition prefer to underscore the love of God. For fine essays covering a considerable spectrum of views on the love of God, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

⁵“We do wrong to exalt the love of God as his supreme feature just because it is more congenial to our thinking,” comments Howard Marshall (*The Epistles of John*, 212). Augustus H.

strong symmetrical temptation, but we must resist it. The one-word synthesis is theologically questionable, aesthetically unnecessary, and psychologically impoverishing.¹

Let us now turn to the two representative attributes: holiness and love.

Holiness: The Beauty of Being Whole

Etymologically, the word “holy” (Hebrew *qadosh*; Greek *hagios*) seems to come from a root meaning “to cut, to separate.” From a divine point of view, holiness means ethical purity; from a human point of view, it may be defined as the state of being set apart from the profane for sacred purposes. In terms of tangible effect, the word bears the idea of integrity, soundness, and wholeness in ethical, spiritual, and even physical spheres—a glorious, kaleidoscopic, beautiful state.²

Holiness is rooted in God, and derives its meaning from him. As German scholar Rudolf Otto proposed in his classic, *God is the Totally Other*, the absolutely different, the *mysterium* that attracts and repels, engendering both awe and fascination.³ Classical Hebrew prophets, especially Isaiah,⁴ present Yahweh essentially as the Holy One. Who, asks Moses in his great song, is so

Strong writes: “Holiness is the track on which the engine of love must run. The track cannot be the engine. If either includes the other, then it is holiness that includes love. . . . God is not holy because he loves, but he loves because he is holy” (*Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 [Philadelphia: Judson, 1907], 272).

¹The Bible has other unqualified statements about the nature of God, such as “God is light” (1 John 1:5) and “God is spirit” (John 4:24). God is perfect in all senses and directions. If it is right to say “God is love,” it may be also right to say “God is holiness,” or “God is justice,” or still “God is coherence.” Instead of defining his nature with just one word, we portray him with all words. Different people, living in particular times and under special circumstances, may prefer to stress different perfections of God. For us sinners, it is wonderful to say “God is love,” but the seraphs prefer to sing “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty” (Isa 6:3). Who knows whether in some corner of the cosmos, in some curve of time, one would prefer to say “God is ecstasy”?

²In some way, the second half of Ps 29:2 (“worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness”) perhaps reflects this understanding.

³See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁴In a series of salvation oracles, Isaiah calls Yahweh “the Holy One of Israel” (41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14). In Isa 6:3, the title employed by the seraphs to exalt and praise God was not “merciful” or “loving,” but “holy.”

magnificent in holiness as God (Exod 15:11)? Echoing Mosaic rhetoric, later writers continue to stress that God has no equal in holiness (1 Sam 2:2; Isa 40:25). God is majestic, transcendent, and glorious in righteousness.

Divine holiness is to be understood as an intrinsic quality. God is holy in his very nature, not only in virtue of what he wills, does or relates to. He does not have holiness; he is holy. “To be holy He does not conform to a standard,” says A. W. Tozer. “He is that standard.”¹ In a certain sense, divine holiness goes beyond the ethical, although it never snubs ethics; it transcends will, although it never antagonizes divine will.

Holiness is a warrant that God will forever act as God (see Ps 93:5), with transparency and righteousness. As Stephen Charnock has observed, if we ascribe to him all the possible perfections, but conceive him devoid of holiness or imagine him blurred by the tiniest spot of evil, “we make him but an infinite monster.”²

For Bloesch, “holiness together with love is the quintessential attribute of God.” In poetic words, he defines the relation between holiness and love: “In the depth of God’s love is revealed the beauty of his holiness. In the glory of his holiness is revealed the breadth of his love. The apex of God’s holiness is the holiness of his love. The apex of God’s love is the beauty of his holiness.”³

Unfortunately, as Tozer observes, we are not fully qualified to appreciate the unique and unapproachable holiness of God, for we have learned to live with unholiness. “Until we have seen ourselves as God sees us, we are not likely to be much disturbed over conditions around us as long as they do not get so far out of hand as to threaten our comfortable way of life.”⁴

¹A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 112.

²Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication), 2:130, 131.

³Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 139, 141.

⁴Tozer, 110, 111.

In spite of our inability to see the absolutely holy, we can apprehend the historical disclosure of God's holiness in both Testaments.¹ To be more accurate, I would say that in the Old Testament God emphasizes his holiness (and transcendence), while in the New he discloses in full scale his love (and immanence).² The revelatory method seems to have functioned well for Israel to formulate his concept of holiness, and is still a valid method—perhaps the best, if not the sole one. Yahweh wanted to be “acknowledged as holy by the Israelites” (Lev 22:32), and he was—sometimes in theory, sometimes in practice.

Lawrence Cunningham detects three kinds of holiness within the biblical tradition: (1) “a *priestly* understanding that emphasizes separation, purity, and segregation for cult”; (2) “a *prophetic* understanding that underscores the relationship between worship, social justice, and conversion of heart”; and (3) “a *sapiential* holiness that puts emphasis on the need for individual integrity as it develops under the eye of God.”³ We can add that while the Old Testament stresses the strict cultic holiness, the New focuses on a dynamic inner holiness.

All these understandings, among other possible ones, are based on the holiness of God, which is evidenced in many ways. God's holiness is (1) manifested in his justice and wrath;⁴ (2)

¹The word “holiness” and its cognates occur more than 800 times in the Old Testament; the adjective “holy,” the noun “sanctification,” and the verb “to sanctify” appear dozens of times in the New Testament.

²Perhaps John (1:17) had this in mind when he said that “the law was given through Moses,” while “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” This does not mean that the law is not an expression of love (cf. Matt 22:34-40; Rom 13:8-10).

³Lawrence S. Cunningham, “Holiness,” *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993), 480.

⁴The wrath of God against sin is both an expression of love and a manifestation of holiness. His wrath is to be seen as *affectus* (involving feeling/emotion) as well as *effectus* (coming as consequence/result of sin). It is a personal reaction, but not an intrinsic divine attribute. See the balanced essay by Tony Lane, “The Wrath of God as an Aspect of the Love of God,” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 138-167, and his sources.

emphasized in his law, particularly the Sabbath (Lev 20:8; Ezek 20:12, 20); (3) revealed supremely in his Son;¹ and (4) recognized in his transparency and accountability.²

God's holiness has many implications for believers. In the context of this study, the direct implication is that God is our pattern of holiness. Lev 17-26, a complex that has been called the "Holiness Code" (H), is marked by the formula "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy."³ God is the model for both personal and communitarian life. Citing Lev 19:2, "a favorite passage for early Christian ethical teaching,"⁴ Peter says: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do" (1 Pet 1:15).

This Levitical-Petrine formula can function in a triple way: (1) in order to approach a holy God, we must be holy (his holiness is a consuming fire); (2) in relating to a holy God, we are to mirror his holiness (he is the standard); and (3) as a result of interacting with a holy God, we become holy (he is the source of holiness). To put it another way, because God is holy, he calls us to be holy; because only he is absolutely holy, he may judge the quality of those who intend to be holy; and because he is holy, he causes us to be holy.

However, Peter's command may still have another meaning. The believers already are holy; therefore, they must behave as holy people in their daily lives. This seems to be the case. M.

¹Holiness is, in essence, Christlikeness. Yet the climax of the holiness revelation is to be found in the cross. If love irradiates from the cross, holiness shines upon the cross.

²Thomas C. Oden denies that God needs to be accountable to anyone else beyond himself (*Systematic Theology: The Living God* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987], 104). In a sense, Oden is right. God does not violate his own holiness, nor does he have a superior to whom to be accountable. But, in another sense, Oden's statement may be misunderstood. For God is accountable to the cosmos. Being love, he graciously invites his moral creatures to judge his actions and his ways. Accountability, according to Adventist (and biblical) theology, is seen especially in the final judgment. In Frank B. Holbrook's words, "the Court's sentence in the preadvent session is given . . . first and foremost of all in favor of God" (*The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* [Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1996], 176).

³See, for example, 19:1; 20:7-8, 24, 26; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:16, 32. Holiness in this context must be seen as both ceremonial and ethical. Holiness, far from being just a static state, is a dynamic action.

⁴Dauids, 69.

Eugene Boring observes that “the imperative rests on the indicative, ‘be what you are,’ or better ‘show yourselves in your daily, public conduct to be what you in fact have been made by God’s act.’”¹ In the same line, J. Ramsey Michaels says that the imperative “is aorist, not with the meaning ‘become holy,’ as if the readers were not holy already (they are a ‘holy nation,’ 2:9), but with the meaning ‘make holiness your trademark once and for all.’”²

The Holy Spirit, as we shall see below, is the direct agent of holiness and sanctification. This is clear in Ezek 36:22-27, a text belonging to an oracle of restoration. Acting upon our consciences, the Spirit makes us aware of God’s holiness, creates the desire for a holy living, and gives us the power to achieve it. He not only places the believers in a kingdom of light, but also implants the ethical qualities of God inside them.

In Paul, as Marie E. Isaacs proposes, *pneuma* is always associated with what is holy, transcendent, and divine. While *sarx* emphasizes human “dissimilarity” with God, *pneuma* stresses human “affinity” with God. It is “a term of kinship between God and man, and this explains why he [Paul] does not clearly distinguish between its anthropological and theological usage.”³ Perhaps the expression “Holy Spirit” (*pneuma hagion*) itself—which, as an Adventist author underscores, may or may not be the “permanent” or “eternal” name of the Spirit⁴—gained prominence in the New Testament due to a progressive awareness of his ethical work.

Love: The Joy of Being Passionate

The word “love” has been misused and overexplored for a long time. In a recent book, D. A. Carson observes that the biblical love of God is different from the love set in postmodern

¹M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 76.

²J. Ramsey Michaels, 59.

³Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and Its Bearing on the New Testament* (London: Heythrop Monographs, 1976), 79.

⁴Otto H. Christensen, *Getting Acquainted With God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 112.

matrix. “What the Bible says about the love of God,” he emphasizes, “is more complex and nuanced than what is allowed by mere sloganeering.”¹

To begin, we ought to ask whether we are able to talk about the love of God at all. A logical answer is that, whether we are able or not, we need to talk about it, and the only vehicle to such a task is our language. If God chose the language of incarnation (the most human language possible) to talk with us about his love, then we can use our language in God-talk. Christ came to reveal the love of God to us in a bi-experiential way (John 17:26).

Next, we must ask whether both God and humans love exactly in the same way (univocally) or in totally different ways (equivocally). Can we say that divine love and human love belong to the same category?² Thomas Aquinas has suggested the theory of an analogy (more precisely the “analogy of intrinsic attribution”) as the solution to this dilemma.³ This means, in the words of Alan J. Torrance, that “certain perfections (*agape*, for example) can be predicated of the created order due to the intrinsic relation of the created order to God”—and that the human language “may be used of the creator.”⁴

God, of course, is above earthly standards. He is the ultimate standard. On the other hand, human beings are under heavenly standards. That is, while God’s love is not measured by any higher ideal, our love is subsumed directly to God. The relation or analogy must always be of one

¹D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Weathon: Crossway, 2000), 24.

²C. S. Lewis wrote: “The human loves can be glorious images of Divine love. No less than that: but also no more” (*The Four Loves* [London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960], 18).

³For two good works dealing with the Thomist insights on analogy, see George P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), and Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963).

⁴Alan J. Torrance, “Is Love the Essence of God?” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 118.

to another (*unius ad alterum*), never of two to a third (*duorum ad tertium*).¹ God is absolutely love, but we love relatively. However, our love may be real for God, as God's love is real for us.

Another aspect that must be noted here is that God loves freely. Obligatory love is not love at all. God seeks fellowship to benefit his creatures, not to benefit himself. Paradoxically, in serving and gladdening his creatures, he finds his pleasure and glory.² The gratuitousness of the divine love is highlighted in the cross—a voluntary act of pure self-abandonment. “The love revealed in Jesus Christ is not a love *for the sake of any ‘thing,’*” professor Torrance correctly states. “In radical contradistinction to the thrust of idealism, it is a love that creates value by giving value to what it loves.”³

Against their classical peers, modern theologians are formulating a more worldly view of God's love. A significant change in agapeic conceptions, if not a paradigm revolution, is under way. God now has emotions and feelings. “If there is no feeling in God, then there is no love in God,” writes Henry Clarence Thiessen, who adds: “He [God] is unlike the gods of the heathen, who hate and are angry, and the god of the philosopher, who is cold and indifferent.”⁴

Ancient Christian theologians, following Greek/Hellenistic conceptions, taught that God could not suffer, for he is unchangeable. Suffering would imply imperfection. The doctrine of *apatheia* (impassibility) of God immunized him against passions and emotions.⁵ In the sixteenth

¹Ibid., 120; see Mondin, 51-53.

²Isaiah expresses this fact with a surprising phrase: “as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you” (62:5). Zephaniah (3:17) also says that God would “take great delight” in saving and quieting Jerusalem with his love.

³Torrance, 130, italics in original.

⁴Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. Vernon D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 86.

⁵There is a growing literature about the passibility/impassibility debate. One of the first modern scholars to show interest in this topic was John K. Mozley, with his *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1926).

century, Martin Luther developed his “theology of the cross,”¹ but the topic of God’s pain implicit/explicit in his approach remained more or less ignored until the end of the nineteenth century. With the Weimar edition of Luther’s works in 1883 (the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Luther’s birth), interest in his theology grew.² The suffering caused by the two world wars also gave an impulse for the theology of God’s pain. Jürgen Moltmann and the Japanese writer Kazoh Kitamori figure among those who have presented new insights for the debate.³

According to Moltmann, if God were “incapable of suffering in any respect, and therefore in an absolute sense, then he would also be incapable of loving.”⁴ God not only is capable of suffering, but, in the forsakenness and death of the Son, he in fact has suffered for us, although in a different way. More than suffering for us, he suffers with us: “Where we suffer because we love, God suffers in us.”⁵

The concept of a suffering God is not based only on the New Testament theology. In an insightful book examining the issue in the literature of the Old Testament, Terence Fretheim approaches the theme of God’s suffering in a variety of ways. According to him, God suffers *because* of the people’s rejection of him as Lord, suffers *with* the people who are suffering, and suffers *for* the people.⁶

¹See Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther’s ‘Theologia Crucis’* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); and Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

²Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 251.

³Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox, 1965).

⁴Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 230.

⁵Ibid., 253.

⁶Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 107-148.

In a study utilizing a computer and a methodology known as “content analysis,” William Griffin tried to establish a psychological portrayal of God as an acting agent. The selected texts employed in his study are Isa 1:1-4:1, Hos 4-8, Joel, Malachi, and Zech 12-14. His conclusion is that, in the prophets, “God is pictured as an emotional and calculating being rather than a dispassionate and non-rational force”; and that the “production of weal or woe is far more characteristic of divine activity than of human.”¹ One of his highlights is interesting in our context: “God shares a similar overall emphasis on emotions as humans, although the emphases on specific emotions are different (for instance, God does not fear).”²

A topic related to the divine suffering is the so-called open theism. Since Adventist theologian Richard Rice launched his book *The Openness of God* in 1980,³ the theological landscape has been altered significantly.⁴ The major impact of the open view is on the way God supposedly knows reality, experiences time, and relates to the world.⁵ But it also influences the way we think God loves, since he is seen as supremely sensitive and responsible to his creatures.⁶

¹William Paul Griffin, *The God of the Prophets: An Analysis of Divine Action* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 227, 230.

²Ibid., 248.

³Richard Rice, *The Openness of God: The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980).

⁴Critics and supporters of the open theism are active. A recent fine publication on the subject is *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), by Clark H. Pinnock. For a short history of the open theism and its basic presuppositions, see Richard Rice, “The Openness of God: A New Level of Discussion,” *Spectrum* 29 (2001): 56-63. The openness theology as it is presented today has merits and weaknesses, but it is too early to either accept or discard it definitively.

⁵In classical theology, God has absolute foreknowledge, is timeless (he knows all at once), and does not change as he controls the world; in openness theology, God knows what is knowable of the future, experiences events as they happen, and changes (not in his character) as he interacts with the world.

⁶Richard Rice, *The Openness of God*, 25.

Whether we accept the current theological perspectives or not, we find rich material in the Bible on God's emotional love—and it is crucial to understand it. Biblical authors treat God's love as multifocused. According to Carson, the Bible speaks of the love of God in at least five different ways: (1) the peculiar “intra-Trinitarian love of God”; (2) “God's providential love over all that he has made”; (3) “God's salvific stance toward his fallen world”; (4) “God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect”; and (5) God's love “directed toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way—conditioned, that is, on obedience.”¹

When it comes to God's love for his people, there is a vast set of concrete manifestations.² God's love is seen in his (1) goodness/benevolence,³ which is his love expressed to his needy creatures; (2) mercy, which is his love manifested toward the pitiful; (3) covenant,⁴ which is his love manifested in the sovereign election of a special people;⁵ (4) sense of justice, which is his love expressed on behalf of the poor and oppressed;⁶ (5) “serviceableness,” which is his love ready to

¹Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, 16-19.

²Geoffrey Grogan envisions no less than thirteen kinds of manifestations of God's love for his people (“A Biblical Theology of the Love of God,” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 51-60).

³Goodness, as Stephen Charnock stresses, is not a habit added to God's essence, but his essence itself, goodness in the highest degree (2:260-263).

⁴God is always faithful to the covenant, but his faithfulness is not cold and legalistic; it has overtones of love (see Grogan, 55, 57). In both Testaments the covenant starts as a more formal relationship (treaty/fatherly models, seen in Genesis and the gospels) and ends with a more intimate relationship (marriage model, seen in Hosea, the Epistles, and Revelation).

⁵Even within the covenant family, there might be further selectivity caused by love, a kind of “an election within an election” (Grogan, 54).

⁶The Exodus took place only because Yahweh personally senses (in fact, experiences) the oppression of his people and acts (Exod 2:24-25; 3:7-9, 16-17). As Jon L Dybdahl observes, “Exodus portrays God as deliverer of Israel” based on “a powerful combination of both feeling and binding covenantal principle” (*Exodus: God Creates a People*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994], 43).

increase people's well-being; (6) grace, which is his love directed to the guilty;¹ and (7) self-gift in the Son, which is his love expressing his self-donation to the world.

What are the implications of God's love for us, in the context of this dissertation? The fact that God is love has a astonishing corollaries, which John more than anyone else understood and made clear.² As God is love, so must we embody love, for he is our model. As he showed concretely his love by giving his Son, so must we love with deeds. Because love begins with God, our love can just be a response. God's love is not a sterile love: it does not come to be lost in the world, but to fructify us by God's power and return to its source. The way of *agape* is down-up.³ Love's fruitfulness is dependent on the response of the partner. The Spirit, operating love in us, is the key to know whether we live in God (4:13-16).

Paul makes clear that our love, as a reflection of God's love, is a love essentially pneumatic. It is the Holy Spirit who "pours" the love into our hearts (Rom 5:5). With this beautiful image, Paul is saying that our assurance of God's love for us comes by intimate revelation of the Spirit, evidenced by the cross. Sure of God's love, we love. This means that love is not a human virtue or conquest, but a gift of grace, the flow of God inside us.

In closing this section, it is important to remark that God's holiness and love, as well as the other attributes, must not be seen in isolation, as compartmentalized and static qualities, but as dynamic expressions of his being. God combines all perfections in his personality. The same may be said about the diverse and interwoven manifestations of a given attribute. When the Spirit lives powerfully in us, he creates a similar pattern.

¹The cross is grace and, therefore, love in high concentration. For this reason, John R. W. Stott is not being hyperbolic when he suggests that "if we are looking for a definition of love, we should look not in a dictionary, but at Calvary" (*The Cross of Christ* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986], 212).

²In a few selected verses of his first letter, John defines the origin, the nature, and the implications of love (see especially 3:10-14, 16, 18, 23; 4:7-18, 21).

³V. Warnach, "Amor," *Dicionário de teologia bíblica*, ed. Johannes B. Bauer, 3rd ed. (São Paulo: Loyola, 1984), 1:54.

Searching for the Image of God

The concept of the “image of God” is ultra-rich in content, meaning, and implications. Its importance for Judeo-Christian theology is out of all proportion to its biblical laconic treatment.¹ Vladimir Lossky may not have exaggerated when he wrote: “There is no branch of theological teaching which can be entirely isolated from the problem of the image without danger of severing it from the living stock of Christian tradition.”² In a sense, our own dignity, worthiness, and self-identity depend on it.

Likewise, the history of the interpretation of the concept is rich. To use a metaphor of Frederick McLeod, “the multi-faceted opinions concerning image resemble a large glittering diamond that sparkles in new, fascinating ways when rotated to the light.”³ From Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200), the first father to develop a theology of the image,⁴ to modern scholars, much has been said. One may even feel that some theologians, dim with the glittering light of the image, say incongruent things.

Here I will not engage in extensive analysis of the image issue. The central point (addressed in the next section) is the work of the Spirit in renewing or restoring the image. Yet it seems important to review some details about the image identification.

Any theology of the image of God has obligatorily to begin (or at least to deal) with its capstone text: Gen 1:26-28.⁵ The text says that God decided to make man (male and female) in his

¹D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53.

²Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 126.

³Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 4.

⁴His view on the subject is found in his chief work, *Against the Heresies*, written in A.D. 185 to correct doctrinal errors of Gnosticism.

⁵Other important texts are Gen 5:1-3, 9:6, and also Ps 8, which seems to be a poetic echo of Gen 1:26-28, although the Psalmist does not employ the expression “image of God.”

own “image” and “likeness.” These famous words go always in pairs: *selem* and *demut* (Hebrew); *eikon* and *homoiosis* (Greek); *imago* and *similitudo* (Latin).

Attempts to differentiate “image” and “likeness” have been made. But these words are probably a synonymous parallelism.¹ If there were any distinction, perhaps they could express, respectively, ideas of reproduction (image)² and resemblance (likeness). Together, these words reveal that man (male-female) is like God in some aspects. As Anthony Hoekema puts it, “man as he was created was to *mirror* God and to *represent* God.”³

In what ways are we to see the image of God? The author of Genesis does not say explicitly. He does not give a theory about image, or even details. Why? Perhaps he wanted to leave a certain ambiguity in the air, or the idea was clear enough for his audience, or it is simply due to the non-systematic character of the Bible. Yet, following his clues, we can infer some facts.

New Testament authors also do not help much to clarify the issue. The New Testament focus is not on the “image of God,”⁴ but on the likeness of Christ. Charles Sherlock comments that it is “striking” “that the term ‘image’ (*eikon*) is not used for humankind in the New Testament apart from reference to Christ”—the “perfect *eikon* of God.”⁵

How should one interpret the *imago* concept? Scholars differ vastly in their opinions. Some of the most significant explanations are:

¹Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), 111.

²“On the basis of Akk. and the root meaning of *slm* [‘to cut off’],” says H. Wildberger, “one easily arrives at the meaning ‘statue,’ for *selem*” (“*Selem, Image*,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997], 3:1081).

³Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 67.

⁴In fact, there is only one indirect mention to the topic. It is in Jas 3:9, where the apostle criticizes the bad use of the tongue to “curse those who are made in the likeness [*homoiosin*] of God.”

⁵Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humankind* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 50.

1. *Body.* The physical interpretation of the image of God has been defended by several modern scholars, such as Herman Gunkel, P. Humbert, and Ludwig Koehler.¹ For J. Maxwell Miller, both *selem* (more concrete) and *demut* (more abstract) have to do with similarity in visual or physical appearance.²

2. *Mental faculties.* According to Edwards Curtis, “most early Christian writers understood the image of God in ontological rather than functional terms, and most emphatically denied that the image of God is found in the human body.”³ Their emphasis was on the immaterial part of the human being, or things like reason, free will, self-perception, self-determination, and moral consciousness. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) suggests that the essence of the image is to be found primarily or even solely in man’s intellectual nature.⁴ “Thomas regards intelligence as a dynamic endowment for man to improve his likeness to God,” explains Joseph Fichtner.⁵ Divine likeness here is seen in human skills to imagine, think, understand, choose, and decide.

3. *Ruling power.* Antiochene fathers such as Diodore (d. c. 390), Chrysostom (c. 347-407), and Theodoret (c. 393-c. 460) “understood ‘image’ as being the dominative power that Adam *qua* male received to rule in God’s place over the material universe.”⁶ For Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428), Adam was both “the symbol and the true type anticipating the plenitude of power

¹See Edward Mason Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984), 40-44.

²J. Maxwell Miller, “In the ‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ of God,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 291.

³Curtis, 21.

⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.93.2

⁵Joseph Fichtner, *Man, the Image of God: A Christian Anthropology* (New York: Alba House, 1978), 106.

⁶McLeod, 235.

conferred on Christ.”¹ Most exegetes today seem to interpret the image as a description of the royal function of humans in the world.²

4. *Glory investiture.* In a complex approach about Glory theophany, Meredith G. Kline develops the concept of man as the glory-image of God. In the Glory, he says, God exercises his “royal-judicial office,” which has an ethical foundation (justice and righteousness) and whose formal-physical expression is a theophanic radiance. Kline writes: “That man in his likeness to God is like members of the divine council suggests that to bear the image of God is to participate in the judicial function of the divine Glory.”³

5. *Relatedness.* For Karl Barth, the image of God in man lies not in any anthropological aspect, but rather in our capacity for I-Thou fellowship. The real man/woman is human in vertical and horizontal encounter, “and in this humanity it is a likeness of the being of its Creator.”⁴ God is not the solitary king of a cosmic island.

6. *Character/righteousness.* Adventist scholar Samuele Bacchiocchi associates the image of God with humankind’s capacity to reflect God.⁵ Martin Luther emphasized righteousness. “In all his important passages on the subject,” David Cairns observes, Luther “equates the image with man’s original righteousness.”⁶

7. *The whole person.* This is Ellen White’s position. “Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character,” she wrote.⁷ For Hoekema, the image includes both

¹Ibid., 237; see 62-70.

²J. Richard Middleton, “The Liberating Image? Interpreting *Imago Dei* in Context,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 24 (1994): 13.

³Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 27.

⁴Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), III/2:203.

⁵Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997), 44.

⁶David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: SCM, 1953), 124.

⁷Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 45.

structure (noun) and function (verb). Just as an eagle flies (one of its functions) thanks to its wings (one of its structures), so human beings function in certain ways thanks to certain structural capacities.¹

What the biblical writer really had in mind, nobody can say with total assurance. As Clines observes, “Different starting-points, all of which seem to be legitimate, lead to different conclusions.”² Yet, when we consider all the biblical data from Old and New Testaments, it seems that all the items above may be juxtaposed to define the image.

To begin, the Hebrews viewed the human being in a wholistic way. Instead of *having* a soul, man/woman *is* a living soul. Johannes Pedersen has expressed this truth with a famous statement: “The body is the soul in its outward form.”³ This means that the body is an essential part of the masterpiece made by God. Influenced by Platonic philosophy and taking for granted that God is incorporeal, some (but not all) early fathers and other scholars discarded totally the physical aspect.⁴ But why should this be? The point is not whether the body belongs to the image, but what kind of body was originally part of it.

There are good reasons to assume that humans had glorious bodies before the Fall. According to Gen 2:25, Adam and Eve “were both naked, and they felt no shame.” The absence of shame apparently was related to a state of innocence (cf. 3:7, 10), but it also might be due to a previous kind of garment. If sin turned us “short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), the lack of sin implies a special glory. Besides, the “heavenly bodies” have a special splendor, which will

¹Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 69.

²Clines, 61.

³Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 1:171.

⁴See David Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 105-116; and Carl W. Griffin and David L. Paulsen, “Augustine and the Corporeality of God,” *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 97-118. James Orr calls the idea that God has visible form, and that man is his image in this respect, a “fancy” (*God's Image in Man and Its Defacement in the Light of Modern Denials* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948], 54-55).

characterize the resurrected bodies (see 1 Cor 15:35-55). In Pauline language, the perishable (body) will be “clothed” with the imperishable (vs. 53). Combining metaphors, he says that our “earthly tent” will be clothed with a “heavenly dwelling” (2 Cor 5:1-4). The quality of the bodies of the future is a clue to the bodies of the past. Christ, with his glorified body, is the link between these two realities. The intensive presence of the Spirit is perhaps the source of luminescence.

When we turn to the rabbinic literature, we find ample support for the idea that God has body or form, and for the logical conclusion that the image of God may refer to human physical form.¹ Of course, the body here must not be seen in a crude sense.² In rabbinic thought, Alon Gottstein suggests, “Adam is envisioned as possessing a body of light,” which possibly legitimates the understanding of *selem* as a body of light.³ The original brilliance or splendor of Adam/Eve was a pale reflection of the glory or effulgence of God. After the Fall, their radiance and majesty diminished.

Ellen White perhaps would agree with this interpretation. She says: “The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.”⁴

One argument frequently used against the physical interpretation is that God is spirit (John 4:24) and, therefore, has not a corporeal form (see Deut 4:12, 15-16). But the critics forget that the Bible also speaks of God’s face, arms, hands, eyes, and ears.⁵ In one of his theophanies, Yahweh

¹See Alon Goshen Gottstein, “The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 171-195.

²Bodily existence does not imply bodily functions. God may have a bodily form for the sake of his creatures. Besides, different bodies may be made of different “substances.” If I read the Bible correctly, God is pure light.

³Gottstein, 179, 180. However, see the criticism of David H. Aaron, “Shedding Light on God’s Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997): 299-314.

⁴Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

⁵For a few examples about the face of God, see Num 6:25; Isa 59:2; about his arms, Ps 77:15; Isa 53:1; 59:1; about his hands, Num 11:23; Job 6:9; 10:8; Pss 18:35; 119:73; Isa 41:20;

allowed Moses to see his back, but not his face (Exod 33:18-23). Ezekiel describes the appearance of Yahweh as a glittering human form (1:26, 28).¹ If we are to imagine God as having or assuming a form, then it makes more sense to envision him through our own form.²

Another objection is that God prohibited the making of any image or idol of any shape (Exod 20:4-5; Deut 4:15-16); therefore, the body could not be the image. In fact, the real issue was the material representation of God, not the corporeality of God. There are three probable reasons for such prohibition. First, the human being already was the image of God—a living image.³ A static image would be a horrible and gross perversion of the complex dynamic God. Second, images and idols were associated with corruption and evil (Deut 4:25-26); behind them, there was a malign power. Finally, images and idols are a fraud; nothing; totally worthless (Isa 44:9; Jer 10:3, 8 14-15). None of these reasons really invalidates the idea of the body as image of God.

The body, however, is not all the image. The invisible faculties of the human being (point 2), such as self-consciousness, will, memory, imagination, creativity, sensibility, and responsibility, also must be included. Without these aspects, the image of God would be a dead image at the level of an idol of clay or stone. Therefore, ancient scholars were not wrong in what they affirmed, but in what they denied.

The interpretation of the image as power for ruling (point 3) certainly has merit. In Gen 1:26 (cf. vs. 28), God's decision of making man in his image is followed by a command to man to

 59:1; about his eyes, 2 Chr 16:9; Pss 33:18 (34:15; 1 Pet 3:12); Prov 15:3; and about his ears, 1 Chr 28:8; Ps 31:2; Isa 59:1.

¹See Clines, 71-72.

²As Sherlock observes, there is “the danger of making God in the image of humanity,” which “is perhaps the most subtle idolatry”; but “it is almost as dangerous to say that being made in the image of God has nothing to do with our physical nature”; after all, “Christ came to redeem us not from matter, but from sin” (75).

³See G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 81-82; Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 67.

rule over the world. Ps 8 also testifies that the human being was crowned with glory and made to rule over the creation.

In this royal task, man and woman would function as representatives of God on earth—an idea supported by the ancient custom of viewing images of gods or kings as representatives of them. Against the Egyptian idealization of the king as God’s image, perhaps the author of Genesis democratized this idea, affirming that every person bears God’s image and is his representative.¹ While other cultures multiplied deities (polytheism), restricted the access to them, and diminished human dignity, Hebrew culture limited the number of gods to one (monotheism),² amplified the access to him, and magnified human dignity.³

The image-glory concept (point 4) is a serious alternative to the traditional views. Its supporter, Meredith Kline, observes that glory is connected with image in creation and re-creation contexts.⁴ “The renewal of the divine image in men [and women] is an impartation to them of the likeness of the archetypal glory of Christ,” he writes.⁵ However, Kline’s view does not stand alone; it must be seen as a forceful complementary aspect.

Point 5 (relationship) is indirectly strong. Gen 1:27 (“male and female he created them”), a basic text for this understanding, apparently is not defining the image. But, when we consider the intrinsic importance of interaction for free and intelligent beings, it becomes relevant. Whether originally intended by the author of Genesis or not, this aspect must be kept in combination with other perspectives as a useful corollary. A God who does not relate would be an isolated God—

¹Wenham, 31; see Clines, 80-85, 93.

²Cairns says: “It was, one might venture to say, almost impossible for Israel securely to hold both these truths together, the reality of the covenant and the universality of the image, until it had dawned on them that there was but one God and that the gods of the other nations were idols” (29).

³Perhaps it is not by chance that violence against humans is condemned on the basis that humanity is created in the image of God (Gen 9:6).

⁴Kline, 28-29. Among his neotestamentarian proof-texts, he cites 1 Cor 11:7, and 2 Cor 4:4, 6, where Paul links image and glory.

⁵Ibid., 28.

tyrant or powerless, never loving. Likewise, a person who does not relate would not be a real portrayal of a loving God.

The argument pro-character/righteousness (point 6), like the argument pro-relationship, depends on indirect inferences. According to Reinhold Niebuhr, Luther was so eager to accentuate our present state of sin, and to prove that the image is now lost, that his thought about a pre-Fall state of perfection is not helpful in this matter.¹ But some evidence in support of this idea does exist. Bacchiocchi correctly points out that in the New Testament the image of God is associated “with moral and spiritual capacities.”²

Paul especially links image and righteousness/holiness (Eph 4:24).³ For him, Jesus is the perfect image of God (Col 1:15), the one who reflects the glory of God (2 Cor 4:4, 7). Conformity to the image of Christ means acceptance of Christ’s righteousness, as well as expression of Christ’s character. Pauline theology of image seems to be more naturally understood in soteriological and eschatological terms than in the protological category.

Taken in isolation, point 7 (the whole person) is probably the strongest one. There is no consistent reason to exclude from the image any aspect pertaining to the human being, since it is a unity. As we cannot separate what God is from what he does or looks like, so must we not attempt to fragment the human being.

If this line of reasoning is correct, then we can define the image of God as a physical, mental, royal, social, moral, spiritual, and glorious resemblance between God and human beings in their original or ideal state, which confers identity and high status to humans. The likeness

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (New York: Scribner, 1964), 160, 161.

²Bacchiocchi, 44.

³Other Pauline texts emphasizing an ethical element in the image from a christological point of view are: Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; Col 3:10.

includes structural and functional aspects. To paraphrase Bacchiocchi, what God is and does on an infinite scale, we are supposed to be and do on a finite level.¹

Here enters sin. Created originally as “both potentially immortal and potentially mortal,” and also as “potentially sinless” and “potentially sinful,”² man chose the wrong alternative. He sinned, and this affected the image of God in him. But if the human being lost something of the image of God at the Fall, what in reality was lost? Must the honored title “image of God” be reserved only for the *homo creatus*, or does the *homo peccator* also deserve it?

Eastern theologians tend to stress the continuity of the image of God in humanity—and the potential for reflecting this image.³ Theologians from Protestant traditions, instead of offering a simple “yes” or “no,” would prefer a qualified answer. Reformed scholars made a distinction between the broader and the narrower sense. At the Fall, man “was not bestialized or demonized” (in the broader sense), but “lost his communion with God—his religious knowledge, his righteousness, his holiness, his conformity (*conformitas*) to God’s will” (in the narrower sense).⁴

Certainly, the image was damaged at the Fall. Yet Reformed language seems not to be the best way of explaining the post-Fall paradoxical human reality,⁵ characterized by both corruption and value. Sin distorted or blurred the whole image, but it did not eradicate or annihilate it. Evidence of this is that, after the Fall, human beings are still spoken of as God’s image-bearers (Gen 5:1; 9:6). In Jas 3:9, the motive for not cursing people (believers or not, for sure) is that they “have been made in God’s likeness.”

¹Bacchiocchi, 44.

²Philip Edgcumbe Hugues, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 400.

³According to Lossky, “the image—which is inalienable—can become similar or dissimilar, to the extreme limits: that of union with God, when deified man shows in himself by grace what God is by nature” (139).

⁴Berkouwer, 38.

⁵Berkouwer analyzes the difficulties of this twofold concept in chapter 2 of his book.

Hoekema defends the continuity of the image in a twisted state. He says: “What makes sin so serious is precisely the fact that man is now using God-given and God-imaging powers and gifts to do things that are an affront to his maker.”¹ Ellen White has a similar point of view: “As the coin bears the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God; and though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul.”²

To employ an analogy from the computer world, both human hardware and software were damaged. They are still working, but in a shrunken and distorted manner. Now, just as a damaged computer is still a computer, so a person whose divine image was marred is still the image of God. Naturally, one may question whether a damaged computer is still a computer. Here we have to consider both the original and the ultimate divine purposes for human beings. Since God is our maker and re-maker, full of interest and power, then there is a warrant for continuity of the image. As V. Norskov Olsen wrote, “even in man’s paradoxical condition God has not forgotten the divine design for man.”³

On the other hand, there is discontinuity in terms of “perfectability” of the image. No one, except Christ, keeps the original glory. If Christ is the perfect image of God in a unique way, we are not the perfect image of God. He was sinless; we are sinful. His “hardware” resembled ours, but his “software” worked much better. This means that “Christian anthropology has to be seen in the light of Christology.”⁴

¹Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 72.

²Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 194.

³V. Norskov Olsen, *Man, the Image of God: The Divine Design—The Human Distortion* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 33.

⁴Ibid.

As Berkouwer has stressed, the image is dynamic, not static.¹ Man/woman is the perfect image of God only when he/she is and acts like God or Christ, headed in the right direction and living day-to-day in love. Our God-imaging status is God-dependent in all senses. Apart from God, there can be an image, but not the image of God. Figuratively speaking, Brunner has said that human beings, in contrast to other creatures, are “not something finished”; God retains them “within His workshop, within His hands.”² We are destined to a responsible existence in faith, love, and gratitude.

From the New Testament perspective, Christ is the image-bearer par excellence (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). On those who are of and in Christ, sharing in his perfect humanity by faith, the Spirit starts a real restoring work. He fixes now our “software,” causing us to think in the right way; and our “hardware” he will fix in the future (Phil 3:21). Since Christ is representative of the new humanity, just as Adam was representative of the old humankind, the Spirit restores the image both in the believers individually and in the community corporately.

In the renewal of the image, the person is once again enabled by the Spirit to live properly a threefold relationship of love: with God, the neighbor, and nature. In this kind of life, Christ as the true image of God is our model. He was wholly directed toward God, wholly directed toward people, and ruled over the nature (think of his miracles and mastery over nature).³ The transformation, while invisible as a process, is visible as an effect.⁴

As I said, there is no consistent possibility for God to make or remake intelligent beings that are not like him. If a creature is to be free, it must be made in the image of God. If it were otherwise, there would occur a rupture in the moral structure of the wholistic universe. Such a reality is possible just as a temporary device in a regime of love, but it could not be perpetuated.

¹See Berkouwer, 100-104.

²Brunner, 97.

³Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 73-82.

⁴See Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 172-173.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit acts in the sense of conforming human beings to God's nature. In creation, by force of coherence, humans were made in the image of God; in re-creation, by force of the same principle, they are reshaped in the image of Christ, the prototype of the free beings of the future. In both instances, the Spirit is the activator of the image.

The Spirit gave life to Adam (Gen 2:7), so that he could actually represent God as a complex moral being; and formed Christ in Mary (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:35), so that he could be for us "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) doubly as God and as man. Likewise, the Spirit fashions the image of Christ in the believers (2 Cor 3:18), so they can reflect Christ and truly represent God again.

Reexamining the Concept of Imitation of God

The idea of the imitation of God is not popular in modern Christianity. Scholars from the Protestant tradition, especially, have reservations against it. Behind such critical views lie three basic concerns:

1. In English, as in the Portuguese language, "imitation" conveys the idea of copy and mimicry—something derivative or artificial, not original or genuine.
2. Some theologians see an insuperable tension between the good news of righteousness by faith and the "burden" of the imitation of God. After all, before being a model or teacher, is not Christ the redeemer or savior?¹
3. The imitation of divine models sooner or later presents a set of problems and difficult questions.²

¹For Barnabas Lindars, the idea of the imitation of God as a guide to Christian ethics is not biblical, and "is only valid as a facet of the alternative ethic of response" ("Imitation of God and Imitation of Christ," *Theology* 76 [1973]: 395, 402).

²Some of these questions, according to David L. Haberman, are: "What does it really mean to imitate the divine model? Is the imitation to be literal or symbolic, external or internal? If literal and external, what physical acts are appropriate? And is the divine model to be appropriated to one's own socio-historical milieu, or is the divine model to be imitated even when incongruent with that milieu?" ("Imitating the Masters: Problems in Incongruity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 [1985]: 41).

These objections are in no way mere academic qualms, and will deserve attention below. For now, it is better to hold off any negative judgment. The central point here is that the idea of imitation is biblical and that the Spirit uses God as the model for us.

The imitation motif was very familiar to ancient people. In fact, E. J. Tinsley defines it as “one of the constants in the religion of the ancient world, determining to a large extent its liturgy, ethics and spirituality.” He adds, “Knowledge of God was held to result in or require a real likeness to him.”¹ The main thesis of Kinsley is that there is a true Christian mysticism, based on revelation/redemption and centered on the imitation of Christ.

Present in Greek/Hellenic philosophy and in the mystery religions, the idea of the imitation of God was also found among the Hebrews and early Christians. Old and New Testament writers frequently work with the imitation motif, though sometimes using other terminology. C. H. Dodd opines that “it is probable that the idea of the *imitatio Christi* had more to say than is commonly recognized by critics, in the selection of incidents from the life of Jesus for record in the Gospels.”²

Imitating the invisible and inimitable God is a paradox. Yet, as Martin Buber points out, this paradox is important in Jewish faith: “The imitation of God, and of the real God, not of the wishful creation; the imitation not of a mediator in human form, but of God himself—that is the central paradox of Judaism.”³ For Christians, Christ as the ideal model makes the paradox simpler, for he bridges the gap between us and God.

In the Old Testament, the motivation to imitate God comes from God himself.⁴ In a series of historical events, which constitute both the distinctive biblical feature of the imitation idea and

¹E. J. Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ: An Essay on the Biblical Basis of Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 27.

²C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946), 85.

³Martin Buber, *Mamre: Essays in Religion*, trans. Greta Hort (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1970), 37.

⁴Some Old Testament sources for the theology of the imitation of God are Exod 18:20; Lev 19:2; 26:12; Deut 10:12-13, 17-19; 11:22; and 26:17.

the “Way of the Lord,” Yahweh reveals “the pattern of the human imitation of himself.” While he journeyed with Israel through an actual way in the desert, he revealed them his way of life—in a significant interaction between historical events, religious imagery, method of revelation, and content of revelation.¹ Israel was to follow Yahweh and walk in all his ways. The figures of the king, the priest, and the prophet shone out as ideal imitators of God.

The way (*derek*) of Yahweh was embodied in the Torah. To follow the signposts of the Torah is to walk in the right direction. The great hymn of exaltation of the Torah, Ps 119, begins praising those who follow the ways of the Torah. A combination of “way” and “Torah” appears in several other verses,² vs. 105 being a kind of climax: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” The verb “to obey” (or “to keep”) also appears frequently together with “Torah” (or synonyms).³ This is not surprising, for there is a practical equivalence between “to imitate,”⁴ “to follow,” and “to obey.”⁵

In the New Testament, explicit or implicit commands to imitate God have endorsement of people like Jesus, John, Peter, and Paul. The theme of the “way” (*hodos*) also emerges with prominence. In fact, the Way is synonymous with Christianity, or, more precisely, Jesus himself.⁶ The Johannine saying “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 4:6) is an evidence of the early Christian belief in Jesus as the true Way.

¹Tinsley, 30, 34, 35.

²Examples: vss. 3, 9, 15, 26, 29, 30, 32, 35, 59, 101, 105, 133, and 168.

³See, for instance, vss. 2, 4, 8, 17, 22, 44, 55, 56, 57, 60, 67, 88, 100, 101, 112, 129, 134, 136, 145, 146, 158, and 168.

⁴The Hebrew language has no specific word for “imitation,” although the idea is expressed by terms such as “walking after” or “following the way.”

⁵W. Michaelis defends that in the Pauline letters imitation is basically not the repetition of a model, but an expression of obedience (“*Mimeomai*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967] 4:668, 673). His view probably does not do justice to the Pauline use of the imitation motif, but he seems to be right in linking imitation with obedience.

⁶See Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; Heb 10:19-20; 2 Pet 2:2, 15, 21.

The motif of imitation, especially the imitation of Christ, recurs in the New Testament in various forms. In the Gospels, for example, it appears as discipleship.¹ Against this idea, K. H. Rengstorf says that “primitive Christianity knows nothing of discipleship of Jesus in the sense of an *imitatio Christi*.”² Yet, if we consider “imitation” in a broad sense, his position is difficult to maintain, although, in a technical sense, he may be right. The call “Follow me,” in Jesus’ mouth, had almost the status of a *terminus technicus*.³ It was an invitation to learn from him by living with him—an exalted Master, the final Authority, in Matthean perspective.⁴ A disciple (*mathetes*), in its original Greek context, was a student/apprentice who attached himself to a philosopher or master to maintain fellowship with his group and drink of his wisdom and knowledge.⁵

The first great New Testament command to imitate God comes from Jesus: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48).⁶ This verse may be paralleled with Luke 6:36, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” The context points to the goodness and love of God in both passages. “Be perfect” is considered the counterpart in the New Testament to “Be holy” in the Old Testament.

¹For a reexamination of specific conceptions of discipleship in various New Testament texts, see Fernando F. Segovia, ed., *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). See also R. N. Longenecker, ed., *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

²K. H. Rengstorf, “*Mathetes*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:455.

³See Matt 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 19:21; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; 9:59; John 1:43; 21:22.

⁴Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 44; see 40-49.

⁵The word “disciple” is derived from the Greek verb *manthano* (“to learn”). There was no disciple without a master. For the usage of the term, see Rengstorf.

⁶The word “perfect” (Greek *teleios*, plural *teleioi*) here has the connotation of “complete,” “mature.” In relation to human beings, it must not be understood as sinlessness. As Dr. Knight expresses, “a lot of confusion can be avoided if we recognize that perfection has more than one meaning in a believer’s life” (*The Pharisee’s Guide to Perfect Holiness*, 150).

John presents Jesus as the perfect imitator of God. As the Father is the model for the Son, so Christ is the model for the disciples. Tinsley observes that John makes explicit a pattern that was implicit in the Synoptic tradition. For him, the *imitatio Christi* “has its roots in the Lord’s insistence that the life of the disciple, like his own life, had to have a clearly recognized form, because, like his again, the Spirit would reveal it as a sign, a sign of Christ, to those who had eyes to see such a thing.”¹

No doubt, Paul is the champion of the imitation motif. As a didactic strategy, the apostle presents himself and others as exemplary figures.² This was no novelty. Calls, both explicit and implicit, for imitation “of personal example are among the most common means of ethical exhortation across a wide variety of writings throughout the Hellenistic period.”³

Paul considered himself a model⁴ not because he thought he was perfect (Phil 3:12), or because he valued a high personal status or cultivated a personality cult (1 Cor 3:51), but because he followed Christ’s example (1 Cor 11:1). A probable basis for his claim was his honorable condition of spiritual father of the community. In 1 Cor 4:14-17, he explicitly links imitation and fatherhood.⁵ Another possibility is that he is simply preaching the imitation of Christ through him, and the imitation of God through Christ.

¹Tinsley, 127, 101.

²Cf. 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Gal 4:12; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thess 3:7; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7. Except for Heb 6:12, 13:7, and 3 John 11, only Paul uses the noun *mimetes* (“imitator”) and the verb *mimeomai* (“to imitate”) in the New Testament. He also employs the compound form *summimetes* (“fellow-imitator”) and *tupos* (“example”).

³J. L. Sumney, “Imitation,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 533. See Benjamin Fiori, *The Function of Personal Example on the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986).

⁴For a recent overview of various Pauline passages dealing with this subject, see Andrew Clark, “Be Imitators of Me’: Paul’s Model of Leadership,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49 (1998): 329-360.

⁵In Elizabeth A. Castelli’s view, the image of the father in 1 Cor 4:14-17 “must be read in cultural context, that is, in relationship to the nature of the paternal role in Greco-Roman society—which is a role of possessing total authority over children” (*Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*

The imitation of Christ appears as preamble of one of the greatest Pauline passages: Phil 2:5-11. “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus,” he says. Then, possibly quoting an early hymn of his authorship (or not), he describes the humble and kenotic attitude of Jesus. This hymn “serves both to exalt Christ and to prod the Philippians to emulation.”¹

Among the Pauline invitations to *mimesis*, there is the striking expression of Eph 5:1: “Be imitators of God.” What does Paul mean? Is he, rooted in the Hebrew tradition, just advising his readers to obey God, to follow the example of Christ, and be faithful disciples? Or is he, influenced by the Greek idea of *mimesis*,² teaching something with cosmologic, ethical, artistic, educational, cultic or hedonistic implications?

Markus Barth argues that “the manifold dimensions and the evangelical character of the words ‘Be imitators of God’ are suppressed or bypassed when the full Greek meaning of *mimesis* is neglected in the interpretation of the Greek term ‘imitators of God’.” However, according to him, “Paul does not adapt his idea of God to the internal dynamics of the Greek term imitation, but follows the opposite procedure: he who is to be imitated determines the nature of imitation.”³ This is a good manner of recognizing a possible Greek influence, but without allowing it to determine the content of the Pauline teaching.

The author of Hebrews presents a roll of role models (chap. 11), and explicitly urges his readers to consider the “way of life” and imitate the “faith” of their leaders (13:3). But, following his pattern of exaltation of Christ as “better,” his most brilliant model could be no other than Christ

[Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991], 101). This is a possible reading, since we keep in mind Paul’s character and ultimate goals.

¹Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 192.

²According to Glenn W. Most, the Greek word *mimesis*, an important term in the literary theories of Plato and Aristotle, “is usually translated ‘imitation,’ but in fact its central meaning is closer to ‘actualization’” (“Mimesis,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig [London: Routledge, 1998], 6:381).

³Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 592.

himself. So, in order to be victorious, believers must fix their eyes on Jesus and endure hardships as Christ endured the cross (12:2-4).

In a particular fashion, Peter also takes the *imitatio Christi* motif seriously. He calls his readers to imitate the holiness of God (1 Pet 1:15-16),¹ to follow the “steps” of Christ in his suffering (2:19-21), and to have Christ’s “attitude” (4:1). To participate in the sufferings of Christ will bring joyful glory at the end (4:13).

If in his gospel John presents the Father/Son relationship as worthy of emulation, in his letters he exhorts his readers to imitate the sacrificial love of Christ (1 John 3:16-18) and whatever else is good (3 John 11). In Revelation, however, his focus changes again. According to Mitchell Reddish, Revelation presents Jesus as the prototypical martyr whose example of endurance is to be imitated.² A possible reference to the imitation motif is found in 14:4, where the 144,000 are described as following “the Lamb wherever he goes.” Revelation presents a scenario in which God is, so to say, back to the center of the whole cosmos, being imitated in a broad sense.

Now it is time to address the objections mentioned in the beginning of this section.

First, there is the objection that equates imitation with mimicry. Clearly, mimicry is not the divine goal for human beings. However, biblical imitation is not mimicry. It happens at a profound level, in our selves, involving both a cognitive and a creative process. The imitator has an active role. We should not underestimate the human imitative skills. Individuals can select models and “discriminate between leaders as good and bad models,” depending on the reward.³

Besides, imitation of God or Christ cannot be criticized as impoverishing mimicry for the model is not flat in his personality and behavior. God is the richest character of the universe.

¹Peter is quoting Moses (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

²Mitchell G. Reddish, “Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33 (1988): 85-95.

³Neal E. Miller and John Dollard, *Social Learning and Imitation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 181-182.

Although invariable in his moral essence, God is dynamic in his being. To imitate him is an enriching adventure—predictable and unpredictable at the same time.

Analyzing Paul's understanding of *mimesis*, Jo-Ann A. Brant writes: "Just as Aristotle, in calling a poet an imitator, does not mean that the poet adopts the qualities of the object he or she imitates, so Paul does not mean that the imitator is a mirror reflection of his or her object."¹ *Mimesis* does not annihilate personality. "The resemblance between Paul and his imitators lies in the fact that they are both engaged in the same *mimesis*," she adds, and concludes with a comparison: "Just as an object of art can teach one about beauty, Paul's example teaches others about life in Christ."² Christians should be on the same side of Christ, see things from the same perspective, and face challenges with the same spirit. When one imitates Christ, one recognizes God's legitimacy, places oneself at the side of God, and shares his cosmic project and personal character.

Elizabeth Castelli has argued that "the notion of mimesis functions in Paul's letters as a strategy of power," where similarity means unity/harmony and difference is associated with disorder/discord. She sees a "hierarchical and asymmetrical" relationship between the model and the copy: while the model is a fixed element and has a "privileged and normative status," the copy has to move toward similarity or sameness and "cannot aspire to the privileged status of the 'model.'"³ Although she probably has overlooked the "spiritual" nature of the imitation in Paul, her arguments make sense from a sociological perspective.

We can positively apply this reasoning to the Adventist view of the cosmic war. With his selfish and narcissistic attitude, Lucifer does not recognize God as the supreme model; therefore,

¹Jo-Ann A. Brant, "The Place of *Mimesis* in Paul's Thought," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 22 (1993): 288.

²Ibid., 298, 299.

³Castelli, 15, 16, 21, 22, *passim*. According to her, Paul's rhetoric "articulates and rationalizes as true and natural a particular set of power relations within the social formation of early Christian communities" (15).

he seeks independence. Christians recognize God as the absolute model; therefore, they accept the divine order of things. In this sense, imitation really involves a relation of power (or worship), which the believer gladly recognizes and perpetuates. The core of divine imitation, therefore, is not mimicry, but worship.

The second objection to the motif of imitation expresses a concern about the danger of distorting the soteriological role of Christ. This is a legitimate concern. After all, the biblical witness is clear: salvation is theocentric, not anthropocentric. God has paid the price. The atoning work of Christ is objective.¹ His death was substitutionary. Yet the imitation motif is theologically legitimate. Rightly understood, it does not aim at divine favor, nor does it exalt human accomplishments. Imitation is only possible due to prior acts of creation and redemption. The believer who truly imitates Christ also accepts God's way of salvation. To imitate Christ as an adventure of faith can be a delightful journey to discover new modes of existence.² Besides, it is a spiritual movement led by the Spirit. As a painter without talent cannot really imitate an artist of genius, so no one by oneself can truly imitate Christ. With the Spirit as guide and energizer, however, imitation becomes possible.

The third objection to the imitation motif poses the question of how humans can imitate God/Christ. Although the Bible does not offer a single direct answer, it does give several cues here (the moral imperatives). Generally speaking, we imitate God in a threefold way: (1) being as God is (or having God's attitude), (2) acting as God acts (or having God's behavior), and (3) following what God reveals (or obeying God's law). Biblical imitation of God is exclusively ethical. To

¹After studying the biblical vocabulary related with salvation, Leon Morris concludes that "there is much support for objective as opposed to subjective views of the atonement" (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965, reprint 1994], 299).

²For Timothy George, "'following' rather than 'faith' was the great word of the entire Radical Reformation" ("The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt [New York: Crossroad, 1988], 338). On the other hand, "faith" was the word of the Reformation itself. Adventism, anchored in the whole spectrum of the Reformation as far as it is biblical, values both "faith" and "following" (or imitation), in this order.

walk in the presence of God, according to Arthur Green, is the formula that best summarizes the Jewish spirituality.¹ The believer must walk *after* God, *with* God, and *toward* God.

The imitator follows a real model, and the imitation manifests itself in concrete contexts. Christ is a live portrayal, or a personalized mirror, of God. So, above all, the believer ought to imitate God by imitating Christ's loving, pneumatic, and sacrificial life. In Luke-Acts, for example, figures such as Simon of Cyrene (carrying his cross behind Jesus) and Stephen (giving his life as a martyr) symbolize ideal imitators of Christ.²

Although moral purity is part of the content of the imitation, loving action probably deserves a stronger emphasis in the New Testament. In Eph 5:2, after the Pauline command to imitate God in 5:1, the first aspect stressed as the probable content of the imitation is the paradigmatic love of Christ.

The splendor of love in discursive form, however, appears in full light in the Sermon on the Mount. This heavenly piece is still valid and is for all, although it seems too radical for modern tastes.³ For the early Christians, Jesus' ethical teaching was just as revelatory as the kerygma.⁴

The disturbing imperative found at the ethical heart of the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies" (Matt 5:43), has no boundaries in time and space. It must be always actualized and applied again and again in specific contexts. Instead of swinging open to the natural flow of emotion, Christians are led by the Spirit to exercise an unnatural act of grace. "In a state of enmity one expects but one thing from the other: actions meant to hurt, sometimes to kill physically or

¹Arthur Green, "Introduction," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1986), xiii-xiv.

²Luke 23:26 (cf. 9:23); Acts 7:54-60. Note that even the prayer of Stephen for his stoners resembles the prayer of Jesus for his "crucifiers" (Acts 7:60; Luke 23:24). See Tinsley, 106-110.

³"The fundamental problem of the Sermon on the Mount is, in the final analysis, its practicability," recognizes Clarence Bauman, after analyzing nineteen perspectives on this magnum discourse (*The Sermon on the Mount: The Modern Quest for its Meaning* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985], 397).

⁴W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 437.

emotionally,” William Klassen observes. “To love the enemy is to take the other by surprise and act as if the life of the other is so important to you that you seek to enrich it, to further it, and to improve it.” To love the enemy is “a rebellion against history,” which truly advances history.¹

For rabbinic Judaism, the imitation of God “consisted of ‘walking’ in ‘the Way’, ‘cleaving’ to God, and this was particularized as imitating the attributes (*middoth*) of God.”² In the Haggadah, people become like God by doing good. This is a possibility open to everyone, but reached by only a few *saddik* (pious, just) people. Another line of thought teaches that only the collectivity of Israel (the *Knesset Israel*) can imitate and resemble God.³ “In the targumic traditions, the early traditions, and in Philo, the main thrust of the *imitatio Dei* was the doing of good deeds, imitation of God in righteousness.”⁴ In his turn, Jewish philosopher-scientist Gersonides (1288-1344) maintained that one imitates God by teaching science and “helping others advance along the route to intellectual perfection.”⁵

In Jewish thought, wisdom (embodied in the Torah) is the means or “the tool for the achievement of *Imitatio Dei*.”⁶ However, I envision the imitation of God as a work of the Spirit in us. Coherent with his nature, the Spirit leads us to orbit around God—now and in the future. At

¹William Klassen, “‘Love Your Enemies’: Some Reflections on the Current Status of Research,” in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 5, 23.

²Tinsley, 63.

³Arthur Marmorstein, *Studies in Jewish Theology: The Arthur Marmorstein Memorial Volume*, ed. J. Rabbinowitz and M. S. Lew (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries, 1972), 114, 115, 118.

⁴Isabel Ann Massey, *Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount in the Light of Jewish Traditions as Evidenced in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 59.

⁵Menachem Kellner, “Gersonides on *Imitatio Dei* and the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1995): 296.

⁶David S. Shapiro, “Wisdom and Knowledge of God in Biblical and Talmudic Thought,” *Tradition* 12 (1971): 73.

the beginning, before sin, “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” while God expanded the limits of the cosmos (Job 38:4-7). At the new beginning, after the end of sin, all atoms, conscious or unconscious, will dance at the rhythm of God’s music. The conductor is the Spirit of God, who governs the cosmos.

Imago-Dei-ization: The Growth Process

In this section, I am introducing a neologism, “imago-Dei-ization,”¹ to describe a well-known experience in Christian environments, namely, the spiritual inner transformation of the believers. Imago-Dei-ization is the work done by the Spirit, using Christ or God himself as model, in the life of a person to conform him or her to the image of Christ. Here this word is purposely substituted for words with a solid tradition in theology, such as sanctification (West) and deification or divinization (East).²

The term “sanctification” would be the natural choice for this spiritual phenomenon.³ It is scriptural and technical. Yet, strictly speaking, sanctification refers to the process of becoming holy or saintly. Now, if love is as much basic as holiness, why not “lovelization” (or “amorization,” in its Latinized form)? Moreover, “sanctification” may carry non-desirable nuances

¹Imago-Dei-ization: juxtaposition of the Latin terms *imago* (image), *Dei* (God), and the suffix “ization.” It means the process of restoring the *Imago Dei*. The word *Dei* in the middle is to highlight that God is both the pattern and the transformer of the image. The term “re-imagezation” could be an alternative.

²The word “deification” (from Greek *theosis*) undercores our participation in divine nature (see 2 Pet 1:4). However, this nonbiblical term might carry ontological and pantheistic undesirable implications. For John Meyendorff, deification is “a Christocentric and eschatological concept, expressed in Platonic language but basically independent of philosophical speculation.” He argues that deification does not eliminate the gulf between the Creator and the creatures, in a merger of essences, even because the communion with God is based on a gift of God himself (“Theosis in the Eastern Christian Tradition,” in *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, ed. Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers [New York: Crossroad, 1989], 471, 476).

³For a work presenting Wesleyan, Reformed, Pentecostal, Keswick, and Augustinian-Dispensational views on sanctification, see Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

(such as perfectionism), or lack desirable dimensions (such as progress).¹ Therefore, to highlight certain nuances, I decided for an analogous but not synonymous term. As a kind of shortcut, a neologism has at least the advantage of allowing one to revisit old ideas with fewer footnotes.

What Is Imago-Dei-ization

Sanctification, so valued in the New Testament,² is generally viewed in modern Christian scholarship in a dual form: (1) as a status or standing before God, which means a past act and a present reality; and (2) as a process of growth, which implies a continuous change toward a future goal. In Christ, the believer has holiness and is consecrated to God's service; in Christ, he or she is also being transformed to be like the model. Such distinction has biblical support³ and is further supported by Adventist theologians.⁴ What I am calling "imago-Dei-ization" refers to this second aspect, that is, the process of growing into likeness with Christ. Having made clear this point, let us see some features of imago-Dei-ization.

¹David Peterson, in his book *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), challenges the idea that sanctification is growth in holiness (process). From the New Testament perspective, he contends, sanctification is primarily a position before God in Christ, leading to a radical re-orientation of one's life and to a holy walk by the ongoing presence of the Spirit.

²According to Horton, "sanctification is the work of the Spirit which receives by far the greatest attention in the New Testament" (258).

³The "status" is supported by texts such as Acts 26:18; Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Col 1:13; and Heb 10:10. The "process" finds support in texts such as Eph 4:15; Phil 3:12-14; 1 Thess 3:11-12; 4:1-12; Heb 12:14; and 2 Pet 3:18.

⁴See Holbrook, 207-214, and Gane, 58-60. In a legal sense, Ellen White says, "We may claim sanctification" (*Selected Messages*, 2:32). In an experiential sense, she states, "Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 1:340; see idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 560).

A Pneumatocentric Process

Imago-Dei-ization is a work of the Spirit in our inner world. All persons of the triune God sanctify us,¹ but the Spirit is the direct agent of this task. The sinful believers of Corinth, said Paul, were “sanctified” “by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Moreover, Paul speaks of the “sanctifying work of the Spirit” (2 Thess 2:13), an expression also employed by Peter (1 Pet 1:2). A key Pauline statement in this sense is 2 Cor 3:18: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”² The believer goes from one degree to another in his or her imago-Dei-ization, reflecting Christ, the true image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15).

This process is spiritocentric. The Spirit leads the work and must receive the merits. Although the believer plays a role (see below), it is a mistake to attribute the transformation to him or her. Moved by love, the Spirit seeks us; moved by faith, we answer. Or, from another perspective and to the displeasure of some, we seek and the Spirit answers, since God is always open to us (see Jer 29:11-13). The Spirit is active as a sovereign power, and the believer is active as a free decider. The model is not so much one of cooperation (synergy) or addition, but of mutually desired energization. In Phil 2:12-13, Paul mentions together both divine and human aspects of sanctification.

¹Sanctification is ascribed likewise to the Spirit (1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 2:13), the Father (John 17:17; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 12:10), and the Son (Eph 5:25-26; Titus 2:14). Christ is not only an agent of our sanctification, but he is our sanctification (1 Cor 1:30).

²The King James Version translates the expression “the Lord, who is the Spirit” as “the Spirit of the Lord.” Both options are possible. In vs. 17, another alternative grammatically acceptable is “the Spirit is Lord,” implying that the Holy Spirit is also Yahweh, the Lord of the Old Testament (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 233). Linda L. Belleville states: “Because Paul depends on Exod 34:34 in v 16, an increasing number of scholars today identify *ho kurios* in v 17a with Yahweh.” The translation would be: “Now by ‘Yahweh’ is meant the Spirit.” According to her, considering the exegetical methods of Paul’s time, “it would be legitimate” to translate the polemical phrase in 17a as follows: “Now the term ‘Lord’ refers to the Spirit” (“Paul’s Polemic and Theology of the Spirit in Second Corinthians,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 [1996]: 300, 301).

A God-Filled Life

The goal of the mysterious divine-human interplay, rooted in love and faith, is “the fullness of God” in us (Eph 3:19). A person in process of imago-Dei-ization is filled by and full of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). Although much argument has been elaborated to explain the rich and controversial metaphorical expression “filled with the Spirit,” it is in reality not so complicated—when taken in its biblical sense, without modern presuppositions.¹ To be metaphorically full of something is to share the essential quality of it, or even be controlled or overflowed by it.² In this sense, Max Turner writes: “To say that someone is ‘full of X’ is to say that *that quality clearly marks the person’s life or comes to visible expression in his or her activity*, rather than merely residing in him or her as an unexpressed potential.”³ Eldon Woodcock also underscores that “people filled with the Holy Spirit are characterized by some of His qualities.”⁴

We must, however, elaborate a little bit on the nuances of the words. Bible writers employ about thirty-five Hebrew and Greek words in the “filling” metaphors.⁵ But only six of them are linked with the filling of the Spirit. In the New Testament, this number is restricted to two word

¹For Rylie, “being filled with the Spirit is simply being controlled by the Spirit” (157). In commenting on the Pauline imperative in Eph 5:18 for his readers to “be filled with the Spirit,” Ronald B. Mayers writes: “The present tense indicates the continuousness of the filling of the Holy Spirit as well as the possible repeatability of the Spirit’s activity. The imperative mood obviously indicates a command that would seem to put the responsibility of experiencing the Spirit’s filling upon the individual believer. Lastly, the passive voice suggests a surrendered will and yielded body with an emptied heart; in short, it is the picture of one *being controlled*. The exegetical sense of the word in this text then seems to mean that *believers are commanded to empty themselves of their self-asserting egos in order that the Holy Spirit might personally fill and control each one*” (“The Infilling of the Spirit,” *Reformed Review* 28 [1975]: 157, italics in original).

²For example, when Luke says that Jesus “was filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40), he means the divine boy was very wise. Elymas was described as “full of all kinds of deceit and trickery” (Acts 13:10) because he practiced such things. People “full of goodness” (Rom 15:14) are a good people who practice goodness.

³Turner, *Power from on High*, 167, italics in original.

⁴Eldon Woodcock, “The Filling of the Holy Spirit,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 71.

⁵See Richard G. Fairman, “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986).

groups: *pimplemi*, “to fill,” and *pleres*, “full of.” Luke and Paul are the only users of the filling metaphor in connection with the Spirit.¹ Both groups of words are “nearly synonyms,” observes Pettegrew, although “they are clearly distinguishable as to duration, manner, results, and purpose.”²

Pettegrew classifies the Lukan usage of these words under the categories of “special filling” (*pimplemi*) and “normal filling” (*pleroo*), and contrasts them as follows: *pimplemi* (eight uses, usually a verb in aorist passive) emphasizes an event, while *pleroo* (six uses, usually an adjective, and imperfect or present passive in verb form) emphasizes an attitude; if *pimplemi* requires no conditions and is a sovereign bestowal, an unsought power, something unusual, recurring, repeated for a new task (not because of sin), an enablement for a special spiritual task, *pleroo* implies conditions and is a preexisting disposition, a non-biding spirituality, progressively more apparent, something intended to be normal, indicative of Christian maturity, and having multifaceted implications for spirituality.³

The New Testament, therefore, seems to refer to the filling of the Spirit in two ways: (1) a “hyper-filling” event dependent on the initiation of God alone, not based upon character change as much as on the immediate felt presence of the Spirit of God, which gives a sense of security, love, power, and boldness beyond one’s capacity, for a targeted ministry or time-limited task; and (2) a normal filling, partly within one’s control, related to character, unspectacular yet essential, which causes one to grow almost imperceptibly over time (not overnight) in the life and likeness of God. It is an error to confuse both experiences, seeking the “extra” as the norm and devaluating the

¹Luke uses *pimplemi* in relation to John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zechariah (Luke 1:67), the disciples (Acts 2:4), Peter (Acts 4:8), the church (Acts 4:31), and Paul (Acts 9:17; 13:9); *pleres* in relation to Jesus (Luke 4:1), candidates to deacony (Acts 6:3), Stephen (Acts 6:5; 7:55), and Barnabas (Acts 11:24); and *pleroo* (the verb form of *pleres*) in relation to the disciples (Acts 13:52). Paul uses the filling metaphor only once (Eph 5:18), but he employs other almost equivalent expressions such as “live by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16; cf. Rom 8:4) and “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25).

²Larry Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 198.

³Ibid., 201.

“normal” as dispensable.¹ “This second type of daily, long-term growth-producing filling of the Spirit is,” in John Coe’s words, “similar to small investments accruing impressive returns over decades, paying sure dividends when most (and sometimes most unpredictably) needed.”²

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Depending on the religious tradition, the filling with the Spirit may be linked with conversion (Protestantism), confirmation (Catholicism), or a second blessing (classical Pentecostalism). Yet, as Turner underscores, “in Lukan terms” the criterion for judging whether one is “full of the Spirit” is not a baptismal or confirmation certificate, nor a second crisis experience, “but whether the community of Christians *felt the impact of the Spirit* through that person’s life and *saw the Spirit’s graces and gifts regularly expressed* through him or her.”³

Adventist theologians, in line with Evangelical theology, tend to see the filling with the Spirit as a repeatable experience. Some prefer to call this experience—which must be prayed for and renewed on a daily basis—“baptism of the Holy Spirit.”⁴ For Woolsey, “the figure of baptism is to teach us, not the time aspect, but the totality of our immersion in the Spirit. We are to be saturated with Him. . . . In short, we need a new conversion every day.”⁵ According to Ellen White, Jesus himself sought this experience. “Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the

¹John H. Coe, “Beyond Relationality to Union: Musings Toward a Pneumadynamic Approach to Personality and Psychopathology,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 18 (1999): 121-122.

²Ibid., 122.

³Turner, *Power from on High*, 169, italics in original.

⁴Seven passages in the New Testament speak of someone being baptized in/with (Greek preposition *en* allows either reading) the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13). The primary sense seems to be that Jesus baptizes the believer into his body, the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the believer may experience the new covenant power of the Spirit. To avoid confusion, the expression “baptism in the Holy Spirit” perhaps should not be used to name a post-conversional pneumatic experience.

⁵Woolsey, 68.

early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others.”¹

A Nomofriendly Disposition

Imago-Dei-ization requires living in consonance with the law that the Spirit internalizes in the heart of the believer. This work of the Spirit, foreseen by Old Testament prophets as a dimension of the new covenant (Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27; Jer 31:33), is reelaborated in the New Testament. In Rom 8:1-4, Paul argues that, while the law was powerless to set us free from sin, the Spirit is powerful to communicate to us new spiritual life. In 2 Cor 3:7-18, he develops a contrast between the benefits of the law of the old covenant, written by the finger of God in stones, and the much more glorious results of the law of the new covenant, written by the Spirit of God in our hearts. The work of the Spirit is based on the conquest of Christ. It is a ministry of righteousness (vs. 9), which leads us to reflect increasingly the Lord’s glory (vs. 18). In Galatians, he again presents the antithesis Torah/Spirit, and stresses the freedom that the Spirit brings. The author of Hebrews (8:8-11; 10:15-17) also refers to the internalization of the law.

Imago-Dei-ization, therefore, is not opposed to the law. Anthony Hoekema understood this fact well, saying: “Spirit-led believers are precisely the ones doing their best to keep God’s law.”² Unfortunately, some Christian traditions, misunderstanding the truth that “the *whole* Bible is a book of the grace of God,”³ minimize the role of the law today.⁴ Adventism is an exception, although it does not have a developed theology of the Spirit as law-giver and heart-legislator. For some Protestants, the law was only a Jewish requisite. However, the New Testament clearly

¹Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 139.

²Anthony A. Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 87.

³J. M. Myers, *Grace and Torah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 1, italics in original.

⁴Literature dealing with continuity/discontinuity of the law in Paul’s thought is immense. One can start with *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), by Thomas R. Schreiner.

teaches the continuity of the law,¹ although we must recognize reinterpretations.² To deny the validity of the law in the Jewish arena of the first century was suicide—both sociologically and theologically.³

When Paul, a Christocentric Jewish theologian, boldly states that “Christ is the end [*telos*] of the law” (Rom 10:4), he does not mean that the law no longer exists.⁴ Christ is (1) the end of the law as its purpose or culmination, “the goal toward which God intended the law to lead”;⁵ (2) the end of the law as type, which survives only in the antitype;⁶ (3) the end of the law as a

¹If there were a discontinuity, various biblical statements would be nonsense. Both Jesus and Paul could be no more emphatic in their negations that the law has been not abolished (Matt 5:17-18; Rom 3:31; 7:12, 14); and both envision a more radical and profound experience of the law (Matt 5:17-48; Rom 7:6). Supposed negative statements by Jesus and Paul about the law must be seen in a context of correction to legalism, respectively, of both Pharisees and Christian judaizers. Basically, the change had to do not with continuity, but with the way of viewing and practicing the law.

²William Loader has shown that, in the perspective of the gospel writers, “Jesus’ starting point was one of complete faithfulness to the biblical laws,” although “his approach to Scripture was different from his antagonists”: while their God was primarily concerned with his commandments, the God of Jesus was primarily concerned with people (*Jesus and the Fundamentalism of His Day* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 18).

³According to J. Andrew Overman, it was through the law that the sectarian communities of that time could affirm their status as true people of God, as well as disqualify the claims of their competitors; strict respect for the law was a condition for these movements to remain within the covenant (*O evangelho de Mateus e o judaísmo formativo: o mundo social da comunidade de Mateus* [São Paulo: Loyola, 1997], 35, 40).

⁴In his comprehensive study of the meaning of Rom 10:4, Adventist scholar Robert Badenas has shown that *telos* is used in biblical and extrabiblical ancient literature to express “goal,” “purpose,” not “termination” or “abrogation” (*Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1985]). For Ladd, *telos* “can mean both end and goal, and both meanings are to be seen here [in Rom 10:4]” (546).

⁵Steven Richard Bechtler, “Christ, the *Télos* of the Law: The Goal of Romans 10:4,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (1994): 302.

⁶Surprisingly for a non-Adventist, Sinclair Ferguson defends a threefold division of the law given to Moses, a formulation rooted in the evangelical theology of the seventeenth century: civil, ceremonial, and moral laws (162-167). Adventist scholars understand that the law abolished by Christ was the ceremonial law (related to sacrifices), which was “type” and “shadow” of the Messiah to come (see Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1). The moral law (the Ten Commandments, placed inside the ark of the covenant [Deut 10:5], symbol of the throne of God), along with dietary laws,

misunderstood regime of works and self-righteousness (a symbol of those who refuse to accept and enter the new aeon); and (4) the end of the law as a mere written code, for the letter is impotent to transform people and now is written by the Spirit in the mind of the believer.¹ However, the law continues (1) as a prophetic testimony to the identity of Christ (it runs in parallel with him, still saying who he is); (2) as the divine standard of ethics for humanity; (3) as an expression of the divine will and human obedience; and (4) as an objective reference for the life energized by the Spirit, making possible a peoplehood in community (horizontal/sociopolitical role) and pointing to God's centrality as the creator, preserver, and fixed pattern of that cooperative community (vertical/religious role).² Let us remember that Paul, a bridge builder, is defending Christ, not attacking the law.

Christ came to fulfill and purify the Torah, embodying it for us, so that he could intensify its claims (Matt 5:17-48).³ As the perfect fulfiller of the law, he fulfills the law for us and in us. When we accept Christ, the Spirit writes Christ and, consequently, the law in our neurons. Therefore, the believer feels free from the burden of the law, for in a certain sense the law is law only for those who do not want or cannot follow the law. This is a forensic and an existential freedom. People led by the Spirit are in such spiritual alignment with the law that the law loses its force and disappears as an instrument of accusation (see Gal 5:18). It is as if the believer was

remains valid. If the law is to be written in human hearts, then it is not to be abolished, but internalized.

¹This does not mean to dispense with the letter, for the fulfillment of the spirit of the law can transcend the letter, but cannot oppose or discard it.

²For additional insights, see the balanced analysis (except for denying the validity of the Sabbath) of Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testament*, 358-554; and Bernard Shulman "The Political Science of the Ten Commandments," *Journal of Individual Psychology* 59 (2003): 166-175.

³Christ is the embodiment of the law as love (an expression of God's character), which will always exist (cf. Rom 13:10; Gal 5:15; 1 Cor 13:13).

living in the pre-Fall or post-sin regime of the law, in which the law was and will be unconsciously fulfilled.¹

Some Christians think that it is necessary to fulfill the law, so that the believer may be released from the law. But, as Bruner has argued, Pauline (and biblical) sequence is rather release-fulfillment. Obedience is *from* the Spirit, not *for* the Spirit. He “is the *source*, not the *goal* of the moral life.”² Forensically free through and in Christ, existentially free by the Spirit, the believer is liberated from sin to live the victorious life of the new aeon.³

A Realistic Spiritual Effort

Imago-Dei-ization develops in a context of spirituality. True spirituality is rooted in God, drawing nourishment from him.⁴ It follows not the mystical path,⁵ but the real Way (Jesus). It flourishes through the work of the Spirit in the lives of Spirit-filled people, not through “spiritual”

¹“After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed,” says Ellen White, “but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition” (*Selected Messages*, 1:230).

²Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 229, 231.

³Thomas R. Schreiner summarizes as follows Paul’s arguments in Rom 8:1-4 about the means to break the power of sin: “Christ’s work on the cross provides the basis for the deliverance of believers from condemnation, while the Holy Spirit supplies the power for conquering sin so that the law can now be kept” (*Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 395).

⁴Christian spirituality may be defined “trinitarianly” as an awareness of God born from an existential quest for meaning, passionate union with him through Christ, and expression of his qualities in the outer life through the work of the Holy Spirit in the inner world. See below further ideas.

⁵There are so many varieties of mysticism that it becomes hard to give a general definition. Winfried Corduan points out two characteristics shared by all mystics: (1) an experience of unity, “a feeling of absolute oneness,” and (2) the claim that such “experience is beyond normal rational categories” (*Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 31, 32). For deeper concepts, see Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: New American Library, 1974). Perhaps believers of Protestant tradition could be a little bit more mystical.

techniques used by non-Spirit-filled people.¹ Spirituality does not come by magic, but is the fruit of obedience to the “laws” of God’s Word.

Imago-Dei-ization, however, is not world-withdrawing. It develops in a real environment. Based on real facts, in a real sense, it must be experienced by real persons in the real world. Life is not rigidly divided into sacred and profane. Believers do not have to flee from the world in order to be spiritual (John 17:15). As Michael Welker puts it, “in contrast to all pneumatologies of the ‘beyond,’ it has become clear that God’s Spirit acts in, on, and through fleshly, perishable, earthly life, and precisely in this way wills to attest to God’s glory and to reveal the forces of eternal life.”² What makes the difference is the way they live and relate to culture.³ Instead of living by a sinful worldly pattern, Christians fashion their lives by a holy heavenly pattern characteristic of the new age (Rom 12:2).

A Verifiable Experience

Imago-Dei-ization cannot be measured, but can be tested. As J. I. Packer observes, it is impossible to measure our growth in grace in the same way we measure the growth of a teenager, for spiritual growth is a mystery. However, our behavior under pressure shows whether we are growing or not—just as in the case of the patriarch Abraham.⁴ One can elaborate an intricate

¹Gordon D. Fee seems right when he defends that for Paul “spirituality” is always related to the Spirit (that is, life in the Spirit, or “Spirit-uality”); and must not be understood as something religious (as over against mundane), non-corporeal, mystical or elitist (as over carnal) (*Listening to the Spirit in the Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2000], 34-37).

²Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 339.

³The tension between the Christian and culture is not a matter totally settled. In his article “Christians Versus Culture: Should We Love or Hate the World?” (*Dialogue* 7 [1995]: 5-8), Adventist educator Humberto M. Rasi proposes an approach including separation (the Christian avoids what is sinful), affirmation (he/she accepts what is compatible with his/her worldview), transformation (he/she influences society positively), and contribution (he/she offers his/her talents to society).

⁴James I. Packer, *Knowing Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 86-87.

inventory to check whether a person is growing in grace or not,¹ but, in reductionistic terms (and in my view), two tests are of fundamental importance.

1. Is one's experience God-magnifying? Imago-Dei-ization creates a passion for praise and worship. The person who is growing in grace becomes humbler, and feels more and more desire to exalt God. It is not by chance that Paul puts praise and thanksgiving in the context of a life filled by the Spirit (Eph 5:18-20). Paul himself, as Packer remembers, had this experience. As his passion for praise increased, his sense of self-value decreased: writing to the believers of Corinth, in A.D. 57 or 58, he defined himself as the "least of the apostles" (1 Cor 15:9); in his letter to the Ephesians, written in A.D. 61 or 62, he considered himself "less than the least of all God's people" (Eph 3:8); and writing to Timothy, in A.D. 65 or 66, he classified himself as "the worst" of all sinners (1 Tim 1:15).²

2. Is one's experience fruitful? Imago-Dei-ization leads to a life of love, which expresses itself in service. The mature believer has not only an obvious supreme love for God, but also a practical love for his or her neighbor. Love, even love for God, is never love in a vacuum, an abstract feeling. Love of God is always expressed through delight, praise, magnification, priority, and obedience. Love of the neighbor is manifested through respect, justice, forgiveness, gifts, and service. In fact, to a great measure, we love God by loving people (see Matt 25:40, 45; 1 John 4:12, 20-21). After all, how can one abstractly love God, without falling into a sterile sentimentalism? In loving, we mirror the perfection of Christ.³ If a great deal of love must be

¹See the description made by H. C. G. Moule in his *Veni Creator: Thoughts on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit of Promise* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), 178-180; and the instrument developed by Todd W. Hall and Keith J. Edwards, "The Spiritual Assessment Inventory: A Theistic Model and Measure for Assessing Spiritual Development," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002): 341-357.

²Packer, *Knowing Christianity*, 92.

³"The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within," writes Ellen White (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 384). One thing that links people like Moses, Jesus, and Paul is that they were all willing to die to bless others (Exod 32:32; John 12:27; Rom 9:3).

called “perfection” or not, it is up to everyone. Beyond any semantical dispute, stands the fact that love is an essential quality of Christ’s character.

A Wholistic Change

Imago-Dei-ization transforms life in all aspects.¹ The sanctifying work of the Spirit develops in us a series of desirable qualities. It affects the whole person:² (1) the intellect, renewing the mind and sharpening the knowledge (Rom 8:5-6; 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5; Col 3:10; Phil 1:9); (2) the emotions, replacing bad emotions for good emotions and leading the believer to have emotional intelligence³ (Gal 5:22; Eph 4:31); (3) the will, conforming our decisions to God’s will (Phil 2:13); (4) the body, making the person healthier and more useful for God’s work (Rom 6:12; 1 Cor 6:19-20; 1 Thess 5:23); and (5) the attitude and the behavior, changing the pattern of thought and action (Gal 5:16; Eph 4:22-24).

Adventist theology, following the biblical thought, is wholistic. This is the reason why the body is not divorced from spiritual life.⁴ Dallas Willard correctly underscores that salvation can only affect us by affecting our bodies. “*To withhold our bodies from religion is to exclude religion from our lives. Our life is a bodily life, even though that life is one that can be fulfilled solely in union with God.*”⁵ Paul recognized the unity of the person and the essentiality of the body for

¹For a helpful study about change, see S. Johnson, *Characterological Transformation: The Hard Work Miracle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985).

²See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 756-757.

³For the qualities of emotional intelligence, see Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1995), 43.

⁴See Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 601; idem, *Education*, 209; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:51.

⁵Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 31, italics in original. Elsewhere he writes that the “*body is our primary area of power, freedom, and—therefore—responsibility*” (53, italics in original).

spirituality.¹ After all, as Ladd puts it, “I have no experience of myself except in a bodily form of existence.”² I, in fact, only experience God in my body. Spirituality is dependent on symbolic language, which is dependent on mental life, which is dependent on complex neurobiological functioning, which is dependent on the brain machinery, which is dependent on the body³—which, unifying all these aspects in a coherent whole, is ultimately dependent on God.

A Paradoxical Reality

Imago-Dei-ization has a paradoxical character when it comes to the believer’s struggle against sin.⁴ Holiness, of course, testifies of the effectiveness of salvation. Jesus died to set us free from sin both legally and experientially (see Titus 2:11-14). If we taste Christ and continue to live in sin, we are denying the power of the gospel.⁵ “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning,” says John in his polemical statement (1 John 3:6).⁶ The believer belongs to, and lives in, a kingdom of

¹For important studies on Paul’s concepts of the body, see John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM, 1952); Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 201-304; and E. Earle Ellis, “Soma in First Corinthians,” *Interpretation* 44 (1990): 132-144.

²Ladd, 507.

³John A. Teske, “The Spiritual Limits of Neuropsychological Life,” *Zygon* 31 (1996): 211, 213.

⁴Sin is a complex concept, which must not be minimized, for it shapes human existence and has cosmic implications. In his comprehensive study on the doctrine of sin, David L. Smith classifies sin into two broad categories: (1) sin as ungodliness (rebellion, covenant unfaithfulness, apostasy, idolatry, and unbelief), which concerns essentially our relationship with God; and (2) sin as unrighteousness (sensuousness, selfishness, and transgression), which has essentially to do with our relationship with each other (*With Willful Intent: A Theology of Sin* [Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1994], 313-326). For Smith, “the root or essence of sin is the rejection of God as God” (326).

⁵The believer is to be considered “dead to sin but alive to God,” says Paul (Rom 6:11). “Sin shall not be your master,” he adds (vs. 14).

⁶Here John is not saying that the believer is sinless, for he knew the facts of experience and elsewhere in this epistle he admits the possibility of sin (1:8, 10; 2:1; 5:16). For possible explanations, see I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 1994), 178-183.

light. However, imago-Dei-ization does not mean sinlessness. The vast possibilities of the gospel do not include eradication of individual, corporate or cosmic sin in this age. John himself alerts that the person who claims sinlessness is self-deluded (1 John 1:8). At the end of his life, Paul recognized that he was not perfect (Phil 3:12-14). “No human being on the earth has holy flesh,” says Ellen White. “It is an impossibility.”¹ Therefore, the believer lives in a state of tension between possibility and reality, mental ideal and bodily experience.

Grudem summarizes well this paradox as follows: the believer “will never be able to say, ‘I am completely free from sin’,” but he or she “should never say (for example), ‘This sin has defeated me. I give up’.”² George Knight synthesizes this tension seen in the thought of John, Paul, John Wesley, and Ellen White, among others, saying that “we can be perfect or sinless in attitude without being perfect or sinless in action.”³ The believer, legally dead to sin, still struggles in faith against sin, but goes on in his or her pilgrimage toward the eschatological experiential perfection.

Future perfection, not present perfectionism in its multiform manifestations,⁴ is the divine goal for believers.⁵ God is a God of *kairos*. In the right time, he will uproot sin, and turn the believers into the perfect likeness of the Son (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49). Some Adventists of

¹Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:32.

²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 747.

³Knight, *The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness*, 160.

⁴La Rondelle (*Perfection and Perfectionism*, 246-324, especially 326) presents and analyzes six different types of perfectionism: (1) apocalyptic (Qumran Community, Montanism, Joachim of Floris); (2) moralistic-ascetic (the Encratites, Pelagianism); (3) ecclesiological (Novatianism); (4) neoplatonic-ascetic (Alexandrian theologians such as Clement and Origen); (5) monastic-contemplative (medieval monks); and (6) ethico-philosophical (Wesleyan Methodism).

⁵The biblical and the popular concepts of perfection are not exactly the same. The problem of perfection has to do with the *what* (absolute or relative?), the *how* (by human or divine power?), the *when* (now or in the future?), and the *for-what* (for self-salvation or divine glorification?).

Andreasen's school—misreading both biblical and Whitean statements¹—teach a kind of eschatological perfectionism.² That is, for them, the last generation of believers will be holier than the previous ones—in a kind of vindication of the character and power of God, which, of course, Christ has already done. In some cases, this perfectionism is unconsciously read into the present and lived as a torturing legalism of lifestyle. But this phenomenon is restricted to minor strata and has been challenged by representative voices of current Adventism.³ The imbalance of some Adventist groups regarding perfection comes perhaps in consequence of a misunderstanding of hamartology and christology at a localized level, and the lack of a fully developed, integrated pneumatology at a denominational level.

Whichever the degree of perfection in this age, one thing is sure: one's victory over sin or failure under sin is directly related to one's yielding to the Spirit or to the *sarx* ("flesh").⁴ But *sarx* must not be understood just as the physical aspect or an internal duality in the believer. Flesh in Paul has "meanings so different that one could almost say that they vary from verse to verse."⁵ In a certain sense, flesh is human nature in its frailty and opposition to God, his grace, his power, and

¹Out of context, the description of the 144,000 in Rev 14:45 may be read in a perfectionist fashion. The same is true of the following phrase of Ellen White: "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 69).

²M. L. Andreasen taught that "the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven is dependent upon the cleansing of God's people on earth," which must be "without blame" and have every sin "burned out" (*The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd ed. [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947], 321).

³See Knight, *The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness*, 185-207; idem, *A Search for Identity*, 144-152; Holbrook, 191-196; and Roy Adams, *The Nature of Christ: Help for a Church Divided Over Perfection* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 113-131.

⁴For a helpful overview of the complex Pauline usage of *sarx*, see Ladd, 509-517. See also E. D. Burton, *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1918).

⁵Ceslas Spicq, "*Sarx, Sarkikos, Sarkinos*," *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:235.

his character. Jewett defines “the flesh” in the context of Gal 5-6 as “Paul’s term for everything aside from God in which one places his final trust.”¹

Walter Bo Russell has advanced the thesis that “flesh” in Gal 5-6 represents life in the old age, while the Spirit represents life in the new age. He argues that the terms *sarx* and *Pneuma* “are primarily used in a redemptive-historical manner and represent two successive historical eras or modes of existence, separated by Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.”² Therefore, to be under the Mosaic law is to be in the flesh; to be in Christ is to be in the Spirit. For Russell, “*sarx* and *pneuma* have become theological abbreviations in Paul’s argument that represent the two competing identities of the people of God in Galatia.”³ His argument, if taken in a dispensational way, is vulnerable. To overemphasize the horizontal/social aspect of the categories *sarx*/Spirit to the detriment of the vertical/individual one is to disrupt the tension of the Pauline theology.

George Ladd has an interesting perspective. “Life in the Spirit means eschatological existence—life in the new age,” he writes. Those who are in the Spirit are not in the flesh (Rom 8:9). “One does not pass from one realm to the other by gradual growth or progress, but by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord.”⁴ As the believers belong to the new age, so they must behave as citizens of the new age. The believer has crucified the flesh “with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24). The mode of existence “in the Spirit” is the secret for a truly ethical life.

A Cosmic Enterprise

Imago-Dei-ization has a beginning, but not an end in this life. To use a crude comparison, growing in grace is like pedaling a bicycle: if one stops, one falls. If justification (as well as

¹Jewett, 103.

²Walter Bo Russell III, “Does the Christian Have ‘Flesh’ in Gal 5:13-26?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993): 180.

³Ibid., 186. For the argument of Walter Bo Russell III in its wider context, see *The Flesh/Spirit Conflict in Galatians* (New York: University Press of America, 1997).

⁴Ladd, 526, 527.

sanctification-as-status) is an act and may be represented by a dot, imago-Dei-ization is a process and can be represented by a line. Imago-Dei-ization will reach its apex and goal only in a new turning point of the cosmic history.¹ This means that in a certain sense a “saint” cannot be made in one day, week, month or year. Although Christ was holy, he was “perfected” through prayer, suffering, and obedience (Heb 5:7-9). Change (for the better or for the worse) is always happening, but growth takes time and work.² While maturing is, of course, a personalized process, the final transformation is corporate (Heb 11:39-40). Until that day comes, the believer lives in Christ by the Spirit the life of the future.

As love links faith and hope at a psychological level, so imago-Dei-ization bridges the gap between justification and glorification in a theological dimension. The goal of imago-Dei-ization is eternity, not just history. This means that the future of the believers is literally glorious. While scientific perspectives are pessimistic about the future of the universe, theological perspectives are optimistic.³ If science relies on chance and human achievements to attempt to alter the fate of a blind universe, theology rests on a powerful and faithful God who holds the destiny of a moral universe. God means hope even for those disintegrated into dust. At the right time, the Spirit of God will bring the dead people back to life.⁴ Christ’s glorified body is the prototype of the bodies

¹Sherlock perceptively has noted that humanity is described as being made in God’s image “at three critical turning-points in the Genesis account”: at the highpoint of creation, at the beginning of the post-Edenic life, and after the judgment of the flood. A deeper understanding came “in the light of Christ” (31). The ultimate stage of imago-Dei-ization will happen after the parousia. Yet the saved will never stop growing, for imago-Dei-ization is also an eternal enterprise.

²See Gary J. Oliver, Monte Hasz, and Matthew Richburg, *Promoting Change Through Brief Therapy in Christian Counseling* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1997), 15-33.

³The book *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), ed. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker, brings together stimulating essays of scholars from diverse fields on the subject.

⁴From Genesis (1:7) to the Psalms (104:30) to Ezekiel (37) to Paul (Rom 8:2, 11; 1 Cor 15:45), the Spirit is presented as life-giver (see the topic “The Spirit as Life-Giver” in chapter 2).

of the glorified saints.¹ They will share in the matter of the new creation, not as digital/disembodied/floating consciousnesses, but as glorified/immortalized/physical beings, with God's moral imprint.

Divine and Human Interplay

One of the most challenging tasks in pastoral theology is to provide a balanced, harmonious, and convincing solution to the divine-human paradox in the matter of spiritual growth. If God is the all-sufficient source of our spiritual growth,² then what is our part? Theologians from the Reformed tradition have had a chronic difficulty solving this puzzle.

This was the case of Karl Barth (1886-1968). With his known emphasis on the absolute primacy and supremacy of God, he may have initially given little room for human response in his *magnum opus*.³ Later, he tried to remedy the lack and address the paradox by focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit as the dynamic agent of sanctification, who bridges human and divine spheres; on prayer as a real point of encounter between divine and human agencies, a means to enter into "covenant-partnership" with God and renew continually the request for the Holy Spirit (a *dandum* and not *datum*, or *datum* while still *dandum* gift); on individual cross (or crosses) as an "indispensable element" of sanctification to humble, awaken, discipline, purify, and deepen the Christian; and on love as the power behind Christian sanctification.⁴

Let us consider three lines of evidence for the cooperation of the believers with God in the change process.

¹As Ladd says, the resurrection of Jesus is "the beginning of the eschatological resurrection itself" (362).

²Jesus' statement that without him we can do nothing (John 15:5) is another way of affirming this same truth.

³Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-1962).

⁴For a didactic exposition on the subject, see Bo Karen Lee, "The Holy Spirit and Human Agency in Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification," *Koinonia* 12 (2000): 175-193, on whom I based this paragraph-summary.

Engagement: The Response of Free Beings

Biblical authors do teach that both God and human beings play a role in spiritual growth.¹ Of course, we must not confuse spiritual growth with salvation, nor equate divine and human roles. Dallas Willard has synthesized the divine-human paradox with a quotable phrase: “Grace is opposed to earning, but not to effort.”² He underscores that the core of human being (will, spirit, and heart) “is reshaped, opening out to the reshaping of the whole life, only by *engagement*”—for “religious business-as-usual, the recommended routine for a ‘good’ church member, is not enough to meet the need of the human soul.”³ To a great extent, character is a pattern of action.⁴

God plays his role basically through the Holy Spirit, who is the divine agent in our inner world. In the metaphor of the vine in John 15, Jesus does not mention the work of the Spirit, but it is assumed. This is the opinion of James Elder Cumming, who writes: “The diffusion of life to every part is the work of the Holy Ghost, which may be resisted by something in the branches, large or small, even in the twigs, even in a solitary twig.”⁵

¹Paul encouraged the believers to offer their bodies “in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness” (Rom 6:19), and to “work out” their “salvation with fear and trembling” under the divine impulse (Phil 2:12-13). Peter urged his readers to “make every effort” to add goodness to their faith (2 Pet 1:5). James argues that faith without deeds is useless and dead (Jas 2:14-26).

²Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ: A Perspective on What It Is and How It Might Be Done,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28 (2000): 257.

³*Ibid.*, italics in original.

⁴Aristotle already knew this fact. “Aristotle’s major contribution to the ethics of character, in addition to his marvelous analyses of friendship and justice, was in his discussion of how character is built through habituation (practice), the importance of thoughtful deliberation and choice, and the argument that all character virtues are a ‘mean’ between two vices, the ‘extremes’ of deficiency and excess” (David W. Gill, *Becoming Good: Building Moral Character* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000], 96). For an excellent introduction to Aristotle’s ethics, see Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle’s Theory of Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁵James Elder Cumming, *Through the Eternal Spirit: A Biblical Study on the Holy Ghost* (New York: Revell, 1896), 165.

The tree (Jesus) has full life in itself, but we can block the flowing of this life throughout our lives, impeding the fruit bearing. This is a negative dimension. Could we act positively, facilitating the work of the Spirit? The answer seems to be yes. If this hypothesis is correct, then the believer can cooperate with the Holy Spirit to produce the “fruit.”¹ But how might it be so, considering that the fruit is a natural work of God? If even the cultivation of the fruit is made by the divine gardener (who cares for and, when necessary, prunes the branches, in a surgery of love), how can we collaborate with God?

In commenting on the sharp contrast between “works” and “fruit” in Gal 5, Samuel Chadwick correctly observes, “Works belong to the workshop; fruit belongs to the garden. One comes from the ingenuity of the factory; the other is the silent growth of a bounding life. The factory operates with dead stuff; the garden cultivates living forces to their appointed end.”²

The fruit also does not come of the law, for, after “serving” the nine buds of the fruit to the believers, Paul underscores: “Against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:23). “He means that they cannot be produced by law,” comments F. F. Bruce; “indeed, when such graces are under consideration we are in a sphere where law is irrelevant. Law may prescribe certain lines of conduct and prohibit others, but love, joy, peace and the rest cannot be legally enforced.”³ A better alternative explanation is provided by Ernest De Witt Burton: “The mild assertion that there is no law against such things has the effect of an emphatic assertion that these things fully meet the requirements of the law.”⁴

¹If the Christian could do nothing, it would be nonsense for Paul to include “self-control” in the list.

²Samuel Chadwick, *The Way to Pentecost* (Berne, IN: Light and Hope, 1959), 101.

³F. F. Bruce, “The Spirit in the Letter to the Galatians,” in *Essays on Apostolic Themes*, ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985), 47.

⁴Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 318.

Although the fruit is not a human product, we play a part in it. In Gal 5:22-23, “Paul did not mean to portray Christians as automata manipulated by the Spirit.”¹ Our part is choosing to remain on the true vine, in intimate relationship with Christ, for a branch or leaf cut from the tree dies. “Since we live by the Spirit,” writes Paul, “let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). We must maintain a fine tune with the Spirit. If “to live” expresses a perennial fellowship, “to walk” (or to “keep in step”) requires a constant decision/effort. The fruit is a by-product of the walking with the Spirit, but the walk is not automatic.

In Gal 6:7-10, Paul speaks about the personal responsibility of the believer. He states and explains the principle that one reaps what one sows. This principle “is applied equally to life in the flesh and life in the Spirit.”² There is a paradox: we cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit, but it will not be produced if we do not search for the Spirit. The fruit is natural to the Spirit, but not to us. On the contrary, the works of the flesh are natural to us, but not to the Spirit. In order to turn unnatural what is natural and natural what is unnatural in our lives, we have to make a continuous decision/effort.

Apostle Peter seems to leave this human dimension quite clear when he says that we must “make every effort,” or apply complete diligence, in spiritual growth (2 Pet 1:5). Here “Peter is calling for an attitude of eagerness and zeal, the opposite of sluggishness and self-indulgence,” says D. Edmond Hiebert. The apostle emphasizes the comprehensiveness of this duty/task with the word “every”; the effort “must be neither half-hearted nor selective.”³

For Hiebert, “human effort must follow the work of God, but the participial construction indicates that such human effort is subordinate to the divine bestowal and flows out of it.”⁴ God

¹L. H. Hurtado, “Fruit of the Spirit,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 319.

²Bruce, “The Spirit in the Letter to the Galatians,” 48.

³D. Edmond Hiebert, “The Necessity Growth in the Christian Life: An Exposition of 2 Peter 1:5-11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (1984): 44.

⁴Ibid.

gives all we need, and we give all he asks. It is no surprise that, in Paul's list of virtues (Gal 5:22-23), the experiences "of a surrendered life come at the beginning"; and "the mastery and subjugation of self, within and without, come last of all."¹

Athletic Metaphor: The Importance of Practicing

Another evidence that the believer can and must do something to improve his/her spirituality is the Pauline use of the athletic metaphor. In his major passage working on this motive, 1 Cor 9:24-27, Paul exhorts his readers to run "in such way as to get the prize" (vs. 24), argues that an everlasting crown deserves a harder training than a perishable one (vs. 25), stresses that he knows his goal (vs. 26), and states that he subdues his body in order to get the prize (vs. 27).

Paul was using a theme quite familiar to his contemporary culture, that is, the Greco-Roman world of the first century A.D.² "The Olympic games were referred to, literally and metaphorically, as the supreme contest in which a person's natural or developed abilities and self-reliance were put to the test," writes Roman Garrison.³ Stoics and Cynics, particularly, denied pleasure and faced pain as an *agon*, a contest. Paul knew the force of the athletic imagery in the popular mentality,⁴ and used it as an analogy of spiritual conflict, moral integrity, discipline, and spiritual victory.⁵

¹Cumming, 167.

²The famous Olympic games took place every four years in Olympia, and the celebration of the panhellenic Isthmian games occurred at every second year in Corinth. In both cases, the winner received just a wreath of leaves. For further historical data, see Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

³Roman Garrison, "Paul's Use of the Athlete Metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 22 (1993): 209.

⁴See Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in Pauline Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

⁵M. Pucci, "Circuses and Games," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 210-211.

The point is that he wanted to stimulate his readers to behave as athletes of Christ. This presupposes effort, self-discipline, endurance, and constant training. It would be ridiculous to think that someone may be a high-level athlete without hard work. The same principle is applied to spirituality. Therefore, in his realism, Paul says to the young Timothy to enter the spiritual arena (or gymnasium) and exercise in godliness to enhance his spiritual power (1 Tim 4:7-8).¹ The exercise is not an end in itself, nor has it any merit, but it is necessary to strengthen our bodies and spirits.

The Hundred-Hundred Formula

Edwin H. Palmer says that when we consider whether the human being is responsible for a fuller indwelling of the Spirit, as well as sanctification, there are two pitfalls to be avoided: (1) the passivist view (we can do nothing) and (2) the activist view (we can do all). The biblical balance, he proposes, lies in a balance of these two extreme positions. However, he does not mean a fifty-fifty proposition. "Rather, it is a balance in which the Spirit is completely sovereign and man is completely responsible: a hundred-hundred proposition, as contradictory as that may seem."²

The hundred-hundred formula, in an initiative-response scheme, seems to be biblical. The Spirit works completely on our spiritual growth, but we must offer totally to him our minds and bodies. From a biblical point of view, the either/or proposition is a false dilemma. A more correct proposition is the Spirit in us. The less we trust in our potential, the more we surrender ourselves to the Spirit; the more the Spirit lives in us, the more we grow, and again the less we trust in our own power.

Therefore, the manifestation of the multifold fruit of the Spirit is not a means to gain salvation, nor an uncoordinated bunch of actions resulting from social obligations. Rather, it is a natural movement of the person who seeks the arena of the Spirit and is controlled by him.

¹See Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 98-99.

²Palmer, 179. In the doctrine of inspiration, this hundred-hundred formula is represented by the term *concursum*.

Working in partnership with God, we can cooperate with the Spirit to bear a sweet fruit in our lives and churches.

How to Facilitate Imago-Dei-ization

Since we are supposed to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the task of imago-Dei-ization, the question is: What could we do? Can we be transformed and grow spiritually through exercises? If the biblical answer is “yes,” as suggested above, how do we grow in spirituality in order to be transformed?

Among the great variety of Christian spiritualities,¹ some are obviously more aligned with the Bible and germane to reality than others; but all may unfold valid points. We do not have to choose one in particular, even because “there are better ways to explore spirituality and spiritual growth than to determine which theological formulation best approximates ‘what really happens’ within the believer who grows.”²

How we experience God depends on our personal and corporate history. “Our spirituality resides, not in the finitude of our individual biology,” writes Teske, “but in a historically and culturally emergent symbolic world that precedes, canalizes and sculpts, and then passes well beyond us.”³ Spirituality is one’s unique movement in a neurocosmic space to transcend self and enjoy union with God. True spirituality is theofocused. The spiritual person is centered on God

¹The reader can consult, for example, these fine sources: Louis Bouyer, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury, 1982); Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Bradley P. Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993); Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998); Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999); Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999); Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998); and Gordon Mursell, ed., *The Story of Christian Spirituality: Two Thousands Years, from East to West* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

²Lawrence O. Richards, *A Practical Theology of Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Academie/Zondervan, 1987), 45.

³Teske, “The Spiritual Limits of Neuropsychological Life,” 210.

(not on self), lovingly oriented toward God, and plugged into God, extracting energy from him. Paradoxically, he or she lives integrated in the real life, being even more human. To be spiritual, in Pauline terms, is to say again and again, in the power of the Spirit, a grateful “Yes” to God, who expressed a graceful “Yes” to the sinner/believer in Christ Jesus.¹

Spiritual development may be mapped as route/journey, structured as steps/degrees, categorized as stages/states, or idealized as progress/maturation.² The styles of the spiritual masters also may be classified under categories such as apophatic (method that advocates an emptying technique of meditation), kataphatic (method that advocates an imaginal technique of meditation), speculative (method that emphasizes the illumination of the mind), and affective (method that emphasizes the heart/emotions).³ Such efforts can be helpful, if we recognize the dynamism of spirituality, the representational nature of maps/schemes, and the need of sensibility to diversity of styles.

Aware of both the possibilities and the risks of these descriptions and models, I cannot examine the theologies of spirituality here. Unfortunately, the limits of the present study permit only an allusion to a minimalist set of tools for spiritual growth. In my view, the “core of the cores” is (1) *prayer* as deep dialogue, “the primary speech of the true self to the true God,”⁴ a kind of religious, existential, and eschatological discourse mediated by Christ and made effective by the Spirit; (2) *the study of Scripture as the primary source* and great matrix of true spirituality, the

¹R. P. Meye, “Spirituality,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 906.

²See Richard Woods, “Stages of Spiritual Development: Retrieving Ancient Christian Wisdom,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation* 15 (1994): 299-319.

³Urban T. Holmes III, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 4.

⁴Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, “Prayer and Personality: Prayer as Primary Speech,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainright, and Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 24.

inexhaustible well where prophets, saints, and mystics drink;¹ (3) *meditation* as a vehicle for gaining perspective, sharpening the focus, and balancing the self; (4) *creative celebration* as an experience of “fellowship,” an emotional catalyzer for a momentum of unity, a point of encounter between the earthly and the heavenly realms; and (5) *prophetic living*² as an expression of sensitivity to cosmic (divine, human, and natural) groans.

I think these tools well represent Adventist spirituality.³ They do not bring spirituality automatically, but surely can be helpful to the Spirit. Although we do not know exactly how the Spirit changes us through means, we can speculate that he seizes a state of openness to make us more aware, give us new insights, create a new identity, present a new value system, and re-shape our personal story—combining imagination and reality.

In closing this section, it is appropriate to remember that there is a tension between being and doing, intimacy and action, the inward and the outward, the individual and the corporate dimensions of spirituality. The tension is real, but these dimensions are not mutually exclusive. The Spirit can give us the skill to be radically balanced as Christ was.

Metaphor of Fruit: The Evidence of Maturity

Now, changing our focus, I will discuss the result of the Spirit’s ethical work. The inner tour (or activity) of the Spirit in us is beyond critical scrutiny, but it produces spiritual fruit. The Pauline catalogue of ethical virtues⁴ in Gal 5, known as “fruit of the Spirit,” is the best expression

¹Whenever the Spirit of God reveals, the content is so rich that it can feed many generations without being exhausted. In the storeroom of the Bible we find old and new treasures (Matt 13:52).

²For a fine description of what it means to be a prophet, see Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, 2 vols. in 1 (Peabody: Prince, 1999).

³Adventism has a place for meditation in its theological mind-set, but seems defective in its practice. Besides, since Adventism is no longer monolithic, its spirituality is also diverse in its secondary aspects.

⁴“Virtues comes in different psychological types, playing different roles in the economy of character,” writes an expert. They have nuances and may be, to some degree, dispositions of behavior (gentleness, hospitality, generosity), or emotion-dispositions (gratitude, hope, peace), or

of this work. Being an eschatological mark of the community of the Spirit, the “fruit” needs to be actualized in every generation (both corporately and individually). It has perennial relevance and deserves a revisit. In doing this, I will try to balance theoretical and practical ideas.

Situating the Metaphor of the Fruit

Three major passages develop the theme of the fruit in the New Testament: John 15 presents the conditions of fruitfulness; 2 Pet 1:5-8 describes the process of cultivation of the fruit; and Gal 5 gives a description of the fruit itself.¹ If John focuses on the connection of the branches with the tree, and Peter “goes through the seasons of spring, summer, and autumn,” “Paul stands looking at the harvest,” the result.² The expression “fruit of the Spirit” appears only once in the New Testament, but the use of “fruit” as an image for human behavior is a commonplace in the Bible,³ as well as “in the ancient background of the early Christians.”⁴

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul uses a variety of metaphors to describe the ethical lifestyle of the Christian indwelt, energized, and controlled by the Holy Spirit. His readers should live/walk (*peripateite*) by the Spirit (5:16), be “led [*agesthe*] by the Spirit” (5:18), “keep in step [*stoichomen*] with the Spirit” (5:25), and sow to (*speiron eis*) “please the Spirit” (6:8). But perhaps the best known and probably the most effective is the metaphor of the fruit (5:22-23), which figuratively means the consequence or result of an action.

self-management skills (self-control, courage, patience), or powers of thought and perception (discernment, wisdom), or attitudes (humility, confidence, mercy) (Robert C. Roberts, “Character,” *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, ed. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995], 68).

¹Pink, 172.

²Cumming, 167-168.

³The word *peri*, the main Old Testament term for “fruit,” appears 106 times; and the Greek *karpos*, 66 times. See, for example, Prov 1:31; Hos 10:12-13; Matt 3:8; 7:15-20; Phil 1:11; and Eph 5:9, 11.

⁴Hurtado, 319.

In Gal 5:22-23, Paul apparently is speaking about behavior or the external aspect. Fruit “is the visible or tangible product of a living plant and the metaphor is almost always used in the Scripture to describe what is evident or external, rather than what is inward, in the heart.”¹ Furthermore, some facets of the fruit, like kindness and gentleness, must be external. Paul contrasts fruit with the acts of the sinful nature in a context of ethical dualism. The one who lives by the Spirit should walk by the Spirit, evidencing one’s relationship with God in the new age brought by Christ and operated by the Spirit.

However, at the light of the immediate context and the whole Pauline theology, it is reasonable to say that Paul had also in mind the internal aspect. To use an old key word, he is focusing on character. Character, in short, is attitude (primarily) plus acts (secondarily) plus response (finally). It is what a person is, does, and becomes in function of his/her choices and actions. In his seminal study of the 1970s, Stanley Hauerwas linked character and self-determination. “Character is not just the sum of all that we do as agents,” he wrote, “but rather it is the particular direction our agency acquires by choosing to act in some ways rather than others.”²

The internal aspect is the field of the Spirit’s action; and the external aspect is the evidence of his action. The fruit shows that the Spirit is effectively working inside the believer. “If any proof of the Spirit’s working and a believer’s maturing is to be looked for on the basis of Scripture,” writes T. Page, “surely it is to be found in the fruit of the Spirit, which displays the character of Christ being formed in a person.”³

Before analyzing the fruit of the Spirit itself, it is important to remember three things. First, Christians live in the world, are shaped by their environment, and need to interpret critically their

¹E. H. Andrews, *The Promise of the Spirit* (Hertfordshire, UK: Evangelical, 1982), 165.

²Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975), 117.

³T. Page, “Holy Spirit,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 410.

culture.¹ Philip D. Kenneson stresses this aspect in his insightful book *Life on the Vine*, pointing to “the inability of many Christians to identify the important difference between native flora and flora of God’s kingdom.”²

Second, Christians live in a community of faith, and the fruit of the Spirit must be manifested not only for one’s individual sake, but also for the benefit of the church in the world.³ The ultimate goal of the fruit is to embody before the world “the kind of reconciled and transformed life that God desires for all of creation.”⁴ The fruit is the characteristic of the community of the Spirit in the new aeon of the Messiah.

Third, the fruit of the Spirit is to be seen in a proactive perspective (Jas 4:17). A common sin today is indifference, which S. Dennis Ford defines as “the failure either to see, to acknowledge, or to act on behalf of others.” According to him, at the root of indifference (or omission) is an archaic and ugly-sounding word, “sloth.” “Not all sloth is moral indifference, but all moral indifference expresses and is an aspect of sloth.”⁵

¹Scripture informs that individually we can frustrate the work of the Spirit (Acts 7:51; Eph 4:30). Would it be possible to do the same corporately, in function of our cultural context? Chances are that the answer is “yes.”

²Philip D. Kenneson, *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 26.

³In commenting on Paul’s transformation of the traditional lists of vices and virtues, J. Louis Martyn says that “in the apocalyptic war of the end-time, vices and virtues attributable to individuals have lost both their individualistic nature and their character as vices and virtues. They have become marks of community character” (*Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, 33A [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 532-533).

⁴Kenneson, 34.

⁵S. Dennis Ford, *Sins of Omission: A Primer on Moral Indifference* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 12, 23.

An Eschatological Catalogue of Virtues

The fruit of the Spirit¹ is technically a list of virtues. “The prototypal use of ethical catalogs begins with Zeno (340-265 B.C.), founder of the Stoa, and is expanded under the Stoic teachers who follow,” writes J. D. Charles.² The Old Testament does not have significant catalogues of vices³ and virtues, but the New uses more abundantly such lists, which are common in the Hellenistic Jewish literature, particularly in Philo. According to Burton Scott Easton, the early Greek Christianity “was in contact with the practice of teaching by using ethical lists on two sides, the Hellenistic Jewish and the pure Greek.”⁴

When it comes to lists of vices in the Bible, explains Easton, “sins are selected somewhat at random”; “a rough metrical scheme, assonance and paranomasia are chiefly responsible for their order”; Jewish custom tended to number sins predominantly of act rather than of thought; and it would be futile “to attempt to construct a standard set of vices that might compose a hypothetical ‘original’ list.”⁵ In the New Testament, there are more than twenty lists of vices.¹

¹Notice the singular, “fruit,” as opposed to the many “works of the flesh.” As Paul Nadim Tarazi observes, these ethical virtues “essentially reflect unity insofar as all the fruit coming from one tree is inevitably of *one* kind” (*Galatians: A Commentary* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994], 297, italics in original).

²J. D. Charles, “Vice and Virtue Lists,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 1253. The four cardinal Stoic virtues were justice, temperance, prudence, and courage.

³“Just as virtues are forms, not only of moral goodness, but also of well-being, vices are not just moral evils, but at the same time modes of failure to flourish—forms of ‘death’” (Roberts, “Character,” 68).

⁴Burton Scott Easton, “New Testament Ethical Lists,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 1.

⁵*Ibid.*, 2, 5. For Hans Dieter Betz, the probable reason why the early Christian writers show little interest in elaborating complete, systematic or creative catalogues is that they just “sum up the conventional morality of the time,” although paradoxically Christian morality also “included a critique and even a replacement of conventional morals,” having an eschatological dimension (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 282).

Regarding lists of virtues, New Testament authors also present several lists,² but they hardly have an Old Testament background when it comes to literary form, because, according to Easton, Hebrews preferred “to depict the goodness of a man by concrete instances rather than by cataloging his benevolent qualities”; the Beatitudes would be the only New Testament list about which “we can be certain of a purely Jewish origin.”³

This fact did not prevent Paul from listing nine highly ethical characteristics of the Christian filled with the Spirit, which William Barclay analyzed in a superb study in the early 1960s.⁴ Although Paul was a theologian rooted in the Old Testament, he was also a man of his days. He liked to contextualize the message of God (1 Cor 9:19-23).

Paul presents this list in a context of polemic against the judaizers. Yet it has a special significance for believers today. Its eschatological tone as a mark of the whole community of the Messiah does not diminish its applicability to individuals, for truth has more than one level of exigence and action. To live “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit” makes a difference. However, as Paul Jersild warns, we must avoid the temptation of understanding “these two poles in moralistic terms, defining the Christian life as one that has attained a higher moral status by entering the realm of the Spirit and leaving behind the works of the flesh.”⁵

A brief analysis of each quality, indicating its biblical and current meaning, follows.

¹Examples: Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21-22; Rom 1:29-31; 13:13; 1 Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 12:20-21; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:31; 5:3-5; Col 3:5, 8; 1 Tim 1:9-10; 2 Tim 3:2-5; Titus 3:3; Jas 3:15; 1 Pet 2:1; 4:3, 15; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15.

²Examples: Matt 5:3-10; 2 Cor 6:6-7; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:32; 5:9; Phil 4:8; Col 3:12-14; 1 Tim 3:2-3; 4:12; 6:11; Titus 1:7-8; Jas 3:17; 1 Pet 3:8; 2 Pet 1:5-8.

³Easton, 9.

⁴See William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit: An Examination of Galatians 5:19-23* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 63-127.

⁵Paul Jersild, *Spirit Ethics: Scripture and the Moral Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 89.

Love

Love (*agape*) is the disposition of looking for the maximum good of the neighbor; the conscious action of helping a person to be happy and successful; the power to love those who are not lovely. *Agape* is the exercise of the total personality, involving emotion and will. Spicq guesses that “the first usages” of the verb *agapao* are “in the sense of welcome: the surprise of the host who receives a stranger,” being “the most rational kind of love [in the New Testament], inasmuch as it involves recognition and judgment of value.”¹

Apparently, Paul has in mind here primarily the love for other persons, and not for God. As Sam K. Williams schematizes it, “in Paul’s theological vocabulary, *faith* is a ‘vertical’ term; *love*, most frequently, a ‘horizontal’ one.”² Love is the public evidence of the private relationship between the believer and God.

In the Greek-Roman world of the first century A.D., the *eros* love was a current coin. Sensuality and self-indulgence were common. Carnal love was part of the rituals of many temples. “The numerous words in the Greek language for sexual relations suggest a preoccupation with this aspect of life,” writes Everett Ferguson.³ But the apostle knew a superior type of love (*agape*), which must go unselfishly in all directions (Luke 10:25-37).

Loving is giving. Without opposing *eros* to *agape*, as Anders Nygren did in the 1940s,⁴ Ysabel de Andia writes: “The criterion for discerning true love is the total gift of self, which is

¹Ceslas Spicq, “*Agape*,” *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:8, 11.

²Sam K. Williams, *Galatians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 143.

³Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64.

⁴Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: SPCK, 1953).

nothing else but ecstasy or sacrifice. *The sign of recognition of love is the sign of the Cross, and the fruit of the Cross is communion and unity.*¹

Christian Schwarz represents graphically the *eros* and *agape* love as follows:

Eros = Loving feelings ⇒ Loving thoughts ⇒ Loving actions

Agape = Loving thoughts ⇒ Loving actions ⇒ Loving feelings²

How does one develop love in the midst of indifference, insensibility, egoism, self-interest, and “objectification”? Certainly, love can be learned, a thesis defended by Erich Fromm.³ Here I present six introductory and suggestive steps:

1. *Understanding the cosmic circle of love.* This circle, which has its starting and ending point in God, is clear in Johannine theology: love starts with God and through Christ comes to men/women, who, tied in true love to an agapeic community (church), return the love to Christ and God (John 17:21-26).⁴ The Spirit makes this process possible.

2. *Receiving the love of God.* Christian love is an echo of God’s love (1 John 4:19). In Greek writings, *charis* (grace) has a reciprocal meaning: the *charis* of the benefactor (in this case, God) is a gift; the *charis* of the beneficiary (in this case, believers) is gratitude.⁵ In a radical sense, human beings only can love after being loved by God.

3. *Starting to love the very neighbor.* God must be the supreme object of our love, but the command to love our neighbor is also absolute. There is no conflict here, for there are levels of

¹Ysabel de Andia, “*Eros and Agape: The Divine Passion of Love*,” *Communio* 24 (1997): 50, italics in original.

²Christian A. Schwarz, *Aprendendo a amar* (Curitiba: Editora Evangélica Esperança, 1998), 19, 21, 22.

³Erich Fromm, *A arte de amar* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1986), 19-25.

⁴Warnack, 1:52.

⁵Stephen Charles Mott, *Ética bíblica y cambio social* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1995), 32.

love, each command being absolute in its sphere. Love to God is vertical; love to neighbor is horizontal.¹ Like fire, love starts in a given point and soon burns in several directions.

4. *Giving priority to people over things.* The principle that people value more than things is clear in the Bible.² People, we love; things, we use. On this subject, it is still helpful to read the classic of Martin Buber about I-You and I-It relationships.³

5. *Thinking from the other's perspective.* Putting oneself in the shoes of the other is a characteristic of love, a presupposition at the heart of the Golden Rule (Matt 7:12). We must have not only "sympathy," or even "empathy," but also "interpathy."⁴

6. *Practicing indirectly the art of loving.* A musician, for example, learning to play the piano, first learns the scales; before shooting arrows at the target, an archer must learn to control his/her breath; an airplane pilot studies the operation of the aircraft before beginning to fly.⁵ Likewise, the lover must begin practicing patience, goodness, kindness, and so on, and then he/she will be loving.

Joy

Christianity is a religion of joy, not of gloom. "For the kingdom of God is . . . joy in the Holy Spirit," wrote Paul (Rom 14:17). In the New Testament, according to Barclay, "the verb *chairein* which means *to rejoice* occurs seventy-two times, and the word *chara* which means *joy*

¹For a study about the dilemmas of love, see Norman L. Geisler, *La ética cristiana del amor* (Miami: Editorial Caribe, 1977).

²See Matt 6:26; 12:6, 12; 23:17-23; Mark 8:36.

³Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Macmillan, 1974).

⁴Interpathy: a psychological concept defined by Aart M. van Beek as "an affective and cognitive intentional act to understand the world of another," a step to grasp the experiential picture of another person and bridge a cultural gap (*Cross-Cultural Counseling* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 35).

⁵See Fromm, 141-171.

occurs sixty times.” For this reason, he states, “The New Testament is the book of joy.”¹ William Morrice found that “every New Testament writer has something to say about joy, in one or more of its varieties.” Luke is par excellence the writer of joy, concentrating in his writings 24 percent of the New Testament vocabulary (326 instances in all) for joy.² Philippians also radiates joy.

As Monroe Peaston puts it, “joy itself can only be known in enjoyment, just as beauty is known as we delight in it, and truth is known as we grasp and are grasped by it.”³ Joy is to be experienced, not conceptualized. But we can make an attempt to portray it.

Joy is the pleasure of living, a state of spirit that illuminates the life. It is the response of the soul to God’s love and grace. It is “not a selfish emotion, but a sun whose rays warm and gladden all within the sphere of its influence.”⁴ It appears as a gift, accompanying restoration, discovery, insight, meaning, communion, and reconciliation.

Joy may coincide with happiness and good feelings, but it does not depend on circumstances.⁵ Joy is deeper in its roots and in its range. In a certain sense, joy transcends despair, transcends us, and transcends even itself. What matters is to what or to whom it points. Joy comes from God; “it is a supernatural result of belonging to the one who is pure joy.”⁶ For trusting in God and tasting his grace, we are overflowed by joy.

¹Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, 76.

²William G. Morrice, *Joy in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 81, 91.

³Monroe Peaston, “Joys, Joy, and Joy Itself,” *The Church Quarterly Review* 167 (1966): 82.

⁴E. H. Perowne, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: University Press, 1896), 69.

⁵Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 264.

⁶Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 44.

“One test of authentic joy is its compatibility with pain,” state Trask and Goodall. “Joy in this world is always joy ‘in spite of’ something.”¹ The early believers were a joyful people in spite of suffering and persecution—and their joyful attitude certainly had a missiological impact.

Five strategies can help one discover true joy in the midst of sadness, despair, consumerism, and artificial desires:

1. *Searching for the presence of God.* If some people believe in the formula I + Money = Pleasure, the psalmist had a more original equation: I + God = Joy (Pss 9:2; 16:11; 84:10; 122:1). “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Paul writes (Phil 4:4). Christ himself said that his presence would bring joy (John 16:22).

2. *Helping others to reach a better kind of life.* To share salvation is a way of going “onward and upward to higher and holier joys.”² The Messiah would find joy in the fruit of his work (Isa 53:11) as a counterpoint to the sadness of the cross. In Luke 15, Jesus, acting as God’s representative, pictures with progressive clearness and intensity the joy of the Father (vss. 7, 10, 20, 23, 32). This was an euphemistic way of saying that God resonates with the salvation of lost people, and an intelligent manner of justifying Jesus’ behavior. The theme of joy is the climax of these parables.³

3. *Being faithful to the principles of the kingdom.* In the Parable of the Talents, the faithful servants are invited to share their master’s happiness (Matt 25:21, 23). This eschatological joy can be experienced now. The early Christians felt joy in being faithful to Christ, in spite of suffering and even death.⁴ “The joy of suffering in the New Testament is essentially eschatological joy

¹Ibid., 54.

²Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:54.

³Kenneth Bailey, *As parábolas de Lucas*, 3rd ed. (São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1995), 246.

⁴See Matt 5:12; Acts 5:41; 1 Pet 4:13.

because the rationale is that we suffer with Christ, and, if we suffer with him, we shall also be raised up with him.”¹

4. *Cultivating a sense of humor.* When we learn how to laugh at ourselves, we abandon the pretension of infallibility and start enjoying life. Some Western societies still bear the marks of the nihilist culture that shadowed segments of the twentieth century, and whose icons were artists and philosophers of chaos and absurdity. But Christians are not invited to this nonsensical feast. If one hopes, one can break the strings of despair and find joy where others cannot.

5. *Focusing on the bright side of things.* Psychologists teach us to be aware of the problems in our past. However, if we look continually to the darkest side of life, we will always see darkness. We have to adapt continuously to our environment just as the eye has to adjust to the light. By focusing on good things, we can increase our joy (Phil 4:8). Theologically, Christians are free to be glad. We need a theology of brightness and joy.

Peace

Peace (*eirene*) describes a condition of assurance, prosperity, and tranquility; welfare, wholeness, and integrity; harmony, serenity, and balance; emotional, social, and spiritual health. *Eirene* includes both personal (physical/psychological) and interpersonal aspects. In Paul, this word gained a new significance, an eschatological character, becoming almost synonymous with salvation.²

Primarily negative in classical Greek, *eirene* incorporated the positive aspects of Hebrew *shalom* and started expressing its spiritual qualities in the New Testament, being linked with terms

¹Manfred O. Meitzen, “How Can We Speak of Christian Joy?” *The Lutheran Quarterly* 22 (1970): 144.

²Ceslas Spicq writes: “We might almost say that the apostle created a new concept of *eirene*, an altogether internal and very spiritual peace, since he locates it at the heart of the Christian life and connects it to each of the persons of the Holy Trinity” (“*Eireneuo, Eirene . . .*,” *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:432.

such as grace, life, and justice. Within the Pauline corpus, the word has a variety of usages, being a dynamic concept. Western people seldom apprehend the whole meaning and depth of *shalom*.¹

With its derivatives, *shalom* is one of the most significant theological words in the Old Testament, where it occurs more than 250 times in 213 verses.² Translated in the Septuagint as *sozo*, *eirene*, *teleios*, and several other terms (more than 20 in all), *shalom* covered a spectrum of desirable conditions. When applied to inorganic objects, *shalom* means “whole,” “unbroken”; when applied to organic things, it means “sound,” “healthy”; and when applied to social relationship, it means “being in order,” “living in happiness.”³ The word *sozo* (one Greek translation for *shalom*, which gave origin to “soteriology”) means “to save,” “to heal,” “to preserve,” “to become whole,” “to rescue.”

The word in the Old Testament has multiple uses and facets. Trying to establish the basic meaning of *shalom* from its roots, Gerhard Von Rad stressed three aspects: (1) *shalom* is an expression of material and physical well-being; (2) *shalom* has a social and relational dimension, that is, it is more a relationship than a state of inward peace, and applies rather to a community than to individuals; (3) *shalom* is a religious/covenantal term and expresses the gift and blessings of Yahweh to his people.⁴

Claus Westermann agrees that the word was used in a variety of ways, and suggests that its basic meaning is a condition of being whole, entire, intact, well, okay. But he limits *shalom* to a context of community, especially small communities, and denies that it may refer to inner peace,

¹For a list of studies on these words, see Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, “Bibliography: Biblical Studies on *Shalom* and *Eirene*,” in *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, ed. Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 259-277.

²R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 931.

³H. Gross, “Paz,” *Dicionário de teologia bíblica*, ed. Johannes B. Bauer, 3^a ed. (São Paulo: Loyola, 1983), 2:823.

⁴Gerhard Von Rad, “Shalom in the OT,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:402-406.

peace with God or peace as opposed to war. “Since shalom means the wholeness of a community, it is not really possible to speak of peace between A and B.”¹ His analysis has strength in what he affirms, but shows weakness in what he denies.

Five suggestions point the way to peace in the midst of worry, anxiety, stress, crises, conflict, and fragmentation:

1. *Searching for the peace-giver.* In a deeper sense, *shalom* can only come from God. By presenting the Messiah as the Prince of Peace, Isaiah (9:6) underlines his moral quality and real power to undertake a cosmic project of peace. Jesus claimed to be the giver and guarantor of the true peace.² Imperial slogans of peace are “the beginning of the end,” which means that “the messianic peace and the Pax Romana [or Americana] are incompatible.”³ Jesus came to erode peacefully this system’s foundations (Matt 10:34; Luke 12:51).⁴ Paul’s peace-benedictions⁵ might be “a subtle claim that divine peace for the world is not found in the rule or cult of Rome but in the rule of the God proclaimed by Paul.”⁶

2. *Avoiding pressure and/or increasing endurance.* As a piece of chalk breaks when one forces it more than it can resist, people start “war” when pressure on them is too high. Crucifying

¹Claus Westermann, “Peace (*Shalom*) in the Old Testament,” in *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, ed. Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 16-48, citation from 19.

²See Matt 11:28-30 and John 16:33. When Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you” (John 14:27), it was as if he were saying, “I am the peace.” Therefore, one could say, peace is not something, but someone.

³Luise Schottroff, “The Dual Concept of Peace,” in *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, ed. Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 156, 157, 163.

⁴Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana: pretensão e realidade* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1991), 90-92.

⁵Paul used the formula “The God of peace be with you” (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 3:16).

⁶J. E. Bowley, “Pax Romana,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 774.

self is a form of increasing endurance. When we are too ambitious or have a very high self-concept, we are most likely to protect our reputation by fighting. Pride, arrogance, and a huge ego take so much space that there is no place left for peace.¹

3. *Making a conscious choice for peace.* Obviously, peace does not come in pills, nor can it be bought or reached by magic. Peace depends on Spirit-empowered choices. This works at personal and corporate levels. One can wonder why a militarist and imperial nation such as Sweden of the eighteenth century decided for peace and succeeded.

4. *Working the boundaries.* No country fights its good neighbors (think of the United States and Canada). At a personal level, nobody fights a friend. This is true for churches as well. Perhaps it is time for balancing emphasis on doctrinal purity and openness to spiritual friendship. In a time marked by global identity crisis, violence, and religious intolerance, Christians should work for peace.²

5. *Accepting forgiveness and forgiving.* Atonement (at-one-ment) implies reconnection and peace (Rom 5:1). The pattern taught by Christ is: guilty-forgiven-forgiver (Matt 18:21-35). Forgiveness in most cases takes time,³ and is influenced by self-concept, circumstances, and personality style (it is not one-size-fits-all),⁴ but with the inner work of the Spirit it can happen. Ideally, forgiveness leads to reconciliation.

¹In a famous sermon delivered in 1650 at the royal chapel in Lisbon, Father Antônio Vieira already pronounced: If you want the world to contain everybody, do not add places, but diminish envies (*Sermões* [São Paulo: Três, 1974], 59).

²For a groundbreaking approach to conflict, see Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

³See Everett L. Worthington, Jr., and others, "Forgiving Usually Takes Time: A Lesson Learned by Studying Interventions to Promote Forgiveness," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28 (2000): 3-20.

⁴See John Berez, *Beyond Shame and Pain: Forgiving Yourself and Others* (Lima, OH: CSS, 1998).

Patience

Patience (*makrothumia*) has two dimensions: (1) negatively, it is the capacity of not losing openness, goodwill, and control easily; (2) positively, it is the determination of persevering, in order to bring purposes to a desired end, against all odds. To be patient (or longsuffering) is to have the disposition of seeing persons and events by the best perspective, and the ability of hoping when nothing seems to be happening. Patience does not mean indifferent inertia forever; it means loving action in the best time.

Patience is a praised virtue in the Bible. In Col 3:12, Paul says that the Christians, as chosen people, must clothe themselves with patience. Paul is remembering here “the age-old and universal convention whereby a man’s status is marked by his dress” or recognized by his uniform.¹ Just as a cotton T-shirt can absorb some raindrops, so the garment of patience can absorb the little drizzles of the daily acid rain.²

Above all, the Bible repeatedly pictures God as merciful, slow to anger, and patient with us.³ If one thinks of how God deals with the world, one has to conclude that he is tenaciously patient. While he could have erased the problem of sin with a decree, he preferred to solve it with a mix of blood and patience.

Some ways to cultivate patience in the midst of hurry, productivity, competition, impatience, and annoyances follow:

1. *Centralizing life in God.* “Impatience witnesses to a life still centered about the self,” Benjamin Farley says; “patience witnesses to a life centered about God.” When one organizes

¹R. Watson Mathewson, “The Garment of Patience,” *The Expository Times* 68 (1956-1957): 118.

²Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Trying Patience on for Size,” *Christianity Today*, 8 February 1999, 56.

³Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Nah 1:3; 2 Pet 3:9.

one's life around God's will and agenda, one does not need "instant gratification, or instant accomplishment, or instant vengeance."¹

2. *Being not perfectionist.* Perfectionism is highly demanding on oneself, on others, and on circumstances. Yet the Spirit opens a door for us to be mature, without being perfectionist. When Jesus said "Be perfect" (Matt 5:48), he was not requiring absolute perfection.² As we start accepting a reasonable standard, our patience grows.

3. *Discovering the rhythm of God.* The Creator is not in a hurry. Salvation history shows a pattern of patient waiting for the right timing. God sees things in the light of eternity. Although our horizon is limited, we can benefit from the infinite horizon of God. We can visualize and pursue significant and ultimate goals. Likewise, we can observe the rhythm of nature, which works in a relatively slow process: the seed is sown, the plant grows, flowers appear, ears grow, and finally the fruit matures.

4. *Learning from "idle" people.* Most people live by the immediate, counting seconds, because the accelerated rhythm of society causes them to deal with ever-shortening fractions of time. However, some people still know how to enjoy life. Brazilians are among the peoples who cultivate a creative idleness, mixing with success work, study, fun, and free time.³ Christians, who have the future guaranteed and should not consider time "as a scarce commodity,"⁴ can learn from them.

5. *Using trials to refine the character.* Patience in hard times makes one more patient (Rom 5:3). Difficulties may be a process of pruning us (Heb 12:7-10). God prunes the right branch, to

¹Benjamin W. Farley, *In Praise of Virtue: An Exploration of the Biblical Virtues in a Christian Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 133.

²For a view of the biblical concept of perfection and sinlessness, see Knight, *The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness*, 149-166.

³Domenico De Masi, *O ócio criativo* (Rio de Janeiro: Sextante, 2000).

⁴Kenneson, 126.

the right size, at the right time. Jesus, not Job, is the real model of steadfastness and patient endurance (Heb 12:1-3).¹

Kindness

Kindness (*chrestotes*) characterizes the sweetness and the tenderness of the person who avoids bringing pain to anyone. In a positive sense, kindness is active helpfulness. “New Testament *kindness* does not set barriers; it is offered equally to everyone,” says Benjamin Farley. “It seeks to rise above all judgments that would hinder, intimidate, or condemn anyone.”² While *agathosune* (goodness) “might and could rebuke, correct, and discipline,” “*chrestotes* can only help.”³

Christian kindness, like other qualities, derives from God. For the Old Testament authors, Yahweh is a kind God (see Jer 9:24). His *hesed* was not only a theoretical concept, but a quality expressed in concrete contexts.⁴ The Hebrew word *hesed* (poorly rendered by “kindness”) occurs 245 times in the Old Testament, 127 of these in Psalms. It seems that *hesed* was not primarily a spontaneous attitude, but a behavior motivated by a relationship (the covenant). However, *hesed* surpasses the obligatory, having to do with magnanimity, “a sacrificial, humane willingness to be there for the other.”⁵ New Testament authors may have worked on the basis of the Old Testament covenant-kindness when they underscore love-kindness as an essential quality of the kingdom of God (see Mark 12:34).

¹Susan R. Garrett, “The Patience of Job and the Patience of Jesus,” *Interpretation* 53 (1999): 254.

²Farley, 135.

³James I. Cook, “The Fruit of the Spirit in the Life of Believers,” *Reformed Review* 28 (1975): 196.

⁴As Cecil S. Emden observes, Israel often lived in “highly insecure circumstances,” which caused the Israelites to value God’s protection, or practical kindness (“A Religion Based on Kindness,” *The Church Quarterly Review* 159 [1958]: 556).

⁵H. J. Stoebe, “*Hesed* Kindness,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:449-464, citation from 456.

With kindness, life runs easier. If it is welcome in the secular sphere, it is essential in the religious arena. Kindness is a powerful tool in witnessing.¹ Ellen White had no doubt about that. “The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian,” she writes.² “Many can be reached only through acts of disinterested kindness.”³

Ways to develop kindness in the midst of rudeness, autonomy, and self-sufficiency include:

1. *Trying to incarnate the essence of the gospel.* Kindness is a by-product of the presence of truth in the mind. “The plan of salvation is to soften whatever is harsh and rough in the temper, and to smooth off whatever is rugged or sharp in the manners.”⁴

2. *Taking time to listen to others.* Stopping to listen is a way of saying, “You matter to me; I can help.” When listening—an art to be learned with psychology professionals—believers must be nonjudgmental, discrete, sensitive, and patient. It is important to listen with our body (non-verbal talk) and with our heart, focusing on the other person.

3. *Seizing the “casual” opportunities to show kindness.* God expects us to help needy people who unexpectedly appear in our way (Luke 10:25-37). Christ values so much this kind of action that he identifies himself with the needy helped or neglected by us (Matt 25:40, 45).

Goodness

The basic idea of goodness (*agathosune*) is generosity, which induces us to give to others what they do not deserve. *Agathosune* is a kind of energized *chrestotes*, kindness in action. The

¹In his international research project, Christian A. Schwarz found that there is a significant connection between loving relationships, including laughter in the church, and church growth (*Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, 3rd ed. [Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998], 36).

²Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938), 100.

³Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:84; see *ibid.*, 9:189.

⁴E[llen] G. White, “Christian Courtesy,” *Review and Herald*, September 1, 1885, 545.

Septuagint renders the Hebrew *tob* (“good”) “mostly with *agathos*, also with *kalos* and *chrestos*.”¹ Therefore, if we assume that Paul thought of “goodness” influenced by his Hebrew heritage, we must conclude that he employed the vocable with a broad scope. English translations for *tob* include (depending on the context): “agreeable, pleasant, satisfying, satisfactory, favorable, useful, purposeful, right, beneficial, ample, pretty, well-formed, fragrant, friendly, benevolent, joyous, worthy, valiant, true.”²

The goodness of Yahweh was something taken for granted by Israel. It is expressed throughout the Bible, particularly in the Psalms. The following formula, for example, is repeated several times: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Pss 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1). God, the word that is at the root of the English term “good,” was considered by ancient philosophers as the *summum bonum*, the greatest good. Mark 10:18 (“No one is good—except God alone”) perhaps echoes this understanding.

In the Old Testament, the goodness of Yahweh was manifested in the form of protection, benefits, and blessings. It was directed to all humankind, but particularly to his special people, by virtue of the covenant. In the New Testament, his goodness is concentrated and manifested in and through Jesus. It is directed to the people of the covenant, but particularly to all who were previously excluded from the love.³

Goodness has strength and value in itself. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good,” Paul advised (Rom 12:21). “We should seek for true goodness rather than greatness,” completes Ellen White, to whom true education values goodness above information and power.⁴

¹H. J. Stoebe, “*Tob* Good,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:495.

²*Ibid.*, 2:487.

³L. R. Stachowiak, “*Bondade*,” *Dicionário de teologia bíblica*, ed. Johannes B. Bauer, 3rd ed. (São Paulo: Loyola, 1984), 1:147.

⁴Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:242; *idem*, *Education*, 225.

Ways to develop goodness in the midst of individualism, isolationism, and self-help include:

1. *Cultivating the habit of gift giving.* In his ethnographic study about the social meaning of exchanging gifts, French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) concluded that giving involves a complex relation of mutual obligations (to receive without repaying is to become servile).¹ Some ancient people did not like to receive gifts (see Gen 14:22-23), but in the kingdom of God one can freely give and freely receive.

2. *Practicing hospitality.* Following an ancient universal phenomenon,² hospitality was a Christian custom, almost a mandate. More than good manners, hospitality is an disinterested gesture motivated by grace.

3. *Being good in order to do good.* No human being is naturally good. God alone is really good (Matt 19:17). Because all are born in Sin (singular, capitalized), everybody commits sins (plural, lower case).³ Goodness can be produced only by a power greater than our sinful and selfish nature working in us. *Being* in Christ, through the Spirit, leads us to *do* good.

Faithfulness

The meaning of *pistis* (“faith”) in Paul’s writings is varied. In Gal 5:22, some versions, as the King James, translate *pistis* as “faith,” but “faithfulness” (or fidelity) seems to harmonize better with the character of the other qualities listed. In this instance, the word “is to be understood in a

¹Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990). See also Alan D. Schrift, ed., *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

²In the ancient Mediterranean world, five kinds of hospitality received emphasis: (1) public hospitality, “practiced by states as part of their foreign policy”; (2) temple hospitality, “designed to facilitate pilgrimages to holy places”; (3) commercial hospitality, developed to serve travelers for a fee; (4) private hospitality, widely esteemed and encouraged as a moral virtue; and (5) theoxenic hospitality, aimed to receive supposed “gods, heroes and various semi-divine guests” (J. T. Fitzgerald, “Hospitality,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000], 522).

³See Knight, *The Pharisee’s Guide to Perfect Holiness*, 48, 68.

religious sense,” and can properly be translated as “loyalty.”¹ Faithfulness is a full answer and adherence to the standard of truth, but it is also the trait that makes a person totally worthy of trust, the virtue of reliability.

Faithfulness “is a universal ethical virtue and is embodied in every civilized code desirous of creating goodwill and respect among its people.” However, the Christian concept of faithfulness does not come simply from an ethical value; it is rooted in the *hesed* of God’s loyalty to Israel.² God is firm, constant, faithful, and so must Christians be.

Ways to be faithful in the midst of infidelity, inconstancy, and changes include:

1. *Cultivating the habit of fidelity in small things.* If only relatively few persons have a chance to prove their fidelity in great gestures, all people have daily opportunities to practice faithfulness in small things. Step by step, the person becomes each time more faithful and reliable. God himself uses this kind of test (Matt 25:21, 23).

2. *Telling the truth and keeping promises.* Christians have motives to honor their commitments that non-Christians may not have, “because we worship a promise-making and promise-keeping God who has called us to do the same as a witness.”³ Christ’s command to “let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’” (Matt 5:37), as Paul Minear explains, “was never considered to be of casual or secondary concern” in the early Christian community. In a culture dependent on oral speech, the absolute integrity of its teachers and members was essential. After all, “the intrusion of the intent to deceive pollutes reality at its very source.”⁴ This is valid also for written or visual cultures.

¹Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 208.

²Farley, 136, 137.

³Kenneson, 191.

⁴Paul S. Minear, “Yes or No: The Demand for Honesty in the Early Church,” *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971): 10, 13.

3. *Being accountable to a group and God.* In individualistic Western societies, it is difficult to open the heart to other people and to confess our mistakes, as the Methodists did in the eighteenth century,¹ but the idea has value. Christians must be a community where “speaking the truth in love” and “truthfully” (Eph 4:15, 25) is the rule.

4. *Looking up to faithful people of the past and the present.* From the patriarchs to the apostles, from the early Christian martyrs to the victims of the Holocaust, the history of God’s people is full of inspiring examples of fidelity.²

Gentleness

The original word translated as gentleness is *prautes*. A combination of strength and softness, *prautes* (also rendered as “meekness”) is the antonym of arrogance and pride. A calm disposition, a sweet attitude, *prautes* is the opposite of bitterness, harshness, violence, and cruelty.³ It is ire in the right measure and by the right motive, the ability to see oneself and others by the right perspective. The mildness that characterizes gentleness must not be considered weakness.

Prautes has to do with humility⁴—which apparently “constituted not only an essential aspect of Jesus’ understanding of the kingdom of God but was an equally essential aspect of his

¹John Wesley formulated a set of questions to be used in every meeting. It was a tool to help each one to search his/her heart, to be accountable, and to grow in spirituality. See David L. Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origin and Significance* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 201.

²See, for example, the classic of John Foxe, *John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (Dallas: Word, 2000). A scholarly approach to the martyrology at the Reformation time is found in Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

³In ancient writers as Plutarch and Xenophon, the “*praos* has a mild look,” “a smiling countenance,” “a soft voice,” “a tranquil demeanor”; “is accommodating and affable,” “courteous,” “charming and gracious,” “but also quiet and reserved”; is “easygoing and welcoming toward all,” has a conciliatory character, and “does not like quarrels” (Ceslas Spicq, “*Praypatheia, Prays, Praytes*,” *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994], 3:165).

⁴In Titus 3:2, the NIV translates the root *praos* as “humility.”

understanding of messiahship.”¹ Jesus, the perfect example of gentleness, praised gentle people in the third beatitude (Matt 5:5), echoing Ps 37:11.² In the long run, the conquests of tenderness endure longer than those of strength. Although his contemporaries did not value meekness, Jesus placed it “among the first qualifications for his kingdom.”³

Gentleness helps us to deal with difficult people and face unexpected situations without losing our poise. Mature believers “understand the strength of being tender.”⁴ Sometimes people who care for pure doctrine forget gentleness. However, truth and gentleness belong together (1 Pet 3:15).

Ways to develop gentleness in the midst of violence, offense, hostility, and aggression include:

1. *Learning from the humble-minded Teacher.* “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,” Jesus invited (Matt 11:29). The phrase “take my yoke” was an invitation to accept his authority; but the complement “and learn from me” was an invitation to follow his example, for “the Christian’s guide to conduct is no law-book full of baffling perplexities.”⁵

¹Craig A. Evans, “Jesus’ Ethic of Humility,” *Trinity Journal* 13 (1992): 127.

²Klaus Wengst has demonstrated that “the humble” in the context of Matt 5:5 is in reality “the humiliated” (*Humility: Solidarity of the Humiliated* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 16). In this context, Jesus is not praising the attitude of the humble in itself, although becoming humble voluntarily for the sake of others is a virtue. His main point is that the eschatological kingdom of God will bring reversals for the oppressed and rewards for the virtuous. See Mark Allan Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996): 460-479.

³Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955), 14.

⁴Trask and Goodall, 138.

⁵R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 122.

2. *Making a choice for nonviolence.* Jesus was not apolitical,¹ nor does the gospel demand a blind submission to injustice, but he clearly taught a non-retaliatory ethic (Matt 5:5, 38-41; 26:52). In time, nonviolence may be stronger than sinful structures.

3. *Learning to yield in debates and actions.* Christians are expected to willingly admit their mistakes, to yield the power, and to trust that one day God will promote a reversal in the status quo.² The Spirit creates gracious believers.³

Self-control

Self-control (*egkrateia*) is the capacity of overcoming passions; the discipline that enables one to affirm one's nobler part and to repress one's not so noble side. Paul probably had in mind not only the control of one's sexual appetites, but also one's passions and relations in general. To have self-control is to master oneself; on the other hand, to lose self-control is to be mastered (2 Pet 2:19).

In Greek/Hellenistic thought, especially within Stoicism, this self-mastery was essential to moral excellence. For this reason, Sam Williams considers that it is "hardly accidental" that self-control appears at the end. "As the last item in Paul's list, self-control corresponds to the first, love, and these two traits thus 'enclose' and frame the others."⁴

Kenneson also thinks the placement of "continence," as he prefers, at the end of the catalogue is purposeful, but for another reason. He plausibly suggests that Paul did not employ the concept of *egkrateia* in the same way as the Greek did. Instead of focusing on the control of the

¹See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

² Kenneson, 213-215; Matt 19:30; 20:16; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:31; Luke 13:30.

³See Rick Warren, *The Power to Change Your Life: Exchanging Personal Mediocrity for Spiritual Significance* (Wheaton: Victor, 1990), 115-123.

⁴Sam Williams, 151.

self, by the self, for the sake of the self, Paul meant “something akin to ‘control of the self by the Spirit for the sake of the gospel.’”¹ In this case, it would be an other-directedness of the Spirit.

For Christian psychologist David Stoop, God cannot drive the car of our lives when we sit on the backseat and refuse to take its control. “If we’re out of control, we place ourselves beyond the help God wants to give.”² When we are overcontrolling, never leaving the driver’s seat, never listening to God, we do just the opposite.

Ways to develop self-control in the midst of immorality, intemperance, excess, and addiction include:

1. *Making a conscious decision to crucify the self.* Ellen White stresses the importance of yielding our will to God’s will: “What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will.”³

2. *Setting spiritual/moral goals and pursuing them.* Christians can learn with athletes in this area (see 1 Cor 9:24-27). Some certainly are not good examples, some may be addicted to competition, but generally speaking they are disciplined and work hard to attain their aims and dreams.

3. *Having a more sacramental view of our bodies.*⁴ The Pauline statement that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) is not only a call to flee from sexual immorality, but also a reason to take care of our health and use it to honor God. Regarding the body, pleasure and discipline, flexibility and control, must be in balance.

¹Kenneson, 226, 227.

²David Stoop, *Self-Talk*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1996), 19.

³Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956), 47.

⁴See Kenneson, 235.

Love: An Integrative Factor

According to some, the fruit (Greek *karpos*, singular) of the Spirit is love, and all other characteristics come out of love and are developments of it. John Stott, for example, says that love “*is the fruit of the Spirit.*”¹ I tend to agree, and suggest that in this case we should change the traditional punctuation in Gal 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love: joy, peace, patience . . .”

Why should we consider love as a synthesis of the fruit of the Spirit? As Paul Tarazi observes, love “constitutes the basis for the whole section of exhortation”; “love is the only element of the list in vv. 22-23 totally absent from the Hellenistic catalogues of virtues”; love, in the New Testament, “perfectly corresponds to ‘the Spirit’,” and both were “novelties” of the Christian teaching.² Besides, while Paul begins his list of virtues with love, Peter ends his progressive list with love (2 Pet 1:7). Finally, the similarities between the vocabulary of 1 Cor 13:4-7 and Gal 5:22-23, both describing the qualities of love, are glittering.

Love, in fact, can be viewed as the integrative motif of the new ethics of the kingdom of God, the principle that gives consistency to all dimensions of Christian behavior. Therefore, all other eight virtues can be integrated into love. Joy is love exulting (in the Spirit). Peace is love in repose. Patience is love on trial. Kindness is love in society. Goodness is love in action. Faithfulness is love in endurance. Gentleness is love at school. Self-control is love in discipline.³ Although these different aspects may have different developments, they are all integrated in the personality of the believer.

¹John [R. W.] Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God’s Word to Today’s World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 152, italics in original. Tarazi also says: “The unity reflected in the word ‘fruit’ points to love as *the fruit of the Spirit*” (297, italics in original).

²Tarazi, 297.

³Adapted from Philip Norton, *Ethics of the Holy Ghost; or, Bible Readings on the Fruit of the Spirit* (London: James Nisbet [c. 1885]), 18; and William G. Coltman, *The Holy Spirit, Our Helper* (Findlay, OH: Fundamental Truth, n.d.), 113. It is difficult to say who was the first person to formulate this idea.

We can compare this array of virtues called love to a diamond: it “is one diamond, but many facets, each contributing to the glory of the whole, and constituting an impressive unity”;¹ or to a rainbow, which has distinct colors, but all performing in unity; or still to the ocean, which has a variety of waves at the surface, but unity of essence at a profound level.²

Turning to the world of psychology, we find another evidence that love incorporates the other qualities. Psychologists traditionally have agreed that human beings experience three primary emotions: love (which moves us *toward* someone or something), anger (which moves us *against* someone or something), and fear (which moves us *from* someone or something). They work like the three primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. The other colors/emotions are shades, hues or combinations of these three.³ So joy, kindness, goodness, and the other virtues are specific expressions of love.

Christians must have all these graces for an efficient and effective ministry. In reality, they must have even other virtues, since these nine seem to be only representative of a larger catalogue of virtues.⁴ Without violating the Pauline text, we could add qualities like empathy, solidarity, honesty, and happiness, to name a few.

All virtues contribute to the growth of the body. While the “works of the flesh” operate in a “messy arena,”⁵ bringing chaos and destroying unity, the “fruit of the Spirit” creates unity and builds up the community. The presence of the Spirit is an integrating factor. For this reason, believers who bear “fruit” help to integrate and build up the church.

¹Coltman, 113.

²Norton, 18.

³Stoop, 12.

⁴That the list is not exhaustive may be attested by the fact that Paul ends the list of works of the flesh with the words “and the like” (Gal 5:21), and says of the fruit, “Against such things there is no law” (vs. 23). Besides, Paul himself adds that “the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth” (Eph 5:19), which is perhaps another way of naming the fruit of the Spirit.

⁵Sam Williams, 149.

Summary

This chapter dealt with three general concepts. First, I argued that God is the ethical model for the believer. He is a personal being, not a blind force, which allows him to be a moral model. His attributes, represented by holiness and love, function as a pattern for the Christian behavior. As persons created in his image, we are to mirror his ethical perfections. The Spirit restores the image of God in the believer and causes him or her to imitate Christ/God. Imitation, far from being a means of salvation, is a corollary of redemption. The ethical work of the Spirit on earth only makes sense because there is a cosmic personal being embodying what is asked from humans. At the same time, it is viable because there is a divine-human being (Christ) testifying of its possibility.

Second, I discussed the role of the Spirit in transforming the believer's life and causing him or her to grow spiritually. I decided to call this process "imago-Dei-ization." The Spirit has a fundamental role in the task of changing the character of the believer, so that he/she can bear the fruit. However, the person also can and must cooperate with him, facilitating his work. The believer is not a robot operated by the Spirit. Some tools that the Spirit employs to transform people are prayer, study of the Bible, meditation, creative celebration, and prophetic living. In my view, these tools are the foundation of the Adventist spirituality.

Finally, I analyzed the ethical result of the work of the Spirit (or the "fruit of the Spirit," in Pauline terms) in the believer's life. Paul certainly had contact with catalogues of vices and virtues common in his days, although the catalogues of virtues hardly had an Old Testament background in terms of literary form. The nine Pauline aspects of the fruit of the Spirit can be summed up in the word "love," which is an integrative factor in Christian ethics. All nine virtues, or graces, deal with relationship. In their context, they seem to be ethical virtues, not theological virtues, although the internal aspect as the sphere of the Spirit's action is not lacking. The manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit happens primarily at a personal level, but it must be a corporate hallmark as well. In fact,

the fruit of the Spirit is the anticipation of the ethical life of the eschatological community, the experience of the new age at its intersection with the old age.

This chapter shows that the Spirit has a decisive role in enabling the believer for ethical living and ministry. When Paul presents the Spirit of Christ as the seal of quality of the true believer (Rom 8:9), he certainly thinks of an ethical dimension. To have the Spirit of Christ means more than merely having the power of the Spirit; it is to be like Christ. The next chapter will deal with the gifts of the Spirit, which should not be seen in opposition to the fruit of the Spirit.

CHAPTER 4

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS PERFORMING ENABLER

Virtually all church metaphors in the New Testament, such as building, body, and family, have a special place for Christ.¹ He is, for example, the Cornerstone, the Head, and the Husband. But there is also a role for all believers. God did not plan a church formed by the Founder alone, nor did he intend to build his church only through a few super-apostles or super-prophets. A temple is made of both cornerstones and ordinary stones, as well as of foundation and walls. Many great achievements of history, for better or for worse, are teamwork.²

In this chapter, I will analyze the role of the Spirit in enabling believers for building the church through ministry. The focus is on the so-called “spiritual gifts,” an expression that I use for the lack of a better and broader term. In the previous chapter we dealt with attitude or “being” qualities; here we will deal with aptitude or “doing” qualities.

The Theology of Spiritual Gifts

Paul, along with Luke and John, is one of the great pneumatologists of the New Testament.³ One of his contributions in this area is the concept of spiritual gifts as being instrumental for the edification of the church. Although this theme is not exclusive of Paul, he is its major formulator.⁴

¹See, for instance, 1 Cor 12:12-14; Eph 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 5:23; Phil 3:10-15; Col 1:18; 1 Pet 2:4-8.

²One may think of the pyramids of Egypt, the atomic bomb, the victories of the Brazil soccer team or any government. The great solitary work of the universe is the atonement of Christ, but even here the Father and the Spirit were with him (2 Cor 5:18-19).

³The Greek term *pneuma* (“s/Spirit”) appears 379 times in the New Testament, occurring 146 times in the thirteen Pauline letters. This crude datum by itself gives an idea of the importance of the Spirit for Paul, as well as of his contribution to the New Testament pneumatology.

⁴See Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 4:7-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11.

If Christ is the center of Paul's theology, the center of his psychology/ecclesiology/missiology is the Spirit of Christ.

Perhaps less charismatic than Paul, Seventh-day Adventists have historically believed in spiritual gifts,¹ especially prophecy. Their exercise of the gifts, however, probably needs improvement. In order to use the potential of the gifts, it is necessary to understand their nature and function. The best source on this matter is Paul, and the place to begin is with definition.

The Meaning of the Gifts

Many definitions have been given for spiritual gifts, most of them stressing both their origin (the Spirit) and purpose (to build up God's community). Accordingly, Peter Wagner says that a "spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God's grace, for use within the context of the Body."² William McRae defines a spiritual gift as "a divine endowment of a special ability for service upon a member of the body of Christ."³ In a similar way, Charles V. Bryant writes: "Spiritual gifts are *special, extraordinary abilities God gives to build up the body of Christ, the church, for ministry to its members and, through its members, [to] the world.*"⁴

James Packer prefers a christological focus: "Our exercise of spiritual gifts is nothing more nor less than Christ himself ministering through his body to his body, to the Father, and to all mankind. From heaven Christ uses Christians as his mouth, his hands, his feet, even his smile; it is through us, his people, that he speaks and acts, meets, loves, and saves here and now in this

¹This belief was formalized as a statement in 1980. It is the Fundamental Belief 16, which appears, for example, in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 206.

²C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, rev. and upd. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994), 34.

³William McRae, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 18.

⁴Charles V. Bryant, *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts: Building Up the Body of Christ Through the Gifts of the Spirit*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Upper Room, 1991), 59, italics in original.

world.”¹ This definition has the double advantage of giving a relational content to the performing aspect of the gifts and of conferring an actual/practical dimension to the head/body metaphor.

Some scholars make a sharp distinction between “gifts” and “talents.” Dwight Pentecost, for example, writes that “when we speak of the gifts of the Spirit, we are not speaking about the native talents with which certain individuals have been endowed by natural birth,” but of “supernatural endowment.”² Ronald Baxter stresses that “it is the gift of the Spirit and not his native talent that gives a person spiritual ability for service.”³ For Siegfried S. Schatzmann, there is a “glaring absence of exegetical support for the equation of charismata with natural talents.”⁴ Bryant—for whom the new dimension brought by the Spirit “is God *as* God’s gift,” not just a “gift *from* God”—comments that “if the spiritual gifts are merely skills or natural abilities, we must admit that someone has played a trick on us.”⁵ James Dunn understands that “charisma itself can properly be exercised only when it is recognized as the action of the Spirit, for *charisma is characterized not by the exercise of man’s ability and talent but by unconditional dependence on and openness to God.*”⁶

Other authors, however, do not see a great difference between the concepts. For Arnold Bittlinger, “Paul knew no distinction between natural and supernatural gifts, between ordinary and extraordinary ministries.”⁷ Carson suggests that “Paul would not have been uncomfortable with

¹Packer, 83.

²Dwight J. Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 165-166.

³Ronald E. Baxter, *Gifts of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1983), 39; see 40.

⁴Siegfried S. Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 73.

⁵Bryant, 33, italics in original.

⁶Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 256, italics in original.

⁷Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12-14*, trans. Herbert Klassen (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), 70.

spiritual gifts made up of some mix of so-called natural talent—what he would consider still to be God’s gift—and of specific, Spirit-energized endowment.”¹ Bruce Bugbee, for whom “natural talents are given at our physical birth,” while “spiritual gift is given at our spiritual birth,” recognizes that “natural talents may be transformed by the Holy Spirit and empowered as spiritual gifts.”² For Rick Yohn, “the only positive way to distinguish between a gift and a talent is to determine whether or not the individual possessing the ability is truly born again.”³ This is another way of saying that talents are general expressions of “common” grace for all people and function in the natural realm (the world), while gifts are specific manifestations of divine grace for all believers and work in the spiritual realm (the kingdom).

Adventist authors envision talents and gifts as mutually related or compatible heavenly blessings. Ellen White used both words almost interchangeably, although she stressed the spiritual use of the talents. In her perspective, a gift is a continuous flow of grace: God gives us a talent, and we give it back to God, who returns it purified and multiplied, so that the flow of blessings may benefit as many people as possible.⁴ James W. Zackrison, placing the use of spiritual gifts as “part of the larger picture of Christian *discipleship*,” observes that sometimes gifts just “enhance natural abilities,” and sometimes they are something “entirely different.”⁵ At his will, the Spirit may

¹Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 37.

²Bruce Bugbee, *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 62-63.

³Rick Yohn, *Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It*, Living Studies ed. (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1982), 5.

⁴Ellen G. White’s representative passage on this topic is found in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 328: “The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ’s service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men.”

⁵James W. Zackrison, *Practical Spiritual Gifts* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 11, 15, italics in original.

amplify a talent or provide a new capability, according to the need, so that the believer can bless the body of Christ and advance the kingdom. For holding a high view of both natural and supernatural powers or skills as gifts from a loving God, most Adventist theologians probably would agree with this position.

I think we, in fact, do not need to place a barrier between these two concepts. First, as J. R. Michaels puts it, spiritual gifts “are defined very broadly in the NT, encompassing both the ‘natural’ and the ‘supernatural,’ both the visible miraculous signs that gave evidence of the Spirit’s presence at Pentecost and the deeds of love, kindness, and service that were part of the believer’s obligation already in the OT and Judaism.”¹ Paul places, for example, prophecy and compassion in the same category of gifts. Then, if a talent serves as a tool or vehicle for the Spirit to cause a positive spiritual impact on the community, it certainly has the essential (or basic) quality to be a spiritual gift. David Ewert has a similar view: “When a natural gift is put into the service of God it becomes a spiritual gift.”²

Second, in a general sense, God is the giver of everything we are and have (Jas 1:17). It is true that certain abilities are given by the Spirit in an extraordinary way (if one wishes, they are miraculous or supernatural), while others almost seem to be just human skills. Yet no human being is a self-sufficient entity. What makes the difference is whether we are connected with Christ and using the talents/gifts to build up the body of Christ and glorify God or disconnected from Christ and using them to build up our own budget and exalt self. For example, a talent of piano playing can become a spiritual gift when given to God, who purifies the talent and enables the talented one. As a result, this talent of piano playing is used to God’s glory, and not to glorify humans on the dance floor. Probably we can imagine talents/gifts as a continuum: while a talent is a gift of the Spirit practiced in a low mode of the Spirit’s visible manifestation, a miraculous activity is a gift of

¹J. R. Michaels, “Gifts of the Spirit,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 334.

²David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1983), 263.

the Spirit expressed in a high mode of the Spirit's visible manifestation. This does not mean that the talent cannot be misused. If one wishes, the ontology of the spiritual gifts is not purely homogeneous (the Spirit only performing miracles), but essentially heterogeneous (the Spirit empowering people).

In third place, Paul hardly would think of the believer as a robot in the hands of the Spirit. The Spirit inspires, empowers, and energizes people, so that they may extend the frontiers of the kingdom. He does not prepare a skill and then draft a person to assume it. On the contrary, he calls people to accept Christ and then motivates them to serve God with their whole being.¹ If this dedication involves prophesying or leading, it is up to the Spirit, who works on the basis of a personal commitment. Therefore, Kenneth Gangel seems right: "The gift is probably not a ready-made ability to perform, but rather a capacity for service that must be developed."²

Finally, this broader view is substantiated by the probable meaning of one of the main Greek words usually translated as "gift" in the New Testament: *charisma* (plural, *charismata*).³ This pre-Pauline word, derived either from the root *charis* ("grace") or from the verb *charizomai* ("to give graciously"),⁴ means "generous gift" or "gift of grace," in the sense that God, freely and sovereignly, bestows special "graces" to believers. According to Enrique Nardoni, "Paul regards charism as an effect of *charis*, as a concrete materialization of God's grace"⁵—which undermines any motive for boasting.

¹Baxter thinks that, in a certain sense, the gifted persons precede the gifts "in their placement in the church." "This is not to say that the gifted existed without the gifts but it is to say that the gifts could not exist in other than the gifted" (33).

²Kenneth O. Gangel, *Unwrap Your Gift* (Wheaton: Victor, 1983), 9.

³*Charisma*, used almost exclusively by Paul (the exception is 1 Pet 4:10), appears 17 times in the New Testament. Other words usually translated as "gift" are *charis*, *dorea*, *doma*, *dorema*, *doron*, *dosis*, and *pneumatikon*.

⁴Schatzmann favors the origin from *charis* (1), while Turner favors it from *charizomai* (*The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 264).

⁵Enrique Nardoni, "The Concept of Charism in Paul," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 74.

From the beginning, the term was used in a theological context, designating a divine gift. However, *charisma* apparently did not have “the technical meaning that came to be given to ‘charism’ in later theology.”¹ There is no agreement here. For example, Dunn says that Paul gave charisma the “status of a technical term,”² and Schatzmann apparently sees a semi-technical meaning.³ On the other hand, Carson states that Paul clearly does not employ the term in a technical sense to refer “only to a select set of supranormal gifts,”⁴ and Turner goes further, saying that “*the claim that Paul coined a hyponym of charisma for a distinct class of miraculous spiritual gifts should be dropped once for all.*”⁵

Although Paul had a high view of charisma, we must recognize that he is not totally consistent in his uses of the term.⁶ Rejecting a technical sense for charisma, Kenneth Berding argues that the concept that links together some passages dealing with the so-called “spiritual gifts”⁷ is “Spirit-given ministries (roles, functions)” rather than special “Spirit-given abilities.”⁸

While ministries and abilities are not mutually exclusive, neither are they synonymous. Nor are charisms and offices irreconcilable, although a superinstitutionalization may eventually kill the

¹Albert Vanhoye, “Charism,” *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 104.

²James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 553.

³Schatzmann, 4, 5.

⁴Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 20.

⁵Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 272, italics in original.

⁶Paul employs “charism” in Rom 1:11; 5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6; 1 Cor 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 2 Cor 1:11; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6. For a brief analysis of the meaning of the term in these passages, see Nardoni, 69-74.

⁷1 Cor 12, Rom 12:3-8, Eph 4:11-13, perhaps 1 Tim 4:14 and 2 Tim 1:6, and maybe even 1 Pet 4:10-11.

⁸Kenneth Berding, “Confusing Word and Concept in ‘Spiritual Gifts’: Have We Forgotten James Barr’s Exhortations?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 39, 46. For him, special “ability/enablement is only present in 1 Cor 12:8-10” (39).

charisms. As the great Gift and Giver, the Spirit works with people, enabling them to develop their offices, ministries, functions, roles, and tasks. Based on the work of the Son, God gives the Spirit, who gives “giftable” people to the body of Christ. The person enters the kingdom with all that he or she is and has; and, if he or she is really willing to work for God, the Spirit adds all that he or she needs to be effective in the church. The Spirit empowers the believer, so that even, or especially, the weak can be strong. Frank Stanger has expressed this well: “The Holy Spirit influences all our natural powers, strengthens them, brings them up to their highest, and gives them a ‘plus.’ . . . The Holy Spirit does not reduce people to their zero. He raises them to their zenith. The Holy Spirit is the Strong One creating the strong ones.”¹

In this context, it is important to remember that gifts and fruit are different spiritual realities. Gifts are abilities, while the fruit is character. A gifted believer may be spiritually immature. Even Pentecostals, who intuitively have linked the power of the Spirit with holiness, are now careful to avoid the idea of spiritual elitism.² However, as Paul stresses in 1 Cor 13, love, which is the integrative factor of the fruit of the Spirit, must control the use of the gifts in the church. Gift without love is false charisma, for the Spirit that enables is the Spirit of love. Then, the fruit of the Spirit, namely love, is the supreme evidence of the Spirit’s operation. Rick Yohn, based on his experience, reminds us: “A local church can exist without all of the gifts. But problems abound when it is deficient in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”³

¹Frank Bateman Stanger, *The Church Empowered: The Nature and Workings of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Francis & Taylor, 1989), 48.

²William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies recognize: “When Pentecostals link Spirit-baptism with Christian maturity, we are much closer in our thinking to the prideful Corinthians than to the apostle Paul” (*Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 203). In their view, missiological power (in the Lukan sense) and ethical dimension (in the Pauline sense) are co-relational, often appearing together and overlapping, but “are not inseparably linked in a causal way” (*ibid.*, 206, 207).

³Rick Yohn, *Beyond Spiritual Gifts* (Wheaton: Tyndale; Eastbourne, England: Coverdale, 1976), 20.

The Varieties of Gifts

In this section, I will briefly define and address the most prominent gifts mentioned or alluded to in the New Testament.¹ Some of them, such as discernment, prophecy, miracle, and tongues, will deserve more space due to their controversial nature. My treatment intentionally will have a general character.

Spiritual gifts are discussed in four major passages: Rom 12, 1 Cor 12 (two times), Eph 4, and 1 Pet 4. No list repeats totally the others.² This suggests that they do not exhaust all possible gifts, but are merely illustrative or representative. As Gordon Fee observes, “Paul’s concern here [in 1 Cor 12:8-10] is to offer a *considerable* list so that they [the Corinthians] will stop being singular in their own emphasis.”³ Today, Paul could add, for example, singers, writers, radio and TV speakers, educators, colporteurs, and physicians, to name a few.

Theologians have made attempts to classify the biblical gifts into three (or more) sets, such as motivational, ministering, and revelational gifts.⁴ These arrangements sometimes sound arbitrary, although they may have a didactic value. If any categorization is to be made, we probably do better in considering 1 Cor 12:4-6. In this passage, Paul particularizes “different kinds

¹The biblical examples mentioned are just an attempt to give some visibility to the gifts. I do not present them dogmatically, nor do I think a person must be notorious to be credited with a given gift. A variety of indispensable tasks in the church is performed by anonymous gifted believers. All gifts could be exemplified by believers throughout the history of the church, but to save space I do not mention them. Jesus, being unique, is not mentioned as an example, although he had in full scale many gifts.

²Rom 12:6-8: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, liberality, leadership, and acts of mercy. 1 Cor 12:4-11: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor 12:28: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, tongue-speakers, and tongue-interpretors. Eph 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. 1 Pet 4:11: speaking and service.

³Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 585.

⁴See a fivefold classification by David Pytches in his *Spiritual Gifts in the Local Church* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1987), 57-58.

of gifts [*charismata*], but the same Spirit”; “different kinds of services [*diakonai*], but the same Lord”; and “different kinds of working [*energemata*], but the same God.”¹ Paul’s conscious or unconscious trinitarian approach can provide a holistic manner of classifying all gifts.²

Now we turn to a brief description and discussion of thirty gifts.

The Gift of Administration

The gift of administration is a remarkable ability that God gives to some believers to plan, supervise, and promote successfully the functioning and growth of the church in the short and long run. Examples include Jethro (Exod 18), Joseph (Gen 41:37-40), and James (Acts 15:13-21).

Paul mentions specifically “those with gifts of administration” (*kuberneseis*; 1 Cor 12:28). They are the spiritual executives of the church. An administrator may be distinguished from a leader in some respects. An administrator is more concerned with organization, processes, tasks, goals, and authority, while a leader is more focused on people, ideas, projects, dreams, and vision. When the Spirit enables an administrator, combining human motivation and organizational skills, he or she helps the church to work efficiently on a solid basis.

The Gift of Apostleship

The gift of apostleship is a special call/appointment that God makes to some believers to witness for Jesus, preach the gospel, and plant new churches with great spiritual authority,

¹There is no consensus whether Paul uses these three words as synonymous or not. John N. Collins argues that “ministries” (or services) and “activities” (or working) are subgroups of the broader category of “gifts” (“God’s Gifts to Congregations,” *Worship* 68 [1994]: 242-249, especially 246).

²Adventist scholar George E. Rice suggests “the distinct possibility that the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are divided into three subgroups identified as wisdom, faith, and tongues.” In this case, the “gifts that belong to each group are connected by the Greek word *allos* (‘another’ of the same kind) while the next subgroup is identified by the word *heteros* (‘another’ of a different kind)” (“Spiritual Gifts,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000], 615).

expanding the frontiers of God's kingdom. Examples include the twelve original apostles, with Matthias replacing Judas (Matt 10:1-2; Acts 1:12-26), and Paul (Rom 1:1).

For its very nature, this gift has provoked some debate. One can consider the word "apostle" (from Greek *apostolos*; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11)¹ in a strict theological sense, and argue that the gift vanished with the death of the twelve original apostles. In this sense, it is quite obvious that the twelve apostles were a unique group, as shown by the expressive symbolism of the number twelve.² An indispensable requirement to be an apostle was to be a witness of the Christ-event (Acts 1:21-22). Another can interpret "apostle" in a broad sense as "one who is sent" (that is, one sent to speak authoritatively in the name of Christ), and argue that there are secondary, tertiary, and so on, apostles. Leaders such as Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy were called "apostles" (Acts 14:14; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:7).

Perhaps when Paul wrote his letters the term "apostle" had not a technical meaning, limited to the twelve. Paul himself may have thought of himself as an apostle in the same level as the twelve. He had a strong perception of his unique apostleship, punctuated by at least seven key-elements: (1) consciousness of a divine call (Gal 1:1, 15), (2) mission to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7-9; Eph 3:1-9), (3) revealed gospel/message of Christ alone (Gal 1:8-12), (4) loyal independence of Jerusalem (Gal 1:15-19), (5) holy pride of being a self-supporting organizer of urban Christian

¹The word *apostolos* appears 80 times in the New Testament, chiefly in Paul (35 times) and Luke (34 times). In spite of this incidence, the theological history of the term is an enigma. Rarely used in both classical and *koine* secular Greek, the word was linked with transport ship. The usage of the term by Herodotus, its appearance in the Septuagint (used once in the sense of messenger), the verbal cognate *apostellein* (used many times in the Septuagint and in the New Testament in connection with mission), and the commissioned-messenger institution of Judaism (*saliach*) are considered in the reconstruction of the New Testament usage. The *saliach*-theory is a growing consensus (Francis H. Agnew, "The Origin of the NT Apostle-Concept: A Review of Research," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 [1986]: 75-96).

²The number twelve perhaps symbolizes the completeness of God's kingdom. The Bible presents several series of twelve: for example, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve disciples, twelve foundations and twelve gates of the New Jerusalem.

communities (Acts 18:1-2, 23; 1 Thess 2:9), (6) disposition to suffer for Christ (1 Cor 5:9-13; Gal 6:17), and (7) appeal to the weakness motif (2 Cor 11:30).¹

Independently of theological disputes, the apostles really did justice to their code name, spreading the gospel in foreign and perilous lands with great fervor. In spite of this outreach characteristic, an apostle should not be interpreted as the exact equivalent of a missionary. Every apostle is a missionary, but not every missionary is an apostle. Only a very authoritative missionary, with a divine call, mission, and message, can be called an apostle.

Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Episcopal traditions tend to stress the apostolic succession² as a means of legitimating their ministry. However, considering that it is virtually impossible to establish such succession historically and that “theoaffinity” is more important than “chronogenealogy,”³ Adventists are more comfortable in focusing on the spiritual linkage with the mission, teaching, and character of the apostles.⁴ For them, theology, not tradition, is the biblically valid connection. In other words, it is not the apostolicity that validates the ministry (or teaching), but the ministry (or teaching) that determines the apostolicity. Swiss Jesuit theologian Hans Küng,

¹Jerry L. Sumney argues that “weakness was integral to Paul’s understanding of his ministry from very early on” (“Paul’s ‘Weakness’: An Integral Part of His Concept of Apostleship,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 52 [1993]: 71-91, citation from 72). “Paul’s understanding of his ministry was no doubt influenced by the Jerusalem Conference and his opponents at Corinth and elsewhere. But before he arrived at Thessalonica he understood himself, even if not precisely with this language, as the apostle of weakness” (ibid., 90).

²Apostolic succession: a supposed continuity in the transmission of authority from Christ to the apostles, and from the apostles to bishops, and from older bishops to new bishops, in an uninterrupted chain through the generations, which would be an indispensable requirement to a valid ministry.

³Against those who boasted of their ethnic link with the patriarch Abraham, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul devalued genealogical claims and valued spiritual coherence (Matt 3:9; John 8:31-58; Rom 9:6-8).

⁴For Adventist scholar Raoul Dederen, what authenticates the church is not “a literal, linear, and uninterrupted apostolic succession by the laying on of hands”; rather “in the NT the line of succession between the apostles and today’s apostolic witness is conceived as a continuous line of faithfulness to the testimony of the apostles, sustained by the Holy Spirit” (“The Church,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000], 563).

in some way, recognizes this fact. For him, the apostolicity is fulfilled when the witness of the apostles is heard, respected, believed, confessed, and obeyed.¹

Most certainly, apostolicity is theoretically open to all believers and must be defined by theological criteria. However, the Spirit is selective in his call to apostles. Not all are apostles (1 Cor 12:29). The church might recognize such calls, and attribute the title “apostle” to some believers. What is not acceptable is for one to name oneself as apostle² or “apostolic” because of power issues.

David Cannistraci, a charismatic pastor from California, believes a wave of apostolic power is coming, following waves of restoration of other gifts, such as healing and evangelism. He writes: “This wave will reactivate true apostolic ministry for the harvest. Because the Spirit is being poured out, and because He is an Apostolic Spirit, apostles and an apostolic movement *must* result.”³ It is necessary to be careful with any “wave.” False apostles or superapostles were already a sad reality in the first century (2 Cor 11:5, 13).

The Gift of Celibacy

The gift of celibacy is a special power that God gives to some believers to live virtuously and gladly as single or unmarried in order to dedicate their lives more fully to the advancement of God’s kingdom. One example is Paul (1 Cor 7:7-8).

Exalted as a heavenly state or despised as a hypocritical fiction, celibacy is a controversial gift. Some praise it as an opportunity to be more available to God and the people (see 1 Cor 7:32-35; Matt 19:10-12), while others criticize it as a political strategy to keep the clergy more servile to

¹Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray Ockenden and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 354-358.

²Paul insisted that he did not name himself as apostle; he was called to be apostle by the “will of God” (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1) or the “command of God” (1 Tim 1:1). He was “sent not from men nor by man” (Gal 1:1). In this, he differed from some evangelical ministers from Brazil who present themselves as “apostles”—perhaps to assure a higher status.

³David Cannistraci, *The Gift of Apostle: A Biblical Look at Apostleship and How God Is Using It to Bless His Church Today* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 26, italics in original.

ecclesiastical hierarchy. No doubt, a single person may dedicate more time to the church. But has the person enough self-control to keep him or herself pure? That is the dividing line that separates those with the *gift* of celibacy from those who are celibate without being gifted for it. If one has a constant struggle to control sexual passions, that would seem to be strong evidence one does *not* have the *gift* of celibacy.

Mandatory celibacy as practiced in the Roman Catholic tradition¹ is under strong criticism. Transcending dogma, politics, and theology, the problem recently gained an ethical, financial, and legal dimension. What every informed person has known for a long time made the headlines of the secular media in the last years: beneath the austere gown of many priests, there is a history of abuse, molestation, and sexual misconduct, perhaps reflecting abuse of power in their own holy hierarchy.²

Celibacy is not just sexual nonsense. It must be viewed in its historical complex context, that is, we must understand how early Christianity saw body, gender, and sexuality.³ Catholicism made celibacy an official mandate for its clergy influenced by philosophical, political, and economic elements, that is, basically extrabiblical factors.⁴ In her devastating criticism of the Catholic teaching on sexuality, which caused her to lose her chair at the Heidelberg University, Uta Ranke-Heinemann demonstrates that beneath the official Catholic hostility to pleasure, glorification of celibacy, and worship of virginity there is a non-biblical low view of women. “The

¹It is interesting to note that there are probably more than 100 married Roman Catholic priests in the United States officiating the rites of the church with the blessing of Vatican. Converted from other Christian traditions such as Lutheranism and Episcopalianism to Catholicism, these clerics were accepted by the pope as Catholic priests. The same rule is not valid for original Catholic priests.

²See A. W. Richard Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1995).

³Here, a magisterial author to begin with is Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

⁴For an elucidative article on these developments, see Bill J. Leonard, “Celibacy as a Christian Lifestyle in the History of the Church,” *Review and Expositor* 74 (1977): 21-32.

history of Christianity is almost a history of how the women were silenced and deprived from their rights,” generalizes the German theologian.¹ Women, seen as impure, an obstacle to holiness, “are the metaphorical enemy of the whole theology of celibacy.”²

In face of human sinfulness and weakness, we can conclude that celibacy should be an option, not an imposition.³ If it is a divine gift, it cannot be an ecclesial obligation. If the Spirit enables a person to be a celibate, the practice of celibacy cannot be a fiction.⁴

The Gift of Craftsmanship

The gift of craftsmanship is a special ability that God gives to some believers to design or elaborate with creativity, art, and beauty items useful in the church or ministry. Two examples are Bezalel and Oholiab (Exod 31:1-6; 35:30-35).

In chapter 2, I already discussed this enablement of the Spirit (see also below the section about the purpose of the gifts). Here I want just to suggest that this gift is a biblical illustration of the scope of the Spirit’s work. Theory is not the exclusive orbit of the Spirit. His enabling work has a wide range. It goes from sophisticated mental processes to refined practical abilities. An artistic gift can be as much a spiritual gift as a theological gift is. Welders, mechanics, waitresses, hair dresserers, and plumbers need to know that, if their lives are devoted to building human-being temples to God, their work is also Spirit-moved, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-empowered.

¹Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunucos pelo reino de Deus: mulheres, sexualidade e a Igreja Católica*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Record/Rosa dos Tempos, 1996), 140. This book was originally published in German in 1988 by Hoffmann und Verlag under the title *Eunuchen für das Himmelreich*.

²Ibid., 141, 199.

³It is worth mentioning that the number of Christian singles in the United States, as well as in Brazil, grew significantly in the last years. Consequently, the literature dealing with this phenomenon also increased.

⁴According to Leonard, “most major reformers [of the sixteenth century] acknowledged that celibacy was possible only as a special gift from God”—and they “apparently believed that few received such a gift” (30).

The Gift of Discernment

The gift of discernment is a special ability that God gives to some believers to perceive with assurance the origin, purpose, and implications of spiritual insights, messages or behaviors.¹ Biblical examples include Solomon (1 Kgs 3:9-12), Peter (Acts 5:3; 8:23), and Paul (Acts 13:6-11; 16:16-18).

The apostolic church recognized a serious need for discernment. Paul speaks of a capacity to distinguish or discern spirits (*diakriseis pneumaton* [1 Cor 12:10]), urges believers to test or evaluate (*dokimazete*) everything (1 Thess 5:21), and suggests that the corporate church judges or weighs (*diakrinetosan*) prophetic utterances (1 Cor 14:29). John tells his readers to “test the spirits” (*dokimazete ta pneumata* [1 John 4:1]). This call to discernment must be renewed in every generation, especially in times of great ambiguity.

Adventists have always valued discernment (although not always using this exact terminology), since they had to deal with prophetic phenomena at the very beginning of their movement. Now other Christian traditions are also rediscovering and appreciating this forgotten gift.² This is providential, for the number of voices claiming charismatic legitimacy has grown exponentially. “The greater the emphasis on the charismatic element in the community, the more keenly is the need for discernment felt.”³

Christopher Morse, in fact, invites Christians to examine and evaluate not only what they believe, but also what they are called to disbelieve. “To believe in God is not to believe

¹“If we consider the biblical account as a whole, it seems that discernment includes both detecting the origin of our inclinations, desires, inspirations, insights and to evaluating the signs by which one might know if a given course of action or teaching seems to be of God or not,” writes Thomas Dubay (*Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment* [Denville, NJ: Dimension, 1977], 27).

²“We are happily experiencing a renewed interest in the discernment of spirits,” wrote Dubay in the 1970s (25).

³Martin McNamara, “Discernment Criteria in Israel: True and False Prophets,” in *Discernments of the Spirit and of Spirits*, ed. Casiano Floristán and Christian Duquoc (New York: Crossroad/Seabury, 1979), 3.

everything,” he says; the Bible presents “a call to ‘faithful disbelief’.”¹ The task of theology is to detect what we must disbelieve. “Faithful disbelief, as a focus of inquiry, is distinguishable from both doubt and skepticism.”²

Gangel classifies discernment into three categories: (1) natural, possible for every person; (2) spiritual, which comes to a believer as he/she grows in Christ (Eph 4:14-15); and (3) gifted, given by the Holy Spirit to some believers.³ We can add communal or corporate discernment, practiced by a community of faith at the light of its tradition or, more important, its sacred sources. This categorization, though not based on clear biblical teaching, has didactic value.⁴

From his Catholic perspective, John Wright stresses that the New Testament does not present “any easy rules of thumb enabling us automatically to determine the will of God”; discernment comes as a gift. Wisdom, in his opinion, is the “word which best summarizes the New Testament teaching on the foundation of all discernment of spirits.” According to him, the Latin word for wisdom (*sapientia*, derived from the verb *sapere*), the Greek adjective *sophos* (“wise”), and the noun *sophia* (“wisdom”), as well as the Hebrew verb *hacham* (“to be wise”), all have roots connected with “tasting.” Therefore, the wise person “is one who relishes the truth, one whose

¹Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 3. Examples of biblical calls to disbelief: Matt 24:23-24; Mark 13:21-22; Luke 17:23; Phil 1:9-10.

²Ibid., 5.

³Gangel, 94.

⁴Discernment, clearly, may be a charismatic and solitary act of an individual. It can either come through a direct revelation from the Spirit or emerge from conscience, that is, a pattern of impressions engraved by the Spirit on one’s mind and modeled by one’s sensory interactions with reality. Up to a certain degree, a mature believer, trained to “distinguish good from evil” (Heb 5:14), can trust his or her conscience. But discernment may also be a corporate exercise. Although ecclesiological discernment is not infallible, for a church easily becomes biased, it usually is highly effective. The Spirit can use methods and processes as tools to help us to discern rightly. Discernment is not contrary to intelligence, evidence, and evaluation. Hard work is essential even in this sphere. Chances are that the more a group studies, the more it discerns. Truth reveals itself for those who love truth.

taste enables him [or her] to judge prudently and discreetly.”¹ When one decides to do the will of God, tastes the presence of God, and is aware of the Spirit’s guidance, then this would be a sign that one is doing God’s will.

Wright is right in most of his reasoning, but his article gives a somewhat naturalistic tone to discernment and leaves an impression that the Bible has no objective criteria to judge what truth or error is. In “minor” personal matters and decisions, the believer needs this kind of discernment. Yet, in major doctrinal matters which comprise the heritage of faith, the revelation of God is quite clear. The problem with some traditions today, as Adventism insists, is precisely in the major matters.

Believers must separate truth from error, and discern lies from truth. To test the spirits implies to test not only charismatic expressions or doctrinal claims, but also political, economical, social, behavioral, and experiential claims. As Amos Yong argues, the demonic (although real) manifests itself in concrete forms or particular incarnations, and discernment as a “hermeneutics of life that is both a divine gift and a human activity” helps us to identify “correctly the inner processes of all things—persons, institutions, events, rites, experiences, and so on.”²

It is true that those who claim to be a channel of divine knowledge or power, namely, the prophets, deserve a special attention. The context of the biblical warnings for discerning the spirits, in the plural, suggests that they are basically calls to control the source and content of prophecy.³ However, every person or system needs spiritual scrutiny, for the human “heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9).

¹John H. Wright, “Discernment of Spirits in the New Testament,” *Communio* 1 (1974): 115-127, citations from 118, 119, 121.

²Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 129-161, citation from 129.

³See Matt 7:15-23; 24:23-24 (= Mark 13:21-22; Luke 17:23); 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1.

As Francis Martin observes, Christians of the first centuries, based on Mark 7:21-22, focused mainly on the identification of “the source of movements within the individual heart” (God, an angel, oneself, or an evil spirit?). They “developed a very refined spiritual anthropology that has formed the basis of personal discernment to our own day.” And the “age of enlightenment with its ‘closed system’ of thinking tended even in religious circles to reduce discernment to prudence or character evaluation.”¹ Gradually, in the early church of the fourth century, discernment of spirits ceased to be viewed as an exceptional gift given only to some, the phenomenon gained a psychological meaning, and the phrase was shortened to just “discernment,” becoming “a virtue or technique needed by every ascetic to prevent him from falling victim to excess or bad judgment.”² Later, Ignatius of Loyola, with his *Spiritual Exercises*, deeply inscribed discernment on Jesuit spirituality.³

In the matter of discerning charismatic expression, particularly prophecy, Adventism is more comfortable with a fourfold objective biblical test:⁴ (1) doctrinal fidelity to the revealed Word of God (Deut 13:1-5; Isa 8:20); (2) fulfillment of predictive prophecies, not considering those which are conditional (Deut 18:21-21; Jer 18:7-10);⁵ (3) the quality or fruit of one’s life (Matt 7:15-23); and (4) recognition of the nature of the incarnate Son of God (1 John 4:1-3). For Rice, “when

¹F. Martin, “Discernment of Spirits, Gift of,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*,” ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 246.

²Joseph T. Lienhard, “On ‘Discernment of Spirits’ in the Early Church,” *Theological Studies* 41 (1980): 528, 529.

³See Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, ed. Joseph N. Tylenda (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991).

⁴These tests appear frequently in Adventist literature, especially in defense of Ellen White’s prophetic gift (see George Rice, 629-631; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, 223-227; and below about prophecy).

⁵Of course, this is an appropriate test for the gift of prophecy, but not for all charismatic expressions in general.

God's law is consciously disavowed and Jesus' teachings are persistently violated while spiritual gifts are claimed, the *charismata* are counterfeit gifts."¹

We could summarize this fourfold test in one supreme criterion: Jesus. As T. J. Gorringer states, "God's presence elsewhere can be discerned in the light of Jesus' story," "which provides the criterion for authentic talk of the Spirit."² Christ is the summation of all truth, the goal of all prophecies, the embodiment of all virtues, and the bridge of all gaps. Through the prism of his divine-human silhouette, a gifted person may discern the movements of the Spirit. Naturally, not everyone is able to apply the criterion of "Jesus" with equal certainty.

The Gift of Economic Humility

The gift of voluntary economic humility is a special ability that God gives to some believers "to renounce material comfort and luxury and adopt a personal life-style equivalent to those living at the poverty level in a given society in order to serve God more effectively."³ One example is the apostles (Matt 10:9-10).

This gift, motivated by love (1 Cor 13:3), may be a blessing to many people. The Spirit enables the believer to give money, time, and love to bless the poor. As Christ did, the rich become poor to make the poor "rich" (2 Cor 8:9). And, as he said, we will always have the poor among us (John 12:8).

Poverty was an issue in the ancient Near East. In those societies, according to Norbert Lohfink, "the care for the poor probably had a higher profile in ethical consciousness than in our modern societies."⁴ Hebrew prophets inherited this concern from their cultural environment, but

¹George Rice, 618.

²T. J. Gorringer, *Discerning Spirit: A Theology of Revelation* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 28.

³Peter Wagner, *You Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 257.

⁴Norbert Lohfink, "Poverty in the Laws of the Ancient Near East and of the Bible," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 34.

especially from Yahweh.¹ In the New Testament world, as Bruce Malina suggests in a fine article, wealth and poverty were not just the extremes of the social body. In a moral context, wealth was a state of powerfulness and security due to greed, avarice, and exploitation, while poverty was a state of impotence and precariousness due to an unfortunate inability to maintain honor, dignity, and inherited social status.²

In some way, rich and poor belong to qualitative opposite spheres. As a flexible rule, the rich know no sense of enough and fully trust in their possessions, while the poor have not enough and trust in God. In a paradoxical state of wickedness, the spiritual poverty of some members from the higher classes may cause the material poverty of many people from the lower classes.

This is not to establish a spiritual dichotomy, for greed and avarice are temptations to the rich and the poor alike. Unfortunately, the Pauline dictum that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10) pictures a sad reality throughout the centuries. Therefore, when one chooses to give up comfort in order to assist the poor, in the spirit of Christ, this is an uncommon gift.

The Gift of Encouragement

The gift of encouraging is a special ability that God gives to some believers to console, stimulate, or warn fellow believers to recover good cheer or remain faithful toward a given goal or the Christian way of life. Or, if one prefers to define this gift as counseling, it is a special ability that God gives to some believers to hear, understand, and guide troubled people who search for solutions to their afflictions. Some examples are Paul (1 Thess 2:11-12; 2 Tim 3:10, 14; 4:1-2), Barnabas (Acts 4:36), and possibly anonymous Thessalonians (1 Thess 5:14).

¹Lohfink observes: “In Hammurabi’s Code, the frame promised that the laws would give help to the poor; but the laws themselves made no mention of the poor. In the Covenant Code [Exod 20:22-23:33], there is indeed a lot of talk about the poor; but the frame had promised that there would be no more poor” (ibid., 43). For Moses, the eradication of poverty should be not just royal propaganda.

²Bruce J. Malina, “Wealth and Poverty in the New Testament and Its World,” *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 354-367, especially 354-357.

Paul mentions the gift of encouraging or exhortation (*paraklesis*) in Rom 12:8, urging the exhorter to work with diligence. People with this gift have stirring speech, which brings comfort or new enthusiasm. By “exhorter,” Paul probably has in mind a leader or preacher of some sort, who not only talks, but lives the content of his or her exhortation.

Although Paul does not explicitly identify exhortation with counseling, this possibly is a modern accurate reading. Regardless of how one calls this gift, there is a wide field for this kind of ministry in the church. In a world rotating at a high speed, where few people have time to waste with others, it gains relevance. To offer free counseling to the afflicted is to say, “You matter to us and to God.” Counseling inspired by the Spirit,¹ following the example of Jesus,² is an initiative of love, faith, and hope to save somebody unloved, faithless, and hopeless.

The counseling of the culturally different, particularly, is more and more necessary in our globalized, multicultural world. “The clash of worldviews, values, and lifestyles is inescapable for therapists,” recognize two experts.³ It is not an easy task to erase labels, overcome biases, undo stereotypes, understand different worldviews, accept diverse concepts of normality-abnormality, discover unexpected codes of ethics, develop new tools, and create better approaches. However, the Spirit, who searches all minds, knows all wounds, and has all medicines, can enable and help the counselor.

An area related to counseling, especially pastoral counseling, is spiritual direction. These disciplines have both similarities and differences. For example, both are crisis-centered, deal with personality in a holistic manner, underscore self-discovery, motivate mastery over the unconscious

¹Of course, a believer who has the gift of counseling should improve his or her skills through formal courses and private study in order to be more effective in his or her ministry.

²Isaiah (9:6) presents the Messiah as a “Wonderful Counselor.” This title underscores the supernatural character of his wisdom and his great ability to advise. Wonderful in all senses, Jesus offers himself as a Therapist to every troubled person (Matt 11:28-30). Christians, motivated by the Spirit, must embody this offering.

³Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), 10.

self, and suggest attention to the body. However, in a particular mode, spiritual direction focuses on meaning (rather than on functioning), implies mutual accountability, values faith community, legitimates conversion experiences, and recognizes the role of the Spirit in the life of the directee.¹

The Gift of Evangelism

The gift of evangelism is a special ability that God gives to some believers to preach the gospel in a clear, compelling, and successful way, causing unbelievers to become disciples of Christ. Some examples are Apollos (Acts 18:24-25), Peter (Acts 2:14-41), and Philip (Acts 8:26-40).

According to Paul, the Spirit enables some believers to be evangelists (*euaggelistas*; Eph 4:11), that is, heralds of good news. Sometimes there is a confusion on the popular level between evangelism and witness. All believers are called to witness, but not all have the gift of evangelism. According to Peter Wagner, the “average Christian church can realistically expect that approximately 5 to 10 percent of its active adult members will have been given the gift of evangelist.”² Thus, one should not require from all what God has entrusted to some.

Evangelism, to be effective, needs the enablement of the Spirit on two grounds. On the one hand, the Spirit enables the evangelist to present the story of Christ in a contextualized, attractive, and compelling manner; on the other hand, the Spirit sensitizes the listeners about their sinfulness, causes them to feel a need for change, and sharpens the focus of their decisions toward Christ.

The Gift of Exorcism

The gift of exorcism is a special power that God gives to some believers to cast out demons, in the name of Jesus, and deliver people from satanic influence. Examples include the 72 (Luke 10:17-20), Philip (Acts 8:5-8), and Paul (Acts 16:16-18).

¹Israel Galindo, “Spiritual Direction and Pastoral Counseling: Addressing the Needs of the Spirit,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 51 (1997): 395-402.

²Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 160.

Paul does not present deliverance from demons as a gift, but plainly states that there is an invisible spiritual battle going on (Eph 6:10-18). That this battle is real is clear from the Gospels and Acts;¹ and that Christians are called to play a part in it as warriors of light is also clear, if we are to take the ministry of Jesus and the disciples as a paradigm. Mark, or a subsequent editor, in fact includes exorcism in the Great Commission (16:15-17), which suggests that this practice was well-known in the early church.

Graham Twelftree observes that “Mark begins his Gospel by giving the impression that exorcism was the most significant feature of Jesus’ ministry,” but, with the progress of his narrative, “exorcism becomes only one of a number of aspects of Jesus’ ministry.” Luke, in contrast, starts by mingling “Jesus’ exorcisms with the other aspects of his ministry,” but, as the story progresses, he “increases the significance of exorcism and dealing with the demonic as an integral part of Jesus’ ministry in order to produce a balance.”² Matthew is less enthusiastic about exorcism, and John tells us nothing about Jesus as an exorcist. The fact remains, however, that exorcism was an apostolic practice.

In our scientific age, those who deny a literal existence of demons present psychological or physical explanations to any disturbance that believers call “demonization.”³ On the other extreme

¹Accounts of exorcism in the Gospels and Acts include many general statements and particular descriptions. Examples: Matt 4:24; 8:16; 8:28-34 (= Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39); 9:32; 15:21-28 (= Mark 7:24-30); 17:14-21 (= Mark 9:14-29); Mark 1:21-28 (= Luke 4:31-37); 1:32-34, 39; 3:11; 6:13; Luke 4:41; 6:18; 7:21; 13:10-17; Acts 8:6-7; 16:16-18; 19:11-12; 26:18. See also Eph 2:2; Col 1:13; 2 Tim 2:25-26; 1 John 5:18.

²Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical & Theological Study* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 175-176.

³Here I am using “demonization” as synonymous with “demonic possession,” meaning the control of a person by evil spirits. Steven S. Carter, arguing that a Christian cannot be demon-possessed, suggests that the best translation of the Greek term *daimonizomai* (used 13 times in the New Testament, only in the gospels) is “demon possession”; “demonization” would be misleading because some theologians have attached to this term a more relative and extrabiblical meaning, asserting that there are degrees of possession (“Demon Possession and Christian,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3 [2000]: 19-31, especially 20-24). From an Adventist perspective, Christians are protected from Satan’s attacks to the measure they submit their lives to the Holy Spirit. Yet a Christian who consciously disobeys God is vulnerable to Satan’s attacks, in variable degrees, just as a non-Christian.

of the spectrum, some believers attribute almost every disturbance to demonic supernatural sources. Adventist and biblical views are more balanced,¹ and can be summarized in three propositions: (1) there is a difference between sickness and demonic possession, although ancient popular belief used to link them; (2) demonization can result in sickness, but not every sickness is a direct result of demonic action; (3) Satan and sin are the ultimate causes of all illnesses, either common or demonic.²

If demon-possession is real, then deliverance may be a necessity. Pentecostals and charismatics take exorcism seriously—in some cases, more (or, one would say, less) seriously than biblical theology allows, for they promote a pandemonism.³ “A review of the literature, history, and oral ‘stories’ of Pentecostalism reveals the centrality of the practice of exorcism in the expansion of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements,” attests a missiologist.⁴ In Pentecostalism, assesses Bloesch, demons “are often conceived of animistically.”⁵

Adventism, on the other hand, stresses the cosmic war between light and darkness, good and evil, God and Satan. Some scholars, in fact, see this theme as an important integrative motif of

¹For helpful Adventist expositions on the subject, see the “Additional Note on Chapter 1 [of Mark]” in Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 5:575-577; and “‘Spiritual Warfare’ and ‘Deliverance Ministry’ and Seventh-day Adventists,” unpublished document approved in 1983 by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, available on the Web (www.sdanet.org/atissue/warfare/bri.html), accessed on October 24, 2003.

²It is necessary to distinguish possession from sickness. Signs or symptoms of demonization may include things such as a violent reaction against the name of Jesus, sudden changes of voice or mood, strange noises and behavior, uncommon physical force, strong bondage to sexual perversion, and sometimes mental disorders. Besides, the distinction between “oppression” and “possession” is theologically sound. A person may be afflicted by the devil without being totally controlled by demons.

³Pandemonism: a tendency to see demons everywhere, a demonization of the world, in parallel to pantheism. British poet Milton (1608-1674) created the neologism “pandemonium” to designate the palace of Satan in the imaginary capital of Hell.

⁴L. G. McClung, Jr., “Exorcism,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 290.

⁵Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*, 192.

Adventist theology.¹ For Adventism, the evil characters are always angels fallen from heaven, never discarnate spirits. The war is played in the real world, involving real divine, angelic, demonic, and human characters, who use physical, social, and political forces or structures in the war. Yet Adventism, as heir of Jewish-Christian apocalypticism, is more concerned with the big picture.

These two views have practical consequences. Pentecostalism approaches evil more directly, from particular to general, while Adventism approaches it more indirectly, from general to particular. If Pentecostalism seizes every chance to humiliate the devil under the power of Christ, Adventism uses every opportunity to exalt Christ over the power of Satan. Pentecostalism tends to create regular ministries of deliverance; Adventism tends to practice deliverance occasionally, when clear manifestations appear. If it is right to compare, Pentecostalism is more specialized in day-to-day struggle, while Adventism is better in theological/philosophical formulation. The logical conclusion is that both schools need each other to fight more efficiently a common enemy.

At the time of the first coming of Jesus, there was a lot of demonic activity, as the Gospels give witness. This was probably due to a great mental, spiritual, and ethical departure from God's ideals, as well as a satanic attempt to erase God's image in people. Social researchers also consider socio-political factors, that is, possession as a self-disruptive protest against an oppressive, unjust, and degrading social system, which was eroding tradition and fragmenting the self.² As the end approaches, Satan again will intensify his activities on earth (Rev 12:12; 16:14). Believers, having implicitly received authority from Jesus (Matt 10:1), are empowered by the Spirit to drive out these evil spirits.

¹The first Adventist scholar to explore seriously, yet not critically, this theme was Joseph Battistone, in *The Great Controversy Theme* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978).

²For a fine approach to this topic from a socio-scientific perspective, see Paul W. Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49 (1981): 567-588.

The Gift of Faith

The gift of faith is a special confidence that the Spirit gives to some believers to perceive that God is willing to intervene in certain circumstances and the courage to apply this confidence to specific situations, asking him to intervene. Examples include Abraham (Rom 4:19-21), Moses (Exod 7-14), Elijah (1 Kgs 17, 18), and Elisha (2 Kgs 2-8).

One may speak of different kinds or models of faith, such as rational, dogmatic, mystical, sacramental, and ecstatic, but not all are equally biblical or valid. Faith is not just attitude, belief, or devotion. From a broad biblical perspective, faith is an intellectual and affective assurance that God, as the unshakeable foundation of the visible and invisible reality, loves, cares, and fairly rewards everyone, followed by the consequent act of embracing him and his offer (see Heb 11:1). Ellen White defines faith as “trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good,” which “leads us to choose His way” and accept his “wisdom,” “strength,” and “righteousness.”¹ Because God is totally firm, steadfast, and faithful, the believer, conscious of his or her own frailty, anchors his or her life in Christ and shares the divine stability.

In the context of the spiritual gifts, faith (*pistis*; 1 Cor 12:9) probably must be seen in connection with the gifts of healing and miracles.² It is not just faith in the sense of believing in God, or relating to God, but in the sense of leaning heavily on God’s love, power, and specific interest. A mix of confidence with expectancy and humble boldness, it is the kind of faith that moves mountains (Matt 21:21 and parallels). Or, in F. Martin’s words, it is “a particular intensification of that basic attitude toward God in Jesus Christ by which we accept his saving act, his authority, and his complete trustworthiness, and base our lives on his Word.”³

¹Ellen White, *Education*, 253.

²Fee suggests that the gift of faith “probably refers to a supernatural conviction that God will reveal his power or mercy in a special way in a specific instance” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 593).

³F. Martin, “Faith, Gift of,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 300.

The Gift of Healing

The gift of healing is a special power that God gives to some believers to touch the lives of sick persons through prayer, and bring cure, well-being or wholeness, according to God's will. Two examples are Peter (Acts 3:1-10; 9:32-42) and Paul (Acts 20:7-12; 28:7-9).

That some believers have "gifts of healing" (*charismata iamaton*; 1 Cor 12:9, 28) is not an exclusive Pauline idea. Healing is a basic feature of the biblical message. Very soon after the Exodus, Yahweh reveals himself as the sole and great Healer (*rope'*) of Israel (Exod 15:26). Michael Brown suggests that "the strategic location of this account in the book of Exodus," with "Egyptian polytheism in the background and Canaanite 'paganism' in the foreground," may be significant. It "introduces the frequent motif of the Lord as Israel's all-sufficient Provider in the wilderness; and it both precedes and underscores the Sinaitic demand for allegiance to Yahweh alone."¹ Against an infinitude of healing deities (for any preeminent deity was expected to protect and heal), Yahweh says: "I alone heal." In Deut 32:39, Yahweh makes clear again that he alone wounds and heals. This emphasis sets the agenda for the subsequent Jewish understanding of Yahweh as the true Healer (see Ps 103:3).

In the New Testament, Jesus also appears as the great Physician of a suffering world. He is Yahweh as Healer in action. With his powerful healings, covering approximately 20 percent of the Gospels,² he shows that salvation means restoration in all senses. At that time, Asklepios/Aesculapius, the eminent Greco-Roman healing deity, was revered throughout the Mediterranean region as *soter* ("savior") and *iatros* ("doctor").³ "Only Jesus the Messiah, with his

¹Michael L. Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 23.

²The Gospel writers report 26 cases of individual healings, already discounting the duplicate or triplicate accounts, and mention 12 occasions when Jesus healed people in groups.

³*Ibid.*, 58-60. For accounts of healings attributed to Asklepius, see E. J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, eds., *Asclepius: Testimonies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945); and for his status as healer/benefactor/savior and a survey of recent scholarship, see Howard C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 78-104.

fame as Savior/Healer, ultimately eclipsed the Asklepius cult. Without a pronounced emphasis on physical miracles of healing, this would not have been possible.”¹

Working on concepts of medical anthropology, John Pilch underscores that sickness and healing are perceived quite differently in our scientific societies than they were in the first-century Mediterranean world. While modern medicine focuses on the *causes* of the disease and seeks to *cure* the *sickness* (the real problem), ancient medicine focused on the *symptoms* of the disease and tried to *heal* the *illness* (the perception of a disvalued state). Curing is a response to an organic problem; healing is a response to the absence of well-being. Simplifying, “curing is to disease as healing is to illness.” Therefore, he argues, we should read the Gospel accounts of miracles with the eyes of an insider, without anachronistic interpretation. The corollary is: Jesus must be seen as a folk healer who healed illnesses, restoring meaning to life, not as a physician who cured sickness.² This insight is partially valid. According to the Gospels, Jesus really restored meaning to life for many persons; however, he also cured sickness, even raising the dead. We cannot maintain Jesus as Savior while minimizing his power to cure and heal. Paraphrasing Jesus (Matt 9:5), we can ask, “Which is easier: to heal or to cure?”

In spite of its relevance in the Bible, healing has received insufficient attention in Christian theology.³ Adventist scholar George Reid observes that “the biblical degree of interest in health and healing is underrepresented in contemporary theological and biblical studies.”⁴ John Wilkinson tells us that “the word *healing* did not occur in the text or index of any standard

¹Michael Brown, 238.

²John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 1-17, 24-25, 89-103, 142.

³In Portuguese, at least, there is a shortage of sources on healing, which caused me to write a master’s thesis on this topic. See Marcos C. De Benedicto, “O toque da fé: paradigmas bíblicos da cura divina” (Th.M. thesis, Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia, Engenheiro Coelho, Brazil, 2001).

⁴George W. Reid, “Health and Healing,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 751.

theological textbook until recent times.” Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Jürgen Moltmann would be the first modern theologians to discuss health and healing. “However, non-medical healing has still to achieve theological respectability.”¹

The Adventist Church, which has given a respectable contribution to the wholistic view of the human being, the understanding of the healing power of nature, and the proper functioning of a healthcare system, needs renewed attention to spiritual healing. To heal as a gift of the Spirit is biblically sound, socially necessary, and missiologically profitable. Wholistic healing, using all means available (the best of faith, nature, and science), is a basic part of the church’s business. Yahweh healed, Jesus healed, the apostles healed, and the church must heal.

The Gift of Helps

The gift of helps (*antilepsis*; 1 Cor 12:28) is a special ability that God gives to some believers to willingly (and many times anonymously) lighten loads, meet needs, and assist people in their tasks, enhancing others’ potential. Examples include Martha (Luke 10:38-42) and Mark (2 Tim 4:11; Col 4:10-11).

In some way, every believer should be a helper, carrying “each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2). Yet some believers do this job with such a degree of goodwill, effectiveness, and constancy that their performance must be recognized as an enablement of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:28). In ministry, this gift has a special applicability. In describing the Spirit-led work of Barnabas and Saul, historian Luke reported: “John [Mark] was with them as their helper” (Acts 13:5). Since the Spirit had sent the two “on their way” (vs. 4), could John Mark also have been appointed by the Spirit as a helper? No doubt, Paul was so successful in his ministry partly because he had a team of “helpers” such as Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22).

¹John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Edinburgh: Handsel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2, bold changed to italics.

The Gift of Hospitality

The gift of hospitality is a special disposition that God gives to some believers to receive people in their homes or churches, offering to them food, lodging, and friendship. Examples include Abraham (Gen 18:1-8), the Shunammite (2 Kgs 4:8-10), and Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3, 26).

Peter seems to link hospitality with spiritual gifts. After urging the believers to “offer hospitality to one another” (1 Pet 4:9), he advises them to use “whatever gift” they have received (vs. 10). Like Paul, Peter recognizes that God’s gifts come in various forms.

Hospitality, as underscored in chapter 3, had an essential value in ancient cultures. In the Old Testament, Abraham was seen as a symbol of hospitality, which brought the presence of God into his house (Gen 18). Lot, who entertained angels (Gen 19), apparently was portrayed in “a widely circulating tradition” in a positive light thanks to his hospitality.¹

New Testament authors made hospitality a sacred mandate, especially considering the role of households in the dissemination of the gospel. “Do not forget to entertain strangers,” advises the author of Hebrews (13:2). “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling,” urges Peter (1 Pet 4:9). Entertain the brothers, says John (2 John 5-8). Paul also leaves his memo: “Practice hospitality” (Rom 12:13). In Paul’s perspective, horizontal hospitality is a corollary of vertical hospitality, that is, we must mirror the receptivity of a God who has welcomed us in Christ (Rom 15:7).

John Koening suggests that “New Testament hospitality has to do with the establishment of committed relationships between guests and hosts in which unexpected levels of mutual welcoming occur, whether or not the participants are already known to one another.” This kind of

¹T. Desmond Alexander, “Lot’s Hospitality: A Clue to His Righteousness,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 289-300. Alexander’s basic argument is that in 2 Pet 2:7-8 Lot deserves the epithet of “righteous” in connection with his hospitality (Gen 19), in parallel to Abraham’s hospitality (Gen 18).

“covenantal” partnership becomes the “fertile ground” for blessings, gifts, and mutual strengthening.¹

Believers from modern Western societies may find it difficult to develop this gift. Peter Wagner, in fact, believes “the distribution of some spiritual gifts has cultural biases and we would predictably find a higher percentage of Christians who have the gift of hospitality in Nigeria, for example, than in the United States.”² However, those who have this gift should use it to bless the church. Hospitality can be a lovely gift in an unlovely world, a sign of grace in a graceless society, a movement of the Spirit in an unspiritual circuit. One perhaps will not entertain angels in person, but one can see the face and the message of God in the face and needs of every (un)known visitor.

The Gift of Intercession

The gift of intercession is a special ability that God gives to some believers to pray with interest and power in behalf of certain causes or other people, in order to oppose the forces of evil and bring God’s blessings. One example is Daniel (Dan 9:1-22).

Prayer, as many other things, is a universal privilege and duty. However, some believers have a great awareness of decisive circumstances, feel a burden to pray, and seek God in the power of the Spirit. They spend an unusual amount of time, energy, and faith struggling with God to change situations—and God frequently rewards these warrior prayers.³ For Wesley Duewel, there is “no greater ministry or no leadership more influential than intercession,” nor “higher role, honor, or authority.” We have been saved and Spirit-filled, he says, to reign through or by prayer.⁴

¹John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership With Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 8, 9.

²Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 66.

³C. Peter Wagner, in his book *Prayer Shield* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1992), develops a profile of the gifted intercessor and deals insightfully with the gift of intercession.

⁴Wesley L. Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 22.

Intercessory prayer is always christological, in the sense that it is based on the work of Christ and rooted in the intercessory life of our Great Intercessor.¹ Yet it is also pneumatological.² The Spirit intercession motif is a clear feature of Pauline spirituality.³ The Spirit plays a role in helping every believer to pray (Rom 8:26). We can say that he (1) motivates prayer, (2) suggests what kind of prayer to offer, (3) shows how to pray, (4) prays with and for us, and (5) interprets our desires to the Father. “The Holy Spirit condescends to use the heart of the believer as the shrine in which he offers to God petitions for blessings and graces beyond human comprehension.”⁴

Richard Dillon comments that the Spirit not only brings joy and peace for believers, but also creates a sense of dissatisfaction with the ways of the world. “As the Spirit is the goad of their new obedience, so is it the poltergeist of their unrest. As the Spirit inspired their rapturous cry ‘Abba,’ so it provokes the cry of pain that tells of their struggles with the dominion of ‘the flesh.’ In other words, it is as ‘taskmaster’ that the Spirit becomes ‘troublemaker.’”⁵

In a special sense, the Spirit enables some believers to transcend their shell, glimpse the world with the eyes of Christ, and unleash a mysterious positive impact on the cosmos. A gifted

¹Hebrews, probably more than any other biblical writing, makes clear the fundamental role of Christ as the only heavenly (and, therefore, cosmic) Intercessor. See especially 7:24-28 and 10:19-23. The believer enters the heavenly sanctuary, toward the mind of God, through Christ as the Way, in the name of Christ as Savior, and trusting in Christ as Intercessor.

²As John Murray observes, the believer has two intercessors: Christ “in the court of heaven” and the Holy Spirit “in the theatre of their own hearts” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 1 vol. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 1:311.

³For further discussion on this topic, see E. A. Obeng, “The Origins of the Spirit Intercession Motif in Romans 8.26,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 621-632; and James E. Rosscup, “The Spirit’s Intercession,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 10 (1999): 139-162.

⁴Robert F. Boyd, “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer: An Exposition of Romans 8:26, 27,” *Interpretation* 8 (1954): 42.

⁵Richard J. Dillon, “The Spirit as Taskmaster and Troublemaker in Romans 8,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60 (1998): 700.

intercessor follows the agenda of the Father, operated by the Son, and revealed by the Spirit. It is a theocentric, all-inclusive agenda, not an egocentric, self-focused agenda.

The Gift of Knowledge

The gift of knowledge is a special ability that God gives to some believers to perceive and expose hidden facts/truths, or “to discover, accumulate, analyze, and clarify information and ideas which are pertinent to the well-being”¹ and growth of the church. Examples: Nathan (1 Sam 12:1), Elisha (1 Kgs 5:20-27; 6:8-14), and Peter (Matt 16:16-17; Acts 5:1-10).

As suggested by the definition above, we can interpret the message or word of knowledge (*logos gnoseos*), mentioned in 1 Cor 12:8, in a prophetic mode or in an ordinary way. That is, knowledge can be either essentially pneumatic, in the sense of being revealed by the Spirit,² or largely human, in the sense of being acquired by research or analogous means. Both aspects probably are compatible with the Pauline thought, which focuses on the divine origin of this knowledge and on the capacity to express it verbally.

The Gift of Leadership

The gift of leadership (*proistamenos*; Rom 12:8) is a special ability that God gives to some believers to inspire, motivate, and conduct people harmoniously in causes or tasks meaningful to the growth of the body of Christ and the progress of the kingdom of God. Examples include Moses (Num 11:16-17), Joshua (Deut 31:7-8; 34:9), and King David (1 Sam 16:13).³

¹Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 254.

²F. Martin defines word of knowledge as “the charismatically endowed capacity to express some aspect of God’s plan as it is at work in creation here and now, revealing something of God.” According to him, this “very special gift, that of knowing what God is doing at this moment in another’s soul or body, or of knowing the secrets of another’s heart (the ancients’ *kardiagnosis*)” “is particularly common among Pentecostals” and charismatics. “The existence of the gift and its divine origin and fruit are unquestionable,” he believes (“Knowledge, Word of,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 528.

³For a discussion about charismatic leadership in the Bible, see chapter 2.

Paul emphasized that the leaders should work hard, enthusiastically, doing their best (Rom 12:8). This was perhaps an indirect manner of recognizing their important role in the life of the church. Effective leadership has been highly valued in the last years as well, both inside and outside the church.¹ Exactly for being so important, leadership has been enshrouded with unrealistic expectations. What does it mean to be a gifted leader?

We cannot define precisely all ingredients of good leadership, for leadership is more an art than a science. However, we can point out a set of general qualities desirable in a spiritual leader.² A gifted spiritual leader is one who connects his or her life to Christ, dreams of a better world, imagines ways of ministering to the community, casts a vision, mobilizes people and gets their best, trains teams, makes wise decisions, creates strategies for growth, mediates conflicts, and prepares a successor.

Every Christian leader should pattern his or her leadership by the model of Jesus. Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus became a leader to serve God and bless humanity, especially the needy. The Spirit inspires servant-leadership fueled by love. A leader who has the Spirit of Christ also has the spirit of Jesus.

The Gift of Liberality

The gift of liberality is a special motivation that God gives to some believers to share with joy their material resources to promote the well-being of people and the expansion of God's kingdom. Examples include Barnabas and others (Acts 4:34-37).

The Lukan picture of the apostolic church is one of almost a collective hysteria to give (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-36; 5:1-2). The believers, of course, were touched by the Spirit. Later, apparently, a number of persons continued to offer their means to support the program of the

¹This fact is attested by an immense number of new books and articles dealing with the subject in the last decade worldwide—literally, thousands.

²For just one good source here, see John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998). In 1 Tim 3:1-7, Paul numbers some necessary qualities for leaders of a local church.

church and to help the poor. More than merely following a cultural relationship based on patronage/clientage, they had the gift of liberality, “contributing to the needs of others” (Rom 12:8). The early Christian church, says a historian, had not a monolithic teaching on wealth and poverty, nor did it present any normative statement on this matter, but it did stress the importance or benefits of almsgiving.¹

The Gift of Martyrdom

The gift of martyrdom is a special capacity that God gives to some believers to remain faithful under pressure, and to suffer or even die for the sake of their faith. Examples include John the Baptist (Matt 14:1-12), Stephen (Acts 7:54-59), and most of the apostles.

Suffering for the truth, in the name of God or Jesus, is a recurrent theme in the New Testament.² This is no surprise for a faith whose Founder died on a cross, offering his body and blood as the unique source of life, and whose death has cosmic redemptive value. So, bestowing an infinite value to martyrdom, the cross of Christ brought a sublime new meaning to radical religious suffering. However, Paul stresses, the gift of martyrdom only has value when motivated by love (1 Cor 13:3).

The early Christians faced almost a daily threat of persecution and martyrdom—first at the hands of the Jewish leadership, then under the Roman power. This soon motivated words of censure as well as of encouragement to prevent apostasy,³ and in the post-apostolic age gave birth

¹Rebecca H. Weaver, “Wealth and Poverty in the Early Church,” *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 368-381.

²Jesus himself spoke frequently about the suffering of his followers (see Matt 5:10-12; 10:16-40; 16:24-26). In the episode recorded in Mark 10:35-45, Jesus apparently uses the cup as a metaphor of martyrdom.

³The author of Hebrews (10:32-39) remembers the early days of suffering and persecution of his readers and exhorts them to persevere. His roll of heroes of faith in chap. 11 may be read in the light of perseverance in times of tribulation, which is confirmed by the frequent reappearance of the hardship motif in chap. 12. John warns that those who leave the Christian community, denying the Messiahship of Jesus, are the antichrists (1 John 1:18-19, 22). Recent investigations of Revelation have identified incentive mechanisms to lead the believers to rationally choose to

to many martyrologies. Throughout the Middle Ages, although rivers of blood of “heretics” bathed the European soil, the heroism of countless martyrs remained largely ignored. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther, with his theology of the cross, began “a revival of the ancient Christian genre of martyrology, reflecting the events of the new era of the Reformation.” Considering martyrdom as a gift of God, literally a “witness to the faith, the Word of God in action,” Luther made an “edificatory use of martyrology” and influenced the later treatment of the theme.¹

In the end-time, when a new Rome, sharing the same agenda of the old Rome (Rev 13), will show its dictatorial power against the followers of the Lamb, the once-usable gift of martyrdom will again be widely necessary.

The Gift of Mercy

The gift of mercy is a special ability that God gives to some believers to show emphatic compassion and practical concern toward people experiencing anguish, distress or need. One example is a group of disciples (Acts 11:28-30).

In Rom 12:8, Paul elevates mercy (*eleon*) to the category of spiritual gift, and urges the merciful to show mercy “cheerfully” (*hilaroteti*), or with readiness of mind. Naturally, every believer must show this quintessential ethical quality of God in his or her lifestyle (Luke 6:36).² Yet some believers enabled by the Spirit with the charism of mercy go beyond a compassionate lifestyle. They feel in their core (or innards)³ with their fellows, and spread love across social boundaries.

remain faithful to God (see Ian Smith, “A Rational Choice Model of the Book of Revelation,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 85 [2002]: 97-116).

¹Robert Kolb, “God’s Gift of Martyrdom: The Early Reformation Understanding of Dying for the Faith,” *Church History* 64 (1995): 399-411, citations from 399, 404, 411.

²Notice that Jesus, the human personification of a compassionate God, gave an eschatological meaning to ordinary acts of mercy (such as to offer a cup of water) done in his name (Mark 9:41).

³In ancient Jewish thought, a deep feeling of compassion is located not on the higher level of the head, but on the lower level of the heart or, more precisely, in the loins. According to Mark

The Gift of Miracles

The gift of miracles is a special ability that God gives to some believers to perform powerful acts perceived as transcending human resources or surpassing the normal course of nature. Examples include Moses (Exod 7-14), Elijah (1 Kgs 17; 18; 2 Kgs 1:9-14), and Elisha (2 Kgs 2:19-22; 4; 5:8-14; 6:1-7).

According to Paul, the Spirit enables some believers with *energemata dynameon*, “miraculous powers” or “operations of powerful deeds” (1 Cor 12:10).¹ This expression, which also appears in a shorter form in vss. 28 and 29 (*dynameis*, “powerful deeds”), probably must be understood in a generic sense.² A worker of miracles is not a professional of the supernatural, but rather an empowered believer who demonstrates the power of the Spirit through mighty deeds such as healings, exorcism, and control over nature. It could be, for example, an apostle, with uncommon faith and notable authority in prodigious action showing God’s power and achieving divine goals.

In Paul’s perspective, miraculous powers are naturally expected in Christian ministry as a result of the wonderful achievement of Jesus Christ and his exaltation as cosmic Ruler/Lord (Phil

S. Smith, cross-cultural information indicates that “emotions are associated with the heart and innards because they are physically experienced there” (“The Heart and Innards in Israelite Emotional Expressions: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 [1998]: 431).

¹Correctly, Francis Martin observes that the “plural form is used most probably to evoke the notion of variety and abundance as is the case with the corresponding terminology concerning healing: ‘gifts of healings’ (*charismata iamaton*; 1 Co 12:9, 28, 30)” (F. Martin, “Miracles, Gift of,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988], 606).

²In the synoptic gospels, whose focus is on the arrival of the kingdom of God in the person of the Messiah, Jesus frequently performs miracles or powerful deeds (*dynameis*), which can include several manifestations of power. See Matt 11:21; 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 19:37. In John, whose focus is on the identity of Christ as the Son of God, the miracles of Jesus appear as *erga*, “works,” or *semeia*, “signs.” In some way, Pauline terminology, which even links “powerful deeds” with the Old Testament expression “signs and wonders” (2 Cor 12:12), resembles synoptic terminology.

2:8-11; Eph 1:19-23; 4:7-10).¹ In biblical terms, the logic of miracles is the same logic of a Creator, Incarnate, and Resurrected God. Divine miracles, anchored on Creation and Resurrection, are a corollary of a miraculous God. In modern Western naturalistic societies, miracles have been challenged and defended on several grounds.² Yet, for the Judaico-Christian mentality, miracles were a reality. In the broader context of the Greco-Roman world, superstition probably was a greater barrier (in some cases, a bridge) for early Christianity than disbelief in miracles.³

The Gift of Missionary

The gift of missionary is a special ability that God gives to some believers to share the gospel with, and minister to, people from another culture. Examples include most apostles and Philip (Acts 8:4-8).

Mirroring the missionary spirit of the Son, the church is missionary by its nature. As members of this centrifugal community, some believers feel called to leave their comfort zone and face challenges or even risks in foreign places. Active in calling, the Spirit is also active in enabling. As Malcolm Martin points out, the Spirit works with the missionary (poetically defined as “a Christian who is in love”) empowering him or her with a spirit of love, prayer, wisdom,

¹The cosmic lordship of Christ is sublimely pictured in the epistle to the Ephesians. Seated at God’s “right hand in the heavenly realms,” he is “above all rule and authority, power and dominion,” having “all things under his feet” (1:20, 21, 22). From his privileged place, Christ confers power to his body (the church) to face all evil powers of every realm (6:10-18). For a church ministering in a world fearful of demonic powers, the power of the Spirit to perform miracles meant hope and certainty of victory.

²For just three significant apologetical works about miracles, see Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1984); Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Defense of Biblical Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); and R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, eds., *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God’s Action in History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997).

³The reader interested in the ancient view on magic, miracles, and related topics, can begin with E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951); H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

understanding, counsel, fortitude (patience, faith, magnanimity, openness, respect), knowledge, piety, and fear of God.¹

A missionary call is a call of the Spirit of Christ in the spirit of Jesus. It is a call of the Lover to love lost people. Then, of course, when the Spirit moves a missionary, he sends him or her to bless and save, not to exploit and kill. The conquerors of the New World, for example, connected their voyages with missionary and apocalyptic dreams. Christopher Columbus and others were influenced by the millennial ideology of Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135-1202), an influential Calabrian Cistercian abbot and great theorist, who divided history into three periods (of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit). However, this “missionary” model, which resulted in the exploitation of Latin America, is not the New Testament model.²

Is it the Spirit or Christ who, through mission, reaches the world? In an article presenting the Spirit as the “divine mystery sent from ‘inside’ to be that mystery fully present and active ‘outside,’” or “God Inside Out,” Father Stephen Bevans argues that the Spirit “precedes Jesus not only in our own lives but in the history of the world and in cultures that have not known him.”³ In his response to Bevans, F. Dale Bruner strongly questions this priority, pointing to the “radical Christocentricity” of the Spirit’s work. “The Son, not the Spirit, is God Inside Out, and it is the Spirit’s good pleasure to make the Son, not the Spirit, primary,” writes Bruner. For him, “Bevans makes the fundamental mistake in placing the sending of the Spirit *before* the sending of the Son.” In Bruner’s view, the “centripetal work of the Spirit (to point us to Christ) moves us to the Spirit’s centrifugal work (world service).”⁴ It seems to me that, although the biblical (Johannine) model is

¹Malcolm Martin, “The Missionary and the Holy Spirit,” *Missiology: An International Review* 5 (1977): 223-239, citation from 224.

²See J. Massynbaerde Ford, “The Holy Spirit and Mission in the New Testament,” *Missiology: An International Review* 16 (1988): 439-453, especially 439-441, and her sources about the *conquistadores* of the paradisiac New World.

³Stephen B. Bevans, “God Inside Out: Toward a Missionary Theology of the Holy Spirit,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22 (1998): 102-105, citations from 102.

⁴F. Dale Bruner, “The Son Is God Inside Out: A Response to Stephen B. Bevans, S.V.D.,” *International Bulletin of Missiology Research* 22 (1998): 106, 108, italics in original.

doubtless christocentric, either view can be defensible, since one maintains the cruciality of the cross. That is, independently of one's starting point regarding the trinitarian mission, the focus must be the salvific work of the Son.

The Gift of Music

The gift of music is a special ability that God gives to some believers to write, perform or conduct spiritual songs that inspire individuals or congregations in private or corporate worship. Examples include Asaph and King David (2 Chr 29:20), both authors of many psalms.

Music is a fundamental tool in worship, although it is not worship itself, nor is it used only in temples. For this reason, it is not surprising that the Spirit enables believers to facilitate encounters with the sacred through music (see 2 Chr 5:12-14). Spirit and music seem to make a good partnership. In the temple of Jerusalem, there was a relationship between prophetic ministry and worship. King David prescribed musicians "for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals" (1 Chr 25:1).¹ The Chronicler titles three important heads of Levitical singers as "seers": Heman (1 Chr 25:5), Asaph (2 Chr 29:30), and Jeduthun (2 Chr 35:15). These singers sometimes uttered oracles inspired by the Spirit (2 Chr 20:14-17). It is probable that the canonical Psalms were composed by musicians under direct inspiration of the Spirit.

Music was so important in the Davidic dynasty that it became, so to say, a question of national security. In choosing the singers for the future temple, King David consulted with his generals² (1 Chr 25:1). Later, King Jehoshaphat successfully appointed singers to praise the splendor of Yahweh at the head of the army during a battle (2 Chr 20:21-28). It is interesting that

¹"The references to cult prophecy in vss. 1-5 follow an old pattern," says Jacob M. Myers, for whom arguably "there is some evidence that Levites took the place of cult prophets" (*I Chronicles*, Anchor Bible [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974], 171). Roddy Braun suggests that the prophesying work of the singers must be understood as "the desire of the writer" to show them as having "a special relationship with God" (*I Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 14 [Waco, TX: Word, 1986], 247). However, there is no real reason to consider this prophetic role attributed to the musicians as mere propaganda.

²Or "cult officials," as some versions say it.

this decision is contextually linked with a well-known verse urging the people to believe in the prophets of Yahweh (vs. 20). Were prophets and musicians here part of the same group? Clearly the musicians had a role in keeping up the morale of the army and of the nation.

In early Christianity, music certainly played a special role in worship. The first Christians formed a singing church, although the “distance of time and culture makes the task of identifying or reconstructing the musical fiber of the early Christian church particularly elusive.”¹ Paul encouraged his readers to sing “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). E. Wellesz sees a specific meaning in each term, defining psalms as “the cantillation of the Jewish psalms and of the canticles and doxologies modelled on them”; hymns as “songs of praise of a syllabic type, i.e. each syllable is sung to one or two notes of melody”; and spiritual songs as “Alleluias and other chants of a jubilant or ecstatic character, richly ornamented.”² It is unclear whether this classification is really valid or whether the three terms are just synonyms. Perhaps more significant, in the context of this study, is the fact that in Ephesians the Pauline command to sing is preceded by a command to be filled with the Spirit (vs. 18). This seems to imply that spiritual music, for Paul, is an act of praise inspired by the Spirit.

Although music is not specifically named among the spiritual gifts of the New Testament, it is without a doubt one of the most influential gifts. Therefore, gifted Christian musicians should make music or lead worship in tune with the Spirit. This means to have a balance between Word and experience, transcendence and immanence, mind and body.

¹W. J. Porter, “Music,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 712.

²E. Wellesz, “Early Christian Music,” in *Early Medieval Music up to 1300*, ed. A. Hughes, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 2.

The Gift of Pastorate

The gift of pastorate is a special ability that God gives to some believers to minister on a regular basis to the spiritual and/or psychological needs of a group of fellow Christians. One example is Peter (John 21:15-19).

In Eph 4:11, Paul mentions “pastors and teachers” (*poimenas kai didaskalos*). Pentecost, among other scholars, sees an allusion here to just one dual gift: pastor-teacher, with two emphases in the pastoral ministry.¹ This interpretation is grammatically possible. However, as Paul cites the gift of teaching as a separate gift in Rom 12:7 and 1 Cor 12:28, the result of either interpretation is almost the same. A pastor is a shepherd, the one who guides, feeds, and protects the sheep.

The metaphor of the spiritual leader as shepherd gave origin to a rich imagery in the Bible. David viewed Yahweh himself as a Shepherd (Ps 23). Jeremiah (23:1-4) and Ezekiel (34) heralded oracles denouncing the shepherds who were extorting, destroying, and scattering the flock of Yahweh. Jesus presented himself as the “good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14), envisaging a day when all sheep of God will be under his care (vs. 16). And Peter promises a “crown of glory” from the hands of the “Chief Shepherd” to those shepherds who oversee God’s flock with love, willingness, and spirit of servanthood (1 Pet 5:1-4). For Paul, it is the Holy Spirit who places the shepherd as overseer of the church of God, bought with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).

The Gift of Preaching

The gift of preaching is a special ability that God gives to some believers to communicate the Word of God with authority, accuracy, and relevance. Examples include Peter (Acts 2:14-41), Stephen (Acts 7), and Paul (Acts 17:16-34).

Peter writes: “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Pet 4:11). *Laleo*, which means “to say,” “to tell,” “to talk,” “to preach,” “to utter,” is the verb used

¹Pentecost, 173. He writes: “As a pastor, he cares for the flock. He guides, guards, protects, and provides for those under his oversight. As a teacher, the emphasis is on the method by which the shepherd does his work. He guides, he guards, he protects by teaching” (ibid.).

here for the gift of speaking. The apostle apparently did not have a prophet in mind, but a preacher or communicator of the gospel. However, this preacher should speak according to the oracles of God and as if God were speaking through his or her personality.

To communicate God effectively to others, it is necessary to preach with authority, like Jesus did (Matt 7:28-29; Luke 4:31-32). Authority, of course, is not authoritarianism. Jesus was authoritative, not authoritarian. The Gospel writers point out at least seven characteristics of Jesus' communication that caused wonder among his listeners. He spoke with (1) *knowledge/wisdom*, showing a deep understanding of Scripture, God's mind, and human psychology (John 7:14-15); (2) *excellence*, revealing profound mysteries and truths in the language of common people (John 7:45-46); (3) *grace*, expressing acceptance and offering new opportunities (Luke 4:22); (4) *sensitivity*, contextualizing the good news in order to make it relevant to the despised people (John 4:40-41); (5) *involvement*, mingling with the people where they were (Matt 9:35-36); (6) *effectiveness*, combining discourse and action in order to achieve the desired results (Matt 17:20; Luke 4:36-37); and (7) *power*, being an anointed channel for the Spirit (Luke 4:14-22).

To preach with authority is not to make propaganda of one's beliefs, but to communicate with the total power of one's personality, so that the people may feel that truth, love, and life flow through him or her. The words of a preacher gifted by the Spirit, whose great model is Jesus, have an illuminating and healing power that transcends common talk.

The Gift of Prophecy

The gift of prophecy (*propheteia*; 1 Cor 12:10; Eph 4:11) is a special ability that God gives to some believers to receive and communicate relevant and accurate divine messages to their communities of faith or the world at large. Examples include Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John the Baptist, the apostle Paul, and the apostle John.

From antiquity, humanity has been interested in knowing the will and acts of God/gods. Royal figures and common people alike try to glimpse the future as much as they can. On the other hand, God has been interested in revealing his plans to humanity (Num 12:6; Amos 3:7). For these

reasons, among others, prophecy has been a widespread phenomenon in time and cultures.¹ Biblical prophecy is the subject of our concern here.

Prophets (Hebrew *nabi'*, Greek *prophetes*) are faithful messengers of God, divine spokespersons, who do not deliver their own messages, but, inspired by the Spirit, announce what God tells them. The case of Moses and Aaron is paradigmatic: before the Pharaoh and the people, Moses would function as God to Aaron and Aaron as a prophet to Moses (Exod 4:10-16; see 7:1-2).

This functional character of prophecy shows that, from a biblical perspective, true prophets do not create their own experiences, although some scholars attempt to connect prophecy with ecstasy or trance,² words widely misused. In essence, biblical prophecy is neither a self-induced trancelike state nor just high voltage brain activity leading to uncommon awareness of reality (see 2 Pet 1:21). Henry Barclay Swete has said with propriety: "The prophet is a *man of the Spirit*; the Spirit of God falls upon him, fills his mind, and speaks by his mouth; he finds himself at times dominated by a spiritual force which comes from without and from above."³

Protected by this parameter, however, we can add that there was a great diversity of prophetic phenomena in biblical Judaism. "At times," as says Cecil Robeck, Jr., prophecy "comes almost silently in thoughts, visions, or dreams. On other occasions it comes quite forcefully, in a

¹Prophetic claims are found from Greco-Roman religions to Judaism, from Christianity to Islam. According to Anne Marie Kitz, there is a growing consensus that prophecy in the cultures of the ancient Near East was "linked to the broader religious phenomenon of divination," which involved several techniques based on the simple idea that divine action upon physical objects causes a material reaction or particular effects, which must be interpreted as divine signs ("Prophecy as Divination," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 [2003]: 22-42, citation from 22). "Sometime during the evolution of Israel's religion," she suggests, "the interpretation of a divine sign became its *divinely inspired* interpretation, which, in turn, became an integral element of the initial sign itself, whether this was received as word, vision, dream, or deed" (41).

²See Simon B. Parker, "Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel," *Vetus Testamentus* 28 (1978): 271-285.

³Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament: A Study of Primitive Christian Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 2, italics in original.

moment of significant emotion, reminiscent of drunkenness.”¹ Even theophanies are among the many ways God communicates with prophets.

David Aune, working on anthropological concepts,² classifies altered states of consciousness, which broadly involves modes of reception of any ancient oracular speech or prophecy, under two categories: (1) possession trance and (2) vision trance. He explains the difference: “Both states exhibit behavioral modifications, but the former is a category which deals with possession by spirits, while the latter typically involves visions, hallucinations, adventures, or experiences of the soul during temporary absences from the body, and so forth.”³ In the Old Testament, according to Aune, “prophetic revelations are received by persons experiencing both types of trance.”⁴ Not everyone would agree with this assessment. Biblical prophets themselves are highly critical of any phenomenon which resembles divination or mediumistic trance (Deut 18:9-13; Isa 8:19). Yet some kind of ecstasy apparently was known and experienced in Judaism, as well as in the early Christianity, although not necessarily by all biblical prophets.⁵

Some scholars make distinctions between Jewish-Christian and Greco-Roman prophetic models when it comes to source, process, and phenomenology.⁶ The first model would be more rational and sober, initiated by God, rarely attached to temples or palaces, highly concerned with social ethics, and generally critical of the establishment, while the last model would be more

¹C. M. Robeck, Jr., “Prophecy, Gift of,” *Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 731.

²See Erika Bourguignon, *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973).

³David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 19-20.

⁴Ibid., 86.

⁵See Robert R. Wilson, “Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 321-337.

⁶See, for example, H. Bacht, “Wahres und falsches Prophetentum,” *Biblica* 32 (1951): 237-262, especially 249-251; and Luke T. Johnson, “Norms for True and False Prophecy in First Corinthians,” *The American Benedictine Review* 22 (1971): 32-33.

ecstatic and frenzied, induced by artificial means, generally attached to cultic centers, little worried with moral values, and interested in perpetuating the status quo. Aune criticizes this kind of distinction and minimizes the differences, although recognizes the validity of some contrasts.¹ In terms of social forms and rituals, Christopher Forbes has shown that early Christian prophecy “took a very different overall form from that which it took in the wider Hellenistic world.”² For one who evaluates both phenomena with the lens of theology, and not only with the lens of history, sociology or history-of-religions, these distinctions are still valid. Beyond any similarity or difference, most fathers of the church such as Justin Martyr and Origen saw the pagan phenomena as inspired by demons.³

Another issue has to do with control. In pagan contexts, the prophet loses control over his or her mind/body during the trance, sometimes speaking with a strange voice. In biblical contexts, the prophet is controlled by the Spirit, but basically his or her personality remains the same. “Paul clearly did not define prophecy as some form of wild-eyed ecstatic phenomenon. The speaker had final control over how the prophetic word was proclaimed.”⁴ Aune writes: “Early Israelite prophets were able to control the onset of the possession trance in order to deliver oracles upon request, or, less commonly, to deliver unsolicited oracles.”⁵

Independent of how one sees the phenomenon, a prophet, though being engaged in a heavenly mission, should not be seen as an alien detached from history. Prophets are products of their cultural contexts—a fact that future generations tend to forget. What makes a prophet a

¹Aune, 21.

²Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 319.

³Justin Martyr, *Apologiae pro Christianis* 1.18, 44, 56; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.7.3-4.

⁴Robeck, Jr., 732.

⁵Aune, 85. Some of the several texts that the scholar lists in support of his statement are 1 Sam 9:3-10, 1 Kgs 22:5-6, 2 Kgs 8:7-15, and Isa 30:2.

prophet is a God-given capacity to “see” behind the scenes and point safe ways. For this reason, time always will be a good tool to assess prophetic claims.¹

Wayne Grudem has made an attempt to establish a sharp difference between Old and New Testament prophecy. For him, the apostles, not the prophets, assume in the New Testament the authoritative role played by prophets in the Old Testament.² New Testament prophets would not have the status and prestige held by their peers of the Old Testament. He writes: “Prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human—and sometimes partially mistaken—report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone’s mind.”³

Grudem’s theory received much criticism, both positive and negative. F. David Farnell, for instance, argued against Grudem that the postapostolic early church used the Old Testament prophets as standards to judge New Testament prophets, that New Testament prophecy is founded on Old Testament prophecy, that vocabulary and phraseology for Old and New Testament prophets are similar, and so on.⁴ Grudem may have overlooked the complexity of Old Testament prophecy and exaggerated in his “banalization” of prophetic phenomenon in the New Testament. All Old Testament prophets were equally inspired, but probably not all enjoyed the same status or recognition. In summary, there is a continuity between Old and New Testament prophecy. However, his thesis might contribute to a more realistic view of prophecy in both Testaments—which does not mean a low view.

¹In the conclusion, I will briefly discuss the issue of prophecy’s fulfillment.

²Grudem writes: “The apostles are the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament prophets (see 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:8-9; 11-12; 1 Thess. 2:13, 4:8, 15; 2 Peter 3:2). It is the apostles, not the prophets, who have authority to write the words of the New Testament Scripture” (*Systematic Theology*, 1050). In fact, the apostles were also prophets.

³Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester: Crossway, 1988), 14.

⁴F. David Farnell, “Does the New Testament Teach Two Prophetic Gifts?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993): 62-68.

The Adventist prophetess

It seems appropriate to introduce Adventist experience here. Perhaps for recognizing the great influence of Ellen White on the making of their movement, Adventists value the gift of prophecy more than any other. Beyond being perceived as a seal of authentication on the remnantal character of Adventism,¹ Ellen White was a dynamic pilot who conducted Adventism for decades.

Ellen White arose in a time of theological and experiential effervescence. Radical visionaries were common, even among ex-Millerite Adventists. Names such as William Foy, Emily Clemons, Dorinda Baker, Phoebe Knapp, Mary Hamlin, and Israel Dammon have been identified as visionaries in addition to Ellen Harmon (White).² How did she become recognized as the authoritative prophetess of Seventh-day Adventism?

Official Adventist explanation might follow this line: called by God and inspired by his Spirit, White was faithful to her task, proved to be a blessing to the church, and passed all tests of a true prophet. T. Housel Jemison, for example, lists four major biblical tests of a prophet fulfilled by White: (1) conformity with the pattern of revealed truth (Isa 8:20); (2) the fruitage of life (Matt 7:20); (3) fulfillment of predictions (Jer 28:9); and (4) recognition of the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2).³ Jemison stresses that the “application of the tests is cumulative” and conclusive. He lists, however, additional evidences as helpful: physical manifestations, timeliness

¹Fundamental Belief 17 states that the gift of prophecy “is an identifying mark of the remnant church” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, 216).

²See Taves, 158-159; and Frederick Hoyt, “Trial of Elder I. Dammon Reported for the *Piscataquis Farmer*,” *Spectrum* 17 (1987): 29-36. For a biography of Foy, see Delbert W. Baker, *The Unknown Prophet: The Life and Times of William Ellis Foy* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1987).

³T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955), 100-111. In chapter 14 (258-279), “Testing the Experience of Ellen G. White,” the author argues for the genuineness of the Whitean gift.

of the message, certainty and fearlessness in the delivery of the message, high spiritual plane in content and mode of expression, and practical nature of the teaching.¹

It is interesting to see how an outside scholar analyzes the process. According to Ann Taves, White faced “two primary threats”: (1) fanaticism (“the threat of competing visionaries”) and (2) mesmerism (“the threat of natural explanations of visionary experience”). Taves suggests that “it is likely that White’s visions spoke more consistently to the needs of the movement both in terms of content and timing than did those of her competitors,” and that “the ‘symbiotic relationship’ between Ellen and James White, to borrow Jonathan Butler’s phrase, provided Ellen White and her visions with a forceful promoter that the other visionaries lacked.” Besides, says Taves, “early Seventh-day Adventists ‘made’ a prophetess by demonizing mesmerism,” and, in doing so, “both neutralized mesmerism and inscribed it at the heart of the Seventh-day Adventist cosmos.”² That is, Ellen White not only rejected mesmerism as a natural explanation for her visions, but also rejected mesmerism as a natural phenomenon. In her view, mesmerism was demon-inspired.

Ellen White has received a great deal of criticism both during her life and after her death. Critics charge her of nervous disorder, false teachings, unfulfilled prophecies, and plagiarism, among other things. Much of the negative criticism finds its matrix in Dudley Canright (1840-1919).³ The charge of plagiarism, elevated to a higher level in the 1980s, has been by far the most impacting challenge. Today no well-informed Adventist can deny her creative use of numerous literary sources. Fred Veltman, author of an in-depth analysis regarding *The Desire of Ages*, concludes that she “was both derivative and original.”⁴

¹Ibid., 106, 110-112.

²Taves, 158, 163.

³Dudley M. Canright, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1919). A solid defense came through Francis D. Nichol in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951).

⁴Fred Veltman, “*The Desire of Ages Project: The Conclusions*,” *Ministry*, December 1990, 14.

Recent criticism, at a first moment, engendered radical revisionist ideas. “An inspired, yet fallible, prophet was—and still is—the dilemma for Adventists,” wrote Donald McAdams.¹ Herold Weiss, although recognizing that Ellen White had a “formative authority” in Adventism, proclaimed the end of her function as a “formal authority.”² In no way, however, was her gift discredited in the sight of Adventism as a whole. Perhaps the criticism brought a more realistic view of the functioning of the biblical gift of prophecy.³

One must pay attention to criticism, of course, but this is not a decisive factor. In fact, it may tell much in favor of the genuineness of the gift. Suffering and even martyrdom compose the profile of biblical prophets. As Aune points out, the motif of the violent fate of the true prophet “was widespread in early Judaism.”⁴ Some prophets, including the chief of them all, Jesus Christ, spoke about this motif.⁵ A prophet without criticism is almost a contradiction of terms.

The Gift of Service

The gift of service (*diakonia*; Rom 12:7; 1 Pet 4:11) is a special ability that God gives to some believers to help people in their community of faith in practical ways. Examples include the seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6), Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Tabitha (Acts 9:36), and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15).

Although Paul does not develop the concept of service in Rom 12:7, the original Greek word he employs, *diakonia* (“service,” “ministry”), has a rich usage in the New Testament. Together, the noun *diakonia* (33 times), the verb *diakoneo* (37 times), and the personal noun

¹Donald R. McAdams, “The Scope of Ellen White’s Authority,” *Spectrum* 16 (1985): 2.

²Herold Weiss, “Formative Authority, Yes; Canonization, No,” *Spectrum* 16 (1985): 8-13.

³“Seventh-day Adventists have a special advantage in understanding inspiration, in that we have had in recent memory a modern example of it in the work of Ellen White,” believes Robert M. Johnston (“The Case for a Balanced Hermeneutic,” *Ministry*, March 1999, 11).

⁴Aune, 157-159, citation from 157.

⁵Num 16:3; Neh 9:26; Jer 43:2-3; Matt 5:11-12; 23:29-31 (= Luke 11:47-48); 23:34-36 (= Luke 11:49-51); 23:37-39 (= Luke 13:34-35); John 5:18; 10:31-33; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:15.

diakonos (30 times) occur 100 times in the New Testament.¹ Used in both a technical and a nontechnical sense, “the word ‘deacon’ denotes one who voluntarily,” energetically, and persistently serves others, “prompted by a loving desire to benefit those served.”²

Mirroring the model of the great “Deacon,” Jesus Christ, who came “to serve [*diakonesai*]” (Mark 10:45), as well as the example of the angels, who are “sent to serve [*eis diakonian*]” (Heb 1:14), the believers are called to serve (Matt 20:25-28; John 12:26). In God’s kingdom, to serve is honor, not shame. Deaconal service has multiple possibilities. A deacon/servant enabled by the Spirit, such as Stephen (see Acts 6:5, 8-15; 7), may reach unimaginable heights of spiritual service.

The Gift of Teaching

The gift of teaching is a special ability that God gives to some believers to expound the truths of the gospel in a clear, warm, and convincing way, in order to nourish, instruct, and strengthen the community of faith. One example is John (1 John 1:1-4).

Paul mentions the gift of teaching (*didaskalia*) in Rom 12:7, 1 Cor 12:28, 29, and Eph 4:11—that is, in his three primary lists of spiritual gifts. This fact suggests an unconscious valorization of teaching, or a recognition of its universal applicability. Perhaps teaching was even a kind of “office,” along with apostleship and prophethood. Essential in Jesus’ ministry (Matt 4:23), as well as in the Spirit’s ministry (John 14:26), teaching is strategic to unfold God’s character and his plan for the world.³

There are many kinds and levels of teaching. In the context of the church, a gifted teacher is one who has spiritual/biblical/theological depth, knows how to communicate content to others

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, “Behind the Word ‘Deacon’: A New Testament Study,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (1983): 153.

²Ibid.

³“Judging from analogy with Jewish teachers and from Paul’s description of Christian teaching,” writes Nardoni, “one may well say that teachers in the early church were a distinctive group dedicated to preserving and transmitting the Christian tradition” and “the established Christian way of life” (76).

effectively yet non-dogmatically, and is successful in this task. A teacher gifted by the Spirit cultivates a healthy balance between individual independence and corporate commitment. Above personal biases or traditional agendas, he or she pledges allegiance to God and his revealed Word.

As Roger Gryson points out, an autonomous magisterium effectively functioned in two phases of church's history: (1) in the ancient church, until the middle of the third century; and (2) in the Scholastic era, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. In both periods, respectively, teachers enjoyed great prestige and authority—first like that of a prophet, and then like that of a bishop. In the other phases, teaching function was dominated by the hierarchy.¹ Yet there was a basic difference: the ancient teacher usually gave priority to revelation and sought to upbuild believers, while the medieval doctor had a taste for speculation and frequently helped to identify “heretics.” Without naive idealization of the early teachers, it is clear that they were closer to the model of teaching oriented by the Spirit.

The Gift of Tongues

The gift of tongues (1 Cor 12:10, 28; *gene glosson*, “varieties of tongues”) is a special ability that God gives to some believers to express intelligible utterances to communicate the gospel, praise God, and/or attest God's presence. Examples include the apostles (Acts 2:4), the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), a group of believers from Ephesus (Acts 19:6), the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:26), and Paul (1 Cor 14:18).

One of the most controversial and studied gifts,² speaking in tongues³ has challenged theologians and other scholars for a long time. C. S. Lewis confessed that glossolalia was “a

¹Roger Gryson, “The Authority of the Teacher in the Ancient and Medieval Church,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (1982): 176-187.

²For a still helpful literary/bibliographic source on the subject, see Watson E. Mills, ed., *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research in Glossolalia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

³The Greek expression *glossa lalein* (literally, “to speak in tongues”) appears in five New Testament passages: Mark 16 (vs. 17, in the so-called “longer ending”), Acts 2 (vss. 4, 6, 11), Acts 10 (vs. 46), Acts 19 (vs. 6), and 1 Cor 12-14 (12:31; 13:1; 14:2, 4, 5 [2x], 6, 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 39). Considering all references or allusions, there is a total of approximately 35 instances in the New Testament, with predominance in Pauline literature. The simpler expression *glossa lalein*

stumbling-block” and “an embarrassing phenomenon” to him.¹ Swete said: “There is no historical statement in the New Testament which is more difficult to interpret than St Luke’s account of the Pentecostal gift of tongues.”² Perhaps only the Pauline theological statements about the same gift surpass Luke’s account in mystery.

What was the linguistic nature of this New Testament phenomenon? Is the biblical gift identical to the phenomenon known today as glossolalia? If the phenomena are different, how should one explain glossolalia?

A plethora of commentary interpretations have been written for the biblical gift of tongues.³ The options include tongues as an enthusiastic expression in native languages improper for a given setting, and against collective expectation;⁴ the ability to speak real unlearned languages (xenolalia

possibly is an ellipse or abbreviation of the more original formula *heterais glossais laleo* (Acts 2:4) or *heteroglossais laleo* (see Roy A. Harrisville, “Speaking in Tongues: A Lexicographical Study,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 [1976]: 35-48). Perhaps “by the time Paul and the author of Acts had put pen to paper the terms had become more or less fixed, a possibility which would also explain the combination of *glossa* with *lalein*, but never with *legein*” (ibid., 45).

¹C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 16.

²Swete, 72.

³See Vern S. Poythress, “The Nature of Corinthian Glossolalia: Possible Options,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 (1977): 130-135; and Mark J. Cartledge, “The Nature and Function of New Testament Glossolalia,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 72 (2000): 136-139.

⁴Bob Zerhusen, “An Overlooked Judean *Diglossia* in Acts 2?” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 (1995): 118-130; idem, “The Problem Tongues in 1 Cor 14: A Reexamination,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 27 (1997): 139-152; and Renton Maclachlan, *Tongues Revisited: A Third Way* (Wellington, NZ: ClearSight, 2000). Supporters of this view argue that the disciples spoke in Aramaic and Greek in a context of worship (the feast of Pentecost), so violating the Jewish diglossia. This concept means that Hebrew was an upper or H language, proper for ceremony, liturgy, and learning (or the “holy language” of the temple), in the same sense that Latin once was the language of the Catholic liturgy. Aramaic and Greek were lower or L languages, everyday vernacular. Therefore, from a *gentile understanding*, we think that the disciples spoke in the languages of several nations; but in fact, from a *Jewish understanding*, they spoke in “other tongues” (Acts 2:4) than Hebrew. This view assumes that Acts 2:9-11 presents a list of nations (geographical areas), not of languages, and that there was a small linguistic diversity among the first-century Jews of the Diaspora. The Septuagint would be just one evidence that most scattered Jews spoke Greek. Besides, Luke includes “Judea” in the list. So, why a language miracle? On the other hand, it is argued, the believers of Corinth spoke remote native languages, without translation, in the worship setting, violating the Greek as *lingua franca*, which everyone knew.

or xenoglossia);¹ angelic speech;² “a kind of structured or ordered babbling”;³ complex speech patterns that “may bear all kinds of cognitive information in some coded array”;⁴ “a piece without fragments from known human languages, having linguistic deviations from patterns common to human languages, yet being indistinguishable by a naïve listener from a foreign language”;⁵ “language of the unconscious, but language capable of becoming conscious”;⁶ “prayer without concepts, prayer at a deep, noncognitive level”;⁷ an eschatological Spirit-inspired “groaning,” that is, a free, transcendent, and “unclassifiable” response to the free, transcendent, and “unclassifiable” Spirit of God.⁸

All these options may be simplified into three: (1) known languages improper for the occasion (naturalistic model), (2) unlearned human languages (miraculous model), and (3) inarticulate speech (ecstatic model). Another possibility is that Luke understood the phenomenon as intelligible, while Paul viewed it as unintelligible. Adventist theologians tend to favor option 2

This interpretation is ingenious, but does not explain satisfactorily all facts stated in the text. In Acts 2:6-12, people from many places wonder how Galileans could speak in their (the hearers’) own languages (see below).

¹For example, Robert H. Gundry, “‘Ecstatic Utterance’ (N.E.B.)?” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1966): 299-307; Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 227-229; and Forbes, chapter 3 (44-74, especially 57-64).

²Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 200, 201. See the *Testament of Job* 48-50.

³Luke Timothy Johnson, “Glossolalia and the Embarrassments of Experience,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 18 (1997): 121.

⁴Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 85.

⁵See Poythress, “The Nature of Corinthian Glossolalia: Possible Options,” 133.

⁶Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, trans. John P. Galvin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 304.

⁷Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 173.

⁸Frank D. Machia, “Sighs Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 47-73.

above (so Ellen White,¹ Gerhard Hasel [see below], Morris Venden,² and George Rice³); but there are defenders of some version of option 3 (so William Richardson [see below] and Ivan Blazen⁴).

Richardson, in consonance with most modern charismatic scholars, sees a difference between the gift in Acts and the gift in Corinth. In Pentecost, according to him, the gift was unlearned foreign language, given with two purposes: (1) “to enable the apostles to communicate in various dialects” and (2) “to grab the attention of the crowds and thereby add credence and credibility to the words of the apostles.”⁵ In Corinth, the gift was a kind of holy enthusiasm, an euphoric experience, that is, unintelligible speech or ecstatic utterance.⁶ He concludes:

Corinthian glossolalia, the charism that Paul included in his list of gifts, and that is nearly hidden behind all the abuses, began as a genuine, personal experience of prayer and praise, characterized by surrender of the human spirit to the divine Spirit. The result was an emotional feeling difficult to put into words. Occasionally, however, it burst forth in rapturous vocalizing, not unlike continuous expressions of “hallelujah,” which would need “interpretation” before anyone else could fully benefit from the reasons behind such enthusiasm.⁷

Richardson’s reconstruction of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 14 has plausibility, if we exegete just the Pauline text. Any Adventist with a charismatic taste certainly will feel inclined to

¹At the Pentecost, according to Ellen White, the disciples (1) were enabled to speak with “fluency” and “accuracy” languages with which they “had been unacquainted”; (2) received this “miraculous gift” as an “evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven”; and (3) now could permanently speak with precision in either “their native tongue or in a foreign language” of their target-audience (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 39-40).

²Venden, *Your Friend, the Holy Spirit*, 79-85.

³George Rice, 616-617. “Uttering sounds that cannot be identified with any human language is not a perversion of but a counterfeit of the genuine [gift of tongues]” (619).

⁴Ivan T. Blazen, *The Gospel on the Street: Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1997), 109-117.

⁵William E. Richardson, *Speaking in Tongues: Is It Still the Gift of the Spirit?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 55.

⁶See *ibid.*, 69-94.

⁷*Ibid.*, 91-92.

appreciate his openness and effort to make sense of such a difficult passage. The problem is that there are other variants involved.

From a broader context, and working mainly with linguistic data, Hasel also makes a convincing case that the gift in both Acts and 1 Corinthians refers to unlearned foreign languages. He argues that in the New Testament the Greek term *glossa* (“tongues”) means either the physical organ of speech or languages; that “there is full and complete identity of language in every New Testament passage that treats the subject of ‘speaking in tongues’”; that the early church fathers and the majority of ancient scholars supported the tongues-as-foreign-language view, differently from modern scholars, which suggests a reading back into the New Testament; and that there is no use of the expression *glossa lalein* (“to speak in tongues”) “in non-biblical Greek texts to mean glossolalia in the sense of unintelligible speech.” Therefore, Hasel concludes, there is just one gift of tongues in the entire New Testament, “which is supported by the same terminology, the context of the Holy Spirit’s work, and the uniqueness of early Christian tongues-speaking,” and such gift is “non-ecstatic in nature.”¹ Any conservative Adventist will appreciate Hasel’s enterprise.

How should one situate oneself between these two Adventist scholars of the same school (Andrews University) holding opposing views? Assuming the risk of dissatisfying both parties, I will suggest that these views are not totally irreconcilable. Is it not possible to speak a real language through the Spirit and at the same time experience an overflow of enthusiasm or some degree of dissociation? Let us look for a biblical rationale.

In Acts, Luke seems to make a deliberate effort² to present the gift of tongues as unlearned foreign languages, but he also allows for an emotional accompaniment. First, the sacred historian declares that the Spirit “enabled” the disciples “to speak in other tongues” (2:4), which suggests a

¹Gerhard F. Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues: Biblical Speaking in Tongues and Contemporary Glossolalia* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1995), 43-51, 70-71, 119, 121-122, passim.

²As Hanz Conzelmann says, the basis for the Pentecost “account is clearly not a naive legend”; there is theological reflection (*Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 15).

gift whose source lies not merely on human psychology. If their utterance were common or caused through some trance-inducing process, it would be difficult to explain the astonishing perceived novelty. Then, using a hyperbole, Luke states that in Jerusalem there were Jews from “every nation under heaven” (vs. 5), a preparatory description for what he will say. In vs. 6, he adds that each one in the international and bewildered crowd heard the disciples speaking in his “own language” (*idia dialekto*). Here Luke seems to emphasize again the specificity and wideness of the phenomenon. The question of the amazed visitors whether the speakers were not all “Galileans” (vs. 7) reinforces the linguistic nature of the phenomenon. To highlight his point, Luke says that the listeners wondered how each one was hearing “in his own native language” (vs. 8).¹ Then, sharpening the focus, he cites a list of countries and peoples that “closely resembles that of the regions and peoples of the Persian Empire according to the inscription made by Darius I at Behistun.”² Luke describes an “assembly of Jews in Jerusalem regarded as representing ‘every nation under heaven,’ but named for the dominions of the King of Persia,” perhaps in order to “represent, not the Dispersion, but the Return of the scattered people of God.”³ Finally, Luke observes that the phenomenon was perceived by some as a declaration of “the wonders of God,” and compared by others to drunkenness, although none knew exactly its meaning (vss. 11-13). This suggests that, even being an inspired utterance in foreign languages, the phenomenon may have involved a high level of emotion. The other two occurrences of tongues in Acts, although not

¹This statement has been used to interpret the tongues at Pentecost as a miracle of hearing (*akolalia*). Luke Timothy Johnson is a modern scholar, among others, who supports this view (*Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 111. But the whole context, particularly vs. 4, seems to dismiss this interpretation. For an additional discussion, see Gerald Hovenden, *Speaking in Tongues: The New Testament Evidence in Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 64-72.

²See Justin Taylor, “The List of the Nations in Acts 2:9-11,” *Revue Biblique* 106 (1999): 408-420 (quoted from summary). Probably knowing this list through literary tradition, Luke may have been also influenced by the preamble to Cyrus’s decree in 2 Chr 36:23.

³*Ibid.*, 419-420. If this hypothesis is correct, then the so divulged idea that the list of nations in Acts represents a reversal of the scattering in the episode of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-8) loses force. Although Luke is a universalizing author, he focuses on the Jews’ response to Christ, especially in the first chapters of Acts.

marked by external phenomena (fire, wind, earthquake), were patterned by that of Pentecost (10:44-47 [cf. 15:8]; 19:6), probably with a similar emotional involvement (note the praise in 10:46), except that in Ephesus the believers also “prophesied” (19:6).

Accepting the phenomenon in Acts as foreign languages, as the natural reading suggests, what are we to do with the phenomenon in Corinth? Are both the same? Must we study them separately? Is it legitimate to use the clearer text of Acts to illuminate the more obscure text of Corinthians?

First of all, one thing seems logical: if we are to use any source to clarify or establish the meaning of tongues in Corinth, the best option is a sacred source that shares some kind of identity in terms of phenomenon, community, authorship, and interpretation. Jewish people in the first century, as a rule, were zealous for their uniqueness. Even a cosmopolitan Paul, with his contextualizing impetus, hardly would violate his religious-ethnic background, unless directly convinced by God.¹

Most scholars assume that the Corinthian phenomenon had counterparts in the Greco-Roman environment.² Christopher Forbes has seriously challenged this consensus, arguing that the

¹Paul only ceased to persecute the Christians after his experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

²Nils I. J. Engelsen, in his research of ancient Greek and Hebrew sources, concludes that similar phenomena were known outside the Christian circles, but the technical terms *glossa* or *glossais lalein* do not appear in pre-Christian literature because automatic/inarticulate speech was “envisioned as an inherent feature of (ecstatic) prophetic speech,” that is, the phenomenon was considered part of divination or prophecy (“Glossolalia and Other Forms of Inspired Speech According to I Corinthians 12-14 [Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1970], ii, 20-21). He writes: “The ecstatic phenomena in Corinth are not as such distinctively Christian, but are pan-human. Still there might be essential differences because the faith which creates them gives to them its own motivation and intellectual frame of reference” (ibid., 23).

Christian phenomenon was unique.¹ T. M. Crone also has shown the improbability of such alleged parallels.² More recently, Gerald Hovenden came to a similar conclusion.³

The phenomenon of tongues in Corinth seems to have been the specific catalyzer of the whole discussion about spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12-14, although the overarching problem was perhaps of an eschatological nature. The Corinthians apparently had an “overrealized” eschatology, as defended by Anthony Thiselton and others.⁴ They probably were influenced in their overall concept of spirituality by their social context. Corinth, capital of the Roman province of Achaia, was proverbial by its sexual license. Destroyed in 146 B.C. and rebuilt in 44 or 46 B.C. by order of Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.), it was a sparkling metropolis (for that time) and a competitive center for trade.⁵ Temples dedicated to Aphrodite (goddess of love, beauty, and fertility; patroness of the sacred prostitutes), Asklepios (god of healing), and Apollo (god of prophecy), among other deities, punctuated the landscape of the city. Inserted in an honor-shame oriented world, the Corinthians apparently used a series of means to achieve high social status. “Corinth was a city where public boasting and self-promotion had become an art form,” says Witherington.⁶ Therefore, reflecting the larger society and a pagan background, the church of

¹“In the case of early Christian glossolalia I have argued that no convincing parallels whatsoever have been found within the traditions of Graeco-Roman religion, as they were known in the environment of the New Testament, whether it be at the level of terminology, phenomena or concept,” Forbes concludes (316).

²T. M. Crone, *Early Christian Prophecy* (Baltimore: St. Mary’s University Press, 1973), chapter 1.

³Hovenden, 6-30.

⁴A. C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978): 510-526; see also Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 16-17.

⁵The literature about Corinth is immense. For a helpful annotated bibliography on the archaeological evidence and topics related to the epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, see Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 48-67.

⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

Corinth had a series of doctrinal, ethical, and spiritual problems. For them, the gift of tongues probably was a “status indicator.”¹ However, the specific status conferred by tongue-speaking may have had an internal, Jewish-Christian origin or influence. Pentecost, showing dramatic phenomena, involving apostolic leadership, and receiving eschatological interpretation, must have had a great impact on the early church.² Therefore, the gift of tongues, regarded as an emblematic sign of the manifestation of the Spirit, must have incited a showy desire in Corinth—a phenomenon not without parallel in the twenty-first century. To put it in fewer words, the believers of Corinth received the gift of tongues from their new Jewish-Christian community, but brought from their Hellenistic background a taste and/or motivation to use that gift as a mark of status. While the practice of tongues was typically Christian, the exaggerated elitism conferred on it in Corinth was typically pagan—not because the pagans necessarily had a similar phenomenon, but because the believers of Corinth, like their pagan co-citizens, were immature and valued flashy spirituality.

With pastoral sensitivity, Paul tries to create a more balanced view by (1) relativizing the gift of tongues as just one gift among many others (chap. 12); (2) encouraging love as the supreme way of the life controlled by the Spirit and the real measure of all gifts (chap. 13); and (3) stressing the intelligibility of tongues and underscoring the utilitarian primacy of prophecy over tongues (chap. 14).

Paul’s arguments about tongues in 1 Corinthians may be interpreted in harmony with the Lukan perspective. One may argue that evidence is pointing in another direction. This is not necessarily the case. To begin with, Paul may envisage tongues as a complex multiform phenomenon.³ “It is possible that there was a continuum of experiences that moved from known

¹For interesting insights on glossolalia as status indicator, see D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 87-103; and idem, “Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 547-589.

²Here in some way I am following John Chrysostom (*Homilies on 1 Corinthians* 29:1, 35:1), as well as Forbes (12, 172-174), who have a similar view about the origin of the status of tongues in Corinth.

³When Paul mentions “kinds of tongues” (1 Cor 12:10, 28), is he alluding to many kinds of languages or to multiple functions, species or expressions of tongues? Interpretations here vary.

human languages on one end of the spectrum, through several intermediate categories of language structure, to unintelligible vocalizations on the other end.”¹ Let us examine some data.

In 13:1, Paul says hypothetically that if he spoke “in the tongues of men and of angels,” but had not love, this ability would be meaningless. Here the apostle probably is not identifying the gift of tongues as tongues of angels. “This type of conditional clause in the Greek language is one that does not speak about reality,” observes Hasel. “Paul seems to say with hyperbole that if all linguistic possibilities, including angelic speech, were at his disposal and yet he lacked love, it would mean nothing.”²

In 14:2, Paul says that “anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God,” and “utters mysteries with his spirit.” An alternative translation for this last clause is “speaking mysteries in the Spirit” (RSV). This solution seems better, for the word “his” is not in the original Greek text. The word “mysteries” may be taken in the “normal” Pauline usage, as something once hidden but now revealed by God (see 1 Cor 2), or as a contrast to the revelation of prophecy. For Richardson, this verse says that the gift of tongues “wasn’t a medium of communication with other humans but rather a medium of communication with God”; or, in other words, “the tongues experience had a vertical dimension but not a horizontal one.”³ For Hasel, the mystery is due to the

Anthony C. Thiselton stresses that we must take the word *gene* (“kinds,” “sorts,” “species”) “with full seriousness” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000], 970). “Too much literature seeks to identify glossolalia as ‘one thing’ when Paul takes pains to refer to different species,” says the scholar (*ibid.*, italics and bold removed from original). His opinion may be conditioned by his view of glossolalia as unintelligible, a “childish” characteristic of immature believers, but the warning is valid. Cyril G. Williams also carefully avoids pointing a straight meaning, for terms like ecstasy may have nuances (*Tongues of the Spirit: A Study of Pentecostal Glossolalia and Related Phenomena* [Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981], 30).

¹William E. Richardson, “Liturgical Order and Glossolalia: 1 Corinthians 14:26c-33a and its Implications” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1983), 244.

²Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues*, 123.

³Richardson, *Speaking in Tongues*, 75.

absence of people who understand the foreign language spoken.¹ Dr. John T. Baldwin thinks Hasel's point of view is favored over that of Richardson.²

Tongues really have a vertical dimension, but Paul is trying to restore the horizontal one. Prophecy, by its nature, is a vertical phenomenon, which becomes horizontal at the moment of communication to other humans. That is, it comes from God to the prophet and goes to the listeners in an intelligible way. Tongues, by their nature, are a vertical phenomenon, which only become horizontal when interpreted. That is, tongues come from God to the speaker, go back to God in form of praise, return to the interpreter, and then reach the audience as an intelligible message.³ In Corinth, where the phenomenon had become an end in itself, at least for a group, the last part of the process was lacking. Yet, with their immature or childish behavior (vs. 20), the Corinthians continued to value tongues above other gifts, love, and community.

With a series of successive remarks in 1 Cor 14, especially in vss. 1-19, Paul seems engaged in making clear that tongues must be an intelligible phenomenon. To achieve this goal, he establishes two practical conditions: (1) the orderly utterance in the public worship of up to three speakers, one at a time, and (2) followed by interpretation (vs. 27). Therefore, tongues could be a

¹Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues*, 126.

²In an editorial note to this dissertation, Dr. John T. Baldwin, my adviser, made the following remarks: "In 1 Cor 14, Paul seems to describe the problems of the Corinthian use of tongues. Thus, not all elements in 1 Cor 14 are normative. This shows that Hasel's point of view is favored over [those of] Blazen and Richardson, who see no text in 1 Cor 14 as pejorative, but all as normative, which in my thinking is not correct. I think Paul is, as I said, describing the problem in 1 Cor 14:2, 14. Therefore, in these two texts, Paul is *not* telling us how things should be in speaking in tongues, but how they *should not be*. . . . Paul is saying: 'If I speak in tongues the way you, dear people, are doing in Corinth, then my spirit is praying to God (I know what I am saying), but my mind (*nous*, idea, concept, thought, prayer in this context) is not fruitful *to those who are listening to me* (because I am speaking in a language they do not understand).' The purpose of tongues in 1 Cor 14 is the edification of the church, and understanding is the only basis of edification in 1 Cor 14. Thus, the tongues-speaker edifies him or herself because the message is known."

³Hasel would say that tongues are purely horizontal, which is why Paul criticized the non-intelligible manifestation. A horizontal communication which is unintelligible is useless. I am trying to broaden the concept in order to include the "praise" that clearly appears in both Luke and Paul as a vertical manifestation.

form of praise or prayer with spiritual profit for the tongues-speaker (vss. 14-17), but was unprofitable (or, worse, harmful) for the community, leading unbelievers to charge the church with madness (vs. 23). If outsiders came into their gathering, they would consider them crazy, or mad, or possessed, no matter the kind of impression. In this case, tongues would have a negative evangelistic impact.¹

At one level, the Corinthians had misunderstood the primary purpose of tongues, and accordingly were misusing the gift.² The basic functions/purposes of tongues apparently are to magnify God through inspired prayer, to be (historically) a sign to unbelievers of a new international covenant, and to reveal inspired content. In Corinth, these purposes were incomplete. To meet their elitist/spiritualizing agenda, the Corinthians were extolling a lesser function of tongues to the detriment of its higher function. With this, we come to the question of tongues as a sign.

In 14:21, Paul, with a rabbinical taste for midrashic interpretation³ and apostolical authority to apply Old Testament passages to new contexts, appeals to Isa 28:11, 12 (echoing the covenantal curse of Deut 28:49-50) in order to make his point that tongues, especially uninterpreted, are not

¹Since the mystery religions of Corinth put emphasis on ecstaticism, Paul's preoccupation makes still more sense. "The expression of the ecstatic state took various forms, such as gashing one's flesh, dancing nude in a frenzy, and speaking in ecstatic utterance," describes H. Wayne House ("Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 [1983]: 139).

²In my view, the Corinthian glossolalia was not a counterfeit, for in this case Paul, with his gift to discern spirits, had prohibited the gift, not just corrected its use (see 1 Cor 14:39, 40). To argue that Paul did not forbid the phenomenon due to a pastoral concern, in order not to quench the charismata, only would make sense if Paul were sure that the phenomenon was not a counterfeit. That the phenomenon could be somewhat ambiguous, no question, but not a clear counterfeit. The Bible has no cases of true prophets, like Paul himself, condoning counterfeit phenomena in the name of pastoral diplomacy. Besides, Paul himself confesses to be a tongue-speaker (vs. 18).

³Midrash: a Hebrew method of searching and expounding Scripture, updating and applying ancient sacred texts to current situations in creative ways.

designed to dominate the corporate worship. He says that tongues are a sign for unbelievers. In what sense are tongues a sign? There are multiple interpretations.¹

In my view, at Pentecost, in a Jewish context, tongues were implicitly (1) a sign of judgment for the unbelieving Israel, indicating that the kingdom was being given to people of all nations; (2) a sign of opportunity to the world, attesting that Jesus was the Messiah, now enthroned in heaven, and that God was speaking through the apostles; and (3) a sign of blessing for the church, evidencing that God was empowering the believers to extol God's salvation and to preach Christ.² In other words, tongues as witnessed in its historical setting, outside the worship space, were a sign, either negative or positive, primarily for virtual "unbelieving" believers (Jews), secondarily for potential "believing" unbelievers (Jews and/or Gentiles), and tertiarily for real "believing" believers (followers). But what kind of sign were tongues in Corinth, in a Gentile context? It is possible that Paul, in order to restrict the Corinthians, and having their "own point of view in mind"³ (to correct it), was remitting them to the primary historical roles of tongues at Pentecost.⁴ Paul seems to be saying: "God used tongues in a context of attestation of his new people before unbelievers; now you are using tongues in a context of exhibition before believers." In some way, the remembrance of tongues as a sign for unbelievers, parallel to (or contradistinct of)

¹See O. Palmer Robertson, "Tongues: Sign of Covenantal Curse and Blessing," *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975): 43-53; B. C. Johanson, "Tongues, a Sign for Unbelievers? A Structural and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians XIV.20-25," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979): 180-203; J. P. M. Sweet, "A Sign for Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glossolalia," *New Testament Studies* 13 (1967): 240-257; Wayne Grudem, "1 Corinthians 14:20-25: Prophecy and Tongues as Signs of God's Attitude," *Westminster Journal of Theology* 41 (1979): 381-396; Forbes, 175-181; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 108-117.

²"It is reasonable to assume Luke considered the Pentecostal recognition of xenolalia, and the positive effect of this, to be a unique and providential sign marking the beginning of the age of the Spirit of prophecy: one that was not repeated exactly elsewhere," comments Max Turner (*The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 226).

³Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 240. See also Sweet, 241, and Johanson, 193-194.

⁴Here one may object that the Corinthians did not know this theological technicality. Well, the right question is: Did Paul know this argument? And if he knew it or was able to elaborate or just to cite it, would he do it? We must not underestimate Paul's theological sophistication or his tendency to elevate the level of the debate in spite of his audience's maturity.

prophecy as a sign for believers, was just one more theological/rhetorical device in the Pauline repertoire to make the triple point that the believers of Corinth should have a more realistic view of tongues, that prophecy is more profitable than tongues, and that public worship should be developed in an intelligible/orderly/edifying way.¹

There are, however, other plausible solutions. One is offered by Joop Smit, who considers irrelevant the original context of the quotation of Isaiah, and applies it “not to the glossolalists among the believers, but to the ecstatic speakers, present everywhere in the Hellenistic surroundings.” The correct rendition of vs. 22 in the form of a definition, in this case, would be: “So the tongues, regarded as a sign of recognition, are not proper to the believers, but to the unbelievers.” Smit concludes: “The thesis is simple: faced with ecstatic speakers the ordinary observer does not think of believers, but of unbelievers.”² A problem with this hypothesis is that it assumes (1) the Corinthian phenomenon had a Hellenistic background and (2) a highly negative view of tongues, which seems to go beyond Paul’s appraisal of the gift. Another possible solution is presented by Robert Gladstone, who, promising to tie together all strands of the text, suggests this alternative translation to vs. 22: “Therefore tongues are a sign, not resulting in believers, but resulting in unbelievers; But prophecy [is a sign], not resulting in unbelievers, but resulting in believers.” With their “infatuation with tongues,” the Corinthians thought this gift would impress and convert unbelievers, but Paul warns them that they were not truly considering the perspective of the outsiders.³

¹This means that one should not press much on this passage, or on Pentecost accounts, to make a case on the role of tongues as a physical initial evidence of the Spirit’s presence. In our modern context, glossolalia may be used in a Corinthian fashion as a sign of a “higher” spirituality. Could in the future a gift of tongues more patterned by the Lukan account of xenolalia come to be known during a final outpouring of the Spirit in attestation of the remnant? This is, of course, speculation.

²Joop F. M. Smit, “Tongues and Prophecy: Deciphering 1 Cor 14,22,” *Biblica* 75 (1994): 186, 187.

³Robert J. Gladstone, “Sign Language in the Assembly: How Are Tongues a Sign to the Unbeliever in 1 Cor 14:10-25?” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2 (1999): 177-194, citations from 185, 192.

Regardless of one's interpretation of vs. 22, the general conclusion is that for both Luke and Paul the gift of tongues is an inspired intelligible utterance of the Spirit with multiple purposes, revelational content, and one source (the Spirit). It is possible, as Forbes argues, that Luke, unlike Paul, "conceives of glossolalia as a subspecies within the broader category of 'prophecy,' rather than as a separate, though related, phenomenon."¹ Yet both are speaking of the same phenomenon, although in diverse contexts, and with different purposes.

The assessment of glossolalia

What could we say about modern glossolalia? After decades of research, the ambiguity of this phenomenon still remains. However, a few provisional "certainties" can be outlined.

First, Christian understanding of glossolalia is highly dependent on one's theological presuppositions. Traditional Protestant theologians tend to see the biblical phenomenon as real languages and the modern phenomenon as gibberish,² which causes them to oppose the modern experience. Pentecostal/charismatic theologians tend to see both Corinthian and contemporary phenomena as unintelligible utterances.

Second, the glossolalic phenomenon is not peculiar to, or exclusive of, Pentecostalism/charismatism. Anthropologist L. Carlyle May documented cases among several twentieth-century non-Christian cultures.³ The respected Pentecostal scholar Russell Splitter recognizes: "Whatever its origin, glossolalia is a human phenomenon, not limited to Christianity

¹Forbes, 51.

²Reflecting the hypercritical view of the past on glossolalia, Merrill F. Unger wrote: "Much of what parades as an ecstatic utterance supposedly evidencing a deeper spiritual experience is mere gibberish produced by auto-suggestion under great emotional stress and strong desire for a tongues experience" (*New Testament Teaching on Tongues*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1973], 166).

³L. Carlyle May, "A Survey of Glossolalia and Related Phenomena in Non-Christian Religions," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 75-96.

nor even to religious behavior.”¹ Splitter mentions dramatic glossolalia, when actors, using their talents in television comedies, “spontaneously initiate a language, then put the punch line in the vernacular”; spiritualistic glossolalia, practiced by mediums and firstly studied by psychologists; pathological glossolalia, which “result of such causes as organic neurological damage, effects of drugs, or psychotic disorders”; and pagan glossolalia, both ancient and modern.² For someone concerned with biblical identity, this fact should suggest caution.

Third, glossolalia has three possible sources: (1) the Holy Spirit (divine origin), (2) the speakers (human origin), or (3) Satan (demonic origin).³ Options 2 and 3 certainly could be mixed. The question is: Can options 1 and 2 be mixed likewise? Might the Holy Spirit take a human-initiated phenomenon and transform it into a gift of praise to God? Biblically, no one can dare to say with assurance “yes” or “no,” although in some way every charismatic phenomenon is a confluence of divine and human elements.

Fourth, modern glossolalia, rightly or wrongly associated with the biblical gift of tongues, has been almost beyond doubt identified with a learned behavior,⁴ bearing no intelligible or meaningful content. According to Malony and Lovekin, “it can with certainty be stated that there has been little or no confirmation of the claims that glossolalists have spoken in modern languages currently being spoken.”⁵ Noted linguists have pointed out that glossolalia lacks the basic linguistic features. William Samarin writes: “When the full apparatus of linguistic science comes to bear on glossolalia, this turns out to be only a facade of language—although at times a very good

¹R. P. Splittler, “Glossolalia,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 336.

²Ibid., 336.

³Unger, 163-164.

⁴See W. J. Samarin, “Glossolalia as Learned Behavior,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 15 (1969): 60-64.

⁵H. Newton Malony and A. Adams Lovekin, *Glossolalia: Behavioral Science Perspectives on Speaking in Tongues* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 28.

one indeed.”¹ Glossolalics “have not tried to produce lexicons, nor do they feel a need to do so”; “they do not know what their speeches mean, and they trust God to interpret the meaning through the insight He gives to another person.”²

Fifth, glossolalia has a communitarian dimension. “Public religious glossolalia typically occurs in an environment of shared expectations. The presence of God is assumed, and the power of the Holy Spirit to speak through individuals is taken for granted.” Yet, it must be noted, there are “individual differences among those who desire to become glossolalic”; not all who seek to speak in tongues receive this ability, probably due to personality traits.³ That the cultural environment provides the socio-religious-psychological “rules” for the glossolalic experience seems beyond doubt.

Sixth, glossolalia implies an extraordinary or altered state of consciousness,⁴ which may have diverse psychological/anthropological interpretations. Felicitas Goodman, noted for her cross-cultural research, has assumed that glossolalia involves a complex state of trance.⁵ According to Malony and Lovekin, *trance* (“the phenomenon observed from the outside,” “defined observationally”) and *possession* (“the experience reported from the inside,” “typically defined personally and culturally”) are the two words that have been applied to the glossolalic state.⁶ John

¹W. J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 127-128.

²Malony and Lovekin, 32.

³Ibid., 31, 63.

⁴In modern science, altered states of consciousness do not imply necessarily abnormality or psychopathology; today extraordinary phenomena are studied with less prejudice than in the past.

⁵Felicitas D. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 8, 124.

⁶Malony and Lovekin, 98, 99.

Kildahl sees a similarity between glossolalia and hypnosis in that either experience can be induced by an authority figure.¹

Seventh, glossolalia, regardless of its nature, should not be taken as a sign of orthodoxy or higher spiritual status. Who dares to deny today that the glossolalic Corinthians were immature, carnal, and almost heretic? For Bloesch, “tongues should be related to the childhood of faith or to new beginnings in faith,” appearing “when we try to integrate past memories embedded in the unconscious with the new vision.”² Classical Pentecostal understanding of tongues as a/the sign of Spirit-baptism has been challenged by sound exegesis.³ Moreover, Paul answers this question with another question: “Do all speak in tongues?” (1 Cor 12:30). The logical answer is “no.” If the gift is given only to some (vs. 10), how can it be a sign for all? Paul, evidently, does not consider the gift of tongues as normative for all believers.⁴

Finally, glossolalia in Christian settings should have at least a minimum of correspondence to the New Testament phenomenon. Hasel rightly says: “If any contemporary glossolalia is to be identified with the New Testament gift of tongues-speaking, then it will have to be demonstrated that it matches the New Testament definition and specifications for ‘speaking in tongues,’ including its source, its purpose, its nature, its orderliness, its outreach design and so on.”⁵

¹John Kildahl, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 37, 54, 55.

²Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*, 196. Theissen also believes that “glossolalia does in fact exhibit regressive traits in linguistic, social, and psychological aspects” (312).

³For a recent bibliography on the Pentecostal doctrine of initial evidence, see Gerald J. Flokstra III, “Sources for the Initial Evidence Discussion: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2 (1999): 243-259.

⁴See Max Turner, “Tongues: An Experience for All in the Pauline Churches?” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1 (1998): 231-253.

⁵Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues*, 153.

The Gift of Tongues-Interpretation

The gift of tongues-interpretation is a special ability that God gives to some believers to make sense in vernacular language of the content of inspired speech given through the gift of tongues. There are no biblical specific examples of tongues-interpreters, but the gift certainly was known (1 Cor 12:10, 30; 14:13, 26-28).

One's understanding of the "interpretation of tongues" (*hermeneia glosson*) in 1 Corinthians (12, 14) depends on one's understanding of the term "tongues." What one thinks of the nature of the gift of tongues will determine what one thinks the gift of interpretation of tongues is. There are two basic interpretations: (1) to translate the inspired content to another language and (2) to put the unintelligent glossolalia into intelligible words or to bring it to articulate expression.¹ Although both views are possible, the "normal" use of the verbs *hermeneuo* and *dihermeneuo* is in the linguistic sense of translation or interpretation.²

The Gift of Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is a special ability that God gives to some believers to accumulate, process, and apply spiritual knowledge to practical situations, with profit to the kingdom of God. Examples include Solomon (1 Kgs 3:9-12, 29-34), Daniel (Dan 1:19-20; 2:23; 4:18), and Stephen (Acts 6:3, 9b-10).

In 1 Cor 12:8, Paul cites the message or word of wisdom (*logos sophia*) as a gift of the Spirit. According to Anthony Thiselton, the meaning here "may be either articulate utterance derived from (God's) wisdom" (subjective genitive), or "articulate utterance about (God's) wisdom" (objective genitive).³ Although this charism may be interpreted in a broader sense as a

¹A. C. Thiselton defends this second use in his article "The 'Interpretation' of Tongues? A New Suggestion in the Light of Greek Usage in Philo and Josephus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979): 15-36. However, see the strong criticism of Forbes (65-72).

²Forbes argues that "there are a large number of cases [in Philo and Josephus] where 'to translate' or 'to interpret or expound' is the translation required" (65).

³Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 938, bold and italics removed.

way of life, it is perhaps better understood as an inspired or intuitive insight directed to a need or end, or even as a prophetic speech for specific situations.

Wisdom is a much praised virtue or gift in the biblical canon. Since Mosaic times, it is frequently mentioned or alluded to. In Deuteronomy, wisdom has an important function. First, as Keith Mattingly points out, it played a role in the choice of leadership (Deut 1:9-18). Second, it “manifested itself in clear leadership responsibilities, such as listening without bias and judging without partiality or fear” (Deut 1:16-17). Third, it is connected with obedience (4:5-8). Finally, wisdom is associated “with the ability to recognize where a particular course of action will lead” (Deut 32:29).¹ Wisdom is frequently connected with the Spirit of God in the Bible. For example, when Moses laid hands on Joshua to install him in the office of Israel’s leader, Joshua “was filled with the spirit of wisdom” (Deut 34:9).

God, as the source of wisdom, shares his wisdom with his people. Mattingly writes: “YHWH alone truly knows and understands wisdom, and it is he who dispenses it to his people. His Spirit is seen to be the means by which his people are filled with wisdom; hence the expression, ‘spirit of wisdom’.”² Wisdom from God is not natural, worldly, speculative or philosophical, but revealed (1 Cor 1:18-31; 2). It is more God-sight than insight. Accordingly, it is possessed only by those who love God and follow his will. An awareness communicated by the Spirit and informed by Scripture, wisdom guides, orients, and achieves. It keeps one’s eye on God and finds its climax in the revelation of Jesus Christ, “who has become for us wisdom from God” (1 Cor 1:30).

In closing this section, we can ask: Are all gifts being experienced in the correct way in the churches today? In spite of so many new books and ideas about gifts, it is possible that the gifts are not finding complete expression. It is necessary that each church, in the light of Scripture, analyze

¹Keith Mattingly, “Joshua’s Reception of the Laying on of Hands, Part 2: Deuteronomy 34:7 and Conclusion,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 40 (2002): 95.

²Ibid., 94.

what it needs to change. The moment is favorable to do this. Gifts are given for a purpose, as we will now see.

The Purpose of the Gifts

The essential purpose of the spiritual gifts is to build a temple. The concept of a dwelling place for God is found in the theology of both Testaments. But there is a basic difference: the temple in the New Testament is more spiritualized and even personalized. Christ, as the true new temple (John 2:19-21), which sheds the glory of God through all the earth (John 1:14), is the connecting point between these two kinds of temples.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit plays a special role in enabling people to build astonishing houses for God. The tabernacle and the temples, which should be built according to heavenly and Spirit-inspired patterns, were places where God would dwell, manifest his presence, and fill with his glory.¹

In the New Testament, as Hildebrandt points out, “the temple analogy is transferred to the believing individual and to the corporate body of believers.”² The believers not only receive gifts/skills to build the temple (Eph 4:11-12), but themselves both individually and corporately are temples (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).³ God dwells in them through his Spirit. This spiritual temple is not to be understood only in a rhetorical or figurative sense. Paul envisions high goals for the body of Christ. The body is built to become “a holy temple” of God, “a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:21, 22). Christ makes possible a spiritual re-enactment of the Edenic experience,

¹About creative skills, see Exod 31:1-11; Hag 1:14; about patterns, see Exod 25:7-8, 40; 26:30; 1 Chr 28:11-12; Ezek 40-44; Acts 7:44; Heb 8:2, 5; and about glory filling the sanctuary/temple, see Exod 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11; Ezek 43:5; Hag 2:5-7.

²Hildebrandt, 195.

³When it comes to temple imagery, Paul’s emphasis is on the corporate community of believers as the eschatological place of God’s presence. Yet he also thinks of the individual believer as a temple of the Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). After all, community is made up of individuals, and the body is formed by its members. Just as the sin of an individual defiles the whole temple of God, so the presence of God in the spiritual temple may be shared by individual believers.

when the light of God shone upon/through Adam and Eve, by anticipating the glory of the resurrected people.

As I said, if in the Old Testament the focus was on the physical temple, in the New the focus is on the spiritual temple.¹ Pauline terminology is an evidence of this. He uses the word *naos* (the inner space of the temple, the place of God's dwelling) six times, but employs only once the term *hieron* (the entire area of the temple).² Following a logical scheme, the Old Testament mentions artistic skills, proper to make a physical edifice, while the New Testament cites spiritual gifts, ideal to erect a spiritual building. The gifted people of the new temple are apostles, evangelists, teachers, and so on. The pattern for the new temple is Christ. Holiness is required in both cases, so that the glory of God may shine, but there is a shift of emphasis from ritual to ethical aspects. As the new temple, the believers must live as children of light.

In Ephesians, Paul develops this theme in a somewhat continuous argument: (1) the Gentiles were dead in their sins (2:1-3); (2) then, graciously, they are made alive in Christ (2:4-8); (3) working on the basis of the cross, the Spirit unites Jews and Gentiles, and both are reconciled to God (2:11-18); (4) the result is a new and holy temple of God, which follows the pattern/measure of Christ, the Head³ (2:19-22; 4:13, 15-16); (5) this temple, in which Christ dwells through the Spirit, must manifest holiness and light (3:16-21; 4:20-24; 5:8-19).

¹For three helpful studies on the church as a spiritual temple or related subjects, consult O. Michel, "Naos," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:880-890; J. Coppins, "The Spiritual Temple in the Pauline Letters and Its Background," *Studia Evangelica* 6 (1973): 53-66; and I. Howard Marshall, "Church and Temple in the New Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989): 203-222.

²He uses *naos* in 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 2 Thess 2:4. His solitary reference to the physical temple in a general sense (*hieron*) appears in 1 Cor 9:13.

³Christ, of course, rules over the church. Yet the Pauline metaphor of headship must be understood in the light of his arguments and his cultural context. Paul does not present Christ as the boss or commander-in-chief of the church (especially in Eph 4:15-16 and Col 2:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:3-11; Eph 1:22-23; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:10). The relation is one of reciprocity, not one of command. According to David J. Williams, Paul seems to derive this concept from the common idea among the medical writers of his day that "the head was the source and center of the life of the body—all that was needed for the proper functioning of the body derived from the head" (*Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999], 90-91). "As against the

The whole teaching of Paul about the nature and functioning of the gifts in 1 Cor 12-14—which is the most authoritative brief theology on the subject—seems to corroborate the purpose of the gifts: edifying or building up (*oikodome*) the church. According to Richard Oudersluys, Paul’s *oikodomein* language “has its rootage in the nature of God’s people as a covenant, corporate community.” Employed in the Old Testament, where “it is God who builds and plants his people” (Jer 1:10; 24:6; 31:4; 33:7), this language is used by Paul to highlight the quality of the believers as God’s spiritual temple.¹ How does Paul develop his arguments?

First, Paul underscores that all gifts are God-given (12:4-6). No believer is an autocracy. Believers live, move, work, and minister by the power of God (see Acts 17:28). Besides, the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the distribution of the gifts (12:11, 18). This means that all believers are part of someone else’s project. The Spirit seeks all giftable people available to employ them in Christ’s architectural project.²

Second, Paul suggests that the gifts comprise a unity in their innumerable expressions. There is an array of different gifts, varying in shape, size, and function, but only one source (12:4). As a well-shaped tree “produces a multitude of leaves, yet no two leaves are alike,” similarly “the church reflects unity in its totality but not uniformity in its parts.”³ God gives his Spirit as a Gift to the church, and the Spirit acts as Giver of multiple gifts.⁴ So diversity of phenomena, rather than headship of authority (Old Testament), this physiological metaphor presents what might be described as ‘the headship of source and of service’” (ibid., 91).

¹Richard C. Oudersluys, “The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts,” *Reformed Review* 28 (1975): 213, 214.

²In the New Testament perspective, the spiritual temple of God is made by God, not by human hands (see 2 Cor 5:1; Heb 9:11, 24). That is, the true sanctuary of God is in heaven, being the earthly temple of Christ an eschatological “extension” of that sanctuary.

³Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 418.

⁴As the church’s needs change from place to place or from time to time, likewise perhaps emphases on gifts also change from place to place or from time to time. Each local church may develop certain gifts, while lacking others. Yet, all churches should have all necessary gifts. One could apply this reasoning to argue that all denominations are complementary. While one has the

the primacy of one phenomenon, should be recognized. Paul highlights both the necessity of unity in diversity and the legitimacy of diversity in unity.¹ As God is one, so the gifts have one source and one purpose, which makes divisiveness something so immature.

Third, Paul says that the gifts are a democratic or all-reaching bestowal. Gifts are not just for an elite. All believers are gifted, for the Spirit gifts “each one” (12:11; cf. 1 Pet 4:10). A writer says: “The wrong question has too often been asked: What are the gifts of God’s Spirit? Why not ask instead, *Who* are those gifted by God’s Spirit? The answer is, *All* baptized believers are charismatic, Spirit-gifted.”² The Spirit does not place useless/needless stones in the spiritual temple of Christ.

Fourth, Paul emphasizes that the gifts are communitarian. The corporate nature of the gifts is clear in Pauline theology—a concept that he probably inherited from his cultural background.³ The gifts are given for the edification of the body, “a common metaphor for society or the state” “in

gift of tongues, so to say, another has the gift of prophecy. As all denominations need each other, none should criticize each other’s theology. This argument fails to recognize that the body of Christ is a whole. As a body, the church is an organism. An organism is a complex living system. It is not like a machine, where the whole is equal to the sum of its parts. An organism is more than the sum of its parts, for there is a continuous interaction and a different reaction to different stimuli.

¹“Interpreters differ in placing emphasis on unity or in diversity in this chapter [1 Cor 12],” writes Thiselton. For him, “both contextually and theologically the unity constitutes the major emphasis in vv. 4-11, since ‘building’ provides the cohesive goal and purpose of the gifts, whatever their variety” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 928). Martin suggests that “in [1 Cor] 12:4-11 Paul continually stresses unity in diversity in order to overcome divisiveness owing to different valuations being assigned to different gifts” (*The Corinthian Body*, 87).

²Lowell J. Satre, *All Christians Are Charismatic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 37.

³In the Israelite worldview, there was an emphasis on corporate solidarity, although the Old Testament also recognizes individual responsibility. Today, researchers are disclosing the complex nature of the *dyatic personality* of the ancient Mediterranean cultures, a concept that may be defined as the self-perception of individuals or groups as interconnected with other individuals or groups within a given social context. If Paul shared that mentality, it was natural for him to stress the corporate nature of the gifts. There is a growing body of literature about the corporate/individual responsibility in the Bible. See, for example, Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

ancient political literature,”¹ and not for the mere enrichment of the individual members (12:7; 14:5, 12). Paul, based on a “socio-logic” and a “theo-logic,” recognizes an interrelationship of three kinds of body: “the believer’s physical body cannot be understood independently of the social body of the *ekklesia*, and the *ekklesia* cannot be understood appropriately except as the ‘body of Christ.’”² As members of the eschatological community, the believers should not compete between themselves,³ nor be proud of their gifts,⁴ nor yet try to exercise their gifts in an insulated context.⁵ The shame or the honor of a part of the body is the shame or honor of the whole body.

Fifth, Paul emphasizes that the gifts are complementary. “No one person has all gifts (12:14-21), nor is any one of the gifts bestowed on all persons (12:28-30). Consequently, the individual members of the church need each other.”⁶ In the body of Christ, there is no place for discrimination. The eyes need the nose as much as the nose needs the eyes. Paul’s rhetoric in 12:29-30 confirms this point. Are all apostles? No. Are all prophets? No. Do all speak in tongues? No. The corollary is that the work of the kingdom must be done by 100 percent of God’s people.

Sixth, Paul makes clear that the gifts are differently scored, and he prioritizes the up-building ones. All gifts are important and necessary, but not in the same measure (12:22-26). The

¹Stephen C. Barton, “Christian Community in the Light of 1 Corinthians,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 10 (1997): 10.

²*Ibid.*, 9, italics in original.

³In 1 Thess 5:11, Paul links “encouragement” (*paraklesis*) with “building up” (*oikodome*): “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.”

⁴As Yohn says, “proper understanding of spiritual gifts should eliminate inferiority feelings,” as well as “exaggerated self-esteem” (*Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It*, 148, 149).

⁵“*Oikodome* is a community task, something that should take place wherever that community exists, and whenever that community exercises itself in witness and worship,” writes Oudersluys (215).

⁶Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 270-271.

church should appreciate, seek, and express the “best” gifts, those that build up the church (12:31; 14:1, 12). The best gifts are those that cause the body of Christ to grow harmoniously, benefiting a greater number of people.

Finally, Paul makes clear that the gifts are to be exercised in a rational and “orderly way” in public worship (14:33, 40). If the gifts certainly have an expression in the secular arena, their natural space is the sacred arena (worship). And in this space, says Paul, any activity or charismatic manifestation must seek the up-building of the church. This means that spiritual gifts and institutional functions (or charismatic and organized ministry) are mutually complementary, not exclusive.¹ For Paul, the body of Christ is composed of a diversity of ordered expressions. Donald Gee is right when he suggests that the observance of the golden rule of edification (1 Cor 14:26) and the golden principle of love (1 Cor 13) “would cure practically every misuse of the gifts of the Spirit.”²

Working on concepts of the noted British anthropologist Mary Douglas, who advanced the hypothesis of the body as a symbol of the social system (a microcosm of the social body), Jerome Neyrey suggests that in 1 Corinthians the Pauline viewpoint “may be accurately described according to the cosmology of a controlled body (strong ‘group’/high ‘grid’),” while the non-Pauline position “fits the cosmology of a group which is weak ‘group’/low ‘grid.’”³ Throughout the letter, therefore, Paul underscores control over bodily orifices, discipline, and authority, in order to maintain the body as an ideal functioning system.

All gifts, then, are designed for this purpose: edification. This is valid likewise in the first and in twenty-first centuries. Paul’s discourse on spiritual gifts is situated in a historical context, but it has theological relevance and normativeness for any Christian church. As Stephen Barton

¹See Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Ministry, Community and Spiritual Gifts,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 56 (1984): 3-20.

²Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, rev. ed. (Springfield: Gospel, 1972), 88.

³Jerome H. Neyrey, “Body Language in 1 Corinthians: The Use of Anthropological Models for Understanding Paul and His Opponents,” *Semeia* 35 (1986): 129-170, citation from 163.

observes, 1 Corinthians “speaks across the centuries to our contemporary concerns in a way that appears remarkably prescient—as if we are all Corinthians.”¹ Does this mean that the miraculous gifts as seen in Corinth are still active today? This is our next topic.

The Continuity of the Miraculous Gifts

In the last few years, there have appeared scores of popular and scholarly books and articles dealing with the polemic about the continuity/discontinuity of the so-called miraculous gifts.² This debate is re-enacted to some degree throughout Christian history whenever groups claiming charismatic power appear. My purpose here is not to present an extensive discussion of the subject, but just give a brief overview of two established schools (namely, the cessationist and the Pentecostal/charismatic) and offer an alternative approach. I will call these models “foundational approach,”³ “charismatic approach,” and “continuous-cyclical approach.”⁴ There is a plethora of possible arguments favoring each point of view; the three chosen in each case are representative of a wider theological debate. To clarify this topic is important not only to satisfy a theological curiosity, but because it has direct experiential and missiological implications.

¹Barton, 1.

²See, for example, Wayne A. Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer, eds., *The Kingdom and the Power* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993); John F. MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); and Graham Houston, *Prophecy: A Gift for Today?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989). A representative bibliography on both sides of the polemic can be found in Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, 1997), particularly the notes on pp. 15-20.

³I prefer this term to the traditional “cessationist” in order to avoid the idea that for the supporters of this point of view *all* spiritual gifts or *all* miracles have disappeared with the apostles. This is not the case.

⁴What follows is partially based on Marcos De Benedicto, “Carismas no século XXI? Análise de três teorias sobre a existência de dons miraculosos na atualidade,” *Parousia* 1 (2000): 59-72; and De Benedicto, “O toque da fé: paradigmas bíblicos da cura divina,” 103-136.

Foundational Approach

The basic premise of this view is that the miraculous gifts were important in the beginning of the Christian church as authenticating tools; but, when the foundation of the church was set and the process of revelation that would give origin to the canon was closed, miraculous gifts became inoperative. The key word is “purpose.” Miracles, through the hands of gifted believers, have fulfilled their accrediting purpose, and ceased.

Among the numerous supporters of this view are the reformers Martin Luther (1483-1546)¹ and especially John Calvin (1509-1564),² the Puritan John Owen (1616-1683),³ and Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921), theologian of the school of Princeton and critic of the pre-Pentecostal healers.⁴ As Allan Pieratt points out, the Catholic Church always had appealed to miracles as evidence of its apostolic authority as mother church; therefore, the reformers needed to develop a theology to explain why vast numbers of miracles claimed in the previous fifteen centuries had no strength at all.⁵ Jack Deere sees the lack of miracles in Christian experience, not a reaction to

¹“Luther clearly believed that the great miracles like healing were given in the beginning simply so that church people could later do ‘greater works than these’ by teaching, converting, and saving men spiritually,” writes Morton T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 221. However, it is not certain whether Luther maintained his opinion until the end of his life. The reformer himself would have succeeded in praying once for the health recovery of his friend Philip Melancthon (*ibid.*, 233).

²For the French reformer, God works miracles as in the old times, but not through the hands of the apostles, for this gift was temporary (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John J. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 14-18).

³See John Owen’s “Discourse of Spiritual Gifts,” in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Gould (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1862), vol. 4, book 9, chaps. 4 and 5.

⁴B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976, reprint 1995; first published in 1918), 3-31. We must note that Warfield’s aim was to refute spurious miracles through the history of the church, not to exegete texts about the supposed cessation of the charismata.

⁵Allan B. Pieratt, *Sinai e maravilhas: o dedo de Deus ou os chifres do diabo?* (São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1994), 28.

Rome or a careful study of Scripture, as the primary motivation for the cessationist doctrine.¹ Let us examine three representative arguments used by these theologians.

Antiparadigmatic Argument

Charismatics have a predilection for Acts, especially Acts 2. Pentecost, in their view, is a paradigm for modern Christians (see below). Richard Gaffin, Jr., professor of systematic theology, has made an attempt to demonstrate that this is not the case. For him, Pentecost is unique and irrepeatable. Gaffin underscores the distinction between “history of salvation” (*historia salutis*), that is, the once-for-all events that characterize the salvific work of Christ, such as his death and resurrection, and the “order of salvation” (*ordo salutis*), that is, events connected with the continuous application of the benefits of salvation to individual believers, such as righteousness by faith and sanctification. For Gaffin, “Pentecost belongs to the history of salvation, not to the order of salvation.”²

Linking John the Baptist’s water-baptism with Pentecost (Acts 1:5) in a relation of sign/reality or prophecy/fulfillment, Gaffin argues that “Spirit and fire baptism is to be nothing less than the culmination of the Messiah’s ministry; it will serve to stamp that ministry as a whole, just as, in comparison, water baptism was an index for John’s entire ministry.” In another line of reasoning, he observes that Peter, discoursing at Pentecost, “closely conjoins, in sequence: resurrection-ascension-reception of the Spirit-outpouring of the Spirit,” being Pentecost “climactic and final.” Therefore, “Resurrection-ascension-Pentecost, though distinct in time, constitute a unified complex of events, a once-for-all, salvation-historical unity.” Considering that the other events in the sequence are irrepeatable, Pentecost also must be.³

¹Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 99-103.

²Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “A Cessationist View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 30, 31.

³*Ibid.*, 31, 32, 33.

It is not my purpose here to analyze Gaffin's article, because in the same book other authors have done it. I just want to signal that the uniqueness of Pentecost is one of the best arguments pro cessationism. However, cannot Pentecost be seen also as the beginning of a new age, the messianic aeon? Is not the parousia the culmination of the salvific events? Does Luke intend to say that all miraculous phenomena related to Pentecost are exclusivistic of the apostles? In the light of the whole biblical teaching, Gaffin's argument is convincing enough to rock some exaggerated charismatic claims, but it is not strong enough to securely fasten the entire cessationist position.

Apostolic Argument

For cessationist theologians, the apostles had a unique foundational role. F. David Farnell, working on Eph 2:20, argues that the apostles and the prophets of the New Testament age were the foundation of the "universal church," and "this foundation, by implication and by its very nature, can be laid only once since foundations are necessarily laid only once at the beginning of any structure."¹ The superstructure does not need the same miraculous "material"; no new foundation of the Christian edifice can be launched again.

Peter Masters, another ardent cessationist, argues that the apostles were witnesses in a strong, even judicial sense, not witnesses in a general sense, as the Christians today. For this reason, the Spirit was given to them in order to enable them to uphold publicly the veracity of the messianic work of Jesus. The purpose of the miracles, in this view, was to authenticate the apostolic witness.² Various texts are used in support of this hypothesis.³ John 15:26-27, for example, says: "When the Counselor comes . . . he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." Acts 1:8 is also explicit: "But you will

¹F. David Farnell, "When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993): 187.

²Peter Masters, *The Healing Epidemic* (London: Wakeman Trust, 1988), 116-122.

³See, for example, Luke 24:46-48; Acts 2:32; 5:31-32; 10:39-42; 22:14-15; 1 John 1:1-3.

receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Warfield, followed by many others, has argued that there is a “deeper principle” showing an “inseparable connection of miracles with revelation, as its mark and credential.” Miracles “belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers.” Although the mystics dream of private miracles, God has chosen to deal with humanity “in its entirety.” When the “historic process of organic revelation” “reached its completeness” with the apostles, revelation and miracles passed away. The Spirit works now “not to introduce new and unneeded revelations into the world, but to diffuse this one complete revelation through the world and bring mankind into the saving knowledge of it.”¹ This line of reasoning is based on such texts as 2 Cor 12:12, where Paul presents “signs, wonders and miracles” as marks of an apostle, and Heb 2:3-4, where it is said that God testified of the salvation preached by the apostles (?) “by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

In response to this “apostolic” argument, much could be said. I will mention three points. First, the apostles, in spite of their special role as founders of the church (beginning with the symbolism of the number twelve), were not the only ones to perform miracles, nor even the only believers considered apostles.² In the second place, miracles cannot be exclusively attached to revelation. In Scripture, we can identify at least eight purposes of miracles: (1) to glorify God, (2) to overflow God’s love, (3) to authenticate a messenger or a divine mission, (4) to attest God’s supremacy over rival deities, (5) to teach or underscore a truth (such as the spiritual meaning of the Sabbath), (6) to amplify or strengthen the scope of the church’s proclamation, (7) to announce the

¹Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*, 25, 26.

²Paul considered himself an apostle (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 9:1-2). Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy were called apostles (Acts 14:14; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:7). According to Paul, the risen Christ was seen by the “Twelve” and then by “all the apostles” (1 Cor 15:5, 7). Although Acts 2:43 and 5:12 tell us that the apostles performed many miracles, this is not conclusive evidence that other believers did not perform them. Stephen and Barnabas did great miraculous signs (Acts 6:8; 14:3).

messianic age, and (8) to function as signs of a deeper eschatological reality.¹ René Latourelle, although in some way faithful to the Catholic idea of miracles as chiefly corroborative or judicial events (Vatican I), or revelatory and accrediting vehicles (Vatican II), recognizes that miracles “are in fact polyvalent signs; that is, they act on several levels at once, and they point in several directions.”² Finally, as Jon Ruthven has pointed out, cessationists fail to distinguish between canon and charismata. He writes:

The central failure of Warfield’s cessationism is the confusion of the *sufficiency* of revelation, that is, in the unique historical manifestation of Christ and apostolic doctrine as finally revealed in Scripture, with the procedural *means* of communicating, expressing and applying that revelation, that is, via charismata, including gifts of prophecy and miracles. In other words, the charismata do not accredit the Gospel; they express the Gospel. Just as the act of preaching does not add to the biblical canon, so neither does the gift of prophecy; as a charism of hospitality expresses but does not replace the totality of Christ’s gracious sacrifice, so also a gift of healing.³

A high concept of the canon is not incompatible with the belief in spiritual gifts. Adventism, historically, has been able to adopt the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* and at the same time to accept the gift of prophecy of Ellen White as true.⁴

Cessationist Argument

One of the most explored texts in the cessationist polemic is 1 Cor 13:8-13.⁵ In vs. 10, Paul states that when perfection (*to teleion*) arrives, miraculous gifts like prophecy, tongues, and

¹For an analysis of these points, see De Benedicto “O toque da fé: paradigmas bíblicos da cura divina,” 76-103.

²René Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles* (New York: Paulist, 281, 282 (citation from 282). For him, miracles are signs, revelation or symbols of (1) the power of God, (2) the agape of God, (3) the coming of the messianic kingdom, (4) a divine mission, (5) the glory of Christ, (6) the trinitarian mystery, (7) the sacramental economy, and (8) the transformation of the passing world; they function as means of communication, revelation, attestation, and liberation and enhancement (of people) (*ibid.*, 282-298).

³Ruthven, 23.

⁴LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 91-106.

⁵Other texts used are Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 12:12; Rev 22:18.

knowledge will cease. But when will perfection come? When is “when”? What does the apostle mean by “perfection”? Theologians holding diverse views argue for different interpretations.

Cessationists have advanced the thesis that *to teleion* here means a relative state of maturity before the parousia rather than an absolute state of perfection at the parousia.¹ Farnell, although recognizing that a decision on these alternatives “is not easy,” favors the “maturity” view for six reasons: (1) “Pauline usage of *teleios* never conveys the idea of absolute perfection, and such a philosophical meaning is also questionable in the rest of the New Testament”; (2) “Paul’s constant use of the *nepios . . . teleios* antithesis [that is, “childhood” *versus* “maturity”] supports this interpretation”; (3) “this view gives an adequate sense to the illustration of 1 Corinthians 13:11 [relative maturity] and 12 [absolute maturity]”; (4) “Ephesians 4:13-14 more explicitly presents the picture of the maturing of Christ’s body collectively”; (5) “this view provides for Paul’s uncertainty as to the time of the Parousia and the status of a written canon”; (6) “the contrast with *ek merous* in 13:9 requires a quantitative idea (‘complete’) rather than a qualitative idea (‘perfect’).”² Therefore, according to this view, the miraculous charismata have ceased in the first century, as “foretold” by Paul.

This view has strong counter-arguments. Six of them are fairly and ably summarized by Farnell himself: (1) the interpretation of *to teleion* as absolute perfection at the parousia is the only view “that adequately satisfies the explanatory confirmation of 13:12 where the ideal, final state is in view”; (2) “the meaning of ‘perfect’ best describes the period of Christ’s return”; (3) “the verb *elthe* [‘comes’] can refer only to the precise moment of Christ’s second coming”; (4) “Pauline statements of eschatological hope center in Christ’s return”; (5) “Paul and other New Testament writers used the related term, *telos*, of the same period”; (6) “maturity and the end are related in

¹Robert L. Thomas, in *Understanding Spiritual Gifts: The Christian’s Special Gifts in the Light of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 106-113, 202-203, is one of the major proponents of this thesis.

²Farnell, “When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?” 193-194.

Paul's writings."¹ Besides, ancient Christian theologians supported the parousia view. Gary Steven Shogren, after searching out 149 comments on the passage in question, from ante-Nicene, Nicene, and post-Nicene fathers, concludes that "almost every church father understood the whole text of 1 Cor. 13.8-12 to be a prediction of the return of Christ."²

An eschatological reading is, in fact, more natural. Paul seems to be saying that all gifts that characterize the history of the church will disappear when Christ appears.³ The contrast in vs. 12 (Now . . . Then) refers directly to the parousia. Paul, perhaps aiming to correct an exaggerated expectation of the Corinthians, is contrasting current reality to future reality. Imperfect gifts and indirect knowledge will suffer a dramatic change at the parousia, while love exists now and will exist forever. Vs. 10 could be paraphrased as follows: "When Christ comes, prophecy, tongues, knowledge, and other imperfect gifts will be useless and cease."⁴ The word *teleion* here is to be understood in the sense of perfection or completeness in reaching its goal and end. Only this view makes sense of the Pauline contrasts.

Charismatic Approach

Whether the twentieth century really has been the "century of the Holy Spirit," as Vinson Synan triumphantly proclaims in the title of his recent book,⁵ we do not know. What we do know is that the twentieth century was the period of the Pentecostal/charismatic expansion. In the year 2000, according to David Barrett, there were 523 million Pentecostals/charismatics (or 27.7 percent of the organized global Christianity) in 236 countries, and he estimates a total of 811 million by the

¹Ibid., 192.

²Gary Steven Shogren, "How Did They Suppose 'The Perfect' Would Come? 1 Corinthians 13.8-12 in Patristic Exegesis," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 (1999): 101, 108.

³Notice that in 1 Cor 1:7 Paul seems to envision the exercise of the spiritual gifts by the believers of Corinth up until the parousia.

⁴Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, 1033, presents a similar paraphrase.

⁵Vinson Synan, ed., *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001).

year 2025. Out of these, 63 million are widely called classical Pentecostals, 175 million are charismatics, and 295 million are neo-charismatics.¹

These movements, embodying scores of groups and streams, have been classified into three successive (and now simultaneous) waves. The first wave, the Pentecostals, began in 1901² and was composed of traditional Pentecostal denominations. The second wave, the charismatics, gained shape after 1950 and is formed by members “renewed in the Spirit” within mainline nonpentecostal denominations. The third wave, the neo-charismatics, gathered “momentum in the 1960s to 1990s” and is formed by persons “empowered by the Spirit” in nonpentecostal denominations or networks.³

Theologically, there are not significant differences between the three movements. For example, the Pentecostals generally believe that the “Spirit-baptism” is subsequent to conversion and that glossolalia is a sign of this experience. The charismatics do not have a consensus about these two points. The neo-charismatics tend to be nonglossolalic, but some accept controversial phenomena such as being “slain in the Spirit.” All three groups emphasize the continuity of the miraculous gifts, and the importance of a life filled by the Spirit. Let us see three arguments of this approach.

Paradigmatic Argument

For many pentecostal/charismatic theologians, Pentecost is a pattern for the normal religious experience of all believers in the Christian age. Roger Stronstad, for example, holds this view. Arguing that Luke-Acts is a theological unity and that Luke as a historian-theologian must be heard in his own right, he says that “Luke’s narratives fall into a combination of one or more of

¹David Barrett, “The Worldwide Holy Spirit Renewal,” in *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, ed. Vinson Synan (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 382, 383, 388.

²It must be said that 1886 also is being indicated as the year of origin, and some scholars cite 1904 (the Welsh revival) or 1906 (Azusa Street).

³For further details or nuances, see Barrett, 381-414.

the following categories”: (1) episodic, (2) typological, (3) programmatic, and/or (4) paradigmatic. According to the author, “Pentecost narrative has typological, programmatic, and paradigmatic elements.” The “gift of the charismatic-prophetic Spirit on the day of Pentecost is paradigmatic for the experience of the eschatological people of God,” who “have become a charismatic community” of prophets.¹

Stronstad’s analysis of the Lukan theology has merit in some aspects, such as his emphasis that Luke-Acts is a homogeneous unity, that Luke was influenced in his historiography by a biblical-Septuagintal historiographical model, that Luke interprets the facts he presents, and that our methodology should not minimize the paradigmatic nature of some accounts of Acts due to the narrational character of the book.² However, as pointed out elsewhere in this chapter, Pentecost has a unique and typological meaning, which Pentecostals often miss. In behalf of paradigmatic/missiological/experiential emphases, we should not skip over important typological/christological/foundational emphases. As Carson points out, the “way Luke tells the story, Acts provides not a paradigm for individual Christian experience, but the account of the gospel’s outward movement, geographically, racially, and above all theologically.”³ This does not mean that the Spirit has ceased his miraculous work, even as described in Acts.

Perhaps contrary to popular Pentecostal/charismatic assumptions, no modern theologian knows for sure the nature of the apostolic experience at Pentecost. Scholar Jan Paulsen warns: “One must exercise care not to read current charismatic phenomena back into the Bible record. There is a danger of assuming an identity that is yet to be established.” As Paulsen stresses, we

¹Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984, 2002), 8, 11, 12, 61.

²Ibid., 2-9. See Carson’s criticism of Strontad’s sharp distinction between Pauline and Lukan pneumatologies, for “Luke and Paul develop complementary theologies” (*Showing the Spirit*, 151). It must be noted that if Luke was a theologian, he was a literary “artist” as well (for a recent scholarly analysis of the role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts from a perspective called “dynamic biblical narrative criticism,” see Ju Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001]).

³Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 150.

“cannot turn back the clock” and “unwind history” to experience the same set of events connected to Pentecost, with the same understanding and “emotional trauma,” for Pentecost is in the past and in a sense is not repeatable.¹

Missiological Argument

For Pentecostals/charismatics in general, empowerment and miracles are closely connected with service and witness. Jesus’ prediction in John 14:12 that future followers would do greater miraculous works than he was doing is extended to all believers today.² Some authors, although not discarding programmatic evangelism, underscore power evangelism, that is, evangelism followed by “signs, wonders, and miracles,” as representative of the standard evangelism described in the Gospels and normative for believers today.³ In Acts, says Douglas Oss, “preaching accompanied by signs is a normal part of new covenant existence,” and “this is true yet today.” According to him, signs and wonders are seen especially where the gospel is being preached for the first time (power encounters).⁴ In summary, it is argued, miraculous signs are an essential part of the message of the kingdom, makes the preaching more effective, and are obligatory for modern believers.

This argument in itself, if taken in a balanced sense, is not biblically wrong. In Jesus’ ministry, miracles were as much an expression of the gospel as was preaching. Criticism must be directed more to particular exemplifications of this principle than to the principle itself. However, when exclusivistic, exaggerated or even false claims are made in the name of power evangelism or

¹Paulsen, 12, 50, 51.

²See Greig and Springer, 393-397 (appendix 2, “John 14:12—The Commission to All Believers to Do the Miraculous Works of Jesus”).

³See John Wimber and Kevin N. Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); and Greig and Springer, 359-392 (appendix 1, “Power Evangelism and the New Testament Evidence”).

⁴Douglas A. Oss, “A Pentecostal/Charismatic View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 281.

whatever, then we have a problem. As Carson observes, faith comes by a varied number of personal experiences; biblical evangelism “is not substandard when no genuine sign or wonder is performed.”¹ A personal change of paradigm may be likewise a “wonder” of the Spirit.

Historical Argument

Theological agenda has caused different readings of Christian history in order to find some pattern of charismatic manifestations. What data do we have? Warfield says that there is practically no evidence for “miracle-working during the first fifty years of the post-Apostolic church”; the evidence “grows more abundant” during the third century; “and it becomes abundant and precise only in the fourth century, to increase still further in the fifth and beyond.” Yet, if the quantity increases, the quality decreases. This would indicate that pagan superstitions flourished in the church, which refused to clean its “lumber” during the Reformation.² Historian Philip Schaff concurs that the ante-Nicene period is more judicious in the accounts of miracles than the post-Nicene phase and the Middle Ages.³ However, Ronald Kydd came to an opposed conclusion. According to him, the ancient sources reveal a church “strongly charismatic up until A.D. 200.” The charismatic evidence declines in the following fifty years, disappears after A.D. 260, and does not reappear until A.D. 320, the end point of the study.⁴ A. Stephanou also presents significant evidence of miraculous gifts in the early Christianity.⁵ No doubt, Kydd’s research seems methodologically more consistent than Warfield’s analysis. So Pentecostals/charismatics use these

¹D. A. Carson, “The Purpose of Signs and Wonders in the New Testament,” in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* ed. Michael S. Horton (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 117.

²Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*, 10, 73.

³Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribner, 1910), 2:117-118.

⁴Ronald A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church: An Exploration into the Gifts of the Spirit during the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984), 4, 87.

⁵A. Stephanou, “The Charismata in the Early Church Fathers,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 21 (1976): 125-146.

data to stress that the post-apostolic church continued charismatic. Apostasy, unbelief, or institutionalization, or a combination of them, caused gifts to vanish.

This argument is correct as far as it goes, but, in my view, it does not consider the whole picture. As we will see below, biblical history shows an uneven pattern of charismatic activities. The same seems to be true for the Christian history.

Continuous-Cyclical Approach

This approach has points of contact with the two previous approaches, but it stands as a separate one. With the foundational approach, it shares an appreciation for the uniqueness of the Pentecost event and the foundational role of the apostles. Yet it rejects the idea that the miraculous gifts have ceased. With the charismatic approach, it agrees that all miraculous gifts theoretically continue today. However, it rejects an exaggerated appeal to the miraculous, and the claim that miracles, healings, prophecies, and tongues are happening all the time, everywhere. The major thesis of this approach is that the charismata are available to the church throughout history, including the current generation, but have peaks or phases of concentration, due to historical developments and divine purposes/sovereignty. In opposition to dispensational theology, it does not divide the history of salvation in definite units, and it sees the mission of the church in continuity with the mission of Israel. Let us look at three specific arguments for a continuous-cyclical perspective.

Typological/Metaphorical Argument

Typology is an elaborate way of teaching spiritual truth in Scripture,¹ although modern theologians may have lost something of both taste and skills necessary to the art of deciphering it. A type is a historical (Old Testament) ritual, event, element, figure or person divinely designed to foreshadow a correspondent reality in the future (New Testament). The author of the Epistle to the

¹For an insightful study, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertations Series 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981).

Hebrews (9:8) tells us that the Holy Spirit used this method as a didactic device to teach spiritual lessons to God's people. Did the Spirit teach something about himself through types? Can we find any typological pattern about the Spirit's action in the world? Certainly.

The yearly cycle of Jewish festivals seems to show a cyclical outpouring of the Spirit in salvation history. First, the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost or Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, identified in Num 28:26 (cf. Lev 23:10, 15-17) as "the day of the first fruits." As we have seen in chapters 1 and 2, Pentecost was the confirmation of Christ's enthronement in heaven (Acts 2:32, 33).¹ Christ, as the antitypical Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7; Luke 22:7-20), died at Passover or Pessah time (John 19:14). Fifty days later, at Pentecost time, the antitypical Pentecost occurs (Acts 2). Patterned by the first Pentecost, when God gave the law on Mount Sinai, the antitypical Pentecost also is marked by a scenario of fire, earthquake, and wind (Exod 19:16-19; Acts 2:1-3; 4:31).² "As God had written the law on tables of stone with His own finger," points out Richard Davidson, "He again writes the law with the finger of His Spirit" (see Matt 12:28, Luke 11:20) upon the minds and hearts of people (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:10). "And as Israel became God's special covenant people, so the New Israel becomes Christ's new covenant church."³ Then, with Pentecost, we have the first antitypical outpouring of the Spirit.⁴

¹Rev 4, with 14 references to "throne" and themes connected to covenant ceremony, apparently also alludes to the enthronement of Christ and Pentecost. In Eph 4:8-12, Paul links Christ's ascension with the giving of spiritual gifts.

²For further insights on this connection, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Ascension of Christ and Pentecost," *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 409-440. According to him, "many NT commentators continue to associate the Jewish celebration of Pentecost with the giving of the Torah" (433). Among the literature cited by Fitzmyer, it is especially important to check the list of verbal allusions in Acts 2 to Exod 19 and 20 worked out by Jacques Dupont, in "The First Christian Pentecost," *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 35-59.

³Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 121. I arrived at a similar conclusion, as expressed in chapter 2, independently of Davidson.

⁴The first 3,000 who accepted Jesus as the Messiah at Pentecost (Acts 2:41) were part of the "first fruits," but this antitypical harvest continued with other converts of the apostolic church.

In the second place, the Spirit is poured out at the Feast of Trumpets or Shofars, the Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. This “feast” was a call to ancient Israel to prepare for the Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Its antitypical fulfillment is more or less clear in Revelation. The literary structure of this book, as some scholars have underscored, seems to follow the Israelite liturgical calendar.¹ “The author invites us to read the Apocalypse in the light of the Jewish festivals, rituals that shed symbolic meaning on history,” writes Jacques Doukhan.² In the apocalyptic trumpets (Rev 8, 9), as well as in the angelic messages (Rev 14:6, 7; 18:1), we find the antitypical call to prepare for the antitypical Yom Kippur, the “superday” of judgment.³ After this, comes the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot, also called the Feast of Ingathering, the second coming of Jesus.

The angel of Rev 18:1, with his great “authority” (*exousia*) and power to illuminate the earth, may particularly represent a great outpouring of the Spirit. He is a messenger of judgment, but this does not prevent the possibility of miracles. That this angel acts before the parousia is evident by the invitation in vs. 4 to come out of Babylon. And that he symbolizes a human movement of proclamation seems clear from the fact that preaching is basically a human task. This

Interestingly, the Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave 11, the alternate Torah of a sectarian Jewish group, speaks of three pentecostal feasts, celebrated with intervals of fifty days between them, numbered from the Passover: Pentecost of New Grain/Wheat (11QTemple 18:10-13), Pentecost of New Wine (11QTemple 19:11-14), and Pentecost of New Oil (11QTemple 21:12-16) (see Fitzmyer, 434-437).

¹“Another major area of sanctuary typology appears to be embedded in the overall literary arrangement of Revelation,” says Davidson. “This is the typology of the Israelite cultic festivals (Lev 23)” (“Sanctuary Typology,” 119). See M. D. Goulder, “The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies,” *New Testament Studies* (1981): 342-367, especially 355.

²Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 14.

³“The seven shofar blasts that punctuate history serve to warn the people of the earth of God’s judgment day. For although the great day of judgment will occur at the end of time, it has implications for our daily lives even now” (ibid., 80). For Davidson, the fulfillment of the spring and fall festivals, respectively at the commencement and the consummation of New Testament salvation history, “is the special focus of the book of Revelation that lies at the heart of Adventist self-understanding as a prophetic/apocalyptic movement” (“Sanctuary Typology,” 121).

angel is parallel with the angel of 14:8, who also has a message of judgment to Babylon and likewise must be seen as a symbol of a human movement.

Therefore, in the Feast of Trumpets and the angelic calls, we have the final antitypical outpouring of the Spirit. The basic difference is that Pentecost aimed to say, “Jesus is the Messiah-Savior,” while the Trumpets seek to say, “The Judge-King is coming.” Table 2 synthesizes graphically some typological aspects of the work of the Spirit viewed from christological, ecclesiological, and apocalyptic perspectives.

TABLE 2
TYPOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

Dates	OT Festival	Christological Fulfillment	Ecclesiological Fulfillment	Eschatological Fulfillment
Spring Sivan (month 3), 6	Pentecost (Lev 23:15-22)	Anointing with the Spirit (Matt 3:16, 17; Acts 10:38)	“Early Rain” (Joel 2:23; Acts 2)	“Latter Rain” (Joel 2:23; Rev 18:1)
Fall Tishri (month 7), 1	Trumpets (Lev 23:23-25)	Call to Judgment (John 12:31)	Call to Judgment (Rev 8, 9; 1 Pet 4:17)	Call to Judgment (Rev 14:6, 7; 18:1)

Source: This table is based on Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 130.

The metaphor of the “early” and “latter” rains also suggests two great outpourings of the Spirit in Christian history. Although this metaphor may not be so significant to many believers today, due to overexploration or geographical/historical distance from the original setting, it is theologically important.

Living in an agricultural country characterized by severe scarcity of water, the Israelites extremely valued the rain. Considered a sign of God's blessing (Deut 11:14-16), the rain generally came in two phases: (1) the early or autumn rains, in October/November, breaking the drought and preparing the soil for the sowing and the germination of the seeds; and (2) the latter or spring rains, in March/April, helping to ripen the crops and warranting a good harvest.

Impressed with the importance of these rains, the prophets employed them as symbols of blessings or a powerful presence of God (the Holy Spirit) among his people. Moses (Job 29:23), Joel (2:23), Hosea (6:3), Jeremiah (3:3; 5:24), Zechariah (10:1), and James (5:7) make reference to them. Pentecostal/charismatic movements¹ and Adventist authors also have made abundant use of these metaphors. Ellen White emphatically compares the Pentecost to the early rain, and the final outpouring of the Spirit to the latter rain.²

In Joel, at least, there is sufficient textual evidence to connect the imagery of rain with the outpouring of the Spirit. Joel, who has been the major focus of attention, presents the metaphor in a context of warning of judgment (2:1-11), call to repentance (2:12-17), and promise of the Spirit (2:28-29). Besides, he uses the word *moreh*, which usually means "teacher,"³ rather than *yoreh*, the usual spelling for the early rain. The expression "autumn rains [*hammoreh*] in righteousness" (2:23) could be rendered as "the teacher for righteousness" (NIV, margin). This is interesting, for the Septuagint translates *moreh* in Ps 84:6 as *nomotheton*, "lawgiver," and the Spirit of truth is presented in John as a teacher of righteousness (14:26; 16:8, 13). With the restoration or the arrival of the messianic times, the Spirit comes abundantly like rain and rains righteousness (cf. Isa 45:8;

¹See R. M. Riss, "Latter Rain Movement," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 532-534.

²Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 611-112.

³Hans Walter Wolff observes that the rabbinic tradition considered the early rain as a "teacher," instructing the people to store the fruits and "to make the roofs watertight"; however, he considers improbable that the community of Qumran has derived the title "Teacher of Righteousness" either from Joel 2:23 or Hos 10:12 (*Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 55, 63, 64).

Hos 10:12) on earth. Although the rain in Palestine does not fall exclusively in autumn and spring, its dual main outpouring seems to grant life to the metaphor of a cyclical outpouring of the Spirit. In terms of fulfillment, Pentecost stands for the initial outpouring, the history of the church stands for the normal continuation of the rain, and the pre-parousia stands for the ultimate outpouring.¹

Biblical-Historical Argument

The biblical miracles are not so frequent as may appear at first sight. The sensation of high miraculous density is due to the fact that the Bible writers, apparently more concerned with ethics than with aesthetics, compress long periods of time in brief literary descriptions. The Bible presents a total of about 260 “supernatural” events, including visions and future prophecies pictured in Revelation.² Technically, these events cannot be all classified as “miracles.” A more narrow reading, excluding visions and future phenomena, would indicate approximately 100 miracles in the Old Testament and 100 in the New Testament—remembering that the New Testament covers a historical period more or less forty times shorter.

Besides, the biblical miracles appear in “waves,” so to say. They are not evenly distributed in time. Although they may be found in the whole biblical chronological spectrum, they have an irregular or uneven character.³ Broadly speaking, miracles are concentrated in five periods:⁴ (1) the

¹We must recognize that there is no consensus about the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. Has it been totally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, or is it still waiting for a final fulfillment? If the prophecy has been fulfilled, what do we do with its apocalyptic imagery? I think an often-quoted phrase of Walter K. Price expresses a balanced interpretation: “Joel’s prediction has *initial* fulfillment at Pentecost, *continuous* fulfillment during the Church Age, and *ultimate* fulfillment at the second coming of Christ” (*The Prophet Joel and the Day of the Lord* [Chicago: Moody, 1976], 66).

²For a list of such events classified by categories, see De Benedicto, “O toque da fé: paradigmas bíblicos da cura divina,” 354-365 (Appendix).

³See Robert L. Saucy, “An Open But Cautious View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 103-112.

⁴Other authors might include also the chaotic period of the judges, with Gideon, Samson, and others; and the exile of Israel in Babylon, with Daniel and his colleagues. We must be flexible here, for the inclusion or exclusion of other phases does not alter the essence of the argument.

creation of the world, with God as the direct Agent; (2) the Exodus and the establishment of Israel in Canaan by the fifteenth century B.C., with Moses/Joshua;¹ (3) the apostasy of Israel in the ninth century B.C., with Elijah/Elisha;² (4) the messianic times and the beginning of Christianity in the first century A.D., with Jesus and the apostles; and (5) the “latter rain” in the end-time, with the remnant of God.

Obviously, these cycles of miracles follow no rigid pattern, nor are they to be seen in a dispensational sense. Notwithstanding, we can perceive phases of concentration. A group of miracles must be considered a cycle when they have quantity or quality enough to interfere in history—or at least in the history of God’s people.³ The unleashing factor of a cycle may vary, according to historical-religious forces. The invariable factor is God’s sovereignty.

It seems theologically correct to state that the cycles of miracles have to do more with religious movements, in a minimal global scale, including the stage of evil in the world, than with personal piety. During the intervals of the cycles, hypothetically, the tendency is for God to use pious (or not so pious) people as agents of miracles, in spite of their possible spiritual or doctrinal immaturity.⁴ During the cycles, for having a judicial, soteriological, eschatological, and missiological character, the tendency is for God to use groups of persons with a greater level of spiritual/doctrinal maturity.

¹The expression “signs and wonders” in the Old Testament “is by and large reserved for texts dealing with” the Exodus period (Saucy, 103).

²As Saucy points out (103-104), the “extraordinary status” of Elijah and Elisha, particularly the former, “is evident in later Scripture.” Jesus himself took them as reference of powerful miracle-working ministry (Mark 4:24-27). Elijah was a prophetic icon evoking eschatological images in popular thought (cf. 6:15).

³Paul Touilleux understands that the “greater” miracles of the Old Testament are restricted to the epopee of the Exodus, while the other miracles are “lesser” events, in the sense that they do not significantly alter history (*Introdução a uma teologia crítica* [São Paulo: Paulinas, 1969], 58).

⁴Examples: Gideon with his many wives and 70 sons (Judg 6-8); and Samson with his ups and downs (Judg 13-16).

Eschatological Argument

The occurrence of multiple satanic miracles in the end-time as a counterfeit of the divine agenda presupposes a new wave of divine miraculous manifestations. This strategy of seduction and deception by appealing to the miraculous suggests that Satan in fact is imitating God. He will act “as” God probably will be acting in the end-time. The product that Satan will sell to the world is “pirated,” a falsified copy of the original. This inference is legitimate not because it is based on the futuristic knowledge of Satan, but because the Bible foretells his movements in relationship to God’s movements. Several biblical examples support this argument.

Jesus foretold that before the parousia “false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Matt 24:24). If there will be false prophets, probably there will be true prophets. Otherwise, Jesus would have just warned against all prophets in the end-time.

In Paul’s words, the “coming [*parousia*] of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing” (2 Thess 2:9). As Adventist scholar Jon Paulien underscores, Satan will counterfeit not only the coming of Christ, but also the ministry of Christ, characterized by “miracles, wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22).¹ The counterfeit miracles are the preparatory step for the climax of the Satanic deception, the counterfeit parousia.

Speaking about another character acting in the same drama under direction of the same personage (Satan), John ascribes to the earth beast the power of performing “great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men,” which will deceive “the inhabitants of the earth” (Rev 13:13, 14). Also, according to him, the “evil spirits . . . like frogs” that gather the kings of earth for the battle of Armageddon “are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs” (Rev 16:13, 14, 16).

¹Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994, 1998), 112, 113. See also LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 78.

The background for these frog-spirits seems to be the narrative of the Exodus. Paulien comments that “the plague of frogs was the last plague that Pharaoh’s magicians were able to duplicate,” that is, “*the frogs were the last deception prior to the Exodus.*” This signals that “*the message of Revelation 16 has to do with the last deception of earth’s history.*”¹ And it may also signal that, just as in the Exodus, more powerful miracles (from God) may follow the counterfeit.

The Armageddon imagery reminds us of Mount Carmel, where the great showdown between Yahweh and Baal, through Elijah and the prophets of Baal, took place (see 1 Kgs 18:16-46).² Carmel probably can be identified as the geographical/historical Armageddon (*Har Megiddon*), the “Mountain of Megiddo,” Megiddo being a city near Mount Carmel.³ In the end-time, says Paulien, “the Mount Carmel experience will be repeated,” but with a major difference. “*At the end, the fire that falls from heaven does not mark the identity of the true God. Instead, it testifies in support of the counterfeit trinity. The fire, so to speak, will fall on the wrong altar. . . . All the evidences of the five senses will suggest on that day that the counterfeit trinity is the true God.*”⁴ Paulien’s interpretation seems to be essentially correct, but it does not eliminate the possibility that God may also send fire on the right altar. God will allow (or, in Paul’s term in 1 Thess 2:9-10, send) the operation of the error to test people’s loyalty regarding two systems of

¹Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, 114, italics in original.

²For an alternate view, see Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 154-159. “The prophet speaks of a ‘mountain’ of Megiddo (Armageddon) while thinking specifically of Jerusalem,” says the theologian, adding that we must understand “Jerusalem” in the Apocalypse “in a symbolic sense” (155).

³For possible origin and meaning of the name Armageddon, see Jon Paulien, “Armageddon,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 1:394-395; and William H. Shea, “The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 18 (1980): 157-162. For representative theological Adventist interpretations of the term, see Hans K. LaRondelle, “Armageddon: History of Adventist Interpretations,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 435-449.

⁴Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, 115-116, italics in original.

worship. However, prior to the true parousia, God can send the true “fire,” just as he sent it to Mount Carmel.

The counterfeit agenda of Satan must not be seen as an isolated initiative in the end-time. It is part of a program initiated in heaven and developed throughout earthly history.¹ It is a parallel scheme with a counterfeit structure: trinity, center of worship, sacred day, rituals of sacrifice or atonement, priesthood, ministry, followers, angels, revivals, and parousia.² Everything in the divine system which can be imitated, distorted, or parodied, will be. The Babylon motif is the preferential biblical synthesis for this counterfeit system, whose basic pillars are self-deification, self-salvation, and self-power.

Historically, the Tower of Babel was the first expression of this system, which, anchored in pride and self-sufficiency, attempted to usurp God’s role.³ Centuries later, the city/empire of Babylon, with its claim of being the “gate of the gods,” reinforced the imagery.⁴ As a type of the mystical or apocalyptic Babylon of Revelation, the literal Babylon enslaved Israel, destroyed the

¹Satan is the invisible mentor and leader of this system of worship. However, he uses historical political/religious powers to accomplish his purposes. For this reason, he is poetically pictured as the kings of Babylon and Tyre (see Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:2, 11-19). Adventism has traditionally identified the Papacy as the modern embodiment of this system.

²Some features of the satanic trinity appear especially in Rev 13, as several scholars have noted. It is a kind of parody, where the Dragon counterfeits the Father, the sea beast counterfeits the Son, and the earth beast counterfeits the Holy Spirit.

³For the scholar Nahum M. Sarna, the Tower of Babel saga is an anti-pagan polemic. “The Bible has deliberately selected the mighty city of Babylon with its famed temple of Marduk as the scene for a satire on paganism, its notions, mythology and religious forms” (*Understanding Genesis* [New York: Schocken, 1970, 1976], 76).

⁴Walter Brueggemann has underscored the distinctive role or function of Babylon as a “powerful theological metaphor” in Israel’s horizon (“At the Mercy of Babylon: A Subversive Rereading of the Empire,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 [1991]: 3-22). “Babylon operates surreptitiously in Israel’s theological speech because Babylon is a partner and an antagonist in Israel’s political life and is perceived as a partner and an antagonist worthy of Yahweh. As Yahweh cannot be settled or reduced in Israel’s discernment, so Babylon cannot be settled or reduced, but remains as a tensive, energizing force in Israel’s faith and imagination” (*ibid.*, 3-4).

temple of Jerusalem, and blasphemed the name of Yahweh.¹ As the political embryo of the antitypical Babylon, the Roman Empire did something similar. And as the real apocalyptic and antitypical Babylon, the Christian Rome turns her face to the Most High in the heavenly sanctuary and oppresses his saints on earth (Dan 9:25).²

It is in this context of cosmic war that we must understand a double and opposed wave of satanic and divine miracles in the end-time. One is Dragon-vindicating; the other is God-glorifying. One seduces people to enter Babylon; the other invites people to leave Babylon. One announces the power of Babylon; the other denounces the fall of Babylon. One is an end in itself, focusing on the marvelous, the feeling, the excitement, the drunkenness; the other is a means to warn about the judgment time, focusing on the heavenly temple and its ongoing process.

As a way of conclusion to this section, it is important to make a brief assessment of these approaches. First, the foundational approach has some merits. For example, it connects the Pentecost to the mission of Jesus and stresses the beginning of a new age; values the role of the apostles in the foundation of the church; recognizes, correctly, that the supposed current miraculous gifts have not produced miracles in quantity and quality similar to those of the apostolic time; underscores love, ethics, and maturity; and emphasizes an orderly worship. But this view also has negative aspects. It tends to ignore the texts that suggest the continuity of all the gifts; makes a rigid/arbitrary separation between “miraculous” and “ordinary” gifts; “imprisons” the Spirit in the past, restricting or minimizing his influence in the present; and has a logical need to consider

¹Hans K. LaRondelle has synthesized well Babylon’s theological characteristics in these words: “Babylon’s rebellion against God’s authority operated in two dimensions: *vertically*, against Yahweh’s sovereign and saving will; and *horizontally*, against Yahweh’s covenant people and their sacred sanctuary worship. Babylon was at war on a double front—against the God of Israel and against the Israel of God” (“Armageddon: Sixth and Seventh Plagues,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 7 [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992], 384, italics in original).

²See Hans K. LaRondelle, “Babylon: Anti-Christian Empire,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 151-176.

almost all miraculous manifestations of the present as false or counterfeit. Adventist theology rightly rejects the cessationist view.¹

The charismatic approach also has several positive points. For example, it emphasizes a theological/historical identity between the apostolic church and the church of the twenty-first century, both with access to the miraculous gifts; values all gifts in a context of renewal, holiness, and evangelization; gives space for experience in its theological formulation; presupposes that God really acts in the world, in opposition to the disguised naturalism that permeates traditional Christianity; and underlines the importance of a live communion with the Spirit, through prayer and openness. However, this view has weaknesses. It tends to underestimate the singularity of Jesus as miracle worker, as well as the status of the apostles as co-founders of the church; supports teachings without firm biblical basis, such as the doctrine of subsequence (in the case of Pentecostalism); sometimes, in a typically immature behavior, confuses possibility with probability,² as seen in the Pentecostal teaching about healing for everyone in the atonement;³ overemphasizes experience and subjectivism to the detriment of theology and propositional truth;⁴ tends to cultivate an exaggerated supernaturalism, sometimes at a popular level approaching superstition or magic; focuses too much on miraculous gifts, favoring an elite of gifts or gifted

¹See Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 49; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, 206.

²Some believers talk about the limitless power of God (that is, the possibility of intervention), but forget to consider his purposes or the circumstances (that is, the probability of intervention). See John M. Berez, "Uncle Arthur's God or Probability?" *Spectrum* 25 (1996): 10-15.

³This teaching is based chiefly in Isa 53:4, Matt 8:17, and 1 Pet 2:24. For some Pentecostal authors, believers have the right to demand healing here and now; sickness is seen as a symptom of unbelief, sin or Satanic attack. At the atonement, Christ, of course, brought healing and blessings for all in a general sense, but we must not be so literalistic, nor expect on earth what is reserved for heaven. Divine healing, as Allan Pieratt argues, is a possibility, not a certainty ("A cura: os extremos e o meio-termo," *Vox Scripturae* 4 [1994]: 197-207).

⁴Several theologians have criticized the subjective character of Pentecostalism/charismatism as an experience looking for a theology. "Pentecostals have traditionally been long on *action* and short on *reflection*" (Menzies, *Spirit and Power*, 209).

believers to the detriment of the fruit of the Spirit and social ethics. Adventism accepts the basic premises of the charismatic approach, but rejects some Pentecostal/charismatic claims.

The continuous-cyclical approach likewise has positive aspects. For example, it allows a high view of Pentecost and canon while accepting the continuity of all gifts; explains better the concentration of miracles in some periods as well as their scarcity in other phases; respects the Spirit's sovereignty to concede gifts at his will; considers all biblical data; provides a logical explanation for the climax of the world evangelization; and presupposes that the miracles, as well as history itself, come in waves or cycles, but go toward a goal (they are not merely fortuitous happenings).¹ This approach, of course, also has negative points. It depends, partly, on deductive arguments; and some of its supporters may, in practice, assume either an anxious or indifferent attitude of expectancy for the new cycle, forgetting that a significant experience with the Spirit is available in the present. This approach, which in some way combines the positive aspects of the other two approaches, probably expresses better the Adventist view.

Summary

This chapter focused on the theology of the spiritual gifts, or charismata, and the continuity of the gifts. As I argued, there is a soft conceptual difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents, but in practical terms this difference disappears when the Spirit mobilizes and energizes the believer. Paul is not consistent in his uses of the term "charism," nor does he think of it in a strictly technical sense. Lists of charisms are merely illustrative. The variety of gifts in a given church is potentially as great as is the real repertoire of people/talents of that church or the purpose of God for it. The basic function of the gifts is to build up the body (church). For this reason, believers

¹Adventism would not consider the charismatic movement as a new cycle of the Spirit, or the latter rain. In fact, some Adventists are extremely critical of it. For Norman Gulley, this movement is "an important part of Satan's final push to take the world captive," "the predicted counterfeit Pentecost to precede the genuine one" (*Christ Is Coming: A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998], 132, 150).

should employ their gifts in a way as to strengthen community. Paul sees believers as living cells of an organism. Each cell must function and be controlled for the good of the whole.

The debate on the continuity of the miraculous gifts can be seen from three distinct perspectives, which I call (1) “Foundational Approach” (cessationist model), (2) “Charismatic Approach” (Pentecostal/charismatic model), and (3) “Continuous-Cyclical Approach” (Adventist/biblical model). According to the third approach, which probably better represents the Adventist thought, all miraculous gifts are theoretically available throughout history. Yet, due to God’s purposes, human response, and historical factors, miraculous gifts have an uneven character. They have phases of concentration, or come, so to say, in waves—which must not be seen in a dispensational way. A new cycle of miracles is envisioned for the time prior to the parousia. Adventism still sees the current Pentecostal/charismatic movements as ambiguous phenomena.

In the next chapter (conclusion), beyond summarizing the prominent lines of the dissertation, I will comment on some implications of the biblical teaching on the Spirit for Adventism.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

This concluding chapter is divided into two sections: (1) a summary of the major conclusions of the dissertation and (2) a series of implications and suggestions for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although I cannot develop extensively the topics addressed in the second part, I hope they can shed light on the work of the Spirit in enabling the church to fulfill its eschatological mission. An effort was made to document the basic points, but I recognize that some of them allow different readings. I present the arguments pastorally, not dogmatically.

General Summary

This dissertation, which follows a selective topical approach combining illustrative exegesis and pastoral insights, was structured into five chapters. Chapter 1 was the introduction. Chapter 2 dealt with the nature and the work of the Spirit from a biblical perspective. Chapter 3 focused on the work of the Spirit as an ethical enabler. Chapter 4 analyzed the work of the Spirit as a performing enabler. Now the conclusion brings together the basic features discussed.

The Spirit Is Personal and Divine

To begin, the Bible presents the Spirit as a divine personality, with intelligence and power to enable believers. If in the Old Testament the personality and deity of the Spirit are strongly suggested, in the New Testament they become quite clear. Although several aspects of the New Testament pneumatology remain open to later debate, some questions find answers. The view of the Spirit as a center of individual consciousness, rather than an impersonal energy, seems to better express the scriptural data. The biblical authors do not theorize about the identity of the Spirit, but assume that he is the powerful personal presence of God. Where the Spirit is, God is. To focus on any function of the Spirit, be it the principle of life or a set of divine characteristics (love, holiness,

power), as if it were the Spirit himself, reveals a confusion between cause and effect. These categories can be used as metaphors for the Spirit, but they are not the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit is real and able to purposely enable believers for ministry.

In order to preserve the personal traits of the Spirit, Christian trinitarians may overemphasize his hypostatization, making the Spirit a being dangerously independent from God. This is an error. The biblical Ruah/Pneuma is God manifested and sensed as an infinite, mysterious, and unpredictable personal self moving in closeness to us, the divine wind/breath/mind creating an environment of cosmic intimacy and conspiring for life, wisdom, and love. Above all, the Spirit is divine and personal because he is God.

In the Bible, we find two parallel streams regarding the Spirit: one more functional, emphasizing his role as source of life, power, love, etc.; and another more personal, presenting him as teacher, comforter, lover, and so on. At the same time, the Spirit is poured and pours, is breathed and blows, is felt and feels. Accordingly, the believer can live in the spiritual atmosphere created by the Spirit, as well as can be controlled by the Spirit. The spiritual/psychological/social impact of either focus is as real as the Spirit is real. To favor or suppress one stream to the detriment of the other would be impoverishing. We need both emphases.

The Spirit Is Portrayed Through Symbols

Six symbols of the Spirit (wind, fire, water, oil, dove, and seal) express the abilities given to certain people by the Spirit to enable them to fulfill their mission. In the biblical times, if my hypothesis is correct, the invisible Spirit embodied the basic feature of the tasks/functions he was enabling believers to perform and represented his role through adequate symbols. According to this logic, a symbol of the Spirit tells us something not about the Spirit as a person, but about him as related to a given mission. For instance, the dove at the Jordan, beyond any characterization of the Spirit, aimed to make explicit the nature of the sacrificial mission of the Messiah. A symbol is a sign revealing/concealing a reality beyond itself. Therefore, Bible writers use symbols to take a picture of the divine enabler in action, while honoring his invisibility.

The Spirit Causes a Variety of Effects

An analysis of twelve ways in which the Spirit enabled persons in biblical times showed the ample range of his empowering work. If the “nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery,” as Ellen White puts it,¹ his work is more definable. The Spirit creates physical/spiritual life, motivates to action, reveals messages, enlightens the mind, gives artistic skills, helps to communicate the gospel, strengthens the witness, stirs up leaders, teaches truth, changes lives, creates community, and makes real the presence of God. Whenever and wherever the Spirit acts, the effect or fruit is positive. He is God in action using people to achieve results and direct the world toward its goal.

John Levison contends that in the Jewish milieu of the first century the name “holy spirit” (*pneuma hagion*) was not a technical term, but a flexible “expression that could be construed in a variety of ways,” largely due to the influence of Greco-Roman conceptions of *pneuma* and inspiration. For Levison, in spite of the indefiniteness regarding the nature of the Spirit, he was associated with a variety of effects, such as prophecy, creation, conversion, and an eschatological figure.² In the Bible, especially the New Testament, while it is questionable that the Spirit is not seen in a technical sense, it is true that he is portrayed as the originator of a variety of effects.

The Spirit Enables in All Ages

Besides various kinds of enablements, five lines of evidence suggest that what the Spirit did in the past he may do today: (1) Christ, although unique, was a model for the anointed believers; (2) the Great Commission, involving pneumatic presence and authority, is universal in scope; (3) the Pentecost account, even though not a paradigm in all historical details for individual believers, democratizes the enablement of the Spirit within the parameters of the messianic community; (4) Pentecost’s phenomena were replicated in different ethnic contexts; and (5) the

¹White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 52.

²J. R. Levison, “Holy Spirit,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 507-515, citation from 507. For a detailed study, see his *The Spirit in First Century Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

concept of the priesthood/ministry of all believers presupposes and requires an enablement by the Spirit.

These findings support the conclusion that, although the Holy Spirit has a multifaceted ministry, his essential function in the realm of the church is to assist, qualify, and empower believers to accomplish God's purposes. If the Spirit has any specialized work within the oneness of the Godhead, it is to activate God's plan and bring it to perfection. Although the current manifestations of the Spirit do not need necessarily to be identical with his biblical manifestations, modern believers do share with their peers of the apostolic church the enabling power of the Spirit.

The Spirit Molds People to the Model

The ethical work of the Spirit in the believer begins with modeling, continues through empowering, and results in character formation. God, it was argued, is the ethical model for the believer. He is a personal being, not a blind force, which allows him to be a moral model. His dynamic attributes, represented by holiness and love, function as a pattern for the Christian's behavior. As persons created in his image, Christians are to mirror his ethical perfections. The Spirit, who gave life and "activated" the image of God in humankind, restores the image of God in the believers and causes them to imitate God/Christ. Imitation, far from being a means of salvation, is a corollary of redemption. The ethical work of the Spirit on earth only makes sense because there is a cosmic personal being embodying what is asked from humans. At the same time, the Spirit's work is viable because there is a divine-human being (Christ) testifying of its possibility. Any heavenly ethic without a divine model living it would be just a noble ideal, little more than sterile knowledge. The Spirit causes one to live in love, with the sacrificial love revealed by Christ as the ultimate affective reference. Christ is the first and the last word in any definition of what it means to be "full of the Spirit."

The Spirit Causes Character Changes

The Spirit has a fundamental role in transforming the believers and causing them to grow spiritually. I decided to call this process "imago-Dei-ization." The Spirit changes the character of

the believer, so that he or she can bear the divine fruit. However, the person also can and must cooperate with him. The believer is not a robot operated by the Spirit. Some tools that the Spirit employs to transform people are prayer, study of the Bible, meditation, creative celebration, and prophetic living. In my view, these tools are the foundation of the Adventist spirituality—which rejects at once a strong emphasis in ascetical, mystical, and sacramental paths (or “externals” as well as “internals”).

The Spirit Achieves Ethical Results

When the believer’s spiritual life blooms, the “fruit of the Spirit” appears. In Gal 5, Paul lists nine ethical qualities caused by the Spirit. He certainly had contact with catalogues of vices and virtues common in his day, although first-century Greek catalogues of virtues hardly had an Old Testament background when it comes to literary form. For Paul, the fruit of the Spirit is the hallmark of the messianic community. Its nine aspects can be summed up in the word love, which is an integrative factor in Christian ethics. All nine virtues, or graces, deal with relationships. In their context, they seem to be ethical virtues, not theological virtues, although the internal aspect as the sphere of the Spirit’s action is not lacking. The manifestation of the fruit happens primarily at a personal level, but the church must present it corporately as well. The Spirit works on persons associated in a corporate context. In fact, the fruit of the Spirit is the anticipation of the ethical life of the eschatological community, the experience of the new age in the intersection of the old age.

This analysis allows us to conclude that the Spirit has a decisive role in enabling believers for ethical living and ministry. When Paul presents the Spirit of Christ as the seal of quality of the true believer (Rom 8:9), he certainly also thinks of an ethical dimension. To have the Spirit of Christ, more than having the power of the Spirit, is to be like Christ. The Spirit convicts the believer of his or her unsatisfactory state and creates a desire for change (that is, the Spirit gives motivation), presents a superior pattern (the Spirit offers a new model), mobilizes/energizes the believer to overcome his or her current state (the Spirit provides the means), and leads him or her to behave in new modes of life in consonance with his or her holy status in Christ (the Spirit

achieves results). The Spirit leads the believer to present ethical and performing results in a unified way: the “being” dimension gives quality to the “doing” aspect, which in turn gives concrete existence to the “being” dimension.

The Spirit Bestows a Diversity of Gifts

When it comes to the charismata, there is a soft conceptual difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents, but in practical terms this difference disappears when the Spirit mobilizes and energizes the believer. Paul is not consistent in his use of the term “charism,” nor does he think of it in a strict technical sense. Lists of charisms are merely illustrative or representative, not exhaustive. The variety of gifts in a given church is potentially as great as is the real repertoire of people/talents of that church or the purpose of God for it. Focus on just one gift leads to a distorted spirituality. The basic function of the gifts is to build up the body (church). For this reason, believers should employ their gifts in such a way as to strengthen the community. Paul sees believers as living cells of an organism. Each cell must function and be controlled for the good of the whole. Although the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit are not one and the same thing, they are related. “Gifts are like a pipe down which love is to flow.”¹

The Spirit Still Performs Miracles

The debate on the continuity of the miraculous gifts can be seen from three distinct perspectives, which I call (1) “Foundational Approach” (cessationist model), (2) “Charismatic Approach” (Pentecostal/charismatic model), and (3) “Continuous-Cyclical Approach” (Adventist/biblical model). For the cessationists, the miraculous gifts had an authenticating purpose and disappeared with the apostles or the inscripturation of the biblical canon. As I have argued in chapter 4, this thesis has no biblical or historical support. Pentecostals and charismatics give a correct emphasis on the continuity of the miraculous gifts, but wrongly attempt to make Pentecost paradigmatic for individual modern believers. A sound exegesis disavows such

¹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 143.

inference. According to the third approach, which generally represents Adventist thought, all miraculous gifts are theoretically available throughout history. Yet, due to God's purposes, human response, and historical factors, miraculous gifts have an uneven character. They have phases of concentration, or come, so to say, in waves—which must not be understood in a dispensational way. A new cycle of miracles is envisioned for the time prior to the parousia.

To close this section, it is helpful to remember that the multiple enablements of the Spirit are emphasized in different parts of Scripture, by different authors with specific agendas and diverse audiences, but all of them share a complementary unity. For instance, the authors of Genesis and Psalms focus on the function of the Spirit as lifegiver; the authors of Deuteronomy and Judges emphasize his task in fostering charismatic leadership; Isaiah pictures his peaceful action as liberator; Joel announces his democratic bestowal on the underprivileged; Ezekiel underscores his role in making the new covenant a reality on the level of the heart or mind; Luke portrays his performance as a divine “character”¹ who purifies those who enter the new international community of the true Israel and empowers the believers to fulfill God's program;² John underlines his mission as teacher of truth and giver of spiritual life; and Paul describes his work in empowering believers to live in this aeon the ethical life of the future by uniting them with their cosmic Lord.

¹See the literary-critical theory of William H. Shepherd, in *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), where he contends that Luke presents rhetorically the Spirit as a “character” in order to ensure the reliability of his narrative and indirectly the fidelity of God (101). Shepherd's theses should not be uncritically adopted as a whole. See also Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts*, where he expands Shepherd's theory.

²According to Robert W. Wall, Acts is “a work of immense literary art,” “roughly ‘aggadic midrash,’” divided in two parts: the first half (ending with 15:12, parallel 2:22) is a narrative commentary on Joel 2:28-32 (cf. Acts 2:17-21) and focuses on power for witness, while the second half (ending with 28:28, parallel 15:13) is a narrative commentary on Amos 9:11-12 (cf. Acts 15:16-18) and underscores the spiritual purification or healing of the converted Gentiles through forgiveness (“‘Purity and Power’ According to the Acts of the Apostles,” *Pneuma* 21 [1999]: 215-231, citations from 215, 216).

Adventist faith, embodying the biblical legacy, must tie together all these emphases. To read the New Testament with a particular, exclusive lens, be it through Lukan eyes (as the classical Pentecostalism, with its empowering emphasis), Pauline eyes (as the magisterial Protestantism, with its ethical emphasis),¹ Johannine eyes (as the traditional Catholicism, with its sacramental emphasis), or selective eyes (as Adventism, with its Spirit of Prophecy emphasis), may bias the theology and experience of the Spirit.

Now I will outline a few points related to the eschatological mission of the church and the final outpouring of the Spirit. Several aspects addressed here have been touched on in passing in the previous chapters. Others are the logical implications of the topics studied.

Implications and Suggestions

Adventist theology anticipates a pneumatological parousia in the end-time, in order to prepare the world for the christological parousia. To put it other way, the second coming of Christ will be preceded by a “second coming” of the Holy Spirit.² The first coming of Christ brought the first coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; now the second coming of the Spirit during the latter rain brings the second coming of Christ. These comings are complementary; they do not happen in a vacuum.³ The climax is an encounter face to face with God.

How will this new “coming” of the Holy Spirit occur? Is it automatic or caused? Does it depend only upon God’s sovereignty or upon the church’s action as well? If there are conditions, which are essential? Is there a fullness of time for the second coming of the Spirit as there was a fullness of time for the first coming of Christ (Gal 4:4)? Is the fullness of time that brings the fullness of the Spirit or is the fullness of the Spirit that brings the fullness of time? Who will be

¹See Dayton, 23.

²This expression is not traditional in Adventism, but has been used by Dwight Nelson in a series of sermons on the Holy Spirit delivered at Pioneer Memorial Church, Andrews University, Winter 2000; and by Norman Gulley in his presentation “The Other Second Coming: Immediacy and Implications” at the 5th South-American Biblical-Theological Symposium, Brazil, July 26-29, 2002.

³See Paulsen, 116.

blessed with this eschatological Pentecost? Is the final Pentecost corporative or individualistic in nature? How do one solve the puzzle of not judging the brother and at the same time judging the brother's experience? What kind of experience is acceptable?

Here I will discuss some of these questions. Apostolic, Pentecostal/charismatic, Catholic, and Adventist experiences will be briefly considered to illuminate the discussion.

The Paradigm of the Apostolic Church

It is common in some popular Christian circles to stress conditions for the full operation of the Spirit in the church. The latter rain, in this perspective, only will come when believers follow certain rules. Is this kind of theological thought correct?

Bruner makes a strong case against lists of "conditions" as prerequisites for the "baptism in the Spirit." He presents six Pentecostal lists, including things such as earnest expectation, intense desire, right attitude, unconditional obedience, prayer, faith, repentance, and separation from sin. Critical of the idea that "keys, secrets, steps, and conditions must bring the Christian into a higher, deeper, fuller or more victorious life," he sums up his basic objection in these words: "A principal error of Pentecostalism, shared by some of Pentecostalism's parents and relatives in conservative evangelicalism, is the conviction that the gospel is sufficient for the beginning but not for the continuing of the Christian life, for bringing the Holy Spirit initially but not fully."¹ Bruner insists that the gospel, operative through faith, is all-sufficient for the whole of Christian life.

In commenting on Bruner's remarks, Henry Lederle states:

Although none of these "conditions" are in any way foreign to the gospel, it is the context in which they operate that causes the problem. These conditions are here not seen as operating within the context of loving gratitude towards God for his saving grace, but as steps to achieve a higher level of sanctity and a blessed experience. A more charitable interpretation would be to see the "conditions" merely as possible ways to prepare oneself for what the Lord may have in store.²

¹Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 92, 240.

²Henry I. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretations of "Spirit-Baptism" in the Charismatic Renewal Movement* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 26.

Adventism, theologically relative of everyone in the Judeo-Christian family, has its own “conditions” for the final Pentecost. Ellen White has said: “Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us his blessing.”¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, a leader wrote: “There is a *preparation*, a *getting ready*, to receive the heavenly Guest. The Spirit is as free as air, free for the asking; yet there is a *price* to be paid, not once, but daily and hourly. There are *terms*, certain *conditions*, upon which the Holy Spirit takes his abode in the temple of our bodies.”² Having stressed that “before the *filling* there is an *emptying*” and that the Spirit “will *not* sit on the throne *with an idol*,” he then lists twenty-three hindrances to the filling (things such as censoriousness, gossip, and backbiting) and describes the conditions of the filling (things such as thirst/desire, prayer, faith, unity, motives, and obedience).³

Here, in order to avoid misunderstandings, it must be made clear that these conditions are not viewed in Adventism as human achievements, but as divine gifts to be sought by prayer and received by faith—in God’s time and way. The God who asks a total response of faith, also grants the power to fulfill his requirements. Another related point which needs an allusion is the concept of counterfeit, already introduced in chapter 4. In the end-time, according to the biblical theology, Satan will deceive the world with a strategy of miraculous signs (Matt 24:24; Rev 13:13-14; 16:13-14). Consciously or unconsciously, unfaithful ecclesial forces seduced by false charisms will be instrumental in his masterful plan.

Therefore, in the Adventist perspective, if it is a misreading of the Bible to think that we can add something to the gospel, it is also a misunderstanding to think that the gospel has no claims; if it is an error to pretend any ability to maneuver the Spirit, it is a mistake not to yield the

¹E[llen] G. White, “The Church’s Great Need,” *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, 177.

²G. B. Thompson, *The Ministry of the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1914), 94, italics in original.

³*Ibid.*, 95-148, citations from 94, 95, italics in original.

self to be shaped by the Spirit; if it is an ugly bias to claim an exclusive possession of the Spirit, it is a betraying license to recognize the fullness of the Spirit in every body of faith independently of faithfulness; if it is wrong to conclude that the Spirit has been absent from the church, it is a fallacy to pretend that he is manifested in plenitude all the time.

Paul has an unmistakable position when it comes to the concession of the Spirit. In Galatians, the apostle mingles christological and pneumatological arguments. As Christ is received through faith, so is the Spirit. In the rhetoric questions in 3:2-4, his argument that the Spirit is received through faith, instead of through works of the law, is absolutely clear. Moreover, the Spirit is operative on the same basis. Likewise, in Acts 15:7-11, Peter argues that God accepted the Gentiles “by giving the Holy Spirit to them” (vs. 8), purifying “their hearts by faith” (vs. 9). How, then, should we consider the human role in this process? Is the word “faith” a magical key to lock or unlock the whole debate, or should we seek for further insights?

I think the apostolic experience at Pentecost (and beyond) may illuminate this question. While no modern theologian knows for sure the nature of that event, for we tend to read ancient events through modern lenses, the biblical accounts allow us to point out some elements related to it. Pentecost, with its foundational character, must be always referential, for we are part of a process initiated (or evidenced) with that event. Here I will briefly discuss five features of the apostolic Pentecost.

Commitment

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is universalized in theory, but his experience has a restrictive element in practice. While the Spirit is given to Jews and non-Jews or prophets and non-prophets alike, he is not given to all Jews or all Gentiles indiscriminately. The fullness of the Spirit in Acts 2 is a privilege of those who accept Jesus as the Messiah. This is not to deny the universal work of the Spirit. “The Spirit’s ministry is global, not only domestic, and ontic, not only noetic.”¹

¹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 200.

John is one of the major formulators of the concept of a community gathered around the Messiah and purified by the Spirit. If ancient Israel was guided and identified by the Torah, the new people of God is identified and guided by the Messiah.¹ John sets his agenda in the very prologue of his Gospel (1:9-13). This nucleus of believers, whom the Messiah calls “mine,” is born spiritually by the Spirit (3:3-8), is promised the Spirit (14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15), and receives the Spirit (20:22). Such commitment to the Messiah is also a theme in the New Testament in general. For Jesus, the disciples/apostles spend words and lives. They feel called by, and tied to, Christ by a power beyond themselves. They have a focus, Jesus, and a driving-force to that focus, the Holy Spirit.

In a sense, Acts is the history of how the name of Jesus was painted on the main billboards of the Mediterranean world, from Jerusalem to Rome, against all political and religious odds. In Acts 4, we see Peter and John being questioned before the Sanhedrin. Peter, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” boldly presents Jesus Christ as the capstone of salvation (4:8-12), in a way that stirs the religious authorities (vs. 13). In Acts 5, the apostles disturb the party of the Sadducees by preaching the resurrected Jesus. Questioned, Peter testifies that Jesus had been exalted to God’s own right hand (vs. 31). “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit,” he concludes (vs. 32). Then, the apostles leave the Sanhedrin “rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (vs. 41). This was typical of their commitment to Jesus.

The agenda of the apostles was the agenda of the Spirit, which in turn was the agenda of the Messiah, which finally was the agenda of God. This means that neither the apostles—nor even the Spirit—had a cause of their own. “One of the striking features of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is that *He does not call attention to Himself*,” writes Paulsen. “He seeks the center stage

¹For John, the greatest titles of Yahweh, the widest claims and promises of the Torah, and the most beautiful dreams of Israel in the Old Testament are embodied in Jesus. Jesus is the Creator (John 1:1-3; cf. Gen 1:1), the great I Am (8:58; cf. Exod 3:14), the water of life (4:10-13; 7:37-39; cf. Exod 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13), the bread from heaven (John 6:32-35, 53-58; cf. Exod 16), the giver of peace (14:27; 16:33; cf. Isa 9:6-7), and the builder of a paradisiac city/land (14:1-3; cf. Isa 65:17-25).

neither in doctrine nor in an individual's experience. That belongs to Christ and the truth about Him."¹ To a great degree, the Bible is a book about Christ.

The Spirit makes Christ real in the midst of fiction, relevant in the midst of irrelevance, and absolute in the midst of relativity. In a time of instability, the Spirit presents Christ as the Rock of the ages. By uplifting Christ as God entering history, the Spirit works to maintain the status and the centrality of God in a world of secularization. The Spirit is implanting on earth the culture of heaven, which means a kingdom of love with a high level of awareness of the physical, ethical, and existential essentiality of God.

The Adventist Church needs to follow the same pattern of the apostolic church, not in order to receive the Spirit, but to give expression to the Spirit's impetus. When a Christian community shows low commitment to the Messiah, the enabling power of the Spirit may be blocked. Commitment, in this context, means a disposition to uplift Christ before the world no matter the price, whether legal or illegal, socially acceptable or politically correct or not.

Joy or ecstasy may be, and frequently is, a by-product of the presence of the Spirit in one's life, but it is never the goal. One cannot use the power of the Spirit as a magical tool to create pleasure or delight for one's self-gratification. "The effective availability of the power of the Spirit is always tied to commitment."² The power of the Spirit is dynamic power for a task or mission. To move ourselves to a center denser than ourselves (Christ) on a continuous basis, it is necessary to be moved by a power greater than ourselves (the Spirit).

Openness

As we saw in chapter 2, the Spirit makes God real for believers. Can God's presence through the Spirit be taken for granted? There is a tension in rabbinic literature, as well as in process theology, regarding God's presence. God is always present, but can be more present in certain contexts. His presence is dynamic and relational. Lodahl puts it this way: "while God is

¹Paulsen, 55.

²Ibid., 59.

present to every person, the intensity of God's presence and sense of God's nearness depend upon that person's openness and faithfulness to God's previous aims (or address) to her or him."¹ In this interaction, community matters. Individual response is conditioned by corporate response, and may influence the corporate response.

What kind of openness would we expect? Openness is the acknowledgment of one's own finitude and God's infinitude, which leads to a total response to God. It is the desire to have the self shaped after God and to be an instrument of God, in order to fulfill God's purposes. "In rabbinic language, human responses of love and faithfulness can bring the Shekhinah near, while self-centered, faithless responses thrust the Shekhinah away."²

Openness also means flexibility regarding new operations of God. If it is true that God does not contradict his previous revelations, it is also true that he is free to choose new modes of manifestations. God is not a prisoner of his theophanies. For example, when the prophet Elijah witnessed a theophany on "Horeb, the mountain of God," the real presence of God was not in the traditional theophanies (powerful wind, earthquake, and fire), but in a silent voice (1 Kgs 19:8-13).

Jewish experience regarding the Messiah is didactical. Mainstream Judaism was so conditioned by a given mind-set, namely, the idea that the Messiah would come as a warrior King,³ that the real Messiah came and was not recognized (John 1:11-12).⁴ Popular imagination

¹Lodahl, 64.

²Ibid., 65.

³There was a general thought that a royal militaristic figure (or figures) would come to defeat the enemies of Israel. Yet we must recognize that the early Judaism, far from being monolithic in its messianic ideas, was a diverse phenomenon. See J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

⁴This is an oversimplification. At least three factors caused Jewish leadership to reject Jesus as the Messiah: (1) a biblical-historical factor (their perspectives about the Messiah were conditioned by their selective reading of both sacred sources and political situation); (2) a psychological factor (they did not want to relate to a "marginal" figure, for they loved popularity [John 12:43]); and (3) a theological factor (their sinful nature led them to avoid the Light, for Jesus was exposing their evil deeds and threatening their position [John 3:19-20; 7:7; 8:45]).

surpassed prophetic revelation, and reality was killed by irreality. A few people, however, recognized and accepted the Messiah (John 1:12). It is this flexible community, not prisoner of tradition, that would receive the Spirit of the Messiah (John 20:22; Acts 2).

Unbelief was so institutionalized, shaping in such a manner the leadership's thought, that even messianic demonstrations of pneumatic power were attributed by the Pharisees to malign sources (Matt 12:22-32). Jesus reduced their arguments to an absurd nonsense (vss. 25-27). They were confusing divine and demonic sources, a sin against the Holy Spirit (vss. 28, 31-32), for the Spirit is the only divine means to touch the mind.¹ Jesus appeals to the principle of fruitage to explain both his miracle and their unbelief (vss. 33-35). He concludes that a hasty judgment of charismatic manifestation is subject to judgment (vss. 36-37).

According to Ellen White, the Jewish leadership was so "permeated with Phariseeism" that it could not receive the new wine of Jesus' teachings. Then, Jesus "chose the lowly fishermen of Galilee."² Yet even for the disciples it was "most difficult" to keep Christ's "lessons distinct from the traditions and maxims of the rabbis, the scribes and Pharisees." The teaching of the Jewish intellectuals, considered the voice of God, "held a power over their minds, and moulded their sentiments."³ In order to be channels of light, they had to be freed from the influence of tradition. Jan Paulsen exposes a similar idea, but speaks of the Jewish option for the "safer" path of the law (legalism), and then asks: "Is legalism based on such a closed system that newness and freshness never slip through? Or, to put the same question more radically: If we continue to pray and long for the newness and freshness of the Spirit's latter rain, but fail to experience it, is it a reflection on a religious system operative in us individually that is immune to newness?"⁴

¹Ellen White concurs that the unpardonable sin "is willfully attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit." If one attributes his work to Satan, one is cutting off the divine channel of communication (*Testimonies for the Church*, 5:634; idem, *The Desire of Ages*, 322).

²E[llen] G. White, "The Enduring Treasure," *Review and Herald*, March 15, 1892, 161.

³Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 670.

⁴Paulsen, 24.

The Adventist community, as any other, needs to be careful in order to recognize present and future charismatic manifestations. It is possible to become so fixed on truth, misapplying the biblical emphasis on discernment, imagining pneumatic phenomena as something so crystalline or “clean” of emotions, that when the true charismatic manifestation appears it is not recognized. Ellen White warns: “Let us beware that we do not refuse the light God sends, because it does not come in a way to please us.”¹ False conceptions can mold the collective mind-set and close it to nonstandardized events.

Charismatic expression, especially prophecy, is influenced by the view of the group. It seems that even prophets seek to conform to the expected and legitimized norms. “If a prophet departs radically from the expected speech and behavior patterns which the society recognizes as prophetic, then he runs the risk of being judged insane rather than prophetic, and his message is likely to be rejected.”²

Sociologist Rodney Stark has elaborated twelve propositions to explain how revelations occur which may shed some light here. Five of them (numbers 1, 4, 7, 11, and 12 in his list) seem to address various aspects of “openness” to pneumatic initiatives.

1. “Revelations will tend to occur when (a) there exists a supportive cultural tradition of communications with the divine and (b) the recipient of the revelation(s) has direct contact with a role model, with someone who has had such communications.”

2. “Certain individuals will have the capacity to perceive revelations, whether this be an openness or sensitivity to real communications or consists of unusual creativity enabling them to create profound revelations and then to externalize the source of this new culture.”

3. “During periods of social crisis, the number of persons who receive novel revelations and the number willing to accept such revelations is maximized.”

¹Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:728.

²Robert R. Wilson, “Early Israelite Prophecy,” in *Interpreting the Prophets*, ed. James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 6.

4. “The greater the amount of reinforcement received and the more revelations a person produces, the more novel (heretical) subsequent revelations will become.”

5. “As they become successful, religious movements founded on revelations will attempt to curtail revelations or to at least prevent novel (heretical) revelations.”¹

While Stark’s language is analytical, he points to aspects of openness in a religious culture. A sociological perception of charismatic phenomena does not necessarily undermine the divine initiative in true revelation. God, although not dependent on cultural environment or ideal conditions to pour out his Spirit, may consider the openness factor. After all, gifts such as prophecy are given for the sake of the community, not for the sake of the messenger. If a community is completely closed to legitimate gifts, then those gifts have no receptive audience. Hardly would God frequently waste his gifts in such a context, although sometimes he may wish to do it whether people are willing to listen or not (Ezek 3:27). Once, Ellen White complained: “I saw that the reason why visions have not been more frequent of late, is, they have not been appreciated by the church.”² Therefore, openness is basically mandatory.

Openness, however, does not mean a gap in one’s reason or a slit in one’s common sense to accept any and every kind of spiritual influence. Researchers have shown that there are various conscious or unconscious ways of seeking encounter with deeper realities. Morton Kelsey mentions four ways of opening “one’s conscious mind to the unconscious”: (1) by employing “meditative techniques, through religious ritual, or by recording and interpreting one’s dreams and visions and learning to work consciously with elements from the unconscious”; (2) by using “auto-suggestion, which involves a carefully structured approach to the unconscious by a kind of programmed, positive thinking”; (3) “by taking various hallucinogenic drugs, or by inviting one kind of spirit or another to possess” one “as mediums do, or by using an ouija board or automatic

¹Rodney Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 287-307, passim.

²Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:119.

writing”; and (4) by “submitting to hypnosis or falling under the suggestive power of an individual or a group.”¹

Openness, in the biblical sense, is existential availability to God, within the framework of the revealed tradition. It is an eagerness to recognize the signs of the Spirit in action, a readiness to receive new divine inputs, a disposition to be pneumatologically used as God moves the world to its goal. This includes openness of leadership to recognize unusual kinds of charisms and approve non-standard styles of worship in the midst of a multicultural church.

Search

In the early rabbinic view (Tannaitic literature), the Spirit is experienced by deeply religious people (a saint or hasid) and in holy environments (namely, Palestine, the holy land par excellence). According to a rabbi, it is safe “to generalize and to state that the holier the domain, the more suitable, the more proper, and the more appropriate it is to serve as the background for the Ruah Hakodesh.”²

Although the New Testament does not present explicitly this particular emphasis, it seems correct to say that the Spirit comes in a context of prayer and holiness. At Pentecost and beyond, the apostles had an attitude of self-examination, repentance, conversion, and prayer—or, to summarize the experience in one word, “search.” Luke paints a picture of a prayerful³ community totally focused on Christ, fueled with the power of the Spirit, and devoted to God (Acts 2:1, 42, 43, 46). The same pattern was apparently followed by the early Christians.

If such search, as the other elements in this section, must not be seen as a step to automatically bring the Spirit, it was a part of a framework that allowed a powerful manifestation

¹Morton Kelsey, *Discernment: A Study in Ecstasy and Evil* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 40.

²Rabbi Herbert Parzen, “The Ruah Hakodesh in Tannaitic Literature,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 20 (1929): 54.

³The disciples certainly knew the link that Jesus made between prayer and the giving of the Spirit (Luke 11:13).

of the Spirit. Search is a warrant that the community is not seeking to manipulate the Spirit, but is available to be controlled by him.

Repentance played a special role in this context. At Pentecost, when people felt compelled to figure out what they should do to be saved, Peter explained: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The gift of the Spirit was connected to repentance, faith in Jesus, and public acceptance of him.

Yet the Spirit is not promised for the sake of repentance itself, but for the sake of Jesus. Repentance, to be true, is caused by God and leads to God.¹ It is not just a sterile sorrow, but an eschatological *metanoia*, a change from self-righteousness to Christ-righteousness, an active awareness that there is solely one hope. Repentance, of course, has to do with abandonment of sin and change of behavior, but its core is a radical act of giving up oneself and embracing God’s offer in Christ. Repentance, followed by forgiveness, gives God a chance to recommence in us a new life on new ethical grounds.

Continuous repentance must be practiced both individually and corporately, for forgiveness is both individual and corporate. A group that insists on a corporate repentance of the Adventist Church, for supposedly having officially rejected the message of 1888 about righteousness by faith and new charismatic manifestations, may be factually/historically mistaken on some points,² but is intuitively correct about the importance of collective repentance.

Scot McKnight underscores that the messianic offer of forgiveness has an eschatological tone; it must not be seen in “strictly individualistic terms,” as centuries of Christian interpretation

¹Notice that Peter presents the exaltation of Jesus “as Prince and Savior” so that God “might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel” (Acts 5:31). Both repentance and forgiveness come from God in the same package.

²For a didactical, yet polemical, analysis of the 1888 topic, see George R. Knight, *A User-Friendly Guide to the 1888 Message* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), especially 125-128. For a more neutral account, see Arnold Valentin Wallenkampf, *What Every Adventist Should Know About 1888* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988).

have proposed.¹ “Recent scholarship has shown the tight connection between forgiveness and the end of the exile: when God acts at the end of history to restore the fortunes of Israel, he will do so by forgiving Israel’s sins, healing her iniquities, and removing her transgressions against the covenant.”² I would say that when Jesus speaks to the nation, he is also directing to individuals, and vice versa.

Joel 2:28-31, the foundational text that Peter uses to explain Pentecost, is connected with judgment, repentance, and deliverance. The prophet calls the priests (and consequently the people) to put on sackcloth, declare a holy fast, mourn, rend the heart (not garment), return to God, consecrate the assembly, weep, and intercede on behalf of the people (1:13-14; 2:13-17). Then, God will change the fortune of his nation, which never again will be “shamed” (2:26). God will pour his Spirit “on all people” (2:28). There will be deliverance and salvation for all who call on the name of the Lord (2:32).

A context of holiness and repentance, however, does not imply perfection. Michael Green correctly states: “If God waited until a church or an individual was perfect before filling them with his Spirit, he would wait for ever.”³ Indeed, according to Paul, the Holy Spirit is given to unworthy sinners who trust in the righteousness of Christ (Gal 3:2-5, 14).⁴ There is a dynamic tension: the Spirit works repentance, faith, prayer, and relationship, which in turn prepare the soil for a greater sowing and harvest of the Spirit’s power.

The “search” here involves also expectancy and desirability. Some researchers suggest that the content of religious experiences tends to agree with the pattern anticipated.⁵ Simplifying, one

¹Scot McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 224-225.

²Ibid., 224. In support of his statement, McKnight lists Lam 4:22; Jer 31:31-34; 33:4-11; Ezek 36:24-26, 33; 37:21-23; Isa 40:1-2; 43:25-44:3; Dan 9:16-19. I would add the important prayer of Solomon in 2 Chr 6:14-42, especially vss. 24-30, 34-39.

³Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 160.

⁴See Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 232.

⁵Bernard Spilka et al., “The Content of Religious Experience: The Roles of Expectancy and Desirability,” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 6 (1996): 95-105.

gets what one longs for and is ready to receive. This sociological language may sound strange for Adventists. Yet Ellen White has an intriguing parallel, except that her emphasis is spiritual/pragmatic rather than phenomenological: “The measure of the Holy Spirit we receive, [sic] will be proportioned to the measure of our desire and the faith exercised for it, and the use we shall make of the light and knowledge that shall be given to us.”¹ Again, speaking of the Spirit, she states: “The promise is not appreciated as it should be; and therefore its fulfillment is not seen as it might be.”²

We must search for the Spirit because in the mysterious interplay between the Spirit and us, which includes a route of access into our center of consciousness through which the Spirit dialogues with our “spirit” (see Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 2:11-13), there is a freedom that the Spirit respects.

Unity

Unity is essential, for the Spirit of God is one, with one nature. Jesus included the vertical/horizontal unity of his followers in his agenda (John 17:11, 20-23). Paul stressed that Christ has broken all barriers of religion, ethnicity, gender, and social status (see Gal 3:26-28). “There is one body and one Spirit,” he says (Eph 4:4). Believers should “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (vs. 3). Therefore, division in the eschatological community, which should reflect the wholeness of the body of Christ, is a scandal—perhaps inevitable, but still a scandal, although not bigger than the scandal of corruption!

One should not idealize the early Christians as a monolithic group with a merging of individualities in name of a common cause. The apostles still had different opinions, orchestrated councils to settle hot issues, and censured each other.³ Yet, beneath the surface, there remained a

¹E[llen] G. White, “Operation of the Holy Spirit Made Manifest in the Life,” *Review and Herald*, May 5, 1896, 273.

²Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:21.

³That the apostolic church had internal disputes is clear from texts such as Acts 15, 1 Cor 1, 3, and Gal 2, among others.

solid platform of unity around Christ, instigated by the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Spirit came to them as *one* group gathered in *one* place (Acts 2:1-4). The experience of the Spirit predictably tightened still more that “oneness,” while honoring the “otherness” of every self. “Among the many miracles of Pentecost,” says Amos Yong, “the most important . . . is that it made possible the encounter of human beings with each other who, left to themselves, would not have entered into relationship.”¹ This is not surprising, for the Spirit of love is always cross-cultural.

When doctrinal/philosophical/political issues started being valued above love in the third and fourth centuries, unity became frequently threatened. Later, in 1054, came the East-West schism, ironically involving a clause (*filioque*) about the procession of the Spirit, the guardian of unity.² Reformation, another major schism, was certainly a movement of the Spirit. Yet the Protestant wing gave opportunity to a tragic fragmentation of Christianity. Is the current numberless amount of churches the Spirit’s will? Is ecumenism the golden solution?

Adventists are suspicious of the glamour of the ecumenical movement. Perhaps representing the average Adventist thought, Bert Beach writes: “When the Holy Spirit leads, unity shares a faith, not merely a shape; it is truly organic, not solely organized. The Spirit produces spiritual fusion, not specious confusion.” For him, the biblical end-time scenario does not portray “a kind of jumbo church representing the people of God, but a persecuted, united remnant having the faith of Jesus and keeping the commandments of God.”³

True *oikoumene* is originated by the Spirit, around the Son, to glorify the Father. Ecumenical initiative for any other motive, based on any other agenda, is at best but a human

¹Amos Yong, “As the Spirit Gives Utterance: Pentecost, Intra-Christian Ecumenism and the Wider Oikoumene,” *International Review of Mission* 92 (2003): 301.

²This was by no means the only cause of the East-West division.

³Bert B. Beach, *Ecumenism: Boon or Bane?* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 18, 21.

endeavor.¹ Unity is a great biblical value, but truth is by no means a lesser merchandise. To protect truth, or the gospel, the Spirit himself may instigate (or at least allow) divisions.

Ecumenism as a principle is a beautiful dream. It could eventually deserve more attention if it really had a biblical, open agenda. Although in the last few years Adventists have participated in theological conversations with Lutherans and Catholics, for instance, it is improbable that they will result in anything beyond mutual clarifications and reduction of prejudices—which is no little achievement. An obstacle for any real Adventist engagement in ecumenism is that the Papacy is inscribed in the Adventist psyche as a dictatorial political-religious power. For most Adventists, ecumenism is just a new instrument for the old agenda of Rome. To be acceptable to Adventism, ecumenism would need to lead back to Jerusalem, not to Rome. Nevertheless, theological conversations should continue. Dialogue does not mean ecumenism.

With their claim of being the leader of an alternative *oikoumene*, a remnant² of God destined to receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the end-time, Adventists might especially explore possible links with Pentecostals/charismatics. Adventism has a negative role for Catholicism, Protestantism, and Spiritualism in its eschatological framework, but the role of Pentecostalism is not so clear. Adventist authors, seeking to detect a future shift, may attempt to link Pentecostal/charismatic experience with a kind of Christianized spiritualism.³ This characterization is not accurate.

¹In the Old Testament, Yahweh condemned political alliances characterized by sinfulness: “Woe . . . to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin” (Isa 30:1).

²Adventist self-perception as the faithful end-time remnant is being challenged in some academic circles, which consider this an elitist, presumptuous claim. For two recent assessments of the diversity of views, see Ángel M. Rodríguez, “The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Thinking,” in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista*, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez (Libertador San Martín, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 269-279; and Carmelo Martines, “El concepto de remanente en la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día: razones subyacentes en el debate contemporáneo” (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002).

³Gulley, for instance, sees the charismatic movement as a “manifestation of spiritualism in the end-time” (*Christ Is Coming*, 132).

Adventism as a whole still sees the current Pentecostal/charismatic movements as ambiguous phenomena. Yet they perhaps have a positive role in helping to overcome the naturalistic paradigm infiltrated in the traditional churches, and can function for many people as a kind of interim “spiritual nest” until the pre-parousial excitement, when a spiritual polarization in the world will require a re-positioning.¹ This supposed low view of the charismatic movement should be understood rather as a word of appreciation.

Besides, a hypothetical Adventist, under risk of criticism by some of his or her fellow brothers, could still argue that the “primal”² approach of the charismatic movement, though not an expression of the latter rain, reveals a trace of the Spirit-energized movement of the end-time. As the nineteenth-century Adventism arose within/from a wider Advent movement, so the genuine new charismatic remnant may arise in a broader charismatic environment. The remnant, perhaps appropriating some features of the current charismatic movement (or, still better, of the New Testament charismatism), would give it a better theological/experiential direction. That is, as the nineteenth-century Adventism was a “prophetic” projection from and a response to the Adventist seekers, so the twenty-first-century Adventism could be an “empowered” projection from and a response to the charismatic seekers. In both cases, there is a religious movement which transcends the cultural milieu and goes ahead keeping the faith in midst of a wider failure.

Adventism, which is closer to evangelicalism today, has much in common with Pentecostalism. Historically, both movements have roots in Wesleyan methodism.³

¹Adventists believe that before the parousia the Sabbath as a day of worship will be a matter of controversy in the Christian world and, therefore, a final test of loyalty to God, in opposition to the false Sabbath (Sunday) of the mystical Babylon. People will have to choose their side—God or Babylon.

²Harvey Cox analyzes the “primal speech,” “primal piety,” and “primal hope” of Pentecostalism in *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 81-122.

³See A. Gregory Schneider, “The Methodist Connection to Adventism,” *Spectrum* 25 (1996): 26-37; and for Pentecostalism, Dayton, 35-54.

Sociologically/psychologically, both pursue a kind of pragmatic primitivism.¹ Theologically, both believe in Christ as the only Savior, anticipate the soon return of Jesus Christ, believe in the charisms of the Holy Spirit, and value personal holiness as lifestyle. Missiologically, both emphasize evangelism and missions. Liturgically, both share some pieces of hymnody.² Affectively, both value revivalist figures or movements, such as the Waldenses, Anabaptists, Bohemians, and the Moravian Brethren. In sum, the Adventist religious world is closer to the charismatic religious planet than is generally recognized.

Naturally, there are also differences. Pentecostals welcome a variety of bodily charismatic phenomena; Adventists are suspicious of bodily charismatic phenomena. Pentecostals frequently display ecstatic behavior in their worship rituals;³ Adventists experience a cerebral ritual in its weekly sessions of biblical study.⁴ Pentecostals emphasize the power of the Spirit; Adventists emphasize discernment of spirits. Pentecostals value fellowship in experience; Adventists value fellowship in truth.⁵ Pentecostalism is somewhat elitist in its experience; Adventism is somewhat

¹In an outstanding book, Grant Wacker explains Pentecostalism's success as a combination of primitivism and pragmatism: "*The genius of the pentecostal movement lay in its ability to hold two seemingly incompatible impulses in productive tension. I call the two impulses the primitive and the pragmatic*" (*Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001], 10, italics in original). In some way, this is also true for Adventism, although the Adventist primitivism is more cerebral and the Adventist pragmatism is more institutional.

²For example, Adventist communities sing "Mansion Over the Hilltop," by Ira Stanphill (1914-1994), an Assemblies of God minister, singer, and gospel songwriter; "Majesty," by Jack W. Hayford (1934-), a glossolalic pastor; and "Spirit Song," by John Wimber (1934-1997), the founder of the Vineyard movement. These songs appear in Portuguese in the Brazilian Adventist hymnal (*Hinário adventista do sétimo dia* [Tatuí, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1998], numbers 501, 73, 496).

³For a fine description of the Pentecostal spirituality through the lens of ritual, see Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

⁴This Adventist ritual is called "Sabbath School." Initiated in 1853, it has perhaps contributed more than the worship service to shape the Adventist communitarian self-identity.

⁵From a liberal Adventist perspective, one could say that Pentecostalism is a strong experience looking for a sound theology, while Adventism is a sound theology seeking for a strong experience. Yet, as Grant shows, the early Pentecostals emphasized doctrinal purity, affirming the priority of the word "truth" in the titles of several periodicals (76, 77).

elitist in its beliefs. Pentecostalism praises glossolalia as the quintessential gift; Adventism underscores prophecy as the highest gift. Pentecostalism sets forth flamboyant charismatic figures of the past and the present, such as Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976) and Benny Hinn (1952-); Adventism esteems moderate charismatic figures basically from the past,¹ such as John Wesley (1703-1791) and Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899). These differences and others (see below) are a great challenge, if not a real obstacle. However, a common platform could provide an opportunity for dialogue.

Pentecostalism is more involved in ecumenism than Adventism. Catholic/Pentecostal dialogue, which officially started in 1972 and has been classified as “one of the most important events in the religious scene of our [twentieth] century,” is a reality in progress—perhaps because Pentecostalism is “a kind of Catholic Spirituality without the Roman juridical superstructure.”² In Brazil and other countries, the experience in the Spirit provides a bridge for a toll-free transit between charismatic groups. This is unthinkable for the average Adventist mentality, but official dialogue could take place.

The Adventist Church perhaps needs a change from isolationism to “bridgeism.” Adventist roots are not blindly exclusivist, but conditionally inclusivist. “From its beginnings Millerism was an interconfessional movement with its aim to arouse the churches regarding Christ’s imminent return. It was only when the missionary activity of the individual Millerites in their respective churches resulted in strong opposition, antagonism, and hostility that separatism became inevitable.”³ Influenced by its concept of Babylon, Adventism became reticent or even opposed to official cooperation with other churches. However, in 1888, Ellen White was able to point out

¹A current exception is perhaps Peter Wagner, although the Wagner of church growth and spiritual gifts, not the Wagner of power encounters and territorial spirits.

²Walter J. Hollenweger, “Roman Catholics and Pentecostals in Dialogue,” *Pneuma* 21 (1999): 135, 149.

³P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 46.

that there were “true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion.”¹ Today, it seems that Adventist attitudes toward other traditions oscillate between an evaluation of doctrinal illegitimacy and fraternal recognition of their role and importance for theological thought and spreading the gospel.

Other traditions probably do not see Adventists as bridge-builders. Some years ago, after complaining that “Adventist community gives considerable evidence of being *isolationist*” (in the sense of “behaving as though no other denomination exists”), Geoffrey Paxton stated: “The early pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism tended to believe that the Holy Spirit Dove flew straight from the apostles to their own shoulders—with only occasional stopovers in the intervening period.”²

If Israel is a mirror for Adventism, either positively or negatively, it is good to remember that God excluded Israel from the world in order to include the world in Israel. Yet Israel seems to have become more exclusivist than God intended. In some instances, therefore, Jesus pushes the limits in order to teach how far God is willing to go to save people. The Spirit of Jesus, who also operated in the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), is the great bridge-builder. He is restrictivist in content, but universalist in call. In line with him, the Adventists should be bridge-builders. The true prophetic identity of the remnant is not construed in a safe, selfish isolation, but in a bold, self-denying exposition. Remnantal identity births in a call, is affirmed in self-consciousness, and is certified in mission.³

¹Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 449.

²Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism: A Documented Account of the Crisis Among Adventists over the Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 151, italic in original.

³The Bible presents the remnant as a faithful movement arisen not in a vacuum, but within a broader unfaithful body, which also may be seen as a continuum in a spectrum of infidelity/fidelity. The biblical balance is neither in being ultra-conservative, as if the remnanthood were an unalterable status, nor in being ultra-progressive, as if it were a transitory state. Extreme particularism and pluralism are two spurious sides of the same coin.

What I am proposing is not ecumenism, nor pluralism,¹ which in sum is an intellectualized, secularized, and radicalized version of ecumenism. It is a question of an open, respectful, and irenic dialogue, in order to undo prejudices, share visions, and advance common causes.² To be optimistic, it would be an invitation to other brothers to see the joyful truths we have discovered, while we get acquainted with their perspectives.³ The content, focus, and scope of the dialogue would depend, of course, on the kind of partners. Conversations could start with either affinities or differences. Perhaps the best place to begin is within Adventism itself, seeking a better tune between its many voices. The Spirit certainly would enjoy sponsoring such dialogue.

To value unity, it is necessary to overcome and overlook minor theological differences both within and outside the denomination. As an heir of the Wesleyan tradition, Adventism could incorporate something more of the inclusiveness of Wesley, especially when it comes to the presence of the Spirit.⁴ This does not mean to renounce the biblical truths, but to seek with love the core of them.

¹Pluralism, a recent attempt to covalidate all religions, which empties the Christian tradition of its exclusivity, has four basic features: it sees “religious knowledge as evolutionary, culturally determined, pragmatic, and polar” (Terrence Merrigan, “Religious Knowledge in the Pluralist Theology of Religions,” *Theological Studies* 58 [1997]: 706).

²Prophetic confrontation is one model of relationship with unfaithful traditions. For instance, a “man of God” (1 Kgs 13:1) was commissioned to confront Jeroboam—a king who might be considered a prototype of the Christian antichrist. Jeroboam, who started faithful, made alternative centers of worship (rival to Jerusalem), changed the religious calendar (from the 7th to the 8th month; compare the Catholic theology of Sunday as the 8th day), promoted idolatry, and tried to unify the roles of king and priest (1 Kgs 12). The prophet of God should warn the king, but not have fellowship (eat) with him—detail that he disregarded, seduced by an older prophet, being killed (1 Kgs 13). Another model is that of friends who sit together as guests to share experiences and learn from each other. In our time, perhaps this is the more fruitful model, although in times of crisis the prophetic model may be the only possible one.

³While Adventism has been unable to convince the religious world of the biblical soundness of some of its pillars, such as the holistic nature of human beings and the importance of a healthy lifestyle, science is helping to draw an Adventist consensus. So Adventism should not be afraid of an open dialogue with society. After all, Adventism in many respects is a “radical” middle-way, mediating and correcting extreme theological positions.

⁴Roberta Bondi summarizes well this inclusiveness when she writes: “The presence of the Spirit [in Wesley’s view] is not limited to those who believe the right things, have the right religious experiences, worship in the right way, or even read Scripture properly. Wesley’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit is broad and inclusive, tolerant of the different ways

Community

In chapter 2, the Spirit's work was linked with community. In what sense are the Spirit and community related? What does the early church have to teach us here? Why is this topic relevant for Adventism?

“Christianity entered history as a new social order, or rather a new social dimension,” writes Georges Florovsky. “From the very beginning Christianity was not primarily a ‘doctrine,’ but exactly a ‘community.’” For him, “‘fellowship’ (*koinonia*) was the basic category of Christian existence.”¹ No doubt, early Christians, although deeply rooted in facts, shared a communal experience. The Spirit was given in a social setting. Early Christianity was not a religion of solitary mystics. As far as Acts is concerned, Alasdair Heron says, the connection between the Spirit and the church is fundamental, for the Spirit is “given *in the church* rather than elsewhere.”² The gospel is announced, embraced, and lived in the context of the church. “There are no isolated Christians, no Christians apart.”³

As a junction of ideas, feelings, and hopes controlled by the Spirit, the church is a dynamic and eschatological community. More than merely a historical institution, it transcends time and space, for the Holy Spirit mediates eschatology and history.⁴ The *ekklesia*, observes Robert Banks, “is not merely a human association, a gathering of like-minded individuals for a religious purpose, but is a divinely created affair.” In Paul’s perspective, “Christians belong both to a heavenly church that is permanently in session and to a local church that, though it meets regularly, is

God works in our midst, and convinced that the proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit must always include the fruits displayed in Christian life and love” (“The Role of the Holy Spirit from a United Methodist Perspective,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31 [1986]: 357-358).

¹Georges Florovsky, “Empire and Desert: Antinomies of Christian History,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 3 (1957): 133.

²Heron, 44, italics in original.

³McDonnell, “Does the Theology of the Early Church Confirm the Classical Pentecostal Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit?” 124.

⁴See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margareth Kohl (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 198.

intermittent in character.” Therefore, “each one of the various local churches is a tangible expression of the heavenly church, a manifestation in time and space of that which is essentially eternal and infinite in character.”¹

Adventist community is essentially eschatological. This means it must always maintain its focus on the heavenly sanctuary, where the eschatological agenda is planned, and on the earthly arena, where it is partly accomplished. If Christ is the center in the celestial realm, the Spirit is the agent in the worldly realm, in order to call attention to heaven. The work of a church operated by the Spirit is to gather a people to live on earth the heavenly reality. To be an eschatological community has spiritual, social, and economic implications.

Due to historical factors, including a strong emphasis on mission, Adventist ecclesiology is not well developed. “Much has been written about the work of the church, but relatively little about the nature or ontological essence of the church,” recognizes Russell Staples.² Now, if there is the peril of too much self-talking, there is also the opposite danger of too little self-understanding. Therefore, the ideal state is that of a church that acts while it reflects, or thinks while it works, never disconnected from heaven.

To contemplate its original face, the church should look to the New Testament. What kind of ecclesiological picture do we find? The church portrayed by Jesus, John, Paul, and Peter is a radical eschatological community originated by God, gathered around Christ, and energized by the Spirit. It is nurtured by the Word, and united as a body in faith, love, and hope. Inebriated with joy, urgency, and expectancy, it is eager to announce the good news, bless the people, and give glory to God through a holy way of life.³ Balanced, it provides solidary expressions of the

¹Robert Banks, *Pauls' Idea of Community*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 31, 41, 42.

²Russell L. Staples, *Community of Faith: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Contemporary World* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 11.

³Some of these features are found in Matt 28:18-20; Mark 10:29-30; John 17; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4, 5:22-32; Col 1:18-24; 1 Pet 2:9-10; and Rev 14:6-12.

presence of the Spirit in an orchestrated fashion: the Spirit is the catalyzer of the community, which is a vehicle for the Spirit.

“It is when the Spirit comes in His fullness upon many individuals simultaneously that He comes upon His church,” writes Woolsey.¹ This statement is essentially true, but we should not overlook the nature of the church as an eschatological community that transcends the sum of its members.

In some way, the five points above make clear that the Spirit comes not as a result of human conquest, but as a divine gift. When we are aware of our frailty, dependence, and need, we find power in the sufficiency of God. In the next section, I will briefly discuss the major biblical elements for a conscious assesment of charismatic manifestations.

Tests of the Charismatic Experience

Till the day when evil is eradicated and believers behold God face to face, they will have to deal with distorted ways of experiencing God. Therefore, a continuous, creative, and dynamic art of testing the spirits is necessary. “Charismatic phenomena are in a way neutral in color. An event that strikes me as supernatural says nothing about where it comes from, or, for that matter, what it *really* is.”²

This challenge is not new. Primitive Christian charismatic phenomena were not distinctively unique. “When we set early Christianity in the context of its times, the full ambiguity of the charismata becomes apparent,” James Dunn writes.³ For this reason and others, the *Didache*, a document of about the year A.D. 100, already stressed the need to assess prophecy.⁴ If this is the case, how are we to evaluate charismatic phenomena? How can we detect the origin of

¹Woolsey, 114.

²Paulsen, 12-13, italics in original.

³Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 307.

⁴*Didache* 11-13. For a convenient study of the subject, see Aaron Milavec, “Distinguishing True and False Prophets: The Protective Wisdom of the Didache,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 117-136.

our impressions, desires, decisions, and dramatic experiences? What kind of bodily exercise is acceptable to Adventism?

We need both objective and subjective tests of the spirits. Objectivity is of primary importance because the truth is propositional.¹ Subjectivity is also necessary because the experience of God may be ambiguous.² Our reaction to any charismatic claim should be balanced. If one should not stand at an extreme of the spectrum as uncritical and supercredulous, one should also not stand on the other extreme as hypercritical and incredulous. While an infatuation with the marvelous may wrongly legitimate hostile spirits, a super-emphasis on discernment perhaps can eventually quench the divine Spirit.

I will consider five usable tests: loyalty to the revealed truth, bearing of good fruit, expression of spiritual experience, progressive theological insight, and coherence of claims.

Fidelity to Revelation

The Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture and works through Scripture, which reveals God's purposes, priorities, visions, truths, and claims. A believer or community cannot be faithful to God without being faithful to God's revelation. For Adventism, fidelity to the Word of God is

¹Morse suggests ten objective tests, which he calls "Ten Cs": 1. Continuity with apostolic tradition (Does this teaching follow the teaching of the apostles?). 2. Congruence with Scripture (Does this teaching conform with the explicit and implicit message of the Bible?). 3. Consistency with worship (Is the doctrine in agreement with the prayer and praise of our worship of God?). 4. Catholicity (May this claim be extended to everywhere, always, and upon all?). 5. Consonance with experience (Is the doctrine in tune with our experience?). 6. Conformity with conscience (Does this doctrine pass in the test of a good private judgment?). 7. Consequence (What are the fruits in the short and long run?). 8. Cruciality (Is the discourse/action important?). 9. Coherence (Is there internal and external consistency?). 10. Comprehensiveness ("Does the teaching take into account the broadest possible range of relevant data?") (46-49).

²Dubay, underscoring that discernment is "incarnational" ("It has an inner element and an outer element, not just one or the other"), proposes a few more or less subjective clues to know whether one is really in contact with God: (1) an awareness of the divine presence; (2) awareness sense-like and not sense like; (3) an infused desire, yearning for God; (4) peace and comfort; (5) new knowledge of God; (6) love from and for God; (7) refreshment; (8) a sense of being engulfed in God, surrounded by him, immersed in him; (9) an experience of union and embrace; (10) awareness of the beauty and goodness of God; (11) radiant joy in God; (12) the feeling of inner burning; and (13) sense of power, strength, and freedom (69, 43-48).

mandatory. Tradition may have its internal logic, yet it must be tested by the rule of Scripture. Experience may have a good appeal, but likewise it must be scrutinized by Scripture.

“While we must beware of reducing theological differences to side effects of personal psychobiographies,” concedes Fritz Guy, “we may properly remember the significance of the personal-experiential ingredients in all theology.”¹ Right. However, revelation remains the more authorized norm for Christians. Those willing to obey God will recognize the doctrine of Christ (John 7:16-17). Obedience to God’s law or words is obedience to God himself, an affirmation of God’s centrality.

The first test of prophetic manifestation in Scripture is fidelity to the true God and obedience to his commands (Deut 13:1-5). If a prophet or dreamer led the people to worship false gods, this was a sign of falsehood, punishable with death (vs. 5). A true prophet of Yahweh would not lead a Jew to be unfaithful to Yahweh or his Torah in the same way that the Spirit of Christ cannot lead a believer to curse Christ or the law of Christ (see 1 Cor 12:3). It would be nonsense. As Satan does not combat the kingdom of Satan (Matt 12:25, 26), so the Spirit of God does not undermine the foundation of the kingdom of God.

Isaiah, in condemning necromancy (8:19) and occultism, underscores fidelity to God’s “law” and “testimony” (vs. 20). Apparently, Isaiah is counterpresenting his own faithful prophetic message to the false means preferred by the people (vs. 11). The law establishes the centrality of God for us. Therefore, the Spirit of God cannot oppose God’s law, since he has the mission of presenting Christ as the divine personification of the law.

The gift of the Holy Spirit may have a closer connection with obedience to God, as revealed in the law and amplified by Jesus, than is usually assumed. As we have seen in chapter 3, Old Testament authors foresee the internalization of the law in the believers by the Spirit during the new covenant (Ezek 36:26-27; Jer 31:33). The Spirit creates both a new awareness of God and a desire for God, leading the believers to offer their lives in obedience to God.

¹Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 156.

In Matt 7:15-27, Jesus links true prophecy with obedience to his words, not with charismatic manifestations. Peter also makes a clear connection, saying that God has given the Holy Spirit “to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32). Obedience, in this context, is acceptance of God’s Messiah and surrender to all of God’s requirements.

John 14 offers a valuable supplement to understanding the relationship between obedience and the grant of the Spirit. Jesus insists that love for him is expressed through obedience to his commands, summarized in love (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 13:34). This love must mirror the quality of his love and obedience for his Father (14:10, 24, 31). In the same context, Jesus promises to ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit to his followers (14:16, 26). Presented here as the “Spirit of truth,” the Counselor will teach them, and supposedly allow them to reproduce the miracles of Jesus in a wider scope (14:12-14).

Fidelity to canonic revelation, however, should not be so strict as to avert new revelation. The Jewish scribes, for example, may have exaggerated their zeal for doctrinal purity. The scribes (from Greek *grammateus*), a class of professional interpreters and teachers of the law in Second Temple Judaism, were the guardians of tradition and curators of the sacred texts. Mentioned fifty-seven times in the Synoptic Gospels and linked with both Pharisees and Sadducees, these scholars are depicted as “the major opponents of Jesus and heavily involved in his trial.”¹ Their pretense of faithfulness to the Jewish heritage closed their eyes to the Jewish hope. Jesus clearly disapproved the boundaries established by the scribes and the temple elite.

Quality of Fruitage

The fruit is a tangible way of tasting and testing one’s charismatic manifestation. When well developed, it reveals the source, motivation, and purpose of a supposed enablement of the Spirit. Jeremiah (23:14, 32) pointed the finger to the bad fruitage of the prophets of Jerusalem, whose lives were characterized by adultery, lies, and fawnery, bringing no benefit to the people. In

¹G. H. Twelftree, “Scribes,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 1086-1089, citation from 1088. See also D. E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

Matt 7:15-23, Jesus pointed to fruitage as the decisive criterion to assess ambiguous prophetic claims. In 12:33, in the context of the controversy about the source of Jesus' power to perform miracles, he appeals again to the fruit metaphor.

Who are the false prophets referred to in Matt 7:12, 22, 23? There is no consensus here. Scholars have suggested, among other solutions, a gnostic group, the Essenes, a Pauline or ultra-Pauline group, antinomians (or Hellenistic libertinists), Zealot propagandists, a group of Palestinian enthusiasts, and the Pharisees (who "as a group saw themselves as heirs of the great prophetic tradition").¹

It is difficult to determine whether Jesus or Matthew really had a specific group in mind. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the author had in mind a kind of people rather than a group of people. Even if the author originally thought of a particular group, the warnings of 7:15-23, as well as those of 24:11 and 24, would be also applicable to any persons who fit the description.

The false prophets apparently are charismatic prophets who employ the name of Jesus in a propagandistic fashion, but lack a salvific relationship with Christ. It is not clear if the comparison of the wise/foolish builders in vss. 24-27 is placed here as the conclusion to the whole Sermon of the Mount or if it is an explanation of the false prophet theme. If we can link it to the immediate context, then obedience/practice, against simulation/hypocrisy, is an evidence of good fruit.

No matter one's interpretation, the presence of the Spirit leads a person beyond "beliefism" toward transformation, obedience, and action. The Spirit is self-evident through fruitage. There is a multiplicity of signs of the presence of the Spirit, but pure love is the golden fruit of his action. The real presence of the Spirit is felt not merely within the perimeter of the temple, but outside in the ghettos of society. Jesus expressed the power of the Spirit through acts of liberation, love, and enlightenment. His anointing brought peaceful liberation to the poor, suffering, oppressed, and disinherited. Yet social love alone is not a warrant of genuine charismatic source.

¹David Hill, "False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7,15-23," *Biblica* 57 (1976): 327-348, citation from 343. Hill favors the view that the false prophets in sheep's clothing are a group of Jewish teachers, namely, the Pharisees.

When the Spirit comes with power, an impact on social structures is expected. Jeremiah frequently denounced false (*sheqer*) prophets as perpetuators of the status of the elite through lies.¹ The political interest, of course, was only a symptom of the problem, whose root was the lack of authorized revelation. They pretended to be speaking the words of Yahweh when in fact the Spirit had revealed nothing to them.

In the New Testament, Pentecost was more than an emotional outburst. It had a social/economic impact (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). No doubt, the practical love shown by the first Christians played a significant role in their impact on the society. Christianity had a great popular appeal in the urban and cultural chaos of the Greco-Roman cities, offering a new solidarity and making life more tolerable.²

Looking for similar “fruitage” today, research on glossolalia, according to Malony and Lovekin, has shown that “the charismatic experience becomes a matter of profound personal importance but has relatively little impact on attitudes toward issues of social justice.”³ While this fact by itself does not disallow the experience, because it can have another kind of healing fruit, it should make one stop to ponder. As a whole, the fruit of the charismatic movement, with its “primal speech, primal piety, and primal hope,” in Latin America seems to be positive.⁴

True pneumatic phenomena are never physically, psychologically, or spiritually harmful—unless when the performer is persecuted. They should result in blessings, wholeness, and well-being. Nor are they self-centered. Any charismatic exercise or spiritual behavior done by an elitist and fleshly believer must be suspected of not coming from the Spirit. This is a lesson of both 1 Cor 12-14 and Gal 5.

¹See Jer 5:30-31; 23:14; 28:15-16; 29:31-32; 37:19; Lam 2:14.

²Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 149, 161, 162.

³Malony and Lovekin, 244.

⁴M. D. Litonjua, “Pentecostalism in Latin America: Scrutinizing a Sign of Times,” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 7 (2000): 26-49, citation from 30.

Balance in Expression

New Testament writers picture the early church as charismatic. The first Christians had a high level of awareness of and expectancy for the presence of God. However, in no place, except perhaps in Corinth, do we find a community drunken with ecstatic experiences. On the contrary, we see a pattern of orderly worship services.

It is difficult to compare the current Adventism to the primitive Christianity when it comes to public expression of charismatic experience. Cultural contexts are different. We do not have all the data. But when we compare, through literary research and direct observation, contemporary Adventism to early Adventism, one thing is clear: early Adventism of the nineteenth century was much more charismatic and enthusiastic than the Adventism of the twenty-first century.¹ Faith healing, glossolalia, shouting, laughing, and prostration in the Spirit were experienced. “Fanaticism” was the key term used to denounce the excesses. The “Nominal Adventists” even charged Ellen White with “fanaticism,” and some “falsely” accused her of “being the leader of the fanaticism.”² Does this mean that Adventism should either approve or imitate modern charismatic expression?

Pentecostalism/charismatism, in its extreme forms, has presented strange bodily exercises—or, to be more critical, bizarre physical manifestations. An “uninhibited expression of raw religious emotion,” frequently “chaotic and deafening,” is in fact a heritage of the early Pentecostalism.³ People today fall to the ground slain in the Spirit; laugh uncontrollably, drunken

¹As Schneider notes, early Adventism was an experimental religion, a religion of the heart, to the point that “the early Advent believers’ emotional demonstrations in their meetings earned them a reputation for disorderly conduct and fanaticism” (27). See also Adriel Chilson, “Pentecostalism in Early Adventism,” *Adventist Review*, December 10, 1992, 18-19; Ronald D. Graybill, “Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Worship,” *Ministry*, October 1991, 10-12; and Arthur L. White, “Charismatic Experiences in Early Seventh-day Adventist History,” a series of 12 articles written originally for the *Review and Herald*, during 1972 and 1973, and available on the Web (www.whitestate.org/issues/Charism-ALW.html), accessed on April 20, 2004.

²Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 22.

³Wacker, 99-111, citations from 99, 100.

with the wine of the Spirit; sob, shake, and jerk spasmodically touched by the Spirit; roar like lions and imitate other animals moved by the Spirit; dance ecstatically led by the Spirit. These phenomena are seen in several places, across denominational and national barriers, especially in the Vineyard movement in Toronto, Canada.¹

Hank Hanegraaff—who sees a “paradigm shift of major proportions” in Christianity, “a shift from faith to feelings, from fact to fantasy, and from reason to esoteric revelation,” which he calls the “Counterfeit Revival”—describes as follows a meeting led by the South-African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne, self-named “Holy Ghost Bartender”:

The scene was surreal. It looked like a bomb had exploded. Bodies were strewn haphazardly throughout the sanctuary. Some lay motionless on the ground. Others twitched spasmodically. Behind me a woman shrieked, “I’m hot! I’m hot!” In front of me a girl was shaking violently. A boy standing in the aisle chopped his hands feverishly at some imaginary object. Next to him a man whirled round and round in a circle. All the while waves of sardonic laughter cascaded eerily throughout the sanctuary.²

Noises and movements imitating animals are an intriguing, recurrent, and disturbing component of the supposed revival or renewal. “Roaring, crowing, mooing, flapping, whooping, barking, braying, howling—along with an assortment of other ‘zoological’ phenomena—have become part of the Holy Laughter theatrics,” writes B. J. Oropeza.³

Supporters of these phenomena, especially the falling down in the Spirit, seek parallels in the Bible.⁴ “An entire battalion of Scripture proof texts is enlisted to support the legitimacy of the

¹The literature dealing with these phenomena is vast. For just three sources, see Guy Chevreau, *Catch the Fire: The Toronto Blessing* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1994); James A. Beverley, *Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing: An Investigative Report* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); and Stanley E. Porter and Philip J. Richter, eds., *The Toronto Blessing—or Is It?* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1995).

²Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival: Looking for God in All the Wrong Places* (Nashville: Word, 1997), 9, 21.

³B. J. Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh: The Holy Laughter Phenomenon Examined* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 89.

⁴The experiences of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:28; 43:3), the disciples (Matt 17:6), the Jewish soldiers and officials (John 18:1-6), Paul (Acts 9:4; 26:14), and John (Rev 1:17) in falling facedown to the ground at the presence of God or Jesus, among others, are used to justify the prostration in the Spirit. For a biblical assessment of the Holy Laughter phenomena, see Oropeza, 109-130.

[prostration] phenomenon, although Scripture plainly offers no support for the phenomenon as something to be expected in the normal Christian's life," comments one author.¹ Naturally, the presence of God can be felt in various modes, overcoming both believers and unbelievers, and arouse a variety of reactions.² Yet this fact does not automatically bestow legitimacy to analogous phenomena in dissimilar situations.

One could argue that such phenomena are means the Spirit uses to encounter one's deep self, heal psychological wounds, and enact a spiritual drama, bringing a sense of empowerment.³ Or that that experience, perhaps by creating a Christian group "addiction," helps to keep a person focused on God rather than on the world. Yet it is highly unlikely that the Spirit, who enables the believer to be truly human, reflecting the image of God, and to have self-control (Gal 5:23; 2 Tim 1:7), would lead people to mimic animals in the worship setting. Subjection of the self to the Spirit, which brings a flow of joy, rather than the pursuit of ecstatic experience, aiming at putting the self under the Spirit, is the New Testament pattern.

For some researchers, these phenomena may be explained by unconscious collective hypnosis, since there are similarities in terms of environment (atmosphere of openness, relaxation, and expectation), techniques (suggestion), and effects (time distortion, physical changes, etc.).⁴ Through hypnosis it is possible to control another's unconscious mind. Morton Kelsey, after describing several things that can be accomplished under hypnosis, such as to selectively erase memories and control bodily functions (for example, heart rate and oxygen consumption), concludes: "Through this apparent mobilization of the unconscious mind by an outside agent, any

¹P. H. Alexander, "Slain in the Spirit," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 790.

²Oropeza, 128-129.

³For a positive assessment in this line, see Margaret M. Poloma, "Inspecting the Fruit of the 'Toronto Blessing': A Sociological Perspective," *Pneuma* 20 (1998): 43-70.

⁴See David Middlemiss, *Interpreting Charismatic Experience* (London: SCM, 1996), especially the appendix "Enthusiastic Phenomena and Hypnotic Techniques."

of the physical effects we have found among various religious groups can be duplicated. Certainly getting a person in hypnotic trance to fall to the floor would be a simple hypnotic procedure.”¹

Others prefer to explain the phenomena as a complex altered state of consciousness.² This state—which can be triggered by a series of factors such as sensory deprivation/stimulation, change of mental alertness, and body chemistry alterations—includes changes in the pattern of thinking, sense of time, body image, suggestibility, and emotional expression, among other things. Interestingly, this altered state is being interpreted positively as a profound religious experience, something analogous to what Isaiah (6), Ezekiel (1-7), Daniel (7-10), Peter (Acts 10), John (Rev 1), and Paul (2 Cor 12) would have experienced during their dreams and visions.³

How should Adventists react to these phenomena and their explanations? First, it is important to recognize that one’s presuppositions can influence one’s hermeneutics and, therefore, the meaning one attributes to bodily phenomena. For example, when Paul portrays his preaching as a manifestation of power,⁴ and especially his mysterious statement about being out of his mind (2 Cor 5:13), we can interpret his view with either rational/cognitive or charismatic/experiential lenses. Moyer Hubbard argues that Paul’s expression “out of my mind” does not have to do with eccentric behavior or ecstatic experience, but with an accusation raised in Corinth against “his poor

¹Kelsey, *Discernment*, 41.

²See Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994); and Mark J. Cartledge, “Interpreting Charismatic Experience: Hypnosis, Altered States of Consciousness and the Holy Spirit,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13 (1998): 117-132. The category of “altered states of consciousness” is perhaps too generic and vague, but has the advantage of being more neutral than terms such as trance and spirit possession.

³See Cartledge, “Interpreting Charismatic Experience,” 125-132.

⁴See Rom 15:18-19; 1 Cor 2:4-5; and 1 Thess 1:5. The word *dynamis* (“power”) appears thirty times in the Pauline corpus.

rhetorical skills.”¹ For Steve Summers, “surely Paul showed by unmistakable charismatic outbreaks that God was powerfully present by his Spirit.”²

Second, one must not confuse divine presence and bodily phenomena. Even when a manifestation is holy, it should not be identified with the divine itself. An encounter with God may cause profound bodily response, but God is beyond bodily agitation. The believer should seek God, not the accompanying phenomena. There is the peril of addiction to the dramatic, the spectacular, the marvelous, for the sake of exciting experiences.³

Third, a revival may start with the Spirit and finish with the flesh (Gal 3:3), or another spirit. Besides, some people may be under the control of the Spirit while others may not. By its nature, a renewal service attracts all kinds of people, many of them “endangered and unstable” or even “psychologically ill.”⁴ It would be naive to think that a divine revival would not attract the attention of devilish forces. A fair assessment would be careful with generalizations. Ellen White warned her audience not to despise the operations of the Spirit because of unbalanced people, or fear of fanaticism, but to cherish the blessing and evaluate the phenomena carefully.⁵

Fourth, dramatic bodily manifestations can have divine, human, or demonic origin. Usually, it is difficult to determine the source of ambiguous phenomena. If Adventists are to follow Ellen White’s later assessment, they will be suspicious of hyper-bodily enthusiasm. For her, the Spirit alone creates “a healthy enthusiasm”; “great bodily demonstrations” “are no evidence of the presence of the Spirit”; and, “just before the close of probation,” bodily

¹Moyer Hubbard, “Was Paul Out of His Mind? Re-Reading 2 Corinthians 5.13,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 70 (1998): 39-64, citation from 64.

²Steve Summers, “‘Out of My Mind for God’: A Social-Scientific Approach to Pauline Pneumatology,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13 (1998): 94-95.

³See The Theological Commission of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church of Germany, “Concerning Extraordinary Bodily Phenomena in the Context of Spiritual Occurrences,” *Pneuma* 18 (1996): 5-32, especially 13-19.

⁴*Ibid.*, 30.

⁵Ellen G. White, “Was the Blessing Cherished?” *Review and Herald*, February 6, 1894, 81-82.

phenomena rocked by dancing music, “a bedlam of noise,” attributed to the Spirit, will be used by Satan to neutralize the power of the truth. “If we work to create an excitement of feeling, we shall have all we want, and more than we can possibly know how to manage.”¹

Finally, it is important not to prejudge a renewal movement only because it does not fit one’s theological or liturgical tastes. As Margaret Poloma says, “revivals are messy—at least they are messy before they are cleaned up by their theological descendants and sanitized by secular scholars in the academy.”² Adventism also had its “messy” moments in its beginning, a fact evidenced in the many warnings of Ellen White against “fanaticism.” A comprehensive history of the early Adventist enthusiasm is still to be written.³ To this day, most Adventists probably would be surprised, or scandalized, in knowing that their prophetess herself seems to have been involved with a group of fanatics, lying on the floor in an intermittent state of trance.⁴ Perhaps more important than the initial “messiness” is the meaning and the direction that the leadership gives to the revival.

Vanderlei Dorneles, a former editor at Brazil Publishing House and currently a professor of journalism, suggests in his recent literary research a link between Pentecostalism, postmodernism, and primitive pagan cult. In his view, postmodernism prepared the way for Pentecostalism, which is in religion what postmodernism is in philosophy. Paradoxically, says Dorneles, Pentecostalism is a “pre-modern” phenomenon. “Pentecostal and charismatic liturgy, oriented to trance

¹Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:16, 26, 36.

²Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing,’” 43.

³For a valid start in this sense, see James Michael Wilson, “Enthusiasm and Charismatic Manifestations in Sabbatarian Adventism with Applications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Late Twentieth Century” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995). Types of charismatic manifestations documented by Wilson include visions, dreams, impressions, tongues, slaying in power, healing, shouting, laughing, a feeling of power, melting and confession, weeping and agonizing, and a sense of freedom (34-100).

⁴See Rennie Schoepflin, ed., “Scandal or Rite of Passage? Historians on the Dammon Trial,” *Spectrum* 17 (1987): 37-50. For Ellen White’s version of this incident, see Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: My Christian Experience, Views and Labors in Connection with the Rise and Progress of the Third Angel’s Message* (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1860), 2:40-42.

experiences, reflects the liturgies of ancient [pagan] cults, in which music and emotional appeal were the techniques for the attainment of trance. So Pentecostalism better represents a return to the primitive [paganism] rather than a religious renovation.”¹

This kind of assessment seems to be correct in theory—especially when it exposes human-manufactured experiences and liturgical excesses, sometimes too close anthropologically to trance- and spirit-possession for a biblically oriented Christian to feel comfortable.² However, this criticism betrays a subtle tendency in modern Adventism of overemphasizing reason to the detriment of emotion. It validates the mind, while denigrating the body; it elevates transcendence, but denigrates immanence. In this view, rational religion (more linked to myths and discourses) is biblical religion, while bodily religion (more akin to rites and symbols) is pagan religion. Is this view faithful to Adventist/biblical wholism?

Biblical evidence supports a balanced approach. If Old Testament writers stress Yahweh’s holiness and transcendence, New Testament writers underscore God’s love and immanence. Torah establishes limits against improper excesses of paganism; the gospel implodes the formalistic excesses of Judaism. The incarnate Son of God, embodying the Torah and radiating grace, unifies legal and experiential aspects of religious expression. The Holy Spirit comes to engrave Christ in the believers’ minds and leads their bodies in praise to God. The presence of God impacts us wholistically, and we must answer to God wholistically. As Jesus said in Mark 12:33, one must

¹Vanderlei Dorneles, *Transe místico: o fator de aproximação entre culto primitivo, pós-modernismo e pentecostalismo* (Engenheiro Coelho, Brazil: Centro Universitário Adventista, 2002), 250, 251.

²Due to superficial or real similarities, most anthropologists probably would study the exotic charismatic experiences under the category of trance or spirit possession. According to Janice Boddie, “researchers currently locate possession in wider spheres of human endeavor, as speaking to quotidian issues of selfhood and identity, challenging global political and economic domination, and articulating an aesthetic of human relationship to the world” (“Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 [1994]: 427). For an influential book on the subject, see I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

love God with all the heart (emotion), with all the understanding (reason), and with all the strength (body).

Worship is a fine combination of Torah and gospel, transcendence and immanence, limit and freedom, mind and body.¹ This is perhaps an area where Adventists can improve their experience. Early Adventism of the 1840s and 1850s started with a highly enthusiastic style of worship, but moderated in the following decades, due to a natural process of sophistication of its members, cultural changes, “abuses of some enthusiasts,” and certainly reaction to Ellen White’s warnings.² In sum, Adventist enthusiasm declined because of historical, sociological, and theological reasons. By 1885, however, the pendulum perhaps had gone too far in the other direction, for Ellen White complained: “There is too much formality in our religious services. The Lord would have His ministers who preach the word energized by His Holy Spirit. . . . Where the church is walking in the light, there will ever be cheerful, hearty responses and words of joyful praise.”³

In the early 1990s, features of the “celebration movement” were incorporated into the worship of a number of churches.⁴ Yet, in my view, there is room for progress. African-American worship, characterized by a celebratory eschatological experience of God in the gathered assembly, is an interesting model to observe.⁵

¹Worship, in the biblical sense, is an act of celebration of God with mind, heart, and body for he being who he is and doing what he does. True worship is (1) centralized in God, (2) mediated through Christ, (3) motivated by the Spirit, and (4) oriented by Scripture; it (5) involves the whole being, (6) focuses on the past, present, and future, (7) gives a new vision of God, oneself, and the world, (8) expresses outwardly what is inwardly, (9) involves a “yes” to a divine mission, and (10) manifests the sacred as love in both the religious setting and the secular arena.

²Graybill, 12.

³Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:318.

⁴For a convenient brief description of this movement, see J. David Newman and Kenneth R. Wade, “Is It Safe to Celebrate?” *Ministry*, June 1990, 26-29.

⁵An Adventist perspective on this subject is found in Clifford Jones, “African-American Worship: Its Heritage, Character, and Quality,” *Ministry*, September 2002, 5-9.

Postmodern tastes value a wholistic participation in the mystery of the sacred. One sees an emphasis on experience, belonging, and acceptance. Instead of fighting a new style of spirituality, Adventism perhaps would do better in capitalizing the wave, redirecting it to the true worship. If the presence of God is felt as real, then emotional expression is normal. The scandal comes when the expression is artificial or disproportionate to the feeling of God's presence, or legitimized in itself apart from Scripture and obedience.

A balanced congregation not only underscores a sense of order and decorum in a Pauline fashion (1 Cor 14:33), but also allows a spirit of joy and flexibility. "For Paul," according to Banks, "worship is obedience rather than literal sacrifice and is rational or voluntary rather than ecstatic. This distinguishes Paul's view from that of the Jewish or Hellenistic cult."¹ Yet Paul certainly is not against bodily expression in worship, if a minimum of order is observed. He advocated praise/prayer with mind and spirit (1 Cor 14:15; cf. Rom 14:17; 1 Thess 5:16-19). Before being a cerebral theologian, Paul was an experiential Christian. He was so successful because, behind his powerful theological framework, he had the driving force of experience.

Music, as an ideological and psychological vehicle, marking the emotional rhythm of the congregation, is essential in worship.² Though just a tool, it is basic. In his cross-cultural analysis, Gilbert Rouget has shown that music associated with rhythm and dance in a given cultural context can induce or trigger trance.³ The ecstatic possibilities of music are real. In spite of this fact, Christian worship can benefit from sound music, which needs not to be old or boring to be proper for worship. Time or tastelessness does not sanctify a song. A "joyful noise" is as much part of the Jewish heritage as the alleged no-drums music of the temple of Jerusalem.⁴ In my opinion,

¹Banks, 88.

²For an Adventist study discussing music, worldview, and worship, see Wolfgang Hans Martin Stefani, *Música sacra, cultura & adoração* (Engenheiro Coelho, Brazil: Imprensa Universitária Adventista, 2002).

³Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession*, trans. Brunhilde Biebuyck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

⁴The "joyful noise" is encouraged in Pss 66:1; 81:1; 95:1, 2; 98: 4, 6; 100:1. For the instruments used in the temple, see 1 Chr 25:1, 3, 6; 2 Chr 29:25.

many pieces of contemporary Christian music may be perfectly appropriate for worship.¹ If a song does not touch an audience, it is unlikely that the Spirit can use it to touch that same audience.

Keavin Hayden advocates religious liberty for the individual in the area of music as an unalienable right before God.² Is not this a fair claim? I think a congregation has the right to define the best style of music for its worship, although it should consider the principles of divine doxology (Does it glorify God?), mood elevation (Does it arouse positive feelings?), spiritual profitableness (Does it communicate something good?), bodily balance (Does it stimulate both body and mind?), and fraternal unity (Does it promote a sense of union?). Musical elitism, in disregarding corporate tastes, probably is no less harmful than charismatic or legalistic elitism.

Without losing the realism of the cross, Adventism might open itself to a wider and deeper experience of the Spirit, not imitating the perfectionist experiment of Albion Fox Ballenger (1861-1921) in the 1890s,³ but following a New Testament Christ-centered pneumatology. This is not just a cultural imposition, or a pragmatic necessity, but also the biblical pattern. If today a group is trying to set the watch of history back in terms of christology, in the future another group may want to set the watch ahead in the matter of pneumatology. Unsound or dangerous experiences normally flourish in untouched soil, that is, areas that the church neglects.

Progression in Theology

A prominent work of the Spirit, according to Jesus, is to unveil the truth to believers (John 14:26). This is a progressive work, a continuing process of search. In order to penetrate the

¹I am thinking of songs such as “The Power of Your Love,” by Geoff Bullock; “As the Deer,” by Martin Nystrom; “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High,” by Rick Founds; and “Shout to the Lord,” by Darlene Zschech.

²Keavin Hayden, *Lifestyles of the Remnant: A Refreshing Look at the Principles of Christian Living* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 77-78.

³Ballenger lived in a context of holiness movements and his theology seems to have inspired the Holy Flesh heretic movement of Indiana, opposed by Ellen White. For a contextualized biography of Ballenger, see Calvin W. Edwards and Gary Land, *Seeker After Light: A. F. Ballenger, Adventism, and American Christianity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2000), especially chap. 3, “Receive Ye the Holy Ghost” (32-64).

mysteries of the spiritual realm and figure out the meaning of events and phenomena, believers are assisted by the Spirit. All believers need such divine help, for they share with nonbelievers the finitude and frailty proper to human beings.

The Spirit assisted the apostolic church to make important theological decisions, in order to expand the mission (Acts 15). The issue in Jerusalem was how far was not too far, or how much could the church contextualize and still remain faithful to the essence of the gospel. In this process, the apostles—sembled to discuss—basically reasoned from experience (vss. 8, 12), common sense (vss. 9, 10), and Scripture (vss. 13-21). The interesting point is that their “light” decision toward the Gentiles was also considered a decision of the Holy Spirit (vs. 28). This should call our attention to the role of the Spirit as contextualizer, a topic little explored.

Since its origin, the Adventist Church has a history of theological refinement. The great pillars were settled in the first years,¹ but the process continues. Although the church sometimes makes mistakes, one can see a serious attempt to adapt itself to the biblical pattern. There is a conscious effort to discover “the truth”—to the point that an overassurance of biblical orthodoxy may threaten the experience. In most instances, such theological endeavor certainly has received the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

When one compares Adventism to Pentecostalism, one sees a different pattern in their theological routes. As a whole, Adventism is selective and biblically oriented, while Pentecostalism is embracing and culturally oriented.² Adventism is more likely to “copy” contemporary practical administrative procedures and evangelistical tools than to accept packages of theological ideas. Three examples, I hope, will substantiate my generalization.

¹Pillars include (1) a realistic parousia (literal Second Advent); (2) seventh-day Sabbatarianism and the continuity of the law; (3) human wholism, involving the unconscious state of the dead and annihilacionism at the last judgment after the millennium; (4) the heavenly priesthood of Jesus; and (5) righteousness by faith (a latter, post-1888, development).

²Pentecostalism, due to its cultural adaptability, has been characterized as a “religion made to travel” (Cox, 102).

First, in the area of eschatology, both movements have Methodist roots, and believe in the soon return of Jesus Christ. However, while Adventism developed an unique premillennialist view of the end-time events, Pentecostalism basically became dispensationalist.¹ This is a paradox, for dispensationalists used to be cessationist, denying the post-canonical continuity of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, a non-negotiable Pentecostal clause!

Second, in the area of typology, both movements began by seeing a special significance in the tabernacle theology. Pentecostals connected with the Azusa Street, heirs of the Methodist camp-meeting tradition, used elements of the tabernacle in the Old Testament to explain typologically Christian experiences of justification (in their view, prefigured by the altar of sacrifice), sanctification (prefigured by the golden altar), and the baptism in the Spirit (prefigured by the great shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies).² Adventists, also heirs of the camp-meeting tradition, soon in their history centralized their theology in the types of the tabernacle to explain the ministry of Christ as the cosmic Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary.³ Today, Adventism is the guardian of the typological interpretation. But a clear difference appears when one compares both approaches to sanctuary typology: while Pentecostals made a personal, earthly application, using types to explain their charismatic experiences, Adventists made a cosmic, heavenly application, using types to explain their prophetic model. Independent of which model is more biblical, it is important to have a strong perception of where the exalted Lord is and what he does today. Because Christ is officiating in the heavenly sanctuary, always available, the Spirit can make the believers feel God near every moment, while keeping a sense of history.

Finally, in the area of “signology,” both Adventists and Pentecostals, as all humans, have a taste for signs as confirmation of God’s favor. Yet, while Pentecostals generally underscore the

¹See Gerald T. Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma* (1984): 5-33.

²See Taves, 337-341.

³For a representative book on the current Adventist theology of the sanctuary, see Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ*.

concept of tongues as a/the visible sign of the baptism in the Spirit, Adventists emphasize the concept of the Sabbath as a visible, eternal, and universal sign of the covenant.¹ It would be interesting to dive deeply into the theology of signs, studying both approaches.² The point is that Pentecostalism focuses on a sign primarily experiential and secondarily doctrinal, while Adventism emphasizes a sign primarily doctrinal and secondarily experiential.

Does this mean that the Spirit is working with one religious body and not with the other? No. All of this is to say that, in the long run, a group that intends to follow the prompts of the Spirit must show theological evidences. Now, how long does it take? A century? I do not dare to answer. Adventism is still maturing. Pentecostalism needs to grow.³ Theology, in order to be kept alive, must be an unfinished task. Every religious movement must constantly evaluate its theological path. Paraphrasing John, if a church claims to have no need to grow in theology and practice, it is deceiving itself and the Spirit of Christ is not in it (see 1 John 1:8). In a sense, the future is open for every religious tradition, even those unfaithful to the covenant (Rom 11). It is the corporate ability to perceive the blowing of the Spirit and the disposition to follow him that finally will make the difference.

The basics of faith, however, should be seriously observed. As a set of pure doctrine may be not tasty enough to delight the soul, so an outburst of enthusiasm may have no substance enough to make a lasting impact. An intense religious experience needs a platform of truth to lend

¹Adventists base their theology of the Sabbath as a sign of loyalty to and love for the Creator in texts such as Exod 31:13, 17; Ezek 20:12, 20; Rev 13:16-17; 14:6-12. In Revelation, in a context of worship, the mark of the beast (a false Sabbath) is seen in opposition to the seal of God (the Sabbath).

²For instance, is the Sabbath in the sphere of the covenant what tongues is in the scope of the Spirit, or is this a comparison of apples with oranges? Can these signs be considered complementary? May a sign of God as Enabler or Empowerer be in opposition to a sign of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier? Is it possible to receive an elusive sign while disregarding a clear one? What is the role of love as a sign of the Spirit's presence?

³Some authors have a highly negative assessment of the Pentecostal theology. Walter J. Hollenweger registered: "The *theological* insights of the Pentecostal movement are neither new nor valuable" (*The Pentecostals* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988], 506, italics in original). Considering recent progression, I would not be so critical.

it support in the long run, especially in times of crisis. Unless Christ, with his law of love, becomes the center of an experience, in time any secular force such as pluralism may dispel or distort the experience. In fact, this is the standard Adventist interpretation of the end-time scenario when it comes to the forces led by Rome.

Consistency of Claims/Deeds

An important scripturistic test to know whether a prophet is commissioned by God is the veracity of his or her prognostication: “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken” (Deut 18:22). Jeremiah (28:9) appealed to this test. An excessive boldness in claiming revelations or charisms, without concrete evidence, may be an alarm of falsehood.

Randall Otto argues that the concept of “prophetic perspective,” the idea that prophets have a vision of the future as a great “landscape,” with little concern “about specificity in the timing of their predictions,” is “an invalid and irresponsible hermeneutical device.” “What a prophet predicted was generally expected to occur within his lifetime or generation, not to be deferred into the distant future.”¹ This may or may not be true, depending on the specific prophecy.

Contrary to popular imagination, biblical prophecy is more propositive/corrective than predictive. Apocalyptic prophecy, however, has a remarkable predictive character. Presenting complex imagery, it deals with long periods of time as a *continuum* in history. Hans LaRondelle explains that “the characteristic feature of classical prophecy is its *dual focus* on the near and the far, without any differentiation in time.” On the other hand, “a comprehensive overview of salvation history in advance is the specific characteristic of *apocalyptic prophecy*.”² Adventism has a special predilection for this last kind of prophecy, as seen in Daniel and Revelation.

¹Randall E. Otto, “The Prophets and Their Perspective,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63 (2001): 219-240, citations from 219, 220, 228.

²Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 9, 10.

One problem with predictive prophecy is its interpretation or, in some cases, reliability. Depending on the group, a prophecy unfulfilled has a great potential for disappointment, frustration, anger, hatred, and membership loss. The higher the tension between a group and the larger society, the greater is the commitment of the members to the group; and the greater the commitment, the higher is the negative impact of a failed prophecy upon the members. Chris Bader states the curvilinear relationship between tension and defection after a failed prophecy with two propositions:

1. The impact of a failed prophecy upon a religious group will be proportional to the average level of exclusive commitment to the group.

2. After a failed prophecy, members will leave the group to the extent that it is less costly to leave than to remain a member.¹

Divine prophecies do not fail as human prophecies, but they may remain unfulfilled. God is reasonable. In some cases, when circumstances change, God changes his plans (see Jer 18:1-10; Jonah). So theologians are justified in talking about both conditional and unconditional prophecies. As a rule, classic prophecies with a covenantal character are more dependent on human response and tend to conditionality, while apocalyptic prophecy has an eschatological tone, which is more dependent on God's sovereignty, and therefore tends to aconditionality.²

Fulfillment of oracles, then, is not always a conclusive proof. In periods of political crisis, prophetic rivalry, charismatic ambiguity, and popular confusion, such as those evident in Jeremiah (7; 12:13-15; 20:1-3; 23:9-40) and Ezekiel (12:21; 14:10), "new criteria were added to older ones for ascertaining the validity of specific prophetic claims."³ Sometimes even this recourse—along with linguistic devices (such as "Yahweh said"), covenant appeals, doom themes, and fulfillment

¹Chris Bader, "When Prophecy Passes Unnoticed: New Perspectives on Failed Prophecy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 127, 128.

²See William G. Johnsson, "Conditionality in Biblical Prophecy With Particular Reference to Apocalyptic," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 259-287.

³Michael Fishbane, "Biblical Prophecy as a Religious Phenomenon," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 1:71.

elements—did not solve the ambiguities. Therefore, as Michael Fishbane underscores, the veracity should be sought in the objectivity of God’s revelation and in the subjectivity of the prophetic consciousness:

For Jeremiah, ultimately, . . . the overriding criterion of a true prophecy lay in its subjective impact on the prophet himself. By his testimony, in fact, true prophecy is presented as having its onset in an inner explosion, a consuming compulsion, a rape of interiority (20:1-9; 23:29). It was thus categorically separate from the illusions of dreamwork, subjective fantasies, or even scholastic plagiarisms—a sampling of the pseudo-prophetic conditions which Jeremiah unyieldingly and repeatedly lambastes (23:26-32). Profoundly aware that he spoke God’s words and not the concoctions of his own mind, Jeremiah (and his prophetic congeners) would have mockingly rebutted the modern suggestion that the prophets merely gave verbal release to some overbearing psychic pressure.¹

The consistency of a claim is also a valid test for other charismatic manifestations, such as miracles or healings. A miracle should be seen by a double perspective: factuality and “signality.” In ancient cultures, people probably were more interested in the significance of the miracles than in their exceptionality. Later, with the scientific era, the exceptionality got more attention than the significance. Today, with postmodernism, theologians are again underscoring the significance. Miracles are, above all, signs. In fact, both factuality and signality are essential. A miracle can be a divine sign only if it is real. For instance, a miraculous healing without a healed person is not a healing at all—and, therefore, cannot be “explored” as a sign of the presence of the Spirit.

Steps for the SDA Church

Does the Adventist Church have the Holy Spirit? “Of course,” an Adventist might say. Does the Holy Spirit fully have the church? “Partly,” the Holy Spirit might say. This may be true for any denomination. The Spirit controls the church, but the church is not totally controlled by the Spirit. What steps should the Adventist Church undertake in order to be more fully operated by the Spirit? I will suggest five provisory steps based on historical, sociological, and biblical observation. It is important to keep in mind that, while these steps do not have directly to do with the Spirit, a powerful manifestation of the Spirit is dependent on indirect factors.

¹Ibid., 72.

A supermanifestation of the Spirit is never automatic, of course, nor does it obey a mathematical formula. Steps are just preparation of the soil. The real manifestation of the Spirit depends on God's sovereignty. There is no warrant that the Spirit will come with power in answer to tears, promises, changes, and exercises. At the same time, there is no menace that the Spirit will leave us in reaction to failures, for nothing can "separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39). The Spirit should not be seen as a rare award that God capriciously grants only to the champions or smart guys. God is pleased in pouring out his Spirit on the church of his Son.

Change of Paradigm

Adventism probably does not need many great changes in its theology or ecclesiology. However, I envision a major adjustment which may have the impact of a paradigm change.¹ By its liberating effect, this change might revolutionize the ecclesial dynamics. It is, in sum, a change from structure as an end, governed by an elite in the offices, to structure as a means, exercised by the believers in the local congregations. I am not proposing congregationalism, but a system where order and charism mutually energize the life of the church. The problem is not with organization, but with a technocratic thinking.

While a church should be a dynamic organism, some churches unfortunately are dead and static—victims of traditionalism. In order to make them functional structures, it is most certainly necessary to implement changes.² As Jesus said, "new wine must be poured into new wineskins" (Luke 5:38). Improvements may be done by things such as the creation of permission-giving networks; reduction of committees and unfruitful meetings; an increase of funds destined to the local congregations; a dedication to creativity, innovation, quality, and excellence in every level; a

¹Paradigm: here a model or pattern of organizational thought and procedure with a pervasive influence in the whole life of the church.

²Three helpful books here are: *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1990), by Leith Anderson; *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), by Aubrey Malphurs; and *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), by William M. Easum.

more participatory democracy; and, above all, a commitment to flexibility and freedom of the Spirit and his charisms (see 2 Cor 3:17).

Although the life that comes from the Spirit is the secret for the church's vitality, appropriation of that life corporately on a continuous basis is not easy. Religious movements tend to start with high charismatic voltage, but in time they walk into routinization.¹ Throughout the history of a movement, this pattern may be alternated with occasional charismatic eruption, due to moments of crisis, conflict, or rupture, but it stands as a general rule.

From a sociological perspective, institutionalism may be an enemy of charismatic expression. Christian historians have suggested that institutionalism played a fundamental role in quenching the charisms, especially prophecy,² in the early Christian church. It is not easy to accommodate both prophets and bishops in the hierarchy. According to Aune, "the much-discussed problem of the decline of prophecy in early Christianity must be viewed as a social rather than a theological issue. With the institutionalization of Christianity and the rationalization of its authority structures, prophecy became redundant as well as dysfunctional."³ In fact, the history of God's people suggests a perennial tension between two parallel poles: the institutional (priests/kings/bishops) and the charismatic (judges/prophets/laities).

Adventism started (1840s) suspicious of organization, but "found itself *forced* toward organization in the 1850s in order to protect itself from impostors and to more adequately advance its mission in the frustrating face of an end that just wouldn't come."⁴ Between 1888 and 1903,

¹This pattern applies at least to early Judaism, early Christianity, early Methodism, early Adventism, and so on.

²See James L. Ash, Jr., "The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976): 227-252.

³Aune, 338.

⁴George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 7.

there was an important organizational restructuring, with missiological motivation.¹ Today, criticism of Adventist institutionalization has grown.² The claim, in some cases, is for flexibility, adaptability, and purposefulness. Unfortunately, no Adventist theologian, to my knowledge, has investigated in depth the role of institutionalization in the depletion of the charismatic fire in the denomination. To briefly examine the Catholic experience may be illuminating, for the Papacy with its ecclesial apparatus holds a prominent place in the center of the Adventist prophetic cosmos.

Adventism traditionally is critical of Roman Catholic superstructure.³ Speaking of the sea beast of Rev 13, which Adventists usually identify as Christian Rome, Jacques Doukhan writes: “Behind its mask of religiosity lurks the all-too-human aspiration for power. God is of no concern to the church. It is all a political game.”⁴ The modern Papacy has not succeeded in reversing the negative assessment—despite a recent isolated positive reevaluation.⁵ Vatican’s apparent democracy is seen as a strategy to recover its influence and power, for Rome “thinks in centuries.”⁶

¹See Barry D. Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present, and Future*, Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series 15 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989).

²The major positive criticism comes from the historian George R. Knight in his *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Mission Confronts the Challenges of Institutionalism and Secularization* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995); and idem, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 167-181. For him, overinstitutionalization threatens the mission of the church.

³Following a Protestant feeling of the day, Adventist pioneers saw the Catholic Church as Babylon. Adventism did not create anti-Catholicism, but embraced the historicist hermeneutical method and perfected the theological logic to keep it alive.

⁴Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 118.

⁵In his study showing how Adventists have viewed Roman Catholicism over the years, Reinder Bruinsma strikes a positive note about recent Catholic changes (*Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, 1844-1965* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994]).

⁶Johann Heinz, “The Modern Papacy: Claims and Authority,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 369.

Historical motives for suspicion exist, of course. Religious superstructures tend to become ends in themselves, and finally persecute those who challenge their legitimacy or question their claims. The Jewish temple of the first century and the Catholic power of the Middle Ages are two characteristic examples. Pope John Paul II himself has recognized Rome's abuses. His many public *mea culpa* are, to quote an Italian Vaticanist, a "program" to revise the "historical image of the church," aiming at ecumenical gains.¹

According to Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian theologian of Liberation, the current Catholic ecclesiastical model inherited its structure, titles, expressions, and symbols of power from the "Roman power" and the "feudal structure." It is a "pyramidal," "personalized," "cosmic, and sacred" hierarchy, where the voice of the superior is the voice of God. The church lacks the "political means of power to exercise violence against those accused of heresy as formerly, but the basic mentality and the procedurals little have changed." It missed the point with the Constantinean turn, when Christianity from *religio illicita* became *ecclesia universalis*. As *Pontifex Maximus* ("supreme pontifex," or "bridge builder," an originally pagan title of honor), the pope unified in himself the *sacerdotium* and the *regnum*, inaugurating a "dictatorship of the pope." The church-institution failed its "test of power."²

It must be added that the shaping of the papacy after the East-West schism in 1054 (before "the bishop of Rome was seen primarily as patriarch of Rome, alongside the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem") and the feeling beneath the "legal maxim 'The first see is judged by no one'," which originated in the sixth century (notice that "*papal*

¹Luigi Accattoli, *Quando o papa pede perdão: todos os mea culpa de João Paulo II* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1997), 8, 21-24, 103.

²Leonardo Boff, *Igreja: carisma e poder* (São Paulo: Ática, 1994), 78, 79, 74, 91-106, passim. This book, originally published in 1981, displeased the authorities of the Vatican so much that its author was submitted to a process at the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Eventually, the book was forbidden and the author punished.

infallibility is a dimension of the *Church's* infallibility, not vice versa”),¹ contributed to the uplift of such a hierarchical structure.

For Boff, the church has a christological and a pneumatological foundation. However, the Latin church concentrated too much in its christological foundation, becoming a fossilized institution. By focusing on structure and power, it lost that freshness that characterized the apostolic church. Could the old church bear a new church? Perhaps the church does not believe in this “ecclesiogenesis” and, as the barren Sarah, even smiles; but renovation is possible. The signs of hope come from the periphery, from the church of the disinherited (the theologian is skeptical regarding a change from the center). In order to recover the balance between charism and power, the church must open itself to charismatic expression. Charism, more important than the institutional element, is the pneumatic force that creates, structures, and vitalizes the church.² Here we find the emphasis of the title, *Church: Charism and Power*—a remarkable book to whose main theses any conservative Adventist theologian could subscribe.

The Adventist Church is much more flexible, open, and democratic than the Catholic giant—in spite of Knight’s assessment that “many sincere Seventh-day Adventists are wondering if their church hasn’t ‘outbeasted the beast’ in the area of church organization.”³ Nevertheless, the church must prevent itself from concentrating too much power in the hands of an aristocracy and putting strong confidence in structure. Fate is implacable with religious organizations based on structure. Time, context, and pretext may cause justifiable and reasonable structures to become unjust and tyrannical superstructures.

If structures are not reformed due to an awareness caused by the Spirit, historical forces, with the divine permission, will disrupt them in the stage of superstructures. Could the Spirit be seen as demolisher of oppressive structures? A religious institution must not become so heavy and

¹Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St. Peter to John Paul II* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 18, 20, 21, italics in original.

²Boff, 113-117, 237-266.

³Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 167.

hard that the Holy Spirit cannot run it unless he destroys it. The Adventist Church cannot allow itself the luxury of developing an ecclesial apparatus that—if the world would last 200 years more, becoming Adventistized, and the president of the United States following a sign in the sky decided to be Adventist—would lead the church to acquire an imperial character.¹

When Israel was to enter the promised land, Yahweh anticipated that the people would desire to appoint a king. Yahweh accepted the idea, but said that the king should not “acquire great numbers of horses for himself,” nor “accumulate large amounts of silver and gold,” or “consider himself better than his brothers” (Deut 17:14-20). Apparently such requirements had the purpose of avoiding apostasy and oppression. Yahweh wanted a “light” royal house in order to grant dependence on him and obedience to his Spirit. This should be a lesson for modern churches. An egalitarian, fair, dialogical, sensitive, open, servant, and dynamic administration seems to be the goal of the Spirit.

With this reasoning, I do not mean a “Montanized”² church, twirled by outbursts of wild ecstasy and characterized by institutional chaos. I mean a Spirit-filled church where order and charism are united in a symmetric symbiosis; where order channelizes charisms and charisms maximize mission; where Christ is actualized by the Spirit, causing a powerful sense of God’s presence. In this model, the local churches should have more resources to run their ministries, but without nourishing gratuitous hostility to higher levels of administration.

Structure, far from being useless or incompatible with charism, is necessary. “Charism needs office the way a delicate plant needs a solid pot to hold it.”³ It is illusory to want lasting social impact without institution, or pursue a church based only on charism. “Abolishing

¹This is, of course, a hypothetical far-fetched situation in order to make a rhetorical point, but one must not forget that the conversion of Constantine to Christianity in the fourth century was implausible as well.

²The reference is made to Montanus, founder of an apocalyptic/ascetic/ecstatic movement in the second century in Phrygia. Two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla, belonged to the hyper-enthusiastic team of Montanus. For in-depth information, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 140.

routinized charisma does not bring pure charisma, but the absence even of routinized charisma,” says Jonathan Mills.¹ Unless the spiritual realm is ruled by laws discontinuous with the common sense and the secular world, hardly would a non-structured organization be stronger, or more productive, than a structured one.

The solution, then, is not in fragmenting the church into congregational bits. This could disfigure the Adventist heritage, threaten the theological unity of the denomination, and impair the global mission of the church. In a time of secular and religious merging, it is not advisable to self-inflict unreasonable divisions. The solution is perhaps in the interplay of what Christian Schwarz calls “the bipolar church concept,” a paradigm comprised by a “dynamic pole” (organic aspect) and a “static pole” (technical aspect), in which organism and organization interact positively. One must avoid two errors: (1) the dualistic thinking to the left (spiritualistic paradigm, which is anti-institutional) and the monistic thinking to the right (technocratic paradigm, which does not see the differences between the two poles). When the Spirit can use the institution (static pole) to stimulate spirituality (dynamic pole), and spirituality to strengthen the institution, growth is the natural result.²

Focus on God as the Center

Another topic important is a renewed emphasis on the Spirit. Ellen White suggested that, in order to receive the plenitude of the Spirit’s blessings, it is necessary to intensify the pneumatological discourse.³ Adventist pneumatology, in fact, is not so developed as its christology or theology. The church should pursue a more balanced or prominent view of the work of the Spirit in day-to-day life in connection with the work of both the Father and the Son.

¹Jonathan Mills, “Holy Foolishness and the Routinization of Charisma,” *Crux* 36 (2000): 12.

²Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 83-102.

³Ellen G. White, “Imperative Necessity of Searching for Truth,” *Review and Herald*, November 15, 1892, 707; idem, “It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons” [sermon at Lansing, Michigan, September 5, 1891], *Review and Herald*, March 29, 1892, 193; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 50.

Eschatology has played a significant role in shaping the Adventist pneumatology—as well as the whole of Adventist hermeneutics and even political positioning.¹ Perhaps instead of viewing pneumatology almost as a subset of eschatology, or just an appendix to a prophetic framework, the church needs to start seeing eschatology as a category dependent on pneumatology. The prophetic scheme in this case is not abandoned, but it gains a divine directiveness, under the impetus of the Spirit.

This change of focus must start at a popular level—in the pulpits of local churches. However, when an emphasis is put on a person of the Godhead, it is easier to lose balance and biblical perspective. Therefore, although recognizing the appropriateness of such an immediate emphasis on the Spirit, I would suggest a long-term theological re-orientation, involving the elaboration of a biblical triune integrative motif.

There are, of course, many theological integrative motifs. Thomas Aquinas theologized around the concept of the vision of God; Martin Luther centered on justification by faith; John Calvin focused on the theme of the glory of God; John Wesley valued the idea of grace; Karl Barth stressed the self-disclosure of God to us (revelation); and, above all, twentieth-century theologians such as C. H. Dodd and George Eldon Ladd widely employed the concept of the kingdom of God.² Stanley Grenz defends that, in order to define the nature of God's kingdom and fill it “with its proper content,” a revisioned evangelical theology should incorporate the motif of “community.”³ John McIntyre proposes that love must not be seen narrowly as a divine attribute, but should be the explicit controlling factor of Christian theology.⁴

Adventism has its own particular theological motifs. In his dissertation of 1995, Alberto Timm concludes that the historical Adventist doctrinal emphases seem “to suggest a system having

¹See Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

²Grenz, 138-139.

³Ibid., 155.

⁴John McIntyre, *On the Love of God* (London: Collins, 1962), 32-34.

(1) God as its unfolding center, (2) the cosmic controversy as its framework, (3) the everlasting covenant as its basis, (4) the sanctuary as its organizing motif, (5) the three angels' messages as its eschatological proclamation, and (6) the remnant as its missiological result."¹

Ellen White's unifying principle, according to some scholars, is the great controversy theme. "This provided a coherent framework for her theological thought as well as for her principles in education, health, missiology, social issues, and environmental topics," says her biographer Herbert Douglass.² Historian George Knight has adopted a different view, indicating seven major topics in White's non-systematic theology.³ Douglass seems so excited with the "seminal, governing principle" of the great controversy theme that he expands it to the whole Adventist theology.⁴

Although recognizing the validity of these motifs above, I would quite obviously suggest that God himself is the best integrative motif possible.⁵ No idea, discourse, scheme, or action can replace God himself as the center. The centrality of God pervades the whole Scripture, including John, with his deep christology. Johannine scholar C. K. Barrett has said: "There could hardly be a more christocentric writer than John, yet his very Christocentricity is theocentric."⁶ In John, says Marianne Meye Thompson, "the Christological circle lies within and shares its center with the

¹Alberto R. Timm, "The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages 1844-1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995), 476.

²Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 256.

³George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 109-127. These themes are the love of God, the great controversy, Jesus and his sacrifice, the Bible, the Second Coming, the third angel's message, and the transformation of character.

⁴Herbert E. Douglass, "The Great Controversy Theme: What It Means to Adventists," *Ministry*, December 2000, 5-7, especially 5.

⁵God, in this case, must be seen as the cosmic personal axis around whom everything revolves—receiving from him life, identity, purpose, meaning, unity, harmony, joy, and so on. Who he is and what he does are likewise basic aspects of this integration.

⁶C. K. Barrett, *Essays on John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 32.

larger theological circle.”¹ Moreover, John (16:7-15), along with other peers, emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit as the effectiveness of Christ—and, therefore, of God. The Spirit is the revealer of Christ, and Christ is the way of knowing, encountering, and approaching God, but God remains the ultimate framework. Generalizing, the New Testament is pneumatocentric to be christocentric, and christocentric to be theocentric. Therefore, a biblical integrative motif should be at the same time monotheistic and trinitarian.

To develop such theology is a complex task because the trinitarian concept has a paradoxical relationship with the monotheistic axiom. As Jürgen Moltmann points out, “the doctrine of the Trinity remains unfinished”: “The more one reflects on the mystery of the Trinity, the farther one seems to move from any final understanding of it. What was closed opens up, and what was once understood becomes unclear. Again and again, one must begin anew.”²

Progress, however, is possible. Within Roman Catholic theology, for example, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) published an influential essay in 1967 and made a seminal proposition: “The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity.”³ Although helpful during a period and endlessly cited, this axiom is not the last word in trinitarian theology, to begin with the impreciseness of its terminology. To some theologians, the alternative paradigm of Catherine Mowry LaCugna (1952-1997) emphasizing the patristic distinction/inseparability of *oikonomia* (the mystery of salvation) and *theologia* (the mystery of God), with a relational ontology of persons-in-communion, is far more fruitful.⁴ LaCugna tries to make sense of the Trinity in real life.

¹Marianne Thompson, 239. Thompson cites Barrett and other authors in support of her theocentric view of the Gospel of John.

²Jürgen Moltmann, “The Unity of the Triune God,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 28 (1984): 157.

³Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad/Herder, 1997), 22.

⁴See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991). For an enthusiastic, lucid appraisal of LaCugna’s trinitarian approach, see Elizabeth T. Gropp, “Catherine Mowry LaCugna’s Contribution to Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 730-763.

Many believers probably find the trinitarian formula “difficult to grasp in the main,” Jan Paulsen guesses, “because there is really nothing in the phenomena of nature to serve as an analogy to it.”¹ Some employ the analogy of family. If the Bible presented the Spirit as feminine, then such analogy could be promising. Yet this possibility is speculative and poses its own problems. Bloesch envisages “one God in three events rather than three persons in one nature,” something like “*one sun with three dimensions—fire, light and heat.*”² But this is essentially the kind of spiritualistic metaphor that Ellen White vehemently condemned when John Harvey Kellogg espoused it.³

As I have suggested in chapter 2, I prefer the analogy of the brain, with its two hemispheres controlled by the cortex—the highest executive and coordinator of the nervous system.⁴ Both hemispheres are inextricably connected, yet have certain independency. The left is predominantly responsible for language-related behavior, while the right is responsible for higher-level visual perception. Functionally asymmetrical (the right hemisphere is less specialized), perhaps to avoid competition, they have a wonderful synchronism. This image, while allowing for three centers in the inner consciousness of the Godhead, stresses its oneness. The brain is, so to say, three and one—like God.

Independently of how one imagines the Godhead, the trinitarian concept is important for the correct reading of the revealed data. From a logical point of view, the plan of salvation is essentially trinitarian. To begin with, the Incarnation requires at least a binitarian formula, and

¹Paulsen, 13. Christensen makes a similar point (69).

²Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*, 270, 271, italics in original.

³See Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, Series B, 7 (Battle Creek, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1897), 62-64; and Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White,” 284-290.

⁴For recent explorations in neuroscience and the cortical dynamics (from an evolutionist perspective), see A. C. Roberts, T. W. Robbins, and L. Weiskrantz, eds., *The Prefrontal Cortex: Executive and Cognitive Functions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Joaquin M. Fuster, *Cortex and Mind: Unifying Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

“between binitarian and trinitarian formulas is a quantitative rather than qualitative difference.”¹ We need also the actualizer or internalizer of salvation—a task suited for the Spirit. Therefore, a radical trinitarianism, in which all persons of the Godhead share full ontological equality, to the point of being one, is the only answer for the radical monotheism posited in the Bible.²

In order to avoid the perils of either modalism or tritheism, Adventism should remain faithful to the biblical heritage: a dynamic monotheism, in which the Word mediates the physical/legal abyss between us and God, and the Spirit bridges the metaphysical/existential gap. In this view, while the Son is the direct visible Creator/Redeemer, the Spirit is the immediate invisible Animator/Lifegiver. Both bring the personal presence of God. Yet, if the Son embodies and localizes God, the Spirit spiritualizes and universalizes God—in order to personalize him to everyone.³ In a certain sense, the Spirit would exercise what Killian McDonnell (following Basil) calls “a contact function,”⁴ although I see the role of the Spirit in a less abstract way. To borrow a phrase from Donald Dawe, “the Spirit is the expression of the freedom of God to be not only ‘for us’ but also ‘in us.’”⁵ Both the Word and the Spirit would have specific, equal (in importance), and essential missions within the economic Trinity.⁶ Along with the Father, they are eternal and simultaneous divine expressions of the same Godhead.

¹Canale, 129.

²Christoph Schwöbel has stated this with a two-fold thesis: “Only a radically monotheistic theology can be a proper trinitarian theology, and only a proper trinitarian theology can be a radically monotheistic theology” (“Radical Monotheism and the Trinity” (*Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43 [2001]: 74.

³See Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 192.

⁴Killian McDonnell, “A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?” *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 208, 209, 220, 221, 226; idem, *The Other Hand of God*, 109-120. McDonnell writes: “Without the Spirit God remains a private self, an isolated glory, an island apart. In this sense the Spirit is sovereign and all inclusive, the universal horizon, the exclusive point where we touch God and God touches us from within” (*The Other Hand of God*, 119).

⁵Dawe, 19.

⁶To stand in the face of biblical monotheism, all persons of the Godhead must share an equality; without this, the Trinity collapses. In spite of this, most Christian theologians probably hold some form of subordinationism. At least, according to Hanson (xix), this was true for

In this theological architecture, the Father is addressed, invoked, and worshiped through the Son in the Spirit. These prepositions and dealings, of course, are not exclusivistic of everyone, as Basil exhaustively demonstrated in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*.¹ Nor do they mean that the Son or the Spirit may not be worshiped, or prayed to, for they can and must. However, this way of dealing with the Godhead, a formula utilized in the patristic period, makes it more personal and closer to us. The result may be a deeper experience of the divine—one of the ultimate goals of the Spirit. A focus on God as the center probably will soften the theological struggles regarding the being of God, if *uno* or *trino*, for he is both. Beyond any trinitarian rhetoric, God, Christ, and the Spirit are equal each other to the point of being one.

Dependence on the Spirit

Church is a spiritual business when the Spirit directs the business of the church. If the Spirit is absent, church is just a business. In this case, the whole ecclesiastical routine is a way of perpetuating bureaucratic status. It is possible to run the business as if the Spirit were present when he is not. The leadership acquires the know-how of doing church successfully, and thinks the Spirit is operating. Improper confidence in a series of resources, including charismatic frenzy, can disguise a lack of the true power of the Spirit.

A Spirit-filled church is totally dependent on God in all matters, not on its own resources. This kind of church values the divine assistance by making it real. God is not likely to manifest

“virtually every theologian,” with the exception of Athanasius, up to the year 355. Badcock comments that “the whole of the Christian theological tradition before the Arian crisis was subordinationist to some extent” (43). Space prevents me from discussing this topic here, but it should deserve more attention from Adventist scholars. An author helpful to begin with is Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

¹Basil wrote this treatise in response to criticisms directed toward one of the two doxologies he was using (see *On the Holy Spirit* 1.3). One, more traditional and economically subordinative, was: “Glory be to the Father through [*dia*] the Son in [*en*] the Holy Spirit.” The other, more equalitarian, the motive of discord, said: “Glory be to the Father with [*meta*] the Son together with [*syn*] the Holy Spirit.” Employing a lengthy grammatical analysis, he aimed at demonstrating that both formulas were acceptable.

himself in a church where he is not necessary or welcome, unless when he comes to judge. Does the Adventist Church need to be awakened to the Spirit of God?

In 1863, Ellen White denounced: “The reason why there is so little of the Spirit of God manifested is that ministers learn to do without it.”¹ Agreeing with her, Adventist pastor Garrie Williams concludes: “Because of the strong doctrinal basis of my denomination, churches have learned to function without the Holy Spirit while relying on teachings, traditions, training, and institutional respectability.”² Every congregation should check its own level of dependence on the Spirit.

A way of being more dependent on God is by maintaining the focus on heavenly and earthly realms in a balanced tension. The early church had a clear apocalyptic vocation. “Christianity inherited from the Jewish apocalypses a way of affirming transcendent values, those things we should affirm even when the world around us collapses,” comments John Collins. According to him, the apocalyptic imagination perceives a higher controlling power, “includes a powerful rhetoric for denouncing the deficiencies of this world,” and constructs “a symbolic world where the integrity of values can be maintained in the face of social and political powerlessness and even of the threat of death.”³

Adventism, with its realistic apocalyptic imagination, must trust in the Spirit of God as the power to achieve on earth the dreams directed to heaven by non-conformist visionaries.

Space for All Gifts

As the discussion about the continuity of the miraculous gifts made clear, the Spirit is fully operative today. Yet many Adventists probably live in a kind of “intertestamental” vacuum. They admire the marvelous charisms of past times and look forward to the outpouring of the Spirit in a

¹Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:383.

²Garrie F. Williams, *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit and Know It* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 17.

³John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 282, 283.

distant future, but apparently never realize that a rich experience of the Spirit is available now. Has the Spirit been withdrawn from the church? A paragraph about a similar dilemma in Jewish history may illuminate our own conundrum.

The older consensus is that after the Babylonian exile there was a decline, even the cessation, of prophecy in Israel.¹ At least this was the people's perception. If God still communicated with his people, it was only through an inferior voice, the *bat qol* (literally, "daughter of a voice"), the echo of the divine voice. Later, this consensus was challenged by several scholars.² One of them, Frederick Greenspahn, writes: "Intertestamental authors may have sensed an absence of prophets—something noted in other periods as well (cf. 1 Sam 3:1)—but they simply did not state that prophecy had come to an end, temporarily or otherwise."³ Recently, Benjamin Sommer came in defense of the earlier consensus. According to him, Second Temple Jews "at once and without contradiction believed that true prophecy had ceased and that lesser but genuine substitutes existed." Among the factors that would have contributed to the decline of prophecy, he counts the collapse of the kingship and the destruction of the First Temple, removing the royal audience and destroying "the central nexus between heaven and earth" (in a phenomenological sense).⁴ The fact remains that there was a psychological awareness that prophetic activities had at least diminished.

Does the present-day church need to follow this self-pitiful pattern of looking to distant past or future golden ages? If, as Gane interprets, it may be true that the "final outpouring of the

¹See Aune, 103-106; Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 193-196.

²For John R. Levison, the cessationist view "is built upon a pastiche of texts: Ps 74.9; 1 Macc 4.46, 9.27 and 14.41; Josephus's *Ap* 1.37-41; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 85.3; Pr Azar 15; and *t. Sota* 13.2-4" ("Did the Spirit Withdraw from Israel? An Evaluation of the Earliest Jewish Data," *New Testament Studies* 43 [1997]: 35).

³Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 40.

⁴Benjamin D. Sommer, "Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Reevaluation," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 31-47, citations from 41, 46.

Holy Spirit” “takes place a short time before Jesus’ second coming,”¹ it is true as well that a powerful empowerment of the Spirit is already available. To paraphrase Jesus (Matt 26:41), the church is weak, but the Spirit is willing.

Theoretically, Seventh-day Adventists have always believed in spiritual gifts. Since 1980, a formal statement recognizes the spiritual gifts as part of the Adventist belief system.² Yet one may feel that in practice the church still has no place for the plain expression of some gifts in its ministry. It is as if the discourse on spiritual gifts were more a rhetorical device necessary to an eschatological worldview than a real belief/practice indispensable to the mission of the church. The bad news is that rhetoric alone will not work. If the talents of the parable (Matt 25) represent spiritual gifts, not using all the bestowed gifts is a sin of negligence that will bring judgment.

Adventism proudly stresses the gift of prophecy. After all, the movement, while partly having a sociological explanation, being fruit of its time and context, nourishes a self-perception as being prophetic. Its apocalyptic tone and millennial hope are based on prophecy. Perhaps the prophetess Ellen White has helped to shape the history of the movement as much as Paul helped to shape early Christianity. Besides, prophecy is the most acclaimed spiritual gift in the Old Testament (Num 12:6) and in the Pauline literature (1 Cor 14:1-5, 39), giving birth to the Bible itself.³

Yet, if an esteem of prophecy is legitimate, an exclusive emphasis on this sole gift is unsound and unbalanced. The paradox is that perhaps even the gift of prophecy would not have a place in the Adventist experience today. It is difficult to imagine a person having a vision during an Adventist worship service without a collective discomfort—at least in Brazil. In the institutionalized church, the good gift of prophecy is no longer an experience.

¹Gane, 124.

²Fundamental Belief 16 reads in part: “God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts.”

³As Gulley puts it, “if a gift could function as *the* sign for Spirit baptism, then mathematically prophecy would have it over tongues” (*Christ Is Coming*, 149, italics in original).

In 1994, Fritz Guy predicted that the Adventism of the future would be more “liberalized.” One element of this liberalization, in his view, is the recognition of contemporary spiritual gifts, particularly prophecy, for “a prophet is by definition a theological discovery.”¹ The church really needs a “liberalization” in this theological area, including the miraculous gifts, which have the power to fuel other non-miraculous gifts.

Significantly, there is a growing number of Adventist voices claiming space for spiritual gifts. Russell Burrill, underscoring that Adventists “have been almost afraid of the more miraculous spiritual gifts,” states: “Spiritual gifts is one of the most neglected subjects in Adventism.”² William Richardson censures the Adventist fixation on one gift, prophecy, to the detriment of tongues, concluding: “It seems more than a little inconsistent for us to speak so well of one gift and think so poorly of another in the same list.”³ Pardon Mwansa complains that Adventists “have failed to find a balance between texts that support the existence of healings and miraculous signs and those that seem to warn against healings and miraculous signs.” He is “very surprised at how quickly we are willing to believe what the devil can do and not believe what God has promised to do.”⁴

Jon Dybdahl points out seven major false emphases which “have led to the current neglect of prayer healing” in the Adventist Church. One of them is what he calls “charismaphobia” (a fear of anything related to the charismatic movement). To contrapose this viewpoint, he proposes what he calls “charismaffinity.” Correctly, Dybdahl underscores that the original documents of Adventism show a charismatic pattern involving prophecy, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues, “being slain in the Spirit, shouting out in exultation to God, and so forth.” We need to

¹Fritz Guy, “A More ‘Liberalized’ Adventist Future,” *Spectrum* 24 (1994): 18-32, citation from 21.

²Burrill, 16, 61.

³Richardson, *Speaking in Tongues*, 68.

⁴Pardon Mwansa, “Healings and Miraculous Signs in World Missions,” in *The Adventist Mission in the 21st Century: Joys and Challenges of Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World*, ed. Jon L. Dybdahl (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 129.

recognize, he concludes, “that in many ways our theology fits more with charismatic theology than it does with the traditional dispensational evangelicals who do not see God as working powerfully through spiritual gifts.”¹

Perhaps there is an unconscious fear that a new prophet will compete with Ellen White or the Bible, a paradoxical cessationist syndrome. Is this fear justifiable? No. Roy Naden has proposed a model based on three spheres of influence of the gift of prophecy which protects the canon and Ellen White’s role: Sphere A (the biblical prophets, the greater light, who enunciated the eternal principles, with a normative function and application to the universal church or even the world, through scores of centuries), Sphere B (Ellen White, the lesser light, who made modern applications of the eternal principles, with a formative function and relevancy to the whole Adventist Church, for a much briefer period), and Sphere C (contemporary prophets, the candle lights, who make local and personal applications, with an operative function and a ministry to local churches, for an even briefer period).²

There are other models that do not threaten the canonical authority, such as one suggested by Vern Sheridan Poythress, who maintains that “modern spiritual gifts are analogous to but not identical with the divinely authoritative gifts exercised by the apostles.” For him, the New Testament recognizes a pyramid of giftedness: first, at the top, there is the messianic giftedness of Jesus Christ in his prophetic, kingly, and priestly roles (level 1); second, there is the apostolic or foundational giftedness of the apostles (level 2); third, there is a special giftedness of pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons (level 3); and finally, there is the general giftedness of every believer in his or her derivative roles (level 4).³ Although this model shows some weakness in that it may

¹Jon Dybdahl, “Should We Pray for the Sick?” in *The Master’s Healing Touch*, ed. James W. Zackrisson (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 33, 34.

²Roy Naden, “Contemporary Manifestations of the Prophecy Gift,” *Ministry*, June 1999, 9-14.

³Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Modern Spiritual Gifts as Analogous to Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary Works of the Spirit Within Cessationist Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 71-101, especially 73-74, citation from 71.

imply a huge qualitative difference between modern and biblical giftedness, it points to possible solutions even within a cessationist framework.

The point here is that the Adventist Church could be more charismatic, in the biblical sense, opening itself for the Spirit. The pattern in the New Testament is one of charismatic churches, Corinth in the lead. It is not necessary to accept all Pentecostal presuppositions, beliefs, and practices to be more charismatic. The church must develop its own model (or models) encompassing healing,¹ prophecy, tongues, and all the other gifts—miraculous or not. As Wayne Grudem argues, mistakes and abuses of a gift do not make the gift itself invalid. “The *abuse* of a gift does not mean we must prohibit the *proper use* of the gift, unless it can be shown that there cannot be proper use.”²

An Inclusive Agenda

The agenda of the Spirit is inclusivist in all senses. Rooted in the truth that in Christ there is neither “male nor female” (Gal 3:28), the Spirit brings freedom for all to do what God dreams for his people. Here I want to focus briefly on the inclusion of women. If the role of women in early Christianity is being revised in the last two decades, due in part to the discovery of ancient texts (such as the Gospel of Mary Magdalene), the Adventist Church needs also to deepen its revision in this matter.

¹I do not mean a ministry of healing patterned by some modern charismatic movements. Ellen White strongly urged the use of “simple remedies” as vehicles of divine healing in contrast to popular “faith” healing. She urged that every ministry should learn to give simple treatments (see, for a typical example, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:172). White predicted that, before a great “revival of primitive godliness” in the end-time, Satan would “endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit” (idem, *The Great Controversy*, 464). It is necessary to discern a possible counterfeit, and rescue White’s advice. On the other hand, many times she encouraged prayer for the sick. Therefore, the issue is not prayer for healing, but how this is done. As I said in chapter 4, the church must use the best of faith, nature, and science.

²Wayne Grudem, “Should Christians Expect Miracles Today?” in *The Kingdom and the Power*, ed. Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993), 84, italics in original.

Women, as Rodney Stark points out, seem to have been especially responsive to the early Christian movement, enjoying considerably higher status within Christian circles than women did in the surrounding pagan societies. Christianity, he argues, may have “rapidly developed a substantial surplus of females,” strengthening the spread of the movement.¹ Challenging rabbinic rules, Jesus accepted female disciples.² At Pentecost, in Peter’s interpretation of Joel, the Spirit likewise enabled “sons and daughters,” as well as “servants, both men and women,” with the prophetic gift (Acts 2:17, 18). Prophetesses such as the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9) were welcome in the early Christian circles. In 1 Cor 11:5, Paul casually informs us that women were praying and prophesying in the churches.

In time, however, the charismatic role of women, at least in public worship, became limited, beginning with Paul (see 1 Cor 14:33-35; 1 Tim 1:11-12). Paul certainly had motives of cultural/ecclesiastical order to forbid female expression in the church. Yet Terence Paige has shown that the problem of the female speech in Corinth probably had nothing to do with “sacral speech”: “Women’s leadership is not the issue; rather, it is modesty and honorable behavior.”³ Moreover, as Beatrice Neall observes, “women are the *third* group in the church of Corinth whom Paul commands to be silent” (after the glossolalics and prophets); they “are not the only ones singled out for rebuke.”⁴

¹Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 95-128, citation from 128.

²According to Luke (8:1-3), many women followed Jesus and the disciples, supporting their ministry. It is reasonable to conclude that they were disciples. For the inclusion of women in early Christianity, see Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity: The First Thousand Years*, vol. 1 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), chapters 2 and 3.

³Terence Paige, “The Social Matrix of Women’s Speech at Corinth: The Context and Meaning of the Command to Silence in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12 (2002): 241.

⁴Beatrice S. Neall, “A Theology of Woman,” in *A Woman’s Place: Seventh-day Adventist Women in Church and Society*, ed. Rosa Taylor Banks (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 30.

Religious movements apparently tend to favor gender equality and charismatic female manifestation in their early stages, but slowly diminish the female space in their later phases of institutionalization. Pentecostalism, in its early “charismatic moment,” also provided a forum for female expression, but routinization and institutionalization, among other factors, soon closed this prophetic avenue in potential.¹

Adventism is not an exception to this implacable sociological rule, frequently fueled by gender prejudice, vanguard fear, cultural accommodation, and priestly bureaucratization. Proportionally, women played a greater role in the leadership of the early Adventist movement than they did later (1915-1970), although since the 1980s new winds are signaling an expansion.² Unfortunately, the ultimate conquest over historical bias and gender stereotypes, symbolized by the free ordination of women cross-culturally, is still in the future.³

As a God-acclaimed prophetic movement, Adventism should recognize the size of its mission, bridge the gap between its ideal and real cultures,⁴ and liberate the female force. Times of revival, such as that foretold by the prophet Joel (2:28-29), disregard cultural conventions. “Revivals mark a time of great urgency. A job needs to get done, irrespective of gender roles.

¹Margaret M. Poloma, “Charisma, Institutionalization, and Social Change,” *Pneuma* 17 (1995): 245-252. See also Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches,” *Review of Religious Research* 22 (1980): 2-17.

²For a collection of articles covering historical and present roles of women in Adventism, see Rosa Taylor Banks, ed., *A Woman's Place: Seventh-day Adventist Women in Church and Society* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992); and for a study combining various data sources by a sympathetic outside scholar showing the social changes within Adventism, see Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

³The issue of women's ordination is analyzed from an Adventist viewpoint in Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998). The chronological/historical steps are summarized by Kit Watts in “The Long and Winding Road for Adventist Women's Ordination: 35 Years and Counting,” *Spectrum* 31 (2003): 56-57.

⁴“Sociologists have long been aware of the disjunction between ideal and real cultures,” says Poloma. “The ideal culture tells one story while the real culture paradoxically often narrates another” (“Charisma, Institutionalization, and Social Change,” 245).

During such times, authority is grounded more in religious experience than in traditional doctrine.”¹ If Adventism wants to be a prophetic voice, calling people to leave Babylon and integrate into its ranks, it has to be inclusivist. The Spirit enables likewise male and female. Who dares to deny that a greater role for women is something from the Spirit?

In closing, it is important to underscore balance again—balance between discernment and empowerment, Scripture and experience, christology and pneumatology. A church that longs for the rain of the Spirit must be alert, but should not buy theological, psychological, or sociological umbrellas just in case of rain. Regarding the outpouring of the Spirit, it is not the business of the church to speculate about “when” or “how much,” but to be prepared for it.

One step (theoretical) in this direction is to have a sound pneumatology. Another (practical) is to be open to the creative, surprising, and serendipitous movements of the Holy Spirit. Adventism, as in 1887, most certainly still needs “a revival of true godliness.”² After all, Christianity is more than rational knowledge; it is also emotional experience. A spirituality based on experience is by definition richer than one oriented by data alone. The Spirit means joy, power, possibility.

As a way of a personal summation, I confess my dream of a church more empowered by the Spirit and pray for new crossings of the Spirit through Adventist and non-Adventist landscapes: Pneuma, Spirit, Geist . . . Ruah Hakodesh, You with many names and no face, come afresh!

¹Ibid., 248.

²Ellen White, “The Church's Great Need,” 177.

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