

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND EVANGELISM

A Position Paper

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After the resurrection but before Pentecost, the disciples were met together out of fear of the Jews. The doors to the room where they were were shut--some think they were barricaded. By some means, Jesus appeared in the room and greeted them with a blessing of peace. He showed them the crucifixion wounds in his hands and his side. Their hearts were made glad at the sight of the Lord. Then he said to them, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost..." (John 20:21-22). He cheered their hearts. He assigned them a task. He equipped them for service. They were to become a terror and vexation to the wicked, but dispensors of good to those who would heed their message.

The story of the New Testament Church is an account of accomplishments made in the power and force of the Holy Spirit. It is so obvious in Acts 1, however, that when Jesus entrusted to his disciples the world-wide task of evangelism He directed them to first tarry in Jerusalem to receive the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This they did. Consequently, the effect of the upper room experience was the salvation of thousands of souls. With breath-taking swiftness, as though borne on the wings of the morning, the gospel spread far and wide making its blessed appeal to sinful hearts and needy lives.

Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Son, is the Redeemer of the human race by virtue of His atoning work. The Holy Spirit, as the Executive of the Godhead, is the Administrator of the redemptive provision. The Holy Spirit is the Representative of the Saviour, the Agent of Christ--as Dr. H. Orton Wiley stated in his

"Christian Theology"--The Holy Spirit "is the Agent of Christ, representing Him in the salvation of the individual soul, in the formation of the Church, and in the witnessing power of the Church in the world. He is not the Representative of an absentee Saviour. He is our Lord's everpresent other Self."

Dr. Samuel Chadwick wrote of the Holy Spirit as follows: "He is the active, administrative Agent of the glorified Son. He is the Paraclete, the Deputy, the acting Representative of the Ascended Christ. His mission is to glorify Christ by perpetuating His character, establishing His Kingdom, and accomplishing His redeeming purpose in the world."

The evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence and influence is readily found when you study the book of Acts. In chapter thirteen one can see how the Holy Spirit directed the affairs of the Church. When missionaries were to be selected the record states, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." (Acts 13:2). When Barnabas and Saul had been commissioned in sacred ceremony the Bible says, "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia..." (Acts 13:4). When it was time for them to minister, the record makes it clear that the Holy Ghost was on hand. Note this, "Then Saul, (who is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said..." (Acts 13:9). When persecution was the lot of God's ministering servants we see that the Holy Spirit's presence was in evidence as stated in Acts 13:52, "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." In those cases and many others we see the striking record of the ever-present, unailing, and minute direction of the Holy Spirit in all the steps of evangelizing the world.

The Holy Spirit proved Hims elf to be the Spirit of power. Dr. Samuel

Chadwick wrote as follows, "The atmosphere of the Apostolic Church is charged with Divine Power. Their word was with power. Conviction accompanied their speech. Signs and wonders confirmed their testimony. They uncovered the hearts of evil doers, and Heaven put its seal upon their judgments. Rulers trembled in their presence. The deaf heard their voice. Disease fled at their touch. Devils were subject to their word. The presence of the Spirit endued men with Divine authority and power. They were sure of the mind of God, for they were taught of the Spirit. They asked and received, for they prayed in the Spirit. They wrought mighty works, for they were strengthened in the might of the Spirit. The normal life of the Church was filled, inspired, and empowered in the fulness of the Spirit of the living God."

Wherever the Church of Jesus Christ has spread throughout the world it has been accomplished in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. Wherever failure in this enterprise has been experienced it has been because of His absence. This is to say that every effective soul-winning program, whether undertaken by the individual Christian or by a body of believers, will be begun and pursued with a proper recognition of the Holy Spirit. The Church has no greater need than a new recognition of the place, Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of its ministers and members. More eloquence, money, members and methods or organization have some value but are not the supreme need. His Presence is necessary and of major importance to the work of the Church. Scholarship is deficient, superficial, if not barren, till He reveals. Worship is empty ritualism or paganistic till He inspires. Preaching is oratorical sham if the utterances are not in the demonstration of His power. Prayer is a waste of time unless He anoints and

energizes. All of our resources of learning and experience, possessions and commitments, discipline and benevolence are unproductive and without reward unless they are yielded to and possessed by the Holy Spirit. The Reverend D. M. Dawson, in one of his books, said, "Without the power of the Holy Spirit all human efforts, methods, and plans are as futile as attempting to propel a boat by puffing at the sails with our own breath."

Reverend A. J. Gordon, in "The Ministry of the Spirit," wrote, "If the Church had faith to lean less on human wisdom, to trust less in prudential methods, to administer less by mechanical rules, and to recognize once more the great fact that, having committed to her a supernatural work, she has appointed for her a supernatural power, who can doubt that the grinding and groaning of our cumbrous . . . machinery would be vastly lessened, and the demonstration of the Spirit be far more apparent."

A rewarding study of the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the scheme of redemption is to be found in volume five of "30,000 Thoughts" in its division on "Christian Dogmatics" under the sub-division, "Operations of the Holy Ghost, Individually Considered." In compiling materials on the subject the editors listed the operations of the Holy Spirit as given here.

I. QUICKENING. God hath wrought many great and miraculous things in the sight of men of all the centuries of this Holy Ghost dispensation. How many have been quickened to a deeper and more intense spiritual life! Multitudes of youth have turned from sin to the Saviour; backsliders restored to the joys of salvation; and prodigals have returned to Father's house. Languishing work in churches has imbibed new life; faith has been quickened; the power of prayer has been re-introduced as the power of the Holy Spirit has been released to render its

service.

The Holy Spirit performs the function of

II. AWAKENING. Men tend to be indifferent to God and must have their attention awakened to Him and to their need of Him. Through the ministry of the preached Word, written word, individually witnessed word or by example or deportment or many other means the Holy Spirit awakens men to the hope to be had in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit operates by

III. INTERCEDING--not in the same sense as Christ does. He aids when men pray--because of our limited knowledge, our emotional stress and strain or our biases we need the Holy Spirit to "Help our infirmities."

Also, the Holy Spirit is active in

IV. ENLIGHTENING the sinner--bringing him to sufficient understanding of the truth and his own need that salvation may be accomplished in his own heart.

The Holy Spirit is faithful in

V. CONVICTING of sin. In the work of conviction the conscience is the subject, the Holy Spirit the author and the light of Truth the means. Until a man is convinced of sin the salvation offered in Christ will have no meaning to him. The Holy Spirit produces within man a sense of guilt and condemnation because of sin. Not only does the Spirit reveal the sinfulness of human hearts, but the fulness and freeness of salvation is Christ. His work is not only to turn men away from sin, but to lead them to a living faith in God.

The Holy Spirit is the agent in

VI. CONVERTING--or turning the sinner from his sin to God; from iniquity to righteousness. One who is converted is quite different from what he was

before. This "is the pivotal point, wherein through grace, the soul turns from sin, and to Christ, in order to regeneration." (H. Orton Wiley)

The Holy Spirit is also the agent in

VII. REGENERATING. "Regeneration is the communication of life by the Spirit, to a soul dead in trespasses and sins." (Wiley) "The regenerated man acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company," said Matthew Henry.

Too, we note that the Holy Spirit is the agent in

VIII. SANCTIFYING--that experience "by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect. It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit." (Wiley)

Therefore, in the total salvation program there is the evident involvement of the Holy Spirit. Dr. William B. Pope, in his "Compendium of Christian Theology," considered by some to be "the strongest and clearest exposition of Wesleyan doctrine since Richard Watson," said, "When our Lord cried IT IS FINISHED! He declared that His work of atonement was accomplished. But, it was accomplished only as a provision for the salvation of men. The application of the benefit remained for the administration of the Spirit from heaven; whose sole and supreme office it is to carry into effect every design of the redemptive economy or undertaking. The ministry of reconciliation is a ministration of the Spirit."

If the work of the Holy Spirit is to carry out the redemptive plan and provision of Christ, and if He does this through Christians individually and corporately, great responsibility rests upon the church.

To the Church there is no option. Evangelism by the aid and empowering of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to the whole task of the Church and is imperative-- not for some Christians, but for all.

The evidence of our areas of interest within the ecclesiastical frame is distressful. We talk about great preachers, gifted orators, brilliant theologians, distinguished teachers, faithful pastors, but so very seldom is reference made to successful soul winners. The work of the Church and winning souls must be synonymous. Jesus went about doing good, that in all things he might win men to God. I think he fired no random shots.

Perhaps our strivings in these times of revolution should be channeled, should be strictly disciplined. We must strive to be so filled and possessed by the Holy Spirit till in anguish we shed tears for the lost; till we rid ourselves of pride to gain power; give up haughtiness to gain holiness and have no part of criticism but rather strive to gain compassion; till our filled hearts are tender and our energies yielded for evangelism service.

Our security as The Wesleyan Church is not in creed or ordinances, sound theology or simplicity of government and worship, but rather in the free and indispensable ministry of the Holy Spirit to, in and through us. As Dr. Samuel Chadwick believed, the Holy Spirit's Presence and the mystery of His might can cause inadequate men to do impossible things and ordinary men achieve extraordinary results.

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