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ORDAINED SERVANT



Rev. Lawrence R. Eyres

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ORDAINED SERVANT

Statement Of Purpose

Ordained Servant exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal Ordained Servant will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

Editorial Policy

1. Ordained Servant publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of Ordained Servant or of the Church.

2. Ordained Servant occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ordained Servant does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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Contents: Vol. 7, No. 3

<i>Editorial Notes</i>	47
<i>Challenges of the Charismatic Movement to the Reformed Tradition</i> , by R. B. Gaffin, Jr.....	48
<i>Pastor to Pastor: The Riches of Spurgeon (Pt. 2)</i> , by William Shishko.....	58
<i>Keep It Confidential</i> , by L. W. Bilkes.....	61
<i>The Spirituality of the Church</i> , by D. G. Hart and John R. Muether.....	64
<i>Balancing Sensitivity & Stewardship</i> , by the Deacons of Franklin Square, NY OPC.....	67
Book Review: <i>A Historical and Biblical Examination of Women Deacons</i> , by Brian Schwertley.....	68

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Editorial Notes



In this issue we feature the address given by Dr. Richard Gaffin at the 1997 ICRC held in Seoul, Korea. It may not be generally known in the OPC but there is a rather wide-spread movement

in some parts of the wider Reformed World to accommodate a view of prophecy that is different from those that we have known of in the past. It does not claim that there is a gift of prophecy in the church, today, which is equivalent to that which was known in the Old Testament, or even in New Testament times. It is said that the gift of prophecy which continues in the church today is not infallible. And yet, at the same time, it is said to be a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit's inspiration in those who have it. It is our conviction that this view—in spite of its frequently repeated claim to honor the 'sola scriptura' principle of the Reformation, is—in fact, in principle—not valid. And we think that Dr. Gaffin has hit the proverbial nail on the head in showing why this is so. We urge all office-bearers in the OPC to read this one carefully (and maybe even repeatedly). In a future issue of *Ordained Servant* we hope to publish another address which was given at the Seoul Conference.

On the cover of the previous issue of *Ordained Servant* was a picture of the late Rev. Bruce Coie. The issue—with his picture—was in preparation when we got word of his death. His ministry began at virtually the same time that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church came into existence, and comes as another reminder that the ranks of those

stalwart men who took a costly stand for the Reformed faith some sixty-two years ago are now almost all gone. A memorial service was held for Rev. Coie at the Quarryville Retirement Center on Friday, February 20th, with Chaplain Dr. Clinton S. Foraker preaching.

Do you have something to say that your brother elders and deacons need to hear? We cannot promise in advance to publish what you send us, but we do promise to give careful consideration to any and all submissions. It is our hope that more of you will make use of *Ordained Servant*, as a means of promoting the edification of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, whenever you have something of substance to offer.

SPURGEON ON
THE SCRIPTURES AND MODERN SCIENCE

The rock of God's Word does not shift, like the quicksand of modern scientific theology.

One said to his minister, "My dear sir, surely you ought to adjust your beliefs to the progress of science." "Yes," said he, "but I have not had time to do it today, for I have not yet read the morning papers." One would have need to read the morning papers and take in every new edition to know whereabouts scientific theology now stands; for it is always chopping and changing. The only thing that is certain about the false science of this age is that it will soon be disproved. Theories, vaunted today, will be scouted tomorrow. The great scientists live by killing those who went before them. They know nothing for certain, except that their predecessors were wrong. Even in one short life we have seen system after system - the mushrooms, or rather, the toadstools of thought - rise and perish. We cannot adapt our religious belief to that which is more changeful than the moon. (From "The Infallibility of Scripture", delivered on Lord's Day morning, March 11, 1888.)



CHALLENGES OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT TO THE REFORMED TRADITION

by

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

A paper delivered at the International Conference of Reformed Churches,
in Seoul, Korea, on October 20, 1997.

My assignment, I take it, is to reflect from a biblical and Reformed perspective on issues raised by the charismatic movement, especially where the latter diverges and so poses a challenge to Reformed theology and church life. Such issues are in fact not new on the agenda of our Conference. Previously papers have been given on baptism with the Holy Spirit (Abbotsford 1989, Prof. J. van Bruggen) and on New Testament prophecy (Zwolle 1993, Prof. N. Wilson).¹

Two general areas evidently present themselves for consideration: 1) the significance of Pentecost/Holy Spirit baptism, and 2) the question of the cessation of certain gifts of the Spirit. Anything like an in-depth treatment of either area is out of the question here. Accordingly, my approach will have to be selective. I will proceed by concentrating on aspects that I judge we best concern ourselves with as a conference of Reformed churches. That will include noting points on which, within the Reformed community, differences in assessing the charismatic movement persist. Obviously, there is room for differences of opinion about what ought to receive our attention. I look forward to the discussion to follow to correct imbalances in my presentation. For clarity's sake I should perhaps say at the outset that when I speak of "the charismatic movement" I do so in what has become its customary sense, that is, including both Pentecostals and those elsewhere who would describe themselves as non-Pentecostal charismatics.

Part I

Pentecost/The Baptism With the Holy Spirit

¹ *Proceedings*, 1989, 186-205; 1993, 116-135.

Christ, the Spirit, and the Church/the Christian

1:1. Pentecost is not part of the *ordo salutis* but of *historia salutis*

Virtually everything the New Testament teaches about the work of the Holy Spirit either looks forward or traces back to Pentecost. So, what really happened then, what is the significance of that event,² is a large and all-important question.

Giving sound answers to that question, I suggest, depends, to a considerable degree, on recognizing and not blurring a basic distinction: the distinction between the history of salvation (*historia salutis*) and the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*), the distinction, in other terms, between redemption in its once-for-all accomplishment and its continuing application to sinners, between Christ's finished work and the ongoing appropriation of its benefits by God's people.

In introducing this categorical distinction here, I should make clear, I am using the expression *ordo salutis* in a somewhat broader than usual, though, I believe, still appropriate sense. In view are not only matters like regeneration, conversion, and justification—identical for every believer—and sanctification—true of every believer but in varying degrees—but also spiritual gifts and empowerment—varying from believer to believer. In other words, *ordo salutis*, as employed here, refers to everything included in individual and corporate experience within the covenant people of God.

² Various and, I take it, interchangeably described in Acts as being "baptized with" (1:5), the "coming upon" of (1:8), "outpouring" of (2:33), "gift" of (2:38), the Spirit.

CHALLENGES TO THE REFORMED TRADITION

What is crucial for a proper overall understanding of Pentecost/Holy Spirit baptism, then, is to recognize that it has its place within the history of salvation (*historia salutis*), not the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*). The significance of Pentecost is primarily redemptive-historical, not experiential. While it would certainly be wrong to polarize these two aspects (an issue we will return to below), the point of what took place on the day of Pentecost is not to provide a paradigm or to set a standard for a particular experiencing of the Spirit, whether individually or corporately.

1:2. The Importance of the relationship between “Lord” and “Spirit”

“A Reformed pneumatology,” W. H. Velema has written, “will only be able to be sound, when it correctly sees the relationship between *Kurios* and *Pneuma*.”³ In my judgment it is difficult to exaggerate not merely the truth but the *pivotal* truth of this statement. Specifically, it points us to where the primary significance of Pentecost lies: in revealing the unique bond that exists between the now exalted Christ and the Spirit. Negatively, where that tethering, along with its most important consequences, is not adequately appreciated, there Pentecost/Holy Spirit baptism remains essentially misunderstood.

Persisting misconceptions in this respect, it seems fair to say, are what characterize the distinctive emphases of the charismatic movement. But similar misperceptions, or at least similarly inadequate perceptions, of Pentecost are found elsewhere, including some Reformed and Presbyterian circles. Accordingly, we ought, before anything else, to clarify the meaning of Pentecost

³ Cited by L. Floor (*Hy wat met die Heilige Gees doop* [Pretoria, 1979], following the title page), from *De leer van de Heilige Geest bij Abraham Kuyper* (s’Gravenhage, 1957), 246: “Een gereformeerde pneumatologie zal alleen dan zuiver kunnen zijn, wanneer ze het verband tussen *Kurios* en *Pneuma* goed ziet.”

by focusing on the relationship between Christ and the Spirit.

1:3. 1 Corinthians 14:45

I begin with the in some respects difficult, but the most striking and pointed declaration of this relationship in the entire New Testament, the final clause of 1 Corinthians 15:45: “the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit.” This affirmation, central to both Paul’s christology and pneumatology, offers as well, I suggest, a one-sentence commentary, in effect, on Pentecost and its significance. The following brief observations will have to forego the careful exegesis which may be necessary for some, though an effort in that direction has been provided in endnotes.

“A Reformed pneumatology,” W. H. Velema has written, “will only be able to be sound, when it correctly sees the relationship between *Kurios* and *Pneuma*.” In my judgment it is difficult to exaggerate not merely the truth but the *pivotal* truth of this statement.

1) *pneuma* in 1 Corinthians 15:45 is definite and refers to the person of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Paul knows of no other “life-giving” *pneuma* than the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Among Reformed interpreters who take this view, a view held especially by more recent exegesis across a broad front: H. Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, 1956), 387 / *Magnalia Dei* (Kampen, 1931), 369; R. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption* [= *The Centrality of the Resurrection*] (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1987/1978), 78-92; J. Murray, *The Epistle To the Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1959), 1:11; H. Ridderbos, *Paul. An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1975), 88, 222-3, 225, 539 / *Paulus. Ontwerp van zijn theologie* (Kampen, 1966), 90, 243, 247, 602; J. Versteeg, *Christus en de Geest* (Kampen, 1971), esp. 43-67; G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, 1979/1930), 10, 168-69, 184, 312.

This conclusion rests on a couple of interlocking, mutually reinforcing considerations that appear to me to be decisive.

a) *πνευμα* in verse 45 and *πνευματικον* (“spiritual,” vv. 44a, b, 46) are cognate noun and adjective. The adjective, particularly as it is paired antithetically here with *ψυχικον* and in the light of the only other New Testament occurrence of this antithesis earlier in 2:14-15, has in view the work of the Spirit and what is effected by him. This is further confirmed by Paul’s consistent use of the adjective elsewhere (e.g., Rom 1:11; Eph 1:3; Col 1:9); Eph 6:12 appears to be the only exception. In 2:6-16 the activity of the Spirit—his sovereign, exclusive work in giving and

2) “The life-giving Spirit,” it should not be missed, is not a timeless description of Christ. Rather, he “became” (egeneto) such. The time point of this “becoming” is his resurrection or, more broadly, his exaltation.⁵ To put it in key terms of the chapter itself: as “firstfruits” of the resurrection-harvest (vv. 20, 23) he is “life-giving Spirit” (v. 45), and as “the life-giving Spirit” he is “the firstfruits.”

As resurrected, the last Adam has ascended; as “the second man,” he is now, by virtue of ascension,

receiving God’s revealed wisdom—is the primary focus of the immediate context. In contrast to the unbeliever (ψυχικός άνθρωπος, v.14), “the spiritual man” (ο πνευματικός, v. 15) is the believer (cf. vv. 4-5) as indwelt, enlightened, motivated, directed by the Spirit. The long-standing effort to enlist this passage in support of an anthropological trichotomy (with πνευματικός here referring to the human spirit come to its revived ascendancy), I take it, is not successful and ought to be abandoned; see J. Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 2 (Edinburgh, 1977) 23-33, esp. 23-9.

b) The participial modifier in verse 45b points to the same conclusion. The last Adam did not simply become πνευμα but “life-giving” πνευμα (πνευμα ζωοποιου). Paul’s use of this verb elsewhere proves decisive, especially his sweeping assertion in 2 Corinthians 3:6: “the Spirit gives life.” Few, if any, will dispute that here “the Spirit” (το πνευμα) is “the Spirit of the living God” just mentioned in verse 3, in other words, the Holy Spirit. And in Romans 8:11, a statement closely related to the 1 Corinthians 15 passage, the “life-giving” activity of raising believers bodily is attributed to the Spirit (cf. John 6:63).

It should not be missed that virtually all the standard English translations at least obscure the sense of verse 45 by rendering “spirit” with a small “s.” Notable exceptions are *The Living Bible* (and now *The Living Translation*) and *Today’s English Version*; they, correctly I believe, capitalize “Spirit.” A survey, though not exhaustive, of translations in other languages that distinguish upper and lower case—Dutch, Afrikaans, French, Spanish, Portuguese—discloses the same obscurity. The only exception I have found is *Die Bybel* (Kaapstad: Verenigde Protestantse Uitgewers, 1959).

⁵ The flow of the reasoning in chapter 15 makes that virtually certain. It would make no sense for Paul to argue for the resurrection of believers as he does, if Christ were “life giving” by virtue, say, of his preexistence or incarnation—or any consideration other than his resurrection. This is in no way to suggest that his preexistence and incarnation are unimportant or nonessential for Paul; they simply lie outside his purview here.

“from heaven” (v. 47),⁶ “the man from heaven” (v. 48). All told, the last Adam, become “the life-giving Spirit,” is specifically the *exalted* Christ.

3) In the immediate context (vv. 42-49), “life giving” contemplates Christ’s future action, when he will resurrect the mortal bodies of believers (cf. v. 22). It seems difficult to deny, however, in light of the overall context of Paul’s teaching, that his *present* activity, also, is implicitly in view. The resurrection life of the believer, in union with Christ, is not only future but present (e.g., Gal 2:20; Col 2:12-13; Col 3:1-4). Christ, as resurrected, is already active in the church in the eschatological, resurrection power of the Spirit. Here is a key consideration for understanding Pentecost, one we will return to it in greater detail below.

4) In view, then, is the momentous, epochal significance of the resurrection/exaltation for Christ personally—his own climactic transformation by and reception of the Spirit, resulting in a new and permanent equation or oneness between them.⁷ This is not to deny that previously Christ and the Spirit were at work together among God’s people.⁸ But now, dating from his resurrection and ascension, their joint action is given its stable and consummate basis in the history of redemption; now, at last, such action is the crowning consequence of the work of the incarnate Christ

⁶ With the immediate context in view, this prepositional phrase is almost certainly an exaltation predicate, not a description of origin, say, out of preexistence at the incarnation. As such (“from heaven,” the man from heaven,” v. 48), he is the one whose image believers (“those from heaven,” v. 48) will bear (fully, at the time of their bodily resurrection, v. 49; cf. Phil 3:20-21).

⁷ Bavinck’s way of stating this truth is striking: “But the Holy Spirit has become entirely the property of Christ, and was, so to speak, absorbed into Christ or assimilated by Him [... als het ware door Christus in zichzelf opgenomen]. By His resurrection and ascension Christ has become the quickening Spirit” (*Our Reasonable Faith*, 387 / *Magnalia Dei*, 369).

⁸ Prior to this time, already even under the old covenant, Christ preincarnate and the Spirit were conjointly present and at work; 1 Cor 10:3-4, whatever their further exegesis, point to that. Cf. 1 Pet 1:10: The Spirit comprehensively at work in the Old Testament prophets is specifically “the Spirit of Christ.”

actually and definitively accomplished in history. This consummate relationship Paul captures by saying, Christ, the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit.

It bears emphasizing that this oneness or unity, though certainly sweeping, is at the same time circumscribed in a specific respect; it concerns their activity, the activity of giving resurrection (=eschatological) life. In *this* sense it may be dubbed “functional,” or, to use an older theological category, “economic” (rather than “ontological”⁹), or “eschatological,” without in any way obliterating the distinction between the second and third persons of the Trinity.¹⁰

5) The last clause in 1 Corinthians 15:45 connects closely with Paul’s subsequent statement at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 3:17: “the Lord is the Spirit,” where “the Lord” (ὁ κύριος) likely refers to Christ and an equation

between him and the Spirit is affirmed.¹¹ Here, too, essential, trinitarian identities and relationships are not being denied or blurred, but are quite outside Paul’s purview. His focus, clear from the immediate context (see esp. v. 18), is the conjoint activity of the Spirit and Christ as *glorified*.¹² The exaltation experienced by the incarnate Christ results in a (working) relationship with the Holy Spirit of new and unprecedented intimacy. They are one here, specifically, in giving (eschatological) “freedom” (3:17b), the close correlative of the resurrection life in view in 1 Corinthians 15. That correlation is particularly unmistakable in the phrasing of Romans 8:2: “...the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free”

1:4. The correlation of the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ.

We may note here that this exaltation-based equation underlies everything Paul teaches about the work of the Spirit in the church. For Paul there is

9 Although, as noted, involved is a real change/transformation experienced by Christ, in terms of his true humanity. His is now, by virtue of the resurrection and ascension, what he did not previously possess, a *glorified* humanity (cf. 2 Cor 13:4).

10 The scope, the salvation-historical focus, of Paul’s argument needs to be kept in view. Essential-eternal, ontological-trinitarian relationships are outside his purview here. He is concerned not with who Christ is (timelessly, eternally) but what he “became,” what has happened to him in history, and that, specifically, in his identity as “the last Adam,” “the second man,” that is, in terms of his true humanity.

It is completely gratuitous to find here, as the historical-critical tradition has long and characteristically maintained, a “functional” christology that denies the personal difference between Christ and the Spirit and so is irreconcilable with later church formulation of trinitarian doctrine. The personal, parallel distinction between God (the Father), Christ as Lord, and the (Holy) Spirit—underlying subsequent doctrinal formulation—is clear enough in Paul (e.g., 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:13; Eph 4:4-6); cf. esp. in recent literature, G. Fee (*God’s Empowering Presence. The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, MA, 1994], 825-45, esp. 839-42), who admirably demonstrates Paul’s clearly trinitarian understanding of God. Paul’s trinitarian conception of God is not at issue but is properly made a presupposition in the interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45.

11 This is also the view of the other writers cited above in n. 4. A growing number of exegetes currently argue that “the Lord” in v. 17a applies Exodus 34:34, just cited in v. 16, to the Spirit, and they minimize or even eliminate any christological reference from vv. 17b-18; e.g., L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory* (Sheffield, 1991), 256ff.; J. Dunn, “2 Corinthians III. 17—‘The Lord Is the Spirit,’” *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., 31/2 (Oct. 1970), 309-20; Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 311-14; S. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel* (Tübingen, 1995), 396-400; R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, 1989), 143-4; N. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh, 1991), 183-84. But v. 17b (“the Spirit of the Lord”) already distinguishes between “the Spirit” and “the Lord,” so that the latter likely refers to Christ, in the light of what immediately follows in v. 18. There, “the glory of the Lord” is surely not the glory of the Spirit in distinction from Christ, but the glory of Christ; in beholding/reflecting that glory, Paul continues, believers are being transformed into “the same image,” and that image can only be the glory-image of the exalted Christ. In the verses that follow, 4:4 (“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”), especially, points to that conclusion (note as well Rom 8:29 and 1 Cor 15:49). The only transforming glory believers behold “with unveiled faces,” which Paul knows of, is “the glory of God in the [gospel-]face of Christ” (4:6), mediated, to be sure, to and within them by the Spirit.

12 We may say that the “is” (ἐστίν) of 2 Cor 3:17 is based on the “became” of 1 Cor 15:45.

no work of the Spirit within the believer that is not also the work of Christ.

That appears, for instance, in Romans 8:9-10. In short compass, “you...in the Spirit” (9a), “the Spirit...in you” (9b), “belonging to Christ” (9d, virtually equivalent to the frequent “in Christ”), and “Christ in you” (10a)—all the possible combinations—are used *interchangeably*; they hardly describe different experiences, distinct from each other, but the same reality in its full dimensions. There is no relationship with Christ that is not also fellowship with the Spirit; the presence of the Spirit is the presence of Christ; to belong to Christ is to be possessed by the Spirit.

This congruence is so, in our experience, not because of some more or less

arbitrary divine arrangement, but preeminently because of what is true *prior* to our experience, in the experience of Christ—because of who the Spirit now is, “the Spirit of Christ” (9c), and who Christ has become, “the life-giving Spirit.”¹³ So, elsewhere, for “you to be strengthened by [the] Spirit inwardly” is for “Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:16-17).

The Spirit as ‘vicar’ of Christ

We may go on to note briefly that the statements of Paul so far considered connect with and reinforce emphases present in the teaching of Jesus. In John 14:12ff. the imminent departure-ascension of Jesus (“because I go to the Father,” v. 12; cf. 20:17) will entail, at the request of the ascended Jesus, the Father’s giving the Spirit to the disciples¹⁴ (v.

¹³ That Paul does not intend an absolute identity, denying the personal distinction between Christ and the Spirit, is clear later on in this passage: the Spirit’s interceding here, within believers (vv. 26-7), is distinguished from the complementary intercession of the ascended Christ there, at God’s right hand (v. 34).

¹⁴ It is important to keep in mind that the “you” addressed throughout this passage is not all believers indiscriminately, irrespective of time and place, but those who “were with me from the beginning” (15:26), who “now,” at the time of Jesus’ speaking, are “not able to bear” the “many things” he “still” has to say to them

16).¹⁵ The before and after of the Spirit’s presence in view pivots on Jesus’ glorification; the former is a function of the latter (cf. 7:39). Pentecost¹⁶ has the same epochal, once-for-all significance as Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension.

This promised sending of the Spirit (14:16-17), however, carries with it another promise. “I,” Jesus continues (v. 18), “will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” In context, this almost surely means that the coming of the Spirit in view, as such, involves the coming of Jesus himself. Jesus’ departure is not a loss but “profitable” (16:7), because the consequent sending of the Spirit is also his own return; in this sense, his going (bodily) is his coming (in the person of the Spirit).¹⁷

The Spirit, then, we may say, is the “vicar” of Christ. As “the Spirit of truth,” he has no agenda of his own; his role in the church is basically self-effacing and Christ-enhancing (16:13-14 especially point to that), so much so that his presence in the church is, vicariously, the presence of the ascended Jesus.

In a virtually identical vein, the now *resurrected* Jesus who, as such, has been “given”¹⁸ universal authority and power (*exousia*), declares in the well-

(16:12). To them, proximately, Jesus fulfills the promise to send the Spirit (20:22) and so, through that sending, to the church in all ages.

¹⁵ Cf. v. 26: “whom the Father will send in my name”; 15:26: “whom I will send to you from the Father”). This arrangement was intimated earlier in 7:39: “For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

¹⁶ I will have to leave to the side here the relationship of the “Johannine Pentecost” (20:22) to Acts 2; see my *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1979), 39-41.

¹⁷ The second coming or, alternatively, his brief, temporary resurrection appearances hardly qualify as this coming, which from the immediate context (vv. 17-23) is at the very least closely conjoined (if not identical) with the imminent (“in a little while,” v. 19) dwelling/showing/being of the Spirit (and the Father, v. 23) in/to/with believers, in distinction from the world.

¹⁸ That is, power he did not have previously but now does,

known words that sanction the Great Commission: “I am with you always until the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). This declaration is best read not—at least not primarily—as an affirmation of divine omnipresence but as a promise of Pentecost and its enduring consequences. Again, the presence of the Spirit is the presence of Christ; Jesus will be with the church to the very end in the power of the Spirit. If Pentecost means anything, then, it means the exalted Jesus is here to stay, to be with his church, permanently.

It is hardly an invalid reading of Pauline (or Johannine) theology into Luke-Acts to recognize similar emphases there. Briefly, the overlap between the close of the Gospel (24:44ff.) and the beginning of Acts (1:3-11) is calculated to show that during the forty-day interim until his ascension, the resurrected Jesus taught the apostles (Acts 1:2), from the Old Testament (Luke 24:44-47), that the recent and impending events concerning him are epochal, decisive junctures in the coming of the kingdom of God (cf. esp. Acts 1:3); his sending/baptizing with the Spirit on Pentecost is as climactic an event, and as essential to the messianic work of salvation foreseen in the Old Testament, as are Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension.

Peter reinforces that point, in fact it is a major emphasis, toward the close of his (essentially Christ-centered) Pentecost sermon. In Acts 2:32-33, following out of his focus on the earthly activity, death and especially the resurrection of Jesus (vv. 22-31), he closely conjoins, in sequence: resurrection—ascension—reception of the Spirit¹⁹—outpouring of the Spirit. The last, Pentecost, is coordinate with the other events, conjoined with them in an especially intimate way; it is climactic and final on the order that they are; it is no more capable of being a repeatable paradigm event than they are. Resurrection—ascension—Pentecost, though temporally distinct, constitute a unified complex of events, a once-for-all, redemp-

as a result of the resurrection.

tive-historical unity, such that they are inseparable; the one is given with the others.

With this we have come full circle; back, in effect, to 1 Corinthians 15:45. The sequence Peter delineates in Acts 2:32-33 Paul telescopes by saying that Christ, as resurrected and ascended, has become “the life-giving Spirit.”

1:6. Pentecost as part of *historia salutis*

Pentecost, then, is an event, an integral event, in the *historia salutis*, not an aspect of the *ordo salutis*; Pentecost has its place in the once-for-all, completed accomplishment of redemption, not in its ongoing application or as a paradigm for individual Christian experience. To assess the primary significance of Pentecost as an empowering or gifting experience enjoyed by some believers in distinction from others and “beyond” salva-

tion seen as the forgiveness of sins, as happens in the charismatic movement and elsewhere,²⁰ is seriously inadequate. Such an appraisal in fact makes too little, not too much, of Pentecost. There is nothing “second order,” or “subsidiary,” or “additional” about Pentecost.

In fact, without Pentecost there is no salvation. Period. Why? Because without what Pentecost documents the definitive, unrepeatable work of Christ for our salvation is incomplete. The task set before Christ was not only to secure the remission of sin but, more ultimately, as the grand outcome of his Atonement, life as well (e.g., John 10:10; 2 Tim 1:10)—eternal, eschatological, resurrection life, or, in other words, life in the Spirit.²¹ Without that life

¹⁹ This reception is not in conflict with what Luke has previously reported: that Jesus already received the Spirit at the Jordan (Luke 3:22) and even at conception (1:35). Involved is a staging or heightening principle that finds its climactic realization in the ascension (along with its reflex—the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost).

²⁰ So, e.g., J. Williams, *Renewal Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1990), 2: 177, 189, and esp. 205-07.

“salvation” is obviously not only truncated but meaningless. And it is just that life, that completed salvation, and Christ as its giver²² that is openly revealed at Pentecost. Pentecost publicly attests the finality and full sufficiency of Christ’s saving work, that he has become “the life-giving Spirit.” Pentecost is the redemptive-historical Spirit-seal (cf. Eph. 1:13) of Christ to the church on the forgiveness and eschatological life secured in his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Pentecost, along with the resurrection and ascension, marks Christ out as having received the Spirit—as the result of and reward for his obedience unto death (cf. Phil 2:8-9)—in order to give the Spirit (Acts 2:33); Pentecost shows the exalted Jesus to be the messianic receiver-giver of the Spirit. The soteriological “newness” of Pentecost, to use more formal, explicitly doctrinal terms, is not—at least not in the first place—anthropological-individual-experiential but christological and ecclesiological-missiological. Pentecost means two things especially: 1) The Spirit is now present, at last and permanently, on the basis of the finished work of Christ; he is the *eschatological* Spirit. 2) The Spirit is now “poured out on all flesh” (Acts 2:17), Gentiles as well as Jews; he is the *universal* Spirit.²³

The difference, then, that Pentecost makes is primarily a difference for *Christ*, not believers. A contrasting profile emerges so far as the before and after of Pentecost are concerned: from the angle of *historia salutis* there is a radical, night-and-day, virtually all-or-nothing difference. Everything is staked on Christ’s actual accomplishment of salvation; before Christ there is nothing, after his coming and work, everything. From the angle of *ordo salutis*, however, there is essential continuity. Before and after differences (old and new covenants) in experi-

encing the Spirit there no doubt are. But, as far as I can see, Scripture is not particularly concerned to spell them out. Such differences resist neat, clear categorization and can only be loosely captured by terms like “better”²⁴ or “enlarged,” “greater,” “fuller.”²⁵

In this connection it strikes me that Pentecostal/charismatic authors have remarkably little to say about the closing words of Luke’s Gospel (24:52-53). This, after all, is the note Luke chooses to end on, the impression he wishes to leave with Theophilus until Part Two arrives. This closing includes the following elements: the apostles and other disciples (v. 33), now, since their contact with the resurrected and just ascended Jesus, with hearts inflamed (v. 32) and minds opened (v. 45), worshiping “with great joy,” and “praising God,” “continually” and publicly (“in the temple”). All this sounds fairly impressive to me, and is in full continuity with their (Spirit-filled) experience *after* Pentecost. This is just one more indication how little the primary point of Pentecost is individual Christian experience or empowerment, postconversion or otherwise.²⁶

²⁴ Suggested by the writer of Hebrews’ comparison between old and new covenants (e.g., 11:40).

²⁵ Comparatives used by the Westminster Confession of Faith (20:1) in describing Christian liberty.

²⁶ But what about the experience, undeniable and undeniably remarkable, of the 120 at Pentecost and of others subsequently involved in the rest of what is best viewed as the Pentecost event-complex, recorded in Acts (8:14ff.; 10:44-48. / 11:15-18; 19:1-7)? Here I can only touch on this much-debated question by suggesting that the inclination, present especially in the charismatic movement, to take these experiences in Acts as providing enduring, normative models of individual empowerment, distinct from or even subsequent to conversion, stems from the failure, in effect, to distinguish adequately between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*. In the event-complex of Acts 2:32-33, for instance, it is at the very least anomalous to view one event (Pentecost) as a repeatable model for individual Christian experience and the other three (resurrection, ascension and reception of the Spirit) as nonrepeatable, once-for-all events. (Too often Acts is mined for experiential models, as a more or less loose anthology of vignettes from “the good old days when Christians were *really* Christians.”) In fact Acts documents, just as Jesus foretold (1:8) and as Luke makes clear enough, a *completed* history, a unique epoch in

²¹ Paul’s metaphors for the Spirit as “deposit” (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) and “firstfruits” (Rom 8:23), especially, highlight the inherently eschatological nature of his presence and work in the church and within believers.

²² Christ, not the Spirit, it should not be overlooked, is the active subject on Pentecost (just as John prophesied, Luke 3:16).

²³ See my *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 13-41.

Finally here, in its climactically Christ-centered significance, Pentecost fulfills “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4; cf. 2:33; Luke 24:49). This identification gives our salvation-historical outlook on Pentecost its full breadth. Pentecost is the fulfillment of that promise at the core of all old covenant expectation, the primeval promise that shaped the subsequent course and outcome of covenant history—the promise to Abraham that in him all peoples would be blessed (Gen 12:2-3). That is how Paul, for one, views Pentecost in Galatians 3:14: through the redemption accomplished by Christ, “the promise of the Spirit” is at the very least integral, perhaps even identical,²⁷ to “the blessing of Abraham” come to the Gentiles.

All in all—from a full, trinitarian perspective—Pentecost points to the epochal fulfillment of the ultimate design and expectation of God’s covenant purposes: God in the midst of his people

the history of redemption—the once-for-all, *apostolic* spread of the gospel “to the ends of the earth,” from Israel to the nations (v. 8 is not a promise to all believers or to every generation of the church indiscriminately but proximately to the apostles; the concrete antecedent of “you (ὁμας) in v. 8 is “the apostles” (τοῖς ἀποστόλοις) in v. 2); cf. also the parallelism of “Gentiles” and “ends of the earth” in Isa 49:6 cited in 13:47). In Col 1:6, 23 Paul hints at the completion of this world-wide, *apostolic* expansion of the church through his own ministry (a completed expansion open, of course, to the postapostolic future beyond).

Undoubtedly, the empowering experience of the disciples at Pentecost, for instance, was postconversion. But that was because it was part of the unique experience, marked by attesting signs and wonders (cf. Heb 2:3-4), of that generation of the church, of which by the nature of the case there could only be one. Theirs is the experience of those who happened to live at that time, the initiation of “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4), when, once for all, God’s Son actually became incarnate, suffered, died, was raised, ascended, and, inseparably and in consequence, sent the Holy Spirit to the church. “Their experience is epoch-crossing, and consequently atypical and non-paradigmatic in nature” (S. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* [Leicester, 1996], 80; see also *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 22-28; R. Gaffin, Jr. in ed. W. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids, 1996), 37-41.

²⁷ Depending on how exactly the two purpose clauses are to be related. Note the citation of the promise of the covenant, Gen 12:3, in v. 8.

in triune fullness. Pentecost brings to the church the initial, “firstfruits” (cf. Rom 8:23) realization of the Emmanuel principle on an irrevocable because eschatological scale.

1:7. The experience of the Spirit

The impression is widespread, particularly within the charismatic movement, that maintaining the epochal, once-for-all, redemptive-historical significance of Pentecost means denying that the Holy Spirit baptism has any experiential significance or implications. That impression, however, would be the farthest from the truth. Undeniably, the Spirit come at Pentecost is the author of varied and profound experiential realities in believers; as such, he is the source of not just some but *all* Christian experience. There can be no question from the viewpoint of the New Testament: not to experience the Spirit—in a vital, transforming, and thus powerful way—is not to have the Spirit at all. That is not, or at least should not be, at issue between the Reformed tradition and the charismatic movement, nor within the Reformed community.

1 Corinthians 12:13 points to the individual believer’s share in the Spirit come at Pentecost. This, the one New Testament reference, apart from those in Luke-Acts, to being “baptized with²⁸ the Spirit,” shows how the epochal, once-for-all event (*historia salutis*) subsequently becomes effective in the life of the believer (*ordo salutis*). Two points are plain: (1) “All” (in Christ’s body, the church, cf. v. 12), not just some, have been Spirit-baptized; “all” have a share in the Pentecostal gift. (2) That experience takes place at the point of coming “into” the fellowship of Christ’s body (that is, at conversion), not subsequently.²⁹

²⁸ The preposition ἐν here almost certainly has the sense “with” or “in,” referring to the element of baptism, not the instrumental sense “by”; see, e.g., the Pentecostal commentator G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, 1987), 605-6.

²⁹ It appears that increasingly even Pentecostal commentators recognize that Holy Spirit baptism as a distinct postconversion experience is not taught here; see., e.g., the clear-headed exegesis of Fee, *First Corinthians*, 603-6; *Empowering Presence*, 178-82.

Something of the full range of experience that flows from sharing in this gift is captured especially by Paul's command (to the church) to be "filled" with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). As the (present tense) form of this imperative in Greek makes clear, this "filling" presence of the Spirit is to be an ongoing, ever-repeated concern for every believer. And as the verses that immediately follow show (5:19-6:9),³⁰ in the ebb and flow that varies from believer to believer, this filling is (to be) an all-controlling dynamic that transforms attitudes and actions in every area of life—in worship and interpersonal relations within the church, in marriage and the family, on the job. Elsewhere, believers are to seek the Spirit's diverse and well-apportioned gifts constantly given for the edification and mission of the church (e.g., Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:1-11, 28-31; Eph 4:7-13). Negatively, believers are exhorted against "grieving" (Eph 4:30) and "extinguishing" (1 Thess 5:19) the ongoing work of the Spirit in the church as real dangers.

These observations may, and need to be, developed much more extensively than I am able to do here. But I hope they at least suffice to show that emphasizing the once-for-all, christological significance of Pentecost is not at odds with recognizing, indeed emphasizing, that the Spirit come at Pentecost is the source of Christian experience. Pentecost, in its significance for Christian experience, is not to be assessed in terms of some particular aspect(s) of the Spirit's activity, in distinction from other aspects. Rather, Pentecost brings the Spirit in the full range of his activity in the church/ within believers, on the basis, as we have seen, of the finished work of Christ and as the culminating fruit of that work.

1:8. Pentecost a once-only event

In this connection we may go on to note that some recent Reformed writers reject the notion

³⁰In the flow of the discourse, the four participial clauses in vv. 19-21 expand on "be filled with the Spirit" (v. 18), and vv. 22-6:9., in turn, elaborate the fourth, "being subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (v. 21).

that Pentecost is a singular or epochal event in the once-for-all accomplishment of our redemption. In fact, for some their rejection is most emphatic. One of the major conclusions of Prof. van Bruggen, in his address to this Conference in 1989, is that "'Being baptized with the Holy Spirit' is not a once-for-all event . . .," a view that earlier in the address he assesses as "impossible."³¹ Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones registers his disapproval in even stronger, more unsparing terms.³²

It seems to me, if I understand these authors correctly, that their rejection rests on a certain

...emphasizing the once-for-all, christological significance of Pentecost is not at odds with recognizing, indeed emphasizing, that the Spirit come at Pentecost is the source of Christian experience.

degree of misunderstanding which stems, at least in part, from not clearly maintaining the *historia salutis-ordo salutis* distinction. That misun-

derstanding may be seen from what they see threatened or denied by the notion of Pentecost as a once-for-all event. For van Bruggen, it is that Pentecost (the "being poured out of/being baptized with the Spirit") is "a permanent reality in which believers share again and again and in different ways," "a continuing reality of the work of Jesus Christ in his believers."³³ And Lloyd-Jones draws the surely remarkable (I would have to say for myself, astonishing) conclusion that if Pentecost is a once-for-all event, then "it is very wrong to pray for revival!"³⁴

But why disjunctions like these? They appear to betray a certain misperception of what is intended by the expression "once for all." It is not

³¹ ICRC *Proceedings*, 1989, 205, cf. 195, 199.

³² "Today there is a great deal of very loose and dangerous talk and writing about what happened on the day of Pentecost. People accept uncritically the explanation that what happened on the day of Pentecost was once and for all and never to be repeated" (*Revival* [Westchester, IL, 1982], 15). The same rejection controls much of the argumentation, I'm informed, in Y. P. Chah, *The Future of Korean Reformed Theology* (in Korean); see also the criticisms of J. Byun, *The Holy Spirit Was Not Yet* (Kampen, 1992), 105-6.

³³ ICRC *Proceedings*, 1989, 200, 204.

³⁴ *Revival*, 15.

merely an emphatic synonym for “once.” It does not mean, as these authors seem to think, something like “simply having happened in the past with no consequences for the present.” That is no more true of Christ’s baptizing with the Spirit than it is for his death, resurrection, and ascension, with which (especially the ascension), as we have seen (Acts 2:32-33), Pentecost forms a single event-complex. The accent here falls on “once-for-allness,” on the reality enduring for all times and places of what has taken place definitively and unrepeatably in the past.³⁵ In fact, it is just the-once-all nature of Pentecost that guarantees the permanent presence of the Spirit in the church and within every believer, in all of his rich and varied activity (cf. again 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14).³⁶

In terms of the covenantal structure of the Christian life, Holy Spirit baptism is an indicative, not an imperative. The New Testament never commands believers to seek to be baptized with the Spirit. Rather, as we were just noting, a share in that baptism is presupposed for every believer (1 Cor 12:13³⁷), and that they share in the gift of

³⁵ The sense is exactly that of the New Testament use of *ἅπαξ* and *ἐφ’ ἅπαξ* applied especially to the death of Christ but also to his ascension, to accent their finality and abiding efficacy (Rom 6:10; Heb 7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10; 1 Pet 3:18; cf. Jude 4).

³⁶ An epochal, once-for-all understanding of Pentecost seems particularly and emphatically clear in chapter 19 of Bavinck’s *Our Reasonable Faith*, which opens with the statement, “The first work which Christ does after His exaltation to the right hand of the Father is to send the Holy Spirit” (386). The elaboration that follows accents the final and definitive nature of this sending. See also esp. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 79-92.

the Spirit come at Pentecost is the absolutely essential basis for exhorting believers concerning every aspect of the Spirit’s ongoing activity in their lives.

1:9. Conclusion

All told, then, in its postapostolic era as well, the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church is also the truly Pentecostal church. As such, as Schilder long ago reminded us,³⁸ the church is not to be caught up in a (redemptive-historically anachronistic) “Back to Pentecost” nostalgia. Its motto, instead, ought to be “Forward from Pentecost ... in the Christ-conforming power of the life-giving Spirit.”

³⁷ According to Van Bruggen, this baptism is the Spirit’s activity in granting diverse gifts to believers (*Proceedings*, 1989, 201). That, it seems to me, is most unlikely. Unity and diversity are certainly equal concerns in chapter 12 taken as a whole—the one body with the many parts. But surely in v. 13, following on the thought of v. 12, the accent is on unity, not diversity (note, e.g., the three-fold occurrence of “one” and the doubly accented “all” in v. 13, with no corresponding terms for diversity). Further, the Spirit’s baptizing activity here is not on those who already have a place in an existing entity, but his action by which they are brought “into” that entity (the “one body”), that is, the action by which they are (initially) united to Christ (cf. v.12); the force of the preposition *εἰς* may not be glossed over here and made synonymous with a stative “in.” (I should perhaps add here that in my view, the baptism of v. 13a does *not* refer to water baptism, although it is certainly one of the benefits of union with Christ, sealed by water baptism. Also, my view, at least as far as I am aware, has nothing to do with the alien notion of “corporate personality,” imposed on Paul [as Byun, *Holy Spirit*, 107, 108 alleges]).

End of Part I

Part II of this paper—presented at the 1997 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches—will be included, God willing, in the next issue of

Ordained Servant

Pastor to Pastor: The Riches of Spurgeon (pt. 2)

by William Shishko



A survey of the *Complete Index to C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons* (1855-1917)—an indispensable aid to finding and using Spurgeon's sermons—shows that the great 19th century British pulpiteer was richly doctrinal in his preaching. While evangelistic messages and sermons of pastoral encouragement were dominant, Spurgeon never shied away from opening, illustrating, and applying the grand doctrinal themes of Holy Scripture. Especially in his early ministry as the congregation at the New Park Street Chapel was growing rapidly, Spurgeon dealt forthrightly with the doctrine of God. In one year alone (1856) his sermon titles included “Divine Sovereignty”, “God’s Omniscience”, “Unimpeachable Justice”, and “The Majesty of God’s Voice.” Over the course of his ministry he preached over 150 sermons specifically on the person of Jesus Christ and some aspect of His work. Never embarrassed about his Calvinistic convictions (much to the embarrassment of many later Baptists who claim Spurgeon as their own!), Spurgeon preached messages specifically on every head of the so-called “Five Points of Calvinism”, and frequently rose to the ardent defense and proclamation of those truths in other sermons. Indeed, his sermons on “Election” and “Election No Discouragement to Seeking Souls” have been frequently reprinted because of their excellence in presenting the historic Calvinistic teaching. Spurgeon, most surely, would have held no sympathies for the contemporary idea that doctrine is “strong meat” and ought to be taught in specialized bible studies (if at all), but surely not in the pulpit (and never on a Sunday morning when visitors will be present!). Nor would Spurgeon give an ear to the superficial observation that the Christian life is more important than Christian doctrine. “Those who do away with Christian doctrine are the worst enemies of Christian religion” he declared.

Yet it was the way in which Spurgeon preached deep biblical doctrine that gave such force to his sermons. He was not content with laying the matter before his congregation like a chef would present a fine meal before diners. Spurgeon organized his points, illustrated them by metaphors, similes, and biblical and extra-biblical matter, and applied them in profound yet natural ways that grew out of the exposition and illustration. One rarely senses that application was added to Spurgeon’s preaching. It was almost always a thoughtful development of the sermon’s theme, now brought to bear on the lives and situation of the preacher’s hearers. Spurgeon’s doctrinal sermons are superb examples of the standard for preaching presented in the original Westminster “Directory for the Public Worship of God”:

“(The minister) is not to rest in general doctrine, although never so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers: which albeit it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation, and to the natural and corrupt man will be very unpleasant; yet he is to endeavor to perform it in such a manner that his auditors may feel the word of God to be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts of the heart; and that if any unbeliever or ignorant person be present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God.”

For example, in the first sermon preached at the New Park Street Chapel in the year 1855, Spurgeon’s introduction to his message on “The Immutability of God” (from the text, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”, Malachi 3:6) included these words:

“...whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is in contemplating Christ a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost there is a balm for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know of nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning.”

Keep in mind that this is from the introduction to the sermon! In a portion of a paragraph Spurgeon used more thoughtful (and biblical!) metaphors than some preachers use in an entire sermon! The text and theme were then opened under three headings i.e. 1. An unchanging God, 2. The persons who derive benefit from this glorious attribute, and 3. The benefit they so derive, all of which flow naturally out of the biblical passage. A hearer or reader could only joyfully accept Spurgeon’s invitation to consider the subject with him.

Much of Spurgeon’s force in his doctrinal preaching came from the vividness with which he felt and expressed truths that so often become cold formulae to us. This is especially true in his treatments of Christ’s atonement.

“A God bowing his head, and suffering, and dying in the person of manhood, puts such a singular efficacy into every groan and every pang, that it needs not that his pangs should be eternal, or that he should die a second death. The dignity of the person adds a special force to the substitution, and thus one bleeding Saviour can make atonement for millions of sinful men, and the Captain of our salvation can bring

multitudes into glory.” (From “Expiation” a sermon delivered in 1864).

This statement, which is representative of many similar ones in Spurgeon’s sermons, displays an orthodox Christology wed to a passion to preach an atoning work that truly saves sinners. It says the same thing as “sufficient for all, but efficient for the elect”, but goes beyond what has become platitude to present a beautifully dressed image that lives in mind of both the speaker and the hearer.

Added to such vividness were Spurgeon’s common uses of easily understood illustrations to persuade his hearers to accept truths which may have been unpalatable or difficult. Here is how the master communicator sought to carry his congregation with him as he presented a truth which many preachers would either state harshly or refrain from altogether:

“It is infinitely benevolent of God, I will venture to say, to cast evil men into hell. If that be thought to be a hard and strange statement, I reply that inasmuch as there is sin in the world, it is no benevolence to tolerate so great an evil; it is the highest benevolence to do all that can be done to restrain the horrible pest. It would be far from benevolent for our government to throw wide the door of all the jails, to abolish the office of the judge, to suffer every thief and every offender of every kind to go unpunished; instead of mercy it would be cruelty; it might be mercy to the offending, but it would be intolerable injustice towards the upright and inoffensive. God’s very benevolence demands that the detestable rebellion of sin against his supreme authority should be put down with a firm hand, that men may not flatter themselves that they can do evil and go unpunished. The necessities of moral government require that sin must be punished.” (From “Individual Sin Laid on Jesus”, a sermon delivered on April 10, 1870)

Here, by reasoning from the lesser to the greater, Spurgeon makes his doctrinal point effectively using an analogy to which all can

relate. One cannot help but be persuaded by such an obvious and incisive parallel.

In our day in which doctrinal preaching is downplayed, let preachers see how the proclamation of the grand truths of the Scriptures was done by Charles Spurgeon. Boldness, vividness, reasoning, illustration, and application all became servants to make the doctrine that flowed from his mouth a living instrument that, by God's grace, transformed individuals and congregations. And rather than bemoan what seems to be a lack of interest in doctrine among an apathetic populace, let those of us who preach week be week labor earnestly following examples such as these, in the confidence that doctrine adorned by the basic principles of good aflame with its truth and with love for people, will always have a hearing among those in whom the

Truth Incarnate is saving and sanctifying.

In our next article we will consider the evangelistic appeals in Spurgeon's sermons.

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SPURGEON'S ENCOURAGING WORDS ABOUT DISCOURAGING TIMES

“(These) are said to be very horrible times- they always were ever I have known anything of the world, and I suppose they always were in our fathers’ time. We are always at a crisis according to some people. I am not about to defend the times; they are, no doubt, very bad, for the innumerable spirits of evil are bold and active, while good men seem to have lost their courage. We find amalgamations and compromises ad infinitum, and the precious truth of God is trodden as the mire of the streets. What about all this? Are we discouraged? Far from it. bad times are famous times for Christ. When Wycliffe came, the times were dark enough in England, and therefore the morning star was the more welcome. When Luther came into the world, the times were almost as black as they could be and therefore good times for reformation! The times were dead enough when Wesley and Whitefield came: but they proved glorious days for the Lord to work in! And if you discern now that there is not much prayerfulness, nor much spirituality, nor much truthful doctrine, nor much zeal, do not fret; it is thoroughly dry soil, and now the root of grace will grow. Let us have good hope. Our faith does not rise when people say the times are improving, nor do we despond when men denounce the times as bad. Eternity is the life time of God, and He will work out his purposes. Time may ebb and flo, God is in no hurry; but if the world goes on for a million years God will triumph in the end, and the poem of human history will not wind up with a dirge, but will end with a triumphant hymn after all.”

—(from “A Root Out of Dry Ground”, delivered on Lord’s Day morning, October 13, 1872)



KEEP IT CONFIDENTIAL

by

L. W. Bilkes

Professional confidentiality

Medical confidentiality, since Hippocratic times, was part of a doctor's code of ethics. Similarly the "oath according to Hippocrates in so far as a Christian may swear it," includes the oath of medical confidentiality. "Whatsoever in the course of practice I see or hear (or outside my practice in social intercourse) that ought not to be published abroad, I will not divulge, but consider such things to be holy secrets."¹ The purpose of the code of confidentiality is to help patients to trust their physician that information revealed to him will not be passed on to others. This bond of trust between patient and physician is important both in the diagnostic process and in the treatment phase, which often turns out to depend not only on surgery and medications but also on the patient's confidence in the doctor.

However, medical confidentiality, as patients and doctors have traditionally understood it, in some sense no longer exists. There are often quite a few health professionals and hospital personnel who are involved in providing health care services and as such have access to the medical records. That is understandable. In the modern hospital there are often several attending physicians (surgical, intensive-care unit, and "covering" house staff), a considerable number of nursing personnel (on three shifts), therapists, nutritionists, clinical pharmacists, students, unit secretaries, hospital financial officers, chart reviewers, various technical and support services, etc. What is important is that a distinction is made between information about the patient that will be kept confidential regardless of the interest of third parties and information that will be exchanged among members of the health-care team in order to provide care for the patient.

There are many angles to professional confidentiality and many confidentiality dilemmas in

professional ethics. Should a physician warn the spouse or lover of an HIV-positive patient? Should a psychiatrist keep confidential a patient's threat to kill someone?

Pastoral confidentiality

In various new forms for the ordination of elders and deacons, the third question put to the brethren contains the question: "Do you promise...to keep the required secrecy with regard to what is confidentially brought to your attention in the discharge of your office?"²

This goes not only for elders and deacons but also for pastors. Prof. C. Trimp correctly applies that to family visiting reports and pastoral reports. To be sure, we are to report on our visiting. The members of the congregation will know that as well. However, that does not mean that we are to report to council everything that comes up in family visiting or in a pastoral visit. That which they share with us and which we discuss explic-

¹ Quoted in Allen Verhey, "The Doctor's Oath—and A Christian Swearing it," in *Linacre Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 2, 139.

² Cf. Liturgische formulieren vastgesteld voor de Generale Synode van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland 1968/69 en 1971/72.

itly in a confidential way is to remain confidential. Even if afterwards we feel the need to talk about it with a fellow-officebearer, of whom we know that he is also under oath of confidentiality, we may not do so, except with permission from those members. They must be able to count on our keeping things confidential. If need be, we can discuss with them to what extent they agree that we report to council. We should clearly agree on this with them. They may never feel that we betrayed them.

In reporting on our visits, we deacons, elders and pastors need to be to the point and keep back confidential information. Our contact with the members of the congregation is to be marked by love and patience, by hoping and hiding, by covering (1 Corinthians 13:7), even if for a lengthy period of time we need to admonish and urgently counsel them. Only in that way there continues to be an open relationship with the members, and the Word of God is given room to bring about healing. To be sure, that changes when the member of the congregation himself makes his sin to be a public sin, or we as officebearers have become convinced that we slowly but surely are drawn into a dirty scheme against God and His people.³ Lynn R. Buzzard and Dan Hall quote Ecclesiastes 3:7 in their subtitle: “A time to be Silent, and a Time to Speak.”⁴ “The premises supporting confidentiality...cannot support practices of secrecy...that undermine and contradict the very respect for persons and for human bonds that confidentiality was meant to protect.” With regard to the latter, Jeanette Hofstee, Milgrom and Gary R. Schoener tell of a teenager who told her pastor of her father sexually abusing her. She asked him not to tell anyone else. The pastor talked with her for a long time and finally she began to understand that the pastor was not to

³ C. Trimp, “Het ambtsgeheim,” in *Zorgen voor de gemeente* (Kampen: van den Berg, 1982), 144.

⁴ Lynn R. Buzzard and Dan Hall, *Clergy Confidentiality: “A time to be Silent, and a time to Speak”* (Diamond Bar: Christian Ministries Management Association, 1988).

keep this information confidential; she agreed to contact children’s protection service, etc.⁵

Confidentiality at Council

In practice it turns out to be difficult as members of church council to keep things confidential. You will know the old story that once at a council meeting there was a lengthy discussion of a very weighty matter. At the close of the discussion the chairman reminded the brothers of the confidentiality of the discussion. He stated it explicitly: “That is to say, brothers, you are not to speak about this matter with any one.” One of the brothers asked in response: “But chairman, what then can we tell our wives when we get home?”

You will get the point of the story. [Some] husbands have difficulty keeping silent about things and [some] wives tend to be overly inquisitive.

As a result we sometimes hear members in the congregation say: “No, I’m not going to tell my ward elder, for then his wife finds out as well, and then in no time the whole congregation will know.” Sometimes elders hear members in their district say: “No, I’m not going to tell the pastor, for then his wife finds out as well, and then in no time the whole congregation will know.”

It is necessary for us to keep confidential things confidential. We may not tell our wives any of it. When we become officebearers, we need to discuss this matter of confidentiality with our wives, and our wives need to honor this obligation to keep confidential things confidential. Even though our wives are more aware than other members in the congregation of various aspects of our work as officebearers, by their very attitude

⁵ Jeanette Hofstee, Milgrom and Gary R. Schoener, “Responding to Clients who have been sexually exploited by counselors, therapists, and clergy,” in *Sexual assault and abuse: A handbook for clergy and religious professions*, eds. Mary D. Pellauer, Barbara Chester, Jane A. Boyajian (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 203-205.

they are to convey that their husbands honor confidentiality.

May we not talk at all with our wives about our work as officebearers?

Are there not some aspects of our work as officebearers that we may talk about with our wives? I repeat that we definitely may not talk with our wives about those things that are clearly to be kept confidential. But it maybe that there are some aspects, for example, of a family visit that we can share, such as sickness in the family or other needs that our wives may well know about, but then that should concern “things” that are clearly public knowledge or should be public knowledge, and the very best will be to ask the family if you may tell your wife.

Prof. W. H. Velema suggests that each officebearer needs to know whether his wife is able to keep silent or not. If your wife is the type to readily talk with others about all she does know, then you can discuss with her less than some one whose wife is able to keep things silent.⁶

It is also needful to pastors to keep confidential things confidential over against their colleagues. Sometimes we pastors in “very difficult cases” feel the need to ask for advice from colleagues who have been in the ministry longer than we have. At times we even feel the need to ask our wives for advice. This, however, is to be done only after we have asked for and received permission from those who are involved.

Prof. Trimp reminds us that we are not in council in order to satisfy our curiosity neither simply ‘to pass on the latest.’ “Every officebearer

6 W. H. Velema, “Het werk van de ouderling in de gemeente,” in *Uit liefde tot Christus en Zijn gemeente: een handreiking aan de ouderling*, eds. D. Koole and W.H. Velema (Kampen: Kok, 1982), 122.

7 C. Trimp, “Het ambtsgeheim,” in *Zorgen voor de gemeente* (Kampen: van den Berg, 1982), 145.

ought to so love the members who have been entrusted to his care that he in his contacts shows forth the form of Christ and for that reason knows how to restrain himself in his talking about these members of the congregation.”⁷

We need to gain confidence

The matter of confidentiality is a matter of confidence. If there is this confidence, if in practice we as officebearers have shown that we know how to shepherd those who are in special need, then this confidence will be given to us. It is not a matter simply of secrecy, of having to keep silent. Even if we are given the strictest rules for confidentiality, that as such does not encourage the members to come to us and share things that are to be kept confidential. The question is: Do we as officebearers have the wisdom to understand and are we able to lead in love those who are entrusted to our care? If that is missing, the most important thing is missing. It’s important for us in our labors as officebearers to be not merely theologians who reason but rather undershepherds who love and lead the sheep.

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The Spirituality of the Church

by

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether



What is the Christian's duty to society? Such a broad question suggests many different answers and conjures up images as diverse as the Good Samaritan, who loved his neighbor despite ethnic and religious differences, and the American Presbyterian John Witherspoon, who was the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. Typically, Reformed answers to this question are easily distinguished from those of other Christian traditions. For instance, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., a theologian in the Christian Reformed Church, has argued that the Calvinist perspective on society has generally been regarded as "conversionist" or "transformationist" or "world-formative," as opposed to the Lutheran or Anabaptist traditions that have harbored isolationist impulses. Plantinga's assessment reiterates the classic statement

"Hodge...denied that the church had any duty to take sides in the emerging struggle between the North and South. He wrote, 'the state has no authority in matters purely spiritual and that the church [has] no authority in matters purely secular or civil.'"

of H. Richard Niebuhr on the relation of Christ and culture. Unlike Luther who made sharp distinctions between the temporal and spiritual, or body and soul, Calvin, according to Niebuhr, had a more "dynamic" notion of the Christian's responsibilities in the world. Niebuhr also detected differences between Lutheran and Calvinistic understandings of the state. While Luther sharply distinguished the kingdom of grace from the kingdom of the world, Calvin argued that the state not only restrained evil but also promoted human welfare to such an extent that magistrates helped to establish the kingdom of God. As popular and as well-accepted as this interpretation of the Reformed tradition is, it fails to make sense of those Presbyterians who adopted a more restrained idea of the Christian's responsibility in political and social affairs. Unlike some Reformed theologians who have posited a basic harmony between church and

state in the execution of God's sovereignty, American Presbyterianism has also nurtured an understanding of society that stresses fundamental differences between the aims and task of the church and the purpose of the state. Sometimes called the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church and attributed to the southern Presbyterian tradition, this conviction also informed the views of Charles Hodge who adhered to this doctrine at a pivotal point in the history of the United States.

Though he is rarely cited as an exponent of the teaching, in 1861 Hodge articulated a view of the church's spiritual purpose and means that, though shorter, rivaled anything James Henley Thornwell or Robert Lewis Dabney could have written. Hodge was writing in response to the Spring Resolutions adopted by the

General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian Church that not only split the denomination along regional lines but also declared that the Presbyterian Church had an obligation to "promote and perpetuate" the integrity of the United States and the federal government. Hodge, however, denied that the church had any duty to take sides in the emerging struggle between the North and South. He wrote, "the state has no authority in matters purely spiritual and that the church [has] no authority in matters purely secular or civil." To be sure, in some cases their spheres of responsibility overlapped. Still, "the two institutions are distinct, and their respective duties are different." To substantiate this point Hodge went on to quote from the Confession of Faith, chapter thirty-one, which states that synods and councils must handle only ecclesiastical, as opposed to civil, matters. He then added an explanation that showed his under-

The Spirituality of the Church

standing of the point germane to the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, namely, the extent and nature of church power. "The church can only exercise her power in enforcing the word of God, in approving what it commands, and condemning what it forbids," Hodge wrote. "A man, in the exercise of his liberty as to things indifferent, may be justly amenable to the laws of the land; and he may incur great guilt in the sight of God, but he cannot be brought under the censure of the church."

Hodge's political sympathies were clearly with the Union. In 1865 he would weep at the news of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Still, he recognized that in the political questions surrounding the war between the North and the South—that is, whether the federal government or the states were ultimately sovereign—the church had no warrant from Scripture to take sides or to compel her members to do so. Christians must be obedient to the government and the church had a duty to teach and encourage such obedience. But the Bible did not settle the matter of the states versus the federal government. "The question," Hodge wrote, "is, whether the allegiance of our citizens is primarily to the State or to the Union? However clear our own convictions of the correctness of this decision may be, or however deeply we may be impressed with its importance, yet it is not a question which this Assembly has a right to decide." To take sides in this matter, Hodge concluded, was tantamount to singing the "Star Spangled Banner" at the Lord's Supper.

Four years later Hodge would continue to assert the Spirituality of the Church, even though the political issue that had provoked the war between North and South had been settled at Appomattox. He asserted that the power of the courts of the church was precisely circumscribed by the Bible. They derived "all their authority" from Scripture and could "rightly claim nothing but what is therein granted." This meant that as church courts they had

"nothing to do with matters of commerce, agriculture, or the fine arts, nor with the affairs of the state." Their proper sphere was the "conduct of public worship" and the "administration of God's house." But with secular affairs they had "nothing to do."

He recognized that in the political questions surrounding the war between the North and the South—that is, whether the federal government or the states were ultimately sovereign—the church had no warrant from Scripture to take sides or to compel her members to do so.

The distinction between secular affairs and church matters might strike some Presbyterians as a departure from the Reformed world-and-life view that regards all aspects of life as having religious significance. Yet, the doctrine of Spirituality of the Church, as understood and articulated by Hodge is nothing more than a restatement of what Reformed theologians and churchmen have confessed about the nature and ministry of the visible church. Though

this doctrine could look like a Presbyterian brief for the separation of church and state, it also meant that the church is a spiritual institution with a spiritual task and spiritual means for executing that task. Here it is significant to remember what John Calvin wrote about the lordship and kingdom of Christ. The Geneva reformer was no stranger to the kind of dichotomy between churchly and secular concerns implied by the Spirituality of the Church. For instance, in the *Institutes* at the beginning of his discussion of the state, Calvin clearly distinguishes between the civil and ecclesiastical spheres. The civil realm is concerned with "merely civil or external justice" while the church "rules over the soul or the inner man, and concerns itself with eternal life." Calvin goes on to say it is a "Judaic folly" not to recognize that "the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things far removed from one another." A similar understanding of the Spirituality of the Church appears in Calvin's description of Christ's office as king, which he writes is strictly "spiritual in nature" (*Institutes*, II.xv.3). Calvin adds that Christ's kingdom is "not earthly or carnal and hence subject to corruption, but spiritual" and because of that "lifts us up even to eternal life" (II.xv.4).

The Spirituality of the Church

Proponents of the Reformed world-and-life view may be dubious of such statements in part because of the widely accepted notion, running from Max Weber to H. Richard Niebuhr, of the Reformed tradition's this worldly spirituality and transformationist vision of culture. But a closer reading of Calvinist piety, such as that found in that portion of the Institutes, repackaged as the Golden Booklet of the Christian Life, suggests that Reformed spirituality can sound just as otherworldly as that of any fundamentalist. In other words, the Presbyterians who articulated the Spirituality of the Church may not have been betrayers of the Reformed tradition if they saw a fairly sizeable gap between things civil and ecclesiastical or between matters temporal and eternal. Nevertheless, showing some precedent for the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church does not automatically make the teaching attractive. For example, it is still associated with the southern Presbyterian Church's defense of slavery and more generally with Christian abdication of social responsibility. Yet, the other side of nineteenth-century Presbyterianism, New School Presbyterians who opposed the Spirituality of the Church in favor of the church's activism, do not in hindsight look much better in their application of Christianity to social involvement. Their reliance upon Christian teaching about the magistrate to support the Union and to baptize the agenda of the Republican Party suffers just as much from self-interest and partisan politics as did the southern Presbyterian defense of slavery. So even though we should concede that the Spirituality of the Church has been a doctrine subject to abuse, so has the notion of an activist Reformed-world-and-life view. We might even go so far as to argue that narrowing the arena of Christ's kingdom to the church was much healthier than using Christ's name to endorse specific political measures. In other words, it is much more fitting (because biblical) to identify the cause of Christ with keys of the kingdom (preaching and discipline) than with the platform of the Republican Party.

"In other words, it is much more fitting (because biblical) to identify the cause of Christ with keys of the kingdom (preaching and discipline) than with the platform of the Republican Party."

Thus, for the same reason that some look to the Lutheran notion of two kingdoms as a way to escape civil religion, so the Reformed doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church provides relief from all efforts to politicize the faith, from placing American flags at the front of the church to singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" during the Sunday service closest to Independence Day. Presbyterians and Reformed do not have to go to Lutheran sources to justify a restrained and transcendent understanding of the nature and work of the visible church. The Spirituality of the Church is the Reformed way of keeping religion and politics separate and of letting the church be the church. As the Lutheran sociologist, Peter Berger, has written, neither the left's nor the right's political agenda "belongs in the pulpit, in the liturgy, or in any statements that claim to have the authority of the Gospel. Any cultural or political agenda is a manifestation of 'works-righteousness' and ipso facto an act of apostasy." Presbyterians should not have needed a Lutheran to tell them that. To the extent that their forefathers in the faith taught and expounded the Spirituality of the Church, they already knew it.

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Balancing Sensitivity and Stewardship in Diaconal Assistance

by
the Deacons of
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Franklin Square, NY

As the Board of Deacons at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Franklin Square, New York, we have struggled for many years with the application of biblical truth to diaconal needs. We have felt the need to systematize a number of principles in order to avoid “shooting from the hip” in these ever increasing instances of financial assistance. Matthew Henry’s *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, in its exposition of 2 Kings 4:1-7, sheds a great deal of light on this topic. In this passage Elisha strikes a wonderful balance between sensitivity to the needs of the widow and the oil, while remaining a good steward of all that God has entrusted to him.

1. At the outset, our attitudes are of particular importance.

Widows and those truly in need are of special concern to those ministering in the name of Christ. Without a godly reputation, we cannot carry the consciences of our congregation members. God’s people rightly look to us with legitimate needs. Our response is to be willing to listen and desirous of understanding the people and their situations.

2. The next step is to apply overarching principles to the matter at hand.

Every effort is made to ascertain if the situation was precipitated by a sudden tragedy or by mismanagement. Was there an ongoing pattern of incurring excessive debt? Our obligation is to offer direction to the Lord’s people, in the way of personal industry.

—Are all gifts being used to their fullest extent?

—Has every attempt been made to satisfy creditors before going to outside help?

3. Now, we attempt to monitor that the actions flow from the principal foundation.

—Is the debt being reduced according to the plan?

—Is there a submissive and obedient spirit that is willing to heed counsel?

—The individual’s obligations must be undertaken and remedied by that individual and not discharged for him, by the Deacons. (God’s people will be greatly blessed in faithfully accomplishing these tasks which should, therefore, not be usurped by the deacons.)

4. Lastly, are necessary changes in attitude effected by this process?

—Is there contentment with little or an ongoing spirit of covetousness?

—Is there a growing conviction to fulfill obligations?

Formalizing these principles has enabled us to avoid being embarrassed about applying biblical principles to sensitive issues. God’s promises are sure and trust in him will never be disappointed. May God increase both our understanding of His truth and our willingness to implement it in our diaconal labors.

BOOK REVIEW

A Historical and Biblical Examination of Women Deacons, by Brian M. Schwertley, 1998, 155 pages. Published by Reformed Witness, 26550 Evergreen Road, Southfield, MI 48076. (The book can be obtained, for \$5 postage paid, from: Reformation Forum - Box 306 - Holt, MI 48842) *Reviewed by the Editor.*

This is a stimulating book. It vigorously interacts with much that has been written in recent years. And while it may not please anyone, since it does not find itself at home in any present company, yet—for that very reason—I find it very cogent and hope that it will get the attention it deserves.

When I first received it I wondered about the wisdom of dealing with the history of this issue first, and only *then* dealing directly with the biblical evidence. Yet, as I worked my way through the book I became convinced of the wisdom of this approach. By doing this the author brings out some of the strengths—and weaknesses—of the various positions that have become well known among us. On the one hand there is the view set forth in the majority report found in the minutes of the 55th G.A. of our church. It simply says that women may not serve as deacons. And then, on the other hand, there is the view expressed in a minority report (found in those same minutes) which argues for opening the office of deacon (though not the office of elder) to women.

It is my opinion that Rev. Schwertley has rightly found weakness in both of these entrenched positions. I think he may also be right in defend-

ing what is essentially the view that was put forth—in essence at least—by John Calvin, and defended (unsuccessfully) by some of the great men at the Westminster Assembly. This view of John Calvin has already been mentioned in *Ordained Servant* (Vol. 3, #3 p. 61f). But in reading the material assembled here I could see much more clearly what led these men to virtually the same conclusion.

One of the aspects of this book that some may not enjoy reading has to do with the fact that Rev. Schwertley's own denomination (the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America) was the first Presbyterian body to open the office of deacon to women (it did so in 1888). I believe he is right in saying that in this decision (as in others) it was the pressure of profound social changes then taking place in the United States of America, rather than biblical exegesis, that brought this about. I do not see how anyone can read what is brought together here without seeing this clearly. And in bringing this out Rev. Schwertley does not hesitate to bring to our notice the fact that even the great Warfield seems to have succumbed to these same influences in his own defense of allowing women to enter the office of deacon.

But these are secondary matters. The main thing is the solid arguments set forth in a defense of non-ordained widows—over sixty years of age—being given a special status and task in edifying of the body of Christ.

It is my hope that this book will receive the attention it deserves.
