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INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

APRIL 2012



# HOLY SPIRIT



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**MINISTRY®**

International Journal for Pastors  
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**COVER ILLUSTRATION**

316 Creative

**LAYOUT**

316 Creative

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

12 issues: United States US\$32.99; Canada and overseas US\$47.00. To order: send name, address, and payment to *Ministry*® Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A. ministrymagazine.org/subscribe

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We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Before submitting, review the writers’ guidelines at www.ministrymagazine.org. Please send manuscripts via email to ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.



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*MINISTRY*® has been published monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Ministry* is a peer-reviewed journal.

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**PRINTER** Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687  
Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

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Vol. 84 Number 4 © 2012

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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# “PASTORS ARE REVIVALISTS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT PEOPLE NEED A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.”

## Pastors as revivalists

I am very troubled by the interview article on revivalists (“A Passion for Revival: An Interview With Lee Venden”—February 2012). It is a classic example of how Adventist pastors are sidelined, how the work they do for Jesus is not considered adequate.

Pastors are revivalists. We recognize that people need a meaningful relationship with Jesus. We recognize the need for Bible study that results in practical and natural sharing. We visit our members and respond to their needs. We pray, study, and develop many approaches to leading our people into a real friendship with Jesus. Suggesting that we need more traveling revivalists is missing the mark. What we need are far fewer administrative people duplicating work that does not affect people at the grassroots level. Members of my church, particularly young people, are concerned about growing administrative levels when they are told there is not enough money to provide a sufficient number of full-time pastors.

Please do not fail to recognize that pastors are revivalists and always have been. The men and women in pastoral ministry must be affirmed and supported. To encourage revival and reformation has been

pastors’ goals for decades and will continue to be their goals.

—Larry Yeagley, Gentry, Arkansas, United States

## The meaning of Genesis 2:17

Stephen Bauer, in his December 2011 article (“‘Dying You Shall Die’: The Meaning of Genesis 2:17”), has ably shown us that the biblical meaning of the phrase *dying you shall die* is legal and not a description of natural consequences.

I understand that every article is limited in scope, but I would not want anyone to conclude from this article that sin has no natural consequences. In the Garden when God asks the fallen couple where they are, their answer reveals that they are afraid of God and ashamed of their nakedness, even though no one has told them they were naked. These are natural consequences of sin. To eat from the tree of life and live forever in this fallen state would be eternal torment. We must affirm that the judgments of God are real without implying that they are arbitrary or merely legal. All that God does, including the death penalty, is based on His desire that we have life abundantly.

—Bruce Blum, Lake City, California, United States

Stephen Bauer’s article left me a bit puzzled. While the case made

does show that Scripture uses the language of judicial penalty when describing the results of human sin, does it therefore necessarily follow that that punishment is not also the result of natural consequences? Does the natural-consequences perspective detract from the significance of judgment or the resolution of the great controversy?

While the language can be understood in the most punitive way possible (rather than in the context of a gracious God who is at least as unwilling for any to perish as He is unwilling for any to escape an appropriate penalty), I believe the language can still be understood in a broad enough way to see natural consequences as the “appropriate punishment” without detracting from anything. [It can also avoid] perhaps a more grievous interpretation of God’s character should the language be used in a way that skews the teaching of Jesus, as if an “eye for an eye” really was more appropriate than getting out of the revenge business. While I appreciate the textual insights here and the genuine importance of accountability (as evidenced by the death of Jesus), genuinely allowing scripture to interpret scripture, is, I think, a bit more nuanced than seems to be implied in the article.

—Ken Curtis, Yucaipa, California, United States





# What the Holy Spirit means to me

Unlike adults, children think in concrete terms. Growing up in an Adventist home, I heard terms such as *Trinity* and *God-head*, and I attempted to construct physical pictures of these Beings and comprehend Their hierarchical structure (certainly the Son couldn't be equal to the Father). Having a father, I was able to easily fashion an image of God the Father; being a son, I could do the same for God the Son. But I never could fathom the concept of the Holy Spirit. Adding to the difficulty, my upbringing included the KJV. So thinking about God as a *Ghost* further complicated the issue! Not only could I not comprehend the Holy Spirit to the degree I thought I understood Him, I found myself relegating Him to a lower status than I attributed to the Father and Son. Only as I grew older could I value both the importance and equality of the Holy Spirit.

Strangely enough, in some respects I have, from time to time, found myself fighting the temptation to place the Holy Spirit on a higher pedestal than the Father or Son. I haven't done so as others have been accused of doing; rather, I have been tempted to think that since Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be with His people forever (John 14:16) and that His followers would not be left as orphans (a literal reading of the Greek of John 14:18), then the Holy Spirit becomes the most important Member of the Godhead for me in 2012. I don't intend to minimize the life and sacrifice of Jesus; rather, I find my heart filled with gratitude for the Member of the Godhead who walks and talks with me, guiding me through life's challenges, searching my heart, and interceding in my behalf before the Almighty.

While I find Trinitarian principles both simple to picture and hard to understand, many still struggle with these concepts in general and the roles and functions of the Holy Spirit in particular. To this end, in February 2009, *Ministry* published

M. Hasel provides a comprehensive overview of the work of the Holy Spirit both for individuals and the church as a corporate body. Merlin D. Burt takes us on a tour of Seventh-day Adventist viewpoints and the writings of Ellen G. White regarding

ONLY AS I GREW OLDER COULD I  
VALUE BOTH THE IMPORTANCE AND  
EQUALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

a special issue on the Trinity. Our editorial team deemed it necessary to do so because in both our travels and hearing from various focus groups, the number one issue that pastors and administrators faced at that time was spurious teachings coming from outside influences regarding the Trinity, creating problems for Adventist pastors and church members alike. Under recent advisement, we felt it important to again address a portion of this same discussion, focusing in upon the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit as this remains fundamental to our Christian identity.

We are pleased to publish articles from several noted scholars in this issue on the topic of the Holy Spirit. Former world church president and theologian Jan Paulsen emphasizes the day-to-day movement of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people, noting that He "respond[s] in practical ways to tangible needs—both in our personal journeys and the corporate life of the church." Frank

the Holy Spirit as they developed over time. E. Edward Zinke discusses the role of the Holy Spirit and biblical interpretation, pointing out His role in the origin of Scripture and the impact of the Word on our lives. Finally, Wilson Paroschi examines the Holy Spirit as Paraclete—the One who stands by our side—as expressed in the book of John.

From the inception of *Ministry* in 1928, one of the goals of the journal has been to provide material that challenges the minds of ministers to wrestle with concepts that are often passed over or accepted without question. It remains critical for pastors—the boots-on-the-ground, frontline workers—to exercise their authority as the resident theologians in their congregations. Of necessity, they must be ready to answer anyone who asks about their belief system (1 Pet. 3:15). For this reason, we offer this issue on the Holy Spirit and pray that you will be enriched and blessed as you read it. [M](#)

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.



# The Holy Spirit—So what?

Four guiding principles that have helped me understand more clearly how and when the Spirit moves and works.

**M**y wife and I were in Nigeria in the 1960s at the beginning of the Biafran War—a brutal, bloody conflict in which many thousands were killed. I was the principal of the Seventh-day Adventist college in west Nigeria where Babcock University now stands. At that time, the college was known for its bakery, and, early every morning, two vans set out to deliver fresh bread to the nearby cities of Lagos and Ibadan.

One of the drivers who took bread to Ibadan came to my house late one evening. He was from the Ibo tribe of east Nigeria, the tribe at war with the rest of the country. As the turmoil had drawn closer to the college, most Ibo students had left the college to return to the comparative safety of their homes. But this student had chosen to stay, and he said to me, “I’m afraid to go by myself into Ibadan tomorrow. Would you come with me?”

We left at four in the morning with an extra box of bread to

distribute to the soldiers at the military checkpoints we passed through. We made our deliveries in the city and then headed back toward the college. But as we came around a long bend in the road, we found a number of cars stopped. Nearby stood half a dozen soldiers in uniform with automatic weapons—they were Hausa soldiers from north Nigeria, the Ibos’ most implacable enemies. They were drunk on palm wine, unsteady on their feet, and less than rational. They could speak only a few words of English and as they came to each vehicle, they asked just one question: “Which nation?” meaning, “Which tribe?” When they came to our van, they did not need to ask the question because they saw the tribal marks on my driver’s face.

“Come out, come out,” they said to him. I knew what would happen if he left the van; so many Ibos had simply been taken off to the side of the road and had been shot. I opened the door on my side and started to get out. “No,” they said and gestured

for me to stay. The leader of the group was on my side of the van. I whispered a prayer and then began to speak to him.

I spoke without pause for about 15 minutes. As I talked, the other soldiers, who had been pointing their weapons through the windows of our van, came around to listen. To this day I have no recollection of what I said. What I do know, however, is that I did not speak their language nor did they speak mine.

Yet they listened intently as I spoke, without moving. After a quarter of an hour, the leader said to the Ibo driver, “OK, we will let you go, but only because your master talked so well.”

As a theologian and professor, I have studied and taught the theology of the Holy Spirit. As a pastor, I have preached sermons on the manifestations of the Spirit in the community of faith. As a church leader, I have prayed for the presence and guidance of God’s Spirit in decisions that sometimes seemed to demand more than human judgment.

But in those few minutes on a dusty Nigerian road, the Holy Spirit reached unexpectedly into my life and became real to me in a dramatic way. Was it an example of glossolalia—speaking in tongues? However you want to define it theologically, I know that God’s Spirit moved physically in that moment to serve a divine purpose and to save the life of the Ibo student, and possibly mine as well.

As pastors and leaders in a church that has rightly taken a cau-

purpose of producing spiritual “fireworks” but to respond in practical ways to tangible needs—both in our personal journeys and the corporate life of the church.

I so often hear the word *spiritual* used synonymously with “mystical,” “inexplicable,” “mysterious,” “elusive.” Yet it becomes clear as we look at the circumstances in which the Spirit was given to the church that His purpose is, for want of a better description, to be “useful.” When He moves, the results are palpable

moves in my own life and within the corporate life of our church.

### **To understand the Spirit’s mission, look to the Son**

Consider the final weeks of Christ’s ministry on earth. After three and a half years of friendship, fellowship, sharing of life, and instruction, the disciples were understandably anxious about the separation that seemed imminent. What would become of them when Christ was gone? While sincere, they were also

[THE HOLY SPIRIT] IS A DYNAMIC PRESENCE TODAY, NOT WAITING IN ABEYANCE TO BE UNLEASHED AT SOME FUTURE MOMENT IN TIME.

tious approach to purely emotional or esoteric manifestations of the charismata, we have, by the same token, often tended to shy away from emphasizing how the Spirit does move in the day-to-day lives of God’s people. Perhaps in our teaching and preaching we sometimes overspiritualize the Holy Spirit. We consign Him to a realm apart from the nine-to-five realities of our world. We describe His role in primarily abstract, intellectual terms, and thus “elevate” Him to a level of practical irrelevance.

But, to put it bluntly, the role of the Holy Spirit is functional, not decorative. He functions as an active force, not a theological construct. He is a dynamic presence today, not waiting in abeyance to be unleashed at some future moment in time. When He moves, it is according to the divine will, not ours. He reaches into human affairs not merely for the

and concrete. He is, in essence, the Divine Facilitator.

How then do we recalibrate our understanding of the Spirit and His movement in our church so that it encompasses this fundamental practicality without, at the same time, veering into that which may be self-focused or trivial, a mere “bedlam of noise”?<sup>1</sup>

For pastors and church administrators who aspire to Spirit-filled leadership, there are additional questions: What does ministering in the Spirit look like in my day-to-day interactions? How can I seek best the guidance of the Spirit and discern His promptings?

This topic is virtually endless, but I would like to share with you four guiding ideas that have stayed with me through the years; ideas that have helped me understand more clearly how and when the Spirit

at times fickle, unsure, unpredictable, and ill prepared to stand firmly for what they had come to know as Truth. Would they be able to survive on their own? Would they, in fact, be on their own?

At various times Jesus tried to prepare them for the day when He would leave (see Matt. 26:11; John 7:33, 34). He assured them that although He would be physically absent, He would never really leave them. “I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20); “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18).<sup>2</sup> Christ’s ascension would not end His real presence among His people; it would simply enter a new phase. His presence among His earthly family would come through the gift and ministry of the Holy Spirit, and Pentecost marked the beginning of this new era.

Of course, the Holy Spirit, as the Third Person of the Godhead, had been present and active on the earth since the beginning. He was there at Creation. He was there inspiring the prophets. He was there providing the gift of leadership to the judges.

Why, then, is the Spirit's special coming to the community of believers after the ascension of Christ specifically signaled in the Bible? He had obviously been there before, so what was new now?

The Spirit's new assignment, after the ascension of Christ, is very closely

or leader of God's people who seeks to know where the Spirit leads or to understand what is "of the Spirit" and that which is not? Look to the Son—His words, His life, His mission—for through the Spirit, Jesus Christ still walks with humanity today.

### **The movement of the Spirit is revealed in community**

If we understand the *why*—the mission—of the Spirit, then what about the *how* of the Spirit? How does His presence manifest itself

organic. Life and nurture are to flow from one individual to the next; thus, the meaning of being one "body." The Spirit binds us together.

Since the beginning of time, God has been at work creating and re-creating, designing and restoring through His Spirit. The community of God's people has always been the community of the Spirit. This is where He functions in practical ways. "The Spirit recreates, refines, and sanctifies human beings, fitting them to become members of the royal family."<sup>4</sup>

WHEN A GIFT OF THE SPIRIT, INCLUDING THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, IS BESTOWED ON AN INDIVIDUAL, THAT PERSON DOES NOT BECOME THE FOCUS OF THE CHURCH. CHRIST REMAINS THE FOCUS.

to the person and message of Christ. In His parting message to His disciples, Jesus tells them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and what He would do (John 14–16).

There exists no mystery here. Although Christ no longer physically lives with us, the Spirit continues His ministry. The Spirit does not bring a new or different gospel. He guides us, reminds us, and teaches us. "By [the Holy Spirit's] power the vital truths upon which the salvation of the soul depends are impressed upon the mind, and the way of life is made so plain that none need err therein."<sup>3</sup>

And so what would be the most important litmus test for any pastor

within our lives as individuals and within the corporate life of God's people?

There are many ways we could describe this. But perhaps the essence of the Spirit's impact can be expressed in this way: the Spirit will always lead us toward an outward, rather than inward, orientation; that is, the Spirit will always lead us toward Christ and other people.

That the fruit of the Spirit has a social setting and finds its meaning in relationships with other people cannot be attributed to a coincidence. And it is also no coincidence that the chapter on love (1 Cor. 13) centers in Paul's treatment of spiritual gifts. The unity of the church is

The presence of the Spirit is to make otherwise frail human beings into a genuine community of disciples. Spiritual gifts equip that community to function for Christ. Not all disciples have the same gifts; the choice is God's. But the primary gift of the Holy Spirit is extended to all who genuinely commit themselves to Jesus Christ and live lives of obedience to Him.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote to a church greatly divided over spiritual gifts. He said that all who have accepted Jesus as their personal Savior have this in common, that the one Holy Spirit has been poured out for them to drink (1 Cor. 12:13).



The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His many gifts are all “given for the common good” (v. 7) and not for some kind of private enjoyment. A sense of spiritual elitism should be alien to the community spirit of the church family. God makes no suggestion that the believers themselves are to pick and choose from a “menu” of gifts the ones they would like. God bestows gifts according to the needs of His people at any given point in history.

All three New Testament lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Eph. 4:8–12) make clear that gifts are for (1) the common good of the church; (2) the building up of the body of Christ, to bring the church to its functional peak; and (3) service. Something must happen! The Spirit is both a functional instrument and a catalyst for change.

And so the Spirit’s presence in the church and our personal lives does the following:

- He makes us sure of our salvation in Christ. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Rom. 8:16).
- He helps us experience the freedom of forgiveness and the removal of guilt. “[W]here the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).
- He binds us together as God’s people. “[T]here should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Cor. 12:25; cf. Eph. 4:3).
- He fights against moral corruption. “[L]ive by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:16).
- He brings forth a variety of fruits. “[L]ove, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23; cf. Eph. 4:31, 32).
- He guides God’s children into a deeper understanding of truth. “‘But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things’ ” (John 14:26; cf. 16:12–15).

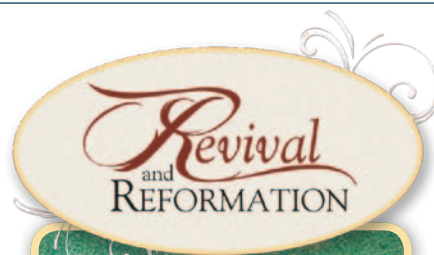
- He empowers the people of God to function as a witnessing community. “‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8; cf. Luke 24:49).

That is what it means to be filled with the Spirit! The Spirit, as an enabling force, equips God’s people to function as believers. The function has a practical focus; it has to do with how we think, the choices we make, and the way we act. As Ellen G. White describes, “When by the Holy Spirit divine truths are impressed upon the heart, new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to co-operate with God.”<sup>5</sup>

I cannot leave this topic without particularly mentioning one gift of the Spirit that has special importance to the community of believers—the gift of prophecy, mentioned in all three New Testament lists of spiritual gifts. This gift “edifies the church” (1 Cor. 14:4) and provides guidance as believers seek to understand the Bible.

In order to safely understand the dynamic role of the gift of prophecy in this final period of earth’s history, we must remind ourselves of the whole sweep of the multiple roles of the Spirit in the church today. With an eye to the vast range of functions of spiritual gifts, the gift of prophecy, as manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White, must be understood. Her work is neither a correction of, nor a replacement for, prophetic ministries of the past. If anything, she helps believers remember and understand the prophetic messages that are already there.

When a gift of the Spirit, including the gift of prophecy, is bestowed on an individual, that person does not become the focus of the church. Christ remains the focus. He is the heart of the gospel. The church belongs to Him. The mission of the church is His. That is the way it always must be or religion deteriorates into idolatry.



## From revival to reformation

True revival and reformation must originate from God. We must allow Him to work in His way to receive the greatest blessings. In the best of times, efforts toward reformation are uncertain and difficult to sustain, but for reformation to be profound and lasting, it must emerge from God’s revival.

Revival is not something humans gear up to achieve. We do not determine that the church should be changed, and then it just happens. Instead, it emerges from God’s continuing efforts to transform us by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). His efforts are ceaseless, of course; but the challenge is that we commonly resist His efforts to give us new hearts, clinging, instead, to our hearts of stone (2 Cor. 3:3).

Only by being truly submissive to God (Col. 3:18–25), allowing Him to transform us into loving, caring people (2 Cor. 3:18), shaped by humility, and committed to service (2 Cor. 5:18), will that fundamental change happen. God *will* revive His church, leading us into true reformation; He *will* lead us into a compelling ministry of reconciliation, but not until we abandon our efforts to program reformation and instead begin to trust, allowing Him to do His work of transformation.

— DAN DAY SERVES AS DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA.

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## That which looks, sounds, and “smells” Spirit filled is not necessarily so

“How do you, as church president, know you’re being led by the Holy Spirit when you make decisions that affect the church?” the young man asked, his tone challenging and skeptical in equal parts. The question came during a live *Let’s Talk* broadcast from Pacific Union College in California. This was one of about 30 free-flowing televised conversations I had with different groups of Adventist young people around the world, during which they talked with me about anything that was on their minds.

The question should be considered important because it probes our fundamental assumptions about the role of the Spirit within the community of faith and within the leadership function in particular.

So far we have explored our need to be more open in recognizing the practical workings of the Spirit in building up and equipping the community of believers. Yet, at the same time, those of us who minister to God’s people face a special—and perhaps seemingly contradictory—challenge. As leaders and pastors within a spiritual community, there is a temptation to clothe ourselves, our speech, and our special projects in the language of the Spirit and to proclaim that the Spirit is leading His people in the direction *we* want to go.

But anointing our plans with words will not guarantee that our will and the divine will are aligned; an elected or appointed position does not come packaged with personal infallibility. Plainly put, being Spirit led does not mean being always right.

How then should pastors and leaders seek the Spirit’s guidance? Occasionally, I have met leaders whose approach to difficult issues is to withdraw into themselves and await a “word from the Lord.” Private prayer, meditation, and study are indeed absolutely critical,

but when it comes to identifying the Spirit’s leading, wise leaders will also reach out for the counsel of their colleagues. A leader who retreats inward to seek a personal God-speaking-to-me moment—an experience that can be notoriously subjective—may be perceived by others as unreliable and perhaps even manipulative.

Ellen G. White writes that a leader should listen to those who “have been long in the work, and who have gained deep experience in the ways of the Lord. The disposition of some to shut themselves up to themselves, and to feel competent to plan and execute according to their own judgment and preferences, brings them into strait places. Such an independent way of working is not right, and should not be followed.”<sup>6</sup>

For all believers who seek the Spirit’s guidance—not just pastors and leaders—encounters with the Holy Spirit are not necessarily esoteric, private, dramatic, or emotional experiences that serve to bathe one in a glow of piety. If we cultivate daily an openness to God’s leading, the Spirit can find us as we dialogue with a trusted counselor, consult with our colleagues, or talk things over with our spouses. The Spirit can even reach us through the mundane operations of a church business meeting or a General Conference committee!

And so, my answer to the young man’s question during the *Let’s Talk* broadcast was simple: leadership—pastoral or administrative—within the church should never be misconstrued as “personal infallibility.” Election or appointment to office does not automatically come with a direct line to the Spirit. Pastors and leaders must seek the leading of God’s Spirit in the same way that every believer does—through individual study of God’s Word and prayer, by seeking the broader counsel of our brothers and sisters in faith, and doing so, always, with an attitude of humility.

## The Holy Spirit is *already* ministering

During a weeklong visit to China in 2009, I met two women whose decades-long ministries have produced results that, quite simply, defy human logic.

Hao Ya Jie is the senior pastor of the Beiguan Seventh-day Adventist Church in Shenyang. When she began her work, she started with a handful of people—just 25 members. And now, 20 years on, she has a community of 7,000 believers. Three thousand worship at the “mother” church and the others are spread out in the district among 17 other churches.

When Hao Ya Jie looks at you, even though somebody else is translating her words, there is an incredible sense of strength and warmth in her eyes; and when she prays, you are transfixed by the passion of her words.

Soon afterward, I met Zu Xiu Hua, in the northeastern province of Jilin, who is in charge of a district of 20,000 church members. When government restrictions on religion were loosened in 1989, the church in that area experienced major growth. She related one story of a large baptism conducted by the only Adventist pastor there at the time. He was planning to do all the baptizing, but it became too much for him to handle. So he stood in the river, spoke the words, and let the deacons lower the candidates into the water and bring them up again. That pastor stood in the river for three days and baptized 3,000 people—1,000 a day. I asked Zu Xiu Hua, “How do you account for this? Where is this extraordinary appeal?” She said, “The people come to the teachings, and they see our zeal and the Holy Spirit.”

A disarmingly simple answer, and yet so powerful.

Sometimes we look back at the dramatic moment of Pentecost and we look forward to the outpouring of the latter rain, and it can be easy to imagine—especially for the Western mind—that we occupy an

in-between space in history where the Spirit is “taking things easy.” Where are the signs and wonders? Where is the drama?

But make no mistake: God’s Spirit is at work today, regardless of whether or not His handiwork fits our preconceptions of what exactly this should look like.

There are dangers in seeing the Spirit only as a future force for which we must wait and pray. We risk diminishing the practical impact of the Spirit’s power in the here and now by “elevating” it to something that always seems just out of our reach. We can become spiritually introspective and distracted from our mission.

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and church will always be a by-product, not an end goal. It is a by-product of

obedience, of our willingness each day to commit our lives, ambitions, and choices to the cause of Christ’s mission. For when we, as a church, are focused on mission and assemble all of our resources for mission, we open ourselves to the infilling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, without which we are helpless to fulfill our assignment.

## Conclusion

Through the years, I have studied, taught, and preached about the Holy Spirit and I have struggled at times to understand how the Spirit works within Christ’s body. But I have continued to believe that the most important question we can ever ask about the Spirit is, “So what?” As a pastor and leader, what practical difference does the Spirit make in my life? In my decision

making? In my leadership style? In the atmosphere I try to cultivate within my workplace and church? In the way I treat people—both within and beyond the community of faith? In my approach to the mission God has entrusted to us?

The Holy Spirit is alive and well. He is present and acting today in His church and for His people as He has in the past. And He will continue to do so for as long as we are here. **M**

- 1 See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 36, 37.
- 2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 113.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 287.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 520.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), 501, 502.

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# The work of the Holy Spirit

When we consider the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, a strange paradox confronts us. On the one hand, we find a silence in many theological works, with only a passing reference to the subject in connection with the question of the Trinity. On the other hand, we find an increasing interest in the work of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal movement and the subsequent waves of charismatic Christianity have led Christians to a new awareness of the Spirit and His gifts in the lives of believers. Here, the focus centers on the work of the Holy Spirit in us—the spiritual gifts that empower us in our ministries. Much of this interest in the Holy Spirit is motivated by the benefits we gain from the Holy Spirit. However, we have to remind ourselves that the Bible is first and foremost about God and not about us or our spiritual potential. Even the spiritual gifts we receive are God’s gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). Therefore, it is appropriate to study the Holy Spirit and His work from a biblical and theocentric focus.

But here is the challenge: Scripture itself does not present the Spirit in any methodical or structured way. Perhaps this has to do, in part, with a peculiar characteristic of the Holy Spirit: His background position.

## The background position of the Holy Spirit

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit does not seek to be the center of attention. He plays a role that involves more of a “background position” in the Trinity.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit promotes and mediates the presence and Lordship of Jesus Christ through His presence in our lives. James Packer has aptly said, “The Spirit’s message to us is never, ‘Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,’ but always, ‘Look at *him* and see *him*, and see his glory; get to know *him*, and hear his word; go to *him*, and have life; get to know *him*, and taste his gift of joy and peace.’”<sup>2</sup> In our sinful world of egocentricity and self-promotion, the beauty of the Spirit lies not in self-display, but in divine selflessness. “For this reason believers are rightly called ‘Christians’ not ‘Pneumians.’”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit teaches us humility in giving glory to God the Father through Jesus Christ, His Son.

## The Holy Spirit and our knowledge of God

The Holy Spirit also plays a pivotal role in our knowing God. The apostle Paul states that the Holy Spirit searches even the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). He knows God as no other being does. He not only has unique access to God, He is God Himself, a Member of the Triune

God.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the Holy Spirit is uniquely fitted to reveal God and His will to us in a trustworthy and authoritative manner. To know the God of the Bible means that we have to rely upon God who made Himself known to us through His Spirit in His Word. In a sense, the Holy Spirit is the epistemological basis for knowing God.

## God’s special revelation and inspiration

The special revelations of God and His will for humanity in Scripture result from the work of the Holy Spirit. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), and no prophetic word can be brought forth by human invention (2 Pet. 1:20, 21). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 17; 15:26), who brings God’s words to reliable remembrance. The Holy Spirit moved biblical writers in such a way that what they wrote in their own words was nevertheless God’s Word and carried divine authority (1 Thess. 2:13). But even though the Holy Spirit inspired biblical writers to record faithfully what God had revealed, the result is not a book primarily about the Holy Spirit but about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (cf. Luke 24:25–27, 44–45; John 16:14; 15:26; Acts 5:32; 1 John 4:2).

The close link between the Holy Spirit and the Bible lies at



the foundation of the Protestant principle of authority. According to Bernard Ramm, “The proper principle of authority within the Christian church must be . . . the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, which are the product of the Spirit’s revelatory and inspiring action.”<sup>5</sup> The Bible is authoritative because it is the vehicle through which God has chosen to speak to us through the work of the Spirit.

### The Holy Spirit and Scripture

Calvin has pointed out forcefully that the Holy Spirit confirms the witness and establishes the inviolate authority of the Scriptures. Calvin called this the internal witness of the Spirit (*testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*).<sup>6</sup> This witness is stronger than any human reason. Scripture is thus self-authenticated.<sup>7</sup> This assurance does not come by any rational process but rather is received in faith. The Holy Spirit establishes the assurance of the trustworthiness of Scripture in the life of the believer.

To have the sure Word of God is not enough; it must be followed by the embrace of, and obedience to, the Word. Thus, revelation, inspiration, proper understanding, and obedience to the revealed Word, all come from the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, there is no appreciation of, or affection for, the divine message. Without the Spirit, faith and love are missing in our responses to the message of Scripture. We need the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand what He has inspired (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12, 14, 15; Eph. 1:17–19; Ps. 119:18).

The Holy Spirit’s work with Scripture did not end in the distant past. He continues to speak to people through the Bible today, making the Word come alive as He helps us understand the significance and relevance of the biblical text for our lives in the present. “The Spirit was not given . . . to supersede the Bible; . . . the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”<sup>8</sup>

By embracing the scriptural Word as trustworthy and true, we are led by the Spirit to accept the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord.

### The Holy Spirit and Christ

The Holy Spirit was active and instrumental not only in the Written Word of God but also in the Incarnate Word. The Spirit prepared the way of the Messiah through prophets. More significantly “the conception of the Messiah is Spirit-crafted.”<sup>9</sup> The Holy Spirit is the One responsible for the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin Mary: “ ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’ ” (Luke 1:35).<sup>10</sup> The result? The One who is thus born is called “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35, KJV), signifying that Jesus is indeed the Son of the Holy One, the Son of God, truly divine and truly human.

### Providing the assurance of salvation

The Holy Spirit also gives assurance of our salvation through Jesus Christ. He bears “witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16, RSV). He gives evidence of God’s work in us. “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us” (1 John 3:24, RSV). The Spirit gives us assurance of our adoption as God’s children. He is a Witness and Seal that confirms our standing in Christ (2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30).

The Holy Spirit is the Agent of this sealing and the guarantee that God will bring to completion what He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6). Hence, the apostle Paul states that all of God’s promises are Yes in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20), who “anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (vv. 21, 22). This sealing implies a moral dimension: to walk in the way of holiness that

accompanies the sealing of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the admonition not to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph. 4:30–32; cf. 2 Tim. 2:19). In other words, living in the Spirit means a life of spiritual and moral congruity with what Scripture teaches (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17).

### The Holy Spirit and new birth

Jesus said, “ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’ ” (John 3:5, 6, RSV). Paul affirms that without the working of the Holy Spirit, we cannot experience regeneration and renewal (Titus 3:5). Indeed, as we are led by the Spirit of God, we become the children of God (Rom. 8:14). The Spirit awakens sinful and dead hearts (Eph. 2:1; Ezek. 36:26, 27) and opens our blind eyes (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4). He does this by awakening in us an awareness of our sin (John 16:8) and convicting us of our lostness and need for a Savior.

### Sanctification and character development

The Holy Spirit desires to make us holy as God is holy. For this reason, He cleanses us from sin and sanctifies us. The apostle Paul writes, “[Y]ou were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11, RSV). The Spirit produces in us lifelong growth in holiness, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit within us—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). He enables us to live victoriously by God’s grace. Our



being changed into His likeness “comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Sanctification and the joy of obedience come through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; cf. Rom. 8:4; 15; 16).

### **Mission and evangelism**

The Holy Spirit also empowers believers for mission and evangelism. He provides the essential strength for the mission of the church (Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:18, 19). The Holy Spirit calls forth persons to be bearers of God’s mission

### **The unity of the church**

The Holy Spirit unites us in many ways. First of all, He brings us to Jesus Christ, our Savior, and unites us with Him. According to Calvin, “the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.”<sup>12</sup> Being united with Christ “is, in fact, the foundation of all the blessings of salvation. Justification, sanctification, adoption and glorification are all received through our being united to Christ.”<sup>13</sup> This work of the Holy Spirit on the individual level leads to a specific community of faith—the church. Having expe-

the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:19–22). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit actively supports and sustains the various members of the body of Christ by giving special spiritual gifts. Different gifts, given by “one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11, RSV), work together “for the common good” (v. 7, RSV) so that the body of Christ is well equipped to fulfill its God-given task to proclaim the everlasting gospel to a perishing world. Since the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts as

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(Acts 13:2, 3). He guides and directs missionaries to specific places to be witnesses for God and to labor for the church (Acts 16:6–8). He equips the believers to proclaim effectively the everlasting gospel throughout the whole world. He leads people to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and to be obedient to the Written Word of God. God has devised that His gospel message should go out into the world through His disciples who have received the Holy Spirit. However, a worldwide mission can be successfully accomplished only if the church is united, and here the Holy Spirit performs another significant theological task.

rienced salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, there is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the church (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1, 2). The church needs to be understood as a faith community that is called into being by the Spirit. Thus, individual believers are built into a new spiritual house of God “in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22, RSV). As followers of Christ, we should be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3, RSV).

We are also baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit unites us in baptism into one body; hence the church as a community of faith is

He wills, it is wrong to expect one single spiritual gift to be present in all believers.

The Holy Spirit produces love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:8), and this love “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14, RSV). In such a loving and spiritual unity, there is neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, neither Jew nor Greek, neither black nor white, neither rich nor poor: all are one in Christ Jesus, through the work of the Spirit (Gal. 3:28).


We often credit human beings in leadership positions with the ability to plant, establish, and maintain churches. We should not forget,

however, that at a deeper level the very existence of the church depends upon the Holy Spirit. We may seek unity and peace and do everything to avoid strife and discord among the members of the church; but true and lasting unity ultimately is the Spirit's work. We are just His humble servants and should not hinder His influence.

The theological foundation for the unity of the church is the work of the Spirit through the Written Word of God that He inspired. The Spirit of Christ who dwells in Christians never leads us to doubt, criticize, go beyond, or fall short of biblical teachings. The Holy Spirit works with the Bible to make it the living Word of God, which can transform our lives.

In summary, the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity,

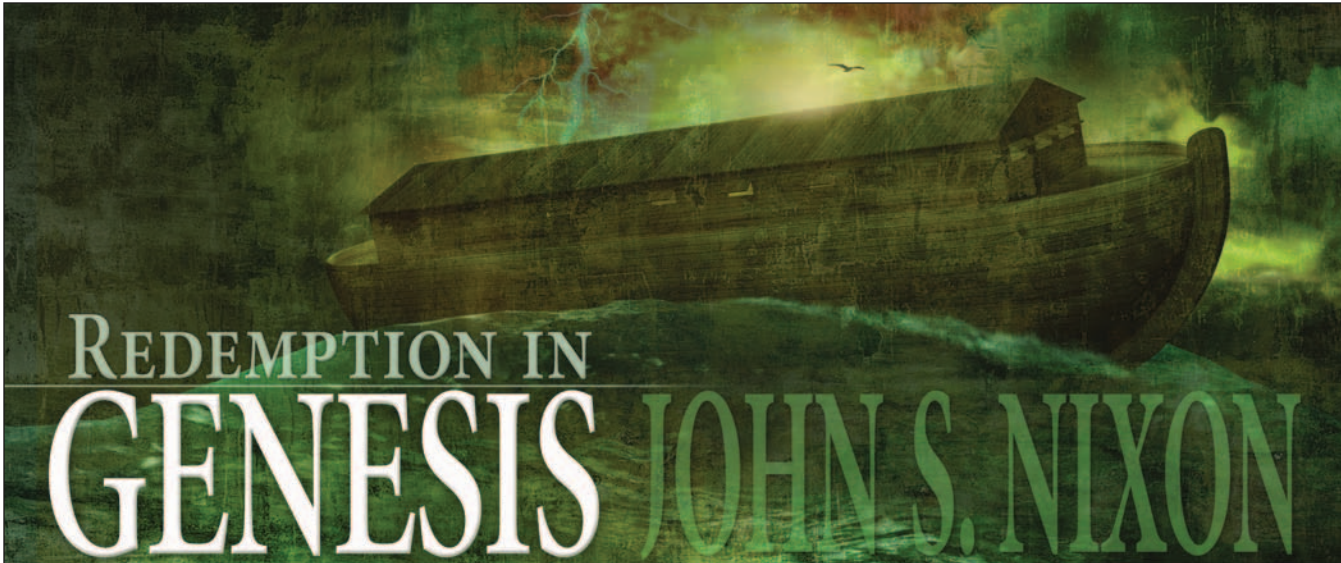
working harmoniously with God the Father and God the Son in Creation and our salvation. The Holy Spirit awakens us from spiritual death, brings forth an awareness of our sinfulness and lostness, kindles a desire for change, and leads us to Jesus Christ. He gives us assurance of salvation. He conforms us to be more like Jesus. He keeps us faithful in our walk with God. He enables us to fulfill God's will and mission. He generated the Written Word of God as our safe guide and only norm for the Christian life and doctrine. He unites the church on the basis of God's Word.

Thanks be to God for His sublime presence in the Holy Spirit. 

<sup>1</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 104.

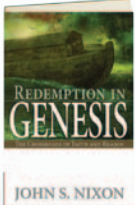
- <sup>2</sup> James I. Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 66, quoted in Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 284; emphasis in original.
- <sup>3</sup> Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 284.
- <sup>4</sup> On the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, see Edward Henry Bickersteth, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993); Max Hatton, *Understanding the Trinity* (Alma Park Grantham, England: Autum House, 2001); and Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 28.
- <sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1.7.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.7.4.
- <sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), vii.
- <sup>9</sup> Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 151.
- <sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.
- <sup>11</sup> See Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, vol. 3 of *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2011), 185.
- <sup>12</sup> Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.1.1.
- <sup>13</sup> Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 80, quoted in Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 217.

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# Ellen White and the personhood of the Holy Spirit

No Christian teaching is more fundamental than the doctrine of God. The Seventh-day Adventist biblical understanding of the Trinity helps us to understand the revealed nature, attributes, and character of God. In the last 15 years, much has been written on the history of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Godhead or Trinity and, particularly, the position of Jesus in the Godhead.<sup>1</sup> Less has been written on the history of Ellen G. White and the Adventist understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.<sup>2</sup>

Against the background of early Seventh-day Adventist theology and experience, this article will explore Ellen G. White's understanding of the Holy Spirit. I will first provide a brief overview of the Adventist view on the personality of the Holy Spirit through the early twentieth century. Careful Bible study, together with Ellen G. White's clear statements, majorly influenced a change in Adventist understanding. Because of current questions, some attention will be given to establishing the veracity of Ellen G. White's clearest statements on the nature of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.

## Adventist views of the Holy Spirit up to the early twentieth century

The Sabbatarian and Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Holy

Spirit, until the 1890s, was largely focused on the tangible, or "living reality," of the Holy Spirit as a divine manifestation rather than His nature or personality.<sup>3</sup> During the period up to the 1890s, most Adventists did not accept that the Holy Spirit had a distinct personality. For them, the Godhead included the Father (who was omnipotent and omniscient), the pre-Incarnate begotten Divine Son, and the Holy Spirit as a manifestation of the presence or power of the Father or the Son. Adventists emphasized the separate and distinct personalities of the Father and the Son. For many early Adventists, a personality required a material form, which prevented omnipresence. By defining the Holy Spirit as an influence or power from the Father or the Son, it allowed for God to be omnipresent.<sup>4</sup>

In 1877, J. H. Waggoner wrote of the Holy Spirit as an *It* rather than a *He*. After writing of the "one question which has been much controverted," that is, "the personality of the Spirit," he described the "Spirit of God" as "that awful and mysterious power which proceeds from the throne of the universe."<sup>5</sup> In 1878, Uriah Smith answered the question "What is the Holy Spirit?" by writing, "In a word it may, perhaps, best be described as a mysterious influence emanating from the Father and the Son, their representative and the medium of their power."<sup>6</sup> Both men remained

respectful of the mysterious nature of the Holy Spirit. In 1878, D. M. Canright, in a more argumentative and apologetic two-part article, explicitly rejected the personhood of the Holy Spirit, "The Holy Spirit is not a person, not an individual, but is an influence or power proceeding from the Godhead."<sup>7</sup>

In 1889, M. C. Wilcox, one of the editors of the *Signs of the Times*, wrote, "God's power, separate from his personal presence, is manifested through his Spirit."<sup>8</sup> In representing the idea of how God can be omnipresent, Wilcox wrote in 1898: "God is a person; how can His life be everywhere present?" and then compared the Spirit to an "aura" that extends beyond a person.<sup>9</sup>

A few other Seventh-day Adventists took a very different view and speculated that perhaps the Holy Spirit was an angel or in the same class as the angels.<sup>10</sup>

The 1890s saw the beginning of a shift toward accepting the personhood of the Holy Spirit. One example of this change can be seen in R. A. Underwood's understanding. "The Holy Spirit is Christ's personal representative in the field; and he is charged with the work of meeting Satan, and defeating this personal enemy of God and his government. It seems strange to me, now, that I ever believed that the Holy Spirit was *only* an influence, in view of the work he does."<sup>11</sup>



The shift in thinking on the personhood of the Holy Spirit was well underway when, in 1907, A. T. Jones wrote, “The Holy Spirit is not an influence; nor an impression, nor peace, nor joy, nor any *thing*. . . . The Holy Spirit is a *Person*, eternally a divine *Person*.”<sup>12</sup>

### Ellen G. White and the Holy Spirit up to the 1890s

Ellen G. White’s writings are particularly rich in regard to the Holy Spirit, often referring to Him in both

the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. I gazed on Jesus’ countenance and admired his lovely person. . . . I asked Jesus if his Father had a form like himself; He said he had, but I could not behold it.”<sup>13</sup>

Other cofounders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, such as James White and Joseph Bates, also directly countered the spiritualizing view in print and supported the personhood of the Father and Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Second, like Adventists generally, Ellen G. White understood the Holy Spirit in a practical and

deceptions of Satan.”<sup>15</sup> She rejected this idea.

Third, her views on the Holy Spirit were drawn from and centered on the Bible. She, like other early Adventists, was, first of all, a student of Scripture. She was particularly careful not to stray beyond the Bible in her descriptions of the Holy Spirit.

In 1891, Ellen G. White wrote in response to a man who believed that the Holy Spirit was really the angel Gabriel and that the 144,000 will be Jews that acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. After giving important

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her published and unpublished writings. In fact, she refers to the Holy Spirit almost as often as to Jesus.

Ellen G. White adopted three important orientations regarding the Holy Spirit and the Godhead during her earlier years that continued throughout her life. First was her emphasis on the personhood of God the Father and Jesus. During 1845 and 1846, there was a branch of Millerite Adventists who argued that Jesus had come spiritually on October 22, 1844. They also spiritualized the resurrection, heaven, the New Jerusalem, the new earth, and also the Father and Jesus. In 1846, Ellen G. White wrote in affirmation of the personhood of the Father and Jesus: “I saw a throne, and on it sat

demonstrable sense. The work of the Holy Spirit was very present and active in her Christian experience and ministry. She received hundreds of prophetic visions and dreams and often experienced dramatic blessings through the operation of the Holy Spirit. During the first few years of her prophetic ministry, Ellen G. White was confronted by some who believed that her visions were a result of mesmerism—now known as hypnotism—and said that there was no Holy Spirit. This gave her “keen anguish, well-nigh to despair.”

“Many would have me believe,” she wrote, “that there was no Holy Ghost and that all the exercises that holy men of God have experienced were only mesmerism or the

principles of biblical interpretation, she directly addressed his positions. “Your ideas of the two subjects you mention do not harmonize with the light which God has given me. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not clearly revealed, and you will never be able to explain it to others because the Lord has not revealed it to you.” She then quoted John 14:16 and continued, “This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter.” Ellen G. White then confessed the limits of her own understanding: “There are many mysteries which I do not seek to understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of these points, silence is golden.”<sup>16</sup> In the absence

of special insight on the nature and personality of the Holy Spirit, Ellen G. White stayed close to Scripture and, unlike the other Adventist writers previously cited, left the personality of the Holy Spirit undefined.<sup>17</sup> This was soon to change.

### Ellen G. White on the Holy Spirit from the early 1890s

Two years later, in 1893, she wrote, “There is altogether too little made of the work of the Holy Spirit’s influence upon the church. . . . The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ’s name. He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1896, she quoted the words of Jesus in John 16:7, 8, and then wrote her earliest clear statement on the Holy Spirit as a Person in the Godhead. “Evil had been accumulating for centuries, and could only be restrained and resisted by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.” In 1898, Ellen G. White published these words, with slight modification, in *The Desire of Ages*.<sup>19</sup> There is no indication of a particular vision that Ellen G. White received that caused her to write more explicitly on the personality of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, as a messenger of the Lord, she became very specific on the issue during the 1890s. Through the remainder of her life, she continued to support the personhood and full deity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

For example, Ellen G. White often referred to John 14–16 and the Comforter bringing the presence of Jesus to the believer. She continued this theme as she presented the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead. She wrote, “Although our Lord ascended from earth to heaven, the Holy Spirit was appointed as His representative among men.” She then quoted John 14:15–18 and continued, “Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His Father,

and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth.”<sup>21</sup> Ellen G. White was comfortable with the existing tension of the Holy Spirit being a Person and also representing Jesus. One characteristic of the biblical Trinity is to represent or point to Each Other. The Holy Spirit represented Jesus. Jesus, throughout His life on earth, represented the Father (John 14:9), and the Father pointed to and exalted the Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35).

### Ellen G. White’s use of *He* and *It* while referring to the Holy Spirit

In 1936, H. C. Lacey claimed that his 1895 series of early morning Bible studies at the Armidale camp meeting and his 1896 presentations at an institute in Cooranbong, Australia, influenced Ellen G. White to accept the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Lacey speculated that Ellen G. White had not used the term *Person* or referred to the Holy Spirit with the personal pronoun *He* or *Him* before his presentation.<sup>22</sup>

An examination of Ellen G. White’s statements show that she did use the word *Person* to refer to the Holy Spirit as early as 1893, as quoted above. But she used the pronouns *It* and *He* variously both before and after her explicit statements on the personality of the Holy Spirit. In 1884, she wrote, “The Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies the Saviour. It is his office to present Christ.”<sup>23</sup> In 1891, she wrote of the “Holy Spirit working upon our hearts.” She continued, “[H]e takes of the things of God, and presents them anew to our minds.”<sup>24</sup> In *The Desire of Ages*, written in 1898, she clearly articulates the personhood of the Holy Spirit, “When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life.”<sup>25</sup> In 1900, she wrote, “The Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men.”<sup>26</sup>

*The Desire of Ages* not only helped to explain the personhood of the Holy Spirit, but it also clearly taught the eternity of Jesus and

His full equality with the Father. Her statement, “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived,” along with other statements on the divinity of Jesus helped many Adventists to take a new look at Scripture to understand Jesus’ place in the Godhead.<sup>27</sup>


### Veracity of Ellen G. White’s statements

There are some who believe in the prophetic authority of Ellen G. White’s writings but deny the personhood of the Holy Spirit and His place in the Godhead. Ellen G. White’s clear statements place them in a difficult position. In response, they have argued that her secretaries or editors inserted these statements without her knowledge. Tim Poirier, vice director of the Ellen G. White Estate, published a helpful paper in 2006 tracing back key statements by Ellen G. White to their original source.

Original drafts, written by the hand of Ellen G. White, are available for at least four of her clearest statements.<sup>28</sup> Other documents are accessible in the original typed form and contain handwritten notations by Ellen G. White on the pages.<sup>29</sup> At the top of one typed manuscript, Ellen G. White had written the words, “I have read this carefully and accept it.”<sup>30</sup> Several of these statements were published in various forms. Ellen G. White, herself, paid for the publishing plates of *The Desire of Ages* and most of her other books. In *The Desire of Ages*, she even sent corrections for the book after the first edition was already published. These changes were incorporated in the second printing. The degree of veracity for Ellen G. White’s statements is significant, and editors find it hard to argue that she did not write the statements regarding the Holy Spirit that appear in print.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White was given the prophetic gift. Her emphatic statements had a significant influence on the development of the Adventist understanding of the Trinity,

particularly through support of the eternal and original nature of Jesus and the full divinity and personhood of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, Seventh-day Adventist doctrine is established through the authority of Scripture rather than through the writings of Ellen G. White. Mrs. White understood her prophetic role was to bring people to the Bible as the final authority and the basis for all faith and practice. She wrote in her first published tract: “I recommend to you, dear reader, the word of God as the rule of your faith and practice.”<sup>31</sup> On many occasions she defined the relationship of her writings to the Bible. In one of her more compelling statements, she defined her prophetic role: “I have a work of great responsibility to do—to impart by pen and voice the instruction given me, not alone to Seventh-day Adventists, but to the world. I have published many books, large and small, and some of these have been translated into several languages. This is my work—to open the Scriptures to others as God has opened them to me.”<sup>32</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists have a more biblical orientation on the Holy Spirit because of the writings of Ellen G. White. We can be grateful that God has led throughout the history of the church to build an understanding of the Bible through the influence of the Holy Spirit in the gift of prophecy. 

1 Studies include Merlin D. Burt, “Demise of Semi-Arianism and Anti-Trinitarianism in Adventist Theology, 1888-1957” (research paper, Andrews University, 1996); Gerhard Pfandl, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Adventists* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1999); Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2002); Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 113–129; Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003): 275–292; Michael Dörnbrack, “Die Rolle Ellen Whites bei der Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre in der Adventgemeinde: Aussagen, Auswirkungen und Reaktionen” (research paper, Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, 2004); Merlin D. Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 125–139; Jerry Moon, “The Quest for a Biblical Trinity: Ellen White’s ‘Heavenly Trio’ Compared to the Traditional Doctrine,”

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 140–159; Denis Fortin, “God, the Trinity, and Adventism: An Introduction to the Issues,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 4–10; Denis Kaiser, “A Comparative Study on the Trinity as Seen in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Christian Connexion, and Among Seventh-day Adventists Until 1870” (research paper, Andrews University, 2008); Merlin D. Burt, “The Trinity in Seventh-day Adventist History,” *Ministry*, February 2009, 5–8. Only a few papers were written before the 1990s. Two of the more significant are Erwin Roy Gane, “The Arian or Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen G. White Answer” (master’s thesis, Andrews University, 1963); Russell Holt, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: Its Rejection and Acceptance” (term paper, Andrews University, 1969).

2 Recent studies include Denis Kaiser, “The Holy Spirit and the Hermeneutical Approach in Modern Adventist Anti-Trinitarian Literature” (research paper, Andrews University, 2008); Denis Kaiser, “The Reception of Ellen White’s Trinitarian Statements, 1897-1915,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., forthcoming); Tim Poirier, “Ellen White’s Trinitarian Statements: What Did She Actually Write?” *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium* 2 (2006): 18–40; Evelyn Tollerton, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Paradigm Shift From Anti-Trinitarianism to Trinitarianism, 1846-1946” (research paper, Andrews University, 2006). The earliest history of the personality of the Holy Spirit is from Christy Mathewson Taylor, “The Doctrine of the Personality of the Holy Spirit as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church up to 1900” (bachelor’s thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1953). Some of the content in the first section of this paper is drawn from Taylor’s research.

3 E. Goodrich, “No Spirit,” *Review and Herald*, January 28, 1862, 68; R. F. Cottrell, “The Beginning of the End,” *Review and Herald*, December 16, 1873, 5; Joseph Clarke, “Be Filled With the Spirit,” *Review and Herald*, March 10, 1874, 103.

4 D. M. Canright, “The Personality of God,” *Review and Herald*, August 29–September 19, 1878, 73, 81, 82, 89–90, 97; D. M. Canright, *Matter and Spirit; or, The Problem of Human Thought: A Philosophical Argument* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882), 47, 48; D. M. Canright, “The Holy Spirit,” *Signs of the Times*, August 8, 1878, 236; Uriah Smith, “In the Question Chair: Is the Holy Ghost a Person?” *Review and Herald*, October 28, 1890, 664. For a good explanation of early Adventist understanding of personhood, see Evelyn Tollerton, “The Spirit of God: The Omnipresent Influence of God” (paper presented at SDATS Scholarship Symposium, January 9, 2007).

5 J. H. Waggoner, *The Spirit of God: Its Offices and Manifestations to the End of the Christian Age* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1877), 8, 9.

6 James White and Uriah Smith, *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland, CA: Steam Press of the Pacific S.D.A. Pub. House, 1878), 184.

7 D. M. Canright, “The Holy Spirit,” *Signs of the Times*, July 25, 1878, 218; D. M. Canright, “The Holy Spirit,” *Signs of the Times*, August 8, 1878, 236.

8 M. C. Wilcox, “Manifestation of the Holy Spirit,” *Signs of the Times*, July 15, 1889, 422.

9 M. C. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Life,” *Signs of the Times*, June 2, 1898, 342.

10 C. P. Bollman, “The Spirit of God,” *Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1889, 663.

11 R. A. Underwood, “The Holy Spirit a Person,” *Review and Herald*, May 17, 1898, 310; emphasis in original.

12 A. T. Jones, “Christian Loyalty,” *Medical Missionary*, March 27, 1907, 98. With the exception of Ellen G. White, Jones is also the earliest clear presenter of the eternal undervived deity of Jesus. See Burt, “Demise of Semi-Arianism,” 7, 8.

13 Ellen Harmon, “Letter From Sister Harmon,” *Day-Star*, March 14, 1846, 7.

14 James White, “Preach the Word,” *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1855, 85; see also James White, “Letter From Bro. White,” *Day-Star*, January 24, 1846, 25; Joseph Bates, *The Opening Heavens; or, A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets and Apostles, Concerning the Opening Heavens, Compared With Astronomical Observations, and of the Present and Future Location of the New Jerusalem, the Paradise of God* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), 1.

15 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), 22.

16 Ellen G. White to Brother Chapman, June 11, 1891, Letter 7, 1891, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 175, 179.

17 The same is true regarding the nature of the Jesus’ divinity. In this case, she is the earliest Adventist writer to refer to Christ as eternal. See Ellen G. White, “An Appeal to the Ministers,” *Review and Herald*, August 8, 1878, 49.

18 Ellen G. White, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Christians; Depend on Holy Spirit, Not Self,” MS 93, 1893, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 323, 324.

19 Ellen G. White, “My Brethren in America,” February 6, 1896, Letter 8, 1896, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 34; Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, no. 10 (1897), 25–33; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), 671.

20 Ellen G. White to Sister Wessels, March 7, 1897, Letter 124, 1897, in *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), 183–185; Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, no. 10 (1897), 37; Ellen G. White, “Extracts From Discourse Given by Mrs. E. G. White in the Avondale Church, March 25, 1899,” MS 66, 1899; Ellen G. White, “Preparation for Baptism,” MS 57, 1900; Ellen G. White, “God’s Purpose for His People,” MS 27a, 1900; Ellen G. White, MS 130, 1901; Ellen G. White, “An Important Letter,” *Union Conference Record*, April 1, 1901, 2; Ellen G. White, “Preach the Word,” MS 20, 1906; Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B*, no. 7 (1905), 62, 63 from MS 21, 1906, written in regard to J. H. Kellogg and his view that God was an essence that pervades all of nature rather than a personal being. She wrote earlier in this manuscript, “I am instructed to say, The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted. Such representations as the following are made: ‘The Father is as the light invisible; the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad.’ ‘The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life.’ Another representation: ‘The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power.’ All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue.”

21 Ellen G. White to Edson and Emma White, February 18, 1895, Letter 119, 1895 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate).

22 H. C. Lacey to W. C. White, July 27, 1936 (Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University).

23 Ellen G. White, “Man’s Obligation to God,” *Signs of the Times*, April 3, 1884, 209.

24 Ellen G. White, “Meeting Trials,” *Review and Herald*, August 25, 1891, 529.

25 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 173.

26 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1900), 70.

27 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 530.

28 Poirier, “Ellen White’s Trinitarian Statements.” Handwritten original drafts by Ellen White are extant for MS 93, 1893; MS 57, 1900; MS 20, 1906; and MS 21, 1906.

29 Interlineated original typed manuscripts are extant for Letter 8, 1896; MS 27a, 1900; MS 57, 1900; MS 20, 1906; and MS 21, 1906.

30 MS 20, 1906.

31 Ellen G. White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851), 64.

32 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1904), 236.

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# The Holy Spirit and biblical interpretation

Unlike ordinary literature, the Bible was written under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. Because its origins differ from that of other literature, elements of its interpretation must also differ. The hermeneutic for studying the Gilgamesh Epic, Plato, Shakespeare, or Longfellow is not adequate for the Bible. Because the role of the Holy Spirit in the production, interpretation, and application of the Bible distinguishes it from all other humanly motivated literature, we must recognize and respect its unique origin. Though Scripture does not have a mystical, secret, or spiritual meaning unapparent in the text itself, its meaning is not captured simply by the study of syntax, grammar, background, author, genre, or structure. To correctly understand the Bible, we need to allow the Bible to be its own interpreter under the guidance of the same Spirit that originally inspired it.

## Origins

The Bible depicts itself as a distinct genre of literature, repeatedly claiming divine origin for itself: “the Word of the Lord spoke,” “the Spirit of the Lord,” “the Word of the Lord came to,” “thus says the Lord.” Paul refers to the Scriptures as the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2). He also states unequivocally: “All Scripture is

given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).<sup>1</sup> Peter states that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets, foretelling the coming Savior.

Though written over centuries, because of its common origin, Scripture displays a unity of divine revelation that was channeled through the Holy Spirit to the prophets and apostles. Though a blending of the human and the divine exists, the result is the Word of God. That is why Scripture says that “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).

Thus, Scripture is unique. Because of its divine origin, the Bible is its own authority. Scripture is not subject to human authorities, philosophies, or methods. Its hermeneutic comes from, and is in harmony with, itself.

## Worldviews

The truth claim of a piece of literature is normally accepted by the power of its rhetoric, logic, philosophy, and science, or by its presentation of facts, the beauty of its language, and the accomplishments of its author. Scripture, however, does not need the power of Aristotle, Bacon, Kant, or Whitehead. It comes with its own Power. The Spirit first prepares our hearts and

minds to receive the Bible as the authority of our lives. The Spirit confirms the teaching of the Bible: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). “[N]o one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). We are also told that the “gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance” (1 Thess. 1:5).

A worldly attitude or a humanistic, rationalistic, or empirical worldview imposed upon the Bible can close the mind to what God has conveyed through His Word. Jesus was the Light of the world; yet, when He came to His own, they preferred darkness. They clung to their human worldviews rather than be exposed to the Light (John 1:4–13) and thus were left in darkness.

Even His disciples suffered similarly. They were with Christ for three and a half years; yet, despite the prophecies of the Old Testament and the constant teaching and warning of Christ, they never expected the Crucifixion. Their worldviews did not allow for a suffering Messiah. Jealousy and bickering occupied their minds so much that they could not hear Christ’s warning of His coming death.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night; in darkness, he was laden

with the worldview that the Messiah would be a worldly king. He brought his little human-centered candle to attempt to enlighten the Light of the world. He applied an earthly thought process to his understanding of Jesus (John 3:1, 2).

Knowing this about Nicodemus, Jesus came straight to the point: Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot see the king-

the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit can one come to know the Truth. Worldly systems of thought will not take us to the Cross; in fact, they will push us away.

Paul addresses the importance of the right perspective for understanding God's Word: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what

and through His Spirit God makes Himself known to us. The Holy Spirit, not the world, teaches us about Him. Our power and understanding are not in human systems but in the wisdom and power of God as revealed by His Spirit.

### Conversion

When we surrender to the will of God through the Spirit, we are



dom of heaven. That which comes from an earthly perspective is earthly, that which is born of the Spirit is spiritual understanding. Nicodemus answered, "How is it possible to be born again?" Jesus answered, we speak out of what we know; that is, the worldly view of life that occupies our mind (see John 3:5, 6, 9, 11).

If we have difficulty understanding signs and miracles, how can we understand if Christ tells us about heavenly things? In contrast to worldly thinking, if the Son of man is lifted up, He will draw all men to Him (John 12:32). Those who come to Jesus will know who He is because they are born of and guided by the Holy Spirit (John 3:1–20; cf. John 1:31–34). In other words, only under

is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2, KJV). Thus he warns, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:8–10).

The world through wisdom, Paul warned the Corinthians, did not know God. Some seek a sign, that is, empirical evidence, while others want philosophical wisdom; but God is not found through those systems. We can know God only through His own self-revelation,

born again. The conversion that comes through the Holy Spirit is a complete reversal of directions. We were once living in darkness; we now live in light. Our lives were headed towards the things of the world; we know we desire heavenly things. Our minds were once entrapped within the errors of worldly perspectives; now, through the revelation of the Bible, we see things from God's point of view.

That is why any denial of the biblical position that Scripture came by the will of God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, denies the reason for the existence of the Bible. It rejects its immediate context. The interpreter, therefore, loses what is vital to the understanding

of Scripture—that it is the Word of God. This imposition of an external worldview on the Bible denies the interpreter the basic principle and power essential to understanding the Bible; and thus, wrong interpretations surely follow.

Further, the willful retention of sin in the life puts us at odds with God’s Word, for sin deadens us to the influence of the Holy Spirit, which we

departing from” the Word of God (Heb. 3:12). Satan works by tempting us to doubt God’s Word (Heb. 3; 4). He leads us to use methods that are independent of God. He wants us to deify reason, causing us to think of our own intellect as independent of God. He suggests that we explain the influence of the Spirit based on scientific principles. He leads us to pervert Scripture’s meaning. He

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need to rightly discern God’s Word. “[T]he natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. . . . The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:6, 7).

### Ploys

Under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is our connection to God. Thus, it is Satan’s purpose to cause us to misread God’s Word. Satan desires to instill in us “an evil heart of unbelief in

tempts us to reject a small portion of biblical truth, which simply leads us to reject more. In short, he knows that the gospel is hidden to those who are lost, to those “whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4, KJV).

How crucial, then, that we never fall for these ploys by rejecting the essential role of the Holy Spirit in the understanding of Scripture.

### Hearts and minds

Imagine the ease with which Shakespeare aficionados could read him if they were like-minded, if

## Revival and REFORMATION

### Problems with modeling clay

I always found modeling clay to be a disappointment. Don’t get me wrong. I loved the vibrant colors, the shapable glob, and the fun machines that could squish it out as ovals, hearts, stars, even as stringy hair to be cut with plastic barber scissors. But if you left it out too long, it would get hard and crumbly. If it got too hot, it would even begin to lose the shape I had formed it into.

Modeling clay reminds me of my heart: it is too easy to misshape when the heat turns up or is left too long exposed to the elements. It loses the form the Creator intended and shaped from the beginning. So being completely honest, maybe I am less disappointed with modeling clay and more disappointed with the condition of my heart and the shape it is in.

My deformed spiritual heart yearns like King David, and calls out to God:

Create in me a clean heart,  
 O God,  
 And renew a steadfast spirit  
 within me  
 (Ps. 51:10, NKJV).

Only God can reform my heart. With the same cosmic power by which He formed the world and took dust from the ground to contour my shape, only God can breathe a revived Holy Spirit inside me.

May Christ Jesus, the Creator and Redeemer, reform my heart and yours. May His life-giving Spirit resuscitate our passion for His kingdom, reviving the righteous spiritual desire in our lives.

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they had lived within his culture and understood his worldview. In a similar way, our understanding of Scripture is clarified when we open our lives to the Spirit, which transforms our hearts and minds. “[I]f the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11). The power of Christ, working through the Spirit, removes the veil from our blinded minds (2 Cor. 4:4–17). With unveiled face, we behold “as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [and] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Then He writes the law of God upon our hearts of flesh (v. 3), which brings our hearts and minds into harmony with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). This union with Christ opens our minds to see the beauty and have understanding of God’s Word that we were unable to experience before conversion. In other words, a true understanding of the Bible depends upon conversion of heart and mind through the working of the Spirit!

### Power and guidance

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 15:26). The Spirit does not speak of Himself, but always in harmony with the Bible. The Spirit brings to remembrance the words of Scripture. He quickens minds to enable deeper understanding of Scripture’s message. “[W]hen He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13, 14).

Imagine a Shakespeare fan was given the opportunity to speak with Shakespeare, to explore his shades of meaning, and to have the bard himself explain his specific intentions

in a particular piece of work. In a similar way, we have the privilege of communing with the One who gave us the Word of God, to receive illumination on the Word, and to receive the quickening power that brings conversion to heart and mind. The Holy Spirit brings to us the words of life. He conveys God’s forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He empowers us to live for Christ. He certifies our hope of eternal life with Christ. Only the Spirit, who gave us Scripture, can give us an understanding of Scripture. The Holy Spirit speaks to our minds and impresses biblical truth upon us. He exalts and glorifies Christ in His purity, righteousness, and salvation, “conveying [the truths of God’s Word] as a living power into the obedient heart.”<sup>2</sup>

By the Spirit, we enter the life of sanctification. The regeneration of our lives enables fuller understanding of truth. Christ said, “ ‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth’ ” (John 17:17). There is an interaction between the lives we live and our understanding the truth. The truth is not simply what we know, but what we do (1 John 1:6, John 3:21). Christ said, “ ‘If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God’ ” (John 7:17).

### Proclamation

If our reading of the Bible is open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will end with a desire to share with others what Christ has done for us. After the Resurrection, Christ met with the disciples and promised that they would receive power after the Holy Spirit came upon them and would be witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Afterwards, when the disciples assembled together, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness (Acts 1:5–8; 4:31). Paul also said that he did not come with excellence of

speech, with persuasive words of human wisdom or empirical signs but in demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor. 1:17–2:16).

The gift of the Holy Spirit impelled the disciples to take the message of the gospel worldwide. Instead of human speculation, the sword of the Spirit shed light upon Christ and cut its way through unbelief, bringing penitence, confession, and transformation. “Thousands were converted in a day.” The church expanded rapidly.<sup>3</sup>

The power of the Bible under the Spirit of God is not imaginary, ethereal, symbolic, or mythical. This power brought worlds into existence, sight to the blind, healing to the deaf, and life to the dead. Satan would love nothing more than to lessen the force of this power in us, distance us from the transformation it brings, and separate our preaching from its influence.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. He longs to open the Bible to us, for it brings the message of God’s love, His plan of salvation, and His offer of forgiveness. He purges us of the sin that clouds our reading of Scripture. The Holy Spirit brings conversion of heart and mind that enables us to understand and live in harmony with God’s Word. Finally, through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit brings the promise of Christ’s soon return, which will restore us to face-to-face communion with God—the purpose for which the Scriptures were originally given.

In summary, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Bible can be understood only through that same Spirit. How crucial it is that we open our lives to the work of the Spirit. **M**

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

<sup>2</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 167; see also Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 671.

<sup>3</sup> See Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 38; see also Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 284.

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# “Another Paraclete”: The Holy Spirit in John 14–17

In John’s Gospel, a group of five passages refer to the Holy Spirit as “Paraclete” or “Spirit of truth” (14:16, 17, 25, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7–11, 13–15). Besides their distinct terminology, what sets these passages apart is that (1) all occur in the “Farewell Discourses” (chaps. 14–17); (2) they deal with the coming of the Spirit; and (3) they describe functions completely different from the ones found in the Gospel’s narrative sections (chaps. 1–13, 18–21). While in those sections the Holy Spirit is mostly a life-giving power through which God regenerates and transforms those who believe in Him (3:3, 5, 6; 6:63; 7:37, 38), the predominant idea in the Farewell Discourses features that of an Instructor, a Witness, and a Guide—concepts that go way beyond the impression of an impersonal Power. In fact, those five passages “provide the strongest evidence for conceiving of the Spirit as a distinct figure, an independent agent or actor”<sup>1</sup> and are among the ones that greatly contributed to the development of the Christian doctrine of the Spirit.

## The meaning of *paraklētos*

The meaning of *paraklētos* is disputed. From the linguistic standpoint, *paraklētos* relates to the verb *parakaleō*, which means only “called

to one’s side.” When used as a noun, the word involves the idea of legal assistance. In Latin, the equivalent term was *advocatus* (“advocate”), and this shows how *paraklētos* was understood by ancient Christian Latin writers and translators. Under the influence of the noun *paraklēsis* (“consolation, comfort”), some translators and Greek fathers came to understand *paraklētos* as a comforter or counselor, a meaning also preferred by Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Luther, among others. The point, however, is that none of these is fully appropriate to John’s *paraklētos*, except 1 John 2:1 in which this refers to Jesus (though not as a title) and certainly means “advocate” (“intercessor,” “mediator”). John Ashton rightly says that “the problem of the meaning of *paraklētos* cannot be solved linguistically,”<sup>2</sup> and this may explain why, in his Latin Vulgate, Jerome (c. 347–420) used the transliteration *Paracletus* rather than a translation. In 1 John 2:1, he translated it correctly as *advocatus*.<sup>3</sup>

Several scholars believe that John’s *paraklētos* is related to the Aramaic *Praqlītā*, itself a transliteration of the Greek word. *Praqlītā* appears several times in rabbinic literature in reference to someone who intercedes for another. It was also used in the Targums to convey the meaning of the Hebrew *mēlīs*, a term that was

associated both in the Old Testament (Job 33:23; cf. 16:20) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 10.13; 14.13) with notions of intercession and instruction.<sup>4</sup> Both notions are present in the Johannine Paraclete passages (John 14:16, 17, 25, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7–11, 13–15). In Jewish thought, therefore, there are several precedents that combine forensic and pedagogical functions in a way that resembles the role assigned to the Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel. And it is precisely that role, not so much the linguistic or historical origin of the term, that should receive our closest attention, especially if we want to have a clearer understanding of the Spirit’s function.

## The Spirit as a person

Among the functions ascribed to the Spirit in the Paraclete passages are the following: teaching (John 14:26), reminding of everything that Jesus said when He was here (v. 26), and guiding into all the truth, announcing the things that are to come (16:13). The Spirit speaks; hears (16:13); glorifies (v. 14); testifies (15:26); and convicts concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8). The Spirit also has been described as “another Paraclete” (14:16), who comes to take Jesus’ place (16:7), suggesting not only that Jesus Himself was a Paraclete to the disciples, but also that the

Spirit would perform a role similar to the role of Jesus, with the difference that His presence should be even more appreciated than that of Jesus Himself (14:28). The Spirit would also be free from time limitations, as He would be with the disciples *forever* (v.16). In addition, the Spirit comes from God (15:26; 16:7); that is, He is sent by God (14:26) as John the Baptist (1:6; 3:28) and Jesus Himself were (3:34; 6:29, 57; 7:29; etc.). The Spirit can also be known and

least the time when the Gospel was written) or a few post-Resurrection appearances during the interval of only 40 days (Acts 1:3) could solve the disciples' orphanhood. It seems more natural, therefore, to interpret Jesus' promise in connection to the coming of the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> Even so, Jesus and the Spirit cannot be the same Person, for Jesus refers to the Spirit as another Paraclete (John 14:16), which preserves the personal distinction between Both, and, at the

for the personality of the Spirit is based on grammar. In Greek, *Spirit* (*pneuma*) is neuter, and several times in the Paraclete passages this word is accompanied by masculine pronouns, in addition to some neuter pronouns, as it would be expected according to the rules of grammatical agreement.<sup>9</sup> The typical argument can be found in George E. Ladd when John correctly uses neuter pronouns in connection to *pneuma*: there is no implication "either for or against the

IN JOHN'S FAREWELL DISCOURSES, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT MERELY AN IMPERSONAL POWER BUT AN AGENT OF GOD WHO COMES TO REPLACE JESUS, THE FIRST PARACLETE . . . , AND CONTINUES THE WORK INITIATED BY HIM.

received (14:17; cf. 7:39) as Jesus could (1:12; 6:69; 10:14; 13:20).<sup>5</sup>

All of this points to a distinct, independent, and personal Figure who, at the same time, shows some divine characteristics, such as the capacity to transcend space and time. While it is true that in John 14:18 Jesus talks about the coming of the Paraclete (cf. vv. 16, 17), He promises that He Himself will return to the disciples, which has already been taken to mean that the Paraclete is the glorified Christ Himself, who comes back to the disciples in a spiritual, invisible form.<sup>6</sup> Several commentators see this return of Jesus in connection to the Parousia (cf. vv. 1–3) or to His appearances after the Resurrection, particularly the one in John 20:19–23, when He breathes the Spirit on the disciples.<sup>7</sup> However, by saying that He would not leave the disciples as orphans, Jesus was more likely referring to the coming of the Spirit, for we find it difficult to see how the distant Parousia (considering at

same time, points to the similarity of roles. The same personal distinction is present in other passages where Jesus and the Spirit are mentioned side by side (1:32, 33; 7:39; 14:26; 15:26; 20:22). In fact, by saying that He would come back to the disciples in the person of the Spirit, Jesus was (perhaps) only evoking the same concept when He said, " 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' " (14:9, ESV). That is, as the Father can be seen in the Son, the Son can come back in the Spirit. It is difficult not to conclude that the same Oneness that exists between the Son and the Father (10:30) also exists between the Son and the Spirit. *Oneness*, however, should never be confused with *sameness*. As the Son is not the Father, the Spirit is not the Son.

### The Spirit and grammar

In John's Gospel, the Spirit is a Person, as much as the Father and the Son are. Since the Reformation, one of the most recurrent arguments

personality of the Holy Spirit. But where pronouns that have *pneuma* for their immediate antecedent are found in the masculine, we can only conclude that the personality of the Spirit is meant to be suggested."<sup>10</sup>

The argument, however, is not correct. The question is relatively simple. What is said means that where masculine pronouns are used, the closest noun is *pneuma*, thus being its antecedent. But the antecedent of a pronoun must be determined by syntax, not by proximity; and when masculine pronouns are used, the syntactical antecedent is always *paraklētōs*, not *pneuma*, which stands only in apposition to *paraklētōs*.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, sometimes John uses neuter pronouns in the same passages. He does so always when the syntactical antecedent is *pneuma*. This means that there is absolutely nothing abnormal or meaningful in John's use of pronouns in the contexts that refer to the Spirit. Also, the fact that *paraklētōs* is masculine does not have any implication regarding the personality



(much less the masculinity) of the Spirit. The gender of *paraklētos*, as well as that of *pneuma*, is nothing more than a linguistic accident, and no theological conclusion should be derived from it.<sup>12</sup>


Another well-known argument tries to deduce not only the personality, but also the divinity, of the Spirit from the Greek adjective *allos* (“another”) used in John 14:16. Spiros Zodhiates, for example, says, “Christ designates the Holy Spirit as ‘Paraclete’ . . . and He calls Him *allos* . . . ‘another,’ which means another of equal quality (and not *heteros*, another of a different quality). Therefore, Jesus Christ designates the Holy Spirit as equal with Himself, God.”<sup>13</sup> This argument is even more erroneous than the other, to the extent that it confuses activity, or at most, personality with divinity.<sup>14</sup> By referring to the Spirit as another Paraclete, Jesus, no doubt, was calling attention to the fact that the Spirit would continue the work that He Himself had initiated and would be with the disciples “forever.” The term may also contain an allusion to the personality of the Spirit as He would come to replace Jesus, but to take it ontologically as a reference to the likeness of nature between Jesus and the Spirit goes far beyond the evidence.

The argument makes a rather basic linguistic mistake: the one of concluding that because *heteros* usually involves a qualitative distinction,<sup>15</sup> *allos* also does. The fundamental notion of *allos*, however, is merely quantitative (for example, “another parable” in Matt. 13:24, 31, 33), unless used in opposition to *heteros*, which is the word that eventually stresses the qualitative differentiation anyway. For instance, this occurs in Galatians 1:6, 7, where Paul says that the false gospel preached to the Galatians in his absence was not *allos*, but *heteros*.<sup>16</sup> Joseph H. Thayer defines the question: “*Allos* as compared with *heteros* denotes numerical in distinction from qualitative

difference; *allos* adds (‘one besides’), *heteros* distinguishes (‘one of two’); every *heteros* is an *allos*, but not every *allos* is a *heteros*; *allos* generally ‘denotes simply distinction of individuals, *heteros* involves the secondary idea of difference of kind.’”<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

In John’s Farewell Discourses, the Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal power but an Agent of God who comes to replace Jesus, the first Paraclete (14:26), and continues the work initiated by Him. This means that the Paraclete compares to Jesus in personality and activity. Also, the Paraclete is not the glorified Jesus Himself, but the Oneness between Both, which is similar to the Oneness that exists between the Father and the Son (10:30; 14:9), and Jesus’ attested the statement that He Himself would come back in the person of the Paraclete (14:18). So, “the Paraclete is the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent.”<sup>18</sup>

The cumulative evidence of Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person. Remember, however, that the emphasis, even in John’s Gospel, does not rest on His personality or divine nature but on His work, and there we should put our emphasis as well—all the more so because God was pleased to make us participants in this work (20:21–23). In fact, the historical realization of the Spirit’s work depends entirely on us. That is, it is not but through us that the Spirit fulfills His mission in the world. This stands as a great privilege. But more than that, this becomes a sacred vocation, to be the instruments through which the Spirit advances Jesus’ work on earth (15:26, 27). 

1 Marianne M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 149.

2 John Ashton, “Paraclete,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 5:152.

3 See also the New Vulgate (1979) and the Jerusalem Bible.

4 For more references and assessment, see A. R. C. Leaney, “The Johannine Paraclete and the Qumran Scrolls,” in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 38–61; Lochlan Shelfer, “The Legal

Precision of the Term ‘Paraklētos,’” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32, no. 2 (2009): 131–150.

5 Gary M. Burge lists 16 similarities between Jesus and the Paraclete; see *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 141.

6 See, e.g., George B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 214–220; Ernest F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 343–349; Ian Simpson, “The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” *Expositor* 4 (1925): 292–299.

7 Barnabas Lindars (*The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible [London: Oliphants, 1972], 480), for example, prefers to see here a reference to the Parousia, while Craig S. Keener (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003], 2:973), among others, understands it in connection to the post-Resurrection appearances.

C. K. Barrett does the same, though he thinks that the text has a double meaning and can also apply to the Parousia (*The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1978], 464).

8 See, e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Pneumatology*, vol. 2 of *The Christ and the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 214; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 785.

9 The passages and the respective masculine pronouns are the following: John 14:26 (*ekeinos*); 15:26 (*hos, ekeinos*); 16:7, 8 (*autos, ekeinos*), 13, 14 (*ekeinos* [twice], *heautou*). In the same passages, there are four occurrences of neuter pronouns in connection to *pneuma*: 14:17 (*ho, auto*), 26 (*ho*); 15:26 (*ho*). The same happens in 7:39 (*ho*).

10 George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 331.

11 As Daniel B. Wallace declares, “The use of *ekeinos* here [John 14–16] is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. Such an approach is based on the assumption that the antecedent of *ekeinos* is *pneuma*. . . . But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, *pneuma* is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of *ekeinos* thus has nothing to do with the natural gender of *pneuma*. The antecedent of *ekeinos*, in each case, is *paraklētos*, not *pneuma*.” *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 331, 332. For a more detailed treatment including other passages in which *pneuma* is supposedly followed by masculine grammatical elements (Eph. 1:14; 2 Thess. 2:6, 7; 1 John 5:7), see Daniel B. Wallace, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13, no. 1 (2003): 97–125.

12 Note that in Hebrew the word *spirit* (*rūah*) is feminine, while in German, French, and Spanish, e.g., it is masculine.

13 Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament: Bringing the Original Text to Life*, Word Study Series (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1991), 944. See also Arnold V. Wallenkampf, *New by the Spirit* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1978), 14.

14 The argument seems to have been first employed by Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the main defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity in the fourth century, who used to say that *allos* in John 14:16 points to the coequality and consubstantiality between the Spirit and Christ (*Oratio in laudem Basilii* 41.12).

15 See, e.g., Acts 4:12 (also mentions *allos*); Rom. 7:23; 1 Cor. 14:21; 2 Cor. 11:4 (also mentions *allos*); Heb. 7:11, 13, 15; Jude 7.

16 “*Allos* and *heteros* are here, as in Acts 4:12: not interchangeable; *allos* bears an additive connotation, while *heteros* has an adversative nuance.” K. Haacker, “*Heteros*,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990–1993), 2:66.

17 Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 29.

18 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 1:1141.

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## Order of Merit to Jan Paulsen

Former Seventh-day Adventist world church president, **Jan Paulsen**, has been appointed Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit. The announcement from the royal palace states that “H. M. The King has appointed Jan Paulsen Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit for meritorious work for the good of humanity.”

“I am totally surprised and very honored by this recognition coming from

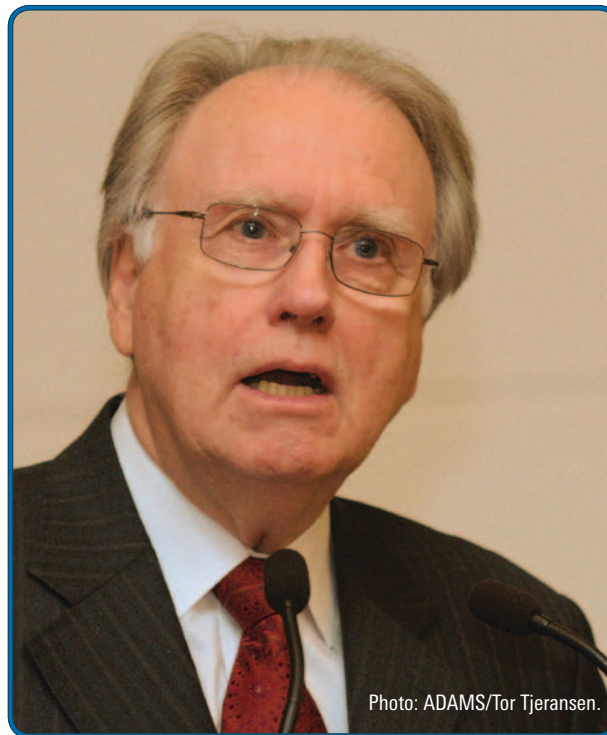


Photo: ADAMS/Tor Tjeransen.

H. M. The King of Norway and his councilors,” said Paulsen. “It warms my heart that the accolade came with the recognition ‘Service for the good of humanity,’ for that is what the life of Christian service is all about,” he added.

The Royal Norwegian Order of Merit was founded by King Olav V in 1985 and is conferred upon foreign and Norwegian nationals as a reward for their outstanding service in the interest of Norway. The actual date when Paulsen will be presented with the insignia of the order has yet to be decided.

“It is a great honor for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway that the global service of Dr. Paulsen has been recognized in this way,” said **Reidar J. Kvinge**, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.

Pastor Paulsen was the world leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from 1999 to 2010. He began his ministerial service in 1953 in Norway. His most recent book, *Where Are We Going?*, was published by Pacific Press Publishing Association in 2011. [Amended from Tor Tjeransen, communication director, Norwegian Union]

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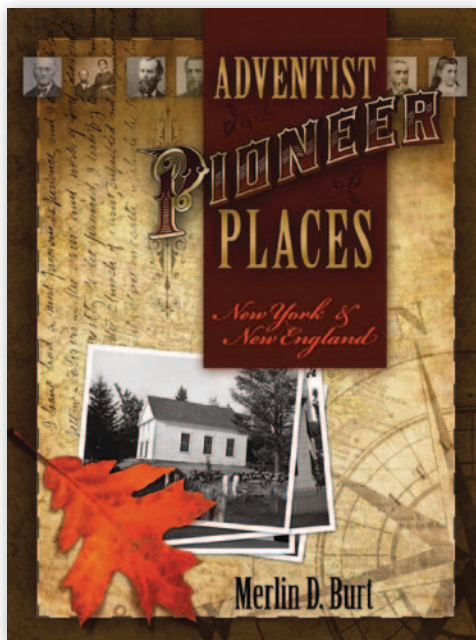
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## Adventist Pioneer Places: New York & New England

by Merlin D. Burt,  
Hagerstown, MD:  
Review and Herald  
Pub. Assn., 2011.

In 1998, I first met Dr. Merlin Burt, and could see immediately that he had a contagious love for sharing our Adventist history. His passion for inspiring



organizing a formal church or school tour group, this book is a must have! And even if you are not able to visit New England but want to learn more about the setting of Adventist history, then this is an attractive book that I would recommend you add to your library. For pastors, I would especially encourage you to get creative: think of ways you can inspire confidence in our Adventist past through a heritage Sabbath or perhaps even a tour of a heritage site in whatever part of the world you are in to celebrate how God has led in our past.

WHETHER YOU ARE ON A FAMILY VACATION TO ANY OF THESE SITES OR ARE ORGANIZING A FORMAL CHURCH OR SCHOOL TOUR GROUP, THIS BOOK IS A MUST HAVE!

confidence in the Adventist movement shines through in this book.

In many ways, this book has been long awaited: the last edition of *In the Footsteps of the Pioneers* (White Estate, 1995) was very outdated and the directions were unreliable. Dr. Burt's careful historical research has eliminated some sites that do not bear the scrutiny of historical research but, conversely, has also added some sites—the most important of which are the sites in Poland, Maine. Dr. Burt deserves accolades for his work in discovering new sites that were previously unknown.

I especially liked that he included the nonprofit Old Sturbridge Village as a site that every family or tour should visit. The village personifies life within antebellum America. As such, the historical context literally comes to life as you see what everyday life was like when Adventism was birthed.

A significant improvement centers on the inclusion of color photographs and GPS coordinates. Now, whenever the names of landmarks or roads change, it will be simple to follow the GPS coordinates to the site.

Whether you are on a family vacation to any of these sites or are

Pastors should recognize the spiritual importance of celebrating our Adventist history as an important rhythm of pastoral ministry. The more I study and lead tours about our Adventist past, the more it makes me proud to be a Seventh-day Adventist. I believe this tour guidebook, and more important by visiting the sites made accessible through this well-written volume, has the potential to do the same for you too.

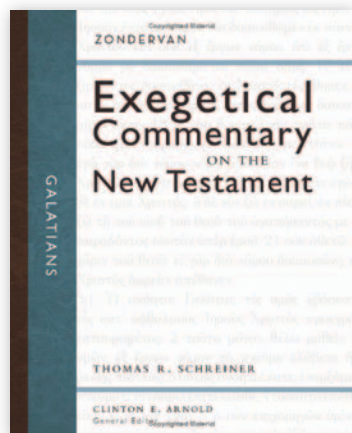
—Reviewed by Michael W. Campbell, PhD, pastor,  
Wichita Seventh-day Adventist Church, Wichita,  
Kansas, United States. [M](#)





## Galatians

by Thomas R. Schreiner,  
Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament,  
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.



This commentary is number 9 in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. This series of New Testament (NT) commentaries is directed toward students and pastors who have studied NT Greek and want some grammatical and exegetical help with the Greek text. Each section is structured as follows: literary context, main idea (key thrust of the passage), translation with a graphical layout, structure (flow of thought), detailed exegetical outline, explanation of the text, and an application section (where the theological message of the passage is summarized).

Schreiner makes the following excellent observation in regard to interpretation of a Pauline text: “[I]nterpretation . . . reflects one’s understanding of the whole of Pauline theology and the relationship between the old covenant and the new. . . . [W]e as interpreters do not simply explain the text in light of the particular paragraph and letter before us. All of us come to the text with a theological worldview that shapes our understanding of the text. Having such a map is not necessarily a disadvantage.


Indeed, we all come to the text with pre-conceptions. . . . [I]f we are conscious of our biases, we can test our worldview via the biblical text and reshape our theology” (210). Furthermore, he states, “[W]e must also avoid wrenching

texts out of context” (261). Schreiner believes “that Martin Luther and John Calvin were substantially right in their interpretation of the letter and that their pastoral application of the letter still stands today” (13).

Schreiner agrees with Luther and argues for the interpretation of the expression *pisteōs Iēsou Cristou*, in Galatians 2:16, as “faith in Jesus Christ,” not the “faithfulness of Jesus Christ,” and interprets all of Galatians from that perspective, especially the two debatable passages of Galatians 2:16 and 3:10–14. Schreiner also attempts to establish the view that the issue about eating in Galatians 2:11–14 was not only that Peter was eating with Gentiles but that he was eating unclean foods as well. Furthermore the substitutionary atonement of Christ comes to center stage, according to Schreiner, in Galatians 3:13 *by becoming a curse for us* (216, 221, 271). Schreiner moreover believes that besides food laws and circumcision, tithing and Sabbath are also tied to the Mosaic covenant and are no longer binding (250, 399). At the end of the book, he expounds on some of the themes in Galatians: God, Christ, truth of the gospel, justification by faith, centrality of the Cross, the gift of the Spirit, already–not yet eschatology, the law and the covenant, oneness of

Jews and Gentiles, freedom in Christ to obey, and the danger of apostasy (387–401).

Schreiner gives a readable and understandable interpretation of the text and makes cogent arguments for his particular views. I do not always find his arguments, claims, and observations convincing. Two examples are (1) that the Sabbath is nonbinding, and (2) in 5:13–15 where Schreiner clarifies what Paul means by freedom from the law: “Paul argues that the Mosaic covenant and the law as a whole have passed away,” and “[t]he law is both abolished and fulfilled in Christ” (337; see also 396, 399). In my view, Schreiner misunderstands what Paul means in Galatians 5:13 (you are called to be free); Galatians 4:5 (to redeem those under law); Romans 6:14 (you are no longer under law but under grace); and Galatians 5:14 (the entire law is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself). Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6 that one is free from the “ministry of death,” the Old Covenant, when one is under the “ministry of the Spirit,” the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:7, NKJV; v. 8, NKJV). The Old and New Covenants have the same content—the law, the Ten Commandments—but are ministered differently: one by death (indicted by the Old Testament sacrifices), the other by the Spirit (prophesied in Jer. 31:31–34; Isa. 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26, 27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–32). Nonetheless Schreiner will benefit some because he helps one solidify one’s own positions when interacting with his expositions.

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, is a retired pastor living in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. 

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Dwight Nelson



Randy Roberts



José Rojas



Carlton Byrd



Ron Halvorsen



Fred Kinsey



Elizabeth Talbot



Jon Henderson



Karl Haffner



Derek Morris

## Reach Alaska Revive!

**This series is for you, your church, and your community. Each meeting is uplinked to satellite at multiple times to make it readily available in all time zones on Hope Church Channel.**

Also: Hope Channel (including DirectTV), Roku, streaming video for mobile, LifeTalk Radio, and on-demand archives. For complete schedule, visit [www.vop.com/alaskaschedule](http://www.vop.com/alaskaschedule).

For further information:

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