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Europe still in great need of evangelism. See news section.

Front cover picture: In spring new life bursts forth from what seems to be dead wood. We always marvel at the new beginning in nature. The Holy Spirit also gives a new birth, a new beginning by imparting spiritual life to people who are dead in sin. See articles on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Editorial

THE RECENT NEWS OF THE GERMAN AEROPLANE THAT was crashed on purpose by its co-pilot in the French Alps, taking with him the lives of 150 people, will have shocked us all. What a tragedy. What has led this young man to cause such a disaster to himself and so many other people? Who can fathom the depths of sin and darkness?

For Bible believing Christians this brings to mind the great tragedy of Adam who, as the representative head of all humanity, fell into sin, thus bringing death into the world. Through the one man sin came into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned, as the apostle Paul tells us (Rom 5:12). But in this seemingly hopeless situation, God intervened because of his great love in his Son Jesus Christ. Paul can state this as follows: 'For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many' (Rom 5:15). As he continues to explain, the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our place gives righteousness and eternal life (Rom 5:12-21).

Especially at this time of the year we celebrate these great historical facts of the gospel, the good news of

what God did through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. Because of this a new beginning, a new birth, is possible. The Holy Spirit has been poured out at Pentecost and he effects this new birth in the lives of sinful people, which manifests itself in repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God as it is preached to effect this radical change in us (Rom 10:13-17; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Peter 1:23-25) and thereby sets in motion a process of renewal (sanctification). This renewing work of the Spirit is experienced by all true believers individually and together in the church as he calls them to grateful obedience from the heart to the standard of teaching of the Word of God (see Rom 6:17).

It remains important for all of us to keep reminding ourselves of these great and wonderful truths. This is even more urgent as we nowadays see so many 'spirits' vying for attention by the manifestation of all sorts of spiritual, emotional and even physical phenomena. They are blown about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes (Eph 4:14). We can see these effects in so many ways today. They can be recognised as they lead us away from God's Word as our only source of authority for our faith and practice. They usually produce man-centred

religion promising health, wealth and excitement only targeted at this life. We have to test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). I hope and pray that the articles in this issue of *Reformation Today* will contribute to this.

We continue our doctrinal series with a set of articles on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, focusing on his person and work. This material has been split into three parts for convenience; parts 1 and 2 appear in this issue with the third scheduled for *RT* 266. Tom Nettles discusses

the ministry and teaching of C G Finney, adding a critical assessment which is important as Finney has had such a wide influence in the church even until today. John Benton helps us to appreciate the great gift of the Lord's Day. Finally, in the middle of all the complexities and challenges of the Christian life and ministry it is a great consolation to be able to read the prayer of our Saviour for us: that the Lord will keep us from the evil one, and that we will be sanctified in the truth of God's Word (see the second article by Bob Davey in his series on John 17).

Kees van Kralingen

The High-Priestly Prayer of Jesus

by Bob Davey

THIS IS THE SECOND OF THREE EXPOSITORY ARTICLES ON THE HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER OF JESUS AS RECORDED IN JOHN'S Gospel chapter seventeen.

The whole prayer falls naturally into three parts. Jesus prays for himself (verses 1-5), for the apostles (verses 6-19), and for all future believers (verses 20-26).

John 17:11-19 The requests of Jesus for the apostles

Jesus, having given his reasons why he is praying for the apostles (vv 6-10), now makes five specific requests for them: that they be kept in their faith (vv 11,12); may have unity (v 11); may have joy (v 13); may be protected from Satan (vv 14-16); may be set apart for service (vv 17-19).

That Jesus is praying specifically for the eleven remaining faithful apostles is clear from verse 20.

Firstly, Jesus requests that the apostles be kept in their faith 17:11,12

11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your name those whom you have given me, that they may be one as we are. 12 While I was with them in the

world, I kept them in your name. Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Jesus again speaks as if his work on earth were finished. He is praying for the apostles because, after his ascension into heaven, they would have to continue the work of the kingdom without his physical presence.

Holy Father. As the imminent work of atonement and salvation on the cross was a holy work, it is fitting that Jesus prays at this time, 'Holy Father'. It shows that there was complete unity of mind between the Father and the Son concerning this holy work of sin-bearing.

Until now the apostles had the Master at their side and could turn to him in every case of need. But they were going to have to face on their own a wicked, cold, persecuting world. They would need special protection from the Father to keep their faith.

Keep through your name... I kept them in your name... those whom you gave me I have kept (guarded). First and foremost, the apostles needed to be kept in their own faith. By officially praying to the Father for just that, he guarantees their safe keeping. Just as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has guarded their faith until now in the Father's will, so their faith needed to be guarded in the future also in the Father's will.

Keep through your name. Their faith would be guarded, both because Jesus requests it and also because the apostles belonged to the Father (verse 10). The interests of both the Father and the Son would be served by the preservation of the apostles' faith. The good names of both the Father and the Son also depended upon it.

We can note that the grounds on which Jesus prays for the spiritual safekeeping of the apostles are the same grounds on which all believers are kept secure in their faith. Believers keep their faith because they are kept safe in it by the Father and the Son. The good names of the Father and Son demand it and their divine power ensures it. 'I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand' (10:28,29).

In the light of this prayer the apostle Peter can write later that the Christian is 'kept (guarded) by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' (1 Peter 1:5). And Jude writes, 'Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy' (Jude verse 24).

The Father and the Son guarantee that every true believer will persevere in saving faith to the end. Saving faith is guarded. This teaching/doctrine is

called 'the preservation/perseverance of the saints'. They are preserved in their faith – they persevere in faith.

none of them is lost except the son of perdition. Jesus speaks of Judas Iscariot (6:70,71). In the band of apostles he was the only one who did not have saving faith. He was eternally lost. All the others were true disciples, with a saving faith guarded by Jesus. It was in the will of God that the apostolic band should have included Judas and that he should turn out to be a traitor.

that the Scripture might be fulfilled. It was prophesied in the Old Testament (Ps 41:9). Neither God nor prophecy can be blamed for the sin of Judas. He was not compelled to sin. He sinned of his own accord.

Secondly, Jesus requests that the apostles may have unity 17:11

that they may be one as we are. Jesus is praying that the apostles remain united as a body in their faith, love, and in their witness for the true gospel (Gal 2:1-2, 9-10). This unity was needed in the face of a hostile world. The unity in the Godhead is the highest model and pattern of unity for believers. Believers are given spiritual unity with each other at conversion. They are to keep that unity in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

Thirdly, Jesus requests that the apostles may have joy 17:13

13 But now I come to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled (made full) in themselves.

In addition to unity Jesus desires that his apostles have his joy, the joy which he gives, the joy of salvation. Jesus has already spoken to the apostles about this joy remaining in them and being full (15:11). This abundant joy, the cup of joy filled to the brim, would give them needed strength for their apostolic work. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength' (Neh 8:10).

Fourthly, Jesus requests that the apostles may be protected from Satan 17:14-16

14 I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one.

I have given them your word. Jesus had given the word of the gospel from the Father to the apostles. It is the gospel of God. The apostles have believed the word and been saved by it (1 Peter 1:23). This gospel was now being entrusted to them, for them to preserve it, proclaim it, and pass it on for future generations.

the world has hated them. From the beginning Jesus had taught that his disciples would be persecuted by the world because of their allegiance to him (Matt 5:10-12). Also he had just told the apostles that they would be persecuted in their ministry (15:19,20). Now Jesus takes this matter in prayer to the Father.

because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. In Christ, believers have become citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20). That is their new home, that is where they belong. Through the new birth they know it, feel it, live for it, and walk worthy of it. They are in the world but not of it, just as Jesus was in the world but not of it. Already the apostles would have been aware of this. What a comfort for the apostles to hear Jesus acknowledging the fact before the Father and praying for them.

I do not pray that you should take them out of the world. For the apostles, as for all Christians, it is the will of God to leave them in the world for a time because they have a work to do for Jesus.

you should keep them from the evil one. Satan has been called ‘the ruler of this world’ by Jesus three times already that very night (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan is evil through and through. He hates God and everything to do with God, so he is the source of all persecution and opposition to the gospel. He tempts to sin. Jesus is praying that the apostles be protected from Satan while they are in this world on their apostolic mission.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Now that Jesus is about to leave the world, he repeats with great emphasis why the apostles need to be looked after by the Father. The apostles no longer belong to this world just as he does not belong to this world. If the Father would not look after them, who would? This leads naturally on to the next request.

Fifthly, Jesus requests that the apostles may be set apart for service 17:17-19

17 Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Sanctify them (consecrate them) by your truth. The primary meaning of sanctify is ‘to set apart’ or ‘consecrate’. Jesus is requesting that, with the Father’s blessing, the apostles be consecrated (set apart) for the work of preaching and teaching the Word of God (Acts 6:2-4).

by your truth .. your word is truth. The apostles would only be fit for their apostolic ministries if they remained faithful to the truth of the gospel. The faith of Christ and his apostles is the fundamental basis and condition for co-operation in the work of the gospel (Jude verse 3).

At this point Jesus is not dealing directly with the subject of personal sanctification or holiness. But, of course, without sanctification or personal holiness there can be no fitness for God’s service. Through the Scriptures, read, digested and obeyed come personal sanctification/holiness and fitness for service (Matt 4:4; Ps 119).

As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. As Jesus had been sent by the Father into the world with a mission, so now Jesus has sent the apostles (sent ones) into the world to continue his mission (Matt 28:18-20).

19 And for their sakes I sanctify (consecrate) myself, that they also may be sanctified (consecrated) by the truth.

for their sakes I sanctify (consecrate) myself. As high priest of his people, Jesus now consecrates himself to the unfinished task ahead of him, the work of atonement for sin on the cross. Without this saving work on the cross there would be no work of God for the apostles to do in the future.

that they also may be sanctified (consecrated). In this high-priestly prayer Jesus consecrates the apostles to the service of God as his apostles (sent ones). In a real sense they will be carrying on his work.

by the truth. As Jesus is equipped for his task by his sinless perfection, so the apostles are to be equipped for their task by the truth of the gospel.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Part 1: His person and his place in redemptive history

by Kees van Kralingen

THIS ARTICLE IS THE NEXT INSTALMENT IN OUR SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. The purpose of this article in three parts (part 3 will appear in *RT* 266) is to summarise the doctrine of the Holy Spirit with specific attention to its application to contemporary issues. Nowadays much attention is given to the work of the Holy Spirit and this is often a cause for debate and division in the church. The charismatic movement with its attention to supernatural gifts and sometimes wild and extreme claims to new phenomena challenges the traditional understanding and practice of the church¹. This movement is no longer confined to independent, Pentecostal or charismatic churches, but has penetrated all kinds of mainline denominations too. Outside the church many people are searching for the meaning of life by seeking in all kinds of different ways some sort of new spirituality. What are we to make of this? Do these trends and phenomena represent a new activity of God's Spirit? Or are we seeing serious deviations from sound doctrine such as we can expect in the last days (2 Tim 3:1-9)? The contemporary situation challenges the church to put these developments to the test of God's Word; to test these spirits to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1). It is therefore important to pay attention to the teaching of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit.

These articles on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit can only provide a very short summary and therefore a list with some suggestions for further reading will be provided separately in the next issue (*RT* 266).

The person of the Holy Spirit

As already discussed in the earlier article on the doctrine of God (by Mostyn Roberts, see RT 260), we believe in the Trinity, in which the Holy Spirit is the third person. God is one and he also exists in three persons. This means that the Holy Spirit is both God and a person and has a distinct personality. These truths can be shown from the Bible as follows.

The Holy Spirit is God as we can see from Peter's words in Acts 5:3-4 to Ananias where he speaks about lying to the Holy Spirit as equivalent to lying to God. The apostle Paul explains in his letters to the Corinthians that we are God's temple, or the temple of the living God, and that God's Spirit dwells in us (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16) thus implying that the Holy Spirit is God. The apostle Paul when quoting the Lord's word to Isaiah (Isa 6:9) refers to the Holy Spirit speaking through Isaiah (Acts 28:25).

We can also see that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are often mentioned together. When Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased' (Matt 3:16-17). In John's Gospel we read that the Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus and the Father (John 14:16, 26; 16:7). The great commission in Matthew 28:19 is another key text with the commandment to baptise new believers in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The often-cited benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14 offers another example. Paul refers to the joint work of the three persons in us: 'And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11). Similar examples are found in Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 1:1-2; Jude 20-21.

The surprising use of the masculine pronoun in combination with the technically neuter Greek word *pneuma* ('spirit') in John 14:26 and 15:26 is a powerful indication of the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Divine attributes, activity and knowledge are ascribed to the Holy Spirit as numerous texts make clear (see for example 1 Cor 2:10-13; 6:11; 12:11).

The conclusion is therefore justified that if this is the way God has revealed himself, this must be the way he really exists.

The Holy Spirit in redemptive history

It is very instructive to see in some detail what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit over the course of redemptive history in Old and New Testaments.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit is said to be involved in creation as we read in Genesis 1:2 that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. The Spirit is giving life which is in line with the Hebrew word used for spirit, *ruach*, which literally means wind or breath (basically: moving air). We find this life-giving work of the Spirit mentioned in Psalm 104:29-30 and Job 33:4. Although the Spirit is involved in creation and brings order, the Spirit can also take life and destroy it as we find in the well-known passage in Isaiah 40:6-7: 'All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it.'

The Holy Spirit is also mentioned as the governing presence of the Lord with his people. An example is found in Numbers 11:25 where we read that the Lord took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders who would share the burden of leadership with Moses. Joseph and Daniel are people in whom the Spirit of God is present as is recognised by other people from the wisdom and spiritual leadership emanating from these men. This governing presence of God through his Spirit not only includes the gift of leadership, but also gives special creative abilities to men to prepare the tabernacle for the people of Israel (Ex 31:1-11; 35:30-35). We find the reality of God being present with his people through his Spirit also expressed in the promise in Ezekiel 39:29 'And I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.'

The Holy Spirit is also already active in the OT, saving and redeeming God's people. His saving power is manifested in people upon whom the Spirit is or came. Examples are found in Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29. The saving work of the Holy Spirit is also highly personal for David as he prays in Psalm 51 that God will not take his Holy Spirit from him. A wonderful example is found in Isaiah 63:7-14 where we are told that the Holy Spirit was directly active in the exodus of Israel from Egypt (verses 10, 11 and 14). The same teaching is found in the well-known vision of the prophet Ezekiel who is instructed by the Lord to prophesy that the breath (ESV; or Spirit in other translations) should come on the bones in the vision to bring them to life. God gives spiritual life and renewal by putting his Spirit in people. He will take away their stony hearts and give a new heart of flesh, causing people to walk in God's statutes and making them careful to obey his rules (Ezek 36:25-28; see also Ezek 11:19-20).

These texts show that God will give new spiritual life and restoration to the people of Israel. These promises find their ultimate fulfilment in the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34) inaugurated by the Lord Jesus Christ. The OT

therefore indicates the intimate connection between the promised Messiah and the Holy Spirit. The prophet Isaiah expresses this as follows: ‘There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord’ (Isa 11:1-2). This is further confirmed in the first of the four so-called Servant songs in Isaiah 42:1, and in Isaiah 61:1, the words of which are applied by the Lord Jesus to himself in Luke 4:16-21: ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me ...’

Further promises in the prophets of the OT show that the giving, or outpouring of the Spirit himself is part of the promised glorious future plan of redemption. To quote just one example: ‘...until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field’ (Isa 32:15-16). Other examples can be found in Isaiah 34:16; 59:21 and the best known example of all is of course Joel 2:28-32 the words of which are expounded by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21).

The Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ

The close connection between the promised Messiah and the Spirit is fully attested by the NT in the description of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see this immediately in his conception and virgin birth which are attributed to the Holy Spirit when the angel said to Mary: ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God’ (Luke 1:35). When Jesus grew up it became clear even in his youth that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (cf. Isa 11:1-2), was upon him (Luke 2:41-52; see also Ps 119:99-100). The fact of Jesus’ anointing with the Holy Spirit became clear and visible at the occasion of his baptism by John the Baptist (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). This remarkable event is later referred to by Peter in Acts 10:38 in his address to Cornelius. This anointing of Jesus means that he has been anointed to the three offices of Prophet, Priest and King. Jesus is the promised and long-awaited Prophet (Deut 18:18; John 1:21, 25). He is also the great High Priest (Ps 110; Heb 4:14-16) and the Davidic King appointed by the Lord (Ps 2:6-7; see the echo of Psalm 2 in the words spoken by God at the occasion of Jesus’ baptism and at his transfiguration (Matt 17:5).

Further evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus is found when we read that the Holy Spirit drove him out into the wilderness (Mark 1:12-13; cf. Luke 4:1). There Jesus was tempted by Satan

but he defeated him by the power of God's Word. Following this event, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). In the story as told by Luke this is immediately followed by his preaching in Nazareth where Jesus explains the words of Isaiah 61 and applies these to himself and his ministry. These words from Isaiah 61 are then immediately confirmed in his teaching with authority (Luke 4:32), in the healing of a man with an unclean demon (Luke 4:33-37) and the healing of people with many other diseases (Luke 4:38-41).

The Holy Spirit is also mentioned in connection with the death of the Lord Jesus by the author of the letter to the Hebrews. In Hebrews 8-10 he contrasts the OT sacrifices with the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In a remarkable statement he says: 'How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God' (Heb 9:14). The resurrection of Jesus is attributed to the activity of the Father (Acts 2:32; 17:31; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:15) whilst Jesus also says that he would rise up and has authority to take up his life again (John 2:19-22; 10:17-18). Several texts also point to the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom 1:4, 1 Tim 3:16; and possibly 1 Peter 3:18).²

The Holy Spirit given by the Lord Jesus Christ

We will now consider what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit in the next stage in redemptive history which is defined in Scripture as the 'last days', i.e. the final stage of redemptive history. As promised in all the Gospels (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), Jesus now sends the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). At the same time this is the promise of the Father, the promise of power to be witnesses to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). The apostle Peter explains to the crowd in Jerusalem that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit is what has been prophesied by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:14-21). Peter summarises the meaning of Pentecost as follows: 'Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing' (Acts 2:33). The purpose is to focus on Jesus who was crucified but has been raised by God and for this reason God has 'made him both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:36). He is the Saviour, the Messiah, the only way to God. This message comes as the greatest possible shock to the people who are told that they have crucified their long-awaited Messiah! They have rejected the Saviour promised to them. When they hear this, they are cut to the heart and they cry out: 'Brothers, what shall we do?'

But Peter can announce a most gracious and glorious message. The promise is

for forgiveness of sin and for the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who repent and are baptised (Acts 2:38). This gospel promise is now intended for all people without any geographical or ethnic restrictions (Acts 2:39; see also Joel 2:28-32). This marks the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 ‘... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’ as the apostle Paul confirms (Gal 3:14). Furthermore, this event at Pentecost of the gift of the Holy Spirit marks the end of the Mosaic covenant and the inauguration of the promised New Covenant. All believers will have personal knowledge of God and will have the law of God written on their hearts and will enjoy the forgiveness of their sins (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:8-13; 1 John 2:20,27).

The book of Acts and the whole of the rest of the New Testament show that Jesus continues this great redemptive plan through the Holy Spirit. The message of the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ go on ‘without hindrance’ as the final word in Acts says (28:31).

The baptism with the Holy Spirit

In the above mentioned texts in the Gospels John the Baptist announces that Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit (*en pneumati hagiō*). Jesus himself confirms this in Acts 1:5. Peter in his report to the church following the conversion of Cornelius refers to these words of Jesus, indicating that the baptism with the Spirit is the gift of the Spirit received by Cornelius in the same way as happened to other believers. The same expression is also found in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where we read: ‘For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.’ Here the expression *en pneumati* is translated by the ESV as ‘in one Spirit’. This can also be translated as ‘with one Spirit’, or ‘by one Spirit.’ The latter translation has been used as an argument for the view that Paul talks here about a different baptism from the baptism with the Spirit indicated in the other texts. As has been observed, however, by Sinclair Ferguson quoting also James Dunn, the combination of the preposition *en* together with the verb *baptizein* never designates the one who performs the baptism in the New Testament. This means that we have to read all seven occurrences of the expression *en pneumati* mentioned above in the way that indicates it is Jesus who performs this baptism with the Spirit. The key point of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and its context is to demonstrate that all believers are united as they have all been baptised with one Spirit into one body, the body of Christ which is the Church. The word ‘all’ in this text is very strong, thus denying the idea of two types of Christians³. As Geoff Thomas says: ‘That is true for the weakest lamb in the flock of Christ, for the newest Christian, and for the backslider who has returned in repentance to Christ.’⁴ This glorious body of

Christ will be composed of people from all different backgrounds who are one in Christ (Gal 3:26-29; Col 3:11). At the same time there is diversity among believers, showing itself in different gifts given to build up the body by mutual edification through the exercise of these gifts.

A further question is whether this baptism with the Spirit is a separate and second experience following conversion as is taught by Pentecostals. A close and careful reading of all the relevant texts in the New Testament does not support such a view. As noticed already, Paul emphasises the unity of all believers who have been baptised with one Spirit into one body. The New Testament shows very clearly that all believers receive the Holy Spirit at their conversion. Peter expresses this in his sermon on the day of Pentecost as he states that the promise for all who repent and are baptised is the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The synonymous use of the notions of baptism with the Spirit and gift of the Spirit by Peter in Acts 11:16-17 demonstrates that at conversion people are baptised with the Spirit. Salvation always has two sides: taking away the 'negative', ie sin on the one hand (forgiveness of sins), and giving the 'positive', the gift of the Spirit and all that this entails. Paul says we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3). In Galatians 3:1-2 Paul also makes a direct connection between faith and receiving the Spirit. The New Testament nowhere tells us to pray for or to seek a baptism with the Spirit as a separate experience after conversion.

But we may ask the question: What about the events described in Acts 8 with the believers in Samaria, Acts 10-11 with Cornelius and Acts 19:1-6 with the believers in Ephesus? Very briefly the response is as follows. The Samaritan believers who have come to faith as a result of the preaching by Philip only receive the Holy Spirit when Peter and John arrive a little later in Samaria. We have to realise the unique nature of the event described here in Acts 8. Jews normally would not have any fellowship with Samaritans. When Samaritans came to faith there would have been the risk that the Church would not develop the necessary unity in Christ. The fact that these Samaritans received the Holy Spirit shown to the eminent apostles Peter and John, rather than just Philip alone, made absolutely clear to the leadership that these Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. This was conclusive proof to the leadership of the Church that Samaritans would belong to the one, united church of Jesus Christ in the same way as Jewish believers. Similarly, the gift of the Spirit to Cornelius and other Gentiles, in the same way as he was given to Jewish people, also made it clear beyond doubt that even Gentile believers are now also true believers belonging to Christ and the Church. That is why Peter has to conclude that they should receive the baptism in water. Finally, the people mentioned in Acts 19:1-6 in Ephesus were disciples of John the Baptist. They

had not yet heard there is a Holy Spirit, but moreover, they had apparently not yet believed in Jesus. This is indicated in verse 4 which says that Paul preached to them Jesus telling them they should believe in him. As they accept Paul's message, they are baptised and receive the Holy Spirit. Again, this event underlines that also disciples of John the Baptist need to come to faith in Jesus and thus belong to the one Church of Christ.

By recording these various events involving different categories of people, Luke indicates that the gospel would spread and bear fruit among people in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth exactly as Jesus had told the apostles in Acts 1:8. The differences in the precise order of events in each case is explained by their unique position in the unfolding redemptive history after Pentecost. We have to realise that what is a description in the Bible is not necessarily a normative prescription for us unless there is other evidence in Scripture to support this. And we have already seen that there is no other evidence elsewhere in Scripture for a separate baptism with the Spirit. We have to conclude that all true believers have received the Holy Spirit, or in other words, have been baptised by Jesus with the Holy Spirit. We may ask the question that, if this is true, how does it come about that some Christians seem to show more evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives than others? This brings us to the issue of being filled with the Spirit and the wider topic of the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, a subject to which we will turn in Part 2.

The Holy Spirit and the Word of God

At several points in his discourse in John 14-16 Jesus refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Word of God. He mentions that the words he is speaking are the words given to him by the Father (John 14:10, 22-24; see also 7:16; 17:8). Jesus then tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit will 'bring to [their] remembrance all that I have said to you' (John 14:26; cf. John 15:26-27; 16:13-14). This means first and foremost that the apostles will be guided to write the words of Jesus accurately and reliably in what we now have as infallible Scripture. This is the same as what Peter later on wrote about OT prophecy which was produced by men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Isaiah and Jeremiah had the words of God 'in their mouth' (Isa 59:21; Jer 1:9). This is also why the believers in Acts 4:24-25 could introduce their quote of Psalm 2 in the following way: 'Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit...' All of this underlines what Paul wrote to Timothy that 'all Scripture is breathed out by God'. Holy Scripture therefore is the Word of God.

The renewing work of the Holy Spirit is also intimately connected to the Word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to achieve his purposes. The work of bringing spiritually dead sinners to spiritual life, granting them faith and repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8; 1 Cor 2:10-14; 1 John 3:9, 5:1). At the same time, the powerful Word of God and its proclamation is used as the means to achieve this (John 15:3; Rom 10:8-15; 1 Cor 1:18-19, 2:1-5, 4:15; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Peter 1:23). In this regard, Sinclair Ferguson draws attention to the parallel between our regeneration and the resurrection of the dead⁵. We have been raised with Christ (Eph 2:5) which is the work of the Holy Spirit and God's Word as shown above. And then Paul also says: 'If the Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you' (Rom 8:11). At the same time Paul can say that this resurrection will happen with a 'cry of command' of the Lord (1 Thess 4:16).

Finally, another important parallel between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of Christ becomes clear when we consider Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16. In both passages Paul is calling believers to live a life of holiness, and indicates what this means for worship, our marriage, family life and work (compare Eph 5:19-6:9 and Col 3:17-4:1). In one case he calls believers to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) for this purpose, and in the other he instructs them to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly (Col 3:16).

References:

¹See for example the article by Conrad Mbewe on Charismatics in Africa in RT 255 (September-October 2013)

²The text of 1 Peter 3:18 translated by the NIV as 'made alive by the Spirit' is rendered 'made alive in the spirit'. Both translations are possible although the latter is more likely given the context in the ESV; see Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1988), p. 156.

³D A Carson, *Showing the Spirit. A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), p. 43-47; John Stott, *Baptism and Fullness. The work of the Holy Spirit today* (Leicester: IVP, 1975), p. 39

⁴Geoffrey Thomas, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), p. 170

⁵Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP: 1996), p. 126

The Matter and Manner of Finney

by Tom J Nettles

IN THE MEMOIRS OF CHARLES G. FINNEY, THE AGEING LEVANGELIST PRESENTS HIS THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES with the confessionalist stream of Congregational and Presbyterian ministers as having begun early. His recollections from 1866-68 imposed on that time forty-five years earlier may have presented his doctrinal system more defined and clearly stated than it actually was. That his spirit of independence in thought and his attachment to a populist kind of rationalism made him resist the system of his would-be tutors cannot be doubted. How quickly he systematised his thought is a matter of speculation. Given his admittedly complete ignorance of theological literature at the time of his conversion and how quickly he began his revival preaching, the conclusion that it developed over a two decade period would not be far wrong. When it did grow into a discernible system, however, it is easy to see why the practical outworking of these ideas troubled Asahel Nettleton and those like him. Finney developed as the fruit of the Pelagianising tendency of Nathan W Taylor's New Haven theology.

Matter

As they were eventually expressed, his theological ideas included the important theological points described here. For Finney, consistently with Arminian views on the subject, election is built on foreknowledge. God must have foreknown who would and who would not be saved. He rejected Adam Clarke's view of *selective* foreknowledge as absurd and self-contradictory. Finney's understanding of this issue considered God's unchangeableness. 'Has he any new light? Has he changed his mind at the time of judgment?' His timelessness meant that 'the beginning and the end of time...are present to his mind' and thus individual selection unto salvation was done just as it is in accordance with moral government. 'If any part of mankind is saved, it is because God can wisely save them.' In the wisest possible administration of his government God 'can bring sufficient moral influence to bear upon' those particular persons to convert them without violating the voluntary nature of all human decision. 'It is a contradiction,' Finney argued, 'to say that the same amount of moral influence can be brought to bear upon every individual

of the human family.’ That would be to assert ‘that every individual could be in circumstances in all respects, precisely similar. But this is a natural impossibility.’ Election, therefore, is God’s foresight of who ‘could be converted under the wisest administration of his government’. Such individuals are chosen to eternal life as God foresees ‘that in the perfect exercise of their freedom, they could be induced to repent and embrace the gospel’. It should be obvious to any observer that this pushes the supposed inviolability and independence of the human will into eternity as the determiner of God’s intentions. God has an eternal determination to accomplish that which most magnifies his moral government. Irresistible operations to effect human volition are contradictory to moral government, according to Finney.

According to that principle Finney viewed sin as purely *voluntary* and theoretically avoidable. ‘Voluntariness is indispensable to moral character,’ Finney instructed, ‘it is the universal and irresistible conviction of men, that an action, to be praise or blameworthy, must be free.’ There is no original corruption of nature, therefore, for that would be both deterministic and connected with imputation, an immoral concept in itself. It is not sin that is natural to children, but ‘faith is really natural to children’. Disobedience to moral law ‘cannot consist in the constitution of soul or body. The law does not command us to have a certain constitution, nor forbid us to have the constitution with which we came into being.’ Sin consists in ‘the irrational gratification of the appetites and passion’. For a person to be saved, one ‘must be brought back . . . to a state in which God and reason control the free action of the mind, and appetite is held in due subjection’. Moral depravity, as Finney defined it, is ‘a voluntary attitude of the mind’ that consists in ‘the committal of the will to the gratification of the desire, or as the Bible expresses, of the lusts of the flesh, as opposed to that which the law of God requires.’ It ‘consists in the choice of self-gratification as an end’, a ‘committing the whole being, to the indulgence of self-love, as the supreme and ultimate end of life’. The wicked heart must be seen as the voluntary state of the will ‘setting up his own interest in opposition to the interest and government of God, or seeking to ‘promote his own private happiness, in a way that is opposed to the general good’. Given the nature of depravity, it is no surprise that regeneration is seen as a voluntary alteration of one’s ‘ultimate intention’. It consists of a ‘change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention, or preference.’ ‘A lazy man cannot get to heaven,’ Finney exhorted, for ‘to get there costs

toil and labour. For his will must be sanctified. The entire voluntary department of his being must be renovated.’ The change of heart that constitutes regeneration means ‘changing the controlling preference of the mind in regard to the end of pursuit’. He preached a sermon entitled ‘How to Change your Heart.’ After a lengthy explanation of the manner in which both the mind and the conscience are informed of what is right, the foolishness and wickedness of sin, of the wisdom and rightness of obeying God, pointing to the uninterrupted course of disobedience of the sinner, and the certainty of eternal punishment for those that persist in it, he called them to repentance and faith. Repentance is to hate and renounce sin; faith is to ‘believe his word and walk in the path he points out to you’. The atonement has opened a way by which God can receive those that repent and walk in obedience without violating his moral government. We make a new heart by an act of informed volition.

To choose God and his service ... to prefer these to your own interest and to every thing else, is to change your heart. Have you done it? Do you still ask, how shall I do it? You might with much more propriety ask, when the meeting is dismissed, how shall I go home? To go home would require two things, first, to be willing; secondly, to put your body in motion. But here, no muscular power is needed. But one thing is requisite, that is a willing mind. Your consent is all that is needed. Be willing to do your duty, and the work is done.

Finney made regeneration analogous to any change of opinion that can be effected in a person by rational argument. Differences between people on any number of matters do not mean that the substance of their minds, bodies, or rationality is different. This variety comes from ‘the voluntary state of mind in which they are’. Even so, ‘it is just as unphilosophical, absurd, and unnecessary, to suppose that a physical or constitutional change has taken place in him who has the new heart, as to infer, that because a man has changed his politics, therefore, his nature is changed’. A new preference in any matter, but especially in the matter of obedience to God, ‘needs only to become deep and energetic enough in its influence, to stamp the perfection of heaven upon the whole character’.

Salvation from sin and from hell only relates to moral agents. This necessarily involves ‘a moral government over them, and over them *as moral beings*, which is the same thing as to say, that they must have the liberty of free voluntary action.’ Finney does not imply that God ‘must preclude himself from throwing in moral influences to affect their

action'. He did insist, however, 'that their liberty of moral action must not be abridged'. God's 'interposing influences must evermore be of a moral, and not of a physical or compulsory nature'. It is the nature of the case that 'God cannot save men without their concurrence'. Even so 'they could not be holy without their own concurrence' nor could they be happy. 'Being constituted moral agents, and made subjects of moral government, it must be in every point of view impossible to save them unless they will turn from their sins.' Since God governs as a moral agent, 'he can do nothing inconsistent with his moral nature. If, then, God works upon the sinner by means of his providence and his Spirit, to the utmost extent he wisely can, and all in vain, there remains nothing more which, as a moral governor, he can do to save him.'

Finney's constant drumbeat on the issue of the voluntariness of moral action comes from his rejection of the idea that intrinsic moral disposition is fully consistent with the reality of moral freedom. He even tried to argue that God's holiness is voluntary. If moral disposition determines moral action, Finney surmised, then *ipso facto* it cannot be voluntary. Given this viewpoint, it comes as no surprise that he believed that the distinction between natural ability and moral ability constituted an irrationality, an absurdity. Commands, he averred, always imply present ability. The natural ability to perform a command must include the moral ability. There can be no aspect of inability if persons are true moral agents to whom moral commands apply. This explains his understanding that sinners must change their own hearts. In his view, therefore, conversion consists of four confluent causes

- Spirit of God – 'The agent who induces him is the Spirit of God.' He can do no more, however, in a qualitative way than the preacher. Quantitatively, the Spirit is able to probe more deeply and more alarmingly into the conscience, but he effects no change in the moral disposition.
- Truth – 'The truth is the instrument, or motive, which the Spirit uses to induce the sinner to turn.'
- The preacher – 'A secondary agent who presents the truth and must seek to show the absolute absurdity and infinite danger of unbelief.'
- The sinner himself – 'The fact is, that the actual turning, or change, is the sinner's own act.'

Conversion occurs when, due to the confluence of the first three agents of conversion, the sinner becomes rationally and cordially persuaded to alter his ultimate intention in life from service of self to obedience to God.

Finney's conviction that only moral suasion and providential arrangement are consistent with the free moral agency of men does not explain the praiseworthiness of God's truthfulness alongside the impossibility of God's lying. Nor does it explain how God himself is a perfect moral agent who is immutable in his holiness and perfectly wise and holy in his decree. How effectual calling is a violation of moral agency Finney does not explain, other than to assert that compulsion is wrong, that a 'physical' change (a change in moral nature) is anomalous to the very essence of humanity, and that, consequently, the nature of the influence must be limited to moral suasion. Does *effectual calling* not respect, and indeed operate on the basis of, humanity in its moral agency? Effectual calling establishes, to use Finney's language, the 'concurrence' of man's moral nature with the moral perfections as set forth in the gospel. Effectual calling honors man as a moral agent, even if his sinfulness is much more radical than admitted by Finney, and imposes no loyalty or response of repentance and faith that is not fully concurrent with a heart made holy. 'Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and *renewing our wills*, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.' The New Hampshire Confession of Faith defines regeneration as 'giving a holy disposition to the mind; and is effected in a manner above our comprehension or calculation, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, *so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel*; and that its proper evidence is found in the holy fruit which we bring forth to the glory of God.'

Finney saw that fundamental to the Reformed concept of innate moral corruption was the system of imputation. He considered that system, therefore, immoral. In Finney's theology, justification and atonement lose any content of specific substitution. The atonement falls in line with the moral government theory; justification is forgiveness and voluntary obedience unto holiness. 'Finally, the greatness of the change requisite in passing from sin to real holiness – from Satan's kingdom into full fitness for Christ's, creates no small difficulty in the way of saving even the converted,' Finney preached. Concerning Christ's obedience in the context of justification, Finney noted, 'Had he obeyed for us, he would

not have suffered for us. Were his obedience to be substituted for our obedience, he need not certainly have both fulfilled the law for us, as our substitute, under a covenant of works, and at the same time have suffered as a substitute, in submitting to the penalty of the law.’ Connecting the atonement in any way to a substitutionary obedience represents God as requiring: 1) The obedience of our substitute; 2) his suffering, as if no obedience had been rendered; 3) then our repentance, and, 4) our return to personal obedience. And then, legal requirements having been fulfilled, salvation is ascribed to grace. ‘Strange grace this, that requires a debt to be paid several times over, before obligation is discharged!’

Having done with any imputation, the atonement is general because of its nature. It has no vital and organic connection with the forgiveness of sins, but is only an expedient on the part of God to bring about repentance on the part of the sinner. In such an atonement there is no ‘lack of provision in the atonement to cover all the wants of sinners, and even to make propitiation for the sins of the world’. Christ’s death has ‘entire sufficiency . . . to do all that an atonement can do or need do for the salvation of our race’. Recalling the confessional position against which he had pushed back vigorously, he wrote, ‘Some have regarded the atonement simply in the light of the payment of a debt; and have represented Christ as purchasing the elect of the Father, and paying down the same amount of suffering in his own person that justice would have exacted of them. To this I answer: It is naturally impossible, as it would require that satisfaction should be made to retributive justice. Strictly speaking, retributive justice can never be satisfied.’

Given his understanding of human ability and the nature of justification, it should come as no surprise that Finney taught that faith involved reaching a state of sinlessness. He developed this idea at Oberlin after 1836, influenced to some degree by Asa Mahan. Mahan spoke of a perfection of will resulting in a life of continuous voluntary obedience to God. Mahan assumed also the ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit’ which empowered and perfected the will. Finney, in order to achieve consistency, contended that ‘holiness in God is not a part of his nature in such a sense that it is not voluntary in him, but it is a voluntary exercise and state of mind.’ To be godlike, therefore, the sinner’s voluntary regeneration should ‘become deep and energetic enough in its influence, to stamp the *perfection of heaven* upon the whole character’ [italics added]. In fact, so Finney asserted, perfect holiness is essential to salvation. ‘The command to be

holy implies the practicability of becoming so.’ Those who do not believe it possible in this life are not true believers. ‘They do not believe God’s word of promise. They have no faith that men can become holy in this life, yet they say they believe in Christ.’ If Christ saves his people from their sins and God will sanctify us wholly, how can one be a believer and reject the idea of perfect holiness in this life? Finney became struck with the idea of salvation from sinning, in this life, and ‘found it everywhere as I read the New Testament, and indeed in the Old Testament also. Oh, how strange that the church should be fighting the ideas of becoming holy through Jesus Christ! How strange that they should insist that he will do no such thing!’

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Given this theology, certain distinctions arose in his revival method ‘to persuade sinners to choose right’. In redefining the work of the Spirit as limited to a moral power, he looked at it as ‘that kind of power by which an advocate moves and bows the heart of a jury’. In arguing his case before a congregation, therefore, Finney claimed to ‘cooperate with the Spirit of God; for this is the very thing the Spirit of God is endeavoring to secure,’ their ‘present action in accordance with the claims of God’.

More earnest effort should be given, therefore, to immediate conversion under ‘the voice of the living preacher’. When other preachers of his acquaintance dealt with souls in distress they recommended the use of means and isolated retirement to discover one’s calling. ‘The Lord convinced me,’ he wrote, ‘that this was no way to deal with souls.’ God showed him ‘clearly that moral depravity must be *voluntary*’. Finney argued ‘that the divine agency in regeneration must consist in reaching the soul, in argument, in persuasion, entreaty’. He continued insisting that ‘the thing to be done was to set the sinner’s duty clearly before him, and depend on the Spirit’s teaching to urge him to do it; to set Christ before him, and expect the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Jesus and show them to the sinner; to set his sins before him, and expect the Holy Spirit to show him his awful wickedness, and lead him voluntarily to renounce his sins.’ In other words, cooperation with the Spirit as an intelligent agent meant, ‘I must present the truth to be believed, the duties to be done, and the reasons for those duties. This is the very thing that the Spirit is doing, to make the sinner see and understand the force of the reasons urged by the minister, the truth of the facts stated and to give the sinners a realising sense of those truths which the minister presents to him, to induce him to

act.' To divert the sinner's attention to his dependence on the Spirit, 'was necessarily to hinder rather than to help forward the work of the Spirit'. By such teaching of dependence, 'sinners were constantly stumbled, and almost never converted under the voice of the living preacher'.

With this view of the kind of attention that the preacher must help the sinner give to the subject, and 'just at the point where the sinner is thoroughly instructed, and while *under the voice of the living preacher* with the strong pressure of truth set home by the Holy Ghost upon him, something was needed to induce him to act *then and there* upon his convictions'. When all the arguments had been presented in their full strength for the irrational and absurd wickedness of resisting the Holy Spirit and rejecting Christ, and done in such a way as had a tendency 'to convert him to Christ; and that when this was faithfully and prayerfully done, we had a right to expect the Holy Spirit to co-operate with us'.

Finney also claimed, somewhat in the spirit of James Davenport in the First Great Awakening, divine leadership and approval for the development of his methods. As cited above, Finney developed his manner of dealing with souls in the confidence that 'the Lord convinced me that this was no way to deal with souls'. Continuing with this confidence, Finney asserted, 'He showed me clearly that moral depravity must be *voluntary*; that the divine agency in regeneration must consist in teaching the soul, in argument, in persuasion, entreaty.' When word began to spread that Finney had 'toned down' and changed his methods he sought to correct that misimpression: 'Were I to live my life over again, I think that with the experience of more than forty years in revival labors I should under the same circumstance use substantially the same measures that I did then.' And the reason for this confidence lay in his sense that the Spirit had given him that insight. 'It was no wisdom of my own that directed me,' he announced. 'I had no doubt then nor have I ever had that God led me by his Spirit to take the course I did. So clearly did he lead me from day to day that I never did nor could doubt that I was divinely directed.' Even in the moment of preaching, the evangelist must make sure that he has not substituted his own preparation for the Spirit's revelation, for, as Finney explained, 'I held that the Holy Spirit operates in the preacher clearly revealing these truths in their proper order to him, and enabling him to set them before the people in such proportion and in such order as was calculated to convert them.'

All that was needed, therefore, were ways in which the attention of

the hearer could be arrested and given opportunity for undistracted concentration on his condition. 'It appeared to me then, as it ever has since, that the great failure of the ministry and of the church in promoting religion consisted, in great measure, in the want of a suitable adaptation of means to that end.' Finney described the anxious seat as 'a means of promoting revival', because from his 'own experience and observation' he felt 'the necessity of some measure that would bring sinners to a stand'. Something needed to make the impressions 'that they were expected then and there to give up their hearts'. At Rochester he first began to employ the 'anxious seat' for he needed something that would make them act as publicly before the world as they had in their pursuit of sin, 'something that would commit them publicly to the service of Christ'. Those that he called to these seats, vacated for this specific purpose, were 'so ripe that they were willing then and there to renounce their sins and give themselves to God'.

Summary and Evaluation

The methods used by Finney in his revival efforts were the immediate result of his theology. He summarised the connection in this way, 'The doctrine upon which I insisted, that the command to obey God implied the power to do so, created in some places considerable opposition at first . . . It was said that I taught self-conversion, self-regeneration; and not infrequently was I rebuked for addressing the sinner as if the blame of his impenitence all belonged to himself, and for urging him to immediate submission. However, I persisted in this course, and it was seen by ministers and Christians that God owned it as his truth, and blessed it to the salvation of thousands of souls.'

Finney's doctrine and practice initiated a radical shift in concepts of both revival and conversion among evangelicals. Wildly varied reactions to Finney's New Measures as well as the theology supporting them began to flow forth in the nineteenth century. Asahel Nettleton, upon request from pastors with whom he had worked, went to Finney while he was in Troy and interviewed him. He came to believe, 'there could be no hope of convincing Mr. Finney of his errors, so long as he was upheld and encouraged by ministers of high respectability'. Nettleton wrote a long letter to Dr Aikin of Utica, New York. He pointed mainly to a denunciatory spirit, the adoption of measures calamitous to revival, and a seeming incorrigibility. 'I have long been wishing to correct some of his peculiarities, that I might invite him into my own field, and introduce

him to my friends', Nettleton wrote. In addition to poor health, however, one factor made Nettleton hesitate: 'Some of his particular friends are urging him on to the very things which I wish him to drop. I fear that their flattering representations will overcome all that I can say.'

Asa Rand and Charles Hodge brought early and highly pertinent theological critiques to Finney. Rand attended a service in which he heard Finney preach his new sermon 'Sinners Bound to Change their Own Hearts.' He took notes rapidly and published a sixteen-page pamphlet entitled *The New Divinity Tried*. He did not mention Finney by name though he used the sermon to make every point concerning the weaknesses he perceived in the New Divinity, as presented by Finney. He alleged that Finney did not know Scripture in that he omitted from any discussion the massive number of texts that declare the heart of man to be deceived, deceitful, wicked, captive, hateful, corrupt, and that all human actions arise from such a heart. He ignored decades and centuries of theological development and carefully constructed vocabulary and concepts such as were present in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. In Rand's observation, there is no true conversion in Finney's theology, since it is only an act of the sinner's will with powers, both mental and moral, already present within him. Because of this, Finney's views trivialise the work of the Spirit as presented so fully and deeply in Scripture, reducing him to an outside agent playing the part of a mere persuader, as if he were only another preacher of moral reform.

Hodge agreed with Rand, but went further in his critique: 'We believe that the characteristic tendency of this mode of preaching is to keep the Holy Spirit and his influences out of view, and we fear a still more serious objection is, that Christ and his cross are practically made of none effect.' The exhortation to make choice of God as the portion of the soul and change the governing purpose of the life are acts which have no immediate reference to Christ. The soul comes to God without a Mediator. 'We maintain,' Hodge wrote, 'that this is another gospel. It is practically another system, and a legal system of religion.' Hodge continued, 'We do not intend [mean] that the doctrine of the mediation of Christ is rejected, but that it is neglected; that the sinner is led to God directly; that he is not urged, under the pressure of the sense of guilt, to go to Christ for pardon, and then to God.' Hodge believed that this defect has a tendency 'fatal to religion and the souls of men'.

Hodge is close to the heart of the issue in pointing to Finney's minimising

of the place that Christ's mediation has in his scheme of salvation. In his scheme, however, Christ's atoning work was not merely neglected, but, for any efficiency attributed to it, was rejected, for there is no substitution, no propitiation, no imputation, and thus no real dependence on the work of Christ for forgiveness or righteousness.

Lectures on the Revival of Religion by W B Sprague, published in 1832, contained nine sermons by Sprague on revival and 20 letters by leading theological thinkers. This avoided any straightforward emphasis on Finney himself, but clearly discussed several issues of concern raised by Finney's increasing influence. 'It is not to be concealed or denied that much has passed at various periods under the name of revivals, which a sound and intelligent piety could not fail to reprobate,' Sprague observed. 'There have been scenes in which the decorum due to Christian worship has been entirely forgotten; in which the fervor of passion has been mistaken for the fervor of piety; in which the awful name of God has been involved not only with irreverence but with disgusting familiarity.'

In his letter Daniel Dana sought to affirm that which Finney emphasised that was imitable, but warned against one of the major errors. 'We cannot speak to sinners too emphatically of their obligation to immediate repentance; of the guilt and danger of delay; nor of their encouragement to give themselves to religion; nor of the absolute certainty that if they truly seek, they shall obtain blessings. Nor can we employ too much pains to wrest from them their ten thousand excuses for impenitence.' Given the necessity of such urgency, however, 'we may not suffer them to forget their deep depravity; their insufficiency; their dependence on sovereign mercy; nor the necessity of divine influence to change their hearts'.

Other writings seeking to address various errors of Finney were those of John W Nevin in *The Anxious Bench* written in 1843 and *The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton* by Bennet Tyler, 1844. Tyler wanted to highlight the life and ministry of Asahel Nettleton with a view to recommending his approach to revival and to point to the distinct difference between Nettleton and Finney by showing the points at which Nettleton himself criticised Finney. Tyler noted, 'A great excitement attended the preaching of Mr Finney and his coadjutors; and multitudes were reported as the subjects of renewing grace. That very many of the reputed converts were like the stony ground hearers, who endured only for a time, few will at this day be disposed to deny. Yet it is believed that some were truly converted to Christ.'

Perhaps the most sustained criticism and deep-seated suspicion of his ministry came from the Princetonians. In their 1876 review of his *Memoirs*, the reviewer began, 'This is a very melancholy record'. He showed the severe scepticism toward Finney that went throughout the review when he said, 'It is the record of the life and labors of a professed minister of the gospel, and yet of a minister who denied and labored to overthrow the great doctrines of the gospel; the record of a man who professed to be . . . under the constant direction of the Holy Ghost, and yet of a man who flagrantly and constantly dishonored the Holy Ghost, not only by denying the teachings of his Word, but by denying to him any other kind of agency in the salvation of sinners than that which was exercised by the preacher himself.' The reviewer reminded his readers that Finney was 'a minister who had no training for his profession, and yet a writer on "Systematic Theology"'. He believed, and with good reason, that Finney's anthropology was the 'baldest Pelagianism', and correspondingly produced a 'miserably shallow soteriology'. It seems, according to this reviewer, repeating the observation made by Hodge forty years earlier, 'He had as little use for Christ in his system as for the Holy Ghost'. The reviewer, true to the end in his intense warning against being deluded by the reported successes of Finney, closed by stating if anybody 'loves the gospel of our Lord, and has felt its power and glory, he will be thankful that he was not trained under such preaching as Finney's'.

Sources used in this article include several sermons by Finney: *How to Change your Heart; Salvation Difficult to the Christian, Impossible to the Sinner; Sinners bound to Change Their Own Heart; On Being Holy; God has no Pleasure in the Sinner's Death*.

Also used in this article, and always indispensable in seeking to understand Finney and the impact of his career, is Garth M Rosell, Richard A G Dupuis, Ed. *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. See also Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, (abridged) ed J H Fairchild. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc 1976. An excellent biography with an emphasis on the thought of Finney is by Keith Hardman. *Charles Grandison Finney*, Baker Book House. Also see the review of Finney's *Memoirs* printed in the *Biblical Repository and Review* in 1876.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Part 2: His renewing work in the believer

by Kees van Kralingen

The renewing work of the Holy Spirit

The ultimate goal of God's plan of redemption is a new humanity and a new heaven and a new earth as we read at the end of the Bible (Rev 21 and 22). The Bible explains that God will bring this about through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit who applies the work of Christ in the believer, both individually and collectively in the Church and also in creation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit from the day of Pentecost onwards. Sinclair Ferguson expresses this as follows: 'The post-Pentecost activity of the Spirit, therefore, spreads through history like concentric ripples in a pool. As in the Old Testament era, so in the New, his activity is soteriological, communal, cosmic and eschatological, and involves the transformation of the individual, the governing of the Church and the world, and the bringing in of the new age.'¹ We will look at this renewing work of the Spirit first of all in the believer. Although we cannot separate the work of the three persons of the Trinity, this work of renewal is especially ascribed to the Holy Spirit as we will see.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer

The order of salvation and union with Christ

The way the Spirit applies the work of Christ in individual believers has many wonderful aspects and people throughout the history of the Church have tried to describe this in orderly fashion. This has led people to try to define this in some sort of order, or chain of benefits realised in the lives of believers often referred to as the 'order of salvation'. In some cases this order has been described as a logical order, in terms of cause and effect, or a series of events in time. This approach has caused significant debate about the details of this order. Sinclair Ferguson has proposed a different approach. He wants to start with what he regards as the central role of the Spirit, as found in the New Testament, which is to reveal Christ and to unite us to him and to all those who participate in his body (the Church).² The work of the Spirit unites us to Christ such that Paul more than 160 times uses the expression 'in Christ'. This central feature of the work of the Spirit is the basic principle which structures all other aspects of the

Spirit's ministry in the believer, as he says: 'The dominant motif and architectonic principle of the order of salvation should therefore be union with Christ in the Spirit.'³

This approach has a number of distinct benefits according to Ferguson. First, it helps us to avoid looking at the various blessings of the gospel either in isolation from each other, or separate from its Benefactor, but rather it stimulates a healthy Christ-centredness in Christian living. Secondly, this perspective also avoids the danger of an unhealthy subjective or introspective approach in which believers try to find out from their present experience where they are located in the order of salvation, rather than focusing their attention and faith on Jesus Christ. Thirdly, using union with Christ as the central principle governing the work of the Spirit helps us to maintain the vital eschatological dimension in the application of redemption, sometimes expressed briefly as 'already/not yet'. As Ferguson shows, this applies to all aspects of salvation of which Christ is the paradigm and source. Regeneration is on the one hand a present reality, but it also awaits its consummation (Matt 19:28). Likewise sanctification already involves a radical break now with the dominion of sin (Rom 6:1-14; 1 Cor 6:11), but also involves a progressive development in our lives (1 Thess 5:23). Something similar applies to our adoption as sons (Rom 8:14-17, 23).⁴

Having been united to Christ by the Holy Spirit such that we are said to be 'in him' means that we share in all that Christ has accomplished, as Ferguson explains⁵. And this shows abundantly the riches of God's grace in our salvation to the praise of God's glory (Eph 1:3-14). Our redemption is founded in our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (e.g. Rom 6:3-11; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:11-13, 3:1). Christ is the second Adam whose resurrection from the dead is our redemption as he died the death that we deserved: death as the wages of sin, separation from life, judgement under the wrath of God and alienation from the face of the Father. In his resurrection Christ was delivered from death by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ did this for us and therefore we can say that the application of redemption to us is rooted in the application by the work of Christ. We can illustrate this as follows. Jesus' resurrection is viewed as his justification (1 Tim 3:16), his resurrection being also for our justification (Rom 4:25). In the same way we can say regarding sanctification that, as Christ died to sin once for all and lives to God, so we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:9-11). In his resurrection Christ 'was declared to be the Son of God in

power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead' (Rom 1:4), resulting in our adoption as children of God (Rom 8:14-17). Likewise, the glorification of Christ in his resurrection is the 'firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep' (1 Cor 15:20) and we will thus be glorified with him (1 Cor 15:22-23, 42-44).

In all of this the Holy Spirit is the bond that unites us to Christ as Paul explains in Romans 8:9-11. This is what Jesus himself had said to his disciples in his final discourse to them before his death (John 14:15-24). Paul can therefore say that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) and that in Christ we are 'being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit' (Eph 2:22).

Regeneration, repentance and faith

The next question is how this union with Christ is brought about in our lives. When we are in Christ we are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). This leads us into the biblical language of regeneration and the new birth which are the ways to express how we become a new creation. In Matt 19:28 and Titus 3:5 a word is used in the Greek (*palingenesia*) which literally means beginning again. Given the context of Matthew 19:28 this term includes a clear eschatological dimension: the final rebirth of the universe, the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth in which believers will partake. In other texts especially in John's writings (John 1:12-13, 3:3-8; 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1,4,18) and in 1 Peter 1:3,23, we read about a new birth, or being born of God. This indicates the fundamental change and total transformation in someone's life brought about by the Holy Spirit (John 3:8). Regeneration has a number of immediate effects. It means new life in Christ and involves a change in mind, heart and will (Rom 6:17). Our minds become illumined by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 4:3-6; 1 John 2:20,27). Regeneration is also explained in terms of washing or cleansing. When Jesus speaks about being born of water and Spirit, he is referring to Ezekiel 36:25-27, whilst Paul describes this as the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

Although regeneration is a work of God the Holy Spirit in which he is sovereignly bringing about his purposes in the salvation of sinners, this does not mean that people are totally passive and inert objects. As we have already seen, the Spirit addresses mind, heart and will. He calls them to spiritual life using the Word of God and its preaching, as is underlined in the New Testament (eg 1 Peter 1:23; Jas 1:18; John 15:3). The Word is instrumental in regeneration. This does not take away the sovereign

nature of the work of the Spirit. As Sinclair Ferguson states: ‘For the New Testament writers, however, there is no hint of a threat to divine sovereignty in the fact that the word is the instrumental cause of regeneration, while the Spirit is the efficient cause. This is signalled in the New Testament by the use of the preposition *ek* to indicate the divine originating cause (eg John 3:5; 1 John 3:9; 5:1) and *dia* to express the instrumental cause (eg John 15:3; 1 Cor 4:15; 1 Pet 1:23).’⁶

Whilst regeneration is thus the work of the Holy Spirit with the Word as his instrument, faith and repentance are the human manifestation of the new birth. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit’s ministry and is seen in the New Testament as the gift of God. We can see this in Philippians 1:29 and Ephesians 2:8. It is important to emphasise that although faith is a gift of God, faith as an act is an activity of man. As Ferguson says: ‘God does not believe for us, or in us; we believe. Yet it is only by God’s grace that we believe. His gift is simultaneously our act.’⁷ And a little further on, he says: ‘The active exercise of faith (it is we, not God, who believe) does not compromise the *grace* of the Spirit’s work in the application of salvation,’⁸ and, ‘The genius of salvation by grace is that it engages man without diluting the graciousness of the salvation received.’⁹

The same applies to repentance which is also described as a gift and as an activity of man. Men are called to faith and repentance; sometimes they are mentioned together (Mark 1:15); sometimes alone (Matt 3:2; Acts 2:38; 16:30-31; 17:30), but it is clear that ‘There is no regeneration which is not expressed in both faith and repentance’.¹⁰

Sanctification and being filled with the Spirit

As we have already seen (see Part 1), the Holy Spirit is given to every believer from the point of regeneration, repentance and faith (Rom 8:9-10; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13-14; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). He begins his renewing work in us, the process of sanctification. Paul describes this in terms of our killing the deeds of our sinful ‘flesh’ as we are led by the Spirit (Rom 8:12-14). This is the conflict between our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit as he explains elsewhere (Gal 5:16-17). It is at the same time the work of God in us, and also our responsibility as Paul states clearly in Philippians 2:12-13. The fact that the Holy Spirit lives in us as in a temple should strongly motivate us to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit employs the Word of God to sanctify us. This can be shown very clearly from the comparison of Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16 as already mentioned above. Jesus prayed that we would be sanctified by the truth (John 17:17).

This throws light on what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Some people give the impression that this refers to a special experience raising us to a higher level of emotional spirituality. Nothing could be further from the truth when we look more carefully at the text and context of Ephesians 5:18. Paul draws a contrast between drunkenness leading to loss of control of our mental faculties on the one hand, and being filled and thus being controlled and led by the Spirit on the other hand. This manifests itself not in feeling ourselves in higher spiritual spheres, but rather finding ourselves down in the middle of life in which we worship God (5:19-20), submit to one another (5:21), serve the Lord in marriage, family and work (5:22 – 6:9). We could say for example that we need to be filled with the Spirit in order to have a Christian marriage!

In this way the fruit of the Spirit shows itself in our lives (Gal 5:22). This is a single fruit consisting in all nine elements which Paul mentions. We cannot opt for only one or a few, but the fruit (single) consists of all of them. This multi-faceted fruit involves our relationship with God, one another and ourselves. The picture of fruit suggests the necessary growth in exhibiting these graces.

Assurance of salvation

Finally, the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer involves several further aspects which are all focused on giving us assurance of our salvation whilst we are still here in this fallen, sinful and dark world awaiting the consummation.¹¹ First, the Holy Spirit given to us is called a guarantee (or ‘earnest’ in older translations) of our future salvation (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). The Greek word literally means down-payment. His presence in us is a powerful guarantee of our future hope. Secondly, believers have also been sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). A seal ‘secures and may also authenticate an object with a view to some future occasion’.¹² We find the two ideas combined in the texts in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13-14. Together they serve a wonderful purpose of giving us a well-founded hope and assurance for our complete and future redemption whilst we are still in the world experiencing the tension and conflict between what we already have, and what is not yet. We are called to live our lives now being led by the Holy Spirit as Paul explains in Romans 8.

In this context we have to mention what John Calvin called the first title of the Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship as mentioned by Paul in Romans 8:12-21 and specifically in verse 15-17, ‘For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption

as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father!”” See also Galatians 4:6-7. ‘The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him’ (Rom 8:16-17). Paul continues to describe the tension between living with the sufferings of the present time and the futility and bondage to decay of this creation, and the hope of obtaining the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:18-22). This brings Paul to another wonderful expression of the comfort of the Holy Spirit present with us in Romans 8:23. He says: ‘... but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.’ This is what we hope for with patience (Rom 8:25).

It is therefore no surprise that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the other *Paraclete*, who would be with the disciples of Jesus after he had gone to the Father (John 14:16). He is the Comforter, but the word means more than that. The word *Paraclete* means someone who has been called to help, to our defence. It also means that he is a witness, which is what he can be as he is present with Christ himself. This is why Paul can talk about Christ living in us and also the Spirit of God dwelling in us (Rom 8:9-10). The Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus Christ in us by applying its benefits to us. Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6) and, therefore, the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Jesus and the Spirit are both witnesses to the truth (John 15:26; 18:37). Jesus taught his disciples and the Holy Spirit will continue to do this (John 14:23-27).

References

¹Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP: 1996), p. 93-4

²Ferguson, p. 100

³Ferguson, p. 100

⁴Ferguson, p. 103

⁵Ferguson, p. 103-106

⁶Ferguson, p. 125

⁷Ferguson, p. 126

⁸Ferguson, p. 128 (*italics his*)

⁹Ferguson, p. 129

¹⁰Ferguson, p. 132; the topic of repentance will be treated in more detail in an article scheduled for *RT* 267.

¹¹Space does not permit to give a full survey of the topic of assurance. Here only the different expressions used in the New Testament for the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to assurance are being discussed.

¹²Ferguson, p. 180

Is Sunday Special?

by John Benton

THE IDEA THAT SUNDAY WORSHIP, SUNDAY CHURCH attendance is part of Christian obedience has come under great attack in recent years.

For example Romans 14:5 says: 'One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.' Here Paul is considering Christian freedom of conscience in terms of 'the weak' and 'the strong'.

Now the ESV Study Bible (which is great in many ways) carries this comment. *'The weak thought some days were more important than others. Given the Jewish background here, that day that is supremely in view is certainly the Sabbath. The strong think every day is the same. Both views are permissible. Each person must follow his own conscience. What is remarkable is that the Sabbath is no longer a binding commitment for Paul but a matter of one's personal conviction. Unlike the other nine commandments in Ex 20:1-17 the Sabbath commandment seems to have been part of the "ceremonial laws" of the Mosaic covenant... which are no longer binding... However, it is still wise to take regular times of rest from work*

and regular times of worship are commanded for Christians.'

Many modern evangelicals would concur with that statement. They would say that actually Sunday isn't special. The practical outcome is that the 10 commandments are downgraded. If one has become optional – the Sabbath – perhaps the rest are too. Also it leads to Christians becoming increasingly loose and pragmatic about Sundays and what they do. 'We'll fit in church somewhere, perhaps before we go out to the beach or late afternoon on the way back from the supermarket; because Sunday isn't special.'

Is the ESV Study Bible correct? Is this the right interpretation of Romans 14:5 and similar verses in Colossians 2:16-17? Is it right to conclude from these verses that one of the 10 commandments 'is no longer binding'? Or have we rushed to embrace something that appeals to us as twenty-first century Westerners as an easier option? Let me explain why I think this explanation has got it very wrong and is very dangerous.

New Testament data

First, we must ask a question. Is it true that strong Christians in the New Testament regard all days the same and no day as special?

The answer is ‘No’. The apostle John (a strong Christian I think we can assume) obviously thought that during the week there was a special day – he calls it ‘the Lord’s Day’ (Rev 1:10).¹ Furthermore the early church gathered on this day – the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and the apostle Paul (a strong Christian) encourages Christians to have their collections to help other churches when presumably they regularly get together – on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2). Surely reflecting on this data, already we see that the absolutising of Romans 14:5, implying that it applies across the board (as per the ESV Study Bible) seems to be leading to a quite definite contradiction. Indeed it would seem that Paul would be contradicting himself.

Second, as we dig into the New Testament we realise that the idea of the first day of the week being special was not something pragmatic or dreamed up by the early Christians, as Romans 14:5 would imply if we take the ESV Study Bible’s understanding. This idea of meeting together with the Lord on Sundays is something clearly instigated by God himself. The first day of the week is the Lord’s Day because on that day Jesus rose from the dead – thus declaring that he is Lord of

all. And it is surely noteworthy that though Jesus probably was crucified on a Friday, none of the Gospels make that explicit. But by contrast all four Gospels spell out repeatedly that Jesus rose on Sunday, the first day of the week (Matt 28:1,2; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1 and more).

And not only was the resurrection on a Sunday, the Gospels go on to tell us that Jesus meets with his disciples in an ongoing way on Sunday (John 20:19,26 etc). What is the essence of church? It is surely Jesus meeting with his people. And now Jesus is ascended we do that as he comes to us by his Word and his Spirit. And guess which day the Spirit came? Pentecost was a Sunday (check it out: Lev 23:15,16). So in the New Testament there was obviously a God-appointed special day – Sunday – which the church observed, the day they met together.

The idea that strong Christians treated *every* day alike doesn’t stack up with the evidence.

Jews and Gentiles

How then are we to understand Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans 14:5? Surely it is fairly straightforward. In Romans there is a question about Jewish and

¹ To make out that ‘the Lord’s Day’ here refers to the whole New Covenant period or the last days until Christ’s return would make the phrase redundant in the sentence. Also John’s use of sevens in his structuring of Revelation indicates that he still frames everything in terms of the creation week.

Gentile believers relating together in the same church. In Colossians there are troubles caused by heretical ideas which have at least partially a Jewish background. What is primarily in view in these passages, given the Jewish context, is the Jewish calendar of Saturday Sabbaths and feasts. That's all gone. They no longer apply. When Paul in Romans 14:5 speaks of considering 'every day alike' he is not speaking absolutely, but in the context of the Jewish calendar. Now if a Jewish Christian wants to continue to keep the Jewish Sabbath or a Jewish feast – that is completely within their liberty – indeed Paul himself seems to do this sometimes (Acts 20:16).

But though the Jewish calendar is finished – fulfilled in Christ – to infer from that that there are now no special days absolutely, is to infer something that simply does not follow and leads to contradiction. The Jewish Sabbath is gone – but to infer from that that the whole Sabbath principle is gone is quite another matter. This is especially true since the New Testament highlights that the resurrection took place on the first day of the week and Christ continues to meet with his disciples on that day (John 20:24,26), and the Spirit was given on that day. By these acts which speak so eloquently of his grace, God clearly marks out one day in seven as special – a Sabbath principle.

Jesus and the Sabbath

None of us want to be legalistic or hypocritical Pharisees. I'm sure this is a big part of the momentum against Sunday observance within current evangelicalism. But Jesus' rebuking of the Pharisees over their misuse and *misunderstanding* of the Sabbath is one thing; however proving that Jesus abolished the Sabbath principle altogether is quite another.

In fact the data from the Gospels seems rather to indicate that Jesus underlined the Sabbath principle. How is Sunday special? Surely, it is special because it represents the Old Testament Sabbath principle translated into New Covenant terms. In the New Covenant the law is not abrogated but written in our hearts (Jer 31:33; Rom 8:3,4). Why would the Sabbath principle be set aside?

First, the Sabbath principle goes back to creation. On the public stage we have recently lost the great battle concerning the redefinition of marriage. We looked at our Bibles and said marriage is between man and woman. That is how it was at the beginning and to change it is wrong. Just so we find the day of rest, one day in seven, was written into creation (Gen 2:1-3). Surely to ignore that is equally wrong. And notice the creation reference is the basis for the 4th commandment in Exodus 20:8-11. If we feel free to ignore creation ordinances why did

we kick up such a fuss over same sex marriage?

Second, the change of the day as we move into the New Testament fits the idea of the onset of a New Covenant era, rather better than a cancelling of the Sabbath principle would. There are a couple of things to reflect on here:

A) It is worth remembering, as Iain Campbell has pointed out², that though the Sabbath was the seventh day of creation, for Adam (created on the sixth day) it was the first day of his week. Adam's first sunrise was the Sabbath. B) The great Old Testament redemption at the exodus apparently brought a change of calendar (Ex 12:2). The beginning of the year was recalibrated, reflecting the fact that a new era had dawned for Israel as they were set free from slavery. This being the case, it should not surprise us that when the great redemption, of which the exodus is only a shadow, is accomplished by Christ this too is marked by a change of calendar. A new era has indeed dawned with the New Covenant.

Third, Jesus speaks of himself as 'Lord even of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27, 28). God established the Sabbath in Genesis, so in claiming to be Lord of the Sabbath, this is another clear claim of Jesus to Deity. But notice some other things here. Some theologians (like the

writers of the ESV Study Bible) insist that the Sabbath was for Israel. But in Mark's verses Jesus does not say the Sabbath was made for Israel but for man. The Sabbath being 'made' refers back to creation. 'Man' appears to be a universal reference to mankind, not just Israel. Further Jesus uses the title 'Son of Man' in conjunction with Lord of the Sabbath. That title is nowhere restricted to Jesus' relation to Israel but is always used in respect of the world in general. So it is with the seminal passage concerning the 'Son of Man' in Daniel 7:13,14. 'He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him.' So the restriction of the Sabbath principle to Israel doesn't fit.

But more. Jesus says in these verses that the Sabbath was made for man – ie 'for the good of man' – for rest, for renewal, for employers not to exploit their employees by making them work seven days a week as Israel had to in Egyptian slavery. Now we have to think, with Jesus explaining that the Sabbath is a blessing to man, how does it make any sense to believe that his first move as Lord of the Sabbath will be to abolish it? It would be nonsense. Rather he shows he is Lord of the Sabbath not by abolishing it but by changing days. The Old Covenant is gone, the New has come – marked by Christ's victory being remembered

²Iain D Campbell, *On the First Day of the Week*, Day One Publications.

every first day of the week.

Fourth, of course the day of rest does not just speak at the level of creation but at the level of salvation. It is a picture of grace, forgiveness and joy. It is a picture of our recognising that by our own ‘working’ we cannot be saved, and so we must ‘rest’ in Christ by believing on him. That’s why Jesus announces the beginning of his public ministry on a Sabbath day – in the synagogue reading from Isaiah 61 of the Sabbath year of Jubilee (Luke 4:18, 19). That’s why Jesus performed so many of his healing miracles on the Sabbath – to the annoyance of the Pharisees.

Sunday and the gospel

And this being the case, Sunday becomes the great day for the Christian to hear the gospel. The central activity of Sunday must be to listen to the Word of God preached. We need to continually hear it for it not only brings salvation but assurance of salvation and keeps us believing.

Martin Luther uses Sabbath vocabulary to give both an encouragement and a warning concerning the need to regularly sit under the preaching of the gospel and meditate on God’s Word. ‘We teach continually that the knowledge of Christ, and of faith, is no work of man, but simply the gift of God, who as he createth faith, so doth he keep

us in it. And even as he first giveth faith unto us through the Word, so afterwards he exerciseth, increaseth, strengtheneth and maketh perfect the same in us by the Word.

‘Therefore the greatest service that a man can do unto God, and the very Sabbath of Sabbaths, is to exercise himself in true godliness, diligently to hear and to read the word. Contrariwise, there is nothing more dangerous than to be weary of the Word. He therefore that is so cold, that he thinketh himself to know enough, and beginneth by little and little to loathe the Word, that man hath lost Christ and the gospel, and that which he thinketh himself to know, he attaineth only by bare speculation.’³

Our salvation is secure. Christ has won it by his cross. He has guaranteed it by his resurrection. But it’s not yet consummated. We are not yet in heaven. We need to keep our faith strong. Heaven is the continual Sabbath (Revelation). But we are not there yet. In the words of Hebrews 4, ‘There remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.’ (NIV) So because we are not yet there, Sunday is meant to operate as a foretaste and encouragement. It is meant to be special in rest, worship, peace and joy.

John Benton is co-pastor of Chertsey Street Baptist Church, Guildford

³ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, (comment on Galatians 1:11, 12)

News

Namibia

The following is an extract from the latest prayer letter from Laban Mwashekele, pastor of Monte Christo Baptist Church (MCBC) in Windhoek.

‘Our local church has grown; we have just ordained seven deacons and seven deaconesses last year. This year, at the end of June 2015, we will have ordained five men as elders at MCBC. Our attendance is about 250 people, and as the membership has grown to over 50, we are opening new branches in new locations and are sending some church members there to go and establish new mission stations.’



Pastor Laban Mwashekele

There are now about 25 mission stations of what is called the Evangelical Baptist Mission, leading to the formation of what now constitutes about 12 churches belonging to the Evangelical Baptist Churches in Namibia.

At the same time Pastor Mwashekele reports that the growth also creates some resistance both from outside and inside Christian circles. The latter may be explained

as many Pentecostal people and churches are turning to the doctrines of grace and adopting the *Baptist Confession of 1689*. These churches receive help and guidance from Pastor Joachim Rieck (of Eastside Baptist Church) and Pastor Spencer Tjihenda, who are teaching them basic doctrine every Sunday afternoon and Thursday evening, with Pastor Mwashekele himself teaching those churches where only the local language is spoken. These churches are calling themselves Mission Baptist Churches in Namibia.

Pastor Mwashekele ends his prayer letter with the following requests which we are happy to pass on to our readers:

‘The two men who need most of your prayers are Lukas Joseph, who leads the Evangelical Baptist Churches in Namibia and his team, and David Matheum, who leads the Mission Baptist Churches in Namibia and his team. Pray that these two reformed missionary movements will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that as I give them spiritual oversight, I do not go beyond the God-ordained means of grace. Pray also that there will be enough finance to meet them halfway, good men to mentor for future use and simple reformed books to help them see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.’

Evangelism in Europe

A group of believers associated with Grace Baptist Partnership, UK have started an initiative to promote evangelism in Europe. They have realised that a majority of people of the current population have never heard the gospel. A website has been launched (www.euroevangelism.org) and a conference has been scheduled in Vienna from 22-24 September this year, DV. Representatives from many European countries will gather to discuss how evangelism in Europe can be stimulated further. Please see the website for further information, contact details and registration for this conference.

African Pastors’ Conferences

Your prayers are requested for two parallel series of conferences in June:

Nairobi, Kenya (9-10), Kampala, Uganda (11-12), Mbale, Uganda (15-16) and Eldoret, Kenya (18-19). Speakers will be Ronald Kalifungwa (Lusaka Baptist Church) and Irving Steggles (Birchleigh Baptist Church).

Hazyview, RSA (9-10), Barberton, RSA (12-13), Komatiapoort, RSA (15-16), Manzini, Swaziland (18-19). Speakers will be Ndonji Kayombo (pastor of Nkana West Baptist Church, Zambia) and Blake Cassell (APC Conference Manager).

The theme for these conferences is ‘Being right with God and becoming more like Christ’.

Carey Conference Recordings

A report of the January 2015 Carey Ministers' Conference was published in the previous issue of Reformation Today. We would like to inform our readers that recordings of both this year's conference and previous conferences can be ordered from:

Carey Conference
The Manse
47 Long Street
Great Ellingham
Norfolk NR17 1LN
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 1953 453347
E-mail: hughcollier.hc@gmail.com

New Books

The following new books have appeared recently:

- Natalie Brand, *Crazy But True* (Bryntirion Press, 2015), 105pp. ISBN 9781783970667. A book on the theology and application of union with Christ; especially targeted at women
- John Caldwell, *Christ, the Cross and the Concrete Jungle* (EP Books, 2015), 116pp. ISBN 9781783970759. The story of a young man's deliverance from a lifestyle of desperation and delinquency to a new life of freedom and hope. This book reveals the remarkable journey of transformation and redemption that is made possible through the gospel of Jesus Christ
- *The Works of William Perkins, Volume I*, edited by J Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), ISBN 978-1-60178-360-8

Please note that we are unable to supply these books; please consult your own bookshop.

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Naphtally Ogallo – Grace Baptist
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Donations to APC: These should be sent to Phil Roberts, 121 Hartshill Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7LU. Cheques should be made out to 'African Pastors' Conferences'. Could UK donors please let Phil Roberts know if they intend to use gift aid.

Further details about individual conferences are available from Phil Roberts (phil@tentmaker) or Frederick Hodgson (frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)

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