

How Does God Speak To Us Today?: Biblical Anthropology and the Witness of the Holy Spirit

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Introduction

The voice on the other end of the telephone was recognizable but distraught: 'You must not go to Brisbane, if you go you will sow in tears. God has told me you must not go.' To which I could only reply: 'God has told Donna and me that we are to go.' The conversation, if such a fundamental discordance of appeal to ultimate authority could be called such, did not continue for very long. Soon our family of six were heading 1500 kilometres north to a city where we knew no one and where I had no assured job prospects. The next two years did prove exceptionally difficult, there were times of tears, but nothing ever caused us to doubt that we had 'heard God' correctly and that the caring parishioner on the other end of the telephone was mistaken.

Probably all pastors have had to deal with situations of reputed divine guidance which, at least in terms of their frame of reference could not possibly have been genuine.¹ Christian history is replete with the strangest and gravest of examples where people have been lead astray out of a sincere conviction that they were being guided by an inner witness from the Holy Spirit.² Even if this is not a new problem it is one which in recent decades has been pressing itself upon the church with increasing urgency. On the one hand there have been changes in the general *milieu* of Western society away from a dominant naturalism to embracing 'spirituality' as an authentic part of human existence.³ The *Zeitgeist* cannot but influence the receptivity of Christians to putative divine communications, not only in the direction of conformity but also by way of aversive reaction.⁴ More specifically, however, we have had the influence of the charismatic or pentecostal movement, where talk about God's voice is not merely commonplace but arguably a badge of spiritual identity.

It is the task of this article to try and bring some clarity to this area of spirituality by exposing it to a more extended theological analysis than is usually the case.⁵ In particular I want to move beyond the initial question

of the credibility of the claim that God can speak other than through the Bible to consider something of the phenomenology and possible causal mechanisms of the witness of the Holy Spirit⁶ in terms of the parameters of New Testament anthropology. Although this exercise may not change our experience of the Holy Spirit it should at least make discussion about the Spirit's guiding work more rational and so more testable.⁷

The Witness of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament

The matter of the witness of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is not a subject of great controversy. Even where a very conservative position on guidance is adopted,⁸ it is incontrovertible that the scriptural writers record instances of Spirit's witness. There are two clear instances of audition in the book of Acts,⁹: 'The Spirit told Philip . . .' (Acts 8:29),¹⁰ 'the Spirit said to him . . .' (Acts 10:19). More ambiguous references could refer to this phenomenon, to sensory experiences, prophecy, or external events. 'having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia . . . they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.' (Acts 16:6-7), 'in every city the Holy Spirit warns me . . .' (Acts 20:23).¹¹ That Luke at least believed that Christians (not just apostles, as the example of Philip shows) could receive this type of divine guidance cannot be denied. What is controversial is the relevance of these examples for post-apostolic times.

The Question of Spiritual Continuity

A thorough discussion of this matter would have to include a survey of historical evidence which could be taken to support the thesis that the witness of the Spirit has always been a part of the church. This has been a self-conscious strategy of some prominent recent neo-pentecostal authors.¹² These surveys are limited because they bear the marks of the pre-commitment of the author and a total reliance on secondary texts: much more impressive are the conclusions of scholars with a facility in patristics who argue that the early church took for granted that the Holy Spirit guided by a wide variety of operations integral to the life of the believer.¹³

I do not wish to pursue this line of inquiry for two reasons. First, it would take me beyond the purpose and limits of this paper. Secondly, I believe that such an emphasis overlooks the crux of the controversy between biblically conservative Christians concerning the status of contemporary charismatic claims to hear from God. The debate to which I want to pay closer attention shortly is not over the quantity of evidence on one side or the other, but about the quality of evidence. More precisely, it is a question of epistemic authority.

The charismatic side, because of its self-understanding, has an *a priori* commitment to emphasize the continuity between the biblical and post-biblical evidence for the witness of the Spirit in the church. Christians

today are in the same position *vis-à-vis* the work of the Spirit as those in the first century. This means that when the evidence of human experience is being examined¹⁴ there is a certain levelling between the biblical accounts and subsequent reports. Usually this takes the form of an uncritical acceptance of events in church history which *prima facie* replicate New Testament phenomena.¹⁵ It may also function *via* methodological ignorance of the time-honoured hermeneutical distinction between prescription and description.¹⁶ The nett result is that in terms of knowing about experiential phenomena the charismatic believer tends to look back to apostolic times across a sort of 'spiritual plain'.¹⁷

Those opposed to claims of hearing God today may also look back towards the first century as if on a level plain,¹⁸ but it is as if the plain ends with a great uncrossable ravine, bordered on the far side by a high plateau. Contemporary believers, as far as the witness of the Spirit goes, are in an existential position inferior to the first Christians. Moreover, the immediate quality of their spiritual experience is irretrievable: if God speaks today he does it *through* the Bible. This perspectival disposition is the corollary of a very different approach to epistemic authority than that found in charismatic or pentecostal circles. There is an essential discontinuity between the authority of human experience outside the Bible and that witnessed to within the Bible.¹⁹ There is no possible extrapolation from current experience back to biblical experience; it is a given that the two belong (at least in the case of the witness of the Spirit) to a different order.

It is hardly possible to overemphasize the insuperable nature of this great divide. In its own way it is as uncrossable as Lessing's famous ditch: 'the accidental truths of history can never become the proof of the necessary truths of reason'.²⁰ Unless it is appreciated by neo-pentecostals that what we are dealing with here is a radical disjunction between two types of authority, the formal authority of written Scripture as over against human experience *per se*, the controversy concerning divine guidance is intrinsically insoluble. No amount of personal experience, nor the putative data of history, nor any weight of tradition could ever overthrow a conviction based on the belief that the Bible represents an essentially different source of knowledge about God, an authority essentially different from all others.²¹ It is this *a priori* epistemological dualism which in the end is being defended. Recognizing this as the 'order of battle' the particularities of the argument may now be usefully discussed.

Theological Objections to a Contemporary Witness of the Spirit²²

1. Historical Background

When it comes to the acceptance of a contemporary witness of the Spirit there is a strong theological tradition of opposition. The roots of such a rejection begin with the Reformation. Luther was faced with a crisis of authority on two fronts. He was forced to deny the Roman Catholic appeal

to the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit in the *magisterium* on the one hand, and on the other hand the claims of enthusiastic Anabaptists who insisted on the autonomy of divine guidance apart from the Scriptures.²³ His reply was that the Holy Spirit is bound to the external word of the gospel and the sacraments.²⁴ Calvin took up a similar position; there is a mutual bond between Spirit and Word; as the two are inseparable there can be no new revelation.²⁵

Puritan theology follows Calvin, though the main opponent became Quakerism.²⁶ Richard Baxter is the central advocate of a religion centred on the safety of Scripture.²⁷ The Westminster Confession codified a distinction already present in Calvin²⁸ between the revelation which led to Scripture and illumination of the truth of Scripture:

Nothing is to be added to the whole counsel of God whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.²⁹

This is the classic Reformed line which essentially passes in undeviated form, incorporating in the last century or so conservative evangelicalism, up to the present day. Reference could be made, for example, to the works of Jonathan Edwards,³⁰ Benjamin Warfield,³¹ W.H. Griffith-Thomas,³² G. Vos,³³ and James Packer³⁴ as representative of this position.³⁵ So much is this so that one commentator is able to say: 'there is one front only in the pneumatological teaching of the Reformed Church, but this has two distinct emphases. The first is the *bodily* word of the Spirit and the second is the *bodily word* of the Spirit.³⁶ 'Body' here means the body of Christ, the church, and 'the word' is the public preaching of the gospel. The Spirit does not operate in autonomy from the community of faith nor apart from the hearing of the Bible.³⁷

2. The Centrality of Reason

A persistent objection to all attempts to rely on the witness of the Holy Spirit as a normal part of Christian experience is that it negates the centrality of God-given reason. Baxter puts the concern clearly: 'The Spirit worketh not on the will but by the reason: he moveth not a man as a beast or a stone, to do a thing he knoweth not why, but by illumination giveth him the soundest reasons for the doing of it'.³⁸ Jonathan Edwards would not even allow Scriptures to be taken as revelatory apart from their context, as this broke the principle of rational control.³⁹ In more recent times G.F. Nuttall recoiled from the Oxford Movement because of its: 'unwise dependence on guidance by abnormal methods believed to be free from the fallibility of human reason and conscience. It cannot be said too strongly or too often that reason and conscience are the normal ordinary ways in which God's Spirit guides'.⁴⁰ James Packer sees the problem as a 'failure to grasp that the fundamental mode whereby our rational Creator

guides his rational creatures by rational understanding and application of his written Word . . . ' as over against ' . . . uncritical acceptance of non-rational and non-moral impulses as coming from the Holy Spirit . . . '.⁴¹

In a more nuanced theological critique Richard Lovelace perceives a confusion concerning the basic nature of created existence. There is an attempt to *replace* the faculty of reason with the witness of the Holy Spirit, whereas it is an office of the Spirit to *transform* the essential human attribute of reason. The result is that 'in the end this course dehumanizes us by turning us into either dependent robots waiting to be programmed by the Spirit's guidance or whimsical enthusiasts blown about by our hunches and emotions'.⁴² This objection is reminiscent of the fundamentalist Thomist dictum: 'Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it'.⁴³

In effect the two objectives combine—any attempt to dethrone the primacy of reason as the guiding faculty of created existence is to lay oneself open to the vagaries of impressions and emotions. It is to enter into a place of ontological imbalance by allowing the senses to dominate the intellect, a reversal of the true order that God designed for human existence. We have arrived here at a fundamental theological datum which forbids its adherents from embracing the witness of the Holy Spirit as a regulative principle of human living, that is, to embrace this latter proposition would be to overthrow a biblical anthropology. Or, to put this analysis more accurately, to reject a systematic *theological* anthropology which can be traced back to Augustine's location of the image of God in the soul.⁴⁴ If this tradition⁴⁵ is correct then those who deny the witness of the Spirit a significant place (or any place at all) in Christian experience are on solid ground.

This is an anthropological position which whilst not necessarily dualistic⁴⁶ places great emphasis on the power of the intellect to move the body *via* the will, so separating him from the brute unthinking creation. There seems to be a general failure of advocates of a commonplace witness of the Spirit that their position is perceived by the other side of the debate to be an assault on what it actually means to be human. Only when this is perceived can one appreciate some of the strength of the reactions to various phenomena publicized by the charismatic movement. It must be clear that if the above brief analysis is correct then the proponents of Spirit-led guidance must demonstrate to the opposing tradition that there is another and equally valid form of knowing than that of discursive reason. Given the priority of the Bible as a source of authority for both parties concerned this epistemological question must best be answered in terms of biblical theology rather than a discussion of the history of philosophy.⁴⁷

3. Biblical Exclusivism

The essence of this objection to all forms of guidance not immediately tied to the Bible is that there can be no new revelation. The advocate of new revelations is impaled on the horns of the dilemma—if the Biblical

revelation is sufficient for all matters of faith and conduct then new revelations are not needed, but if new revelations are needed then the adequacy of the Bible is implicitly or explicitly undermined.

Biblical theologians of a Reformed ilk have seen an indissoluble connexion between the events of salvation-history as recorded in the Bible and the revelation which is responsible for this same record. This sets up a closed (because past) cycle of history and revelation. Vos remarks:

. . . new revelation can be added only, in case new objective events of a supernatural character take place, needing for their understanding a new body of interpretation supplied by God. . . . mystical revelation claimed by many in the interim as a personal privilege is out of keeping with the genius of Biblical religion . . . As to its content and inherent value it is unverifiable, except on the principle of submitting it to the test of harmony with Scripture. And submitting it to this it ceases to be a separate source of revelation concerning God.⁴⁸

If the epoch of revelation has ended, and it is still held that God by his Spirit leads and guides his people into all truth,⁴⁹ then this must mean that Spirit-led guidance equals, in Packer's words: 'saying to us the same things he said to others long ago, only now in direct application to ourselves, in the situation in which we are'.⁵⁰ 'It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand God's word, and to apply it to our lives'.⁵¹ The Holy Spirit can lead only within the limits set by the Word.⁵² That opening of our spiritual eyes to the truth of Scripture which is called 'illumination' added to application cannot however constitute new revelation.

To deviate from the medium of the written Word into any reliance on impression, convictions, intuitions or voices is to fall into irrational subjectivism. This is exactly the error to which our 'Quaker age' is prone, as Peter Adam says: 'if it is true you must feel it deeply, therefore if you feel it deeply it's true'.⁵³ As sensations can be produced by any number of sources—God, Satan, an angel, a demon, human emotions, hormonal imbalance, insomnia, medication, or an upset stomach, and as there can be no sure way of identifying the source of the experience, one is left in a quagmire of uncertainty.⁵⁴ The only possible way out is to adhere solely to the deliverance of the objective propositional revelation enshrined in Holy Scripture.

The only one way to counter this objection, is to establish from Scripture that revelation did not end with the authoring of the Bible, and that any ongoing revelation can be distinguished as such, at least in principle.⁵⁵

Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Witness of the Spirit

(a) Transrational Knowing in Contemporary Charismatic Theology

When the current literature describing the witness of the Spirit is examined one is struck by the varieties of ways in which the experience is described.

Sometimes there is an appeal to the faculty of imagination,⁵⁶ at other times the encounter is called an impression,⁵⁷ an 'inner leading',⁵⁸ a voice,⁵⁹ a mutual conversation⁶⁰ or knowledge by acquaintance.⁶¹ At this point the terminology of John Wimber is most helpful: 'A rational experience must be added to a *transrational* experience, the natural to the supernatural, for the most forceful advance of the Kingdom of God'.⁶² By 'transrational' Wimber means something not irrational, but beyond the rational, but presumably it agrees with what is in the ordered mind of God but not accessible to finite intellection.⁶³

(b) Transrational Knowing in Classical Reformed Theology

In terms of the history of theology there are a number of possible candidates for transrational knowing.

The first of these is the 'internal testimony of the Holy Spirit'. In systematic form the progenitor of this doctrine is Calvin.⁶⁴ We know that the Scriptures are the Word of God because the Holy Spirit inwardly witnesses to us with all the authority of God that this is so. Whereas no amount of human reasoning could ever persuade us of the full authority of Scripture this is what is confirmed to us by the Spirit.⁶⁵ Calvin's language is not precise; at times he speaks of the testimony in terms of the Spirit 'illuming the mind'⁶⁶ but elsewhere refers to 'the heart' as the *locus* of a new spiritual sense by which the divinity of Scripture is perceived as by an intuitive spiritual perception.⁶⁷

Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees—in which the mind reposes more securely than in any reasons; such, finally a *feeling* that can be born only of heavenly revelation. . . . the only true faith is that which the Holy Spirit illumines our hearts. . . . faith is much higher than human understanding . . . it will not be enough for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also strengthened and supported. . . . the Word of God is not received by faith if it flirts about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart . . .⁶⁸

For Calvin there is clearly more to that revelation of the truthfulness of Scripture given by the Spirit, which later Reformed theology came consistently to designate as 'illumination', than intellectual apprehension. There is a reason beyond reasons, the reason of the heart.⁶⁹

Since Reformed (and conservative evangelical) theology in the centuries after Calvin focussed so strongly on the rational nature of faith and since the testimony of the Spirit was linked indissolubly with the written Word of God a positive doctrine of the transrational knowing apart from Scripture could not come into sight.⁷⁰ There was however one area where the knowledge of the heart obtained a particular prominence; that was in the area of assurance.

Calvin himself appealed to a number of biblical texts⁷¹ as evidence that

the Holy Spirit testifies to the heart of the believer that he or she is a child of God. This was to become a distinctive of Puritan Theology.⁷² Spiritual knowledge of salvation goes beyond reason; its certainty springs from an immediate awareness of and contact with the thing known. It extends from the head to the heart, as J.I. Packer summarizes: 'it was a God-given conviction of one's standing in grace, stamped on the mind and heart by the Spirit. . . . carrying with it the same immediate certainty'.⁷³ In Puritan language this is 'sensible' and 'experimental'. In line with Romans 8:16: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God' (K.J.V.) the *locus* of assurance is in the spirit, which is taken to be the conscience.

At this point there is a division in Puritan thought.⁷⁴ Some understand Paul to mean that the Holy Spirit causes our spirits to testify to our hearts that we are God's children. Alternatively, and this is of importance for our study, the Spirit bears direct witness immediately and intuitively by way of presence. Thomas Goodwin sets up a distinction in knowledge similar to the rational-transrational duality already discussed:

the one way is *discursive*; a man gathereth that God loves him from the effects [marks of regeneration] as we gather that there is fire before there is smoke. But the other is *intuitive* . . . it is such a knowledge as whereby we know that the whole is greater than the part . . . There is light that cometh and overpowereth a man's soul, and assureth him that God is his, and he is God's, and that God loveth him from everlasting.⁷⁵

Although Goodwin went on to deny that this can be experienced apart from the Word, as in the case of 'enthusiasms',⁷⁶ we have here another important witness for a non-rational form of knowing.

The witness of the Spirit as the source of assurance was considered sufficiently significant to become a part of confessional theology. According to the Westminster Confession assurance of salvation is: 'not a bare conjectural or probable persuasion . . . but an infallible assurance . . . the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God'.⁷⁷ The Savoy declaration uses similar language but adds the expression 'the *immediate* witness of the Spirit'.⁷⁸ Later Reformed theologians added little to the above.⁷⁹

It is at this point that I believe there exists an important but overlooked intersection between Reformed and other mainstream theology and contemporary charismatic-pentecostal thought.

(c) The Spirit of Man as the *Locus* for the Witness of the Holy Spirit

Various strands in contemporary charismatic thought identify the human spirit as the site for the witness of the Holy Spirit. Mark Virkler says:

God has placed within all men a spirit. This is what distinguishes mankind from the animal kingdom . . . man was designed by God to lend the creative

capacity of his spirit to the Holy Spirit to fill. . . . God spoke a word to Abram's spirit . . . (Gen. 12:1-1). . . . The voice of God is Spirit-to-spirit communication, the Holy Spirit speaking directly to my spirit.⁸⁰

Leanne Payne's third way of knowing, 'knowledge by acquaintance', is located for her in the 'heart' which she equates with the spirit.⁸¹ Joyce Huggett quotes approvingly a number of authors who use this terminology: 'It is within this inner stillness . . . that the Spirit of the living God speaks most clearly to our spirits.'⁸² 'He responds . . . He seeks me. He is anxious to invade my spirit . . .'⁸³ The use of 'spirit' as an organ receiving supernatural knowledge is sufficiently familiar in charismatic circles as to be used without explanation.⁸⁴

Others however have attempted to give some structure to the usage. Australasian Bible teacher Tom Marshall sees a definitive rôle for the human spirit in receiving divine knowledge. In the unfallen state Spirit informed spirit would have ruled mind which would have ruled body. When man fell the spirit was dethroned leaving life ruled by intellect, emotion or will.⁸⁵ Regeneration is the coming of the Holy Spirit to live in the human spirit so as to restore it to primacy. In Christian living knowledge received in the spirit is meant to rule over the reasonings of the mind.⁸⁶ As far as I have been able to ascertain this framework goes back to the writings of the Welsh revivalist Jessie Penn-Lewis.⁸⁷ Penn-Lewis appeals to the scriptures to justify her anthropology, a matter to be taken up later, but she is most relevant to our discussion of transrational knowing when she seems to attribute to the spirit a distinctive phenomenology. The mind of men needs to pay heed to the state of the spirit: whether it is crushed or 'down', in poise and calm control or in driven 'flight'.⁸⁸ Believers 'should learn how to discriminate the feelings of the spirit, which are neither emotional (soulish), nor physical'.⁸⁹ Thus the spirit is said to have its own form of 'consciousness'⁹⁰ clearly distinguished from the intellect: 'When there is no movement, or "draw" or "leading" in the spirit, then the mind should be used in reliance on the judgement of God'.⁹¹

The critical question at this stage is whether there is adequate scriptural evidence for understanding spirit as distinct from mind and for establishing a Spirit-spirit link which would justify positing this as the nexus for transrational knowledge. There are at least three possible ways of approaching the question.

One might try to establish a full-blown tripartite view of man. There are numerous difficulties with this approach. In the first place it presupposes a complete Hellenization of the New Testament, a radical break with the holistic emphasis in Old Testament anthropology,⁹² which, whilst not impossible, is *a priori* unlikely. Also, there is very little in the New Testament which witnesses to a formal trichotomistic view of man. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is the most popular proof text: 'May your whole spirit,

soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Yet Paul has no interest in the context of making an anthropological statement *per se*. His point is that God will redeem the total person. What we have here seems to be an example of synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a word which sometimes refers to a part is used to signify the whole. Paul is referring to whole people in three different ways, rather than to three distinct parts of a person.⁹³ Appeal may also be made to Hebrews 4:12: '... piercing to the division of soul and spirit . . .'. Again psychological analysis is not the author's intention.⁹⁴ Finally there are undoubted examples of parallelism where soul and spirit are limited: "'My soul [*psyche*] glorifies the Lord and my spirit [*pneuma*] rejoices in God my Saviour"' (Luke 1:46-47). A tripartite anthropology therefore seems unjustified.

Alternatively we might try to show that even if *pneuma* is not a separate constituent of human personality it is functionally distinguishable from *psyche* throughout the New Testament.⁹⁵ Applied to the New Testament as a whole it soon becomes apparent that this approach is simplistic. *Psyche* can be described as the seat of various emotions: fear (Acts 2:43), grief (Matthew 26:38), trouble (John 12:27) and so on, but so can *pneuma*: grief (Mark 8:12), trouble (John 12:31), peace (2 Corinthians 2:13), refreshment (1 Corinthians 16:18), *etc.* It is necessary to abandon any conception that soul and spirit are completely divisible aspects of the function of the human person.⁹⁶

Arguably however there are crucial distinctions. Of the two terms *pneuma* is never used of non-believers in relation to God or as the site of negative ethical impulses.⁹⁷ As a corollary of this, *pneuma* can be described as the special object of God's attention.

In the non-Pauline literature *pneuma* falls within a range of uses for *ruah* in the Old Testament. Eichrodt summarizes 'Spirit is man in so far as he belongs and interacts with the spiritual realm'.⁹⁸ It is a realm of sensitivity and responsiveness to the divine: 'Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking . . .' (Mark 2:8, *cf.* Matthew 5:3; Luke 1:47; John 4:24; Hebrews 12:23). It is the Pauline usage however which is most relevant.

It is with the spirit that man serves God (Romans 1:9). Man as spirit is able to enjoy union with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). Prayer and prophecy are said to be exercises of the spirit (1 Cor. 14:14, 32). Grace is bestowed in the sphere of the spirit (Galatians 6:18). Renewal is experienced in the spirit (Ephesians 4:23). The spirit is made alive by God even when the body is perishing (Romans 8:10). There is a testimony of the spirit that a person is a child of God (Romans 8:16).⁹⁹

A broad sweep of scholarship accepts that in Paul the Holy Spirit is largely concerned with the human spirit. Anderson concludes that spirit: 'is an orientation towards God summoned forth by the divine Word and enabled by the divine Spirit'.¹⁰⁰ For Schweizer it is 'the organ that

receives the Spirit of God'.¹⁰¹ G.E. Ladd insists on an infinity between the divine *pneuma* and the human *pneuma*: it is precisely 'because man possesses *pneuma* that he is capable of being related to God'.¹⁰² The most important text in this regard is the one already referred to in the examination of the Puritan view of the witness of the Spirit, viz., Romans 8:16: 'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God'.

There is considerable controversy as to exactly how this text is to be translated, in terms of two distinct witnesses to adoption, as in the *New International Version* translation above, or whether the sole witness is the Holy Spirit: 'the Spirit himself testifies to our spirit that we are the children of God'.¹⁰³ Whichever way this is taken, some form of knowledge is scribed to the spirit of the Christian.¹⁰⁴ The immediate context (v.15) is suggestive that this happens in prayer, but there is little to indicate what sort of knowledge is implied. Some commentators refer to a mental disposition,¹⁰⁵ others to the 'subjective testimony of conscience',¹⁰⁶ 'filial feelings',¹⁰⁷ or a 'sense' of our filial relationship with God.¹⁰⁸ This takes us no further than the Reformed dogmatic tradition with its 'spiritual perception', 'immediacy' and 'intuitive knowledge' all of which is compatible with the existence of a transrational form of knowing claimed by contemporary charismatics. Where however the biblical commentators seem to stand with the charismatics is in breaking the nexus between this sort of heart knowledge and Scripture insisted upon in the Reformed-conservative-evangelical tradition. Not only is it anachronistic, but there is nothing at all within the context of Romans 8 to suggest any relationship between Holy Scripture and the witness of the Spirit.¹⁰⁹ The only way in which the necessary bond of Scripture and supernatural knowledge can be maintained is to set up the sort of uncrossable spiritual ditch between the experience of New Testament believers and subsequent generations alluded to in the earlier part of this paper.

The other critical texts pertaining to transrational knowledge at the Spirit-spirit conjunction are in 1 Corinthians. Sometimes¹¹⁰ appeal is made to 1 Corinthians 2:10–16 to justify a distinction between the 'soulish man' and the 'spiritual man'. This goes beyond the language of the passage which seems to be an example where *nous* and *pneuma* overlap in meaning.¹¹¹ Likewise the 'spiritual discernment' Paul refers to in verse 14b means no more than 'by means of the Spirit'.¹¹² 1 Corinthians 14 however does seem to develop a relationship between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 14:2 we read: 'For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit'. On the implications of this verse I agree with Dowling: 'it seems clear that Paul believed in an immediate communing with God by means of the Holy Spirit speaking through the human spirit, that sometimes bypassed the mind'.¹¹³ This in and of itself does not make

for transrational *knowledge*, but the whole notion of the interpretation of tongues developed by Paul later in the chapter only makes sense if the 'mysteries' uttered in the spirit actually contain information. In 1 Corinthians 14:14 he says: 'For if I pray in a tongue my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful'. Some have argued that 'my spirit' does not mean Paul's human spirit but the Holy Spirit apportioned in a personal way.¹¹⁴ Even if this were granted it leaves an indubitable reference to the operation of the Holy Spirit: 'through appropriate psychological channels independently of my mind'.¹¹⁵ Fee seems most accurate when he concludes, in paying special attention to v.32 ('the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets'), that:

he [Paul] tends to use the term ['spirit'] in a much more flexible way than most of us are comfortable with. The Spirit who speaks through the prophets is understood to be speaking through 'the spirit' of the prophet . . . The Corinthian zeal for 'spirits' in 14:12, therefore, is zeal for manifestations of the Spirit . . . as he quickens their spirits to pray. . . . 'my spirit prays' seems to mean something like 'my S/spirit prays . . .'.¹¹⁶

Prayer, like all communication, is informational, that is it bears knowledge, the sort of knowledge implied in 1 Corinthians (as with that of Romans 8:16, or with the witness of the Spirit in Reformed thought) is transrational in origin; it is a gift of the Spirit of God imparted to the human spirit. Again, there is nothing at all in the relevant texts to suggest any necessary connexion with Holy Scripture. It has been established that transrational knowledge is a concept compatible with the teaching of the Bible, and that the *locus* for this knowledge is the human spirit (under the action of the Holy Spirit) it remains to be ascertained if there is a New Testament category capable of incorporating this knowledge and what in charismatic thought is known as the witness of the Spirit.

(d) Transrational Knowledge as a Species of Revelation

As discussed earlier the pattern of Reformed theology has been to link revelation, the conscious mind, the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Word and Spirit are indissolubly linked, and taking into account the revelation-illumination distinction it might almost be said that the *credo* of the heirs of the Reformers is 'no new revelations'. Often, the possibility of revelation in the present era is not ever discussed,¹¹⁷ or revelation is defined rationalistically. Broughton Knox says: 'Revelation is entirely intellectual'.¹¹⁸ Carl Henry welcomes the view that: 'Revelation is to be grasped by reason, that is, normal powers of human apprehension; this requires no special work of the Spirit'.¹¹⁹ Revelation in other words is *solely* proposition and all propositions have been recorded in Holy Scripture.¹²⁰ Again, this ditch is uncrossable, but it is also, I believe, unbiblical.

The range of uses of *apocalyp̄t̄olapocalyp̄sis* in the New Testament is well known.¹²¹ What Protestant systematic theology has chosen to over-

look is that there is no neat biblical antithesis between objective revelation or uncontrolled mysticism.¹²² Matthew 16:17 says of Peter's confession of Jesus' Messianic identity: 'this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in heaven'. Apparently Peter received revelation without knowing it. Galatians 1:16 speaks of a revelation *en emoi* ('in me'), a private disclosure to Paul. Matthew 11:27 reads: '. . . no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him'. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says that the Spirit has 'revealed' to believers what God has prepared for them. At the very least it must be concluded that every Christian conversion is a result of a *revelation* that Jesus is the Son of God. In an almost passing fashion Paul can say to the Philippians: 'let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded God will reveal that also to you' (Philippians 3:15 R.S.V.).¹²³ (Similar examples may be found in Ephesians 1:17 and possibly Ephesians 3:14–19.) We are not here dealing with a 'report in God's own words'¹²⁴ but the reality that more revelation takes place in the believer's life as he or she grows in spiritual maturity.

A. Oepke finishes his discussion with the conclusion: 'It is here very evident that in the New Testament the term "revelation" does not have, or does not always have, the specific sense which it came to have in latter ecclesiastical dogmatics'.¹²⁵ Holz considers that the word group is not yet fixed in religious meaning.¹²⁶ One can only conclude that in the history of Christian theology too much has been made of a narrow sense of the concept of revelation.¹²⁷

I have deliberately left till last the use of the *apocalyptō* word group in 1 Corinthians 12–14, the context which most intimately links the Holy Spirit, the human spirit and revelation.¹²⁸ The word group occurs in 14:6, 26 and 30. In 14:6 Paul speaks of coming to the church with 'some revelation'. The context is the superiority of the intelligible prophetic message over unintelligible tongues, 'revelation' here is a shorthand for a prophetic communication.¹²⁹ This is how the verse is used in v.26: 'When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation . . .'. Most explicit are vv. 29–32:

Two or three prophets should speak . . . and if a *revelation* comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn . . . The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of prophets . . .

All commentators recognize that revelation and prophecy are equated here.¹³⁰ Whatever the case elsewhere it can hardly be denied that Paul sees the *locus* of revelation as being the spirit of the prophet.¹³¹ This is the conjunction we have been looking for—the Holy Spirit, the spirit of man, revelation, or in the language I have chosen to use in this paper, transrational knowledge and the witness of the Spirit. Typically, Paul does not enter into a phenomenology of prophetic revelation, but in line with the

material already examined the description of Orr and Walther seems most reasonable: 'the person seated receives in his mind a strong impression of an idea, an interpretation of the gospel, or some injunction . . .'¹³² It can hardly escape our attention how this language coalesces with that used for the witness of the Spirit in traditional dogmatic usage and in the charismatic literature. What I am proposing is that the working of the Holy Spirit contextualized in 1 Corinthians 14 applies equally to 'hearing God' in the many other areas of Christian life and service.

(e) Revelation and Biblical Exclusivism

One of the traditional objections to all forms of enthusiasms is that they threaten the centrality of the biblical witness. If however 'revelation' can be used in the broad fashion argued for in this article the witness of the Spirit as presented here cannot be construed as canon-threatening. This low-level revelation is no more than the Holy Spirit giving specific application of the core truths of the Christian faith recorded once and for all in Holy Scripture. The Bible remains the undisputed standard for all faith and conduct.¹³³ I follow here what is implicit in Article 6 of the Anglican Articles of Religion:

Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

In matters necessary to salvation the witness of the Spirit should, in conformity with traditional Reformed theology, be thought of as tied to the contexts of the Bible, in non-essential matters its scope includes all those veridical leadings, impressions, convictions, words and so on which are appealed to by charismatic believers.

I concur with the conclusion of Yves Congar:

... [the] way is left open for 'private revelations', which concern the historical life of the church, but not the constitutive articles of apostolic faith. Within the context of these 'private revelations' in the widest sense of the term, it is possible to claim that a charism of special devotion may be equivalent to what Paul calls 'prophecy'.¹³⁴

(f) The Problem of Order

Another classical objection to extra-biblical revelation is the impossibility of discerning on subjective grounds what is from God and what is not. As I have indicated above, the Bible is not committed to any particular phenomenology of the witness of the Spirit, so it is of no immediate help here. Nevertheless, it would be reasonable to expect that there be some particular *quale* attached to the sensation of revelation.¹³⁵

The quality of sensation which seems most satisfactorily to describe

reports of the witness of the Spirit is moral authority. In her discussion of the way God speaks to the soul, Teresa of Avila says: 'The first sign that a locution comes from God, is the sense of power and authority the locution bears with it, and the sense of confidence and peace that follows it'.¹³⁶ Joyce Huggett speaks of the authority and dynamism of God's voice.¹³⁷ Mark Virkler quotes Ben Kinchlow: 'the thought immediately brings with it what young people call a "rush". It's something that hits you as right'.¹³⁸ In his study of the significance of the witness of the Holy Spirit, William J. Abraham notes:

Subjects who experience the inner witness of the Holy Spirit are naturally inclined to treat their experience as veridical. Descriptions of their experience . . . appear luminously correct . . . it leads to a deep sense of certainty of the reality of God . . .¹³⁹

A biblical base for this certitude can be found in Romans 8:16. Of it Cranfield comments: 'no less an authority than God has assured us' [that we are his children].¹⁴⁰ I am also reminded of certain statements by Jonathan Edwards:

The gracious and most excellent assistance of the Spirit of God in praying and preaching, is not by immediately suggesting words to the apprehension . . . but by warming the heart, and filling it with a great sense of things to be spoken, and with holy affections, that these may suggest words . . .¹⁴¹

There may be a precise theological reason for this phenomenological order. Speaking on the authority of Jesus, P.T. Forsyth wrote:

He claimed to be an authority for the conscience, not for the intellect. But it is indirectly, from His seat in the conscience. It is because the conscience rules the intellect, and by the conscience reason stands or falls.¹⁴²

To examine in detail the nature of the relationship between conscience, heart and spirit would be complex and lengthy.¹⁴³ Yet it seems feasible to suppose that the spirit, in receipt of divine revelation, acts as a sort of sensor of spiritual truth equivalent to the rôle of conscience in the moral realm. To experience the witness of the Spirit would bear with it the same impression of authority as a man is placed under when he is convinced by his conscience. As the conscience is not infallible but must be obeyed if one wants to avoid 'moral suicide' (Bonhoeffer), so the man who is convinced within his spirit that God is speaking to him is likewise constrained to follow such a leading. Just as the most bizarre acts performed in obedience to a mistaken conscience do not invalidate the place of conscience in moral decisions, neither does the most bizarre behaviour based on a belief in a special witness of the Holy Spirit invalidate the rôle of this witness in the life of the believer.

To expect perfection in the realm of spiritual guidance would presuppose that the spirit of man is made perfect at regeneration *and* that the other aspects of the human person (soul, body) could in no way contaminate or distort the communication of the divine Spirit with the human spirit. It would be difficult to substantiate these assumptions biblically.¹⁴⁴ It must therefore be expected that there will be many occasions in which sincere Christians will be misled in terms of the witness of the Holy Spirit. Discerning that which is of the Holy Spirit and that which is not, must be considered a matter of learning through experience and part of the pattern of Christian maturity. Enough has been said, however, to establish that in principle an applied theology of the witness of the Spirit need not lead to unrestrained enthusiasm.

The 'How' of the Witness of the Spirit

Numerous attempts have been made to make the witness of the Spirit more explicable. All seem to have serious difficulties.

(a) Mystical

Introvertive mysticism involves a human agent entering a state of consciousness which is devoid of its ordinary contents. There is experience of oneness with the divine in a blissful state marked by timelessness.¹⁴⁵ Oswald Chambers is one who uses mystical language to describe the witness of the Spirit: 'the tone of the Holy Ghost' is 'totally unlike any other voice'.¹⁴⁶

If the witness of the Spirit were a case of introvertive mysticism we would expect it to be devoid of all cognitive content. I have argued at length in this paper, however, that the witness of the Spirit is a form of revelation and so information bearing. There are no grounds for describing the witness of the Spirit as mystical.

(b) Foundational

If a belief is properly basic it can be put in the form of a proposition and be believed in rationally even though no reasons can be offered for the belief.¹⁴⁷ Sometimes the witness of the Spirit is described in terms similar to basic beliefs. Goodman says:

There is no explaining how this leading comes, yet its coming is a blessed fact of experience with all spiritual people. They know the will of God without being able to explain quite how they know it. To take any other course would be to disobey the plain leading of God to them.¹⁴⁸

The language used to describe the witness of the Spirit may conform to the language of basic beliefs, but the fact that this witness may be labelled as an experience with certain qualities and associations, both biblically and in devotional literature, disqualifies it as being properly basic.

(c) Aesthetic

Geoffrey Nuttall grapples to describe the witness of the Spirit: 'unreflecting, undifferentiating immediacy in the apprehension of the Holy Spirit like that of aesthetic experience'.¹⁴⁹ This is misleading if it suggests that the witness of the Spirit is essentially a matter of appreciation, but is potentially useful if it can be established that the witness of the Spirit involves some sort of perceptual experience.

(d) Perceptual

At different places in this paper I have referred to the Reformed tradition, following Calvin, as categorizing the witness of the Spirit in terms of a 'spiritual sense'. As noted earlier Calvin is vague, but seventeenth century Puritanism was heavily indebted to John Locke's naive realism. The sensation of the Spirit is analogous to sense perception.¹⁵⁰ Of radical Puritanism N. Baxter says: 'Experience of the Spirit was the touchstone of faith, and the touchstone of this experience was sensual perception'.¹⁵¹ Modern exponents at times use this sort of language; Virkler teaches: 'Your spiritual senses will be trained as you use them. . . .'.¹⁵²

As long as this task of spiritual perception is taken analogically it is unobjectionable, but if stretched beyond this it becomes exposed to the fatal difficulty mentioned by William Abraham:

the perceptual model becomes immediately implausible when the details are pressed. Those who have explored its possibilities find themselves in the awkward position of having to develop an elaborate anthropology where the soul has to have senses to match the eyes and ears of our normal perceptual equipment.¹⁵³

(e) Integrative

After rejecting most of the interpretations above Abraham postulates an alternative mechanism:

A fifth alternative is to see the appeal to the internal witness of the Holy Spirit as helping to render plausible a large scale, integrative system of belief . . . one would construe the claim about the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's inner life as intimately related to a wider narrative of the activity of God in creation, in human experience generally, and in history, which in turn would link to a web of beliefs about the nature of God, other spiritual experiences, human nature, ethical commitment, life after death and the like.¹⁵⁴

It is not altogether clear what Abraham means, but his approach is reminiscent of J.H. Newman's 'illative sense'. This is the human capacity to see a large field of evidence as a whole and to divine its significance.¹⁵⁵ Newman used the 'illative sense' to illustrate the categorical nature of faith. This seems to me to be essentially correct, and if so Abraham's understanding of the witness of the Spirit is incorrectly generalized. In par-

ticular his interpretation is too heavily dominated by rational categories (almost to the point of de-mythologizing) and not sufficiently connected to reports of the experience itself. Furthermore his analysis attempts to place the inner witness of the Spirit within a cognitive system rather than elucidating the nature of the witness itself.

(f) Intuitive

This is probably the most common way of understanding the nature of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. It almost seems to follow that if the witness of the Spirit is not the result of discursive reason, if it is rather non-inferential and immediate, then it must be a sort of spiritual intuition. Nuttall comments: 'We accept today the distinction between intuition and discursive reason, and allow the necessity of intuition in the mental activities of a complete personality'. Tom Marshall is another writer who is explicit on this point: '... it is knowledge of a particular kind. It is direct knowledge that comes intuitively—not as the result of rational, deductive mental processes'.¹⁵⁶

Abraham attacks this sort of talk as 'vacuous and obscure' because it leads in the unhelpful direction of positing an incomprehensible faculty responsible for intuiting.¹⁵⁷ This is a valid criticism, but more can be said. Popular authors in particular seem to be unaware of what is connoted by intuition, philosophically. Whilst there are both rationalistic and mystical forms of intuitionism they have in common the positing of some personal capacity in man which enables him to grasp immediately some solution or principle.¹⁵⁸ The emphasis lies on some higher ability of the knower to know that which is known. This seems to be almost the reverse of the form of transrational knowledge I have discussed in this paper. If the witness of the Spirit is a form of revelation then its phenomenology is not 'grasping' but 'being grasped' not 'comprehending reality' but being apprehended by God. Only in this way may *sola gratia* be maintained and human inability in matters divine be affirmed.

(g) Stimulative

All attempts exhaustively to define the working of God must be incomplete, but there seems to be a more adequate way of explaining the witness of the Holy Spirit than the suggestions examined so far. This is in terms of 'stimulation'.

Joyce Huggett quotes John Powell: '... can he [God] actually whisper words to the listening ears of my soul through the inner faculty of my imagination? Can God stimulate certain memories stored within the human brain at the time these memories are needed?'¹⁵⁹ Obviously God can do this, and in some way we must suppose revelation to correspond with this process. What I am proposing is that the inner witness of the Holy Spirit is simply the action of the Holy Spirit in causing certain created effects in the human spirit. If these are actions of the Spirit of God in

relation to the human spirit as the *locus* of spiritual communion we would expect such actions to be deeply intimate in nature.¹⁶⁰ If it is the action of the Holy Spirit it should be phenomenologically distinguishable from the human spirit (as argued above). This coheres with the reports of the witness of the Spirit examined so far, in particular with the data assembled by Mark Virkler, where he records how thoughts, words, feelings and impressions from the Holy Spirit enter into the stream of consciousness in a spontaneous way.¹⁶¹

There may be an analogy for this in neurophysiological research. Wilder Penfield stimulated the brains of patients with low level electrical impulses. He found that he was able to elicit memories, impressions and so on which effectively doubled the stream of consciousness of the subject but without causing mental confusion. To explain this he made a distinction between consciousness and awareness. The primary stream of the patients' consciousness was able to be aware of a secondary stream of mental activity.¹⁶² Analogously, we can be simultaneously conscious of our own inner states and aware of the effects produced in us by the Holy Spirit.

It may be objected that this is a reasonable proposition for rational knowledge but not for the spirit-based transrational knowledge that I have proposed. I am influenced at this point by the work of Donald Mackay. Mackay argued that it was more faithful to the Bible and in line with both current neurophysiology and cybernetic research to construe 'body', 'mind' and 'spirit' as three levels of significance in the human person rather than three separate entities: 'rather than three different kinds of "stuff" that have somehow to exert forces on one another . . . mental activity determines brain activity by being embodied in it'.¹⁶³ God the Holy Spirit has unimpeded access to the whole person: body, soul, and spirit. It should not surprise us if the inner witness of the Spirit is accomplished by his stimulation of the neuronal pathways of the brain while at the same time interacting with those less tangible elements of human existence which we call mind and spirit. Greater specificity than this I leave to other writers.

Conclusion

It was the stated purpose of this study to bring greater clarity to the question of hearing God's voice today, or, in the terms I have put it: 'the witness of the Holy Spirit'. I have argued at length for a significant continuity between the experience of the first Christians and subsequent followers of Jesus up until today. In particular I would see the pentecostal/charismatic movement as an efflorescence of tendencies and experiences which have always been present in the Christian church. Indeed, if this could not be reasonably established then this movement would need to be rejected, it would not belong to the 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church'.

I have tried to show that the reputed divide between traditional Reformed theology and the interpretation of the witness of the Spirit in contemporary charismatic devotional literature is not uncrossable. I have attempted to demonstrate this not *via* dogmatic theology but by a re-examination of the primary biblical data, especially as this pertains to anthropology and revelation. If this project has been successful it has a number of implications. The potentially most significant of these is to reduce the tension between the two spiritual streams. It is too simplistic to label the charismatic emphasis as unbiblical subjectivism and to describe the Reformed viewpoint as cold objectivism. Neither of these two caricatures does justice either to the biblical evidence or to the experience of others who love God. I hope this paper will facilitate the construction of bonds of love between both groups.

Other implications are of a more devotional nature. First, we are reminded that Christianity is essentially a supernatural religion. This becomes obvious once we broaden our working concept of revelation to include all divine acts of self-communication. Revelation is going on in the life of the Christian all the time, primarily through the means of grace, but through whatever means God chooses in his sovereign freedom. At first glance this may seem to lead to a devaluation of revelation, but such a conclusion need not follow. We need to keep constantly in mind that the absolute centre of revelation is the Word of God, Jesus Christ who primarily comes to us in a saving way through Holy Scripture. The more variegated witness of the Spirit as I have discussed it in this paper should not be the occasion of empty familiarity but ongoing amazement. It is a truly wonderful thing that God our Father should speak to us supernaturally (how else?) again and again in many various ways. This is a particularly salutary safeguard against the danger of falling into a purely rational religion. Enthusiasm and rationalism are the two equally unfortunate ends of a spectrum of religion extremism, charismatics being tempted to one end and conservative evangelicals to the other. Both groups would essentially agree that the Bible has the balance and this article has been a small attempt to show what this means.

Throughout I have presupposed that God can be heard today, but as yet I have made no attempt to quantify what this means. Many of the charismatic writers that I have cited talk of the witness of the Spirit as not only a regular experience but a constant experience. It seems impossible to verify this sort of analysis biblically. It is, however, the common experience of those in the pastorate to be confronted by sincere believers who claim: 'I never heard God speak to me'. Often the problem may be that they are misled by the language of audition, thinking that the Holy Spirit communicates only in an audible voice. In all probability these Christians are familiar with various convictions and so on which they have readily attributed to the Spirit of God but have not described these as 'hearing God'. Notwithstanding this explanation it is my conviction that there is a real

famine of hearing God in Western nations. We are faced all around with deep spiritual impoverishment. The witness of the Holy Spirit cannot be divorced from a desire to obey God¹⁶⁴ and the spiritual discipline of listening.¹⁶⁵

It is on this larger note that I wish to finish, for no matter how valid the witness of the Spirit today genuine revival will never come *via* a focus on any human experience. It is as Hendrikus Berkhof says:

Only if we forget ourselves with all our experiences, in favour of the Redeemer, can such experiences of renewal arise. The more we forget ourselves and look to Christ, the more we are filled with his life and the more we are regenerated to a new life . . .¹⁶⁶

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NOTES

- 1 The example usually cited is where a young person is inwardly convinced that God is calling him to marry a non-Christian. A proposition in manifest contradiction to the teaching of Holy Scripture: 'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers'. (2 Cor. 7:14a. N.I.V.) See, for example, R.P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Waco: Word, 1986, pp. 195 ff.
- 2 See, for example, Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. vol. 1: *Revelation and Experience of the Holy Spirit*, tr. D. Smith, London: Chapman, 1983, pp. 144-145; A. Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving*, London: Banner of Truth, 1983, pp. 131, 133; J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973, p. 264; J. Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints* (abridged ed.), Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1977, pp. 142-143. In a recent newspaper article a guerrilla leader in Bougainville was quoted as saying 'God has spoken to me that we must commit atrocities against the informers and betrayers'. *West Australian*, 20/3/90, p. 16. Instances could be multiplied.
- 3 The high profile 'New Age Movement' is the obvious instance here. So, D.R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*, Downer's Grove: I.V.P., 1986.
- 4 D. Hunt and T.A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity*, Eugene: Harvest House, 1985. For a less stringent position: D. Meatheringham, 'Hearing God in an Age of Spirituality', *Fellowship for Revival* (Adelaide), 15 March 1989.
- 5 This task has not been assisted by the paucity of discussion on the subject of the leading or guidance of the Holy Spirit in standard text books on pneumatology, e.g. A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, tr. H. DeVries, London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900, neglects the matter altogether.
- 6 For convenience, and in line with popular language, I will use the expression 'witness of the Spirit' to cover a range of inner convictions, impressions, auditions or sensations which Christians attribute to the Holy Spirit. Things like: 'I just really sensed', 'God laid it on my heart', 'I just knew God was saying', 'God spoke to me' and so on. These phenomena are described as auditory or sentient rather than visual, so excluding an explicit consideration of dreams, visions, images and the like. I have chosen to defer explicit analysis of these claims until later in the paper on the grounds that I must first defend the theological position that is it at least possible *in principle* that God speaks to us today in an immediate way.
- 7 In accordance with this object I will focus the discussion along lines of tension generated by scholars whose theological identity is linked to the Reformation rather than the Enlightenment.

How Does God Speak To Us Today?

- 8 As in G. Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, Portland: Multnomah, 1980, especially pp. 97–115, who denies that the Bible teaches individualized divine guidance.
- 9 All quotations from the Bible are from the *New International Version* unless otherwise indicated.
- 10 Acts 8:26 'Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip . . .' seems to parallel 8:29, against its Septuagintal background it does not imply an angelic visitation but is a particularly vivid way of describing divine guidance. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1954, p. 186.
- 11 For a discussion on these texts see, for example, J.H.E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles*, London: Lutterworth, 1967, pp. 159–164; E. Schweizer, *The Holy Spirit*, tr. R. and I. Fuller, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978, pp. 130–132.
- 12 Especially, J. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, pp. 151–164. See also: M. Virkler, *Dialogue with God*, South Plainfield: Bridge, 1986, pp. 247–258; J. Huggett, *Listening to God*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986, pp. 108 ff.
- 13 So, J. Patout Burns and G.M. Fagin, *Messages of the Fathers of the Church*. Vol. 3: *The Holy Spirit*, Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1984, pp. 207 ff.; Congar, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–71.
- 14 When propositional truth is being dealt with the two sides stand in the same relation to biblical authority.
- 15 E.g. B. Chant, *Upon Dry Ground*, Adelaide: Christian Revival Crusade, n.d., pp. 65–76.
- 16 For a balanced approach to this issue from scholarship sympathetic to Pentecostalism see G.D. Fee and D. Stuart, *How to read the Bible for all it's Worth*, London: Scripture Union, 1983, pp. 96–102.
- 17 Or perhaps the spiritual topography may be visualized as a plain leading up to a mound, the latter representing the comparatively richer spirituality of the first Church. Both pictures deny that there is anything other than one spiritual order in Christian history.
- 18 That is to say that all post-biblical Christians live in the same order of spiritual experience.
- 19 A distinction needs to be drawn between what is witnessed to *by* the Bible and what is witnessed to *in* the Bible. Any spiritual experience witnessed to *in* the Bible has as much veracity as any other part of the Word of God, but only if it is witnessed to *by* the Bible must it necessarily be attributed permanent significance. This is perhaps another way of putting the descriptive-prescriptive dichotomy.
- 20 'Lessing', in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. A. Richardson, London: S.C.M., 1969, p. 191. I am also reminded of Immanuel Kant's objections to the cosmological argument for the existence of God. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. L.W. Beck, N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill, pp. 507 ff. Kant's point was that a logical jump is needed to move from the contingent realm of causation of which we are familiar through experience to the concept of a necessary cause.
- 21 J.I. Packer is one of the most influential exponents of the position described above. In his articles on the Charismatic movement: 'Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement', *Churchman* 94, 1, 1980, pp. 7–25, and 94, 2, 1980, pp. 103–125 (later republished in *Keep in Step With the Spirit*, Leicester, I.V.P., 1984, pp. 200–234), he shows a good deal of sympathy towards charismatic spirituality. However, since he cannot allow an equation between that to which the New Testament witnesses and contemporary charisms he is inexorably driven to what seems to be the bizarre conclusion that God is blessing certain psychological processes in the charismatic churches. This seems to be a theological expedient conjured up to make sense of a historical contingency. Ruthlessly applied logic, *à la* Lessing and Kant, would imply a radical rejection of current charismatic expressions.
- 22 There are objections other than theological ones to expecting God to speak today apart from the Scriptures. A. Ralston, for example, is concerned that an appeal to the divine authority, as in: 'God told me . . .' leaves no room for discussion: 'Guidance—What

- Does the Lord Require?', *Interchange*, 46, 1989, pp. 6–16, p. 15. Others, e.g. O. Barclay, 'Weighing Guidance', *Salt*, Summer 1989, pp. 3–5, are willing to allow for special and exceptional acts of divine guidance outside the normal range of Christian experience. Neither of these positions could in principle render the charismatic theological view on the witness of the spirit illicit rather than troublesome.
- 23 See G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962, pp. 33–58, 351–386, 477–485, 815–832.
- 24 *Augsburg Confession*, Article 5; *Schmalkaldic Articles*, 3, 8.
- 25 Calvin, *op. cit.*, 1, 9.
- 26 For this and other examples of extreme left wing Puritanism, see G.F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, London: Blackwell, 1946, pp. 34–37.
- 27 R. Baxter, *Practical Works*, ed. D. Orme, London: 1830, 2, 104; 4, 295; 5, 556; 12, 495–500. Baxter is careful, however, not to deny the possibility of new revelations concerning particular duties, but to expect such is to test God.
- 28 Calvin, *op. cit.*, 1, 9, 3.
- 29 *Westminster Confession*, Chapter 1, article 6.
- 30 J. Edwards, 'Thoughts on Revival', in C. C. Goen (ed.), *The Great Awakening*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 437–439.
- 31 B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956, pp. 70 ff.; *Studies in Theology*, London: Oxford University Press, 1932, pp. 15 ff.
- 32 W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God*, London: Church Book Room Press, 1973, pp. 235–243. [Reprinted by Church Society, price £6.95, excluding p. & p. Ed.].
- 33 G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, pp. 326–327.
- 34 J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 264–267; *God has Spoken*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979, pp. 82–83; *God's Words*, London: I.V.P., 1981, p. 39.
- 35 This is not to suppose that this position is adopted only by Reformed theologians. See, for example, R. Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 3, 8; A Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*, London: S.C.M., 1947, p. 219.
- 36 I. Lunning, 'The Reformation and the Enthusiasts', in *Concilium*, edd. H. Kung and J. Moltmann, N.Y.: Seabury, 1979, pp. 33–40, p. 40.
- 37 Cf. Congar, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 143; Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
- 38 Baxter, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 104.
- 39 Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 438–439.
- 40 G.F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit and Ourselves*, London: Epworth, 1966, p. 36.
- 41 Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 264.
- 42 R.F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, Downers Grove: I.V.P., 1979, p. 265.
- 43 Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1950, regarded the violation of this principle to be the fount of all the pneumatological aberrations from the Corinthian charismatics onwards.
- 44 'It is in the soul of man, that is, in his rational or intellectual soul, that we must find that image of the creator which is immortally implanted . . .' *On the Trinity*, 14, 4, 6. 'For not in the body but in the mind was man made in the image of God.' *On the Gospel of John*, 23, 10, St. Augustine, cited in R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, N.Y.: Scribner's, 1964, vol. 1, pp. 154–155.
- 45 For Luther's dependence on Augustine see the material cited in Niebuhr, *Nature*, pp. 160–161, and for Calvin, see *Institutes*, 1, 15, 3.
- 46 See the discussion by G.C. Berkouwer, *Man the Image of God*, tr. D.W. Jellema, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, pp. 194–233.
- 47 L. Payne, *The Healing of the Homosexual*, Westchester: Crossway, 1984, p. 22, wants to trace the problem back to Aristotle's rejection of Plato's third way of knowing: 'which included the ways of divine inspiration . . . of the dream . . . of the vision, and . . . of love.' Via the influence of Aquinas, who took Aristotle's epistemology into the church, Christian theology was left without the categories to recognize a knowledge arising from a source of consciousness other than the intellectual.

- In terms of the history of theology Payne has an important point, but to suppose there are only two clear-cut streams in epistemology is simplistic and coloured by the fact that the author is a Roman Catholic. It is quite possible that a biblically grounded epistemology will be incompatible with both Platonic intuitionism and Aristotelian-Thomistic rationalism.
- 48 Vos, *op. cit.*, pp. 326–327. Cf. L.L. Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, p. 123; Packer, *God has Spoken*, p. 82.
 - 49 John 16:13.
 - 50 Packer, *loc. cit.*
 - 51 A. Ralston, *op. cit.*, p. 10 (emphasis mine).
 - 52 A. Mitchell, 'Guidance 3', *Interchange*, 46, 1989, pp. 20–23, p. 22.
 - 53 Expressions used by Dr. Peter Adam in a public address entitled 'True Spirituality', delivered in Perth, Western Australian on the tenth of April 1989.
 - 54 See, especially, Friesen, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–147.
 - 55 This of course loops back to the 'other way of knowing' discussed at the end of the last section.
 - 56 Huggett, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
 - 57 Virkler, *op. cit.*, p. 101, citing D. Wead.
 - 58 L.L. Morris, *Spirit of the Living God*, London: I.V.P., 1967, p. 79, citing William Temple.
 - 59 Huggett, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
 - 60 D. Watson, *Discipleship*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981, p. 149.
 - 61 L. Payne, *The Broken Image*, Westchester, Crossway, 1981, p. 145.
 - 62 Wimber, *op. cit.*, p. 35 (my emphasis).
 - 63 In a manner similar to St. Augustine's understanding of miracles: *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy*, tr. R. Stothart, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872, p. 509.
 - 64 Though see Augustine, *On Psalm 36*, sermon 2; Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.6; *Summa Theologica*, 1a, 2ae, q. 106, a.3.
 - 65 Calvin, *op. cit.*, 1, 7, 1–5.
 - 66 *Ibid.*, 1, 7, 4.
 - 67 I follow Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, pp. 10 ff. at this point.
 - 68 Calvin, *op. cit.*, 1, 7, 4; 1, 7, 5; 2, 2, 33; 2, 2, 36; in F.L. Battle's translation, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960, vol. 1, pp. 80, 81, 580–581, 583 (emphasis mine).
 - 69 One cannot help but recall Pascal's famous dictum: 'The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know'. *Pensées*, tr. W.F. Trotter, London: Dent, 1932, p. 78.
 - 70 See W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, tr. H. Knight, London: Lutterworth, 1956, pp. 31–39; B. Ramm, *The Witness of the Spirit*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, pp. 109–130.
 - 71 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13–14; Calvin, *op. cit.*, 3, 2, 36.
 - 72 J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, Wheaton: Crossway, 1990, pp. 179–189.
 - 73 *Ibid.*, p. 182.
 - 74 *Ibid.*, pp. 184 ff.
 - 75 Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, ed. J. Nichol, London, 1861, 1, 233, cited in Packer, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
 - 76 Goodwin, *op. cit.*, 1, 250.
 - 77 *Westminster Confession*, 18, 2.
 - 78 *Savoy Declaration*, 18, 2 (my emphasis).
 - 79 See, for example, J. Buchanan, *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, London: Banner of Truth, 1966, pp. 250–268 (First edition 1843); O. Winslow, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, London: Banner of Truth, 1961, pp. 171–174 (First edition 1840). For a discussion of the witness of the Spirit in Methodism see L.M. Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1962, pp. 63–78. A listing of John Wesley's terms to describe the experience of assurance, e.g. 'inner impression', immediate 'discovery', 'deep sense' bear strong resemblance to the language used by

- contemporary charismatic authors to describe their experience of the witness of the Spirit.
- 80 Virkler, *op. cit.*, p. 60, p. 27.
- 81 Payne, *Healing*, p. 23.
- 82 W.P. Keller, 'Solitude for Serenity and Strength', *Decision*, August–September 1981, p. 8, cited in Huggett, *Listening*, pp. 51–52.
- 83 J. Borst, *A Method of Contemplative Prayer*, Asian Trading, 1974, p. 18, cited in Huggett, *Listening*, p. 68.
- 84 For example: 'At one time I would have regarded this sufficient evidence for initiating a ministry of deliverance but, as I *did not feel in my spirit* the presence of demons in her personality I continued with my questioning'. S. Hughes, 'The Demonic in Counselling—Real or Imagined', *The Christian Counsellor*, 2, 3, 1992, pp. 2–6, p. 3 (emphasis mine).
- 85 In Marshall's terminology, 'soul'.
- 86 T. Marshall, *Free Indeed*, Chichester: Sovereign World, 1983, pp. 136–143, 153–154, 148–160.
- 87 J. Penn-Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–110. Sometimes mediated by the works of Watchman Nee, for example, *Release of the Spirit*, Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, 1967.
- 88 *Ibid.*, pp. 112–113.
- 89 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 90 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 91 *Loc. cit.*
- 92 Representing the prevailing consensus of Old Testament scholarship. See, for example, P. Addinall, 'The Soul in Pedersen's "Israel"', *Expository Times*, 93, 2, 1981, pp. 299–303; M.E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body*, London: S.C.M., 1962; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, tr. J. Baker, London, S.C.M., 1967, vol. 2, pp. 147–150; E. Jacob, 'The Anthropology of the Old Testament', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Friedrich, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, vol. 9, pp. 617–631; H.W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, tr. M. Kohl, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974. For a diverging position see R.H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 117–134.
- 93 J.W. Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 48, 108. For other objections to using this text trichotomistically see J. Osei-Bonsu, 'Anthropological Dualism in the New Testament', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 40, 4, 1987, pp. 571–590, pp. 582–584.
- 94 See F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, p. 165.
95. Cf. G. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 112.
- 96 This could be visualized as two overlapping circles, as in a Venn diagram. Spatial representation should not however mislead us into thinking in terms of 'parts' rather than powers at work in the human person. Cf. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
- 97 For *psyche* as a source of evil, see: 1 Peter 2:11, 4:19; 2 Peter 2:14; Hebrews 13:17.
- 98 Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133.
- 99 R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, London: Brill, 1971, pp. 164–175 contains a useful outline of the history of the interpretation of *pneuma* in Paul. I follow here W.D. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man*, London: Macmillan, 1956, pp. 129–132.
- 100 R.S. Anderson, *On Being Human*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, p. 212. Cf. E. Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, tr. O. Wyon, London: Lutterworth, 1939, p. 240. G.S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit*, London: S.C.M., 1965, p. 117 makes the point that this obviates any objection based on a violation of the principle of *sola gratia*.
- 101 E. Schweizer, *pneuma*, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Friedrich, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968, vol. 6., pp. 332–455, p. 435. Cf. W.F. Orr and J.A. Walther, *1 Corinthians*, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976, p. 157; B. Wilberforce, *Mystic Immanence*, London: Elliot Stock, n.d., p. 31.
- 102 G.E. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 463.

- Cf. Griffith-Thomas, *Holy Spirit*, p. 29; H.D. McDonald, *The Christian View of Man*, Westchester: Crossway, 1981, p. 21; C.F.D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit*, London: Mowbrays, 1978, p. 9; Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 162–163.
- 103 For the former interpretation see E.A. Obeng, 'Abba, Father: The Prayer of the Sons of God', *Expository Times*, 99, 12, 1988, pp. 363–366. For the latter translation, C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975, vol. 1, pp. 402–403.
- 104 E. Kasemann, *Romans*, tr. G.W. Bromiley, London: S.C.M., 1980, p. 229.
- 105 J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, pp. 295–297.
- 106 W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911, p. 203.
- 107 C. Hodge, *Romans*, London: Banner of Truth, 1972, p. 267. (First edition 1834).
- 108 J.R.W. Stott, *Men Made New*, London: I.V.P., 1966, p. 93.
- 109 Although neither the Holy Spirit nor the human spirit is named in 1 John 2:20, 27 we are arguably dealing here with the same transrational knowing: 'But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know the truth (lit. 'you all know') . . . his anointing teaches you about all things . . .'
- 110 For example, McDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Penn-Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
- 111 C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: A. and C. Black, 1971, p. 74; Fee, *1 Corinthians*, p. 112; Orr and Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
- 112 Fee, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
- 113 R. Dowling, '1 Corinthians 14:1–25: Mind and Spirit', *Evangel*, Autumn 1991, pp. 9–13, p. 11.
- 114 Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 319; W.A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Westchester: Crossway, 1988, pp. 117–118.
- 115 Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 319. Cf. V. Fitzner, *First Corinthians*, Adelaide: Lutheran, 1982, p. 22.
- 116 Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 596, 670.
- 117 See, for example, J. Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, New York: Columbia, 1956, especially pp. 104–108; A. Murray, *The Spirit of Christ*, London: Nisbet, n.d., pp. 214–223, 373–377; W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991, pp. 198–214; W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Nashville: Nelson, 1980, vol. 1, p. 62.
- 118 D.B. Knox, *The Thirty Nine Articles*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967, p. 77.
- 119 C.F. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 2: *God Who Speaks and Shows*, Waco: Word, 1976, p. 309.
- 120 Cf. J.I. Packer, 'Contemporary Views of Revelation', in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. C.F. Henry, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957, pp. 87–104.
- 121 O. Oepke, *apokalypṓ* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965, vol. 3, pp. 563–592. (I do not include *epiphanein* in this discussion of revelation because it is restricted to or of Jesus himself.)
- 122 D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, Homebush: Lancer, 1988, pp. 161 ff. Cf. G.C. Bingham, *The Day of the Spirit*, Adelaide: New Creation, 1985, pp. 115, 183, 297.
- 123 Grudem, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- 124 Contra R.P. Martin, *Philippians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, p. 141. See J.F. Collange, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians*, tr. A.W. Heathcote, London: Epworth, 1979, p. 135; F.F. Bruce, *Philippians*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983, p. 125.
- 125 Oepke, *op. cit.*, p. 585.
- 126 T. Holz, *apokalypṓ*, in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, edd. H. Balz and G. Schneider, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 131–132.
- 127 Cf. H. Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith*, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, vol. 2, p. 6.
- 128 The specific context is that of prophecy in the church assembly. A related example can perhaps be found in Galatians 2:2. For a discussion see F.F. Bruce, *Galatians*, Exeter: