

Reformation
& Revival



A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership

Volume 3, Number 2 • Spring 1994

An influence or a person? It makes all the difference. Can we have an ecclesiastical Aladdin's lamp whose genie can do magical tricks for us, or is there the Sovereign person to whose control we submit as He guides us into the Scriptures and takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us (John 16:14)? A person Who is with us in the dark. Who accompanies us into the unknown, Who enables us to attempt things humanly impossible, Who can lead us to mortify the body and its lustful deeds—such is the Paraclete and His controlling and sustaining influence we need. Let us keep on good terms with the Holy Spirit.

G. A. Adams

The progress from a changed consciousness to a changed conviction is directed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works *with* the Word. He does not work against the Word or without the Word. The Word and the Spirit go together. Doctrine and life go together. To separate them is to frustrate the work of sanctification within us and to grieve the Holy Spirit.

R. C. Sproul

... **f**or it is the Spirit's way to keep out of direct view, like a shy child hiding behind the door. So Christians never know the Spirit in the way they know the Son, and we can be led astray by questioning that suggests we do.

J. I. Packer

The Return of the Holy Spirit: A Modern Parable

Geoffrey Thomas

The group was singing earnestly, the drums were pounding, the guitarists were strumming away and the audience was tapping their feet—but the Spirit was not there. They sang songs for an hour, building up to a great crescendo and sitting down in an aura of well-being—but the Spirit was not there. The preacher gave his message, told his stories, made them laugh, and made them cry—but the Spirit was not there. He began his appeal and worked them over, some needed to come to the front to be saved, others to rededicate their lives, others for inner healing, others to talk to counselors about their problems. A crowd gathered. A man said to himself, "I want to be happy like these people," and he went forward—but the Spirit was not there. After the service was over the people talked to one another about their activities and plans, and nobody realized that again the Spirit was not in their midst.

Down the road in another church the pastor announced the hymns of Toplady and Watts and a metrical Psalm, and the congregation sang—but the Spirit was not there. The New International Version was read—but the Spirit was not there. The preacher prayed for the congregation and the community; he thanked God for the gospel—but the Spirit was not there. Afterwards the congregation quietly went home, as aware as the minister had been that things were not as they should be, nor as they could be in the church of the living God.

When the blessing of God is removed from a gospel church which is worshipping in the old ways, the results are immediate and pathetic. If the Spirit of God is not inhabiting the praise of the people and the proclamation of the preacher, there is nothing left but bare walls. However, when the Spirit is driven out of a church which has handclapping, "loadsachoruses," and a band, racy sermons, laughter and altar calls, it will be about a millennium or two before anyone notices that He has gone—because even when He is

not there they act as if He were, and the atmosphere feels “religious.”

One day the preacher fell before God and cried, “Lord, I cannot go on without Your blessing. David said of You, ‘He restoreth my soul.’ My soul stands in need of restoration. I seem to do everything like a religious robot without even thinking of You or invoking Your aid”—and the Spirit began to move.

The preacher searched the Bible, asking what are the marks of the Spirit’s presence? He learned that defiant sin in his own life or blatant sin tolerated in the congregation quenches the Spirit. If he misrepresented God and His way of salvation or if he fellowshipped with the ungodly, he found that that would grieve God the Spirit. He discovered that if he boldly preached on sin and righteousness and judgment that the Spirit Himself came in his preaching and testified of these sober realities. Most important of all, if he glorified the Lord Jesus Christ and spoke much of Him as God the Son, and the Savior of all who trust in Him, then that work which the Spirit most delightfully assisted and blessed was apparent. The great lesson he learned, as if for the first time, was that the Spirit is given to those who obey God. He sought painfully to change his ways, discipline his life, be more resolute in studying the Word of God, spending longer in the presence of the Savior, avoiding those patterns of life that left him morose before the television to the neglect of his family. He went out after people who had been long on the fringes of the church and talked to them about their need of Christ. He gave more time to preparing his sermons, thinking of the people he was preaching to and the God in whose presence he stood when he spoke His Word. He continually acknowledged his own need of the Spirit—“Without You I can do nothing!”

On Sunday he stood before his congregation and prayed, “Lord, we fear going through this service hearing the voice

of men—our own singing of hymns, and the preacher’s speaking the Word. We dread the thought that we will leave this building in an hour and not have known the fellowship and secret sovereign testimony of Your Holy Spirit to our hearts. We confess our sins to You; we cry out in our helplessness and in our need of You. Come and have mercy upon us. We can only erect an altar: it is Your prerogative to send the fire.”

Then the forgiving Spirit, long grieved, modestly returned and breathed upon them all. “If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20).

Author

Geoffrey Thomas is pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales. He is a popular conference speaker in both Great Britain and the United States and an associate editor of *Evangelical Times* and *The Banner of Truth*. He is a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.