

THE PHENOMENA OF THE SPIRIT

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I. INTRODUCTION

My assignment is a broad one. “It is to address the issues of “speaking in tongues” as the initial evidence [or sign] of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, as well as the nature of the gift of tongues. Also, the paper is to deal with physical manifestations often referred to as “laughing in the spirit,” “dancing in the spirit,” and “groaning in the spirit.” These are the specifics of my assignment. Due to the broad nature of the topic, I am limiting my response today to “Speaking in Tongues,” “Being Slain in the Spirit,” and the “Holy Laughter” phenomenon, which itself is surrounded by still other phenomena.

Except for purposes of clarity, then, this paper will not involve a systematic study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. There are significant earlier and later works on this subject.¹ I am focusing more on the “phenomena” or physical “manifestations” that often have been attributed to the Holy Spirit. I believe it is crucial to acknowledge upfront that the Church of God early pioneers appeared to be open to all that the Holy Spirit might visit on them. There was a yearning for real experiences of the Holy Spirit. Certainly this desire included the acknowledgment and legitimacy of a variety of

¹ Merle D. Strege, *I Saw the Church: The Life of the Church of God told Theologically* (Anderson, In.: Warner Press, 2002); John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity* (Anderson, In.: Warner Press, Inc., 1980); Barry L. Callen, *Contours of a Cause: The Theological Vision of the Church of God Movement (Anderson)* (Anderson, In.: Anderson School of Theology, 1995); Gilbert W. Stafford, *Theology for Disciples* (Anderson, In.: Warner Press, 1996).

phenomena of the Spirit. While they would not do so in an uncritical manner, they did make space, it seems to me, for a variety of experiences.

I have chosen to focus my primary search on the earlier periods of the Church of God. I do this for two reasons. First, the more recent works by Church of God authors provide excellent theological and biblical discussions of the Holy Spirit. Yet, very little space is given to the physical, demonstrable phenomena associated with the Spirit; perhaps the exception might be *Speaking in Tongues*. It just seems to me that it would be interesting to connect with the period in our evolving tradition where more space seems to be given to this area. Second, this attention to the earlier tradition might invite us into fresh conversation about issues that we otherwise might keep on the periphery. To assist me in this, a principal source that I will use for documenting Church of God responses, direct or indirect, is the respected work of the late Brother Kenneth Tippin, whose extraordinary labors in mining these responses remain a gift to the broader church.² Of course, a variety of other sources will be utilized in this paper.

In the July 1, 1884 issue of *The Gospel Trumpet*, D.S. Warner said, “God will lead us much farther out into the deep things of God, and put upon the saints a power and glory that has never yet been reached....Yea we are not only looking for the return of the ‘early rain,’ the Apostolic power; but in addition the ‘latter rain’ also....” In another article in *The Gospel Trumpet*, “The Spirit’s Indwelling,” Warner says:

² Kenneth R. Tippin, ed., *Powerful Words: Radical Words Then and Now* (Sturgis, MI.: Douglas Carr, Gateway River of Life Ministries, 2001, First Printing). This is a completed volume covering approximately the first four chapters of a broader manuscript. Both these sources are located in the Church of God Archives, Anderson University, Anderson, Indiana. In this paper, the book will be cited according to convention, but references to the manuscript will be noted as **Tippin Manuscript**.

[T]he Holy Spirit can calm down in the soul, but because the Holy Spirit resides in us, his mighty power is always ready to spring forth into “vehement” action, and “thrilling” flashes through our consciousness....³

E.E. Byrum also observed and commented on the legitimacy of diverse responses to the move of the Holy Spirit:

There may be a number of persons converted at the same time, yet their actions or operations of the Spirit may be widely different. While one may leap and shout and manifest great physical performances, another one may sit quietly down without a word or outward manifestation, and yet be just as thoroughly converted, just as free from the guilt of sin, and with as positive knowledge of an acceptance with God as the one who makes such an outward manifestation.⁴

H.M. Riggle also expresses assurance that God is up to something. According to Riggle, “...God is nursing a storm in the heavens, and I pray God it may soon break upon us. Oh, that heaven’s lightning would strike the church and burn up the dry sticks! Let it come, Lord. I can hear the distant thunder-roll.”⁵ Further, J.W. Byers, in an 1895 *Gospel Trumpet* article wrote that “today the great need of the church is the power and accompanying manifestations of apostolic days....We must receive the endowment of holy boldness, and dare to declare the whole truth of the gospel. Brethren, we have been weak on this line.”⁶ These few historical reminders make our presence here today both necessary and relevant.

For our time together in this session, I hope to facilitate thoughtful deliberations and openness to all that the Holy Spirit desires for us today. In this vein, I first will review some basic understandings about the teachings on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine to varying degrees has served as a point of departure for diverse church

³ *GT* (April 1, 1887) quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 113-114.

⁴ E.E. Byrum, *The Secret of Salvation*, 76, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 116.

⁵ H.M. Riggle, *Pioneer Evangelism*, 55-57, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 119.

⁶ Quoted in *Tippin Manuscript*, 396.

groups. Second, in the interest of time, I will move into the phenomena or the manifestations as included in my assignment. In these sections, I will focus on how both others and the Church of God (Anderson, Ind.) have reflected on these phenomena, and offer my personal reactions or assessments. I will conclude today with a reminder on how we might relate to each other, even in the midst of different perspectives on the phenomena of the Spirit.

II. ON THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Baptism of (by) the Holy Spirit goes by other names, also. A few of the more familiar alternative terms used by the Church of God (Anderson, Ind.) include “Entire Sanctification,” “Holiness Perfected,” “Perfect Love,” “Christian Perfection,” “Second Work of Grace,” and “The Second Crisis in Redemption.” Simply, we have defined Baptism in the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace [subsequent to regeneration] that destroys the inbred depravity inherited from Adam.⁷

In *We Preach Christ*, Charles Ewing Brown aligns his basic understanding of the doctrine of Sanctification with the Wesleyan doctrine. Brown wrote that “the justified believer may consecrate himself [sic] fully to God and receive in this life full deliverance from the remains of original sin in his nature by one definite act of faith and one

⁷ See William G. Schell, *The Better Testament: Or The Two Testaments Compared* (Moundsville, W. Va.: Gospel Trumpet Publishing Company, 1899), 199, 200; Charles E. Brown, *We Preach Christ* Anderson, In.: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1957), 1957; F.G. Smith, *What The Bible Teaches: A Systematic Presentation of the Fundamental Principles of Biblical Truth*, condensed by Kenneth E. Jones (Anderson, In.: Warner Press, Inc., 1945, condensed edition, 1955), 63; Albert F. Gray, *Christian Theology*, vol. II (Anderson, In.: The Warner Press, 1944), 281-284.

immediate work of grace” (95). Brown is in basic agreement with his historical predecessors Daniel Sidney Warner and F.G. Smith.

The biblical proofs of the “Baptism” as a subsequent, instantaneous work of the Spirit rest in the following passages: Acts 2:1-12 [Pentecost], Acts 8: 5-13, 17 [the Samaritans], Acts 9:17 [the conversion of Saul/Paul], Acts 19:6 [the twelve disciples at Ephesus], and Acts 10:44 [the Gentile, Cornelius, and his household]. All these passages serve as proof-texts to support the view of sanctification as a second, distinct work of grace.

III. PHENOMENA OF THE SPIRIT

A. *SPEAKING IN TONGUES AS INITIAL EVIDENCE OF THE INFILLING*

This phenomenon is held by many as different from “Speaking in tongues as a gift of the Spirit.” According to Pentecostal writer, L. Thomas Holdcroft, “the difference between sign and gift is one of function and purpose, not of nature or quality.”⁸ The conviction of speaking in tongues as the “sign” of the infilling of the Holy Spirit is held by many of our brothers and sisters in Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal or “charismatic movement” groups. Some of the same texts we use to support the Baptism as a second, distinct work of God’s Spirit are used by many in support of their belief that speaking in tongues in the book of Acts is the sign of the initial filling of the Holy Spirit. Also, for many who hold to this view, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to the salvation experience, but identified as a “third work” of grace, subsequent also to “sanctification”

⁸ L. Thomas Holdcroft, “Tongues and the Interpretation of Tongues,” in *Conference On The Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, ed. Gwen Jones (Springfield, MO.: Gospel Publishing House, 1983), 253.

as a “second work.” There have been writers who have insisted that justification and sanctification were distinct realities, clearly separated in time. Others have agreed but strongly exhort the church that while these realities may be separate, it must not be argued dogmatically that they cannot happen simultaneously. It is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit.⁹

What is the nature of the “tongues”? Who should speak in tongues? The careful advocates of this doctrine would agree with the Church of God’s historical position on this. “Speaking in Tongues” refers to actual known languages. It is not some “unknown,” undecipherable gibberish. The miracle is that one speaks in a language, previously unknown or untaught to him or her. The fundamental purpose for speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the Baptism is to promote the missionary agenda of God. Who is to speak in tongues as the “sign”? The answer would be that *every Christian* should speak in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Stanley M. Horton, a Pentecostal, describes helpful distinctions. Assemblies of God and other nonholiness Pentecostals, he argues, see justification and an initial sanctification as occurring at the same moment. Instead, they do believe in “progressive sanctification,” which is incomplete until our glorification. They do not hold to a view of entire sanctification, therefore, as a second, distinct work of grace subsequent to justification. However, “Holiness Pentecostals’ still hold to a second definite work of

⁹ See Arlo F. Newell, *Receive the Holy Spirit* (Anderson, In.: Warner Press, 1978).

grace, which they believe removes original sin entirely and makes it easier to live a holy life.”¹⁰

CHURCH OF GOD TEACHINGS

Kenneth Tippin highlights the early tongues story in the Church of God.¹¹ The early years span the beginning years to just before the end of 1926. However, there is not much said about the gift of tongues during much of the early decades of the Church of God. Yet, the historical testimony is clear in many respects.

For the early writers, it is clear that Speaking in Tongues was not evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. F.G. Smith says that “to ask for our evidence that we have the Holy Spirit is like asking for an evidence of the existence of the sun overhead. The sun does not need a witness to testify for it, it stands for itself....”¹² The fundamental teachings embraced the view that there are many manifestations or evidences of the Holy Spirit. From Hebrew 10:15 and Romans 8:16, for example, F.G. Smith argues that the Holy Spirit is the evidence.¹³ In fact, for F.G. Smith, the Pentecostal emphasis of speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit was a major theological departure of the Church of God from many of the Pentecostal churches at that time. Smith believed that the vast amount of deception and fanatical extremism in the Church of God Reformation movement could be attributed to this belief.

¹⁰ Stanley M. Horton, “The Pentecostal Perspective,” in *Five Views On Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1987), 134.

¹¹ The information on “The Early Tongues Story” in the Church of God is found in Appendix C of Tippin’s manuscript, 399ff.

¹² Smith, *What the Bible Teaches*, 71-72.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 73.

The early writers certainly do seem to secure their teachings on the gift of tongues on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, specifically chapters 12-14. From these passages, writers like J.W. Byers, Jennie C. Ritty, F.G. Smith, H.M. Riggle, D.O. Teasley, J.M. Nichols-Roy, and E.E. Byrum appear to share a fundamental consensus. Specifically, the scripture does not prohibit speaking in tongues. However, not every member has this gift. For the most part, many of the writers understood tongues as being intelligible human languages [J.W. Byers, F.G. Smith, Russell Byrum, J.M. Nichols-Roy]. The gift of tongues requires the gift of interpretation, or else the public display of tongues will not edify or build up the body of believers. These writers understood that the gift of tongues as "gift" required limits and was subordinate to the gift of prophecy.

There are, in addition to what appears to be a consensus, some interesting departures. While J.M. Nichols-Roy agreed that tongues included human languages, he appeared to extend the definition of languages to include other than human language.¹⁴

In the early years, F.G. Smith appears to have provided an influential contribution to the Church of God's understanding of the gift of tongues. On June 14, 1918, he gave an address to the General Ministerial Assembly on "The Gift of Tongues." It was based on Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, chapter fourteen. R.L. Berry wrote a follow-up account of Smith's message. Smith finally made this teaching available to all in the church, not just to the ministerial leadership. Smith promoted a dual exercise of the gift of tongues: a personal phase [private; devotional use] and a public phase [corporate worship].

For Smith, the Personal Phase is governed by the Holy Spirit and offered to God (14:2). It is not understood by humans (vss. 2, 28) and even the speaker does not

¹⁴ Tippin Manuscript, 422.

understand (v.14). However, one could receive the interpretation by prayer (v.13). Smith further indicates that the objective of this private tongue speaking is to edify the individual (v.4). Of course, if one brought this into the congregation, it would not be viewed as edifying, unless interpreted (vss. 5, 19). Hence, this phase of speaking in tongues is prohibited in public unless interpreted (v. 28). Smith's reading of the text subordinates this to prophecy, since the private phase of the gift of tongues is not very profitable, even if interpreted (vss. 26, 27). According to the text, Smith agrees that all may prophesy because prophecy is direct and convincing (v. 3, 4, 23-25, 31, 39).

In the Public phase of the gift of tongues, Smith affirms that it must be real languages, based on Acts 2 (14:6, 11). The public speaking in tongues is neither prohibited nor limited. Smith argues that the public aspect of speaking in tongues would require no interpretation. They are intelligible languages. I am not certain at this point whether Smith simply assumes that one would automatically find themselves in a context where this language, previously untaught and unspoken by the speaker, would be recognized and understood. On the other hand, Smith believed that this public phase of the gift of tongues constitutes a real "sign," helpful to unbelievers. Therefore in this sense, no interpretation is necessary because the very intelligibility of the language is its primary divine witness.¹⁵

REACTION AND ASSESSMENT

Of all the phenomena or manifestations, speaking in tongues is both biblically attested and tenaciously ambivalent within the thought and practices of the Church of God (Anderson, Ind.). It seems to me that our movement is not served well by

¹⁵ Ibid., 432-433.

categorically denying the validity and exercise of the legitimate use of tongues. I believe that there is no sound scriptural basis for advocating the cessation of this gift. Whether it should be used given our current context is another issue of note. Yet, the abuse of this gift does not justify its exclusion as an authentic gift of the Spirit. While we have an obligation to be discerning and pastoral in our responses toward the legitimate use of the gift of tongues, we also have another fundamental obligation to embrace the truth attested in Scripture.

In the public use of speaking in tongues the phenomenon often characterized by everyone speaking simultaneously, in what appears to be no known human language, is without biblical warrant, and, therefore, a false expression of a legitimate biblical gift. The teachings on the gift of tongues we affirm are clear that not every believer should be expected to have this gift. The purpose of this gift must be attended by the gift of interpretation of tongues that is not contrived to force a false appearance of scriptural conformity. We must hold fast to the biblical subordination of tongues to the straightforward, intelligible utterances of prophecy. Paul is clear in his correction of an abuse of this gift that the pursuit of the more “extraordinary” gifts is no substitute for the earnest pursuit of the gift-giver. This is consistent with the scriptural requirement that all we do in corporate worship must edify or build up the church. What amounts to indecipherable gibberish –not linked to any known language or dialect –and not accompanied by interpretation is legitimately labeled as unbiblical. We are justified, therefore, to insist on these biblical guidelines in the exercise of this gift in public worship.

Likewise, we have no scriptural warrant to deny the speaking in tongues in a private, devotional setting. It is here that we must be careful. In this dimension of the gift of tongues, it is possible that the speaker may not have the interpretation of what they utter. The believer who speaks in tongues in private or devotional settings edifies him or herself. I am not certain that the text prevents the use of a language that is “of angels.” If the Holy Spirit is free to do what the Holy Spirit wants to do, then we are on solid ground to permit such a private or devotional use of the gift.

B. BEING SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT

This phenomenon of the Spirit is known variously as “falling under the power of God,” being “under the power,” or “resting in the Spirit.” This phenomenon in its more modern expression is associated historically with what is called “The Toronto Blessing.”¹⁶ The proponents of this manifestation of the Spirit see it as an authentic sign of the Lord’s presence. George A. Maloney, a critic, defined “slain in the spirit” as follows:

It is the release of God’s energy that flows out from one person usually touching another, that causes the receiver to “fall” under this so-called power of the Holy Spirit. A “floating” effect accompanies the falling to the earth, filling the receiver with a sense of deep peace and joy. The whole body, soul and spirit seem to “let go” under an invisible power.¹⁷

It may be our initial temptation to deny or ignore this “phenomenon” of the Spirit. Yet, let’s be more measured in our response. It is interesting, though, that many contemporary advocates of most phenomena of the Spirit would castigate anyone who

¹⁶ The Toronto Blessing is renewal movement within the general charismatic movement. It’s beginning is marked on January 20, 1994, at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church. More will be said later.

¹⁷ George A. Maloney, “How to Understand and Evaluate the Charismatics’ Newest Experience: ‘Slaying in the Spirit,’ *Crux Extra*, 15 April 1981, 1, quoted in Jerry Don Venable, “Slain in the Spirit: Another View,” *Paraclete* 22 (Summer 1988): 21.

would dare subject a “move of the Spirit” to any kind of systematic examination. This attitude is both an odd and unbiblical one. In all ages the church has been exhorted to test the spirits for their conformity to the revelation of the Trinitarian God (See Acts 17:11; I John 4:1). My observation is that most people are unwilling to assess any teaching or practice coming from their favored teachers and pastors. This is a dangerous practice. Any serious exploration of being slain the Spirit in its modern sense necessarily must be in conversation with the pervasive manifestation of this modern practice, especially as faithfully promoted by several well-known television evangelists. Certainly the practice is much, much wider than that. Like most other experiences of the charismatic renewal movement, this practice also crosses denominational lines.

Scriptures Commonly Used in Support of Being Slain in the Spirit

There are particular scripture passages that appear to serve as fundamental support for the phenomenon of being slain in the Spirit.¹⁸ I will simply identify the Old and New Testament verses here, and say more about some of them later. From the Old Testament, Genesis 2:21; 15:12; I Samuel 26:12; II Chronicles 5:11-14, with 7:1, 2; Isaiah 29:10; Ezekiel 1:28; Ezekiel 3:23; Daniel 8:16-18; Daniel 10:9-10. From the New Testament the following passages are commonly used for support: Matthew 17:5-7; Matthew 28:4; Mark 14:35; John 18:5-6; John 18:36; Acts 9:3-4; Acts 10:10; Acts 16:29; Revelation 1:17.

¹⁸ Venable, “Slain in the Spirit,” 21-26; Marvin J. Gorman, “Slain in the Spirit,” in *Conference on the Holy Spirit*, 300-305.

Historical Accounts

The advocates of being slain in the Spirit also connect the phenomenon to several accounts of historic revivals. Among these are accounts from the Great Awakening, especially in some of the accounts of John Wesley, George Whitefield, the Quakers in England, the Shakers in America, and some of the camp meetings during the 19th century. Understandably, the Azusa Street Revival in the first decade of the twentieth century also lends credibility to such manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Before I look more closely at some of the pivotal scripture passages and their implications, I want to situate this portion of the reflection within a broader context of history, especially some of the early camp meetings of the nineteenth century. In addition to this, I will also refer to the physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the early years of the Church of God (Anderson, Ind.).

HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONNECTIONS

In his autobiography, Peter Cartwright provides an insider's view of frontier camp meetings. The outpouring of the Spirit at Cane Ridge Camp-meeting between 1800 and 1801 in the upper part of Kentucky is a case-in-point. It is here that Cartwright saw "hundreds fall prostrate under the mighty power of God, as men [sic] slain in battle."¹⁹ As the revival spread throughout the Cumberland area, Cartwright recalls how ministers of different denominations came together and preached night and day, four or five days at

¹⁹ W.P. Strickland, ed., *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher* (Cincinnati, OH.: The Methodist Book Concern, 1856), 30.

a time.²⁰ According to Cartwright, there were camp meetings that lasted three to four weeks.

He makes an interesting observation. “He saw more than a hundred sinners fall like dead men under one powerful sermon, and heard more than five hundred Christians shouting aloud the high praises of God at once”.²¹ In his autobiographical account, Cartwright appears to value “moderation”: He says, “In this great revival the Methodists kept moderately balanced; for we had excellent preachers to steer the ship or guide the flock. But some of our members ran wild, and indulged in some extravagances that were hard to control”.²²

What were some of the “extravagances” to which he alludes? What he called the “great revival” from 1801 well into the following years, Cartwright writes about certain “powerful exercises.”²³ Among these powerful exercises were the ‘jerks,’ which was overwhelming in its effects upon the bodies and minds of the people. “Saints or sinners” apparently engaged in these exercises.²⁴ A warm song or a sermon could lead people into convulsive jerking all over, which they could not stop. The only way, according to Cartwright, to find relief from jerking required that “they rise up and dance”.²⁵

“Other strange and wild exercises” included the “running, jumping, barking exercise.”²⁶ In addition, there was what he considered “the most troubling delusion of all.” This involved some that fell into trances and saw visions. They could lie motionless for days or weeks at a time, without food or drink. Upon awakening, they would claim to

²⁰ Ibid., 45.

²¹ Ibid., 45-46.

²² Ibid., 46.

²³ Ibid., 48.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 51.

have seen heaven and hell, to have seen God, angels, the devil and the damned. “They would prophesy, and, under the pretense of Divine inspiration, predict the time of the end of the world, and the ushering in of the great millennium”.²⁷

Cartwright viewed the *jerks* as judgment sent from God, first, to bring sinners to repentance. Secondly, to show believers that God could work with or without means, and do whatever seems good to Him.²⁸ Interestingly enough, Cartwright saw them all as delusions for weak-minded, ignorant, and superstitious persons. For jerking, Cartwright indicated he would recommend fervent prayer as a remedy. According to him, fervent prayer “almost uniformly proved an effectual remedy”.²⁹

In his influential work on frontier camp meetings, Charles A. Johnson argues that “the ‘falling exercise’ was the most common of all forms of bodily excitement...”³⁰ In a revival at Providence, Kentucky in 1801, during a falling exercise, “women in their frantic agitations sometimes ‘unconsciously tore open their bosoms and assumed indelicate attitudes’”.³¹ In Johnson’s work, he includes a chapter subsequent to these descriptions entitled “The Camp Meeting Matures.” In this chapter he indicates that “Thomas S. Hinde, untiring reporter of western Methodism in its earlier years, did not make a single mention of ‘barking, running, jumping, or falling’ taking place after the Great Revival”.³² Furthermore, from 1834-1844, reports from the *Western Christian*

²⁷ Ibid., 51-52

²⁸ Ibid., 51.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion’s Harvest Time*, Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), 57.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 95.

Advocate regularly reported the following: ““Good order and solemnity prevailed throughout””.³³

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

Some of the early pioneers were not unacquainted with a variety of responses to the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. While most of them expressed concern for the abuse of legitimate responses to the Holy Spirit, my reading of some of the accounts indicated that they embraced the legitimacy of a variety of emotional and physical responses to the experiences of conversion and of entire sanctification.

D.S. Warner exhorted all the pure in heart to seek from God his precious fullness. He says, “Sink into all the depth of the Divine will, definitely believe for the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, and the precious anointing that abideth forever, and according to your faith, so be it unto you.”³⁴ J.W. Byers describes his own experience of Holy Spirit baptism, following an unconditional and complete surrender to the Lord. He writes that

...As I dropped, loving arms of Jesus had caught me and I was glad to be in death with him...I arose from my knees and scarcely had time to lie down when truly I experienced a taste of death. Wholly unconscious of my earthly surroundings, but knowing I was in the presence of Jesus, I believe a death was wrought in me, after which the baptism of Pentecostal fire and the Holy Ghost came upon me. The refining fire went through my very body and the effect seemed terrible....Then following the distinct baptism of fire the floodgates of heaven’s glory were opened upon me, and, oh, the heavenly deluge that followed can be realized only by those who have experienced the same.³⁵

Note this particular physical manifestation of the Spirit that D.S. Warner describes: “Myself [sic] and others felt a wonderful death to sin and the world. Sarah

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *GT* (December 15, 1883), ??, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 104.

³⁵ Daniel S. Warner, *Sanctification* (Anderson, In.: The Gospel Trumpet Company, 1902), 110-111, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 106.

passed through the death groans, the Spirit laid me out on the floor.”³⁶ Both Warner and Byers appeared quite comfortable describing their experiences as a kind of “death.” Several of the pioneers spoke of the Holy Ghost baptism as the “death route.” Describing his personal experience of consecration, H.M. Riggle, with reference also to the motivation for his response, says: “I did not seek for the manifestation, for certain experiences, or fruits of the Spirit, but I sought for the Spirit himself. I received him. He cleansed my heart, filled me with power, and all my being with the glory of God. I was sensitively conscious of his sweet indwelling presence.”³⁷

Further accounts seemingly descriptive of a manifestation akin to “being slain” would include Joseph Smith’s confirmation in a *Gospel Trumpet* article “that seventeen people were baptized and were filled with the Holy Spirit and some of them overwhelmed with the power fell prostrate on the ground.”³⁸ D.S. Warner offered further observations of dying to sin in his report on another meeting four and half months later: “Many received the Holy Spirit baptism by the laying on of hands, according to the apostolic practice. The mighty shock from heaven usually dropped them instantly to the floor like dead men and women, but the resurrection was in the glow of eternal glory.”³⁹ Similarly, over three years later than this observation, Warner writes about experiences during the 1886 Jersey City, Ohio assembly: “Dear Sister Spacky was all of a half hour in the awful phangs of death. Her hands turned cold, and covered with the clammy death

³⁶ Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 108, from Warner’s diary entry, October 18, 1877.

³⁷ Riggle, *Pioneer Evangelism*, 40-46, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 110-111.

³⁸ *GT* (May 15, 1886).

³⁹ Warner, “A Great and Heavenly Feast,” *GT* (October 1, 1886), quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 113.

sweat. The death scene was just as real as a person literally expiring; but the resurrection was glorious.⁴⁰

Therefore, experiences like death are attested to by the early pioneers. Using phrases like “fell into a trance,” “prostrated beneath the mighty power of God,” “the Holy Ghost fell on them....Some shouted; others were overpowered, and prostrated,” “slain by the mighty power and laid like dead persons....”⁴¹

REACTION AND ASSESSMENT ON BEING SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT

The scriptural support for the phenomenon of being slain in the Spirit is justifiably contested territory. Keep in mind that the exercise of this phenomenon today raises questions. Surrounding the contemporary practice of this phenomenon appears to be a cadre of personalities whose principal purpose seems to be to slay people in the Spirit. This is wedded to persons in attendance who harbor the expectation that this will occur. It is not *whether* the Spirit sovereignly chooses to be manifested in this way on this occasion at this time, but only *when* in the worship service this manifestation of the Spirit will take place. I am always concerned then by the promptings, the subtle-and-not-so-subtle suggestions given by the preacher or worship leader that set the stage for desiring the experience, expecting the experience, and practicing the experience. If a manifestation is truly of the Spirit of God, why is there any need at all to use human effort and manipulation to ensure the experience?

I also am concerned that the psychological dimensions of the whole phenomenon are going unexplored. I am concerned that this purported manifestation of the Spirit

⁴⁰ Warner, “The Jersey City Assembly,” *GT* (October 15, 1889), quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 112.

⁴¹ See especially, D.S. Warner and Joseph Fisher in the *GT* (February 15, 1883); (January 1, 1885); (July 1, 1886); (October 1, 1886), quoted in Tippin Manuscript, 364-379.

operates under the assumption that the experience is for everyone. I am concerned by the widespread practice of “blowing” a person or whole groups of people over. I am concerned that much too often the centrality of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ appears to get second billing to the experience of being slain in the Spirit. This tendency seems to put the emphasis in the wrong places. I am concerned about people slain in the Spirit “falling backwards” into the arms of “catchers.” I am concerned about attitudes of spiritual arrogance stemming from those who experience this phenomenon and the spiritual recklessness of those who accept any new thing, with no attempt or desire to test the spirits to see if they be of God. In like manner, then, I must be concerned about those who do not practice it or any other physical manifestation or condemn any and all demonstrations of effusive response to the presence of the Holy Spirit – even in the raising of hands or the clapping of the hands or saying robust “amens.”

Hence, all these descriptions only serve to further irretrievably fracture the unity of the body of Christ, which, by Scripture, only serves to undermine the work of the Holy Spirit in and among us. If the modern exercise of gifts and demonstrations of physical phenomena cause and maintain divisions in the body of Christ, then the body of Christ has a problem. Are we too intent to seek the gifts and the manifestations, rather than to diligently seek the gift-giver? Are we enamored by gifted preachers and teachers, content to idolize them at all costs? There is a lot of blame to be shared by many of us.

Having rattled off some of my concerns let me attempt to address them in a more thoughtful manner. There are biblical passages that appear to parallel being slain in the Spirit, or falling (under the power of God). First, I find no biblical evidence for people falling by virtue of having hands laid on them or being blown upon, or any other such

cause. There is certainly scriptural support of people falling as a result of a divine visitation by an angel or by a theophany [the appearance of God]. At Ezekiel's prophetic commissioning, he *fell on his face* before the glory of God (Ezekiel 1:28). In Ezekiel 3:23-24, again in response to God's glory, Ezekiel *fell on his face* (v. 23). However, in v. 24, the spirit *sets him on his feet* and spoke with him. Daniel also *fell prostrate* [face to the ground] in response to having seen the angel Gabriel. He later *fell into a trance*. But then the angel touches him and *sets him on his feet*, and proceeds to speak to him (Daniel 8:16-18). Again in chapter 10 of Daniel, he *falls into a trance, face to the ground*. Then at the touch of the angel's hand, Daniel is set on his feet, in order to hear a word from the Lord. So in the few cases, *select* people *fell*, but not all. The *falling* was in response to a Divine presence, not in response to a human being. The *falling* was never *backwards*. In these few cases, God gives them a message *after* they are set on their feet.

In the New Testament, Matthew records that the guards at the tomb of Jesus *shook and became like dead men*, due to fear of the angel positioned at the tomb's entrance (28:4). In the Garden of Gethsemane, the detachment of soldiers accompanying Judas in his betrayal of Jesus step back and *fell to the ground*, upon Jesus identifying himself (John 18:5-6). Saul [Paul] *fell to the ground* on his way to Damascus in response to the light surrounding him—the presence of the risen Christ (Acts 9:3-4). Further on in Acts, the Philippian jailer *fell down trembling* at the sight of Paul and Silas still inside the jail—even though the prison doors were wide open. Finally, in the book of Revelation, John *fell at the feet* of the One like the Son of Man *as though dead* (Revelation 1:10-19).

There are other references to “falling” and similar words in the scriptures. Many who fell, fell as a response to divine judgment, as a consequence of an act by their

enemies, or as a form of mockery (II Chronicles 14:14; II Chronicles 29:8; Psalm 118:13; Isaiah 28:13; Isaiah 51:23; Mark 15:19; I Timothy 3:6). So not all “falling” exercises in scripture are positive moves of God’s Spirit. Yet, there are legitimate expressions of being overwhelmed by the presence of God, as I just have attempted to indicate. I have shown where such phenomena occurred in past revivals, and have even been validated by the observations by representatives of our Church of God pioneers.

However, I have little confidence that the contemporary expressions of being slain in the Spirit are the same as that demonstrated in the scriptures. I understand this does not by itself disqualify the practice. Yet, analogy means something. Most persons *fell forward*, on their face or their knees, and not backwards. So there is no scriptural validation for having “catchers” in place to catch those who *fall backward*. It is also interesting that in some of the early revivals, and even by the testimonies of our own tradition, many who fell were not Christians. Some were describes as “sinners,” being brought under conviction. So many either were seduced by Satan, or so moved by the powerful, anointed preaching of the gospel that they *fell prostrate* in the powerful presence of the Spirit. They were seeking conversion. Other accounts in our tradition identified falling [in its several varieties] as only one manifestation of the Spirit’s baptism. Also, in scripture, *falling before the Lord* always maintained the focus on God, never on any human. Present day experience of being slain often is orchestrated without due diligence to the relationship one has with God. In addition, there appears to be an inordinate focus on the one purporting to be the vessel through whom the Spirit is working. In Daniel, there were many who *fell down and worshipped*, but the object of worship was the “image of gold” (Daniel 3:5, 6, 10, 11). This is idolatry! These are just

some of the reasons that justify suspicion towards the modern day “Slain in the Spirit” phenomenon. Hear me closely! This is not to deny legitimate expressions of bending the body in homage to the Lord of lords and the King of all kings. I am fully open to God doing what God wants to do, in the way God wants to do it, and through whom God wants to do it. Our caution is that just because someone declares that what they do is Spirit-led does not make it so. If we are honest in this, then our “testing the spirits” is not a condemnable action.

HOLY LAUGHTER

While the phenomenon of Holy Laughter is global, it is a particularly important feature of what has been called the “Toronto Blessing.” The Toronto Blessing is a movement primarily birthed out of the modern charismatic movement that is still ongoing. There is general agreement that the Toronto Blessing as a charismatic renewal movement began officially on January 20, 1994 at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church. The chief proponent of Holy Laughter, South African, Rodney Howard-Browne, has found broad dissemination of his church services on the Trinity Broadcasting Network [TBN] headed by Paul and Jan Crouch. It also enjoys continuing legitimacy in Word-Faith and Vineyard churches. According to one source, Holy Laughter has received endorsements from Oral and Richard Roberts, Marilyn Hickey, Paul and Jan Crouch, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, John Wimber, and many others.

[<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/holylaugh.htm>] A descriptive account of Holy Laughter might include spontaneous, uncontrollable laughter erupting from the congregation, even during times of solemn ceremony or messages from the

pulpit. In addition to Holy Laughter (or laughing hysterically), there are other phenomena often associated with the phenomenon of holy laughter in various degrees. These associated phenomena include barking like dogs, roaring like lions, acting as if drunk, clucking like chickens, seeing visions from God, crying, leaping, dancing, and shaking. Of course, also associated with this is “being slain in the Spirit,” which has been discussed previously. The history of this movement is a very interesting one. This is not a major concern of this paper, however. Yet, the passionate interest it still generates and broad acceptance it still enjoys is not to be dismissed without serious scrutiny.

Its chief advocates attempt to ground this phenomenon historically by claiming its occurrence in both the Great Awakening of the 1740’s and the Second Awakening in the early 1800’s. **[Did the revivalists Charles Finney, Peter Cartwright, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards endorse the practice of “holy laughter”?]**

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

Unlike the weighty sources referenced earlier in respect to Speaking in Tongues, I believe it is difficult to mount similar evidence on “laughter.” While there are indeed references to laughter made by some writers, one could not equate these references to the identical phenomenon known as “holy laughter” today. Lets look at the few references I could find in Tippins’ research.

E. E. Byrum, in observing the diverse responses to the move of the Holy Spirit, further says that “another one will *laugh* and can apparently do nothing else to express

the change, while another can only vent to the same through a flood of tears, or even weeping with loud cries.”⁴²

D.O. Teasley also makes reference to laughing. According to Teasley,

The visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit in conversion may differ according to the temperament of the person converted. Many persons have trouble with doubts because their manifestations were not greater or as great as some one’s else; but extraordinary manifestations such as leaping, shouting, etc. are not always manifestations of divine presence. Some people when the Spirit speaks peace to them feel like shouting praise to God; some feel like *laughing*; some feel like crying....⁴³

R.L. Berry wrote: “Let a man be ever so full of the Spirit, let him shout, *laugh*, sing, leap, or what not, and there is a seemliness, a propriety, a gentlemanliness about it that upbuilds and gives pleasure to the onlookers.”⁴⁴

The above quotes appear to assume that *laughing* can be a legitimate response to the move of the Holy Spirit. While E.E. Byrum appeared to embrace laughing in my earlier reference, he shares about a camp meeting experience in Michigan where *laughing* became the occasion for casting out devils before a large audience crowding about to witness the scene:

A woman in attendance...was discerned to be possessed of devils. When special prayer was held in her behalf, the evil spirits came out with loud cries....A few days later...the same lady [having not been saved] is discerned to be ‘wholly in the hands of the devil.’ As she came forward for prayer, the devil seemed to take entire possession of her organs of speech as a mouth-piece, and *laughed* us to scorn, scoffed at the idea of devils being in her; but as such devils were commanded to come out, they did so with loud cries. At times she would *laugh* with all her might, then immediately she would *bark like a dog, hiss like a snake, imitate a cat, and make all kinds of hideous noises*, which only could come from demons from the pit.⁴⁵

⁴² E.E. Byrum, *The Secret of Salvation*, 76, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 116, emphasis mine.

⁴³ D.O. Teasley, *The Holy Spirit and Other Spirits*, 179-181, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 116.

⁴⁴ Tippin Manuscript, 396.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

Note that in this account by Byrum he links other so-called physical manifestations of the Spirit with the manifestation of “mighty” laughter. Except for the discernment that the lady was possessed of devils, the totality of these physical manifestations would look identical to the Toronto Blessing mentioned earlier. I would fear to attribute to the devil what truly is of God. There is very little to suggest that the laughter described by those who observed the historic revivals and the laughter mentioned by Church of God observers is the same experience as the modern phenomenon of Holy Laughter. Laughter is a human response that need not be motivated by evil intentions. I can conceive of laughter as a legitimate response to the Divine presence in the spirit of the Church of God writers I have explored. So a deeper assessment of the modern phenomenon is in order.

REACTION AND ASSESSMENT OF HOLY LAUGHTER

I question the claim of advocates of the Toronto Blessing that this move of the Spirit is consistent with or parallel to that identified in the early revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They attempt to go mainstream by implying the endorsement of Jonathan Edwards and later, Charles G. Finney—to name a few. Remember the stinging indictment by revivalist Peter Cartwright of many of these physical manifestations as perpetrated by Satan. Jonathan Edwards indeed speaks of religious affections and could give some measure of credibility to some of the highly emotional and physical manifestations present during the Northampton Revival. Yet, Edwards opposed charismatic or involuntary manifestations. Some scholars argue that his stance fundamentally was that these physical manifestations could neither prove nor disprove an authentic presence of the Holy Spirit. Remember E.E. Byrum’s camp meeting

observation that the mocking, derisive laughter coming from a lady in attendance was due to possession by devils.

Words of caution come from other Church of God writers, even as they earnestly desire the authentic move of the Holy Spirit. D.O. Teasley, for example, argues that “it is not God’s most common way of bringing souls to Christ to prostrate them, although He sometimes uses this means; but whenever He does so it is to be considered an exceptional case, and not an established rule....”⁴⁶ While Teasley appears to know too much about how God works for my taste, his purpose, I believe, was to support the authentic, to resist the demonic, and to fire up the “dead.” Gifted Church of God evangelist, J.W. Byers, also understood that all spiritual gifts or manifestations of the Spirit could be abused: “There has been more destructive fanaticism under the pretense of spiritual manifestation than any other form in these last days.”⁴⁷

In addition to its claim that it parallels past historic revivals, the Toronto Blessing has appealed to Scripture in support of its phenomena of the Spirit. The advocates of the Toronto Blessing equate or connect laughter with the presence of “joy” that they believe exist during the manifestation. This joy comes from those filled with the Spirit. Scriptures used to lend varying weights of support include: Acts 2:28; 8:8; 13:52; 15:3; Romans 15:13; I Peter 4:13. Others might include Psalm 2:4; 37:13; 126:1-3; Acts 2:46; Philippians 4:4; and I Peter 1:6-8. These passages focus on joy, which by extension, they argue, could include laughter or, certainly, would not exclude it. This hermeneutical sleight-of-hand should be resisted, in my opinion. The words *joy* and *laughter* come from different root words. The Greek word for “joy” (*chara*) refers predominantly to the

⁴⁶ Teasley, *The Holy Spirit and Other Spirits*, 179-181, quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 117.

⁴⁷ J.W. Byers, “Spiritual Gifts,” *GT* (January 28, 1897, reprinted January 25, 1906), quoted in Tippin, *Powerful Words*, 120.

idea of “delight” or “cheerfulness.” It is indeed a stretch to make joy and laughter essentially equivalent notions, when a close reading of scripture does not support such a move.

All forms of “laugh” (laughed, laughter, laughing) do not appear at all in the book of Acts – the very book from which their identity springs. On an important level, then, no spiritual manifestation in Acts can be forced to include the physical act of laughing. This is especially the case, I believe, for the kind of impulsive, uncontrollable laughing that can legitimately interrupt even the preaching of God’s word in the midst of corporate worship. Moreover, laughing in the Scriptures is not an absolute and always positive response to the Divine presence or to the realities of life. There are times when laughter is inappropriate, unwise, and evidence of ungodly motivations [See Ecclesiastes 3:4; Ecclesiastes 7:3-4, 6; Luke 6:25; and James 4:9].

The ability to laugh is a gift indeed from God. Laughter is therapeutic. We are not talking about this. We are talking about the particular phenomenon known as Holy Laughter, which I hold has no merit in Scripture or church tradition.

Other phenomena of the Spirit often associated with Holy Laughter include animal sounds: barking like dogs; roaring like lions; clucking like chickens; clacking like pigeons are excellent examples of animal sounds. From some of my reading, even many supporters of the Toronto Blessing find animal sounds the most problematic phenomena. They confess that little or no scriptural basis exists for these phenomena, but some supporters are still reluctant to completely dismiss it, for fear of undermining people’s freedom to experience the Spirit. Yet, this is an invitation to deception, it seems to me.

For the Church of God, we have always affirmed our understanding of faith as “experiential,” but only as experience is supported by the Scriptures.

This appears to be an easy call. One scripture alluded to in support of animal sounds is Hosea 11:10-11: “(10) They shall go after the Lord, who *roars like a lion*, when he *roars*, his children shall come trembling from the west. (11) They shall come *trembling like birds* from Egypt, and *like doves* from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord.” In this text Israel is God’s wayward child. The text has God as the lion who roars – not the children of God. God’s roar indeed is not ferocious, as to kill, but it is a roar that calls the cubs to return to safety. The text further says that in response they do come trembling like birds and doves. This is the language of compassion and restoration for sure, when compared to the broader context of Hosea’s prophecy. Yet, how one can take these words in this Old Testament passage, intended as figures of speech, transform them into a literal practice and then label the practice as a scripturally-supported manifestation of God’s Spirit? One critic of the Toronto Blessing and its varied display of phenomena of the Spirit offered this comment: “It was not enough to believe that they [the early disciples at Pentecost] spoke in tongues, now they have to bark like dogs in the Spirit, roar like lions in the Spirit, cackle like chickens in the Spirit, and stagger like drunks in the Spirit. What will be the next ‘move of the Spirit’?”

[www.rapidnet.com]

The final phenomenon frequently associated with Holy Laughter movement is being “drunk in the Spirit.” The believer appears to lose control and wobble about just like one expects a drunk person to act. The supporters of this phenomenon attempt to find scriptural support directly from the biblical account of Pentecost in the book of Acts.

In Acts 2:1-13, 15, the crowd gathered and expressed amazement because each one heard in their own native language. They heard them speaking in their own language the mighty deeds of God. How drunk could they be that everyone could not only hear them, but also hear them clearly speak God's Word? Does not "new wine" garble the speech muddle the thinking, blur the sight, and make tentative the walk? In the Scripture passage in Acts 2, there is no hint of this. "Everyone was amazed and perplexed" (v. 12). Yet, while *all* were amazed and perplexed, only *some* sneered and mocked (v. 13). Therefore, not all those present charged these disciples with being drunk. Those who sneered were the only ones who suggested that "they [were] filled with new wine" (v.13). For the supporters of "Drunk in the Spirit" to endorse their practice of appearing or acting drunk or being served by the Holy bartender, miss an important point. If Peter and the rest were as "drunk" in the Spirit as the supporters of this phenomenon indicate by their practices of drunkenness, then how could Peter and the rest serve as powerful witnesses to the resurrected Christ on that Pentecost day? They were so much the "clear-headed" witnesses that through Peter's Christ-centered, intelligible proclamation, three thousand people were convicted by the Spirit of Christ, repented of their sins, and saved before the sun set. Their scriptural support for the practice of being drunk in the Spirit is, therefore, forced. It is scripturally without sound basis. The phenomenon is considered authentic because people do it. Experience fundamentally drives authenticity. I stand here with the Church of God's historic insistence that experience rooted in the richness of the biblical witness is the standard of authenticity. Why would one hold to an experience attributed to the Holy Spirit that can find no support in the very Scriptures God-breathed by the same Spirit?

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I have covered a lot of territory, but there is still so much more to consider in any serious examination of the phenomena of the Spirit. I will offer some concluding observations, some interesting questions, and a final exhortation.

From this paper, I come humbly to several broad conclusions or inferences about our topic today. First, physical phenomena of the Spirit did occur in the early years of the Church of God and were not categorically rejected. While a case could be made for this, one should not infer that the early years of the Church of God experienced a groundswell of spiritual manifestations. The Church of God sources I quoted often did not give much in-depth description of the phenomena. In addition, I was impressed by their persistent openness to and yearning for the move of God's Spirit in significant ways. Moreover, while phenomena of the Spirit did appear to enjoy a great degree of legitimacy, they were always subject to scrutiny. The consequences of a "Spirit-led" testing many times resulted in judging much of the phenomena as ordained by Satan. Again, while many of the writers mentioned in this paper appeared accepting of many manifestations, I did not get any sense that they believed that these manifestations constituted the major work of the Holy Spirit. In much of what I read, the major work of the Holy Spirit still in preparing believers to hear the Word, responding to the Word, living the Word, and sharing the Word.

As a result of doing this paper, I also ask myself some "interesting" questions. Is talking about the phenomena of the Spirit in Byrum Hall today viewed as more preferable than experiencing the Spirit in corporate worship tonight? When was the last time that our camp meeting services witnessed persons responding to the preaching and the singing

with loud weeping, high praises, falling on their faces, laughter borne of the Spirit, and so forth? We have observed the solemn, the blessed quietness, the “thoughtful” gaze, the nodding of the head, and the scatterings of amens. Why do these responses appear to be normative? Do we “program” around the Spirit at times? Do we already have preconceived notions of what are acceptable expressions of the Spirit? Have we become so modern that we radically separate our “human reason” from our “passions”?

The Church of God speaks of unity of all believers. We have done well in more recent years of challenging ourselves to live out this fruit of the holy life. Yet, there are still pockets of divisions among us. Continuing divisions [arguments for legitimacy aside] are Anderson here, Hispanic Concilio yonder, the Indian Council and West Middlesex over there; *Reformation Witness* here and *One Voice* there; there is the North American church here and the broader international diversity of the church yonder. Why have I witnessed less demonstration of the phenomena of the Spirit in Anderson than in West Middlesex or Kampala, Uganda? Even given the diversity of our movement, why is Anderson seen as predominantly Anglo and West Middlesex as predominantly African American? Do these distinctions contribute to or explain in any meaningful way the degree of openness to certain phenomena of the Spirit? It just might be that only as we experience the authentic unity the Holy Spirit brings – which we affirm as a distinguishing mark -- will we then grasp with our whole selves—mind and body-- what the Spirit is doing in the world today, and be more willing to go where the Spirit leads.

This brings me to my concluding exhortations. First, our teaching and preaching surrounding the phenomena of the Spirit must always be in the context of God’s ultimate and broader agenda to reconcile the world back to God. God is not just concerned about

our movement, or about the necessary but not sufficient attention to doctrinal faithfulness. Second, Our teaching, preaching, and living in the Spirit must always be in the context of our distinguishing doctrines of holiness of lifestyle and its fruit – the unity of all believers. This must hold true as an ongoing willingness to engage all our brothers or sisters, wherever they may be—even if “Charismatics.” A third encouragement is that we need to be reminded that the Spirit fills our heart with God’s love (Romans 5:5), which produces spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23), and God’s love-bearing Spirit dispels all fear (I John 4:18). We need not allow fear and suspicion based on differences produce unholy responses within the body of Christ. Further, in humility, we must be willing to “test” the spirits, understanding that the goal of this testing is true knowledge, trust, wisdom, and obedience. Its goal is not unwarranted suspicion and spiritual rigidity. As our own writers have instructed us, we are not simply “individuals” wanting our own individual experiences validated at all cost. We are the body of Christ, the family of God, and, as such, our apprehension of the Spirit’s work should be a communal responsibility. Finally, there are times when we do “walk in the dark,” but in prayerful submission to our God, may the Holy Spirit help us to “walk in the light.”

Benjamin F. Reid wrote passionately about the need for a priority of teaching on the Holy Spirit, in the context of a willing spirit of obedience. Reid said, “We must let the wind blow!”⁴⁸ So let’s go forward into God’s future. In doing so, let us passionately shun the false, even as we just as passionately embrace the authentic. Come Holy Spirit, Come!

⁴⁸ See Benjamin F. Reid, *Glory to the Spirit* (Anderson, In.: Warner Press, 1990).