

HOLY SPIRIT

Revelation & Revolution

EXPLORING HOLY SPIRIT DIMENSIONS

REINHARD BONNKE

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Exploring Holy Spirit Dimensions

REINHARD BONNKE
WITH GEORGE CANTY

*This book describes
how the Third Person of the Trinity,
the Eternal Spirit of God,
has come into his own this century and
how we came to know his work and identity.*

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Reinhard Bonnke with George Canty
English

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CREDO

God is pouring out his Spirit, manifest power, the greatest non-scientific power on earth.

The Spirit is the creator and upholder of the whole universe and this world is his special interest and responsibility.

Sent by the Father, the Holy Spirit imparts himself to all who believe. No one else can impart him. He is a Person, not a commodity. We cannot order Deity.

The Baptism in the Spirit is physical and spiritual. The Spirit “abides” and makes us aware of his constant presence with assurance of his lasting power.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, love’s beginning and source. Love is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, our greatest asset, mightier than miracles.

The Holy Spirit is the reality of Christianity. Without the Spirit the Christian faith is powerless and impossible. He is the essence, the secret dynamic of the faith, and its actuating force.

The Spirit is the *pneuma*, rushing wind, always active. There is no still wind and no still Holy Spirit. If we claim to have the Spirit we shall be active with him and to that degree. His only instruments are believers.

The Spirit made all things and keeps them together. He cannot care for the world without miracles. To deny miracles is to deny the creator his rights.

FOREWORD

One hundred years ago a new age of the Holy Spirit dawned. A new dynamism has since animated hundreds of millions of Christians. It has taken time to impact the world. But what an impact! It is the primary phenomenon in history.

The UK evangelical magazine IDEA¹ quotes David Martin, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics, as saying that the Holy Spirit movement in the last century “is the most dramatic development of Christianity in the century recently concluded.” Harvey Cox, Professor of Divinity at Harvard has called it “the reshaping of religion in the 21st century.”²

It has been claimed that greater advances have been made in understanding the Spirit – the theology – since 1900 than in the previous 1,900 years. This may well be the case. We know nothing about God unless the Spirit reveals it. Jesus said the Spirit would speak not about himself but about the Son: “*He, the Spirit of truth, will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you*” (John 16:13-14).

The swing of interest in the Spirit came from the fringe, from unknown faith people, not from scholars, though it has produced scholars. Such people – nobodies, coming full of the Spirit from the outer edges of Christianity, were met with suspicion, as one would expect. They had only experience, and to men of the Church no theology meant no credentials, no bona fides.

Yet, if the Church was demanding a theology of the Spirit, why wasn't it providing one? Where was the Church's theology of the Ascension? Where were the guides to the Holy Spirit in action? It looked suspiciously as if Holy Spirit miracle Christianity, the standard and original faith of the New Testament, was expected never to be seen again. With the Holy Spirit in action New Testament religion could become common experience once more.

However, was there anyone who could still imagine what first century Christianity was like, what the 120 disciples were like on the day of Pentecost? Well, hundreds of millions of people around the world today speak of their experience as a repeat of apostolic times. Today's worldwide Holy Spirit effects may have previously been beyond people's imaginations, but they are obviously real and cannot be ignored.

We shall always be learning about God. That will be one of our eternal joys. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide us into all truth – guide us, not jettison us into a mass of truth like a bullet into the Swiss mountains. He said he had things to tell his disciples, but they were not ready for them. Isaiah said God had to teach people “*rule on rule, rule on rule, a little here, a little there*” (Isaiah 28:10).

Today we are learning even more of the Spirit. The original group of “discoverers” shone with a light that reached Europe from a half-burnt-down mission hall on Azusa Street in 1906. They had little teaching on the Spirit in their own churches and certainly no scholarship. So they picked up their Bibles to teach themselves. Scholarship is not needed for a walk with God. Those Spirit-baptized fathers bequeathed to us some basic teaching that is still

important today, a century later. Daniel was told that *“knowledge shall increase”* (Daniel 12:4, NKJV) and we do, indeed, understand more as time goes on. Bible revelations filter through only gradually until they become the general teaching of the church. It may take decades, even centuries, before a truth becomes the currency of common belief. We can see that as we look back across the centuries of church history.

Things said in this book are likely to be new insights to many. These are not trivial matters; they are Bible truths and therefore potent. Nor are they the *“great matters or things too wonderful for me”* that the Psalmist preferred to leave alone (Psalm 131:1). Unfortunately, there are people around today who think that most of the Bible belongs to that category. Charles Spurgeon said that some high-flown teachers think that Jesus said, “Feed my giraffes,” putting the food of the Word far out of reach of normal creatures. These chapters are a suitable diet for all, including “babes in Christ.” The apostle Paul found that the pagans of Athens were hungry for philosophical novelties, not truth, and the Areopagus institute was there to examine them. Jesus had different ideas: *“Every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old”* (Matthew 13:52). We can all walk with God with understanding, though we learn slowly and do not jump into new shoes every day.

Holy Spirit-filled churches have changed tremendously this century, but the Word of God is still the floor plan. Earlier Spirit-filled people lived through stormy waters. It was the Word that made them what they were; the Word was the unshakeable rock on which they built, not experience alone, as this book will show.

It is the duty of those who teach to strengthen Christian basics and to provide evidence of the new life produced by the living Word.

A Fuller College professor stated that this Holy Spirit revival “is a profound augmentation of all Christian teaching.” It is the Holy Spirit who adds depth to every major doctrine. The revolutionary secret is out: The gospel is for the body as well as the soul. God is as active on earth as he is in heaven. We know now who the Holy Spirit really is. He is the agent of divine action on earth.

Of course, there is always the periphery, the zealous but not wise, the arrogant who claim superior private revelations, and those who suppose that having the Spirit guarantees that God must do whatever they say. New schemes, panaceas, gimmicks, revivalist and instant church-filling and church-growth “secrets” come to us as if from a production belt, together with private instructions and directives personally from the Almighty. But extremists are not our role models.

Tens of millions of people today are filled with the Holy Spirit, creating an acute need for teaching. The experience of the Spirit is wonderful, but we must grow. I longed for an up-to-date guide of dependable authority so believers could see from the Word what are acceptable practice and standards. This little book is an attempt in that direction. Our campaigns and the many people involved have made such a guide urgent.

I am publishing this book with the support of well-qualified Christian scholars. An English friend, George Canty, who also longed for such a book, joined in. That we were both looking for the same thing seemed to me more than coincidence; we took it as

divine prompting. George Canty has unique qualifications, having had a real Acts 2 experience as long ago as 1926; today, still drawing on the power of it, he continues to play an active part in a wide range of gospel initiatives. He is a Bible theologian with a clear and original mind.

The Holy Spirit is the inspiring Spirit. These chapters are just one result, hopefully written in terms that everyone can enjoy. It is not a re-hash of things everybody knows, nor is it padded out with dramatized “comfort writing.” This is original and fresh Bible teaching. I have asked for God’s anointing on this volume and that the Holy Spirit, the Great Interpreter, will anoint the minds and hearts of all readers.

Testimony

When a boy, I longed for the baptism in the Spirit more than for my daily bread. My father eventually took me to a place where a noted preacher was holding services. While there, with no one near me, I felt as if all heaven was cramming into my soul. Filled with God, I found myself speaking in tongues. A spiritual instinct was born in me, prompting me, inspiring me, and leading me. I don’t need to pray for God’s presence, I don’t seek him. I simply rely on his promise. We are his temples. He is where we are and he will never leave or forsake us. The Spirit of God performs his wonders.

*The Holy Spirit comes
for the best and for the worst of us,
the Father's promise sent by the Son.
What a gift!*

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Throughout most of the church's history the Holy Spirit was not much more than a name. The immediate answer to the question used as the title of this chapter is that the Holy Spirit is God in action on earth.

For centuries people thought of the “Holy Ghost” as just that, a holy ghost, a sort of religious fragrance or ambience lingering in Gothic churches. The majesty of the Almighty, the Third Person of the Godhead, seemed known only as a mysterious cathedral atmosphere. That is quite a status reduction!

To talk about him we have first to identify him. He is the power of Pentecost. He began the Christian Church. We can pinpoint when and where this happened. It was in AD 29 at the annual Jewish festival held 50 days after Christ's crucifixion, called the day of Pentecost. That morning the Spirit of God burst upon the world in reality, not as a sweet influence but literally as a hurricane. He announced his own arrival with the miracle of 120 disciples speaking in tongues. This noisy outburst attracted the first Christian congregation.

He did not come just to demonstrate divine things, to provide a one-off experience that people could remember when they grew old. The disciples were emboldened. They cast aside timidity

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and challenged the world. For many thousands of years, no matter where you look, mankind lived entrenched in superstitions and traditions. In AD 29 those people in an obscure corner of the world became bigger than life size, ready to challenge the devil, the world, and history itself. The well-known evangelist Smith Wigglesworth said the Acts of the Apostles was written because the apostles acted.

This was the new living resource promised by Christ. He had risen to God and sent the evidence of it, the gift of the Spirit. Seated at the right hand of the heavenly throne, he gave the world physical proof of it. The disciples experienced something that had never been known on earth before.

Despite such tangible experience, as memories of the apostles dimmed, the Holy Spirit somehow became a remote presence. Jesus was remembered, and so were all his works; as time went by a great Christian statement was written about him, the Apostles' Creed. That creed has been recited on 50,000 Sundays by millions of Christians. Yet it made only passing mention of the Holy Spirit – "I believe in the Holy Spirit." We do not know who wrote the Creed, but it was certainly not the Apostles. Whoever composed it was evidently not as conscious of the Holy Spirit and his role in affairs as the first disciples.³

Dr. Arthur Headlam, a former Bishop of Gloucester, said in his commentary that it was not understood what the Holy Spirit gifts were that were exercised in the early church. However, Paul wrote to the Galatians as if the Holy Spirit experience was a normal part of everyday life: "*We live by the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:25). The great

Bible translator J. B. Lightfoot knew little of the Spirit himself, saying that to live by the Spirit was “an ideal rather than an actual life.” This seemed to have been the accepted situation by the late 19th century. Holy Spirit reality had drifted out of sight.

The Spirit is God, and God is not remote. That was never his intention. We ought to know him as much as we know the Father and Jesus. The Father and the Son are one, but also can be distinguished. We recognize their roles. What is the role of the Spirit, his distinguishing feature?

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity at work on earth. Everything that God does here, outside of heaven, is by the Spirit. All the experience of believers, forgiveness, answers to prayer, assurance, joy, healings and signs are the works of God performed by the Holy Spirit. Today God is at work around us through the Holy Spirit. We learn who the Spirit is in the New Testament. For instance, the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles has been called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

The basic Bible truth is that God makes himself known by action, not so much verbally. The Holy Spirit is action. He is the wind from heaven, which is always moving or it would not exist. If we know the Spirit, we know God and we can all know him, just as we know Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the wonderful resource promised by Jesus. Before then the Spirit was not truly known. The first disciples needed to learn the new

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potential. The book of Acts is the story of their exploration of the Holy Spirit. They had been sent by Jesus to perform an impossible task, to carry the gospel into the heathen world and to shed light in its thick darkness. They were only fishermen and peasants, but the Holy Spirit made them spiritual giants still honored some 2,000 years later. That is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the God of Pentecost, the Spirit of activity, power, love, strength and miracles.

The Holy Spirit has not come to create a cozy atmosphere in a church. We do not draw him into our services by creating the right atmosphere, regardless of whether that is quiet and subdued or noisy and exuberant. The Holy Spirit does not need to be attracted, invoked, persuaded or baited. He is not a reluctant or indifferent visitor but, following his own will and desire, he comes to take up residence.

The apostles were not praying for the Spirit, but he came, invaded the place; any atmosphere they might have experienced together was blown away, invaded by a “*rushing mighty wind*” (Acts 2:2, NKV). The Spirit is the atmosphere of heaven itself and heaven comes down here with him. He is the pneuma, the wind of heaven blowing through our stuffy traditions and stagnation. We may sing “Welcome, welcome, Holy Spirit”, but he does not come because of our welcome. He is no guest, no stranger invited in for an hour or two. He is the Lord from heaven and invites us into his presence. Where there is faith and the Word, he finds his natural environment.

The Holy Spirit does not choose the strong and the capable, although he does not ignore them either. However, his purpose is to give strength to the weak and needy, the little folk who think

little of themselves. Their weakness attracts his power, his all-sufficiency and life-giving dynamism. He comes for the best and for the worst of us, the Father's promise sent by the Son. What a gift!

We read with wonder and joy what the Spirit was in Bible days. That is the Spirit we are talking about here. He is the eternal Spirit, no different now than then. In fact the Old Testament days were not his great days. He is the New Testament Spirit. He is the essence of the Christian faith, brought to us by the gospel. There is no Christianity without him. He is not an accessory, but the very substance of what we believe. He is God on earth, actively indwelling and saturating every particle of what we experience. This means that Christianity is a supernatural faith. A non-supernatural gospel is only a shell.

The Holy Spirit is the God of Pentecost, the Spirit of activity, power, love, strength and miracles.

The New Testament contains not a single word suggesting the Spirit would ever withdraw or change. Even if we “quench the Spirit,” or “grieve” the Spirit, he does not retreat and leave us. David prayed, “*Do not take your Holy Spirit from me*” (Psalm 51:11), but that was a thousand years before he came to abide with us. Our unbelief grieves the Holy Spirit. We can certainly grieve him by what we do, but we could neither quench nor grieve him unless he was with us. The world cannot quench or grieve him. Only believers have that dubious privilege.

The supreme work of the Spirit is salvation. His priority is not Christians concerned about scruples and finer points of spirituality and holiness. Any virtue of ours is swallowed up, carried away in a wave of his sanctifying presence.

The apostles needed the Spirit and so do we, even more. In Bible times the world had 300 million people, all unevangelized. Today there are almost 7 thousand million on earth and most of them are unevangelized. We need to do what the apostles did. If we do, God will give us what he gave them.

The book of the Acts of the Apostles does not portray peak Holy Spirit power, but only what the first disciples did by the Spirit. Nothing is said about it being the maximum of possibility. **There is no maximum.** The early Christians are not our role models. Their story is only a first sampling of the potentialities of Holy Spirit ministry. The field is open to us. Paul prayed *“that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know [...] his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead”* (Ephesians 1:18-20).

Christians were never intended to fight the world, the flesh and the devil with only their own resources – whether they lived in the first or the twenty-first century. The gospel is the *“power of God”*

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(Romans 1:16) – that is, by the Holy Spirit, but not when we ignore him. How much preaching today sounds as if the preacher had just come out of the upper room with the Apostles? How much sounds as if the gospel really is the power of God? Preachers who talk to their congregations like doctors in their clinic, passionless, give the Holy Spirit no chance. The Christian job cannot be done without the Spirit’s anointing and that we know. *“Be filled with the Spirit!”* is our instruction (Ephesians 5:18). Being purpose-driven is part of it, but being

Spirit-driven is the New Testament pattern. He is the motivator and the motivating power.

The half million words of the Old Testament is God's treatise on the Holy Spirit. It demonstrates that whole nations tread the road of tragedy if the Spirit of God is ignored. The Spirit touched an individual in Israel only now and then, but otherwise the nation was on a slippery downward slope. When the Spirit came everything changed. It was a supernatural gospel with revolutionary effects.

The faith spread. Over the decades it became decadent and secular, and its history suggests the Christian church has failed to realize the potential of the Spirit. The Spirit has always been at work, for he is the restless, ever-active One. He may have been given little recognition, but he was working against the flow of the corruptions of the Church. The church has been embroiled in intrigues, politics, theological heresies, internecine strife, debates over issues remote from anything Jesus said, and oblivious of the Holy Spirit's reality.

It is high time for us to know who the Holy Spirit is and what Jesus said about him as the secret of gospel power. It is not a case of struggling and sweating to get the Spirit, but of letting the Spirit come in. We do not make his power. We do not make him effective. We do not generate Holy Spirit power by prayer, sweat, agony, time, effort, good works, or anything else. The Father gives us the Spirit as a gift, not a reward or wages, something we earn. If we could make ourselves so good that we deserved the Holy Spirit, we would not need him. Like Elisha, we are all called to pick up the Elijah mantle, but our Elijah is Christ Jesus. We do not ask, "*Where is the God of Elijah?*" (2 Kings 2:14), but "*Where is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ?*" for one greater than Elijah has come.

*The Spirit is the author
of all things visible and invisible.
Miracles are one of a piece with creation
and essential to God's control.
All things exist by the Holy Spirit.
Nothing is more natural
than the supernatural.*