

Simon Ponsonby: More -

How you can have more of the Holy Spirit when you already have everything in Christ

Victor (Kingsway) 2004

AJM July 2005

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Introduction

Many Christians are like the carp he found on holiday, half stranded out of water, having departed from the deep waters of God's life-giving Spirit, and now slowly suffocating.

1. Longing for the deep

Billy Graham, 1988 : 'the most desperate need of the nation today is that men and women who profess Jesus be filled with the Holy Spirit'. *It is my intention throughout this book to deduce from Scripture and the church's testimony the reality of an essential, personal, tangible, repeatable Pentecost.* Many church luminaries knew they did not have it all, and longed for more – Wesley, Moody. Unless we are filled by the living waters of the HS, which Jesus promised would flow out – not in (Jn 7.38), we will never be the blessing God intended us to be, never water the desert into life (Ex 47). David Pytches: 'yes, I believe in the second blessing – it comes after the first and before the third'.

Many evangelicals question this desire for more. But they are biblically reductionist – they read scripture through a filter, and while making the cross central, actually fail to see that the cross is the door not the room. Wanting more is a sign of maturity; it's the authentic cry of the true believer, it's part of the DNA of the spiritual life, and mirrors the natural desire of God himself. 'Christianity was never meant to be merely a meal ticket to heaven and a disciplined gritting of the teeth until the day we get there.' Some evangelicals have not been evangelical enough in looking to and following through the biblical theology of life in the Spirit.

Anselm : *I believe in order that I may know.*

Bernard : *I believe in order that I may experience.*

Scripture speaks of experience as the norm of the religious life – we are born again; we receive the love of God into our hearts; we are filled with the Spirit – all experiences. Our relationship with God is not meant to be an emotionally detached act of faith.

How do we receive the Spirit, at once, or gradually? Makes no difference – what matters in a bath is that it is full, not how it got to be so.

2. Expect more

Christianity is a love story. We alone were made not just to serve God but to love him and be loved by him. Heb 1.13-14, he made angels for ministry, us for intimacy. The work of Christ is not some metaphysical, judicial exchange, but a marriage – not of convenience (escaping hell) but of love (entering heaven).

Richard Rolle identified 3 levels of loving Christ – love which obeys, love whose heart is fixed on Jesus, love which sets you on fire. Almost none find the third.

The most common term for worship in NT is *proskuneo* – a combination of 2 words meaning to come before, and to kiss. One of the genuine marks of any renewal is to cause us to fall in love again with Christ. Charles Finney in early C19th described it as 'waves and waves of liquid love'. Don't we want that?

John 4 – Jesus promised she would never thirst again. Often the river of God's Spirit is blocked up, diverted by sin, the world, the flesh, the devil.

Filling with the HS is repeatable – it happened at least 3 times for Peter, twice for Paul, and at least in Acts 2 and 4 for the Pentecost Christians. Paul commands the Ephesians to be filled, 5.18 – implying that many believers are not. It's not a matter of a spiritual frisson, but of authentic Christian living.

Victorian missionary Andrew Murray suggested 4 steps to being filled by God's Spirit:

1. Say, I must be filled
2. Say, I may be filled
3. Say, I should be filled
4. Say, I shall be filled.

Tozer: *the Spirit filled life is not a special deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for his people.*

3. May Day

This book is the answer to the question he was asked, 'on what basis can charismatics say there is more to be had of the Holy Spirit?' Doesn't every Christian have the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is a person in our lives, all right – but do we really know him, or are we living like strangers in the same house? He doesn't want to be like a marble statue at the

entrance, he wants to fill all the rooms. See Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3; see the insistence on fullness in Colossians 1.19.

Principles from Ephesians (ch 1 who we are and what we have in X; the more we may have in X; ch 2 who we are and what we have in X; ch 3 the more we may have in X; ch 4 what we are and what we have in X; then ch 6 how to live in X and fight for X).

- The 'more' is centred on Christ
- The 'more' is claimed in prayer
- The 'more' is conveyed by the Spirit
- The 'more' is clearly for all

These Ephesians didn't have the NT; they had the OT and the gospel, but above all they had Christ. The knowledge of God comes through Christ. Jesus said the Spirit would guide us into all truth, teach us. Paul likewise (1 Cor 2.10-13).

- The Bible says Jesus is Lord – the Spirit makes it real to me (1 Cor 12.3)
- The Bible says God is Father – the Spirit makes it real to me (Rom 8.15)
- The Bible says God is glorious – the Spirit makes it real to me (2 Cor 3.15ff)
- The Bible says God is love – the Spirit makes it real to me (Eph 3.16ff)

Pascal had God made real to him by a revelation of the HS, and sewed his record into his doublet, entitling it 'fire'. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the Bible alone is where God speaks. Quite the contrary – it says God speaks through creation (Rom 8.18ff), conscience (Rom 2.14), kerygma (Rom 10.14-17), directly by the HS through dreams, visions, words, prophecy, tongues (Acts 2, 1 Cor 12). Sensitivity to the Spirit's voice is part of the more. Do we know what we have in God? Do we know the power we have in God? Paul said the kingdom is not talk but power (1 Cor 4.20). Stott: *what we need is not more learning, not more eloquence, not more persuasion, not more organisation, but more power from the Holy Spirit.*

4. Further up and further in

Nye Bevan once emerged from a trades union/management meeting in tears, with the words 'I am heartbroken by the paucity of their expectation'. Is God? He says *come* (Is 55.1; Mt 11.28; Jn 6.35; Mk 10.14, Mt 25.34 etc). He says *ask* (Lk 11.9-13, Jas 4.2). We are to want things. Why don't we ask? Some don't because

- They don't know they are allowed to ask
- They don't think there is anything else to ask for
- They don't want anything else
- They don't think they will be heard
- They don't think they are worth anything

God tells Solomon, 'ask' (2 Chron 1.7). If God were to appear to you tonight, what would you ask for?

Take Jacob – he wanted: blessing, wife, flock; he made sure he got. Gen 32.22f God blessed him because he refused to settle for less, and fought with God.

Song of Songs – she goes and *looks* for her beloved.

Jabez, 1 Chron 4.9, asks; and gets.

Joshua, Exodus 33.7-11, insists on waiting in the tent of meeting, pitched outside the camp for all those who wanted to seek the Lord. Most didn't, they watched Moses go in. Joshua wouldn't leave it; and here he was prepared to be the leader who would take them into the Promised Land.

Paul also refused to settle for too little. Phil 3.12-13 – he hasn't yet made his own what is his own. He's always striving for more. George Whitefield prayed constantly for more. Smith Wigglesworth went all the way to Sunderland where he'd heard there was a revival, because he wanted more, and returned home in the power of the Spirit for an anointed ministry.

What stops us getting more?

1. An unexpectant heart – cp Acts 19
2. An unyielded life – the Spirit comes to make Jesus Lord, to transform us into the likeness of Christ (1 Cor 12.2; 2 Cor 3.18)
3. An unconfessed sin – cp Ps 51
4. An undiscerned enemy – Satan doesn't want us to have more! After Jesus was baptised in the HS he was immediately tempted in the wilderness; following the discussion of asking for the HS Luke has him cast out a demon and heal a boy.
5. An unclaimed inheritance – cp Num 32, where the tribes of Gad and Reuben wanted to stay on the first good pasture land, rather than go on into the Promised Land.
6. Unwanted gifts – the spiritual gifts (cp M Turner, *The HS and Spiritual gifts in the NT church and today, 1998*, the standard serious textual approach)
7. Unbelief because of unworthiness – we condemn ourselves; but we receive through God's generosity, not through our worthiness; Rom 8.32.

5. Pentecost : In the river over our heads

In the OT the Spirit of God, the ruach of God, like the wind, was elusive but dynamic. He had been active in the world since the beginning; Gen 1.2, Ps 104.30. Other appearances:

- The breath, source of life - Job 33.4
- Source of Bezalel's creative gifts for building the tabernacle – Ex 31.3
- Source of revelation through prophets – Num 24.2, 2 Kings 2.9, 2 Sam 23.2; Neh 9.30; Ez 2-3, Dan 4.8
- Source of authority and power for leadership – Num 11.25, 27.18, Jud 6.34, 11.29, 15.14, 1 Sam 10.6
- Omnipresent – Ps 139.7
- But could be grieved through sin, and his presence forfeited – 1 Sam 16.14, Ps 51.11, Is 63.10

But the prophets looked forward to a day when the HS would be poured out on all flesh, Joel 2.28, Ez 11.19, 36.26. John the baptist said the one was coming who would achieve this. The Spirit prepared Jesus in the wilderness, and empowers him in ministry. After his death, the Spirit instructs and anoints the disciples; he is now in them (Jn 14.17). Nothing would ever be the same again.

Pentecost

Jerusalem was full with several 00,000 pilgrims. Pentecost was so called because it fell on the 50th day after the presentation of the first sheaf reaped from the barley harvest; it was also called the feast of weeks and the day of first fruits. It later became the occasion for celebrating the giving of the law to Moses at Sinai. It was a day for commemorating God's provision; and the day on which he provided the HS. It became the day for celebrating not just the first fruits of the harvest but the first fruits of the reception of the Spirit.

What is a Christian? *A person who has caught fire from God's manifest, consuming, purging presence.* 96. Kierkegaard: *Christianity is incendiarism; Christianity is fire-setting; a Christian is a person set on fire.*

Pentecost was prophetic: it saw the gift of the Spirit inaugurating God's new covenant with humankind; it showed the gift of the Spirit had come to all; it demonstrated that Jesus is Lord.

KP Yohanan, founder of Gospel for Asia: *I found that believers are ready to get involved in almost any activity which looks spiritual but allows them to escape their responsibility to the gospel.* All the Christian paraphernalia in the US is entertainment for saints, not designed to reach unbelievers. But the HS did not come for our entertainment or excitement; he came to empower us for evangelism. He filled the church so that the church might fill the world. Andrew Murray: *no one may expect to be filled with the Spirit if he is not willing to be used in missions.* We must not pray, come Holy Spirit, unless we are prepared to go with the Holy Spirit.

And the experience? 'Surely we cannot expect Almighty God to visit us, saturate us, supernaturally transform and equip us, while we remain emotionally and physically like marble?' Look at the results – the Roman empire; the Moravians and Wesley.

Clearing the path for Pentecost:

1. repentance
2. obedience
3. unity
4. prayerfulness

6. Baptised with our baptism

A loss of awareness of the dignity, authority, aseity and sovereignty of the Spirit? It's not that we put the Spirit to work for us (occultists do that), it's that the Spirit puts us to work for him. Our relations with him must be girded by awe. He always pushes Jesus into centre stage. He always meets us as individuals, with different constitutions.

'Baptised in the Holy Spirit' – a term found nowhere in the OT, and in the NT only as John the Baptist's promise that after him would come one who would 'baptise you in the HS', plus Acts 1 and 1 Cor 12.13. The Spirit is the element, the milieu, not the instrument: in, not by. John's baptism was a baptism in water into repentance. Jesus' baptism is a baptism in the Spirit into the one body of Christ (1 Cor 12.13 we were all baptised...). Paul is challenging the elitist, charismatic, gnostic theology of the Corinthians here.

Contention of the book that you cannot be a Christian without the Spirit – Acts 19 is the aberration which proves the norm. A prayer to be filled with the Spirit is biblical – think of a dinghy containing a compressed air cylinder, needing a cord pulled to inflate it. We are to pray for release from within, not an event from without.

Acts 8 is often given as evidence for a two stage initiation in the Spirit. Scripture is clear no one can become a Christian without the Spirit (Jn 16.8, Titus 3.5, Rom 8.9, 1 Pet 1.2, 1 Jn 3.24), and that there is only one baptism in the Spirit, which is baptism into Christ (1 Cor 12.13). So the Samaritans must have been in a unique position, not a normal one.

The charismatic / Pentecostal tradition has the right experience but a flawed doctrine; the conservative evangelicals have the right doctrine but a flawed experience. Many evangelical Christians know biblically that they have been baptised in the Spirit, but do not know it existentially. Paul's injunction to the Ephesians to be filled by, to walk by, the Spirit suggests that it is not automatic but requires a response on the part of the believer.

In Acts the same people are filled with the Spirit successively – Acts 2.1-4; 4.8,31; 9.18; 13.9). Paul prays for the Ephesians and Colossians to know a deeper fuller experience by the Spirit – we cannot claim to have it all as from conversion.

7. My story

His background, Brethren and Strict Baptist; his father turned down for ordination because he had received the gift of tongues. Finding God at Nailsea, where John Simons was the vicar; working as a parish evangelist, then going to theological college. A wilderness experience, stripped of role.

8. Resurrection power, fellowship sufferings

Luther taught that we must not substitute a *theologia gloria* for the primacy of the *theologia crucis*. It's not either or but both and – the Spirit leads us to the cross from which is released the Spirit. The river of life flows from the place of the skull. It was there that Jesus released the river of living water, symbolised in the pouring of blood and water from his side. John 19.28-30 says Jesus gave up *his* spirit – but in the Greek there is not a pronoun but an article – Jesus gave up *the* Spirit. While the Spirit would not be actually given by Christ until Pentecost, it was at the cross that the gift was secured and sent.

Spirit-filled worship leads to the cross; the Pentecostal revival of the early C20 saw the writing of lots of new songs about the cross; ditto the charismatic renewal of the 80s with Graham Kendrick; and again in the 90s with Matt Redman. They weren't theologians; but that was where the Spirit took them.

Story of E African revival – Roy Hession, *The Calvary Road*, CLC 1982. He says personal and national revival are the result of a deep work of the Spirit emanating from brokenness before the cross.

It's surprising that Jesus' ministry doesn't begin immediately after he received the Spirit at baptism, but only after facing his adversary in the wilderness. The wilderness is a training ground prepared by the Holy Spirit for those who desire to minister in the power of the Spirit. Many Christians are unwilling to go there; but only there do we learn to depend on God and not on self. The wilderness is the making of the men and women of God – Joseph; Moses; David; Elijah; John the Baptist. In all their experiences, time in the wilderness waste places was never wasted. Wilderness is a place where God's people have less of this world in order to gain more of God. It's where we are emptied of all that clutters our lives.

Features of the wilderness:

1. a place of separation
2. a place of revelation
3. a place of consecration
4. a place of preparation
5. a place of benediction.

The deep things of God are learnt in the fiery furnace of the desert. It is here that he digs deep wells of the Spirit into our life. We receive more of God's Spirit only as we empty out more of our self, and this takes place in the desert... We must embrace it. 185.

Conclusion: In at the deep end

More – it flows out of the cross, it spills out of our lives and impacts others; it's not a one-off experience but an ever deepening infusion of God's life in our soul.

An example of someone who wanted more – Billy Graham.

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