

EVANGELICAL SPIRITUALITY: A BIBLICAL SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE

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Christians define spirituality differently. For many Roman Catholics spirituality means the veneration of saints, the worship of relics, pilgrimages to shrines, the mediating and propitiatory function of the priest in celebrating the mass, and the propitiatory function of prayer. In some monastic orders the spiritual person is equated with the ascetic, one who dedicates his life to a pursuit of contemplative ideals and who, for religious reasons, practices extreme self-denial or self-mortification. For Pannenberg spirituality is the quest for self-identity, for human meaning through the Christian message. For some evangelicals spirituality is equated with exercising spiritual gifts, for others it is measured by souls won to Christ, and for still others it is the quest for self-improvement through sound doctrine.

Most evangelicals will agree with Augustine and Calvin that spirituality is best defined as love of God and love of man. Richard Lovelace wrote: "But the goal of authentic spirituality is a life which escapes from the closed circle of spiritual self-indulgence, or even self-improvement to become absorbed in the love of God and other persons."¹

This definition of spirituality is grounded in both Testaments. J. Gerald Janzen notes:

It can hardly be doubted that the Shema constitutes the theological center of the Book of Deuteronomy: "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one; and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" (6:4-5). . . . Every act of Torah-obedience finds its motivation, its purpose, and its criterion of appropriateness in Israel's love for Yahweh.²

"Love" in this treaty context, as William Moran has convincingly argued on the basis of relatively similar political documents in the ancient Near East, means steadfast commitment, undivided allegiance.³ It is an act of the will that cannot be coerced. Synonyms of love are "trust" (Deut 1:32), "hold fast to" (4:4; 11:22), "serve" (10:16), and various expressions for obedience (11:1, 13, 22). Once allegiance is sworn, instruction is appropriate.

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¹R. F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985) 18.

²J. G. Janzen, "The Yoke That Gives Rest," *Int* 41 (1987) 256.

³W. L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963) 78-84.

Note too that love involves the whole person. Commenting on the phrase "with all your heart (Hebrew *lēbāb*), soul (*nepeš*) and strength (*mēʾōd*)," S. Dean McBride writes:

They were not meant to specify distinct acts, spheres of life, attributes, or the like, but were chosen to reinforce the absolute singularity of personal devotion to God. While syntactically the three phrases are co-ordinate, semantically they are concentric, forming a sort of (prosaic) climactic parallelism. Thus . . . *lēbāb* alone designates the intentionality of the whole man; *nepeš* similarly means the whole "self," a unity of flesh, will, and vitality. Most difficult is *mēʾōd* since its use here as a substantive noun is a *hapax*. . . . Usually *mēʾōd* connotes "excess, muchness" and it hence appears to function in 6:5 to accent the superlative degree of total commitment to Yahweh already expressed through the use of the preceding terms. Rather than a particular faculty, "strength" or the like, *mēʾōd* evokes the fullest "capacity" of loving obedience to Yahweh which the whole person can muster.⁴

Jesus in Mark 12:29-30 reaffirms this basic command from Deut 6:4-5 and links with it the command of Lev 19:18 to love one's neighbor as oneself. This understanding of true spirituality also finds confirmation in the apostle to the Gentiles. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 13 Lovelace says, "Paul tells us that love is a far more reliable measure of spirituality than our gifts or works or theological acuity, and that it is one of the few things that last forever."⁵

Having defined spirituality as love of God and man, I will now develop these notions under the headings of "A God-Centered Life," "A Kingdom-Centered Life," and "The Dynamics of a Spiritual Life." The similarity of this outline with the one in *Renewal as a Way of Life* by Lovelace is not coincidental.

By "Biblical Scholar" and "Evangelical" in the title of my paper I understand my assignment to entail noting respectively continuities and discontinuities between the Testaments and continuities and discontinuities among evangelicals regarding these matters.

I. A GOD-CENTERED LIFE

Evangelicals will agree, I suggest, that foundational to loving God is faith in him, fear of him, and repentance before him. In this conviction they stand in marked contrast to the contemporary world.

Pannenberg⁶ notes that since the time of the literary figure Jean Paul (1763-1825) and the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) people have talked about the absence or death of God. In 1957, Pannenberg continues, Gabriel Vahanian used the phrase "the death of God" for his analysis of contemporary culture. What is meant by this talk is not a metaphysical thesis about the nonexistence of God but the irrelevance of God, the lack of experiencing God, in concrete experience. Modern secular culture, at least as it is represented by

⁴S. D. McBride, "The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5," *Int* 27 (1973) 304.

⁵Lovelace, *Renewal* 18.

⁶W. Pannenberg, *Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

the news media, thinks it gets along quite well without God. Armed with technology based on scientific descriptions of the material and social universes, modern society aims to affect life and control the environment against the risk and contingencies of death and chaos. Modern man, who has expelled God from his universe, thinks he has achieved a relatively high measure of security in individual life through science, technology and social engineering.

Contemporary theologians reinforce the contemporary *vox populi*. Pannenberg⁷ also notes that dialectical theology by its emphasis on the absolute transcendence of God, existential theology by its denial that God is approachable as a being in himself, and Paul Tillich by his theory that God is absorbed into the world by disappearing into its "depth"—as well as other contemporary notions about God—all deny the possibility of a personal relationship with the God of Scripture.

As a result modern culture and secular man have lost both God and meaning, sure values, and stable communities. Modern man, emancipated from God's revelation and traditional institutions, including the Church and family, is profoundly afraid of the future and lonely in the present. Pannenberg elaborates upon the consequences of loneliness.

As a consequence of this increasing experience of loneliness, fewer persons are able to develop a sense of personal identity in the course of their individual lives, and that entails the spread of neurosis. At the end of such a journey into loneliness there emerge the recourse to violence and error on the one hand, and the resort to suicide on the other.⁸

In sum, the world apart from faith in God is spiritually dead. By contrast evangelicals find spiritual life through faith in God. Although many evangelicals are not Calvinist, they will applaud Calvin's decision to root in faith the way in which saints receive the grace of Christ.⁹

All evangelicals believe in a personal God who enters into a personal "I-thou" relationship with those who trust him. In the Bible, and consequently for the evangelical who finds his knowledge of God in Scripture, God is not merely an inferred First Cause, or the hearsay of the saints met in Scripture and in Church history, or an ideal of all that is beautiful, or even a system of divine matters, but a Person. Any other way of knowing God than in a personal relationship is idolatry. God walked with Adam, called the patriarchs, offered Israel at Sinai not an impersonal contract but a very personal covenant, and promises in the new covenant that the elect will know him. Jesus taught his disciples to address him as Father.

Evangelicals also agree that in both Testaments God is known by faith (cf. Hebrews 11). Evangelicals will agree with Calvin that faith arises from the promises of God:

But since man's heart is not aroused to faith at every word of God, we must find out at this point what, strictly speaking, faith looks to in the Word. God's word to

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 89.

⁹J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.2.7.

Adam was, "You shall surely die" [Gen 2:17]. God's word to Cain was, "The blood of your brother cries out to me from the earth" [Gen 4:10]. But these words are so far from being capable of establishing faith that they can of themselves do nothing but shake it. In the meantime, we do not deny that it is the function of faith to subscribe to God's truth whenever and whatever and however it speaks. But we ask only what faith finds in the Word of the Lord upon which to lean and rest.¹⁰

Calvin finds his answer in God's promise of salvation:

It is after we have learned that our salvation rests with God that we are attracted to seek him. This fact is confirmed for us when he declares that our salvation is his care and concern.¹¹

The Psalms, the supreme expression of spirituality in the OT, support Calvin's notion. These saints time and again latch on to God's sublime, merciful attributes revealed to Moses at Sinai (Exod 34:6).

Evangelicals disagree, however, in their understanding of the object of faith. Dispensationalists contend that OT saints believed the Word of God relative to their dispensation, without specific reference to Jesus Christ. Reformed theologians believe that the elect in all dispensations, participating in a covenant of grace that transcends dispensations, have always had Christ as the object of their faith. Kaiser seeks a mediating position by arguing that OT saints believed God's promise about Israel to become the national mediator of blessing but disallows specifying that promise as Jesus Christ. Suffer me, if you will, to argue the Reformed position briefly here.

Adam and Eve believed in the Lord who promised the woman a seed that would destroy the serpent. Implicitly they must have looked for a second Adam, a heavenly man, to destroy this adversary whose origins are outside of the earth. Moses the lawgiver said that Abraham was counted by God as having met the righteous requirements of the law when he believed God with reference to the promised seed (Gen 15:6), and Paul explains that that seed is one person, who is Christ (Gal 3:16). Indeed *zera*, "seed," is a collective singular so that it includes all that believe in the seed who is Christ. As a result of this identification of the body with its head Paul can say, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:16). Elsewhere Paul identifies the seed promised in the Garden of Eden with the Church, presumably because of its identification with the seed: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20). Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets as they foretold his death for sin, his burial, and his resurrection. Peter wrote: "Concerning this salvation the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1 Pet 1:10-11). The gospel, says Paul, was announced in advance to Abraham

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

(Gal 3:8) and is according to the OT Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3). Though not an evangelical, Gerhard von Rad as a Biblical theologian expressed the truth in a classic statement: "Christ is given to us . . . through the double witness of the choir of those who await and those who remember."¹²

Old and New Testament saints differ only in the clarity with which they saw Jesus Christ. For example, while the OT saints knew he would be born of a virgin and would suffer and die for sin, they could not confess that he was born of the virgin Mary and suffered under Pontius Pilate.

Evangelicals also disagree about the author of faith. Arminian evangelicals locate the first cause of faith in the will of man; Calvinists locate it in the will of God. Again, suffer me to argue briefly the Reformed position. Christ, according to the writer of Hebrews, is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). In sovereign grace God put enmity against the serpent in the heart of the woman who, left on her own, had sided with the devil against God (Gen 3:15). Paul notes: "Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger'" (Gen 25:23; Rom 9:10–12). He continues the argument, noting that God says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" [Exod 33:19]. It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth" [9:16]. Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden (Rom 9:15–18).

Paul says that salvation is a gift, and he defines that gift as having the two faces of God's grace and man's faith (Eph 2:8). Jesus says to the unbelieving mob, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). And to the Father he prays: "You granted the Son authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him" (17:2). Luke says that "all who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48), and Peter addresses his first letter "to God's elect . . . , who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet 1:1–2).

Through faith all evangelicals find an inner assurance that they are the adopted children of God and call God "Abba/Father." Those who believe that faith is a gift are convinced that he "who began a good work in them will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6).

Evangelicals of the Augustinian and Reformed persuasion find justification and sanctification not as chronologically separate spiritual experiences but as synchronic and unified ministries of the Spirit that accompany his gift of faith. Arminian evangelicals, on the other hand, regard the Spirit's sanctifying ministry as subsequent to a person's exercise of faith. Evangelicals of the holiness movements go one step further and look for a second blessing as the *sine qua non* of spirituality.

¹²G. von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (ed. C. Westermann; Richmond: John Knox, 1963) 39.

Finally, in conclusion on this section of faith, let me return to secularism. While the evangelical radically distinguishes himself from his age by faith in Christ, secularism is having a very deleterious effect, especially on evangelical practical theologians. They are especially prone toward attempting to build the Church through science and technology rather than through the Spirit and prayer.

The God-centered life also includes the fear of God. The necessity of fearing God in the OT is too well known to require much elaboration here. All know that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." According to Henri Blocher, "beginning" does not mean *initium* but *principium*.¹³ Von Rad comments on Wisdom's slogan:

There lies behind the statement an awareness of the fact that the search for knowledge can go wrong, not as a result of individual, erroneous judgments or of mistakes creeping in at different points, but because of one single mistake at the beginning.¹⁴

In sum, what the alphabet is to reading, and what numerals are to mathematics, and what notes are to music, the fear of the Lord is to wisdom—that is, it is fundamental to living life well.

But what exactly is the fear of the Lord, and what is its function in the life of the NT saint?

The fear of the Lord entails three ideas: (1) God's objective standard of ethics (2) accepted by saints (3) motivated by a healthy fear that God will keep his threat to punish sin. For example, in Ps 19:7-9 "the fear of the Lord" is a synonym for the "law of the Lord" along with "the statutes of the Lord," "the precepts of the Lord" and "the commands of the Lord." In Prov 15:33 it is parallel to "humility." The saint, as it were, waves a flag of white surrender before God's high standards. He does so out of the healthy realization that the Avenger will right all wrongs. This fear is not contrary to faith in God's promises. Quite the contrary, it is part and parcel with it. Love, springing from faith in God's promises, and fear, arising from faith in God's threats, are two sides of the same coin: faith in the God who has spoken in Scripture. The unity of this faith keeps the evangelical from slipping into a cavalier servility and decadent self-surrender. The covenant-keeping God reveals himself in such a way as to combine fear of himself with promise of salvation. Walther Eichrodt helpfully writes: "The terrifying unapproachable God reveals himself as at the same time a leader and protector of his people, one who has bound up his gift of life with fixed ordinances governing the way that life is to be lived by the nation."¹⁵

Some evangelicals—citing 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment"—think that fear has no place in the Christian's spiritual life. Those who know better recognize that fear of God plays a vital role in spiritual life. According to the

¹³H. Blocher, "The Fear of the Lord as the 'Principle' of Wisdom," *TynBul* 28 (1977) 15.

¹⁴G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London: SCM, 1970) 67.

¹⁵W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 2. 271.

NT the believer must serve God "with fear and trembling" (2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12). What John means by perfect love is perfect obedience. When we obey perfectly, obviously we have no fear of judgment. But, as I. Howard Marshall notes:

It is sadly the case, however, that our relationship to God can sometimes fall away from perfect love, and then we need to be reminded of his judgment to prevent us from falling further into sin. As long as I love my fellow-men, I have no fear of the law which forbids murder. It is only when I slip away from love and begin to hate them that I need the fear of the law to warn me against letting my hate turn into murderous action and to exhort me to return to love.¹⁶

The Testaments, however, accent God's wrath and God's grace differently. Although the writer of Hebrews warns that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31), he contrasts the age of law, which motivated conformity to God's standard by stressing fear of his wrath, with the age of grace, which motivates obedience by accenting God's love (cf. 12:18-24).

Scripture consistently links the saint's fear of God's wrath against sin with his or her flight to God's grace for salvation from his wrath. David's consciousness of his guilt in taking away Bathsheba's purity and Uriah's life prompted him to pray: "Be merciful to me, O God" (Ps 51:1). Standing in the deep, black well of his guilt David looked up and saw stars of God's grace that those who stand in the noonday sunlight of self-righteousness never see. Jesus denied salvation to the Pharisees because they were confident of their own righteousness, but he offered it to the tax collector because he said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The gospel cannot be understood apart from its promise of forgiveness of sins and redemption from the power of sin by the death of Jesus Christ. For Paul the preaching of the law must first precede the gospel. Otherwise a guilt consciousness would not arise (cf. Romans 7). The Reformers found spiritual energy in the doctrine of justification because of their experiences in the medieval cathedrals. Upon entering those cathedrals, Pannenberg notes, they passed between the wise and the foolish virgins at the portal and beneath the representation of the last judgment. Inside they were often faced by Christ at the last judgment looking down upon them from the apse. Their agitated consciousness found liberation from sin, anxiety and guilt through the gospel. Evangelical spirituality is rooted in the grace that teaches the heart to fear and its fears relieves.

Today, however, traditional evangelical spiritual energy is being vitiated through the critical dissolution of a guilt consciousness brought about by osmosis from the world. The effect of Nietzsche's and Freud's criticism on the credibility of traditional Christian piety has been almost fatal. Allan Bloom says unequivocally that "psychologists are the sworn enemies of guilt."¹⁷ Christian counseling may deflect itself to the false goal of trying to make people feel happy rather than to make them holy.

¹⁶I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 225.

¹⁷A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 121.

As faith in God leads to fear of him, so godly fear leads to repentance before him. "Before the mind of the sinner inclines to repentance, it must be aroused by thinking upon the divine judgment."¹⁸ Typical of Biblical thinking, Paul preached to the Athenians: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). For some evangelicals, whose spiritual life is brain deep rather than life deep, repentance is nothing more than changing of the mind about Jesus Christ and is unrelated to fear of judgment and cleansing of the heart from sin. It is true that the Hebrew verb rendered "repent" means "return" and the Greek verb means "change the mind or the intention." But Biblical repentance is more than this. Calvin defines true repentance thus:

It is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and the vivification of the Spirit.¹⁹

He defends his understanding from Jer 4:1, 3-4:

"If you will return, O Israel,
return to me," declares the Lord. . . .
"Break up your unplowed ground
and do not sow among thorns.
Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,
circumcise your hearts, . . .
or my wrath will break out and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—
burn with no one to quench it."

Calvin comments: "See how Jeremiah declares that they will achieve nothing in taking up the pursuit of righteousness unless wickedness be first of all cast out from their inmost heart."²⁰

Faith in God, fear of God, and repentance before him are all foundational to love of God because they lead to gratitude for his forgiveness. Ronald Clements writes:

Throughout Deuteronomy there is a constant emphasis on the debt which Israel owes to God. All its life, both political and religious, is seen to depend upon what God has given to Israel. Consequently there is no part of this life which is not a cause for Israel to show gratitude to Yahweh, and it is this gratitude which the Deuteronomist regards as the true basis of worship.²¹

To ground Israel's allegiance in God's grace the lawgiver changes the reason for observing the sabbath from "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8) to "Observe the Sabbath by keeping it holy. . . . Remember that

¹⁸Calvin, *Institutes* 3.3.7.

¹⁹Ibid., 3.3.5.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹R. E. Clements, *God's Chosen People* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1969) 69.

you were slaves in Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deut 5:14-15). The difference between the rationale for keeping Sabbath in the two Decalogues is striking. The Decalogue given at Sinai commanded Israel to remember in order to sanctify the day. The one given on the plains of Moab expands on that command to advance Sabbath theology: Observe the sabbath in order to remember God's grace in redeeming Israel from Egypt.

The truth that love is based on gratitude entails two other truths. First, it entails that the elect love God because he first loved them (1 John 4:19). Lovelace states it well:

The substance of spirituality is love. It is not our love but God's that moves into our consciousness, warmly affirming that he values and cares for us with infinite concern. But his love also sweeps us away from self-preoccupation into a delight in his unlimited beauty and transcendent glory. It moves us to obey him and leads us to cherish the gifts and graces of others.²²

Second, it also entails that NT saints should love more than OT saints. They have more reason to be grateful. Recall Jesus' teaching to Simon: Of two forgiven debtors, the greater debtor will love more than the lesser (Luke 7:41-42). Whereas OT saints were vague about heaven and hell, Jesus plainly revealed the eternal destinies of saints and sinners. NT saints now know the full extent of both the canceled debt and the gift of eternal life. Commenting on imprecatory psalms Derek Kidner writes:

There is "sorer punishment" revealed in the New Testament than in the psalms, simply because the whole scale of human destiny has come into sight. This is very clear from a comparison of Psalm 6:8 with Matthew 7:23, where the words "Depart from me, all you workers of evil" are transformed from a cry of relief by David into a sentence of death by Christ. The principle is the same: truth and lies cannot live together. "Outside" will be "every one who loves and practises falsehood". But it is one thing to be driven off by David; quite another by Christ, to the final exclusion which is also the climax of almost every parable in the Gospels.²³

NT saints love more not only because they are aware they have been saved from sorer punishment but because they have a greater display of God's grace. God humbled himself in the OT, but never to the extent of dying for sinners. Finally, the full revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the NT exhibits and correlatively offers a model for love in a way unknown in the OT. Here the believer observes the Father honoring the Son and the Son honoring the Father, with the Spirit subservient to and honoring both.

II. A KINGDOM-CENTERED LIFE

We turn now to the other quintessential aspect of true spirituality: love of fellow men. Evangelicals do not dispute the need to love the image of God (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Love of God and love of his image are inseparable. "If any

²²Lovelace, *Renewal* 18.

²³D. Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1972) 30.

says, 'I love God,' and yet hates his fellow man, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20). Christ says that all the specific teachings found in the law and the prophets hang on the two abstract commands to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Many, I suspect, are not aware that according to the sages the wise man is very socially minded. The sages hone love for one's fellow to a fine edge. Love draws a veil over other's faults (Prov 10:12), refuses to use one's advantage to disadvantage others (11:26), does not sing songs to one whose heart is weighed down with sorrow (25:20). The wise man knows that open rebuke is bad but that hidden love avails less (27:5). God will judge a man according to the way he responds to those staggering toward slaughter (24:11-12). Love directed to one's enemies reaps greater dividends than retaliation for wrong (25:21). The NT goes beyond even this with our Lord's teaching that we should wash each other's feet and, if necessary, die for one another, as Christ willingly died for sinners. He holds up the despised Samaritan as the example par excellence of a good neighbor.

Evangelicals do not agree, however, about the political structures within which this love should be exercised. Pietists give little thought to politics, but Lovelace points to the importance of community both in Biblical theology and practical theology:

Yet when we read the Bible, the kingdom of God is the central theme which ties together everything, both in the Old Testament and in the New. There is a reason for this. One of the ruling passions of humanity is the search for a righteous government. The poor and the disadvantaged contend against "the system" with the conviction that another economic order will make the world liveable. . . . This search is the "plot" of the Old and New Testaments.²⁴

But what exactly is the kingdom? Baptists and Lutherans radically divorce the kingdom of God from the kingdom of the world. Calvin also clearly distinguished between the sanctifying activity of the Spirit in the Church and in the secular realm of civil government. The process of regeneration occurs only in the individual, not in the community. Nevertheless in Calvin's view secular government is the expression of a general divine concern for the preservation of human society. Furthermore he recognized that it needed charismatic leaders endowed by the Spirit to guide it. Finally he calls upon all secular administrators to submit themselves humbly to the great king Jesus Christ and to his spiritual sceptre and to effect universally the demands of the law. Puritans aimed not only at a social commitment to the Christian community but also at a theocratic reconstruction of the entire political order to enhance the glory of God. The theocratic thrust of the OT undoubtedly influences this aspect of Reformed theology.

III. THE DYNAMICS OF A SPIRITUAL LIFE

We now turn to consider the dynamics of spirituality both in its defensive posture against the kingdom of Satan and in its offensive posture within the kingdom of Christ. Augustine, with good Biblical authority, divided mankind into two cities "formed by two loves: the earthly by love of self, even to the

²⁴Lovelace, *Renewal* 40.

contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self."²⁵

The saint must live within the earthly city and at the same time resist its three depraved, spiritual dynamics: the devil, the world, the flesh (John 17:14-16). Since most evangelicals have more familiarity with these three deadly spiritual forces from the NT, the writer will highlight some of the rich teaching of the OT about them.

Genesis, after its accounts of creation in Genesis 1-2, exposes Satan as the source of evil in this world. The fast-talking serpent, met in Genesis 3, incarnates that diabolical spirit whose origins are not of this earth but in heaven. God pronounced all the creatures of this earth very good, but the archenemy of God and man is the epitome of evil. Moreover he knows the counsel of heaven itself. "You will become as divine beings," he cajoles the woman, "knowers of good and evil" (Gen 3:5). After the representative pair had been blinded by this angel of light and had eaten the forbidden fruit, God announces to his divine assembly: "They have become like one of us, knowers of good and evil" (3:22). The heavenly deceiver of the whole world (Rev 12:9) appears as a perfectly serious theologian attacking the mind. He does not dispute the existence of God but distorts his command and reduces it to a question (3:1). This deceptive tempter slanders the goodness of God by alleging that God's commands are intended to keep humans from their full potential (3:5). According to him, God's commands are like bits in a horse's mouth, like barricades along the path. His hiss can still be heard in those who try to liberate humans from God's authoritative Word so that they become their own gods. Finally, our liberal theologian denies the threats of God's word: "You will not die" (3:4), he boldly asserts in direct contradiction to God's holy word.

OT saints conquered Satan by counting on his damnation. Every time they saw a serpent eating dust, the symbol of abject humiliation and utter defeat, they were reminded that God judged Satan and looked by faith to the seed that would destroy him (Gen 3:14-15). That judgment found fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ (John 16:11; Col 2:15; 1 John 3:8). Like our Lord they also prevailed over his temptations by authoritative Scripture (cf. Matt 4:1-11 and Deut 6:13, 16; 8:3).

We now turn to consider Satan's seed, the world allied against the kingdom of God. Israel encountered the world in the specific form of the inhabitants within the sworn land, known by the shorthand name "Canaanites." The "final solution" was the extermination of these depraved people. God allowed no peaceful coexistence with them because their corrupting influence was too powerful (Deut 7:1-7). On the principle that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough (1 Cor 5:6), Israel was also commanded to put to death false prophets and even apostate relatives (Deuteronomy 13). The NT parallel to these commands is the doctrine that the holy catholic Church must excommunicate "anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler" (1 Cor 5:11; cf. 2 John 10-11).

²⁵Augustine *City of God* 14.28.

With regard to the flesh—namely, the egocentricity of fallen human nature—the law clearly taught mankind's total depravity and warned Israel against self-confidence. Humility, the Augustinian virtue, is a constant spiritual requirement according to both Testaments. Shortly after professing Israel said in unwarranted self-confidence that they would keep the law (Exod 19:8), they demanded an idol and participated in a pagan orgy. Though they professed allegiance to God through outward circumcision, Moses said that their hearts were uncircumcised (Deut 10:16). The very people to whom the law was given Moses accused of being stiff-necked (9:6), and he demonstrated their depravity by recalling their seditious unbelief in the wilderness, at Sinai, Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah (9:7-29). Likewise Paul warns the churches against self-improvement. Only participation in the covenant of grace avails. According to this covenant arrangement, God out of unmerited love to sinners grants the elect regeneration, defined by J. I. Packer as "that irrevocable work of grace whereby through union with Christ one's heart is changed and faith is born, never to die."²⁶ Out of hearts born from above the elect know God, know the forgiveness of sins, and have the law written on their hearts (Jer 31:31-32). The patriarchs and true Israel must have participated in that covenant, for apart from God's grace all are sinners. None are declared righteous by keeping the law (Rom 3:9-20).

I now turn to consider the positive spiritual dynamics operative within the kingdom of God. I have already mentioned justification and sanctification, which Lovelace lists among "primary elements of continuous renewal."²⁷ Here I wish to treat briefly the law, the Spirit, and the sacraments. Had I more time and space I would certainly go on to missions and prayer.

Jonathan Edwards said of the law, "There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy, and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ."²⁸

How can it be, for example, that the psalmist found the law to be a tree of life (cf. Psalm 1) whereas Paul found it a sword of death (cf. Romans 7)? The difference is partially due to the fact that the pious psalmist was an elect saint already participating in the provisions of the everlasting covenant (cf. Jer 31:31-34): He knew God (Ps 9:10), had a regenerate heart (119:11), and knew the forgiveness of sin (32:1). Paul, on the other hand, was part of that elect nation that was circumcised in the flesh but not in heart, that was striving to justify and sanctify itself through the law apart from the Spirit and faith. For sinners the hammer-blows of the law forge them into saints by driving them to the gospel of redemption. For saints, by contrast, the law is more therapeutic and sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb (19:10). For unregenerate sinners, gospel follows law; for regenerate saints, law and

²⁶J. I. Packer, *Keeping in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1984) 123.

²⁷R. F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979).

²⁸Cited in D. P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 5-6, and in M. W. Karlberg, "Legitimate Discontinuities Between the Testaments," *JETS* 28 (1985) 10.

gospel are inseparable as they fulfill the law both in their justification and sanctification through faith in Christ.

The dynamics of the spiritual life of OT saints can be encapsulated as "Torah piety." They knew God through the law. A recent study by Gerald H. Wilson argues convincingly that the Psalter has been edited to set forth David as an exemplar, a model, for the saint's response to life's conflicts, crises and victories.²⁹ In this light Leslie Allen calls attention to numerous and striking parallels between Psalm 18, where David serves as a role model in relying on God in distress, and Psalm 19, where David finds the dynamics of spirituality in the law:

What is postulated of Yahweh in Ps 18 is in three cases applied to his Torah in Ps 19, in a chiastic order. Yahweh shows himself pure (18:27), and the Torah is pure (19:9). Yahweh gives light (18:29) and so does his Torah in turn (19:9). Yahweh's way is perfect (18:31) and so is the Torah (19:8).³⁰

More specifically the sage in Proverbs 2 spells out the psychological dynamics for mediating the wisdom of God into the heart of the saint (see vv 6, 10). The dynamics are both passive (acceptance of the word in the heart, storing it up with delight through memorization, and attentiveness to its reading, vv 1-2), and aggressive (crying out for it with the voice and searching for it as for hidden treasure with the eye, vv 3-4).

The spiritual reception of authoritative, canonical Scripture also operates powerfully in developing the spiritual life of the NT saint. Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:16). Paul equated being full of the Spirit with being full of the Word of Christ (cf. Eph 5:18 with Col 3:16), and Peter, after noting that the living and enduring word of God birthed the young Church, admonished it to crave pure spiritual milk that by it it may grow up in salvation (1 Pet 1:23-2:2).

As noted above, salvation occurs only as the saint receives Christ clothed in the gospel. Though the law is holy, just and good, it cannot deliver sinners from the grip of sin. In fact, apart from gospel it tightens its stranglehold on them by condemning their consciences and deluding them into a sense of self-improvement.

The Spirit's ministry must accompany the gospel. God's kingdom has always been formed by preaching the gospel in the Spirit. But just as the gospel came in shadows and types to the OT saint and not in the full revelation in Christ Jesus, so also the ministry of the Spirit is in a penumbra in the OT in contrast to the full knowledge of his ministry in the NT. In the OT the Spirit is mentioned seventy-eight times and about half of those with reference to the new age. In the NT he is mentioned 244 times. In sum, the Spirit is mentioned about fifteen percent of the time with reference to the old dispensation and eighty-five percent of the time with reference to the new. Nevertheless, though the Spirit's ministries are concealed, Leon Wood is

²⁹G. H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars, 1985).

³⁰L. C. Allen, "David as Exemplar of Spirituality: The Redactional Function of Psalm 19," *Bib* 67 (1986) 546.

certainly correct in arguing that the Spirit must have regenerated and sanctified OT saints.³¹

But the ministry of the Spirit in the two dispensations differs more than epistemologically; it also differs ontologically. In his upper-room discourse (John 14-16) Christ fortified his incipient Church with the promise that he would continue with them in the form of the Spirit and correlatively with greater power than they or any saint had theretofore known. That promise was fulfilled when the ascended Christ gave his Church the Holy Spirit, also called the Spirit of Christ because Christ administers the Spirit to the Church. Prior to Pentecost saints were like children governed by law; after Pentecost they attain full maturity in the freedom of the Spirit (Gal 3:25-4:7). NT saints, in contrast to the OT, count on the indwelling Holy Spirit to become like Christ and to continue his ministry that ushered in the new age. Christ promised that when the Spirit was given they would have power to establish the kingdom of God universally (Acts 1:7). History has validated his promise.

The insistence on a subsequent "baptism of the Holy Spirit" after regeneration was developed on the basis of experience and isolated texts (e.g. Acts 8:14-17) and not on Biblical theology. J. I. Packer argues convincingly against the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection, the belief that the Spirit subsequent to regeneration eradicates in one single moment every motive from the Christian's heart except love. That doctrine lacks conclusive Biblical proof, has an unrealistic theological rationale, leads to unedifying practical implications, and contradicts Rom 7:14-25.³² Packer also effectively critiques the halfway house of Wesleyan perfection, the Keswick teaching that from the inner passivity of looking to Christ to do everything will issue a perfection of performance. His criticism includes among other arguments (1) its Arminian distinction that parceled out salvation in two distinct gift packages (Christ's work as justifier from sin's guilt, and his work as sanctifier from sin's power) and (2) its inadequate exegesis of Romans 6.³³ Though pentecostalism, Wesleyanism and Keswick teaching were intended to enhance spirituality, they impede it for many by creating false expectations, false guilt, and inauthenticity. On the other hand, the Reformed doctrine that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit ceased in the final period of canonical revelation, a doctrine that I confess, must be validated by an appeal to history (e.g. the dead are not raised now) and may lead to spiritual deadness by reducing Christianity to a rational system of thought rather than maximizing and realizing the essential ministry of the Holy Spirit in life.

In sum, ideally the saint ever grows in sanctification and power through Spirit and Scripture. It is mischievous to pit them against one another. In this way the humble and believing saint is ever pressing toward the mark of his high calling in Christ Jesus, but never attaining it before the redemption of his body in the final resurrection.

³¹L. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1976).

³²Packer, *Keeping* 145-163.

³³Ibid.

Finally, I turn to the sacraments. Pagans sought to recreate life through myth and ritual magically enacted. By contrast OT saints in a partial manner and measure had access to and communion with the enjoyment of the higher world through sacred personnel such as the high priest, sacred seasons such as Passover, sacred sites such as Mount Zion, and sacred actions and institutions such as sacrifice. Paul says that Israel drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:4). These symbols not only assisted mightily in the love and worship of God but also formed a community in fellowship with God and with one another. As a flag, national holidays, and national anthem bind a nation together, these symbols bound Israel together as a community of love and justice under God.

But the symbols in the OT, which on the vertical axis gave partial access to Christ and the higher world, also veiled the heavenly reality. F. F. Bruce states:

For all the impressive solemnity of the sacrificial ritual and the sacerdotal ministry, no real peace of conscience was procured thereby, no immediate access to God. . . . The whole apparatus of worship associated with that ritual and priesthood was calculated rather to keep at a distance from God than to bring them near.³⁴

On a synchronic, vertical axis these earthly symbols partially mediated heavenly realities to OT saints, but on the diachronic, horizontal axis they functioned as types pointing to the higher world that, as Geerhardus Vos expresses it, "has now been let down and thrown open to our full knowledge and possession."³⁵ They assist NT saints in understanding Christ and their heavenly orientation and intensify their awareness of the greatness of the present age, filling them with joyful exuberance and gratitude.

In place of the OT types Christ instituted the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's supper—enabling the Church in *signum efficax* to experience and feed upon the foundational reality, the death and resurrection of Christ, that constitutes them as a community in Christ, serving God, one another, and the nations. Regrettably, since the holy sacraments have been seen as divisive, evangelicals have tended to minimize their efficacy.

Through baptism the Church recognizes that it has been saved from the condemned world even as Noah was saved from his world through the flood and that, having died to that world, it now lives in newness of resurrected life with its living Head who died for sinners.

In his "Sermon on the Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ" Luther noted that the meaning of this sacrament is a twofold communion: (1) the communion of believers with Christ, and (2) the communion among all those who enjoy such unity with Christ, thus forming the one body of Christ. Luther even reapplied a powerful image from the *Didache* (9:4): As many grains of wheat come together to form the single loaf of bread that is being

³⁴F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 148–149.

³⁵G. Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980) 199.

broken and distributed in the sacrament, so the faithful are joined together in the sacrament to form one bread, one cup, one body in communion with Christ.³⁶ The power of that symbol is not only communal, it is also eschatological: It confirms the social destiny of the Church. Pannenberg writes:

The human predicament of social life is not ultimately realized in the present political order of society, but is celebrated in the worship of the church, if only in the form of the symbolic presence of the kingdom to come. The awareness that in the liturgy of the church there is symbolically present what all social and political struggle is about without its definite achievement, is absolutely crucial to the significance of the eucharistic liturgy. Without this dimension, the eucharistic liturgy degenerates into a self-contained, ecclesiocentric ritual, if not into a self-delusive reassurance of private participating in the salvation acquired by Jesus Christ.³⁷

That note about the eschatological social destiny of the Church, when the kingdom of God is coextensive with creation and wherein the Lamb is the glory, is a good note on which to conclude this essay.

³⁶Cited by Pannenberg, *Spirituality* 39.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 47.