

T. F. TORRANCE AND T. A. SMAIL:

Interpreting the Spirit for Guidance and Correction in the Church

Marty Folsom, Ph.D.

Professor of Theology, Shiloh University

drtrinity@comcast.net

Abstract: *This exploratory article discusses the theological relation of Thomas A. Smail and Thomas F. Torrance for developing a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit to inform and guide the life of the Church and believers. This will extend to Smail's corrective work in Pentecostal and charismatic churches that depart from a sound theology in thought and practice. Smail uniquely contributes to Torrance studies in his thoughtful advocacy for and correction of those who pursue a life in the Spirit.*

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is often acknowledged as the divine person who brings to fruition God's presence and work in our lives. Yet for many, the Spirit is the missing or neglected person of the Trinity. For others, the Spirit is dangerous. As critiqued by Smail, and in my own experience, Pentecostals and charismatics often have a tarnished understanding of the Spirit as one who serves human desires with supernatural power that misses the loving freedom of God, replaced with some human vision of success. We need to stay true to the revelation of the triune God,

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and faithful to the Spirit's intention in the actuality of our life and worship, which should not be separated.

T. F. Torrance and T. A. Smail are important to consider for this conversation. Many consider Torrance the greatest English-speaking trinitarian theologian of the twentieth century, laying a foundation for the Church's understanding of the Holy Spirit.¹ T. A. Smail helpfully developed Torrance's trinitarian thought, building as he engaged the charismatic movement and gained insights regarding how theology guides and corrects.² My intent in this article is not to compare and contrast their work, but to show their complementary work in serving the Church when thinking and acting with regard to the Holy Spirit.³ I hope to argue that Torrance and Smail, when read together, complement each other and provide the implications of theology for practice. I bring their scattered insights into an ordered presentation to aid in further development and clarification.

Our discussion begins by tracing the common understanding of Torrance and Smail on the Spirit. Then we will engage the problems they identify in inadequate theologies of the Spirit, concluding with corrective guidance for a proper dynamic

¹ See T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), chapter 6, "The Eternal Spirit," 191-251; *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM, 1965), chapter 12, "Spiritus Creator: A consideration of the teaching of St. Athanasius and Basil," and chapter 13, "The Relevance of the Doctrine of the Spirit for Ecumenical Theology." See also Elmer Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), chapter 6, "The Holy Spirit," 211-41, and "Thomas F. Torrance on the Holy Spirit" in *Word & World* 23, no. 2 (2003).

² Smail recounts, "The theology of Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance that had shaped me then, and is still very important to me, tended to reinforce my own suspicions and disinclinations about more Pentecostal responses to the gospel." - T. A. Smail, "A Renewal Recalled," in *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology* (London: Gospel and Culture, 1995), 8. Published in the U.S. as *The Love of Power or the Power of Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1994).

³ Torrance gives more *insight* on a *theology* of the Spirit than Smail, but he does point to implications for the life of the Spirit in the Church. See Gary Deddo, "The Holy Spirit in T. F. Torrance's Theology," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialog with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer Colyer (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). In the section, "T. F. Torrance Responds," Torrance says, "... one should not expect the Spirit to have some kind of autonomous working. That is indeed the danger point where serious problems arise in many charismatic movements, when an emphasis on the Holy Spirit incompatible with the coinherent nature of the activity of the Triune God can become unbiblical and heretical" (312).

theological praxis for the Church. The aim is to provide clarity and theological continuity for understanding God's gifting and ongoing work of the Spirit in the Church and world.

T. F. Torrance, profound as he is in the foundations, leaves much to be explored for the Church's understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He does not always play out implications for the guidance and correction of the Church. His methodologically constructive articulation points to correctives for the conversation rather than developing them as he did in his christological works. T. A. Smail studied with Torrance at New College, Edinburgh, 1949-52,⁴ and went on to be a leading figure in the charismatic movement in the UK. Smail engages charismatics as a corrective guide, not helping a movement looking for a theology, but recognizing it as seriously in need of one.⁵ This combination leads to a Torrance-Smail framework that intends to gather insights with deep roots and fruitful outcomes to further the conversation as a consolidated theological praxis.⁶

Theologians in Service of God and the Church

We will begin with the unique, relational, trinitarian theology that this pair of theologians holds in common. Torrance and Smail both assert that theology may not begin with experience or gifts of the Spirit. Proper theology must begin with a "classical trinitarian theology that has its roots in the New Testament and that centres in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the only Son of the Father as the focal point of all creation and recreation."⁷

A proper theology for renewal must be expressed in a community that focuses on the cross and resurrection of the Son who continues to work in us and

⁴ David Torrance confirms that Tom Smail was one year ahead of him at New College, therefore was there under TF 1949-52, and that he subsequently went to study with Barth 1952-53 (personal correspondence with Jock Stein 12 Dec. 2021).

⁵ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 49.

⁶ Jim Purves, *The Triune God and the Charismatic Movement* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 156-75, explores at length the influence of Torrance on the charismatic movement in Scotland. Purves goes on in the next chapter, pp. 176-90, to discuss Smail. This sequence is not an accident, as he discusses on pp. 203-7.

⁷ T. A. Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 185.

through us by his Spirit.⁸ Without community, we collapse into individualism as each contorts the Spirit to fit their own individual needs and desires. Smail asserts we need a Paschal model of renewal that begins with the Cross and works its way out as a single movement of the Father, through the Cross of Christ, and poured out on the Church at Pentecost as a unified movement of God's grace.⁹

The well-expressed spiritual life that follows from the work of the Spirit is evidenced by a healthy relationship with God.¹⁰ When the Spirit of Christ indwells Jesus' body, a wholeness follows. Creativity flows. It renews and releases those in captivity through participation in the life of God, who transforms the whole life of humans in every aspect.

The work of theology brings humans into concert with the present and acting God. Therefore, as Smail saw through his encounters, charismatic renewal cannot be about humans in acts of self-perfection or empowerment. Renewal is about relationships.¹¹ But these relationships are anchored in the triune God. These become elastic and dynamic expressions that are never disconnected. They produce freedom, engaging the present life of humans within a life-giving attachment to the gracious activity of God.¹²

Smail's most memorable experience of the Spirit was at a neo-Pentecostal conference where he spoke in tongues. An interpretation was given by a young woman unknown to him, saying, "There is no way to Pentecost except by Calvary; the Spirit is given from the Cross."¹³ This theme runs through all of Smail's works. The Spirit, by whom Jesus is conceived, fulfills his ministry, is resurrected, and ascends, is still the one at work in Jesus' Church to bring it to loving obedience,

⁸ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 60.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ T. A. Smail, *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975), 65.

¹¹ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 109.

¹² Ibid., 160

¹³ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 104.

indwelling his people to continue the work of the Father through the Son to the glory of God.¹⁴

The Spirit and the Trinity – God’s Eternal Life for the Church

The Holy Spirit must be understood within the triune life of God. Along with Torrance, Smail roots his thinking on the Holy Spirit in the developing foundations of Scripture¹⁵ and the early church in its trinitarian dynamics.¹⁶ Critical issues such as the *homoousion* of the Spirit, acknowledging full divinity of the Spirit, and the *filioque*, which could appear to subordinate the Spirit, underscore that misunderstanding and diminishment of the Spirit in the life of the Trinity can damage our understanding of and relationship with the Living God. With Torrance and Smail, we are on the road to healing the tensions of the great schism. Both call for a renewal of the mutual and interdependent life of the persons of the Trinity and their proper relations.¹⁷

In the Reformation era, Calvin reemphasized the personal action of the Holy Spirit. The life of faith is facilitated by the Spirit in joining us to Christ. This role of connecting in personal participation in the life of faith, the reading of Scripture, and union with Christ, informs both Torrance and Smail as the evangelical faith revives the present work of the whole triune God in a responsive life.¹⁸

For Torrance and Smail, theology becomes a map derived from divine reality. It is a tool that allows one to move within the area one is traveling. Rather than merely talking about God, we must enter into a knowing that brings us to indwell the reality that has come to us in Christ, and in an ongoing manner, through the

¹⁴ T. A. Smail, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock), 106.

¹⁵ T. A. Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 150-51.

¹⁶ T. A. Smail, "Holy Spirit," in *The New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, second edition, eds. Martin Davie, Tim Grass, Stephen R. Holmes, John McDowell, and T. A. Noble (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 421-3.

¹⁷ We do not have space to discuss the many issues of the filioque clause, but see Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity*, 154-65 for Smail's fullest engagement.

¹⁸ Smail, *ibid.*, 423.

Spirit.¹⁹ The Spirit becomes the personal compass, orienting us to follow the reality of Jesus, aligned with the movement of God.

Any discussion of the Spirit must be explored within an implicit trinitarian context.²⁰ We cannot relate to the Father separately from the Son, just as we cannot know the Spirit without knowing the Son and the Father. All our knowledge of each of the triune persons is irreducibly tied to the others. Through the Bible, we become attentive to the witness of all that is given in personal revelation that does not transmit information but speaks to us as persons.²¹ Granted, each person is a different expression from the other two, revealing a distinctive and complementary fashioning within the unitary life of God. But the Spirit most distinctly directs us away from himself to the Father and Son, drawing us to participate in knowing and being known within the triune life without drawing attention to himself.²²

Each person within the Trinity is an agent to be encountered.²³ There are no separated centers of consciousness, only an integrated life of loving from the divine will. Each acts in their own particular way, speaking and acting their unique fulfillment of the loving freedom of God in sharing one will.

Torrance writes his trinitarian theological manifestoes to include all three persons within one text. He also selects the person and work of Christ as a primary focus for many works in his corpus. Smail, on the other hand, writes on each of the persons in distinct discussions within a trinitarian conversation. Torrance works from the unity of the Trinity and plays out the trinitarian dimensions, but Smail is more inclined to begin with each person of the Trinity and explore them in the light of their relations from that vantage point. Neither approach is to be preferred, but his approach has led Smail to be more expansive in his exploration of the Spirit, which now informs our discussion.

¹⁹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 51.

²⁰ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²² *Ibid.*, 148.

²³ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 50.

Smail affirms that good doctrine “is bound to have the most direct pastoral and spiritual implications.”²⁴ He affirms that the Spirit must be seen as fully and uniquely personal, which informs our personal life. A person is defined as “One who reveals himself as the source and centre of the kind of actions and relationships that, by analogy with ordinary human experience, we recognize as personal.”²⁵ The question of what we mean by being and acting like a person will be engaged in all that follows. But the Spirit is certainly not a thing or merely the relation between persons.²⁶

Doctrine must be fully relational to reflect a trinitarian engagement. There cannot be a mere “I-Thou” between the trinitarian persons; they must resonate with a shared life of “I-Thou-We.”²⁷ It must have unity, particularity, and distinctions that flow from the union of the three. From the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, we are brought to share in this life of personal participation. Revelation is necessary, but the same God brings us into a responsive experience of communion as he fulfills reconciliation, bringing us to share his redeeming life.

Three persons provide an exact, and yet unique, self-giving. An inadequate but helpful illustration suggests the image of a clipboard on a computer. An original text communicates (the Father). One may create an exact copy on the clipboard (the Son), and then paste an exact copy (Spirit) in a new context that is identical to the original. The pasted text is distinct from the copy in its new location. Both copy and paste are interconnected with the original, but within a new context. The copy and paste each impart toward the new context without losing the voice of the original. Each image is identical. The uniqueness of each form is distinct. Each necessarily needs the others to complete the communication. The analogy lacks the fullness of personal being. But we can understand that the Pentecostal “pasting” is the outpouring of the acts of the Father and Son in new contexts. The Spirit is not sent on a separate mission from the Father and Son. The Spirit is a fully trinitarian

²⁴ Ibid., 10.

²⁵ Ibid., 33.

²⁶ Ibid., 136.

²⁷ Ibid., 154.

person, fully engaged in new contexts, with the intent of the source still in force. Thus, each of God's acts in history are "an expression of God's own eternal being."²⁸

It is clear that the Spirit is essential in knowing the triune God. However, for some, "There is a reticence about the Holy Spirit in that he constantly points us away from himself as he initiates us into knowledge of and relationship with the Father and the Son."²⁹ Yet, the Spirit is the unveiling mystery, precisely the point where our ability to know God is at stake. It is the Spirit who gives us ears to hear the Shepherd's voice and encounter the reconciling ministry of the Father and Son.³⁰ This is the pledge of the Spirit who works in us.³¹ All three trinitarian persons work together in continuity with no independent actions. Smail sees this as a life of "mutual coordination and interdependence," of giving and receiving between the Son and the Spirit as improving on Barth's theology, which favors the Son and creates a one-sidedness that neglects important christological and pneumatological implications, as we shall see.³²

The Holy Spirit is God displayed in a trinitarian context, making the others known. What the Spirit does, when sent into our hearts, is to cause us to cry "Abba, Father"³³ and to confess "Jesus is Lord."³⁴ No individual manifestation of tongues or other spiritual gifts can replace the essential reorientation of our being to the Father and Son by the Spirit.³⁵ How the Spirit acts may be distinct, but who the Spirit is and what the Spirit does are always within a personal relationship with the Father

²⁸ Ibid., 164.

²⁹ Smail, "Holy Spirit," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 421.

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:19.

³¹ 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14.

³² T. A. Smail, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *Theology Beyond Christendom: Essays on the Centenary of the Birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 108.

³³ Galatians 4:6.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:3.

³⁵ Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity*, 151-2.

and Son.³⁶ Smail borrows an image from James Packer, pointing out that the Spirit is like a huge searchlight that allows us to see a cathedral on a dark night, but we cannot look at the light. We honor the Spirit by looking at what is illuminated, namely the Father and Son.³⁷

The triune life is inseparable. Even on the cross, the Father is still with the Son, even though the Son is "separated" from the Father in death in dealing with the consequences of sin. The Spirit was still present, as was appropriate throughout Jesus' life, and was not withdrawn on the cross.³⁸ Jesus was the Mediator on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit brings humans into an intimate indwelling with Jesus as he reconciles God and humanity. "The Holy Spirit is the freedom of God to be present to his creatures and sustain them in the creaturely being and reality, and thus to realise their relations with himself."³⁹ The cross reveals the love of God the Father coming to us in the work of the incarnate Son, in the inner life of the Trinity, including the Spirit: "The cross is a window opened into the very heart of God."⁴⁰

As we will see in discussing the sending of the Spirit, the Father gives the gift of the Spirit, but only in the closest connection with the person and work of the Son.⁴¹ Any fracturing of the internal relations and external actions can only lead to a loss of understanding and participation in the whole life of God with humanity, the life of the churches, and our own personal lives.

³⁶ Ibid., 152.

³⁷ Ibid., 132-33.

³⁸ T. A. Smail, *Once and for All: A Confession of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), 134.

³⁹ T. F. Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man," in *Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World: Essays presented to James Torrance*, ed. Trevor Hart and Daniel Thimell (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1989), 384.

⁴⁰ Smail, *Once and for All*, 126. Smail is quoting here from T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 112.

⁴¹ T. A. Smail. "The Holy Trinity and the Resurrection of Jesus," in *Different Gospels: Christian Orthodoxy and Modern Theologies*, ed. Andrew Walker (London: SPCK, 1993), 18.

Jesus and the Spirit – God Embracing the Church

The relation between Jesus and the Holy Spirit provides the field within which guidance is needed and errors in the life of the Church come into view. While we cannot fully engage all the ancient debates, we can recognize that the outcome of the debates causes us to “insist that there can be no dealings with the Spirit that does not involve a dealing with the Son and no dealing with the Son that does not involve a dealing with the Spirit.”⁴² This implies a double mediation that is central to the New Testament, and Smail turns to Torrance for its articulation, “In his new coming the Holy Spirit is mediated by Christ, and at the same time mediates Christ to us.”⁴³ All errors violate this basic collaboration of mutuality.

Both the Son and the Spirit are gifts of the Father. Initially, the Spirit is the Father’s gift to the Son. The Son gives the gift of the Spirit to us. This Spirit gifts us with life in the Son, and through him, brings us home to the Father.⁴⁴ We are born again as the Spirit of adoption brings us to share in the relation of the Son to the Father, discovering ourselves as the children of God who share the bond of love and in the Son cry out, “Abba, Father.”⁴⁵ The Son and Spirit are both Paracletes, called alongside us to help, not switching places or passing a baton, but indwelling us in uniqueness as both “Christ in you”⁴⁶ and “God’s Spirit who lives in you.”⁴⁷ And the Father comes to us in their indwelling in the togetherness of the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁴⁸ These understandings lay the basis for rejecting any mode of separating the person and work of any of the three in any element of relating to us. Together, we share the *koinonia*, the communion that establishes the Church and our place in it within the personal embrace to receive all Christ has for us, and give

⁴² Smail, “Holy Spirit,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 423.

⁴³ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 51, quoting Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 245.

⁴⁴ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 113

⁴⁵ Romans 8:15.

⁴⁶ Galatians 2:20.

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:16.

⁴⁸ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 161-2.

ourselves in grateful response.⁴⁹ Having been gifted, we become sharers in the gift-giving to others.

As we discuss what it might mean to be charismatic or Pentecostal, we must recognize that this has little to do with physical manifestations and much to do with restoration and renewal in these primary relationships with the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Only by being recentered in this way may we appropriately serve our neighbor and the mission of God in the world. We become charismatic as we participate in the dynamic field of the Spirit's work — beginning with hearing and confessing fidelity to Abba and his Son.⁵⁰

The Son prepared the way for the Spirit as he ascended to heaven to the Father; otherwise, "the kingdom of heaven could not be opened to believers, and the blessing of the divine Spirit could not be poured out upon human flesh or be received by sinful mortal men."⁵¹ But this Spirit moves us towards Christ. Through him, we respond to what Christ has done for us. The Spirit enables us to say "yes" and to affirm Jesus' presence and power with fresh expressions in all the situations of our lives. What Christ does *for* us enables what the Spirit does *in* us as life in response.⁵² We yield to the work of the Son and Spirit in our life of obedience compelled by love and empowered by his redeeming presence.

Even Jesus receives the Spirit from the Father and by the Spirit responds to the Father. The Father is the source of the Son and Spirit and the One to whom Jesus gives himself by the Spirit. We receive the Father's Spirit through Jesus and in the Spirit we respond to the Father through Jesus.⁵³ We are gifted to share in the triune fulfillment of love that comes to us and brings us home, even as we continue our earthly journey.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 189.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁵¹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 110, quoting Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 248.

⁵² Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 112.

⁵³ Ibid., 108.

Smail thought Torrance's affirmation of the vicarious response of Jesus on our behalf was important. He agreed that we depend on Jesus' response and his acting in our place. However, Smail was "dissatisfied" with how Christ's response works in us. Smail clarifies that we cannot respond to the Father *by ourselves* until the Son has responded for us. But we must answer *for ourselves* as the Spirit makes available to us the power to respond on our side of the relationship.⁵⁴ We say an "Amen" by the Spirit as we cry out "Abba." The life that the Spirit gives is a life of responsiveness, alive in purposeful interaction.⁵⁵

Elmer Colyer recognizes the difficulty with Torrance's "radical emphasis" on the total substitution of Jesus on our behalf. Torrance's emphasis could be seen to undermine our response and our agency in the relationship.⁵⁶ Colyer believes one must get the logic of God's grace in the right order to see that the human agency is developed in the transformation initiated by Jesus. This does not exclude the human, but makes room for human interaction within time and space through the work of the Spirit within us.⁵⁷

Chris Kettler further investigates this accusation as it appears in Smail, suggesting that Smail may introduce a cleavage between the Son and Spirit. One may think that "all of Christ means none of me," a total substitution. Our sense of participation appears threatened, neglecting any place for ourselves. Kettler suggests that view would *destroy* the human rather than *restore* their humanity.⁵⁸ But this is not a simple cause and effect scenario, where Jesus acts and we are passively affected. The individual human response echoes what Christ has done, including what we need to do ourselves. Kettler asserts that Smail needs to amend "I need to go and do myself" with "... in Christ." Kettler asserts that the "crucial ministry of the Spirit is to enable us to participate by faith in the perfect obedience

⁵⁴ Ibid., 109. Smail quotes from Torrance, *Mediation of Christ*, 104.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 170.

⁵⁶ Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 117-18.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 118-19.

⁵⁸ Christian D. Kettler, *The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock), 139-40.

of the Son to the Father."⁵⁹ The faithfulness of Jesus undergirds our faith and response. We are gathered within the embrace of the Incarnation.⁶⁰ There is no independent personal reality outside our dynamic life in Christ by the Spirit. I suggest that we amend the original statement with "... in the Spirit," rather than "... in Christ." Smail already assumed Christ has done all for us and it is now the Spirit who brings us to indwell Jesus, just as Jesus was empowered by the Spirit. We need to hold Jesus and the Spirit together in all personal dynamics. As Smail says, "Christ says 'Yes' to God for us, but the Spirit liberates us to say 'Yes' to Christ for ourselves."⁶¹ This corresponds to Torrance's statement,

the Spirit is present in such a way as to make him open to God and capable of responding to him. Here the Spirit is to be thought of as acting not only from God toward man but from man toward God by bringing his human relations with God to their proper end in him, and thereby undergirding and upholding man in an enduring ontological relation to God ... he does have a relation to God which is continuously given and unceasingly sustained by the creative presence and power of the Spirit. In this event, as we have seen, man is not to be understood from an independent centre in himself but only from above and beyond himself in a 'transcendental' relation to God – and therefore also, of course, in a transcendental relation to his fellow-men.⁶²

In this Spirit-infused life, the glory of the Father and Son is reflected in us by the Spirit, taking from the life of the Head and making it invigorate the life of the members of the body.⁶³ In this way, we see the double mediation, as the Spirit is

⁵⁹ Kettler, *Vicarious Humanity*, 141.

⁶⁰ T. F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 142.

⁶¹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 174.

⁶² Torrance, "Goodness and Dignity," 382-83.

⁶³ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 81.

mediated by Christ, and the Spirit mediates Christ to us.⁶⁴ Being grounded in the life of Christ's mission, the Spirit who brings the power of God to Jesus now works the same power in us. This is in continuity with the extending life of God, ecstatically reaching out for the wholeness of humanity, restoring and creating a life in communion within the community of God.

Instead of looking for gifts given by the Spirit, as is common in charismatic practice, we need to see that the gift *is* the Spirit. Both the Son and Spirit indwell us in different ways to bring us into the life of God. Jesus indwells us to restore and renew our life with God; we share his death and life and the mission of his life-giving grace. The Spirit relates us to the Father through the Son, bringing their life to us and then bringing us home to them.⁶⁵ In the Spirit, they give themselves to us in a personal expression of togetherness.⁶⁶ Unitedly, they dispense from the love of the Father, through the Son, the Spirit who brings all that is given to fulfill the possibilities of who we are in Christ.⁶⁷

If we focus on human benefits more than on the life of Christ and the Spirit, we go astray. This is even true of "Spirit-led" movements. "The more the renewal relates to the central things of the gospel, e.g. the person of Christ rather than tongues or healing, the more its contribution becomes recognizable and receivable by the rest of the Church, and the more it is delivered from its own idiosyncrasies and eccentricities."⁶⁸ Like Jesus, we must proceed with the Spirit of the Lord upon us and continue in his ministry.⁶⁹ Only then can we authentically reflect the glory of God, sharing in the service of Jesus by the power of the Spirit.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Ibid., 51-53 for how Christ brings us the Spirit, referring to Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 245. See also *Reflected Glory*, 61-63 for how the Spirit mediates Christ to us.

⁶⁵ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 58-65.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁷ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 70.

⁶⁸ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 17.

⁶⁹ Smail, "Doctrine of Holy Spirit," *Nicene Creed*, 163.

⁷⁰ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 36.

Missing an appropriate understanding of the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit causes a myriad of problems. This may happen even at the level of great traditions — Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, or those trying to be unaffiliated — or in individual experiences and the practices of churches.⁷¹ Additionally, one may tragically collapse the whole Trinity of God into one Spirit in a unitarian structure and lose the particularity of the persons.⁷² Also, the Spirit may be absorbed into Jesus, as Purves critiques Barth and Torrance for doing. When the Son becomes too central, the Spirit is reduced to a bond between the Father and Son and loses the distinction of the full personhood of the other two.⁷³ The list of inappropriate understandings could be quite long and serious.

While affirming the centrality of Jesus, we cannot allow a loss of affirming the person of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ We are freed by Jesus to enter the life of the Trinity; we are freed for Christ and his service by the distinctive work of the Spirit. If we discount the work of the Spirit, we default to making Jesus an authoritarian figure in the life of the Church, with little concern about the Spirit's involvement. If we emphasize the work of the Spirit over Jesus, we encourage autonomy in the name of the Spirit, who is no longer the Spirit of Christ.

We need balance between what Christ does *for* us and what the Spirit does *in* us. This enables the dynamic participation that Smail thinks Torrance has missed.⁷⁵ He also acknowledges the more significant problem of becoming over-interested in the Spirit in a way that may lead to unbalanced Christian mysticism (as in some Eastern Orthodoxy), religious pluralism (as in Western liberalism), or charismatic excess (as in Pentecostal and charismatic experience).⁷⁶ The Eastern Orthodox accuse the West of depersonalizing the Trinity in pursuit of power for the Church. Spiritual power is sought through an infallible Pope (Roman Catholic), an infallible

⁷¹ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 69-73.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 37-40.

⁷³ Purves, *Charismatic Movement*, 203, 211, 219, 222, and see 209 for what has been missing in Scotland, as the Spirit is de-emphasized in the church as it focuses on Jesus.

⁷⁴ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 66-71.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 127-35.

Bible (evangelical Christian), a fixed liturgy (no room for the Spirit), or a minister-dominated church (where the Spirit is optional).⁷⁷ The work of Jesus needs to be focal, but the very centrality of his work cannot exclude the collaborative work of the Spirit in our theology and practice.

One of the greatest concerns is tritheism, separating the trinitarian persons into divided individuals, as perhaps portrayed in the Rublev Icon. The Spirit can appear to be just another Son, almost indistinguishable from Jesus. But the Spirit is another kind of person.⁷⁸ In equalizing and humanizing the three, one loses the interrelatedness and uniqueness that are essential to the dynamic life of the Trinity. Augustinian models have their own unique problems, whether the unity is conceived by human experience (to remember, understand, and will) in the unity of human psychology or the reduction of the Spirit to a bond between the Father and Son, creating a depersonalized binitarian image.⁷⁹ These metaphors can lead one to think about God in his eternal nature, but neglect appropriate interpersonal encounters in space and time.

Separating Jesus and the Spirit even impacts how we read Scripture. If we make the Bible a text with Jesus as the final authority, we can forget that it was inspired by the Spirit and illuminated by the Spirit. Placing Jesus as the authority may imply a fixed interpretation that often shifts authority to the interpreter and dismisses the present activity of the Spirit. A Bible-based church that is not Spirit-led will tend to default to human authority, gradually usurping the place of Christ and the Spirit. A Spirit-led church that is not Bible-based will make claims of the Spirit that are inconsistent with the person of Jesus. But Jesus must be the final authority and the Bible must refer to him through the lens of what the Spirit is doing.⁸⁰ Proper interpretation must employ a christological pneumatology and a pneumatological Christology, heard within the unity of a mutually informed life, through the voice of Jesus and with the ears of the Spirit.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

Humans create all kinds of replacements for the Spirit and Jesus, dividing and utilizing a theology that serves human needs. One can replace the Spirit with isolated concepts of grace, divine acts, or any theological belief in a manner severed from the Spirit, and the presence of the Son.⁸¹ We get lost in the idea and miss the immediacy of the divine persons. One can also replace the Spirit with techniques and technology, liberated to follow agendas of success through human performance setting the stage.⁸² It is far too common to interpret the Bible for ourselves and by ourselves and neglect the voice of Jesus and the leading of the Spirit.

It is not uncommon to subordinate the Spirit to the Son, following a hierarchy of power. There comes a point that the Spirit simply is reduced to power, dissolved into the activity of the Son. Smail recognized that even he had done that in *Reflected Glory*.⁸³ Once one subordinates the Spirit to the Son, it is easy to follow an authoritarian logic. The Pope stands over the Church, and the Bible and ministers rule over the congregation. Calls for submission to these authorities replace the freedom and wonder of the Spirit in living out the love of Christ.⁸⁴ Orthodox theologians trace the troubling weaknesses of the Western Church to a depreciation of the Spirit and a replacement by human structures.⁸⁵ Where the Spirit is absent or silenced, power will be given to “vicars” who take the place of the Vicarious Christ and his Spirit who brings us to share Jesus’ life.

In the subordination of the Spirit to the Son, one can also get a sequential, almost modalistic framing of the Trinity. Jesus is held as the one who saves us and reconciles us by his blood into which we are baptized. This leaves room for a second baptism in the Spirit, a second blessing to take the believer to the next step as a second stage. This can introduce a whole realm of spiritual activity that becomes independent of Christ. The critical control as to what is accounted to be “of the

⁸¹ Ibid., 43.

⁸² Ibid., 173.

⁸³ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 69-70.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 134.

Spirit of Christ" is abandoned for dramatic experiences in a manner that does not test the spirits.⁸⁶ When the Spirit of Pentecost is separated from the anchor of Calvary and Easter, it departs from the reconciling and redeeming work of God and building of the Body into Christ as the Head, experienced in the grace and love of the Spirit's *koinonia*.⁸⁷

When the Spirit becomes less than a full person (the spirit of this place), the end result is either impersonal theology and church practice, or the Spirit is seen as an untrustworthy, absent power to be contained by those in power. The Spirit may become a mode of power to be harnessed or, conversely, one from whom the Church is to be quarantined, thus losing a sense of being a full person in his own right. The Trinity becomes binitarian when the Father-Son relation becomes the heart of the gospel and the Spirit is largely forgotten.⁸⁸

In a further tragic move, the Spirit is absorbed into the human spirit.⁸⁹ The individualist urge of the twentieth century moved churches and believers to harness the power of the Spirit so that the gifts are humanly possessed. The Spirit is "on tap" at a Holy Spirit meeting, to top up and play out the independent autonomy of the individual. Similarly, an authoritarian structure in a church may collapse into self-rule, each person developing a form of spiritual anarchy.

The Church is threatened when the realm of the Spirit becomes all about power, which spreads in several cloaked forms. It may occur in the context of charismatic/Pentecostal, in the certainty of the apologist/legalist, or in the monastic/mystical experience of liberal traditions. In each of these ways, the Spirit becomes the possession of, or servant to, the believer, providing what is humanly desired. However, no power, wisdom, insight, or any other gift is given as our possession. The Spirit is the gift, enabling his people to function as the body of Christ, serving God's creative, reconciling, and redeeming purposes.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁸⁷ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 103-4.

⁸⁸ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 42.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 21.

Only the true Spirit of Jesus brings humble obedience to build the whole Church and not create heroes and leading actors. Those claiming to follow the Spirit cannot be seen to replace Jesus, adding to what he is doing in an inconsistent manner, or acting independently of him. We must always follow the Christ-ward bend of the Spirit.⁹¹ The Spirit does not in any way replace Jesus, but is the means to relate to the one who is alive and present in personal harmony.⁹²

The Spirit as the Giver of Life - Extending the Church

We have established the critical relation of the Holy Spirit to the Trinity, to the Son in particular, and now we will look at the unique contributions of the Spirit to the Church and Christians.

The Spirit gifts the Church with the Living God. The writers of the Written Word, the Bible, are those moved by the Spirit to witness to the Living Word. The Spirit also gives the Church wisdom to interpret, remember, and hear the person who reveals God in the flesh.⁹³ With biblical knowledge and theological expertise, the Church develops doctrine to lead us to Christ and the Father through the guiding power of the Spirit.⁹⁴ All that follows in the life of the Church is moved by the Spirit in creative continuity with the Father and Son, who keep the Church aligned and engaged with the penetrating voice of the Living God.⁹⁵

The Spirit gives us the gift of adoption. The Spirit has already been given to us as children, beginning to share in what has not yet been fulfilled, the already and not yet.⁹⁶ We must not adopt a form of triumphalism, which causes us to make claims for our power and knowledge beyond what is given by God, as happened in Corinth. However, we assuredly know we are the children of Abba when the Spirit moves in us to cry out his name and we embrace the one who has embraced us.

⁹¹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 13.

⁹² Smail, *Giving Gift*, 40.

⁹³ Smail, *Once and for All*, 5.

⁹⁴ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 80.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹⁶ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 122.

The Spirit is key in God's salvation story. Think of the Spirit's life-giving actions at Easter, causing Jesus to be raised from the dead,⁹⁷ confirming the Father's judgment of reconciliation for humanity, and revealing the deity of the Son. In this act, the Spirit is seen as mutually interdependent in the salvation event, as well as later moving the Church to live in response to this divine action.

The gifting to the Church continues at Pentecost, as the Risen Lord sends the Spirit to the waiting and soon-to-be empowered Church.⁹⁸ The Spirit has been involved in gifting the world since its creation and continues to be the agent of restoration and renewal in the world and in the Church, as well as in particular persons.

The Spirit is also at work in the culmination of all things.⁹⁹ But the Spirit is never alone in any activity; even at Pentecost, the Father is sending the promised Spirit, continuing Jesus' paracletic work. The gift is a fully integrated trinitarian outpouring, inviting new possibilities for humanity in concert with God's embrace and empowerment.¹⁰⁰

After the giving of the gift at Pentecost, the Church experiences new practices of sharing in word, power, healing, meals, and a new life in common.¹⁰¹ At Pentecost, we discover the Spirit is the gift and source of all that follows.¹⁰² The Spirit is the Gift that keeps on giving, opening the realm of grace to humanity as the habitat of dynamic relationships, that is, the personal realm.¹⁰³ Any view of the Spirit that slides toward impersonal purposes is alien to this life-giving Spirit first

⁹⁷ Romans 8:11.

⁹⁸ Smail, "The Holy Trinity and the Resurrection," in *Different Gospels*, 23.

⁹⁹ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 168-9.

¹⁰⁰ Smail, "The Holy Trinity and the Resurrection," in *Different Gospels*, 17.

¹⁰¹ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 183.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 16. See Acts 2:38, in which the Church will receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit."

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 17-21.

seen in enlivening the Son in his earthly body and then his churchly body on earth.¹⁰⁴

The Spirit does not give of himself alone, but provides what the Father and Son offer through him to us.¹⁰⁵ Only in this way can we be aligned with the fact that Christ is the Head and the Spirit brings the face and voice of Jesus to be known, extending what was done objectively by Jesus to be experienced in the life of the Church.¹⁰⁶ Even Jesus receives the Spirit at his baptism, getting the Father's blessing. Now we are included by the same Spirit, empowered to share his work.¹⁰⁷ The Spirit does not merely gift us the created life of the present age; we are promised the life of the age to come. The inbreaking of the Spirit provides the first installment of God's fulfillment. The Spirit draws us to live into the future, focused on where we are going rather than where we have been.¹⁰⁸ The freedom of the Spirit provides insight, looking with new eyes toward what is to come as we personally engage the Living God.

The Spirit also gifts us with belief to hear and respond to the promises of God. As we live expectant that Jesus goes with us, we find we are existing in the freedom of the Spirit. We do not just believe we are forgiven and reconciled to God; we become children who trust the one who is with us, creating expectancy, knowing that we are not alone but going forward in the power of the Spirit as Jesus did.¹⁰⁹ The Spirit intertwines our life together.

Traditionally, we affirm baptism into Christ, but must also discuss baptism in the Spirit. If we are to refer to this baptism as a real gift in our experience, we must be clear about what we are affirming. This is a biblical concept, but one among many terms or phrases for the initiating work of the Spirit.¹¹⁰ Each biblical

¹⁰⁴ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Smail, "The Holy Trinity and the Resurrection," in *Different Gospels*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity*, 153.

¹⁰⁹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 145.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

image used should not be assigned a different meaning. All activities need to be acknowledged as the creative work of the one Spirit, who gifts in dynamic, not formulaic, ways. Smail rejects describing in only one phrase, such as initial evidence or baptism in the Spirit, the many ways the Spirit works in believers. This reductionism focuses on the experience of the believer, sets limits established by humans, and makes the Spirit a force more than a person.¹¹¹ The Spirit's work must be seen in the context of Christ's baptism and in continuity with it. What has begun in Jesus is consequently nurtured by the Spirit.¹¹² They work in concert; we cannot divide them in our experience. Baptism in the Spirit must also reflect the content of Jesus' baptism and the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to release power to continue his work in the disciples.¹¹³

Human belief in the work of the Spirit is an important component. If one resists or disbelieves that the Spirit is at work in them, it is less likely they will experience the gifts or fruit of the Spirit. There are no conditions to receiving the Spirit, but there are consequences of resisting the Spirit, which becomes an act of self-exclusion.¹¹⁴ To allow oneself to be included in the Spirit's gifting is to open to the creativity of the Spirit. The Spirit "does the same thing differently" in each person.¹¹⁵

Jesus is at work by his Spirit to bring us to freedom fostered by his love.¹¹⁶ We are not given autonomous power by the Spirit; we are empowered to follow Jesus faithfully in present expressions of his ministry, made effective by yielding to the same Spirit who empowers him. This is our participation in Christ, renewed in life by him, drawn to intimacy with him, and involved by the action of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ We are endowed by the Spirit to express the gifts that further the triune

¹¹¹ Ibid., 136.

¹¹² Ibid., 138-39.

¹¹³ Ibid., 139-44.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 144-45.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 149.

¹¹⁶ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 70.

¹¹⁷ Smail, *Once and for All*, 153.

mission in the world. Unfortunately, many non-charismatic churches implicitly focus on a humanly controlled ministry or explicitly deny echoes of the Spirit's work in the Bible.¹¹⁸ But the Jesus of the Bible releases the Spirit here and now, not just then and there in ancient times.

A primary gift the Spirit offers us is a shared life, the *koinonia* with Christ that then weaves us into a community.¹¹⁹ Vertical connection with the triune God creates a fellowship, a community that can only be realized in communion with God and humanity.¹²⁰ This belonging to Christ means inclusion in his body, the Church. The resulting life of love is nurtured in Christ by his Spirit. We learn that love grows into sharing, including within the community as well as to neighbors and strangers, as we see in the book of Acts. The *koinonia*, sharing of life together, precedes *charismata*, the gifting life, as a development of the sharing community. "The initial evidence that we share in the Church's baptism in the Spirit is less speaking in tongues and more in new relationships of love with God and with others."¹²¹

The unity of the Church is also the gift of the Spirit. Our unity cannot be in doctrine alone but in the mutuality of love that reflects the life of the triune God. The Spirit provides more than an invisible bond; we are integrated at the heart level into the life of Christ and woven into one another in mutual self-giving. When there are divisions, it is evidence of the lack of yielding to the Spirit, in submission to Christ. Unity cannot simply be in proximity in the same space or committed to the local mission. Unity is nurtured as we are baptized in Christ, and through the Spirit begin manifesting a life guided and empowered by the present presence of the Living God.¹²² For Smail, the charismatic movement broke down barriers for many people and revealed the Spirit afresh to listen to each other and become respected friends.¹²³ For others, it created new walls by resisting the Spirit's work.

¹¹⁸ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 54.

¹¹⁹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 52-53.

¹²⁰ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 182-83.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 188-89.

¹²³ T. A. Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change: Dialogs with a Radical Baptist Theologian*, ed by David Coffey (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 162.

The Church is built from the beginning by the illumination of the Spirit. The early Church drew life from the apostolic witness, speaking still in the present witness of the contemporary Church, making present the living Christ as Lord of the Church. Unity today needs to come through yielding to Christ's active involvement in speaking in the Church as the Spirit gifts with understanding, convicting and regenerating the community to grow in living as participants in the Kingdom of God.¹²⁴ When we finally cry, "Abba, Father," we are assured by the Spirit of adoption that we are those addressed by Christ, who now share his Abba cry, having been awakened to the witness that has called us home.

The Son intercedes for us with the Father, and the Spirit also intercedes in our life of prayer and worship. This gift of access brings intimacy, fulfilling what we are unable to provide.¹²⁵ In this dependence on the Spirit, we become transformed to have the mind of Christ, to be restored to Christ's image, and to bear the Spirit's fruit as evidence of what has been empowered in us apart from our doing. The empowering of love is made available, not gained by achievement.¹²⁶

By the Spirit, we are made witnesses, a gift unleashing the good news of all that has come to us in Jesus. We share his ministry. We do not have our own ministry, but are gifted to engage in the liberating ministry that sets hearts free.¹²⁷ As Jesus began his ministry with "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," so we share in the proclamation of freedom, healing, and announcing the Kingdom come.¹²⁸ We do not simply echo or reflect on Jesus in our proclamation. By the Spirit, we are personally creative, even artistic, in speaking his story, living from a christological center as we spiritually portray Jesus in our cultural and historical situations with the Spirit shaping our story. Conformity to human ideals must be set aside. Creativity must be inhaled in submitting to the Spirit, who is an Artist at work in us

¹²⁴ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 53.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹²⁷ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 103.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

and through us on the canvas of our community.¹²⁹ This collaboration is recreative and restorative for the whole community.¹³⁰ When the Spirit sets persons aside for service, in a manner true to who they are in Christ and in their uniqueness, there are no stereotypes, no models to follow. We are readied, caused by the Spirit to invite others to come drink the water of life,¹³¹ but also to hear and speak what Jesus says to the neighborhood. This partnership creates a purposeful, creative, responsive arrangement born of the Giver of life. We are integrated into the life of God, fulfilling his purposes in love, receptive to the personal dynamics that overcome our fallen nature as we die to self and are awakened by the Spirit, who makes us alive to God and each other as we are meant to be.¹³²

Addressing Inadequate Theologies of the Spirit – Correcting the Church

For Torrance and Smail, a proper theology provides context for correction. We will note a few of the more recent issues that arise from an inadequate understanding of the Spirit. We will contrast the Torrance-Smail proposal with misinformed theologies in the practices of the Church, especially Pentecostal-charismatic expressions.

The Problem of Individualism

In recent times, church culture has drifted toward focusing on the spirit of the individual human and away from the Holy Spirit. Individual experience dominates over the witness of Scripture regarding the Spirit of God. However, God's purposes call us away from privatized and domesticated religious experiences, to share the life of God with the world in creative and restorative ways.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 180.

¹³¹ Revelation 22:17.

¹³² Smail, *Giving Gift*, 178-9.

¹³³ Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change*, 168.

Smail notes that the rise of Pentecostalism in the early twentieth century was preceded by the holiness movement. That development distorted the essence of Wesley's teaching and focused on the experience of the individual believer who fulfilled the conditions for receiving the Spirit in a special way.¹³⁴ Smail believes the charismatic renewal is an authentic work of the Holy Spirit, but that it is rooted in the Reformation tradition with a move toward individual interpretation. This continued through Pietism and holiness teaching with individual concern for piety. Finally, this course developed through classical Pentecostalism with its concern for the individual experience of the Spirit.¹³⁵ This trajectory has influenced the spirit of the age to think of the Spirit specifically encountered in individual human experience and not from the revelation of God through the Bible.

Stated theologically, the subjective experience of Pentecost has overshadowed and often replaced the objective work of Jesus on the cross.¹³⁶ When this happens, an "uncrucified carnality" is released as the human pursues spiritual ecstasy detached from the source of either the Son or Spirit.¹³⁷ What is missing is significant; Smail states that he almost called *The Giving Gift* something like *What the Charismatic Renewal did not say about the Holy Spirit*.¹³⁸ Like the Corinthian Christians, "exclusiveness, arrogance, disregard for the truth, and hunger for power" may come to characterize and neutralize the work of the Spirit.¹³⁹

Initial evidence of the Spirit may appear in an individualized form as speaking in tongues. A better understanding comes when we see ourselves as adopted children who cry out, "Abba, Father." This is evidence of the new relationship enacted by the Spirit and reveals that our identity is transformed.¹⁴⁰ Rather than displays of supernatural manifestations, the love that echoes from

¹³⁴ Smail, "Holy Spirit," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 424.

¹³⁵ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 53-54.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹³⁷ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 59.

¹³⁸ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 11.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁴⁰ Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change*, 168-69.

Calvary is the surest sign. When methods and techniques to unlock the divine become dominant, the movement has slipped into a form of near gnostic practices with claims of special knowledge to access the power of God.¹⁴¹

The Problem of Autonomy

A new model of "Christian" life arises when we lose the power of Calvary, move to autonomous concerns, and pursue a second successive stage of the Spirit.¹⁴² This approach tragically leads to a belief that we may possess power that the Spirit hands over to us. But the only power the Spirit gives comes from the love poured out on the cross, the healing born of God's love, and this results in glory being given to Jesus as we are crucified and rise with him.¹⁴³ The self-seeking model is a shadow of the reality it attempts to claim.

Having claimed the life of the Spirit, charismatics may speak of "anointing" by the Spirit for a functionally independent ministry. This follows from the fact that Jesus was anointed for ministry in the Spirit, liberating the oppressed and proclaiming Jubilee for a life of sharing.¹⁴⁴ This is still possible, but when the anointing lacks sharing of Jesus' concern for the broken and oppressed, it erodes credibility. Anointing makes theological sense only when Jesus is glorified, the Spirit is honored, and humility adorns the servant.

When an autonomous individual, with their own ministry, decides what ministry looks like, there is little room left for Jesus or the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it should be that, in responding to the Spirit, we are enabled to care for each person and situation as the Spirit leads.¹⁴⁵ When the origin of ministry is in the human, it takes on a false form of power, crushing in victories that do not look like the cross.¹⁴⁶ Exhibitionism and self-fulfillment, counting how many gifts are

¹⁴¹ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 63-64.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 56-57.

¹⁴³ T. A. Smail, *Windows on the Cross* ((London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), 117.

¹⁴⁴ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 104.

¹⁴⁵ Smail, *Once and For All*, 172.

¹⁴⁶ Smail, *Windows on the Cross*, 88.

manifested, become expressions of greed and not the Spirit on a mission of love.¹⁴⁷ We come to a crossroads, asking whether one is pursuing the love of power or the power of love.¹⁴⁸ The Spirit can inappropriately be conceived as a force, dispensing supernatural energy to conquer, forgetting the self-giving love of Jesus on the cross, who heals our humanity and restores us to his Father. "Charismatics have often switched the emphasis from the Son to the Spirit as the sovereign source of renewal, power, and spiritual gifts and fruit."¹⁴⁹ What begins as a new emphasis becomes a swapping out of the Son who is replaced by the Spirit.

The Problem of Triumphalism

Success in "Spirit-empowered" ministry can become results-oriented.¹⁵⁰ A kind of triumphalism takes over. ¹⁵¹ The pursuit of mountain-top experiences overshadows the loving and saving experience of Jesus himself. The show has usurped salvation. The Spirit comes along with a "second blessing" as a step up in the spiritual life after receiving Jesus.

Second blessing theology subtly replaces the work of the cross as it features the sensational experience of individuals. It neglects the community in continuity with Jesus. The debate, as Smail saw it, was about a proper theological emphasis on the Spirit at work in drawing the church into the life and mission of the triune God over against an individually-focused search for empowerment and experience that diverges from life together with the triune God.¹⁵² Smail refused to embrace any second blessing theology, as dividing the Trinity, misconstruing the Spirit, and not remaining true to the intent of Scripture.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 178.

¹⁴⁸ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 19. See the following pages on this shift and the problem of missing the Father!

¹⁵⁰ Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change*, 171-72.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁵² Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 38.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 134-37 and 48-49.

It is paramount that we not separate the Spirit from the Father and the Son. That leaves us with an independent Spirit who can no longer be the Holy Spirit. But there is no autonomous realm of the Spirit.¹⁵⁴ The Spirit is only the self-giving of the Father and the Son, and any depiction of the Spirit or his work that abandons this has fractured the life of God and the meaning of the three persons.¹⁵⁵ Subtly, a theology of glory replaces the theology of the cross.¹⁵⁶ Consequently, worship and ministry celebrate triumph, forgetting God's suffering and humanity's sinfulness. God's true gifts are neglected, as well as our life of confession and intercession in response to the living Christ.

The Problem of Synergism

Smail also raises concerns over Arminian and Pentecostal attitudes that present the Spirit as synergistic with humans. Our understanding of God becomes conditioned by our faith, shifting the focus to affirm the free will of humans, which ends up abandoning us to ourselves. The gifting of the Spirit becomes the result of conditions that we believe God lays down for us. Humans "work with God" in a conditional manner that undermines the actual gift of God and his Spirit.¹⁵⁷ If the Christian life begins with us, it follows that we must keep it growing. However, if this life is the Spirit's regenerating work, then it follows that our growth is also sustained by the Spirit at work by grace.¹⁵⁸ Human religions are always in competition with the Holy Spirit, subverting the freedom of God, who had poured out his grace. Humans who conform to human interpretations of the Spirit live under the rule and judgment that are deprived of what the Son and Spirit work out on our behalf.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 25.

¹⁵⁵ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 157.

¹⁵⁶ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 111.

¹⁵⁷ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 154-55.

¹⁵⁸ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 84.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

Churches that conform to human standards are reduced to autocratic institutions and eventually die.¹⁶⁰ Absent the Spirit who is the giver of life, the community fossilizes, submitting to other authorities than Christ and the Spirit. Churches that universalize Jesus and the Spirit end up with a deist god who leaves a residue of spirituality but little trace of the personal life of the living God. Human ideals form the spirit of the group, leading according to its values. Laws of spiritual experience show up as rules to replace the responsive, personal life.¹⁶¹

The Problem of Revivalism

Outside the walls of the Church, along with meaningful revivals there are often revivals that Smail believes are false because they make claims on the Spirit's work. These are escapist, built on false prophecies, leading to disappointment and disillusion.¹⁶² Importantly, they usually miss the presence of focus on the Father who sends the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit shows up as an occasional visitor after long periods of absence and departs when the event is over.¹⁶³ The goal of true revival is to hear the Word of the Lord afresh, and this is lost when leaders take it upon themselves to dispense the gifts of the Spirit through their activities, missing the discernment that should accompany all claims that the Spirit is at work.

We must be clear that proper alignment with the Spirit is in cooperation with Jesus, who is sent from the Father. We cannot create any experiences or make promises that are not first true of their loving will to work in us and through us. We ought to be freed from guilt and confusion as we align with the Spirit's work and sense the authenticity of love and joy that follow as we live within the triune embrace.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 196.

¹⁶¹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 41-42.

¹⁶² T. A. Smail, "The Ethics of Exile and the Rhythm of Resurrection," in *On Revival: A Critical Examination*, ed. Andrew Walker and Kristin Aune (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 59, 63.

¹⁶³ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 189.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

The Problem of Distortions

In the West, there is a tendency to fear the work of the Spirit, due to the Pentecostal and charismatic movements.¹⁶⁵ This fear does not create freedom for the life of the Spirit. It does not attune to the Spirit that Jesus promises in the Bible. A Spirit-impoverished Church is a flat-tire Church, as Barth stated.¹⁶⁶ Cutting ourselves off from the Spirit may be as damaging in its own way as misconstruing the Spirit. Choosing Jesus while neglecting the Spirit raises the question of which Jesus we are following. Forgetting the work of the Son and Spirit, who bring us to the Father, reveals a deeper dimension of misconstruing all three and our place within their life. This reflects one of many forms of Trinity Deficit Disorder.¹⁶⁷

It is not surprising that restoration movements arise, attempting to renew life in the Spirit. From house churches to non-denominational movements to the recent Pentecostal and charismatic movements, spiritual change is pursued from a heart seeking renewal. The desire to restore the Church from its human traditions, legalistic structures, and other misguided formulations leaves us vulnerable to factions, not unlike those we find in 1 Corinthians.¹⁶⁸ Like them, we may desire to live in the triumph of the resurrection, but lack the love that reflects the Spirit's leading by our spirit of triumphalism, thus living as though we can claim the power on our own terms, while in actuality we only deceive ourselves and others.¹⁶⁹ An honest restoration can only come when we acknowledge our sin and inadequacy and abandon our desire for constant victory, or end the myth that the Spirit should yield to our desires.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹⁶⁶ Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, introduction and epilogue by John D. Godsey (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), 83. A pneumatic tire without air is useless.

¹⁶⁷ Marty Folsom, *Face to Face: Sharing God's Life, Volume 3* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 228-34.

¹⁶⁸ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 78.

¹⁶⁹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 122-23.

¹⁷⁰ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 68.

The great danger of misunderstanding the Spirit is that we become human-focused with a need-centered distortion that informs our relationship.¹⁷¹ Persons quest for gifts to fulfill their individual lives, and not for a revival of God's will in the life of the Church. But if our motives are awry, "Spiritual gifts are dangerous in the hands of fleshly people, as Paul's warnings to the Corinthians clearly show."¹⁷² We end up with various forms of pietistic individualism, sensationalism, superficiality, and personal self-fulfillment.

Those who lead churches have a responsibility to remain servants of the triune God, not authoritarian managers who either resist or employ the Spirit for their own purposes. It is far too easy to attempt to lead without the Spirit, even focusing on Jesus, but forgetting the Spirit given as a gift to build up the Church. Leaders become replacements for Jesus and the Spirit, and the Church is depersonalized,¹⁷³ rather than made personal by the personalizing persons of the Son and the Spirit.¹⁷⁴ Torrance affirmed Cyril's thought of understanding the "Holy Spirit as spiritualising, enlightening and rationalising, and thus the one personalising being, to whom all other spiritual and rational natures are indebted."¹⁷⁵ This affirmation encourages us to see the constructive value of a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church within God's personal life.

A Constructive Theology of the Spirit – Guiding the Church

For Torrance and Smail, proper theology guides the Church to participate in the life of the triune God as it receives and reveals God's mission of reconciliation in the world. The Spirit brings the life of God to humanity, reminding and unfolding the future fulfillment toward which God leads us among his renewing of the entire

¹⁷¹ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 28.

¹⁷² Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 18.

¹⁷³ Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity*, 162.

¹⁷⁴ T. F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stpck, 2003), 140.

¹⁷⁵ T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, Second Edition (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 227.

cosmos. We will now survey constructive proposals for the correlation between the life of the Spirit and the practices of the Church.

The Spirit Guides the Church

A significant problem for the Church is that its teaching on the Spirit's work in equipping the Church for fellowship and mission has been muted or neglected.¹⁷⁶ The Church needs to be released from its dependence on human leaders, self-focus, and institutional forms that replace or reject the Spirit's igniting, guiding, and empowering work. Our life with the triune God begins as we confess the *Abba* of Jesus as our Father and the Son as our Lord — both by the Spirit's work. *Abba* and *Kurios* (Lord) on our lips is a sign of the Spirit's incorporating us into the family of God.¹⁷⁷

There has been a proper wariness that Spirit-led people will lead the Church inappropriately to add beliefs and practices to the faith, especially works-based teaching. Smail rightly affirms that we cannot have Christianity plus, but we cannot have Christianity minus either, meaning to lose the Spirit.¹⁷⁸ The Spirit forms us in Christ, unveiling our faces to behold the glory of the Lord.¹⁷⁹ We need the undergirding of classical theology, but also the freedom of the Spirit that restores us to the Father and into the freedom of knowing and being known by Jesus by the Spirit. Otherwise, we rob the Spirit and the Church of the completing work of God's gifts to us, for us, and through us for the sake of the world.¹⁸⁰

The Spirit Personalizes the Church

The Holy Spirit is the center and source of God's personal activity, relating the Father and Son to us with an intimate distinction in being.¹⁸¹ Smail affirms that the proper function of charismatic renewal is to call the Church to trinitarian

¹⁷⁶ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 145.

¹⁷⁷ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 30.

¹⁷⁸ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 146.

¹⁷⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

¹⁸⁰ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 151.

¹⁸¹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 146.

renewal, engaged through biblical and theological study to guide us on the journey. We know where to go, but need the Spirit to bring a fresh opening to the Father and Son for a dynamic life together.¹⁸² The Spirit reminds us that Jesus is the Christ who died for our sins and is the same one who pours out his Spirit to empower the witnessing life of the Church.¹⁸³ The Spirit facilitates the human side of the relationship with Jesus and his Father, bringing their love and power to active service, enlivening the Church here and now to experience the living God in the midst of our days.¹⁸⁴ With our propensity to focus on ourselves, we continually need to refocus on Father and Son, which is the essence of our repenting as we come home and follow Jesus afresh as new persons.

The first thing that the Spirit does for us is to restore the knowledge that we are children of the Father and to know his heart. The Spirit not only awakens us with the *Abba* cry, but testifies that we are children of the Father throughout life.¹⁸⁵ This opens our theology to align with the mission of Jesus, bringing the Father's love to us, as well as restoring us to his Father. Good Spirit theology reorients us to the forgotten Father. The gift of the Spirit is never an end in itself, but is a return to the simplicity of being a child with the Father of all love.¹⁸⁶ The Spirit gives glory to the Father through the Son, not just pointing to him, but revealing all the love and fulfillment in us so that we respond in gratitude to him.¹⁸⁷

The Spirit Directs the Church to Jesus

The Spirit recenters us on Jesus. Smail expresses gratitude to "Professor Torrance and the whole Barthian tradition ... for insisting that Christ has answered

¹⁸² Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change*, 168.

¹⁸³ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 58. See also Frank Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018) and *The Spirit-Baptized Church: A Dogmatic Inquiry* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Bloomsbury, 2021).

¹⁸⁴ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 64.

¹⁸⁵ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 41, 58.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁸⁷ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 84-87.

for us when we have nothing to say for ourselves.”¹⁸⁸ This is central, but does not go as far as Smail wants to go, in seeing the Spirit at work in facilitating our response, enabled to say and act in obedient response by the Spirit.

Smail emphasizes that what Jesus did once and for all, the Spirit continues to work out in us here and now. This dimension of the Spirit’s work makes our joining to Jesus personal; we are corporately connected, revealing the Spirit’s work in our relating with one another as we focus on Jesus.¹⁸⁹

The Spirit raises Jesus from the dead on Resurrection Morning, but Jesus’ ascension also marks the arrival of the Spirit, bringing Christ’s power and presence to the Church. Each interacts for the other in the life-giving mission of God. Then, the Spirit intercedes for us and builds the Church as the body of Christ, as the promise of what is to come, the “not-yet,” becomes “now poured out” in conjunction with Jesus’ ascension, and not in any way replacing Jesus.¹⁹⁰ This personal mediation continues. We need to become more aware of Jesus’ priestly role today, but also of the Spirit as Intercessor on our behalf and in our midst.

The Spirit Transforms Humans for Response

The intersection of God with our personal humanity occurs as the Spirit brings a paradigm shift in our thinking. No longer do we trust our senses, arguments from human thinking about who we are, or mere observations to make sense of the world and our place in it. We are converted to align our thoughts with God’s wisdom. This change of mind comes as the Spirit gives us ears to hear and know who God is as revealed in Jesus, addressing us to make possible a personal knowing of the living God.¹⁹¹

Having received life from the Father, through the Son, who comes to us by the Spirit, we are prepared for life together. This means that, by the same Spirit,

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 111.

¹⁸⁹ Smail, “When Wright was Right,” in *Challenging to Change*, 169.

¹⁹⁰ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 123-24.

¹⁹¹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 63.

we also offer ourselves daily through the Son to the Father.¹⁹² This creates the responsive life of being known, and hence coming to know more fully the one who came seeking us. Pentecostals do well in receiving the Spirit, but need to follow the Spirit into the life of yielding to the love of God in worshipful obedience as an expression of freedom, not compliance to the law. The Spirit makes life fruitful, not slavish compliance.

Jesus brings us to a life of listening to the Father,¹⁹³ and the Spirit takes the things of Jesus and reveals them to us.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the ongoing life with the Father and Son is facilitated by communication that the Spirit brings to us.¹⁹⁵ The constructive element of the divine action brings us into communion through hearing and responding. The Son's communion with the Father is unbroken, but we must be brought to the Father by the Spirit through the mediation of the Son. As Christ received the Spirit in his humanity, so we receive the Spirit, who takes our broken humanity to share in God's eternal life even as we are in the space-time continuum.¹⁹⁶

The Spirit Brings Personal Fulfillment

In this theology of restoration by the collaboration of the triune persons, we are fulfilled as persons. The Son is called the Personalizing Person, but the Spirit also personalizes because the fullness of our humanity can only be restored by the personal engagement of God in redeeming our lost relation. God does not act independently of us or expect us to merely *theorize* how his work is effective. In his revelation to us, he is addressing us in person, and so the revelation becomes the

¹⁹² Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 116; see the Torrance quote showing him correcting and correlating East and West in rethinking with Pentecostals for a more satisfying theology and practice.

¹⁹³ "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." - John 6:45 (NASB)

¹⁹⁴ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you." - John 16:13 (NASB)

¹⁹⁵ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 77.

¹⁹⁶ Purves, *Charismatic Movement*, 226. Purves looks to Torrance for this understanding as the fulfillment of trinitarian theology for charismatics.

reconciliation and we *become* what we were created to be — persons in covenantal relation, enjoying God's enduring love. Thus, in alignment with Torrance, Smail is affirming that the Spirit originates a person-creating movement in all of the inner-trinitarian relations. God's presence ultimately transforms us in personal encounters; enveloping us changes our being.¹⁹⁷

The being of God that exists in relation describes the essence of personal being. Torrance calls this "onto-relational being," and this understanding is implicit in Smail's work as well.¹⁹⁸ Smail extends the category with the personological model, including the unity the Spirit creates within the Trinity to also extend to believers in the Church.¹⁹⁹ It follows that the healing holistic life of the Church must always begin with the work of the Spirit. God's eternal life appropriately finds expression through the Spirit's work in the Church and world. Smail is passionate about this outworking of theology in a shared life with the Spirit, saying,

For many people, myself among them, it has brought a new and continuing experience of the Holy Spirit — God in the present tense — who acts in here and now eventfulness in the lives of individuals and the fellowship of his Church, so that things are seen and heard which may make it plain that Jesus Christ is not two thousand years away in the past, remote and retired in heaven, or reserved for an apocalyptic future, but lives to keep his promises to all who turn in expectant faith towards him.²⁰⁰

The way forward is to pursue a path toward maturity. We need not emphasize speaking in tongues, but confess "Jesus is Lord." In him, we are united by the Spirit, growing in Christ and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.²⁰¹ We are changed into Jesus' likeness as we experience his love and find the joy of glorifying

¹⁹⁷ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 158.

¹⁹⁸ Gary W. Deddo, "The Importance of the Personal in the Onto-relational Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Thomas F. Torrance*, ed. Paul D. Molnar and Myk Habets (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 143-160.

¹⁹⁹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 187.

²⁰⁰ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 13.

²⁰¹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 21.

him in word and deed. This transformation is the Spirit's work. It is displayed in our reflection of Jesus' face as we are changed to be like the original, now a copy being made into his likeness.

Transformation is not our work; it is the mediating work of the Spirit, who does not change us individually, but in the renewing fire of relating to one who makes the difference.²⁰² This is no life of human spiritualizing; it is the dynamic of intimate, ongoing encounters. "God's Word is not just to be spoken, it has to be heard; God's grace is not just to be given, it has to be received."²⁰³ The Spirit is actually related to and sustains all humanity; apart from him, humans could not be alive.²⁰⁴

The Spirit Brings Maturity

Maturity begins with a basic acknowledgment of our dependence on God by his Spirit. We grow as we see, with Karl Barth, that the Spirit was given as the gift of the Father, through the Son, to empower God's people to be a witness in the world.²⁰⁵ By the Spirit, we witness to the kingdom of God, for which Jesus had to go away and send his Spirit.²⁰⁶

Exploring life in the Spirit is not about human empowerment to reach God, but about participating in God's mission in the world.²⁰⁷ The Holy Spirit is the basis of our Christian life; the stress must not be on human decisions. We do not make ourselves Christians or grow through our efforts. God's gracious action and revelation to us makes possible a human decision in response, enabled by God's will and act.²⁰⁸ This is why it is so important to explore the person and work of the Spirit in a trinitarian context. Only with a thorough understanding of the work of the

²⁰² Ibid., 24-29.

²⁰³ Smail, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *Theology Beyond Christendom*, 91.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 103.

²⁰⁵ Smail, "Holy Spirit," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 424.

²⁰⁶ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 106

²⁰⁷ Smail, "Holy Spirit," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 424.

²⁰⁸ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 83.

Spirit within the trinitarian life of God can we explore the transformation of persons. We cannot make ourselves holy; that is the exclusive initiative of the Spirit to whom we yield as flowers yield to the sun to become what they were made to be (sunflowers, in particular, turn their faces toward the sun all day).

In this process, the Spirit brings hope. The Spirit creates an atmosphere of hope, plenty, and effectiveness. This prompts his people to live in expectation, enthusiastic towards a life of eventfulness, not just inward experience.²⁰⁹

In this hope, the Spirit forms the life of the Church, the community that is instituted by the Son and constituted by the Spirit. The Church exists because its being is in him, and not our institutions. It is constituted by the Spirit in the witness that facilitates person-to-person relationships.²¹⁰ We receive what Christ has done and is doing, and are freed by the Spirit to respond, not by ourselves but for ourselves, with creativity that is faithful and relevant to the work of the Son and brings God's life to our contexts. We do not depart from Scripture and Sacraments as we call on the Spirit to bring us into *koinonia* with the Father through the Son, and also with one another. Exposition of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments need not be exhausting, but might open our ears to hear the heart of the Father, the voice of the Son, and the present, creative wisdom of the Spirit at play in the intersection of our lives.

The Spirit Gifts the Church

Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, we are surprised by the gift the Spirit brings. The Spirit's action created in Mary a response of praise and treasuring in her heart. She prayed with gratitude and anticipation for what God would do, submitting with joy as a servant. The future was born from Mary's womb, and Pentecost is on the horizon.

The Spirit places the hope of the world's future in the present, a place of vulnerability and anticipation that God will carry his purposes, begun by the Spirit,

²⁰⁹ T. A. Smail, *Praying with Paul* (Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2007), 106-10.

²¹⁰ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 191-3.

through to his intended end.²¹¹ But at Pentecost, the Spirit's implantation of new life becomes a corporate receptivity, not a solitary ecstasy as for Mary.²¹² The community becomes inseparably linked to the love of God for his people; an extension of that connection explodes in visible demonstrations of hospitality and sharing in spiritual, social, and economic expressions of giving.²¹³

The Spirit coordinates his people together in an earthly workshop for the glory of Christ to be personally encountered and shared. This becomes a laboratory of experiencing, in person, that which can only be done in a corporate community. Each person engages as part of a body joined by the Spirit to create strength in the whole, and not any individual part by itself.²¹⁴ This is *koinonia* at its best — participation in the Holy Spirit.²¹⁵ In this space, there is not to be any domination by human authoritarian structures that inhibit the Spirit. There needs to be a *koinonarchy*, as I have described it, that is the rule of a shared life submitting to what is loving for each other in the presence and power of the Spirit.²¹⁶

The Spirit Orients Us Forward

The Spirit orients his people to the eschaton. Like Mary, we see the future as a glimpse of the Father's fulfilling work that begins in this moment. The Son has been placed inside to grow and become the one who reveals God in the world. The giving gift is within her, but cannot be contained by her as he grows and is revealed as the hope of the world.²¹⁷ Given as a seal to us, the Spirit does not just lock us inside, but rather, like a seal embossed with wax, creates in us characteristics that are impressed on us to instill his life, even while we remain distinct. The future is

²¹¹ Ibid., 28-29.

²¹² Ibid., 20.

²¹³ Ibid., 183.

²¹⁴ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 126.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 127-29.

²¹⁶ Folsom, *Face to Face*, Volume 3, 360-64.

²¹⁷ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 29.

being formed in us to conform to the person of Jesus.²¹⁸ The Spirit is not the Spirit of things as they are, but the Spirit of the future completing the purposes of God for his creation.²¹⁹

We do not abandon the present in our life in the Spirit. We have access to the God of the eschaton, so that “[t]hrough the Spirit, who comes to us from God, we are given access to the truth about the ultimate reality of God, something we could not have reached on our own but which has been made accessible to us through what God has done in Jesus.”²²⁰

We are brought by the Spirit to discern the hidden things of God as prayer in the Spirit, just as Jesus experienced.²²¹ This requires a posture of listening so the Spirit might “reshape the content of our prayer to bring it into harmony with what Christ is praying on our behalf.”²²² We respond freely to what we hear as a gift of the Spirit. This is no life of repetition, only one of spontaneous, creative loving in conformity to all that is present of the Father and Son’s love for us, but also free to imaginative expressions that bring the blessings of the Spirit.²²³ In our life of prayer, we act as those attuned to the voice of God, who, by the Spirit’s interceding, lifts and intertwines our humble prayers within the context of the prayers of Jesus on our behalf.²²⁴ Additionally, Smail asserts that perhaps the gift of tongues expresses this stance of depending on the Spirit to pray for what is beyond ourselves. This is not a focus on our “gift” or prayer, but is a releasing to one who is able to do what is beyond us in intercession.²²⁵

²¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 168.

²²⁰ Smail, *Praying with Paul*, 17.

²²¹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 200. Smail references Luke 10:21, “At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.” (NASB)

²²² Ibid., 211.

²²³ Ibid., 193.

²²⁴ Ibid., 208.

²²⁵ Ibid., 212.

The Spirit Facilitates a Life of Prayer

Having begun the life of prayer with the cry “*Abba*,” we find ourselves sustained and guided as we learn to listen. We have inherited the Spirit, who brings a constant and intimate communication that enables and sustains us even when we do not know how to pray.²²⁶ Even the Lord’s Prayer is associated with the Spirit, as portrayed in Luke 11:1-4, and in Luke 11:13, Jesus invites the hearer, saying, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”²²⁷ The Lord’s prayer both attunes us to Jesus’ dialog with the Father and leads to an invitation to the Spirit, who brings connection to its highpoint.²²⁸

The Spirit Brings Creativity

From this communion comes the life of reflecting the Son by the Spirit’s work. Smail conceives the Spirit as an artist who casts the trinitarian love in new, endlessly redeeming contexts. This perfecting creativity takes what exists and moves it to what it is intended to be in its fullness. Like the resurrection, this involves ongoing events of new beginnings, including revolutions and overcoming injustices, oppression, detachment, and disintegration of what happens at the cultural and personal level.

The Father’s initiating love seeks to cast out all fear and set captives free. We are called to mirror what has come to us by the Spirit. This may bring controversy as we engage our culture, as it did for Jesus when walking by the Spirit. But Smail believes we must not let the creativity born of the Spirit die due to laziness, fear, corruption, or the self-centeredness that marks our age. Freedom comes in the life of love empowered by the Spirit.²²⁹

²²⁶ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 144.

²²⁷ Luke 11:13 (NASB).

²²⁸ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 167.

²²⁹ T. A. Smail, *Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in our Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 186-200.

The call is to live a life tuning in to the Spirit by reading the Bible; embracing the sacraments; worshipping in Jesus' Church, with all its historical roots; and developing discernment to know Jesus' voice and follow the Spirit's wisdom.²³⁰

The Spirit Calls Us to Discernment

Whatever it has meant to be charismatic or Pentecostal, it must come to mean conformity to Christ in ongoing connection with the Spirit.²³¹ This includes a proper theology as outlined by Torrance and Smail. But it also means actively being equipped and equipping others for God's mission in the world. This is not formal education; it is a developing sense that we have received forgiveness and reconciliation from God and may now offer this to each human we meet with a love born of the Spirit.²³² All of this learning must lead to a discernment that is faithful to the biblical gospel. For Smail, this is *the* neglected gift of the Spirit.²³³ The ability to distinguish between what is authentic and inauthentic is critical for the demanding road of hearing the Spirit's word, including prophecy, and standing for all that is required of love and faithfulness to covenant love.²³⁴

Wisdom is especially important in discerning the spirits. Each church has its own identity that can confuse the issue. But faithfulness to the Spirit of God must set the final possibilities and limits. Claims must reflect the heart of the loving *Abba*. They must resonate with the transforming ministry of Jesus. The Spirit cannot be heard to act alone, only as the Spirit of Jesus and his Father.

Unholy spirits may include conservatism or restlessness that is anxious to change everything. There may be a spirit of complacency that refuses to challenge anything. A spirit of idolatry may cherish buildings, programs, or tradition more than the living God. There may be a spirit of thrill that loves new experiences more than what God is doing in and for the Church and world. The one Spirit comes with

²³⁰ Smail, *Praying with Paul*, 64-69.

²³¹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 196.

²³² Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 145.

²³³ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 164-65.

²³⁴ Smail, "The Ethics of Exile and the Rhythm of Resurrection," in *On Revival*, 61.

many different forms of building the body and the persons who yield. What is constant is a faith in the God who is the source, and continually assessing whether words or plans echo from that epicenter. But Smail concludes that we must remain open to receive, as well as wise to follow within the guidance of the personal God we come to know.²³⁵ We must stay in the realm of inspiration so that the inspirer, the Spirit, will work in us, the inspired, so that we remain distinct and yet aligned in obedient correspondence, marked by God's creativity.²³⁶

The Spirit must remain a Spirit of freedom or we have lost our bearings. The Spirit gives humans and whole communities new freedom that comes from sharing God's purposes. The objectivity of God's creation and reconciliation leads to redemption that becomes obvious in bearing the fruit of the Spirit in the community of faith as well as particular persons. Freedom is not independence; it is the interdependence of love that breaks down walls and builds in love. This is the context of the incorporation of humans into the mission of God by the Spirit in each place. This provides for the gifts of responsiveness to be shared with others.²³⁷

The gifts of the Spirit are the gifts of the Crucified. We have died with Christ and live now as those who live in the ministry of the resurrected Jesus by his Spirit. We are freed from the self-seeking, fearful bondage of the past, and now live in the mystery and power of the Spirit, who live by the faithfulness of the Son of God.²³⁸ We now breathe Jesus' resurrection by his Spirit, both with the way God provides through creation, as with medicine, and also with divine works beyond human limitations.²³⁹ In a similar manner, we are wise to employ language that people will "see and hear" as well as remain open to what can exceed our capacities, with tongues that speak to others of God's mighty acts in languages unknown to us, thus within a christological context as the Spirit imparts.²⁴⁰ Smail concludes that

²³⁵ Smail, *Praying with Paul*, 97-105.

²³⁶ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 91.

²³⁷ Smail, *Once and for All*, 161.

²³⁸ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 114.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 131-33.

there is no “law of tongues,” only the availability of the Spirit to open deep places in our being to praise God and to be present for others as a vehicle of God’s grace. All must follow the royal law of love.²⁴¹

The Spirit and the Life of Worship

Most distinctly, we must affirm that the Spirit gives us a life of worship. This is a life of intimacy through prayer and a gathered dynamic life within the body of Jesus.²⁴² Life is exchanged through releasing our past and opening to what the Spirit is doing. As we surrender what enslaves us, we enter into the hearing, sharing, and empowerment of the trinitarian God, who calls us to lives of empowered service.

Worship is the gift and work of the Spirit, not engaged through attempts of humans to reach God.²⁴³ This affirms the Reformed emphasis on the initiating work of God. However, space is also created for humans to respond to the Spirit with creativity and freedom. All becomes a response to the gift that is a shared reality, God’s initiation of life and worship.

Liturgies in the Church ought not to replace the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. There certainly can be freedom and spontaneity within the framework of liturgy that continues to be Christ-centered. Embracing creative continuity with Christ by the Spirit means we tell the story and recite the ancient words. Additionally, we may allow for the Spirit to answer and express through us a life responsive to God’s initiative and to the rest of the community.

Smail sees the Spirit as a center of divine activity, bringing home the love of the Father and Son to God’s family.²⁴⁴ The Spirit brings an authentic response to the biblical gospel in the present to enliven us again with gratitude for the communion we find.²⁴⁵ Liturgy that is too ritualistic becomes boring and irrelevant,

²⁴¹ Ibid., 150.

²⁴² Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 199.

²⁴³ Smail, “Holy Spirit,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 424.

²⁴⁴ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 83-84.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 212.

except to the few who cling to the past. Worship that rejects liturgy disintegrates into self-indulgence, answering the cravings of people instead of the address of God.

There needs to be a tension between liturgical givenness and spiritual spontaneity.²⁴⁶ But the center is focused on sharing the *Abba* cry of Jesus by the Spirit in an interflow of life, adopted into a relationship of prayer and worship where we become more fully ourselves as we share in the embracing life of Father and Son by the Spirit.²⁴⁷ The modes of a life of worship may range from a gathered life of those who sing songs of intimacy and hushed reverence²⁴⁸ to the freedom of singing in the Spirit with an unveiled heart of worship led by the Spirit's renewing work.²⁴⁹

Renewal has been at the center of the recent decades of the movement of the Spirit. This has been subdued by those who become preoccupied with self-focused individualism or superficiality. But renewal continues to impact the world through those who believe God is alive.²⁵⁰ Where the Trinity is known and worshipped, the freedom of the Spirit ought to be embraced. Where the Spirit is held at bay, one may ask what is at play in the leading of the community. Who is leading and how? "It is the pneumatological element in the incarnate Christ that makes his humanity not only normative for but creatively empowering of ours."²⁵¹ His leadership is fulfilled in the power of the Spirit, as could be our own. In the sacraments, the Spirit whispers, "You are accepted."²⁵² Then personal union is established as a vine to the branch. An organic unity bears the fruit of what is provided from the larger whole, growing from the life-giving source.²⁵³ We are

²⁴⁶ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 114-16.

²⁴⁷ Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 172.

²⁴⁸ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 110.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁵⁰ Smail, "The Ethics of Exile and the Rhythm of Resurrection," in *On Revival*, 60.

²⁵¹ Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity*, 163.

²⁵² Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 35.

²⁵³ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 59-60.

given a choice that grapes do not have. We give ourselves to the one who has given all to us as we are awakened by the Spirit. We personally walk the way of love, having been found by love and walking in the Spirit in a response that could be called a life of worship.²⁵⁴

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is a neglected person in much academic theology and the life of the Church. Smail affirms,

I want to maintain more strongly than ever that the only hope of the Church is in new openness to the Holy Spirit who brings us into living contact with the Father and the Son. The charismatic movement as a thing in itself may well be almost over, but the renewal of the Church by the Holy Spirit has only just begun.²⁵⁵

The renewal of the Spirit must come as a trinitarian renewal.²⁵⁶ It does no good to focus on one person of the Trinity without the whole. We need God, not just experiences of the Spirit, as though the two could be separated.²⁵⁷ We need a right relation to the Spirit, not an abolition of the Spirit because of abuse.²⁵⁸

The call for a proper theology, as presented by Torrance and Smail, is one that brings a life of purpose in restoring relationships so humans may share the fullness of God's life.²⁵⁹ We do not need better practices for the Church for renewal; we need theology to come to the rescue.²⁶⁰ We need to seek God himself. This occurs as we are opened to the Father by the Spirit, drawn into communion with

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 213. Smail mentions in the footnote to this chapter that he is indebted to J. B. Torrance, who was his friend. J. B. wrote the masterful *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 1997).

²⁵⁵ Smail, *The Forgotten Father*, 9-10.

²⁵⁶ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 164.

²⁵⁷ Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change*, 167.

²⁵⁸ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 96.

²⁵⁹ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 176.

²⁶⁰ Smail, "When Wright was Right," in *Challenging to Change*, 167.

Christ by the Spirit, and find closeness with others by the Spirit. This is a life of personal transformation, a renewal where gifts are peripheral, and the Gift is the Spirit in Person and all that is opened for us by him.²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Smail, *Charismatic Renewal*, 18-19.