

Dear Friends,

Amongst the precious things my Father will likely bequeath to me are all his Bibles. They must take up two rows of shelves in his study. He has always shut himself up in his closet with his Bible and with the Holy Spirit. In one of his Bibles he has marked the verse where it says in Acts 15:28, "*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us,*" with the words in the side margin "*The senior partnership of the Holy Spirit.*"



How true. In the great business of knowing God, of knowing his mind and will, of building Christian character, "*the senior partnership of the Holy Spirit*" is "the one thing needed". He is the giver of power, he is the source of wisdom. Apart from him we can do nothing; indeed both our character and service would be spiritually bankrupt. As Andrew Murray the Keswick preacher once said, "*the one thing needful for the Church, and the thing which, above all others, we ought everywhere to seek for with one accord and with their whole heart, is to be filled with the Spirit of God.*"

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." Note the order. This sets forth the one and only appropriate position of the Spirit in the Holy Catholic Church Universal. To relegate the Spirit to any other position is to grieve and nullify his presence and power. If spiritual revival is to come to our Church, if the Church of Jesus Christ more widely is ever to exert a restraining and regenerating influence over the affairs of the world, she must restore the Spirit to his proper place, in the Chair as it were, presiding over both our private and public affairs, having the casting vote.

George Whitefield was born in Gloucester and was ordained in the Cathedral at the ripe old age of twenty-two by Bishop Benson in June 1836. In his Journal he records, "*After a long night of desertion and temptation, the Star, which I had seen at a distance before, began to appear again, and the Day Star arose in my heart. Now did the Spirit of God take possession of my soul and, as I humbly hope, seal me to the day of redemption.*" He began preaching in Gloucester, his first sermon being in St Mary de Crypt, marking the beginnings of Methodism. It was reported that he drove fifteen people mad to which the wise old Bishop responded, "*he hoped the madness would not be forgotten before the following Sunday.*"

Now the first movements of the Spirit may be faint but we should never despise the day of small things. Neither Whitefield or the Wesley brothers did. In one hymn Charles Wesley alludes to an episode in the prophet Elijah's experience with his servant after he prayed for rain (1 Kings 18:44): "*Saw ye not the cloud arise/Little as an human hand..*" That faint beginning soon spread across the skies and the rains did come which Wesley paraphrases: "*But the Lord shall shortly pour/All the spirit of his Love.*" So God's work broadens and deepens as the Spirit is given his rightful place.

In a small treatise published in 1677 and later read by Charles Wesley and Whitefield when they were in the Oxford Holy Club, *The Life of God in Soul of Man*, Henry Scougal of Aberdeen wrote: "*The Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Highest must overshadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Christ be formed in us.*"

It is here inferred that the Spirit's presence is at least initially hidden from our consciousness, just as the hidden spring of the artesian well is far out of sight in the bowels of the earth. All we become conscious of is the manifestation of the Spirit's presence in various influences, operations, and effects like the wind in the trees. The Spirit is just as truly in us when he makes no sign as when the fountains of joy are overflowing, or the waters of peace are softly refreshing our weary and troubled hearts.

John Wesley preached in Gloucester at least on sixteen different occasions (on one occasion in July 1777 recording "I preached in dull Gloucester"), and referred to a moment when he saw the Spirit moving: "*As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.'*" His breath was literally taken away. He later went on to encourage his followers in his *Treatise on Christian Perfection*: "*I believe the Holy Spirit sets before us the 'more excellent way', and incites us to walk therein – to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness.*"

"What is the wind?" asked a little boy of his Grandad. "I don't know my boy," said Grandad, "but what I do know is I can hoist a sail." We may not fully grasp how the Spirit moves, but one thing we can do is hoist a sail to catch the wind of the Spirit. Then there will be signs of life in new and perhaps unexpected ways which will take our breath away.

May the Lord grant us the one thing needful which is his Spirit that we may bless the Lord and walk in his ways. And by the Spirit's enabling our Church will "*be beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, like Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King*" (Psalm 48:2).

May everyone have an enjoyable Summer,

Rev John