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manner which is ultimately futile and self-defeating. None of his gifts is denied; it is the context which is wrong, and which only God can put right.

When all is said and done, the Fall is a reality which has introduced into human experience the spiritual rebellion of the fallen angels. We did not start this rebellion; we have been tempted into sharing it. But once caught in the net there is no escape, unless God himself provides a way. This he did in Christ, when he defeated the power of Satan, destroyed the gates of hell and paid the penalty for sin which made it possible for God to receive us back as his children and open up to us the tree of life from which the disobedience of our first ancestor had so tragically barred us.

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The Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelization Reflections on Oslo '85

Bruce J. Nicholls

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I wish to summarise my reflections on this important consultation in 10 points.

I

The Holy Spirit empowers God's people for world evangelization.

World evangelization is the central task of the church. It is set within Christ's kingly reign in creation and redemption. While social responsibility and justice are also part of Christ's purpose for his church, reconciliation with God is central to reconciliation with one's neighbour. The Father sent the Spirit to bear witness to the Son and without his witness ours is futile. He is the agent of salvation or as the Nicene creed confesses "the giver of life".

World evangelization is an unfinished task. If it is true that half of the people who ever lived are alive today and that statistically the number of Christians remains static at less than one-third of the world's population, then the extent of spiritual lostness is unprecedented. Manifestations of demonic power, whether overt or masked, are as great as in the apostolic age. Human suffering in all its forms continues to escalate.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the only hope now and for the age to come. We await his return in power. He gave to his disciples and to every succeeding generation the promise of the paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to empower them for this global task. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost to equip God's people to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Today the same spirit renews and empowers his people and thrusts them into mission. In obedience to the inspired Word of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are called into costly discipleship as individuals, families and **p. 340**

churches. The task of world evangelization can be carried out only by people who are open to the Spirit and whose lives are transformed by his power. While previous consultations on world evangelization reflected on other aspects of mission it was the task of Oslo '85 to focus specifically on the work of the Holy Spirit and evangelization. Sixty evangelical church leaders from Pentecostal, charismatic and other traditions rejoiced in the unity experienced and a degree of mutual understanding achieved in the areas of differences. The Holy Spirit was in our midst and Christ was glorified.

II

The work of the Holy Spirit must be understood in the trinitarian framework of God's mission in the world.

In the midst of the present day confusion about whether the Holy Spirit is divine and personal or simply the name for the ultimate Being of God active in the cosmos, we recognise the need for a trinitarian framework to test the truth of conflicting claims and the variety of religious experiences. The Holy Scriptures affirm that the Holy Spirit is personally distinct from the Father and the Son and yet co-equal, co-eternal and co-divine. His work as the divine agent in salvation is inseparable from who he is in Godhead and in creation.

Though innocent of later trinitarian formulations, the New Testament writers think of God in the tri-personal way that the later formulations were trying to safeguard. They testify that believers know God in and through Jesus Christ so they know Jesus Christ in and through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's ministry is the *paraclete* ministry of Christ; all experiences and religious life must lead to him. It is the Spirit who reveals and mediates the Crucified Christ risen from the dead to all who respond to his convicting and convincing work. The convictions and formulations of the Spirit in the New Testament were revealed to the apostles by God in the context of their living in the Spirit and directly experiencing Christ as Saviour and God. Their theology of the Spirit emphasises the historical and eschatological, the experiential and charismatic dimensions of the Spirit's work. Our doctrine of God must be truly trinitarian if the present reductionist trend to unitarianism is going to be stemmed and the Holy Spirit given his rightful place in the divine economy.

III

The work of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Word of God.

We affirm that we cannot speak about the work of the Holy Spirit apart p. 341 from witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. The *paraclete* function of the Spirit is to glorify Christ. This Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. He is Christ Emmanuel, always personally with us through the Holy Spirit by faith. In Christ we understand by faith that the true God is at work in the world, in history and in people. In general revelation God discloses himself as creator in the works of creation, in his moral law and in his providential care of all things. But it is only through witnessing to the Word that the Holy Spirit reveals that God is redeemer. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life, creates faith and emancipates us from demonic forces. This distinction between general and special revelation, common and saving grace, law and gospel, is essential to our understanding of the relationship of Word and Spirit. The distinctive yet inseparable relationship of Word and Spirit, so emphasised by the 16th century European reformers in their efforts to

clarify the work of God as creator and saviour, needs to be restated today. This is also true of our understanding of the Spirit in relation to the sacraments as the Word visible.

The incarnate Word is no hidden impersonal cosmic Christ nor is he merely a human Christ seen in the face of the poor. Yet through his Spirit the risen Christ reigns in the cosmos and shows his love and compassion to all, especially to the poor, the helpless and oppressed. The spirit calls us to a compassionate and costly identification with Christ and his mission to all human kind, who are spiritually lost, suffering in their humanity and are in demonic bondage.

The Spirit is also inseparable from the Scriptures as the Word of God written. The same Spirit who first inspired the authors of the Bible, now illumines our minds to understand and interpret what God has said and done. Our Lord who promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth does not guide us into truth apart from the Scriptures. We bring the world's agenda to the Word and listen to the Word's response to it. We also proclaim the Word's agenda to the world ever looking to the Spirit to give life and salvation to those who hear it.

IV

It is important to churches seeking their own identity and mission to understand the interpretations given to the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Church.

The rapid growth of the Church in the 20th century especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America raises acutely the issues of the unity of the Church, the relevance of denominational distinctives and the [p.342](#) Church's mission in the world. Churches in the third world which are the fruit of the modern missionary movement with ecclesiastical roots in Europe or in North America are searching for their own identity. A careful study of the expansion of the Church through history and especially interpretations given to the work of the Holy Spirit over the centuries is essential to churches seeking to understand their nature and mission in their own cultural and historical situations. The person and work of the Holy Spirit became a central issue of the Church fathers from the time of Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa in the late 4th century A.D. They attempted to do for the Holy Spirit what Athanasius had done for the doctrine of the person of Christ. However, the schism over the filioque clause on the procession of the Holy Spirit, Augustine's debate with the Donatists over sacraments and the influence of neo-platonistic philosophy on his doctrine of the Church has had its influence on the Church worldwide. This is also true of the conflict between Luther and Calvin on divine election, the sacraments and missions, and Luther's dispute with the Anabaptists. From the 18th century on, revival movements associated with the Wesleys, George Whitefield and Jonathan Edward and with D. L. Moody and C. H. Spurgeon have influenced the direction of missions. German pietism, the emergence of the ecumenical movement after the Edinburgh conference of 1910, the explosion of Pentecostalism and more recently of the charismatic movement have all shaped denominationalism worldwide.

A knowledge of this history helps the younger churches to discover their roots and also to critically evaluate the degree that western inculturation of the Church has influenced their own history. The movement towards indigenisation, the dangers of religious syncretism and western colonialism and the spirit of secular humanism and Marxism are factors that make the study of Church history important for the Church's self-understanding and mission.

V

The Holy Spirit constantly renews the Church for mission in the world.

Scripture affirms that the Church as the Kingdom community is a corporate, supernatural community of God's chosen people. The church is both a body with Christ as head and a household of faith in which believers individually and personally are members. The universal Church is visibly manifest in place after place where local congregations live as worshipping, learning, caring and witnessing and serving communities under the Lordship of Christ. [p. 343](#)

God renews and empowers the local church through the work of the Spirit in the preaching of the Word and in worship in the purpose of glorifying Christ and building up the Church as his body. Renewal in worship, both in liturgical and non-liturgical forms, is central to the Church's fulfilling its mission in the world. The celebration of the sacraments, ordinances and Christian festivals become opportunities for evangelism as the Word made visible confronts unbelievers with their need of salvation in Christ. The Holy Spirit renews the bodylife of the local congregation through his ongoing sanctifying work in individual and corporate holiness. The integration of what we proclaim, what we are, what we do and how we live, is essential to our witness in the world. The supreme proof of the newness of life in Christ is the fruit of the Spirit produced in the life of the Christian. Proclamation gains credibility only when the transformation proclaimed in the Gospel is seen in the lives of God's people and it loses credibility when it is absent.

The Holy Spirit renews the local church through the setting apart of pastors, teachers, elders and missionaries for the work of the ministry. Church discipline in matters of doctrine and moral behaviour is essential. Church members must accept the role of servanthood to each other and be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Renewal by the Spirit brings new life to existing Church structures and may create new structures from time to time to serve expanding needs. Constant and believing prayer is central to the Spirit's work of renewal of the churches. The consultation was frequently reminded of the effect of periodic revivals throughout history on the missionary outreach of the Church.

VI

The Holy Spirit renews unity in the lifestyle of the Church.

The cross as the basis for true fellowship and unity in the Church makes reconciliation central to harmony and restitution among believers. The Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth actualises the spiritual unity in the lifestyle of the congregation in its worship, witness and service. Schism is sin, except where unrepented apostasy or persistence in immorality necessitates separation. The Holy Spirit renews the local church so that as a microcosm of the whole Church it manifests the single corporate priesthood of all believers by a genuine inter-relatedness to its members who may not naturally be drawn together.

Only in the reality of this unity does diversity become possible. This [p. 344](#) diversity may be expressed in different forms of worship and in spiritual gifts for ministry. It is evident in the structures of the Church from house groups to large conglomerate congregations. It is also manifest in numerous so-called para-church agencies with specialist ministries and in cross-cultural missionary structures. A sense of mutual accountability and stewardship in all things ensures that diversity is complementary and not competitive to unity in the church.

This awareness of our unity and diversity was a significant characteristic of the Oslo '85 Consultation. There was great diversity in our midst—theologians, pastors, evangelists and missionaries from western and non-western regions. We represented pentecostal, charismatic and non-charismatic traditions, and yet we maintained a spirit of unity and expectancy throughout the five days together. On the fourth morning of the consultation the participants were constrained by the Holy Spirit to set aside their agenda and to renew their identity in Christ through spontaneous praise, confession and prayer for renewal. Further, case studies discussed in the consultation from Northern Ireland, South and East Africa and South-East Asia also bore living testimony to “maintaining the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace across barriers of race, religion and creed.”

VII

Spiritual gifts as functional ministries of the Holy Spirit continue to be valid today.

One of the signs of renewal in the church is the effective and Godcontrolled exercise of the spiritual gifts God gives at will to equip his people for functions or roles in the life of the church. Such gifts are given for the service of the whole body and are not to be used selfishly. The gifts listed in the New Testament are usually illustrative of diversity of functions rather than exhaustive in number and institutionalised. Pastors, teachers and elders have a special responsibility in the corporate life of the church to exhort the right use of gifts and to maintain a balance between freedom and order. The church is a charismatic community offering praise to God, experiencing healing within and manifesting the power and love of God to all in need of forgiveness, acceptance, liberation and healing. In the exercising of these gifts, worship is transformed into a joyous response to the living God and so becomes a powerful evangelistic witness to the world, especially where the gospel cannot be openly preached.

In God's sovereign control, all the gifts through the Spirit are to be [p. 345](#) encouraged and continue to be valid. However, some among us believed that some of the gifts are restricted to the apostolic age. Not all Christians are agreed on the interpretation to be given to the use of these gifts and further opportunity for dialogue between Christians on this subject is urgently needed. Such tests as are discernible in Scripture need to be applied in determining the authenticity of their use.

VIII

The power of the Holy Spirit in signs and wonders needs to be balanced by holiness in the life of the believer.

The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit in holy living are complementary. Demonisation and occult practices are more widespread than is commonly acknowledged, not only in those third world societies which accept the supernatural as normative, but also in more secular societies where the manifestation of demonic power may take more deceptive forms. In this power encounter the kingly reign of Christ may be manifest in diverse signs and wonders. In our consultation, attention was given to speaking in tongues, prophesying, miraculous healing, exorcism of demonic spirits. Several case studies evidenced that the power of God characteristic of the apostolic age is still present today. However, there is a need for discernment, for example in recognising various stages of demonisation and distinguishing them from psychosomatic illnesses. Special pastoral care may be needed for those who have not received specific gifts for which they have prayed or were not healed in mass healing campaigns. Team ministry in

the local congregation in the exercising of these gifts is to be encouraged. The dangers of obsession with these special ministries needs to be heeded. Faithful preaching for growth in the knowledge of Christ and for evangelistic outreach should be given priority in ministry.

The ministry of signs and wonders needs to be balanced by an equal emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit in individual lives and in the congregation as a whole. Sanctification as an ongoing process of walking in holiness is essential. The work of the Holy Spirit is to indwell the believer, fulfil the righteous requirements of the law and to set us free from the law of sin and death. True spirituality is walking in the spirit. A spirit of prayer, generosity to others and a daily walk in discipleship are signs of the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Godliness is prior to spiritual power. [p. 346](#)

IX

The Holy Spirit is the prior cross-cultural missionary.

The Holy Spirit is the primary missionary who goes beyond the frontiers of the life of the Church, overcomes cultural barriers, confronts people with the need to respond to God's creatorhood and moral law. He prepares them to hear and receive the Gospel. The Bible shows us a world without Christ—ever seeking God, for all are created in his image. But at the same time the world is ever rebelling and rejecting God and his moral law, for all have sinned and have come short of his glory. Conscience, guilt, shame, and idolatry are all elements of the response of religious men and women to the work of the Holy Spirit. The secular man relativises all truth in favour of pluralism and reduces the complex to the simple and an irreducible unity by a process of reductionism. Thus reduced to meaninglessness, the secular man is already prepared by the Holy Spirit to hear the Gospel. The Spirit's witness to people of other faiths and ideologies cannot be identified with God's preparation of Israel for the fuller revelation of Jesus, the Messiah. Their closed systems of belief and experiences in most cases causes them to resist the Gospel. Yet the Spirit of the living God is always at work in all people, irrespective of their religious adherence, confronting them with their sin and rebellion and preparing them to hear and receive the Gospel when it is proclaimed to them.

The Christian missionary motivated and guided by the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's agent to proclaim Christ as the only Saviour by word and by deed. The awareness that the Holy Spirit is the prior missionary enables the Christian to locate inter-religious dialogue more faithfully within the context of human understanding and of evangelism. Because of this work of the Holy Spirit and the impossibility of salvation apart from his convicting and saving ministry, the Christian will give priority to prayer in the fulfilling of the cross-cultural missionary task.

The Holy Spirit enables the new believer to evaluate his own culture in the light of God's Word, rejecting what is idolatrous, transforming those elements that are all consistent with God's general revelation and divine law. He will see all of life through the eyes of his new faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit will enable the Christian worker to use creatively all the communication media with moral integrity, technical proficiency and with accountability to the Church. [p. 347](#)

X

The Holy Spirit speaks to the conscience of the people and of the nation.

The current “success theology” with its emphasis on personal popularity and highly visible ministry goals exalts the promises of the kingdom of God but rejects or ignores its demands. When this new cultism is accompanied by moral breakdown in the life of the Christian leader, the manipulation of the communication media and the failure to give leadership in difficult ethical issues such as abortion, poverty and racism, the Church loses all credibility before a watching world. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement to come. He transforms God’s people into the image of Christ as salt and light in the world and they become his agents for restraining evil and corruption and his witnesses to the convicting and guiding light of Christ himself.

Christ calls us to follow the way of the cross and to identify with him in his earthly humiliation. We suffer together with the whole humankind as we share in the suffering of creation on its way to liberation and freedom in the Spirit. We agonise with the growing poverty and social and economic injustice in the world today on a scale never experienced before. In the midst of violence and oppression we adopt the role of “suffering servants”. This may lead us to identify with the legitimacy of oppressed peoples’ concerns against the claims of legality as in South Africa and to disobey Caesar in order to obey God as in other parts of the world. As the Holy Spirit enables us to faithfully witness to both the goodness of God and the justice of God he speaks with convicting power to the conscience of the people and their leaders. Whenever Christians have embraced this role of powerlessness and servanthood, God has been pleased in many cases to multiply their number many times. This law of the harvest has been amazingly evident in recent years in parts of Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

May the fruits of Oslo ’85 be seen in greater Christian unity, in holiness and justice, and in world evangelization. The promise is

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.” ([Acts 1:8](#)).

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Dr. Bruce J. Nicholls was a participant in the consultation on the Holy Spirit and Evangelization held May 28–June 1, 1985 in Oslo, Norway under the joint sponsorship of WEF and LCWE. He also contributed a paper on “The Holy Spirit Confronts the World of Religions”. A book summarising the 40 papers and findings of the consultation is being edited by Dr. David Wells and will be published early in 1986. p. 348

Belief and Unbelief in Prayer A Comparison Between Calvin and Karl Barth

Han Chul-Ha

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