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peace and righteousness. But alas, the Church has so often failed to be the guardian of creation, and the world has rejected it and turned to the priestesses and gurus of the age of Aquarius.

The key to this actualization of the new creation is the Holy Spirit. Creation spirituality reduces the Holy Spirit to being the spirit of creation itself, to a cosmic mystical inner force whose secrets have been well-learned by its spiritual leaders. Against this background the doctrine of the Holy Spirit once again becomes the centre stage in theological debate. Leadership in missiological praxis is not enough. We must do our theological homework on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, or as in the parable of the sower we will be rootless and choked by the weeds of other gospels. The call to study is not a call to privatized study in the library alone, but a call to utilize the manifold gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the body, so that in unity we may become spiritually mature and attain the fulness of Christ. We need teams of scholars, churchmen, educationalists and missionaries who will share their resources to do theology in the everchanging world for Christ's sake. [p. 101](#)

The Holy Spirit, Creation and New Creation

Ken R. Gnanakan

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The author of this article sets the perspectives for this issue of ERT. He welcomes the new emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in ecumenical thinking, but warns against a spirituality drawn from fallen creation. The author explores the work of the new creation spirituality of the Spirit in the renewal of creation, community and in the wider society. The victory of the Resurrection is suggested as the link between creation and new creation and the only hope of mankind.

Editor

Ever since Roland Allen's powerful reminder about the centrality of the role of the Holy Spirit,¹ theology has struggled to give to the third person of the Godhead the place he deserves within the work of God in the world today. Barth's Christocentrism, for example, dominated the scene for decades. But now with so much within the Church to remind us of the Spirit's working it is time for us to take a fresh look.

The theme for the WCC Canberra assembly is timely—'Come, Holy Spirit,—Renew the whole Creation'. This is the first time the assembly has focused on the Holy Spirit, and with the wide range of representation within its membership one can be certain that the impact will be significant. As stated in their *Resources for Sections*, 'Our choice of a Spirit-centred theme may well reflect the mood of the times in which we live. Rapid changes are taking place in our social and political life. The ongoing search for spiritual values and

¹ *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected writings of Roland Allen*, edited by David M. Paton (World Dominion Press, 1960). I have developed his thoughts in 'The Role of the Holy Spirit' in my *Kingdom Concerns* (TBT, 1989), pp. 165–186.

human community, the longing for justice, and the expectations around the dawn of a new millennium—all these must have played a part in the choice of our theme. We are convinced that when we gather as churches we must seek to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches ([Rev. 2:11](#)) in our day.’² p. 102

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rather than attempting to evaluate the WCC theme and its related documents, this paper sets out to make some comments on the significance of the Holy Spirit to creation and new creation. The linking of creation and new creation is important, as whatever we need to remind ourselves about creation today ought to be from our own eschatological perspective. God proclaimed, ‘Behold, I make all things new’ ([Rev. 21:5](#)), and we live today in the anticipation of the new creation that will fully be available in the coming kingdom.

Right at the outset, we face the question whether there is continuity between the present creation and whatever God wants to accomplish in the *eschaton*. Needless to say, to live in anticipation is to experience already some of the New Creation reality. The Holy Spirit is this foretaste—‘a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance’ ([Eph. 1:4](#)). The Holy Spirit who has central place in the making of this final creation also has a part in the making known of this reality within the present creation.

We must take seriously the possibility that with all the discussions on the nature and ministry of the Holy Spirit there could be a shift in our theological emphasis from Jesus Christ to the Holy Spirit. But this is not to displace Christ, but to place the Holy Spirit where Christ himself showed he would be. Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, ‘He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you’ ([Jn. 16:14](#)). A proper pneumatological emphasis will ensure the right Christological focus. One cannot easily negate the centrality of Christ which is so forthrightly portrayed—‘For by him all things were created ... and in him all things hold together’ ([Col. 1:16f.](#)).

A brief look at the Bible will reveal an interlinking between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of Jesus Christ. For instance, when the birth of Jesus Christ was announced Joseph found Mary to be ‘with child of the Holy Spirit’ ([Luke 1:3, 5](#); [Matt. 1:18](#)). The same Spirit who acts in creation, the life giving Spirit, was active in bringing about God’s becoming flesh. Then in the baptism of Jesus Christ, the temptation, and the public ministry that follows there is explicit reference to the Spirit’s activity. The emphatic references to the Holy Spirit’s anointing at the commencement of Jesus’ ministry must serve to underline the integral link between the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the interlinking comes out forcefully in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who is credited for raising Jesus from the dead ([Rom. 8:11](#)). And it is the resurrection that brings the decisive p. 103 blow for fallen creation. Paul exclaims, ‘Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ He is ecstatic about the resurrected life in Jesus. The new creation of which we are part has been made available in an anticipatory way in the life we live in Christ. Jesus Christ, the first fruits of this new creation, the Lord of the Church ‘who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body’ ([Phil. 3:21](#)).

The Holy Spirit—‘the giver of life’—raising Jesus from the dead, giving new life to the believer and pouring out himself to initiate the Church into its life-giving mission—is seen in his broadest possible scope. He is seen to be not only embracing all of the created order at present but all that is to come in the Kingdom. The work of the totality of the triune God

² *Resources for Sections: The Theme, Subthemes and Issues*. WCC Seventh Assembly, WCC 1990, p. 1.

is being disclosed to us in the gift of the Holy Spirit, making known the things of God in Jesus Christ to his people today.

What this means to us today is important. If the Holy Spirit has now filled us with the hope of ultimate victory, we need to be demonstrating this reality *even now*. The resurrection of Jesus Christ spelled his victory over sin. We need to be seeing this victory right here in this world controlled by Satan, 'for [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his son' ([Col. 1:11](#)). We draw out some of the implications below.

NEW CREATION SPIRITUALITY IN A FALLEN WORLD

Paul writes to the Corinthian church, a church struggling with various spiritual issues, 'If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation' ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)). The immediate reference to the new creation is the bringing of the individual believer into fellowship in Christ and into the community of the new creation. Paul elaborates when he writes to the Ephesians: 'We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ...' ([Eph. 2:10](#)). Linking the Spirit with creation and new creation immediately draws our attention to our personal relationship to God, our spirituality—our personal attitudes towards God, to people and all that is around us. We have tended to take a rather negative view of spirituality, in terms of a retreat from the world. 'Worldiness' has been shunned and what has been advocated is 'other-worldiness'.

In the light of our 'creation-new creation' link, what we need to develop is a worldly spirituality. Part of the problem stems from our attitude to creation itself. We have been unfortunately conditioned by Hindu and Greek negative attitudes to the world, and hence our salvation and our sanctification is looked upon in terms of a separation p. 104 from the created order. The Hindu attitude to the impermanence of this world equated it to meaninglessness. All of creation, including the body and flesh, is therefore seen as that from which we need to escape. This attitude however, needs to be eliminated: creation was seen by God himself as 'good'. 'Goodness' here is not merely something right and proper but that which is meaningful, beautiful and purposeful.

We need to be clear that our new creation spirituality is not merely a personal or individual spirituality. Recent explorations of 'creation spirituality' have been helpful in restoring a balance. While the intention of such thinkers is good, what they are really advocating is 'fallen-creation' spirituality. However, they serve to remind us that, since creation links us with all that God has made, our spirituality must be worked out within that scope. Sin is definitely personal; but man is not an individual in isolation. This is why the sin of Adam has had universal effects. And now, as a new creation in Christ, we can transcend the effects of that sin. It is 'new creation spirituality' we now speak about.

We have no doubt that spirituality must continue to find its expressions in inner depths, continuing in traditional forms of spirituality, even learning from our Asian spiritual manifestations. However, we need to see what is meant by the 'new emphasis upon the dimensions within spirituality of openness and submission rather than struggle, of one's place within God's world rather than one's separation from it'.³

THE CARING MINISTRY OF THE REDEEMED COMMUNITY

What we have considered above needs to be elaborated in terms of the shift now being effected from the individual to the community. Unfortunately, our Christianity, and

³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

therefore our spirituality as we have just seen, has been influenced by a false idea of individualism. There is no doubt that God has created us as individuals, and that individuality is key to our identity within humanity. However, a negative spirit of individualism has eroded even our understanding of Christian community.

'The Spirit who sets us free reconciles us to God in Christ and gathers us into a community of God's people. Estranged from God, humanity seeks its own destiny, its sinful arrogance that results in brokenness of life, alienation from one another and from the rest of [p. 105](#) creation.'⁴ This sums up very well the effects of sin in terms of the alienation that is characteristic of individualism. The Church, then, the community of the new creation, brought into being through the activity of the Holy Spirit, must demonstrate a breaking away from the alienation that resulted from sin and show signs of the Kingdom community brought together by Jesus Christ. The divisions within the Church are a major hindrance to our witness in the world today.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples who were gathered together at Pentecost, there was a bringing together for the first time of this new community in Christ. The first thing they realized was that they 'began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them' ([Ac. 2:4](#)). Peter was to realize the significance of this phenomenon much later. The gospel was to be sounded out to every creature; salvation was now available for all in Jesus Christ. Every one present heard in his own language and was able to witness this miracle in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of unity. That is why even the Trinity is unity. The alienation that sin brings about—even the alienation of Jew and Gentile—is directly in conflict with the unity that the Spirit creates. The alienation that come from man's rebellion against God brought about a separation not only from God but from the rest of humanity. The Holy Spirit recreates this true community when he sets into motion the Church, the new creation, a community of all who believe in Jesus from every corner of this world.

What are the distinctives of this community? First, the new community that God creates is a community that cares. The blindness of sin has closed the doors of caring for others. Selfishness and greed are the distinctives. But men and women in Christ are those whose eyes are opened to the needs of others in a world with people who are hurting inside, lonely and lost, deprived and forsaken. The community of the new creation begins to experience this concern within its own confines, but then goes on to demonstrate this to fallen creation.

God's concern for the poor is demonstrated through the heart of the new creation community. What must be demonstrated by this community is not just an attitude of pity that will give only from its material possessions, but one which will care enough to get to the sinful roots of imposed poverty. There are perversions and injustices that need to be attacked.

People hunger to be near to God. The Spirit moves within situations both of material poverty and material affluence, challenging and [p. 106](#) enabling persons and communities to proclamation and service. The power of spirituality can be seen in a special way in the lives of some of the poor. Imposed poverty is an expression of sinful forces in society which create and perpetuate social inequality, and is contrary to the will of God, yet some have found in materially desperate circumstances a deeper awareness of their dependence upon God, and a sharper sense of the reality of God's presence. They have found a spirituality which gives them the power to survive degradation and despair, and empowers them to work for God's justice.' God's 'fighting' for the rights of the poor is

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

positively a rebuke to the affluent: 'materially satisfied, they are less likely to recognize their need for God'.⁵ The Holy Spirit deals with the rich who in their callousness refuse to care for the poor.

Further, the community of the new creation, the body of Christ, begins to experience the joy of createdness once again. What was lost soon after creation and therefore impossible to experience in fallen creation is now made possible. Man made in the image of God was created with individuality within community. This individuality was characterized by freedom and dignity: a freedom to be all that God had made him to be, and a dignity to do all that God intended him to do. The world today is crippled under the bondage of sin, manifested before our eyes in all kinds of seen and unseen shackles. The dehumanization of men and women by exploiters and oppressors, the alienation of man from man by racist discriminations, and the degradation of human beings itself, is far too obvious. It is the new creation community of the Holy Spirit that will demonstrate to the world the freedom and dignity which there is in Christ.

ACTUALIZING NEW COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY

A look at sin from the perspective of the new creation will help us to widen our understanding of this biblical concept. *Resources for Sections*, drawing together from previous challenges, urges us to struggle to liberate every person, community, and the whole of creation to be involved in 'concrete struggles to transform history in the perspective of the Kingdom of God'.⁶ Dealing with sin inescapably implies dealing with its manifestations all over God's created world. If sin is universal, it is manifest in the totality of this world's systems. However, to deal with structures is a very abstract expression of a **P. 107** concrete concern. It is people who make structures of evil, who make society evil and therefore make the world's systems what they are today. However, dealing with personal sin is not merely dealing with personal piety. New creation spirituality must be tangibly demonstrated as the community of God's new creation gives itself to a sinful world, just as Jesus Christ gave himself for the sins of this world. Wilberforce, Pandita Ramabai, even William Carey gave themselves to a total expression of the gospel in their attempts to see spirituality influence the sinful systems of this world.

However, the greater need is for the new creation community to demonstrate this spirituality first in itself. The prophetic voices of the Old Testament challenged God's people who were callously immersed in their perversions and injustices. The very structure of God's community was being attacked. The prophets were pointing towards what was to be demonstrated within the community of the new creation in Christ. Our prayer should first be: 'Holy Spirit, renew thy New Creation, the community submitted to Jesus Christ'.

Coming into God's kingdom implies accepting his kingship. There is no claim on the benefits of his rule unless we accept the demands of his kingship. There is little justification for claims that we are cleaning up the evil structures of this world unless people first acknowledge the Lordship of the resurrected Jesus Christ. The Church, the community of the new creation, will need to actualize this victory and stand as a witness to a world that is blinded by the dominion of darkness.

SIGNS OF THE SPIRIT RENEWING CREATION

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

The Spirit transforming creation calls us to have a new relationship to creation itself. 'As we await the final realization of God's will for all things, the Spirit calls us to work for a right relationship with creation.'⁷ The same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the Spirit that will raise fallen creation in its decay to be a renewed creation. Is this a breaking in of something new, or a continuity in the economy of God? Whatever the sense of the new order to be consummated with the coming of the Kingdom, we may be sure that there must be signs of this new creation even in our *present* creation.

The Holy Spirit who brooded over the face of the water at the time of creation now broods over this present creation. It is his brooding that brings about a global ecological concern, not only within the community of the new creation, but ironically even outside. Christians [p. 108](#) have been scathingly attacked for an arrogance towards creation which has resulted in the exploitation of the material world. The ecological crisis viewed as a theological problem will help us recognize our sad failure. Our stewardship has been misinterpreted, resulting in a mismanagement. A respect for creation will serve as a corrective to the years of environmental exploitation. On the other hand, one must also guard against the kind of respect that will lead to a total worship of mankind. However, a healthy respect for the handiwork of the Creator must point to the Creator himself as responsible for all the beauty and wonder, a Creator who desiring the best for man planned for him a meaningful existence within a purposeful world he had created for his glory.

We must note that the broadening out of the scope of new creation is linked directly to our appreciation of the scope of God's rule. For instance, there should be no argument against the fact that God is ultimately Lord of all that he has created. But the acceptance of the fact that God has created both man and this environment must lead us to accept his concern for all that he has created. If the new creation community, brought about by the activity of the Holy Spirit, must develop in greater sensitivity to God's total concern, it must accept the ecological challenge. The correlation of man and his environment will highlight the intensity of Paul's imagery of even creation waiting in 'eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed' ([Rom. 8:19](#)). Rather than merely emphasizing human redemption, it is the *interdependence* that we must also stress, and in doing so seek to restore a more positive attitude to our God-given environment and God's concern for it.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

The pneumatological emphasis brings us face to face with a totally new attitude to God's work outside the new creation community, to all people within creation. 'The conviction that the whole creation is the sphere of the Spirit's activity has again and again raised questions regarding the discernment of the Spirit outside the boundaries of the Church. In a world that is becoming more and more pluralistic, the issue has become more and more pressing than ever before. Whether Christians should seek to discern the Spirit also in places where the name of Jesus is not acknowledged has become an important question.'⁸ [P. 109](#)

Our answer to this question should unquestionably be in the affirmative. The Holy Spirit is at work in all of God's creation, and hence he is at work even amongst people where Christ is not acknowledged. However, this does not mean that it is in the same way that he works in the new creation community, the kingdom community. Whereas his

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

activity within the community relates to his sanctifying purposes, his activity outside is salvific, in the sense of bringing men and women face to face with the decisive claims of Jesus Christ.

But we need to take a look at the other side. The Holy Spirit's acting in all of creation inevitably gives us a new attitude to all peoples. Our mission has been stifled because of a negative view of people of other religions, and our confrontation with them. Our arrogant, boastful claims have severed our relationship with our neighbours right from the start. If the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, is responsible for the creation of all the people of this earth, then we need to discover this fundamental commonality before we begin to build false barriers.

'Christians live side by side with communities of other faiths and convictions. Together they share a common humanity and face common challenges and tasks.'⁹ This understanding of commonality needs to be explored to greater depth. While our Christian commitment clearly demands a stand for Jesus Christ as the only way for salvation, it does not deny us the right to stand alongside other human beings in common endeavours. In this sense, fighting against injustices and social evils does not imply the bringing in of the Kingdom of God, but the demonstration of Kingdom values, the values of the new creation community. It is here that a greater clarification is needed.

Moreover, we need to develop a more positive view of religion itself. If man is created in the image of God, there is a natural tendency in man towards worshipping God. Satan is active and he diverts man into false forms of worship. But the false essence of worship is what God himself has invested in man. Religions then are an expression of man's desire to get back to God despite his sinfulness. Such a view will help us to have a positive approach to our neighbours instead of the destructive attitude that has hitherto led us to condemnatory and judgmental confrontations. The devout Hindu, the sincere Muslim, truly longs for God and we need to appreciate that fact. The continuity from creation to new creation in this sense implies a continuity from religion to the Kingdom.

However, one will find it hard to justify the claim of God's *salvific* p. 110 activity in and through other religions. *Resources* suggests, 'This conviction that God as creator of all is present and active in the plurality of religions makes it inconceivable to us that God's saving activity could be confined to any one continent, cultural type, or group of peoples.'¹⁰ This is certainly true if it is meant to combat the idea that the biblical God works only through the Western people or through their culture. But that is not what is implied by the Spirit's working through the new creation. To affirm unequivocally that God the Holy Spirit has been at work in the life and traditions of peoples of other faiths *with salvific effect* is totally contrary to biblical teaching. However, the Holy Spirit is definitely at work making men and women aware of the inadequacy of their traditions and pointing them to the ultimate truth that Jesus Christ has brought to light through his death and resurrection.

Today's renewed emphasis on the Holy Spirit provides a welcome challenge, if it truly means a return to the divine initiative for our mission as portrayed in the Book of Acts. The life and dynamism of the early Church was directly related to the life-giving activity of the Holy Spirit, empowering ordinary human beings in their utter humanness to be part of God's mission to the world. In a world torn apart by various forces today, it is the motivating force of the Holy Spirit that will truly lead us in the right direction. Accordingly, my version of the prayer will be: 'Come Holy Spirit, renew thy *new* creation'. It is then that

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

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we will recognize our responsibility to be involved in God's concern for the whole creation.

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God's Visible Glory: The Beauty of Nature in the Thought of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards

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Today there is a growing tendency to fuse nature with grace. Creation is God, as in the Hindu view that nature emanates from God and returns to God in cyclic regularity, that matter is spiritual energy. The visible is but the maya (illusion) or lila (play) of the invisible. There is no essential gap between the creator and the creation. Matthew Fox, the influential American Catholic theologian, expounds creation spirituality as the mystical absorption into Mother Earth, the return to the original innocence of the child and the firm rejection of the fall/redemption theology. The contemporary ecological debate is being moved in this direction by the exponents of New Age philosophies. There is an urgent need for solid biblical foundations if evangelicals are going to enter the ecological debate effectively. This article on Calvin's and Edwards' understanding of creation as God's glory, of the fall as blinding mankind to God's revelation in creation, and of Scripture as providing the necessary glasses (to use Calvin's image) to understand God's revelation through nature is a useful study. The author discusses a number of key issues in Calvin's and Edwards' understanding of biblical orthodoxy offering a theological foundation for ecological understanding. The missing dimension in this article is the role of the Holy Spirit, without which no true understanding of nature is impossible.

Editor

One of Calvin's earliest statements of Protestant ideas,¹ the 1534 preface to Pierre Olivétan's translation of the NT, begins with his joy in creation:

God the Creator, the most perfect and excellent Maker of things, who had [p. 112](#) already shown himself more than admirable in their creation, made man as his masterpiece ... formed in his own image and likeness, in which we see a bright refulgence of God's glory.

¹ Joseph Haroutunian called this preface Calvin's 'first statement of faith as a Protestant'. See John Calvin, *Calvin: Commentaries* (transl. and ed. Joseph Haroutunian; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 58n.