

New Spirit | Ezekiel 36:26-28 & Acts 1:4-5 | 7 & 10 February 2019

I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Ezekiel 36:27

While Jesus was with the disciples, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Acts 1:4-5

As we move our attention to God our Father’s promise to give us a *New Spirit* let’s go back in time to when the church was hammering out if the Holy Spirit, so prominent in Scripture, was God. A premier theologian in the debate was Basil of Caesarea (330-379 A.D.), nurtured in faith largely by his grandmother, Macrina the Elder and sister, Macrina the Younger.

Basil’s understanding of God and the Holy Spirit is important for today’s discussion. A foundational principle is “that God is unknown in his essence but made known through his activities” v. [Following notes taken from Timothy Parker McConnell’s dissertation, *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, ProQuest LLC, 2009]. How does a child come to know their parent? Through knowing the parent’s essence or through daily activities in life?

Timothy quotes Basil then follows with a summation of his position.

The Spirit is divine in nature, infinite in greatness, mighty in his works, good in his blessings. Shall we not exalt him? Shall we not glorify him? I recon that his ‘glorifying’ is nothing else but the recounting of his own wonders... to describe his wonders gives him the fullest glorification possible. The same is true for the God and Father of Our Lord Christ and the Only-Begotten Son himself; we are only able to glorify them by recounting their wonders to the best of our ability.

By focusing on the activities, wonders, and deeds of the Spirit the theologian is led not only into knowledge of God but a relationship of worship. This characteristic claim of Basil in never abandoned. Knowledge of God comes by virtue of God’s activities, and these activities are not revelations of divine essence, but revelations of God’s presence. The Christian believer is called by these activities not to know about God (that is, to know the nature of divinity), but to know and thus to worship God—as Basil writes, not to know what God is, but to know how God is in relation to us. Page 279-280

A contemporary author, Steven R. Guthrie, provides an overview of the Spirit’s “activities” or “wonders” described by Basil in his book *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human*, (Baker Academic, 2011).

Throughout this book I will argue that one of the principal works of the Holy Spirit is to make and remake our humanity. In creation, incarnation, and redemption, the Holy Spirit is the *humanizing Spirit*.

In creation, the Spirit is the Breath of God that animates the dust of the ground and creates a living human being. Similarly, in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is *the incarnating*

Spirit. It is by the Spirit that the eternal Word of God becomes truly and fully human. The Spirit likewise rests upon and empowers the humanity of Jesus, and so we call him the Christ, the Messiah—that is, the one anointed with the Spirit. Finally, in the work of redemption and consummation, the Holy Spirit is the re-humanizing Spirit. The Spirit is poured out on God’s people, so that by the Spirit they may become truly and fully human, recreated in the Image of the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. Page xvi

Imagine this Holy Spirit containing the power to create and re-create reality itself. In Esther’s words “Is reality itself inexhaustive, fecund, generative, and generous?” I had to look up *fecund* – “capable of producing offspring or vegetation, fruitful.” Glory! Does this not punctuate the IFM Effect – indeterminant future manifestations. Does this not connect reality with the Godhead generally and the Holy Spirit specifically?

Back to Guthrie, the subject headings in the 1st chapter are telling – “**Ruach** [the Hebrew word for Spirit] and Untameably Mystery” (7); “Holy Spirit as Boundary-Breaker” (9); “Holy Spirit as Plan-Disrupter” (9); and “Holy Spirit as Surprise-Bringer” (10). My favorite statement in Guthrie is: “*The work of the Spirit is to bring dust to life and fill it with glory, in other words, to make us truly human, the image bearers of God*” (42).

Spirit = **ruah** (Hebrew); **pneuma** (Greek)

A lexical study through the theological dictionaries is massive – the TDNT, the most extensive with 9 volumes, has 129 pages covering our subject. Thus, I will draw some general thoughts from the NIDNTT which is 3 volumes and draws from the TDNT.

NIDNTT, Vol. 3

The Greek root **pneu**, from which the New Testament word for *spirit* is derived, denotes dynamic movement of the air. 689

As in earlier Jewish thought, **pneuma** denotes that power which man experiences as relating him to the spiritual realm, the realm of reality which lies beyond ordinary observation and human control. Within this broad definition **pneuma** has a fairly wide range of meaning. But by far the most frequent use of **pneuma** in the NT (more than 250 times) is as a reference to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, that power which is most immediately of God as to source and nature. 693

At one end of **pneuma’s** spectrum of meaning it denotes the human spirit, or perhaps better, man in so far as he belongs to the spiritual realm and interacts with the spiritual realm. In this sense **pneuma** occurs in the NT nearly 40 times. Thus the spirit of man is that aspect of man through which God most immediately encounters him (Rom 8:16; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 2 Tm 4:11; Phlm 25; Heb 4:12; Jas 4:5), that dimension of the whole man wherein and whereby he is most immediately open and responsive to God (Matt 5:3; Lk 1:47; Rom 1:9; 1 Pet 3:4), that area of human awareness most sensitive to matters of the spiritual realm (Mk 2:8; 8:12; Jn 11:33; 13:21; Acts 17:16; 2 Cor 2:13; 7:13)... Here too there still persists the ancient Hebraic idea of the **pneuma (ruah)** as the breath of God (2 Thess 2:8; cf. Jn 20:22), the breath of life (Rev 11:11; 13:15). 693-694

The Spirit in the earliest Christian Communities and in Acts. "Holy Spirit" denotes supernatural power, altering, working through, directing the believer (there is no significant difference between the phrase with the definite article and without). This is nowhere more clearly evident than in Acts where the Spirit is presented as an almost tangible force, visible if not in itself, certainly in its effects. This power of the Spirit manifests itself in three main areas in Luke's account of the early church. (1) The Spirit as a transforming power in conversion... (2) The Spirit of prophecy. For the first Christians, the Spirit was most characteristically a divine power manifesting itself in inspired utterance. The same power that had inspired David and the prophets in the old age (Acts 1:16; 3:18; 4:25; 28:25) was now poured out in eschatological plenitude as Joel had foretold (Acts 2:17 ff; cf. Joel 2:28-32). And (3) The Spirit as the director of mission... This dynamic is also brought to the fore by Paul where "The Spirit is the fundamental mark of belonging to Christ" and The Spirit, as it were, is the exalted Lord's steward taking possession of his property on his behalf (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19 f.)... Alternatively expressed, it is by being baptized in the one Spirit, drenched with the one Spirit, that individuals become members of the one body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). 698-701

For Paul also, the believer has a responsibility to live his life in the power of the Spirit. In general terms that means to let his character be moulded by God according to the pattern of Jesus Christ - not as something which the believer achieves for himself, but as something which by attentive openness to God he allows the Spirit to produce through him (2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:18-23; cf. Rom 8:28; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 30; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 6:1; Col 1:8). 702