

The kingdom of God becomes a reality through the work of

The Holy Spirit

by Ern Baxter



CYNTHIA

In some Christian circles, discussion about the Holy Spirit is considered improper. Many believe that any emphasis on the Spirit is unscriptural in the light of John 16:13, where we are told in the King James Version that "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come . . . He shall not speak of himself." Those of us who have talked about the Holy Spirit through the years have more than once had this scripture brought to our attention in order to correct us for our "error."

But this hesitation to talk about the Spirit is based on a misinterpretation of the word "of" in the King James text. Almost any other translation clarifies the problem. The New American Standard Bible reads, "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. . . ." A simpler translation yet is, "He will not speak *from* Himself."

The Holy Spirit is the author of the sacred Scriptures, for "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). Yet the author of the sacred Scriptures speaks of Him-

self in them a great deal. He speaks of Himself in both testaments. He speaks of Himself in almost every book of the New Testament, and there are entire sections devoted to His description of Himself and of His work. Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit speaks of Himself, and for good reason, as we shall discover in this study.

The Spirit and the Kingdom

One of my concerns about the Holy Spirit is His distinctive relationship to the kingdom and government of God, and its outworking in the earth. Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." I believe it is grammatically legitimate to take the inner part of that verse out to make this sentence: "The kingdom of God is . . . in the Holy Spirit." Although it is not called "the kingdom of the Spirit"—but rather the kingdom of the Father and the kingdom of the Son—it is nevertheless the kingdom *in* the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who is responsible for bringing the government of God into historical realization.

The relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Kingdom is rather strongly implied by our Lord in Matthew 12:28 where He says, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Our Lord here equates His kingship with the dynamic of the Holy Spirit, who enabled Him as Jesus of Nazareth to cast out demons. Everything that the Messiah did, He did because the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him: "The Spirit of the Lord was upon me to enable me to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind the brokenhearted," and to do all the other things that were His mission. The Spirit's presence upon Jesus also prophetically anticipated the success of His reign—a reign brought about by

the dynamic of the Holy Spirit—for "the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power" (1 Cor. 4:20).

My concern is this: How will the establishment of the Kingdom which we talk about ever be brought about? As I have searched the Scriptures, I have become aware that the kingdom of God will become reality by the ministry of the Holy Spirit through us.

Understanding God's Nature

We must digress for a moment to understand properly the Source of truth. The nature and purpose of God are a matter of revelation. The nature and purpose of God have not been discovered in scientific laboratories, nor in brainstorming sessions among brilliant minds; they have not been revealed by any combination of the five senses in research or investigation. The nature and purpose of God are a matter of revelation. The measure of our faith in what God will do is the degree of confidence we have in the integrity of what God has said in the revelation of His Word, much of which is totally beyond the ability of our five senses to discern.

In Psalm 90:2 Moses says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." In John 5:26, Jesus says it simply: "The Father has life in Himself." God is God—uncreated and self-existent. We are totally dependent upon revelation for this knowledge. Every time man, unassisted by revelation, tries to create a deity, he projects his best ideas of what God should be like into infinity, and the result is one of those hydra-headed, multi-membered monstrosities that men worship as idols. We don't understand God by a projection of our best inner consciousness into infinity; we understand Him by a humble reception of His rev-

elation when He says, "I am God, and beside Me there is none other. I have chosen to reveal Myself, for I am a Communicator."

Scripture tells us that as a communicator, God, "who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). The most thrilling fact in the universe is that the great God of the universe, the First Cause, the Creator of all, *has spoken*. He has communicated, He has articulated His nature and His mind in a way that we can understand—and it is our exciting privilege to probe what He has stated, to find out what He intends to do, and to participate in it.

God's perspective is the ultimate perspective, the ultimate reality, and we must open our hearts to receive a divine revelation of His nature. We must understand that God eternally exists and He manifests Himself to us in three Persons. The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, is a revelation, not a human formulation, and if we are to comprehend something of God's nature, we must understand the distinctive place of the Holy Spirit.

The Distinctive Place of the Spirit

We have been taught—and accurately taught, I believe—that based on the Bible, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are God. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God. They are co-equal, and yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. Within the infinite mystery of the structure of the triune God, there are actions that are distinctive to each of them without violating their equality.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-equal but They are functionally different, and so the Bible says, "The Father sent the

Son." It also says that the Son was obedient in that He *came* and did exactly what the Father wanted Him to do. In thirty-three and a half years He lived out His impeccable life—climaxed in His vicarious death—rose in victorious resurrection, ascended in magnificent triumph and sat down in fulfilling enthronement at the Father's right hand. After the Father sent the Son, and the

Son. He is the one who in the mystery of the Trinity reaches out to human need in history.

My concern these days is that it is possible for us to be theologically accurate in our perception of the Holy Spirit and yet miss His experiential significance by failing to be personally involved with the person of God who is acting. We may have high ideas about the Father and address

Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses men for leadership, how He sorts out spiritual authority—as opposed to human, even ecclesiastical, authority—to bring the government of God to pass in the earth by His sovereign designation. We must be concerned with the dynamics of apprehending the One who will bring about the government of God in the earth according to the divine intention. We must be concerned to make ourselves available to Him.

In Isaiah 34:16 God announces that none of His intentions for the earth will fail: "Seek from the book of the Lord, and read: Not one of these will be missing; none will lack its mate" (NAS). Every prophecy will have its fulfillment. Not a single word God has spoken will fail to be fulfilled. Some piece of history will match up with—be a "mate" for—every prophecy that has ever fallen from the lips of God. "For His mouth has commanded, and His Spirit has gathered them" (v. 16). Everything God has spoken will be fulfilled in history because the Holy Spirit will act to fulfill His purposes.

Whatever the Father and the Son intend to do with individuals and nations will be done by the Holy Spirit.

Son came and returned to the Father, *They* sent the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit *came* and stayed.

Many sermons have been preached on the thirty-three years of our Lord's life on earth, of the sufferings He endured—and rightly so. But how many sermons have been preached on the fact that the blessed Holy Spirit has resided down here in the midst of this muck and mire, this sordid atmosphere of fallenness, for nearly two thousand years?

The Holy Spirit is God active, the "executive agent" of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the "doer" of the Godhead—God at work, God exerting power. Put very simply, the Father thinks it, the Son articulates it, and the Spirit does it. The Spirit testifies to the immediate, present activity of God. From the birth of nature at creation to the re-birth of man's soul in eternal life, the Bible records the ceaseless activity of the Holy Spirit. We talk about what the Father does and what the Son does, but what the Father and the Son do is done by the Holy Spirit, for He is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the

Him with great affection, honor and reverence. We may have great love for the lordship of Christ and speak highly of His deity. But the fatherhood of God and lordship of Christ are only made real in our lives as we enter into the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit, for it is He who communicates and ministers the purposes of the Father and the Son. To know about the Father's personal care for me is very touching. To know about the Son's redemptive act for me is very moving. But the Holy Spirit must bring that knowledge into the reality of my experience.

When I approach cosmic, history-shaping concerns in which the Father and the Son reveal Their intentions for this planet, then I begin looking for the Holy Spirit. Whatever the Father and the Son intend to do with individuals and nations will be done by the Holy Spirit.

The Restoration of God's Government

Leadership and government in human affairs are the work of the Holy Spirit. I believe that we will begin to see in our day how the

The Spirit Neglected

Because the Holy Spirit is God active, Satan is intent on thwarting His activity. He tries to make certain that we neglect the Holy Spirit. Even our designation of the Spirit as the "third" person in the Trinity suggests that He is perceived as third in importance.

In our experience of meeting God, however, the Spirit is actually first. One Christian writer some years ago wrote a book entitled *Spirit, Son and Father*, simply pointing out that the first person in the Trinity we meet is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who meets us on the road of life and says, "I want to have a word with you." Jesus said, "For when the Spirit is come [to you] He will [through you] convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment." The One who

convicts us and converts us, who illumines and regenerates us, who heals us and places us in the Body of Christ, is the Holy Spirit. He is the One who gives us access to the Son and the Father.

I can understand how Satan is not at all disturbed when we merely have sound theological views of the Trinity—as long as we are not personally involved with the Holy Spirit in a vital, ongoing communion. The enemy has encouraged men to treat the Holy Spirit with contempt. As a result, the Spirit has been de-personalized, denied, resisted, quenched, grieved and blasphemed. He even had a difficult time getting into the creeds. The Apostles' Creed, dating from about the third century A.D., merely mentions Him: "I believe in the Holy Spirit." The Nicene Creed from the early part of the fourth century says, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets." That is much better, but it took several centuries for even that much recognition.

The Spirit in the Twentieth Century

I continue to search the Scriptures and my own heart, beseeching God for what I believe must be a new dimension of the Holy Spirit's activity. Significantly, many Christian leaders at the turn of the century were searching for a deeper understanding of the Spirit.

Elder Cumming, an esteemed and godly Scottish leader, wrote in 1890: "It surely must ever remain one of the painful memories of the Church that the Holy Spirit has so generally been ignored, forgotten or kept in the background. [Since] the early days of Church history... down to yesterday, how little attention has

been given to this subject." Benjamin Warfield wrote in 1900: "As we sweep down the history of the Church, we discover that the topic of the work of the Holy Spirit was one which only at a late date really emerged as the explicit study of Christian men. As we sweep over the whole extent of the modern Church, we discover that it is a topic which appeals even yet with little force to very large sections of the Christian Church." And in 1905 H. Davidson wrote: "The question is whether the full significance of our Lord's words concerning the Spirit has ever been adequately apprehended by His Church."

I believe that the concerns these men were feeling have been somewhat resolved by God's activity since the time they wrote these words. The significance of this century, I think, is that there has been more charismatic manifestation of the Holy Spirit's activity in these past one hundred years than there has been since the days of the apostles.

Taking into account what we have observed about the nature of the kingdom of God—that the kingdom of God is *in* the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the One who will bring the government of God into historical reality—the action of the Holy Spirit in the last century holds unique significance that we cannot ignore.

The twentieth century has seen God at work in the classical pentecostal movement, in the great healing movement, in the Latter Rain movement, and in the charismatic renewal. My own spiritual growth has been deeply influenced by my contact with all of these movements.

Without going into lengthy biographical detail, I witnessed the pentecostal movement as a young lad and then became involved myself in the charismatic dimension on July 2, 1932, when I received the baptism of the Holy

Spirit. Subsequently, I came into contact with the great healing movement, the Latter Rain movement and later the charismatic renewal. Those were marvelous, exciting days. I saw things happen that I thought I would never see—things that were mind-boggling. Through all those movements, God the Holy Spirit was and is trying to break through into our consciousness to make us aware that we must be connected to Him if we are going to be a part of the purposes of God.

God Will Be All in All

But I believe that even those of us who have recognized the Spirit's activity as an integral part of God's plan have often been unable to see the vast social and cosmic dimensions of that plan. We have allowed our focus to fix narrowly upon the Holy Spirit's involvement with individuals rather than upon His larger purpose. However, the apostle Paul, who was not an individualist, taught that God's plan is much more than simply saving individual souls. His plan is instead to fill all things with Himself so that in the end God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

God will redeem creation by filling all things with His Spirit. Christ ascended in order to fill all things with Himself by giving His gifts to men, gifts which Paul tells us are for the building up of the community (Eph. 4:4-13). James W. Jones has written in his book *The Spirit and the World*: "The Spirit is to form community. This



Ern Baxter, a long-time leader in the charismatic renewal, pastored one of the largest evangelical churches in Canada for twenty years. Since that time he has traveled extensively in ministry throughout the U.S. and abroad. Ern is a member of New Wine's Editorial Board and resides in Mobile, Alabama, with his wife, Ruth. This month he celebrates his 50th anniversary in the ministry. In honor of the occasion, New Wine is presenting a special tribute to Ern, which begins on page 15.

Spirit-filled community is both a foretaste of the Kingdom and a means to its realization. Through the work of the community of the Spirit more of life is filled with the Spirit and this is a further step in God's plan of filling all things with himself.

"The Kingdom is the rule of God and God rules in Spirit. The Kingdom will not come by political means but only by the working of the Spirit. But when, and

as, it comes, it brings *all* things into subjection to Christ—the political, the economic, the intellectual, as well as the private spheres of life. And it transforms all of these spheres, for it is not of this world and therefore cannot be identified with any of the Western democracy nor Eastern communism nor any combination of them. To say that the Kingdom does not come through politics, economics, or technology does

not mean the Kingdom has nothing to do with the political, economic, or technological orders. Clearly it does, for it will transform all of these into subjection to Christ. It is only to say that these orders are not primary in God's plan. Individuals are not primary either (except in the sense that all experience happens to individuals, not to isolated individuals but to members of communities and societies). What is primary in the plan of God is the *koinonia*, the community and the Kingdom, which transcends individualism and collectivism and encompasses both the public and the private realms of life" (pp. 69-70).

I believe that for a hundred years the Holy Spirit has been hammering on the doors of our corporate heart, saying, "*Make room for Me*. You have not seen anything yet. I have dealt with the petty kings and kingdoms of your personal situations. I have dealt with the small confines of your family, and I have moved in on your little church groups and blessed you. I have touched your large gatherings. But I have been sent with a mission from the Father and the Son to bring the kingdoms of this world under the lordship of My master, Jesus Christ—and I must do it through you. *Make room!*"

The activities of the Holy Spirit over the past hundred years are unprecedented in Church history, and we need to appreciate how significant His work has been. Since "the kingdom of God is in the Holy Spirit," the Spirit is bringing into historical reality and finality the reign of Jesus Christ. We must tell the Holy Spirit that we are hungry for Him, and that we want to be made ready for the next dimension of His moving. If the Kingdom of God in the Holy Spirit is to become a reality in our lives, we must prepare Him room. ♥

Tips For Fathers

One of the clearest messages we speak to society is the character we impart to our children. Here are some suggestions for overcoming four common fears that fathers face:

1. **I don't want to force my ways on my children.**

If you don't influence them, the rest of the world certainly will. Faddists have no hesitation at all about pushing their "latest ideas" on your children. But you are the only faithful source of life they have. If you're following a good path, don't be afraid to take your children with you.

2. **I'm not educated enough to cope with today's problems.**

Parents are increasingly delegating their responsibilities to schools, psychiatrists, the church—that is, to *specialists*. But you have been appointed by God to the job of raising your children, and your personal history and testimony should be their primary source of life. Textbooks and specialists are only intended as additional support for your work.

3. **What if I lose them?**

Be determined that win, lose, or draw, you will walk in integrity with your family, and under God's oversight you will give direction to their lives.

4. **I don't know how to start.**

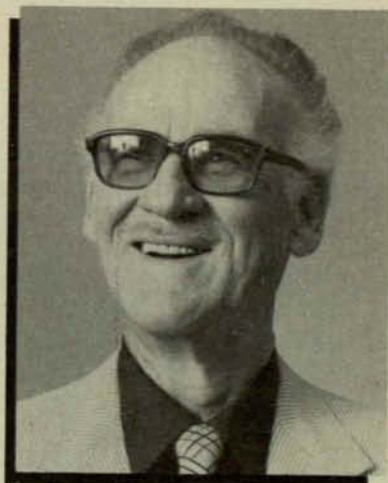
The problem of overcoming initial inertia may be the toughest one of all. The following suggestions might help:

- a. *Don't be naive about fatherhood*—It's hard work, but remember, God has appointed you to the job.
- b. *Fatherhood is a gift from God*—God delights in giving His wisdom to those who ask.
- c. *Pool your resources with other fathers*—They can be your best "support team."
- d. *Start with an area you can manage*—Health for the whole family begins with health for the smallest part.
- e. *Learn by doing*—Instead of wishing or theorizing, take the first step. Even if it fails, you'll know better how to take the next one.

"Tips for Fathers" are provided by *Fathergram*. If you would like to receive *Fathergram*, write to them at P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616

Fifty Years of Ministry

A tribute to Ern Baxter



Scripture tells us that God gives men various spiritual gifts and ministries, and that gifted men are themselves gifts to His Church. While in the providence of God there is no such thing as an insignificant gift or insignificant person, every age in the history of the Church produces a handful of men who receive great gifts and who rise to towering spiritual stature. By their visible ministries they portray the message they proclaim. Most such men are only peripherally aware of their significance. They are too involved in responding to the call of God on their lives to take note or to keep score. They seldom stop to tally their triumphs or pause to bemoan their failures. Their primary concern is to proclaim the eternal truth of the gospel and to declare the reality of the kingdom of God. Those who endure in this way become the spiritual patriarchs pointing the way for the next generation.

In these pages we wish to pay tribute to one such patriarch who is a member of our own spiritual family. This month Ern Baxter celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of his entry into the Christian ministry, and we are grateful for the opportunity to give special recognition to a man who has preached to millions and whose ministry has transformed the lives of thousands of people all over the world.

Ern Baxter's ministry extends over three generations. In 1932, when Ern began preaching in a small prairie church in the plains of western Canada, North America was in the throes of an economic and spiritual depression. Ern rose to prominence in ministry over twenty-five years before the



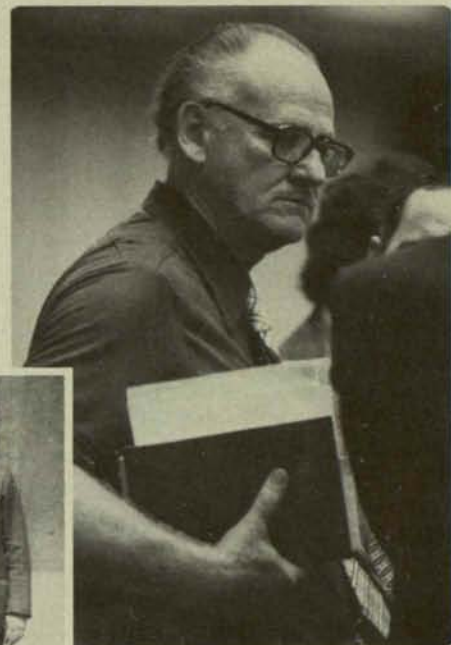


beginning of what is now called the charismatic renewal in the Church.

He traveled and ministered with some of the great evangelists of the 1940's and 1950's, most notably with William Branham, whose worldwide ministry of miracles was without peer in its day. As the Bible teacher in many of William Branham's campaigns, Ern preached to crowds which at times numbered over a half a million people.

In addition to his worldwide teaching ministry, for many years Ern Baxter pastored a church in Vancouver, British Columbia, taking the helm of a small congregation in 1940 and building it into one of the great interdenominational congregations of the 1960's. In 1974, Ern became associated in ministry with Charles Simpson, Bob Mumford, Derek Prince and Don Basham.

But Ern Baxter's most insistent call and most consistent service has been to the nations of the world. His great influence has been felt in England and



Scotland and in Australia and New Zealand, where godly men with thriving churches and strong congregations look to Ern and welcome him as a spiritual father, receiving ongoing benefit from his continuing apostolic ministry. The eloquence and depth of his preaching, distilled from decades of disciplined study and years of pastoral experience, have established him as one of the great pulpit voices and one of the truly great gospel communicators of our time.

Emerging from a severe health crisis which took place three years ago, Ern has returned to full vigor and a full ministry schedule, working at a pace which most men half his age would find hard to accept. To see Ern in his present state of spiritual and physical health is to be reminded of Caleb in the Old Testament who, when Israel was dividing the land God had promised them, came to Joshua to claim Hebron and its mountain as his inheritance:

And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now, therefore, give me this mountain, of which the Lord spoke in that day (Josh. 14:10-12).

With grateful hearts we commend our brother Ern Baxter to the mountain of his inheritance, knowing that by God's grace and faithfulness, he has now, as then, "the strength for war, both to go out and to come in." Well done, good and faithful servant. And may your God, who has led you this far, extend your years upon the earth. Your vision and your message of the kingdom of God are needed now more than ever. ♥

Photos, from left to right:
Ern as a boy; with his father; with Dr.
E. W. Kenyon; Ern in 1979.