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Spirit and Word: Lessons from Puritanism

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The seventeenth century was an age similar to our own in at least one major respect: the emphasis on experience. It was the age of diaries and autobiographies, of Rembrandt and his fascination with himself, the age of anatomy. In religion, also, it was the century of prophesying, of telling experiences, of preaching what “I felt, what I smartingly did feel.” During the Civil War and Commonwealth period in particular, religious enthusiasm burst forth in almost every direction, with new groups and sects claiming the liberty of the Spirit. Mainstream Puritanism addressed itself to this question as a matter of urgency. The debate centered around the work of the Holy Spirit in the enlightenment of Scripture’s hearers and readers. It was one of the major controversies of the time, and the way it was dealt with provides us with some illuminating insights into the sort of questions which have again come to the fore in our century.

The Puritans, to a man, accepted the inspiration of Scripture. But when they came to examine the work of the Spirit within the believer, discussion, even controversy, emerged. All agreed that the letter of Scripture, the “bare word,” could not save. The work of the Spirit was essential for a saving knowledge of the Word. (John Owen spoke of the “external testimony” of the Spirit opening the eyes of the blind.) But thereafter questions arose about which there was not such unanimity. (1) Did the Spirit ever speak apart from the Word? Or was He bound to what was written? (2) What exactly was the Spirit’s function and role in the interpretation of the Word? (3) What about leadings or promptings or impressions? Were they of the Spirit? And if so, how should they be tested? By the Word alone? Or by the Word and the Spirit? (4) How could you tell that it was the Spirit who was speaking to you? Might it not be your own spirit? Or even the Evil Spirit? (5) And when the Holy Spirit did speak, what

exactly did He say? And to what part of the human personality did He speak? These were some of the many questions raised in Puritan sermons and books about the relationship between Word and Spirit.

Word and Spirit

This was the basic question. Did the Holy Spirit speak only “in” or “through” or “by” the Word? The main body of Puritan opinion answered with a qualified “Yes.”

There must be a double light. So there must be a Spirit in me as there is a spirit in the Scriptures before I can see anything. The breath of the Spirit in us is suitable to the Spirit’s breathing in the Scriptures; the same Spirit doth not breathe contrary motions (Richard Sibbes).

Or again, John Forbes: “Nothing else doth the Spirit witness but that which is contained in the Word.” However, Oliver Cromwell said that sometimes “God speaks without a written word,” and Robert Baillie found himself having to condemn the Independents for what he called their “contemplations of God without Scripture.” But those who claimed such directness went on to make it clear that in such cases the Spirit never spoke in a way that contradicted the written Word. Walter Cradock said, “The Spirit leads by the Word,” while Samuel Petto added, “My heart was wonderfully set against those who pretend to revelations without, or not agreeable to, or against the Scriptures.” Even the immediate testimony of the Spirit within a person’s heart, said Petto, is “the effectual application of the Word unto a particular soul. Or if it be not by an express word, yet it is by some Scriptural consideration, or, in or presently after waiting upon the Lord in ways of His own appointment by the Word.” So, if direct perceptions of the Lord did occur, they always presupposed biblical understanding, arose from biblical

study, were identified by biblical criteria, and were interpreted by biblical theology.

The mainstream of Puritan opinion, then, held the balance between Word and Spirit. The Spirit is indispensable to a true learning from Scripture, and any “spiritual” thoughts which are not grounded upon Scripture are false. To submit to the Spirit is to submit to the Word. We must have the Spirit to interpret the Word, but if we would live under the Spirit’s authority we must bow before the Word as His textbook. It was the Quakers who upset this balance. They also took Scripture very seriously, but they also emphasized individual personal experience (the Spirit in them) so much that they tended to undervalue the written Word. They said that the same Spirit who was in the apostles was also in them, and in the same way. Hence George Fox took 2 Peter 1:19, “a more sure word of prophecy,” to mean the Holy Spirit, and not the Scriptures *per se*. He also spoke of the Spirit who gave the Word as the judge and touchstone of spiritual experience, and not the Word as such. Spiritually, the Quakers felt themselves to be very close to the apostles, sharing the same kind of inspiration. As long as they gave priority to the apostles in the testing of spiritual experiences, they were within the bounds of Puritanism. But some of them separated the Spirit in them from the Spirit in the Word, and gave priority to the Spirit in them. Hence they became dangerously subjective and impulsive.

Mainstream Puritans argued against them in two ways. (1) They said that the Spirit in the apostles acted uniquely and extraordinarily, whereas the Spirit’s activity in subsequent believers was ordinary. It was the difference between inspiration and illumination. “The Holy Spirit, by immediate inspiration, revealed unto the apostles the doctrine of Christ, and caused them infallibly to indite the Scriptures. But this is not that way of ordinary illumination now” (R. Baxter). (2) They rejected the Quaker tendency to separate the Spirit

from the Word, and employed three analogies to do so: (1) The Scriptures are the lantern, the Spirit is the candle within. (2) Just as male and female are essential to natural generation, so are Spirit and Word in spiritual generation. (3) Earth, rain, and sun, together with the seminal virtue in plants, are necessary to germination, as are Word and Spirit in spiritual germination.

Should there be any conflict between the Spirit in the Word and the Spirit in the human heart, Baxter's answer was clear:

Christ gave the apostles the Spirit to deliver us infallibly His own commands, and to indite a rule for following ages; but He giveth us the Spirit to deliver us infallibly His own commands, and to indite a rule for following ages; but He giveth us the Spirit but to understand and use that rule aright. This trying of the Spirit by the Scriptures is not a setting of the Scriptures above the Spirit itself, but is only a trying of the Spirit by the Spirit; that is, the Spirit's operations in ourselves and His revelations to any pretenders now, by the Spirit's operations in the apostles, and by their revelations recorded for our use. For they and not we are called foundations of the church.

Interpret Scripture well, and you may interpret the Spirit's motions easily. If any new duty be motioned to you, which Scripture commandeth not, take such motions as not from God. (Unless it were by extraordinary confirmed revelation.)

That last remark indicated that Baxter did allow for immediacy and directness in the Spirit's activity in the heart. But it was not the usual ordinary way in which He worked, and it was always to be tested by the Word.

Discernment

The second question addressed by the Puritans con-

cerned discernment. How could men distinguish the Spirit within them from their own fancies? Their answer was first to *analyze*, and second to *test*. In analyzing the action of the Spirit they came to three conclusions: (1) The Spirit's enlightenment was *rational*. Since man was a rational creature the Spirit opened his mind to God's truth through the Word. (2) It was also *moral*. The activity of the Spirit, they believed, was closely linked to conscience. Sibbes spoke of a conscience as "an inferior light of the Spirit." They were careful to add that reason and conscience were not the Spirit (as if the Spirit dwelt in every man as reason or conscience). And they recognized that spiritual things were not discoverable by reason or conscience alone, since they were too wonderful and mysterious for that. But when the Spirit performed His marvelous work of enlightenment He always worked on and through reason and conscience. (3) The third element in discernment was *experimental*, "knowledge with a taste," "a sweet relish" (Sibbes). So there was an intuitive element to discernment also. You do not need witnesses to prove that the sun is shining on you—you *know*.

But analysis was followed by *testing*. How did you actually recognize the voice of the Spirit? How could you test a claim to spiritual enlightenment? John Goodwin, the Arminian, said that the test was that of reason: enlightened by Scripture, of course, but not bound by it. Roman Catholics said that it was the church. Tradition was the best interpreter of the Spirit. George Fox said it was Christ Himself in a man, linked to a holy life, and unity among the Friends. But the Puritans said it was Scripture. John Owen said of the church, "There is no need of traditions . . . no need of the authority of any churches," and Sibbes described the church as "the remotest witness, the remotest help of all." In Scripture you had the true judge and touchstone. If anyone should suggest that to make Scripture the judge was in effect to make your own interpretation of Scripture the judge, the

Puritans would have stressed the necessity of deriving your interpretation of Scripture from Scripture itself, using the principles of literal meaning, unity and coherence, and analogy and, of course, always seeking the Spirit's testimony to and through the Word.

The Nature and Content of the Spirit's Testimony

Before examining this it might be useful to take a glance at a related question, namely, the mode of the Spirit's indwelling. Here there was considerable difference of opinion. Some, like Hollinworth and Howe, were reluctant to call it a personal indwelling of the Spirit Himself: "The Spirit by a metonymy may be said to dwell in us . . . when we partake of His gifts and graces, though these be not the Spirit Himself . . . as when we say the sun comes into a house, we mean not the body of the sun . . . but the beams of it." Others, however, especially the radicals, argued that it was the Spirit Himself who came. Thomas Goodwin said, "Now for the manner of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost's Person; it is no error to affirm that it is the same in us and the man Christ Jesus." But what of the content of the Spirit's witness? What effects did His indwelling have? We will follow the three categories already referred to above.

1) It was *intellectual*. Did the Spirit convey infallible revelations to men? People like Fox said, "Yes." Fox claimed that things recorded in the Bible had been revealed to him independently and infallibly. "This I saw in the pure openings of the light, without the help of any man; neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures, though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it." Others like Baxter and Owen said, "No." Speaking of contemporary claims to revelations Owen said:

Whether they contain doctrines contrary unto that of the scriptures, or additional thereunto, or seemingly confirma-

tory thereof, they are all universally to be rejected, the former being absolutely false, the latter useless. . . . For He (the Holy Spirit) having finished the whole work of external revelation, and closed it in the Scriptures, His whole internal spiritual work is suited and commensurate thereunto.

2) It was *moral and practical*. Did the Holy Spirit give people direct guidance through immediate "openings," or "leadings," or "waitings"? Again Fox said, "Yes." He could claim without embarrassment, "At this my spirit was greatly grieved, and the Lord, I found, was highly offended." Indeed, some of his followers actually attributed infallibility to him. Fox would have nothing to do with extremists like the Ranters, who claimed direct guidance but lived loosely. There must, he said, be moral integrity and uprightness of life. But he insisted that the Spirit did lead directly, and quoted examples of Scriptures and impressions coming to his mind and to the minds of others. Baxter also allowed for the possibility of new "revelations" being given to individuals, but was careful to specify what they were:

It is possible that God may make new revelations to particular persons about their particular duties, events, or matters of fact, in subordination to the Scriptures, either by inspiration, vision, or apparition, or voice; for He hath not told us that He will never do such a thing.

But he emphasized that such "revelations" were entirely God-given; and the possibility of being deceived by one's own imagination was very real. "Certain experiences telleth us that most in our age that have pretended to prophecy, or to inspiration, or revelations, have been crack-brained persons, near to madness, who have proved deluded in the end." If direct experiences were of God they usually occurred within the context of a true biblical understanding, and were

always to be tested by Scripture.

3) It was *experiential*. Three areas of experience may be referred to. (1) Did the Holy Spirit give believers direct assurance of their sonship? (2) Did He give liberty and boldness in prayer? (3) Did He come into meetings of the church, creating a new awareness of the presence of God and so enriching worship and fellowship?

1) *Direct Assurance*. There was general agreement that the Spirit did give direct assurance. The Puritans spoke eloquently about the “spirit of adoption.”

There is a great deal of familiarity in the spirit of adoption. That “abba Father,” it is a bold and familiar speech . . . there is an inward kind of familiar boldness in the soul, whereby a Christian goes to God, as a child when he wants anything goes to his father. A child considers not his own worthiness or meanness, but goeth to his father familiarly and boldly (R. Sibbes).

2) *Prayer*. Richard Hollinworth spoke about the work of the Spirit in prayer, and described it in two ways. First, He enlightens, enlivens, and enlarges the heart. Second, in the act of prayer, He excites, discovers, and brings to mind God’s promises. “Promises and prayers are like the figures 6 and 9, the very same figures, only the promises like the figure 9 do bend downward, and the prayers like the figure 6 do point upward.” The Spirit also excites the graces of prayer (lifting our hearts like a log out of a ditch), enlarges our affections, and restrains our tongues. Hollinworth also spoke of the silent ejaculations which were too big for expression.

3) *The Spirit Coming into Meetings*. There is abundant testimony to the Spirit’s presence in individual lives and church gatherings.

God hath appeared 200 times, 2,000 times to my soul. I have

seen Him while in the sacrament, I have seen Him among the saints, I have seen Him in the country, in such a condition, in such a place, in such a meadow, in such a wood, when I read His word, and called upon His name (Walter Cradock).

I remember one once said of the late Queen Elizabeth,

I have seen her picture, saith he, but I have one picture of her that I will not sell for all the pictures of her in the world. And what was that? I *saw* her but once, saith he, and the image of her remains still in me; which image he could convey to no man living. . . . Therefore, now, if you ask me what it is the saints know, which another man knows not? I answer you fully, he himself cannot tell you, for it is certain, as to that impression which the Holy Ghost leaves upon the heart of a man, that man can never make the like impression on another; he may describe it to you, but he cannot convey the same image and impression upon the heart of any man else (T. Goodwin).

Areas of Practical Disagreement

We now examine three practical areas where the Puritans disagreed: prayer, hymn singing, and preaching.

1) *Prayer*. “The more radical Puritans, acutely conscious of the working of the Holy Spirit, immediately, in their hearts, increasingly felt there to be no place in worship for liturgies or read prayers” (G. Nuttall). Such prayers become a hindrance to spiritual freedom; they quenched the spirit, and were referred to as “stinted prayers.” In Fairfax’s army Baxter found that the men were “sometimes against forms of prayer,” and “sometimes against set times of prayer, and against the tying of ourselves.” Walter Cradock complained bitterly that

when it may be (that) the poor minister’s soul was full of

groans, and sighs, and he would have rejoiced to have poured out his soul to the Lord, he was tied to an old service book, and must read that till he grieved the Spirit of God, and dried up his own spirit as a chip, that he could not pray if he would.

Bunyan wrote a book against liturgies, although he later revised his views because of the excessive subjectivism and wordiness of some of the praying. The Quakers took extempore prayer to the further point of silence, so that people would sit in silence and pray only when they felt inclination to do so. John Owen agreed with the arguments against liturgies. He too was concerned about a true spirituality, but unlike the Quakers, he did not advocate waiting in silence for the Spirit's leadings, nor was he overly enthusiastic about inwardness. His concern was for an authentic work of the Spirit in which ordinary praying should be elevated to praying in the Spirit. More conservative Puritans would not go as far as this. There was a middle group who favored extempore prayer but still allowed read prayers. Baxter is a typical example. Others, like Hollinworth, felt that extempore prayer was based on a false assumption, namely, that the Holy Spirit moved in the believer in the same way in which He moved in the biblical authors. This was not the case, so it was better to use biblical language in prayer.

2) *Hymn Singing.* Conservatives said that to be consistent those who rejected read prayers should also reject hymns, since they too were from books. Baxter used the use of hymns and Psalms as an argument to justify the use of forms of prayer. But some of the radical Puritans rejected the comparison, regarding hymns as primarily edificatory and didactic, and therefore justifiable. Others accepted the parallel and refused to use hymn-singing from a book. The Quakers were among this group, and George Fox declared that his mission was

to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings, and singings, which stood in forms without power; that their fellowship might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the Eternal Spirit of God; that they might pray in the Holy Ghost, and sing in the Spirit.

3) *Preaching.* Puritanism was a movement of preaching. For this reason it deserves special treatment, and our discussion of it will therefore be more detailed. What effect did the Spirit/Word correlation have on the seventeenth-century view of preaching? We shall examine three aspects of this matter: (a) Who should preach? (b) The act of preaching. (c) Ordination and training.

a) *Who Should Preach?* In the 1570s Puritans' prophesying began, probably in Northampton. At first they were meetings of ministers, but as they developed, and with the increased interest in the Spirit, the right to prophesy was extended to gifted members of the congregation. Prophesying was understood to be biblical exegesis coupled with personal testimony and exhortation. John Robinson was forced to justify the practice in a polemical debate with John Yates. Yates had argued that biblical prophesyings were extraordinary. Like tongues, they had ceased. Robinson rejected the argument and went on to sum up the benefits of prophesyings: the preservation of purity of doctrine, the clearer shining of the truth "as by the beating together of two stones," the conversion of outsiders through the testimony of several believers, and the deepening of fellowship and goodwill between ministers and people.

Naturally, out of such opportunities for individual participation in meetings, lay preaching emerged, and with it the question of ordination. In 1639 Sidrach Simpson left a Congregational church in Rotterdam and founded a separate congregation, partly because he stood for the ordinance of prophesying "after the Brownist way" during worship on

Sundays. During the Civil War period it ran riot: “when women preach and cobblers pray, the fiends in hell make holiday.” The Quakers led the way in this. They abandoned the settled ministry. They allowed lay participation. And they permitted women to speak, justifying the practice on several grounds: the equality of men and women in spiritual privilege and responsibility, the prophesying of people like Philip’s daughters, and the preaching of the woman of Samaria. For Fox, of course, there was no need to appeal to the Bible in this way, because he and his fellow Quakers had the Spirit! Fox said, “And if there was no Scripture for our men’s and women’s meetings, Christ is sufficient.”

Congregationalists and Presbyterians tended to differ over the involvement of gifted brethren in public worship. The Congregationalists employed several arguments in its favor. Why, they asked, are people gifted if they are not to use their gifts? It is wrong to quench the Spirit when He is at work. Apollos preached without anyone ordaining him. Preaching was *ex dono*, not *ex officio*, so if God gave the gift who could suppress it? The Presbyterians used several counterarguments. Richard Hollinworth, for example, said that the promise of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled at Pentecost, so that the office of prophet had ceased in the New Testament age. Thomas Hall argued that the gift of prophecy in the continuing church was preaching, and no one should preach without a clear call and accompanying gifts.

It was people like Baxter who occupied a central position between these groups. He allowed for lay preaching, but only in exceptional circumstances:

as if a layman were cast on the Indian shore, and converted thousands, who could have no other ordination . . . upon the peoples’ reception and consent, that man will be a true pastor, yet, the regular way of entrance appointed by Christ to make a person capable, is the said election and ordination.

b) *The Act of Preaching*. The central issue here was whether the sermon should be read or be extempore. How did the Spirit function with the Word in the actual delivery of the sermon?

In 1592 William Perkins spoke of the custom of preaching from memory, and many of the later Puritans memorized their sermons. Baxter said, “Never since I was 20 years old did I ever learn and say without the Book, the words of one prayer, or one sermon, since I preached.” It seems that Owen and Howe probably did much the same. But others preached in a much freer way. Bunyan was one. Morgon Llwyd was another. “He comes not to them with a sermon out of a book, but with that which the Lord hath spoken to him.” Baxter commended this directness and earnestness:

They are greatly taken with a preacher that speaketh to them in a familiar language, and exhorteth them as if it were for their lives; when another that readeth or saith a few composed words in a reading tone, they hear almost as a boy that is saying his lesson.

What is important to emphasize is that whether sermons were memorized or more extempore, the concept of preaching was the same: the exposition and application of the Word with warmth and directness. Since the Word was the voice of the Spirit, preaching meant letting the Bible speak; but because the Spirit was alive, He spoke again through what He had spoken; and at the same time He was at work in the hearts of the hearers. So their view of preaching was dynamic, not static.

The Quakers went much further than this in their approach to preaching. Their speaking was much freer and far more spontaneous. This can be seen in the babbling record of Fox’s words when he said:

Let it be your joy to hear or see the Springs of life break forth in any . . . such as are tender, if they should be moved to bubble forth a few words and speak in the seed and lambs power, suffer and bear that that is tender, and if they should go beyond their measure bear it in the meeting for peace sake and order.

c) *Ordination and Training.* Because of their stress on the immediacy and the Spirit, the Quakers did not share the prevailing Puritan emphasis on learning. Indeed they were suspicious of training for ministry and the concept of an ordained group of “ministers.” Some of the radical Puritans also frowned on those who subjected the

infinitely abounding spirit of God, which blows when and where it listeth . . . to the Laws and Ordinances of men. . . . God must not speak till man give Him leave; not teach nor Preach, but whom man allows, and approves, and ordains (Saltmarsh).

Oliver Cromwell rebuked the Scottish Presbyterians who had complained about

men of civil employments . . . usurping the calling and employment of the ministry, [by declaring] though an approbation from men hath order in it, and may do well; yet he that hath no better warrant than that, hath none at all. I hope that He that ascended up on high may give His gifts to whom He pleases: and if those gifts be the seal of Mission, be not envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy.

The Presbyterians, on the other hand, laid heavy emphasis on learning, education, and a university training. It is conceivable that they went too far in the opposite direction. So it was the middle group again who sought to strike the right

balance between Spirit and Word in this connection. Baxter’s words were judicious:

If we give to reason, memory, study, books, methods, forms, etc., but their proper place in subordination to Christ and to His Spirit, they are so far from being quenchers of the Spirit, that they are necessary in their places, and such means as we must use, if ever we will expect the Spirit’s help. He that hath both the Spirit of sanctification, and acquired gifts of knowledge together, is the complete Christian, and likely to know much more, than he that hath either of these alone.

The Puritans, like ourselves, had to struggle to keep the right balance between the Spirit and the Word. There were other areas where similar tensions emerged. Take the question of the *sacraments*, for instance. Did the Spirit reside in the Word, so that all that was needed was for the Word to be read and proclaimed? Or, were the sacraments really necessary at all, if the Spirit was moving in men’s hearts? Or, were they means of grace, the Spirit’s presence being regarded with equal importance as the use of the correct words? And what of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and *history*? Is the Christian era the age of the Word? Or, as many seventeenth-century people were asking, is it the age of the Spirit? Or, is it both? The way they answered these questions touches on a number of contemporary issues such as the place of spiritual gifts, our attitude to guidance and providence, and the evangelization of those who have never heard the Gospel. (Is the Spirit at work in them already? Or do they need to hear the Word?) These are big matters, and we would do well to consider their efforts to grapple with them.

Conclusions

1) The Danger of Detaching the Word from the Spirit. To have the Word without the Spirit produces serious conse-

quences in all sorts of ways, as people resist the living element for an excessively cerebral approach. *Doctrinally*, we are left with a dry orthodoxy and an easy believism. *Evangelistically*, we may be content with statements of truth and competent apologetics. *Preaching* becomes simply a matter of accurate exegesis and correct homiletics. *Ministerial training* will be heavily academic, with an emphasis on degrees and qualifications. *Worship* will be correct, formal, and orderly, preferably with objective hymns and lecture-type sermons. *Assurance* will be entirely a question of intellectual assent to the written Word. *Guidance* will involve focusing the mind on objective factors, circumstantial considerations and the advice of counselors. *Church life* will concentrate on activity, organization, structures, and correct teaching.

2) The Danger of Detaching the Spirit from the Word. Equally serious consequences derive from this imbalance, because people rely on immediate “words,” impressions and emotions, relegating the Word to a subordinate position. *Doctrinally*, vagueness and “feeling good” replace clarity and depth of understanding. *Evangelism* becomes less truth-centered and more a question of “a warm atmosphere” and “feeling at home.” *Preaching* is regarded as less important than “direct words” and “prophecies,” often in the first person singular, and calculated to produce an immediate response. *Ministerial training* is seen to be relatively unimportant compared with enthusiasm, immediacy, and spontaneity. *Worship* will be seen in terms of free expression, individual participation, new forms, a relaxed atmosphere, a conversational style, with a liberal sprinkling of choruses. *Assurance* becomes a very subjective affair, almost entirely to do with how people feel. *Guidance* similarly will be about impressions and “words from God” and direct leadings. *Church life* will revolve around the degree to which emotions and sensations are aroused, so that a “good meeting” and “a lively

church” will be one where laughter and exuberance abound.

3) Maintaining the Balance Between Spirit and Word. Since the Word of God is the “sword of the Spirit” it is essential that they are kept together. Each teaches by means of the other. They never contradict each other. “So those who would live under the authority of the Spirit must bow before the Word as the Spirit’s textbook, while those who would live under the authority of Scripture must seek the Spirit as its interpreter” (J. I. Packer: *Keep In Step with the Spirit*, p. 240). Preserving the right balance will enable us to function properly in each of the eight areas just mentioned. *Doctrinally* we will be anxious to marry a clear theology to a warm spirituality, so that convictions with a prayerful dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit can give new life to dead souls. *Preaching* will be both the careful and accurate exposition and application of the biblical text, and truth on fire. *Ministerial training* will emphasize the importance of thoroughness of thought and disciplined study, together with the necessity of a close walk with God. *Worship* will be truth-centered and Bible-drenched as well as being Spirit-inspired and God-glorifying. *Assurance* will be a combination of objective biblical evidence and the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit. *Guidance* will depend on both biblical criteria, circumstantial factors, and the direct activity of the Spirit moving our hearts. *The life of our churches* will be constantly measured by the concern for biblical reformation and spiritual revival.

May we always strive to maintain the balance between Word and Spirit, and may the Spirit graciously take up His Word in our day and wield it as the mighty weapon it is.

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