

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN WORSHIP: EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE OR DISCIPLINED FORMATION?

by
Scott Aniol¹

“Our church’s worship is pretty formal, but I prefer Holy Spirit-led worship.” Such was the comment I overheard recently by a young evangelical describing his church’s worship service, illustrating a very common perception by many evangelicals today—if the Holy Spirit actively works in worship, the results will be something extraordinary, an experience “quenched” by too much form and order. A common perception, to be sure, but how grounded in Scripture is this expectation concerning the Holy Spirit’s work in worship?

My purpose in this paper is to assess this common expectation, measuring it against a biblical theology of the Holy Spirit’s work. I will begin by describing what appears to be the default expectation regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in worship by contemporary worshipers. I will explain that this expectation finds its roots in the Pentecostal movement and has spread even beyond charismatic movements into evangelical churches that claim to have a cessationist theology of the Holy Spirit’s work. I will then assess this default expectation from a biblical framework. First, I will examine exhaustively the language of Scripture describing the Holy Spirit’s actions, demonstrating that the Spirit’s usual work through the whole of Scripture is to bring God’s plan to order. I will then use that examination as a foundation upon which to discuss how the Holy Spirit ordinarily works today. Finally, I will specifically examine the New Testament discussions of the Holy Spirit’s work in worship, revealing that his actions there fall far more within the category of ordering than within categories describing extraordinary experiences. Thus, this paper will argue that the Holy Spirit’s ordinary work in worship is that of disciplined formation.

THE DEFAULT EXPECTATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’S WORK IN WORSHIP

Arguably, the default expectation of contemporary evangelical

¹Dr. Aniol is Associate Professor and Chair of Worship Ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of several books, the most recent being *By the Waters of Babylon: Worship in a Post-Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), and is the director of Religious Affections Ministries (www.religiousaffections.org).

worshippers is that the Holy Spirit works in worship in such a way so as to create an extraordinary experience, well expressed in the popular worship song by Bryan and Katie Torwalt:

Holy spirit, You are welcome here
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere
Your glory, God, is what our hearts long for
To be overcome by Your presence, Lord.²

Many theologians and authors who have helped to shape contemporary evangelical worship embody a theology of the Holy Spirit's primary work as that of making God's presence known. For example, Wayne Grudem argues, "The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially the church.... It seems that one of his primary purposes in the new covenant age," Grudem continues, "is to manifest the presence of God, to give indications that make the presence of God known.... To be in the Holy Spirit is really to be in an atmosphere of God's manifested presence."³ Zac Hicks agrees: "The Holy Spirit has an agenda in manifesting his presence to us."⁴ Bob Kauflin believes that "there are times, of course, when we become unexpectedly aware of the Lord's presence in an intense way. A sudden wave of peace comes over us. An irrepressible joy rises up from the depths of our soul."⁵ "None of us," Kauflin insists, "should be satisfied with our present experience of the Spirit's presence and power."⁶

This expectation is certainly not new; theologians such as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards addressed the religious "enthusiasts" of their day.⁷ However, the contemporary iteration is rooted in a Pentecostal theology of the Holy Spirit's work. In their insightful *Concise History of Contemporary Worship, Lovin' on Jesus*, Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth convincingly demonstrate that Pentecostalism, with its "revisioning of a New Testament emphasis upon the active presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit," is one of five key sources of

²Bryan Torwalt and Katie Torwalt, "Holy Spirit," 2011, available at <https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/6087919/holy-spirit>, accessed October 31, 2018. This is a CCLI Top 10 song.

³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 634, 641, 648.

⁴Zac M. Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 33.

⁵Bob Kauflin, *True Worshipers: Seeking What Matters to God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 133.

⁶Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 84–85.

⁷See Ryan J. Martin, "'Violent Motions of Carnal Affections': Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, and Distinguishing the Work of the Spirit from Enthusiasm," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 15 (2010): 99–116.

contemporary worship.⁸ They suggest that “Pentecostalism’s shaping of contemporary worship has been both through its own internal development and through an influencing of other Protestants in worship piety and practice,” including the following ways its theology has shaped contemporary worship:

- (1) mainstreaming the desire to be physical and expressive in worship
- (2) highlighting intensity as a liturgical virtue
- (3) a certain expectation of experience to the forms of contemporary worship, and
- (4) a musical sacramentality [that] raises the importance of the worship set as well as the musicians leading this set.⁹

They explain, “Pentecostalism contributed contemporary worship’s sacramentality, that is, both the expectation that God’s presence could be encountered in worship and the normal means by which this encounter would happen,” creating an “expectation for encountering God, active and present through the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ Daniel Albrecht agrees: “The presence of the Holy Spirit then is fundamental to a Pentecostal perspective of worship. The conviction that the Spirit is present in worship is one of the deepest beliefs in a Pentecostal liturgical vision. The expectancy of the Spirit’s presence is often palpable in the liturgy.... Their liturgical rites and sensibilities encourage becoming consciously present to God—even as God’s presence is expected to become very real in worship.”¹¹

This experience of the Holy Spirit’s active presence is often directly tied to music, specifically to the “flow” of the emotional expressiveness of the worship music. Hicks suggests, “Part of leading a worship service’s flow...involves keeping the awareness of God’s real, abiding presence before his worshipers. As all of the elements of worship pass by, the one constant—the True Flow—is the presence of the Holy Spirit himself.” This kind of flow, according to Hicks, “lies in understanding and guiding your worship service’s emotional journey.”¹² “Grouping songs in such a way that they flow together,” worship leader Carl Tuttle explains, “is essential to a good worship experience.”¹³ The goal and

⁸Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017), 17–18. The other four are youth ministry, baby boomers, Jesus People, and church growth missiology.

⁹*Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Daniel E. Albrecht, “Worshiping and the Spirit: Transmuting Liturgy Pentecostally,” in *The Spirit in Worship—Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 239.

¹²Hicks, *Worship Pastor*, 184.

¹³Carl Tuttle, “Song Selection & New Song Introduction,” in *Worship Leaders Training Manual* (Anaheim, CA: Worship Resource Center/Vineyard Ministries International, 1987), 141.

expectation of any worship service, according to Barry Griffing, “is to bring the congregational worshipers into a corporate awareness of God’s manifest presence.”¹⁴ James Steven notes, “By investing heavily in particular signs of the Spirit’s presence, such as ecstatic physical patterns of behavior, church members define the Spirit by the empirical measurement of particular phenomena, which if absent imply that the Spirit has not ‘turned up.’”¹⁵ For Pentecostals and other continuationists, this expectation includes miraculous gifts such as tongues and prophecy, but even for other evangelicals who do not hold to a continuationist position on miraculous gifts, the default expectation is that the Holy Spirit will manifest God’s presence in other extraordinary ways such as a heightened experience of emotional euphoria.

Worship in which the Holy Spirit is directly active is often necessarily connected with spontaneity and “freedom” of form. Worship that is structured and regulated is the opposite of “Spirit-led” worship in this view. As Lim and Ruth note, most contemporary worship, impacted as it is by this understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work in worship, considers “extemporaneity as a mark of worship that is true and of the Holy Spirit, that is, worship in Spirit and truth (John 4:24). This view of extemporaneity” they note, “has been held widely within Free Church ways of worship.”¹⁶ What Albrecht observes of Pentecostal worship has become the standard expectation for much of evangelicalism:

In the midst of radical receptivity, an encounter with the Holy Spirit may occur. Pentecostals envision such encounters as integral to the worship experience. While an overwhelming or overpowering experience of/in the Spirit is neither rare nor routine for a particular Pentecostal worshiper, the experiential dimension of worship is fundamental. The liturgical vision sees God as present in the service; consequently, Pentecostals reason that a direct experience of God is a normal expectation.¹⁷

ACTIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SCRIPTURE

Ultimately, current expectations concerning the Holy Spirit’s work in worship must derive, not from experience, but from Scripture. In order to lay such a biblical foundation, I will next survey how the Bible broadly characterizes the Holy Spirit’s activity, and then narrow the focus to the church age and specifically corporate worship.

¹⁴Barry Griffing, “Releasing Charismatic Worship,” in *Restoring Praise & Worship to the Church* (Shippensburg, PA: Revival Press, 1989), 92.

¹⁵James Steven, “The Spirit in Contemporary Charismatic Worship,” in *The Spirit in Worship—Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 258.

¹⁶Lim and Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus*, 38.

¹⁷Albrecht, “Worshiping and the Spirit,” 240.

Scripture contains roughly 245 explicit descriptions of the Holy Spirit's actions, 80 in the Old Testament, and 165 in the New Testament.¹⁸ Overwhelmingly, the dominant action ascribed to the Holy Spirit in both Testaments is the giving of revelation (37 times in the OT and 64 times in the NT). God the Spirit speaks through prophets and apostles, and ultimately inspires the Holy Scriptures themselves (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21).

Second in order of frequency in the OT and third in the NT is special empowerment given to individual leaders whom God has called to perform special ministry on his behalf, often closely associated with giving revelation. This act of the Holy Spirit occurs 20 times in the OT and 18 times in the NT. For example, the Old Testament describes the Holy Spirit being "upon" Moses and the elders of Israel (Num 11:17), Joshua (Deut 34:9), judges such as Gideon (Judg 6:34) and Samson (Judg 13:25), and prophets such as Elijah (1 Kgs 18:12). He also uniquely came upon Israel's kings, Saul and David (1 Sam 16:13–14). This act of the Holy Spirit was never permanent (1 Sam 16:14; cf. Psalm 51:11) and was only given to special leaders of God's people, often resulting in unique wisdom, physical strength, and revelation from God. It was even applied to non-believers on occasion (e.g., Balaam in Num 24:2; Saul in 1 Sam 16:14).¹⁹ OT prophecy also foretells a similar empowerment given by the Spirit to the coming Messiah (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 48:16; 61:1). Not surprisingly, then, the earliest examples of this in the NT apply specifically to Jesus Christ, first pictured when the Holy Spirit descends upon him at his baptism (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). The Holy Spirit also uniquely empowers other spiritual leaders in the NT, such as John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) and the apostles (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17; 13:9).²⁰

Actions of the Holy Spirit in the OT fall off considerably in frequency after the top two categories. They can be described as follows:

¹⁸Thanks to PhD students in a seminar I taught on the Holy Spirit and Worship at Southwestern Seminary, and especially my graduate assistant John Gray, for helping to compile and organize this biblical data. The list contains only direct actions ascribed to the Holy Spirit, not necessarily assumed effects of his actions. I examined each case and categorized the actions based on similarity.

¹⁹Alva J. McClain says of this special Spirit-empowerment, "Three things should be noted about this coming of the Spirit upon the great leaders of the historical kingdom: first, it was not always related to high moral character; second, in certain cases its outstanding effects were seen chiefly in the realm of the purely physical; third, and most important of all, it had to do primarily with the regal functions of those who stood as mediators of the divine government of Israel" (*The Greatness of the Kingdom* [Winona Lake, IL: BMH, 1959], 93).

²⁰In these cases, Luke uses the term *πμπλημι*, translated with a form of "fill," in which *Holy Spirit* always follows in the genitive case, indicating that he is the content of the filling and explicitly distinguishing it from Luke's use of *πλήρης* or *πληρόω*, both of which describe sanctified maturity (e.g., Luke 4:1; Acts 13:52). The latter is also the term Paul uses in Ephesians 5:18. See William W. Combs, "Spirit-Filling in Ephesians 5:18," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 19 (2014): 31–34.

The Holy Spirit participated in creation (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30), gifted Bezalel and Oholiab with skill to build the tabernacle (Exod 31:1–5; 35:30–35), and dwelt in the midst of Israel (Neh 9:20; Hag 2:5; cf. Exod 29:45).

In the NT, however, the second most frequent action of the Holy Spirit after revelation is the sanctification of believers, appearing at least 24 times. This work of the Spirit characterizes Spirit filling (Acts 6:3; 11:24; Eph 5:18)²¹ and describes the Spirit's work to progressively produce holy fruit in a believer's life (e.g., Rom 15:16; Gal 5:22). In the NT the Holy Spirit also indwells (17 times), regenerates (13 times), assures (5 times), convicts (2 times), and illumines (2 times).

There is some debate, of course, as to whether with Spirit baptism (mentioned 11 times in the NT) the Holy Spirit is the *agent* of baptism or the *medium* of baptism. If he is the *agent*, then baptism should be listed also as an action of the Holy Spirit. While this is a grammatical possibility in some texts (e.g., the key text of 1 Cor 12:13), the four earliest references to Spirit baptism (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) predict that Christ is the one who does the action of baptizing in (ἐν) the Spirit, parallel to John baptizing in (ἐν) water, thus identifying the Spirit as the *medium* of the baptism. However, for sake of argument, in this paper I will consider even this among the Spirit's actions, and regardless of whether one takes the Spirit to be the *agent* or *medium*, the results are clearly articulated in 1 Corinthians 12: Spirit baptism unites all believers to Christ from the moment of their salvation and forevermore.

Finally, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12–14 discuss gifts that are given to believers. Although absent in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 explains that these gifts are given “through the Spirit” (v. 8) or “by the one Spirit” (v. 9), and chapter 14 calls them “manifestations of the Spirit” (v. 12). Since these passages explicitly ascribe the giving of these gifts to the Holy Spirit, other passages that discuss such gifts may also safely be attributed to a work of the Holy Spirit (e.g., 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). These gifts are supernatural abilities “given for service within the ministry and outreach of the local church,”²² including miraculous gifts, which involve what Rolland McCune describes as “a suspension, a bypassing, or even an outright contravention of the natural order”²³ (e.g., prophecy, miracles, healing, and tongues), and non-miraculous gifts, which Stitzinger describes as abilities that “operate within the natural realm of order even though God's hand of

²¹When translating πλήρης or πληρώω; see n. 20 above.

²²Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, vol. 2: *The Doctrines of Man, Sin, Christ, and the Holy Spirit* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 349. Wayne Grudem, a continuationist, defines them similarly: “A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 101).

²³Rolland D. McCune, “A Biblical Study of Tongues and Miracles,” *Central Bible Quarterly* 19 (1976): 15.

providence is involved"²⁴ (e.g., evangelism, teaching, mercy, administration, etc.). Of course, there is wide debate concerning whether and which of these gifts continue today. I personally believe that supernatural gifts of the Spirit have ceased in the present age, a defense of which is beyond the scope of this paper.²⁵ However, for the sake of this discussion, I will assume a broad, continuationist perspective. In other words, even assuming the present continuation of all the kinds of spiritual gifts mentioned in Scripture, the common expectation that the Spirit's normal work in worship is one of extraordinary experience is still suspect.

CHARACTERIZING THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

This brief survey of the Holy Spirit's activity throughout Scripture helps to lay an important foundation for assessing his work in worship, especially what Christians should expect his ordinary work to be. In order to arrive at conclusions regarding that expectation, I will next consider broadly how to characterize the Holy Spirit's ordinary activity, and then I will narrow the focus specifically to how the New Testament characterizes his work in worship.

Is the Holy Spirit's Work Characteristically Extraordinary Experience?

Taking all of the biblical data concerning the Holy Spirit's work throughout history into account, there is no doubt that he sometimes works in extraordinary ways. Yet extraordinary works of the Spirit are not the usual way God works his sovereign will through the course of biblical history. When extraordinary experiences occur, they happen during significant transitional stages in the outworking of God's plan. Sinclair Ferguson helpfully explains:

In the Scriptures themselves, extraordinary gifts appear to be limited to a few brief periods in biblical history, in which they serve as confirmatory signs of new revelation and its ambassadors, and as a means of establishing and defending the kingdom of God in epochally significant ways.... Outbreaks of the miraculous sign gifts in the Old Testament were, generally speaking, limited to those periods of redemptive history in which a new stage of covenantal revelation was reached.... But these sign-deeds were never normative. Nor does the Old Testament suggest they should have continued unabated even

²⁴James F Stitzinger, "Spiritual Gifts: Definitions and Kinds," *Master's Seminary Journal* 14 (Fall 2003): 161.

²⁵A few representative works that argue a cessationist position include Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918); Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Final Word: Biblical Response to the Case for Tongues and Prophecy Today* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1998).

throughout the redemptive-historical epoch they inaugurated.... Consistent with this pattern, the work of Christ and the apostles was confirmed by “signs and wonders.”²⁶

In other words, to focus on the relatively few cases in biblical history of extraordinary works of the Holy Spirit and draw from those a theology that assumes this to be his regular activity fails to take into account the purpose of these works in the overarching plan of God. Furthermore, even the extraordinary works of the Spirit in Scripture, such as giving revelation or empowering for service, hardly resemble the kinds of extraordinary manifestations contemporary worshipers have come to associate with the Holy Spirit, such as emotional euphoria or “atmosphere.” Even if Christians in the present age should expect extraordinary works of the Spirit to regularly occur, what most contemporary evangelicals have come to expect does not fit the biblical pattern for how the Holy Spirit works.

Ordering as a Characteristic of the Holy Spirit’s Work

Rather, the ordinary work of the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture is better characterized, not as *extraordinary experience* but rather as an *ordering* of the plan and people of God. Ferguson notes that the very first action of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is “that of extending God’s presence into creation in such a way as *to order and complete what has been planned in the mind of God*.”²⁷ Jonathan Edwards developed this theme in his discussion of the Holy Spirit’s work in creation:

It was more especially the Holy Spirit’s work to bring the world to its beauty and perfection out of the chaos, for the beauty of the world is a communication of God’s beauty. The Holy Spirit is the harmony and excellency and beauty of the Deity...therefore it was his work to communicate beauty and harmony to the world, and so we read that it was he that moved upon the face of the waters.²⁸

“This,” Ferguson continues, “is exactly the role the Spirit characteristically fulfills elsewhere in Scripture.”²⁹ Indeed, this overarching characteristic of *ordering* describes much, if not all, of what the Holy Spirit does throughout Scripture, including giving revelation, creating life (both physical and spiritual), and sanctifying individual believers: “The Spirit orders (or re-orders) and ultimately beautifies God’s creation.”³⁰

²⁶Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 224–25.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 21.

²⁸Jonathan Edwards, “Miscellanies,” no. 293, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The “Miscellanies,”* (Entry Nos. a–500), ed. Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 384.

²⁹Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, 21.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 22.

Graham Cole summarizes, "Creation and its sustenance are the work of the Spirit as the Spirit implements the divine purposes in nature and history."³¹

PURPOSE OF REVELATION

Spirit-given revelation also had the ultimate purpose of bringing order to God's plan in the world. The Holy Spirit gives special revelation to disclose the nature and character of God, explain God's requirements, correct sin, and give hope for the future. Likewise, he guides the apostles into the truth (John 16:13) necessary to establish Christian doctrine and set the church in order (1 Tim 3:15). Ultimately, he inspires a "prophetic word more fully confirmed" (2 Pet 1:19–21), the canonical Scriptures, given to believers "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16–17). The nature of such inspiration is important as well: the Holy Spirit did not inspire the Scriptures by bringing authors into a sort of mystical trance as they were "carried along" (2 Pet 1:21); rather, as helpfully defined by John Frame, inspiration is "a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word."³² Each author conscientiously penned the Scriptures (Acts 1:16; 4:25; Heb 3:7; 1 Cor 2:12–13) using craftsmanship (e.g., the Psalms), research (e.g., Luke 1:1–4), and available cultural forms and idioms. Spirit-inspired revelation is both for the purpose of order and produced in an orderly fashion.

PURPOSE OF EMPOWERING

Likewise, the empowering of individual leaders for special service was for the ultimate purpose of bringing to order God's redemptive plan in both Israel and the church. This is true of Moses and the elders of Israel. As Ferguson notes, "Just as the Spirit produced order and purpose out of the formless and empty primeval created 'stuff' (Gen 1:2), so, when the nation was newborn but remained in danger of social chaos, the Spirit of God worked creatively to produce right government, order, and direction among the refugees from Egypt."³³ Likewise, the Spirit gifted Bezalel and Oholiab with skills necessary for building the tabernacle. Ferguson observes, "The beauty and symmetry of the work accomplished by these men in the construction of the tabernacle not only gave aesthetic pleasure, but a physical pattern in the heart of the camp which served to re-establish concrete expressions of

³¹Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 282.

³²John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 140.

³³Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, 22.

the order and glory of the Creator and his intentions for his creation.”³⁴ Indeed, in his fascinating book, *Spirit and Beauty*, Patrick Sherry demonstrates that “a long list of Christian theologians, from Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria in the early Church to more recent writers like Edwards and Evdokimov, have associated the Holy Spirit with beauty.”³⁵ The Holy Spirit’s work of beautifying could be considered a subset of the broader category of ordering. This is true as well for his empowering of apostles in the early church, gifting them with the necessary abilities to both quickly spread the gospel message beyond Jerusalem “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) and firmly establish the doctrine and practice of the early church (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4). In other words, while it is accurate to say that the Holy Spirit has worked in extraordinary ways, these were rare, and their function was to bring God’s purposes into order.

SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION

The Holy Spirit’s characteristic work is not only an ordering of God’s historical-redemptive plan, but it also a “moral ordering.”³⁶ This work begins with his acts of convicting sinners (John 16:8) and regenerating hearts (Titus 3:5), bringing life and order to once dead and disordered lives. This re-ordering continues with his frequently mentioned work of sanctification (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2). He “circumcises the hearts” of believers (Rom 2:29) and strengthens their inner being (Eph 3:16), pouring love into their hearts (Rom 5:5) and leading them to fulfill “the righteous requirement of the law” (Rom 8:4). Of particular importance for this discussion is a careful focus on what Paul calls “the fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22–23, the results of such an ordering in the life of the Christian: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Indeed, the overwhelming emphasis in the NT concerning what will characteristically define the life of a mature, Spirit-filled Christian is on sobriety, discipline, dignity, and self-control. Paul commands believers to “think with sober judgment” (Rom 12:3), “be sober” (1 Thess 5:6, 8), and “be self-controlled” (Tit 2:12), as does Peter (1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; 5:8; 2 Pet 1:6). In particular, he urges older men to “be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness,” older woman to “be reverent in behavior,” and younger women and men to “be self-controlled” (Tit 2:2–6). None of these evidences of the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life resemble what a contemporary worshiper would describe as “extraordinary experience.” Rather, these are the result of the progressive work of the

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2002), 77.

³⁶Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, 24.

Spirit to sanctify a believer through the disciplines of his Word. John Murray summarizes the Holy Spirit's work in sanctification: "It is the efficacious and transforming enlightenment of the Holy Spirit by which the people of God attain 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph 4:13)."³⁷

PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS

This concept of *ordering* also describes the purpose of the Spirit's work of gifting, specifically, an ordering of the body of Christ. Paul states that "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). He explicitly connects the Spirit's giving of gifts to bringing order within the church, commanding, "Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church" (1 Cor 14:12). The Holy Spirit's gifting of individual Christians with a diversity of ministry abilities serves to build up the unity of the Church—many members of one body (1 Cor 12:12; Rom 12:5), with the goal that this body will "attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). It is in this context that Paul most clearly defines Spirit baptism—"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13)—which, even if the Holy Spirit is the agent, involves an ordering such that the body of Christ is formed and unified. Or, to use another NT metaphor for the Church, by the Spirit, believers "are being built together into a dwelling place for God," "a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:21–22).

ORDERING IN CORPORATE WORSHIP

This metaphor of the Spirit building believers into a temple for God narrows the focus of the Holy Spirit's work specifically to corporate worship. The temple metaphor is not coincidental; the gathered NT church is the dwelling place for the Spirit of God in this age in the same way that the temple was God's dwelling place in the OT economy.³⁸ In this temple, built by the Spirit of God and indwelt by him, worship takes place. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit of God who makes worship possible. Christians come to enjoy communion with God through the person and work of Jesus Christ, but this happens "in one Spirit" (Eph 2:18).

This also may be what Christ meant in John 4 when he said that God is seeking those who will "worship the Father in spirit and truth" (v. 23). Since "God is a spirit" (v. 24) and does not have a body like man, true worship takes place in its essence in the non-corporeal realm

³⁷John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 225.

³⁸Metaphorical reference to the temple in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 6:16 employ plural pronouns, while Paul also describes the bodies of individual believers as "a temple of the Holy Spirit within you" (1 Cor 6:19).

of the Spirit, which is why it is essential that the Holy Spirit dwell within the NT temple—the Church—in the same way he dwelt in the temple of the Old Testament. And while in the Old Testament, worship was specifically localized to that physical, Spirit-indwelt temple, “the hour is now here” (v. 23) that worship takes place wherever two or three Spirit-indwelt believers gather together, for there he is “in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20).

Furthermore, characterizing the Holy Spirit’s work as one of *ordering* comes even more into clarity when narrowing the focus of his work to corporate worship. The key passage for this focus is 1 Corinthians 14:26–40.³⁹ Apparently, Christians in the church at Corinth had similar expectations about the Holy Spirit’s work in worship being extraordinary experience as contemporary Christians do. As D. A. Carson notes, “At least some Corinthians wanted to measure their maturity by the intensity of their spiritual experiences.”⁴⁰ Yet Paul corrects their expectation by emphasizing that even if the Holy Spirit works in extraordinary ways in worship, like with tongues or prophecy, “God is not a God of confusion”—in other words, disorder—“but of peace” (v. 33). The meaning of εἰρήνης here “is much the same as that of the Rabbinic *shalom*”—a state of completeness, soundness, and harmony.⁴¹ Paul’s argument here appears to be that even within a context of expecting the Holy Spirit to work in miraculous ways, confusion and disorder are evidences that he is *not* working. As Charles Hodge noted about this passage, “When men pretend to be influenced by the Spirit of God in doing what God forbids, whether in disturbing the peace and order of the church, by insubordination, violence or abuse, or in any other way, we may be sure they are either deluded or imposters.”⁴² It is a God of peace who is at work in corporate worship.

On this basis, Paul provides clear principles for order in a worship service, fully consistent with the Holy Spirit’s usual activity. The purpose of prophecy, Paul contends, is the “upbuilding” of the church (vv. 3–5). “Only two or at most three” people may speak in tongues in any given service, “and each in turn” (v. 27). If there is no one to interpret the tongues, “let each of them keep silent” (v. 28). Only two or three prophets should speak, others should weigh what is said (v. 29), and they should do so one at a time (v. 30). Far from expecting the Holy Spirit to sweep through the congregation, causing worshipers to be

³⁹For a helpful examination of this passage and its relationship to the tension between freedom and order in worship, see David M. Toledo, “Freedom and Order in Worship: Paul’s Instructions in 1 Corinthians,” *Artistic Theologian* 5 (2017): 3–16.

⁴⁰D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 108.

⁴¹*TDNT*, s.v. “Εἰρήνη, Εἰρηνεύω, Εἰρηνικός, Εἰρηνοποιός, Εἰρηνο-ποιέω,” by Werner Foerster, 2:408.

⁴²Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 304.

overcome with his presence, "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (v. 32). As Gordon Fee notes, "The Spirit does not 'possess' or 'overpower' the speaker.... It is indeed the Spirit who speaks, but he speaks through the controlled instrumentality of the believer's own mind and tongue."⁴³ Far from quenching the Holy Spirit, order within corporate worship is exactly how the Holy Spirit works, desiring that "all may learn and all be encouraged" (v. 31). Anthony Thiselton draws the necessary conclusions for order in corporate worship from this emphasis upon edification:

Contrary to widespread popular uses of this chapter to assume an intimate connection between being inspired by the Holy Spirit and "spontaneity," the chapter as a whole places the issue of concern for the other and communicative intelligibility at the center of the discussion, and perceives the Spirit of God as "allocating" both "allotted time" and "differentiation"...as that which reflects God's own mode of self-giving in freedom conditioned by covenantal concern for the other. Thus "order" is not, as most or many modern writers claim, a symptom of authoritarianism...but arises because, if the Spirit is genuinely inspiring the worship, patterns of worship will be characterized by the nature of God as one gives himself to the other in modes governed by temporal purposiveness, not by anarchy or by activities which minister largely to self-esteem.⁴⁴

In summary, there is a strong case to be made that foundational gifts like tongues and prophecy have ceased now that the Church has complete, inscripturated revelation, but even if the Holy Spirit continues to work in that way today, he does so through order and for the purpose of sanctifying believers. Nothing of how the New Testament describes his work in worship comes near to the notion of creating an "emotional atmosphere." As Mark Taylor notes, Paul's instructions here do "not preclude spontaneity, but even sudden impulses are subject to the principle of peace and order."⁴⁵ Thus in corporate worship, exactly because of how the Holy Spirit ordinarily works, "all things should be done decently and in order" (v. 40).

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN WORSHIP

Putting all of this together provides a robust picture of what should be the expectation for how the Holy Spirit works in worship. First, his purpose in all he does is to bring order, to both individual Christians

⁴³Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 692.

⁴⁴Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1075–76.

⁴⁵Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 348.

and to the Body as a whole. The descriptions in Scripture of the Holy Spirit's activity overwhelmingly attest to this purpose, and this purpose would most naturally extend to his work in corporate worship. He worked to bring peace and blessing to Israel as he dwelt among them in the OT Temple, and he does the same as he dwells within the NT Temple. This was his purpose in the foundational gifts he gave to the apostles and others during the formation of the church, and even if those gifts continue today, their purpose remains the same.

Second, one of the most influential and long-lasting works of the Holy Spirit to bring order to his people was the inspiration of his Word; this is why the most frequently described act of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is the giving of revelation, and why, for example, his work of "filling" a believer (Eph 5:19) is paralleled in Paul's writings with the Word of Christ "richly dwelling" within a Christian (Col 3:16). Thus, believers should expect that the Holy Spirit will work today primarily *through* his Word, and he will never act *contrary* to his Word.

The sufficiency of the Spirit-inspired Word of God leads, third, to the conviction that he has given the church in that Word all the revelation necessary concerning the elements he desires to be part of worship: reading the Word (1 Tim 4:13), preaching the Word (2 Tim 4:2), singing the Word (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19), prayer (1 Tim 2:1), giving (1 Cor 16:2), baptism (Matt 28:19), and the Lord's Table (1 Cor 11:23–32). Furthermore, because the Holy Spirit inspired the sufficient revelation concerning the elements for worship, believers should expect that he would naturally work through those elements in the context of worship. This is why Christians have traditionally called these prescribed elements the "ordinary means of grace"—these were the primary means Christians should expect the Holy Spirit to ordinarily work his grace into their lives. Thus, Charles Spurgeon's catechism reads, "The outward and ordinary means whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to us the benefits of Christ's redemption, are the Word, by which souls are begotten to spiritual life; baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer, and meditation, by all which believers are further edified in their most holy faith (Acts 2:41–42; Jas. 1:18)."⁴⁶

This leads to a fourth observation, namely, that believers should expect the Holy Spirit's regular work in worship to be that of sanctifying them through the effectual means of grace that he has prescribed in his Word. The regular, disciplined use of these means of grace progressively forms believers into the image of Jesus Christ; these Spirit-ordained elements, what Robert Letham calls "God's prescribed vehicles through which he communicates his mercies to us by the Holy Spirit,"⁴⁷ are the means through which Christians "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in [them], both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12–13).

⁴⁶Question 71 (Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Catechism*, 1855).

⁴⁷Robert Letham, *Union with Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011), 139.

Finally, with this being the expectation of how the Holy Spirit will work in worship, what role does emotion and music play in worship, and how are they related to the Holy Spirit? This question is particularly relevant since emotion and music are central to the contemporary expectation of how the Holy Spirit works. Very simply, understanding the ordinary way the Holy Spirit works in worship leads to the conclusion that emotion and singing come as a *result* of the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life, not as a *cause* of the Holy Spirit's work. Calvin Stapert helpfully makes this point with reference to Ephesians 5:18–19 and Colossians 3:16:

“Spirit filling” does not come as the result of singing. Rather, “Spirit filling” comes first; singing is the response.... Clear as these passages are in declaring that Christian singing is a response to the Word of Christ and to being filled with the Spirit, it is hard to keep from turning the cause and effect around. Music, with its stimulating power, can too easily be seen as the cause and the “Spirit filling” as the effect.⁴⁸

“Such a reading of the passages,” Stapert argues, “gives song an undue *epicletic* function and turns it into a means of beguiling the Holy Spirit.” He argues that such a “magical *epicletic* function” characterized pagan worship music, not Christian.⁴⁹ Further, while the NT does describe certain “emotions” that rise out of a heart of a Spirit-sanctified believer, such as the “fruit of the Spirit,” these will be characterized, not by extraordinary euphoria, but by what Jonathan Edwards calls “the lamb-like, dove-like spirit or temper of Jesus Christ.” Truly Spirit-formed “religious affections,” according to Edwards, “naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, and mercy, as appeared in Christ.”⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

While the Holy Spirit of God, who with the Father and the Son should be worshiped and glorified, may certainly do whatever he pleases in the world broadly and in corporate worship specifically, he is not a God of disorder, but a God of peace. The testimony of Scripture concerning the usual ways he works and a careful study of the New Testament's explicit treatment of his ordinary work in worship should lead Christians to expect, not extraordinary experience when the Holy Spirit works, but disciplined formation. Truly Spirit-led worship is that in which the forms, elements, and content are shaped, guided, and filled with the Spirit-inspired Word for the purpose of the disciplined spiritual formation of his people.

⁴⁸Calvin R. Stapert, *A New Song for an Old World: Musical Thought in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 19–20.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁰Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, new ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1978), 272.