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# “BOND OF LOVE”: THE ACTION OF THE SPIRIT

## ABSTRACT

The emergence of the various forms of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology has led to a welcome interest in the third Person of the Trinity, who has been largely neglected for centuries. However, while there has been a concentration on the experience of the Spirit, this has not been matched by an understanding of his work. The ancient idea, seen especially in Augustine, is that the main activity of the Spirit is that of providing relationship, as the “bond of love”; this provides a key concept which undergirds the work of the Spirit in creation, redemption, sanctification and empowering. It is hoped that increased understanding of the work of the Spirit will contribute to the healing of divisions in Christianity which emerged out of conflicting attitudes to the modern experiences.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The last century has witnessed a concentration on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, sparked off by the events at Azusa Street in Los Angeles in the early years of the twentieth century. These resulted in the emergence and development of the Pentecostal denominations. The particular features of this were the belief in a second experience of the “baptism” or filling of the Spirit and the practice of the “gifts”, the *charismata*, the phenomena described in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, and in Acts 2; such as prophecy, healing and particularly *glossolalia*, “speaking in tongues”, became a central feature of Christian life and worship in these groups. Later, in the nineteen-sixties, there was a further development, commonly known as the “charismatic movement”, sometimes as the “Renewal”, or by some other name. The practice of the gifts was again central. Unlike the older Pentecostalism, followers of this movement tended to remain within their denominations, and often intended to “renew” them from within. These

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movements had a pronounced effect on the Church as a whole, not least because they now account for about a quarter of all Christians (Hummel 1993:290). Their influence is seen particularly in the style of worship, as there was an explosion of new songs in a much more contemporary form than the traditional hymns. Today, the emphasis continues, with a “third wave”, again emphasising the practice of the *charismata*, but as in original Pentecostalism, again forming separate churches and denominations. “Christian centres” and groups such as “His People”, and the Rhema church emerged in this way.

As will be seen, the Spirit largely works through human agency, but that working is never forced. It is a *synergy*, a cooperation between God and the human agent, even as Jesus himself was God come in the flesh (cf Ferguson 1996:124). What this however means is that the full effect of God’s actions depend on human cooperation, which itself means that it will be most effective the more the people through whom the Spirit acts understand who he is and the nature of his workings. While the Spirit only works by the Church, the Church finds itself impotent without him. The power of God is often not utilised fully, just because it is not appreciated as it should be.

However, more than looking at the Spirit as the dispenser of gifts, there has not really been a clear understanding of his role in the Church and the world. The thrill of experience tended to sideline a desire to understand it. If the role and function of the Spirit is clarified, it will be to the benefit of all wings of the Church, and even contribute to harmony between the new and the traditional denominations. This division is arguably the one that is the most significant in the modern Church, eclipsing the old denominational differences, which are rarely understood among modern Christians.

## 2. NEGLECT OF THE SPIRIT

It used to be commonly said that the Holy Spirit was the “forgotten person of the Godhead” (Ferguson 1996:11). This is no longer so, partly due to Pentecostalism and its successors in both new and traditional denominations, and due to considerable academic interest, notably in several works by Jürgen Moltmann. Historically however, Western theology, much more than that in the Eastern Church, has concentrated on the Person and work of the Son. Part of the reason for this is that it has not been obvious what the role and function of the Spirit is. Indeed, by the very nature of “spirit”, there is a hiddenness. However, a fuller understanding of the Spirit is beneficial to Christian theology, and then to Christian life. It is

vital both for individual Christians and for the Church to be more aware of the Spirit and his work (Strauss 1954:12).

Without the active presence of the Spirit of God there must be a desperate vacuum at the heart of Christian life (Heron 1983:107).

James Denney aptly wrote, “to understand what is meant by the Spirit is to understand these two things - the N.T. and the Christian Church” (Johnston 1970:127). No small part of the reason for the lack of emphasis that the Spirit should have, and so of his contribution to Christian life, is a lack of understanding of what the Spirit does, based in part not only on wilful neglect, but on the difficulty of conceptualising his nature (Hendry 1965:11).

### 3. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

What does the Spirit do? The most obvious answer is to empower. Taylor (1972:3) commences his well-known book “The Go-between God” by noting that it is the Holy Spirit who is the chief actor in the mission of the Church, lamenting that modern Christians have often forgotten that, an “omission” that has bedevilled the practice and theology of our mission. It is the rediscovery of this aspect which has then been so significant in the modern movements (Williams 1971:19). “Spirit” and “power” are often interchangeable in the Bible (Fee 1994:35). At his ascension, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from on high (Lk 24:46). That was advice that they were only to ready to follow, for they were frightened, and justifiably so, for they had seen what had happened to their Lord, and even though they had seen the apparent defeat of the cross be turned around to the victory of the resurrection, they were naturally not too eager to experience those events themselves. They knew full well that in themselves they just did not have the power to stand, let alone to proclaim the message of what Jesus had done. The whole situation was turned around by the events of the day of Pentecost, when they were transformed when the Spirit indeed descended with the phenomena of wind and fire, and they emerged from the upper room to speak to the world in the power of God. So powerful was this that three thousand were added to the Church on that one day.

The second obvious answer to what the Spirit does is of transformation, that the Spirit changes or enhances ordinary human attributes, thereby empowering. In particular, the Spirit is traditionally associated with sanctification. While “we await a Saviour, who will change our lowly body

to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:20), this is "by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself".

A third role is that of motivation. The Spirit is the one who implants in the Christian the desire to serve God and the details of how this is done. Indeed, the idea of the "spirit" of a human individual may well be understood in terms of desire and motivation; the Spirit then acts on this spirit, conforming it to God (Ez 36:27). One of the most astounding things about Christianity is that it is not, as often thought, a set of ethical rules, but that its ethics come as an internalised result of the transformation to God that is its central feature. This makes an immediate connection with ethics, and indeed there has at times been a tendency to reduce the Spirit just to morals (Heron 1983:112). This of course tends to make the Spirit impersonal, which has also been a recurring deviation from traditional Christianity. On the contrary, the Spirit is emphatically a Person, the third in the Trinity, who then transforms our spirits.

There is however a further possibility, which may then be understood as underpinning those of motivation, transformation and empowering. This is that the essential function of the Spirit is to bond, or to relate. It is this which may well contribute to a deeper understanding of the Spirit; as Williams (1971:39) confesses, it is often hard to fit him into traditional theologies. Augustine's understanding was that the Holy Spirit was the *vinculum amoris*, "bond of love", linking together the first and second Persons of the Trinity. The Spirit acts in a similar way in bonding the divine and human natures in Christ.

### 3.1 The Spirit relates

In this case, what may be suggested is that the Spirit not only links within the Godhead, but that this fundamental function of bonding is applied also to humanity. Thus empowerment is possible just because the Spirit links a person to the ultimate source of power. Salvation is possible because the Spirit links the Christian to the ultimate source of life. Christ transforms the Christian only through the relationship that the Spirit gives. The Spirit links the head to the body in the Church (Smail 1975:76). Christians then do the work of Christ in the world, as they are related to him. They do his work of prophet, priest and king, as they enlighten, sanctify and strengthen, aspects traditionally predicated of the Spirit (Murray 1963:113), but who acts through Christians. Citing the opening of book 3 of Calvin's *Institutes*, Ferguson (1996:100) can therefore point out that the idea of union with Christ is at the heart of evangelical theology. The Heidelberg catechism states that the Spirit "is also given me, to make me, by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all his benefits" (in Lederle 1988:239). The expression "in

Christ”, or its variants, is so significant that it occurs over 160 times in the New Testament (Ferguson 1996:100). Christianity must, by its very name, be Christocentric, and any stress on the work of the Spirit must never replace this. Hendry (1965:41) fears a spiritualist heresy, a slide into mere religiosity. He (1965:68) adds that there can be an unfortunate tendency to sever the Spirit from Christ in Pentecostalism.

In other words, the Spirit generates relationship. The very fact that the Spirit glorifies Christ (Jn 16:14) gives a clue to understanding him, for he relates us to Christ. It is this that lies behind the frequent Pauline interchange of “spirit” and Christ. Heron (1983:31f) discusses the Biblical usage of the words commonly translated “spirit” and observes that the Greek *pneuma* had become conformed to the Hebrew *ruach* as applying “both to God and to man, and so operate as a linking term between them” (1983:33). The Spirit is the usual “channel of communication” between God and people in the Old Testament (Turner 1996:6), a “current of communication” (Taylor 1972:17). It is hardly surprising that relating to God is fundamental to eternal life. After all, very existence, and particularly life, is only possible in the context of a net of interdependent relationships. Interestingly, circulation, which is the means of the inter-relation of the organs of a body, is the first thing to develop in a foetus. It is also significant that brain processes are a result simply of the interaction of the neurons, never of one alone. Relation is even fundamental to the material world. Nothing, except God, exists independently; he alone has *aseity*, existence “from himself”. Continued attempts to explain the existence of the world and of life without any reference to God, by some form of spontaneous creation (cf Davies 1984), have so far proved fruitless. Many feel that the world can only be explained by means of its relation to a creator. The one way nature of time, and the increase of entropy (the measure of the move from order to chaos which is characteristic of the world), supports such a view, although of course cannot prove it. This is particularly the case for life, which the Bible portrays as being totally dependent upon God for its origin. The Genesis account tells how the first man was formed “from the dust of the ground” (Gen 2:6), but who only then lived when God breathed into him the breath of life. The same is true elsewhere, as in Ezekiel 37, where the “breath” or “wind” is the same word as translated elsewhere as “spirit”. The essential idea here is that life is only possible by the action of God. The Spirit generates, or creates, the relations which are the essence of life. Indeed, the very picture of “wind”, which is the basic understanding of *ruach* (Heron 1983:4), must be essentially relational, as it is physically generated from the relation between areas of high and low pressure.

It is certainly true that things actually only exist in relationship to other things. Buber, in his classic *I and Thou*, treats relationship as foundational

to being, a “mould for the soul” (Milandri 2001:174). He writes, “in the beginning was relation” (Moltmann 1985:11). It has been a modern realisation that a person is only such by relating to others, a particular emphasis of the African world-view, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, “a person is a person through people”, or as Mbiti formulates the same idea, “I am because we are”. Such thinking is a welcome corrective to Western over-individualism. This is also true of the individual, who only exists as a living being because of the fundamental inter-relating of the various components of the body. The same is however also true of the very nature of things, which only exist because their components have a particular relationship to each other. On the macro level, a car cannot really be called a car if it has been reduced to its components, and on the micro level, even an atom loses its specific identity if its protons and electrons stop relating to each other. Indeed, it has often been observed that the “teleological argument” for the existence of God, the argument from design that was popularised by the example of Paley’s watch, in fact reduces to the cosmological argument, simply because order and design are absolutely essential for existence.

Relation is foundational even to God. Different sets of relationships are what distinguish the Persons of the Trinity, as Augustine realised, so it is a stress on relationship that gives a solution to the problem of understanding the Trinity consistent with the Biblical material. It was the realisation that the three Persons fully interact, in what is known as *perichōrēsis*, that enables them to be distinct yet fully equal. This follows from the nature of God as spirit (Jn 4:24), so totally immaterial. This then means that God, as spirit, cannot in any way be possessed, but as spirit, can be related to.

It has frequently been noted that the Spirit is commonly connected with eschatology (eg Fee 1994:803f, who sees this as one of his main characteristics; he contrasts the centrality of eschatology in the early Church with its general irrelevance today). Thus his coming at Pentecost was a sign of the “last days”, and his gifts are first-fruits of the abundance of the future life. By the reality experienced in the present, the Spirit gives a “yearning for the future” (Williams 1971:11). This aspect can be understood in the same way, as the Spirit relating to the future, in effect giving a link to it. This is similar to the fact that he links the Christian to the past events of the cross and resurrection, so enabling salvation. Taylor (1972:80) then says that by the Spirit we enter the “Eternal Now”.

The concept of the *vinculum amoris* thus puts the stress on what is bonded, and not on the bond itself. As commonly observed, the Spirit is “self-effacing”, the “shy” Person of the Trinity (Ferguson 1996:186), drawing attention to the other Persons, not to himself. Taylor (1972:43)

suggests that we do not commune with the Spirit, for he is communion; we are not aware of him, but through him we are aware of God. It may be observed that the Old Testament makes a distinction between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Lord, depending on whether the general term for “God”, or his personal name, usually translated “Lord”, is used (cf Hendry 1965:47). The former is more usually in the context of empowering, the latter of prophecy, because in the first case, the point of the relationship that the Spirit enacts is for power, the second for instruction.

The idea of the Spirit as the *vinculum amoris* then throws light upon the enigmatic comment that the evangelist made, “as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn 7:39), and on the related point, “if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you” (Jn 16:7). As he says, part of the reason for this is the fact that Jesus is the sender of the Spirit (Jn 15:26, 16:7), and this cannot be the case when Jesus was incarnate, limiting the full exercise of his deity. Ferguson (1996:67) also suggests that the sending depends on the atonement, the fact of the crucifixion; a little quaintly, while the blood that issued from Jesus’ side speaks of sacrifice, the water represents the Spirit! The *kenōsis* of his incarnation provides a further reason for the delay in the sending of the Spirit. Murray (1963:40) stresses the point that the Spirit who indwells the Christian is the Spirit of Jesus; this means that the Spirit changes as Jesus changes. Effectively the relationship that the Spirit gives alters. Before the incarnation, the bond was to the *logos*, so naturally manifested as the “Spirit of prophecy”, as Turner (1996:7) emphasises. Then when Jesus became incarnate, the bond was to the *kenotic* Christ, but after the ascension, it was to a Christ who now fully manifested both divinity and humanity for the first time. He could “now communicate what previously had no existence ... a life at once human and Divine” (Murray 1963:39). This means that it was only after his glorification that the disciples could receive divine enabling by their relation to Christ, which happened for the first time at Pentecost. It is then perhaps meaningful that on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit came from heaven to show the link between the disciples and the ascended Christ. (Is this why *glossolalia* is sometimes the tongues of angels?)

The idea of relation will also add content to other Biblical pictures of what it means to become a Christian, such as the pictures of the new birth (Jn 3) or the new creation (2 Cor 5:17). These are valuable pictures in that they reflect the sovereignty of God in the regeneration of Christians, and also the decisiveness of a new start, but they are quite consistent with the idea of relationship, particularly of the dependence that is the life of a Christian “in Christ”. Christianity is not an imitation of the faith of Jesus, but it is emphatically faith in Jesus (Dunn 1975:13). This union is at an

individual level. It is not that only ministers or priests are in union with God, mediating grace to Christians, but that all Christians are directly united to Christ (Schweizer 1961:168).

In this case, the work of the Spirit can appropriately be understood in terms of bonding. In the modern world, Taylor (1972) aptly describes the Spirit as the “Go-between God”, but this idea is by no means original to him. In the early Church, Ignatius of Antioch describes Christians as “stones trimmed ready for God to build with, hoisted up by the derrick of Jesus Christ (the Cross) with the Holy Spirit for a cable” (Moule 1978:38 (cf 1 Pet 2:5)). Moltmann (1997:116) aptly comments that while “the Word specifies and differentiates, the Spirit bonds and forms the harmony”. Augustine even feels that the very name of “Holy Spirit” indicates his bonding, as both features of holiness and spirituality are common to all three Persons (Gaybba 1987:62); this would be similar to the way in which parents are particularly bonded by a child that shares their natures.

It is appropriate that the Spirit is the means of relationship, seeing that breath is a common picture for him. On the one hand, breath is one of the basic ways in which we relate to our environment. One of the others, eating, is a key element of the Lord’s supper. Then of course we primarily relate to other people by speaking, which has breath as fundamental to it. On the other hand, “Spirit” indicates the divine nature of this action. Not only does it reflect the very nature of God (Jn 4:24), but the Greek suffix *-ma* carries the connotation of origin; a similar case is *charisma*, “gift”, from the idea of *charis*, “grace” (Conzelmann 1974:403).

#### 4. ROOTS OF THE CONCEPT

Although the specific idea of the *vinculum amoris* is commonly attributed to Augustine, there were indications of the idea earlier, such as in Athanasius and in Basil, who referred to the Spirit as the communion (*koinonia*) between Father and Son, and in Gregory of Nazianzus, as intermediate between them. There are even hints as far back as the last quarter of the second century in Athenagoras of Athens (Torrance 1996:167), and in the writings of Epiphanius (Torrance 1988:234), who referred to the Spirit as in the midst of the Father and Son, and as the bond of the Trinity (*sundesmos tēs Triados*). All of these of course wrote in Greek; Augustine then transferred the idea to Latin. Most (eg Moltmann 1981:169), who refer to the concept and attribute it to Augustine place it in *de Trinitate*, 6:7, where although the word *vinculum* is present, it is not coupled with *amor*, but connected with Ephesians 4:3, *in vinculo pacis*, “the bond of peace”. Torrance refers to *de Trinitate* 15:27,50, but he rather cites “a kind

of consubstantial communion” (*communio quaedam consubstantialis*) between Father and Son (15:50). Others, such as Ferguson (1996:261) refer to *de Trinitate* 15:17,29. However the exact phrase is not to be found in any of these places in Augustine’s writings (*Migne Patrologia Latina* Vol 55). The phrase “*vinculum Trinitatis et amoris*” is however to be found in Augustine (*Liber de spiritu et anima*) (*Migne Patrologia Latina* Vol 40) col 820). Coffey (1990:201f) attempts to show the scriptural basis for the idea of the Spirit as the mutual love of Father and Son, feeling that Augustine had not done this adequately. The idea then goes into medieval theology, surfacing for example in the writings of Hugh of St Victor (*de laude caritatis* [Smith 1977:100]), although here again, while the word *vinculum* does occur, the exact phrase does not.

What may again be surprising is that almost everybody who refers to the phrase (eg Moltmann 1981:169) cite *amoris*. LaCugna (1993:156) refers to *amor vinculum*. Exceptions are Heron (1983:88) and Hendry 1965:45), who have *vinculum caritatis*; the former however also locates it in *de Trinitate* 6:7. Certainly *caritas* would be the more usual Augustinian word, used extensively in *de Trinitatis* 15 for the Holy Spirit, although not exclusively; *de Trinitatis* 15:30, 39 do use *amor* (cf Hodgson 1943:152,163). Certainly Augustine commonly uses *caritas* for love (and sometimes *dilectio*). The difference is similar to that in Greek between *agape* and *eros*. The former, *agape* or *caritas*, has the connotation of a self-giving love, very much the Christian virtue, manifested in God’s self-giving for us (eg Jn 3:16), then in the attitude that Christians should display to each other. God initiated the relationship with us, even when we were sinful and unlovely (Rom 5:7). It has been remarked that the Greek word was rare and obscure until the coming of Christianity (Stauffer 1964:37), associated with an attitude which could readily be despised as non-manly and weak. The alternative, Latin *amor* or Greek *eros*, refers of course to attraction, the latter being used of the attraction between the sexes. *Dilectio* also has the connotation of choice.

Bonding is then fundamental to God, which is how Augustine understood it. It then became a commonplace in theology, but not always just applied to the relationship between the Persons. Leo III, who died in 816 AD, wrote that,

in the Father there is eternity, in the Son there is equality, in the Spirit the *connexio* (“binding together”) of eternity and equality (Heron 1983:91).

## 5. A PERSONAL BOND

It is easy to see that the nature of the *vinculum amoris* demands that the Spirit be fully divine. The ideas of empowerment and transformation imply this if these are actions of the Spirit, but also if the means of these acts is bonding, for only God can be in full relationship with God (cf 1 Cor 2:11). There has from time to time been a tendency to subordinate the Spirit to Christ, especially if he is simply seen as applying the work of Christ (cf Heron 1983:126f). This subordination is reinforced if Christ is seen as the sender of the Spirit (Jn 15:26). It is partly for this reason that the Western church has advocated the procession of the Spirit as a common act of Father and Son, avoiding the implied subordination of the Son. This idea, that of the *filioque*, relates strongly to that of the *vinculum*, and likewise to the thought of Augustine. However, subordination must be excluded; it must be remembered first that the very incarnation was due to the action of the Spirit (Lk 1:35), and that Jesus acted in the power of the Spirit. The dependence is not one way, but mutual; better that the two roles are equal and complementary. Both Persons are fully divine. Augustine in fact prefers to speak of the Spirit as “gift” (Acts 8:20, Rom 5:5, Jn 4:10, cf Congar 1983:85), which for him implies full divinity, as God gives himself fully (O’Donnell 1988:77). The Holy Spirit has even received as his name what is common to both (Congar 1983:87).

At the same time, the Spirit is personal, indeed Personal. The idea of the *vinculum amoris* has not been accepted without some hesitation, because seeing the Spirit as the bond in the Trinity can suggest that the Spirit is not really personal (Hodgson 1943:143).

All the great theologians have always said that the love wherewith a man loves God or his neighbour is the Holy Ghost. It is not the *work* of the Holy Ghost only, it *is* the Holy Ghost (William Temple, in Oates 1968:81).

However, such sentiment, however laudable, is contrary to the developed Trinitarian dogma of one God in three co-equal Persons. Loss of the Spirit’s personality has therefore been a recurring criticism of Augustine. It has been felt that this may even lead to inadequate application of the Trinity to life (*Forgotten* 1989:31).

It must be affirmed that although a bond may be impersonal, there is no reason why this has to be the case. A person can well fulfil that function, such as one introducing two people, or a child strengthening the relationship between the parents. A child is a link between the parents, and by their mutual love of, and care for, the child, their love for each other grows. Even physically, although a rope or chain can be used to tie

two people together, a person could hold them. It must be remembered that a person can act impersonally, as when somebody pushes a car. One significant point here is that while a person can bond others, with basically the same results, there is a possibility that without slackening the bond, there is an element of freedom possible in the relationship. The affirmation of the Spirit's personality does however mean that is necessary to understand such as love not as the Spirit himself, but as the result, or “fruit” of the Spirit (cf Gaybba 1987:131). The action that bonds people is then not just emotion, but the Spirit, who then generates the emotion that goes along with the bond. Not that this should be seen as fundamentally exclusive; God is spirit, and has Spirit, has wisdom and is wisdom (Pinnock 1996:24), likewise the Spirit is love and generates love. Even if it has frequently been observed that the action of the Spirit in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, was basically impersonal, this does not preclude personality. The comment of Moltmann (1985:97) should also be noted, that the same idea of personality may not be applicable to all the Persons (also Heron 1983:174).

## 5.1 Unity but not union

The nature of a bond is that it links two people or things, and may then affect them, but it does not change their natures. Difference is maintained. Thus although the Spirit gives unity in the Church, diversity is respected, whether of different people with different gifts (1 Cor 12), or Jew and Gentile (Eph 2). Therefore the Spirit does not divinise a person who is linked to Christ (cf 2 Pet 1:4); salvation is not impartation of deity, but adoption as children of God. Likewise eternal life is not something that becomes inherent to a believer (neither is it a part of being human, as the ancient Greeks believed), but is due to the relationship with God, who alone has eternal life (1 Tim 6:16). Secular peacemaking commonly involves the imposition of homogeneity in order to remove friction, and that this is often done by violence and oppression; in contrast, Christian peacemaking involves the recognition of difference, but harmony between them, enabled by the Spirit. It is appropriate that the Holy Communion is the central act of Christian worship, as communion is the first fruit of the Spirit (Hendry 1965:120).

Bonding can occur at various levels. At the most basic, two things or people can be bonded, and enter into a relationship, but that is all that happens. It is quite possible for two people to have a blood relationship, such as between a father and a son, but for those two to have nothing whatsoever to do with each other. The relationship is there, and is real, but is ineffective. The prodigal son (Lk 15:11f) remained a son, but the

relationship did not affect him once he had left home. However, the bonding can be such as to affect the two being bonded. On the basis of the relationship, the prodigal could return, and then the relationship could develop. A third level is where the bonding is total, and a third entity results. There is a mixing that takes place. The concept of bonding then actually becomes irrelevant, as the two can no longer be distinguished, and separation is only possible with difficulty. The two do not just affect each other, but they lose their identities.

The action of the Spirit as *vinculum amoris* is then in these two former ways, which must be related. There are basically two possible sorts of relationships that the Spirit produces, the second dependent upon the first. Such a two-fold pattern of relationship is a common Biblical feature. Right at the beginning, at creation, God created animal life, but as a type of that life, and incorporating all the features of that life, such as having four limbs, he also created humanity, which had an extra relationship with him. In his setting apart of Israel as a peculiar people to him, he had a special relationship with one tribe, Judah (including Benjamin). In the establishment of a group to minister to him, the one tribe of Levi was set apart, but within that tribe, the priests had a particular relationship and responsibilities. Examples could be multiplied, such as the three among the thirty in David's bodyguard, types of prophets, and so on. In the New Testament, the same is true, with Jesus choosing Peter, James and John within the twelve disciples to relate to in a closer way. The principle even holds in the incarnation, because the Spirit was firstly instrumental in the incarnation, but then also filled Jesus fully at his baptism. It was the Spirit who made Jesus to be Messiah, son of David, even from birth, but then designated and empowered him to fulfil that role.

It is of course immediately obvious that such a pattern has immediate application to Pentecostal and Charismatic theology, which has as its basic premise a concept of two possible relationships. On the one hand the Spirit acts to give a relationship between a person and God, but then a second level of relationship is also possible, where the Spirit "fills". John 14:17 contrasts the state of the disciples at that time with what would be the case in the future. "... you know [the Spirit], for he dwells with you, and shall be in you." By the action of the Spirit, there is a basic bond, a basic relationship. The believer becomes adopted as a child of God, and has eternal life (Jn 6:47). But then that relationship can be internalised, transforming the nature of the believer. The external action of the Spirit affects the will of the Christian (Murray 1963:261), generating willingness for the relationship to be internalised. The "spirit" or will of the believer then becomes more conformed to that of God, and so the believer becomes more what God wants, so more lovable. At the same

time the Spirit generates a common “spirit”, or will, and so unity naturally follows. The Hebraism “spirit of” such as gentleness (eg 1 Cor 4:21), which seems to refer to a normal human attribute, may well be understood as the gentleness that the Spirit gives (Fee 1994:27). The human spirit is the place where, by the Holy Spirit, human and divine interface (Fee 1994:25). The bond is not just *vinculum caritatis*, but becomes *vinculum amoris*. The Spirit is given to change the one who receives him, just as the *charismata* are primarily for the benefit of those who receive their benefits, not for those who practise them (Dunn 1975:253), and of course, in so doing they bond them together.

Again, the understanding of the nature of the bond must affect the idea of “filling” with the Spirit, which then cannot be such as loses the difference between divine and human, merging them in any way. Here, however, the nature of the bond as *perichōrēsis* means that the human nature is distinctly affected by the Spirit. Ferguson (1996:187) remarks that the only two occurrences of “dwelling-place” (*monē*) are in John 14; as *paraclete*, Jesus goes to prepare a place for the disciples, while his replacement *paraclete* makes a dwelling for Father and Son in the disciples. The Spirit is “in”, not just “with” the Christian (Jn 14:17). Calvin insisted, against the weight of Erasmus, that we are saved “in” Christ, not “by” Christ (Ferguson 1996:101). It is then the filling of the Spirit which enables sanctification, and perhaps more crucially for Pentecostal theology, it is only in this second degree of relationship that the organs of the body are directly influenced by the Spirit, so only after “filling” of the Spirit that *glossolalia* is possible.

It is this second case that better reflects the inter-Trinitarian relations that the Spirit produces. The union and communion in the Trinity is an analogy for that between Christ and people (Ferguson 1996:71) and so between people. This is a relating together of such a kind that each intimately affects the other, but without a merging. The distinction of the Persons is maintained by *perichōrēsis*, by which the unity in the Godhead is maintained without merging the Persons; their diversity is not in the least compromised. The same is seen in the Person of Christ, where the Spirit links the divine and human in the one Person of Jesus himself. Here the same sort of bonding is known as the *communicatio idiomatum*, again resulting in unity and not a Nestorian separation of attributes to each nature. Of course the classic affirmation of this is in the Chalcedonian definition, with its four famous negatives, “indivisibly, inseparably, unconfusedly, unchangeably”, the first two against Nestorianism, the latter against Monophysitism. The two natures maintain their natures and absolute distinctiveness, but affect each other. This classic definition then applies also to the relationship between the believer and God. The mystery of the incarnation is repeated in the Christian, bonding him or her to Christ.

On the one hand there can well be a relationship in which actions are done simply because of the existence of that relationship. How many people are doing their duty to an aged relative simply because of that relationship? The deeds are good, but the motive falls far short. It is perhaps even possible to speak of the love of God in such terms, for it was “while we were yet sinners [that] Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7). This is the sort of love that can be labelled *caritas*, or *agapē*, love which is not deserved, which is not due to any feature of what is loved, where the attitude of the loved is more likely contrary. The “spirit” is not in line with that of God. In that state we could hardly have been attractive to a holy God, although of course he acted because he knew what we would become. More likely is that so many people are doing their religious duty, such as going to church, even praying, without an inner motive. But once people start to be transformed, duty is replaced by a desire to serve and to please the object of love. Such Christian love readily bonds. Colossians 3:14 refers to love, which is of course a fruit of the Spirit, “which binds (*sundesmos*) everything together in perfect harmony”. This is then *amor* or *eros*, a love which is mutual, where the wills or “spirits” are in harmony.

The bonding of the Spirit then also includes freedom of human choice. The Spirit never forces, but rather appeals. There is a necessity of human response (Dunn 1975:75) that means that there is always a genuine *synergy*. The bond of the Spirit is never complete, but always developing towards a fuller state. There is always an anticipatory, eschatological aspect to his work.

This sort of relationship must be the ideal, as God desires. Indeed Moltmann (1985:259) even suggests that such a unity of *perichōrēsis* even occurs within the natural human body, where each part affects each other, and in particular, between the immaterial and material; he is especially concerned to avoid any idea of domination of one over the other. There is increasing awareness of the mutual effects of the body and the mind, particularly in that the wholeness of one is essential for the wholeness of the other.

## 5.2 Interpersonal relating

Similarly, it is interaction that is the ideal for human relationships, if only because people were created in the image of God. Thus, in particular, the nature of marriage should be one in which the couple retain and even enhance their distinctiveness, but still relate strongly, relating to and complementing each other. It is no accident that marriage is used as a picture of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:23). It will also, as love, be a dynamic, not a static bond. Love that is not active and developing

dries up and dies. Murray (1963:241) pictures the Spirit as the persistent coming of the rain, not as a single gift; he believes that this is implied in the construction of John 16:8, where the Spirit repeatedly comes convincing the world. The tense of the command of Ephesians 5:18 likewise implies repetition, and continuous filling. Pentecost was the start of a process, not a final event.

## 6. CONCLUSION

A fuller appreciation of the fundamental action of the Spirit can not only benefit personal Christian faith and experience, but also enable the resolution of the new set of divisions in Christianity, paradoxically engendered by the new experience of a Spirit who generates relationship. But a better understanding of this role should contribute to resolving the misunderstandings, and then the Spirit, in synergy with human effort, will generate, as “bond of love”, unity between Christians and groups which desire to express their Spirit-given faith in different ways.

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Keywords

Trefwoorde

Holy Spirit

Heilige Gees

Trinity

Drie-eenheid

Charismatic theology

Charismatiese teologie