

TTS Foundations 2023/24: **[S15] "We Believe in the Holy Spirit" (P1)**

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[1] Introducing Pneumatology – The Doctrine of the HS

Our focus today? In the words of the Nicene Creed...

- *"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified" – i.e. 'pneumatology'!*
 - **REFLECT:** If you were planning, what would you cover?

One of the weaknesses of the systematic approach? It can give the impression that we can easily separate Christian doctrine into 'parts'.

- I.e. that systematic theology is ultimately just a big bag of ideas.
 - Rather than a single body of divinity!
 - (A seamless garment.)

This will become especially important as we come to study pneumatology – it overlaps with pretty much **everything**. (E.g.)

- *Who is God and what is he like? / How did God create all things? / How are people saved? / How does God work in the sacraments? / How does God work through preaching? / How do we know God exists? How do we have assurance? / What are the spiritual gifts + why are they given? / What is Scripture, and how is it given?*

Having said all that, it might seem strange that we're only covering this now. BUT – the eagle-eyed will have noticed that the Spirit has been no stranger.

REFLECT: How has pneumatology featured so far?

[1A] S3 – On the Trinity

- **What did we establish?**
 - **LOOK:** John 14:26 – re: the personal pronoun!
 - The Spirit is both divine and personal.

[1B] S4 – On the Creation of All Things

- **What did we establish?**
 - **LOOK:** Ps 104:30 – more on this later.
 - All animal and human life possesses the *Spiritus Dei*.

[1C] S7 – On the God Man

- **What did we establish?**
 - Christ's incarnation (and Virgin Birth) by the HS.
 - (Re: the NC – "*was incarnate from the HS*".)
 - ALSO: remember the four major ecumenical councils.
 - Constantinople [381AD] added today's line!
 - *"We believe in the Holy Spirit, [the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified]" – more on this later!*

[1D] S12 – On the Resurrection

- **What did we establish?**
 - **LOOK:** 1 Tim 3:16 – ‘vindicated in [by the] Spirit’
 - (The Resurrection was a Triune act of Father, Son, **and** the Holy Spirit.)

[1E] S13 – On the Redemption

- **What did we establish?**
 - **LOOK:** 1 Pet 1:1-2
 - The ‘*Ordo Salutis*’ (the order of salvation) – a pneumatological zip!
- **The Triune God’s free choice to be a Saviour God.**
 - *God chooses us* – in Christ, by the Spirit.
 - *God creates us anew* – in Christ, by the Spirit.
 - *God grants us faith* – in Christ, by the Spirit.
 - *God justifies us by this faith alone* – in Christ, by the Spirit.
 - *God conforms us to Christ’s image* – in Christ, by the Spirit.
 - *God will glorify us* – in Christ, by the Spirit.

[1F] S14: “He Ascended... And His Kingdom Will Have No End”

- **The Son is coronated as King – his Coronation Gift?**
 - **LOOK:** Eph 4:8-9
 - *“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear” [Acts 2:33]*

IN OTHER WORDS:

We’ve spent at least fourteen sessions studying the work and glory of God in Christ, for us and for our salvation – but by doing so, we’ve been students of the Spirit all along.

[2] The Trinity and the Holy Spirit in Church History

Again, 'pneumatology' is the study of the third person of the Trinity. We must therefore to be solid on the basics here, moving forward.

THINK: What do we know / remember about the Trinity?

- **There is one and only one God (the LORD God of Israel), who has eternally existed as three totally distinct persons, each sharing the same divine being and one united will.**
 - One 'what', three 'whos'.
 - One essence, three hypostases.
 - "One God in three ways" [Barth]
 - E.g. I am human (my 'what-ness') but I'm also Nathan (my 'who-ness').
 - (One being, one person in humans – but 'God is God and We Are Not'.)

We can apprehend this, even if we cannot comprehend it.

- Indeed, the Trinity was first known *doxologically* before it was understood *dogmatically*.
 - **LOOK:** Gal 4:7 – worship the F, through the S, by the HS.
 - "The worship of the Trinity was a fact in the religious life of Christians before it was a dogma of the Church" [Henry Barclay Swete – *The Holy Spirit in the NT* (1910)]

We see the ancient Church testify to this from the very beginning.

- Consider Polycarp [69-155AD]:
 - "For all things, I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, through whom with him and the Holy Spirit be glory both now and forever and throughout the ages to come. Amen" [Polycarp – *Martyrdom* XIV:3]
- Consider Justin Martyr [c.100-165AD]:
 - "[We] bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost" [Justin Martyr – *First Apology* LXVII]

It might seem strange, then, to hear Gregory of Nazianzus say this:

"You see lights breaking upon us gradually, and an order of Theology, which it is better for us to keep, neither proclaiming things too suddenly, nor yet keeping them hidden to the end. ... Our Saviour had some things which he said could not be borne at that time by his disciples (though perhaps they were filled with many teachings), perhaps for the reasons I have mentioned; and therefore they were hidden. And again he said that all things should be taught to us by the Spirit when he should come to dwell amongst us. Of these things, one, I take it, was the Deity of the Spirit himself, being made clear later on when such knowledge should be seasonable and capable of being received after our Saviour's restoration, when it would no longer be received with incredulity because of its marvellous character. For what greater thing than this did either he promise, or the Spirit teach? If indeed anything is to be considered great and worthy of the Majesty of God, which is promised or taught" [Gregory (c.329-390AD) – *Orations* XXXI.27]

REFLECT: What do you think Gregory is saying?

- **It's not that no one ever spoke about the HS – rather, it took the Early Church a while to give him his due.**
 - Christological heresies were the immediate threat.
 - Focused pneumatological reflection was uncommon.
 - (As we'll see next time – the Reformation gave us some of the best examples!)

I want to begin by briefly telling this story. Why?

- **FIRST:** once again, because death does not define the Church.
 - *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it"* [2 Tim 3:14]
- **SECOND:** to tell this story is to tell the story of the HS himself.
 - "You see lights breaking upon us gradually..."
 - This was the HS' work in history, through the Church.

THEN – we'll examine how the HS is described in Scripture.

[2A] The First One Hundred Years

- **For about one hundred years after Christ, most conversation about the HS stuck closely to Biblical language.**
 - (NOTE: with the exception of 'Montanism'.
 - BUT – we'll save this till next time!)
- **Clement of Rome** [c.35-100AD]
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 2:3-5 – in the same way, Clement talks about the Corinthians receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - "Content with the provision which God had made for you, and carefully attending to his words, ye were inwardly filled with his doctrine, and his sufferings were before your eyes. Thus a profound and abundant peace was given to you all, and ye had an insatiable desire for doing good, while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit was upon you all" [1 Clement II]
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 12:13 – in the same way, Clement talks about the Spirit as the 'glue' of Church unity.
 - "Have we not all one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace that has been poured out upon us? And have we not one calling in Christ? Why do we divide and tear to pieces the members of Christ...?" [1 Clement XLVI]
- **The Didache** [c.100AD]
 - Talks about the Spirit's role in evangelism and election:
 - "[God] comes not to call according to the outward appearance, but to them whom the Spirit has prepared" [Didache IV]
 - (Re: Calvin – "God's grace is tasteless to men until the Holy Spirit brings its savour" [Inst 3.24.14])
 - Mentions the Trinitarian formula of Baptism, and so includes the Holy Spirit:
 - "And concerning baptism, baptise this way: Having first said all these things, baptise into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water" [Didache VII]

THEN – the next 200 years saw the beginning of formal Trinitarian reflection. This had consequences for pneumatology.

[2B] The Second / Third Centuries

- **Justin Martyr** [c.100-165AD]
 - “Our teacher of these things is Jesus Christ, who was also born for this purpose, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the times of Tiberius Caesar; and that we reasonably worship him, having learned that he is the Son of the true God himself, and holding him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third” [First Apology XIII]
 - **N.B hint of some kind of ‘order’ within the Trinity.**
 - (*Pater in primo locō; Filius secundō; Spiritus tertio* – ‘the Father in first place, the Son in second, the Spirit in third’.)
- **Irenaeus of Lyon** [c.130-202AD]
 - “Now God shall be glorified in his handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modelled after, his own Son. For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man and not merely a part of man was made in the likeness of God” [*Against Heresies* V.I.1]
 - **Note the Son and Spirit as the ‘hands’ of the Father** – and they’re both involved in creation.
- **Origen of Alexandria** [c.184-253AD]
 - “[From Scripture] we learn that the person of the Holy Spirit was of such authority and dignity, that saving baptism was not complete except by the most excellent Trinity of them all, i.e. by the naming of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by joining to the unbegotten God the Father, and to his only-begotten Son, the name also of the Holy Spirit. Who, then, is not amazed at the exceeding majesty of the Holy Spirit, when he hears that he who speaks a word against the Son of Man may hope for forgiveness; but that he who is guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has not forgiveness, either in the present world or in that which is to come! ... [Up] to the present time we have been able to find no statement in Holy Scripture in which the Holy Spirit could be said to be made or created” [*De Principiis* I.III.1-4]
 - **THINK:** What do you think Origen is saying?
 - (1) The Trinity as the result of searching Scripture.
 - (2) The Spirit as uncreated – important!
 - (3) The “authority and dignity”, and “exceeding majesty” of the Spirit.

The third century onwards saw *Christological* heresy give birth to *Pneumatological* heresy. This forced the Church to hone its thinking.

[2C] The Third / Fourth Centuries

- **Athanasius of Alexandria** [c.296-373AD]
 - “[Certain] persons, having forsaken the Arians on account of their blasphemy against the Son of God, yet oppose the Holy Spirit, saying that he is not only a creature, but actually one of the ministering spirits, and differs from the angels only in degree. In this they pretend to be fighting against the Arians; in reality they are controverting the holy faith. For as

the Arians in denying the Son deny also the Father, so also these men in speaking evil of the Holy Spirit speak evil also of the Son. The two parties have divided between them the offensive against the truth; so that, with the one opposing the Son and the other the Spirit, they both maintain the same blasphemy against the Holy Triad" [*Epistulae ad Serapionem* I.1]

- N.B. These men were called the *Tropicī*.
- Condemned at the Council of Alexandria [363AD].

- **Basil of Caesarea** [330-379AD]

- One of the so-called 'Cappadocian Fathers.'
 - Cappadocia – E. Turkey.
 - (Alongside his brother, Gregory of Nyssa and his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus.)
- "The question which now crops up, owing to those who are always endeavouring to introduce novelties, **was passed over in silence by earlier generations**, because the teaching had never been controverted, and thus it had been left without authoritative explanation: I refer to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. I will therefore add a statement on this subject, keeping close to the sense of Scripture. As we are baptised, so we believe – as we believe, so also we give praise. Baptism has been given to us by the Saviour, 'into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. Therefore, we present our confession of faith in accordance with our baptism, and our offering of praise in accordance with our faith. **We glorify the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son, in the conviction that the Spirit is not alien to the divine nature**: for that which is alien by nature does not share in the same honours. We pity those who speak of the Holy Spirit as a creature, because by such a statement they fall into the unpardonable calamity of blasphemy against the Spirit. For those who are even slightly instructed in the Scripture, it needs no argument that the creation is distinct from the godhead. **Creation is a slave; the Spirit sets free**. Creation stands in need of life; the Spirit is the life-giver. Creation needs instruction; the Spirit is the teacher. Creation is sanctified; the Spirit is the sanctifier. ... Since then he is by nature holy, as the Father is holy by nature, and so is the Son, we do not allow him to be separated and divided from the divine and blessed Trinity, and we repudiate those who ignorantly count him as part of creation" [Epistle CLIX – *To Eupaterius* (c.373AD)]

The result of all this? Less than 10 years after Basil spoke this...

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified" [Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed 381AD]

Hence Gregory of Nazianzus' statement – re: 'lights breaking upon us gradually'.

LOOK: John 16:13

[3] The Holy Spirit in Scripture – General Themes & Continuity

So the HS is integral to every part of Christian theology – and pneumatology helped crystallise the doctrine of the Trinity.

REFLECT: How do the Scriptures describe the HS and his work?

- We've established a lot of this in previous sessions:
 - **LOOK:** John 3:8 – the Spirit regenerates us.
 - **LOOK:** Rom 8:14-15 – Spirit of sonship, Triune economy.
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 6:11 – the HS justifies + sanctifies us. (Cf. Ps 121)
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 6:19 – the Spirit indwells us, unites us to Christ
 - **LOOK:** John 14:25-27 – comfort, assurance, peace, truth.

KEY POINT: "you will receive the promised gift of the HS" [Acts 2:38]

Pneumatology is the ground of Christian piety, and when the NT authors touch on this subject, they do so in terms **of the free and loving choice of a Triune God.**

- "The Holy Spirit is freely given to us by the Father. We do not have to buy him. ... That which is a gift is free. The fruit of grace is given by grace. So the Spirit is said to be received by the gospel, not by the law (Gal 3:2). We receive the Spirit by grace alone and not by making ourselves worthy to receive him. All the Spirit's workings are called 'charismata' or 'free gifts'. He is freely given and he works freely, looking for no payment from us. So we receive him as a free gift. This is how the Spirit is to be seen, to be asked for and to be received, as a free gift. This is what faith takes hold of in our communion with the Holy Spirit. So the soul rejoices in the comforter for two reasons. Firstly, because he is willing to come to us and, secondly, because he is willing to be given to us" [Owen – *Communion*]

BUT – how else is the Spirit described in Scripture?

Let's take a look at a few key distinctives.

[3A] "We Believe in the HS, the Lord" (of his Church)

- **LOOK:** Rom 5:5
 - **Having regenerated us, the Spirit bonds us to Christ and imparts his love to us.**
 - Re: Augustine – Lover / Beloved / Love.
- **LOOK:** Eph 4:1-6
 - **Having bonded us to Christ in love, the Spirit bonds the Church together in love.**
 - Re: 2 Cor 13:13 – the grace!
 - "Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord! / Let all your graces be outpoured / On each believer's mind and heart / Your fervent love to us impart. / Lord, by the brightness of your light / You in the faith do men unite / Of every land and every tongue / This to your praise, O Lord, be sung" [Luther 1524 – *Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord*]
- **LOOK:** 1 Cor 12:4-6
 - **Having bonded us together in love, the Spirit equips the Church for love and service.**
 - More on this next time!

- **LOOK:** Acts 20:28
 - **Having equipped the Church for love and service, the Spirit appoints some to love it and keep watch over it.**
 - **LOOK:** Num 11:25
 - Continuity between covenants.

[3B] "We Believe in the HS ... The Giver of Life"

- Recall the words of Basil of Caesarea –
 - "Creation stands in need of life; the Spirit is the life-giver"
- **DISCUSS:** How would we justify this from Scripture?
 - [1] The Spirit was present at Creation.
 - **LOOK:** Gen 1:1-2
 - [2] The Spirit's creative activity continues.
 - **LOOK:** Job 33:4 / Ps 104:30 / Isa 42:5
 - *KEY Q: Why is this exciting?*
- **There is continuity here between Old & New Covenants.**
 - **LOOK:** John 6:63
 - The *ruach* of God gave life to man in Adam.
 - So the *ruach* of God gives life to new man in Christ!

[3C] A Tangent on the Spirit as the Giver of Life

- **Quick tangent – I'd argue this puts wonder back into creation + scientific inquiry back to Xians. HOW? Bear w/ me.**
 - The so-called 'Conflict Thesis':
 - Dominated western intellectualism for 2-300 years.
 - Kant / Voltaire / Gibbon (Enlightenment)
 - John W. Draper + Andrew D. White (Victorian)
 - [i] **Religion is hostile to science.**
 - [ii] **Religion is in competition with science** – GotG
 - The only problem is that *it's NOT true!*
 - No dark ages. No flat earth.
 - The Church funded medicine, science, and education.
 - Monasteries were the incubators of West. Civ.
 - Why did the Church do this?
 - **LOOK AGAIN:** Gen 1:1-2
 - **There is no hostility** – creation is an intelligent & orderly act of the Triune God, we can understand it.
 - **There is no competition** – the Spirit continues to create today, using means and mechanisms.
 - "See it is I who have created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and produces a weapon fit for purpose" [Isa 54:16] – **ALSO:** Exo 35:30-35 – Bezalel + Oholiab.

Our pneumatology can therefore lead us back to a place of enchantment and wonder – and it is the HS that sets us on the path of scientific inquiry. (Why? Because *all* truth is theological.)

- “[The] breath of life which quickens all things and is the Creator of every body and of every created spirit is God himself, the wholly uncreated Spirit. In his supreme will lies the power which assists the good wills of created spirits, judges the wicked, and ordains all. To some he grants powers, and to others he does not. For just as he is the Creator of all natures, so is he the giver of all powers” [Augustine – *City of God* V.9]
- “For it is thanks to the activity of God continued even down to the present time that seeds display themselves and evolve from hidden and invisible folds, as it were, into the visible forms of beauty which we behold” [Augustine – *City of God* XXII.24]
- “But who can doubt that the Holy Spirit gives life to all things; since both he, as the Father and the Son, is the Creator of all things; and the Almighty Father is understood to have done nothing without the Holy Spirit... And who can deny that the creation of the earth is the work of the Holy Spirit, whose work it is that it is renewed? ... But do we suppose that the substance of the earth exists without the operation of the Holy Spirit, without whose work not even the expanse of the sky endures?” [Ambrose – *On the Holy Spirit* II.V.32-35]

[4] The Holy Spirit in Scripture – One Big Idea

All these are important snapshots of the Spirit's ministry.
BUT it's my suggestion that there's a 'big idea' here.
One centre of gravity – the heartbeat of the Holy Spirit.

[4A] We first hear it in the OT – a sign of things to come...

LOOK: Gen 1:1-3 / Ps 33:6 / Num 24:2-4 / 2 Sam 23:2

- *"As for me, this is my covenant with [my people], says the LORD: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth" [Isa 59:21]*
 - All throughout scripture, we hear this same theme repeat.
 - I.e. a connection is made between the Spirit and the Word of God.

[4B] Then in Christ, it becomes deafeningly loud.

- **LOOK:** John 16:12-15 – the Spirit glorifies the living Word.
 - This is what we call the 'Word / Spirit balance' – key to NT.
 - **LOOK:** 1 Thess 1:4-5 – *"Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" [1 Cor 12:3]*

CENTRAL POINT:

We have no hope of constructing a healthy doctrine of the Holy Spirit without this firmly in view – the passion of the Father is to see the Son magnified and lifted up.

THUS:

The Spirit serves the Father by exalting the Son.

Re: Bernard – "in giving he reveals him; in revealing him he gives him" [Bernard of Clairvaux – Sermon 8 on *Songs*]

"For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God's face, shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognise him in his own image, namely, in the Word" [Inst. I.IX.3]

At this point, we're at a crossroads. I haven't got a fancy finish.

Why? Because this road leads somewhere – this subject informs everything we're going to go on to discuss. For example – preaching, sacraments, spiritual gifts, authority of the Church, doctrine of Scripture, etc. We must see this very much as 'part one'. BUT – there is one last thing to say.

There's the possibility a two-fold error here – mirroring one another.

- **ON THE ONE HAND: emphasising the Word of God without regard for the Spirit of God.**
 - I've seen Churches like this – re: 'Father, Son, + Holy Bible'.
 - There's no life, there's no power.
 - It doesn't work. We're not rationalists.
 - (Re: MLJ – 'logic on fire'.)

- **ON THE OTHER: delighting IN the Spirit whilst ignoring the delight OF the Spirit.**
 - I've seen many charismatics make this mistake.
 - Is it wrong to delight in the Spirit? Of course not.
 - Is it wrong to glorify the Spirit? Certainly not.
 - BUT the Spirit isn't most glorified when he's the focus –
 - He's most glorified when the Son is in focus.
 - (Re: Packer's floodlight analogy – i.e. at a stadium or concert one wouldn't spend a lot of time looking at the floodlights or spotlights, but rather at that which the lights are focused upon. So too for the Holy Spirit and Christ – it is not *at all* 'bad' to talk about, pray to, or worship the Spirit, but his own delight is to direct us elsewhere, to the glory of Christ, and this is his ordinary ministry.)

You might ask me, 'Nathan what does this look like?' After all, if the Spirit serves the Father in exalting the Son, how will we know?

To finish, I want us to consider the hymn 'To God Be The Glory'.

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!

**Oh come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!**

The Spirit delights to make much of Christ's mediation before the Father – and is to be found in the Christ-centred worship of God's people.

"The LORD inhabits the praises of his people..." [Ps 22:3]