*William Law (1686-1761)*

*“The Power of the Spirit" - By William Law, Edited by Dave Hunt, Christian Literature Crusade, 1971, 189 pages.*

*The Indwelling Spirit (pp. 15-24)*

**The Spirit of the Triune God, breathed into Adam at his creation, was that alone which made him a holy creature in the image and likeness of God. A new birth of this Spirit of God in man is as necessary to make fallen man alive again unto God as it was to make Adam at first in the image and likeness of God. And a constant flow of this divine life by the Spirit is as necessary to man's continuance in his redeemed state as light and moisture are to the continued life of a plant. (p. 15)**

**A religion that is not wholly built upon this supernatural ground, but which stands to any degree upon human powers, reasonings, and conclusions, has not so much as the shadow of truth in it. Such religion leaves man with mere empty forms and images that can no more restore divine life to his soul than an idol of clay or wood could create another Adam.**

**True Christianity is nothing but the continual dependence upon God through Christ for all life, light and virtue; and the false religion of Satan is to seek that goodness from any other source.**

**Man's fall from his first state brought a separation from God and thus from the life, light and virtue which is in Him. Man's salvation can therefore only be effected by a reconciling union of his spirit with the Spirit of the Creator.**

**Read whatever chapter of scripture you will, and be ever so delighted with it - yet it will leave you as poor, as empty and unchanged as it found you unless it has turned you wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, and brought you into full union with and dependence upon HIM. (p.17)**

**Take away this inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or suppose it to cease for a moment, then no religious acts or affections can give forth anything that is godly or divine. (p.17)**

**No man can remain in the goodness of his redeemed state but by continuing in that vital relationship to God that begins at his conversion; which is the same as saying that the continual inspiration and empowering of the Holy Spirit within the redeemed heart is vital and necessary to the salvation given us in Christ. Every branch of a tree, though ever so richly brought forth, must wither and die from the moment it ceases to have a LIFE UNION with the root.**

**The divine life in man can never be in him but as a growth of life in and from God.**

**Nothing but obedience to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, trusting Him for continual inspiration can possibly keep men from being sinners or idolaters in all that they do.**

**To think that we are our own, or at our own disposal, is as absurd as to think that we created ourselves. We believe that in Him we "live and move and have our being." (pp. 18-20)**

**The Christian church is in a fallen state for the rejection of the Holy Spirit, who was given to be the power and fulfilling of all that was promised by the gospel. And just as the Pharisees' rejection of Christ was under a profession of faith in the Messianic Scriptures, so church leaders today reject the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit in the name of sound doctrine. (p. 23)**

**As all types and figures in the Law were but empty shadows without the coming of Christ, so the New Testament is but dead letter without the Holy Spirit in redeemed men as the living power of a full salvation. (p. 23)**

**Thus, the coming of the Holy Spirit, being the fruit of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, is essential to the fulfillment of the salvation Christ procured. (p. 24)**

**Where the Holy Spirit is not honored as the one through whom the whole life and power of gospel salvation is to be effected, it is no wonder that Christians have no more of the reality of the gospel than the Jews had of the purity of the Law... For the New Testament without the coming of the Holy Spirit in power over self, sin, and the devil is no better a help to heaven than the Old Testament without the coming of the Messiah... While we still cling to a religion that does not acknowledge this, it is a full proof that we are not yet in that redeemed state of union with God which is intended by the gospel. (p. 24)**

*The Gospel (pp. 24-34)*

**The truth and perfection of the gospel could not be realized until it became solely a ministration of the Holy Spirit. Though instructed in heavenly truths from Christ Himself and enabled to work miracles in His name, nevertheless the apostles were not yet qualified to know and teach the mysteries of His Kingdom. There was a higher dispensation to come which they could never have part in from an outward instruction, even from the lips of Christ Himself. Only when He, being glorified, should come again in the fulness and power of the Spirit [*emphasis added*], breaking open the death and darkness of their hearts with light and life from heaven, could they experience in themselves all that He had promised to them while He was with them in the flesh.**

**"I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away," said Christ, thus teaching the need of a higher and more blessed state than they could know through His bodily presence with them. For He adds, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Therefore the real comfort and blessing of Christ to His followers could not be had except through something more than His physical presence and verbal instruction, wonderful as these must have been to those privileged few.**

**Before His crucifixion Christ carefully explained to His disciples the necessity of His outward teaching and guidance being changed into the inspiration and operation of His Spirit resident within their souls.**

**A man, however expert in all Scripture doctrines or learning, can only talk about the gospel as of any tale he has been told until the life of Christ has been brought forth, verified, fulfilled, and enjoyed through the power of the Holy Spirit in his soul. No one can know the truth of salvation by a mere rational consent to that which is historically said of Christ. Only by an inward experience of His cross, death, and resurrection can the saving power of the gospel be known. For the reality of Christ's redemption is not in fleshly, finite, outward things - much less in verbal descriptions of them - but is a birth, a life, a spiritual operation, which as truly belongs to God alone as does His creative power.**

**All that we are to be and do is by that very Spirit of Christ living within us.**

**He who places any hope or trust for salvation in a mere intellectual assent to doctrinal opinions has no more scriptural faith than he who looks for redemption to an image of stone. Every society of Christians which rejects the present operations of the Holy Spirit can produce nothing better than a religion of self-effort, despite its great zeal for all sound Scripture doctrines.**

*Worship of the Letter A Denial of the Spirit (pp. 35-46)*

**Christ's work of redemption in the flesh was only preparatory to His future indwelling us by the Spirit, so the written doctrines of Scripture are only a means to all that inward teaching and powerful working of Christ's Spirit within us. We must beware of resting in the mere letter without expecting through the indwelling Holy Spirit a real and living experience of all that Scripture holds out to our faith. (p. 35)**

**The life-giving power of Christ does not reside in Greek and Hebrew syntax, but in the quickening of the Holy Spirit.**

**Many profess a sound doctrinal understanding of the letter of Scripture, but at the same time they reject the very work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives to which the plainest meaning of the Scriptures they so zealously study and guard would point them!**

**Without the present inspiration of the Spirit, a man's knowledge of the letter of Scripture can be no more than ideas in his head.**

**Bible scholars are generally looked upon as having a divine knowledge when they are as ready at chapter and verse of Scripture as the learned philosopher is at every page of Plate of Aristotle. On the basis of a prescribed religious education, the clergyman is thought to be fully qualified to engage in that ministry for which the apostles had to receive an enduement of power from on high. This scholarly worship of the letter has greatly opposed the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and blinded men to the living reality which the gospel holds out to those who believe.**

**Flesh and blood may say to Christ, "Hail Master," and betray Him with a kiss; but no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**

**The natural man is everywhere in the church singing of his love for Jesus and calling Him Lord with his lips, while betraying Him to the world with his life!**

**Men are more concerned about proving who has the right doctrinal interpretation of Scripture than they are concerned with whether or not the reality of the gospel is being demonstrated in their daily lives. (p. 39)**

**One can be so proud of his doctrinal soundness that the Holy Spirit cannot convict him of the unsoundness of his life.**

**Vain men give to one another a special recognition as having great power and position in this heavenly kingdom by virtue of a proficient learning in languages and Biblical history, or skill in doctrinal analysis. If the faith of illiterate fishermen did more for the establishment of the church in a few years than centuries of prodigious scholarship, one may readily understand that a trust in the wisdom of men and the letter of Scripture has caused the church to fall from its first gospel state in much the way that Adam fell through eating of the same tree of knowledge.**

**The old Serpent has elevated many of his servants through this same subtlety into places of authority and influence within that which pretends to be the Church of Christ.**

**In this fallen state of the Church today, Bible scholars are everywhere given over to the self-assuming working of their own natural intellectual powers. Preachers and teachers come forth to play the orator with gospel mysteries as thought the kingdom of God were a kingdom of words, and not as it is in reality the inward work of the Triune God in the soul and spirit of man. (p. 42)**

**When Scripture creates a hunger and thirst to be filled and blessed with His divine nature through the Holy Spirit, then the letter kills not, but leads directly to life.**

**If the living Word, who is Christ Himself, is not living as Lord and Master in the depths of our spirit now, then those outward words He spoke can only condemn us in that coming day; and the more familiar we have been with the letter of doctrine, the treater will b our judgment for having neglected that reality which these words continually held out to us in the truths we professed with our lips but denied with our lives.**

**To justify the lack within his own heart of the fire of the Holy Spirit, the well-read theologian explains that the ancient way of knowing the things of God, taught and practiced by apostles and early Christians, is not for this present age. Primitive Christians indeed needed to have the fulness of the Holy Spirit's manifestation given to every man - but this was only for a time, until the completeness of the written canon of Scripture should give scholarship sufficient words to study and teach. Behold the folly of human reasoning! (p. 44)**

*The Wisdom of this World Denies the Spirit (pp.47-60)*

**How does the learned expert in the letter of Scripture doctrines view these words of Jesus: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"? Why, he bends every effort to become as wise in worldly wisdom as human learning can make him, as though he were determined to be anything but that simple child of faith to whom the Father reveals the mysteries of the gospel. Thus, he shuts himself and others out of the heavenly kingdom, turning from the tree of life to feed on that tree of sin and death that was called in the garden, the tree of knowledge. ... He has sold his birthright in the gospel state of spiritual illumination for a name, to make a noise with the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of the natural man.**

**Thousands stand ready to split doctrinal hairs and instruct others in the fine meaning of Scripture words - but there are so few through whom the Holy Spirit can work to bring men to new birth in the kingdom of God. (p. 47)**

**To know the truth of gospel salvation is to know that man's natural wisdom is to be equally sacrificed with man's natural folly. They are but one and the same thing, only called sometimes by one name, and sometimes by the other. For man's intellectual faculties are, by the fall, in a much worse state than his animal appetites, and require of him much greater self-denial. To believe this, no more need be known than these two things: 1) that our salvation consists wholly in being saved from ourselves, or that which we are by nature; and 2) that nothing could be our salvation but such a humility of God manifested in human nature as is beyond all expression except in the God-man Christ Jesus. (p. 49)**

What a paradox to see the professed church of the Lamb filled with great numbers of champion disputants, who from age to age have been up in arms to support and defend a set of opinions, doctrines, and practices, all of which may be most cordially embraced without demanding the least degree of self-denial, and most firmly held fast without bestowing the least degree of humility!

**What a gross ignorance, both of man's need and Christ's salvation, to run to Greek and Hebrew schools to learn how to put off Adam and to put on Christ! How absurd to seek to be wise in scholarship concerning the letter of Scripture in order to obey Christ's command that we must become like a little child to enter into His kingdom! (p. 51)**

If Christians had desired no knowledge but that which comes alone from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church had been a kingdom of God and communion of saints to this present day. Christians would have known no master but Christ, nor would anything else be considered possible to effect salvation except dying to self that the Christ of God might be formed in us, making children of God out of the fallen sons of Adam. But now corruption, sin, death, and every evil of the world have entered into the Church, the spouse of Christ, just as they entered into Eve, the spouse of Adam, in paradise. And in the very same way, knowledge other than that which comes from the inspiration of the Spirit of God alone. (p. 51)

**Let no one here imagine that I am writing against all human literature, arts, and sciences, or that I wish the world to be without them. I am no more an enemy of them that of the common useful labors of life. It is the application to the things of the Spirit of God of the same methods of learning and wisdom used by worldly scholars in earthly pursuits that I charge with folly and mischief. And in this I have all learned Christendom, both popish and Protestant, on my side. For they both agree in charging each other with a bad and false gospel state, because of that which their great learning and logic has produced for them.**

**Is it not time to seek a better ground to stand upon than such scholarship as this? Consider first of all that true deliverance from sin is nowhere to be found for fallen man, but in these two points: 1) A total childlike faith in gospel salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ for man; and 2) A total resignation to, and sole dependence upon, the continual operation of the Holy Spirit in man. Through Him, Christ becomes our never ceasing Light, Teacher, Guide, and Living Power whereby we can walk in all the ways of virtue in which He Himself walked in the flesh.**

**Let the Christian world forget or depart from this true gospel salvation; let anything else be trusted but the cross of Christ and the Spirit of Christ; and then, though churches and preachers and prayers and sacraments are everywhere in plenty, nothing can come of them but a Christian kingdom of pagan vices, along with a mouth-professed belief in the Apostle's Creed and the communion of saints. ... What vanity, then, to count progress in terms of numbers of new and lofty cathedrals, chapels, sanctuaries, mission stations, and multiplied new membership lists, when there is no change in this undeniable departure of men's hearts from the living God. (pp. 55-56)**

**Could you therefore be content to be one of the primitive Christians, who lived before the writings throughout church history, and who were as good disciples of Christ as any that have been since. ... What project was it, to be grasping after the knowledge of all the opinions, doctrines, disputes, heresies, schisms, and decrees which seventeen hundred years had brought forth through all the extent of the Christian world! That project this, in order to learn the reality of the power of Christ as a deliverer from the evil and earthly flesh and blood, and death and hell, and to become a preacher of a new birth and life from above! For as this is the divine work of Christ, so he only is a true and able pastor who can bear a faithful testimony to this divine work of Christ in his own soul.**

**Books of divinity, indeed, I have not done with; but will esteem none to be such but those that make known to my heart the inward power and redemption of Jesus Christ, through the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit. (p. 59)**

**In the present church, the tree of life is hissed at as the visionary food of extremists, and the tree of death, called the tree of knowledge, has the eyes and hearts of priests and people, and is thought to do as much good to Christians as it did evil to the first inhabitants of Paradise. The simplicity indeed both of the gospel doctrines and letter has acquired the shine of worldly wisdom and methods; for these latter are now thought as powerful a means of getting men of the world to turn to God as they were formerly proven to be the power of darkness that turned men from God to the world. And so it must sadly be said that the gospel which can give life only when ministered by the Spirit, has become the province of scholarship in the letter, which can only bring death. (p.60)**