

HOLY SPIRIT: LORD AND GIVER

Is 11:1-3; Ps 33:6; Ps 104:29-30; 2 Peter 1:21

- I. EMPOWERING WIND:** “Lord and Giver of Life” (Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed, 325/381 A.D.)—empowering (e.g. windmills, sailboats; tornados, hurricanes)
- A. Natural Revelation: humans sense *Something Other* (transcendent; non-material; Spiritual, sustaining the visible, mundane world—powerful (Gk *dunamis*)—mysterious Presence
1. “Holy Wind” of Navajos; “Wakan-tanka” of Sioux; *Orenda* of Iroquois; *Manitou* of Algonquin all denote spiritual realities—immanent, energizing Spirit
 2. Philosophers’ intuitions—Platonic Realism: “analogy of the cave” & Transcendent Forms beguiling, especially for mathematically-inclined; Stoics’ Soul of World—Cicero *et al.*
 3. Physicists’ mysterious universe—e.g. Isaac Newton’s Gravity; Albert Einstein’s $E=mc^2$ & atoms’ incredible energy; electromagnetism; strong & weak nuclear force; invisible powers
 4. Musicians following Pythagoras, speak “language of the spirit”; Cicero: *return* to divine realm
 5. Love’s power—creative, energizing, life-giving (thus Dante’s *Divine Comedy*)
- B. Biblical terms: most common words for “spirit,” *Ruah* (Heb) & *Pneuma* (GK) frequently translated “wind” blowing where He wills (Jn 3:8)
1. Empowering: Samson; 120 at Pentecost touched by “mighty, rushing wind”
 2. Comforting (*com*=with; *fortis*=strength); thus *Paraclete* providing “strength/power”
- C. Trinitarian Dogma: Spirit Co-Equal (“with the Father and the Son adored and glorified”): LORD, denoting immanent Power/Love—“The Spirit was the vitalizer (*zoopoion*) and perfecter (*telesiourgon*) of the Trinity’s work (“let us make”) in creation” (*Ancient Christian Doctrine*, v. 4, p. 37); St Gregory of Nazianzus: “Christ is born; the Spirit is his forerunner. He is baptized; the Spirit bears witness. He is tempted; the Spirit leads him up. He works miracles; the Spirit accompanies them. He ascends; the Spirit takes his place. What great things are there in the idea of God that are not in his power?” (*ACD*, p. 28).
1. Visible Creation: Gn 1:1—Spirit hovered over waters; Ps 33:6—word & breath; Ps 104:29-30—Creating/sustaining Spirit; I Cor 15:45—1st & 2d Adams, “soul” & spirit; Col 1:16)—Prov 8:27-31 re Spirit/Wisdom creating
 2. Invisible Spiritual beings (man’s spirit as well as angelic/demonic/principles/powers) realms
 - a. Salvation: conviction; regeneration; justification; adoption; sanctification—*ordo salutis*
 - b. Christ’s Victory over Satan (wilderness temptations; Heb 5:15)
 3. Magisterial Authority—shaping, sustaining all that is; St Ambrose: “No one can say that there is anything that the Holy Spirit has not made. There also is no doubt that everything subsists through his operation” (*ACD*, p. 43).
- II. INSPIRING BREATH:** “Spoke through the Prophets”—“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21) revealing God’s Truth
- A. Natural Revelation suggests divine Message needing delivery, i.e. spokesmen/prophets
1. Assorted Indian sachems, holy men; Greek’s Delphic Oracle, allegedly conveying divine message (e.g. Socrates hearing injunctions)
 2. Reading great literature, many sense “inspired” dimension; Handel’s *Messiah*, composed within a few days in frenzy of “inspired” creativity; T. Howard’s *Dove Descending* analysis of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*—“a major edifice in the history of the Christian West”
- B. Biblical terms (*Ruah*; *Pneuma*) may mean “breath” as well as “wind”
1. Thus God/Spirit “breathed” into Adam “breath of life” (Gn 2:7)
 2. Respiration essential for animal life—incredible lungs-given process (cf. Fr. Paul Brand’s *Fearfully & Wonderfully Made* & account of young man dying of polio)
- C. Inspiring OT & NT Prophets (e.g. Jeremiah in womb; St John “in the Spirit” Rev 1)
- D. Inspiring THE WORD, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-3)
- E. St Hilary of Poitiers: “The gift of the Spirit is evident where wisdom speaks and the words of life are heard. It makes itself known where there is knowledge that comes from God-given insight” (*ACD*, p. 279).
- F. Augustine: “If he loves his brother, the Spirit of God dwells in Him” (*ACD*, p. 283)

LORD & GIVER OF LIFE: QUOTATIONS

“*Nitch’i*, meaning Wind, Air, or Atmosphere, as conceived by the Navajo, is endowed with powers that are not acknowledged in Western culture. Suffusing all of nature, Holy Wind gives life, thought, speech, and the power of motion to all living things and serves as the means of communication between all elements of the living world. As such, is central to Navajo philosophy and world view.”

James Kale McNeley, *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy*, p. 1

““Wind existed first, as a person, and when the Earth began its existence Wind took care of it.””

--McNeley, *Holy Wind*, p. 9

““Wind exists beautifully, they say. Back there in the underworlds, this was a person it seems.””

--McNeley, *Holy Wind*, p. 10

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love,
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the bands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.

--T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” in *Four Quartets*

“Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of children, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory. In a word, it is our being brought into a state of all ‘fullness of blessing,’ both in this world and in the world to come. We receive all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise, through faith.”

--St Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 15:36

“There is a holy spirit in everyone who confesses his sin, for it is already due to a gift of the Holy Spirit that you are disgusted by what you have done. Sins are pleasing to an unclean spirit, displeasing to a holy spirit. So although you are still imploring pardon, from another point of view you are already united with God, because you are disgusted with the evil thing you have done. And so what is displeasing to him is displeasing to you as well. That makes two fighting against your illness—you and the doctor. . . . This is why the psalm does not say, ‘Give your Holy Spirit,’ but ‘Do not take it from me.’”

--Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*

“Authentic transformation is possible if we are willing to do one thing and that is to arrange our lives around the kind of practices and life Jesus led to be constantly receiving power and love from the Father.”

--Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

“Like the victor who, on taking possession of a kingdom, places in each city men to execute his orders and act as his regents governing the place he has conquered, so the Holy Spirit, the loving Conquistador of souls, places some divine gifts in each of the human faculties, so that through His holy inspirations the whole many may receive His vivifying influence. Into the intelligence, the supreme faculty of the spirit from which radiates light and order of the whole human being, He pours the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge; into the will, the gift of piety; and into the inferior region of the sensible appetites, the gifts of fortitude and fear of God. By means of these gifts, the Holy Spirit moves the whole man, become Director of the supernatural life, and more—becomes the very soul of our soul and life of our life.”

Luis Martinez, *True Devotion to the Holy Spirit*, pp. 17-18

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!” (Ps 96:9). John Saward develops this theme in *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty*. Such beauty streams, as Light from Light, primarily from Christ, “the Light of the World, the Bridegroom who beautifies the Bride of the Lamb who is the lamp of a lustrous city” (p. 19). His beauty enters into and emanates from all that is beautiful in the world, “for without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Openly dependent upon Hans Urs von Balthasar (one of the greatest 20th century theologians), Saward endeavors “to perceive—through holy men and holy images—the objective glory of divinely revealed truth” (p. 22). Still more, he wants “to repeat Our Lord’s call to holiness: ‘Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt 5:48)” (p. 25). Responding to that call, he believes, involves pondering great works of sacred art, such as a celebrated altarpiece painting by Fra Angelico in the Convent of San Marco in Florence, wherein “the beautiful holiness of Paradise sheds its rays upon earth. It is meant to move men towards sanctity” (p. 26). Saward then devotes many pages to a careful description and explanation of the various figures portrayed by Fra Angelico. Importantly: his “art is centered on Christ” and celebrates the great mystery of His Incarnation (p. 48).

Grounded in the theological genius of St Thomas Aquinas, Fra Angelico’s art reflects the Angelic Doctor’s conclusion that there is a “fourfold beauty in Christ. First, in His divine nature (*secundum divinam formam*) He has beauty, for He is God the Son, the Splendour of the Father. Secondly, in His human nature He has the beauty of grace and the virtues, for He is ‘full of grace and truth’. Thirdly in Christ we see the beauty of moral conduct (*conversacionis honestae*); the human actions of the Son of God are more upright and therefore more beautiful than any other man’s. Finally, Christ as man, even before His Resurrection, had the beauty of body, a beauty befitting the man who was God, in whose face the spiritual beauty of the Godhead shone” (p. 56).

Christ’s beauty then extends, by grace, to His saints, for He wants His Bride, the Church and her members, to reflect His fairness” (p. 61). Adopted into God’s family we are “sons-in-the-Son” and thus called to radiate His beauty in His world. To St Cyril of Alexandria: “We who bear the image of the Earthly Man cannot escape corruption unless the beauty of the image of the Heavenly Man is imprinted upon us, through our call to adoption as God’s sons. Partaking of [Christ] through the Spirit, we are sealed by Him, in His likeness and to the archetype of the image. . . . *Thus the ancient beauty of nature is restored*” (p. 62).

Having carefully examined Fra Angelico’s artistry, Saward moves to a contemplation of the altarpiece’s placement—on the altar. At the very center of the sacred sanctuary there is a work of art. Religion and art belong together! “As St Thomas puts it, ‘just as a work of art presupposes the work of nature, so the work of nature presupposes God’” (p. 73). In following Nature, “‘like a pupil with his master,’” Dante declared, “‘we may call / This art of yours God’s grandchild, as it were’” (p. 90). Great art is not “creative”—it just makes visible the creativity of the Creator. Modern artists, all too often, celebrate themselves, paint self-portraits, and sing songs suffused with subjectivity. We even have “performance artists,” doing anything bizarre enough to attract the passing attention of the passing crowd. “It is above all God *incarnate* whom they will not worship. The creature intent on glorifying itself resents the Creator who humbled Himself” (pp. 145-146). But ultimately, as Josef Pieper noted, “‘Music, the fine arts, poetry—anything that festively raises up human existence and thereby constitutes its true riches—all derive their life from a hidden root, and this root is a contemplation which is turned toward God and the world so as to affirm them’” (p. 81). Consequently, there is both a deeply moral and holy dimension to real art. Though not precisely a Sacrament (a designated “means of grace”) there is a sacramental quality to art that enables it to convey great blessings to those open to its ministry. And inasmuch as it embodies the Word through whom all things were made it celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation. So good art aids orthodoxy. “‘God’s Word,’ says Balthasar, ‘did not come to rob us of speech but to untie our tongues in a manner hitherto unknown’” (p. 90).

In the judgment of Michael O’Brien, one of the finest Christian novelists now writing, “This luminous book is so important that it can scarcely be overestimated. The substance of Saward’s scholarship, and his understanding of culture, are dazzling. His vision is of the utmost urgency. This is wise, deeply moving and invigorating—a masterpiece.”

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“Surprised by Beauty”

As I’ve aged I’ve learned to appreciate classical music, discovering the truth enunciated by George Rochberg: “Music remains what it has always been: a sign that man is capable of transcending the limits and constraints of his material existence” (p. 342). Accordingly, Robert R. Reilly, in *Surprised by Beauty: A Listener’s Guide to the Recovery of Modern Music*, demonstrates Plato’s insight that “rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful” (p. 19).

Reilly begins with a short but powerful chapter entitled “Is Music Sacred?” In a word, he says: Yes!—if it’s attuned to the beauty of the cosmos. As Cicero argued, two millennia ago: “the right kind of music is divine and can ‘return’ man to a paradise lost. It is a form of communion with divine truth” (p. 20). That’s especially true for Christians because, as St. Clement of Alexandria discerned, believers who are born again rightly sing “a ‘New Song’ far superior to the Orphic myths of the pagans. The ‘New Song’ is Christ, *Logos* Himself” (p. 20). Clement even allowed that pagan “music participated in the divine by praising God and partaking in the harmonious order of which He was the composer. But music’s goal became even higher because Christ is higher. With Christianity the divine region becomes both transcendent and personal because *Logos* is Christ. The new goal of music is to make the transcendent perceptible” (p. 21).

Ultimately Reilly returns to this theme in a chapter entitled “Recovering the Sacred in Music.” Classical music has survived its “attempted suicide” at the hands of atonal composers following Arnold Schoenberg, in whom “All the symptoms of the 20th-century’s spiritual sickness are present, including the major one diagnosed by Eric Voegelin as ‘a loss of reality’” (pp. 264-265). Fortunately, tonality is back, as Reilly demonstrates in his celebration of selected artists—preeminently Christians such as Henryk Gorecki, Arvo Part, and John Tavener, whose music is rooted in the New Testament. “Their purpose is contemplation, specifically the contemplation of religious truths. Their music is hieratic. It aims for the intersection of time and timelessness, at which point the transcendent becomes perceptible” (p. 268). All three “completely believe in the salvific act of Christ, center their lives on it, and express it in their music” (p. 267). In all his compositions, Tavener aspires “to the sacred. . . . Music is a form of prayer, a mystery.’ Tavener wishes to express ‘the importance of immaterial realism, or transcendent beauty.’ His goal is to recover ‘one simple memory’ from which all art derives: ‘The constant memory of the Paradise from which we have fallen leads to the Paradise which was promised to the repentant thief’” (p. 273).

What Reilly illustrates and lauds in *Surprised by Beauty*, is the remarkable, recent resurgence of this ancient Christian view. “Modern” classical music, dominated for decades by Arnold Schoenberg and “his denial of tonality,” had little concern for beauty—indeed he “declared himself ‘cured of the delusion that the artist’s aim is to create beauty’” (p. 23). But Schoenberg couldn’t stamp out man’s need for beauty, nor did he discourage scores of gifted composers who loved tonality simply because of its manifest beauty. Thus one of the greatest 20th century composers, “Jean Sibelius, anything but an orthodox Christian, nonetheless hearkened back to St. Clement when he wrote: ‘The essence of man’s being is his striving after God. It [the composition of music] is brought to life by means of the logos, the divine in art. That is the only thing that has significance’” (p. 22). Saying so, Sibelius shared the philosophical position of the philosopher Simone Weil, who said: “‘We love the beauty of the world because we sense behind it the presence of something akin to that wisdom we should like to possess to slake our thirst for good’” (p. 24).