



INTRODUCTION

The nature of the relationship between the Spirit of God and the Word of God has been debated among believers for centuries. How do the Word of God and Spirit of God relate in the inspiration of Scripture? What role does the Word have in regeneration in light of Peter's claim that his readers have been 'born again...through the living and abiding word of God' (1 Pet. 1:23) and James' reminder that God 'brought us forth by the word of truth' (James 1:18)? And what is the relationship between the Spirit of God and the Word of God in preaching? Is the Spirit present wherever and whenever the Word is preached?

This book focuses on that latter question. The question, of course, already begs a further question about what we mean when say that the Spirit is present. 1 Thessalonians 1:5 is a key text; Paul reminds the Thessalonians that 'our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.' Does this imply that the Word can be preached without the Holy Spirit? If so, is Paul speaking about the Spirit's influence on the preacher, his illumination of



the hearers, his working of miracles to accompany the preached Word, or the very presence of the Spirit?¹

Martyn Lloyd-Jones cited texts such as 1 Thessalonians 1:5 in support of his doctrine of unction, urging that the Spirit sometimes accompanies the preached Word and sometimes does not.² He claimed that, throughout church history, ‘the power came, and the power was withdrawn.’³ Lloyd-Jones suggested that such fluctuations were clearly visible in the person of the preacher and the nature of his preaching. When a preacher is ‘clothed with power and authority’ he will be given ‘clarity of thought, clarity of speech, ease of utterance, a great sense of authority and confidence.’⁴ His people will notice the difference immediately and be gripped, convicted, moved and humbled. Lloyd-Jones counselled his readers to seek such accompaniment of the Spirit:

Seek Him! Seek Him!...Let Him loose you, let Him manifest His power in you and through you. I am certain, as I have said several times before, that nothing but a return of this power of the Spirit on our preaching is going to avail us anything...This ‘unction’, this ‘anointing’, is the supreme thing. Seek it until you have it, be content with nothing less.⁵

Both Lloyd-Jones and contemporary writers draw evidence for this periodic empowerment and accompaniment of the Spirit from the history of revivals. Lloyd-Jones begins with Luther

1 For a discussion of the possibilities see: F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary 45 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 14; Charles A Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 79–80.

2 For a different reading of Lloyd-Jones see: Eryl Davies, *The Bala Conference* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2014).

3 D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 324.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 325.

and Calvin and ends with the preaching of David Morgan in the 1859 Welsh revival.⁶ Robert Strivens asks his readers why Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, 'Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God', yielded such emphatic results in Enfield and yet was preached on several other occasions with no such extraordinary effects.⁷ The conclusion he draws is that the Spirit sometimes accompanies the preached Word by filling the preacher and sometimes does not.⁸

My purpose in writing this book is not to examine the topic from the perspective of biblical or systematic theology—enquiring what Scripture teaches. Nor is it to provide a full-blown analysis of Lloyd-Jones' understanding of the relationship between Word and Spirit in preaching or his claim that this is borne out by the evidence of church history. Rather, I want to examine the narrow historical theological question of what the Protestant Reformers, in particular John Calvin, actually taught on this topic. Several contemporary authors have claimed that Calvin not only distinguished Word and Spirit but separated them. This book seeks to assess whether that view is supported by the primary sources.

At the outset, it is helpful to make a couple of methodological observations about how we 'do' historical study. When researching the history of ideas it is crucial to understand what particular writers are trying to achieve by their words.⁹ We must beware of the danger of what Quentin Skinner calls 'the priority of paradigms.' Skinner explains: '[T]he current historical study of ethical, political, religious, and other such modes of thought

6 Ibid., 315–323.

7 Robert Strivens, 'Preaching—"Ex Opere Operato?"' in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, ed. Roger Fay (Stoke: Tentmaker Publications, 2008), 57.

8 Strivens, 'Preaching,' 71; Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 324.

9 Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,' in *Visions of Politics. Vol.1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 82–85.

is contaminated by the unconscious application of paradigms the familiarity of which, to the historian, disguises an essential inapplicability to the past.¹⁰ In the discipline of historical theology there is an acute danger of reading the heroes of the faith through the lens of our own theological and cultural convictions. We anachronistically treat them as if they were addressing and contributing to debates which post-date them by many centuries and which they show little if any awareness of.¹¹ The danger is particularly acute when assessing the views of the Protestant Reformers on the topic at hand because the views of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions have become hardened with time. The responsible historian needs to be alert to this danger and must acknowledge that it is impossible to come to a text without bringing one's own expectations, presuppositions and biases about what will be found there.

The historical theologian must also be careful not to assume coherence and consistency in the primary texts they are studying. It is quite possible that the author has not provided a coherent closed system of thought and the interpreter must not be blind to statements that contradict each other in the interests of revealing a supposed coherence.¹² The way we treat a theologian's work is quite different to the way we interpret Scripture where coherence and consistency are assumed since it is the very Word of God. We must be alert to complexities, nuances and the possibility of irreconcilable statements. If we are not, we will end up misreading the author's work and failing to understand the force of what they have actually written.

With those two methodological cautions in place, we can turn to the structure of this book. In the first chapter, the views of Philip Eveson, Robert Strivens, Stuart Olyott and Hywel Jones are

¹⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹¹ Ibid., 60–62.

¹² Ibid., 70.

introduced. These authors argue against a perceived conflation of Word and Spirit in contemporary preaching and suggest that it is a significant departure from the Reformed tradition in general and Calvin in particular. In the second chapter, we consider the diversity of views held upon the topic by the radical Reformers, Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger. The churchmen are considered in this order since their views are, to a certain (although often over-stated) extent, reactive to one another. The third and fourth chapters provide a critical exposition of Calvin's views, examining first Calvin's sacramental theology and then providing a critical exposition of his views on the relationship between Word and Spirit as found in the *Institutes*, Calvin's commentaries and his other writings. The important connections between his understanding of preaching and the other means of grace are noted. In the conclusion I will make some brief observations about the trajectory of later developments in the Reformed and Lutheran traditions and consider the significance of Calvin's teaching for preaching and church life.