Toward a Reformed Praxis of Living by the Spirit: Practical Pneumatology for 21st Century Queensland Presbyterians.

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Abstract

For Christians, life in the 21st century presents many ethical challenges. Queensland Presbyterians are among those who need an ethical model capable of addressing the challenges of modern life. Presbyterians stand in the Reformed tradition; a tradition that has formally emphasized the role of Old Testament Law as the foundation of ethical life. The 17th century doctrinal standard of the Presbyterian Church, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* sets forth its position on Christian ethics by appealing to the “binding authority” of the Old Testament Law. However, in the light of the Apostle Paul’s comprehensive emphasis on the Holy Spirit within ethics, this thesis will argue that the Law-orientated model, formally advocated in the Presbyterian doctrinal standards should be reconsidered. For Paul, Christian ethics was not predicated on the “letter” of the Mosaic Law (albeit, empowered by the Spirit), but a new comprehensive understanding of the Spirit. Using Paul’s concept of “Living by the Spirit” as a point of departure, this thesis seeks to move towards the development of a practical pneumatology that will provide Reformed/Presbyterian Christians with a theological framework for understanding ethical life within this new modality of the Spirit.

Whilst challenging some formal beliefs, the proposed practical pneumatology respectfully seeks to uphold The Westminster Confession’s position on the authoritative primacy of Scripture. After establishing the foundational role of the Spirit in epistemology, the thesis develops a model which argues that the Holy Spirit enables Christians to interpret truth through multiple media: personal spirituality, corporate church life, Scripture interpretation and life in the world. Moreover, the model constructed, also argues for a dynamic integration of these Spirit “media”; an integration that is necessary to account for a realistic understanding of “Living by the Spirit” as it relates to ethics. Being more than a purely theoretical project, this thesis draws on the “broad spectrum” discipline of Practical Theology. As such, the thesis methodology moves in a practice-theory-practice orientation. Following a description of the factors that have influenced the Queensland Presbyterian view of the Holy Spirit, a reappraisal of Letter/Spirit relationship will be considered by reflecting on Paul’s ethical perspective in Romans. From this point a model of “Living by the Spirit” is developed and then subjected to empirical testing via case studies among selected Queensland Presbyterians. An analysis of the data will provide insights into the usefulness of this model for the ethical lives of Queensland Presbyterians, and its value for ongoing theological reflection in the Reformed tradition.
Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Presbyterian, Paul, law, spirit, ethics, reformed, pneumatology, living, practical.

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Abbreviations

Bible Versions:
NIV-New International Version
ESV- English Standard Version
GNT- Greek New Testament (Friberg NT UBS 3/4)

Ecclesiastical Organizations:
PCQ-Presbyterian Church of Queensland
QTC- Queensland Theological College

Old Testament books:
Gen--Genesis  Song-- Song of Songs
Exod--Exodus  Isa-- Isaiah
Lev-- Leviticus  Jer-- Jeremiah
Num--Numbers  Lam-- Lamentations
Deut--Deuteronomy  Ezek--Ezekial
Josh--Joshua  Dan--Daniel
Judg-- Judges  Hos--Hosea
Ruth-- Ruth  Joel--Joel
1-2 Sam--1-2 Samuel  Amos--Amos
1-2 Kgs--1-2 Kings  Obad--Obadiah
1-2 Chr--1-2 Chronicles  Jonah--Jonah
Ezra--Ezra  Mic--Micah
Neh--Nehemiah  Nah--Nahum
Esth--Esther  Hab--Habakkuk
Job--Job  Zeph--Zephaniah
Ps/Pss--Psalms  Hag--Haggai
Prov--Proverbs  Zech--Zechariah
Eccl-- Ecclesiastes  Mal--Malachi

New Testament books:
Matt-- Matthew  1-2 Thess-- 1-2 Thessalonians
Mark-- Mark  1-2 Tim-- 1-2 Timothy
John-- John  Phlm--Philemon
Acts-- Acts  Heb--Hebrews
Rom-- Romans  Jas--James
1-2 Cor-- 1-2 Corinthians  1-2Pet--1-2 Peter
Gal-- Galatians  1-3 John--1-3 John
Eph-- Ephesians  Jude--Jude
Phil-- Philippians  Rev--Revelation
INTRODUCTION

For Christians, maintaining a consistent moral life is a perennial challenge. The 21st century presents the Reformed Christian with many complex ethical challenges; some well-known and some yet to be imagined. In approaching these challenges, The Presbyterian Church of Queensland continues with the premises established by its Reformed heritage: “PCQ is a national Presbyterian Church that holds strongly to the Bible as its rule of faith and life... This means that in all that we do we seek to bring glory to God and to be aware of where he is leading us through his Word and Holy Spirit.”\(^1\) Although acknowledging the Holy Spirit, the denomination’s “strong” reliance on the Bible, as the “rule” of life, remains consistent with its 17th century standard *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Moreover, when the Word is interpreted ethically through *The Confession*, an Old Testament style law-based ethic emerges.\(^2\) Some Presbyterians apply this ethic in a less rigorous manner, by appealing to the text of Scripture as a “guide” for living. But is Christian ethics simply a matter of following laws or referring to texts? Whilst the Apostle Paul upheld the divine authority of Scripture, his view of Christian ethics involved a real engagement with the Holy Spirit: “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit…” (Rom 7:6 NIV). Although the Reformed tradition interprets Paul as implying a “new way” of interpreting the law, Paul appears to have something different in mind, something more comprehensive; a “new way” of conceptualizing the Spirit in the Christian life that transcends the old way, not simply augments it. Karl Barth describes it this way:

> Were this to mean that we were to serve God in some new, more refined, more detailed oldness of the letter, we should be confronted merely by a new piety. We now have to show that newness of the spirit denotes the possibility which has its beginning in God, beyond the frontier of the old and every new possibility of religion.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) “The moral law does forever bind all, as well-justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither does Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthens this obligation.” *The Confession of Faith 1647*, (Inverness: John G. Eccles Ltd, 1981), XIX:V.

For a theologian to move beyond the frontier of a current belief towards a new understanding, a crisis in that prior belief often provides the catalyst for change. Significantly, this thesis marks the culmination of a quest by the author to understand the nature of the Holy Spirit’s role in the ethical life, a quest that was initiated by a crisis in belief. Thus the fundamental thesis question has an autobiographical derivation. Educated in theological institutions with strong Reformed emphases and applying that training in a pastoral context, I became increasingly aware of the inadequacies of the ethical model that was promulgated during ministerial training and subsequently practised. I discovered that a religious life based on a system of law-orientated ethics or even the less rigid practice of simply following the guidelines of Scripture, was a less-than-adequate way of “actually” addressing moral contingencies. The awareness of this deficiency did not only relate to my own personal experience, but was observed in numerous pastoral contexts. This crisis instigated a reinvestigation into practical pneumatology and an attempt to reconsider Reformed ethics and the role of the Holy Spirit within it. The research led to the writings of the Apostle Paul and his concept of “Living by the Spirit” and what it might be. Therefore, the thesis is fundamentally driven by questions that have originated within the concrete situation of ethical life4: How can a Reformed Christian understand the Spirit’s relationship to the ethical life? And can this understanding be compatible with the fundamental premises of Reformed Theology, whilst remaining consistent with Paul’s perspective on the role of the Spirit? In brief what might a Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit” comprise?

The use of theological terms requires clear definition. As the thesis is entitled “Towards a Reformed Praxis of Living by the Spirit,” and as the words in the title are theologically loaded, clarification of meaning is required. The term “Reformed” refers to a particular theological tradition associated with the Protestant Reformation. Reformed Theology was ostensibly developed in the 16th century by prominent theologians such as John Calvin, and was taken up by various streams of Protestant Christianity in subsequent eras. The Scottish Presbyterians adopted it, and it provides the fundamental theological undergirding of The Westminster Confession of Faith. For the purposes of this study, Reformed and Presbyterian (although technically distinct terms) may be used interchangeably when referring to the PCQ’s ecclesiastical or theological tradition. “Praxis” denotes an integration of theoretical reflection and practical application. In this thesis, Praxis is a reflexive term, meaning a

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4 Set within the context of a parish within the Presbyterian Church of Queensland.
theoretically informed practice and a practically informed theory. “Living by the Spirit” is a term taken from Paul’s texts. It is a term that refers to the Christian ethical life under the auspice of the Holy Spirit; it carries the connotation of a “lifestyle” governed by the Spirit. Therefore, the study aims at advancing a thesis that moves “towards” an integrated theoretical/practical understanding of “Living by the Spirit” that is cogently appealing to Reformed Christians. A theoretical model will be empirically tested among Queensland Presbyterians to ascertain its veracity. Given that the theoretical model advanced in this study will only be tested amongst a select group, general extrapolation cannot be assumed. Therefore, the term “towards” is included within the title to imply the incipient nature of the research. This thesis aims to assist in the development of a more comprehensive understanding of “Living by the Spirit” within a Reformed context.

Practical pneumatology, although receiving attention by scholars is much more than a purely theoretical or academic endeavour, as the word “practical” indicates. Recent studies that have sought to address practical pneumatology via Pauline ethics⁵ have done so by appealing to a theoretical engagement between their own model of interpretation and Paul’s texts; the results yielding simply “another” theory. Whilst serving a purpose, any attempt to understand the Spirit’s ethical work without integrating a personal/practical element will be limited by its incapacity to understand the nature of the Spirit’s dynamic engagement with concrete situations. In contrast, this study seeks to integrate theory and practice into the scholarly endeavour, with a view to developing a more comprehensive and empirically verifiable understanding of “Living by the Spirit.” Thus Practical Theology with its practice-theory-practice orientation is employed to provide the methodological structure. There are three reasons for adopting this approach. Firstly, the inclusion of an empirical element (case studies) assists in verifying whether the original ideas animating the thesis are more widely held, as well as gaining access to previously unknown insights. Secondly, as the issue that undergirds the argument of this thesis was first identified in a pastoral setting, a method that reintroduces and is able to test the revised theory in a pastoral context would best serve in confirming the theory being advanced. Finally, as there is no comparable study available (to

my knowledge), the research will provide valuable data for further development in the field of practical pneumatology.

As the thesis is framed within the larger discipline of Practical Theology, the primary argument must transverse multiple sub-disciplines. Four theological sub-disciplines are employed in the formulation of the thesis: Descriptive Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology and Strategic-practical theology. Moreover, in the process of developing the argument within this framework, further disciplines such as exegesis, history, philosophy and psychological analysis are also employed. Thus, given the complex nature, breadth and practical scope of this project, in-depth development of some themes and critical engagement in some issues are limited. Furthermore, whilst this project seeks to engage Reformed ethics, it does so respectfully mindful of the primary doctrinal assumptions of the constituency under consideration. Principally, within this tradition, the Scriptures are viewed as the Word of God and are accepted as such in the form of the Protestant Canon as outlined in *The Westminster Confession*. Moreover, as *The Westminster Confession* affirms this canon and the authorial provenance as stated therein and as interlocutors significant to the thesis, such as the Protestant Reformers and Queensland Presbyterians assume the same, this basic premise will be accepted and upheld throughout the thesis.

Pneumatology has been a relatively neglected field of study throughout the history of theological reflection. Only recently has a renewed interest in the discipline emerged. However, the Reformed tradition is not without a strong heritage in pneumatological reflection. In fact, John Calvin has been described as the theologian of the Holy Spirit. So why has the development of pneumatology and its application to ethics within the Reformed tradition been muted? Calvin’s defence of the Word’s authority against the Roman Catholics on the one hand, and the Anabaptists “fanatics” on the other may be a contributing factor. Moreover, his emphasis on the ethical value of the Law almost certainly limited a comprehensive understanding of the Spirit in ethics. Furthermore, with the advent of 17th Century Reformed theology, for various reasons, a “more rigid” view of Calvin’s theology ensued where the role of the Law became reified in Reformed ethics. As theological ideas are the genetic code of religious practice, the Reformed tradition has always had a strong disposition towards the Word/Law ethics. Even when an array of theological works that have

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6 *The Confession of Faith 1647: I-I-X.*
flowed down to influence the Queensland Presbyterians is considered, it is evident that the Spirit’s role is portrayed as largely subsidiary. The ubiquitous influence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements during the 20th century, rather than enhancing a view of the Spirit among Reformed Christians has incited a negative reaction. This reaction has generally translated into a “strong” reaffirmation of a dependency on the Word as the supreme authority, with the Spirit being relegated to the category of experience. For these reasons, the research has identified that the relationship of the Word (letter) and the Spirit is a significant factor in how the Spirit is viewed in relationship to Christian ethics.

Reclaiming a more comprehensive understanding of the Spirit in Reformed Christian ethics involves reconsidering the Letter/Spirit relationship. A cursory reading of Scripture (as a whole) reveals a transition from an emphasis on the Letter of the Law in the Old Testament to an emphasis on the Spirit’s ethical guidance in the New Testament. Customarily, for various hermeneutical reasons, Reformed theology has conflated the two and developed the view that Christian ethics entails a kind of Spirit-empowered Law-keeping. Thus Paul’s “new way” of the Spirit (Romans 7:6) is understood through the lens of literary hermeneutics; where the Spirit gives a new, deeper, or “inner” understanding of the Law. However, I wish to contend that this is not Paul’s intention. When Paul sets forth his theological argument in Romans 6-8, he has in mind an ethical view that is “non-nomistic”; a view based on union with Christ. The death and resurrection of Christ enable Paul to conceptualize the relation of the Christian to the Law. As Christ died, so the Christian’s old self and by extension their relationship to the Law died with him. When Christ was raised, the Christian is raised to a new reality, where the indwelling Christ (present as the Spirit) animates ethical conduct. Ethics is not formulated around Spirit-influenced Law-keeping, but a comprehensive “new way” of living and serving under the Spirit’s influence. The Letter represents the old ethical system; the Spirit, a new modality of ethical life. Although, for Paul, Christian ethics is governed by a new “way”, he does not denigrate the Law or abandon the authoritative role of Scripture. This new ethic, Paul describes as “Living by the Spirit.”

The concept of “Living by the Spirit” is not set forth by Paul as a rigidly structured system, presumably to prevent it from developing into a new legalism. Whilst the avoidance of such rigidity is necessary, there is value in attempting to formulate of model of “Living by the Spirit” that honours the intention of the New Testament, yet provides a broad theological framework in which Reformed Christians might conceptualize the Spirit-engendered ethical
life. The model developed within this thesis not only draws on the insights of Scripture, but the contributions of theologians within, or sympathetic to, the Reformed tradition. The foundational assumption of this model is the Holy Spirit as the source of truth—a concept principally explicated by Calvin. The model recognizes however, that the Holy Spirit does not engage humanity in abstraction, but through “media”. The media identified, through which the Spirit engages humanity are: the material world, the Church, the Christian person (as a reasoning/experiencing being) and the Christian Scriptures. At the risk of developing a hermeneutic with four equal sources of authority, the thesis argument establishes (consistent with Reformed theology) that the Scriptures remain the primary or regulatory authority within this hermeneutical dynamic. However, simply identifying four “media” of the Spirit does not equate to a model that the Reformed Christian might use to engage ethical issues. The model’s utility comes through recognition of a “dynamic integration” of these media. As the Spirit-influenced Christian is involved in a Spirit-endowed church, aware of a Spirit-ordered world, under the guidance of a Spirit-inspired word, the Spirit enables him or her to live out a Spirit-coordinated life; a life in conformity with God’s will—“Living by the Spirit”.

The direction of theological reflection usually moves from theory towards practice, in the hope that it might be taken up by practitioners and applied. In some cases the theories presented are “practically unworkable”. One of the distinctive features of this thesis is the capacity to test the veracity of the model being developed in the concrete situation; a similar situation from which the original questions arose. Given the limited nature of a research project such as this, comprehensive testing of the model in multiple ethical contexts over an extended period of time is not a practical option. What is possible however, is the use of case studies with selected individuals from within the Queensland Presbyterian constituency. The analysis of case study data provides the opportunity for the thesis model to be considered, reflected on and discussed in the process of evaluating its validity. What is gained is not a comprehensive understanding, but insights that might confirm, complement or challenge the thesis model, as it is understood. It is considered that the empirical phase of the research makes this project unique in this field of study and will provide insights that will contribute to the thesis aim of “moving towards” a Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit”.

This thesis aims to encourage Reformed Christians towards a more adequate understanding of the ethical life; life beyond the frontier of law-based religion—living by the Spirit. In moving
towards this goal, chapter one outlines methodology. It considers the necessity of a practical method, the value of Practical Theology and the hermeneutical considerations of such an endeavour. Chapter two opens up the argument by considering the sources that have shaped and continue to shape the pneumatology of Queensland Presbyterians; identifying a strong bias towards the Letter/Law and how it has overshadowed the Spirit’s role in ethics. Having identified the Letter/Spirit relationship as a key factor, chapter three seeks to return to the Christian Scriptures (as the tradition’s primary source document) to principally reinvestigate Paul’s perspective, concluding that the Spirit must take a more prominent role in ethics. Paul’s concept of “Living by the Spirit” thus becomes the point of departure for the development of a revised model. Chapter four represents the systematic theology section of the thesis and specifically seeks to formulate a model of “Living by the Spirit” that is intelligible and applicable to Reformed Christians. This model is then tested amongst selected Queensland Presbyterians, and chapter five discloses the process and the content of the twelve case studies undertaken. Finally, in chapter six an analysis of the case studies reveals the gains made by this broad-ranging study and discloses valuable truths that will assist Reformed Christians in moving towards a more adequate understanding of “Living by the Spirit”.
CHAPTER 1: Methodology

Introduction

It is the unique dimension of the Holy Spirit (as a personal being) within Christianity that enables Christianity to transcend philosophical speculation and move towards genuine theological reflection. The 19th century Scottish theologian, George Smeaton argued that the existence of the Holy Spirit sets Christianity apart: “The distinctive feature of Christianity, as it addresses itself to man's experience, is the work of the Spirit, which not only elevates it far above all philosophical speculation, but also above every other form of religion.”7 (sic) By referring to “the work of the Spirit” Smeaton is relating to the manner in which God (as Spirit) meaningfully engages human beings. Although the spiritual nature of Christianity may encompass an understanding of the human spirit, it is primarily the Spirit of God and its relationship to the human being as the reasoning/experiencing subject that is under consideration. Although technical treatments of Pneumatology serve a purpose, to fully appreciate the unique nature of the Christian experience of the Spirit, it is necessary to come to terms with the Spirit of God from a practical perspective. Therefore, in approaching this subject of moving towards a Reformed praxis of Living by the Spirit and its application for 21st Century Queensland Presbyterians, a research methodology that facilitates theological reflection by enabling theory to interact meaningfully with practice, should be employed.

1.1 Practical Theology

Until recently the disciple of Systematic Theology has, predominantly, been the principal domain of theoretical reflection. Pastoral theology is the domain where this knowledge is applied to the practical life of the church. In this kind of model, theory uni-directionally instructs or advises practice. However, in this process a division between theory and practice remains, preventing either discipline from meaningfully critiquing the other. Effectively, this tended to result in either, a bias towards ungrounded abstract theory or theoretically deficient pragmatic action. The re-development of Practical Theology since the 1960’s has been an attempt to reclaim in Christian theology the idea that theological reflection should always be grounded, integrated and verified in practice.8 Terry Veling argues, “Practical theology is an

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attempt to heal this division, so that pastoral theology is never simply an afterthought of a
derivative of systematic theology. So that theological reflection can regain its intrinsic
connection to life. So that we can overcome the artificial distinction between thinking and
acting and become more serious about both." Such an approach is not without significant
precedent. Indeed, the New Testament presents a very practically orientated approach to
theology. The Apostle Paul talks about a wisdom that is practically derived, “I want to know
Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,
becoming like him in his death…” (Phil 3:10 NIV) Clearly, the authors of the New Testament
were not interested in developing abstract theology, but a “practical theologizing”, as Ben
Witherington argues, “Put bluntly, we do not have ‘theology’ in the New Testament; we have
what may be called theologizing —indeed theologizing into specific cultural settings,
whether we are talking about Jesus’ parables, Paul’s rhetoric or John’s apocalyptic salvos.”

Because Pneumatology cannot avoid engaging either theory or practice, Practical Theology is
a most suitable vehicle for discussing and developing the concept of “Living by the Spirit.”
But how does Practical Theology function? How does it differ from simply applying theory?
Practical Theology is, in fact, a holistic discipline, which aims to understand, analyse and
revise church praxis. The discipline employs methodologies which do the following:
consider the state of the current praxis, subject the current praxis to critique, reflect on the
issue theologically and offer a more adequate praxis. More than simply applied theory,
practical theological methods represent a process that integrates practice into the initial stages
of the theological investigation; a view promoted by theologians such as Don Browning:

The view I propose goes from practice to theory and back to practice. Or more
accurately, it goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of
normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-
laden practices.

Practical theology is aware of both theory and practice at every stage of the theological
process and is necessarily critically conscious of the presuppositions that undergird any of the
disciplines engaged in the process. In summary, practical theology is a dynamic process of
reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world carried out in the light of

9 Terry A. Veling, Practical Theology: On earth as it is in heaven. (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 5.
Christian truth and tradition, and (if necessary) in critical dialogue with others sources of knowledge.  

Practical theology can rightly be described as a hermeneutical theology. The practical theologian is not simply interpreting the bible and then applying it practical situations, but understands that interpretation and understanding have a more complex relationship. Theological hermeneutics begins with a consciousness that the theologian exists within a religious tradition that consists of founding texts, whether they are the Christian Scriptures, Creeds or Theological treatises. These traditions shape the interpretation and the presuppositions behind the interpretation. More recently, philosophical hermeneutics has opened the theologian to new horizons and possibilities in the process of interpretation and understanding. Because Practical Theology is dependent on a more comprehensive hermeneutic (indeed it was dependant on hermeneutics for its development), it is necessary to understand the nature of the relationship of Practical Theology to Philosophical Hermeneutics, and in the case of this thesis, principally the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

1.2 Practical Theology and Philosophical Hermeneutics

With the rise of practical philosophy, pioneered by thinkers like Gadamer, hermeneutics developed a more holistic perspective than the theoretical interpretation of the written text alone:

The rebirth of practical philosophy signals a wish to question the dominance of theoretical and technical reason...further, the rise of practical philosophies, especially influenced by Gadamer, has brought into closer relation historical thinking, hermeneutics or interpretation theory and practical reason or ethics.

Theology has traditionally had a connection to hermeneutics. However, for a large portion of Christian history, hermeneutics has been associated with simply interpreting the Bible as text. The third century theologian Origen, developed an allegorical hermeneutic, distinguishing the

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14 Ibid., 37.
15 Veling, *Practical Theology: On earth as it is in heaven.*: 34.
literal meaning of the text from a deeper spiritual meaning.\textsuperscript{18} Later theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas developed Origen’s system to incorporate four ways of understanding the text. Aquinas’ system was subject to the authority of apostolically derived ecclesiastical tradition. Reacting against the failures of ecclesiastical tradition, the Reformers decoupled hermeneutics from ecclesiastical tradition and established the primacy of the Bible’s authority and a more literal interpretation of it. As a result the hermeneutical endeavour was wrested from the hands of the authoritative community and placed in the hands of the individual exegete. Moreover, an ontological relationship to the text developed, giving individual consciousness new powers. Taking it further, and drawing on Cartesian rationalism, Baruch Spinoza developed a hermeneutic that not only established the primacy of reason in hermeneutics, but also placed the Bible in the same category and level as other texts—that is, subject to the authority and scrutiny of human reason.\textsuperscript{19}

Whilst Spinoza’s hermeneutic laid the foundation for Schleiermacher’s more comprehensive “general hermeneutic”, Schleiermacher’s reaction against rationalism elevated the role of experience and the conditions of understanding into the hermeneutical endeavour. Following on from Schleiermacher, William Dilthey wanted to broaden the task of hermeneutics to take into account how understanding an author is the means to an understanding of history.\textsuperscript{20} Against Schleiermacher’s focus on the subjectivity of the individual, Dilthey’s hermeneutics orientated towards an objective understanding of experience: “... any inner experiencing, through which I become aware of my own disposition, can never by itself bring me to a consciousness of my individuality. I experience the latter only through a comparison of myself with other people.”\textsuperscript{21} Ramberg believes Dilthey’s greatest contribution was to ground

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] Regarding hermeneutics, Dilthey writes, “But above and beyond its practical merit for the business of interpretation, there seem to me to be a further purpose behind such theorizing, indeed its main purpose: to preserve the general validity of interpretation against the inroads of romantic caprice and sceptical subjectivity, and to give a theoretical justification for such validity, upon which all the certainty of historical knowledge is founded.” Wihelm Dilthey, "The Rise of Hermeneutics," in \textit{The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur}, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 114.
\item[21] Ibid., 102.
\end{footnotes}
hermeneutics in a general theory of human life and existence.\textsuperscript{22} However, with the rise of existentialism, Hermeneutics began to take an ontological turn.

Martin Heidegger sought to show that one’s being-in-the-world (Dasein) is prior to any method of determining truth. Understanding is not simply a method, or the outcome of critical reflection; it is intrinsically something we have. For Heidegger, an understanding of the world presupposes an inherent pragmatic understanding, which determines the way we humans orient ourselves in the world:

In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a ‘signification’ over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already had an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation.\textsuperscript{23}

However, it was the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer that would crystallize the existentialism of Heidegger into a hermeneutical system in its own right. Gadamer would be instrumental in establishing the relationship between hermeneutics and Practical Theology. Over and against Schleiermacher and Dilthey, who are concerned with establishing a hermeneutical methodology, Gadamer wanted to find understanding in the wider domain of existence in the world. In the introduction to \textit{Truth and Method}, he writes: “The following investigation...is concerned to seek that experience of truth that transcends the sphere of scientific method wherever it is to be found and to inquire into its legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{24} In explicating the truth of understanding Gadamer is indebted to the ancient Greeks. The dialectical structure of Plato’s dialogical method provided Gadamer with a model of understanding that allows both the matter under investigation and the investigator to come under questioning.\textsuperscript{25} Also, Aristotle’s concept of \textit{phronesis} constitutes a mode of self-knowledge that is based on one’s practical and concrete being-in-the-world, as Malpas observes, “...taken together, these two concepts


\textsuperscript{24} Hans-Georg Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method} (New York: Crossroad, 1982), xii.

can be seen as providing the essential starting point for the development of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics.”

Drawing on Heidegger’s insights Hans-Georg Gadamer sees that humans are “in-the-world” alongside that which is to be understood. This is seen in Gadamer’s concept of historical tradition [effective-history]; where he understands the subject and the object of investigation to share the same historical continuum: “If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always subject to the effects of effective-history.” For Gadamer, hermeneutics is the “laying-bare” or making explicit that which is already implicitly known. Therefore, understanding truth is not slavishly dependent on scientific method. To illustrate this idea, Gadamer appeals to the concept of art: “That truth is experienced through a work of art that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all reasoning.” Understanding is not a matter of the “transcendental ego” using a methodological construct to arrive at an objective understanding of truth, but has its beginnings by “being” in a world that is implicitly known. Thus understanding precedes interpretation. However, is not the interpreter’s being contaminated by bias and prejudice? Is not the hermeneutical process, therefore, compromised?

Well aware of the issue of prejudice, Gadamer engages the ancient Greek concepts of dialogue and phronesis. Gadamer re-introduces the pre-Renaissance “positive” conception of prejudice as pre-judgment. Pre-judgment represents a preliminary understanding that is open to correction. This means the interpreter is in a dialogue that encompasses self-understanding and an understanding of the matter under investigation. In the dialogue our prejudices come to the fore and can be objectified. As opposed to the Cartesian “transcendental ego” the positive prejudice in the hermeneutical endeavour constantly brings the understanding back to oneself—i.e. application. Gadamer sees practical application as neither subsequent nor occasional to understanding, but co-joined with the process of understanding from the beginning (a significant feature of Practical Theology). For the interpreter to understand, he or she must be involved in the understanding, and not be distanced from it, as Gadamer

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26 Ibid., Section2.
28 Truth and Method: xiii.
argues, “In order to understand that, he must seek not to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he wants to understand at all.”

As such all understanding is oriented to present concerns and interests, and is inherently practical.

Through Gadamer’s influence in Practical Philosophy, theological hermeneutics has moved beyond textual interpretation to an understanding of theological truth and the conditions of understanding in concrete life. With this “turn”, theology can no longer avoid being practical. Don Browning argues, “...if this philosophical turn is taken seriously, all humanistic studies, including theological studies, must be recognised as practical through and through.”

Furthermore, with respect to Gadamer, Browning adds, “Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory breaks down the theory-to-practice (text-to-application) model of humanistic learning. It implies more nearly a radical practice-theory-practice model of understanding that gives the theological enterprise a thoroughly practical cast.”

On the basis of Gadamer’s hermeneutical model, Browning formulated his own system of practical theology—Fundamental Practical Theology; the system employed in the methodology of this thesis.

### 1.3 Relating theology and philosophy (a necessary consideration)

Engaging contemporary cultural praxis from a theological position demands both, a firm commitment to Christian truth and an open-minded cultural perspective. This kind of process usually opens dialogue with other disciplines: “Often, it will require of theology a partnering with other disciplines, especially the social sciences, to help us get a better read of what is actually going on in our situation.”

Even if extraneous disciplines, like the social sciences, are not directly engaged, there is a need for a conceptual self-awareness, since Practical Theology is itself dependent on philosophical ideologies. The theologian must be aware of the possibility of ideological conflict within the practical theological endeavour, and must have an understanding of the relationship between theological assumptions and the assumption of partner disciplines, in the theological process.

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29 Ibid., 289.
31 Ibid., 39.
33 Veling, *Practical Theology: On earth as it is in heaven*: 17.
Theology and philosophy, when considering methodology, are not easily separated.\textsuperscript{34} Given that practical theology is a “theology” constructed by drawing on the insights of a philosophical system, due consideration must be given to the nature of the relationship between these two disciplines. Moreover, given that this thesis is advocating a pneumatological system, which is heuristically dependent on a philosophically derived methodology (Fundamental Practical Theology) for its presentation, the issue is especially important. The primary function of theology is to serve the Christian church, the message it proclaims and the truths it upholds.\textsuperscript{35} Christian theology moves between the two poles of eternally derived truth and the temporally situated life. If it fails to give credence to its divine source its mission is compromised; if it fails to engage temporal situations, its mission is pointless. The question is this: How can the practical theologian avoid the primary theological endeavour being undermined by potentially contradictory philosophical presuppositions, while drawing on their useful aspects?

An important contributor to this conversation is Paul Tillich. Tillich asks this question, “What is the relationship of theology to the special sciences, and what its relationship to philosophy is?” In answering the first part of the question Tillich asserts that theology deals with “ultimate concerns” and should not be involved in issues of “preliminary concern” e.g., politics, medicine etc. and the sciences connected with them. However, for Tillich, the point of contact between the sciences and theology is actually the philosophical element of both. Therefore, even when the special sciences are involved (as is the case in many practical theology endeavours), the issue comes back to the relationship between philosophy and theology.\textsuperscript{36}

For Tillich, Philosophy and Theology engage in the field of “ontology.” But how do they relate? Firstly, the disciplines differ in cognitive attitude. Philosophy deals with the structure of “being” in itself and the philosopher tries to maintain a detached objectivity towards being and its structures. On the other hand, Theology deals with the “whole of being”, which incorporates God; who once genuinely engaged in the theological endeavour is both subject

\textsuperscript{34} As early as the 17\textsuperscript{th} century Descartes’ recognized the issue of interrelatedness." But it must be accepted that all the sciences are so mutually interconnected that it would be much easier to learn them all together than to separate one of them from the others."Rene Descartes, 	extit{Discourse on Method and Related Writings}, trans. Desmond M. Clarke (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 118.

\textsuperscript{35} Paul Tillich, 	extit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chigaco University Press, 1951), 3.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 18.
and object (the endeavour is relational); the theologian cannot be detached. Secondly, the disciplines differ in their sources. The philosopher looks to the whole of reality to discover within it the structure of reality as a whole. The theologian looks to where reality is ultimately manifest, not to a universal logos, but to The Logos that became flesh (Jesus Christ, who is manifest in the Christian Church and its traditions). Thirdly, the two disciplines differ in content. The philosopher examines reality as cosmological structures, the theologian views reality from a soteriological perspective. One looks at simply what “is” the other at what it should or will “be” from God’s perspective.

Tillich also recognizes a convergence in the two disciplines. Theologian and Philosopher alike exist within the same reality and attempt to understand the same subject matter. Every philosopher is a hidden (albeit unintentional) theologian and the theologian a hidden philosopher. However, Tillich believes there can be no synthesis of the two. Each must relate to the other in his/her domain: “Conflicts on the philosophical level are conflicts between two philosophers, one of whom happens to be a theologian, but they are not conflicts between theology and philosophy.” In relating the two, Tillich presents a “method of correlation”. According to Tillich this method attempts to explain the content of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence. The effectiveness of this theology is evidenced in the meaningful correlation of the questions asked with the answers given. Philosophy (among other disciplines) plays a vital role in the questioning phase, helping to frame the existential questions affecting the Christian. The theologian analyses the material and attempts to correlate it with the theological concepts he derives from the Christian faith. Although Tillich speaks of mutual interdependence, there is a suggestion that his model appears to allow philosophy the right to ask questions and not provide answers: “His method is a uni-directional model of reflection which applies Christian truth to the world without allowing the world to significantly question particular

37 It should be noted that existential philosophy would share some of the assumptions of theology (this is why it is used as the basis of Practical Theology). However, the primary difference would lie in the personal relation with God, who becomes both the object examined and the subject who examines.
38 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1: 23.
39 Ibid., 26.
40 Ibid., 26.
41 Ibid., 60.
42 Ibid., 63.
interpretations of truth.”\textsuperscript{43} Whilst this may be open to debate, it is sufficient to recognize that Tillich’s observations have been immensely valuable in initiating a vital conversation that practical theologians needed to enter into.

In continuing this conversation, theologians like Seward Hiltner and David Tracy have advanced a model known as “mutual critical correlation”. Hiltner argues that the correlation should be conceived more as bi-directional. Thus disciplines like philosophy may contain new insights, not already available within the Christian revelation and tradition, rendering the dynamic of interrogation and response both mutual and dialectical.\textsuperscript{44} Fundamentally, this methodology relies on the fundamental presupposition of natural theology, which assumes that human reason has the capacity to discern matters of a transcendent nature. As such, secular wisdom is to be respected for its ability to enlighten and inform the theological enterprise.\textsuperscript{45} Mutual Critical Correlation is effectively, as Swinton suggests, “...a model of integration which seeks to bring these dimensions [reason, tradition etc.] together in a way which respects and gives equal voice to each dialogue partner.”\textsuperscript{46} The value of such a method is that it provides the practical theologian with data from sources otherwise disregarded by traditional systematic theologians. Moreover, the theological endeavour gains a far higher degree of cultural relevance and critique of scripture and tradition, than previous theological models provided. However, in such a methodology, epistemological priority becomes an issue. At a fundamental level, how can a philosophical system created by human beings have equal authority to a system of revealed knowledge that claims that God is a higher authority? If mutuality means giving both philosophy and theology an equal voice in the process, then the theologian is simply led back to the question that introduced this section—without resolution! However, there is a way ahead.

The discussion on correlation has been helpful in clarifying the issues and necessary for understanding a process for relating philosophy to theology. Practical theology can benefit from a system of critical correlation, but the nature of the alliance needs clarification. However, given that this thesis addresses the New Testament concept of “Living by the Spirit” from a Reformed perspective, the fundamental epistemic priorities of this theological

\textsuperscript{44} Walton. H Graham. E, & Ward. F \textit{Theological Reflections: Methods, vol.1} (London: Epworth 2005), 158.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{46} Swinton. J \textit{Practical Theology and Qualitative Research: 77. (emphasis added)}
tradition should be maintained.\textsuperscript{47} Granted, Reformed theology’s position is a faith position; however, as Swinton argues, “All commitments to bodies of knowledge and epistemic systems are foundationally faith commitments, even within the so-called ‘hard sciences’..."\textsuperscript{48} Notwithstanding this, there is a precedent that gives just cause for philosophy and theology to usefully co-exist within the practical theological enterprise, without necessarily compromising Reformed theology’s foundational assumptions. The solution comes from a concept promulgated from one of the founding fathers of Reformed Theology, John Calvin—“Accommodation.” In explaining the nature of God’s revelation to humanity, Calvin observes that God “accommodates” himself to our limited human faculties. Calvin advocates that we cannot know God as he “really is”, so he accommodates himself to us in, either, fallible human language or the created order: “Moses says that God had planted accommodating himself, by a simple and uncultivated style, to the capacity of the vulgar. For, since the majesty of God as it really is, cannot be expressed, the Scripture is wont to describe it according to the manner of men.”\textsuperscript{(sic) 49}

For Calvin, the concept of accommodation is extended beyond God’s modes of revelation to humans, but incorporated in his wider theological enterprise of using “the sciences” in assisting the theological endeavour: “But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics and other like disciplines, by the work and the ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance.”\textsuperscript{50} Ernest Lucas observes of Calvin on a similar matter of scriptural exegesis, “Although critical of pagan thinking and convinced that the fallenness of man includes his intellect, Calvin did not disavow the use of extra-biblical knowledge in exegesis,

\textsuperscript{47} In brief, the Reformed faith holds that: God is an eternal being who created the world and initially the created order was flawless; humanity’s failure to conform to God’s commands during a probationary period instigated the entrance of sin (moral inconsistency) which resulted in all the human faculties becoming flawed (not in an absolute, but ultimate sense). God instigated a plan of redemption for humanity which incorporated revealing divine truth to them (principally in what is now known as the Christian Scriptures). Whilst humans may and do use reason it is limited and imperfect; whilst humans do see the value in tradition, it too, is subject to human corruption, whilst Spiritual experience is a vital dimension of the Christian faith it is not reliable as a stand-alone means of understanding truth. The Reformed tradition gives epistemic priority to the Christian Scriptures as God’s revealed truth and the final authority in discerning truth within the spheres of reason, experience and tradition. The Christian Scriptures (Holy Bible), whilst penned by human authors derive their authority from God, who inspired these authors with direct intervention from the Holy Spirit. The ongoing role of the Holy Spirit is to enable Christians to understand God’s revealed truth.

\textsuperscript{48} Swinton. \textit{J Practical Theology and Qualitative Research}: 89.


even when it was from non-Christian sources.”  51 However, in recognising the usefulness of extra-Christian sources, Calvin qualifies such usage: “Lest anyone think a man truly blessed when he is credited with possessing great power to comprehend truth under the elements of this world [c.f. Col 2:8], we should at once add that all this capacity to understand, with the understanding that follows it, is an unstable and transitory thing in God’s sight, when a solid foundation of truth does not underlie it.” 52 What Calvin is alluding to, is a kind of asymmetrical relationship between a theology that derives its authority from God and a science that derives its authority from human sources—the divine source always having priority.

Notwithstanding Calvin’s observations, the concept of accommodation, as a means of understanding the relationship between theology and philosophy can also be traced in the New Testament. The New Testament not only employs mundane language in communicating divine truth, but that language (Koine Greek) is culturally conditioned. This means that it incorporates humanly derived philosophies in the process of communication, even though the essence of the truth conveyed is of divine origin. For example, when St Paul engages the Greek philosophers in Athens (Acts 17) it is recorded that he quotes some of their own philosophical writings to support his case, accommodating their understanding in the process of communication. Notwithstanding this, the essence of his message does not capitulate to the ideologies of those philosophies; in fact, it is logically inconsistent with Greek thinking: “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:22-24 NIV) Therefore, the New Testament reveals a methodological process that allows for accommodation of cultural ideas as a heuristic device in assisting communication of the message, whilst ensuring the essential message does not capitulate to the inherent logic in those culturally conditioned means—thereby maintaining epistemic priority.

Practical theology owes its very existence to both, theology and philosophy. Both disciplines have a role to play in the theological endeavour. However, at bottom, Practical Theology is a theological discipline employed to enhance the Christian church’s faithful engagement with

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52 Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1: 275.
the culture in which it exists. As such, with respect to the engagement of philosophically conditioned systems in the practical theological endeavour this thesis will employ an asymmetrically orientated relationship to Browning’s mutual-critical-correlation. This allows theology the latitude to accommodate philosophy in the endeavour and philosophy the latitude to critically engage theology, but ensures theology retains the “controlling interest”—upholding the fundamental position of faith and its sources.

1.4 Thesis Method

Don Browning claims that Practical Theology is not simply a sub-species of theology, but reclaims what theology should be in the first place: practical through and through. In his model of Fundamental Practical Theology, Browning proposes that disciplines including Historical Theology and Systematic Theology are, in fact, subspecies of the practical theological endeavour; instruments of the wider theological enterprise of revising church praxis:

> When a religious community hits a crisis in its practices, it then begins reflecting (asking questions) about its meaningful or theory-laden practices. It may take time to describe these practices so it can better understand the questions precipitated by the crisis. Eventually, if it is serious, the community must re-examine the sacred texts and events that constitute the source of the norms and ideals that guide its practices. It brings its questions to these normative texts and has a conversation between its questions and these texts. This community of interpreters will see its inherited normative sources in light of the questions engendered by its crisis. As its practices change its questions change, and the community will invariably see different meanings in its normative texts as its situation and questions change.53

The actual method of this thesis will integrate a consideration of practice early in the theological process. Browning’s practice-theory-practice method will be employed as an overarching structure. In drawing on the insights of Don Browning’s Fundamental Practical Theology, this thesis will follow a broad structure that moves from understanding the original theoretically informed praxis, to considering the normative sources against which to measure this praxis, through a process of theological reflection, and finally, engaging in an empirical study that seeks to understand the value of the proposed model. Don Browning’s methodology incorporates his mutual critical correlation theory, which is oriented towards a critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of

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experience and interpretation (usually sociology or psychology), with the specific aim of
guiding its action towards social and individual transformation.\textsuperscript{54} Whilst the nature of this
study does not require significant interaction with communities of experience external to
those affiliated with the Reformed understanding of the Christian faith, mutual critical-
correlation will play a more latent role (as it is inherently built into Browning’s system).
Aware of engagement with philosophical ideologies, not only inherent in Browning’s
methodology, but underpinning the qualitative research method of Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis (used in the final section), the research methodology will
embrace an “accommodation” approach, viewing the aforementioned philosophical devices
as having a heuristic role, and hence a subordinate, though necessary role in the practical
theological enterprise.

Browning’s first stage in the practical theological endeavour is \textit{Descriptive Theology}—a
phrase Browning describes as a historically situated dialogue.\textsuperscript{55} At this stage in the process,
the aim is to contextualize the issue at hand against the cultural, traditional and sociological
backgrounds, with the goal of accurately defining the issue. With respect to this thesis, it will
involve understanding the theological ideas, either historically theoretical or locally derived,
which inform the pneumatological understanding of contemporary Queensland Presbyterians.
Among questions to consider are: What seminal theological ideas shape their tradition? What
theological texts are they likely to read? What are the local issues they are responding to?
What popular literature influences the preaching or teaching? The data will be used to
understand the ideological/theological sources that influence Queensland Presbyterians’
understanding of how the Holy Spirit relates to their Christian lives. Fundamentally, this
section (corresponding to chapter two of the thesis) will seek to establish a concrete
understanding of the current ideological context/s against which a revised practical
pneumatology can be presented by identifying key areas of influence that need to be
addressed.

Browning’s second stage is designated \textit{Historical Theology}. Historical theology asks, “What
do the normative texts, that are already part of our effective history really imply for our
praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible?”\textsuperscript{56} This is where traditional

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 49.
disciplines of biblical studies, church history and the history of Christian thought are located. This phase helps clarify the normative principles pertaining to the issue at hand within the larger hermeneutic enterprise of understanding the theoretical basis of the existing praxis. The Christian scriptures are considered by those within the Presbyterian tradition as the primary source of authority; the confessional statement of the church; The Westminster Confession is considered a secondary source of authority—other scholarly works are tertiary sources. The Scriptures, the Westminster Confession, Reformed theologians, and other biblical scholars will all be consulted in this section in an attempt to reconsider the implications of the key areas of influence identified in the previous section, with the aim of arriving at an understanding of “living by the Spirit.” This section (corresponding to chapter three of the thesis), in appealing to the historically authoritative texts, will establish a theoretical basis for a revised model, with which the current praxis might be corrected or modified towards a more effective outcome.

The third stage of this methodological approach is Systematic Theology. Having established a basic description of existing beliefs and practices arising out of the descriptive phase, and then having critiqued against the normative Christian sources, the next section (corresponding to chapter four of the thesis) will focus entirely on theological reflection and the development of a new pneumatological model. Browning sees this process as a fusion of horizons between the implicit visions in contemporary practices, with the vision implied in the normative Christian texts. The systematic nature of this enterprise exists in the investigation of how general gospel themes and carefully reasoned theological reflections respond to the questions that characterize the present situation.57 With respect to this thesis, this section will respond to the questions presented by the current praxis, with a revised theoretical basis for ‘Living by the Spirit’; applicable to Reformed Christians, in particular Queensland Presbyterians. In systematically working out this practical pneumatological model, the function of the Holy Spirit in Christian epistemology, the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics and the way the Holy Spirit works through various “media” to bring understanding in the Christian’s daily praxis will be considered.

Browning describes the final stage of his practical theology method as Strategic Practical Theology. This phase seeks to understand how the enlightened theological reflection is

57 Ibid., 51.
grounded, and then asks, “What should be our praxis in this concrete situation?” It brings the fruits of historical and systematic theology into contact with the analysis of the concrete situation, first engaged in descriptive theology and now resumed in strategic practical theology. This stage (corresponding to chapters five and six of the thesis) involves critically testing the theoretical assumptions of the systematic theology section in concrete situations. The process of understanding how the revised praxis is grounded concretely will involve case studies of selected Presbyterian Christians. These case studies will incorporate initial interviews (to gain a base-line understanding), a guided 21-part study course (to educate the case study participants in the revised model), and concluding interviews (to analyse the effects of the revised theory on their practical understanding). During the final interview phase, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be employed. IPA is an experience-based qualitative approach that is concerned with understanding lived experience; how participants make sense of their experience and the meanings those experiences hold for the participants. As qualitative research, it seeks to describe and clarify human experience from the subject’s perspective. Researchers who use this method gather the data through interviews, observations and documents, with the data transformed into written text for analytical use.

IPA’s phenomenology resides in its exploration of the participant’s personal perception rather than attempting to comprehend any objective state. Originating with Edmund Husserl who, in 1906, proposed a phenomenological way of looking at objects by examining how humans, in their perception of them, actually "constitute" them. Husserl’s epoché or “bracketing” method posits that any phenomenological description is to be considered from a first person point of view, so as to ensure the description is as experienced, or intended, by the subject. The experience is ‘bracketed’ so as to recognize that one’s observation of the object is not the same as the object in and of itself. However, the approach to IPA adopted in this thesis follows the track of the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger resisted Husserl's

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58 Ibid., 56.
59 Whilst Presbyterians broadly subscribe to the Westminster Standards, not all share the same theological assumptions and outlooks. Care will be taken to ensure that in the selection process of individuals, these will be randomly drawn from different areas or groups to allow for the likely inclusion of people having a range of theological perspectives.
neo-Cartesian emphasis on consciousness and subjectivity. For Heidegger, our being is being-in-the-world, so we do not study our activities by bracketing the world; rather we interpret our activities and the meaning things have for us by looking to our contextual relations to things in the world. This implies that the researcher is involved in the research participants’ understanding.

This is where the IPA method also incorporates its “interpretative” element. It acknowledges that the participants’ personal perceptions cannot be accessed directly, but are mediated through the researcher’s conceptions and thus the results are subject to interpretative activity. Recognising the limitations of Husserl’s “bracketing” (and drawing from Heidegger’s insights), Hans-Georg Gadamer developed a hermeneutic model which acknowledges that the reality which humans interpret also shapes the process of interpretation. Gadamer, in seeing that language is the key to interpretation, posits that interpretation involves the fusion of horizons of the original author and reader. The dialogue between text and interpreter brings understanding. As mentioned in the section on Philosophical Hermeneutics, Gadamer viewed prejudice positively. Applied to IPA, this interpretative theory recognizes that the “fusion of horizons” between researcher and subject produces a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. A conscious self-critical approach by the researcher ensures that the dialogical process minimizes the researcher’s capacity to bias the subject’s observations. The aim of this process is to analyse how the proposed practical pneumatology has affected the subjects’ understanding and assisted them in moving beyond their current understanding towards an understanding that incorporates a more open recognition of the Holy Spirit in their Christian lives.

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63 Ramberg and Gjesdal, "Hermeneutics."
Conclusion

Theological reflection on the Holy Spirit lacks a certain depth without a consideration of the practical dimension. As has been argued, the most suitable methodology for approaching the topic under investigation is one that employs Practical Theology. Methodologies that move from practice to theory and then back to practice ensure that the result does not fall to the extremes of an ungrounded theory or a theoretically deficient practice. As was pointed out, this methodology is dependent on Philosophical Hermeneutics for its structure. Whilst philosophy and theology can be construed as being incompatible; when orientated in the right way, they can be beneficial to the endeavour being undertaken, without compromising fundamental assumption of the theological enterprise. Don Bowning’s methodology is a well-attested system and the use of it in this project provides a good framework with which to approach a subject that has received little attention in the Reformed tradition.
CHAPTER 2: Factors Shaping the Pneumatology of Queensland Presbyterians

Introduction

Theological beliefs and practices are shaped by ideas—ideas with a historical provenance. The aim of this chapter is to understand the key theological ideas which are most likely to have influenced, and may continue to influence, the way Queensland Presbyterians conceptualize the Holy Spirit’s relationship to Christian living. No one tradition develops in narrow isolation, but rather is influenced and impacted by a wider culture of ideas. As such, the first section considers some precipitating factors why practical pneumatology has generally received little scholarly attention, and why this is changing. The “intellectualist” manner in which the Holy Spirit has been interpreted among theologians, both ancient and modern, provides a clue as to why practical pneumatology may have been under-appreciated historically. However, with the advent of phenomena such as Pentecostal Christianity, and a more subjective orientation of culture in general, a renewed interest in pneumatology is emerging.

In sharpening the focus on the more direct theological factors influencing Queensland Presbyterians, section two begins by examining the seminal role of John Calvin and the impact of his thinking on pneumatology. In continuing a description of the theological influences, the influential factors arising in 17th century Presbyterianism are examined. Given the significance of this defining era, a more in-depth analysis of the theological and socio-political factors is undertaken. From the 18th century until the present day, studies in pneumatology continued to enter circulation and influence Presbyterian theological belief and practice; the most prominent contributions to the field are reviewed. In the final section the impact of local reactions to the perceived excesses of Pentecostal and Charismatic phenomena are examined. Also in this section, popular influences which have the potential to encourage a more open mindset towards a practical appreciation of the Holy Spirit among Presbyterians are also discussed. The goal of this research is to attempt to identify and isolate the most significant factor/s that may have limited the development of Practical Pneumatology among Queensland Presbyterians; as such, this chapter corresponds with the Descriptive Theology outlined in the opening chapter on methodology.
2.1 Practical Pneumatology: A General Overview

Practical Pneumatology has received limited treatment in the course of Protestant theological reflection. In considering possible reasons, some scholars have suggested that this lack of interest may be attributable to theological ideas as far back as Patristic sources. Shults and Hollingsworth cite the example of Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D) and how his focus on the logos concept seemed to downplay any real difference between the Word and the Spirit. Rowan Williams, in commenting on contemporary spirituality, also believes that relating the Spirit and Word within a logos framework downplays the Spirit. It leads towards an intellectual understanding of the Spirit, where the Spirit’s role is more information than transformation: “If the Spirit simply instructs and guides, leads towards the Logos, it is less easy to talk about ‘Spirit’ as the constitutive reality or quality of Christian existence…If the Spirit’s role is to conduct us to the ‘advanced class’ where the Logos presides, Christian maturity ‘in the Spirit’ becomes a rather aridly intellectualist notion.”

Also reflecting on later Patristic sources’ influence, J.I. Packer believes the dearth of theological reflection on the Holy Spirit is partially attributable to Augustine’s legacy of ascribing potency to internal grace rather than the Spirit. Moreover, given Packer’s inference, and the popular understanding of Augustine’s Trinitarian designation of the Father as the Lover, the Son as the Beloved and the Spirit as Love, it is not difficult to see how such a conceptualisation (interpreted with a modern mind) could frame the Spirit more abstractly. Although when Augustine deemed the Spirit as love, he would (in all probability) have been thinking in “personal” and “relational” terms. Furthermore, whilst there is little doubt that not all Patristic fathers conceptualized the Spirit in the manner of Justin Martyr, it is

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64 A notable exception to this is the work of John Owen. John Owen, Pneumatologia, (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1674).
66 It should be acknowledged that viewing the function of the Spirit (with reference to logos) as being downplayed in a practical sense was not a uniform position held among the Patristics. Groups such as the Montanists (akin to contemporary Charismatics) focused on the experiential (in their case, ecstatic utterances) c.f. Veli-Matti Karkkainen, Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and contextual perspective (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 41-3.
interesting to note that historian Geoffery Nuttall considers John Owen’s comprehensive 17th century work, *Pneumatologia* as unprecedented. Nuttall argues that Owen, although being very aware of Patristic contributions to pneumatology, believes prior works were not fully developed along practical lines. ⁷⁰

Likewise, in reflecting on an abstract interpretation of the Holy Spirit, Robert W. Jenson argues that Karl Barth’s emphasis on Christology has subsumed the role of the Spirit to a mere functionary of the Son. Given Barth’s enormous influence on the 20th century Protestant church, the weight of this claim is not inconsequential. According to Jenson, Barth portrays the Spirit as *something* rather than *someone*; the Spirit is an *echo* of some other agent (usually Christ) and consequently the Spirit echoes, rather than acts in human history and experience. ⁷¹ If Jenson is right then Barth’s ideas may well be a contributing factor to the dearth of practical pneumatological reflection. Of course, some latitude must be given to Barth, who should be understood over and against his theological arch-nemesis Friedrich Schleiermacher. In Schleiermacher, the Spirit of God and the human reason are described as virtually indistinguishable: “In as much, then, as the reason is completely one with the divine Spirit, the divine Spirit can itself be conceived as the highest enhancement of the human reason, so that the difference between the two is made to disappear.” ⁷²

Also Reformed theologian Charles Hodge, in reaction to the perceived threat of Schleiermacher’s influence, tended to distance pneumatology from the subjective. Hodge, standing in the tradition of Protestant Scholasticism, rigidly connected the Spirit to the interpretation of the Word: “…this inward teaching or demonstration of the Spirit is confined to truths objectively revealed in the Scriptures.” ⁷³ For Hodge experience was limited within the text of scripture so the Christian cannot appeal to their own feelings or inward experience as the grounds of arriving at certainty. No doubt there may be many lesser reasons for the lack of development in practical pneumatology; however, given the weight of the examples

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briefly surveyed, it becomes evident that the Word/Spirit being biased more towards the Word is a theme that is hard to ignore.

However, whilst these previous examples may provide some theoretical justification for the lack of attention to practical pneumatology generally, it should not be supposed that Protestantism was altogether devoid of pneumatological reflection on the Christian life. At the turn of the 20th century it was a phenomenon from an entirely unexpected quarter that instigated a renewed interest in “practical matters” pertaining to the Spirit. The rise of Pentecostalism and the more widespread Charismatic movement reignited pneumatological discussion in the 20th century. Alister McGrath believes that “the rise of the Charismatic movement within virtually every mainstream church has ensured that the Holy Spirit figures prominently on the theological agenda.” Unfortunately, rather than seeing the advent of the Charismatic movement as an opportunity, positively to address practical pneumatology, prominent voices within the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition tended to view the Charismatic movement as a problem to be solved. One such voice was J.I Packer: “For the fact we must now face is that the theology most commonly professed within the movement to account for its own claimed distinctive is deeply unbiblical.”

Whilst the Charismatic renewal may have placed the Holy Spirit on the theological agenda during the 20th century, another subtle force, external to the theological endeavours of the Christian church, was acting to help initiate a new wave in pneumatology. As the ubiquitous influence of modernity waned towards the end of the 20th century, a renaissance in “spirituality” ensued. Charles Taylor, in his 1991 work *The Ethics of Authenticity*, dubbed this phenomenon as “the massive subjective turn of modern culture...” In drawing on Taylor’s observations, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, in *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* argued, “It is a turn away from life lived in terms of external or ‘objective' roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences.” The place of external authority or authority “from above” began to give way to the subjective, or authority “from within”. Although the effects of this phenomenon were, and are, greatest outside of institutional religion, this renewed

interest in personal spirituality also affected Christianity towards the end of the 20th Century. 78

The ideological convergence of this “spirituality renaissance” with the effects of the Pentecostal/Charismatic phenomena also initiated a renewed interest in practical pneumatology. Veli-Matti Karkkainen in *Pneumatology* observes, “A distinctive feature of this new search for the Spirit and spiritual life is that rather than looking for generalizations and abstract definitions...people are experiencing a hunger for a concrete, lived experience of the life-giving Spirit...”. 79 Moreover, Karkkainen believes if the Pentecostal movement did anything, it reminded traditional Christendom that understanding the Holy Spirit can never be divorced from a personal concrete experience of the Spirit. In fact, he argues that the biblical record shows that a powerful charismatic experience of the Spirit has, almost always, preceded theological reflection. 80 A new interest among theologians in practical and concrete elements of pneumatology has begun. Whilst there is an ever-increasing body of literature contributing to the field of practical pneumatology, there are some notable contributions which express a more life-orientated and concrete expression of it. Jürgen Moltmann’s *Spirit of Life* 81 is not only concerned about a pneumatology that correctly presents God as Spirit, but also a pneumatology that impacts “real life”, whether social, political or ethical. Moltmann seeks to broaden narrow understandings of spirituality, which have chained the Spirit to the role of biblical interpretation and subjective assurance—widening the scope for a “holistic” view of Spiritual life.

Michael Welker in *God the Spirit* argues that current theological constructs prominent in Western theology have reduced our capacity to understand the role of God’s Spirit. 82 Welker believes that his “realistic” theology more adequately mediates the need of theologies “from below”; who seek to understand “God actions” in the creaturely reality. The goal of this “new” construct is to renounce a theology of “control” by enlightening and changing the Christian’s worldview, moral systems and value structures to correspond to what he calls

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80 Ibid., 15.
82 “Their simplicity and ready plausibility are alluring, and they possess a correspondingly universal effectiveness and capacity to win out over competitors”. Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 41.
For Welker, theology must move beyond mere personal experience or abstract reasoning and work itself out in “real life” matters. Clark Pinnock’s *Flame of Love* highlights the ubiquitous role of the Holy Spirit in creation and redemption. Pinnock believes that the Holy Spirit is integral to our very existence, which is too often taken for granted.83 Pinnock’s contribution is valuable in as much as he seeks to view Christian theology through a pneumatological lens, shaping how the Christian lives and thinks in relationship with God, through the Spirit.

It is now clear that there is a renewed interest in practical pneumatology. Shults and Hollingsworth believe that this interest needs to materialize into a pneumatology that integrates the doctrine of the Spirit with the practice of Spirituality: “First, a pneumatology in which divine Spirit is understood as an all-embracing and all-pervading dynamic presence, in which all creaturely spatio-temporal forms of ‘energized’ material live and move and have their being, invites more relational, holistic and embodied practices in spirituality.”84 However, for such a pneumatology to be developed an appreciation for the factors that may limit its development needs to be gained. In the preliminary interviews with the twelve Queensland Presbyterian case study participants, there appeared to be an evident lack of appreciation for practical pneumatology. Despite these initial observations, the Reformed tradition does have a strong heritage in pneumatological reflection, as John Hesselink argues, “... in Reformed Theology there is a greater appreciation, deeper understanding, and more comprehensive and balanced presentation of the full power and work of the Holy Spirit than in any other tradition, including the Pentecostal tradition.” 85 In order to ascertain why practical pneumatology has failed to “gain traction”, the remainder of the chapter will seek to capture a descriptive understanding of the theological factors that Queensland Presbyterians have been exposed to and potentially influenced by. It is not possible to determine the exact degree of influence; however, it is possible to outline the material that has been available to this group and attempt to identify if there are certain significant factors that have played a part in contributing to the aforementioned lack of interest in practical pneumatology.

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2.2 Practical Pneumatology and Queensland Presbyterians: Theological Influences

2.2.1 John Calvin

Arguably the most significant influence on Reformed/Presbyterian pneumatology comes via the theology of the 16th century Reformer, John Calvin. If in the history of Christian thought Pneumatology has received little attention, then Calvin may be described as an exception to this rule. Calvin, more than any other in his time was instrumental in bringing the discussion of the Holy Spirit into the foreground of theological reflection. In fact, the 19th century American theologian B.B. Warfield would later describe Calvin as “the theologian of the Holy Spirit.” Moreover, according to Warfield, pneumatology was probably Calvin’s primary legacy: “It is probable however that Calvin’s greatest contribution to theological science lies in the rich development which he gives; and which he was the first to give, to the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit.” Calvin’s pneumatology, more so than later scholastic representations, was characterized by a greater pastoral orientation and represented a way of knowing God that also took into account an intuitive and experiential knowledge of God. For Calvin theological reflection always necessitated practical piety—a piety lived in conformity with God’s Spirit.

Calvin drew heavily on the thinking of St Augustine. Underpinning Calvin’s pneumatology was St. Augustine’s Letter/Spirit relationship, which orientated the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Scriptures hermeneutically. Consequently, Calvin attributes the divine provenance of the Christian Scriptures to the Holy Spirit. But Calvin’s conception of the Holy Spirit’s engagement with Scripture extends beyond the text itself, to the reader’s engagement with it. He not only believes that the Spirit of God is responsible for the indirect authorship of Scripture, but believes that the Christian reader’s authentic understanding of the Scriptures

87 Ibid., 485.
resides with the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit: “...we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgements or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit...the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason.”91 For Calvin the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life was connected to the enduring value of the Christian Scriptures: “God did not bring forth his Word among men for the sake of momentary display, intending at the coming of the Spirit to abolish it. Rather, he sent down the same Spirit by whose power he had dispensed the Word, to complete his work by efficacious confirmation of the Word.”92 Therefore, “Living by the Spirit” for Calvin was principally living under the instruction of the Spirit-inspired guidance of God’s Word—Spirit and Word, being “effectively” inseparable. This Word/Spirit relationship with respect to the Christian life is, arguably, Calvin’s greatest single legacy to the practical piety of those within the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.

Notwithstanding, the aforementioned allusion to Calvin’s understanding of the Word /Spirit relationship, the ethical and practical life for Calvin is not simply conducted in the manner in which a student might engage an instruction manual! 93 For Calvin his entire understanding of the Christian ethical life is viewed from a pneumatological perspective.94 At the core of his practical pneumatology was the Christian’s “Spiritual union with Christ”: “But the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to, the Holy Spirit so that the man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning within him. [Gal 2:20]”95 Paul Chung believes that Calvin’s practical pneumatology is predicated on the notion of a “mystical” Christ-union: “ Calvin takes union with Christ (prior to purgation and illumination) as a mystical urge ( the last stage of the contemplative life) for a point of departure considering the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality.”96 Calvin believes that the initial function of the Holy Spirit is vivifying faith in the believer,

92 Ibid., 95.
93 Karl Barth observes that the spiritual Christ-union that Calvin embraces ensures that his religion is not simply a religion of laws. Of Calvin’s view he writes, “ As he lives in us, he rules us by His Spirit and directs our actions...” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G.W Bromiley and T.F Torrance, trans. G.W Bromiley, vol. IV:3.2 (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 551.
which initiates the “union.” Moreover, the same Holy Spirit that initiates “saving faith” in the Christian person also provides the power to emulate Christ’s character, through what Calvin describes as, “…the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits,” Thus in Calvin’s understanding the “indwelling Spirit” in uniting the Christian to Christ, engenders a moral predisposition towards holiness: “By his secret watering the Spirit makes us fruitful to bring forth the buds of righteousness.” So significant is the function of the Holy Spirit for Christian understanding and living that Calvin describes it as the “key that unlocks the treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven,” having the capacity to consecrate believers to God, purging them of “worldly uncleanness”, to become “temples holy to God.”

Calvin, as well as being a theologian was an avid commentator on the Bible. As such, he always sought to correlate his theological reflection with his understanding of the Scriptural text. Consistent with the New Testament witness in Paul’s Letters, Calvin understands “spiritual living” as necessarily incorporating firstly, the mortification of the old “sinful nature” and secondly, a vivification of a new “godly nature.” Both mortification and vivification are empowered by the Holy Spirit: “...we are not conformed to the fear of God and do not learn the rudiments of piety, unless we are violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to nought.” Other motivations for a life of piety extend beyond the “inner workings” of the Spirit and the particular guidance of the scripturally derived ethics. Calvin appeals also to other “outward” disciplines. In fact, the example of Jesus Christ is considered a primary motivator to holy living. He also considers virtues like “cross bearing”—suffering for Christ’s sake, contemplation on the future life, frugality, and the appropriate exercising of one’s calling—as useful practices in facilitating a godly life. That said none of these external disciplines could be construed as independent from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit or from a dependency on the content contained in the Christian Scriptures.

98 Ibid., 537,81.
99 Ibid., 540.
100 Ibid., 542.
101 Ibid., 542.
102 Ibid., 600.
103 Ibid., 686.
Any discussion on Calvin’s pneumatology, as it pertains to Christian living, must take into consideration his views on Biblical Law. Calvin wrote, “I understand by the word “law”, not only the Ten Commandments, which set forth a godly and righteous rule of living, but the form of religion handed down by God through Moses.” More than simply prescripts for the Jews, Calvin saw the Law as the perfect standard for ordering a Christian’s life. Over and against the Anabaptists, who saw the Law as pertaining only to the time of the Old Covenant (Mosaic) and having no value under the New Covenant (Christ) and the reign of the Holy Spirit, Calvin argues for a continuity of Law. He argues that the Law has a spiritual benefit (even to Old Covenant Jews) that transcends the material nature of Old Covenant life. For Calvin the letter of the Law without the Spirit condemns; but by virtue of being “in Christ” through the instrumentality of Spirit, Calvin argues for the Law’s value, “Christ is the Spirit [2 Cor 3:17] who quickens the letter that of itself is death-dealing...righteousness is taught in vain by the commandments until Christ confers it by free imputation and by the Spirit of regeneration.” Calvin understands that whilst believers have the Law of God “written on their hearts” and have a longing to obey God which is generated by the indwelling Spirit, they still profit from the written law as a moral instructor: “Now the Law has the power to exhort believers. This is not a power to bind their consciences with a curse, but one to shake off their sluggishness, by repeatedly urging them and to pinch them awake from their imperfection.”

In what Calvin calls the “third or primary” use of the Law, he considers the Law of God as a means of prompting the Spirit-empowered obedience, exhorting Christians, on their occasions of remission and reminding them afresh of God’s perfect standard. Chung observes of Calvin’s conceptualization of law ethics, “When the law is truly obeyed inwardly in the power of the Spirit, it discloses the presence of Christ in the law...” Thus Calvin can justify linking the Law and Christ. This helps makes sense of why Calvin was hesitant to leave the Old Covenant concept of Law behind. Rather than seeing a sharp disjuncture between Old and New Covenants, he viewed the transition as more of a gentle slope (with a

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104 Ibid., 348.
105 Ibid., 689.
106 Ibid., 351.
107 Ibid., 362.
degree of overlap), where law and gospel are compatible. However, this amalgam of law and gospel was not without negative practical consequences. Despite Calvin’s emphasis on Spirit motivation and his avowal of the spiritual life, the practical manifestation of his pneumatology often revealed a rigid legalism. Although writing of a Spirit-engendered obedience to the Law, it was still an Old Covenant paradigm being advocated—with new motive. Thus, Calvin’s practical religion often smacked of an inconsistent legalism. In a critical assessment of Calvin’s “third use” of the law, John Leith argues, “He gave a persuasive and powerful statement of the personal claim of the living God on every human life; yet his efforts to compel people to submit to this claim tended to substitute precisely formulated rules for the personal reign of God.” This was also evidenced in the way the Geneva Consistory enforced various religious practices. Adding further weight to this, William Bouwsma writes, “He saw God’s law as a narrow path; only if we stay within its boundaries, straying neither to the right nor to the left, will we be safe.” In sum, whilst giving the Spirit greater weight in his pneumatology, Calvin’s “practical” pneumatology often manifested itself as a spiritually legitimized moralism.

Calvin is most famously known for his interpretation of the doctrine of predestination. Whilst this properly belongs to the category of soteriology, it nevertheless impinges on his conceptualization of the spiritual life. Of the significance of the Spirit to predestination, Chung argues, “If Calvin’s concept of justification and sanctification is grounded in human religious experience of the union with Christ, his concept of election can be treated in light of the secret work of the Spirit.” Certainly, Calvin viewed predestination from the perspective of the practical Christian life, providing grounds to undercut confidence in human works and lay bare the source of salvation and ethics—Christ. Moreover, not only does an experiential engagement with the Spirit enable a faith in Christ, it brings commensurate joy, hope and confidence to live a life of obedience. However, he did not view this outward

112 Ibid., 54.
115 Leith, John Calvin’s doctrine of the Christian life: 122.
116 Ibid., 214.
obedience as proof of one’s election. Although election may be ratified by a spiritually motivated obedience, which may provide a degree of comfort, Calvin ultimately places primary assurance in the “secret testimony” of the Spirit.

Furthermore, Calvin’s understanding of practical pneumatology was not simply orientated towards individual piety alone. Indeed, it was Calvin who restated Cyprian’s maxim, “He cannot have God as his father who does not have the church as his mother.”\textsuperscript{117} In Calvin’s thinking, the church provides the context for the preaching and teaching of the Christian Scriptures and also the context in which the sacraments are administered. Yet beyond the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments within the life of the church, the Holy Spirit in Calvin’s ecclesiology, as will be argued later, is underdeveloped. Calvin was just one person in the history of Protestant thought, but his influence extends far beyond his 55-year tenure.

Although many of his ideas may have been derived from his theological predecessors, such as St Augustine, Calvin’s capacity to present his doctrines in a clear, concise and systematic format ensured that his ideas would become entrenched in the beliefs and habits of Presbyterian/Reformed Christianity henceforth. His emphasis on the Spirit as the source of divine truth, his belief that the Word of God and the Spirit work in concert encouraging Christian behaviour, and his promotion of the ministry of the Church as the custodian of truth established and embedded his pneumatology in the Reformed consciousness. In fact, much of theological reflection in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century draws on Calvin’s ideas.

\subsection*{2.2.2 The 17-18th Century}

The development of pneumatology and its relationship to the moral life became more pronounced from the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. This century precipitated the rise of Puritanism, where spirituality was promoted as a primary characteristic of Christianity. For many Puritans, the Christian life was a spiritual pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{118} As they passed through this world of sin on the way to the “heavenly Jerusalem,” Puritan spirituality promoted a regimen of self-examination and prayer, aimed at the mortification of the flesh. For the Puritans the ethical obedience commensurate with this pilgrim’s progress was directly related to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and (in most cases) the guidance of God’s Law. As with Calvin’s understanding

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\item This concept is most clearly seen in the following work: John Bunyan, \textit{The Pilgrim's Progress: In Modern English} (North Brunswick: Bridge-logos Publishers, 1998).
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of pneumatology, the Puritans conceived a strong relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Christian Scriptures. During the 17th century the *Westminster Confession of Faith* was formulated. The *Confession* sought to codify Presbyterian doctrinal beliefs and reify within the Presbyterian consciousness, the notion that the Christian life was to be guided by the Scripture alone. The role of the Spirit was relegated to “illumination” of the truths of Scripture:

> The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and the government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.\(^{119}\)

Because of the importance of this era, a more detailed discussion on the Presbyterian understanding of Christian living, especially relating to Law, will be pursued. Puritanism was not a generic movement.\(^{120}\) For some of the Puritans (especially the Presbyterians), Paul’s statement “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Rom7:6 NIV), could never refer simply to an annulment of the Law to make way to an era of purely “living by the Spirit”, as some of the Anabaptists in Calvin’s day advocated. Like Calvin before them, the Presbyterian Puritans emphasized human sinfulness and sovereign grace.\(^{121}\) They believed that God, by virtue of being a sovereign creator, who imprinted morality on the hearts of his creatures, had the supreme right to command. Law “prescribed” humankind’s duty to God, not merely described a course of ethical action. Law was to be adhered to, not only in its “substance”, but also in its “form”. Therefore, the Puritan believers’ morally binding imperative was not only from their inner “spiritual” disposition alone, but also from the literal command, as John Downname affirms, “…both in respect of the

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119 *The Confession of Faith 1647*: I:VI.
120 A detailed presentation of the demarcation of the Puritan groups is set forth by Geoffrey Nuttall. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in the Puritan faith and experience*.
matter and also the manner of it, it must be performed."

Seminal Covenant theologian Hermann Witsius (1636–1708), in *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, also reinforced the idea that the Old Testament Law was morally binding on all Christians. Taken from this perspective, Law remained as a literal legal command and the Spirit was, effectively, instrumental in empowering the believer to obey or “fulfil” the law as written. Moreover, this ethical view of Law was often set within the framework of the concept of “covenant.”

The Puritans viewed the Christian life in accord with their particular understanding and interpretation of the Biblical concept of covenant. The concept of covenant allowed the Puritans to understand how the relationship between the sovereign God (whose purposes in election are unchangeable) and the believing Christian (whose responsibility is to take the initiative in moral actions) is logically conceivable. Covenant, as the means of balancing God’s sovereignty with human responsibility, became foundational to many of their theological systems. The system known as Federal Covenant Theology developed in the latter part of the 16th century. Within this system, theologians usually emphasized two theologically constructed covenants. The first, the Covenant of Works, made between God and Adam (humanity’s representative head), and the second, the Covenant of Grace—God’s redemptive initiative, spanning both Old and New Testaments. Under the Covenant of Works, Law-keeping was the basis of Adam (humanity’s representative head) maintaining and retaining a state of favour with God. Under the Covenant of Grace, Law took on an ethical role. Because the Covenant of Grace spanned both Mosaic and Christian dispensations, Covenant theologians tended to collapse the ethical component of both administrations together—Law being a valid ethical imperative for the Christian as well as the Jew. The ceremonial elements of Law were considered superfluous under the New Covenant, whilst moral elements (principally the Ten Commandments) continued to hold sway as a valid and binding moral code. In qualifying this, in an attempt to avoid charges of legalism, they often argued that the Law was never to be considered to be an instrument for

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124 The word Federal is derived from the Latin: *foedus*—covenant.
“gaining legal merit” before God (as it might have been under the Covenant of Works). This was the basic schema adopted in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which became and remains the doctrinal standard of Presbyterian churches.

The theology of the Reformers had a strong influence on the formulation of Westminster theology. Calvin was one of those influences. His idea of the “principal” use of the Law as an instrument of instruction for the regenerate was significant: “The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh, the law remains a constant sting that will not let him stand still.” Whilst the incipient Covenant theology, evident in Calvin’s work, did orientate the “principal use” of the Law as a guide to Christian living, some scholars argue that subsequent influences tended to construe Calvin’s interpretation of Law differently. It is believed by one school of thought that The Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism were part of a theological culture that tended to reorientate Calvin’s theology towards a more “rigidly legal” view of Christianity. R.T Kendall initiated this line of inquiry with his provocative book Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649. Kendall argued that Calvin’s successor Theodore Beza, employing an Aristotelian model of reasoning, presented Calvin’s theology in a more rationalistic light. However, as post-Reformation orthodoxy was influenced by a number of sources, others have suggested that this more rational approach to Reformed theology entered Scottish theology via Robert Rollock’s 1596 work Tractatus de vocatione. Robert Lethem believes that the methodology of Rollock’s theological system can, at least partly, be

125 The Confession of Faith 1647: XIX:V,VI.
128 A significant contributor to this field of study is Richard A. Muller. Muller believes that the historical methods used by historians and theologians alike (Kendall, McGrath etc) fail to see that 17th century Reformed thinking had many sources, “They fail to allow for differing antecedents, sources, and contexts for the formulations of individual theologians. They also fail to observe the rise and development of a confessional tradition at the hands of a rather diverse group of formulators, they fail to consider the tradition as itself represented by a series of documents arising from different contexts, and they fail to identify the patterns of relationship and difference belonging to the tradition itself. And from a methodological perspective, they also fail to observe how the more specific characteristics of one major theologian’s formulations are rather differently received by other thinkers within the confessional tradition.” Richard A. Muller, Calvin and the Reformed Tradition, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).Kindle loc. 254-259.
attributed to the influence of Philosopher/Mathematician Peter Ramus, whose methodology focused on sub-divisions and dichotomies. Still others have argued that the source of this rigidity came from Rhineland theologians such as Heinrich Bullinger. Against Calvin’s concept of sovereign initiative and grace, the Rhineland perspective presented a view of covenant that was conditional on human obedience: “The burden of fulfilment rests upon man, for he must first obey in order to bring God’s reciprocal obligation into force.” John Von Rohr argues that some of the Puritans struggled with the concept of covenant, but concludes, “…the Rhineland view of covenant had triumphed and became the interpretative scheme utilized by the Westminster Assembly of Divines as it drew up its normative and influential Confession.” As such, the argument follows that the Christian life and understanding of the Law were “rationally” framed through this view of covenant, leading to a view where grace establishes a Christian’s right standing, before God, but obedience to the Law keeps the Christians there! In fact T.F Torrance believes that these influences were so significant that the Christian life was understood in Scottish Presbyterian consciousness as follows, “The general effect of all this was that faith was intellectualized, theology was 'logicalised' and the Christian life was moralised.” Although it is doubtful that Torrance’s observations would be true in every case, and are certainly biased by his own assumptions, this notion is, nevertheless, not easily dismissed. However, are these claims of a “more legal orientation” of the Christian life, within the Westminster creeds, verifiable? It appears that Law-keeping, as an expression of Christian ethical obedience, is advocated in both The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) and its

133 Thomas F. Torrance, Scottish Theology:From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 62.
134 “The moral law does forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither does Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthens this obligation. VI. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly...” The Confession of Faith 1647: XIX:V,VI.(emphasis added)
companion document *The Larger Catechism (1648)*. In the *Westminster Confession’s* chapter on the Law, WCFXIX: VI, the Law functions to “direct and bind” true believers. Although, the minutes of Assembly show the words “and bind” were excluded in the first draft, they were later added by specific resolution, possibly indicating the express intentionality of the Assembly to uphold the morally binding nature of biblical Law. Also, in line with *The Confession*, the *Larger Catechism* views the Law as indispensable in the ethical endeavour; its function described as follows, “…to provoke them to more thankfulness and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.” Moreover, the degree to which 17th century Presbyterians understood the *Westminster ethic* as promoting a legally-orientated Christianity, is further attested in the content of contemporary works of the day. David Dickson’s *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* (a document bound with publications of *The Confession* as early as 1650) states, “That the obligation of the moral law [ten commandments], in all points, to all holy duties, is perpetual, and shall stand to the world's end, that is, ‘till heaven and earth pass away’.”

Further to this, the fact that Law and Covenant systems could so strongly grip *Westminster ethics* may be attributable to more than the purely theological influences alone. The logic of Covenant and its correlative Law also provided the basis for the integration of politics and religious thought in the 17th century. Raath and De Freitas argue that Heinrich Bullinger bequeathed to Scottish Theology a theologico-political ideology constructed around the concept of covenant. For Bullinger, covenant was more than simply a theological concept; the *divine covenant* became the basis for a political ideology that could challenge the divine right of kings and their unlimited right to legislate. Bullinger’s system allowed a shift of the

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137 *The Larger Catechism 1648*: 181. (emphasis added)
138 It should be noted that a distinction needs to be made between “legal” and “legalistic”. In this context, Legalistic is more in line with a narrow duty-driven works righteousness; legal refers more to a mode of living similar to legitimate Old Covenant law obedience.
139 David and Durham Dickson, James, "The Sum of Saving Knowledge," (1649), http://www.covenanter.org/Westminster/sumofsavingknowledge.htm. “Ever since its publication in 1650, *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* has had an immense influence on the thinking of the Kirk by members and ministers alike...it provides us with a rather remarkable, and remarkably clear, picture of the understanding of Scottish Theology as it was being taught and was taking shape in the parishes of the land.” Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell*: 112.
political focus from the absolute power of sovereignty to the idea of a civil office limited by law—God’s law. In Bullinger’s logic, covenant provided the justification for the divine sovereignty over, not only the Christian church, but the Christian state! Under such a theocratic regime, God’s Law (principally the Ten Commandments) becomes the moral basis for life in such a society. In the mid-sixteenth century, John Knox, drawing in theologico-political ideas from the continental reformers (such as Bullinger) radically grounded these ideas in Scotland. Knox ideally saw Scotland as a covenanted nation under God, in much the same “way” Israel was. In this schema of social contract, both church and state must obey God’s law.141

Knox’s covenental vision for Scotland waxed and waned during the later decades of the 16th century and into the early decades of the 17th. However, the attempt by King Charles I to introduce Laud’s prayer book into Scotland in 1637 would reignite the vision for Scotland as a nation under God, galvanizing latent adherents of Scottish religious nationalism and the Presbyterian ecclesiology in an unprecedented way. J.B Torrance in his article The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and its Legacy142 argues—against the backdrop of Charles I’s attempt to establish uniformity of worship with Laud’s Liturgy in 1637, that the concept of covenant, used in a socio-political sense by those opposed to Laud’s changes, became more contractual in its orientation. Thus, the relational concept of covenant became distorted in the minds of a population familiar with the contractual concept of covenant. This meant that the biblical unconditional nature of covenant was supplanted by a conditional understanding of covenant.

Influential Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford revived Knox’s vision of Scotland as God’s own. With reference to the national covenant, Rutherford wrote, “For the Lord delighteth in us, and this land is married to Himself.” (sic)143 It would fall to Rutherford and the Westminster divines to see Bullinger’s ideology and Knox’s vision materialize on a far grander scale. Rutherford played an active role in reifying the covenant concept of Law in a politicized context—the Westminster assembly. If Knox’s reformation of 1560 introduced the amalgamation of politics and faith to the religious consciousness of Scotland, and the

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National Covenant of 1638 further cemented it in the Scottish psyche, the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, and the resultant Westminster Assembly, would ensure that the marriage of political ideology and religious faith would be enshrined in the Presbyterian consciousness in perpetuity. On the basis of the Solemn League, the Westminster divines had a political mandate to ensure the British Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland would all adopt the Presbyterian system of religion.

Compiled during the English Civil War, the *Westminster Confession* became the confessional standard to ensure the unity of religion within the Commonwealth. During his tenure at the Assembly in 1644 Rutherford penned *Lex Rex*;\(^\text{144}\) a document that draws on Old Testament theology to justify his views of Government against the divine right of kings; showing how all of society is under God’s law, even the king. The success of the Presbyterian project was heavily dependent on Old Testament Law, at every level. It is highly conceivable that such a strong commitment to Old Covenant Law necessitated that the *ethical system* promulgated within the *Confession* be necessarily bound to the ongoing validity of Old Testament law. It appears that anything less, would have been logically inconsistent and practically unthinkable to theologians like Rutherford. As such it is not surprising that Rutherford, during the Westminster Assembly, would speak disparagingly of “antinomians”\(^\text{145}\) and even, notable “independents” like Thomas Goodwin.\(^\text{146}\) That Rutherford’s goal succeeded is attested in the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) chapter of the confession: “The moral law does forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof...”\(^\text{147}\)

The promotion of religion via the agency of politics is not without practical religious ramifications. It would appear that J.B. Torrance’s argument—that the contractual nature of the national covenant of 1638 instilled into the minds of the Scottish peoples a legalistic

\(^{144}\) *Lex, Rex,* (London: 1644).

\(^{145}\) Of the Assembly proceedings Rutherford writes, “...there are many sects here, of Anabaptists, Libertines who for all opinions in religion, fleshly and abominable antinomians...all against the government of presbyteries.” *Letters of Samuel Rutherford: 617.* (emphasis added)

\(^{146}\) “Thomas Goodwin, Jeremiah Burroughs, and some others, four of five, who are for the independent way, stand in our way, and are mighty opposites to presbyteral government.” Ibid., 618. Though Rutherford would have been referring to their stance on church government, nevertheless, Goodwin’s writings on the Holy Spirit, which placed a strong emphasis on the inner nature of Law in the New Covenant over and against the Law’s external demands, would have caused Rutherford some discomfort. C.f. Thomas Goodwin, *The work of the Holy Spirit in Our Salvation*, Works of Thomas Goodwin (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 214,34,36.

\(^{147}\) The *Confession of Faith 1647: XIX.*
notion of religion—has a degree of plausibility. Calvin’s concept of an *unconditional* covenant had taken on a *conditional* nature in the Scottish Presbyterian psyche; inverting the roles of grace and law into a legalism: “But legalism puts it the other way round. ‘If you keep the law, God will love you! If you keep the Sabbath day and carry the yoke of the Torah, the Kingdom of God will come!’ ”\(^{148}\) Although it would not be reasonable to assume that all Presbyterians conceptualized the Law this way, it is nevertheless true that this legal/legalistic notion of Presbyterian ethical life did tend to have a legal influence wherever the Confession was upheld stringently—even in Australia. Malcolm Woods in *Presbyterians in Colonial Victoria* observed, “The ‘Shalt nots’ of the Commandments given to Moses were intrinsic to Presbyterian Morality…holding that divine wrath would fall on society for toleration of evil, a vigilant Church sought to control behaviour, with scant regard for individualism.”\(^{149}\) Notwithstanding the legalistic manner in which the *Westminster documents* were interpreted by many Presbyterians within the 17th century and beyond, the very Law-orientated language of *The Confession* and *Larger Catechism*, in implying that the Law has a perpetually “binding” relationship to the Christian, simply reads in such a way as to present an “apparently” contradictory position to that of the Apostle Paul: “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Rom 7:6 NIV).

Although the principal legacy of 17th century Presbyterianism was to bequeath tradition in which the practical Christian life had a more “legal frame”, it is also worth acknowledging that within contemporary Puritan quarters practical pneumatology was given considerably more space. Throughout the 17th and into the 18th century a number of Puritan writers took very seriously the role of the Holy Spirit within the realm of practical Christian living (beyond a narrow Spirit generated law-based ethic). One of the most prominent was the prodigious scholar and theologian John Owen. Owen’s voluminous work *Pneumatologia* (1674) is probably the most comprehensive work on the Holy Spirit in the history of Protestant Christian literature. Owen had a genuine appreciation of Calvin’s prior contribution to pneumatology and also understood that a clear understanding of the Holy Spirit must be one of Reformed Theology’s key emphases.

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Whilst Owen’s comprehensive work outlined the more technical aspects of pneumatology, Owen also strove to be deliberately practical in his emphasis. Historian Geoffery Nuttall observes that Puritans such as Owen were particularly focused on giving a new practical legitimacy to pneumatology: “What is new, and what justifies Owen in his claim to be among the pioneers, is the place given in Puritan exposition to experience and its place as a primary authority...”\textsuperscript{150} For Owen, like Calvin before him, the Spirit-generated ethical life emanates out of the Christian’s union with Christ. He believed that the holiness of an authentic Christian life was directly attributable to a relationship with Christ, through the Spirit. Although giving credence to the roles of natural law and Mosaic Law in the moral endeavour, he also recognized the limitations of Law in the practical moral endeavour, as it could never produce the “evangelical” convictions and desires which lead to the mortification of the “old nature”, and a love-motivated obedience to Christ.

The truly practical nature of Owen’s pneumatology is evidenced in the way he describes the Christian’s obligation in the process of the Spirit’s inner work of sanctification: “... it is equally incumbent on us to evince and manifest it by its fruits, in the mortification of corrupt lusts and affections, in all duties of holiness, righteousness, charity and piety, in the world: for that God may be glorified hereby is one of the ends why he endues our natures with it; and without these visible fruits, we expose our entire profession of holiness to reproach.”\textsuperscript{151} Although Owen was not a Presbyterian, his monumental work in the area of pneumatology could not go unnoticed by any serious Reformed student of the Holy Spirit, and his ideas undoubtedly influenced some of the authors referred to in the following section (especially Packer and Ferguson).

Nuttall also observes that another considerable influence in shaping Puritan pneumatology was the preaching of Richard Sibbes. Sibbes’ works were principally devotional rather than controversial, and as such his influence found a sympathetic hearing across “party lines”\textsuperscript{152}. His work \textit{Bruised Reed} played a significant role in the conversion of another notable Puritan thinker, Richard Baxter. Whilst Sibbes went along with the Calvinist/Puritan understanding of the necessary union of the Word and Spirit, he tended to give a greater credence to the

\textsuperscript{150} Nuttall, \textit{The Holy Spirit in the Puritan faith and experience}: 7.
\textsuperscript{151} Owen, \textit{Pneumatologia}. 444.
\textsuperscript{152} Nuttall, \textit{The Holy Spirit in the Puritan faith and experience}: 14.
Spirit within that relationship: “The word is nothing without the Spirit; it is animated and quickened by the Spirit. Oh! The Spirit is the life and soul of the word.”

However, whilst some Puritans could and did give greater weight to Spiritual experience as a ground for authority, there was among them (except the more fanatical elements) a concurrence that the word should remain the primary mode of the Spirit’s authority, as evidenced in Richard Baxter: “This trying the Spirit by the Scriptures, is not a setting of the Scriptures above the Spirit itself; but is only a trying of the Spirit by the Spirit; that is, the Spirit’s operations in ourselves and his revelations to any pretenders now, by the Spirit’s operations in the Apostles, and by their revelations recorded for our use.” Significantly, in Baxter’s thought, the Spirit is assumed to be the principal hermeneutical authority, with the “mode” of the written Word viewed as the surest form of this authority. Although further exposition of Puritan pneumatology is not warranted here, it is worth mentioning that valuable contributions to experiential pneumatology were also made by John Flavel, Thomas Goodwin, Stephen Charnock, Walter Cradock, John Howe, and others.

Although having little “direct” influence on the development of practical pneumatology among Queensland Presbyterians, it would be remiss not to briefly consider the influence of the 18th century American theologian, Jonathan Edwards. One of Edward’s biographers, Ola Elizabeth Winslow observed, “He believed that reality is of the spirit.” Furthermore, with reference to his work *Religious Affections*, Gerald McDermott concurs with others that this particular work could be considered the most penetrating guide to spiritual discernment that has ever been penned. Standing strongly in the Puritan tradition, Edwards gave significant attention to matters relating to the practical or experiential element of the Christian’s spiritual life. He attributes to the Spirit the role of the primary source of legitimate religious affection: “The Spirit of God, in those who have sound and solid religion, is a Spirit of powerful holy affection; and therefore, God is said ‘to have given them the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind’, (2 Tim.1:7).” However the Spirit of God that gives rise to this “solid religion” must have a necessary outworking in ethical practice: “Yet the principal evidence

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of this power is in those exercises of holy affections that are practical; conquering the will, the lusts, and corruptions of men, and carrying them on in the way of holiness...”  

Further to Edwards seeing the necessary connection between the Spirit’s inner working and the Christian’s ethical life, he would deem the ethical life in the Spirit, as the “principal” evidence of the Spirit’s work of grace: “... Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I may go further, and assert, that it is the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own consciences.” Moreover, in being consistent with his views on practical pneumatology, Edwards personally practised what he theoretically asserted; as this diary record verifies:

Monday, Oct. 20. I again found the assistance of the Holy Spirit in secret duties, both morning and evening, and life and comfort in religion through the whole day. Tuesday, Oct. 21. I had likewise experience of the goodness of God in “shedding abroad his love in my heart,” and giving me delight and consolation in religious duties; and all the remaining part of the week, my soul seemed to be taken up with divine things.

Whilst it is true to say the Edwards extolled the virtues of Spirit-generated experiential religion, he also was wary of false forms of spiritual experience. He believed that (what he deemed as) the “extraordinary gifts” of the Spirit, had no value in their own right, and should only be given legitimacy in connection with the fruit of holiness: “The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the end of all extraordinary gifts... They are good for nothing, any further than as they are subordinate to this end...” To this end, Edwards like Calvin and his Puritan forebears were highly suspicious of forms of practical pneumatology that strayed from a strong connection of Spirit and Word, and which did not have holiness of life as their principal focus.

158 Ibid., loc 30686-88.
159 Ibid., loc 30871-73.
160 Ibid., loc 711818-21.
161 Ibid., loc 69386-88.
2.2.3 Modern Reformed Pneumatology

Although following strongly in the Puritan tradition, the nature of theological writing towards the end of the early 18th century, and beyond, took on a more “systematic” nature, with the Holy Spirit being reflected on in distinct categories. At a cursory glance the reader of these works could easily get the impression that the Holy Spirit is more an object to be observed, than a living being to interact with. The works in the modern era, although giving extensive treatment to themes like regeneration (as did the Puritans), pay “relatively” little attention to the function of the Spirit in the Christian’s daily life, generally reserving a chapter towards the end of the treatise for explication of practical pneumatology. Nevertheless, there have been some notable works and the following is a review of the practical pneumatology included within them.

In the 19th century, a number of Scottish Reformed theologians presented substantial works on pneumatology. Typical of this genre, in his 19th century work *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, James Buchanan only dedicates one chapter to the function of the Spirit as the agent of holiness. He advocates that the general work of the Spirit consists of two parts: regeneration and edification. Edification includes the roles of the Spirit as comforter, sanctifier and guide. For Buchanan the principal work of the Holy Spirit is sanctification, which begins from the moment of the sinner’s conversion. As the soul of the sinner is quickened to spiritual birth, the logical extension is a new life. When examining St Paul’s saying, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25 NIV), Buchanan believes this is a challenge to holiness: “...a renewed heart will be followed by practical reformation, and a holy life can only spring from an inward change of heart...we cannot walk spiritually unless we are spiritually alive.” The Holy Spirit is not only indispensable for “new birth”, but also for “new life”.

Buchanan’s work appears to depart from the strong Law emphasis of 17th century Presbyterianism. With reference to the “new life”, Buchanan views the Holy Spirit’s role, “…to encourage and animate him [the believer] in the path of holy obedience, and to impress him with an awful sense of reverence and godly fear.” With reference to St Paul’s aforementioned Galatians reference, Buchanan is very conscious that Paul is not simply

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163 Ibid., 438-9.
164 Ibid., 444.
conveying a doctrinal truth, but: “...also a practical duty.” 165 “Living by the Spirit” incorporates an active and habitual exercise of faith in Christ, which for Buchanan, means abiding in Christ’s truth. Interestingly, the truth referred to here by Buchanan is not the truth contained in the Mosaic Law (though he concedes its usefulness), but the truth contained in the gospel: “Man’s method of sanctification is by the law—God’s method of sanctification is by the Gospel; the former is by works, the latter is by faith—unto works.” 166 “Through the indwelling Spirit, the Christian is to engage in a constant conflict against the ‘flesh’: The whole course of his sanctification is a ceaseless warfare, which will never terminate until the body is dissolved in death.” 167 Furthermore, “Living by the Spirit” implies being attentive to a spiritual mindset, which begets a desire habitually to cultivate behaviours that show forth the “fruit of the Spirit”. 168 In Buchanan’s work there is a genuine attempt, albeit brief, to develop pneumatology in a more practical direction.

Another Scot who wrote on the Holy Spirit was George Smeaton, an exact contemporary of James Buchanan. In a similar manner to Buchanan, Smeaton’s work takes a systematic approach, devoting only one chapter of his *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* to the subject of Christian holiness. Smeaton views as inseparable the work of Christ “for us” and the work of the Spirit “in us”, and relates them as cause and effect. In a Calvinist vein, he emphasises the necessary role of the Spirit in understanding the Scriptures and also the role of the Spirit in enabling the believer’s union with Christ. 169 In describing how the Spirit empowers the Christian life Smeaton writes, “He moves the Christian to the reception of doctrine, to the discharge of duty, to the exercise of worship, and to the enjoyments of religion...” 170 and further, “...a true Christian life animated by the spirit of prayer, and an enlargement of the heart to run in the way of God’s commandments.” 171 For Smeaton, a conscious recognition of the inner abiding of God’s Spirit is indispensable for a genuine Christian life. In relating the function of the Holy Spirit in Christian ethics, Smeaton contrasts it with philosophical morals, abstract principles and external rules. Christian ethics are derived from the

165 Ibid., 445.
166 Ibid., 447. Note that Gospel here is a reference to the mode of living under the New Covenant.
167 Ibid., 448.
168 Ibid., 451.
170 Ibid., 236.
171 Ibid., 238.
“resurrection life” of the believer by virtue of the union with Christ through the Spirit of life.  

Aware that Christian ethics must transcend mere duties and laws, Smeaton argues, “Christian ethics, on the contrary, are the fruits, results and evidences of the salvation.” The Spiritual life is a natural desire to do right: “...a new spiritual relish, or a new sense...to regard sin as repulsive, and holiness as the element in which the mind delights to dwell.” However, Smeaton is aware of the ongoing presence of sin and warns against any illusions of perfectionism: “...the mind and affections engaged in the exercise of holy love by the power of the Holy Spirit may all of a sudden be turned away by some old root of sin or strange law...and thus the conflict continues to the end.” For Smeaton, “Living by the Spirit” involves a life of active obedience that relies on God’s Spirit. Eradicating sin is impossible, but overcoming its power is possible through Spirit-empowered obedience. Buchanan and Smeaton were also contemporaries of Robert Murray-McCheyne, a renowned devotional writer and poet. As a devout Presbyterian minister McCheyne had a keen concern for sound doctrine; however, he had a special concern for the importance of apprehending “experientially” the theological doctrines he held dear. M’Cheyne was an extraordinary example of a Christian living by the Spirit: “Holiness in him was manifested, not by efforts to perform duty, but in a way so natural, that you recognized therein the easy outflowing of the indwelling Spirit.” Despite what contemporary readers would deem a systematic or rigid style, the 19th century Scottish authors did make a legitimate attempt to represent the Holy Spirit from a more practical “lived” perspective.

Moving into the 20th century, another Reformed author who has made his presence felt in the field of pneumatology, at an academic level, is the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper's popular book, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* represents a genuine attempt to provide a comprehensive work on the subject from a Reformed Protestant perspective: “

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172 Ibid., 244.  
173 Ibid., 245.  
174 Ibid., 255.  
175 Ibid., 257.  
176 M’Cheyne gained renown on a popular level among Australian Presbyterians for developing a system to read through the Bible devotionally over a one year period.  
178 Ibid.  
have made an effort,” Dr Kuyper writes in his preface, “to represent the work of the Holy Spirit in its organic relations, so that the reader may survey the entire domain. And in surveying, who is not surprised at the ever-widening dimensions of the work of the Holy Spirit in all the things that pertain to God and man?” The book is comprised of 123 brief sections, which originally appeared individually in Heraut (a weekly Dutch religious magazine, which Dr Kuyper edited). Kuyper’s goal was to present in the language of the ordinary people, an understanding of the Holy Spirit that would promote spiritual growth and as such, genuinely attempts a link between a doctrine of the Spirit and Christian spirituality. However, given its more academic flavour, the work would perhaps have a greater appeal to the more “dogmatically inclined” Dutch Reformed mind. Whilst Kuyper does make a genuine attempt to ground his pneumatology, it is nevertheless a very dogmatic representation of the subject. As many of Kuyper’s readers (at least in the Australian context) would have been theological students and pastors, the work would have been interpreted as more orientated towards “information” rather than “transformation”. As such, I believe works like Kuyper’s work added little to augment the development of practical pneumatology for Queensland Presbyterians.

One of the most influential theologians in the late 20th century, certainly among Reformed Christians, was J.I. Packer. Gaining prominence through his work *Knowing God*, Packer became a champion of the Reformed and Evangelical cause against, what many considered, the excesses of a burgeoning Charismatic movement. It is against this backdrop that J.I. Packer wrote his primary work on the Holy Spirit, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (1984). Packer’s purpose in the work is clear, “…to help Christians who mean business with God and are prepared to be dealt with by him.” Although polemically orientated against the excesses and perceived eccentricities of Charismatic and Pentecostal expressions of Christianity, Packer also takes the opportunity to critique the dull and doctrinaire tenor of more conservative treatments of the Spirit. For Packer the focus of the Spirit’s ministry is the mediation of the presence of Christ. However, Packer’s emphasis on the Spirit’s

180 Ibid., xi.
182 Ibid., 232.
183 “My hope is that by developing the thought of the Spirit as mediating Christ’s presence and fellowship—which is central to New Testament teaching on the Spirit—I may be able to provide such a theological perspective, in outline at any rate.” Ibid., 52.
“floodlight” ministry (i.e., directing the focus to Christ) has a tendency to downplay the experiential correlatives of Christ’s presence “within” the life of the believer and the believer’s life “in Christ.” As expected, Packer’s emphasis simply highlights the author’s desire to correct the “over subjectifying” of the Charismatic position. 184

Like Calvin and Owen before him, Packer views the work of the Holy Spirit as integral to the subject of Holiness. This is clearly a subject close to his heart, as he describes the Evangelical church’s attitude to holiness as, “…little short of tragic”. 185 Having, anchored holiness in the person and work of Christ, he moves on to discuss the Spirit’s role as the principal agent in the work of holiness. However, like his Puritan forebears, Packer views law-keeping (albeit Spirit-empowered) as the foundation of Christian morality: “Christians must never cease from law-keeping…You cannot be a good quality disciple, says Jesus, without being a conscientious law keeper.” 186 Given Packer’s Evangelical persuasions he may not view Law-keeping in the same vein as some of the 17th century Puritans; however, his simplistic and brief treatment of the complex relationship between the Spirit and the Law leaves the issues unresolved, allowing for an interpretation of the Christian life that is predisposed to a legal approach. Although, Packer exhorts his readers to strive for an authentic pneumatology, he seems simply to reinforce the 17th century view that Spirit-empowered law keeping is the proper mode for Christian life and ethics. Whilst some of Packer’s arguments against the Charismatic movement have some validity, his attempt at mitigating the spiritual excess, realistically did little to allow any positive discussion of practical pneumatology.

Another work on pneumatology available to contemporary Reformed/Presbyterian Christians is Sinclair Ferguson’s The Holy Spirit (1996). Ferguson’s work generally remains within the orbit of traditional Reformed thinking. Ferguson believes that the same indicative/imperative ethical pattern that existed in the Old Testament covenant relationship carries over to the new: “The pattern is the same: the indicatives of God’s gracious self-revelation give rise to the imperatives of heart and life conformity to him.” 187 Life conformity means a conscious effort to put off the “old nature” and put on the “new nature”. The capacity to fulfil the imperative of the “new life” is enabled by virtue of a spiritual union with Christ, as Paul

184 Ibid., 70.
185 Ibid., 101.
186 Ibid., 113.
indicates in Romans 6; the agent of the union being the Holy Spirit. Coming from a Scottish Presbyterian background, Ferguson is acutely aware of the issues relating to Old/New Covenants, Law/Spirit and Pentecost/Sinai etc., which are at the heart of Paul’s reflection on the Christian life. Whilst he concedes that a superficial reading of the Acts of the Apostles would indicate that the Law simply gives way to the Spirit, he doesn’t simply fall into line with the Westminster position. Ferguson believes the issue to be more complex and in this regard he seems to depart from the standard Westminster position.

Rather than perceiving the ethical life of the Christian as Spirit-empowered law-keeping (i.e., Westminster Confession), Ferguson gives greater credence to the “newness” of the New Covenant. Ferguson believes that the Law written on the heart and the indwelling of the Spirit are two aspects of the one new covenant reality: “...the new covenant believer does not receive the moral law in the same way as did the believer under the Mosaic administration; now it is received in Christ...as well as in the power of the Spirit who energizes Christ’s people to fulfill it in their own lives.”188 The ministry of the Spirit produces the righteousness the Law demands. The degree to which Ferguson’s views differ from traditional Westminster theology is evidenced in the closing comments of a book review by Reformed commentator Mark Karlberg: “The reader is advised to peruse The Holy Spirit with caution and discernment, making careful comparison with the teaching of Scripture and that of historic Reformed orthodoxy.”189

Recent contributions to the field of literature on the topic of pneumatology include The Spirit of Truth and Power (2007)190 edited by David Wright. This work is a compilation of scholarly papers presented at the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference and includes some insightful works, such as Francis Watson’s article of the Spirit and Biblical Hermeneutics; later referred to in this thesis. Also, another recent contribution to the field is Gwyn Walter’s The Sovereign Spirit (2009) which presents a thematic overview of Calvin’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Walter’s work is particularly helpful in as much as it organizes Calvin’s writings on the Holy Spirit into thematic sections, enabling the reader to get a better grasp of Calvin’s pneumatology. Another worthy contribution to pneumatology comes from expatriate

188 Ibid., 166.
Australian theologian Graham Cole. Cole’s work *He who gives life: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (2007), whilst being traditionally systematic, genuinely attempts to ground pneumatology in a practical way. The very title of the book suggests that his orientation is towards a pneumatology that informs sincere Christian living and near the end of each chapter a section is partitioned off to set forth implications for belief and practice.\(^{191}\)

However, as these most recent works have had such little time in circulation, I consider their capacity to have influenced the current thinking of Queensland Presbyterians would be, at best, minimal at the time of writing this thesis.

### 2.3 Practical Pneumatology and Queensland Presbyterians: Local and Popular Influences

Given the Reformed tradition’s emphasis on education, the shape of the practical pneumatology influencing Queensland Presbyterians is almost certainly conditioned by ideas derived from many of the aforementioned theological sources. However, local and popular factors also play a part in the way Presbyterians shape their views of the Christian life. It should not be assumed that Queensland Presbyterians, although formally subscribing to a common doctrinal standard,\(^{192}\) are ideologically and practically homogeneous. Ministers and adherents of the Queensland Presbyterian Church, have many people in Queensland who come from other areas of Australia and other countries in the world (e.g., South Africa). This growing number of ministry workers and adherents are not only a geographically/culturally diverse group, but bring their own peculiar doctrinal persuasions and theological emphases; albeit with a common Reformed heritage.\(^{193}\) The 12 case studies (set out in chapter 5) deliberately seek to reflect this diversity. Notwithstanding their diverse heritage, whenever the issue of the Holy Spirit or spirituality was raised in conversation with Queensland Presbyterians (e.g., formally in the case studies or informally in congregational contexts)

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\(^{192}\) Minister’s who join the Presbyterian Church of Queensland are required to take vows which indicate that they adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith (as read in light of the Declaratory Statement).

\(^{193}\) For example, many ministers within PCQ have trained at the Anglican theological college in Sydney; Moore College. The tradition of Moore College and its affiliate denomination Sydney Anglicanism, could be described as promulgating a version of Reformed theology that is evangelical in practical piety, whilst having a rational perception of Christian spirituality (this manifests itself in a praxis of a functional religion, highly suspicious of anything mystical or overtly “spiritual”). Still other ministers have trained at the theological Colleges in Brisbane or Melbourne, where a more conservative and rigidly confessional approach to Reformed theology was taken. Moreover, many of the adherents within the Queensland denomination come from varying backgrounds: Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglican etc.
there seems to be a universal reaction in one direction: a perceived suspicion of Pentecostal or Charismatic excesses. Pentecostal claims of spiritual elitism, statements inferring a direct line of authority to God via spiritual experience, or acts of guilt-based manipulation, are examples that solicit criticism from Presbyterians. Because the Holy Spirit is often cited as the basis of the aforementioned claims and actions, a negative sentiment towards “practical acts” associated with the Holy Spirit was a common trait among the case study participants interviewed.

Pentecostalism and its correlative, the Charismatic movement have had a significant local impact on the way that Reformed/Presbyterian Christians interact with the subject of pneumatology—especially its implications for the Christian life and church practice. Consequently, in reaction to the so-called excesses\(^\text{194}\) of these movements (perceived or real) the Reformed theological response was to emphasize a view of the Holy Spirit that could easily be rationalized according to Reformed maxims. By the late 1980s the charismatic phenomenon was growing in influence in Australia and was perceived by many Presbyterians and adherents of Reformed theology as a significant threat. The rapid growth in adherents, many of them being drawn from traditionally conservative churches, was considered such a sufficient threat to the Reformed and Evangelical denominations, that formal “defensive” responses were deemed necessary. Consequently, the Charismatic movement was often denigrated and its proponents demonized, as this response by influential Sydney Reformed Evangelical, Philip Jensen attests, “John Wimber…in encouraging people to get in touch with the ‘supernatural’, he misrepresents the effects... In seeking unity, he welcomes and promotes the enemies of the gospel. In emphasizing extra-biblical phenomena, he undermines the centrality of the cross, the power of the word of God, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the unity of our common commitment to the truth of the gospel.” \(^\text{195}\) With this kind of hard-edged rhetoric being broadcast in Presbyterian and Reformed circles, it could be imagined that any “balanced” attempt at promoting practical pneumatology would find little support.

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\(^{192}\) The Pentecostal or Charismatic excesses, referred to in this paper include, for example, the compulsory requirement for every Christian to speak in tongues, the expectation that God will heal or perform miracles as a response to a faith-based demand and openly expressive worship services where people were made to feel inferior if they didn’t express their worship of God in the same manner.

Although the heat of the rhetoric against the Charismatic movement may have subsided since the 1990s, an anti-Charismatic residue remains. In a 2008 article in *Australian Presbyterian*, prominent Presbyterian minister David Cook—in an article on Acts, which includes a reflection on the 1990s phenomenon of John Wimber’s signs and wonders movement—argues that the book of Acts in the New Testament is less about the dynamic acts of the Holy Spirit and more about the spread of the Word via preaching. Whilst it should be acknowledged that Cook’s speciality is preaching, it nevertheless appears that the Reformation emphasis on the supreme authority of the Bible, manifesting itself in a form of functional Christianity (in this case preaching), is deemed as inherently superior to anything related to experiences of the Spirit—despite the book of Acts being replete with examples of the Holy Spirit’s actions in advancing the Christian gospel. Thus it appears that Cook almost sets that the Spirit and the Word are set in opposition. There appears to be a predisposition within the Presbyterian consciousness to over-emphasize the Word, as Cook’s comment shows, “I think the book of Acts is primarily about the progress of the Word, which is why I find it rather ironic that it’s actually called the book of Acts.”

Whilst in the literature being disseminated at a popular level—a general acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit is deemed necessary—this acknowledgment is often conditioned by the notion that the Spirit is merely a subsidiary agent of the Word. The Holy Spirit only “legitimately” guides through the Christian scriptures and any immediate or experiential revelation is to be treated as inferior, as an article by Queensland Presbyterian, Paul Cornford argues, “In conclusion, we affirm along with the writer to the Hebrews and the apostle Paul, that the revelation of the completed canon of Scripture, especially the Old and New Testaments taken together, is actually far superior to the partial mode of prophecies, tongues and miracles.”

This quotation shows that in Cornford’s desire to affirm the primacy of the Christian Scriptures over “less objective” means, he is willing to gloss over a significant fact that at the time of the writing of Hebrews and St Paul’s letters there was no completed canon! In a

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196 Cook at this time was also the principal of the Sydney and Missionary Bible College, a non-denominational training institution that has trained many ministry workers for the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Queensland.

197 “So, if you ask Paul, ‘What is the apostolic model of ministry?’ He would say that it’s the ministry of the word, both publically and privately. It is proclaiming, teaching, and testifying to the word of God.” David Cook, "A Moving Word: Acts is really about the progress of God's word," *Australian Presbyterian* 2008, 5.

198 Ibid.

companion article on guidance, another Queensland Presbyterian, Peter Bloomfield distinguishes between the Spirit’s ministry of comforter and the ministry of revelation. Bloomfield argues that the Spirit’s ministry of guidance is only via the scriptures. “The only place we find true authoritative guidance for our knowledge and relationship with God is Holy Scripture.” He then goes on to state, “We must not equate experience and guidance, nor can we define what we may feel as a message from God.” Again it is clear that little ground is conceded to a valid practical working of the Spirit (outside of reading the Bible) in the area of the Christian’s moral life. Whilst the aforementioned representations of the Spirit and the Word may have some validity in the context of the issues being addressed, it is nevertheless easy to conclude that in such a “Word-biased” atmosphere, practical pneumatology has usually amounted to little more than an allowance that the Holy Spirit’s role is to guide the reader’s interpretation of the Bible, and in ethical contexts, used to support the claims of biblical Law.

Despite many of the local or popular sources of information being presented to Queensland Presbyterians having an anti-Charismatic/Pentecostal tenor, there are some sources providing a more sympathetic appreciation of the Holy Spirit and Christian life. With the “renaissance of spirituality” (mentioned at the beginning of the chapter) the idea of the Holy Spirit having a real, practical interaction with the Christian is gaining a sympathetic ear among Reformed and Evangelical Christians. One popular author standing in the Presbyterian tradition is Eugene Peterson. Peterson’s works are readily available to Queensland Presbyterian pastors, and I personally know a number of Presbyterian ministers who read this material. Peterson’s work provides an emphasis on spiritual theology that has given impetus to reconsider the predominately “Word-orientated” view of the Spirit.

Other than literary sources, the availability of internet-based information has also provided Queensland Presbyterians with access to Reformed scholars and pastors who are more favourably disposed to speaking about the Holy Spirit’s role within the practical exigencies of Christian living. In recent years the Queensland Theological College has invited

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200 Peter Bloomfield, "He leadeth me..." Australian Presbyterian 2008, 6.
201 Ibid.
202 Michael Raiter, Stirrings of the Soul (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2003), 28.
204 QTC is the training college for ministry candidates for the Presbyterian Church of Queensland.
internationally renowned (American) pastors and scholars, such as Mark Driscoll (Mars Hill Church), John Piper (Bethlehem Baptist Church), and Don Carson (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) to speak on varying subjects. All of the aforementioned claim allegiance to the Reformed tradition, but none of them are Presbyterians! Driscoll has Pentecostal leanings, and both Piper and Carson are Baptists; all provide lectures/talks and sermons, which are readily available through internet-based YouTube clips. In a 2008 YouTube sermon, John Piper exclaimed regarding the Holy Spirit, “... I want more of your baptising power; I want to be enveloped more fully...”205 With such high-profile advocates of popular Reformed theology speaking more openly about the Spirit, there is a high probability that Queensland Presbyterians might view the Spirit’s relationship to the Christian life more positively; as this comment on a blog (managed by a Queensland Presbyterian) appears to suggest:

The great promise of the reformed charismatic movement is the fusing of the joyful enthusiasm of these Pentecostal types with a more robust, and dare I say “intellectually sound” (without sounding patronising) understanding of the work of the Spirit, and the purpose of the Christian life. I’ll still probably never be a charismatic, I’m much too narrow minded for that, but at least I’ll be able to sit on the sidelines and sneer less when my Christian brothers open their mouths.206

Conclusion

In attempting to understand the factors that influence the practical pneumatology of Queensland Presbyterians, a clearer picture has emerged. Within the scope of the material examined, it has become evident that the lack of development of practical pneumatology within this tradition, is largely attributable to factors that precipitate a view that the Spirit is subservient to the Letter—muting the Spirit’s practical role. Within Protestantism generally, the Patristic view of the logos concept was identified as so linking Word and Spirit as to subsume the Spirit as an agent of information, rather than transformation. Also, over and against Schleiermacher’s amalgamation of the Holy Spirit and human reason, the influential theologians Charles Hodge and Karl Barth stressed that truth was more objectively found in the Word (meaning for Barth—Jesus Christ, for Hodge—the Bible), thus the Spirit was conceived more abstractly. When it came to examining the theological works specifically

influencing Reformed pneumatology, it was revealed that Calvin had a strong focus on the Spirit. However, his reaction to the Anabaptist position could never allow the Spirit-directed Christian life to be distanced too far from the authoritative text of scripture and the restraining influence of the Law of God. Whilst viewing the Spirit as necessary for empowering the ongoing Christian life, Calvin’s positive emphasis on God’s Law, when taken up by the 17th century Westminster divines, further reinforced the value of the Letter over the Spirit by strongly validating Law-orientated ethics. Although the theological works from the 18th to the 20th century spoke of the practical works of the Spirit, their position is not substantively different (with the exception of some of the Puritans) from the 17th century understanding of the Spirit’s relationship to the Letter.

Furthermore, an investigation of Australian-based material available to influence Queensland Presbyterian pneumatology showed that there was a negative reaction to the perceived excesses of Pentecostal and/or Charismatic positions. This appeared to precipitate a natural retreat to the objective “safe-haven” of the written Word, which viewed through the lens of confessional Reformed theology often translated into a Law orientated ethic, with any recognition of the Spirit downplayed. The Charismatic influences combined with the “subjective turn” in culture have allowed for a more favourable environment in which a practical pneumatology might be developed. However, I want to argue that for practical pneumatology to develop within the Reformed tradition and the Queensland Presbyterian church, the Word/Spirit relationship needs to be reconsidered. The Word must not be allowed to be set against the work of the Spirit (external to the interpretation of the Word), where embracing one means denying the other, and the Spirit should not formally be viewed as a “servant” of the Mosaic Law. A more adequate way of construing the relationship between the two is needed. This new understanding must not undermine the primary authority of God’s Word (the Scriptures) as truth, but must allow space for the Spirit to be viewed (consistent with Paul) as the pre-eminent agent for directing and empowering the Christian life. There must also be a reconsideration of the relationship of the Spirit with Law. A correct orientation of the Spirit/Letter/Law relationship is essential to this endeavour. The Apostle Paul wrote, “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Romans 7:6 NIV) Coming to a clearer understanding of what Paul meant in this text, will go a long way in getting the right orientation!
CHAPTER 3: The Spirit and the Letter: Reclaiming the Spirit

Introduction

In the Reformed tradition, the Spirit is deemed as inseparably bound to the written Word of God. The investigation into the influences shaping the pneumatology of Queensland Presbyterians revealed that the Holy Spirit’s practical relevance is usually biased towards practical and/or ethical instruction from “the letter” of the Christian Scriptures. Moreover, the Spirit’s role in Christian living, when understood from the perspective of the Presbyterian doctrinal standards, formally corresponds to the Spirit’s role empowering obedience of God’s Law. It appears that within the ethical consciousness of this tradition, the role of the Spirit is invariably restrained within the confines of the Scriptures generally, and “the letter” of the Law in particular. I want to suggest that the key to reclaiming the role of the Holy Spirit, in the development of a more holistic understanding of the Holy Spirit’s practical relevance for Queensland Presbyterians, is to reconsider Paul’s Spirit/Letter relationship. Why? It deals directly with the issue of the relationship of Scripture/Law to the Spirit as it relates to the Christian life.

A reorientation of the Letter/Spirit relationship opens up the possibility of embracing the Holy Spirit in a more comprehensive sense, and the Law in a less legal sense. In embarking on this task, firstly I will survey, in this chapter, the Holy Spirit’s presence within the Christian Scriptures, showing that there is a mutual relationship; the Scriptures reveal the work of the Spirit, whilst the Spirit is responsible for the divine provenance of the Scriptures. The survey shows that a cursory overview of the Scriptures reveals that the Spirit’s role moves from a discreet presence in the Old Testament, to a more prominent role in the New Testament. Secondly, the Reformed/Presbyterian understanding of the Spirit/Letter relationship is considered. The Reformation’s challenge of Catholicism was based on an appeal to the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. For the Reformed tradition, Spirit and Letter are inextricably bound. The basis of this hermeneutical relationship is examined and its ethical implications considered. Finally, focussing on Paul’s epistle to the Romans, I will seek, in the last section, to show that Paul’s primary thrust was ethical and that these ethics were not built on an appeal to the Old Testament “letter” of Law, but on the “new way” of the Spirit. The goal is to provide a theoretical basis for validly viewing the Spirit’s practical and ethical role
beyond the narrow confines of the “letter” of the Law/Scripture, whilst upholding the enduring value and authority of Scripture within the Spirit’s “new” ethical domain.

3.1 The Spirit within the “Letter” of the Scriptures

3.1.1 The Old Testament

From the opening chapter of the written text of the Christian Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is featured. In the creation account, the Spirit of God is portrayed as the creative force hovering over the formless deep, poised as the agent of divine power that will bring order out of a lifeless chaos (Gen 1:2). In the book of Job, the Spirit is described as a creative and life-giving being (Job 33:4). Also, in the account of the prophet Ezekiel, the Spirit of God appears as the divine agent to revivify the wayward people of God (Ezekiel 36-37). The Spirit of God is revealed in the Old Testament as the power of God towards change-orientated action.\(^{207}\) However, whenever God’s Spirit acts towards the people of God, the designation often changes to the Holy Spirit. This is not that God’s Spirit changes, but the designation stresses that there is a moral dimension to the relationship between God and humanity.

The Holy Spirit features in the role of ordaining and empowering specific individuals to perform duties in accord with God’s divine purposes relating to humanity. God’s primary agents of leadership in the Old Testament were prophets, kings and priests. In Exodus 31:3, the Holy Spirit endows craftsmen with special talent to create articles for the Israelite system of worship, a system which is designed to worship the Holy God. The Spirit had a special function in the proclamation of God’s Word to God’s people, via the office of the prophet, as set forth in Numbers 11, 24, 1 Samuel 10, Nehemiah 9:30, Isaiah 59:21 and Ezekiel 2:2. In the Old Testament, the Spirit is also revealed as the agent of divine guidance, who is instrumental in anointing and empowering judges and kings (Judges 3, 6, 11, 14, 1 Samuel 16:13, Psalm 51). Although the priesthood is the other significant office of the Old Testament, overt reference to the Holy Spirit and the setting apart of priests is not explicitly set forth. However, priests were anointed with oil for their holy office (Leviticus 8:1-10), and the divine anointing process carries with it an inference of an endowment with God’s Holy

\(^{207}\) Packer observes, “Power in action is in fact the basic biblical thought whenever God’s Spirit is mentioned.” Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*: 57.

Although records of the Holy Spirit’s presence and actions are relatively sparse in the Old Testament, when compared with the post-Pentecost era in the New Testament, this does not diminish the role of the Spirit in the relationship between God and his people. The Holy Spirit was active; guiding, leading, directing and instructing God’s people—albeit indirectly via the aforementioned offices. This Old Covenant administration was an administration where the “Letter of the Law” played a central role in the moral guidance of God’s people (namely the Sinai Commandments). Under the era of the Old (Mosaic) Covenant, the Spirit anointed and empowered prophets, priests and kings (as well as other selected divine functionaries) to facilitate the Covenant’s administration and guide God’s people in accordance with his laws. This is clearly seen in this testimony of Moses, “He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” (Deut 6:13-14 NIV) Thus in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit’s relationship with the letter of God’s Law was indirect.

Whilst the functioning of the Holy Spirit may have been indirect, it could not be considered as entirely remote or impersonal. God had set his people apart to be a holy people, a nation dedicated to God and his commands (Exodus 19:6). In Isaiah 63 the prophet outlines the relationship between God and his people Israel. When discussing their rebellion against God, Isaiah writes of the Spirit’s function in a personal tone, “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.” (Isaiah 63:10 NIV) Moreover, David’s plea in Psalm 51 for God not to remove his Holy Spirit from him was just as much a reference to David’s personal relationship with God as his role as the anointed king of Israel. Thus, throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as God’s powerful and personal presence working in and for the creative and redemptive purposes of his people.\(^\text{208}\) What should not be overlooked at this stage, is that this powerful working is manifestly set in contrast with the limited power of humanity: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.” (Zech 4:6 NIV) This deliberate contrasting of the “weakness” of human power over and against the Spirit’s power

\(^{208}\) Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*: 27.
is noteworthy, as it will later form the conceptual basis of St Paul’s argument in the New Testament about the sufficiency of the Spirit in the Christian’s ethical life, over and against the insufficiency of the power of the human individual to keep God’s Law.

3.1.2 The Gospels and Acts

The New Testament gospels represent the Holy Spirit in a similar manner to the Old Testament, although it should be acknowledged that until the death of Christ, the Old Covenant is still functioning—albeit with an anticipatory orientation towards a New Covenant. The principal difference being the Spirit’s focus in the gospels is now on the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus singularly embodies the Old Covenant roles of prophet, priest and king. Moreover as God’s Son and Messiah, he has a special relationship with the Spirit. Having attributed Jesus’ divinity to the work of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-20), the gospels go on to accent the function of the Spirit with reference to his ministry. The account of Jesus’ baptism is loaded with Old Testament imagery.

Immediately following his baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit alights on him, whilst simultaneously the voice of God affirms his sonship with a royal psalm (Psalm 2:7). The event represents Jesus’ anointing as the Messiah King.209 Jesus is then led by the Spirit into the desert for a 40-day period of temptation (Luke 4:1-3)—an event reminiscent of Israel’s post-exodus sojourn. The Spirit’s appointing of Jesus’ prophetic ministry is also attested in Luke’s account. Following his victorious return from the temptation to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14 NIV), Jesus attests to the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, whilst reading from the scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news…” (Luke 4:18, 21 NIV) Not unlike the Old Testament, explicit references to the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ priestly function are largely

209 “The voice from heaven at the baptism (1:11) calls Jesus ‘my son,’ an echo of Psalm 2:7 (cf. ‘You are my son, this day have I begotten you’). Since this psalm most likely was a royal psalm used at the coronation of the king in Israel, the royal connotation of Jesus as the anointed king, the Messiah, would naturally follow. At the same time, the voice also declares Jesus to be the one with whom ‘I am well pleased,’ an echo of Isaiah 42:1. This passage introduces the Servant (see Servant of Yahweh) whom God equips with the Holy Spirit (Is 42:1–2), an event portrayed in Mark 1:9–11 by the coming of the Spirit at the baptism.” R.A Guelich, "The gospel of Mark," in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. Joel B. Green and Scott McKnight (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1992), 518.
absent, but the Spirit’s connection to his representative role is latently implied. Furthermore, nearing the end of his ministry, Jesus foreshadows the coming of the Spirit in a fuller sense; to guide and lead God’s people in the truth (John 16:13), and prepares his disciples for the future ministry of the Spirit, which will extend his influence universally.


Although in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit features in the prominent role of enabling and empowering the advancement of the Christian gospel through the agency of the Apostles, there is another equally important role—moral guidance. In the New Testament writings, Jeremiah’s predictions of the internalization of God’s moral demands in the New Covenant era come to fruition in the advent of the Spirit and its subsequent personal endowment: “…because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” (Rom 5:5 NIV) However, it is St Paul who will more fully and comprehensively take up the explication of the ethical role of the Spirit in the New Testament.

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210 In John 14:16 Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “another advocate or counsellor”, implying that the Spirit will take his representative role in his material absence. In John 16:13 he alludes to the fact that the Spirit is not independent in this role but speaks only that which is given by himself.

211 “Pentecost publically marks the transition from the old to the new covenant, and signifies the commencement of the ‘now’ of the day of salvation (2Cor 6:2)” Ferguson, The Holy Spirit: 57.

212 “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. (Jer 31: 33-34NIV)
3.1.3  The Apostle Paul

More than any other New Testament author, Paul addresses the issues relating to the Holy Spirit and the Christian’s moral life and ministry. There is adequate evidence from the record of the New Testament that personal engagement with the Holy Spirit played a significant role in shaping the way Paul came to view the Christian life. Paul’s conversion includes a spiritual experience, mediated through the disciple Ananias: “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 9:17 NIV) Following Paul’s conversion he is commissioned by the Jerusalem church for his Gentile mission, which is described as the Holy Spirit’s appointment (Acts 13:2-4). It is also recorded that during his mission Paul is conscious of the Holy Spirit’s guidance; in fact this guidance is portrayed as very personal and immediate: “When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.” (Act 16:6 NIV).

Moreover, Paul himself considers the Holy Spirit as a kind of personal guide: “I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardship are facing me.” (Acts 20:23 NIV) Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is more than the means of empowerment and guidance for Paul; it is the very authoritative basis of his message (Acts 28:23). For this once legalistic Pharisee, the Holy Spirit had come to occupy a prominent place in his “transformed” life as a follower and servant of Jesus Christ. As conscious as Paul was regarding the importance of the Holy Spirit’s role as a “functional” guide in the exigencies of Christian ministry and mission, a significant proportion of the discussions in his epistles relate specifically to the Holy Spirit’s function in ethics. Right from the outset of Paul’s letter to the Romans, the idea of the Holy Spirit as an agent in the Christian’s moral endeavour is evident; Paul refers to the Spirit as, “the Spirit of Holiness” (Rom 1:4 NIV). Paul’s discussions regarding the moral role of the Holy Spirit are often related to the Mosaic Law and its alleged redundancy under the New Covenant. In Romans 2:29 he contrasts the Spirit with the written code and again in Romans 7:6 considers the role of the Spirit as a superior “new way” of living, in contrast to the “old way” of the written code. Paul goes on to devote a significant proportion of Romans 8 to discussing the necessary relationship between the

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213 The term “Spirit of Holiness” appears nowhere else in the New Testament. Given the ethical thrust of Paul’s Roman epistle it is more than likely referring to the Spirit who functions as an “agent of holiness”, not the Spirit that is holy; otherwise the standard designation of Holy Spirit would have been used.
Holy Spirit and Christian ethics, setting forth the sufficiency of the Spirit to overcome natural human sinfulness: “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live…” (Rom 8:13 NIV)

Notwithstanding Paul’s strong ethical focus on the Spirit in Romans, it is his letter to the Galatians where the line between Letter of the Law-based living and the Spirit-orientated way of living is most sharply drawn. In opposing the Law-orientated ethics of his opponents, which inevitably gravitated towards self-justification, Paul resolutely states, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature…Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Gal 5:16, 25 NIV) In Paul’s understanding, the faith-based relationship with Jesus Christ is initiated by the Spirit and the Christian life continues in the Spirit. That is why he finds it incredulous that the Galatian Christians should turn back to the Old Covenant Letter-orientated Law as the means of “going on” with God. For Paul, whether being directed in the practice of ministry and mission, or being guided in the ethical life, “Living by the Spirit” was a very powerful, and necessary reality.214

It is clear that much of the knowledge available about who the Spirit is and the Spirit’s role in God’s purposes comes through the written text of Scripture. However, the “letter” of Holy Scripture itself derives its authority from the Holy Spirit: “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV) From this text it appears that the Spirit actually gives the “letter” of scripture its divine authority. Scripture and Spirit are related. Nevertheless, what seems most evident from this brief survey of the Spirit within Scripture is that there is a progression from the Spirit having a predominantly discreet presence and indirect role in the Old Testament, to a position of occupying an overtly prominent presence and direct role in the New Covenant. Thus the most natural conclusion to draw is that the old era of the Mosaic Law has given way to a new “spiritual” epoch; the Letter of the Law is now superfluous in a dispensation where ethics are governed by the Spirit. Yet, within the matrix of Reformed tradition—with its reliance on the authority of the written “Word” and emphasis on Law

ethics, and set within the framework of Covenant theology—such a conclusion is usually incomprehensible. An understanding how this tradition interprets the relationship of the Letter and Spirit is the subject of the following section.

3.2 The Spirit and the Letter: Understanding the Reformed Interpretation

As the Reformers challenged the ecclesial authority of Catholicism, they did so based on the authority of the written text of the Bible. In their understanding, it was an appeal to the very Word of God—a Word that derived its authority from God’s Spirit. Gary Badcock describes the Reformers’ emphasis on the Spirit this way: “Thus if we were to present the Reformation systematically or schematically in terms of its experience of the Spirit, we would have to speak, not of freedom of conscience, but quite simply and directly of a book, and of that book as containing the address of God to the world.”215 The Reformers advocated a religion of the Letter as well as a religion of the Spirit. But how are the two orientated? How did the Reformers understand this relationship ethically? As alluded to in the previous section, a simple way to understand the relationship between the Letter and the Spirit might be to see it as a contrast between two historical dispensations. One historical dispensation, in which the Letter of the Jewish Law (Ten Commandments) was the basis of morality (albeit, aided indirectly by the Spirit), and one in the New Covenant era, in which the Holy Spirit becomes the basis of ethical guidance.

But, for the Reformers this position represented the danger of abandoning the authoritative letter of the Word, as Calvin himself argues: “For of late, certain giddy men have arisen who, with great haughtiness exalting the teaching office of the Spirit, despise all reading and laugh at the simplicity of those who, as they express it, still follow the dead and killing letter.”216 In summing up his argument Calvin asserts, “God did not bring forth his Word among men for the sake of a momentary display, intending at the coming of his Spirit to abolish it. Rather, he sent down the same Spirit by whose power he dispensed the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word.” 217 Spirit and letter cannot be separated! For the adherents of the Reformed faith in the 17th century, the union of the Letter and the Spirit translated into the enduring ethical validity of the Old Covenant Letter of the Law: “The

216 Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1: 93.
217 Ibid., 95.
moral law does forever bind all, as well-justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof…” The fact that the Mosaic Law retains a “binding” moral validity within this Reformed tradition, despite Paul’s exhortations to “live by the Spirit”, would suggest that there is a logic at work in the Reformed consciousness that construes the Spirit as ethically inseparable from the Letter. The following sections will seek to shed light on the Reformation/Reformed understanding of this relationship.

3.2.1 Augustine’s Hermeneutical Legacy

A significant aspect of understanding the Reformed interpretation of the Letter/Spirit relationship involves a consideration of the heritage behind Reformed hermeneutics. The early church father Origen is credited with establishing Letter/Spirit antithesis as an interpretative principle, developing an allegorical hermeneutic, where the literal text is set in a disjunctive relationship with a resultant “deeper” spiritual meaning. As influential as Origen’s contribution was, St Augustine’s ubiquitous influence would overshadow it. Whilst affirming the doctrine of Justification by faith, Augustine was also vexed by the ongoing presence of sin in the Christian’s moral endeavour. In a sermon on Romans, Chapter 7, he wrote, “Behold the Spiritual: With the mind I serve the Law of God. Behold the Carnal: but with the flesh the law of sin. Is then the very same person at once spiritual and carnal? The very same undoubtedly, as long as he liveth here, so he is.” Hence, it is within the orbit of existential living and “going on” in the Christian life that Augustine writes his anti-Pelagian treatise On the Spirit and the Letter (AD 412). (Interestingly, Augustine in his expositions of Romans 7, prior to 396, assumed that Paul referred to life under the law; by 412 his focus was more on the struggle of the Christian with sin.) In this seminal work Augustine seeks to respond to the claim of the possibility of living without sin in the present life.

Augustine argues for an internal/external orientation of the Letter/Spirit relationship: “...the law is ‘the letter which killeth’; but when the life-giving spirit is present, the law causes that

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218 The Confession of Faith 1647: XIX:V.
219 As illustrated by Origen: “Celsus...has fallen into the most vulgar of errors, in supposing that in the law and the prophets there is not a meaning deeper than that afforded by a literal rendering of the words.” Origen, "Origen against Celsus “ 618.
to be loved as written within, which it once caused to be written without.” 222 Essentially, the “external letter” of the law condemns without the inward vivification of the Spirit, but through the convicting operation of the Spirit, the law is loved as if it is written on the heart of the believer. The Spirit internalizes the external. Essentially Augustine’s “theory of signs” enables him to view this progression from outward letter to inward spirit. For Augustine, the letter of scripture is a sign of a greater reality, the outer word contains the inner idea: “And in reading it (scripture), men seek nothing more than to find out the thought and will of those by whom it was written and through these to find out the will of God, in accordance with which they believe these men to have spoken.”223 For Augustine, it is res non verbum: the meaning and not the expression; the truth not the appearance; the intention not the literal statement that was important.224 In this context, the “sign” of the letter points away from itself to the “thing” of the Spirit. However, this relationship is not disjunctive as in Origen’s allegorical method, but conjunctive—the meaning linked to and found within the word, not disengaged from it. The letter of Scripture points to the spiritual truth contained within that letter—though able to be logically distinguished the two are bound.

Taken from a practical perspective, Augustine considers that the convicting operation of God’s Law in the believer’s conscience drives that believer to the grace of Christ which emancipates by the Spirit: “The unrighteous man therefore lawfully uses the law, that he may become righteous; but when he has become so, he must not longer use it as a chariot, for he has arrived at his journey’s end.” 225 The Spirit enables the believer to love the will of God whereas the external law (devoid of the Spirit’s influence) would have only brought fear and judgment. Then the Spirit resident in the heart of the Christian effectively becomes the Law: “What then is God’s law written by God himself in the hearts of men, but the very presence of the Holy Spirit, who is “the finger of God,” and by whose presence is shed abroad in our hearts the love which is the fulfilling of the law, and the end of the commandment?”226 Thus, in Augustine’s logic, true Christian morality is not simply a matter of a Christian responding in guilt to the external demands of the Letter of the Law, but the Spirit taking the letter and

224 Carol Harrison, Augustine: Christian truth and fractured humanity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 64.
226 Ibid., 98.
internalizing the truth, that obedience might be internally motivated: “We must therefore avoid saying, that the way in which God assists us to work righteousness, and works in us both to will and to do his good pleasure, is by externally addressing to our faculties precepts of holiness; for He gives His increase internally, by shedding love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us.”227 Augustine’s conjunctive relationship between external letter and internal Spirit became foundational for Reformed hermeneutics.

3.2.2 The Reformers’ Interpretation

Augustine’s Letter/Spirit hermeneutic was taken up by the Protestant Reformers. Martin Luther, however, nuanced the Letter/Spirit relationship along the lines of a Law/Gospel contrast. For Luther the letter is not only Mosaic Law, but all doctrine (when employed in the religious life without a genuine reliance on grace and the Spirit).228 Luther writes, “The real difference between the old and the new law is this—that the old law says to those who are proud in their own righteousness, “You must have Christ and His Spirit; the new law says to those who humbly admit their spiritual poverty and seek Christ; Behold, here is Christ and His Spirit.”229 Further to this, in his treatise on the “Spirit and Letter” Luther argues along the lines of an internal/external orientation, “You see, then, why the Law is called ‘the letter’: though noble doctrine, it remains on the surface; it does not enter the heart as a vital force which begets obedience.”230 But, for Luther, via the Gospel, Christ’s Spirit enables the keeping of the Law.231 Similarly, Reformers like Philip Melanchthon, in his Commentary on Romans, understands the Old way of the Letter to signify not just a literal observance of Mosaic Law, but like Luther, all religious activities done without fear of God, trust in Christ and a reliance on the Holy Spirit—in short, human religion. The new way of the Spirit is a religion based on faith in God with a pure heart. Melanchthon argues, “Spirit and letter are distinguished. The Spirit signifies the impulses excited by the Holy Spirit, while the letter

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227 Ibid., 101.
228 “By the term written code in the writings of the apostle Paul refers not only to the symbolical portions of scripture or the doctrine of the Law but to every teaching which prescribes those things which belong to a good life, whether Gospel or Mosaic Law. For if these things are known and remembered and the spirit of grace is not present, it is merely an empty written code and the death of the soul.” Martin Luther, Romans, ed. Hilton,C Oswald, vol. 25, Luther's Works (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 324.

228 Ibid., 327.


230 “The Law is not kept by man’s own power, but solely through Christ who pours the Holy Spirit into our hearts.” Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), 94.
signifies the thoughts, intentions, purposes, and imitations without true movement of the heart; nevertheless, the letter pertains to discipline.”232 Whilst Luther and Melanchthon differentiate between an external letter and the internal Spirit more along the lines of mere outward religion versus heart devotion, Calvin seems to connect the two.

John Calvin also draws on Augustine as one of the primary sources of his theology.233 That he takes up Augustine’s inward/outward hermeneutic is seen in his interpretation of Romans 7:6: “In newness of spirit; He [Paul] sets the spirit in opposition to the letter; for before our will is formed according to the will of God by the Holy Spirit, we have in the law nothing but the outward letter, which indeed bridles our external actions, but does not in the least restrain the fury of our lusts.”234 Simply put, the letter of the Law without the Spirit, can address only external behaviour; only with the Spirit can it address inner motives. In Calvin’s schema the Spirit and the Law work together; the believer remains obligated to the moral letter of the law.235 However, how does he avoid the charge of this leading to justification by works of the law? For Calvin, from a soteriological perspective, the forensic power of the Law to condemn—which the Letter of the Law imposed on the unspiritual soul—is abrogated through faith in Christ. In this regard the Law has no power to bind the conscience.236 But from an ethical perspective, Calvin would claim that under the newness of the Spirit, the believer’s human will is formed with a desire to serve God with sincerity—the moral letter of the law (i.e., The Ten Commandments) remains as a “necessity” to the Christian’s ongoing moral endeavour.237 For Calvin there can only be two valid alternatives; the law is abandoned or embraced: “But if no one can deny a perfect pattern or righteousness stands forth in the law, either we need no rule to live rightly and justly, or it is forbidden to depart from the law.”238 Thus, in Calvin’s logic, for the Christian to depart from the necessity of the Letter of the Law is a departure from primary means of living out the truth.

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235 Commenting on Romans 7:3 Calvin writes, “...but we must remember, that Paul refers here only to that office of the law which was peculiar to the dispensation of Moses; for as far as God has in the ten commandments taught what is just and right, and given directions for guiding our life, no abrogation of the law is to be dreamt of; for the will of God must stand the same forever.” Ibid.
237 Ibid., 360-3.
238 Ibid., 362.
scholar, Knox Chamblin presents Calvin’s position this way, “…law denotes the rule of life which God gives to his people, that way in which they are to walk, those commandments which they are to obey.” 239

Furthermore, the Reformed understanding of the Letter/Spirit relationship cannot be understood without considering the concept of covenant. The Reformed Christian invariably looks through the lens of Covenant theology, where the Law serves the purpose of the Covenant—the communion of God’s people with God in conformity to His standards. Although the concept of “Covenant”, as an organizing principle between Old and New Covenants did exist among early Reformation theologians, the controversies with the adherents of the Radical Reformation240 galvanized its importance. In reaction to the Anabaptists, who sharply divided the Old and New Testaments,241 the 16th century Reformed Theologians argued for the organic unity of both the old and new epochs via the concept of Covenant. Zwingli’s conflict with the Anabaptists was, in fact, the catalyst for establishing a logical unity between Old and New Covenants in the Reformed consciousness, as Peter Lillback suggests, “From this point on, the concept of covenant continuity and its vast implications began to be felt throughout the Reformed world.”242 Calvin, in defending the legitimacy of faith in the Old Testament, too, saw the necessity of a conceptual link between the two epochs: “The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same.”243

The Covenant of Grace (described in the previous chapter) links both the Old and New Testaments, with the moral law being binding in both dispensations. With the concept of Covenant uniting the purpose of God’s redemptive plan for humanity across the two historical dispensations, the Letter could not simply be supplanted by the Spirit under the

240 The Radical Reformation is a term that categorizes groups, generally known as Anabaptists, who adopted positions that the mainstream Reformers would have considered counterproductive to the Reformation cause e.g. Re-baptism.
241 Steinmetz argues, “In Calvin's day Anabaptist theologians like Pilgrim Marpeck described the difference between the Old Testament and the New as the difference between ‘yesterday’ and ‘today.’ ” Steinmetz, John Calvin as an interpreter of the Bible,” 286.
New Covenant administration in the Reformed consciousness. The Spirit had to be related to the Letter of the Law in such a way that the Law was upheld as morally binding, whilst giving space to the “newness” of the Spirit. Augustine’s internal/external relationship between the Spirit and the Letter ensured that these conditions were met. Thus the Christian is still obliged to the Mosaic Law, but not in an “outward religious sense” but empowered by the Spirit of God—inwardly.

3.2.3 Contemporary Reformed Interpretations

The aforementioned orientation of the Letter and Spirit has remained so convincing that many prominent modern Reformed scholars simply follow the same hermeneutical logic and interpret Paul’s “new way” of the Spirit (Romans7:6) as a “spiritually/inwardly motivated way of “keeping of the external letter of the Law”. C.E.B. Cranfield understands it this way: “That Paul is not opposing the law as such and in itself to the Spirit is clear, since only a few verses later he affirms that the law is ‘spiritual’ … ‘Letter’ is rather what the legalist is left with, as a result of his misunderstanding and misuse of the law. It is the letter of the law in separation from the Spirit.”

Scott Hafemann’s argument is similar: “Rather, the Letter/Spirit contrast is between the Law itself without the Spirit, as it was… experienced by the majority of Israelites under the Sinai covenant, and the Law with the Spirit, as it is now being experienced by those who are under the new covenant in Christ.”

In addition, Knox Chamblin views it this way, “The Spirit internalizes God’s law, i.e., teaches it in the most deeply personal way.” In his thinking the Spirit takes the dead letter and turns it into “holy writ” for the guidance of the believer. Thus, the Spirit is a hermeneutical device for the letter of the Law.

According to Chamblin, the Spirit not only gives the Law depth, but also the power to do what it demands. Thus, the “new way” of the Spirit enables a qualitative and quantitative enhancement of the Letter, thus the Old Covenant “style” religion is modified by the Spirit’s agency. Paul’s “new way of the Spirit” set forth in Romans 7:6, simply equates to a “spiritual” understanding of the Letter of the Law. It is basically a direct application of Old Testament prophecy—“And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees


247 Ibid.
and be careful to keep my laws...” (Ezek 36:27 NIV) — applied uncritically to the New Covenant context.

This, of course, is the exact position of the Westminster Confession: “Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God revealed in the law requireth to be done.”248 For the Reformed tradition to uphold the value of the Letter of the Mosaic Law in Christian ethics, the Letter/Spirit relationship must be construed from a “literary hermeneutical perspective” where the “New way” of the Spirit is a deeper understanding of the “Letter”; a way of seeing more deeply within what once could only be understood from without. Not only so, but the underlying principle of covenant continuity in which Old and New testaments are joined, predisposes the aforementioned hermeneutical interpretation of the Letter and Spirit towards an ethical collusion rather than a contrast. Thus, theoretically, the Mosaic Law remains as a binding moral authority for those who formally subscribe to this tradition; the Spirit being the interpreter and empowering influence of the Law as it is applied to ethical contingencies of life. However, is this really compatible with the St Paul’s view of the Spirit/Letter relationship?

3.3 The Spirit and the Letter: Revisiting Romans: Paul’s Ethical Emphasis

Stephen Westerholm in his 1984 article Letter and Spirit: The foundation for Pauline ethics argues, “It would, I suggest, be difficult to find a better starting-point for a study of Pauline ethics than the Letter-Spirit antithesis.” 249 The Letter/Spirit antithesis (as Westerholm describes it) appears explicitly in only three places within the Pauline corpus — (Romans 2:28, Romans 7:6 and 2Corinthians 3). However, the relative sparseness of this concept belies the inherent theological value of the concept to Paul. Although Paul was explicitly charged by the resurrected Christ to reach out to the Gentiles with the gospel, he also believed the Jews should be privileged to hear the gospel first (Romans 1:16). As Paul preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in various locations throughout the Gentile world, his first point of contact was often Jewish synagogues. Given the radical implications of Paul’s Gentile inclusive

248 The Confession of Faith 1647: XIX:VII.
version of Christianity (although ratified by the Jerusalem Council; Acts 15:22-35) for deeply held Jewish beliefs, his proclamation was often the cause of friction. This friction was not only between Paul and the Jews, but between himself and Jewish Christians (Judaizers)—who held rigidly to an interpretation of Jewish Law that deemed its obedience to it necessary for Christian living.

Although Paul’s Galatians and Corinthians epistles do give the reader significant insight into Paul’s views on the Law and Spirit, I want in this study, to focus principally on his Roman correspondence, and for the following reasons. Firstly, his letter to the Romans is less polemical and adversarial than Galatians or Corinthians and, as such, gives a more balanced view on the subject. Secondly, Romans also has been a primary text for the development of Reformation theology, with Martin Luther principally appealing to Romans in establishing the Protestant Reformation on the doctrine of Justification by faith. Finally, given contemporary scholarship’s reconsideration of Paul’s perspective, the letter of Romans is often the source of much of this discussion. In appealing to the text of Romans, I wish to argue that ethics was not simply a subsidiary theme, but in fact one of Paul’s primary concerns for his fledgling Gentile converts (Galatians 3:3, Romans 6:1, 15:16, 1Corinthians 5-8). Furthermore, I believe that Romans 7:6, one of the primary texts where Paul outlines his Letter/Spirit relationship, is pivotal for understanding Paul’s concept of “Living by the Spirit”.

3.3.1 A New Perspective

C.J. Den Heyer observes that Paul nowhere attempted to develop a generic theological system which he thought he had to impose on his readers, but his theologizing was tailored to particular situations. Similarly, Christiaan Beker set forth the thesis that despite recognizing in Paul’s theology, coherency, it was almost certainly flavoured by contingent

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250 Richard Longenecker argues, “It was this thesis, which has been concisely expressed by the phrase ‘justification by faith’, that characterized all of Luther’s preaching and epitomized all of the theology of the succeeding Protestant Reformation—and which has provided the primary interpretative approach for almost all Protestant Christians in their reading of Romans.” Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical issues in Paul’s most famous letter* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 306.


factors. For the Protestant Reformation, whether because of a lack of background understanding or the specific needs of the time, tended to view Paul’s writings, such as Romans, as a kind of “compendium of Christian theology”. For Reformers such as Martin Luther, the focus on Justification by faith seemed to dominate. This view, however, in the light of recent scholarship, has been subject to significant critique. It is now more widely accepted that Martin Luther’s guilt-ridden conscience, almost certainly contributed to his view that justification was the most prominent theme in Romans: 

... I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him." In recognizing Luther’s bias towards his “world in front of the text”, Krister Stendahl challenged the long-standing Reformation tradition that Paul, in Romans, was responding to guilt-derived legalism.

Building on this, E.P Sanders in his landmark work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* challenged the Reformation interpretation of Paul. Sanders’s study into early Judaism revealed that the Lutheran interpretation had, in fact, read back into first century Judaism, the legalism that was most evident in 4-5th century Judaism. He argues that Paul was not challenging a Jewish merit-based legalism at all, but the more predominant “pattern of religion” in Palestinian Judaism, which Sanders dubbed “Covenantal Nomism.” Sanders maintained that in this form of Judaism, God’s grace was the basis for one getting “into the covenant”, but works of obedience to the Law “maintains one within it”. As far as understanding the ethical model embraced by Paul himself, Sanders follows Albert Schweitzer’s lead in viewing Paul’s pattern of religion along the lines of participation with...

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253 Christiaan Beker writes, “Therefore the interpreter of the Pauline letters cannot focus on the ‘substance’ of the letter apart from its contingent setting. Too often, interpreters act as if the situational particularities of the letter are merely peripheral...Thus theologies of Paul often tend to forget that Paul’s thought is geared to a specific situation and that his arguments cannot be divorced from the need of the moment. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: the triumph of God in life and thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 24-5.24-25.

254 Luther wrote regarding his assessment of Romans: “Thus in this epistle we find most richly the things that a Christian ought to know; namely, what is law, Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, righteousness, Christ, God, good works, love, hope, the cross, and how we are to conduct ourselves towards everyone...” Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J.T Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), xxiii.


Christ (c.f. Galatians 2:20). Sanders argues that it cannot be assumed that Paul must be interpreted as simply correcting legalistic merit-based interpretations of the Law (although these may have existed), but the very "system" of Law legitimated under the Old Covenant (now defunct). Sanders asserts, “What is wrong with the Law, and thus with Judaism, is that it does not provide for God’s ultimate purpose, that of saving the entire world through faith in Christ…” 259

With such significant implications for New Testament theology and ethics, Sander’s views have received considerable attention. J.D.G. Dunn criticizes Sanders for making too sharp a distinction between entry and continuance in the covenant.260 Stephen Westerholm in appealing to the Old Testament argues that Paul is addressing merit theology: “…the law is surely attributed with ‘a soteriological function’ in texts which make life, righteousness and divine blessing dependant on its observation.” 261 Despite these matters being subject to ongoing debates, there is now a general consensus among New Testament scholars that the landscape of Pauline studies has been irrevocably changed on account of Sander’s work: “No longer can the Jewish religion of Paul’s day be simply written off as a legalistic religion of works righteousness.” 262 Thus, the “New Perspective on Paul” has opened the possibility for considering that Paul may have, in fact, been opposing the ongoing validity of the Letter of the Law as the means of Christian ethics. Notwithstanding this, new developments in New Testament studies lend further support to the notion that Paul’s principal thrust in Romans is orientated towards a movement away from the Letter of the Law, as the principal ethical imperative for Christians. Paul wants to instruct the Romans in a more adequate way of living their faith; a morality based on a holistic instrumentality of the Holy Spirit—over and against obedience to the letter of the Mosaic Law.

259 E. P. Sanders, Paul, the law and the Jewish people (London ; Philadelphia: SCM Press ; Fortress Press, 1985), 47; ibid.
261 In support, Westerholm cites numerous verses from the Old Testament to support his theory e.g. (Lev 18:5, Deut 4:1, Deut 5:33, Deut 6:24-5) “All the commandment which I command you this day you shall be careful to do, what you may live” (Deut 8:1)Stephen Westerholm, Israel’s Law and the Church’s faith (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 147.
262 Longenecker, Introducing Romans:Critical issues in Paul's most famous letter: 329.
3.3.2 A New Contextual Understanding

Since the 19th century, F.C. Baur’s thesis exerted widespread influence in the field of Pauline scholarship. Baur posited that Paul’s theology must have one central theme. For Baur, who drew on Hegelian methodology, that central theme revolved around the conflict between Jewish (Petrine) and Gentile (Pauline) Christianity.\(^{263}\) Baur argued that the authentic Paul could only be found in the epistles where the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christianity was evident, thus for Baur Romans 9-11 was the central argument of Romans. Thus the Jew/Gentile distinction (along ethnic lines) became the key to understanding Romans up until the mid-twentieth century. However, recent scholarship has revealed a more nuanced understanding of the Romans situation. Scholars such as Stanley Stowers, Ben Witherington III, A. Andrew Das, Thomas Tobin, and Richard Longenecker have identified, along with historical particularity of Paul’s letters, the rhetorical context of Paul’s text. Thomas Tobin argues, “Context is important if one is ever to understand Romans properly. What I mean is that interpreters tend to be interested primarily in what Paul wrote and pay too little attention to how and why he wrote as he did.”\(^{264}\) By taking into account Paul’s own situation, writing style, use of rhetorical devices, the nature of Paul’s theological debates in other churches, the contemporary culture of ancient Rome and the interpretation of contemporary events by Roman and Jewish scholars of the day, a clearer picture of Paul’s “horizon” emerges.

Firstly, the significance of Paul’s personal experiences on his theological writing should not be lightly dismissed. Seyoom Kim believes that the Damascus event forms the very basis of Paul’s theology and apostleship.\(^{265}\) Paul the ex-Pharisee understood the rigorous demands that the Law placed on one’s conscience and the equally rigorous endeavour in keeping it.\(^{266}\) The role the Holy Spirit played in Paul’s life has already been briefly outlined in a previous section. Following his conversion in AD 35, and perceiving himself in terms of a “New

\(^{263}\) F.C Baur, Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873-5).
\(^{265}\) Seyoom Kim, though acknowledging that Damascus shaped Paul’s theology, recognizes that his prior theological influences were reinterpreted in light of that experience, “…the elements of his background remained suspended in need of the catalyst of the Damascus revelation for a solution into his theology.” Seyoom Kim, *The Origins of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1981), 104.
\(^{266}\) See Philippians 3:3-6 as well as Paul’s insight regarding the person “under law” in Romans 7.
Creation” (2 Cor 5:14-21 NIV), Paul embraces God’s new way; a way of establishing and maintaining a right forensic standing before God—the way of faith. As a consequence of his conversion and commensurate submission to Christ, Paul, in Philippians 3:4-9, radically renounces his dependency on the “credentials of Judaism”. So absolute is his faith commitment to Christ, that all prior Law-related claims to a right standing with God were now considered “rubbish”—compared to knowing Christ and attaining His righteousness. Further to this, Tobin believes, whilst Paul (as a Christian) never saw himself as a non-Jew, the impact of his conversion and subsequent submission to Christ directed his thinking away from a “dependency” on a Law-based righteousness.267

Tobin suggests that Paul’s movement away from Law cannot simply be reduced to a denouncing of the “external marks or customs” of Judaism (circumcision etc.), as some scholars have suggested.268 Tobin argues, “Paul’s conviction that neither Jewish nor Gentile believers had to observe the Mosaic Law, was quite radical in another way. It included not only the law’s specific dietary and purity regulations but also its broader ethical commandments.”269 A preliminary survey of the Pauline ethical texts (Colossians 2, Galatians 5 and Romans7) show that Paul’s argument against Jewish Law could not be simply an argument against customs or “boundary markers” of Judaism. Moreover, Paul circumcised Timothy for the sake of not offending the Jews (Acts 16:3); similarly Paul engaged in purification rites so as not to offend the Jews (Acts 21:26). Paul’s concern was that a “reliance” on the system of Mosaic Law as the means of maintaining a Christian’s relationship with God, countered an ongoing trust in Christ. The tone of Paul’s conflict with the Judaizers, especially among Galatian churches, reveals just how deeply he held these personal convictions.

Secondly, the context of the Roman correspondence against Paul’s wider interaction with the other New Testament churches and their particular theological controversies is important.

267 Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans: 57. Note that Paul is not downgrading the ‘ontological’ validity or truthfulness of the law, simply its instrumentality in enabling the acquisition of a right moral standing before God.

268 Scholars such as J.D.G. Dunn would argue that Paul’s anti-law teaching related primarily to the ‘boundary markers’ of Judaism e.g., Sabbath, Circumcision, food laws etc. “…specific commandments like Sabbath and festivals, remained the clearest identity and boundary markers of Judaism as a whole, as indicated by evidence both within and without the corpus of Jewish writings” Dunn, The New Perspective on Paul: Collected essays: 169.

269 Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans: 57.
The issues surrounding the Jerusalem Council AD 48 \(^{270}\) (Acts 15) clearly highlight that not all Christians shared Paul’s perspectives on the Law. Whilst there was a concord concerning the Gentile requirements at the Council, Galatians 2:6-11 suggests that the “compromise” was not entirely pleasing to Paul. Although Kim believes that it was the Judaizers who were unhappy with the council’s decisions \(^{271}\), the rhetorical nuance of the underlined phrases suggest the Paul was also uncomfortable with those who initiated the compromise, “And from those who seemed to be influential what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me…. who seemed to be pillars…But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.” (Gal 2:16 ESV)

Tobin believes that by AD 53, Jewish missionaries tried to establish Jewish Law-based requirements in the Galatian Christian communities. \(^{272}\) In response Paul’s polemically-charged Galatian correspondence intimates that relying on Law, as the basis of a person’s righteous standing before God was to deny the righteousness of Christ attained by faith. Moreover, to seek moral conformity with God on the basis of the Mosaic Law, having begun with the Spirit (Gal 3:3), effectively snubbed God’s New Covenant administration and contradicted the faith commitment to Christ. Whilst Paul did prevail over this conflict in the Galatian churches, as 1 Corinthians 16:1 indicates,\(^{273}\) the conflict took its toll on his reputation. Paul’s strong rhetoric in contrasting righteousness, Spirit and freedom, over and against slavery and the Jewish tradition left external witnesses—such as the Roman Christians, who would have received second-hand accounts of the Galatian conflict—wondering whether Paul was either antinomian or even anti-Jew.\(^{274}\) Now, given that the Romans would have been aware of Paul’s interaction with the Galatian Christians via various

\(^{270}\) Tobin dates the council around AD 48. Whilst precise dating may be disputed, the inclusion of dates are inserted to simply show the sequence of events that leads to an understanding of Paul’s relationship with the Roman church.

\(^{271}\) Seyoom Kim suggests that the Judaizers were the ones who were unhappy and consequently reignited the debate in Antioch and Galatia. Seyoom Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second thoughts on the origins of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 2002), 34.

\(^{272}\) Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans: 62.

\(^{273}\) Ibid., 68.

\(^{274}\) “In Galatians, Paul contrasted faith in Christ and observance of the law so starkly that they seem opposed to one another almost in principle…when Paul came to write Romans, he came to it as the heir of a legacy of sometimes bitter controversies.” Ibid., 5.
people transiting from Ephesus and Corinth to Rome; Paul’s law-free approach to the moral life had to be carefully reasoned and diplomatically presented to avoid misunderstanding. Paul wanted to present a view on ethics to the Romans, which emphasized the abrogation of the Old Covenant “system of Law” without undermining the “moral essence” of that Law, and thus coming across as anti-Semitic.

Finally, the Roman church had emerged from the evangelization of Jewish communities in Rome. By AD 49 internal issues (relating to Christian/Jewish differences) in the Jewish communities led to an expulsion of the Jews from Rome—among whom were Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2). The Roman commentator Suetonius observed of this expulsion, “He (Claudius) expelled from Rome, Jews who were constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.” As a consequence, when Paul wrote to the Romans, around AD 57, he was writing to predominately Gentile churches, which had more than likely formed, either prior to or following the Jewish expulsion, some eight years earlier. Tacitus’ record of Nero’s persecution makes no mention at all of the Christians being a Jewish sect, indicating that the Christians were recognized as an entirely independent identity by the AD60s. Whilst the Christians and Jews may have become culturally distinct, Tobin believes it was a widely accepted fact that the Jewish laws and customs were held in high esteem in the collective Roman (Gentile) mind. If this is the case, then given the “positive” acceptance of Jewish laws by the wider Gentile population, coupled with the lack of personal influence from Paul himself (Romans 1:10) with respect to ethical guidance, it was most likely that the largely Gentile church endorsed and practised the Jewish law-ethic. Thus, with the Roman Christians relying (by default) on “the Law” to give them definable moral boundaries, Paul was anxious

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275 “Given the public nature of Paul’s letter writing, they would also have been aware, in some detail, of Paul’s responses in those conflicts.” Ibid., 69.

276 Ibid., 17. Quoting Suetonius, Claud.25.4 (GLAJJ 2:307) It is largely accepted among scholars that ‘Chrestus’ was a reference to Christ, and the conflicts revolved around a clash of Christian and Jewish ideals.

277 The list of the names in Romans 16 indicates that most of the people in the church/churches were Gentiles; probably 20% were Jews.

278 Various Roman writers noticed the influence Jewish laws had on non-Jewish inhabitants of Rome: Horace, Valerius Maximus, Seneca the Younger, Tacitus, and Juvenal, e.g.,Seneca complained that “the way of life of this accursed race (the Jews) has gained such influence that is now received throughout the world; the vanquished have given laws to their victors.” Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans: 24. Also Tobin notes, “That the Roman Jewish community itself already had a self-understanding that strongly emphasized the superiority of the Mosaic Law over other codes of law and the superiority of the Jews’ observance of their law over other people’s non-observance of their own laws.” Ibid., 30.
to instruct them in a “way” more consistent with the gospel. Paul’s concern for the Romans was that they understand the “whole truth” of the gospel clearly. Paul’s wanted them to understand that the faith that justifies a person before God necessitates obedience; however, not an obedience that “relies” on the Jewish law (effectively nullifying one’s justification by faith). For Paul, Old Covenant Law ethics needed to be corrected in the light of the gospel of Christ, with all its radical implications.

3.3.3 A New Spirit-based Ethic

The introductory verses of Romans and the general references to Spirit throughout the text would suggest that Paul’s main thrust was simply wider than justification by faith. Paul’s ethical orientation of the epistle is evident from the outset. Firstly, in the opening sentence of the epistle, Paul describes himself as a “slave of Christ.” This phrase only appears at the introduction of Romans and Philippians. Given the ensuing discussion in Romans 6 regarding slavery of sin/righteousness with respect to ethics, its inclusion here may be significant. For Paul, the ministry of apostleship to the Gentiles is subsumed under the wider context of obedience to Christ. I believe, in highlighting his own status as an obedient servant, Paul wants to encourage in the Romans the same obedient faith that he possesses. Moreover, in Romans 1:5, Paul states the very purpose of his divinely appointed apostleship: “…to bring about the obedience of the faith among all the nations…” (Romans 1:5 ESV). Interestingly, the Greek phrase ὑπακοὴν πίστεως (obedience of faith) appears also in Romans 16:26, at the end of the epistle. Glenn Davies observes, “…the bracketing function of εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως at the opening and close of the letter would suggest it is structurally significant for the epistle as a whole.” It appears that this phase forms a kind of theological parenthesis, signalling the importance of the obedience concept to the epistle’s argument as a whole. Not only so, but “obedience vocabulary” is more prominent in Romans than any other writing in the New Testament (the ESV shows that 6 of the 12 references to “obedience” in the New Testament appear in Romans).

279 It should be noted at this point, that the interrelationship of right believing and right living is not the only issue in Romans. Paul also desired to show that the Jews no longer had exclusive access to God, or any advantage over the Gentiles, but without rejecting them as a people—or God’s inclusion of them in his future kingdom. He wanted to uphold obedience of life, but an obedience that relied on an absolute trust in God’s way, the way of the Spirit. And he sought to show the freedom of flexibility of life in the Spirit without rejecting love for one’s fellow Christian and respect for the governing authorities. Romans was written to address issues, of which, the issue of “righteous” living was one of the most significant.

280 Glenn N. Davies, Faith and Obedience in Romans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 25.
Secondly, it appears that Paul’s aim for the Romans was to establish a faith-based obedience to God’s will and that the Spirit has a significant role to play in the endeavour of obedience. In Romans 1:4, Paul makes a significant statement regarding Christ: “ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ κατὰ σάρκα …υιὸς θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα” (Romans1:3,4 GNT). Whilst this construction can simply refer to the divine/human natures of Christ, the Greek κατὰ σάρκα κατὰ πνεῦμα ( according to the flesh/according to the Spirit) antithesis, in the context of this epistle, can be taken another way. In Galatians 4:23, κατὰ σάρκα refers to the birth process of Ishmael, who, in the context of Paul’s polemic is linked to the Law. Paul then goes on in Galatians 4:29 to contrast the inferior origin of the child of the slave woman (Ishmael) κατὰ σάρκα ,with the superior origin of the child of the free woman κατὰ πνεῦμα. In Galatians, Paul is contrasting the “inferior” Law ethic, as a means of sustaining righteousness, with the “superior” Spirit ethic. The possibility of Paul establishing the superior “instrumentality” of the Spirit, over and against the inferior instrumentality of the flesh (human nature) in connection with Law obedience, as the means of living righteously, is given greater weight by the inclusion of the adjective ἁγιωσύνης (holiness). Whilst, the πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης (Spirit of Holiness) construction appears nowhere else in the New Testament, the concept of the Holy Spirit connected to holiness does, (Romans 14:17,15:16). Despite Luther viewing ἁγιωσύνη as meaning nothing more than another way of saying “Holy Spirit”, the inclusion of this unique construction within the introduction of the letter should not be so lightly dismissed. If indeed Paul’s aim is to establish the “new way of the Spirit” as the ethical system for New Covenant believers (Romans 7:6), then it makes sense to designate the Spirit as the agent of holiness from the beginning.

281 R.J Erickson—in assigning the use of “flesh” to the “morally neutral” semantic field of Paul’s usage of the word σαρξ —writes , “…under this rubric are those passages referring to human relationships based on natural birth processes…the contrast between σαρξ and πνεῦμα in Romans 1:3 is between Christ’s natural human existence “from the seed of David,” on the one hand, and his divine dignity on the other (cf. 1 Tim 3:16 ; Phil 2:9–11 ).” R.J Erickson, "Flesh,” in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, ed. G.F Hawthorne, R.P Martin, and D.G Reid (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 304.

282 The author realizes that Paul’s use in Galatians 4:29 may cross the interpretation of σαρξ into another “morally negative” semantic field and the parallel runs the risk of denoting the human origins of Christ as sinful. However Paul is really contrasting the law with the Spirit. Paul saw the law as good (Rom7:12) though inferior in the new age of the Spirit (Rom7:6). The contrast therefore, is not evil vs. good, but inferior/transitory vs. superior/eternal.

283 Luther, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: 21.

284 Fee considers that the genitive should probably be taking the dynamic sense here. He writes, “ All things considered, and especially in the light of the O.T. background to the term, this is the preferred option…If
Finally, not only does the beginning of Romans set Paul’s direction towards Spirit-orientated ethics, but there is a high incidence of Spirit language throughout Romans. In fact, besides Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, Romans has the largest volume of Spirit-related material of all of Paul’s letters. In his extensive work, *God’s Empowering Presence*, Gordon Fee observes that the Holy Spirit features more extensively in Paul’s discussions on the Christian life, in Romans, than any other place within the entire Pauline corpus:

> There is scarcely a dimension of Christian life, from the proclamation that calls people to faith (15:18-19), to their conversion (e.g., 8:14-17), to ethical life (8:12-13), to community relationships (14:17) and worship (12:3-8), that is not covered in this letter, with the Spirit as the crucial reality….Here is the certain evidence that one simply cannot have a truly Pauline theology without giving serious attention to the role of the Spirit in that theology...the wide range of materials in which the Spirit is mentioned should also lead to a more fully integrated and balanced view of Spirit life than is often the case.

Thus, having identified the significance of the obedient life and its inextricable link to the Spirit (both within the introductory text of and the body of the epistle as a whole), it is becoming clearer that a strong case for a Spirit-orientated ethic in Paul is emerging.

### 3.3.4 A New Letter/Spirit Understanding

From Romans 3:21 to 5:21 Paul marshals his argument for the righteousness (justification) that is by faith in Christ (first alluded to in Romans 1:17). He then uses the example of Abraham (Romans 4) to demonstrate that righteousness is obtainable outside of the Mosaic Law system. At the conclusion of Romans 5, Paul highlights the comparative greatness of God’s grace over sin, in reconciling humanity to God. He argues that although the Law came to reveal the greatness of humanity’s sin, God’s grace abounded, so sinners may no longer labour under the weight of guilt, but through the grace of God in Christ, might know justification—the emancipation from the weight of the Law (v21). However, he then anticipates accusations of antinomianism, and states, “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?” (Rom 6:1 NIV). In asking this Paul is quite probably foreshadowing the kind

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285 References appear in chapters 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 (multiple), 9, 14, and 15.
286 Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*: 34.
of question that the Christians in Rome, conditioned by a view that Law is necessary to maintain the Christian’s standing with God, would ask. Effectively, is God’s grace a licence to cast off all moral restraint? “By no means!” (Rom 6:2 NIV) is Paul’s emphatic response. He then devotes the next three chapters (chap. 6-8) of the epistle on the theoretical justification of “how” a Christian, who is justified by faith, should and can live righteously before God.

Paul introduces in Romans 6 the concept of “union with Christ” as the basis of his new ethical alternative to Mosaic Law-keeping. For Paul, Christ died not only for the believer to enable legal justification, but the believer relationally died with Christ—symbolically demonstrated by water baptism (Romans 6:4). In Paul’s logic, the old human nature must not be overcome by law-keeping, but addressed in another way. The old human nature with its predisposition to sin should be perceived as conceptually dead and, by extension, its power to rule over the believer, broken. Furthermore, just as Christ rose in victory over sin and death, the believer must equate their own rising out of the waters of baptism with a rising in victory over the sin-nature. Consequently, loyalty to the old sin-nature is incompatible with loyalty to this Christ union. Therefore, ethics is not principally predicated on duty to Law, but on a relational union with Christ—an identity with him based on faith. But how is such a union possible? Is it only notionally possible, without being actually possible? In attempting to understand it, Reformed scholars such as Bruce McCormack have argued for a rational union of “wills.”

Whilst such a notion cannot be precluded from Paul’s logic entirely (Romans 6:11, and 1Corinthians 11:1), the union referred to is more likely supernaturally orientated (i.e., derived from interaction with God’s Spirit). In support of this idea, it firstly should be noted that Christ and the Spirit are used interchangeably with respect to a relationship with the believer (Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18), and secondly, Paul’s extended discussion on spirituality in Romans 8, (especially where he indicates the Spirit “lives” in the believer (Romans 8:9), indicates that he is conceptualizing a union along “spiritual lines,”

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287 In offering a solution of his own, McCormack posits an alternative view of “union with Christ”, which he deems covenant ontology… “Covenant ontology is an ontology of correspondence. We are what we truly are (and what we will be in the eschaton) in those moments when our humanity is conformed on the level of lived existence to the humanity inaugurated in time by Christ’s life of obedience. We are what we are through correspondence. To put it this way is to tease out the ontology embedded in my earlier contention that union with Christ takes its rise through a unity of wills, not through a unity of substances.” Bruce L. McCormack, “What’s at stake in the current debates over justification?,” in Justification: What’s at stake in the current debates?, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Leicester: 2004), 115.
that is, by virtue of God’s Spirit “indwelling” a real though mysterious union is effected within the believer—a view that even finds support with Calvin: “For we hold ourselves to be united with Christ by the secret power of his Spirit.” Effected by the Spirit, this union with Christ becomes foundational for understanding Paul’s argument on the letter/Spirit relationship in Romans 7:6.

Having established that union with Christ is the principal basis of the justified Christian’s ethical behaviour, Paul returns to address the necessary issue of the believer’s ongoing relationship with the Mosaic Law in Romans chapter 7. In Romans 7:1-6 Paul wants to answer these questions: “How should the Roman Christians, who have shown a bias towards the Jewish Law as an ethical standard, now view the Law?” and, “What role does the Spirit (previously alluded to) play in this ethical endeavour?” Paul predicates the discussion by stating clearly to his addressees: “…I am speaking to those who know the Law…” (Rom 7:1 ESV). This could refer to Jewish converts, or more likely (as the aforementioned discussion has argued) Gentiles who were familiar with and based their ethics on Mosaic Law. He further states, “…the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives” (Rom7:2 ESV). This rhetorical statement implies, “Surely you know that the Law is only binding on a person whilst they are alive?” Paul then follows through with his logic of the death /life union with Christ.

To apply this he draws on the analogy of human marriage. The law binds two people in marriage. If, however, the husband dies then the wife is no longer bound “by law” to that union. If fact, to strengthen the point, Paul adds that if the wife lives with another man whilst married, this makes her an adulteress. Therefore, one person cannot be legitimately bound to two parties, simultaneously. He now applies the analogy, “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.” (Rom7:4 ESV) Thus, the argument is as follows, “You were married to the Law as a God-fearing Gentile or Jew, but now you, by virtue of your spiritual ‘union with Christ’ have died to that prior legal relationship, that is, it has been nullified. Now you are married to Christ, you will live in this new and different union with a new ethical arrangement; in fact, to continue to embrace the Mosaic Law would be unfaithful.” Paul is comparing and contrasting two allegiances. If the

289 ESV gives a clearer rendering in Romans 7:1-4.
Christian has died to the allegiance of the Law through union with Christ, they cannot have a relationship with the Law any longer!

It would appear that Paul is setting forth a new manner of living before God that transcends the keeping of literal moral precepts of the Old Testament. This “new way” moves away from a “reliance” on the external letter and moves towards the principal moral agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus what Paul has in mind, is two distinct contrasting “ethical systems”. One of these systems is viewed by Paul as belonging to the administration of the Old Covenant; the other system represents a mode for ethics under the New Covenant. For Paul, the written code is, almost certainly, the Mosaic covenant with its ethics inscribed in tablets of stone. This “old” epoch in God’s economy of salvation-history that is now defunct since the advent of Christ and His New Covenant. In fact, Paul’s parallel letter/spirit passage in 2 Corinthians 3 confirms this:

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant— not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? (2 Cor 3:6-8 NIV)

This observation is not without scholarly precedent or support. Ernst Kasemann believes that Paul as a former Pharisee could not make a distinction between the cultic and ethnic Torah, with the law being a true counterpart of the gospel; as such, the law was indivisible and its abrogation complete.290 For Kasemann, the Letter-Spirit antithesis clearly characterizes the standing of the Christian after the change of covenant dispensations: “For Paul the antithesis of letter and Spirit is the same as that of flesh and Spirit. As he sees it, the presence of the risen Lord in the power of the Spirit takes the place of the Torah of Moses and makes holy the world which otherwise, even in its piety and ethics, is unholy.”291 In considering the Letter/Spirit issue from a salvation-history perspective, Stephen Westerholm, adds “Letter and Spirit thus represent here, man’s service under the old and new covenants respectively. ‘Letter’ refers to the concrete demands of the Old Testament Law…’Spirit’ refers to the spirit of God whose determining of the Christian’s conduct from within has replaced obligation to

290 Ernst Kasemann, Commentary on Romans (London: SCM Press, 1980), 186.
291 Ibid., 191.
the laws of Torah.” 292 Douglas Moo also believes Paul addresses the Law as the Mosaic “ethical system”. Moo argues that Paul is emphasizing deliverance from the “binding force” of the Mosaic Law as a whole, not just the cultural or ceremonial elements.293 For Moo, the contrast between Old and New is primarily a contrast between the administration of Old and New covenants and the ethical implications of that contrast.

But how can Paul’s other positive statements on the Law be reconciled with the aforementioned position? C.E.B. Cranfield, in supporting a traditional Reformed stance, argues that Paul cannot mean to set the Spirit in opposition to the Law in Romans 7:6, on the grounds that the Law is spoken of as “spiritual” in Romans 7:14.294 In response, what needs to be taken into account is the nature of the Law under consideration in v14. The written code referred to in Romans 7:6 and 2 Corinthians 3, is clearly a reference to Mosaic Law set within its Old covenant context—the Letter. However, the Law, as moral truth (albeit written) has a spiritual derivation (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21), and may be seen as truth, even above and beyond its particular manifestation within salvation history.

Notwithstanding its out-dated Old Covenant modality, it is still “essentially” God’s moral will. I believe the point that Paul wishes to make regarding the Law in Romans 7:14 is this: the real problem with the Mosaic Law—within its Old Covenant modality, despite its divine derivation—is that it made no provision addressing the inner natural desires (the flesh) which railed against it. It revealed sin, but provided no “actual” capacity to overcome it! Therefore, Paul can speak positively of Law as divine moral truth derived from the Spirit, and negatively of it as “framed within a system” that did not enable the “weak” human nature to overcome its convicting power and therefore fulfil what it demanded. For Paul, it is the “system” of Mosaic Law in relation to weak humanity that is essentially the problem, not the “essence” of divine moral truth within it. God’s law is good, but it is impossible to be kept by human effort (Romans 7:14, 8:3).

However, adherents of the Reformed tradition have generally interpreted Paul’s positive statement on the Law in Romans 7:14-25 to mean that the Spirit now enables the keeping of

294 Cranfield argues, “That Paul is not opposing the law as such and in itself to the Spirit is clear, since only a few verses later he affirms that the law is ‘spiritual’”. Cranfield, The Epistle to the Romans, 1: 339.
the letter of the Mosaic Law that the moral law of God might be fulfilled.\textsuperscript{295} They argue, as Calvin does, that only a Christian can genuinely delight in God’s law and bemoan the struggle within.\textsuperscript{296} Therefore Paul’s statement, “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind…” (Romans 7:22, 23 NIV) must be the “normal” Christian experience, and not that of an unregenerate Gentile or Jew. However, W.G. Kummel led a school of thought which challenged the aforementioned argument by appealing to linguistic evidence.\textsuperscript{297} Rather than drawing an analogy with personal experience, Kummel argued that Paul is not outlining the “normal” experience of a Christian, but objectively is discussing the persona of one under law. Kummel appealed to passages, such as Romans 3:7-8; 7:7a, 9; 1 Corinthians 6:12, 15; and 13:1-3 in verifying other uses of the first person pronoun which do not refer to Paul himself or his own actions. Furthermore, in the light of our previous discussion on the contingency of the Roman context, the dichotomy between a regenerate and unregenerate person is almost certainly a false one, and superfluous in this context. Paul quite clearly is addressing those who “know the Law” (Rom 7:1 NIV), whether Gentile God-fearer or Jew, who may or may not be regenerate! Paul’s principal aim is to state the ineffective instrumentality of the Law in the “new” moral endeavour and wants to stress that knowing the Law will not enable its effectual fulfilment.\textsuperscript{298} On the contrary, attempting to use the Law as an instrument to overcome the flesh, only increases guilt and leads to moral anguish: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from the body of death?” (Rom 7:24 NIV)

In opposition to the long-held view that v.24 is the Christian’s auto-biographical cry of frustration, Stanley Stowers effectively argues that this construction parallels sayings in Greco-Roman literature, where a character of the tragedy expresses frustration over the

\textsuperscript{295} This is the position largely held by adherents of the Reformed faith, as Moo affirms “The interpretation of vv. 14-25 in terms of “normal” Christian experience is typical of Lutheran and Reformed theology right up into the twentieth century, and is still widespread.” Moo, \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}: 470.

\textsuperscript{296} Calvin, “He then sets before us an example in a regenerate man, in whom the remnants of the flesh are wholly contrary to the law of the Lord, while the spirit would gladly obey it…That the whole, then, of this reasoning may be more fully and more distinctly understood, we must observe, that this conflict, of which the Apostle speaks, does not exist in man before he is renewed by the Spirit of God: for man, left to his own nature, is wholly borne along by his lusts without any resistance; for though the ungodly are tormented by the stings of conscience, and cannot take such delight in their vices, but that they have some taste of bitterness; yet you cannot hence conclude, either that evil is hated, or that good is loved by them; only the Lord permits them to be thus tormented, in order to show to them in a measure his judgment; but not to imbue them either with the love of righteousness or with the hatred of sin.” Calvin, "Romans Commentary", 7:7-17.

\textsuperscript{297} W.G Kummel, \textit{Romer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus} (Leipzig: J.G Hinrich, 1929).

struggle between morality and action.²⁹⁹ A struggle that even those today, outside of
Christianity, encounter.³⁰⁰ Rather than a kind of auto-biographical statement of Christian
moral frustration, v.24 would have been, more naturally, interpreted by the Roman readers as
a common expression of lack of mastery over malevolent inner desires, despite the moral
right being cognitively perceived.³⁰¹ It is possible that what Calvin saw as the “normal”
Christian experience is a projection (reading into the text) of his own moral struggle under
the Law ethic—an ethic which he promulgated! Notwithstanding, the letter-based morality—
which the Mosaic Law offered within the frame of the Old Covenant —due to the inner
inadequacies of human nature, simply didn’t enable the kind of moral conformity that Paul
saw God expected!

In contrast to the formal Reformed understanding of the Letter/Spirit relationship, which
orientates the Spirit as “a helper” of the Law in Christian ethics, I believe that the Spirit’s role
is far more prominent. The “new way” that Paul refers to in Romans 7, is not simply Spirit-
engendered interpretation and subsequent religious obedience to the letter of the Law. I
believe Paul has in mind a more holistic Spirit-engendered “way of life”; a lifestyle
controlled by the Spirit i.e., “living by the Spirit.” However, being free from the “Letter of
Law” (as an ethical system) does not automatically imply a life decoupled from any moral
imperative.³⁰² The internal working of the Spirit takes the primary place of the written code
of the Mosaic Law (c.f. Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 37). This would appear to be in accord with
Paul’s statements in Galatians, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your

²⁹⁹ Stowers references works, such as: Euripides in Medea and Hippolytus. Also, Plutarch quotes Euripides:
“Wretched I am...” (Euripides,frg.841) Stanley K. Stowers, A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and
³⁰⁰ In a recent article describing the nature of sex addiction, Neil McMahon cites a young woman’s moral
struggle, “The only way I could explain it is to say I had two women fighting for control of the same mind and
body: one was the woman who wanted a normal life, a nice boyfriend and meaningful relationship; the other
was after instant physical gratification for whom sex became an obsession.” Neil McMahon, "I've had 300 one
night stands," Grazia 2011, 41.
³⁰¹ Andrew A. Das, Solving the Romans Debate  (Minneapolis Fortress Press, 2007), 226.
³⁰² Paul, in contrast to the Mosaic Law, alludes to being under the “law of Christ” (1 Cor 9:21, Gal 6:2). Whilst
some scholars view such a phrase as an anomaly to Paul’s thinking it should not be so easily dismissed. I concur
with Todd Wilson, who views the term  apologetically: “The ‘law of Christ’ would be well-suited, then, as a
rebuff of the agitators, because it shows that Paul’s gospel is in no way intended to set aside the best the law has
to offer. Instead, by reissuing an important facet of the agitators’ theology and perhaps phraseology (albeit
with his distinctive impress), Paul can turn their whole argument on its head: only in Christ and in loving service (i.e.
burden-bearing) can the law of Moses find its real fulfilment (Hong 1993: 177; Longenecker 1998: 86; Sanders
Interpretation," Currents in Biblical Research 5, no. 1 (2006): 137. Therefore, at the risk of being dubbed “anti-
nomian”, Paul conceptualizes his ethical stance as “law” but in such as way as to distance it from Mosaic Law.
freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love...So I say, live by the
Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature...But if you are led by the
Spirit, you are not under law’’ (Gal 5:13-18 NIV). The new way of Living by the Spirit, in
Paul’s mind is a way of ethical life that is free from the obligation to obey the system of the
“letter of the Mosaic Law”, not an adjunct to it. In discussing Paul’s “Law of the Spirit”
statement as a metaphor, Erik Konsmo argues that the new Spirit ethic takes the place of the
Law system: “The metaphor of Spirit-law is structured in terms of the SPIRITUAL LIFE AS
A LEGAL SYSTEM. Paul intends a different type of legal system from the Mosaic Law.
There is no codified set of commandments, yet good and evil will still be judged, with
rewards or penalties for such behaviour.”

Because the Christian may be free from the obligation of the “system” of Mosaic Law, this
does not infer that the Christian Scriptures are entirely superfluous for Christian living, or
indeed the “laws” have no value to guide! As is clearly evident from the contest of the
Pauline epistles, that even within the context of promoting living by the Spirit, Paul still saw
the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative and useful for Christian living. Throughout the texts of
Romans, Galatians and First Corinthians, Paul regularly quotes the Old Testament scripture
to support his arguments. This notion is certainly in accord with the Pauline statement: “All
Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in
righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2
Timothy 3:16 NIV)

303 Konsmo, The Pauline Metaphors fo the Holy Spirit: The Intangible Spirit's Tangible Presence in the Life of
the Christian: 151.

304 I recognise that the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is questioned in the field of New Testament
studies. Following an analysis of the arguments, Stanley E. Porter concludes: “Whereas the arguments from
chronology, epistolary format, style and content are finally inconclusive, it seems to me that the theological
data are the only—or at least the strongest—evidence that raises justifiable doubt regarding Pauline
authorship of the Pastoralists.”Stanley E.Porter, "Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for
ground to question Paul’s authorship, then this could easily be countered by incorporating the theological
content of the Pastoralists into what is accepted as Paul’s Theology and simply expanding his theological scope.
Moreover, in response to Porter, Robert Wall argues that the very acceptance of the Pastoral Epistles into the
canon of the church suggests that the theological content was considered legitimately Pauline by them: “ The
church’s recognition of the Pastoral Epistles as apostolic and divinely inspired—and thus canonical—is a
result of their actual performance in forming an infallible understanding of God within faithful readers.”
Biblical Research 5(1995): 128. Further to this, the acceptance of the Pastoral Epistles into the Protestant
Canon as authoritative and their endorsement in the Westminster Confession of Faith as being such;
necessitates, with respect to this thesis, that they be considered authoritative. Therefore, I will assume that the
interpretation as predisposing Pauline/New Testament ethics towards Spirit- motivated Law keeping, I will later argue that the Christian Scriptures (viewed as the Word of God within the Reformed tradition) have an ongoing validity for Christian living, despite the claim of a dominant role of the Spirit in ethics within the New Covenant.

3.3.5 A New Way of the Spirit

Paul’s concept of Living by the Spirit is a peculiarly New Covenant phenomenon. The survey at the beginning of this chapter revealed that the Holy Spirit did play a role in the religious lives of the Jews under the Old Covenant. However, it is within the post-Pentecost era of the New Covenant administration where the Holy Spirit engages God’s faithful people in a new and unprecedented way. The Holy Spirit is revealed as the driving force behind the life of the emerging Christian church within this new era. The anticipated “baptism of the Holy Spirit”, which Jesus foreshadows in Acts 1:5, endowed the fledgling church with the power and energy to embark on the mission to evangelize the world (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit empowered the Apostolic mission (Acts 6:5, 9:17) and was instrumental in the growth of the Jerusalem church (Acts 9: 31). Moreover, the initial break-through in the Gentile mission and its acceptance by the sceptical Jewish Christians was singularly attributable to the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:19, 44-47, 11:12-18). This influence continued as the Holy Spirit directed the particular actions of the Apostles—as they advanced the Christian Gospel into the Gentile world (Acts 13:4, 9, 15:28, 16:6-10). At every major turn in the growth and the life of this emerging early church, the Holy Spirit plays a key role. From the defining moment of Pentecost, the New Covenant age of the Holy Spirit had broken in.

However, the “new” advent of the Spirit brought with it more than the establishment of a new era of the Spirit’s greater quantitative presence. The coming of the Spirit brought a new qualitative understanding of how God’s followers should live. For Paul the Spirit’s outpouring initiated and shaped a new way of understanding how God’s future kingdom would impinge on the Christian’s present life. Gordon Fee argues, “For Paul, through the resurrection of Christ and the subsequent gift of the Spirit, God himself had set the future inexorably in motion, so that everything in the “present” is determined by the appearance of

Pastoral Epistles are an authoritative part of Scripture and see no valid reason to consider that Paul did not personally contribute to their theological content.
the “future.” As such, in this new reality Paul considers the Christian life as inexorably orientated towards the future, evidenced in this statement to the Philippians: “But our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20 NIV). In Pauline Christianity, the Christian’s ethical life does not gravitate towards “the past” of the Mosaic Law and Old Covenant, but is conditioned by the “future orientated” Spirit. This is illustrated in his explication of the value of the Old Covenant, where he speaks in terms of a “fading glory” with respect to the former administration, which must give way to the superior glory of the New Covenant—not a letter that kills, but a Spirit that gives life (2Corinthians 3: 6-8).

In Paul’s understanding the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit brings the reality of the future sin-free existence into the present with a message of hope. Paul describes the Spirit as the “first-fruits” of those who eagerly look forward to their eternal redemption (Romans 8:23). In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul employs fiscal terminology such as “deposit” and “guarantee” to describe the surety of future redemption that the Spirit brings to the present (2 Corinthians 1: 21, 5:5). However Paul wants to do more than give Christians hope for the future, he wants to give them power to live this future reality in the present! Consequently, the present “guarantee” of such a promised future state of eternal holiness means that the Holy Spirit, which is the basis of this guarantee, becomes intimately related to the ethical endeavour within the present. This is illustrated in the exhortation to the Ephesians, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30 NIV).

Against the background of the Holy Spirit’s ubiquitous influence following the Pentecost event and in view of the Spirit’s abiding presence, which conditions the present Christian life from a future orientation, Paul conceptualizes his understanding of the Christian ethical life. For Paul, theology, ethics, and spirituality are not separate logical categories but an integrated whole; a comprehensive idea that manifests itself in a life lived in conformity with Christ. For Paul, the ethical life is principally a lifestyle based on a faith-union with Christ, where the indwelling Spirit actualizes Christ within the believer’s life (Galatians 2:20). Paul uses the metaphors of “walking” translated often as “living” to best conceptualize this Spirit-empowered ethical life (Romans 8:4, Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 4:1, 1Thessalonians 2:12). Erik Konsmo makes a distinction between “living” and “walking” in the Spirit by arguing the

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305 Fee, God's Empowering Presence: 801.
306 See also 2 Corinthians 7:1-2, Galatians 6:8 and especially Romans 8:11-18.
former is tangibly expressed by the latter: “Living in the Spirit should produce the tangible evidence of walking in alignment with the desires and actions God desires.” However, he also suggests that the metaphor of “walking” that Paul employs is comprehensive: “...Paul suggests that walking figuratively represents the totality of one's conduct on earth.” For the purpose of this thesis “living” or “walking” by the Spirit will be considered synonymous.

Nevertheless, the use of such terminology would suggest that the Spirit-life was inherently practical. In support of such a notion, R.P. Meye argues: “Practice of the Spirit makes more explicit the ‘intentionality’ and ‘discipline’ anticipated by Paul’s language of ‘walking.’ Practice here is understood as a comprehensive pattern of action governed by one’s basic perspective. For Paul this perspective is theological and spiritual.” Yet how is this practical life in the Spirit to be understood for contemporary Christians? Despite delivering one of the most comprehensive exegetical and theological studies on Pauline Pneumatology, Gordon Fee was hesitant in offering any conclusive opinion on what Paul’s concept of “Living (walking) by the Spirit” might actually entail: “Since the Spirit is God’s own empowering presence, Paul expected God’s supernatural aid to enable them to live in keeping with God’s character and purposes.” Fee believes that the Christians in Paul’s day would have simply understood it in terms of a very practical way of the Spirit guiding them in ways consistent with God’s will, without reference to the Mosaic Law code.

Whilst it can be affirmed that Paul envisages the Christian life as “practically-empowered” by the Spirit, should it be taken for granted that Reformed Christians would intuitively come to terms with what living or walking by the Spirit might be? Given the Reformed tradition’s emphasis on Law, I suggest such a discovery would be improbable. Therefore, should an attempt be made to formulate a working model that gives the Reformed Christian some guidelines within which to frame “Living by the Spirit”? I acknowledge that any attempt at constructing a “rigid” system would probably be out of step with how Paul would have wanted “Living by the Spirit” to be understood; and inevitably lead back towards a law-orientated form of religion. However, I believe there is value in attempting to draw out a

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308 Ibid., 101.
310 Fee, God's Empowering Presence: 433.
broad theological framework of “Living by the Spirit”, in which an understanding of the ethical life, within a Reformed context, might be understood.

Conclusion

In attempting to make a case for reclaiming the Holy Spirit’s role in the practical and ethical domains of Christian living (especially as it pertains to those within the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition) the issue of the Spirit’s relationship to the Letter of Scripture and Law needed addressing. A survey of the Holy Spirit within the text of the Christian Scriptures revealed that there is a progression from the Spirit’s discreet role in the Old Testament to a much more overt role in the New Testament. In fact when St Paul’s contribution was taken into account, the role of the Spirit appears to be quite significant. From a straightforward reading this certainly gives the impression that the Spirit dominates New Covenant ethics rather than an ethical system, which appeals to the Letter of the Law.

However, the Reformed tradition construed the relationship between Letter and Spirit in such a way that makes it difficult to view the Spirit as having any authority apart from a direct association with the text of the Bible. Moreover, with respect to ethics, their Letter/Spirit antithesis tends to make the Spirit simply a functionary of the interpretation and application of the Letter of the Mosaic Law. However, after examining Paul’s ethical perspective from within his Roman’s epistle—in the light of more recent developments in scholarship—there is good reason to believe that Paul may not have considered the relationship between Letter and Spirit in the way that the Reformers did. Whilst I concede there is further scope for a more in-depth technical discussion on the issues raised in this chapter, it is not within the brief of this project’s practical orientation to engage these issues further. However, this chapter has shown that Paul’s concept of the ethical life under the guidance of the Spirit is more than a literary/hermeneutical way of construing Old Testament Law from a Spirit-orientated perspective. Thus using the insights gained from the study of Paul and using his insights as a point of departure, I will now seek to develop a theological understanding of what “Living by the Spirit” might look like when considered from a perspective that draws on the insights of Reformed Theology, and is capable of engaging that tradition.
CHAPTER 4: Toward a Reformed Praxis of Living by the Spirit—a model.

Introduction

How might a Reformed Christian practically comprehend “Living by the Spirit”? In the previous chapter it was established that Paul conceptualized his approach to ethics by advocating Living by the Spirit as an alternative to Law. Given that Paul did not expressly set out a carefully defined model for understanding “Living by the Spirit”, there is enough latitude to provide for further development of this concept. Therefore, using the conclusions of the previous chapter as a point of departure, I propose to develop a model of “Living by the Spirit” which might prove helpful as a way for Reformed Christians to develop an understanding of how the Spirit relates to life. Presenting such a model within the Reformed tradition has its complexities. The emphasis on the Spirit’s exclusive relationship to the Word and an apparent endemic suspicion of experiential spirituality, make the enterprise a challenging one. Despite the challenges, developing a systematic understanding of “Living by the Spirit” is an endeavour well worth pursuing, given its potential to offer clarity and direction for Reformed Christians facing the challenges of 21st century life.

In developing a practical pneumatology of this nature, there is a temptation to simply start afresh. However, to ignore worthy contributors within the Reformed tradition would deprive the endeavour of some of its most useful insights. The direction this study takes, seeks to acknowledge the valued theological contributions of Reformed theology, whilst having the honesty to challenge its shortcomings, the courage to extend beyond its prior reach and the humility to remain true to Reformed Theology’s primary assumption of the authority of the Scriptures. I acknowledge that the following model is a theological construct and that the Spirit-life cannot be rigidly systematized; the model is offered as a conceptual framework for Reformed Christians. The structure of the proposed model, by necessity, must cover a broad range of topics, which precludes addressing some critical issues. The methodology requires that the model’s validations is also sought from empirical testing and as the test group are

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311 Ethical life for the Christian cannot be divorced from the practical aspects of daily life. The Spirit may guide the Christian in certain practices that may not be ethically “loaded” but the failure to follow them through may have ethical ramifications.

312 I acknowledge that Paul used a number of metaphors to describe the Spirit life; however, I consider there is further scope to develop a model that makes explicit, that which may have been assumed.
Queensland Presbyterians, the issues addressed and the language used aims for relevance and intelligibility among this constituency.

In developing this model, I will firstly propose that the Holy Spirit provides the epistemic foundation for understanding theological and moral truth. Drawing on Calvin’s insights I will seek to establish that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, the source of the ethical endeavour. Secondly, I will then argue that the Spirit engages humans through a variety of media and that taken together this forms a hermeneutical “system” for understanding the Spirit’s ethical guiding. Thirdly, I will show that viewing the Spirit, as working through a variety of media is not without precedent within the Reformed tradition. From this point, the various “media of the Spirit” will be considered in turn.

The first medium of the Spirit is the material world, in which God’s Spirit is actively involved providentially ordering human affairs. The second medium of the Spirit is the Christian church. The Christian community was created by the Spirit and is gifted by the Spirit for the mutual edification and guidance of its members. The third medium is the Christian person, whom the Spirit of God personally relates to through the mind and experiential senses. The final medium of the Spirit in developing this Reformed model is the Scriptures. God’s Spirit is set forth as the source of the Scriptures and the authority behind the truth contained within them. Although the “system” of Law is defunct, the Spirit may still use the law (within the corpus of Scripture) in a subservient role in the ethical endeavour. Finally, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The Christian ethical life is not simply lived out in conceptual categories. In the Spirit’s working through the various media there is a “dynamic interaction”, and there is a need to realistically recognise that an interaction between the aforementioned media of the Spirit is necessary if this model of “Living by the Spirit” is to be understood and then practically applied.

4.1 The Spirit of Truth: The Core of Living by the Spirit

“Live by the Spirit” was an expression used in by Paul in the New Testament to exhort Christians to order their behaviour in conformity with God’s truth by means of the Holy Spirit. However, to live in conformity with God’s truth, means that this truth must be “known”. It is a dictum of Reformed theology that God’s truth is revealed in the Christian

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313 Christian person is a term that takes into account the Christian as a reasoning/experiencing being. This will be clarified in a following section.
Scriptures. Reformed theology considers the Scriptures are an organic whole and therefore it is considered proper to allow one section to interpret another. Further to this, Calvin observes, “… he sent down the same Spirit by whose power he had dispensed the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word.”\textsuperscript{314} Thus, for Calvin the Scriptures are authenticated by the Spirit of God and as such are a vehicle for the Spirit’s divine revelation of truth. The Reformed tradition advocates that the Christian Scriptures are the principal source of authority (“sola scriptura”) and that God’s Spirit is the ultimate source of the truth contained within the Scriptures. Therefore, it must reasonably follow that the Christian ethical life, for the Reformed Christian must be derivative of the Spirit; and by necessary extension it follows that the Spirit of God must be deemed as the ultimate source of truth.\textsuperscript{315} This is a position that Calvin holds, even notwithstanding his uniting of Word and Spirit: “If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonour the Spirit of God.”\textsuperscript{316}

Whilst affirming the Spirit as the source of truth is simple, understanding how this can be affirmed is not. The Christian person is not a disembodied spirit that exists within some ethereal spiritual union with God, and as such, does not arrive at the aforementioned notion of the Spirit by pure intuition. The Christian person is flesh and blood, living in a material realm—albeit with a spiritual dimension. To arrive at an idea that the Spirit of God holds the ultimate claim on truth, the Christian person must acknowledge a conditional dependency on “mediated means.” By this I mean that to acknowledge the foundational role of the Holy Spirit within a theory of knowledge, the interpreter—who is bound by the limits of time and material reality—must accept that the “proximate” beginning point within this theory of knowledge is his or her understanding via “means” or “instruments” of the Spirit. As already intimated, I understand these means, which will be later explicated in depth, to include: God’s world, the Christian Church, the Christian person and the Christian Scripture. Although from a temporal perspective, the “proximate” processes towards understanding are

\textsuperscript{314} Calvin, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, 1: 96.
\textsuperscript{315} This claim is not meant to supplant the co-equal status of Jesus Christ or the Father in the overall domain of revelation, the Spirit is still God’s Spirit and as such the Trinitarian God is ultimately the source of truth. However the Trinitarian role of \textit{mediation} in the process of enlightening and engaging the human mind with respect to the truth of God falls principally to the Holy Spirit. (John 14,16, 1Cor 2)
\textsuperscript{316} Calvin, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, 1: 274. (\textit{emphasis added})
practically prior; I believe the Spirit logically precedes the act of understanding and the media used in that process of understanding. Therefore, to consistently maintain the assumption that the Spirit is the “sole fount of truth” I consider it necessary to place this discussion on the epistemic priority of the Spirit first, because it places the Spirit as the “ultimate” starting point for the interpretative system being explicated.  

But why even begin logically with epistemology? Because I consider the “logical point of contact” with the Spirit (the source of truth) is the human mind. Following the prompting of A.A. Van Ruler who believes that the Spirit is God’s point of contact with the human, I concur that the Christian life conceptually begins with God-enlightened cognition: “It is the Spirit then that enables the regenerate human to think and to reason.” God wrestling with the human subject is the Spirit’s regenerating and enlightening work: “It is the Spirit, then, who enables the regenerate human to think and reason. This is an “enlightened” reason.” It follows then that there is, in fact, an “immediate” work of the Spirit; however, it would ordinarily follow a sequence that begins on the mediated path. But why is this notion of the Spirit’s engagement with the human important for a practical pneumatology and its engagement with the moral life? Because a failure to acknowledge the critical primacy of the Holy Spirit in governing the enlightened cognition is to concede, by default, that “natural” human reason has epistemic priority. Hence the human mind, with its natural predisposition towards self-interest, effectively becomes the ultimate arbiter of truth. A point that Calvin, too, was careful to make, “…we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit.”

However, despite Calvin’s elucidation on the Spirit’s primacy over natural reason, the subsequent Reformed tradition moved in another direction. Responding to the perceived necessity to defend their position against Lutheran and Catholic opponents, 17th Century

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317 An analogy of this logic can be viewed with Calvin’s treatment on the Knowledge of God, “Yet, however the knowledge of God and of ourselves may be mutually connected, the order of right teaching requires that we discuss the former first, then proceed afterward to treat the latter. Ibid., 38.


319 Allan Jansen summary of Van Ruler’s position. Ibid.106. I would also qualify this by saying that this reasoning relates to morality and wisdom, not all human reasoning.

320 It should be acknowledged, however, that this secret testimony is associated with the Word of God. Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1: 78.
Reformed theologians embraced more rationalistic approaches to certitude.\textsuperscript{321} As such, a new era of Protestant scholasticism developed,\textsuperscript{322} in which many prominent Puritan theologians were involved.\textsuperscript{323} Whilst certainly not ignoring the work of the Spirit in establishing truth, many within the Puritan tradition capitulated to a subtle rationalism\textsuperscript{324} by appealing to an Aristotelian “practical syllogism” as a logical method for verifying assurance. For example, the Puritan Thomas Watson argues, “Assurance consists of a practical syllogism, in which the word of God makes the major conscience, the minor, and the Spirit of God, the conclusion.”\textsuperscript{325} Also Thomas Goodwin writes, “… a man gathereth that God loves him from the effects, as we gather that there is fire because there is smoke.”\textsuperscript{326} Thus, by allowing external data to be filtered through a rationalistic frame in the process of verifying assurance, Goodwin’s thesis (albeit well-intentioned) stands virtually opposed to Calvin’s.

Furthermore, with respect to more contemporary forms of Reformed theology, James Sawyer believes that a fear of “loss of control” in embracing Spirit-related subject matter has seen many within the tradition succumb to a form of rationalism that seeks “primary” epistemic certainty in a logical analysis of biblical facts. The perceived fluidity of Spirit-related truth has caused these more rationally inclined people, to avoid a reliance on the ‘secret’ witness of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{327} However, against this rational bias and its quest for logical certitude outside of

\textsuperscript{321} Alister McGrath comments on this era, “As a result many Calvinist writers turned to Aristotle, in the hope that his writings on method would offer hints as to how their theology might be placed upon a firmer rational foundation.” Alister E. McGrath, \textit{Christian Theology: An introduction} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 77. See also, Gorge S. Hendry, \textit{The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology} (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1957), 79.

\textsuperscript{322} This was exemplified in theologians like Theodore Beza (1519-1605) who were influential in promulgating an Aristotelian rationally coherent interpretation of Calvin’s theology. C.f. also Willem J. Van Asselt, “The theologians toolkit: Johannes Maccovius (1588-1644) and the development of Reformed theological distinctions,” \textit{Westminster Theological Journal} 68(2006): 23-40.

\textsuperscript{323} McGrath notes, “The writings of the leading Puritan theologians William Perkins, William Ames, and John Owen are clearly heavily influenced by Beza.” McGrath, \textit{Christian Theology: An introduction}: 81. See also Kendall, \textit{Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649}.


\textsuperscript{325} Thomas Watson, "A body of Divinity ", http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.txt.7.6


\textsuperscript{327} Sawyer writes of American evangelicalism, “It has become so thoroughly rationalistic that the existential presence of the Holy Spirit has been all but denied” M.James Sawyer, "The Father, the Son, and the Holy
the Spirit’s testimony, can it be shown from the Christian Scriptures that the Holy Spirit’s “secret testimony” as the point of contact with the human mind, is a valid concept?

In verifying the Spirit as the source of truth, the Reformed theologian, to be consistent with his or her own fundamental assumptions, is obliged to appeal to the Christian Scriptures—the material testimony of the Holy Spirit. In appealing to the Genesis text, Amos Yong argues: “In a very general sense, all knowledge is pneumatological insofar as, from a Christian theological perspective, human beings are rational and knowing beings because of the life breath of the Spirit of God (Gen 2:7).” Moreover, Yong’s ideas appear to find support in other Old Testament texts: “But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, which gives him understanding” (Job 32:8 NIV). That the Spirit interacts with the reasoning human mind is revealed in the account of the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Of all the trees placed in the garden, Adam and Even were free to eat, except the tree of the “knowledge” of good and evil. The centrepiece of temptation was to “know” as God knows—to have the very mind of God! Satan’s temptation involved casting doubt on God’s claims and appealing to a superior knowledge acquired through a rational quest; a quest captured brilliantly by John Milton:

The Tempter, all impasioned, thus began. O sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving Plant, Mother of science! Now I feel thy power Within me clear; not only to discern things in their causes, but to trace the ways of highest agents, deemed however wise.

However, the temptation to acquire ultimate knowledge, from outside the realm of faith, yielded alienation from God! Thus subsequent to the fall of humanity the reasoning mind, although originally endowed with a Spirit-initiated wisdom, was corrupted (Romans 1:18-32). But through the regenerating work of the Spirit, following acceptance of the gospel, a restored reasoning becomes possible.

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328 Classic example is the Systematic Theology of Charles Hodge. For a contemporary Australian example of this, read Guidance and the voice of God, Jensen & Payne. For a critique of this position, read Who's afraid of the Holy Spirit. Eds. Sawyer & Wallace.


At this point it is worthwhile returning to the New Testament to gain extra insight into this subject. It should come as no surprise that Paul in beginning his discourse on the Christian ethical life in Romans 12 should specifically address the mind:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:1-3 NIV).

In view of God’s mercy, despite humankind’s rebellious nature, the Christian is now to offer his or her life as a “living sacrifice”; a continual offering in the service of God. Paul exhorts Christians not to be conformed to the world around them, but to be transformed; a transformation that is initiated by the agency of renewed mind—the result of which is the capacity to discern and approve God’s perfect will. Now, what is immediately obvious is the lack of overt reference to the Holy Spirit, especially given Paul’s prior discussion on the relationship of the Spirit with the mind in Romans 8. Moreover, the reference to “spiritual” worship in the NIV’s translation is not a direct reference to the Spirit (the word is actually ὀλοκλήρου, translated as “reasonable” or “logical”). However, Fee argues that the Spirit is clearly implicit in Paul’s discussion. In arguing his position he believes that Paul, in appealing to a “logical” form of service, is contrasting the debased and foolish reasoning of those who serve the creature rather than the creator, as described in Romans 1:18-32. This “reasoned” and “sacred” sacrifice is now linked with the renewed mind of the Christ follower, who lives the new eschatological age of the Spirit and is, by extension, a “spiritual” service. Furthermore, given Paul’s prior discussion on the inadequacy of the Law and the sufficiency of the Spirit, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the Spirit empowers this renewed mind, in such a way to discern the mind of God (c.f. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16). Notwithstanding the peculiarities of the exegesis of this particular text, the Spirit as the

331 “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” Romans 8:5-9 (NIV) (Underlining added)

332 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence: 600.
epistemic foundation of the Christian ethical life also finds support in other texts (e.g., Romans 8, Romans 14:5, Colossians 2:8, 2 Corinthians 10:5).

Perhaps the most comprehensive section of the New Testament that addresses the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christian epistemology is Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, particularly chapter 2. Paul in this epistle is confronting those who claim to be “spiritual”, but are still very much captive to latent Greek epistemology; whether mediated through the eloquence of the Sophists or the logic of the Philosophers: “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...” (1 Cor 1:22-23 NIV). Over and against the predominant Greek mindset, subtly embedding in the minds of his readers, the Apostle sought to establish a basis of truth on other grounds than natural wisdom; the work of the Spirit. Paul argues that his preaching did not rely on human wisdom, but was verified through the Spirit’s power (possibly miracles). He sets the “secret wisdom” that comes via the Spirit against the wisdom of human rationality, which from his perspective is ultimately clueless in respect to the purposes of God (1 Corinthians 2:9). In contrast, he argues, “…but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10 NIV).

Furthermore, in his statement: τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οἴδεις ἕγνωκεν εἴ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor 2:11 GNT), Paul is asserting that the knowledge of God is only discernible via the illumination of the Spirit of God. Outside of the Spirit, divine truth is unintelligible. In fact, the very source of Paul’s words is the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13) and can only be understood by the person who has the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). Calvin, in reflecting on this, resonates with Paul: “…Let us observe, however, that it is not acquired in a natural way, and is not attained by the mental capacity, but depends entirely on the revelation of the Spirit. “334 Only the spiritual person knows the mind of the Spirit.

333 “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (ESV) (Emphasis added)

However, Gordon Fee observes that in making his argument in 1 Corinthians 2:11-16 Paul appears to be drawing upon a Greek philosophical principle of “like is known by like.” 335 Does this, therefore, imply that Paul’s basis of truth ultimately falls back to a position of reliance on human reason? I would suggest not. Firstly, the content of his argument and the nature of his Gospel presentation present a message that seems to be “folly” to those who relied on Greek wisdom, and secondly, the use of analogy does not imply a reliance on rationalism. 336 Paul is simply “accommodating” his hearers and their limited understanding by using the logical device of analogy. 337 The fact that a person thinks, would suggest that reasoning almost always is used in the process of understanding. This does not, however, imply a reliance on natural reason, or more accurately a reliance on reason drawn from a source other than an engagement with God. In this regard, Wheeler Robinson suggests, “Reason is a true ally of religion, but the ultimate proof of the reality of God is always some way of experiencing him.” 338 It is only rationality adrift from the Christians’ dependency on God, which is to be viewed with suspicion within the domain of Christian epistemology. Nevertheless, despite his initial critical observations, Fee helpfully adds, regarding Paul’s logic, “Humans do not, on their own, possess the quality that would make it possible to know God or God’s wisdom. Only like is known by like; only God can know God. Therefore the Spirit becomes the link between God and humanity, the “quality” from God himself who makes the knowing possible.” 339 Thus, from Paul’s perspective, the true authority in understanding and interpreting divine truth is contingent on the interpreter being personally indwelt, illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Johannine writings also seem to advocate that the Spirit guides the Christian understanding of truth. In John’s gospel and First John, the interrelationship of truth and the Spirit are clearly evident. Notwithstanding Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus regarding the Spirit and understanding (John 3), and the references to worshipping the Father in Spirit and


337 This logical accommodation is consistent with Paul’s ministry philosophy: “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1Cor9:22NIV)


339 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*: 110; ibid.
truth (John 4), it is in Jesus’ discourse with his disciples in John 13-16, where he foreshadows the advent of the Spirit, that the relationship between truth and the Spirit is most evident: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13 NIV). For Jesus, understanding truth and the work of the Spirit are intricately bound.340 In 1 John, the apostle not only connects the Spirit with truth, but also specifically relates the two through the medium of “knowing.” In his discussion on discerning truth from falsehood, John writes, “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.” (1 John 3:24 NIV), and also, “We know we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13 NIV). For John knowing the truth is contingent upon a Spirit anointing, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth” (1 John 2:20 NIV). But perhaps the most substantial statement of John’s, regarding truth and the Spirit comes in 1 John 5, where he makes a direct equation between truth and the Spirit: “οἱ τὸ πνείμα ἔστων ή ἀλήθεια” (1 John 5:6 GNT). Therefore, in Johannine thinking, knowing the truth was simply not possible without the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit is the truth!

Therefore, in moving towards a model of “Living by the Spirit” amenable to those within the Reformed tradition, I want to affirm that the Holy Spirit is the source of truth. Moreover, whilst it should be acknowledged that the mind is the place where this endeavour usually begins, and must be sustained, it is also acknowledged that the Spirit’s epistemic primacy cannot be subject to the prior validation of human rationality—thus making it logically subject to human reason. Affirming the Spirit’s primacy (just like belief in God) is ultimately a position of faith—a faith given by the Spirit! The interpreter, although using means, by faith arrives at the fundamental assumption that the Holy Spirit is the source of truth; the “means” accomplish the “ends” of knowing the truth. It is to an understanding of these means, as they relate to a system of understanding, we now turn our attention.

340 One of Jesus’ more significant statements on the subject was John 16:13, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (ESV) Whether the guidance referred to here is, firstly, the Spirit calling to remembrance Jesus’ teaching so it could be written in the gospels by the apostles, or secondly, later Christian’s interpretation of that gospel truth; either way the Holy Spirit is the primary medium safeguarding the truth. It should be noted that this guidance will always be consistent with prior revelation, as Hans Kung confirms, “What the Spirit then has to tell the Church are not any new revelations, new teachings, new promises, which might be added to supplement or surpass what Christ said. What is said of the Spirit is not that he will guide us into new truths, but that he will guide us into all the truth.” Hans Kung, The Church maintained in Truth, trans. Edward Quinn (London SCM Press, 1980), 27.
4.2 The Mediated Spirit: The Ways the Spirit Reveals Truth

Asserting the logical primacy of the Holy Spirit is a necessary first step in developing an understanding of “Living by the Spirit”. However, as previously alluded to, the Spirit does not engage the Christian in abstraction. Theologians have long recognized the multiple media, which a person draws upon to come to an understanding of what is true and/or right. Towards the end of the 16th century the English Reformation theologian Richard Hooker formulated a basis for theological authority from the multiple sources of Reason, tradition and Scripture. Hooker realized that understanding truth involved a multifaceted methodology that was located within the matrix of natural law. Drawing on Hooker’s model as a foundation, John Wesley, in the 18th century developed an approach that took Hooker’s triad into account, but added to it “experience” as a legitimate basis for understanding. Albert Outler outlines Wesley’s method, “Thus, we can see in Wesley a distinctive theological method, with Scripture as its primary norm but interfaced with tradition, reason and Christian experience as dynamic and interactive aids in the interpretation of the Word of God in Scripture.” Outler popularized Wesley’s method, dubbing it “the quadrilateral”. The Wesleyan quadrilateral was a model for conceptualizing the way ethical or theological decisions were made. The use of multifaceted models for understanding continues to find support from contemporary scholars like Richard Hays:

…the canonical Scriptures constitute the “norma normans” for the church's life, whereas every other source of moral guidance (whether church tradition, philosophical reasoning, scientific investigation or claims about contemporary religious experience) must be understood as “norma normata.”

What is consistent with and acceptable to the Reformed tradition within these models, is the ultimate priority of Scripture in the process of understanding.

342 Hooker writes, “ Wherefore that here we may briefly end: of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage…Angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.” Ibid., 285.
The aforementioned methods or models provide a valuable contribution, in as much as they draw attention to a necessity to consider multiple mediums through which an authoritative understanding of truth may occur. However, I find Hooker’s triad of reason, tradition and Scripture lacking, not only because it is structured with a dependency on law, but also because it fails to adequately acknowledge the category of experience. Wesley’s model with the inclusion of experience seems to present a more fully orbed method of conceptualizing the way God’s truth is mediated, but it too can be problematic, given its classification of reason and experience as separate elements. Both reason and experience belong to the human subject. Reason is experiential and experience does involve some form of cognition; they are just the thinking and sensing aspects of the one dimension—the Christian person. More importantly, however, what becomes most apparent with both of these models is that the human subject as interpreter stands in the “centre” and appeals to these various media to gain understanding.

Whilst appealing to multiple media or means, as a method of understanding truth itself is not problematic; the anthropocentric structure of the systems predisposes them to allowing human reason to subtly reassert the place of authoritative primacy. However, I consider that it may be better to approach a way of determining truth in the ethical life by viewing a hermeneutical model from the perspective of the various mediums, with the Spirit being central. Amos Yong takes a solid step in this direction, when he suggests a model which, in his words: “…identifies the process of interpretation as including three distinct but interrelated moments captured by the metaphors of Spirit, Word, and Community.” Yong calls this triadic model “trilectical”, in as much as the three moments are structurally interrelated (each informs the other and is shaped by the other. He also calls them “trialogical” because each moment has an ongoing submissive relationship to the other. Yong’s model is helpful in that it identifies the “interpretative domains” of the Word and the Church; however, the fact that he places the Spirit in a separate category fails to do justice to the Spirit’s involvement in those other domains.

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346 A point that Andre Munzinger also acknowledges, “More significantly, Spirit and reason are not to be considered to be mutually exclusive. Rather, the Spirit can enhance and transform reason and enable it to attain its full potential of discernment.” Andre Munzinger, Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 120.

The way ahead is not better served by placing the Spirit in a separate category, or indeed, equating the Spirit with experience, but by viewing the Spirit as undergirding all the distinct domains or fields of interpretative media. That given, I want to suggest that the media might be more realistically represented as the following: the world, the church, the believer and the Scriptures. Each of these media represents distinct (though not separate) domains of the Spirit’s work and influence. In contrast to the approaches of Hooker and Wesley, the interpreter must recognize that he or she stands within the model as one of the media through which the Spirit works; thus the interpreter also stands in the place of “the interpreted.” The Spirit is central in this interpretative model and becomes the primary interpreter (Psalm 139:23, Romans 8:27, 1 Corinthians 2:10) with the Christian person (as secondary interpreter) becoming both the means through which the Spirit interprets (“searches”) and a subordinate participant in the interpretation. Thus the reasoning/experiencing/church-orientated/Scripture believing Christian retains a space to interpret but without occupying the principle position of authority—which ultimately belongs to God (evident as Spirit). Having acknowledged this, the Christian is now able to identify the Spirit at work through the aforementioned media. The Christian approaches the realm of understanding, not as a “disinterested observer” in a Cartesian sense, but as an active participant in the process. Therefore, understanding what is true or right is accomplished as the interpreter apprehends the Spirit’s authoritative work in the multiple domains that surround him/her: God’s world, God’s church, God’s person, God’s word. To an understanding of the Spirit’s operation within these distinct domains, we will now proceed.

4.3. Reformed Precedents

In developing a Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit”, (as previously intimated) there are valuable insights that can be gained from within the Reformed tradition. John M. Frame is a Reformed theologian who has advanced a multi-faceted method for determining ethical behaviour. Frame argues that the Christian must approach ethics from three perspectives: the normative, the situational and the existential. Frame believes that under the normative perspective, the Christian must understand that the “norm” of ethics is God; this has an order to it which moves from the most general to the most specific—God himself, his word, his written word, his law. However, contrary to this thesis, Frame views Law as the ultimate moral norm for the Christian: “As we saw in the previous chapter, Law is both part of
Scripture and a way of looking at Scripture as a whole. Either way, God's law is normative for our lives. It tells us what to believe and what to do.” 348 Whilst I disagree with Frame that God’s Law is normative for Christian living, in connecting his normative perspective with the Scripture he gives weight to the authority of the written text of Scripture and its value for ethical instruction.

Frame also argues that ethical decisions always take place in a context. Therefore, another component of Frame’s model is the situational perspective: “The situational perspective deals with our ethical environment, which includes everything. By “everything,” I mean God himself and the whole course of nature and history which he directs by his divine plan, his creation and providence.”349 Finally, Frame acknowledges that the experiential element of the ethical process must be taken into account; he calls this the existential perspective: “We cannot know anything without our minds, that is, without any sense organs, reason and other mental capacities. And we cannot know anything without these capacities functioning together in a subjective process by which we discover truth.350 Frame’s model reveals a precedent within the Reformed tradition of an ethical model that recognizes multiple components—three of the four parts are drawn on in this section.

However, of even greater relevance is Gywn Walters’ 2009 work, The Sovereign Spirit: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the writings of John Calvin, and its attempt to analyse Calvin’s signature doctrine. In attempting a systematization of Calvin’s pneumatology, Walters focuses on Calvin’s major Spirit-orientated themes. He commences by addressing the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the inner life of God. Among other themes, Walters also devotes a chapter to the believer’s salvation in Jesus Christ. Walters reflects on the relationship of Christ and the Spirit with respect to the believer’s “union with Christ”. He also mentions that it is the Spirit that initiates and enables faith in Jesus. Faith transcends human reason: “Thus the knowledge in which faith consists is not transient but, imparted by the Spirit, is at a higher level than that of the senses.”351 However, Walters’ particular relevance to this project is the way that he categorizes the other areas in which, and through which, the Spirit is operative. Walters outlines Calvin’s view of the Spirit at work in the world and recognizes

349 Ibid., 271.
350 Ibid., 349.
Calvin’s idea of valuing the world as a medium of the Spirit’s working: “Proximate, mediate or secondary causes certainly have their real existence and function, but they are operative only under the government of God, by his Spirit and conform to his purpose.” Walters sees the value of Calvin’s conception of the Spirit’s sovereignty over the material world, that it gives the Christian confidence to view life positively without being overwhelmed by the apparent disorder of life.

Walters also gives due attention to the Spirit’s engagement with God’s Word, which is one of Calvin’s major themes. He considers the objective/subjective relationship of the Word/Spirit and also gives due consideration to Calvin’s hermeneutical value of the Scriptures—being the spectacles through which to read life. Walters also addresses the category of the Spirit and the individual Christian. The particular focus here is the issue of sanctification. Walters notes of Calvin, “Sanctification for him has no meaning unless it results in the moral transformation of life. The professed ‘vertical’ experience of the Holy Spirit must be manifested by its ‘horizontal’ repercussions.” Finally, Walters draws attention to Calvin’s understanding of the Spirit’s engagement with the Christian fellowship, although this treatment is limited. All the components in this present model of “Living by the Spirit” are included in Walters’ explication of Calvin’s pneumatology.

Moreover, what is of significance is that whilst the categories of ‘media’ of the Spirit discussed in the following pneumatological model correspond closely with Walters’ categories, it should be noted that the categories formulated in this thesis were established prior to the reading of Walters’ work. Although I have borrowed some of Walters’ insights in explicating the details of the categories, it should be noted that the correlation of my work and Walters’ may not be coincidental. In my prior reading of Reformed theology in general, and Calvin in particular, I arrived at a model that took into account the various categories of the Spirit’s engagement, which virtually correlates with Walters’. After considering John Frame’s ethical categories and the way Walters categorized Calvin’s pneumatology, there may be good reason to believe that viewing the Spirit’s work through multiple media may be the most natural way for Reformed Christians to conceptualize the Spirit’s engagement with ethics, and by extension an ethical understanding of “Living by the Spirit”. Further to this,

352 Ibid., 14.
353 Ibid., 35.
354 Ibid., 120.
the practical case studies (presented in next chapter) will go some distance in attesting to the validity of this claim.

4.4 The Media of the Spirit: The Elements of Living by the Spirit

4.4.1 The Spirit and the World

Does the Spirit use the material world as a medium for engaging God’s people? For many within contemporary Western society, even Christians, the material and spiritual seem unrelated or, at least, disconnected from each other. This disconnection can give rise to practical beliefs that tend to ignore the relevance of the material world to the Christian life. Though the reasons for the aforementioned disconnect may be many and varied, I consider one of the chief contributing factors is the body/spirit dualism bequeathed to Christianity during its early engagement with Platonism.\(^{355}\) Plato’s ideologies found their way into Christianity through St. Augustine, a disciple of the Neo-Platonist Plotinus. For Augustine, as with Plato’s cave analogy, understanding originates with sensation—the quest for truth is then attained by climbing the ladder of reason to the eternal ideas in the mind of God.\(^{356}\) This upward inclination towards “ultimate truth” away from the particulars of material reality had the corresponding effect of overstressing the knowledge of God found in the mind and gave rise to a view of spirituality which considers (in Augustine’s words), “…the contemplative life is “superior” to the active life.”\(^{357}\) With Plato’s ideology firmly embedded within the Western Christian consciousness through Augustine’s ubiquitous influence, the predisposition to distance the Holy Spirit from the matters relating to the material or natural world became established. Notwithstanding this, there is a valid case for a more explicitly Christian view; a view that sees the Spirit as very much involved with the material reality—annonymously or overtly active in the world in which the affairs of the Christian’s life are played out.


4.4.1.1 The Spirit and the Created Order:

The opening verses of the book of Genesis refer to the Spirit in relationship with the created order: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the “Spirit of God” was hovering over the waters” (Gen1:1-2 NIV). What is immediately obvious is that firstly, the Spirit is distinguished from the creation, and secondly, the formless primordial creation is contingent upon the creative power of the Spirit to shape it into a “created order.” With regard to the first observation, the clear distinction of the divine creator from the material creation is established by the presence of the Spirit hovering above the material mass. The Spirit acts on creation, but remains distinct from it, as Calvin expresses: “[the Spirit]… is accepted from the category of creatures; but in transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life and movement, he is indeed plainly divine.”

Such a distinction necessarily stands against any claims of Pantheism and establishes that God the Spirit, whilst forming and animating creation, is qualitatively distinct from it. In respect to the second observation, the particular creative power of the Spirit is represented to show the necessity of the Spirit for giving meaning and order to an otherwise formless reality. The Spirit acts on primordial matter that is described as “formless and void”. H.C. Leupold argues that the corresponding Hebrew terms *tohu* and *bohu*, taken together (as they are in this context), are implying the two directions necessary for the newly created world: firstly, it needs to be shaped and formed into definite moulds and it must be inhabited with beings.

The Spirit’s world involves design and purpose, for this new reality is meaningfully related to God’s divine will. Rather than considering the Spirit as incompatible with the material order, the biblical account presents the material, created order as essentially “good” (Genesis 1:31, 1Timothy 4:4-5) and considers the continuance of this “good” material world as being necessarily dependent on the Spirit’s involvement. In Psalm 104, the text portrays the Spirit as the force that gives the creature substance and life: “When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (Ps 104:29-30 NIV). Without the vivifying

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involvement of the Spirit, living things return to dust; with it, life is restored and sustained.\footnote{On this matter Keil and Delitzsch comment, “The spirit of life of every creature is the disposing of the divine Spirit, which hovered over the primordial waters and transformed the chaos into the cosmos.” C.F Keil and F.Delitzsch, Psalms, trans. James Martin, 10 vols., vol. 5, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten volumes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 135.} The Spirit operates at the intersection between creation and redemption, and in doing so affirms God’s interest in the material world.\footnote{Paul Chung draws out a similar understanding in his reference to Calvin’s view of the Spirit’s engagement with human culture: “In fact, the Spirit is the divine point of contact or catalyst between the God of creation and the God of redemption.” Chung, The Spirit of God Transforming Life : The Reformation and Theology of the Holy Spirit, 33.} This restorative/ redemptive idea finds further support from Ezekiel’s “valley of dry bones” narrative. Ezekiel’s vision sees dry bones restored to the status of living beings, animated by the breath of God’s Spirit, yet this is a vision with a deeper meaning: “Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land” (Ezk 37:13-14 NIV). The life-giving Spirit restores and regenerates to bring relational harmony between God and his people.

The same regenerative and restorative interaction between the Spirit and the creature is most evident in Paul’s concept of the New Creation. In Paul’s thinking, to be “in Christ” is to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9) and it is the Spirit’s regenerating influence on the human being that enables faith and the life of obedience; this is the state of being Paul calls the “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17,Galatians 6:15). The Spirit does not abstract the Christian away from nature but has a transformative effect in the natural person, so as to “secretly” solicit from human nature a life of moral conformity to God’s will. What is clear from the testimony of Scripture is that the Spirit’s connection and involvement in the material world is deemed normal. There is no sense that being spiritual equates with non-material.

4.4.1.2 The Spirit and Providence:

The Spirit’s involvement in creation is purposeful. Gwyn Walters describes the Spirit’s work thus, “The Spirit of life, wisdom and power is thus at work in all men—oftentimes working despite their perverseness, and so arranging things that there is ‘nothing haphazard in the universe.’”\footnote{Walters, The Sovereign Spirit: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the writings of John Calvin: 18.} History in God’s economy is not random: “The LORD Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand’” (Isa 14:24 NIV). Not only does God plan out the course of history, but his Spirit (as the agent of his
divine energies) is active within this history, as Isaiah’s prophecy illustrates, "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin" (Isa 30:1 NIV).

Moreover, the Spirit’s purposefulness is directed towards an ultimate eschatological goal, as Colin Gunton argues, “He [God] is creator not creation, but he is also, in realisation rather than denial of that transcendence, one who in Christ becomes part of that creation, freely involved within its structures, in order that he may, in obedience to God the Father and through the power of his Spirit, redirect the creation to its eschatological destiny.”

The connection between God the Spirit and eschatology is most clearly seen in chapter 8 of Paul’s Romans epistle. For Paul the believers’ life “in the Spirit” (no longer under the fear of the law) longs for their ultimate redemption, a longing that also the creation shares: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:22-23 NIV).

As the Spirit is at work in God’s providential purposes, so too, the Spirit is involved in ordering the specific affairs of particular people within the creaturely domain—to accomplish God’s purposes. Calvin asserted, “…we ought not to forget those most excellent benefits of the divine Spirit, which he distributes to whomever he wills, for the common good of mankind…It is no wonder then, that the knowledge of all that is most excellent in human life is said to be communicated to us through the Spirit of God.” Whilst Calvin might have had in view “natural endowments” of the Spirit for the benefit of humanity in general, and God’s people in particular, it is nevertheless true that the Spirit of God is able to work in all the affairs of life. Whilst the involvement of the Spirit in the lives of believers is to be expected, God also embraces those who would appear outside of the God’s fold. God anointed the pagan king, Cyrus of Persia, to act on his behalf: “This is what the LORD says to his

364 The following verses set the context of the verses quoted in the text: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God Rom 8:18-21 (NIV).
366 Anointing is generally a term referring to the endowment of God’s Spirit.
anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of, to subdue nations before him and to strip
kings of their armour, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut…” (Isa 45:1
NIV). There are also other accounts of similar events: Joseph’s brothers (Genesis 50:20),
Pharaoh (Romans 9:7), and Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:16).

Furthermore, there is ample evidence from the Bible that the Spirit directly intervenes within
the temporal affairs of believers, so as to direct their paths in accordance with God’s plans—
through the Spirit’s prompting, Peter recognized the hidden deception of Ananias and
Sapphira (Acts 5:3); the Spirit specifically directed Philip to testify of Christ to a foreigner
(Acts 8:29); following a vision Peter is specifically directed by the Spirit to evangelize
Cornelius (Acts 10:19); the Spirit forcefully closes the door of opportunity on Paul’s mission
to Asia (Acts 16:6,7); and Paul is specifically compelled by the Spirit to proceed towards
Jerusalem (Acts 20:22). Thus the Spirit providentially orders the history of the material
world, both indirectly and directly within human affairs, to the advantage of God’s purposes,
orientating things towards His eschatological goal.

4.4.1.3 The Spirit and Consecration:

If material reality is viewed as disconnected from the divine reality, then alongside such
logic, the notion of the “consecration” of the material world for divine purposes would appear
as non-sense. Yet, if the Christian scriptures are taken seriously, there is a place for seeing the
material reality as having a legitimate role in God’s purposes. It would be hard to find a more
prominent example in Scripture of the Spirit’s consecration of Nature than the incarnation of
Jesus Christ. God in redeeming humankind, does not call humanity out of an “intrinsically
evil” world through some philosophical ideology (e.g., Platonism), but chooses to personally
enter that natural world through the phenomenon of incarnation. Not only is Jesus conceived
by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18), but is anointed and led by the Holy Spirit during His
earthly ministry (Matthew 3:16, 4:1). Also, not only is the natural world integrated into God’s
redemptive purposes (Romans 8) but God has specifically set apart material things for
consecration in his work. Bezalel and Oholiab were set apart by God and anointed with God’s
Spirit to craft the sacred objects of the tent of meeting (Exodus 31:1-7), and David passed on
to Solomon the plans that the Spirit had placed on his mind, to build the temple and the
dedicated items within it (1 Chronicles 28:12). It should also be recognized that the
consecration of material objects within God’s divine economy does not imply divinization of
that object, but merely the consecration of that thing towards God’s holy purposes: “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1Tim 4:4-5 NIV). Nature is not a raw material mass unconnected to God’s purposes. Historically, God has consecrated the “things” of nature, specifically to fulfil his divine purposes. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that under the Spirit’s consecrating power the material world is still not integral within those same divine purposes.

I have argued in this section, that the testimony of Scripture (itself a material means of the Spirit) indicates that the Spirit of God is at work in the world animating, directing, and consecrating reality in a way that is commensurate with God’s purposes. Moreover, the overall witness of the Christian Scriptures is not principally concerned with matters of philosophical ontology—how the Spirit should be differentiated from the material world—but its focus is on the redemption of sinful humanity and the moral implications of that. Whilst the Holy Spirit is portrayed as good, the material realm is not portrayed in Scriptures as intrinsically morally evil. Rather than the Divine Spirit fleeing from the material (as in Platonic logic), God the Spirit engages the material world purposefully with the intention of redeeming God’s people and fulfilling God’s plans.

Therefore, for the Christian to fully understand how to live under the influence of the Spirit in this world, a positive appreciation of the Spirit’s relationship to the material world and the providential circumstances of everyday life would become necessary. Any truly practical pneumatology must take seriously the Spirit’s undergirding involvement in the mundane affairs of life and the fulfilment of God’s plan within it. This does not imply that the individual Christian should automatically interpret the contingencies of their immediate material circumstances as direct guidance from the Spirit of God, which would inevitably lead to rampant superstition. However, due recognition to the material circumstances of life needs to be given, as God does act in and through the created order to accomplish His divine purposes (even in the particularities of everyday life) and the Christian should be mindful of such a reality—allowing it to be carefully weighed and considered within the wider orbit of the Spirit’s media.
4.4.2 The Spirit and the Church

4.4.2.1 Reformed Ecclesiology

Pentecost has traditionally been interpreted as the starting point of the Christian Church as a recognisable community. The resultant experience of the Spirit arrested this new community and engendered within it a culture of love, unity, praise and mutual concern (Acts 2). The main emphasis of the early church was a common participation in the Spirit by all the members of the community. However, this New Testament community with its emphasis on mutual concern, love, and a desire to worship God in the unity of the Spirit did not last. The New Testament epistles bear witness to the problems that began to corrupt the Church. By the 16th century, the church that Martin Luther encountered appeared almost entirely alien to the first community of the Spirit. Rather than cultivating an environment of love, the church, which became the matrix for Luther’s faith, generated an atmosphere of fear, judgment and superstition. Luther wrote, "I lost touch with Christ the Saviour and Comforter, and made of him the jailor and hangman of my poor soul.”

Roman Catholicism had shifted the emphasis from the Spirit’s direct work in the community through each member, to the Spirit’s empowerment through the ecclesial institution, As Hendry argues, “In the Roman view, the Church is primarily the successor of Christ; the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are then regarded as endowments bequeathed by Christ to the Church to enable it to discharge its supernatural role.” The Spirit’s authority resided ultimately with the Pope and was administered through an ecclesiastical structure. The concept of a Christian life being developed within the church as the “body of Christ” (in a New Testament sense) on the whole would have been foreign. However, the Protestant Reformation instigated a definitive break from the authority of the Roman Catholic institutional church and the relationship of the Spirit to the Church shifted yet again. The Spirit’s authority and power no longer flowed through the ecclesial system, but through the phenomena known as the “means of Grace” (Word and Sacraments); of which the Word was the pre-eminent. However, whilst the Reformation provided a much-needed response to Roman Catholicism’s hierarchical approach, Hendrikus Berkhof believes that Protestantism

368 James Kittelson, Luther the Reformer (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishing House, 1986), 79.
370 Ibid., 72.
(in reaction to Catholicism) bequeathed such an individualized view of the Spirit that the Spirit’s dynamic working within the Church community remains significantly diminished.\textsuperscript{371}

Whilst Calvin stood firmly against what he viewed as the illegitimate authority of the Roman Catholic Church, he nevertheless held to a very high view of the authority of the Church per se: “…for those to whom He [God] is Father, the church may also be Mother.”\textsuperscript{372} Moreover, Calvin could not ignore the communal aspect of the church, as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles: “It is as if one said that the saints are gathered into the society of Christ on the principle that whatever benefits God confers upon them, they should in turn share with one another.”\textsuperscript{373} Furthermore, the value of the Church was not held fast by Calvin alone, but also adopted by the Westminster divines: “All saints… being united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.”\textsuperscript{374} Church, as a necessary dimension of Christian life, was certainly esteemed in Confessional Reformed thinking. However, in comparison to New Testament ecclesiology, the Reformed conception of church tended more towards an institutional formality.

In Reformed ecclesiologies, the church community is formally edified and directed through the ministry of “the word” and “the sacraments”.\textsuperscript{375} Within the context of church life, moral and practical guidance are dependent on the “ordained” clergy faithfully administering these designated “means of grace.”\textsuperscript{376} Whilst the role of pastors and teachers is upheld, the role of spiritually gifted “laity”, within the wider church community was not “fully” appreciated. It appears on a practical level, that within this tradition the spiritually gifted laity have remained mere functionaries of mundane church life, and the “gifts or graces” among the laity have not

\textsuperscript{371} “For many Protestants it is difficult to understand that the Spirit has anything to do with the institutional and organizational character of the Church. The reason is that they have such an individualistic and spiritualistic or, at best, personalistic conception of the Spirit that they do not understand that God created structures as well as persons and that in his saving work he is, at best, interested in structures insofar as they can serve his purposes.” Hendrikus Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (London: The Epworth Press, 1964), 51.

\textsuperscript{372} Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1: 1012.

\textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 1014.

\textsuperscript{374} The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Amendments made to the Confession by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Declaratory Statement of 1901., (Burwood: Christian Education Committee Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1989), XXVI.1.

\textsuperscript{375} Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1: 1012.

\textsuperscript{376} “Means of grace” is a term that designates the Christian Scriptures and the Sacraments as the medium through which the grace of God is administered to Reformed Christians. For further information see, Craig Van Gelder, The ministry of the Missional church (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 55.
been considered valuable in the process of ethics, as Michael Green’s position demonstrates: “These gifts have no necessary link with holiness of life nor with power in service; they are gifts of the Spirit, not graces of character.”377 In comparison to the Roman Catholic ecclesiology, Calvin’s ecclesiology would have appeared far less formal and simpler. Yet Calvin’s ecclesiology was still orientated the same way as that which it sought to replace. In Reformed ecclesiology the “ordained clergy” (ordained by the Church organization) principally are entrusted with the interpretation and teaching of Christian doctrine—the believer knowing the truth via a submissive spirit.378

4.4.2.2 New Testament Ecclesiology and the Spirit

Not altogether different to the Reformed position, the New Testament does set forth an ecclesiology where Pastors and teachers have an equipping role: “It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service…” (Eph 4:11-12 NIV). However, as this text indicates, it is not simply pastors and teachers that do the preparing, but those within the Church community with diverse gifts and graces (including prophecy and evangelism). Moreover, notwithstanding the fact there are certain gifts that orientate towards leadership, a case can be argued (supported by the New Testament accounts) that the Spirit does not only work through the education-orientated spiritually endowed individuals alone. It is entirely plausible that the whole church community (under the influence of God’s Spirit) has a role to play assisting individual believers within this community to understand and comprehend sound doctrine, moral truth and the practical living out of it. In fact, without the whole community being viewed as important, the Spirit’s work is constrained.379

Jesus speaking of the Spirit before his crucifixion indicated that the Spirit would replace his personal presence. The counsel and instruction that Jesus gave to the company of his disciples would now, in his physical absence, be taken up by the Holy Spirit: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things

378 Calvin writes in this regard, “…anyone who presents himself in a teachable spirit to the ministers ordained by God shall know by the result that with good reason this way of teaching was pleasing to God, and also that with good reason this yoke of moderation was imposed on believers.” Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1: 1021.
and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26 NIV). Jesus goes on to describe the guidance role the Spirit offers as synonymous with truth: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13 NIV). Now it could simply be construed that this guidance was specifically for the Apostles, and therefore argue that this applies to the ministry of discernment and teaching that spiritually gifted teachers and pastors offer (through their explication of the apostolic tradition). However, when the Johannine epistles are taken into consideration, the relationship of the whole community to spiritual guidance in the truth is seen more clearly. Although a survey of First and Second John reveals that the word church (ἐκκλησία) never appears; leading to speculation that the concept ‘people of God’ is absent from Johannine theology, there is nevertheless, a strong ecclesiology evident. Judith Lieu, in addressing the issue of doctrinal authority, argues the following, “For 1 John, authority lies within the life and experience of the believing community; finding the way forward is a shared experience and examination of their present Christian life is done from within and not from outside”.

Moreover, in 1 John 4 there is an indication of a strong interrelationship of the Spirit, community and truth. In verse 1 the author challenges the community to “test the spirits”, in this case, discern between true and false teachers and their respective doctrine (it appears that the challenge to orthodoxy was coming from those who purported to be teachers or leaders). In verse 2 the Spirit of God is evident in a true doctrinal confession (in this case a validation of Christ’s incarnation). John is addressing the community in an inclusive manner, which is evident from the abundant use of the plural in verse 6: ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμέν, ὁ γινώσκων τῶν θεῶν ἀκούει ἡμῶν, ὡς οὖν ἐστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. From verse 6 John stresses that a genuine adherent of the truth will not only issue a true confession, but a willingness to listen to and affirm the faith of the community; a concept paralleled in John’s gospel, “He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God (John 8:47 NIV). But the question begs, how could the community inherently discern the truth? Whilst it is true that every Spirit-filled believer may have a ‘sense’ of spiritual truth (1 Corinthians 2), not all have the same power to discern subtle errors. It appears that the author simply assumes the corporate discernment available to the

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body of Christ via the gifts of the Spirit. Paul alludes to the same phenomenon in 1 Corinthians 12:10, where he refers to those who have the gift of distinguishing between spirits, and in Ephesians 4:11-14 which outlines gifts given to the church that assist in keeping them from the “wind and waves” of false doctrine, as well as the wisdom of the mature (1 John 2:14). The inner testimony of the Spirit does give individual believers a sense of true and false doctrine; however, there are those within the body specifically gifted by the Spirit to discern truth and offer wisdom within the community. 382

On a practical level, this means that moral discernment in a church context is not exclusively dependent on the ministry of ordained clergy, but may be just as dependent on the ministry of the Spirit-gifted community, with multiple believers playing a role. Furthermore, John views Christian truth as holistic by nature; 1 John 4:7-12 makes it clear that the truth is not simply the affirmation of intellectual propositions, but is verified practically. Whilst the apostle advocates that adhering to the community’s confession and fellowship is a sign of the Spirit of truth, coming from the opposite side in 1 John 4:13, he affirms that the inner testimony of the Spirit confirms that one is abiding in the truth. Not only so, but John’s theology weaves together the ideas of spiritual discernment, the love of God, knowledge of truth and love of fellow believer (1 John 4:6-8) and all this within the community; as Lieu affirms, “The spirit is experienced within the community, for it is there that confession is made and tested...The focus is on the spirit present in the community rather than in the hearts of individual believers and it is the community rather than the individual which provides the battleground.” 383 In John’s ecclesiology, a “real” working of the Holy Spirit, mediated through the Christian community appears to provide guidance to adhere to true doctrine that is validated by true living. The Christian community, established and animated by the Spirit provides a “corporate culture” of ethical truth, known and lived.

Paul saw the need for church structure and leadership and advanced a relational ecclesiology. For Paul being In-Christ, through the Spirit, is more than a state of relationship for the individual Christian; it is a state or being-in-relationship with other Christians, bound in a holy union: “Don't you know that you yourselves [plural] are God's temple and that God's

382 The spiritual gifts referred to may not necessarily be the clerical gifts of teaching. Words of knowledge, wisdom, gifts of discernment (1Cor 12:1-12), gifts of encouraging, leadership and mercy (Rom 12:6-8), prophecy (Eph 4:8) are all gifts that can be exercised by Christians (laity) outside ordained ministry. Even the gift of teaching is not the exclusive domain of the ordained clergy.

Victor Furnish, in reflecting on Paul’s ethics in a corporate context claims, “This communal context of the believer’s life is of greatest importance for Paul’s understanding of how the Christian is able to know what he ought and ought not to do.” But can Furnish’s claim be supported by Paul’s writings? Notwithstanding the aforementioned reference to the temple of the Holy Spirit (where Paul exhorts the church to be a holy entity), the ethical life, community and the Spirit are integrated in Paul’s ecclesiology. In warning the Corinthian Christians with respect to the perils of idolatry, Paul makes this assertion, “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour” (1 Cor 10:24 ESV); in saying this, Paul is making it clear that even though one believer may not have a problem with idolatry, he or she should be willing to limit their freedom for the sake of the “weaker” brother or sister in the Christian community. In fact, in the following chapter he indicates that a sin against the community is a sin against God (1 Corinthians 11:27). How Paul understands the association of the Holy Spirit in the corporate ethical endeavour is seen in his explication of the concept of Spiritual gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul engages the Corinthians on the subject of true spirituality. Contrary to the Corinthian idea that the endowments or “gifts” of the Spirit were for the aggrandizement of the individual recipient, Paul makes the contrary point: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7 NIV). Paul’s logic is as follows; there is one God and there is one Spirit and as a consequence the gifting of the Spirit towards individual members of the “body” (i.e., the church) is directed towards the good of the community—that everyone in it may be edified. No gift is deemed insignificant—all have value (1 Corinthians 12:21-26). Further to the subject of Spiritual endowments for the common good and correlative to it, is Paul’s discussion on love. For Paul, love is the key motive and expression of a life lived in conformity to God: “Therefore love is the fulfilment of the Law” (Rom 13:10 NIV). Love, expressed in the Christian community is the goal of the gifts. That is why Paul describes love in terms of ethical

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385 The ESV renders the verse more accurately than the NIV.
386 Love now mediated by the Spirit in the community replaces the Law in Paul’s thinking: “Love represents the ethical outworking of the imputed righteousness bestowed by grace through faith, the outward expression of new life in Christ. There is a necessary correlation, then, between faith in Christ and loving others. And just as faith spells the end of the Jewish Law in a salvific sense (Rom 10:4), so love represents the fulfilling of the Law in an ethical sense (Rom 13:10); in Paul’s thinking, together the two essentially replace the focus on Law.
behaviour towards others: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud” (1 Cor 13:4 NIV). However, behind love is always the animating power of the Holy Spirit, so much so, that to treat one another wrongly in the Christian community is, in Paul’s mind, “grieving” the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:25-32). Similarly in Galatians, Paul indicates that “walking” by the Spirit necessitates abandoning ungodly behaviour towards others (Galatians 5:25-26). Thus, for Paul, far more than simply encapsulating the ministry of the Spirit within the “teaching or preaching” gifts of the clergy, the Spirit works more widely within the Christian community; the Spirit empowers and endows believers to work together for a common good—to truly love each other by living rightly.

4.4.2.3 A Community of Wisdom

The Spirit of God brings to and through the community a practical wisdom for living. James Gustafson argues that Christian morality cannot be explicable on the basis of moral propositions alone, but rather the guidance of the Spirit of Christ in the community: “The presence of the Spirit in the church might prompt an obedient action which is not defensible by even the best rational reflection of the wisest and most learned theologians of the church.” However, not only does the church need the Spirit, but without the “whole” community of believers, the Spirit lacks the most effective medium for empowering and guiding individuals into a way of right living. In the dynamics of living the Christian life, more than “truth propositions” delivered from a gifted few are required. The variegated richness of the Spirit-originated gifts and graces creates a community culture where love is expressed truly. Within this community culture, Christians are not only offered guidance for right living but actively participate in an environment that cultivates and supports it. The Christian community is a necessary medium through which the Spirit of God works in communicating truth; in fact Berkhof would go as far to say, “It is impossible to have communication with the Holy Spirit in an individualistic way without communion with one another.” The practical implication of this for those within the Reformed tradition is that receiving guidance for ethical living entails far more than simply sitting in a church service and listening to a sermon. Whilst this teaching element is certainly of value, it may not be the only way that God’s Spirit guides the


believer from a corporate perspective. Viewing the church from the wider practical perspective of a “spiritual community” and the “body of Christ” gifted and empowered by the Spirit, opens up an understanding of how the Spirit of God assists the believer to “Live by the Spirit”.

4.4.3 The Spirit and the Christian Person

Whenever the Holy Spirit is considered in relationship to the individual believer, the subject of personal spiritual experience must be engaged. Unfortunately, the popular notion of simply equating the Spirit with spiritual experience has often so shrouded valuable theological reflection, that it has hindered the development of a more fully orbed pneumatology. In seeking to develop an understanding of the Spirit’s relationship to and through the Christian person, it should be recognized that genuine personal spiritual experience, whilst originating from God and His action on the human self, is necessarily set in the wider context of the Spirit’s actions in the world and (usually) the Christian community. Consequently, this discussion on the Spirit and personal experience has been deliberately placed after the two prior subjects to set it within its appropriate context.

A genuine engagement between the Spirit and the experiencing human involves more than “subjective feelings”. Although hermeneutical models have tended to place reason and experience in separate hermeneutical categories, I am convinced that they cannot be so neatly divided. Genuine spiritual experience stands neither at the polar extremes of subjectively generated religious feelings, nor rationally conceived notions of spiritual truth. The Spirit brings the divine wisdom of God to the experiencing subject, who is a thinking/feeling being. In this regard Andre Munzinger argues, “…Spirit and reason are not to be considered to be mutually exclusive. Rather, the Spirit can enhance and transform reason and enable it to attain its full potential of discernment.”389 Human feelings and reasoning are both involved in the spiritual experience; however, it is of primary importance to note that neither is the source of the experience—the Spirit is.

4.4.3.1 The Spirit and Regeneration

The Christian person begins their personal relationship with the Spirit through the experience of regeneration. Regeneration is what Jesus is referring to in his discussion with Nicodemus:

389 Munzinger, Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul: 120.
“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth; no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ’You must be born again’”’ (John 3:6-7 NIV). Being “born again” is something that the Christian cannot manufacture themselves. From a Reformed perspective, regeneration is an act of God that is sovereignly instigated by the Spirit and which transforms the believing subject into a “new person”; as Abraham Kuyper explains: “The seed of regeneration is intangible, invisible and purely spiritual. It does not create two men in one being; but before and after regeneration there is but one being, one ego, one personality.”  

Regeneration is conceptualized in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as effectual calling, a calling of the Spirit that effectively draws the Christian into a new state of being:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ: enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. 

According to *The Confession*, the regenerating work of the Spirit has the effect of enlightening the mind with the capacity to understand the “things of God” previously unknown. Moreover, regeneration has a moral effect as well, changing the Christian will with a predisposition towards faith in Jesus and all that flows from that. However, the work of the Spirit does not simply enable faith in the Christ event, but effectively unites the believer with Christ.

### 4.4.3.2 The Spirit, Union with Christ, and Ethics:

The experiential work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration event opens the believer to a new reality of Christ-union. For the apostle Paul, the regenerating Spirit makes union with Christ a present reality in the believer’s life: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the

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Lord is, there is freedom” (2Cor 3:17 NIV). In recognizing and concurring with this, Calvin states, “Both doctrines must be believed. We are partakers of the Holy Spirit in proportion to the intercourse that we make with Christ…” This experience of the Spirit-based union with Christ has significant implications for Christian ethics. Spiritual union with Christ is the basis for Paul’s challenge for ethics: “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin…” (Rom 6:5-6 NIV). For Paul the moral life is derivative of this “mystical” union with Christ, through the Spirit. Whilst in Romans 6, Paul makes no reference to the Spirit, he does in Romans 7:6 where he alludes to the “new way” of the Spirit. Moreover, in Romans 8, Paul uses the Spirit in the same context that he referred to Christ in Romans 6: “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it” (Romans 8:11-12 NIV). I consider that Christian living for Paul is not a matter of gratitude-based Law obedience, but is more in accord with E.P Sander’s interpretation: “Ethics rather are derived from the “mystical doctrine” of the dying and rising again with Christ.”

However, there are those who stand within the Reformed tradition who treat with suspicion the notion of an ethical life based on the believer’s “mystical or spiritual” union with Christ. Bruce McCormack believes that participationist views (like Sanders’ and Calvin’s) are more indebted to Platonic ontologies than Paul. McCormack argues that Calvin, in borrowing the “older theological rhetoric” of the church fathers uncritically adopted their Greek ontologies: “The problem with refusing to engage ontological questions as an essential part of the dogmatic task is that we all too easily make ourselves the unwitting servants of the ontology

392 My position is that the actual “mechanics” of regeneration (like the relationship between the body and soul) is ultimately a mystery. I see value in Volker Raben’s assertion that a “personal relationship” exists between the Spirit and the believer: “The means of the transforming work of the Spirit in [2 Corinthians] 3:18 are thus relational: the believer is brought into the presence of the Lord (cf. 3:17a) and an intimate relationship is established through the unveiling of the faces and the contemplation of the (glory of the ) Lord.” Rabens, The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life: 191. The strength of the aforementioned position is that it enables conceptualization of an ongoing ethical relationship.


that is embedded in the older theological rhetoric we borrow—and so it was with Calvin.”

For McCormack this failure is seen in Calvin’s asserting the primacy of justification from a forensic viewpoint, yet ordering the teaching in Book III of the Institutes, where he places the mystical union with Christ and Regeneration logically prior. In offering a solution of his own, McCormack posits an alternative view of “union with Christ”, which he deems covenant ontology: “Covenant ontology is ontology of correspondence… union with Christ takes its rise through a unity of wills, not through a unity of substances.” For McCormack, justification is a decision to actualize a decision that God made in eternity to elect the believer, a believer who is “in essence” the function of a decision which gives rise to a willed relation. The Holy Spirit is the power of the divine declaration that gives rise to a subsequent obedience, where the existential point of encounter is the mind and the modality of action is “illumination”. Thus McCormack wants to see the experience of “union with Christ” as ostensibly a rational phenomenon.

Whilst it certainly can be conceded that the reasoning mind is involved in this spiritual experience of being united with Christ through regeneration, I believe that the spiritual “union with Christ” cannot simply be reduced to a cognitive response. If McCormack only perceives spiritual union from the perspective of “willed decisions”, how is it possible to deal with the reality of the Spirit’s work in the material world, external to the human mind or will? For instance, how does McCormack come to terms with the reality of the body “being” a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), or Spiritual gifts of healing (1 Corinthians 12), or even, when Paul speaks of the believer being “in Christ” as a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17), does it not appear that more than a conscious union of wills has taken place? If then, the Christian believer’s experience of this spiritual union with Christ is considered “mystical” then Seng-Kong Tan best captures the nature of it: “Hence to be partakers of the divine nature means a participation not of essence but of quality; thus it is not substantial, but nonetheless, it is still ontological as participation in the nature which involves a sharing in the properties of the essence.”

395 McCormack, ”What's at stake in the current debates over justification?,” 104-5.
396 Ibid., 103.
397 Ibid., 115.
398 See ibid., 110-17.
the reasoning mind, but not necessarily in a rationalistic sense. There is a “real” spiritual union where God, through the Spirit engages the human subject enabling a faith in God that internally motivates him or her to a life of moral conformity to Christ (Galatians 2:20).

4.4.3.3 Personal Spiritual experience and objectivity:

How is the Christian to make sense of the Spirit’s engagement in the “practical” domain of Christian living? Jesus seems to refer to the direct and immediate guidance of the Spirit, “Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11 NIV). And in Acts following Peter’s vision, Luke writes, “And while Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him…” (Acts 10:19-20 NIV), and similarly Luke writes of Paul’s experience, “And after Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:10 NIV). What we see in these examples is the Spirit (not human rationality or self-generated experience) initiating these experiences, but enlightened human reason reflecting and acting on the Spirit’s prior initiative. Despite these clear examples, Philip Jensen argues, “Apart from his Spirit working through Scripture, God does not promise to use any other means to guide us, nor should we expect him to.” However, if Jensen is implying that Christians are only guided through the reading of Scripture, what is the reader to make of the aforementioned examples in the New Testament, where the Spirit acts directly on the believing subject, with respect to guidance? In responding, I propose that it can be sustained from Scripture itself that the Spirit of God can actually bring an “objective guidance” that does not take its cue from the human volition—yet involves a “real” interaction with the experiencing subject!

However, it can be argued that the Spirit actually generates experience which brings objectivity, as T.F. Torrance explains, “He is at work to realize the Godward side of our life, and to direct us in all our being and knowing away from our own subjectivity to the objective

400 By this I mean that spiritual experience does not have to correlate with pre-existent human rationality. Experience involves thinking, but is not necessarily subject to the constraints of rationality.

401 By his own admission Jensen admits he is arguing his position from a negative. It might be equally argued that scripture doesn’t speak against revelation of truth via another means than reading the bible. Philip D. Jensen and Tony Payne, Guidance and the voice of God (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 1997), 78.
reality of God’s own Being and Word.” For the New Testament believers, the Spirit was not merely a catalyst for subjectively generated religious experience but the agent of God acting under his initiative, not the initiative of the believer. Therefore, the Spirit engages the human subject with divine wisdom that transcends humanly contrived feelings. In John 14-16 Jesus candidly discusses the role of the Spirit. He has already defined himself as “the truth” in John 14:6 which is described in verses 16-17 as “another” counsellor (c.f. also John 15:26 and John 16:13). Don Carson argues that this reference to the Holy Spirit is no ‘creedal’ reference, but believes that the Spirit (as counsellor) is to be experienced. In John 14:17 the Spirit is portrayed as “dwelling with/in you” (disciples); it would seem that understanding the Spirit is related to “personally experiencing” the Spirit. In John 14:26 the Spirit is said to “bring to your remembrance”; meaning the disciples will be enlightened by the Spirit to recall the words of Christ (the implication is that reason will also be employed). Also, in John 16:13 the Spirit is seen as the guide that leads into all truth. Whilst it is evident that the Holy Spirit (being a comforter/advocate) exercises a personal ministry of guidance into the truth in John 14-16, there is no hint of personal mystical experience devoid of any conscious use of the mind, the Spiritual guidance issued focuses on bringing objectivity to the disciples minds—clarifying Jesus teaching. With a view to accurate transmission to posterity, this guidance leads the church to clearly understand and apply that revealed truth. At least with reference to John’s gospel, the guidance of the Spirit is very much connected to a conscious connection with the essence of previously revealed truth—albeit in an experiential context.

The narrative of Peter’s vision in Acts 10, further exemplifies the “objectifying” role of the Spirit. Rather than seeking a mystical experience of “personal” subjective benefit, Peter receives a vision that challenges his prior theological assumptions. The Holy Spirit then guides Peter through a set of divinely orchestrated circumstances to discover God’s plan for the Gentiles’ salvation. The objectifying influence of the Spirit at no stage “focuses” on personal religious experience for its own sake (though that is a by-product) but focuses on

402 Thomas Torrance, God and Rationality (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 174.
404 “The Spirit then will teach nothing new. But all that Jesus taught and did he will manifest in a new light, in a
new age, in the face of new situations and new experiences. Only in this way will the truth of Jesus Christ become freshly clear and intelligible in its meaning for today.” Kung, The Church maintained in Truth: 28.
405 “What the Spirit then has to tell the Church are not any new revelations, new teachings, new promises,
which might be added to supplement or surpass what Christ said. What is said of the Spirit is not that he will
guide us into new truths, but that he guide us into all the truth.” Ibid., 27.
God’s plan of redemption and his ultimate glory (even though spiritual experience is the medium through which this is achieved). Against Peter’s pre-conceived notions of what was “correct theology” the Spirit brings an existential challenge to his prior assumptions. Not only was the spiritual encounter experientially powerful, but also the practical verification of what the Spirit testified to Peter in the vision (the actual conversion of Cornelius) confirms the objective truth being affirmed was legitimate. Therefore, an experiential engagement by the Spirit need not be viewed with suspicion, a point that Gwyn Walters validates in his reflection on Calvin’s pneumatology, “It can also be maintained that the inner experience implied by the testimony of the Spirit is “objective” as anything: the experience of a person in relation to God is as objectively real as anything else in the universe.”

4.4.3.4 Normative spiritual experience:

Can a Reformed/Presbyterian Christian expect as “normative” the kind of personal guidance from the Spirit that was previously discussed? The whole Cessationism verses Continuationism debates (which pertain largely to the phenomenon of miracles) that seem quite prevalent in the United States have not attracted the same attention in the Australian context. Therefore, engaging in an extended and detailed discussion, on a subject that lacks direct relevance to this thesis would be superfluous. However, John Woodhouse in commenting on the debate from an Australian context believes that Cessationism in emphasizing the discontinuities between the New Testament and today, and Continuationism, the similarities; both overstate their cases. The first group stresses the miraculous “cannot” happen, the second group stresses that the miraculous “should” happen. However, stressing the extremes of the miraculous in the New Testament as being either “descriptive” or “prescriptive” appears to leave little scope for the sovereign action of God. Michael Raiter takes the following position, “God is gracious and, while he has not promised such experiences, he may in his mercy give them.” Another Australian, Graham Cole takes a slightly more cautious approach, in arguing that the Apostle Paul whilst validating the Spirit’s personal interaction with the believer suggests that Paul does not seek to “normalize” this

407 John Woodhouse, “Where have all the miracles gone?,“ The Briefing 2010, 13,21.
408 Raiter, Stirrings of the Soul: 238.
experience of all believers. However, these cautious approaches to the Holy Spirit’s interaction with the Christian person would suggest hesitancy in positively embracing the Spirit’s leading, and could be a reaction to the “Charismatic excesses” referred to in an earlier chapter. However, I concur with Woodhouse that Christians should not limit God and be open to genuine divine action: “There is no theological reason—no biblical teaching—that tells us that God “will not” do today what he did then. The power of God is no less today than then.”

I propose that the New Testament itself affirms there is an expectation that the Spirit does have a positive role to play in the Christian’s life. The Christian can expect as normative the Spirit’s leading in interpreting the truth; the Spirit that led the apostles into all truth (John 16:13) and enabled the authorship of scripture, can bring certainty to the contemporary believer’s interpretation of the apostolic witness in scripture. Secondly, according to promises contained in texts such as Jeremiah 31 and Galatians 5, the New Covenant believer can and should expect the inner witness of the Spirit to actively participate in guidance in living the Christian life. Thirdly, the Christian can expect the Holy Spirit to render assurance in matters of the faith (Rom 8:16, 2Cor 1:22, 5:5). It is conceivable that the impromptu experiences of the Spirit are possible; though they should be subject to testing (1 John 4:1). However, whilst the Holy Spirit can subjectively guide believers, the Holy Spirit would never guide the Christian into a moral action that is contrary to the Spirit’s material testimony—the Scriptures.

4.4.4 The Spirit and The Scriptures

4.4.4.1 The Scripture as primary authority

The Protestant Reformation, in reaction to the perceived abuses of the Roman Catholic Church appealed principally to the authority of Scripture as the primary basis of discerning truth, adopting the maxim “sola scriptura”. This idea is foundational to the doctrine set forth in The Westminster Confession of Faith:

409 “The apostle Paul’s own experience is instructive here. In his Corinthian correspondence he makes it clear that tongue-speaking is a bona fide Christian experience and desirable (1Cor 14:5). Indeed, he relates how he personally spoke in tongues more than any of the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:18). Yet at no point did Paul turn his experience into kerygma. In fact he argues clearly that in the economy of God’s dealings with his people not all will be gifted with tongues speaking (1 Cor 12:27-31, especially v.30). Graham A. Cole, "Religious Experience and Discernment today," Reformed Theological Review 56, no. Jan-April (1997): 6.

410 Woodhouse, “Where have all the miracles gone?,” 16.
The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.\footnote{The Confession of Faith 1647: I:IV.}

Within the Reformed tradition, the Christian Scriptures are affirmed as the most authoritative medium through which the Holy Spirit offers guidance for Christian living. In Calvin’s understanding, the Spirit which inspired the original writing of scripture is at work in the Christian reader to bring about a recognition that the written word carries divine authority: “The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets, must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.”\footnote{Calvin, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, 1: 79.} Reformed Christian’s appeal to the divine authority of Scripture is usually verified by appealing to the following texts: “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21 NIV) and: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness…” (2 Tim 3:16 NIV). The Scriptures, as the mediated instrument of God’s Spirit, are considered by those in the Reformed tradition as the very “Word of God.” Thus Scripture is deemed the “norma normans non normata”. However, the created world, the church and the Christian person (according to this thesis) are also considered media through which the authoritative Spirit of God works. If this is the case, does the recognition of the Spirit’s authoritative engagement through these other media challenge the Reformed concept of the primacy of Scripture?

Firstly, the discussion is not seeking to re-establish that the Scripture has a Spirit-derived authority, but argues why Scriptural authority has primacy over the other media of the Spirit. It should be clarified that it is the same Spirit that bestows authority on all four of the media under discussion. As such, all of these media share the same source—God the Spirit. At this point it is useful to draw on the concept of Divine Trinity and the notion of intra-Trinitarian relationships. Whilst the Father, Son, and Spirit have an ontological equality, there is a voluntary functional hierarchy, as Millard Erickson explains: “…the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son (see John 14-16) as well as the will of the Father, but this does not imply that he is less than they are.”\footnote{Millard J. Erickson, \textit{Christian Theology} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 338.} I want to propose by way of analogy with
these intra-Trinitarian relationships, that the other media of the Spirit bestow functional primacy to the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the material testimony of the Word of God, which engages the church “ab extra”, and through the power of the Spirit and the gospel create it. The Church does not confer authority on Scripture but reflexively through the Spirit verifies its authority; as John Webster argues: “That authority is properly a matter for “acknowledgement” is especially important in discussing the nature of Scripture’s authority in the church.” 414 Furthermore, the same Word, which issues the Gospel, invokes faith in the Christian believer; through faith they enter into a relationship with Scripture, where the inner testimony from the Spirit acknowledges the authority of the objective testimony of the written Word of God. Calvin makes the point this way:

Let this point therefore stand; that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught, truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit.415

Once the Christian believer responds in faith under the conviction of the Spirit, he or she is drawn to the Scriptures and into the embrace of its authority. What necessarily follows is an acknowledgement that God is speaking through the Scriptures. As the Word of God, the Scriptures offer an interpretative grid and an authoritative means by which Christian experience in the world and church can be measured.

Secondly, following on from the previous argument, there is now value in appealing to the self-attesting testimony from within the Scriptures. There are two prominent accounts in the gospels that give an indication of Jesus’ view of the supreme authority of God’s word. Jesus in telling the parable of the rich man and Lazarus alludes to the primacy of scriptural authority over miraculous experience: “He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!'” (Luke 16:31 NIV). Even over and against a miraculous event, the authority of the Scriptures takes precedence in soliciting a faith response. Also, during his temptation in the wilderness (although being divinely authoritative in his own right) Jesus appeals to the written text of scripture as the authoritative basis for rebuking Satan: “Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone’” (Luke 4:4 NIV). Why did Jesus, who was God and had the

authority to rebuke Satan, defer that authority by an appeal to Scripture? Certainly in standing on his own authority he would have compromised his time of testing. Nevertheless, the appeal was to scripture and nothing else. Not only Jesus, but the Apostle Peter pays tribute to the authority of the scriptures as the grounds of truth over and above experience. He contrasts the incident on the mount of transfiguration and his first-hand “experience” of God’s voice from heaven with an even more reliable source of truth: “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to…” (2 Peter 1:19 ESV).416 Furthermore, the self-attestation that comes through the scriptural records, previously discussed, was not a deliberate attempt by Jesus and the apostles to defend the authority of the Scriptures per se. These references of self-attestation are records that make explicit the underlying premise regarding the primacy of Scripture, embraced by Jesus and the Apostles.

Finally, given Paul’s emphasis on the superiority of the Spirit over and against the Law, the reader of the New Testament could be forgiven for anticipating that Paul may want to confer greater authority on the indwelling Spirit, than the “letter” of Scripture. However, even in Paul’s more vehement attacks on the Law as the grounds for the ethical life, the Scriptures are used by Paul as the primary authoritative basis from which to argue against the alleged ongoing necessity of the “system of Law”. In the first 16 verses of Galatians 3, Paul quotes the Old Testament scriptures no less than eight times as supporting evidence for his argument. Whilst Paul views the “system” of Old Covenant Law as defunct, he can and does appeal to the Old Testament Scripture as an authoritative support for his argument: “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law’” (Gal 3:10 NIV). For Paul the Spirit-derived Scripture is embraced as the authoritative standard to argue for and validate the Spirit-directed life.

4.4.4.2 The role of Scripture and law in the ethical life

If “Living by the Spirit” incorporates the Scriptures as the primary authority, how is the Christian to view the law (which is a constituent part of Old Testament Scripture)? A number of scholars have advanced theories as to the relationship of Scripture to the Law in the New Covenant context. In Hays’ view, Paul dispels the word as “gramma” (letter); he does not dispel it as “graphe” (writing); however, only those within the orbit of the Spiritual

416 ESV rendering is more accurate than NIV.
community can understand its meaning. For Hays, the Spirit is related to the outward community, rather than simply an inward interpretation of the text. The script, which is not embodied in the living community, is dead. 417 The value in Hay’s position is that it makes a legitimate attempt to uphold the authority of Scripture without necessitating a rigid obedience to the “letter.” Coming from another perspective entirely, James Thompson argues that Paul validates the use of the commandments: “Thus he affirms in Galatians and Romans that the believers are not under law but under grace (Gal. 3:10–12; Rom. 6:14), but insists that they keep commandments that are derived from the law.”418 However, such a position fails to take into account (or acknowledge) Paul’s nullifying of the Mosaic Law “system”.

Peter Thomson’s position, who in Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the letters to the apostle of the Gentiles, attempts to show from 1 Corinthians that Paul’s ethical content is reliant on the Law. Thomson advocates that the Law can be invalid with regard to the believer’s in-Christ status, but valid with regard to the believer’s flesh-nature. 419 That is to say, that a wayward Christian who has “grieved the Spirit” may be rebuked by the letter of the Law and driven afresh to repentance and a renewed “walk” in the Spirit. In this view, Law is not considered necessary for “normal” Christian living (in as much as the Christian lives in conformity with the Spirit’s guidance) but is applied as a corrective to abnormal or immoral behaviour; a position illustrated in Paul’s writing: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.” (1 Cor 14:33-34 NIV) However, this position seems to indicate the Law is both valid (as an ethical system) and invalid (as an ethical system), at the same time, depending on the moral standing of the Christian person it addresses.

However, of greater value to this discussion is the contribution of Francis Watson. With reference to the relationship between the Spirit and the Scriptures, Watson highlights that it is a particular aspect of Protestant Reformation thought to take a negative view of the Biblical text, as text. From this perspective the scriptural text is viewed as a “dead letter” until the Spirit enlivens it. Watson argues that the ambiguities of this ancient text are difficult for

anyone (even educated people) to understand: “The solution lies in assigning the Spirit the role of liberating us from the dead letter of the text, transforming it into a word addressed directly to us, here and now, and thereby distancing it from an original context that remains alien to us. The Holy Spirit mediates between ourselves and the text…” Watson believes that this view sees the text as a problem, which only the Spirit can remedy. However, rather than simply seeing the Spirit’s role to act on the “problematic” text to make it effective for Christian living, Watson posits a far more holistic relationship between the Spirit and the text of scripture. The Scripture is not a “dead letter” but a living word. This idea is self-attested: “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12 NIV).

In reflecting on Peter’s speech at Pentecost, Watson perceives the Spirit inspiring Peter’s speech, which includes the incorporation of Old Testament scriptures foreshadowing the Pentecost event. Luke in turn writes down Peter’s speech under the inspiration of the Spirit— for posterity. His point is that the overarching Spirit draws the texts in (at every level) and employs them in the use of the gospel. Using Watson’s reflections as a point of departure, I want to advocate a view that the Christian Scriptures (inclusive of the law texts) are to be drawn into the service of the gospel by the Spirit. Simply put, it is not so much that the Spirit is an adjunct to keeping the Law/s or bringing them to life for righteous Christian living (as in the Reformed tradition), but that the law (as a constituent part of the Scriptures) is, in fact, an instrument which is employed by the Spirit in this “new ethical domain” to assist and guide the believer within the wider orbit of Living by the Spirit: “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly” (1 Tim 1:8 NIV).

Reformed theology asserts that the Scriptures are the primary source of authority; this model does not contradict that fundamental principle. Whilst God the Spirit is the source of authority in every media of the Spirit, the Spirit’s testimony through the Scriptures, as the Spirit inspired Word of God, “ab extra” occupies the primary place of authority. Law texts are contained within Scripture and have an ongoing role in conveying wisdom for Christian ethics. However, against the Reformed position which views the “letter” of the Mosaic Law

421 Ibid., 97.
as authoritative for Christian ethics, this model advances the notion that the Spirit draws the law (as a constituent part of Old Testament Scripture) into the service of the Christian ethical endeavour under the aegis of “Living by the Spirit”. Under the old system of Mosaic Law, the law held the believer captive by its condemning power; under the “new way” the Spirit takes the law captive and employs it as the authoritative Word of God in the service of the Christian life to teach, instruct, and guide: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV). Therefore, “Living by the Spirit” is an ethical model that stands over and against the system of Mosaic Law, yet the “living by the Spirit” model embraces Holy Scripture and bestows on it the primary place of authority for regulating the Christian ethics under the aegis of this “new way” of the Spirit. Life in God’s world, within God’s church, as God’s person, under the authority of God’s Word is a dynamic reality; it is to the dynamic relationship of the media of the Spirit we will now direct our attention.

4.5 Dynamic Integration of the Spirit’s Media: Living by the Spirit

Acknowledging the Spirit of God as the foundation of true knowledge, and that the Holy Spirit is at work holistically within the world, the church, the Christian person, and the Christian scriptures is a necessary beginning. However, understanding more realistically how the Spirit might “actually” lead Christian’s into a life of ethical conformity with God’s will for their lives is not easily subjected to systemization. Moreover, it would be overly simplistic to assume that Paul’s idea of “Living by the Spirit” is simply entailed in an “intellectual” awareness of the Spirit’s primacy in truth— an understanding that the Spirit is at work in the world, through the church, via personal experience, and speaks authoritatively through the Scriptures. Whilst all of these elements are important for developing a robust practical pneumatology, the essential reality is that the Spirit of God is free from the exigencies of human control and there will always be an element of the mysterious and inexplicable: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8 NIV). Nevertheless, without attempting the impossible task of trying to set out the “secret and mysterious” ways of God’s Spirit, it is a worthwhile task (within the bounds of limited human reason) to attempt a rudimentary comprehension of the interrelationship of the
aforementioned Spirit-media, to appreciate how the Spirit might work in an integrated way through these means.

The whole is more than the sum of the parts. Drawing clear distinctions between world, church, person and scripture is a necessary step in logically identifying the media of the Spirit as distinct entities. However, coming to terms with the “new way of the Spirit”, as I have presented it in this practical pneumatology, requires more than identifying that the Holy Spirit works through the parts or distinct media of the Spirit. Life is not lived out in neatly defined conceptual boxes; there is inevitably an integration of the aforementioned Spirit-media. I believe that because the Spirit of God is a living and active force at work to accomplish God’s ultimate purposes, there is a need to comprehend the dynamic interrelationship of the media of the Spirit, when attempting to develop a practical pneumatology. What is needed is a way of approximating the integration of Spirit’s work through the various media. In this regard, I refer to Goldstein Laurence’s interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s views on language, by way of analogy, which Laurence believes to be a precursor to philosophical integration:

…Wittgenstein passed this verdict on his philosophical contemporaries: ‘The main mistake made by philosophers of the present generation…when language is looked at, what is looked at is a form of words and not the use made of the form of words. Language should not be regarded as a system of signs, with sentences latching, in a mechanical way, onto the states of affairs they portray…but as words used in context, in the performance of various sorts of action, this interweaving of words and action constituting our language-games. To imagine a language thus properly conceived, i.e., as the greatly heterogeneous amalgam of our language-games, is to imagine a form of life. A form of life is a manifold of types of activity characteristic of a given species.’

Laurence observes in Wittgenstein a way of understanding language that moves it beyond a mechanical model of a “system of signs”. It would appear that Wittgenstein envisages language as words in action within larger “language games”, which in turn makes up a form of life. Whilst language and philosophical integration is not the concern of this project, and no analogy corresponds perfectly, the salient point I draw from this is: practical pneumatology must move beyond mechanical doctrine where the component parts of a system can be arbitrarily drawn on by the “objective” interpreter. This pneumatology must

appreciate the Spirit of God actively engaging God’s world, God’s church, God’s person and God’s word. All of these distinct domains of the Spirit are integrated with the other, and through the action of the Spirit create a “form of life” in which the interpreter is also the interpreted. Therefore, using this as a useful point of departure, further explication with respect to the manner of this integration is required.

In attempting to understand the integration of the various media of the Spirit, in the process of creating a model for the Spirit-guided life, I refer to the theological concept of co-inherence, as popularized in the writings of Charles Williams (1886-1945). In the tradition of writers like Dante, Charles Williams seeks to clothe some of Christianity's most abstract principles in the flesh of absorbing stories. The plots of Williams’ early novels revolve around one or several objects of unique physical and spiritual power. As both matter and spirit, these objects function sacramentally and serve to introduce antagonisms central to the development of each novel's plot. The undergirding theological orientation of Williams’ works leads to the exploration of the sacramental intersection of the physical with the spiritual; while also examining the ways in which power, even spiritual power, can corrupt as well as sanctify. In articulating this intersection Williams coined the term co-inherence to describe (in his understanding) a universal spiritual principle that worked itself out in the material realm in various ways. In Williams’ conceptualization, co-inherence could be deemed as “entities that exist in essential relationship with another, as innate components of the other.” For example, in The Figure of Beatrice, Williams writes, “The Incarnation, or rather the Motherhood of the Incarnation is the function for which we were created …” By this, I understand him to mean that the Incarnation of Christ provides an analogy of the co-inherent type of existence humanity should be living in relationship to the created order. Thus co-inherence opens up the possibility of one entity integrating with the other whilst having the appearance of being completely distinct.

Of course, Williams’ theory of co-inherence is not without precedent. In the process of coming to terms with formulations of Trinitarian theology, the Church Fathers referred to this same concept. The term translated “perichoresis” (which implies an interchange produced by

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424 Charles Williams, The Figure of Beatrice (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1943), 92.
The revolution of successive cycles) was used by the Church Fathers as a conceptual framework for dealing with the distinction and unity of the trinity. 425 In showing how this was applied, G.L. Prestige draws on the insights of Pseudo Cyril to illustrate how the persons of the god-head remain distinct and yet integrated, “... the Father is not 'in' the Son in the sense in which one physical object is inside another, not like a basin within a basin; but as the subject of an extremely exact portrait might exclaim, " I am in this picture and this picture is in me"; or the quality of sweetness in the honey on a man's lips might claim a similar unity with the honey; or the warmth declare its union with the fire...” 426

The point that Prestige observes through the Church Father’s illustrations in explaining the intra-Trinitarian relationship is that even though qualities like taste and feeling are distinguishable qualities of observable realities, not exclusively bound to them, they are nevertheless, necessarily bound to them. Thus, in following this logic, it could be reasoned (for example) that a particular human and a community are two distinct realities, even though a community is made up of humans. Although a particular human is distinguishable from the community, community cannot be community without the involvement of particular humans. Furthermore, what makes a human truly human is their communal nature (created in God’s image). Thus, although humans and community may be distinguished from each other, the reality is that without a co-inherence of one with the other, neither “truly” exists!

However, with respect to the pneumatological model presented, does the concept of co-inherence compromise the authoritative primacy of Scripture? John Webster argues that because Holy Scripture is the instrument that breaks in and reforms the church, community co-inherence is not possible: “It [Holy Scripture] is the sword of God, issuing from the mouth of the risen one. And that is why there can be no ‘co-inherence of Bible and Church’...” 427 Webster argues for an asymmetric relationship between Bible and Church, with the Bible having the primacy. Notwithstanding my uncertainty of what Webster means by Church or the Spirit’s relationship to it, I believe that co-inherence does not compromise the primacy of Scripture. Again, an intra-Trinitarian understanding of the “media” of the Spirit offers understanding. As the Spirit’s media, the church, the Christian and the world are functionally subordinate to the Word, in a similar manner as the Son is functionally subordinate to the

426 Ibid., 288.
427 Webster, *Holy Scripture: A dogmatic sketch*: 52.
Father, and the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Moreover, this notion of co-inherence is not out of step with Reformed theology. The 19th century theologian Abraham Kuyper in setting forth his theological method discusses a similar concept:

Coordinated under one head, one might say that the Holy Spirit guarantees this organic articulation through the agencies of the Holy Scripture, the Church and the personal enlightenment of the theologian...For this reason the theologians of the best period of the Reformation ever insisted strenuously and convincingly upon the linking together of theology to the Word, to the Church and to the personal enlightenment; for in these three factors together is found the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without which no theology can flourish.428

Although Kuyper’s model does not integrate an understanding of the Spirit’s relationship with the world, there is a strong correlation between it and the model presented in this thesis. I believe his talk of coordination and “organic articulation” is not out of step with the concept of co-inherence as it relates to the dynamic integration of the Spirit’s media. Moreover, from a Reformed tradition, Kuyper would have certainly assumed that Scripture holds the primary authority in the theological endeavour; yet in considering the theological process as pneumatological, he could speak of an “organic articulation”. Thus, the dynamic integration set forth in this model does parallel prior Reformed formulations, which upheld the primacy of Scripture.

Applying this concept of co-inherence and dynamic integration to the various media of the Spirit, it could be argued that the individual believer co-inheres with the community of faith “the church” (for without individual believers there is no community of faith); the community of faith co-inheres in the world as it is a community within a larger community. The word of God, though peculiarly from God, co-inheres in all three aforementioned media as it testifies, commentates and instructs particular believers within a community of faith on how to live within the wider reality of the world. However, the Spirit adds another dynamic element to this co-inherence. The same Spirit that was instrumental in the creation of the world, and is currently at work animating the purposes of God in this world is the same Spirit that instigated the Christian Church at Pentecost and guides and empowers the Christian Church today. The Spirit has an all-pervasive influence (albeit anonymous at times) over the affairs of Christians: “The immanence of the Spirit, in the special work of sanctification but also in

the general guidance of the universe to the end designed for it, asserts the principle that God is not only transcendent in the fullest degree, not only active in controlling the world “ab extra”, but also operative in it from within.” Moreover, the same Spirit that guides and empowers the Christian church is the same Spirit that regenerates, convicts and guides particular Christians (in a personal way) as they live out their lives in the context of both the world and the Church. Furthermore, the Spirit speaks through the Christian Scriptures providing a hermeneutical grid through which the Christian life may be interpreted reliably. Therefore, the Spirit “ordinarily” provides a “dynamic” co-inherence between the various media in a seamless way. As such, a clear recognition of the Spirit’s work between the various media of the Spirit in the process of “Living by the Spirit” may not be immediately and consciously observable—it would simply seem to the Christian as the Spirit “leading”. However, in the mode of reflective hindsight the Christian could theoretically (though not precisely) trace the operation of the Spirit within the process of ethical decision-making. For example a Christian may find himself or herself in a conflict situation with another person. The circumstances have created an opportunity to test the moral integrity of this Christian person. On reflection they may discuss it with a fellow church member to gain a more objective point of view from a more mature or gifted Christian. They might then reflect on what the Holy Scriptures have to say about it, and following a time of prayer and meditation arrive at the conviction that a certain course of action would most honour God and maintain their standing as an honourable Christian. At every step of the way the Spirit is “secretly” at work leading this Christian person to make the right ethical decision.

Although the aforementioned example is relatively straight forward, most ethical decisions are made extemporaneously, and often under pressure. In these circumstances the Christian, who is aware of God’s Spirit being active in the world, who participates in the fellowship of the Church where they are nurtured in the truth, who is consciously aware of God’s Spirit indwelling them, and who has a knowledge of the Christian Scriptures, have at their disposal the “spiritual” tools to address these ethical issues as they arise. The Spirit communicates a “sense” of what is right in a way that appears to be intuitive, but in reality is a “dynamic co-inherence” of these media of the Spirit.

429 Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*: 300.
Even though “Living by the Spirit” may have the “sense” of being subjective, the reality is that the processes behind this “living” lead to a conclusion that this may not be the case at all. The Spirit working through the various media provide a “triangulation effect” bringing a higher degree of objectivity and certitude to the ethical decision-making process than could have been previously “naively attributed” to a work of the Spirit. Viewed from this perspective, Paul’s concept of “Living by the Spirit” does not have to fall towards the extreme alternatives of either, the perceived “highly subjective” Pentecostal notions of Spiritual living, or the “highly rational” law-orientated alternatives presented by some from the Reformed tradition. This understanding of the new way of the Spirit makes space for a genuinely “realistic” alternative. It does not orientate towards a highly structured system with a predisposition towards a rigid law-orientated ethic. It also provides enough structure to avoid the notion that “Living by the Spirit” must be something entirely mystical; whilst at the same time conceding a genuinely supernatural element to the Spirit’s work. The Reformed Christian now has at their disposal a way of framing “living by the Spirit”: The Spirit-influenced Christian involved in a Spirit-endowed Church, aware of a Spirit-ordered world, under the authoritative guidance of a Spirit-inspired Word, living a Spirit-coordinated life. For too long, Reformed Christians have lacked a cogent way of conceiving the very practical nature of Paul’s ethical “way” of the Spirit; perhaps this model will assist in making this “way” much easier to travel for those who stand within this tradition.

Conclusion

As indicated in the introduction, “Living by the Spirit” is a concept with latitude for further interpretation. This chapter has sought to offer an interpretation that could be embraced by those within the Reformed tradition. Whilst this practical pneumatology may extend beyond the reach of previous Reformed studies, it is not entirely without precedent within this tradition and has sought to remain true to the Reformed maxim of the primacy of Scripture. Moreover, the Spirit as the source of truth and the Spirit’s use of various media has been supported by the Scriptures’ testimony. The material world is not simply an inanimate object devoid of any divine value. We have seen the world is God’s world and He is actively involved, via his Spirit, animating his divine prerogative and working out his divine purposes. To understand life in the Spirit is to understand that life is lived out in a world that God’s Spirit is actively involved in. Whilst there has been a tendency within the Reformed tradition to view church life and ministry through an institutional lens, the New Testament presents the
church as a living/relational community. The Spirit as God establishes and enables the ongoing life of the Church by the endowment of Spiritual gifts. Each Christian has a gift and as they use those gifts, the others are assisted to “walk” in a way that is pleasing to God. The Spirit integrates ethics into the life of the community.

Personal Christian life entails more than embracing propositional statements of belief. The Spirit personally engages individual believers by regenerating them, gifting them, and empowering them to do God’s will, albeit within the context of God’s church within God’s world. There has been a reticence with the Reformed tradition to see value in spiritual experience due to its potential subjectivity. However, we have seen that not all experience is subjectively derived; in fact, the Spirit is the element that brings true objectivity to experience. The Scriptures are viewed as deriving their authority from the Holy Spirit and as such are deemed as the authoritative Word of God. This authority applies to all the Scriptures including the Old Testament Law. Whilst this thesis has challenged the Reformed interpretation of the relationship between the Spirit and the Law, it remains true to the intention of the Reformed tradition by advocating an ethical standard that is in accord with the intention of the Law—“living by the Spirit”. Under the aegis of the Spirit, the Law functions as an ethical guide, although as a “complete ethical system” it is redundant under the New Covenant regime. Finally, the strength of this model is not simply the recognition of its conceptual components and their inherent value, but recognition that each component is dynamically related. It is the dynamic co-inherence that enables its genuine applicability to everyday life and as such can lay claim that it really does attempt to assist Reformed Christians to “live by the Spirit”. 
CHAPTER 5: Toward a Reformed Praxis of Living by the Spirit: Case Studies.

Introduction

The model of “Living by the Spirit”, developed in the previous chapter was formulated with the express intention of empirical testing. Moreover, it was specifically developed for testing among Reformed/Presbyterian Christians. And as this thesis has as its particular focus Queensland Presbyterians, it was trialled on a select group from within this constituency. The goal of this practical phase of the research is to gain an interpretive understanding of how this model is perceived and understood by this constituency as being a useful way of approaching contemporary life. The data extracted from this empirical process is used as the basis for the analysis in the following chapter. This chapter begins with an outline of the case study method, which includes three practical elements related to data gathering. The first phase involves base-line interviews, the second phase involves an educational element and the final phase involves interviews with the participants—aimed at interpreting their understanding of the model and its practical applicability. The remainder of the chapter sets forth the content of the 12 case studies. Each case study is an interpretative reflection on data gained from an initial interview and a concluding interview which follows an educational course undertaken by the participants. Conscious of the need for anonymity, I have protected the identity of the case study participants by modifying their names and altering descriptions of their circumstances.

5.1 Case Study—Method

The final stage of the project comes under the auspices of Strategic Practical Theology. It brings all the fruits of historical and systematic theology sections into contact with the concrete situations first considered under the head of descriptive theology, and re-engages them with the goal of deriving a revised praxis. This stage involves critically testing the theoretical model—set forth in the previous chapter—in the concrete lives of practising Queensland Presbyterians. The process leading towards the presentation of the following data involves case studies of selected Presbyterian Christians and informal observations drawn from selected congregational meetings. As previously set forth in more detail in the chapter

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430 Presbyterian Church of Queensland will sometimes be referred to as PCQ.
on methodology, the case study interview process employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an experience-based qualitative research tool. IPA is a method used in seeking to understand how a theory is perceived when examined through the lens of lived experience. IPA’s phenomenological approach allows an exploration of the participant’s personal perception rather than attempting to comprehend any objective state. From a practical perspective, the researcher is involved “interpretively” in the process of assessing and clarifying the participants’ understanding. The IPA process acknowledges that the participants’ personal perceptions cannot be accessed directly, but are mediated through the researcher’s conceptions. Considered through the lens of this interpretative theory, the process duly recognizes that there is a “fusion of horizons” between the researcher and the subject, and that this produces a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A conscious self-critical approach by the researcher attempts to ensure that his or her biases do not overshadow the observations of the participants. The study involved three phases.

**Phase 1**

Following the approval of all ethical clearances, twelve participants who are practising Queensland Presbyterians, were invited to participate in the study. The majority of the participants are ordained ministers (however, they differ in as much as they are practising in large or small churches, are retired, are involved in theological lecturing, or are involved in administrative positions). Also included among the participants are a student minister, a theological student and a layperson actively involved in children’s ministry within a local Presbyterian congregation. Given that the 21st century Presbyterian Church of Queensland comprises people from different backgrounds, the participants selected reflect that characteristic. As ministers are most likely to address or reflect on issues relating to the model, and given that they have (or will have) received formal theological training in the Presbyterian tradition, I considered them to be the most suitable research group. Moreover, the broad spectrum of ministers selected was chosen on the grounds of their different theological training. Because theological education differs among institutions, I also wanted to ascertain the effect (if any) that different theological educations had on the participants’ reception of this model. I regarded the three remaining participants, who did not hold formal ministry positions, to be suitable candidates as they had enough theological understanding to be able to reflect on and articulate the concepts being advanced.
In order to establish a “base line” against which the impact of the “revised model” could be measured, each participant undertook an initial interview. The interview canvassed the following issues: their understanding of a “system of practice” for daily Christian life, their understanding of God’s Law and its relevance to them, their current understanding of “Living by the Spirit” and matters relating to the Holy Spirit, the impact of their education on their understanding, and a reflection on any struggles or joys in living the Christian life. The interviews involved a face-to-face format with a total of eight questions being asked. The question was asked and the interviewee responded, accompanied by clarification and/or interpretative engagement by the interviewer, if necessary. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes, and was audio-recorded so the data could be accurately assessed later. The answers were then recorded in written form and later incorporated into the case studies proper. Also following the initial interviews I conducted an afternoon seminar on “Living by the Spirit” at a multi-staff, regional Presbyterian Church, with approximately 400 members. The seminar material included: an overview on the Holy Spirit in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, understanding the Spirit as a basis of “knowing truth”, a presentation on the World, the Church, the Christian person, and the Scriptures as “media” through which the Holy Spirit works and a summary of the integration of these various media in the process of understanding spiritual truth. A considerable “question and answer” time followed. The seminar was also useful for gaining an insight into how congregational members of a Queensland Presbyterian Church understood the concept of “Living by the Spirit”. The insights drawn from this seminar are incorporated in the analysis in the following chapter.

Phase 2

With the 12 case study participants selected and the preliminary base-line interviews completed, a study course was formulated. The study course presented the model of a “Reformed praxis of ‘Living by the Spirit’” and was disseminated in 21 instalments via email. The material presented was an abridged version of the model formulated in the previous chapter, covering all the key points. The instalment (via email) method gave the participants time to reflect on each part, without feeling overloaded. Following is a summary overview of the material presented to the participants. I conveyed to them that in approaching the subject of “Living by the Spirit”, a method of theoretical study is presented, specifically designed to give an understanding of “Living by the Spirit” that is both, comprehensible and
relevant. In considering the current or previous position/s traditionally held by the church—through applied theological reflection—I am seeking to deliver a model of “Living by the Spirit” that: firstly, attempts to honour the fundamentals of Reformed theology; secondly, is a theoretically informed practice (praxis) that could be supported by reference to the Scriptures and thirdly, is realistically applicable to their lives.

The instalments presented disclosed that the Reformed heritage of Presbyterianism had a strong reliance on Law, as the basis of the ethical life. It was also revealed that within the Reformed tradition there is a connection between the Letter and the Spirit. To uphold the value of the Letter of the Mosaic Law, this tradition orientated the Letter/Spirit relationship in such a way as to make the Spirit the agent that empowered a deeper understanding of the “letter”. Consequently, I argued that this leads to the notion in classic Reformed thought, that the Christian ethical endeavour is Spirit-empowered law-keeping. In reflecting on this matter though an examination of Paul’s theology in the New Testament, it was determined that faith does necessitate obedience. However, I argued that for Paul, this obedience is not reliant on the Mosaic Law but “trusts” in God’s “new way” of the Spirit. In moving away from a “reliance” on the external Old Covenant letter, this new “way of the Spirit” may also be considered as “Living by the Spirit.” Notwithstanding this new mode of ethics, this new modality does not introduce an entirely new ethical content (the moral “essence” of the Law remains valid!)

As the subject of the ethical life of “Living by the Spirit” was approached, it was acknowledged that the mind is the place where this endeavour usually begins, and must be sustained. I noted that Christian living is never predicated on human rationality disengaged from God’s sovereign involvement. For a person seeking to know God’s will, the “secret testimony” of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. God’s Spirit is the source and foundation of all divine truth for human beings. However, this truth comes to the Christian in a “mediated” way. The Spirit engages Christians through multiple “media” so that they might know God, love God, obey God and enjoy fellowship with him in relationship. The first media we considered was the World—the created order. I argued that God’s Spirit was not only instrumental in the creation process but also in upholding and animating this material world for the express purpose of fulfilling God’s plan. The Holy Spirit is the “invisible hand of God” providentially ordering history on a micro and macro level in concert with God’s ultimate purposes.
Not only can God the Spirit engage the Christian through the circumstances of life in the world, the Spirit engages Christians in the context of the church. The church was historically born of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and is empowered by the Spirit to exercise Christ’s ministry to the world. The Spirit gives gifts to individual Christians for the collective good of the church. “Living by the Spirit” is related to living within the community of Christ—a community where the Spirit, through the ministry of “one another” nurtures and develops Christians towards maturity. I observed that within the God-directed material world and within the Spirit-formed community of faith, there exists the Christian person. Indwelt and guided by the Spirit of God, the thinking/feeling Christian has an awareness of God, who mysteriously engages them personally. Whilst that engagement has often been misunderstood, an authentic engagement with the Spirit should lead the Christian person to a more objective sense of God’s truth and a desire to live in His ways.

For the Spirit-influenced Christian person, who is actively involved in the Spirit-empowered church, and who lives in the Spirit-ordered world, reliance upon the Spirit-inspired Word (the Christian Scriptures) is also necessary. I advocated that through the Scriptures, the guiding of the Spirit finds its most concrete, explicit, direct and reliable medium. The Scriptures (word) provide the corrective key to the interpretation of the Spirit’s work through the other media. Finally, I described the integrating effect of the Holy Spirit’s work through the various media of world, church, person and Word. I argued that life is not lived out in “conceptual boxes” and that a correlation of the various “media” of the Spirit is necessary for the Christian to understand what it is to “Live by the Spirit”. Following the 21 instalments, an overview was also sent to all the participants for the purposes of refreshing and consolidating the information.

Phase 3

I allowed approximately one month to pass, giving ample time for the participants to reflect on the information sent to them, I then forwarded the following instructions: “The title of the thesis is, Towards a Reformed Praxis of “Living by the Spirit”: Practical pneumatology for 21st century Queensland Presbyterians’. The word ‘praxis’ means, in this context, ‘a theoretically informed practice’. Since I have now ‘theoretically informed’ you with a model for considering “Living by the Spirit”, I am now interested in how this theory works out in the practice of your life. Because you are one of the 21st century Presbyterians that have
chosen to participate in the case studies, how this theory impacts the practice of your life is very important to the completion of this project. I am not so much interested in your purely theoretical reflections on my theories alone (though I will certainly value them); what is of primary importance to me is how this theory does, might, or will impact the practice of your life.” Final interviews were then undertaken in a similar format as the initial interviews: eight set questions, 60-minute format and audio-recorded data.

The questions sought to understand the degree to which the model presented, changed or would change the participants’ understanding of: daily Christian practices, the basis of the Spirit as the source of truth, the notions of the Spirit working through the various “media”, the way that the integration of the “media of the Spirit” realistically represented how the Spirit engages them in daily life and the degree to which the model was helpful for understanding and living out their daily Christian lives. General observations and reflections were also solicited. Furthermore, to gain additional “informal insights” into how this Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit” might be considered by congregational members in the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, I adapted the 21-part presentation into five short talks. These 30-minute talks were presented at another regional Presbyterian Church’s annual camp (this is a small/medium-sized regional church). Questions were encouraged and time was taken for informal feedback. Although the information gleaned from this seminar is not included in the content of the 12 case studies, the insights are incorporated into the analysis in the following chapter.

5.2 Case studies

5.2.1 Case Study 1: Harold

Harold is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. He grew up in a Presbyterian Christian family and attended a Presbyterian church in another state. After being convinced of his calling into church ministry, he moved to Queensland and trained at the Presbyterian Theological Hall. This tenure at the Theological Hall coincided with an era in that institution, where the ongoing moral and social validity of the Mosaic Law for contemporary Christians was emphasized. He wasn’t aware of practising any system to maintain his Christian faith until he came to college. The strong Law-orientated model, which
he encountered, seemed to provide him with a clearly definable ethical system for maintaining his relationship with God.

The model was presented to him as being based on the *Westminster Confession* and was promulgated as “true” Presbyterian doctrine, with a strong ethical emphasis on the Ten Commandments. He was led to believe that God’s grace got you into the kingdom, but the Law kept you there. The role of the Holy Spirit in ethics was implied but never clearly enunciated in a cognitive way. The Law model for Christian living was a system that he publically supported and privately attempted to live out. He would later describe it as guilt-motivated ethics. In attempting to live out this model, he was constantly frustrated by feelings of failure and began to fall into a continual state of depression. Realizing the failures with this system and reconnecting with his previous Presbyterian heritage (which did not emphasise Law as strongly) Harold moved away from this position. He describes the move as emotionally difficult. He personally felt like a traitor when he walked out of the Law-orientated system. He describes it this way, “It was emotionally hard because of the relational dependency on those within that system, and it was as if my old life has been erased.” Whilst he felt like he was disowned by some who adhered to his previously held convictions; his children, however, appreciated the “new” person who was less critical, judgemental and harsh etc.

Since his movement away from this “legal” system, Harold views the Law from a more positive perspective. He considers that the Ten Commandments are really an expression of God’s character; which is essentially “love”. Whilst he still views the Law as a moral benchmark, Harold understands its primary purpose is to lead him to “the foot of the cross” of Jesus (which I understand as his metaphor for forgiveness). The Law becomes a reference point for “false leadings” of the Spirit. A genuine leading of God’s Spirit must be consistent with God’s moral will (Law). “Living by the Spirit” is understood by Harold to be the inner motivation of the Spirit to live in a way that pleases God—an internalization of God’s moral law. However, rather than seeing it as an intuitive or emotional reality, “Living by the Spirit” is a way of analysing the world and circumstances within it, where the Spirit guides him into the right lifestyle choices and habits. He understands the “way of the Spirit” as a mature position, in contrast to the “way of the Law” as an immature position. The Spirit provides more flexibility than the “letter of the Law”, enabling ethical deliberations that are “deeper”
and better applied. In facing the decisions of everyday life, he views the Spirit as guiding the believer to make decisions that will lead him/her to become more like Jesus Christ.

Following the presentation of this model of “Living by the Spirit” Harold was interviewed to ascertain the degree of influence this new model had or would have, on his ministry. It was discovered that this model simply provided him with a theoretical justification for what he already understood on an intuitive or implicit level. He viewed it as an acceptable way of articulating what was taken for granted already. Describing the Holy Spirit as the source of “moral truth” which employs various media to communicate that truth was acceptable to him. He believed the Spirit enabled truth to “live”. With respect to the four media of the Spirit advocated in this model, the following was observed: With respect to the Spirit’s work through the world and the circumstances of life within the world, he found it a valid way of representing the Spirit’s engagement. He was hesitant to advocate that the Spirit was active in every particular of life, but recognized that the Spirit was active in animating God’s purposes. He was careful to advocate that the Spirit’s testimony through the Scriptures was a sound corrective for any perceiving Spirit-led circumstances. He also pointed out that he was in perfect agreement with the view that the Spirit of God worked through every individual within the local church, not just the clergy. He believed it to be a weakness in his pastoral ministry that he did not take more seriously the Holy Spirit’s gifting of every believer and his role in facilitating them in exercising those spiritual gifts. The thesis helped him identify this area of weakness in his own prior understanding of the Spirit’s role in the communal dimension of church life.

He recognised that there was also a valid role for the Spirit to work within the personal experience of the Christian person. He understood the Spirit’s role as experientially helping “glue” together all the other dimensions of the Spirit’s working to bring clarity and objectivity to an understanding of what was true or right. The Spirit had a special role in bringing assurance to the believer (with respect to their own standing before God), and enabled him/her to take God at his word even when rationally something might not have made sense. Interestingly, he made the comment that we might be surprised to find out just how much the Spirit was engaged in our lives; meaning that he believes the Holy Spirit should be given more credit for leading our lives than we currently acknowledge. He acknowledged the Spirit’s work through the medium of the Christian scriptures. He acknowledged that the Scriptures don’t speak specifically to every situation so the Spirit
works in that domain of specific ethical application, even though there may be no scripture to affirm or deny a particular action or thought. The Spirit uses the scriptures as a parameter for truth.

When questioned regarding the dynamic interaction of the Spirit in bringing together the four media (discussed in the thesis) he responded by stating, “I always thought of it that way.” He mentioned that there is potentially an infinite number of different ways the Holy Spirit may engage the Christian because the Spirit is “infinite”. The various media of the Spirit, Harold referred to as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and the Spirit is the glue that puts it all together. In reflecting on the model overall he believed that it didn’t provide him with any revolutionary new thoughts, but simply confirmed in a “concrete” way what he had “loosely” held in his mind already. However, there was one thing he did find enlightening. Harold believed the idea that the use of the Law (as scripture) within the wider orbit of the Spirit’s working was helpful. Having moved away from a rigid Law ethic, he felt it was a good balance to see that the Law could still be viewed as having value in the ethical endeavour. In summary, the experience was helpful as a confirming exercise and now provided him with a “theoretically defendable” model with which to substantiate that which he had been practising.

5.2.2 Case Study 2: Kevin

Kevin grew up in Queensland and was involved in Presbyterian churches from infancy. He has been an official member of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland for 15 years, and at the time of writing is involved in pastoral ministry. He completed theological studies at a non-denominational training college (with a Reformed emphasis) outside of Queensland, and is currently completing subjects at QTC to qualify for ordination. Kevin adopted a practical model for maintaining his ongoing Christian life; a model which appears to be in common use in Reformed and/or Evangelical Christian circles. This model incorporates daily Bible reading and prayer, family devotionals (reading/prayer) and regular attendance at church meetings. He also believed that putting your theoretical beliefs into practice consolidates and strengthens your relationship with God. He recognizes that these elements are simply “scaffolding” to maintain your relationship with God and should not be viewed as a means to establish that relationship—in a “salvation by works” sense.

For Kevin, like many who have been influenced by the evangelical tradition, the role of the (Ten Commandments) did not feature largely in his ethical life. Material instruction from
ethics generally is derived from the broader Christian Scriptures, with equal weight being placed on Law and non-Law passages for ethical instruction. For Kevin, the Law has firstly a historical significance in its relationship to Israel (like a schoolmaster to teach them until the advent of Christ). With Christ perceived as fulfilling the Law on behalf of Christians, the condemnation that the Law incites, no longer affects Christians. With respect to the Law and its application to Christian ethics I observed that he might not have worked out the interpretative relationship between the Old and New Testaments and the nature of the Law’s continuance in the Christian life.

In considering the concept of “Living by the Spirit”, Kevin believes that the Holy Spirit does influence the Christian’s ethical decisions. The Holy Spirit directs a person towards the scriptures to discover Jesus and enter into a relationship with him. As expected from someone brought up in a Reformed tradition, Kevin sees a strong conceptual link between the Spirit and the Word of God (scriptures). He also sees that the Holy Spirit plays a role in “putting to death” the old human nature, and creating in the Christian a more “Christlike character” and in this regard the Spirit works ethically. The Spirit convicts the Christian of sin, and directs him or her —through the instruction of the Scriptures—to turn towards God in obedience. However, outside of these general concepts Kevin didn’t elucidate an understanding of the Spirit’s workings in particular ways to bring about the life change he mentioned. He admitted that he received very little instruction on the Holy Spirit from his theological training, and anything he did learn was mainly due to his own reading.

At the time of the case study Kevin is serving in a pastoral role in a Presbyterian church whilst he was completing the remaining academic requirements for ordination in the PCQ. After going through the 21-part course work relating to the model set forth in this thesis the following was observed. Kevin believed the basic thrust of the model validated what he had already suspected, but found some of the arguments differed from his own positions in certain matters. He had little difficulty in accepting the idea that the Spirit of God is the source of truth, and cited the example of praying before preaching a sermon or studying the Bible. Prayer of this nature was recognition that only God’s Spirit could enable the Christian to understand the content as it was delivered.

With respect to the Spirit engaging people through the world and the circumstances of life, Kevin believed this was a valid idea. He mentioned how the “apparent coincidences” in life
are too uncanny to be accidental and can only be attributed to the Spirit’s working. He conceded that it was often difficult to see “God’s hand” in the particulars of life at the time of the event, but with the benefit of hindsight, recognition of the Spirit’s working was much more evident. He believes God can and does guide through circumstances, but never contrary to his material witness in the Christian scriptures. In considering the idea of church being the medium of the Spirit, Kevin found this helpful. He believed that (in his understanding) the Reformed (Confessional) understanding of ministry did not go far enough in incorporating every member of the church in the process of moral guidance and maturity. He believed that clergy-laity distinctions should be relaxed to make room for the Spirit’s work in a wider field.

In considering the area of the Spirit’s work through the medium of experience, Kevin was more reticent. It appeared the whole area of experience being some kind of authority was approached with a strong degree of reluctance. In the end he conceded he wasn’t sure on this issue, but made the point that any experience must be corrected by the testimony of scripture (a standard answer among Reformed Christians). Also, as expected, he agreed that the Spirit did reveal truth through the Bible and noted that the more you study it, the more confident you can grow in knowing the will of God for your life. It provides a daily corrective against the errors of the world. The model presented, advocated a “dynamic interaction” between the various “media” of the Spirit presented. In discussing this notion, Kevin agreed it was a helpful way of conceptualizing the Christian life; it enables some objectivity to be brought into the interpretative process. He admitted, “If it is just you and your Bible, you don’t know whether your interpretation is right or wrong!” In conclusion, despite having some perceived reservations about some of the ideas undergirding the model, Kevin found it helpful in giving a broad framework for understanding “Living by the Spirit”. He believed that many Christians probably thought along these lines, but didn’t have a formal system to frame their ideas and beliefs.

5.2.3 Case Study 3: Hayley

Hayley is currently a member of a small Presbyterian church in a regional centre. She has been a member for six years, and prior to that was involved as an active member of a Reformed Church (Dutch) for around 30 years. She has played an active role in a growing church and has in the past, and currently been involved in children’s ministry. She is a mature Christian with a reasonably good grasp of Reformed theology. With respect to embracing a
method of maintaining a vital relationship with God, Hayley reads her Bible daily and engages in personal prayer. She also believes that actively serving God through some form of ministry is a good way to keep her relationship with God strong, and believes that sharing life with other Christians is also indispensable.

Hayley, in coming from a relatively progressive Reformed church did not recognize the need to emphasize the Ten Commandments as the basis of a moral life. Consistent with her tradition she did see the value of the Law in revealing the shortcomings in Christian character and driving a person to a greater dependency on the grace of God. For the Christian the Mosaic Law is best summed up in the love commands: Love for God and neighbour. She also saw a positive value in the Law (Ten Commandments) as a basic way of instructing a Christian in the basic principles of loving others, which has the prophylactic benefit of preventing the believer from falling into unloving patterns towards others. However, when considering the model advocated in this thesis (that the Spirit embraces the Law within its wider orbit) she found it, conceptually, difficult to understand.

“Living by the Spirit” for Hayley encompasses a Christian life lived and guided by the inner discernment and power of the Holy Spirit. It is fundamentally a lifestyle that manifests itself in godly behaviour towards others. This is not simply an outward piety, but is seen in the motives, priorities and secret actions of these people as they daily go about their business. The Spirit who is understood to be a helper, counsellor and guide also uses scripture to enlighten the believer in understanding the best course of action in a given circumstance. She believes that there is not only one interpretation for a particular portion of scripture, but the Spirit is free to apply that scripture in a meaningful way in any given situation. Everyone’s experience of the Spirit can be unique given the uniqueness of every situation. Hayley shared that there had been very little teaching on the Holy Spirit in her church experience and there was an evident hesitancy to discuss matters of the Spirit, as this tended to disturb their “neat” theological systems. She believed the perceived need to maintain “doctrinal correctness” quashed the work of the Spirit.

Going through the 21-part course the model presented helped her achieve a greater appreciation for God’s work through the circumstances of life, and to appreciate that God’s work is bigger than particular local church environments. She had no real problem accepting the Holy Spirit as the source of all moral truth, though admits there was a time when over-
zealous Pentecostal friends caused her to doubt this. However, in acknowledging the Holy Spirit as part of the Holy Trinity she had little trouble in logically embracing this concept. In reflecting on the Spirit’s work through the medium of the world and life in the world, she has a growing appreciation for the work of the Spirit in this manner. With the benefit of hindsight she is able to see how God has used her to help others, and conversely others to help her.

Commensurate with this idea is the Spirit’s work through the medium of the Church. Hayley sees that God does communicate truth through other members of the Church, although she has found in her experience that not all members of the church are necessarily acting in her best interests. She acknowledged that some Christians (who are not living in tune with God) could have the tendency to advise you according to their own interests and not what is best for your spiritual health. Nevertheless she acknowledged the indispensable value in corporate wisdom.

In discussing the matter of spiritual experience, Hayley noted that she believed she did receive genuine experiences of the Spirit. She said that the clarity and objectivity that the Spirit brought to a particular situation was often gained during times of solitude or meditation, where she had the time to filter out her own motives and be honest towards God, allowing him to convict or lead. She also noted that the confirming that the Spirit brought often countered her own rational predispositions; even though it didn’t make sense, she “knew” it was right. Consistent with the general Reformed position, Hayley embraced the notion that the Scriptures were the most reliable medium through which the Spirit engages Christians. However, perceptively, she identified that Christians can also read their own interpretations into scripture, and that is why the other “media” of the Spirit were necessary in bringing a corrective balance to this interpretative endeavour. Hayley also understood that the Spirit does realistically hold the various parts of the model together and discussed how the Spirit was like the lifeblood that enabled the various systems of the body to receive life. She conceded that this study didn’t reveal anything she hadn’t already heard before; however, it enabled her to conceptualize it in a way that made it cogent and transferable to others.
5.2.4 Case Study 4: Stuart

Stuart is currently an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. He trained for ordination at a theological institution outside of Queensland with a Reformed emphasis and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in another state, before transferring to Queensland. With respect to a system or method that provides a framework for Christian living, Stuart is aware that Jesus Christ and his gospel is the central aspect of the Christian life and that this life is lived out under the lordship of Jesus. From his perspective the guiding question is, “How consistent is my life with Jesus?” Implicit within this broader understanding, is the evangelical practice of personal devotional reading and prayer, as well as regular attendance at church.

Whilst Stuart holds a high view of God’s law, he does so acknowledging that the particular demands of the Mosaic Law (ceremonial and moral) have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and that the Christian is no longer bound to observe them literally. The Gospel event (Jesus’ life, death, resurrection etc.) changes the Christian’s relationship to the Old Covenant. The teaching of Jesus now superintends the Christian’s ethical life, rather than the literal Law. He believes, however, that the Law (as it may be applied to the Christian life) is interpreted through the teaching of Jesus Christ. For example, the Sabbath command is interpreted as being made for humankind’s benefit, not as a duty to rigorously observe. It points to the spiritual rest a Christian receives via faith in Christ, and also has a promissory aspect (anticipating heavenly rest). Whilst it may have a practical benefit in coordinating physical rest with the day Christian’s gather for worship, it is never to be observed legalistically. With respect to the relationship between the letter of the Law and the Spirit, he believes that the Spirit that inspired the letter (Scripture) gives the reader illumination and understanding on how to apply it. Scripture is an instrument for a relationship with the risen Christ and the Spirit mediates that relationship.

After completing the 21 readings that set forth the model of “Living by the Spirit”, Stuart made the following observations: The exercise reinforced to him the need for theological reflection and how it impacted his life and ministry. It showed him the value of consciously thinking about what you may unconsciously believe and being able to articulate it. With regard to the model’s presentation of the Holy Spirit being the source of all moral truth he noted that he already thought about the Spirit this way, and recognized that this position was
simply in line with classic Calvinist theology anyway. When it came to his understanding of
whether he thought it was a valid concept to advocate that the Spirit engages humanity
through the circumstances of life, he did recognize this as valid. Stuart believes that the Spirit
takes the truth of the Gospel and applies it to the context of one’s life. He cited a practical
elementary where he believes the Spirit helped him, through an appreciation of the “Gospel
truth” to understand the value of a life serving God relative to a life without God. From his
perspective The Spirit enables a Christian to look at life through the lens of the Gospel.

In response to the notion that the Spirit is at work in the church (the body of Christ), to assist
Christians to know and live in truth, Stuart suggested that the church was the “normal” way
that the Spirit worked in engaging Christians. Whilst his initial and primary observations
focused on the Spirit’s work through the “knowledge” gifts of teaching and prophecy, he
believes that any Christian may “open up” a truth from scripture to encourage or help another
understand what is true or right in any given context. Whilst Stuart recognizes that the Spirit
is at work in every believer in the church, his understanding seems to be constrained by the
Reformed clergy/laity distinction. In considering the Spirit’s role in the believer’s
“experience” he was hesitant to disengage the work of the Spirit from the Word, believing
experience can be unreliable and it is the gospel as evident in the Word that remains certain.
It appears he believes God can work through experience but certainty in that experience is
drawn from a rational understanding of the gospel. Nevertheless, he does recognize an
experiential element in the Spirit’s work. With respect to the Spirit’s work through the
medium of the Holy Scriptures he believes this is the only place that a person can confidently
know the truth; consistent with mainstream Protestant thinking. Although he understands that
the church is the custodian of the Word, the Word constantly holds the church to account.

With respect to the dynamic relationship with the aforementioned media of the Spirit, Stuart
conceded that God’s workings are far greater than our attempts to understand what is going
on. He believed what was required was not analysis but faith—trusting God, knowing that he
knows what is going on. Even though God and his Spirit are working in ways that he doesn’t
understand he knows that the valid “practical” response is a life of faith. In summary Stuart
believed that the model advocated didn’t present anything in a revolutionary new way, but
simply stated explicitly, elements that he implicitly understood.
5.2.5 Case Study 5: Hervey

Hervey has been a member of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland since he was young. He trained at the Presbyterian Theological Hall in Queensland and following ordination was appointed as the minister of a parish. He considers himself a Reformed Evangelical and believes that God reveals His truth through the Holy Scriptures, which stands above every other authority. He understands the Gospel is focussed on the work of Jesus Christ and he believes a Christian expresses their grateful obedience to God based on a life of love-motivated ethics. With respect to a method of maintaining his ongoing relationship with God, he would start the day reading the Bible, praying and singing praises to God (personal worship). He considers his personal Christian life as integrated into the life of the church community.

When considering the Law of God, he understands it to be principally the Ten Commandments. He believes the Ten Commandments constitute the ethical model for historical Israelite society. There is no “direct” translation of truth—we learn “interpretatively” from Israel and apply it to the life of the church. He considers Jesus as the fulfilment of the Ten Commandments. God’s moral principles are reflected in the Laws, Christ reinterprets them and the Christian walks in the “essence” of these truths. That said the Law of God has value in the convicting of sin and an understanding of the need for a saviour. He believes a Christian can still live without these laws, but there is benefit in knowing them. The Holy Spirit embeds the moral Law of God into the conscience of the Christian, and the Spirit may use the written Laws to outline moral boundaries. He considered the Law as an instrument of the Spirit.

By “Living by the Spirit”, Hervey understood that the Spirit of God (which indwells him) connects him to Christ and His truth as taught in the Bible and then applies this to life’s circumstances. Hervey’s training at the Presbyterian College coincided with an era where a strong emphasis on the ongoing role of Mosaic Law was promoted. He was taught that you were saved by the Spirit’s work, but grew in maturity under the influence of the Law. Various religious activities were proof that God was working in you. The Holy Spirit applies the Law in “more and more” detail and the Spirit helps you keep it. However, Hervey recognized that this system led to a legalistic and pietistic view of life that tended to ignore the “spirit” of the Law.
After completing the 21-part course on “Living by the Spirit”, Hervey felt that it deepened his understanding of the Spirit’s relationship to the Christian life. It helped free his mind from “rational” constraints, which tended to limit his understanding of God within the limits of cogent reason. It liberated his understanding in that he now knows that God is at work in the process of life and helped him see the value and necessity in engaging the contemporary culture (a culture in which God is at work through his Spirit). He now believes that the “Living by the Spirit” should engage more with present realities rather than defending its own “orthodox” traditions—there is far more to ethical obedience than defending propositional truth. Understanding the Holy Spirit as the source of all moral truth sits well with his Trinitarian theology.

When reflecting on how the Spirit works through the circumstances of life, Hervey noted that there were times when he believed God placed certain people in his way so he could benefit from them and 

vice versa. He acknowledged that whenever he tried to “make things happen” in the church God would not “be present”. God’s blessing usually came when he patiently followed God’s leading and the circumstances were right. He believes we should be open to how things happen, realizing that God has a sovereign will. With respect to the Spirit’s work through the medium of the church, Hervey used to see the church as a place where people came to worship God; now he views it as a gathering where people learn and share their lives. Every Christian has a contribution to make to the lives of the others. The Spirit works through the community.

In discussing the matter of Christian experience, Hervey believes that the Holy Spirit can bring a “sense” of objectivity to a situation, but also acknowledges that there is a danger that Christians can simply draw on experience as the basis of truth. For him the experience of the Spirit serves to verify the faith we have received. He acknowledged that fear and pride often prevent Christians being open to an experiential “walk” of faith. Since Presbyterians often pride themselves in doctrinal truth, Hervey believes for a person to be “open” to the Spirit, with respect to formulating truth, may lead to a loss of respect among peers. Nevertheless, there needs to be a discerning over what is legitimate and illegitimate experience!

Hervey believes the word of Scripture and the Spirit goes together. Scripture is the only reliable medium that connects Christians with the apostolic faith. However, the word of Scripture must be viewed through Spiritual eyes and fails if the interpretation is overly
rationalistic. When asked about the concept of the “dynamic relationship” of the various media of the Spirit, Hervey said it was a good way of keeping an understanding of the Christian life from being overly scholarly. In his younger years his focus was on promoting doctrine; he now sees that living a God-honouring life according to God’s Word is more important. The dynamic integration aspect of the model helped reinforce this. In summary, whilst many of the concepts advocated by this model were not completely new, it did give him a more holistic appreciation of the Christian life, freeing up his understanding to embrace God’s work in the wider world. It also helped him in his ability to articulate these concepts better.

5.2.6 Case Study 6: Sean

Sean was born into a Presbyterian family and attended Presbyterian churches in his youth, during his university study in the city and later as a family man in working life. He has been involved in cross-cultural mission work in a foreign country and is currently studying for ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. He also works part-time as a student minister. Given his cross cultural experience, Sean has been exposed to a model of Christian life that differs from those who have lived exclusively in an Australian context, and as such seems to have a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit’s engagement in his life. When speaking about a “system” for living out his Christian life, Sean sees the need to guard himself against spiritual forces of evil and as such takes seriously the virtues outlined in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (chapter 6), which outlines various practices described as the armour of God. He devotes himself daily to Bible reading and devotional prayer. He also sees the need to pray continually during the day, in what he calls “conversational prayer”.

When asked of his opinion of God’s Law, Sean views it as God’s moral benchmark, which reveals his own moral inadequacies. The Law also has an ethical component that reveals God’s will to him. He views the Mosaic Law as a kind of moral boundary which may rebuke an erring Christian, but largely offers principled guidelines to those Christians serious about following God’s ways. The Spirit uses the moral code to convict the conscience of sin. With respect to the Spirit’s relationship to the Law of God, Sean believes the Spirit “shines revelation” or illuminates the truth. He considers Bible teaching and Christian doctrine as being like files in the filing cabinet of his mind. The Spirit orders the files, taking them out as the need requires. For example the Spirit helps unpack and apply the truth of memorized
scripture—making the ancient word of God an active and dynamic truth for everyday situations.

He believes the degree to which the Spirit works in the Christian’s life, guiding him/her into the way of God’s truth is contingent upon the person’s humility and the quality of their personal relationship with God. In this training, both formal and informal, he has received little teaching or training on the practical working of the Spirit for the Christian life. Due to his cross-cultural experiences, he found himself more “directly” dependent on God’s Spirit than he would in a familiar context. In Sean’s experience the foreign people he worked among conceptualized life in spiritual terms. They saw Jesus as an overlord who stood against the forces of darkness. Having taken into account this experience, he believes that knowledge of scripture is not enough; other dimensions of the Spirit’s work need to be considered.

Sean went through the 21-part course on “Living by the Spirit”, as well as participating in a one-day seminar conducted in his local church. In reflecting on the impact of this teaching, Sean believed his understanding of the Spirit’s work was broadened. He drew a lot of comfort from identifying the Spirit’s work in the multiple dimensions. This model gave him a way of thinking about how the Spirit assists him in practically living out his own life. Understanding the Spirit as the source of all moral truth was in no way problematic to Sean. With respect to the Spirit working through the medium of the world, Sean could think of many examples ranging from miraculous provision to moral guidance though circumstances where he could identify the Spirit of God orchestrating circumstances to accomplish His will.

With respect to the Spirit working through the medium of the church, Sean believes that each Christian needs the other, and no Christian can effectively live in an isolated manner. He identified that even the Apostle Paul was set apart by the Spirit in the church, on his lonely missionary journeys through ancient Asia Minor. When it came to identifying the Spirit’s work through personal experience, Sean experienced the Spirit’s comfort and assurance to reaffirm that his course was the right one, whether the endeavour was a moral one or simply a matter of practical decision making. He believed that the bigger the step of faith taken in the name of God, the more evident the Spirit was to comfort, encourage, and guide—the more you moved out of your comfort zone, the more you moved into God’s zone. With respect to the relationship of the Spirit to the Holy Scripture, consistent with his Reformed convictions,
Sean advocated that the truth contained within the pages of the Bible would override the most convincing experience or circumstance, should there be a potential moral conflict of interest. Sean found it helpful to think about the various media of the Spirit having a dynamic interaction. For him, it gave a theoretical legitimacy to areas of the Spirit’s work that he considered the domain of personal conjecture.

On the whole, Sean found the endeavour helpful for coming to terms with the Holy Spirit, and the application of that Spirit’s work to the Christian life. He found that there was often very little discussion on the Spirit’s work in Presbyterian circles, and apart from this project, any information on practical spirituality was gained through the initiative of personal research. Sean said he already implicitly understood much of the content of the course, but had not previously seen it formulated into a system. The systematic nature of the course made it easier for him to teach the concepts to others. He also added that he felt the one-day seminar on “Living by the Spirit” was well received, and helped many in the church clarify areas of the Spirit’s work that may have previously been misunderstood.

5.2.7 Case Study 7: John

John is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. John grew up in a non-Christian family and became a Christian at the age of 17 through personal Bible study. He began his church life in another denomination within the Reformation tradition and developed a model of Christian living consistent with Evangelical piety. John trained outside of Queensland at a theological institution with a strong Reformed tradition. With respect to a system of maintaining his Christian life, John reads various devotional books as well as the Bible and engages in personal prayer. He considers his devotional time as regular but not regimented.

When considering the Christian’s relationship to God’s Law, John views it as a guide to living God’s way. Law is more than simply the Ten Commandments, but the moral will of God revealed through all of scripture, whether the format of the truth is presented as direct moral injunctions or simply as more wisdom-orientated texts. The law of God is less about commands that direct and more about truths that guide. He looks to the New Testament as the means of interpreting the Old Testament and how it relates to the character of God. With respect to specific commands like the Sabbath, John considers it (for Christians) as pointing forward to heavenly rest, though recognizes God’s wisdom for humanity’s benefit. With
respect to the relationship between the Law and the Spirit, he sees that the Spirit is the underlying truth of the Law (Scripture) and the Spirit continues to use it (within the wider corpus of scripture) to help him grow in maturity and develop increasingly nuanced ways of understanding life. The Spirit and the Law work together, to develop a relationship with God. Knowledge is not the goal; a relationship with God is!

When he thinks about the term “Living by the Spirit”, John considers it to be life that pleases God. Living in a way that is “Christ-like” not only allows God to take delight in him, but conversely he can delight in living this God-pleasing way. Despite receiving theoretical information on the Holy Spirit during his theological training, John was taught very little with respect to the personal presence of the Holy Spirit. His understanding of “Living by the Spirit” has been developed through his own study and theological reflection, as well as seeing God’s “guiding hand” in various trials and tribulations he encountered during his brief tenure in pastoral ministry.

After completing the 21 instalments on “Living by the Spirit” John indicated that he found it an approach that he felt comfortable with, theologically. It forced him to think more accurately about how to read the Old Testament law and apply it to his life. He commented, “When I read the Old Testament, how should it be applied to the Christian life; what should I be thinking, praying, doing?” In considering the concept of the Holy Spirit being the foundation of all moral truth he had no problem with this idea. With respect to the Holy Spirit engaging the Christian person through the world and circumstances in that world John theoretically believed this to be a valid concept. However, practically he noted that the busier life became, the “less aware” he was of God being at work in ordering circumstances in his life. He noted that this was a significant point, as Queenslander’s lives are becoming busier all the time. With respect to the Spirit’s work through the medium of the church, whilst believing it to be a valid concept, “practically” he found it works only to a limited extent. He believed that, in his experience, people don’t have the logical categories to think or talk about ethical matters. He believes that a more nuanced level of spiritual discernment among the church community was lacking. His best possible explanation for this “lack” was the wider impact of “culturally conditioned” individualism.

With respect to the Spirit’s engagement, within the realm of personal experience, he noted that he hasn’t worked this through fully. Whilst he does believe the Spirit engages Christian’s
experientially, he observed that, both the cautious way in which religious experience was
canvassed during his theological education and his own reserved nature may be factors that
contribute to this being a blind spot in his understanding. Consistent with most Christians
within the Reformed tradition, the Spirit’s testimony is viewed as most reliable and accurate
through the medium of the Holy Scriptures. However, despite the influence of tradition on
Scriptural interpretation, the Word of God can speak clearly through the text of the Bible in a
fresh and challenging way. John saw that positioning the Law within the wider domain of the
Spirit’s New Covenant’s ethical modality as harmonizing with his notions of the Christian
life. One of the key aspects of the model was the “dynamic interaction” of the various media
of the Spirit in the process of ethical understanding. John found this idea helpful, in as much
as it gave credence to other forms of authority—other than the Bible. He found the model a
useful tool for theological reflection and found that its key strength was in providing a cogent
system in which to reflect on the Christian life. He personally found it helpful in that it
sensitized him to the notion of seeing God at work in everyday events.

5.2.8 Case Study 8: Gary

Gary grew up in a Roman Catholic family, though with only a nominal understanding. He
made a decision to become an authentic Christian in his later teenage years and became
involved with the Presbyterian Church. He has been a member of the denomination for
approximately 30 years; actively participating in church life. Gary trained at the
denomination’s training college, QTC. Like many in the Reformed and or Evangelical
tradition, Gary practises a system of regular Bible reading and prayer to maintain the
vibrancy of his Christian life. However, for Gary, prayer is more than a ritual act; it is
embraced as an ongoing conversation as he goes about his daily life. He also devotes one day
per week to reading which aims at enhancing his personal relationship with God and his
effectiveness as a Christian leader.

With respect to his views on the Old Testament Law, Gary believes that it is not morally
binding on Christians in the same way as it was binding on the Jews. He believes that Jesus
Christ fully kept the righteous demands of that law, and the Christian benefits from Christ’s
righteousness by a faith union with him. The moral Law has a limited ongoing benefit, but
must be subjected to Christ’s interpretation of it. When it comes to applying the Old
Testament Law to his own life, Gary looks to discern the undergirding moral principle behind the particular law or command, and then applies it to his own situation. In considering the relationship between the Spirit of God and the letter of the Law, Gary believes that the Spirit gives him the capacity to discern the letter’s true meaning and then the power to live out the truth, which is revealed. He admits that during his training (whether in college or regular church life) he received very little teaching with respect to the practical aspects of the Spirit’s work. However, from his own study and reflection Gary has formulated the belief that the Holy Spirit is personally present in his life to enable right, ethical decisions. He believes that the Spirit can orchestrate circumstances, as well as teach through the message of the Bible.

After completing the study series “Living by the Spirit” Gary indicated this model didn’t change the way he understood or lived out his Christian life, but it did force him to think about the processes of his life and forced him to embrace the “actual experience” of theology, not just the theory of it. He commented when reading this document, that he saw his own way of understanding the spiritual life reflected in it. He had no difficulty in affirming that the Holy Spirit was the ultimate basis of all moral truth. In reflecting on the Spirit’s engagement with Christians through the circumstances of life, Gary found this to be a realistic notion. As he has grown in maturity as a Christian he has become more aware of this reality. He also acknowledged that the greater the “risks” a Christian takes in God’s name, the greater is the awareness of God’s work through circumstances. He also readily verifies the notion that the Spirit of God is at work through the Christian community and that teaching and counselling all happen in community. He believes a Christian cannot receive true moral guidance nor grow in maturity outside the domain of the Christian community.

When discussing the idea of the Spirit of God bringing experiential objectivity to an ethical situation he reservedly agreed. However, experience has also taught him that a Christian needs to verify experience against the testimony of the Christian scriptures. In this regard he readily agreed that the Spirit worked through the medium of the Scriptures and that the Bible can be described as the Christian’s “go-to manual” when it comes to ethics. The Bible is the backstop of truth. When reflecting on the idea (presented in the model) that the Old Testament Law is not simply empowered by the Spirit for the Christian, but used by the Spirit within the greater realm of “the new way of the Spirit”, Gary was quite comfortable with this and found it compatible with his own beliefs. When reflecting on the concept of the “dynamic interaction” between the various media of the Spirit, Gary found this valuable. In his own
interpretation he likened the various media as the orchestra in which the Holy Spirit acted as “the conductor”, which enabled the harmonious interaction of the media to bring guidance and maturity to the Christian. Gary believed this model, fundamentally, defined what he already understood about the Christian life, but it had just given him a “biblically grounded” theological system to hang it on. He also believed it would be a helpful way for him to teach other Christians about “Living by the Spirit” and would provide a system by which “experience” could be validated, whilst at the same time grounded in the teaching of scripture.

5.2.9 Case Study 9: Ken

Ken is currently a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland after transferring from another state. Ken trained at a Presbyterian theological college outside of Queensland. Growing up in a Christian home, Ken was instilled with a strong Christian ethic, and was very sensitive to the “oughtness” of Christian living. However, he now sees motivation as more than superficial and recognizes that morality is not so much about “rules to live by” but rather, an ethic of love. He sees Law-keeping as juvenile and obedience to God transcends rules. He prays and reads his Bible regularly, as a means of guidance, and believes that the Spirit of God will not guide “contrary” to scripture, but guidance is more than simply following a “logical” process. He admits he is frustrated with ethical positions that seem to align moral decision-making with following a “logical process.”

When Ken thinks about the Law, he immediately considers the Ten Commandments. However, these laws reflect God’s character and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is the Christian application of this Old Testament law. The morality of Jesus Christ is not that different to the Ten Commandments, but is viewed from a positive perspective; the Law that pre-existed the Old Covenant is now expressed differently and necessarily transcends particular historical eras. To simply embrace a rule-driven morality is to return to a form of Old Covenant religion. With respect to an example of practice, Ken believed that the Sabbath was practised as a day of religious significance. He believes we live in God’s world and the Sabbath is part of the pattern of life within it. It involves rest, collective worship and a sense of the hope for future rest. Ken sees the Spirit and the Law as friends, not enemies. Law, with the Spirit, is viewed as positive, without it, negative. He believes, “hypothetically” that the Spirit can make the Letter redundant if a Christian remains obedient, but he knows no one who has.
Ken, in reflecting on his theological training noted that the Spirit was given very little space. The Christian life was presented as very “cerebral” with no room for subjectivity. In his experience the same emphasis is evident in the culture of Presbyterianism, regardless of the location within Australia. When he reflects on the concept of “Living by the Spirit” he thinks about a “new life” in Christ and “spiritual” fellowship with God. It brings a status, freedom and maturity that legalism could never bring. It involves sensitivity to God’s promptings. The Spirit adds a dynamic element to Christian life that transcends duty. Although the tradition he was educated in viewed the Bible as a “closed system” that the Spirit enables the interpretation of, he believes the Bible could be perceived as an “open system” in which it takes a key role in interpreting reality in the world and orientating life God’s way, within that world.

Following the 21 instalment course on “Living by the Spirit”, Ken commented that it was thought-provoking, and helped open up his thinking in considering the role of the Spirit, more holistically than he previously had. He saw that the Spirit is not simply “the assistant” to help him “tick the legal boxes”, but it challenged him to live in a dynamic relationship with the Spirit. The Word of God is not the sum total of the Spirit’s work. Although Ken found it hard to comprehend “authority” in any other way than through the Bible, he conceded that it was helpful to think of the Bible as the Spirit’s “expression”. The Spirit imparts truth in a wider domain than the Bible, but always consistent with the Bible. Ken did agree, conceptually, with the notion that the Spirit works through circumstances in the world. However, he also found that “practically”, this idea conflicts with the ministry programs of traditional churches and with the commensurate pressures on Pastors’ duties, which often provide little time for extemporaneous ministry.

When considering the role of the Spirit, through the medium of the church, Ken had some very helpful insights. Recently, out of interest and curiosity, he had been occasionally attending a Pentecostal church. What he observed was a higher degree of maturity among the regular laity. He could see that maturity was more likely to develop when people see that they have a useful role to play in helping each other grow. Ken noted that mature, godly people are those who tend to take a real interest in others. His experience in the Pentecostal church made him feel that a church “full of pastors” was surrounding him. Although a general extrapolation could not be drawn from this. He believes that every “sheep in the flock” has the Holy Spirit just as much as the “shepherd” (meaning pastor). Whilst Ken did agree that
the Holy Spirit could bring a sense of truth through experience, he found it a slightly “unsettling” notion, when coming from his own logical adherence to the Westminster Confession. Whilst he can see the value in “experiencing God” he noted he tended to feel guilty if he allowed experience too great a role. In his mind it was a “slippery slope” leading to subjectivism, despite the fact that he has some mature Pentecostal friends who haven’t gone this way. He believes that the fear of “loss of control” means that many Presbyterians tend not to give credence to the experiential work of the Spirit.

Consistent with many from the Reformed tradition, Ken had no problem in accepting the Spirit’s work through the Scriptures. However, he has come to see that the Scriptures are a means to an end (relationship with God) and not simply an end in themselves. In reflecting on the “dynamic interaction” of the various media of the Spirit, Ken found it very helpful. He mentioned that it helped give the church a justification for engaging the wider community more meaningfully, and helped him to appreciate that God may be working in advance of him. God is the weaver of the tapestry in which the Christian is just one thread. For Ken this whole “Living by the Spirit” project was very timely in his life. He mentioned that his response to this material could determine whether his life would either progress with God or grow cold. He believed in a church system, designed to exclude the Spirit (in any experiential sense); he had some challenging choices to make about how he would live. Ken seemed to be quite appreciative of the process and actually mentioned that in the interview process he noticed the Spirit at work, guiding, comforting, challenging and leading him to take the next step in his faith journey. In a final word he observed, “We can never talk about the Spirit, without him being in the room!”

5.2.10 Case Study 10: Tom

Tom is a retired minister of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. Although retired he plays an active role in the life of his local church and keeps abreast of the latest trends in Christian thought through reading and ongoing study. He began training for the ministry at the Joint Faculty (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational) in the 1970s. Whilst it was an era when the continuing Presbyterians were reacting against “liberal theology”, Tom tended to avoid the debates, as he was more practically orientated. Tom came under the influence of an ex-missionary couple in his early life and developed a strong Evangelical piety, which
incorporated daily prayer and Bible Study. He found this influence helpful in maintaining his zeal for God and enabled him to live a more “intentional” Christian life.

In discussing his views on God’s Law, Tom tended to equate the Law with the Word of God. The Law of God, as interpreted through the events of Christ’s life and teaching becomes the instructive Word of God, for Tom. He recalls a time when he first encountered a strong Law-orientated ethic, which made a direct application of Old Testament Law to contemporary Christian life, and noted how it shocked him. He believed it to be a wrong way of interpreting the Bible. Tom believes that the Ten Commandments (even as basic or pure as they are), still require interpretation for the Christian; consequently he sees them as setting forth principles that inform the Christian ethical life. In regard to the relationship between the Law of God and the Spirit, Tom believes when a Christian becomes “saturated” in the Word of God (through continual study) the Spirit is able to apply those embedded truths subconsciously and bring application to Christian lives. The Spirit may use the Law to convict of sin, or bring certain truths to mind that encourage a godly life. Tom cannot recollect having any teaching or training in the area of practical pneumatology. In his understanding, “Living by the Spirit” is naturally connected to the Word of God, where the Spirit uses the Word to guide morally. Nevertheless, he believes that God does order the circumstances of life, as well.

Tom studied the 21 instalments of “Living by the Spirit” and discovered that it more than anything confirmed (in a concrete way) what he already believed, and to a large degree practised. Like many of the other respondents, Tom had little trouble acknowledging the Holy Spirit as the source of all moral truth; however, qualified it by saying that it was never divorced from the Holy Scriptures. When considering the notion that the Holy Spirit engages humanity through the medium of the created order and the circumstances of life within that order he heartily agreed. Coming from a farming background he had sensitivity to God’s work through nature and was able to cite significant examples where he observed God’s Spirit orchestrating the affairs of his life in a defining way. He affirmed the idea that the Spirit was the contact point between God and humanity’s life in the world. Although a relatively novel idea to him, Tom saw value in understanding that the Holy Spirit works through the church community to enable ethical guidance and maturity. He observed without the benefit of the community it is easy to be led away into error, and that God gives gifts that each may care for the other. Though it may not always work out this way, practically!
When reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit in his personal experience, and in Christian experience in general, Tom did believe that the Spirit dispensed experiences that objectified truth. Though a set of circumstances and some powerful experiences Tom believed that his call to full-time Christian ministry was confirmed; so much so, that returning to his old life was no longer an option. He believes that the Spirit works powerfully in convicting of certain behaviours and courses of action through the Holy Scriptures, but no less so in personal life-changing experiences (which he adds were verified by the truth of scripture). Moreover, when questioned with respect to the Scriptures being a “medium” for the Spirit to teach truth, he heartily agreed. He believed that the only real way to learn about God was from the Scriptures. In considering the “dynamic interaction” of the various “media” of the Spirit he believes that life is not lived in simple boxes and there is a real interaction where the Spirit uses experience and the circumstances of life, confirms it in the word and verifies it in the community to lead a Christian into a deeper understanding.

Tom mostly found that the model verified what he always understood, but had never set it out systematically. Although he noted that his “traditional Presbyterian” biases made some things difficult to grasp, he nevertheless understood the general tenor of the thesis. He said that he would find it helpful in explaining “Living by the Spirit” to other Christians, should they ask.

5.2.11 Case Study 11: Norman

Norman is currently a minister in the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. He studied at a theological college outside of Queensland which stands the Reformed theological tradition. Norman first encountered Christianity in a Lutheran setting and was involved in Baptist and Salvation Army churches before settling in an Anglican church. Consistent with many Christians in the evangelical tradition, Norman believes that regular Bible reading and personal prayer is an effective way of maintaining a healthy spiritual focus on life in the world. When he thinks about the Law, God’s moral requirements come to mind. Norman does not see the Old Testament laws as directly relevant to him, but sees himself as under “the Law of Christ”; by this he means that Christ is a transitional figure in God’s moral economy and has not only fulfilled the moral requirements of the Law but now distils the “laws” into an ethic of love. In Norman’s thinking, Jesus takes the Old Testament teaching and reveals its deeper “spiritual” intent, e.g. adultery is more than an act, it can be lust! In this regard, Norman believes that Jesus actually has a higher view of the Law than the Jews.
With regard to the Spirit, Norman understands that the Spirit enables a person to have a genuine faith in Jesus and a deeper understanding of his teaching. The Spirit works to give a “spiritually insightful” understanding of the written text of scripture. In the reading of the Word, the Spirit uses the truth that is revealed to prompt in him the desire and give him the knowledge to become more like Jesus Christ, in his daily life. He admits that in his theological training, there was very little emphasis in the practical work of the Spirit, and the emphasis on the Spirit’s role mainly focussed on understanding the Scripture. When questioned directly on what he understood by “Living by the Spirit”, Norman made the following observations: The Spirit opens the Christian’s mind to understand what the Bible says; the Spirit specifically encourages and enables the application of God’s word which is expressed in godlike love; this manifests itself in a general lifestyle in the “manner” of God which puts God’s priorities first; this ties into ethics because the Spirit empowers the believer to “want” to do the will of God; despite the Spirit’s inextricable link with the Word of Scripture, the Spirit also works within the wider scope of the world. Norman conceded that the Spirit is bigger than the doctrine of salvation, and reflected that “we” (Presbyterians) don’t have a big enough view of the Spirit’s wider work.

Norman participated in the 21 instalment program on “Living by the Spirit”. However, he admitted due to his heavy work-load (involvement in starting a new church) he was unable to reflect on all the material and was only able to gain a “summary overview”. Despite this, in order to gain an impression of how the ideas of the material may exist “latently” within the minds of Queensland Presbyterians and to compare the difference with those who more carefully studied the material, his concluding reflections were solicited. Because he didn’t have the opportunity to reflect on the material he couldn’t say that it made any difference to the way he consciously lived his Christian life. He agreed with the notion that the Spirit was the source of moral truth, but wanted to qualify that the Spirit was not separate from the presence of Jesus Christ. Once I indicated that the Spirit makes the presence of Christ “real” he had no problems with the idea. He believed that it was quite conceivable to believe that the Spirit of God works through the circumstances of life, but qualified this by noting that there needs to be a corrective.

This naturally led to the next question, which related to the Spirit’s work through the church (the local Christian community). He heartily believed in the “horizontal” value of the Christian community and the ethical value of the “one another” concepts. In regard to the
Spirit bringing a “sense” of objective truth to a Christian person, he admitted he found this true for his own experience. He qualified this by stating that personal “revelation” is not universally authoritative (like the Bible) and has relevance only for the person involved or those immediately affected. He also observed that sometimes truth was simply “self-evident”; God so lines things up that you cannot but conclude this “matter” is God’s will. He willingly admitted that the Spirit’s testimony was most reliable and consistent through the text of the Holy Scriptures. He also agreed there needed to be a “dynamic interaction” between the various media of the Spirit for the Christian to “realistically” know how to live a life that pleased God.

Norman’s case study provided me with the capacity to compare those who had studied my model of “Living by the Spirit” with someone who only had a cursory glance at it. What stood out most to me, as I read out the respective questions in the final interview, was that as one question was answered it was qualified by referring to an objection that would be addressed in the following question. This simply mirrors the way in which I constructed the model, starting at the Spirit’s work from a wider perspective and gradually narrowing it down—addressing possible objections as I went. The correlation between Norman’s responses to my questions, and my own formulation of the system indicates that this may be the way Reformed/Presbyterian Christians conceptualize the concept of “Living by the Spirit.”

5.2.12 Case Study 12: Robert

Robert has been a Presbyterian for less than five years. At the time of this case study he has been involved with the Presbyterian Church of Queensland for three years. Prior to becoming a Presbyterian, he was involved in Pentecostal churches and exercised a limited role in pastoral leadership. Since becoming a Christian in his adult life, Robert believes that his “calling” is to be a pastor and is studying at the Queensland Theological College, to this end. Under his prior Pentecostal model of the Christian life, Robert believed that blessings in life were a reward for acts of obedience—a kind of law-orientated ethic. However, since becoming a Presbyterian, Robert believes that the Spirit of God empowers his Christian obedience, which is observable by fruits of the Spirit. He augments this practice with Bible reading and prayer (personal and family).
When questioned in the initial interview regarding the Law, Robert differentiated between the Pentecostal and Presbyterian chapters of his Christian life. Under the Pentecostal way he considered Law as the Ten Commandments which could be applied uncritically and directly to his ethical life; under his Presbyterian logic he is able to differentiate between the application of moral law under the Old Covenant and New Covenant respectively. Consistent with Reformation thinking he sees that the Law guards and guides a person until they put their faith in Christ. The Law (as commandments) has value to the Christian if used correctly. In seeing the relationship between the Law and the Spirit, Robert believes the Spirit works with the written Law (commandments) to bring conviction of sin and the illumination of truth. He contrasts this with his previous Pentecostal model, which advocated that the Spirit would directly give a “word” from God, which would be interpreted as a higher form of authority than the written Scriptures. Studying the Scriptures under this model was viewed as “unspiritual”. He considers “Living by the Spirit” as a life empowered by the Spirit, as well as guided by the Scriptures and other Christians. Despite the aforementioned observations, Robert noted that he has a natural tendency to fall back into a Law-orientated life. He considers that it is easier for him to moralise the Christian life rather than wanting to live by faith. In this regard, he indicated that in his transition from Pentecostalism to Presbyterianism he tended to move away from any “real” influence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life—almost certainly as a negative reaction.

Robert willingly participated in the 21-part course on “Living by the Spirit”. When questioned in the concluding interview regarding the difference it made to his practice of Christian living, he indicated that it seemed to correct his view of the Spirit’s role in the Christian life. Because he had moved away from Pentecostalism, he tended to minimize the Spirit’s agency in the Christian life. The model presented, helped him realize that his Christian ethical life was “really” based on the Law—which was further exacerbated by the model of evangelism he was using (which viewed the Law as the primary means of convincing people they were sinners)—and that he was now given valid reasons for re-embracing the Holy Spirit. Robert agreed that the Holy Spirit could be seen as the basis of all moral truth. When questioned regarding the Spirit engaging the Christian through the circumstances of life in the world, he believed that this was true. He noted that everything in life has a purpose and God ordains all human encounters. However, Robert believes that all circumstantial experience needs to be tested to validate its credibility (the Scriptures being
the principal means of this testing). When questioned regarding the Spirit’s work through the Church (as a component of “Living by the Spirit”) Robert saw this aspect of the Spirit’s ministry as invaluable. Not only with direct reference to him, but as he sought to help others in the Christian community, he noticed that the Holy Spirit encouraged him through that experience. He observed, in comparison to his Pentecostal experiences, that Presbyterians had a lot to learn in the area of “ministry to one another”, and the “horizontal” dimension of the Spirit’s work in Presbyterian churches (in his experience) was largely not evident, nor readily encouraged.

With respect to the Spirit’s engagement through the medium of Christian experience, Robert observed that he found this to be most true in his “sense of call” into Christian ministry. He also noted that he had other experiences where the Holy Spirit seemed to “prompt” him to act—especially when taking opportunities to share his faith with non-believers. Robert also made the interesting observation that the Holy Spirit does not act experientially in a Christian’s life for their own benefit. God initiates spiritual experience (yes, also for the benefit of the immediate recipient) so that others may benefit from God’s blessings. We discussed the example of the Apostle Peter’s “spiritual experience”, and how it led to the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his family. Robert does believe that the Spirit’s most reliable medium was the Holy Scriptures; however, he indicated that on matters where the Bible was silent the Spirit gives wisdom via other media to arrive at an understanding of the truth (in conjunction with principles drawn from the Bible). He also agreed that seeing a “dynamic interaction” between the various media of the Spirit as a realistic way of understanding “Living by the Spirit.”

Robert made some valuable concluding remarks. Having the Pentecostal experience to compare with Queensland Presbyterianism, he observed how little the Holy Spirit is spoken about in the Presbyterian context. He indicated that the Christian life is often spoken of with reference to Jesus, but the Holy Spirit seems to be the “silent partner” in the endeavour. Notwithstanding the differences, he also noted that he never really had a “developed” theology of the Holy Spirit from either of the aforementioned traditions. He also made the interesting observation that Christians in the Presbyterian tradition are not aware of the disjunction between what they theoretically believe about the Christian life and what they practise in the Christian life. In making this statement he was referring to the way Presbyterian Christians can theoretically deny the role of the Law with respect to “justifying
them” before God, whilst actually living in a Law-orientated way that practically makes their standing with God dependent on some Law-orientated system. In referring to himself on this matter, he believed that the method of evangelism he was employing (with a strong emphasis on Law as the means of showing humanity’s guilt before God) played some role in the aforementioned irregularity.

**Conclusion**

As the final distillation of the 12 case studies will take place in the following chapter, no analysis will be set forth here. However, with respect to this practical element of the research, the case-study method was positively received by the participants. With respect to the education process, the email instalments proved to be an efficient way to disseminate the information, without overloading the participants’ schedules. All of those involved in the study willingly participated at every stage and did not hesitate to provide honest feedback. Whilst the study was qualitative in nature, the consistency of the answers given (at least on key points) indicated that general extrapolations could be consistently drawn and applied to Queensland Presbyterians; though this would require further research of a quantitative nature to confirm. In-depth insights will now be considered in the following analysis.
CHAPTER 6: Toward a Reformed Praxis of Living by the Spirit: Interpretative Analysis

Introduction

A distinctive feature of this thesis, in contrast to a purely theoretical project, is its provision for empirical testing in “real life” contexts and the opportunity for subsequent reflection. In this final chapter, the case study data (previously set forth) is analysed with the view to gaining a clearer understanding of the potential value of the model of “Living by the Spirit” for Queensland Presbyterians. As a component of the Strategic Practical Theology section of the thesis, this analysis distils the information extracted from the application of the theory within the concrete situation. This information is now integrated back into the research with the intention of providing a credible research base against which a Reformed Praxis of “Living by the Spirit” might further be developed. As with any form of inductive research, the researcher has to make provisions for outcomes that were not expected, some of which were only discovered during the latter stages of this empirical phase. Not only does the following analysis seek to distil the information gathered from the twelve case studies, but also it incorporates general observations made during the whole empirical research phase (which includes understanding gained from two congregation-based seminars). As Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is employed within the research methodology, the remarks within this analysis legitimately incorporates the researcher’s own personal reflections.

Some findings were anticipated; some were not. The practical methodology employed in this research provided some useful feedback and as such warrants notable mention as to its perceived benefits and value as a tool of theological reflection. The role of theological culture proved to be a significant determinate of whether or not Queensland Presbyterians are open to consider new theological perspectives. As such, the research project was able to draw out a clearer understanding of Queensland Presbyterian culture and ascertain why a positive appreciation of practical pneumatology has gained little traction within this particular culture. Also, the relationship of Old Testament Law to Christian ethics was one of the key concepts under investigation in this project. An analysis of how Law is perceived among Queensland Presbyterians reveals that it may not be as widely supported as initially anticipated, despite its formal inclusion in Presbyterian doctrine. How the case study participants understood the
Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Christian life was analysed; revealing a huge deficiency in understanding of the subject, as well as great potential for developing it further. This final chapter will also offer up some reflections on the way ahead, outlining opportunities for future research in developing this vital subject.

### 6.1 Practical Methodology and Living by the Spirit

One of the unexpected discoveries made during the empirical phase of research was the benefit of a practically orientated methodology. I observed that the use of Practical Theology, as a methodological instrument evoked marked responses from some of the participants. One of the participants made the point that the whole exercise reinforced the need for theological reflection and its impact on the Christian life (which he inferred was lacking). He also commented that it showed him the value of consciously thinking about that which is simply unconsciously held.\(^{431}\) From my observations, Practical Theology tended to expose many of the latent disjunctures between what was theoretically embraced and what was practised. One case study participant, Robert (case study 12), drew my attention to this when he commented that he no longer believed the Mosaic Law to be binding as an ethical standard and yet he consistently appealed to the moral imperatives of the Ten Commandments in various ministry situations. Moreover, he recognized in his own personal life a fundamental disconnect between what he believed about God’s Law and what he practised with respect to it. Theoretically he believed that God’s Law was not the basis of his “right-standing” before God; practically he found himself being predisposed to a “Law-orientated” life. It was the use of the practical methodology that served to identify this problem.

However, from a more positive perspective, Kevin (case study 2) commented that he found that putting his theoretical beliefs into practice tended to consolidate and strengthen his relationship with God. In making this point he appealed to the life of Jesus. When Jesus wanted to make a similar point, he spoke about the person that hears his words and puts them into practice being like the man who built his house on the foundation of the rock; which the deluge of rain and wind could not move. It is the engagement between theory and practice that establishes doctrine in its soundness. Given the essentially practical nature of “Living by the Spirit”, I believe only the use of Practical Theology as a methodology could have drawn attention to the aforementioned matters. In fact without the use of this practical format,

\(^{431}\) Refer to Case Study 4.
understanding the “living” element of the subject would have been limited. In the course of the empirical research phase it was reinforced that the Reformed tradition generally, and Presbyterianism in particular have been heavily weighted towards theoretical theological reflection. Therefore, in a religious tradition where the necessity for practical verification of truth is viewed with suspicion, this project helped to reveal that theoretical reflection alone is predisposed to areas of deficiency in understanding. Moreover, this tradition could greatly benefit from the application of Practical Theology to its theological endeavours.

6.2 Theological/Ecclesiastical Culture and Living by the Spirit

On the basis of the research undertaken it became evident that within the Queensland Presbyterian Church, theological culture is a strong determinate of doctrinal belief. The case studies highlighted a perception that there is a lack or even absence (in some instances) of substantive reflection on the practical elements of Pneumatology within this tradition. Many of the participants indicated that during the course of their theological training, practical pneumatology was rarely engaged. In the majority of case study participants, outside of lectures on the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Trinity, Regeneration and Sanctification, discussion revolving around the Holy Spirit’s work in the ongoing Christian life was virtually non-existent. Moreover, this lack was noticeable throughout the spectrum of the case study participants, with such factors as: age, gender and background causing little substantive differentiation. In fact, Ken (case study 9) indicated in his theological training that the Christian life was presented to him in such a way as to infer that it was primarily a “cerebral” endeavour, with little or no room given for subjectivity. Ironically, notable exceptions to this were the students who had studied at the Queensland Presbyterian Hall during the era where Law-orientated ethics were promoted. These participants mentioned that the Holy Spirit was taught in regard to the Christian life, but only in such a way as to empower Law-keeping (largely consistent with the model advocated by 17th century Puritanism and The Westminster Confession.) A number of the participants commented that the only knowledge they had gleaned on “Living by the Spirit” or the practical aspects of the Christian life came from extra-curricular study.

From the responses received from the twelve case study participants, there is an indication that practical pneumatology may not be viewed as significant or may be perceived as not correlating well with the academic syllabus. Whatever the actual reason(s), the case studies
revealed a deficiency in theological reflection with respect to the practical dimension of the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Christian’s ethical life. Furthermore, this deficiency was also recognized at a congregational level (at least at the two churches where seminars were conducted). The empirical evidence would suggest that there is a connection between the theological education and congregational understanding on this subject; however, further research would need to be undertaken to verify this.

Notwithstanding the reasons for the aforementioned deficiency in understanding, at both of the congregation-based seminars, many of the participants appeared to have little or no appreciation of the Holy Spirit’s connection with the Christian life. Moreover, particular case study participants confirmed this. Hayley (case study 3) observed that in her experience within congregational life, there was very little teaching on the Holy Spirit. In fact, she added, there appeared to be a hesitancy to discuss matters relating to the Spirit; in her opinion, addressing matters pertaining to the Spirit tended to threaten their “neat theological systems.” Further to this observation, other participants seemed to verify a systemic resistance to the Holy Spirit’s recognition. Ken (case study 9) indicated that he believed the “Church system” (by this I assume he meant the Church as an institution), was actually structured in such a way as to exclude the Holy Spirit’s practical engagement. In fact so challenging were the revelations regarding the Spirit and the Christian life (from the case study material) that he believed he was now forced to reconsider the way in which he approached the Christian life and ministry. Furthermore, Hervey (case study 5) confirmed the prior observation by stating that within the culture of Queensland Presbyterianism there was a real sense of pride in a rational appreciation of “doctrinal truth”. He believed that Presbyterians—whether motivated by fear of being branded an “extremist”, or fear of losing control, or even the insecurity of not being able to appeal to rational arguments as a basis of truth—were reluctant to embrace the Holy Spirit on a practical level.

6.3 Pentecostalism and Living by the Spirit

This empirical phase of the research also revealed a negative reaction to the “excesses” of Pentecostalism, which was previously identified in chapter two. This anti-Pentecostal sentiment also played a big role in Presbyterians’ hesitancy in approaching practical

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432 I understand by this comment that he is referring to the legal/political nature of church governance.
pneumatology. In connection with Hervey’s prior comments and observations from the other respondents it appears that reluctance is partially motivated by “identity association”. By identity association I am referring to the way certain theological emphases are associated with certain groups; in this particular instance the Holy Spirit is often associated with Pentecostalism or Charismatics. The inference is that if you embrace one theological distinctive of this group, you embrace all of their distinctives. Thus following the logical argument of the “slippery slope”; if a Presbyterian embraces the Holy Spirit practically, he or she embraces everything about Pentecostalism, even the bad! This then leads to the accusation of guilt by theological association. As such, for a Presbyterian to move away from a rationalist, law-dependent or literal scripture observance position on the Christian life, towards the Spirit-led life, it could be deemed within this tradition as a “spiritual journey” which the Presbyterian Christian embarks on at their own doctrinal peril. I believe that this element of “identity association” may play a far bigger role in determining a person’s theological convictions than most Reformed Christians consciously realize. I draw this conclusion on the basis of my findings in which the case study participants concurred with the model of “Living by the Spirit” which I promoted, even though (in my understanding) they found it difficult to “say” that they were actually “Living by the Spirit”. The need to be associated with a theological system or culture—even though the adherents may secretly embrace doctrines which they publically deny—is very strong. It appears that the human need for group affirmation can and does practically override their willingness to confess that which is secretly believed.

Finally, during the two seminars conducted at a congregational level, I discovered that many of the participants—despite having reservations about Pentecostal interpretations of the Christian life—were open to discussing the Holy Spirit. I also became increasingly aware that much of the alleged hesitation in openly discussing or practically embracing the Holy Spirit in the Christian life was simply due to ignorance on the subject! In fact, during one of the seminars I discovered that the majority of the attendees seemed to indicate that the practical working of the Holy Spirit was almost a foreign concept to them. Following the seminar, the participants expressed appreciation that the model actually dealt with the Spirit in a way that opened their minds to new possibilities. The participants also expressed the view that the model presented/engendered a sense of freedom to explore “Living by the Spirit”, without the
fear of wandering off into “fanatical” error that was disengaged from a logical appreciation of truth as governed by the Scriptures.

6.4 The Law, the Word and Living by the Spirit

Law is a prominent theme within the ethics of the 17th century formulation of The Westminster Confession of Faith and affiliated documents. However, the case studies revealed that the Westminster emphasis on law was not largely evident amongst most of the participants and, of the participants in whom it was, their case studies confirmed that they had moved away from that position or were reconsidering it. I discovered that the participants who studied at Presbyterian institutions where The Westminster Confession was more rigidly taught had a much higher awareness and appreciation of Law and its application for the “ongoing Christian life.” From what I have ascertained, the participants who attended these institutions were taught along “traditional” law-orientated Westminster lines. Those interviewed were taught that adherence to the Law (explicitly expressed as the Ten Commandments) was a necessary part of the ongoing Christian life. However, one participant, whilst not having as rigid an understanding seems to see the Law from a much more positive perspective, viewing the Law and Spirit as “friends not enemies.” Moreover, I discovered that after all the participants had completed the 21-part course, it was the participants, who had been trained in accord with the Westminster tradition, who indicated that the model had benefitted them the most. These participants expressed a sense of liberty to embrace a practical theology of the Spirit without the fear of abandoning the value of God’s Law “in its entirety” as an ethical guide.

In contrast to this, many of the other participants who attended training institutions that, though Reformed in persuasion, did not promote the Westminster perspective on ethics, tended to adopt a “non-Law” approach to the Christian life. For the majority of these participants Law was simply perceived as a phenomenon of the Old Testament with little direct relevance for Christian living. When understood through the lens of their model of biblical/historical theology, the Mosaic Law is deemed as having been fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ death brought an end to the Old Covenant; its sacrificial system, ceremonies and moral systems. Thus, taken from this perspective, the Law is largely deemed superfluous to the Christian life, other than to foreshadow the coming of Christ. There was a general belief, since Jesus has “fulfilled” the Law, that Christians are no longer bound to
observe them; Jesus becomes the superintendent of the moral code for Christians. The Law belongs to the past and has no part to play in the Christian life. When applied from a practical/ethical perspective, Christians in determining their moral behaviour are to compare their lives with the life of Jesus. Thus, the consequence of such a view is, rather than having a theology that progresses from Law to Spirit (Romans7:6), it progresses from Law to Jesus; the Spirit (outside of regeneration) is deemed as having only a primary value in assisting in the interpretation of the Scriptures. As it could be expected, the participants who adopted this stance did not appreciate the value of the model of “Living by the Spirit”, as much as those who had been trained along the line more rigidly consistent with the Westminster Confession’s interpretation of Law.

One of the recurrent themes of the case study interviews was the reference to the authority of the Christian Scriptures, understood by this constituency as the Word of God. Whenever the participants were questioned or spoke regarding the authority of the Holy Spirit, there was invariably a qualification referring back to the Scriptures (Word of God). Even though many of the participants were comfortable to move away from the text of Law as an ethical guide, the text of scripture was viewed as inseparable from an authoritative understanding of the Christian life. However, when it was made clear that “Living by the Spirit” was not incompatible with the authority of the written text of scripture—participants felt more at ease with the proposed model. Therefore, it appears that relating the Letter of Law/Scripture correctly to the Spirit can make a substantial difference to a Reformed Christian’s willingness to positively consider a more comprehensive role of the Holy Spirit in the ethical endeavour.

A right orientation of the value of the Word of God, the Law (as part of that Word) and the Spirit as the one that inspired, applies and empowers that Word in the Christian life, can allow for ethical liberty without licentiousness and legal instruction without the predisposition towards legalism.

6.5 The Media of the Spirit and Living by the Spirit

In reflecting on the data gathered from the initial interviews, there was a uniform belief amongst the participants that the Spirit and the Word (scriptures) were strongly related. What also appeared to be fairly consistent across the case studies was a suspicion of the legitimacy of the Spirit’s work from an “experiential” point of view—with particular reference being made to the excesses of Pentecostal Christians. However, I discovered that the more the
participants were exposed to cross-cultural encounters (e.g., mission work overseas) or more entrepreneurial expressions of Christian ministry, the greater was the value placed on the “experience of the Spirit”. I consider this phenomenon to indicate that the more the Christian feels “out of control” of their circumstances or the more they are forced to move into circumstances where a rational cognition of theological truth loses its value, the greater is the dependency on direct “experiential” aspects of God’s Spirit. Thus, the value of the Spirit in the practical life of Christians appeared to increase in proportion to the increased necessity to live by faith i.e., outside a person’s normal “comfort zone.”

The model of “Living by the Spirit” presented, set forth God’s Spirit as the basis of knowing moral truth, and this was accessed via four “media” of the Spirit; the world, the church, the Christian person and the Christian scriptures. It was also discovered, the more a person had an affinity to the natural world, the more likely they were to acknowledge God’s Spirit at work in the world. For example, Tom (case study 10) came from a farming background. He had no difficulty in believing that the Spirit of God engaged him through the natural world and the circumstances within it. He also related how the Spirit’s construing of life’s circumstances played a significant role in his calling into pastoral ministry. Interestingly from a contrary perspective, Hervey (case study 5) who grew up in the city and in association with a more academic form of Christianity had conceptualized “the material world” as a reality that opposed God and as one to be viewed with suspicion. However, following the 21- part course work on “Living by the Spirit”, Hervey commented on how he felt more liberated to view the world not as something that opposes God and the church, but something through which God is at work. This view of the Spirit engendered in him a willingness to look afresh at the circumstances that surrounded him and see them from God’s perspective.

Commensurate with both Tom’s view and Hervey’s final perspective was the observation made by John (case study 7). John observed that the busier life got for Christians, the less likely they were to see or be aware of God’s work in the world; indicating that a more reflective predisposition was required if the Christian was to gain a fuller appreciation of the Spirit’s active work in the material world. Therefore, the model opened up some healthy reflection on the Spirit’s work through the circumstances of life in the world in a way that the participants may not have had prior cause to consider. Therefore the model seemed to engender a more positive perspective of the world as the domain of the Spirit’s acting.
With respect to the Spirit’s work in the Christian Church there were varying responses, all of them helpful. Harold (case study 1) reflected on how he now believed in the value of every Christian being used by God’s Spirit for the church community’s edification. However, he also admitted that during his time in ministry, he did not practise this—something he indicates that he now regrets. Kevin (case study 2) explicitly stated that the Reformed (Confessional) model of pastoral ministry did not go far enough in incorporating every Christian into the process of moral guidance and maturity. He felt the clergy-laity distinctions need to be relaxed more to make space for the Spirit’s wider work. John (case study 7) made an observation that many Queensland Presbyterian Christians in the churches he has been affiliated with didn’t even have “the categories” for thinking about the ethical life in the context of a communal dimension. This lack was attributed by John as possibly the “individualism” of Western society conditioning the thinking of Christians. The cause of John’s observation could be manifold, but a failure to encourage the laity to see the value of communal interaction, with respect to ethics and practice, could be a contributing factor. Both, Ken (case study 9) and Robert (case study 12), in reflecting on their Pentecostal experiences, made the observation that Presbyterians had a lot to learn about the “horizontal aspects” of church community life. In fact, Ken, in relating the story of his visit to a Pentecostal church described the experience as like one of being surrounded by a church “full” of pastors! Robert also shared that he believed Presbyterians had a lot to learn from Pentecostals about the aspect of “ministry to one another.” It appears that the case studies revealed that there may be a real under-appreciation of the communal value of the Spirit’s work in ethical and practical living. Moreover, associated with this apparent undervaluation, there may be a desire to see this communal aspect of ethical life developed further.

When it came to reflection on the Spirit’s engagement through the medium of experience, the responses were “formally” subdued. By “subdued”, I mean there was a marked hesitancy to openly discussing spiritual experience. I believe this was partly due to the fact that in a culture where truth is mostly arrived at via rational theological reflection, any attempt to perceive truth from a personal experience is deemed as having little substantive value. Also, the reaction against the perceived fanaticism of Pentecostalism would certainly reify the point of the prior observation. Moreover, there is a high probability that the Spirit’s work through experience may be minimized due to a misunderstanding—regarding the nature of personal experience itself. I suspect, by their reactions, that most of the participants conceptualized
personal experience along the lines of self-generated “subjective feelings”. If that is so, then consequently they would not see as valid their own engagement with God’s Spirit—through life in the world, involvement in the church and the study of the Bible—as pertaining to a Spirit-related experience. Despite this, Robert (who came from a Pentecostal background) did indicate some appreciation of this, as he noted that the Holy Spirit simply doesn’t act in the Christian’s life for their own benefit, but works from the wider perspective of God’s people.

However, when the question regarding experience was framed in such a way as to solicit how they identified the Spirit as bringing “objectivity and clarity” to a life situation, the “practical” idea of experience was viewed far more positively. Whenever the Spirit was related to in the sense of personal “assurance” or “calling to a particular ministry role” experience of the Spirit was valued. Although in nearly every instance a reference is made to connecting personal experience to the corrective nature of the Christian scriptures, for fear of validating “experience” as a stand-alone means of verifying truth. This indicates to me a ready willingness to embrace the value of the Spirit in the Christian person’s experiences, but to do it in such a way that doesn’t allude to some kind of subjectively generated self-interest. Therefore, it appears that Presbyterian Christians may know that God’s Spirit does work through personal experience; however, they lack the language to describe it in a cogent way and are fearful of misrepresenting what is communicated.

The Spirit working through the medium of the Christian Scriptures is an idea that was universally embraced by all the case study participants. This was to be expected, given that the Bible is viewed as the “primary authority” within the Reformed tradition. Nevertheless, this acceptance was not without some qualification. Kevin (case study 2) commented, “If it is just you and your Bible, you don’t know whether your interpretation is right or wrong.” Whilst acknowledging the primary authority of the Scriptures, Kevin also wanted to stress that arriving at an authoritative understanding of the truth must necessarily take into account the other means (media of the Spirit). Further to this, Robert (case study 12) recognized that there are some issues on which Scripture is silent—particularly complex ethical issues—and that the Spirit works through the other media to arrive at a position of truth despite the explicit lack of detail provided by the Word. With respect to the dynamic interaction of the various media of the Spirit, most participants believed that this was a valid way of conceptualizing “Living by the Spirit”. Analogies that the case study participants provided included: the “Spirit is the glue”, the “Spirit is the conductor”, the “Spirit is the lifeblood”.
All appeared to be valuable ways of illustrating how the Spirit engages Christians using the media in a dynamic way.

The real value of the integration of the “media of the Spirit” through the concept of dynamic co-inherence is that it gives credence to media other than The Word in the Christian’s ethical and practical life. Whilst appealing to the concept of *sola scriptura* might be helpful in reinforcing the primary value of scripture in a theoretical sense, it does little in giving Reformed/Presbyterian Christians practical guidance on how to integrate the authoritative Word of God, realistically, in everyday life. Dynamic co-inherence upholds the primary value of Scripture (maintaining its regulatory authority); giving a legitimate space to the other media. Moreover, this understanding gives Reformed Christians freedom to embrace the role of the other media without fear of becoming disengaged from the “anchor” of the Word.

### 6.6 The Christian Gospel and Living by the Spirit

The relationship between the understanding of the Christian gospel and “Living by the Spirit” was an unexpected discovery. This research is based on the assumption that Queensland Presbyterians have a formal allegiance to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (the denomination’s doctrinal standard). It also assumes that *The Confession’s* associated *Declaratory Statement* allows for liberty of opinion on matters not deemed essential to the doctrine contained within it. Apart from the minority of the case-study participants who had been brought up or trained in traditions where the Law-ethic of the Westminster Confession was strongly advocated, most participants appeared to have been either brought up or trained in environments where no cogent “system” for ethics and practical Christian living, apart from reading the Bible, praying, and going to church was promulgated. For this majority it appeared that once having been “justified before God” on the basis of faith in Jesus, the ongoing Christian life was simply a matter of practically applying Bible-knowledge to random ethical challenges and the exigencies of everyday life. In connection to this and of particular interest to me was the concept that appeared throughout the various conversations (expressed in various ways) which inferred that there were “Gospel issues” (those that pertained to a person’s right-standing before God) and other issues of the Christian life (which did not pertain to a person’s right-standing before God). Although unexpected, it should be briefly acknowledged.
There may be a number of reasons behind this apparent division between gospel/non-gospel issues, or what might be deemed as essential/non-essential issues, including how the Christian gospel is actually defined. Nevertheless, the Reformers were patently aware of the need for the Christian life of faith to be integrated with ethics. For Reformers such as Calvin, their theological systems established a basis for “going-on” with God, which incorporated a Spirit-empowered keeping of the God’s Law. The idea of Christian holiness being deemed a non-gospel issue would have seemed strange to them; at least to Calvin: “Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.”433 However, according to my empirical research there is in existence a notion of a disjunction between “justification” and the ongoing Christian life, for some Queensland Presbyterians. As this opens up an entirely new line of inquiry it cannot be addressed further in this thesis. However, as an issue that was unexpectedly raised by the research it warrants identification as a possible factor why “Living by the Spirit” may not have gained any traction among some Reformed Christians.

6.7 Expanding the Pneumatological Horizons

From my engagement with Queensland Presbyterian culture, this model was surprisingly positively received, despite the fact that the subject of the Spirit has been treated with suspicion, ignored or simply seen as irrelevant. Despite the case study participants being not naturally predisposed to discussing the practical application of the Holy Spirit to the Christian life, many of them had “secretly” formulated their own understanding of what “Living by the Spirit” might be. Whilst “formally” acknowledging that the Spirit engaged the Christian life almost exclusively through the study of the Bible, these participants indicated that their intuitive understanding of how they viewed the Spirit at work in their lives closely correlated with the model presented to them. That said, it was apparent from both the case studies and the congregational seminars, that the practical application of the Holy Spirit to Presbyterians’ ethics and practices was a subject that was often discussed—except, in a negative sense. Although one of the case study participants concluded his final interview by alluding to the fact that the Spirit can never be discussed theoretically without being “in the room”; it appears that the practical presence of the Spirit in the “theological room” was not going to be

discussed unless it was actively engaged. The project was the catalyst for that practical engagement. This thesis has provided the initiative to reconsider this important aspect of the Christian life and to take a fresh look at what one participant called, our “silent partner” in the Gospel work.

The model effectively presented a systematic way of understanding how the Holy Spirit might be understood “practically” in the life of Queensland Presbyterians in particular, with a possible wider application for all Christians of a Reformed persuasion. I began the project with a vague suspicion (based on years of experience in pastoral ministry) that Queensland Presbyterian Christians may have thought about the practical Christian life in the same way the model presented it. Many of discoveries confirmed these initial suspicions. For the participants and many of those interacted with in congregational seminars, the model explicitly stated what was previously implicitly understood—or at least made sense to them—in a way that made it seem that it was implicit. The result of this practical research seems to further strengthen a case for arguing that this way of conceptualizing the Holy Spirit’s engagement in the Christian life may be the most consistent way for those standing in the Reformed tradition to conceptualize practical pneumatology. For a tradition that values cogent theology, it was the “theoretically defensible” way of speaking about the Holy Spirit and the Christian life, presented in this thesis, which appeared to give it credibility. In my understanding of the participants’ feedback, the model enabled them the freedom to explore areas of the Holy Spirit’s work that was previously perceived as “out of bounds” whilst still giving them a cogent way of expressing and supporting their discoveries. They found reassurance in the fact that the Christian Scriptures were presented as the primary truth standard for the model. In their minds, this “Biblical anchoring” allowed them a freedom to explore spirituality in a wider and more holistic way.

Furthermore, the model was described as something that could be easily taught and was acknowledged by one of the participants as its greatest strength. Whilst the time constraints of this project prohibited an accurate understanding of how this model impacted the Christian lives of the participants over an extended period, its greatest contribution was to put into circulation, ideas that gave space for a realistic appreciation of the practical work of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing discussion of the same. The research has also opened up the possibilities for more in-depth studies in areas, such as: the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics and the development of a pneuma-centric model; dynamic integration and the
process of understanding theological truth; the influence of theological culture on personal identity; the understanding of The Gospel in Reformed contexts and its effect on the spiritual life; and reasons for the underdevelopment of personal spirituality in the Reformed tradition.

Conclusion

This empirical phase of the research helped confirm the value of Practical Theology as a tool for substantive theological reflection. Many of the discoveries made would not have been possible without this discipline in the research method. The theory-practice-theory methodology, not only enabled theory to be tested, but also previously untested beliefs to be exposed. Another key discovery in this project was the significant power of theological culture in determining belief. I discovered it was an extremely powerful phenomenon in the lives of the participants interviewed. This revelation indicates the power of culture and that it should be considered as a significant factor when advancing different or new theological perspectives. The role of Ecclesiastical culture, either its positive influence, or its negative role, in reacting to movements like Pentecostalism is significant. The research also unveiled that the role of Law in Reformed ethics was not as great as initially anticipated. Of the twelve participants (who were selected as a representative cross-section of Queensland Presbyterians) only about one third considered the Law relevant to the Christian life. Not surprisingly, these were the people who appeared to most appreciate the model of “Living by the Spirit”. For the remainder, Law ethics seemed largely irrelevant.

However, what remained constant was the value placed on the Scriptures (as the Word of God) as the final authority for Christian living. Regarding the Holy Spirit, there appeared to be a real lack of understanding about the Holy Spirit and the Christian life. In many cases anti-Pentecostal sentiment had shaped that lack of understanding; however, it appeared that ignorance on the subject was largely due to a lack of teaching and education. However, the case studies and the congregation-based seminars revealed that there was a real willingness to explore the matter further and a desire to give the Holy Spirit greater prominence in the Christian life. Finally, one of the most rewarding features of presenting this proposed model of “Living by the Spirit” was to discover that the majority of the participants believed that the model presented correlated closely with what they had come to intuitively believe about the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Christian life. Whilst many of the participants rarely spoke about the Holy Spirit’s role in the Christian life, when considered from the perspective of this
model of “Living by the Spirit”, they found it easier to talk about it. It is this finding that gives me good reason to believe that if this kind of model was developed further it might enable Reformed Christians the freedom to openly discuss, teach and promote the Holy Spirit’s role in the Christian life in a way hitherto not addressed.
CONCLUSION

The academic endeavour of moving towards a Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit” was principally motivated by the desire to discover a more adequate ethical model than the traditional Reformed Law-ethic. In looking to pneumatology (especially that of Paul) for an answer, the question was posed, “How might a Reformed praxis of ‘Living by the Spirit’ be envisaged?” Because the inquiry has emerged out of a “specific life situation”, a method was selected that would best integrate the theory advanced with the practical realm from which the question first arose—The Presbyterian Church of Queensland. In the endeavour to answer the primary question, key theological influences likely to shape Queensland Presbyterians’ understanding of pneumatology were investigated. An array of theological sources was considered; from Calvin’s seminal contribution, the defining influence of 17th century Presbyterianism, theologians of the modern era, as well as local influences (mostly reflecting an anti-Pentecostal sentiment). A recurrent theme emerged, revealing a strong bias preferring the Letter/Law over the Spirit; the Spirit’s role apparently muted by its functional subservience. In order to reclaim the Spirit’s role in ethics, the Letter/Spirit relationship was reconsidered. Over and against the Reformed tradition’s predisposition to conflate the two by formulating a Spirit-empowered Law ethic, a fresh look at Paul’s Epistle to the Romans presented another perspective. The study revealed that Paul more likely viewed the relationship thus: the Letter/Law refers to the now defunct Old Covenant ethical “system,” while the Spirit is associated with a new mode of ethics. Whilst upholding the divine authority of Scripture, Paul considered the Spirit’s role as dominant and conceptualized the ethical life as “Living by the Spirit.”

Having established that Christian ethics should be primarily formulated around the Holy Spirit’s role, and that Paul viewed this role through the metaphor of “living”, the question was asked; what would that look like for a Reformed Christian? Cautious of constructing a “rigid system” that might be predisposed to legalism, a model was developed which presented a broad theological framework through which Reformed Christians might conceptualize “Living by the Spirit.” The proposed model began by arguing that the Holy Spirit provides the epistemic foundation for truth. However, this Spirit does not engage Christians in abstraction, but works through “media”. The various media of the Spirit were identified as: the material world, the church, the Christian (as a reasoning/experiencing being)
and the Scriptures. The ensuing theological explication revealed that God’s Spirit is providentially acting in the world and ordering reality according to His will; the Spirit which gave birth to the Church at Pentecost continues to animate its life through the endowment of spiritual gifts and corporate presence; the Spirit of God engages the Christian person as both interpreter and interpreted in the process of ethical understanding; and the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are the most authoritative of the media, providing regulatory governance in the ethical process. However for the model to correlate with the dynamic nature of life, an integrated understanding of the “media of the Spirit” was required. Through an understanding of co-inherence it was argued that the Spirit coordinates the various media, enabling a capacity for a seamless ethical understanding as the Reformed Christian engages the contingencies of life.

A distinct feature of this enterprise was its engagement of pneumatological theory with religious practice. Through a series of non-random case studies among a select group of Queensland Presbyterians, an interpretative understanding was gained of how the model of “Living by the Spirit” was perceived and understood by this constituency. The analysis yielded valuable insights into Queensland Presbyterians’ perceptions of the subject. The first insight related to the value of Practical Theology. In an ecclesiastical and theological culture which largely relates theory to practice uni-directionally, the thesis’ practice-theory-practice methodology assisted in both exposing flaws and offering encouragement in ways previously not possible. The empirical research also confirmed what was initially observed regarding the asymmetrical nature of the relationship of the Word to the Spirit. In fact the study revealed a very limited general understanding of pneumatology. Apart from this pneumatological deficiency being theoretically conditioned, the negative reaction to the perceived excesses of Pentecostalism appeared to be a significant factor mitigating the development of pneumatology within this tradition.

With respect to the Law and the Scriptures, Law ethics was certainly not as prominent as would be expected in a Confessional Church of this nature, although Scriptural authority was upheld. Furthermore, the model was perceived as shedding a more positive light on the Spirit’s work through the material world. It also solicited the perception of a greater value for the “horizontal” aspect of spiritual life within the church. Although spiritual experience was a delicate subject, the model assisted in showing that Spirit-originated experience has a valuable purpose. Whilst the Scriptures were upheld as the primary authority and sometimes
contrasted with the Spirit, when it was then explained that the Scriptures were the primary regulatory medium of the Spirit within the model, there appeared to be a greater degree of acceptance. As a cogent way of expressing Spirit-derived ethical life, the research principally served the purpose of allaying fears within a tradition that has often been suspicious of the Spirit and served to open up new possibilities in understanding.

What are the implications of this research? One of the primary implications is methodological. The Reformed tradition needs to take more seriously the engagement between theological theory and religious practice. Whilst the case study participants formally subscribed to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and presumably acknowledged its theological views, what these people “actually” believed and practised (with respect to ethics) appeared different. When questioned regarding the cogency and applicability of the model presented, the majority of the case study participants asserted that the model simply made explicit what they implicitly believed, with respect to the Christian life. Significantly, it appears that this thesis has given “tangible expression” to a latent belief (at least evident in those tested). It appears that in the absence of any substantive explication on the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the ethical life, Reformed Christians may simply formulate their own understanding of pneumatology and ethics in order to deal with the complex contingencies of life.

With respect to practical pneumatology, the thesis sets forth an understanding of the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Christian life that falls neither to the extremes of conservative rationalism nor to that of charismatic experientialism. It appears that for many Reformed Christians these two alternatives have been perceived as the only realistic alternatives! This thesis may assist Christians within the Reformed tradition to conceptualize a way of “Living by the Spirit” that presents a cogently defensible alternative. It is also hoped that this study may assist in elevating the importance of practical pneumatology within the Reformed consciousness. Many valuable scholarly contributions are beginning to emerge and this study seeks to add an extra dimension by bringing concrete practice into contact with theoretical reflection.

The knowledge gained through this research has raised as many new questions as it sought to answer. In moving “towards” a Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit”, this thesis has taken a significant first step in presenting a theoretical model for empirical testing which is
broadly structured. However, given the wide-ranging scope of material covered, the limits of this thesis have not allowed for the substantive development of some ideas and themes. This thesis has looked at the theory of the Spirit as an ethical agent and engaged the practical context with an “educational model”. Although a necessary first step, it should be acknowledged that the Christian is not only called to “Live by the Spirit”, but also “in the Spirit”. Thus, the practical understanding of how to relate to God via the Spirit requires further development within the context of this model’s application to Reformed Christians. Furthermore, issues such as the Spirit’s power for ethical living through this theological frame have not been explored and would benefit from specific research. Application of the model to specific ethical situations (through further empirical study) would further ascertain the model’s tangible value. The thesis has also opened up further research opportunities in the field of hermeneutics. The role of a pneuma-centric hermeneutical model was touched on only lightly and requires further academic development. The “dynamic co-inherence” of the media of the Spirit in the process of ethical understanding is another area open for further scholarly work. Other areas of interest which could be further enhanced by research include: the role of “identity association” in limiting or enhancing theological reflection, the practical interpretation of the Reformed view of the Christian Gospel and its effect on Christian ethics, and the role of fear within the Reformed tradition in limiting pneumatological-orientated ethics. Certainly, more is yet to be accomplished, and moving towards a Reformed praxis of “Living by the Spirit” may be a much larger task than first imagined. However, it is hoped that the initiatives provided by this research will make the direction of that task clearer.
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