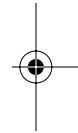


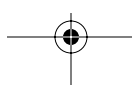


Foreword



Few conference talks have flowered so richly into an evangelical classic as the little book you are about to read. Published in 1964, *Baptism and Fullness* appeared just prior to the explosive growth of the charismatic movement in mainline churches. With the second edition in 1975, slightly revised yet unchanged in its basic orientation, the book found its way onto the essential reading lists for those on both sides of the debates concerning the work of the Spirit.

What accounts for its enduring popularity? After all, *Baptism and Fullness* is, as you can plainly see, a rather small book. I would like to offer a few suggestions as to why it has been such a profound resource, since a mere commendation for someone like Stott from someone like me seems a little pretentious.





First, everything that John Stott writes exhales the Scriptures that one can easily discern have been deeply inhaled as the atmosphere of the author's daily walk with Christ as well as academic study. While doing my doctoral studies at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, I came into daily contact with a new generation of Anglican evangelicals who were Stott's spiritual children. And, as they say over there, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I found myself challenged by their zeal for personal Bible study and prayer, which yielded a passionate and informed evangelistic witness. Our conversations turned on passages of Scripture, not simply on "relevant" topics, and when the latter came up, appeals quickly went to the biblical text. However, John Stott's brand of exegesis (biblical interpretation) is not a wooden biblicism, where one simply inserts quotations for a party view. Rather, he *explains* the Scriptures, but what he explains are the *Scriptures*. All who love to breathe that atmosphere of genuine Bible study—the sort of thing that seems less pervasive in personal and corporate church life among us today than it was perhaps a generation ago—find a book like *Baptism and Fullness* a rewarding experience regardless of their position on the issues it addresses.

Second, Christ is the center of this, as all of Stott's other writings and sermons. Since Christ is the center of Scripture itself, that is as it should be. This book reminds us that wherever we land on the issues related to spiritual gifts, the primary role of the Holy Spirit is to witness to Christ and to





equip the church as the witness to Christ, “that in everything he might have preeminence” (Col 1:18). One can therefore discern where the Spirit is genuinely present in power as the vital wellspring of Christ’s body when Christ is being proclaimed with clarity, truth and conviction, and people are being conformed to Christ’s likeness. After all, the evidence of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost was, just as Jesus had promised before his ascension, the preaching of Peter and the other apostles that led to repentance and faith, with baptism and the Lord’s Supper uniting believers in a fellowship of worship and witness.

Third, John Stott is not wary of talking about the Holy Spirit. If Christ is the center, the Spirit is recognized in this book as the person of the Trinity who keeps our eyes on Christ while empowering us for personal and corporate life. Especially in the context of controversy, many writers have approached the gifts with a polemical attitude, eager to advance a particular side of the debate. There is no doubt a place for such writing, but this book, characteristic of Stott’s ministry, is the work of a missionary pastor who has always maintained a rather cheerful confidence that a careful consideration of the Scriptures will yield greater unity among God’s people. The first line in his introduction sets the tone: “Wherever one looks in the church today, there is an evident need for a deeper work of the Holy Spirit.” By this Stott does not mean that the church needs some new work that is distinct from Pentecost. At the same time, he does not regard Pente-





cost merely as a past event with little connection to us today. Rather, he argues, the church easily forgets the person and work of the Holy Spirit, or at least takes the Spirit for granted. God's Word must determine the legitimacy of Christian experience, but the latter, for Stott, is not to be neglected.

After laying down the ground rules for interpreting the relevant biblical passages, the author walks us through the dramatic events concerning the general outpouring of the Spirit that were prophesied and fulfilled in the history of redemption. From there he takes up the more controversial matters that are still very much alive in the questions and discussions of Christians today. On one hand, Stott is concerned that some of the claims in the controversies over the Spirit's work have divided Christ's body into the "haves" and the "have nots." The Spirit, he maintains, is given to every believer. On the other hand, the Scriptures call believers to a greater "fullness" of the Spirit as they grow up into the unity of Christ's body. Hence the distinction evident in the title: baptism in the Spirit belongs to the whole body, while fullness ebbs and flows.

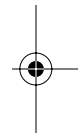
Although he is irenic, fair and balanced in his approach, this book does not evidence a forced attempt at a "middle way" between charismatics and noncharismatics. Like a good pastor, Stott's conclusions are sometimes jarring and cautionary. Furthermore, regardless of where the reader stands in that debate, there is plenty of wise criticism to go around. There are points at which both parties may take exception to





the arguments presented or wish that more had been said. Yet even at those moments, one cannot fail to be impressed with the constant attentiveness to God's Word.

From this preface some may expect another log on the fire of controversies that seem to have died down in evangelical circles. However, that would be a mistaken impression. While readers will doubtless find rich wisdom for questions concerning the spiritual gifts (such as tongues and prophecy) that are just as fresh today as ever, I was especially impressed with the way in which my rereading of this brief exposition drove me to my knees with a renewed request for that fullness of the Spirit's presence and power that our Father promises to all of his people and has secured through his incomparable Son. So read on, and prepare to be changed.



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