

**GAFCON SEMINAR ON:  
THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH  
Holiness, Unity and Mission  
By  
IKECHI NWACHUKWU NWOSU**

**Preamble:**

The orthodox faith firmly acknowledges the triune nature of God; God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit in coequal eternal splendor. Grudem<sup>1</sup> holds this view tenaciously. The Holy Spirit is first mentioned in Genesis 1:2 where He represents God's presence in the creation work of God. <sup>2</sup>He is a person. By 'person' we don't mean human; He has personality and individuality. He is distinct but fully God, just as God the Father and God the Son. <sup>3</sup>So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but One God. The Bible, as well as the historic ecclesiastical Creeds vividly illustrates the divine personhood of the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is identified with the Spirit of the Lord, Christ, Truth, and the *paraclete*<sup>5</sup> Paul asserts: "Now the Lord is the Spirit..." (2Col.3:17). Acts 5:3-4 deepens our understanding: Peter confronts Ananias as to why he lied to the Holy Spirit and tells him that he had "not lied to men but to God." Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18), received the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Matt. 3:16), overcame the temptation in the wilderness with the Holy Spirit's fullness (Matt.4:1), and then began His earthly ministry with the constant presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:14). This type of relationship with the Holy Spirit is what Jesus intends for His church.

In Christian theology, there are doctrinal and biblical symbols used to represent the Holy Spirit: **water** (John 7:38-39), **oil** (2Cor. 1:21), **wind** (Acts 2:2-4); **Light** (Luke 9: 34-35), **Fire** (Acts 2:1-4), and **dove** (Matt. 3:16-17). According to Watson, <sup>6</sup>"Theologically speaking, these symbols are keys to the understanding of the Holy Spirit and His actions; they are not mere artistic representations." The Holy Spirit enters the believer at salvation for spiritual impartation. Paul suggests this in Gal. 3:2 thus: "...Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" He is believed to perform specific divine functions not just in the life of the Christian or the church but also in the world. As Jesus was sent into the world by God the Father, so the Holy Spirit was sent into the world by Jesus. Jesus said in John 16:7-8 "... I will send him (Holy Spirit) to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: Apart from acting to convict and

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 226.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth A. Matthews, Genesis 1-11:26, the New American Commentary, Vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 135

<sup>3</sup> Quicunque Vult, BCP Church of Nigeria (2007) p 43

<sup>4</sup> Paraclete: This is Greek word transferred into English to mean comforter or Advocate

<sup>5</sup> Ikechi Nwachukwu Nwosu, Baptism of Jesus & Christian Baptism (Neighbourhood Writers and Publications) 2016, pp 43-51

<sup>6</sup> David Watson, One in the Spirit (Hachette UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973) 20-25.

convince the unredeemed persons both of the sinfulness of their actions, and of their moral standing as sinners before God, and then converting such persons to God; the Holy Spirit also empowers, endues, sustains, comforts, teaches and inspires the believer in Christ. No doubt, we live in the age of the Holy Spirit. At this time, Holy Spirit is very alive in fulfilling the divine plan and purpose of redemption in this world through the Church. From start to finish, the pilgrimage of every Christian and indeed the life and faith of the ecclesia revolve on the Holy Spirit. Put it more succinctly, there is no Christian life without the Holy Spirit! For Augustine, “the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church.”<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit’s work in the church is more concisely discussed under three headings: Holiness, unity and mission.

### **Holiness (Maturity in Christ):**

Maturity in Christ is the ongoing process of spiritual growth in the life of a believer that is geared towards conformity to Christ’s image. Holiness, in one word, is Christ likeness. “As the children of God, Christians must demonstrate Christ likeness - a behaviour that avoids entanglement with the world.”<sup>8</sup> Paul travailed in prayers for his audience to have this experience (Gal.14:19). Holiness is a crucial theme in the Bible both as God’s gift and His command. Believers are called ‘holy’ because of their unique relationships to Jesus that set them apart for a special purpose. Being holy does not make them ethically perfect and sinless, but it changes them so that they can start to live a pure and holy lifestyle. Holiness is the fruit of the spirit displayed in our lives as we walk by the Spirit with Christ every day (Gal. 5:16, 22,25). The pursuit of holiness – becoming like Jesus, should be a priority for every Christian. It is true that when a new believer encounters Christ, he experiences a dramatic change in his life; however, maturity in Christ is achieved only as the new believer grows in experience. This is to say that whereas spirituality is a possibility for a believer immediately upon conversion, maturity takes time as the believer yields to the Holy Spirit’s leading. In keeping with the scriptures and the character of God, the believer is called unto maturity in Christ (Holiness). The realization of this goal is possible only by supernatural power such as is provided by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer provides a limitless and constant source of spiritual energy. ...He builds up His Church through this Holy Spirit by miraculously changing lives”.<sup>9</sup> This experience is not negotiable as long as one is in Christ. God is both holy and perfect; He wants His children to follow suit (see 1 Peter 1:15-16; Matthew 5:48).

Maturity in Christ requires a radical reordering of priorities, regulation of appetite, submission of will to God and learning to obey God in everything. The keys to maturity in Christ are consistency and perseverance in spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines include Bible study, prayer, fellowship, discipleship and stewardship. Paul argues that the only way to spiritual discipline is for the believer to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). When we become Christians, we are given all we need for maturity in Christ. Peter tells us that God’s divine

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<sup>7</sup> Saint Augustine, *On the Day of Pentecost*, trans. Edmund Hill, in vol. 7 of the works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Sermons on liturgical Seasons: Part III – Sermons, ed. John E. Rotelle (New Rochelle, NY: New City, 1993), 276.

<sup>8</sup> William D. Barrick, *Sanctification: the Work of the Holy Spirit and Scripture*. MSJ 21(2) (Fall 2010), 179

<sup>9</sup> GAFCON DECLARATION 2018 paragraph (14)

power “...has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence” (2Peter 1:3). Although on conversion, the Christian is called to serve God, yet an effective Christian stewardship is the by-product of maturity in Christ.<sup>10</sup> Holiness is the precondition for enjoying the happiness of fellowship with God. It is the precondition for our usefulness to God. In Luke 1:74-75, Zachariah prophetically expressed: “...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. In the area of Church leadership, it takes a matured Christian to rise and contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the Saints (Jude 3)

The Church, in order to remain faithful to her God and calling, should entrust her teaching and leadership ministry to faithful men, matured believers who will be able to teach others, as the mission unfolds and progresses (2Tim.2:2). A Christian is born of and by the word. Through this same word we are disciplined and groomed into Christian maturity.<sup>11</sup> The catalyst that quickens maturity in Christ is the Holy Spirit within the believer. However, the ministry of the Spirit is not automatic, and is not effective without cooperation on the part of the individual, hence the command in 1Thess.5:19 “Quench not the Spirit.” There can be no achievement of moral purpose of God in the life of the believer apart from an intimate and vital relationship between the guidance and direction of the Spirit and the life of the individual. The Galatians Christians started their Christian life really well. They were saved by grace. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, but they failed to continue living that way and began to revert back to their old ways of life, Paul did not spare them (Gal.3:1ff). The partnership (fellowship) of the believer and the indwelling Holy Spirit in all that is undertaken for God is absolutely essential to achieving the will of God. It is because of this obvious requirement for achieving excellence in moral experience that the believer is exhorted in Eph.4:30 “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Thus, the necessity of a close fellowship with the Holy Spirit through the yielding of heart is indispensable to achieving the moral excellence for a life that is truly honouring to God.

### **Uniting us together in Christ:**

By unity, we mean that unique grace of the Holy Spirit which brings diverse people together irrespective of their race, gender, tribe and social backgrounds in celebration and single-minded devotion to the love and gospel of Jesus Christ, and demonstrating its life-changing power to a watching world. It is the oneness that shines with self-authenticating glory for the world to see – glory of His holiness as expressed by Christ in John 17:22 “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.” This glory emanates from Christ whom we are united with – “I in them and you (Father) in me” (John 17:23). Therefore, the ultimate aim of unity in Christ is for the glory of God to be revealed

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<sup>10</sup> Ikechi Nwachukwu Nwosu, *Consecrating a servant in the Bishop*; Neighbourhood Writers & Publishers (2017) pp 74-75

<sup>11</sup> Chigozirim Onyegbule, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth*, Skillmarks (2009) p 203. See also John P. Richardson, *A strategy that changes the Denomination: Anglican Evangelicals, the conversion of England and the transformation of Anglican Church*, LuLu, Raleigh NC (2011) pp74-78

both in the church and in the world. Paul prays, "... the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom.15:5-7). The gathering of Anglicans, arising from the assault of heretical teaching on human sexuality and liberal approach to Bible interpretation gave rise to GAFCON.<sup>12</sup>

Often times, we are tempted to pray for the unity of the church. This is a theological error, which must be avoided by all means. One of the peculiar marks of the Christian calling is to preserve or keep the unity of the spirit in the **bond of peace** (Eph.4:3). The church is already united in Spirit as Jesus prayed for in John 17:21 "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And our responsibility is to keep this unity by pursuing the things that make for peace in our day to day lives.

Note that the Spirit (in Eph. 4:3) is capitalized. It refers to the unity provided by the Holy Spirit. It is a unity which we can never produce. We are not even asked to do so. Christian unity (the unity of the Spirit) is a unity which starts within and works outward through organic life, like we see in a flower or in human body.

There is a spiritual dynamics, a spiritual unity, which gives rise to more visible forms of unity. The Holy Spirit is the root dynamic.<sup>13</sup> And the first expression of this unity is a transforming faith through which all believers might find themselves already united... The classical way of framing God's relationship to humanity (the economic Trinity) is that the Father works through the Son in the Spirit. By the spirit we are the habitation of God (Eph 2:18-22)... More specifically, our experience of the Father and Son is mediated through the presence and "communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:13). Through the communion of the Spirit we participate in the mutual love or perichoretic unity (mutual indwelling) of the Triune God.

There is diversity in unity, not uniformity. A body of believers united in the truth of the Gospel. <sup>14</sup>The parts do not look alike, they do not function alike, yet, they are all important, needed, interdependent, and all work toward the same end, the purpose for which each member was designed in the function of the body as directed by the head and in accord with the creative purpose of God.

It is the Holy Spirit who frees our hearts from irrational, self-defensive prejudices so that we are willing to own up to true convictions about Christ (1 Cor. 2:14-16). It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to have faith in Christ and to cry out to God with confidence, "Abba, Father"

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<sup>12</sup> Theophilus Usikaro, Basic Principles and Practices of Anglicans. Holy Trinity Printing Press: Warri (2013) p100. This is not to say that GAFCON has solved the problem of Christian disunity, Evangelicals and Pentecostals are not easy to lead and or to agree on many biblical issues. I could not agree less with Richardson who says that leading Evangelicals is like trying to herd cats! Cf. Richardson opcit pp 79-80

<sup>13</sup> John Mark Hicks, "The Holy Spirit and Unity", Lexinton Theological Quarterly (June, 2011), 208

<sup>14</sup> Ikechi Nwachukwu Nwosu, Priesthood of All believers: The Episcopal Ministry, Synod Presidential Address 2017 p 53. Also GAFCON DECLARATION 2008 opcit paragraph 14

(Rom. 8:15-16). And it is the Holy Spirit who bears the fruit of love in our lives and gives us a common care for each other (Gal.5:22). So our common convictions and confidence and care are all from the Holy Spirit. Therefore Paul calls it the “unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3). In the church, the Holy Spirit also brings *fellowship* instead of *factions* (Acts 4:32). “And the congregation of those who believed was of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.” It is always the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire unity among members in the local church.

The rationale for unity in Christ is so the ministry of outreach to the lost will not be hindered. There is far more unity than mere atmosphere of sweet friendliness and fraternity. Our unity is grounded in our understanding of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom lifestyle, which we are all called into. <sup>15</sup>“...we are committed to the unity of all those who know and love Christ...we celebrate the God-given diversity...” We exist as a ‘body’ because we share fellowship with the Trinity.

This makes us one in God’s kingdom irrespective of our tribal, racial, gender, and social differences. Thus, no human ideology or sentiments should influence, replace, adulterate or even expunge this understanding from our consciousness. Doctrinal unity recognizes that we have one God, one faith, one baptism and one hope. The unity of the believers is fuelled by the realization of the persons of the Godhead<sup>16</sup> – a grand tri-unity of absolute perfection (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4; John 10:30), which the church is called to imitate or resemble. The Church does not unite in Christ for frivolities, tribalism, selfish gratification and carnality; the church unites in righteousness as a tangible and glaring evangelical proof to the world. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Thus, unity among believers is a divine initiative, created by and located in the divine life; it is enabled and empowered by divine agency; and it is the experience of the divine life.

### ***Preparing and moving us Forward for Mission:***

Gallagher<sup>17</sup> reasoned that the role of the Holy Spirit in missions has received a lot of scholarly attention in recent decades primarily due to the rise of Pentecostalism. On the other hand, Lee was of the opinion that the modern debate over the role of the Holy Spirit in missions was ignited by the Pentecostals whose emotional excesses (in the eyes of some evangelicals), along with their teaching of baptisms in God’s Spirit, miracles, and tongues as a proof of salvation, caused upheavals in mainline denominations and controversy for evangelicals in general.<sup>18</sup> In any case, the long existing orthodox truth is that the Trinity influences the purpose, process and product of mission. Hence it is called ‘Trinitarian Mission’. This suggests that the orthodox faith has always believed that the starting place for considering the

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<sup>15</sup> GAFCON DECLARATION 2008 paragraphs 11-12, Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Robert L. Gallagher, “The Forgotten Factor: The Holy Spirit and Mission in protestant Missiological Writings from 1945-1955,” in *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission*, ed. Charles Van Engen, Nancy Thomas, and Robert Gallagher (Monrovia, CA: MARC,1999),200

<sup>18</sup> Jang Woo Lee, “Power Evangelism in the Third Wave Movement and its Implications for Contemporary Church Growth” (Ph.D. diss: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), 40-42.

spiritual dynamics of mission must be in recognizing the interplay of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the mission enterprise

Biblically, the point of departure for the Trinitarian mission approach was clearly presented by Jesus Christ in John 20:21-22 when he said, ‘... as the Father has sent me, I am sending you’. And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘receive the Holy Spirit’. In the context of Jesus’ statement, the Father is the sender, the Lord of the harvest; the incarnated Son is the model embodiment of the Father’s mission in the world; and the Holy Spirit is the divine empowering presence for the entire mission.<sup>19</sup>

Harold Lindsell<sup>20</sup> notes two major obstacles facing those who seek to reassert the Holy Spirit’s role in missions: the human tendency toward self-reliance and ecclesiastical bureaucracies which inhibit one from following any guidance of the Holy Spirit which breaks policy. The mission of the church is, in reality, a continuation of Christ’s earthly ministry (John 14:12). For Jesus, redeeming men’s souls was His whole purpose for coming to the earth. Hence His word: “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost” (Matt.18:11). The Bible is seen as the authoritative revelation of the Holy Spirit’s role in missions. It reveals that the continuation of Christ’s earthly ministry is sustained and perfected by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 16:8 “And when He (the Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...” The Holy Spirit calls sinners into the saving knowledge of Christ.

There is a relationship between the outward call of the Gospel preaching by the Church through the help of the Holy Spirit and the inward call of the Spirit; the outward call of Gospel preaching must be accompanied by this inward call of the Spirit in convicting a person of sin, righteousness, and of judgment, if he is to be saved.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the Holy Spirit does not only call sinners into the saving knowledge of Christ, but also calls the saints into the Ministry of the Gospel (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit guides and empowers the Church to live out her mission in this world. Not only does the Holy Spirit change the convert’s heart, He also indwells the heart of the believer to guide and direct him in fulfilling divine mandate (John 14:16-18; 2 Cor.1:22; Gal. 4:6). This suggests that all Christians are duty bound to evangelize, to preach the good news of salvation in Christ (Matt.28:18-20). In a sense, Christians are all full-time Church workers; we are called to be witnesses for Christ. In our respective occupations, in our various places of work, we ought to testify for God in our speech and in our deeds. The immediate area of ministry would be our Jerusalem: those closest to us – our family and relatives; then our Samaria: neighbours, friends and colleagues at the work place; lastly to the uttermost part: strangers. “...we gladly accept the great Commission of the Risen Lord to make disciples of all nations”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jang Woo Lee, “Power Evangelism in the Third Wave Movt. and its Implications for Contemporary Church Growth” (Ph.D. diss: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), 40-42.

<sup>20</sup> Harold Lindsell, *An Evangelical Theology of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) pp 214-215

<sup>21</sup> T.C Tennent, *Invitation To World Mission: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, (2010), 75

<sup>22</sup> GAFCON DECLARATION 2008 opcit paragraph { 19 6 }

Even though the power of the Holy Spirit is responsible for the conversion and regenerative work in the heart of the convert, the role of witness and proclamation by human messengers is not to be diminished as suggested by Jerry Rankin.<sup>23</sup> The Holy Spirit makes Witnesses out of Weaklings. Jesus said in Acts 1:8 "...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." The Church has been called to participate in God's mission in the world. But it can only take the Holy Spirit to empower the Church for this all important assignment. Gary Tyra <sup>24</sup>employs a biblical theology of the Holy Spirit to deepen and inform our understanding of life as the Church, the people of God. Since the Church's mission to and into the world is both evangelistic and prophetic, the task calls for the working of the Spirit in our preaching, proclamation and service. Charismatic as well as evangelical grace is utilized to produce mission results.<sup>25</sup> The Holy Spirit empowers the believers to act on Jesus' behalf today here on earth operating in signs, wonders, and miracles like Jesus did and released His disciples to do in the Gospels. Jesus challenged and encouraged his disciples that they can do even more as He did (John 14:12). The Holy Spirit also produces growth without gimmicks, manipulations and human mechanism. Acts 4:33 reveals: "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all." The Holy Spirit's missionary task in all places is the building of Christ's Church (Matt.16:18). The establishment of Churches, therefore, is central to the Holy Spirit's work in missions. Besides bringing people to God, the Church is to gather God's people together and facilitate a corporate environment of worship that provokes spiritual rejuvenation and growth. The Church should be an atmosphere of spiritual edification, where God's Word is taught, where believers are grounded, disciple and led toward maturity. The Holy Spirit involves believers in the building process by giving them spiritual gifts ((1 Cor.12). To mature believers and prepare them to perform works of ministry, "He gave some to be Apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body Christ..." (Eph.4:11-12).

The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit, thus Church planters who intend to apply principles of Church growth are warned not to forget the role of the Holy Spirit in the process. Besides the immediate empowerment of the disciples, the coming of the Holy Spirit led to the inauguration of Christ's Church causing it to spread beyond Jerusalem and eventually, through Paul's ministry, to the Gentile world (Acts 2:42-47; 9:31). The implication thereof is: "the presence of a church in the world is Christ's antiseptic to sin, and influence of God's righteousness that tends to displace the infection of evil. The Church is intended to represent his interests in the affairs of the society. It was never intended to be passive, nor to be confined within four walls of a building, but to

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<sup>23</sup> Jerry Rankin, *To the Ends of the Earth: Empowering Kingdom Growth: Churches Fulfilling the Great Commission* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 83.

<sup>24</sup> Gary Tyra, *Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and action in Christian witness* (Inter-Varsity press. 2011), 48

<sup>25</sup> Dale A. Robbins, "what People Ask the Church", retrieved from <http://www.victorious.org> on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2018.

be involved as a catalyst of God’s high ideals in the world around us.” According to the World council of Churches:

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. Experiencing life in the Spirit is to taste life in its fullness; the Holy Spirit meets us and challenges us at all levels of life, and brings newness and change to the places and times of our personal and collective journeys<sup>26</sup>.

### **Conclusion:**

The Church was conceived by God, established by Christ with His Blood, and is being sustained by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the faith and life of the Church must attest to this very fact. To ignore this spiritual arrangement is to be eternally irrelevant to God’s prophetic agenda for the Church. We must not relegate the Holy Spirit to the background in all our theological discourses and programmes; He is our inspiration and energy! Whatever the church has ever needed and will ever need is accessible by her affinity with the Holy Spirit. The Church only needs to submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit for divine-oriented results in this world. John the Baptist moved away from the physical Temple in the wilderness as a lesson.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ikechi Nwachukwu Nwosu, Jesus Christ, The Temple and us. Neighbourhood Writers and Publications (2016) p 2

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Thoughts for Group Discussion Ensuring that thoughts have backing from the Holy Bible

*\*(each group should be made up of 30-40 persons, have a leader and secretary for recording)*

1. How does the presence of the Holy Spirit influence personality?
2. The Church leadership insists on maturity, who identifies confirms "maturity"?
3. The Church is united in the Spirit already by virtue of Christ's prayer. Can denominationalism be looked at from this angle?

4. The issue of unity in diversity in the church is most possible when the ultimate focus is on the Triune God. What challenges are there for GAFCON to keep pursuing this?
5. What practical ways can we rely solely on the Holy Spirit for successful mission in the appointments of credible leaders?
6. What are the stages of mission, and what difficulties are there in emphasis on empirical evidence for success before embarking on mission?
7. The Church is called to be holy in an increasingly godless society. Suggest a structure that can help the church achieve this.
8. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is not realistic until it is translated into social action. Comment
9. Sometimes it looks like some Christians now guide the Holy Spirit into some 'truth' instead of the Holy Spirit guiding us, with specific reference to modernized theology. Discuss with specific reference to Archbishop Jensen's and David Binder's SIN AND ERROR IN THE CHURCH ([www.GAFCON.org](http://www.GAFCON.org)), see APPENDIX
10. If the present day church must witness the full influence of the Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit must be given a full right of place in Christian theological institutions. Discuss.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Sin and Error in the Church**

One of the most striking things about the Bible is its reality. It has often been observed, for example that only one of its heroes – the Son of God himself – is without sin. Sometimes the sins of the saints are very serious indeed.

The Bible's reality includes its description of the Church. As Menu Acts 4 draws to its conclusion with a description of the wonderful generosity of Christian people to those in need, we may think that the presence of the Spirit has led to instant and complete holiness. Then comes the story of Ananias and Sapphira to bring us back to reality. Grievous sin exists in the Church itself. Sometimes those who sin are merely outward Christians; sometimes their faith is much more than that.

And so in page after page of the NT we have the same testimony. One of the key obligations for receiving the Supper of the Lord is that people who have offended each other are reconciled (1 Corinthians 11). Paul has to urge that two women workers become reconciled (Philippians 4:2-3). Paul himself had a sharp conflict with Barnabas about Mark (Acts 15:37-40). Peter had to be rebuked by Paul (Galatians 2). And so the list goes on, including serious offences such as sexual immorality, greed and litigiousness (I Corinthians 5-6) and false teaching; (2 Peter 2).

Why am I talking about this?

Because I heard a strange argument recently. When the question of sexual ethics and the teaching of the Bible was raised with a senior leader, the reply was – well look how bad your church is. There followed a long list of sins and offences, some of them very serious: corruption, adultery, strife, false teaching. This is all very tragic. But it is not equivalent to changing the doctrine of the church and actually blessing what God condemns.

I am sorry to say, having been Bishop now for many years that nothing would surprise me. Indeed, knowing my own heart, nothing would surprise me. Indeed knowing the Bible, nothing would surprise me. Our own doctrine tells us how bad we are, even though the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts. Our own Prayer Book majors on the confession of sins and with very weighty words indeed. And I hope our practice assumes the possibility of sin and even crime in our midst – it is always wise for two people to count the offertory for example.

Of course this is not the whole story. Christian people, blessed by the Holy Spirit of God are being transformed from one degree of glory to another. The Christian church so often shines in the darkness and Christians live for God sacrificially and lovingly. But this side of eternity we are far from perfect.

But that is what puzzled and worried me about this argument. It was as though the person did not know how bad the church can be and is in his own culture. You can find tribalism, sexual immorality and false teaching in all the churches. You may even find the leadership turning a blind eye to it. But– it is one thing to point to the sins of the church. It is another thing altogether to justify an official change in doctrine and practice to incorporate them! After all, no-one is pretending that greed is good or that corruption is Christian. But many are actually officially changing the teaching and practice of the church in a way which denies scripture. That is the problem.

You cannot justify your own doctrinal failure by pointing out that other people are sinful.