

## EXCERPT



### *Welcome, Holy Spirit* *A Theological and Experiential Introduction*

October 5, 2021 | \$22, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5388-5

*"In an age bubbling with numerous spiritualities, Dr. Smith, in this book, has given us a gift: a biblical, pastoral, and practical guide for what it means to discern and obey God the Holy Spirit so that God the Son and God the Father are magnified in our time."*

**Domenic Ruso**, founding planter of the 180 Church in Québec and faculty member at diverse theological schools across Canada

## A Fresh Understanding of the Holy Spirit

When we consider the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a Christian believer, we need to talk about three things. First, we reflect on what it means to receive the gift of the Spirit as a dimension of Christian initiation. Second, we also need to have clarity about the goal of the Christian life—that is, to what end is the Spirit at work in our lives? And then, third, we need to consider the *means* by which the Spirit works to bring us to maturity in Christ. These are the beginning, the destination, and the *means* by which we come to this destination. The primary focus of this chapter will be on how the Spirit fulfills within us this ideal of human flourishing. But first, we need to look at the goal of the Christian life, to then set the stage for a consideration of the transforming work of the Spirit.

Whether we have language for it or not, everyone longs to be complete—to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. In the same way that a child longs to grow up into adulthood and a person who is unwell physically or emotionally longs for healing and wholeness, there is within each of us a yearning to achieve our human capacity and potential—to become, one might say, the kind of person we were created to be.

The good news is that we have the capacity to be all that God created us to be through the gracious and sanctifying work of the Spirit. The Spirit is given such that we can know the transforming grace of God by which we are made whole and fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

There are several metaphors in Scripture for the Christian life and the work of the Spirit in our lives. There is the powerful image of sickness and health: we are sin-sick souls and the Spirit is the means by which we know healing and wholeness. There is also the metaphor of the journey: the Christian is on a pilgrimage to a desired destination, following Christ and guided by the Spirit to the "heavenly city." Then there is the powerful image of infancy and maturity. A new Christian is an infant in the faith and is called to move from infancy toward what it means to be mature—an adult faith. Thus 1 Peter 2:2 and the following verses speak of infants who mature as they are fed by the word, and Colossians 2:6-7 speaks of how, now that we have received Christ Jesus as Lord, we grow up, rooted in Christ, but moving toward the very maturity that Paul speaks of in the closing verses of Colossians 1 as our destiny.

One of the great dangers in the church is what we might call the propensity toward a kind of infantilization, or what Timothy Bergler calls "juvenilization." Rather than cultivating genuine spiritual growth toward maturity—and adult faith—we foster instead a contentment with an adolescent faith, fed by entertaining public speaking or approaches to shared worship that do not call us to depth and breadth in our experience of God.

Whatever the shape of our congregational life or worship, the Spirit's agenda is surely one of nudging, pressing, calling, and animating us toward maturity. If we are walking in the Spirit, we will sense this constant movement in our hearts and lives toward an adult faith. We receive the gift of the Spirit at Christian initiation; now we learn to walk in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit, and respond to the calling and movement of the Spirit in our lives and in our communities that leads us and empowers us on this journey.

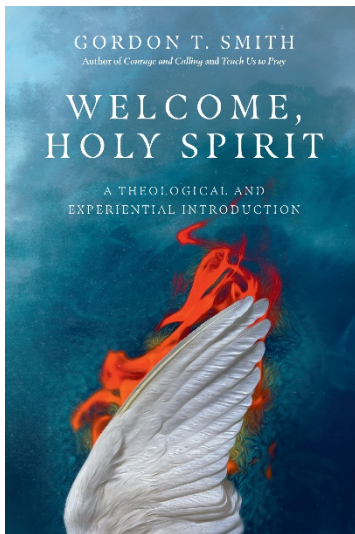


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We need to affirm again and again something that is basic to the life and witness of the church: that spiritual growth toward maturity is a requirement and expectation; it is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian believer. Indeed, I will be speaking to this in an upcoming chapter as a high priority for what it means to be the church. But for now, in this context, I am going to speak about the individual Christian who, while in fellowship and in mutual dependence within Christian community, is called to move from infancy to maturity, from beginnings to the full measure of the human vocation.

The goal of the Christian can be delineated in different ways, but it all comes down to this: we are called to be mature in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul states this pointedly in a number of places, including Ephesians, where the call is that we would all grow up to him who is our head, Christ Jesus. That is, the apostle longs for his readers to no longer be tossed back and forth as children but grow to maturity, which is described as "the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-14). Then, when we turn to Colossians 1:27-30 and 2:6-7, here too we see that the vision of the Christian life is radically christocentric: Christ in you the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). The work of the apostle is to present each one mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28). Having received Christ Jesus as Lord, they are then to be rooted and established in him (Colossians 2:7). Our deep longing and aspiration is to know, love, and serve Christ. It is thus the intent of the Spirit that Christ would be formed within us (Galatians 4:19). Beyond this, it is helpful, not apart from but *in Christ*, to speak of four aspects of Christian maturity—four dimensions of what it means to fulfill our identity and purpose as Christian believers.

To be mature in Christ is to become increasingly wise: to move from ignorance and foolishness to knowledge and understanding that finds ultimate expression in wisdom. To be mature in Christ is to be a wise person. This includes, as we see from the book of Proverbs, moral intelligence: integrity of speech, sexuality, and finances. And it is the fruit of teaching; we attend to wise teachers so that we grow in wisdom.

Second, to be mature in Christ is to know what it means to love others as we have been loved, and then in turn to live in love with and for others. Just as the church is a teaching-learning community that grows in wisdom, it is also a school of love where we learn what it means to be hospitable to one another, to forgive one another, and to serve each other.

Then third, to be mature in Christ is to have clarity about vocation—to know what one is called to speak and do so that at any given time we are able to say, as Christ said in his prayer to the Father, that "I have completed the work that you gave me to do." We learn to live not with frenetic busyness or in despair, but with hope and courage. We live and work in a way that reflects the deep call of God on our lives.

And then, fourth, we need to speak about *emotional* holiness—the capacity to live not with fear or anger or discouragement but with hope that is evident in a resilient joy. When the Spirit is present in our lives, we grow in hope and joy, even in the midst of suffering and difficulty.

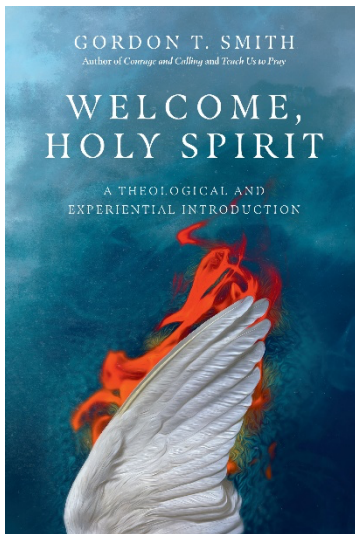


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This is but one vision of the Christian life and what it means to be mature in Christ. The main point is that if we are speaking about the Spirit, we need to be aware of what we believe the Spirit is up to in our lives, in our world, and in the church. Our pneumatology needs to be about tending to what we recognize the Spirit is doing. Further, the Spirit's work in our lives is not foreign or burdensome. Rather, we long for wisdom; we long to love as we are loved; we long to do good work—the very work we are called to do—and we long to live with a resilient joy. And so, we pray that the Spirit would come and do precisely what the Spirit does: to transform us into the image of Christ.

—Adapted from chapter five, "The Spirit and Transformation"



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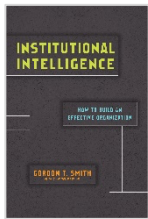
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How can we cultivate both fresh understanding and fresh experience of the Holy Spirit, no matter what our theological tradition? This much-needed master class on pneumatology from Gordon Smith encourages us to hold biblical convictions firmly but gracefully as the guiding principles of discernment and humility help us intentionally live Spirit-responsive lives day by day.

## **New from the Author of *Courage and Calling***

**Gordon T. Smith** (PhD, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University) is the president of Ambrose University and Seminary in Calgary, Alberta, where he also serves as professor of systematic and spiritual theology. He is an ordained minister with the Christian and Missionary Alliance and a teaching fellow at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. He is the author of many books, including *Institutional Intelligence*, *Courage and Calling*, *Called to Be Saints*, and *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal*.

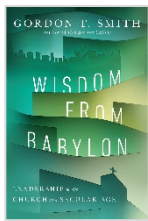
Also by Gordon T. Smith:



### ***Institutional Intelligence: How to Build an Effective Organization***

November 3, 2020 | \$25, 240 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4714-3

We tend to view institutions cynically, but they are essential to human flourishing and thriving communities. Focusing on the nonprofit sector, Gordon Smith unpacks the core of institutional intelligence, showing team leaders, directors, executives, board members, and employees how to work effectively within the institutional character of their organizations.



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### ***Teach Us to Pray***

April 17, 2018 | \$16, 112 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4521-7

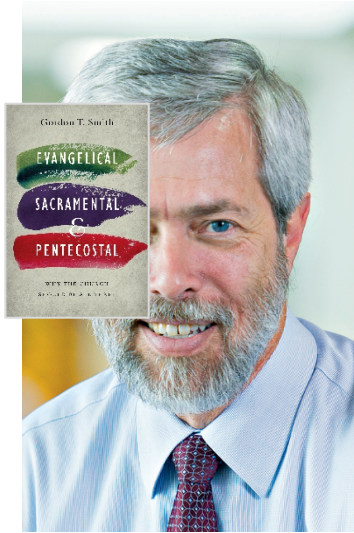
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## BIO



***Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should Be All Three***

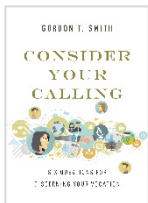
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March 21, 2017 | \$18, 143 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5160-7

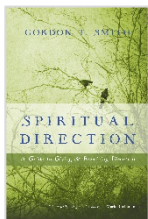
Christians tend to divide into three camps: evangelical, sacramental, and pentecostal. But must we choose between them? Drawing on the New Testament, Christian history, and years of experience in Christian ministry, Gordon T. Smith argues that the church not only *can* be all three but in fact *must* be all three in order to truly be the church.



### ***Consider Your Calling: Six Questions for Discerning Your Vocation***

December 31, 2015 | \$17, 128 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4607-8

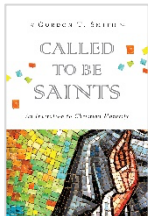
What is the good work to which I am called? Gordon T. Smith acknowledges that this is not a simple question to answer in the midst of our very complicated lives. That's why he has written this brief and accessible book—to help us explore six core questions we need to ask in order to discover our calling, in community with God and others.



### ***Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction***

March 7, 2014 | \$17, 103 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3579-9

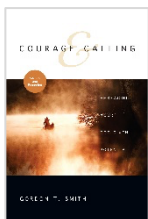
God gives us companions on our journey. A spiritual director is one such companion, offering spiritual guidance. Whether you are a director, a directee or simply someone who wants to learn more about this ancient ministry, this comprehensive introduction to the art of both giving and receiving spiritual direction will be a helpful guide.



### ***Called to Be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity***

December 5, 2013 | \$28, 256 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4030-4

Theologies of justification are too numerous to count. In this book, Gordon Smith synthesizes a lifetime of writing on calling, conversion, discernment, and spiritual formation in a comprehensive and compelling theology of sanctification. Smith presents holiness in its christological, sapiential, vocational, social, and emotional dimensions.



### ***Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential*** by Gordon T. Smith

March 31, 2011 | \$20, 269 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3554-6

What is my calling? How do I best live it out? Will my vocation change? In this revised edition of his popular book, Gordon Smith addresses these and other questions you may be struggling with. And he leads you through a process to discover your vocation by listening to God and becoming a coworker with him.



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