



The Holy Spirit and the Frozen Chosen | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Call it Holy Spirit Adventism, the kind that throws its arms around Jesus' promise (John 16) that he will bear us all, through the Spirit, toward the new, toward a faithfulness fully liberated from ruts and rigidity.

Bureaucracies get nervous around the Holy Spirit. The young as outspoken as the old; the powerless talking change and sounding off like prophets—it's discombobulating. But it's also...*how the Gospel unthaws the frozen chosen.* The Jesus movement...*moves*; it's too wild for confinement.

I have no formal connection with the One Project, but in February I was present and grateful when this year's American "gathering" convened in Seattle. Under gray skies and light, light rain (only tourists carry umbrellas), 1,000 people assembled in the Westin Hotel, some saying this was their "camp meeting."

Attention zeroed in on Jesus' "Final Week," the gathering's theme, and for how it played out over two days you can still search the *Spectrum* website. Now I want only to comment on the One Project's overall perspective. Simply put, it's Yes to Jesus and No to ruts and rigidity. The One Project thus echoes, I would say, the precise nuance of gospel teaching about the Holy Spirit. John 16 declares that *God's presence as "the Spirit of truth" propels us into change (difficult as that may be) while retaining focus, all the while, on the Jesus story.* If we could all boom out a simultaneous "Amen" to that overall perspective, it might shake the foundations of Adventism. Then, perhaps, there could be *real* reformation and revival.

This year, three speakers referred to July 8, 2015; when delegates to the General Conference session in San Antonio voted (against the majority advice of specially appointed scholars from around the world) to exclude women from full equality in ordained ministry. Two of these speakers mentioned the date itself, not just the event, making me think that July 8, 2015 could be Adventism's sec-

ond-greatest disappointment, after October 22, 1844.

It's a dark reminder, certainly, of bureaucratic resistance to the Holy Spirit. Jesus made it clear, after all, that the Spirit would nudge true disciples toward deeper embodiment of the radical welcome He preached and lived. His words and deeds undermined any basis for exclusion other than sheer refusal to respond (Matthew 18), and led Paul, just a few years later, to exclaim that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor even "male and female" (Galatians 3:28). Inside the church, status distinctions based on luck—your color or gender; your language or circumstance—simply dissolve.

Sin-twisted souls balk at this. That's why, at His last meal, Jesus held His tongue even when He had more things to say—"[Y]ou cannot bear them now," He told His inner circle (again, John 16). But over time the Spirit would guide His followers to a deeper grasp of gospel unity and grace.

The One Project gets this. Old ideas may need a take-down, old practices an overhaul or a replacement. One preacher at this year's gathering surmised that Judas failed for "putting God in a box." Judas thought he knew all about God, and shut up the divine in a space of his own devising. But instead of lapsing into self-satisfaction about what God is up to, what you have to do, the preacher said, is this: You have to let God "blow the lid off the box."

Exactly. But who can allow such a thing? ■

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.

