

**'Baptise us with your Spirit, majestic, humble Christ' by Brian Wren (*Singing the Faith* 369)**

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Baptise us with your Spirit,  
majestic, humble Christ,  
to overcome temptation;  
assailed, but not enticed.  
Baptise us with your Spirit,  
that in each other's eyes  
we may discern your purpose,  
and cast away disguise.

Baptise us with your Spirit  
to careful, patient, thought,  
and habit-forming virtues  
aspired to, copied, taught,  
till clothed with new creation,  
self-critical, reformed,  
we demonstrate the gospel,  
to you alone conformed.

Baptise us with your Spirit  
in unrestricted ways  
that move us, mind and body,  
to laugh and shout your praise.  
Send us to clear the rubble  
of each defensive wall,  
inviting to your table  
our neighbours, one and all.

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There is an intimate and inseparable union between Christ and the Christian. What happens to Jesus happens to us. The crucial events in Christ's life are recapitulated in the life of the believer. Christ dies to himself in the surrender of the cross; Christians die to themselves in the life of faith. They are crucified with Christ. Christ is raised to new life by God the Father; Christians are raised to new life in Christ, in the life of faith. Christ ascends into heaven; Christians make the same journey to the Father in the life of faith.

Brian Wren's hymn reminds us that, in that life of faith, all Christians share in yet another central event in the life of Christ – his baptism. Christ's baptism and ours are also intimate and inseparable.

Central to Christ's baptism was his being anointed by the Spirit (for example in Luke 3: 21-22). In the life of faith, as the Spirit descends on Christ, so the Spirit of Christ descends on the Christian. Two moments in the same mystery: Christ's baptism and his receiving of the Spirit; our baptism and our receiving of the Spirit. According to St Paul, Christians who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Christ.

So our prayer to Christ is that he will baptise us with the Spirit with which he was baptised. And always for good purposes. The baptism of Christ and his receiving the Spirit were prerequisites for his subsequent temptations. No gift of the Spirit – no victory in temptation.

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Christians have always understood the temptations of Christ as a preparation for Jesus' public ministry. Once and for all Jesus had to decide what sort of a Messiah he was going to be. What sort of a Christ was he not going to be. God's purpose for Jesus had to be crystal clear.

Baptise us with your Spirit,  
that in each other's eyes  
we may discern your purpose,  
and cast away disguise.

The real Jesus had to stand up. As we pray to be baptised with Christ's Spirit, God's purpose for us becomes clear. In the baptismal life who we are meant to be emerges. We 'cast away disguise'.

No image was more important to Paul than the new creation in Christ. In baptism, new life in Christ begins. As we receive the Spirit of Christ we are transformed into the likeness of Christ. If I am to be Christ-like in character I must be Christ-like in my expectation of the Spirit. In the pilgrim's upward ascent, the 'habit-forming virtues aspired to, copied, taught' are all evidence of the new creation. The strongest evidence of our transformed baptismal life is what others see.

... till clothed with new creation,  
self-critical, reformed,  
we demonstrate the gospel,  
to you alone conformed.

Only those baptised with the Spirit of Christ 'demonstrate the gospel'. 'I wanted my life to be my argument', said the theologian and Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer. 'I wish to cry gospel by my whole life', wrote priest and martyr Charles de Foucauld.

Because our receiving the baptism of Christ means our receiving of the character of Christ we receive also the jubilation and exuberance of Christ. Baptism into Christ brings a profound release. 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive', declared the second century bishop, Irenaeus.

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in unrestricted ways  
that move us, mind and body,  
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The Cornish Methodist Billy Bray declared that as he walked the gospel life one foot shouted 'praise' and the other foot shouted 'Hallelujah'. Baptism is outward looking. Baptism in Christ always involves us in reconciliation. The community of the baptised is committed to the breaking down of barriers, to the collapsing of walls that divide. Baptismal life in Christ is as much about the transformation of society as it is about the transformation of the individual. Font and table are the twin foci of the gospel community. The Spirit invites all into

the transforming waters of baptism. The Spirit invites all to the transforming feast of the kingdom.

Send us to clear the rubble  
of each defensive wall,  
inviting to your table  
our neighbours, one and all.

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