

The Second Hand: The Role Of The Spirit In Ministerial Formation

David T Williams, University of Fort Hare

Abstract

It is the privilege and responsibility of the Church to continue God's work in the world as his agents. Just as the Father sent the Son to act for him in the world, so the Son sends his agents. And just as the Father equipped the Son with the power of the Spirit, so the work of the Church is likewise empowered. In keeping with the practice of agency, the Church has generally recognized the role of ministers, similarly empowered. God works through them, although far from exclusively, in Church and world.

In this case, preparation of ministers, and of all Christians for service, is spiritual. Nevertheless this cannot be to the exclusion of intellectual, even physical preparation, although the tragedy is that the intellectual has so often been so emphasized as to eclipse the spiritual. The two aspects interact, and are more effective when perceived to do so.

The Spirit then has a number of distinct functions in respect of his role. Firstly he empowers; without this, Christian work cannot be effective in its primary goal. Secondly, he calls specific people into specific roles, and in that identifies them as God's agents. Thirdly, he facilitates the relating of the roles in the Church, so relating the ministers to God, and also to other people and their ministries. Fourthly, he transforms and develops the life and talents of those he has appointed. All of these may be seen as aspects of sanctification, so are not simply events, but processes, in which there will naturally be specific events.