

# The value of glimpsing energy as spiritual

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An earlier column explored the meaning of spirit as the universal energy in creation including human life. The next thing to be said about spirit is that energy has to be structured or else there is only chaos. Paul Tillich, a great theologian of the 20th Century, defined spirit as “the unity of power and form.” A contemporary word for the form that spirit has is “information.”

Jeremy Campbell in *Grammatical Man* writes: “The view arose (after World War II) of information as an active agent, something that ... ‘informs’ the material world... Thus, information emerged as a universal principal at work in the world, giving shape to the shapeless, specifying the particular character of living forms and even helping to determine... the patterns of human thought.” (1992-on the dust cover of the book).

If we look at the information of the universal spirit in creation there is an enormous number of different things to see. We have come to think of the structures in creation in terms of atoms, molecules, cells, tissues, organs, species, and ecosystems, to mention only a few. We organize our knowledge of the information in creation into systems: physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, aesthetics, politics, economics, ecology and a plethora of other systems and sub-systems. In all this organization there may be no mention of spirit but if we have a spiritual orientation we affirm that spirit is central to all the different sectors of the organization in creation. Every system of information is expressive of spirit. Every system is subject to a test by the spirit of truth which is from the Creator Spirit who has made all the systems and exists within them.

The Bible knew the reality of this universal information and called it the Word of God. “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made.” (Psalm 33:6) John’s Gospel (1:1 ff.) says “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God... Without the Word was not anything made that was made” John goes on to say that this Word, this information, was embedded in the man Jesus whose information was the light of humanity. By the spirit of Jesus, therefore, Christians test the truth in any system in so far as it relates to the benevolence and intelligence found in Jesus.

The value of seeing this organization in terms of spirit and testing the spirit by the spirit in Jesus is that it helps prevent raising the importance of any one system to egregious dominance over the other systems. This mistake can be seen when a particular philosophy like apartheid, for example, prevails over the sciences of biology or sociology to insist on false values that are applied in those fields. Apartheid holds that one race is superior to others and should be treated accordingly in social and political organization. This is clearly wrong if tested by the spirit of Jesus. Another example is when the science of economics claims priority over all other systems of knowledge thereby authorizing wars and expenditures that impoverish or damage other systems in creation. The world’s continuing plague of starving people in which countless children die while an unrelenting arms race continues, is a glaring example of one or two system claiming inordinate primacy over all others.

To know and acknowledge the spirit of God present in all things as energy and information affirms that “we live and move and have our being in God.” This makes all of living holy, not just our religious

thoughts and activities, but our affairs in all our systems. We have the obligation to try and see that they are not against the spirit.



***Paul Newman** is a retired United Church minister, and retired Professor Emeritus of Theology at St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon. He lives in Sooke, Vancouver Island. He is author of *Humanity and Spirit: Reasons For Hope*; and *A Spirit Christology, Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith*.*