

18<sup>th</sup> September 2022

## Spirit

**"Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove."**

Margaret V Old, *Spirit of God*

The idea of breath is significant in Christian belief. At the beginning of the Bible we're told: "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In both Greek and Latin, one word is used for both breath and spirit (*pneuma* and *spiritus* respectively). The doctrine of The Holy Spirit – the "Breath of God" – is integral to Christian theology. This inspired the 19<sup>th</sup> century English Anglican priest, Edwin Hatch, to write one of my favourite hymns.

An academic most of his life – Professor of Classics at Trinity College, Toronto, and Vice-Principal of St Mary's Hall, Oxford, for example – Hatch was what the writer Ian Bradly describes as "a man of deep piety". Hatch's faith was as "simple and unaffected as a child's". Give me this simple faith in the Breath of God any time if it can create a such a hymn as Edwin Hatch offers to us. And, indeed, might Hatch's words not encapsulate the importance to the late Queen Elizabeth of faith in the Spirit of God?

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with thee I will one will,  
to do and to endure.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
till I am wholly thine,  
till all this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
so shall I never die,  
but live with thee the perfect life  
of thine eternity.*

### **A prayer for today**

*Breathe your Spirit on me, loving God, that I might do what you will have me do. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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