

The world is full of ko-oks, crooks and charlatans. It doesn't matter if it's business or politics, finance or medicine. The world is full of con artists, confidence tricksters and plain, good ole crims. Whether it be someone swindling pensioners out of their homes, the American Republican party selling false facts on Fox, emails from Nigerian princes asking for your banking details, or someone, somewhere, suggesting bleach as a sure-fire cure for covid, the world is full of shysters and snake oil salespeople.

And surprise, surprise, the church is no different. Whether it be people using their gifts to line their own pockets, get people to support questionable causes, or simply gain a platform for their Texas sized ego's, the church has its share of it all.

And if we're honest, most of that chicanery, revolves around the Holy Spirit. Whether it's speaking in tongues, prophesying the world's end, or asking you for your hard-earned.

There have been stories of gold dust falling on congregations, uncontrollable laughing, there was a movement many years ago characterised by involuntary shaking. Funnily enough they were called the shakers!

When I became a Christian in 1980, the Holy Spirit was a hot topic. In the country Baptist church where I was converted, it caused a real ruckus. You were for it or agin it, it caused a lot of problems.

As the Lord Jesus was the best thing that ever happened to me, I thought anything that promised more of him, was alright by a long shot. So, I was pretty keen ... but there were a lot of people in our church, who I respected a great deal, who weren't. So, I was a little unsure.

Janet's parents lived in Huntly. While we were there, we attended church. Janet's Mum and Dad had neighbours who went to the Assemblies of God, and they invited us along.

The first time, I was very unsure. The place was full and loud, I thought the welcomer wasn't particularly sincere, the singing went on and on. The minister kept popping up and down ... then ... all of a sudden, the music shifted into a higher gear and off they went. Praising the Lord, they called it. I couldn't understand a word of it, then suddenly, everything went quiet, and right behind us an angel starting singing. It was in English. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard. Kiri Te Kanawha had snuck into the service behind us; it was just magnificent.

As I stood listening to that incredible sound, I thought, if the Holy Spirit could produce beauty such as this, then this was all good, as far as I was concerned, I was in.

The thing was, when I turned around to see who this earth-bound angel was ... I nearly fell off my chair. It was an old Whia, who looked as if she had slept rough for a year, her hair was all over the place, and her were clothes even worse ... her dentures had gone walkabout, and there she was, beaming and glowing like a like a search light on a stormy night.

Her name was Queenie. She was a disguised Angel. Queenie was the Holy Spirit to me that day.

From that moment to this, I have been committed to the Holy Spirit that I heard in Queenies voice that morning in Huntly.

It is the power that opens graves. Rattle's bone. Stitches sinew. Covers with flesh and skin. Joins together and makes stand. It is the power that summons the four winds, shouts in a prophet's thunder. Creates a vast multitude from the dead.

It is the sound of a violent wind, a tongue of fire, the power of preaching in languages not learned. It is the giver of visions, knowledge, and dreams. It is the promise of all that is to come. It is the Advocate. The Spirit of Truth. The witness to Jesus.

It is the energy that drives the church forward. The peace which stands against human horror. The wisdom that crosses boundaries. The kindness that loves our neighbour.

It is the power to live as Jesus promised. The spiritual blood that flows in our veins ...

It is the song of a disguised angel.

It is our inheritance.

It is our life.

The world is full of ko-oks, crooks and charlatans. Full of con artists, confidence tricksters and plain, good ole crims. The world is full of shyster's and snake oil salespeople.

But ... the Holy Spirit... is not one of them.

Amen.