

In a sane and penetrating manner, David Ewert illuminates what the Bible says about the baptism and filling of the Spirit, and discusses what the Spirit's presence in the Church should mean.

An Approach to the Current Charismatic Movement

Throughout the history of the Christian church there has been a strand of teaching which holds that salvation, as far as it is can be known in this life, is experienced in two stages: first, the event of becoming a Christian; then, as a later and distinct event, some special and distinctive operation or gift of the Holy Spirit.

This disjointedness has expressed itself in some traditions in the form of baptism and confirmation (the gift of the Holy Spirit being more strongly associated with the latter than the former). In Puritanism the two-stage view of salvation was thought of as conversion and confirmation of sonship (assurance) at a time subsequent to conversion. John Wesley thought of the two stages of Christian experience in terms of justification and partial sanctification, and a later experience in which entire sanctification or Christian perfection was received as a gift. This emphasis can be traced in the more recent Holiness Movement in which deliverance from the **penalty** of sin is distinguished from the second divine work of sanctification, the deliverance from the **power** of sin. It used to be prominent in Keswick's emphasis on the "second blessing."

In this two-stage salvation tradition the idea of Spirit-baptism came to be associated with the second stage of Christian experience. Some Puritans identified the experience of assurance as a baptism with the Spirit. In Methodism 'entire sanctification' was called a baptism with the Spirit.¹ Keswick preferred to describe the "second blessing" as the fulness or filling with the Spirit. Through the influence of R.A. Torrey, in America at least, the 'baptism of the Spirit' came to stand not for 'sanctification', but for empowering for service. About the same time, several Holiness leaders came to a new appreciation of the gifts of the Spirit, which they thought should be present in the church (e.g. A.J. Gordon, A.B. Simpson—the latter was interested particularly in divine healing).

It was from this context that Pentecostalism sprang up (Topeka Bible College, 1900, Los Angeles, 1906), with its insistence that speaking in tongues is the outward sign that a person has received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Three distinctive doctrines emerged out of this movement. (1) That the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second (Pentecostal) experience distinct from and subsequent to

conversion; (2) That speaking in tongues is the necessary and inevitable evidence of this baptism. It was this teaching which set the Pentecostal movement off from early Holiness groups (e.g., C.M.A. renounced this teaching and lost many members to Pentecostalism as a result; the Church of the Nazarene parted company with Pentecostalism when the latter laid such stress on the speaking in tongues); (3) That the spiritual gifts listed in I Cor. 12: 8-10 may and should be manifested when Pentecostal Christians meet for worship.

Whereas Pentecostalism was less rigid in the earlier years of its history, succeeding generations hardened these beliefs into dogmas. Happily, the new Pentecostalism of our day shows more flexibility again. Pentecostalism was severely criticised by other denominations in the early decades of its development (particularly, in some cases, by denominations which were historically rather close to Pentecostalism, e.g., Mennonite Brethren). In the last twenty years or so, there has come a widespread recognition and acceptance of Pentecostalism as a valid expression of Christianity, as a 'third force' in Christendom (along with Catholicism and Protestantism). What is more, since about 1960 Pentecostal teaching has been making a significant penetration into older denominations, and the lives of a number of congregations, groups and individuals have been greatly changed. Future generations will be in a better position to assess the impact of this movement on the church in the second half of the 20th century.

The Pentecostal movement in America (as well as in other lands) has centered on the 'baptism in the Spirit', and this has led serious students of the Scriptures to ask what the Scriptures have to say on the work of the Holy Spirit. It can hardly be said any longer that the Spirit is the 'forgotten' member of the Trinity. Indeed, so strongly has the Spirit been pushed into the center of discussion, that we need to be reminded of the words of our Lord that the Spirit would glorify Him (John 16:14). However, there is much questioning in our Brotherhood about the charismatic movement, and so in this paper we shall deal (1) with the key-texts in Acts that speak of the receipt of the Spirit; then (2) we shall make a survey of the 'fulness' passages; thirdly (3) we want to take a

look at the passages that speak of the baptism in the Spirit; finally (4) we want to focus on the gifts of the Spirit. It is our hope that out of this brief study we could develop proper attitudes toward the charismatic movement.

A Miraculous Gift

John the Baptist expected the One coming after him to usher in the new age by baptizing in Spirit and fire (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). The fulfillment of this hope lay beyond the Cross and the exaltation of our Lord ("the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified," John 7:39). That the Baptist had Pentecost in mind when he spoke of the Lord's baptism in the Spirit, and not a post-conversion experience, is clearly seen from Acts 1:5, where Jesus says: "John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Gift of the Spirit at Pentecost

Pentecost, which was originally an agricultural festival, had come to be the festival at which Israel remembered the giving of the Law at Sinai. At the Pentecost described in Acts, the 120 suddenly heard a noise from heaven like that of a strong wind, and tongues of fire appeared (Old Testament symbols for the presence of God). The Spirit left his recipients in no doubt about his coming.

Another attendant circumstance of the coming of the Spirit was the ability of the apostles to communicate the Gospel to the Jerusalem crowds in their native dialects. Luke of course knew that the visitors all spoke either Greek or Aramaic, and that the apostles could have addressed them in these known tongues, but he described this miraculous way of proclaiming the Good News to impress the readers with the fact that the gift of the Spirit manifestly had been given. We have no evidence from the New Testament that this miracle was repeated.

The promise of Jesus that the disciples would be baptized with the Spirit (Acts 1:5), that they would be

endued with power to witness (Acts 1:8), was fulfilled at Pentecost when the apostles were "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4)—notice here the variety of expressions used to describe the receipt of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Pentecost was a watershed in the history of salvation. It was the climax of what the prophets had predicted and of what Jesus had said and done (cf. Acts 2:29-33). Pentecost marked the beginning of the New Age, the last days, of which the prophet Joel spoke (2:28 ff., cf. Acts 2:17). The gift of the Spirit was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise (Gal. 3:14—here the blessing of Abraham is defined as the gift of the Spirit; Acts 2:39, "for the promise is to you and to your children"). Pentecost was the birthday of the church, and the beginning of the fulfillment of the Great Commission to bring the Gospel to all the world.

The disciples who witnessed the Pentecost event had a unique experience. They had lived on the other side of the Cross and of Pentecost, and now lived on this side. In this we cannot imitate them. To say that they were Christians before Pentecost, but now were Christians baptized in the Holy Spirit, and that their experience is a pattern for all believers, is perverse.

Coming of the Spirit to the Samaritans

As a result of Philip's preaching in Samaria, new converts had been won. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard the good news, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they arrived, prayed over the Samaritan believers and they received the Holy Spirit.

Since, according to Rom. 8:9 all believers have the Spirit, some hold that the Samaritans were not truly Christians until this event. Others use this story to argue for a two-stage salvation experience: conversion (and receipt of the Holy Spirit—in spite of the fact that Luke says the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, v. 16) and the baptism of the Spirit (when the apostles laid hands on them). Still others find in this story the necessary support for the practice of confirmation. Even more fanciful is the view that Philip was not sufficiently qualified to lay on hands, so that the Jerusalem apostles, who had more ecclesiastical authority, came to perform the act. (The lay brother Ananias evidently carried sufficient weight to lay hands on Paul.)

It appears to us that the view of F.F. Bruce is probably the most accurate.² He feels that since there had been centuries of bitter hatred between Jews and Samaritans, the Samaritans were given this special, external evidence of the gift of the Spirit, in order to assure them that they were one with the Jerusalem community, the Mother church. The event is quite unique. Just as Peter had opened the door of faith to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, so he (and John) opened it to the Samaritans (and somewhat later Peter opened it to the Gentiles). In all great spiritual movements there are phenomena which are not easily categorized. It is precarious to hold up a narrative, which is descriptive in character, as normative for Christian experience. There is just as much reason to say that the experience of Cornelius, where the Spirit is received at conversion and before water-baptism, is the pattern.



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Receipt of the Spirit by Paul

There are those who maintain that since Paul was converted on the Damascus Road, and was baptized in the Spirit three days later, we have Biblical precedent for the experience of salvation in two stages. In the interest of accuracy it should be pointed out that he was "filled" with the Spirit (9:17). But why such a fanciful division between what happened on the Damascus Road and at the meeting with Ananias? Paul did not distinguish division between what happened on the Damascus road (26:15 ff.) and the commission received through Ananias (22:13 ff.). A man whose loyalties to Judaism ran so deep, needed a few days to have his Weltanschauung changed so completely. As he called on the name of the Lord, had his sins washed away (22:16), was filled with the Spirit and baptized (9:17, 18; 22:16), Paul became a new man in Christ. To be filled with the Spirit was, of course, an indispensable qualification for his apostolic service.

Falling of the Spirit on the Gentiles

While Peter preached to the guests who had gathered in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word (10:44). This surprised the Jewish believers, that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles (10:45). Evidently to convince them of this fact, we have an outbreak of glossolalia, as these Gentiles come out of darkness into the light (10:46)—reminiscent of what happened to the Jewish disciples at Pentecost.

Whereas Peter, at Pentecost, exhorted his hearers to repent and be baptized in order to receive the gift of the Spirit (2:37 ff.), here the gift of the Spirit is received as they listen to the Gospel, and they are baptized forthwith (10:47, 48). The order of salvation experience here seems to be the fact that the work of the Spirit does not always follow fixed patterns. Luke is narrating unique historical events, none of which can be imitated by us in detail, since we do not stand at the turning-point of the ages, as these early believers did. We need to remind ourselves of this particularly as we come to Acts 19.

Coming of the Spirit on the disciples at Ephesus

It is not easy to determine from the text whether the disciples of John whom Paul encountered at Ephesus, were Christians. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" seems to suggest that they had made a commitment to Christ. On the other hand, the fact that they went through the act of water-baptism after the Holy Spirit came upon them, suggests the opposite. That they are called 'disciples' does not settle the matter completely, either. However, to argue that they were baptized, Christian believers, who had not yet received the baptism in the Spirit, is a *tour de force*.

Paul's words to them seem to suggest that although they may have known about John's prophecy (that the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire), they did not know that this promise had been fulfilled at Pentecost. The Western text reads: "We have not even heard that any people are receiving the Holy Spirit." They were living, as it were, on the other side of Pentecost. Moreover, they may have received the Good

News from a defective source (perhaps from Apollos before he was instructed by Aquilla and Priscilla). On the whole, it seems better to accept the view that they were Christian believers whose faith was defective, and who, after having received the gift of the Spirit were re-baptized, in good Anabaptist fashion. As in the case of the Samaritans, the receipt of the Holy Spirit is here attended by the laying on of hands. Since these are the only two cases in Acts where the laying on of hands and the gift of the Spirit are related, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that reference is made to it because, in Luke's view, these two cases were quite exceptional.³

Receipt of the Spirit according to Paul

Whereas Luke gives us a theological history of the early church, Paul writes letters to these early converts. According to the apostle there is no Christian life without the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Also, he makes it clear that the gift of the Spirit comes not "from the works of the law" but "from the hearing of faith" (Gal. 3:2, 6). Again in Eph. 1:13, 14, the gift of the Spirit is related to hearing of the Gospel and faith. The presence of the Spirit in the believer's life, then, is the seal, the indisputable mark, of God's work of renewal in a man's life (Eph. 4:30).

But that is not to say that all believers experience the work of God's Spirit in full measure at the time of conversion. Indeed, Paul explicitly exhorts the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit (5:18). It is to this topic that we turn next.

Amazing power of 'filled' people

From the Lucan account in Acts it is quite obvious that not all believers were full of the Holy Spirit (cf. 5:3). Of some, on the other hand, it is explicitly stated that they were full (or filled) with the Spirit. To get a better understanding of what it means to be full of the Spirit, we need to take a look at all the 'fulness-passages' in Acts and Paul. As we begin our survey we discover immediately that the fulness of the Spirit is closely related to the believer's daily life and witness.

Fulness and witness

When the disciples were "all filled with the Holy Spirit" (2:4) on the day of Pentecost, they gave powerful witness of the Gospel. When Peter and John were dragged before the Sanhedrin, Peter "filled with the Holy Spirit" addressed the court in a powerful impromptu testimony (4:8)—the aorist *plestheis* may suggest a special moment of inspiration. Later, when the apostles were released from prison, and they reported to the praying company of friends, "they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (4:31). At his conversion, Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (9:17) as the necessary equipment for his prophetic-apostolic ministry.

All of these passages remind us of Joel's prophecy: "I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophecy" (quoted by Peter, Acts 2:18). "Pentecost momentarily placed in sharp and dramatic relief that the Church that

came into being in her New Testament form is a speaking, proclaiming Church and that she addresses all men and all nations with her message."⁴

Fulness and courage

No one reading the Book of Acts can help but be impressed by the courage of the early believers. Not too many days previous to Pentecost the apostles were in hiding for fear of the Jews, but the coming of the Spirit changed all that. It is not accidental that the word *parresia* (or *parresiazomai* - freedom, openness, boldness—especially with respect to speech) occurs some twelve times in Acts.

The same Peter who had shamefully denied his Lord impressed the Sanhedrin with his 'boldness' (4:13). Where did he get it? He was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (4:8). What gave the band of persecuted disciples the boldness to proclaim the word of God? Again it was the fulness of the Holy Spirit (4:31). Where did Stephen who dared to challenge the basic structure of Judaism (Law and Temple), get the courage to face the fierce mob? Twice it is reported that he was full of the Spirit (6:5; 7:55). Incidentally, only the fulness of the Spirit enabled him to forgive his enemies. Because Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit, he effectively confronted Elymas, the magician (13:9).

Courage did not come to these early Christians easily; it was not, as it were, part of their 'nature'. Only the fulness of the Spirit made them fearless in the face of suffering and death.

Fulness and service

In order to regulate the matter of Christian charity in the Jerusalem community, the apostles instructed the church to appoint seven men "full of the Spirit" (6:3) to take care of this ministry. Stephen, who heads the list, was a man "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (6:5). The fulness of the Spirit, then is a requirement for even the humblest services in God's Kingdom. Indeed, sometimes the humbler tasks demand more grace than those which strike the eye.

Fulness and daily life

Generally the fulness of the Spirit is not associated with ecstatic gifts, but with the daily life of the believer. Several times the fulness of the Spirit is mentioned in connection with blameless living. The seven were to be men "of good report, full of the Spirit" (6:3). Of Barnabas it is said that he was "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit." Down to earth goodness is a greater test of the fulness of the Spirit than the endowment with flashy spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 13).

If I may refer to the Seven once more, the fulness of the Spirit is also associated with 'wisdom' (6:3). In order to deal with a delicate situation, they needed the fulness of the Spirit. The learned rabbis were amazed at the wisdom of the "uneducated, common men" (Acts 4:5, 13; 5:27 ff.). Nor could the members of the Synagogue of Freedmen hold their own against the "wisdom and the Spirit" of Stephen (6:10).

Of both Barnabas and Stephen it is said that they were full of the Spirit and of 'faith' (6:5; 11:24). Faith

here certainly does not mean doctrine, but trust, confidence, commitment. And not only were they confident of God, but it may well mean that they trusted men (Barnabas demonstrated that when he brought the former persecutor, Paul, into the Jerusalem circles). To be full of the Spirit is a kind of synonym for being full of faith—to have an unshakable confidence in God's grace, to put one's life in God's hands.

Another sign of the fulness of the Spirit is 'joy'. Of the young converts at Antioch of Pisidia it is said they "were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (13:52). The note of joy sounds throughout the book of Acts. Hull says, "Indeed, so closely does Luke identify joy and the gift of the Spirit that it is not unreasonable to suppose that in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch and the Philippian jailor and his household he used 'rejoiced' as a synonym for 'received the Holy Spirit' (8:39; 16:34)."⁵ (Interestingly, the Western text does say of the Eunuch that "the Holy Spirit fell on him.") According to some rabbis, the Holy Spirit rested only in a joyful heart.⁶ In Paul, 'joy' and 'Holy Spirit' frequently stand in close proximity to each other (e.g. Rom. 14:17; I Thess. 1:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:18). That Christian joy is more than a feeling of felicity becomes rather obvious when we see joy and suffering standing side by side (e.g., I Thess. 1:6; Acts 13:42). We notice, also that the fulness of the Spirit overlaps with the fruit of Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22, where joy is a fruit of the Spirit).

It is within the context of the Christian life that we find the one passage in Paul that speaks of the fulness of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The imperative "be filled" suggests that the believer is fully responsible. The present tense implies that this is to be an ongoing, progressive experience. We never reach the saturation point, but the work of transformation by the Spirit is a life-long process.

We should note that the command to be filled with the Spirit stands in the context of Christian ethics. It is related to the careful walk (v. 15) to ethical discernment (vv. 16, 17) indeed, it is in antithesis to the drunkenness which leads to debauchery. On the other hand, the fulness of the Spirit is also related to Christian worship. Fulness of the Spirit expresses itself in joyful song and thanksgiving.

Whereas in the Old Testament the fulness of the Spirit was reserved for a privileged few (e.g., Bezaleel, Joshua), this privilege is now open to all the people of God. Fulness is not a spiritual luxury reserved for a special class of pneumatics, it is the way of life for the new people of God. Interestingly, nowhere in the N.T. do we ever hear of a believer claiming that he was full of the Spirit. It should however, be our constant prayer and concern, that Spirit of the risen Christ pervade our lives.

Coming into the body of Christ

John the Baptist, standing at the dawn of the new age, spoke modestly of his preparatory role by saying: "I baptize you with water but the One coming after me will baptize you with Holy Spirit and fire" (Mark 1:8 para.). After His resurrection our Lord reminded his disciples of this promise: "John baptized with water, but

before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). He told them to wait in Jerusalem for this promise to be fulfilled. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. The only other passage in Acts, which mentions the baptism in the Spirit is 11:16, where Peter says that he remembered the word of the Lord: "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with Holy Spirit"—again referring to the Pentecost event.

The Gospel texts which speak of a baptism in the Spirit all look forward to Pentecost for their fulfillment, as do the two texts in Acts. And in every case the baptism in the Spirit is seen in comparison to the baptism in water, as practiced by John. It is interesting that the disciples at Ephesus who had been baptized with the baptism of John were re-baptized when they received the Holy Spirit. It is the only account of such a re-baptizing in the N.T. Whether any other of Jesus' disciples (who had been disciples of John first) were re-baptized is not known. Could it be that those who had received John's baptism before the death of Jesus did not need to be rebaptized, while those who were baptized by John's baptism after Christ's death and the coming of the Spirit, were re-baptized?⁷ Interestingly, when a contrast between Spirit baptism and water baptism is made, it is always between John's water baptism and Pentecost and not between Christian water baptism and the baptism in the Spirit.

The only other reference to the baptism in the Spirit in the New Testament is I Cor. 12:12, 13. To the question of how the unity of the Body of Christ is constituted, Paul says that all the members have been baptized by one Spirit into one body. We would certainly do violence to our text if we forced it to say that Paul is here speaking of a post-conversion, second-stage, salvation experience, for he is dealing with the question of how we come to be incorporated into the Christ. Nor does the text say that Christian water-baptism is the means by which we receive the Spirit. However, the metaphor of baptism in the Spirit is taken from water-baptism. In the early church the gift of the Spirit and water-baptism were simply different aspects of initiation into Christ (together with faith and repentance).

What Paul is saying is, that incorporation into the body of Christ is possible only by the Holy Spirit. That this Body is represented in a local community is obvious from the fact that Paul is writing to a local church, but also from the fact that he goes on to say that there is now no difference between Jew and Greek, slave and free.

To strengthen the statement that we are all baptized into the Body of Christ by the Spirit, Paul adds that we were all made to drink (or saturated with) the same Spirit (depending on how one translates *potizo*).

Baptism in the Spirit, then, refers, first of all, to the inauguration of the church at Pentecost (cf. the passages in the Gospels and Acts); secondly, it refers to initiation into the Body of Christ. J.R.W. Stott says, "The baptism (of the Spirit) was unique initiatory experience; the fullness was intended to be the continuing, the permanent results, the norm. As an initiatory event the baptism is not repeatable and cannot be lost, but the filling can be repeatable and in any case needs to be maintained."⁸

We realize, of course, that some folk describe a pro-

found post-conversion experience, which has transformed their Christian life, as a baptism in the Spirit, and we would not quibble with them about the reality and the meaningfulness of such an experience. However, one should be a bit more accurate in the use of Biblical phraseology.

Gifts of the Spirit

The only church in which Paul had to regulate the use of the spiritual gifts (as far as we know) is the Corinthian, and he devotes three chapters (12-14) to this subject. (This is not to say that other writers or writings of the N.T. have nothing to say on the matter.) In Corinth the discussion of this topic arose in part at least, out of Paul's concern for the unity of the church. The richly endowed tended to become proud, and the less-endowed jealous, and this led to divisions in the church.

Paul begins his discussion by reminding those who made so much of the ecstatic gifts, that the ecstatic element is in itself not necessarily Christian (pagan worship also had it, 12:1-3). The test of a genuine Christian experience is whether a man confesses Christ's Lordship in his life or not.

Diversity of spiritual gifts (12:4-11)

When a man confesses Christ as Lord, especially if he has a radical conversion experience, the shackles of the inner man are broken and latent powers are released and new gifts are given. These *pneumatika* (or *charismata* - 16 times in Paul, once in Peter) are the powers of the age to come, experienced as first-fruits of this age. There is a great variety of gifts, says Paul, but they all come from the same source, and so should not lead to division. These gifts are given to the believer for *diakonia* (v. 5). This is underscored in v.7: "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for profit" (i.e., to profit the people of God).

Altogether Paul lists some nine different gifts in vv. 8-10. However, when we look at the list of gifts given at the end of the chapter, and at the ones mentioned in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, we realize that the ones mentioned here are but representative. Among them are the pedagogical gifts (e.g., "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge"). No doubt the gift of instructive discourse is meant. To carry on a meaningful teaching ministry, men need insight into divine truth and the gift to convey this insight to others. To the wonder-working gifts belongs the gift of faith—not saving faith which all believers have but the "faith to remove mountains" (I Cor. 13). Gifts of healings (note the plurals!) and the ability to perform the extraordinary (*energmata dunameon*). Certainly Paul does not mean that any one man has the gift to heal every sickness (Paul himself was not healed, even though he begged God to do so, II Cor. 12). We do not doubt that God does enter miraculously into the life of man, but it does not follow that every gift listed by Paul must be present in the same way at all times in the church.

Besides the gifts of communication already mentioned, Paul lists prophecy and speaking in tongues. If we say that prophecy is inspired preaching we are about as close as we can come to the meaning of *propheteia*. However,

preachers should not presume to stand directly in the line of O.T. prophets, who received their oracles directly from God, or the N.T. prophets and apostles on whom the church is built. We are prophets only in the sense that we interpret the apostolic and prophetic tradition for our day. Since prophecy was highly valued in the early church; it was essential that people discern between the genuine and the spurious. For this purpose God gave some members an intuitive sense of discernment. Tongues and their interpretation are put last in the list of **charismata**, perhaps, because they were over-valued in the Corinthian congregation. In the list at the end of the chapter tongues again stand at the bottom. Of this gift to communicate with God ecstatically we will have more to say later.

What is important to observe is that Paul says these gifts are sovereignly distributed to each one by the Spirit (v. 11). This should check the pride of those who have ecstatic gifts; it should do away with envy on the part of those who do not have them; and it should remind those with certain gifts not to dictate to others which gifts they should have.

Unity in spite of the diversity of gifts (12:12-31)

The argument of 12:12-31 is that this great diversity which the Spirit creates does not disrupt the harmony and unity of the Body of Christ (just as the human body has a unity in spite of its great diversity). This diversity of gifts among God's children is there for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ. Some of these gifts are people (apostles, prophets, teachers, v. 28; cf. Eph. 4:11); others are not ecstatic in character ('helps' 'leadership'); then again others are more unusual ('powers', 'gifts of healings', 'kinds of tongues', 'interpretation of tongues').

By putting gifts of different kinds together in one group Paul seems to suggest that there is no aspect of the church which is not affected and sustained by the power of the Spirit. Also, if one adds the gifts in Rom. 12 and Eph. 4 to the list in this chapter, it is obvious that the 'teaching-preaching-communicating' gifts are central, although the gifts of practical service of love run a close second. The rhetorical questions with which Paul concludes the chapter make it obvious that not every believer has all these gifts. Spiritual gifts are there for service, and are, therefore, related to a man's calling in life. No man can fulfill his Christian calling in life without the help of the Spirit of God.

Principle governing the use of all gifts: love (13:1-13)

(1) Charismatic Gifts of No Value Without Love (vv. 1-3): Paul insists that even if someone had the whole range of tongues but did not love, his service would be essentially pagan (v. 1). Even the charismatic gifts of insight, and the ability to share these with others (prophecy), or a miracle-working faith which enables a man to do the impossible, are quite meaningless when not attended by love. And what is said of the ecstatic gifts hold for almsgiving, and utter devotion to the point of death. Love (a fruit of the Spirit) is by far the "more excellent way," in comparison to the charismatic gifts.

(2) Charismatic Gifts Ephemeral in Contrast to Love (vv. 8-13): The charismata are given to the church for

this age. When this age comes to an end; prophecy, knowledge, tongues, and all the other gifts have served their purpose and will cease. Love, by contrast, is eternal. Just as a child lays aside its childish ways when it grows up, so the church lays aside that which belongs to the period of her imperfection when she enters the gates of eternity. In spite of the many gifts which God has given the church, our vision is still quite blurred, and there are many questions to which we have not answers (by means of a mirror we look into these enigmas). But when the perfect day comes we shall look directly into His face and understand fully.

What, then shall be our attitude toward the gifts of the Spirit? We must be open for them (**zeloute**—12:21). However, we should be concerned primarily about the gifts of communication. ("most of all that you prophecy," 14:1).

Comparative value of tongues and prophecy 14:1-25

(1) For the Church (vv. 1-19): The basic reason why prophecy is of greater value to the church than tongues is that a man speaking in tongues builds himself up, whereas a man who proclaims God's truth builds up the congregation (v. 2-4). Paul would be quite pleased if all had the gift of tongues, but in order to build others up by speaking in tongues an interpreter is necessary. For this reason there is no profit in the public exercise of tongues if the message is not understood by the congregation (v. 5, 6). Indeed, Paul says, if he should speak in a tongue which they could not understand he would be like a barbarian (v. 11). The underlying principle that is to govern all aspects of Christian worship is that it is to be **upbuilding**—possible only when it can be understood.

Paul himself prays and sings in a tongue, but he also prays and sings with the mind (vv. 14, 15). If he should pray ecstatically in public, the uninitiated man (**idiotes**) could not even respond with Amen (v. 16). With a bit of irony he suggests that a man can utter a beautiful prayer in tongues, but it is of no use to the person who does not understand what he is saying (v. 17). Paul has the gift of tongues, but in the congregation he refuses to use it, since he is concerned with the welfare of the people of God. (vv. 18, 19).

(2) For the unbeliever (vv. 20-25): The prophets had warned Israel that if they would not obey God's message God would speak to them with foreign tongues. These would be a sign of God's judgment. Applying that to the Christian congregation, if an unbeliever should witness this speaking in other tongues, it could well be the finger of God for them, making them conscious of the fact that they are not part of the people of God (vv. 21, 22). To the believer, prophecy is a sign that God is present; he is speaking to them; they can hear him, signifying that they are the people of God.

However, tongues can have another effect on the unbeliever (Paul assumes that some may be present in the service). They may lose all respect for the church, for they will conclude that they are out of their minds (v. 23). Prophecy, on the other hand, may become God's message to them to awaken them out of their sinful stupor and lead them to repentance (v. 24).

Orderly employment of tongues and prophecy 14:26-33

If there is to be any speaking in tongues in public at all then there must be an interpreter; and in any case, no more than two or three shall speak by turns (vv. 27, 28). The same applies to prophecy. No more than two or three shall speak, and the audience is to listen with discernment (vv. 29-31). Neither tongues nor inspired preaching is to be out of control, and good order is to be observed (vv. 32, 33). The thrust of the whole chapter is to relegate tongues to private use, since the public meeting of the unbelievers is for upbuilding, and for that a teaching-preaching ministry is necessary.

Need for Discernment

Inherent dangers in the current charismatic movement

One danger in all renewal movements is that those who experience God in a new way want to live from these experiences. But since we are still in this age, and in the flesh, we must walk by faith even in the midst of frustrations, trials, tears, and the shadow of death (cf. 2 Cor. 1). We know, too, that our emotional life cannot be held at a high pitch constantly. This often leads to an erratic kind of Christian life.

Another danger arising out of this emphasis on experience (and, in one sense, we can never emphasize experience enough), is that we make our experience normative for others. This is particularly the case when believers, who have lived on a lower level of Christian life for years, suddenly experience a breakthrough and a transformation of their life through the work of the Holy Spirit. They then tend to think that all believers must experience Christ in this way. Indeed, they search for Scripture texts to substantiate their experience. But the only proper description of such post-conversion experiences of the Holy Spirit is that of the 'filling' of the Spirit. Of course, when people have such experiences we thank God and rejoice with them.

Sometimes when people experience God in a new way, and the latent powers of the inner man are released, or new gifts are bestowed, they become spiritually proud. This was obviously the problem in Corinth. We should remember that helping others in need (Rom. 12:8), is a gift as much as speaking in tongues (cf. I Cor. 12:28, where workers of miracles and helpers (*antilympseis*) stand in one line). Ridderbos says: "Im allgemeinen kann man deshalb sagen, daß das Charisma in der Gemeinde als Dienst fungiert und in diesem Dienstcharakter auch allein seine Bestimmung und sein Kriterium findet (vgl. auch I Petr. 4, 11)."¹⁰

Spiritual needs that appear to have surfaced

Quite obviously the charismatic movement is one of the perennial reactions which the church experiences when its life becomes indifferent and cold, and when it fails to understand or to fulfill its mission. As an expression of a search for a deeper experience of the Christian life the charismatic movement asks you and me whether our faith is real and vital (not to be identified with ecstasy, necessarily). It may, then, be a call of repentance. We

might ask ourselves how much of our church and conference work could go on without much interruption if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn?

Also, there has emerged the need for more intimate, unstructured fellowship-meetings of smaller groups in the church. The church should not view this as a threat, but rather as a means of renewal of its life. However, these prayer and study groups should not neglect meeting with the larger bodies of believers (the local congregation, for example). This is necessary, first of all, for the purpose of instruction (small groups are, as a rule, sharing groups). Also, one needs a wider brotherhood (with its young and aged, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, etc.) for one's own spiritual discipline and development; small groups tend to reflect similar life interests and styles. Then, too, it is important that we confess our faith, pray, sing, participate in the Lord's Supper, and hear the proclamation of God's Truth in a somewhat broader setting than a cell-group. However, we should take seriously the possibility that the desire for a more intimate fellowship is a judgment on the big size of some of our congregations not to mention the elaborate church plants which have been erected in some centers. It does not follow, on the other hand, that organization as such is inimical to the movement of the Spirit. The larger the body of believers, the more organization is necessary. And we should not overlook the fact that the gift of leadership (*kubernesis*) is as much a charismatic gift as is, for example, the gift of healing (cf. I Cor. 12:28). Also, we should remember that small groups can be turned in on themselves just as much as larger groups, and if the prayer, the Bible study, the fellowship, does not lead to service in the world it is self-defeating.

What attitudes should we foster?

First of all, we must cultivate a magnanimous spirit. Just because there have been excesses among the so-called charismatics; just because some who speak in tongues have made themselves obnoxious occasionally; just because the charismatic movement has led to serious disruptions in the life of some congregations, we must be careful not to condemn the movement out of hand as heresy. We know that in all such movements the spurious and the genuine often get mixed up, and that we cannot always distinguish between authentic and induced experiences. Paul's argument in I Cor. 12 is, that the unity of the church is not destroyed by diversity. This means that we must be big enough to accept people with different kinds of spiritual gifts and experiences. Our concern should be His kingdom. "The powerless non-Pentecostal Christian that all members use their gifts to serve God and build has a need no different from that of the powerless Pentecostal Christian."¹¹

Also, we should be open for God and perceptive enough to hear what He is saying to us through the charismatic movement. Openness, however, does not exclude discernment (which, incidentally, is also a gift of the Spirit). Let us not be blind to the fact that many lives have been completely transformed by what is sometimes called (wrongly) the "baptism in the Spirit." If our spiritual pilgrimage has been different, let us not be so

prejudiced that we cannot discern God's grace in different and, perhaps, unusual ways. The 'charismatics', on the other hand, should develop a sense of history, and not presume to have discovered something that the church throughout its history has not known. Peter, in the only passage in which he uses the word *charisma* (the only passage outside of Paul) exhorts us: "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (I Peter 4:10). May this be our concern!

NOTES

1. J.D.G. Dunn, "Spirit-Baptism and Pentecostalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 23 (1970), p. 399.
2. F.F. Bruce, *Book of Acts*, p. 182.
3. J.H.E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit, In the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 118.
4. H.R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, p. 102.
5. Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
6. H.L. Strack, H. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I. 643.
7. Bruce, *ip. cit.*, p. 386, n. 12.
8. J.R.W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit*, p. 25.
9. H. Ridderbos, *Paulus*, p. 320.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
11. Dunn, "Spirit Baptism and Pentecostalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 23 (1970), p. 406.

A Christian Perspective on Abortion

When does life begin? Can someone who advocates the destruction of a human foetus claim concern for the quality of life? What are the ethical issues involved in abortion? These are the questions Vernon Ratzlaff grapples with in this significant statement.

Abortions—consciously human-induced terminations of pregnancy—are being carried out in increasing numbers. The United States records about 200,000 legal abortions annually, compared to 18,000 two years ago (New York state accounts for about 90,000 of these);¹ Britain has about half that number;² Canada in 1970 had 11,200 and the monthly rates shown thus far (as of June, 1971) indicate that about 30,000 abortions will have been performed here in 1971.³

The Canadian provinces with the highest rates of abortion (December 1970—the last month for which I

have specific figures) were British Columbia (where abortions numbered 19% of live births), Alberta (10.5%), Ontario (9.8%).⁴ In fact, abortions are beginning to be seen as a means of birth control in preference to contraceptive methods. (In one British Columbia hospital, two women have each had their third abortion in eight months.⁵)

That abortion is a question which has been focused only recently in terms of major proportions is seen in the treatment granted it in the writings of moral philosophers. Two of the major works in Christian ethics⁶ make no mention of abortion, although they both have sections dealing with the taking of human life and with sex; in contrast, books written in the last half of the 1960's invariably deal with the question.

To the extent that abortions are equated with murder, as claimed by church father Tertullian, or to the extent that they are seen as one step along the way to increasing dehumanization, to that extent the Christian owes it to himself to be concerned about what George Williams claims to constitute the "second major moral issue of our society" (i.e. abortion/euthanasia).⁷ (The first issue, he feels, is "peace in the world.")

It may be that abortions constitute little more than an operation similar to removal of any extraneous tissue; if that be so, we must train ourselves to evaluate it accordingly. But it may also be that abortions constitute a violation of human life, and we must then also evaluate it accordingly. Above all, we as Mennonite Brethren must



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