

Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

Study 7 Holy Spirit Baptism

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The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Petts, D., *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey Hall, 1999. pp 10-16 (*Ch.15, The Baptism with the Holy Spirit, pp97-107*)

Forty days after his resurrection, just before he ascended into heaven, Jesus gathered his disciples together and began to tell them something of the great task of world evangelism that lay before them. You are to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in my name, he told them, beginning at Jerusalem. But before you even start, you must wait in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:47-49 paraphrased).

This power that he promised them was none other than the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (Acts 1:8) which would enable them to be witnesses for Christ to the ends of the earth. Jesus called it being baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). In obedience to his command that they should wait for this power, the disciples stayed in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension into heaven, spending much time in prayer (Acts 1:14). Finally, ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak languages they had never learned as the Holy Spirit gave them the power to do so. After that they were a revolutionised group of people! The book of Acts tells us how they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6, KJV). On the Day of Pentecost alone 3,000 people turned to Christ, and as the days went by multitudes continued to be added (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).

It is difficult to imagine what might have happened if the church had continued to move in the power of the Spirit down through the centuries of its history! Sadly, however, as the years went by, worldliness and materialism began to creep

in, until not only was there little evidence of the power of the Spirit among so-called Christians, but for long centuries the gospel itself was scarcely preached. Of course, the Reformation began to change all that, but it was not until relatively recently that Christians all over the world began to realise that the power that was available to the early disciples on the Day of Pentecost is available to God's people today! At first, at around about the beginning of the twentieth century, those Christians who began to believe this and who were 'baptised with the Holy Spirit' just like the early disciples, were misunderstood and often turned out of their churches and denominations. These people quite understandably began to meet together now that they were no longer welcome in their own churches, and so there came into being what has become known as the world-wide Pentecostal Movement. The Pentecostal Movement has made rapid strides forward as Spirit-filled Christians have preached the Gospel in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit. As a result many Christians who worship in the churches and denominations which once rejected those who were baptised with the Holy Spirit, are themselves seeking and receiving this blessing. Some are still sceptical. Others are interested, but not yet committed. Others are earnestly seeking. Some believe in the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, but do not believe that it is necessary to speak in tongues as the early disciples did. In fact some Christians are totally opposed to the Baptism with the Holy Spirit as Pentecostal Christians understand it. There is a great variety of views and interpretations, but if we will carefully and prayerfully examine the scriptures with an open mind we will not go astray.

What it is

When Jesus told his disciples that they would be baptised with the Holy Spirit in a few days (Acts 1:5), he also described what would happen as the Holy Spirit coming upon them (Acts 1:8). In Luke 24:49 he called it being clothed with power from on high. In the Old Testament we read that the Holy Spirit came upon Gideon (Judges 6:34) and again the word means clothed.

We saw when discussing the subject of water baptism, the literal meaning of baptise is immerse. So it is clear that the 'baptism' with the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit coming upon, covering, clothing, or immersing a person. When Jesus said that the disciples would be baptised with the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit would come upon them he was, therefore, saying the same thing. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit coming upon you.

When did it happen?

There are several occasions in the book of Acts when we read that the Holy Spirit came upon various people. It is from these passages that we may clearly see what happened when people received the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, what kind of people they were, and how and when they received it.

The first people to be baptised in the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts were, of course, the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:4 we are told that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. Peter later described this as being baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15-17), and told the questioning crowd that this was the Spirit being outpoured upon all people (Acts 2:17).

Now this can be understood in two different ways. It could mean that Pentecost was once and for all and that all mankind could ever expect to receive of the Holy Spirit was what

happened at Pentecost. Alternatively it could mean that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit was so outpoured that he was, from that moment on, available for all people to receive if they would repent and believe the gospel.

This is obviously the correct interpretation because there are passages in the Book of Acts where we see that the experience of Pentecost was repeated on several occasions. At Pentecost the Spirit was outpoured. He came upon the one hundred and twenty disciples in the upper room. But when Peter says that the Spirit is outpoured upon all people, he is telling his hearers that the Spirit will come upon them too (Acts 2:38-39).

Sometime later, the apostles heard that many of the Samaritans had been converted under Philip's ministry. They had not yet, however, had the Spirit come upon them (Acts 8:16). So the apostles sent Peter and John in order that the Samaritans might 'receive the Holy Spirit' (another scriptural expression for receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit — Acts 8:15).

In Acts 10:44-48 we read how the Holy Spirit came on the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household and in Acts 11:15-16 Peter describes this as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The other expressions used in these passages are also interesting, for what Peter calls being 'baptised in the Holy Spirit' in Acts 11:16 is referred to in Acts 10 as

- The Spirit coming on Cornelius (10:44)
- The gift of the Holy Spirit being poured out (10:45)
- Receiving the Holy Spirit (10:47).

In Acts 19:6 the Holy Spirit also came on the Ephesian disciples who had not yet 'received' him (19:2), and we notice that, like the Samaritans in Acts 8, they received through the laying on of hands.

There are then at least four occasions in the book of Acts when we read that the Holy Spirit came on people. In these passages we are given a more or less complete account of what happened when people were baptised in the Spirit in fulfilment of Jesus' promise in Acts 1:5-8.

We must now look at each of these four instances in more detail and ask:

- To whom was the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given?
- When did they receive it?
- What happened when they received it?

Answering questions like these we will assure ourselves of the scriptural truth of this very important subject. Since the Book of Acts, like the rest of Scripture, is useful for doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16), we need to realise that the experiences that the early church received may be received by the church today. The blessings individual Christians experienced in New Testament times are available to us as individual Christians today. We may experience in our own lives the very same power that transformed the spiritual experience of men like Peter and Paul! To be sure about this, we will now seek to answer the question, 'To whom is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit promised?'

To whom is it promised?

In Acts 1:5 when Jesus told his disciples that in a few days they would be baptised with the Holy Spirit, he also described the experience as (literally) the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4, Luke 24:49) which NIV paraphrases as the gift my Father promised. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the fulfilment of what God had promised through the prophet Joel centuries before (Acts 2:16-17, Joel 2:28-32). This promise of the Father was the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit outpoured upon all people. Preaching

to the crowd that gathered at Pentecost, Peter said that this promise was For you, for your children, for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:38-39). This verse makes it clear that the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, is available to all Christians, indeed to all people if they will repent and believe the gospel. When should it be received?

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God the very first thing they did was to send Peter and John in order that the Samaritan converts might receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17).

Similarly, the very first question that Paul asked when he found a group of disciples at Ephesus was Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? (Acts 19:2).

In the case of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48) the Holy Spirit fell on them before Peter had finished preaching. They had only just heard the gospel. They had had no opportunity to make any outward expression of their acceptance of it. They had certainly not yet been baptised in water. But they were wonderfully baptised in the Holy Spirit! In fact it is noteworthy that, after the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit was received at, or immediately after, conversion. The normal scriptural pattern seems to be:

- Repentance and faith (conversion)
- Water baptism
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit

All these were expected to occur very close together as Peter's exhortation in Acts 2:38 implies:

Repent and be baptised, every one of you... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The reason that the disciples were commanded to wait in Acts 1:4 is simply that until Pentecost the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit had not yet been fulfilled. They had to wait for its fulfilment. But once the Father's promise through the prophet had been fulfilled (Acts 2:17) the gift became available to all who would repent and be baptised (Acts 2:38-39).

This does not mean that the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is conversion, or that one receives it automatically when one is baptised in water. (The experience of the Samaritans and Ephesians makes that clear — Acts 8:12-17, 19:1-7). The work of the Spirit at conversion is one of convicting and regenerating. The work of the Spirit at the Baptism with the Spirit is clothing with power. The work of the Spirit at conversion comes before water baptism. The Baptism with the Spirit usually follows it. The Baptism with the Spirit is often accompanied with the laying on of hands, and always with certain supernatural manifestations, neither of which have any connection with his work at conversion.

Conversion and the Baptism with the Spirit are, therefore, clearly distinct, but that does not alter the fact that all Christians should seek to be baptised with water and with the Holy Spirit immediately after they are converted.

What happens when we receive it?

The Bible is our sole authority for doctrine. This means that all that we believe, including our teaching about the Baptism with the Spirit, must be based upon the scriptures. So, what we believe about what happens when a person is baptised in the Holy Spirit must be taken from the scriptures and from the scriptures alone.

In these days millions of people are being baptised in the Spirit all over the world. So it's not surprising that there are a

number of different views on this important matter. The danger is that, as a result of a wonderful experience, people start to build a doctrine on that experience. However, as we examine the word of God, we discover that there was only one recurring phenomenon that was invariably accepted as the sign that the Spirit had come. There were sometimes other signs as well, but only one was repeated on each occasion and that was speaking in tongues.

On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) there was the sound of a violent wind; there were tongues of fire that sat on each of them; but this was before they were all filled with the Spirit. What happened as a result of their being filled was that they began to speak in other tongues.

When Cornelius was baptised in the Spirit, Peter said that the Holy Spirit came on them as on us at the beginning (Acts 11:15). What had convinced him about this was not the repetition of the wind or fire — for there was no such repetition — but the fact that Cornelius and his household were heard to speak with tongues and magnify God (Acts 10:46) as the first disciples had on the Day of Pentecost.

Similarly, when the Spirit came upon the Ephesians (Acts 19:6), they spoke in tongues and prophesied. It is interesting that tongues is mentioned before prophecy here. Prophecy is the greater gift (1 Corinthians 14:5) and we might have expected it to be mentioned first. So why is tongues mentioned first? Presumably because it happened first.

So, in the book of Acts, whenever people experienced the power of the Spirit coming upon them, the very first thing that happened was that they began to speak a language that they had never learned — they began to speak in tongues.

It is true that there is no mention of tongues in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8; but we are told that Simon saw

something happen when they received the Spirit. It would obviously have been something supernatural for a sorcerer to have offered money to gain possession of it, and commentators are generally agreed that what he saw was speaking in tongues.

Besides, the fact that what Simon saw is not mentioned shows that Acts 8 is not a full description of what took place. What we can therefore categorically state is this:

Whenever there is a full description of the Baptism in the Spirit in the Book of Acts it is accompanied by speaking in tongues.

If that was the normal pattern for believers then, we must surely teach it as the norm for today.

Conclusion

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the Spirit coming upon a Christian giving power for service. There are four main passages in Acts which describe this taking place. From these we learn that, once the Spirit had been outpoured at Pentecost, the blessing was given to young converts usually immediately after their baptism in water. The experience was sometimes received through the laying on of hands and was accompanied by speaking in tongues.

In recent years millions of Christians have been baptised in the Spirit in this way. Have you?

*For more detailed discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit in general, please see Petts, D., *The Holy Spirit -- an Introduction*, Mattersey Hall, 1998.*

Is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation or inclusive in it?.

Corbett A., *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, www.andrewcorbett.com.

There are a growing number of people who are sympathetic to the modern availability of the gifts of the Spirit but reject

the idea of them being only available to those who have had an experience 'subsequent' to their salvation generally referred to as the baptism in the Spirit.

Within my lifetime I have witnessed an amazing shift in thinking, practice and response to the charismatic gifts. As a boy I remember when Pentecostals were looked down upon by 'mainstream' Christians. They were generally regarded as uneducated, ignorant, and gullible. As Pentecostalism birthed its super-preachers, who often boasted in their lack of education and minimal theological training, this stereotype was often reinforced in the minds of traditional Christians. But then came the charismatic movement which began in the 1960s and reached amazing heights in the 1970s when nearly every mainstream denomination had their pockets of 'charismatics'. Pentecostals were no longer seen as "them" but were increasingly becoming "one of us". Evangelical leaders, like Billy Graham, were quick to recognise the rise of Pentecostals and warmly embraced them into his city-wide crusades. Pentecostals had arrived.

One hundred years on and the influence of Pentecostal churches upon the mainstream, traditional churches can hardly be understated. Pentecostals now form the largest segment of church-attending, active Christians in the world. It is the only expression of the Church that is generally growing worldwide. Pentecostals now hold positions of influence in politics, media, sport, entertainment, literature and community service groups. Pentecostals are now being noticed.

For the most part, Pentecostals have held a wide range of doctrinal positions from Reformed to Arminian, from Calvinist to Semi-Pelagian, from Modalistic to classic Trinitarian. But the one unifying doctrine which distinguishes

them even from 'charismatics' is the belief that there is an experience with the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation called the Baptism in the Holy Spirit which is evidenced by the receipt of a heavenly prayer language called: tongues. But now Pentecostals are being questioned.

What makes someone Pentecostal is not whether they use a certain spiritual gift, or even how they worship, or whether they use choruses or hymns. The distinguishing feature is the belief, promotion, and practice of the doctrine of subsequence. Pentecostals believe, teach and invite people to a subsequent experience with the Holy Spirit variously called being filled or baptised in the Holy Spirit. This is the touchstone of Pentecostalism. Either the charismatics are right- that all of the Holy Spirit in His fullness is given at the point of salvation, or the Pentecostals are right- that one can be saved yet still lacking the 'Promise of the Father'.

Pentecostals are now being challenged.

I've been reading the life story of the great Baptist preacher, and the world's greatest ever Christian essayist, F.W.

Boreham. He talks about sitting under the ministry of C.H. Spurgeon, F.B. Meyer, and other great men of God. He describes his dramatic conversion in 1888 when aged 17. But he then goes on to describe his encounter with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands in 1890. From that point he experienced a newness in his walk with Christ, a passion for the lost, and a fresh love for God's Word. He alludes to what we would call today "gifts of the Spirit" operating throughout his life over his many years of ministry, including discernment and prophecy. He even makes mention of the fact that he was prophesied over as a little baby that he would grow to be a very successful writer. His story is one that is repeated multiplied times over throughout history. People who have

been soundly converted have then experienced a later encounter with the Holy Spirit which they refer to as either a baptism or a filling with the Spirit.

For those who see no distinction between regeneration and the baptism in the Spirit salvation was not finished at the Cross but at Pentecost. Not until the first believers were baptised in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2 did they simultaneously experience regeneration. The various gifts of the Spirit, including tongues and prophecy, were distributed to believers as the Spirit willed. And this same pattern has continued to the present day. All regenerated believers have whatever spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has bestowed. It may take time for a believer to discover this gift, but by virtue of their salvation they have already received the fullness of the Spirit and His gifts in their life. This we might call the doctrine of inclusiveness.

But Pentecostals regard salvation as having been finished by virtue of the Cross of Christ. The blessings of salvation, including our physical resurrection and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, come as a result of Christ's atoning and redeeming work on the Cross. Thus, to a Pentecostal, a person can be regenerated but not yet physically resurrected. Similarly, a regenerated person may not yet have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals point to Biblical examples of this. Firstly, the original disciples. At a post-resurrection appearing of Christ He breathed on them and told them to receive the work of the Spirit in their lives- which we might reasonably take to mean regeneration (new birth, salvation). But 40 days or so later they are waiting for a further encounter with the Holy Spirit which Christ taught was the "Promise of the Father" or the "baptism in the Holy Spirit". Secondly, the Samaritans who responded warmly to

Philip's preaching were clearly saved. But Philip called for the apostles to come from Jerusalem to pray for these new converts to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8). Similarly, in Acts 19 Paul enquires of the Ephesian believers as to their response to the Holy Spirit subsequent to believing. Upon discovering that they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, he prayed for them to do so- and they did. It's therefore one thing to assert that the New Testament teaches that the baptism in the Spirit is synonymous with salvation, and another thing altogether to claim that Pentecostals have no basis for believing that it is a subsequent experience to salvation. The latter claim is at least challenged with the Acts narratives which give Pentecostals support for their position. Either way, it should be the modern believer's earnest prayer to fulfil Ephesians 5:18. *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.*

The Basics of the Holy Spirit

Cornwall, J., *Back to Basics*, Brentwood, Sharon Press, 1994. (Ch. 4, *Basics of the Holy Spirit*, pp63-83).

It is fair to say that no one can successfully live the Christian life. Only Christ can live it in us, and He does this through the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus needed the presence of the Holy Spirit during His days on earth. With the foresight peculiar to prophets, Isaiah saw the coming of Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit on His life mid through His ministry. He wrote: "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isaiah 11:2-3).

That Jesus lived and ministered in an unlimited anointing of the Holy Spirit is self-evident. Jesus said of Himself, "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure [unto him]" (John 3:34). Jesus told His disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Just before His ascension, Jesus added: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Jesus expected His followers to be endued with the same Holy Spirit that had anointed Him. He promised to send Him; He fulfilled that promise on the day of Pentecost. That indwelling Spirit lives a holy life of wisdom, power, and fellowship with God in each believer.

The Actuality of the Holy Spirit

It is probably fair to say that all Christians believe in the Holy Spirit. What has been such a surprise to me is how many of them fail to see Him as a person. They view Him as an influence or executive force of the Godhead. He is far more than this. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the Godhead. He is divine in the absolute sense, for He has divine attributes ascribed to Him. The Bible calls Him eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), omnipotent (Luke 1:35), and omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). God's Word ascribes divine works to Him. It also credits Him with a part in creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4), regeneration (John 3:5-8), and resurrection (Romans 8:11).

He is far more than merely a godly influence, for He exercises the attributes of personality. He has a mind (Romans 8:27), a

will (1 Corinthians 12:11), and He has feelings (Ephesians 4:30). Harmonious with these evidences of personality, He reveals (2 Peter 1:21), He teaches (John 14:26), He witnesses (Galatians 4:6), He intercedes (Romans 8:26), He speaks (Revelation 2:7), He commands (Acts 16:6-7), He testifies (John 15:26), He may be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), He may be lied to (Acts 5:3), and He may be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31- 32).

The Holy Spirit is a personality separated and distinct from God, for He proceeds from God, is sent from God, and is God's gift to persons. At the creation of the earth we read: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). Their work was cooperative, complete, and consecutive, but obviously, two persons were at work. Similarly at the baptism of Jesus we see the Son in the water, the Spirit descending as a dove and the Father speaking from heaven. The Holy Spirit was acting harmoniously with God yet not as the Father but as the Spirit upon the Son. Yet the Spirit is not independent of God. He always represents the one God. Just how the Holy Spirit can be one with God and yet distinct from God is part of the mystery of the Trinity. Perhaps you may grasp a better understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit if I list some names given to Him throughout the Bible. He is most frequently called the Holy Spirit. He is also called the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), the Comforter (John 14:16), the Holy Spirit of Promise (Ephesians 1:13), the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17), the Spirit of Grace (Hebrews 10:29), the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2), and the Spirit of Adoption (Romans 8:15). These names reveal some of His offices and functions for the believer.

There are also names and titles ascribed to Him that speak of His position, such as: the Spirit of God (Matthew 3:16), the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30), the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:17), the Spirit of the Father (Matthew 10:20), the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19), the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6), the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), the Free Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17), the Good Spirit (Nehemiah 9:20), My Spirit (Acts 2:17-18), Thy Spirit (1 John 4:13), and His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10).

He is obviously the executive of the Godhead. God is the legislature. Christ is the judicial system, for all God's laws are judged in the blood of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who functions in the office of the executive who puts the laws into operation and penalizes violators and blesses those who obey. There are other titles given to the Holy Spirit that more specifically speak of His character and work. He is called the Spirit of: Adoption (Romans 8:15), Burning (Isaiah 4:4), Counsel (Isaiah 11:2), Faith (2 Corinthians 4:13), Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2), Glory (1 Peter 4:14), Grace (Hebrews 10:29), Holiness (Romans 1:4), Judgment (Isaiah 28:6), Knowledge (Isaiah 11:2), Life (Romans 8:2), Love (2 Timothy 1:7), Might (Isaiah 11:2), Wisdom (Ephesians 1:17). The Holy Spirit is also called: the Voice of the Almighty (Ezekiel 1:24), the Breath of the Almighty (Job 33:4), the Power of the Highest (Luke 1:35), and an Unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20). These names, titles, and descriptive phrases speak of a person distinct from, but an integral part of, God the Father and God the Son.

We learn more about the Holy Spirit as a person by observing the various symbols the Bible uses to illustrate His functions. He is called a Fire (Matthew 3:11) illustrating His purging, purifying work in the believer, and the fiery boldness and zeal

He imparts to them. It also may speak of the warmth and illumination of a fire.

The Spirit is symbolized as a wind (John 3:8; Acts 2:2) that illustrates His mysterious, independent, penetration, and life-giving operation. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as water, an indispensable element of physical life. Water purifies, refreshes, quenches thirst, cleans, and renders sterility.

Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit as a seal in Ephesians 1:13 and 2 Timothy 2:19. A seal conveys the thought of ownership and security.

Repeatedly the Spirit is illustrated in the symbol of oil, for in Bible times, oil spoke of usefulness, fruitfulness, beauty, life, and transformation. It was commonly used for food, light, lubrication, healing, and the soothing of the skin. Spiritually, the Holy Spirit does all these to our lives.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is symbolized as a dove, for this is the form He took when He descended upon Jesus at His water baptism (see Matthew 3:16). The dove symbolizes gentleness, tenderness, loveliness, innocence, mildness, peace, and purity. The Holy Spirit is a real person as genuine as, but different from, the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not duplicate Jesus; He came to glorify Christ. His work is always harmonious with the work of Jesus. He was very active with the earthly ministry of Jesus from being the instrument of His conception, the confirming witness at His baptism, the source of anointing for His ministry, His guardian at the crucifixion, the means of His resurrection, and the power of Christ's ascension. Jesus and the Holy Spirit always worked hand in hand. They still do!

The Activity of the Holy Spirit to the World

Does any of us completely know the full work of the Holy Spirit to the world of people? We know He was an active

agent in the creation of the earth and therefore must remain an active instrument of God in maintaining the operation of our planet. Similarly, He is involved in the lives of men and women for whom this world was created. He preserves, protects, and provides for persons far more than we will ever understand.

In summarizing the ministry of the Holy Spirit to mankind in general, Jesus said: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11).

Jesus declared that the Spirit will act as Christ's prosecuting attorney. The Greek word translated here as reprove can also be translated to convict or convince. The Holy Spirit came to convict or to bring home truths otherwise doubted or discarded. He also presses charges made against conduct in life. Somehow in our self-justification, we fail to know what sin, righteousness, and judgment really are, so we need to be convinced of these facts.

Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would specifically convince or convict persons of "sin, righteousness, and judgment".

Jesus did not leave to our imaginations what He meant by this, for He said, "Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:9). The basic work of the Holy Spirit is to deal with the unbelief in the human heart. Sin has so closed us off from the spirit world that we inherently disbelieve in Christ. It takes the special ministry of the Holy Spirit to instil faith in our hearts. Unbelief is the mother sin. Someone has wisely said of unbelief: "Where it continues, all other sins are retained; when it departs, all other sins are removed." A mere change in

mental philosophy will not remove unbelief. It takes an illumination of the Holy Spirit.

The second ministry of the Spirit to men and women is a conviction of the righteousness of Christ. Jesus said it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to convince us of righteousness, "Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more" (John 16:10). While Jesus was on earth, He became God's standard of righteousness, but when He ascended to heaven that standard was removed from the earth. If we judge righteousness by looking at one another, we will live very unrighteously. The Holy Spirit works in our consciences to remind us of the standard of living God has designed for His people. Paul put it this way: "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15).

The third special ministry of the Holy Spirit is to convince men of "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11). The persons in the world, and, tragically, many Christians, live lives terrorized by the devil. They declare him to be the god of this world and they flee, fear, or fight him. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to inform all of us that when He cried from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), Satan's judgment was complete. The war is over! Satan is eternally defeated by Jesus. The Holy Spirit wants us to stop having a devil who is too big and a God who is too small. It is the work of the Spirit to convince us that it is God who is sovereign; not the devil.

A fourth work of the Holy Spirit to persons in general is regeneration. When a person responds positively to the convicting work of the Spirit, He is ready to be "born again" or regenerated. In the original creative work of God, His hands formed a body from the dust of the earth. This body

was surrounded with beauties of nature, but it could not respond. It was lifeless. God breathed the spirit of life into his nostrils and man became a living soul.

Unfortunately sin deformed, defiled, and disgraced this marvellous work of God. This living soul became dormant and dead to the spirit world that surrounded it. Although God is never far from any of us, we live and act as if the realm of the divine did not exist. But when the Holy Spirit who quickened the body of Adam quickens the soul of a man or woman, he or she awakens to the spiritual world around them and begins to live the spiritual life. Anyone who has witnessed the reactions and subsequent life of a real convert knows that regeneration is not merely a doctrine. It is a practical reality. It is an entrance into a new life. The Holy Spirit is God's agent in effecting this new birth. Paul puts it, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Activity of the Holy Spirit to a Believer

It may take most of eternity to discover all that the Holy Spirit does in the life of one who allows himself or herself to be made into this new creature. Perhaps we can summarize some of this by speaking of the Spirit indwelling, sanctifying, and empowering the believer.

At the point of a person's conversion, Jesus appoints the Holy Spirit to be a personal comforter. Jesus said: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). The word "another" places the Holy Spirit in comparison with Jesus. Jesus said He would send "one like Me". The Greek word for Comforter (paraclete) means "one called alongside to help". It suggests the work of a representative or a lawyer.

Jesus assigned the Holy Spirit as a personal lawyer or representative to each believer. When the enemy brings charges against us, we need not respond on our own. Jesus told His disciples, "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13:11).

We don't even know how to approach God properly, but our personal representative does. We read: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Paul also reminds us, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27).

Another thing that happens immediately after our conversion is that the Holy Spirit makes His home in the believer. Jesus said of the Spirit: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). He who has been with us as a guide, protector, and intercessor is to be in us.

During the three plus years that Jesus was with His disciples, He met their needs as a companion who walked with them. Just before His death and subsequent resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit, who was to do for and with them what Jesus had done, would not merely be with them; He would be in them.

We generally refer to this ministry of the Spirit as indwelling. Although God is always present, "For in him we live, and

move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), it is the special ministry of the Holy Spirit to indwell the hearts of men and women who have been saved.

Sin caused the Spirit to depart from men and women, leaving them in spiritual darkness. In relation to understanding, the unconverted cannot know the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). As touching the will, persons cannot be subject to the law of God (Romans 8:7). When it comes to worship, none can call Jesus LORD (1 Corinthians 12:3). As to daily practice, one in whom the Spirit does not dwell cannot please God (Romans 8:8). Concerning character, these cannot bear spiritual fruit (John 15:4), and persons void of the indwelling Spirit cannot have faith to receive the spirit of truth (John 14:17).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the mark of a New Testament Christian. It is not what a person professes that makes him or her a Christian. It is what he or she possesses that makes the difference. Conversion without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is impossible, for regeneration by the Holy Spirit involves a union with God and Christ that the Bible calls an indwelling. No one can live the Christian life but Christ, and He lives it in the believer through the Holy Spirit. Still a third necessary work of the Spirit in the life of believers is sanctification. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit effects a radical change in the soul by imparting a new principle of life. This does not imply that the child of God is immediately perfect. Far from it He is "born again", but he is a baby who must learn to live a new life.

In each new convert there remains inherited and acquired weaknesses and tendencies to sin. There is still the world, the flesh, and the devil to overcome. The Spirit works in a progressive manner to overcome these faults. It is by gradual

degrees that the soul is renewed into the image of Christ. Faith must be strengthened through many tests. Love must be fortified to survive hardship and temptation. Allurements to sin must be overcome, and tendencies and habits must be corrected. None of this can be done by mere action of the believer's will. The Holy Spirit works from within the life to effect changes that will be seen throughout that life.

If the Spirit did a single work and then departed, all converts would fall back into their old ways. Fortunately, the Spirit does not depart; He indwells. From this position within the believer, He continues to work divine means of growth. Peter put it, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

This work of cleansing and consecration is called sanctification or "setting apart". The Bible says: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Salvation and sanctification work together like a hand in a glove.

Peter says we are the "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). Our salvation may have been made available from before the foundations of the world, but our sanctification must be worked in us daily in our here-and-now. Paul wrote: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (1 Thessalonians 4:3,4). By faith and repentance we turn to God and are regenerated. Then we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to teach, urge, enable, and motivate us to godly living — sanctification.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

In preaching to the multitudes, John the Baptist said: "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:16). Christ's forerunner made a parallel between what he was doing in baptizing converts in water and what Jesus would do in baptizing them in the Holy Spirit. It is much more than symbolic, for what John did was very literal — it was experiential. Similarly, the baptism Jesus offers is equally something we sense, see, and experience.

Because of John's use of the word baptize, this experience of the enabling of the Holy Spirit is usually called "the baptism of the Holy Spirit". It is after salvation. It is not being baptized into Christ, but it is Christ baptizing us in the Spirit. Peter's statement on the day of Pentecost was: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). Just before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Then on the day of Pentecost, "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4). Fundamentally, this baptism of the Holy Spirit is an energizing of the life of the person who is indwelt by the

Spirit. Working from His abiding presence within the believer, the Holy Spirit begins a divine energizing of a person's will, thoughts, spirit, and personality. Even the human body submits to the direction of the Holy Spirit. So complete is the presence of the Spirit in the believer that He speaks — with our facilities and cooperation — a language we have never learned: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

Throughout the book of Acts, whenever persons were baptized in the Holy Spirit, there was a physical, visible evidence of the coming of the Spirit. Wherever this evidence is described, it usually mentions that they spoke with other tongues. James reminds us, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5). The Holy Spirit takes the most unruly member of our life and controls it so completely that it can speak a language the mind does not comprehend.

The main feature of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is power for service. Whenever we read of the Spirit "coming upon", "resting upon", "falling upon", or "filling" people, it consistently refers to power for service. It does not refer to the saving work of the Spirit. Remember that the promise of the Haling of the Spirit was given to persons who were already in intimate relationship with Christ. They had already been sent out to preach. They were assured, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Their moral condition was described by Christ as, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Their relationship to Christ was illustrated by Jesus as, "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5). It seems evident,

then, that a person may be a disciple of Jesus and yet lack the special endowment of power spoken of in Acts 1:8. More is available!

There is, of course, but one Holy Spirit, but there are many operations of that Spirit. We see this illustrated in electricity. The same electricity that illuminates our houses, operates refrigerators, cooks a meal, becomes heat, and powers our computers, is also the source of energy for hundreds of other accessories. Similarly, the same Holy Spirit regenerates, sanctifies, energizes, illuminates the Word, and imparts special gifts to believers.

Some persons are confused about how to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I can give you at least five guidelines from the Scriptures. First, repent and turn from sin and iniquity, for the baptism of the Holy Spirit belongs to Christians only. The Spirit of God will not empower a vessel He does not indwell. Sin in the life of a Christian hinders this work of the Spirit. The psalmist reminds us, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

A second step to being baptized in the Spirit is obedience to the Word of God. Jesus Himself coupled obedience with the coming of the Spirit when He said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14:15-16). We could hardly expect God to entrust the energizing of the Holy Spirit to disobedient sons.

A third action that opens a believer to be baptized in the Spirit is the exercise of faith in God's promises. Jesus repeatedly promised to send the Holy Spirit. We simply need to believe His promise and act on it. The Holy Spirit is a gift of Christ. We need but reach out in faith to receive it from His hand.

A fourth action that will assist a person in being filled with the Holy Spirit is prayer, for prayer conditions our lives for the Spirit's coming. While prayer does not change God, prayer certainly does change us. One facet of prayer is simply asking for a promised thing. Jesus taught, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in say name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). Remember that the 120 who were the first to be baptized in the Spirit had been praying in the Upper Room for ten days before the Spirit descended upon them! Although the Holy Spirit has been promised, we are still expected to ask for it. James reminds us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

Still a fifth route to being filled with the Spirit is to have hands laid on you. We read: "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:17).

Consistently through the book of Acts, when the apostles laid hands on believers, they were filled with the Spirit. In modern experience it is often when the minister lays hands on persons while praying for them that the Spirit comes into them in a fresh new way. It is the action of impartation.

The Activity of the Holy Spirit in a Believer

Long before the Holy Spirit seeks to do a work through a believer, He begins to do a work in him or her. He is not too anxious to flow the charasmata (gifts) of God through a believer until the character of God has begun to form in him or her. This inherent nature of Christ that has been made available to believers is often called "The fruit of the Spirit". Jesus introduced this idea of bearing fruit in His teaching of the vine and the branches. He said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). He is the vine and the believers who have an

abiding relationship with Him are the branches. He reminded His disciples that the life was in the vine and its root structure, but that this life bore fruit on the branches. The fruit, then, was not the fruit of the branch, but the fruit of the vine. We bear the nature of Jesus, not our human nature blessed by the Spirit.

Later in the New Testament, we are introduced to this fruit of the Spirit with the words: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). Since Jesus had already introduced the concept of grapes being the fruit that comes from Christ through the believer, we need to accept this passage in Galatians as one fruit with nine different manifestations, just as a bunch of grapes has many separate grapes on the stem.

It is easy to see this fruit described as three triads. The first three "grapes" ripen toward God — love, joy, peace. The fruit of love is simply a result of intimate contact with God whose very nature is love. It is God's love flowing out through us to others. The "grape" of joy is love rejoicing. This grace of God is descriptive of God's kingdom, for the Word tells us, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). The third "grape" is peace, another characteristic of God's kingdom that is the result of having experienced the love and joy of God.

These first three fruits come into the life of a believer fully ripened. They characterize our initial responses to God. We respond to God in love, joy, and peace. These are the initial products of the Spirit that others see in our lives, and often, after tasting of our fruit, they are enticed to come to Christ to be able to bear these fruit in their own lives.

The second cluster of fruit to be seen in the person in whom the Holy Spirit indwells, ripens toward his peers.

"Longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness" are not action.

While the other two fruits in this cluster are passive, this grace is very active. It not only forbears, it acts.

The third cluster of fruit is much slower to ripen, for it grows close to the vine and is often shielded from the sun. It is a fruit that ripens to ourselves. It is described as: 'Faith, meekness, and temperance'. The fruit of faith speaks of fidelity. It is faithfulness in things to ourselves — things that others may never know about. It probably extends from marital fidelity to faithfulness in prayer and Bible reading. It moves these beyond the practice of disciple to the reception of the divine nature.

Similarly, the fruit of meekness ripens in the life of a believer who continues to abide in the vine. Meekness is never to be equated with weakness. It is a gentle answer to a rough question. The Bible's use of the word generally refers to teachableness. It is submission to the will of God. Moses was described as "Very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). He was teachable, submitted, and gentle, but none could call him weak.

The fruit of temperance is often the last "grape" in the cluster to fully ripen. I guess that fundamentally it adds nothing to the power of the life, but it becomes the governor that makes that power useful. All excess is dangerous. We are urged to be, moderate in all things" (1 Corinthians 9:25), and leaders in be church were required to be temperate (see Titus 1:8; 2:2).

All this fruit is the natural outgrowth of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer. Its abundance or scarcity will depend upon our yieldedness to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is His fruit, not

ours, but He is both willing and anxious to transplant it into our being and behaviour. It is impossible to bear this heavenly fruit without the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit of God. Those who know anything about growing grapes know that grapes are propagated by grafting not by seed. The purpose of bearing grapes then is not self-propagation but for food and the pleasure of others. Each branch must be grafted in Christ but the fruit that results out of this uniting is a potential blessing to others. The fruit of the Spirit is produced in the lives of believers to give others a chance to "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). How are others to know of the goodness of Christ if they cannot sample some of it in their relationships with believers?

With a little change of metaphor Jesus said: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:38-39). Whether it is fruit for eating or water for drinking, each is a free sample of the goodness of our Lord.

The Activity of the Holy Spirit through a Believer

In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul spoke of some special abilities [Greek: The Charismas] the Holy Spirit would give through Spirit-filled believers. He wrote: "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

We normally refer to these as "the gifts of the Spirit". They are supernatural abilities that function beyond our own natural abilities. It is the person of the Holy Spirit operating at His level of ability rather than blessing us as we function at our limited levels of capability.

These gifts of the Spirit logically divide themselves into three triads of gifts, very much as the fruit of the Spirit is viewed as three groups of three. There are the supernatural enablings to know, to do and to speak.

The supernatural enablings to know are: a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, and the discerning of spirits. These gifts are not the acceleration of a person's natural wisdom or knowledge; they are supernatural information given to meet a specific need at a precise time.

Then there are the three supernatural enablings to do: the gifts of faith, the gifts of miracles, and the gifts of healing. These charismas are far more than acceleration of natural or Mottled abilities. They are divine actions operating through the believer.

And finally, there are the supernatural enablings to speak: tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy. Again, these gifts are beyond an acceleration of natural linguistic ability. It is the Spirit speaking through the individual beyond his or her natural abilities.

These gifts do not operate independently of the believer. It is a cooperative effort of the indwelling Spirit and the person who is indwelt. The individual becomes an active participant rather than becoming a robot. The gifts do not function through a trance-induced state. Every faculty of the individual IN called upon when these gifts are exercised.

The Bible says that "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1Corinthians 12:7). The gifts

are not for display, nor are they spiritual measuring rods. They are manifested for the welfare of the Church. They are equally for the benefit of individual members of the Church, and they are also for the benefit of the world. Most importantly, the gifts of the Spirit are for the glory of God. This is the ultimate object. Their operation proves the presence of God, establishes the reality of God, and demonstrates the mercy and compassion of God.

These gifts are resident in the Holy Spirit as certainly as the fruit is the Spirit's fruit. The Word says: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

It is probably an error for any believer to brag that he or she has "the gift of ..." The indwelt person has the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit has the gifts. Although some persons are more comfortable allowing the Spirit to function one gift more than another, this is an action of the faith of the individual far more than the possession of the gift.

It is proper that we want the operation of these spiritual gifts. Paul said, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). The Greek word for covet means to desire earnestly; to long for with a passion. It seems that this is one route into the operation of the gifts. The second route is superior, because the "more excellent way" Paul speaks of is love, for the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is the chapter on love. Deep love for God and compassionate love for one another will open us to the ministry of the Spirit through our lives to others. It is obvious that prayer releases both of these channels, for both our strong desires and our love will cause

us to ask the Father for the manifestation of the Spirit's power through our lives.

The Continuing Work of the Spirit

While the initial empowering of the Holy Spirit is seen as an experience, the Bible speaks of it as a continuing experience. It needs to be entered repeatedly. Paul exhorted the believers, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The Greek calls for a continuous action. Some versions of the New Testament translate this verse: "Keep being filled with the Spirit". Our human capacity is so small we need to be filled repeatedly.

Our ability to yield to the Spirit grows through use.

The disciples learned the value of being refilled with the Holy Spirit. After the first persecution, and upon the release of the apostles from prison, we see them praying until there is a repeat of the initial experience of Acts 2:1-4. More than once we see them praying for a fresh outpouring — a renewed experience of the Holy Spirit.

After every ministry of the Spirit through us, there is a need for a fresh anointing. Energy expended must be renewed or we will be powerless. Persecution, pressure, spiritual battles, and spiritual ministries use up or deplete, the anointing. It is much like using a flashlight. At some point the batteries must be recharged or replaced. It is not that the Holy Spirit has been driven from our lives. It is that we need a renewing or refreshing from Him, just as the body needs the renewing of food and sleep.

Jesus speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit as "rivers of living water" (John 7:38). This implies a constant intake and outflow. If we do not have an inflow to balance the outflow, we will be depleted and dry. I live in Phoenix, Arizona, where we have the Salt River whose only source of water is rainfall. During most of the year it is a dry river bed. However, during

a rain storm it can become a raging torrent that washes out bridges. Some Christians flow only when there is a special rain of God's Spirit, but God's desire is that we have a constant source of the Spirit flowing through our lives so that we will never be dry river beds. We need to keep being filled.

The Compensations of a Spirit-filled Life

It would take a complete book to list the benefits of being tilled with the Holy Spirit, but let me list some of the most obvious advantages. The Spirit-filled life is an abundant life. Jesus promised, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This abundant, full, satisfying life of Christ flows to us through the abiding presence of the Spirit of Christ. When Christ holds undisputed possession of us, He gives us a life that is open, strong, and filled with harmony. It is a life that shines forth and transmits itself to others. It is in complete contrast to the narrow, weak, unprogressive, pitiful, and sick life we lived before the Holy Spirit took residence in us.

I have also observed that the Spirit-filled life makes it possible to live a holy life. When He is dominant in our lives the Spirit frees us from the law of sin and death and brings us into true Christian liberty. He breaks the chains of sin asunder, brings freedom from slavery, and then nurtures within us spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts.

The Spirit-filled life becomes a life of power. Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This power is not only for ministerial success, but enables us to face trial and even martyrdom. Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, died victoriously while praying for his executioners.

This Spirit-filled life is also a life of thanksgiving and praise. It is striking that Paul, following an exhortation to the Ephesians to "Be filled with the Spirit" added, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19). It does not come naturally to our human spirit to praise God; to thank Him for all things. However, when the Holy Spirit makes His home in our spirits, we find ourselves triumphing over difficulties in life with hymns and grateful worship. The Holy Spirit enables us to see the victory of God in all circumstances of life, and He empowers us to praise God in the midst of everything — positive or negative. I have experienced that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit brings me into a life of joy and happiness. In speaking of the Spirit, Jesus told the woman at Jacob's well: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). This "springing up" is the enthusiasm of joy and the pleasure of happiness. I have sought joy in possessions, position, and plenty of money, but the greatest joy I have ever experienced has been the joy of the Spirit as He abides in my spirit. Believers who will allow the Holy Spirit to indwell their lives will also experience a higher level of continual peace than they have ever known before. There is the peace of a higher relationship with God through the presence of His Spirit. There is the further peace of knowing that God accepts personal responsibility for the person He indwells with His Spirit.

I am convinced that there is no higher way to live life here on this earth other than to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. It is the fulfilment of the promise of the Proverbs, "The

blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22). At times this blessing is so generous that we need Christian ceremony to help us release it.

Tongues - Glossolalia

The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Editor Stanley Burgess, Zondervan, MI, ,2002 p670.

The usually, but not exclusively, religious phenomenon of making sounds that constitute, or resemble, a language not known to the speaker. It is often accompanied by an excited religious psychological state, and in the pentecostal and charismatic movements it is widely and distinctively (but not universally) viewed as the certifying consequence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. Terminology.

Not used in English before 1879, the technical term *glossolalia* derives from *glassais lalein*, a Greek phrase used in the NT meaning literally "to speak in [or 'with' or 'by] tongues." Its inclusion in the list of spiritual gifts (charismata) given in 1Cor. 12:8-10 accounts for the popular equivalent expression "the gift of tongues," though that precise phrase nowhere occurs in Scripture. A French scholar coined the term *xenoglossia* (or *xenoglossy*: French *xenoglossia*) in 1905 to describe a spiritualist medium who, in trance, wrote in modern Greek though she had no acquaintance with that language.

Xenographia, it was later argued, would be more accurate.

Xenolalia, a more frequent synonym of *xenoglossia*, describes *glossolalia* when the language spoken is identifiable as one among the over 3,000 known to occur on the globe. Two other terms describe *xenoglossia*: the longer *xenoglossolalia* and *heteroglossolalia* ("speaking in other languages"). *Glossographia* refers to automatic writing that is inspired from a higher

power but results in no known language. In recent times, scholars have coined still other words for related phenomena: *propheteialalia*, the inspired vernacular speech of the prophet; *akolalia* (perhaps better *akuololalia*), the perceived hearing of another language even when one is not spoken; *ermeneglossia*, a technical term for interpretation of tongues; *echolalia*, the agitated repetition of the words of another; *idiolect*, a *glossolalic dialect* peculiar to an individual. "Prayer language" as a synonym for *glossolalic prayer* (cf. 1Cor.14:14) appears to be of recent origin, made popular by pentecostal and charismatic televangelists and talk-show hosts. Fortunately, a term used late in the 2nd Century by Tatian, an early Christian apologist, never got picked up in the modern European languages; he used *glossomania* to refer to the insane speech of the Greek philosophers against whom he wrote (Oration, 3). Although the OT contains records of ecstatic religious speech, there is no Hebrew equivalent for the term *glossolalia* nor any use of the expression *glossais lalein* in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT in common use during NT times). The singular *glossa lalein* does appear in the Septuagint, but not in reference to *glossolalia*.

2. Non-Christian Varieties.

Whatever its origin, *glossolalia* is a human phenomenon not limited to Christianity nor even to religious behaviour among humankind. *Dramatic glossolalia* occurs in television situation comedies when actors spontaneously initiate a language then put the punch line in the vernacular. No external source for such speech, neither divine nor devilish, need be imagined beyond the stage talents of the speakers. *Spiritualistic glossolalia* and related phenomena among spiritual mediums were among the first studied by psychologists near the beginning of the 20th century. Pentecostals have attributed a satanic origin to

such cases, even though proof lies outside scientific methods of sociopsychological inquiry. *Pathologic glossolalia* is known to medicine and psychiatry, the results of such causes as organic neurological damage, effects of drug or psychotic disorders. Schizophrenic disorders have furnished examples of *glossolalia*. Research conducted by social scientists (Malony/Lovekin, 1985) over the past two decades have corrected earlier views that all *glossolalia*, even and especially its Christian varieties, arose from mental illness or social and economic deprivation. More relevant to *Christian glossolalia* are clearly reported cases of *pagan glossolalia*, both ancient and modern. These have varied in the degree of religiousness involved—some more or less culturally routine, others evincing marks of singular prophetic distinctiveness.

Among ancient parallels, the Delphic Oracle (Parke 1956) is best known. Located at the city of Delphi less than 50 air miles across the Corinthian Gulf to the northwest of Corinth, the Delphic Oracle flourished in the high classical period of Greek culture (the 5th century B.C., Nehemiah's time in Israel), but its popularity had declined by NT times. Private citizens or public officials consulted the oracle in order to acquire, as they believed, divine guidance regarding particular issues like marriage decisions, business ventures, and battle strategies. An inquirer would first undergo purification rites and present sacrificial offerings. Then the inquirer would be brought into the presence of a young woman, a priestess of Apollo said to possess a "pythonic spirit" (named after the serpent said to have been slain by Apollo: such a priestess is mentioned in Acts 16:16). A male prophet of the temple received the question of the inquirer. The young priestess fell into a state of frenzied ecstasy and spoke out words that were unrecognizable. The attending priest supposedly translated

these into understandable Greek of the period and presented the oracular response to the seeker of the will of the gods.

The result, though often ambiguous, was taken to strengthen the intent or preference of the inquirer, who was thus led to believe the action taken reflected the divine will.

Scholars do not agree regarding what produced the ecstatic state. Researchers have variously proposed a narcotic effect from chewing leaves of a nearby tree or use of a sacred drink. Now discounted is an earlier theory of intoxicating gases that escaped from a cleft in the earth at that vicinity. Some suggest a demonic spirit. Whatever the cause, the Delphic ecstatic speech formed, not only a parallel to, but also a precedent for, the *glossolalia* at Corinth. It may be that the popularity of speaking in tongues at Corinth in part was fuelled by a misguided Christian effort to match the speech of rounding pagan deities.

An important study by anthropologist L. Carlyle May (1956) that predates the rise of the charismatic movement shows the widespread occurrence of contemporary pagan, or non-Christian, *glossolalia* among 20th-century cultures. Using a taxonomy of *glossolalia* that ranges from mumbles and grunts through esoteric priestly languages and imitations of animal speech to widely related instances of xenolalia, May shows that cases outside Christian influence have been reported in Malaysia, Indonesia, Siberia, Arctic regions, China, Japan, Korea, Arabia, and Burma, among other places. He found that it was used sparingly among American Indians but was widespread in African tribal religions. He concludes that *glossolalia* on the whole occurs infrequently and has not been reported to appear in whole tribal groups except where affected by Christianity. More often it produces religious

leaders rather than followers, but it is by no means a necessary feature even of ecstatic religious leaders.

Reports of such cultural, pathological, and dramatic cases of *glossolalia* are descriptive: it does not lie within the methods of social science or historical research to conclude that any given instance of *glossolalia*, Christian or non-Christian, may have a divine (or devilish) origin. What exists—phenomena that appear—can be described by all observers. Observers, from their own worldview, determine what they believe is the spirit—or Spirit—that impels the glossolalist.

3. Biblical Data.

If sheer quantity of text is the measure, more is said in Scripture about *glossolalia* than about the Virgin Birth or the ordination of women. Roy Harrisville (1974) counts 35 references to the phenomenon in Mark, Acts, and 1 Corinthians -28 of them in 1Corinthians, 23 of which are in ch.14. These texts chronologically locate *glossolalia* from just prior to the ascension of Jesus and the first Christian Pentecost around A.D. 30, through the middle 50s at Corinth in Greece, to Paul's mission in Ephesus in Asia Minor around A.D. 60. The phenomenon therefore, as reported in NT records, spanned three decades, flourished in both Jewish (Jerusalem) and Gentile (Corinth) centers, and appeared in widely separated parts of the Mediterranean—Corinth is nearly 1,500 air miles from Jerusalem—in places that marked the eastern and western limits of Paul's missionary enterprise. If *glossolalia* appears with surprising infrequency over the centuries in the life of the church, that does not rise from a lack of biblical accounts of its origin.

The most frequent phrase, which appears in Mark, Acts, and 1Corinthians puts "tongues" in the plural *glossais lalein*. "In tongues" (or "with tongues") is the appropriate translation

whether or not the preposition *en* appears. The singular, "to speak in a tongue," occasionally occurs, but only in 1Cor.14:2, 4, 13, 27 (where, in the icy, "unknown" is italicized to show there is no comparable Greek word underlying the English adjective). There are "new" tongues (Mark 16:17), "tongues of men and of angels" (1 Cor. 13:1), and "other tongues" (Acts 2:4). Besides speaking in tongues, one may also "pray" in tongues (1Cor.14:14). The parallel structure of 1Cor.14:14-16 suggests that to "sing in the Spirit" and to "bless in the Spirit" also are glossolalic acts. One may even "have" (1Cor.14:26) a tongue. There are "kinds [species, varieties] of tongues" (1Cor.12:10, 28).

A large consensus among biblical scholars concludes that Mark's gospel ended at Mark 16:8. Among several alternative endings that appear in copies of NT manuscripts, Mark 16:9-20 seems to have been added to the original gospel in the late 2nd century. The textual history is complicated, and conclusive proof is impossible. Accepted theories of the origins of the canonical Gospels make it clear that sayings of Jesus and stories about him circulated orally for decades before they were ever gathered into written Gospels (cf. Luke 1:1). An example appears in Acts 20:35: "Remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'"—a saying not found in any of the four Gospels. What is striking about the "Markan Appendix," as Mark 16:9-20 is called, is this: of all the sayings and stories of Jesus that were still circulating in the 2nd century, the one that got attached to a canonical gospel distinctly reflected charismatic interests, including speaking "in new tongues." This suggests that interest in *glossolalia* clearly persisted into the 2nd century. Three clear occurrences of *glossolalia*, besides at least two other strong allusions, appear in the book of Acts. Acts 2 describes

the descent of the Holy Spirit on the first Christian Day of Pentecost, a late spring Jewish holiday that earlier celebrated the agricultural harvest but later observed the harvest of Sinai, the giving of the law through Moses. On this day "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (v. 4). Said the listeners, "We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (v. 11). This was in Jerusalem, among Jews, on a Jewish holiday. Later, yet in Palestine, but in a Gentile household, the address of Jewish leader Peter was interrupted when the Spirit fell on the foreign group. Peter's fellow Jews who had made the trip to Caesarea with him "were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God" (10:45-46). Still later, in Ephesus, a leading city in western Asia Minor, Paul met a group of people who knew only of John's baptism. After Paul laid hands on them, "the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (19:6).

Luke's interest in the book of Acts seems to include a sort of theological geography. In his gospel, Luke took Jesus from rural Galilee to the Jewish capital of Jerusalem; likewise, in Acts he takes Paul from the Jewish center to the imperial capital of Rome. In doing so, Luke seems to mark the movement of the gospel westward by gradual stages—each characterized by the descent of the Holy Spirit—Jerusalem (Jews alone), Caesarea (Gentiles on Jewish soil), Ephesus (Gentiles in Greek territory). At each step the Holy Spirit falls and *glossolalia* is an accompanying feature.

"Samaria" (Acts 8:14-24)—a nation of half-Jews—could be inserted between "Jerusalem" and "Caesarea" above, but *glossolalia* is not mentioned. Many commentators conclude its

presence, however, since there was some aspect of the episode that led the magician Simon to offer money to acquire the trick of giving the Spirit by the laying on of hands. Connections flourished in those days between magic, nonsense syllables, and popular piety.

The other place where *glossolalia* originally may have appeared in the text of Acts describes the effects of prayer following the safe release of Peter and John: "After they prayed, the place ... was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31). Many NT scholars, Rudolf Bultmann among them, believe the original text may have read "...filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues." No surviving manuscript, however preserves such a reading.

It is Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that most speaks of *glossolalia*. The setting of the letter is crucial to its interpretation. First Corinthians is not a zero-based treatise on spiritual gifts. Rather, it is a forceful pastoral letter sent to correct rumoured wrongs in a church founded a half-dozen years earlier by the apostle Paul in Corinth, the capital city southern Greece. Paul's unnamed successor(s) warped teachings he had left. The congregation, at least an influential and troublesome part of it, developed a distorted doctrine of Christianized human nature such that it overemphasized the spiritual side of the Christian life to the neglect even of basic morality (e.g., incest was arrogantly tolerated [1Cor.5:13]). With that mind-set, using *glossolalia* would attest a supposed higher spirituality.

Paul's response to the Corinthian super-spirituality lay in his appeal, not to end the use of *glossolalia*, but to govern use by three guidelines: (1) recognition of the diversity charismata graciously given by the triune God (1Cor.12) (2) the

supremacy of love, without which no charisma count (1Cor.13); and (3) the priority of congregational edification over personal benefit (1Cor.14).

Is *glossolalia* at Corinth the same phenomenon that appeared in Jerusalem a quarter century earlier? Acts describes *xenolalia* on the Day of Pentecost (2:14). The hearing of identified languages is not mentioned in the other two instances where *glossolalia* is mentioned in Acts (10:46 19:6)—though the vocal consequence consisting in "praising God" (10:46, cf. 2:11) may imply that the content of the glossolalic speech was understood. In any case, Acts is theological history—a work composed by its author freely at will. First Corinthians, by contrast, is a pastoral response in the form of a straightforward but longer-than-average letter that addresses specific problems in a particular congregation.

Glossolalia in Acts is heard as "our own languages" (2:1)

Corinthian *glossolalia* is addressed to God—"no one understands him," and he "does not speak to men but to God" (1 Cor. 14:2). *Glossolalia* in Acts is an outcome of the Spirit's arrival. In Corinth it is a charisma, one among others. (Luke does not use the term charisma in Acts or in his Gospel: it is except for 1 Peter 4:10, a Pauline word.)

Corinthian *glossolalia* occurred in a settled congregation and required the companion gift of interpretation to extend its usefulness beyond the speaker. Paul, not Luke, speaks of "interpretation": there is no uninterpreted *glossolalia* in Acts. In Acts 2 at least, the tongues are immediately perceived as various native languages. The *glossolalia* of Acts seems once-for-all, at least initiatory: *glossolalia* at Corinth habitually recurred.

Phenomenologically, the *glossolalia* of Acts and 1Corinthians may be the same. But Luke in Acts makes a theologically

symbolic use of *glossolalia* entirely appropriate to the genre of Acts, while in 1 Corinthians the phenomenon crops up as a pastoral problem rising from overzealous charismatic piety. A clear precedent for NT *glossolalia* appears in the tradition of ecstatic prophetism in the OT. Israel's prophets were given to dreams, visions, and a variety of abnormal behaviours that included broken speech. Samuel directed Saul to Gibeah and said, "You will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person" (1Sam.10:5-6). Earlier, when Moses gathered 70 elders to the meeting tent, "then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again" (Num 11:25). Contagious ecstatic prophetism is an acknowledged part of Israel's past and an unavoidable topic in OT theology. What is striking is the nearly universal voice effects coupled with emotive experience.

In non-biblical Jewish literature roughly contemporary with NT times, the Testament of Job 48-50 furnishes the nearest parallel to Paul's reference to "tongues of angels" (1Cor.13:1). Facing his impending death, Job distributed his goods among his children, saving the best—a triple stranded charismatic sash—for the three daughters. As each daughter tied one of the strands about herself; her "heart was changed" (cf. 1Sam.10:5-6) and she "no longer cared for earthly matters." The first daughter then spoke "ecstatically in the angelic dialect, sending up a hymn to God." The mouth of the

second daughter "took on the dialect of the archons and she praised God." The third daughter "spoke ecstatically in the dialect of those on high ... in the dialect of the cherubim." No evidence exists that Paul knew of the Testament of Job.

4. Theological Nuances.

Nearly all classical pentecostal groups adhere to the doctrine that speaking in tongues certifies the personal experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Representative is the doctrinal formulation of the American Assemblies of God:

The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking of tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1Cor.12:4-10, 28), but different in purpose and use.

Nineteenth-century Holiness groups sought to recover Wesley's emphasis on personal holiness. Donald W. Dayton (1987) shows that over the decades of that century, Wesley's language of "pure love" and "entire sanctification" was gradually replaced by the phrase "baptism in the Holy Spirit"—commonplace among Holiness people and revivalists as the end of the 19th century drew near. A simultaneous development, it can be argued, was the shift from Wesley's "assurance" to the notion of "evidence." This exchange was doubtlessly facilitated by the rise of a popular scientism after the American Civil War. Darwin published *Origin of the Species* in 1859 and *Descent of Man* in 1871. Holiness seekers, who also resisted imported German higher criticism, opposed the "evidence" argued by the new biological and biblical sciences. Adamantly opposed to the conclusions, they may well have been captured by the method: one gets at truth by "citing evidence." This pop intellectualism accounts for the way the question was put at

century's end, when Charles F. Parham's Bible school students gathered in Topeka in 1900. As he left for ministry elsewhere, Parham, founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement, charged his students to search the Scriptures and to discover the "Bible evidence" for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The answer identified by the students gave birth to the pentecostal movement: speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Classical pentecostals account for the difference between Acts and 1 Corinthians by maintaining a distinction between speaking in tongues as the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (as the frequent outcome of the Spirit's descent in Acts) from the gift (charisma) of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians. Most pentecostals admit the difficulty of supporting the doctrine of initial evidence from 1 Corinthians. In truth, the doctrine finds its sole support from the historical precedent of the cases of the Spirit's descent in Acts 2:10,19. Not all classical pentecostals teach initial evidence. Exceptions include organized classical pentecostal churches in Scandinavia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Latin America. Admittedly, the case for initial evidence is not as strong as that for major doctrines such as the sinfulness of humankind or the efficacy of the atonement. Yet historical precedent as a basis for belief should not be belittled. Jesus himself appealed to precedent: did not the Pharisees, chagrined that Jesus' disciples picked and ate grain on the Sabbath, recall that David "unlawfully" entered the sanctuary and ate consecrated bread? (Mark 2:23-28).

5. Historical Survey.

What counts for *glossolalia* in Christian history depends on how the term is defined. The technical term *glossais lalein* (in the plural) is limited to the NT itself, until the phrase is picked

up by patristic commentators citing the NT. But if ecstatic speech and written nonsense syllables are counted, then *glossolalia* can be sporadically located over the whole history of the church until its exponential spread in the 20th century pentecostal and charismatic movements.

The first full generation of *glossolalia* is recounted in Acts: 30 years elapsed between the Jerusalem Pentecost (Acts 2, around A.D. 30) and the Ephesian descent of the Spirit (Acts 19:1-6, about A.D. 54). Over the next hundred years, little is recorded. By the third generation of the 2nd century, however, the magical use of esoteric nonsense syllables occurs in Christian Gnosticism, and a prophet named Montanus (who flourished in Phrygia in central Asia Minor) announced that he had become the Paraclete. Doing combat with heretics, both Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180) and Tertullian (A.D. 207 or later: he had himself become a Montanist) offered as apologetic defence the existence in their communities of the apostolic charismata.

But for Origen in the 3rd century and Augustine in the late 4th and early 5th, it is clear that charismatic phenomena, including *glossolalia*, were valued as marks of the birth of the church centuries earlier. Augustine made a metaphor: the church, by his day spread over the then-known world, collectively spoke in virtually all the languages of the inhabited globe. It was Augustine who established the belief, deeply held by many to the present day, that the charismata ended with the days of the apostles.

Saints through the Middle Ages are often credited with the capacity to speak in tongues, though careful historical research has to be applied to determine where such attributed endowments are little more than stylized encomium¹.

¹ a formal text that expresses high praise for somebody – eulogy

Neither Luther (1483-1546) nor Calvin (1509-64) reflected firsthand encounters with *glossolalia*. For Luther and his foes, "speaking in tongues" had to do with the Roman Mass offered in Latin: Luther said the vernacular is needed. Calvin saw the tongues of the Jerusalem pentecostal as symbolic of the inclusion in the church of non-Jews.

Persecution from Louis XIV against 17th-century French Protestants produced the French prophets of the Cevennes mountain region in southeastern France. Records describe extraordinary phenomena—trances, faints, shakings, and *glossolalic* sounds. Some of the Camisards, as they were known, escaped to England, where they later forced John Wesley's attention to *glossolalia*. Wesley (1703-91) theoretically defended the contemporary relevance of the charismata and thought kindly of the Montanists. Reactions to his own preaching included some who were "constrained to roar." While he supported deep personal experience of the sanctifying Spirit, it seems to be too much to claim Wesley was himself a *glossolalic*.

The 19th century opened with the Shakers well situated in upstate New York. It closed with the birth of the pentecostal movement. In the 1820s and 1830s, both among the Shakers and the followers of Edward Irving, a popular London Presbyterian pastor, *glossolalia* occurred repeatedly. In the 1840s *glossolalia* emerged with the rise of Mormons: both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young spoke in tongues. Latter-day Saint doctrinal formulations to this day include the practice.

Throughout the 19th century, the Holiness movement grew. Its pursuit of restored holiness and the "perfect love" engendered by Wesley the century before, traced a shift, as Donald W. Dayton (1987) shows, in terminology from terms

like "entire sanctification" and "Christian perfection" toward a rising preference for "baptism in the Holy Spirit." In the 1890s, four renowned Bible teachers who did not have Wesleyan roots—A. J. Gordon, Reuben A. Torrey, A. B. Simpson, and C. I. Scofield—wrote books that, though their preferred terminology varied, urged the fullness of the Spirit upon every believer.

The stage was thus set for the birth of the pentecostal movement. It took only the linkage of speaking in tongues with the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to bring about the pentecostal movement. That happened in the closing days of 1900 among Charles Parham's Topeka Bible School students: when *glossolalia* was pronounced to be the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the classical pentecostal movement was born. The rest is history (Synan, 1971; details in this section have been drawn largely from Williams/Waldvogel, 1975).

6. Varied Explanations.

How does *glossolalia* occur? What are its effects and significance? Responses to these and similar queries turn on the worldview of the inquirer and the methodology adopted. Even Third World illiterate pentecostals are entitled to their uncomplicated view that God has filled them with himself and they speak in tongues under the direct drive of the Holy Spirit.

Research conducted by social scientists (Malony and Lovekin, 1985) has been the kind of inquiry most productive of theories. The earliest psychological investigations viewed *glossolalia* as the by-product of an unhealthy mind or a disordered personality. It has been attributed to hysteria or hypnosis, suggestion or regression. Some researchers view it

as an altered state of consciousness, others as learned behavior or narcissistic self-preoccupation.

Buddhist doctrine explains xenolalia as a linguistic survivor from a prior existence. Jungian theory views *glossolalia* as an individual breakthrough from the collective unconscious. It has been described as the consequence of stimulation of Broca's Area in the left cerebral hemisphere and as a form of right-brain speech. It can be styled as the suspension of the rational or as a mix of a cry (anticipating death) and a laugh (celebrating birth: Hutch, 1980) or as a kind of mysticism—although *glossolalia* played no major role in the classical Christian mystical tradition.

Pentecostals are gratified to learn that they have been, in more recent research, accorded healthy normal personalities— if, as a whole, a bit more anxious than others. In fact, history, psychological analysis, and personal testimony converge to suggest occasional coincidence of personal or social stress and the use of *glossolalia*. Ongoing research will add to the common understanding of the phenomenon, but research cannot exhaust the meaning of the experience to the individual believer.

7. Evaluation.

A few summarizing and interpretive conclusions can be offered.

1. *Glossolalia* is a human phenomenon, not limited to Christianity nor even to religious behavior. Speaking in tongues "embraces every ecstatic oral-auditory phenomenon from speaking a language not generally known ... to speaking in forceful declamations, incantations, and other verbal effusions that are more likely to be psychological-spiritual projections of inner speech than some authentic language itself" (Williams/Waldvogel, 1975, 61).

2. The impulse for *glossolalia*, not readily accessible to scientific determination, may rise from the speakers themselves, from a demonic spirit, or from the Holy Spirit. Even if *glossolalia* occurs in a balanced pentecostal environment, any one of the three sources may apply. The discernment of the community is essential. On the other hand, *glossolalia* of simply human origin is probably more frequent than recognized. That explains, for example, the humanities scholar who "taught himself" to speak in tongues and can do so at will.

3. It is equally wrong to conclude (1) that *glossolalia* did not occur between the 1st and the 20th centuries or (2) that it is a regular and predictable outcome of revivalistic religious fervor. Despite emotional excesses at the Kentucky Cane Ridge revival in the early 1800s—surely the most emotional of American awakenings, where appeared such phenomena as shaking, barking, falling, and fainting—no clear cases of *glossolalia* are reported. Nor do any come from the lay-led prayer revival of the 1850s. The charismatic renewal after the 1960s, on the other hand, is replete with reports of *glossolalia* among many quiet and controlled mainline Christians.

4. The doctrine of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit can be labeled the distinctive teaching of the pentecostal churches. But it is misguided to confuse that which distinguishes pentecostalism with its essence. The pentecostal family of Christians are, on the whole, balanced evangelical believers with a high view of Scripture, a penchant for deeply personal (but not mystical) religious experience, and a conspicuous passion for global evangelization.

5. Even deaf people speak in tongues. But this has been little studied among social scientists and, for that matter, rarely observed among pentecostals.
6. "That a phenomenon has a psychological explanation does not exclude it from being a gift of the Spirit" (McDonnell, 1976, 154). That an experience is human cannot mean it is not Christian, as the incarnation itself discloses. Given the theology of the book of Hebrews, one may conclude that Christians in fact have a better chance of becoming truly human than non-Christians.
7. Xenolalia is at the same time the most difficult variety of *glossolalia* to document yet the most widely reported among global cultures.
8. Most instances of *glossolalia* seem not to consist in the extraordinary use of some identifiable language. The significance of *glossolalia* for the individual speaker may lie in its capacity to vent the inexpressible—hence the observed connection with stress. But in congregational life the good of the group exceeds that of the individual, and the companion charisma "interpretation" is required. Such interpretation need not be considered literal translation of the speech given in tongues but rather an explanation of the meaning of that glossolalic utterance for the gathered Christians. Eccentricities arise when interpretations are preserved and assigned a value above Scripture and the tradition of the local church or the Christian family of which it is a part.
9. After all self-induced and demonically originated *glossolalia* has been accounted for, there remains a variety—one could say a level—of encounter with the Holy Spirit, the consequence of which is speaking in tongues. The capacity for speech distinguishes human nature among living beings; it likewise differentiates—in OT theology—God from the many

other gods. It is not to be wondered at that one of the finest varieties of religious experience links divine and human speech. Nor is it surprising that the result of that mix transcends rational thought.

10. Genuine Christian *glossolalia* is temporary, a feature of the present age between the first Christian Pentecost and the second coming of Christ. "Tongues ... will be stilled" (1 Cor. 13:8); there will be no speaking in tongues in heaven.

Glossolalia is therefore supremely eschatological, a broken speech for the broken body of Christ till perfection arrives.

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Glossolalia: An Outsider's Perspective

Social psychology is "the study of the manner in which the personality, attitudes, motivations, and behavior of the individual influence and are influenced by social groups." Experiments have demonstrated that the social norms of a group have an impact not only on how the individuals in that group behave, but even to some extent how they perceive reality. In other words, any group exerts a pressure to conform, but it also provides a "frame of reference," a way of cognitively "making sense of the world" (cf. Sherif, 106).

One area of sociopsychological research is *glossolalia*, and a question that can be asked is, As we examine the setting in which and the method whereby an individual is first introduced to *glossolalia*, do we find that the setting and method affect glossolalic speech? (We must be clear that this approach deals only with the phenomenon of *glossolalia* and can say nothing about its origin or source.)

The social psychologist may theorize that exposure to persons who are already engaged in *glossolalia* will have a measurable impact on an initial glossolalic experience. (This hypothesis would leave out of consideration "spontaneous" glossolalists, that is, those who speak in tongues without any prior exposure to *glossolalia*.) As the glossolalic phenomenon is experienced in a specific social setting, the actual form of *glossolalia*, which includes its sociolinguistic structure and the physical manifestations that accompany it, may be shaped by an established norm that is "taught" or "caught" via an implicit social norm.

To pursue this hypothesis one would likely observe that the social format for the practice of *glossolalia* occurs, more often than not, during a ritual activity known as the "altar call."

Kildahl provides a "typical" example of one such altar call: a man named Bill Jones, who was seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit, remained after a church service to discuss "the gift of tongues." Jones states that once they began praying as a group the guest speaker began to "pray in tongues," and that he (Jones) felt, as he listened to the preacher praying in tongues, "as if there were an electrifying charge in the air." Jones continues his account by stating that the preacher placed his hands on Jones's head and then encouraged Jones to repeat what he (the preacher) said. As reported by Kildahl, the actual words the preacher spoke were "Aish nay gum nay tayo." Jones

did as instructed and began to repeat the glossolalic sentence. After two or three recitations, however, Jones began to modify the speech by saying, "aish nay ... anna gayna ayna ganna keena kayna geena anna nay-manna nay- manna ..." (Kildahl, 3). It would seem, then, that Jones's glossolalic speech was based on the rearrangement of certain phonemes of the speech that had first been presented to him and which he recited. However, what if a person experienced *glossolalia* for the first time without reciting a set formula? The response to this question could be that it is possible for a person to hear glossolalic speech from other participants and then rearrange the phonemic structure into a novel schema. For example, as a person prays during an altar call or in any setting where glossolalic speech is occurring all around, a kind of linguistic pattern may be implied without any explicit instruction. This process would be similar to the way in which all humans acquire language—through "immersion" in a language. The evidence suggesting that *glossolalia* can be learned by immersion was found by linguists who discovered that individual pentecostal communities do conform to a certain pattern of glossolalic speech. For instance, Pattison examined the linguistic studies of Wolfram (1966) and Nida (1964) and concluded that glossolalic phonemes were similar to the known language of the speaker, with a further delimiting by a "restricted phonemic code" (Pattison, 79). Furthermore, Samarin records a pentecostal minister as saying that it seemed to him "that there are certain similarities of tongues and some of these words seem to be common to a number of people." The minister continued by saying that he had traveled all over the United States, Germany, and Sweden, and that "many times there [seemed] to be a few 'established patterns' among public tongue speakers." Samarin also

includes the statement of an Assemblies of God minister who observed that "those under the influence of strong personalities sometimes tend to speak similarly in tongues just as they may imitate mannerisms" (Samarin, 98).

With these data serving as a guide, the social psychologists' hypothesis may be that glossolalic phonemes and patterns are directly related to modern languages, and more specifically to the language of a local group practicing *glossolalia*. Further, the social psychologist may propose that the arrangement of these morphemes into glossolalic "words" represents the desire of the group to conform to a sociolinguistic norm that acts as a delimiting agent in the selection of morphemes and in the possible combination of those morphemes into words. That is, like all human speech, glossolalic speech in pentecostal communities is shaped by an extant norm of linguistic production, whether taught explicitly or by immersion, which subsequently limits the "glosso-linguistic" possibilities within individual pentecostal communities.

Having produced a hypothesis, a social psychologist might construct an experiment that would study the linguistic structure of glossolalic speech in different parts of the world, with an emphasis on structural similarities within a linguistic community. Further, specific research could be done to analyze the claims of "spontaneous" glossolalists who believe that they acquired the speech apart from any prior exposure to the norm. The key questions in this case would be (1) Does the form of *glossolalia* in any way relate to a "spontaneous" glossolalist's native language? and (2) Is there a way to ascertain whether or not any linguistic modifications occurred in an individual's glossolalic speech after he or she became part of a specific glossolalic community?

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Manual Glossolalia

In Greek, speaking in tongues (*glossais lalein, glossolalia*) clearly means speaking in languages and not in ecstatic gibberish (Horton, 1976). This definition, though clear and simple when referring to vocally articulated languages, poses a challenge to the 103 signed languages existing worldwide.

Pentecostal pastors and missionaries ministering among the deaf attest to the fact that "deaf people do speak (vocally) in tongues." However, since the early 1990s the phenomenon known as "manual *glossolalia*" has gained recognition.

According to the testimony of a retired deaf evangelist, this experience dates as far back as the 1940s or 1950s: "Our hands would take on different shapes and movements we could not recognize, but we just assumed it was all a part of our enthusiastic praise."

Every verified instance of signed language characteristically has three basic components: (1) specific hand configurations that involve certain rules defining clear and appropriate hand

shapes; (2) articulation qualities that incorporate the movements of a particular hand shape identifying the intensity of the concept being expressed; and (3) the planes of placement that help identify verbal tenses and directionals as to who is doing what action. Each signed language contains far more complex linguistic values than these three basic and consistent components.

Testimonies have been given by deaf congregations of messages in tongues, spoken in what appeared to be a foreign signed language, followed by subsequent interpretations articulated in the American Sign Language. These expressed foreign sign languages contained clearly defined hand shapes, verbal tenses, and placements. Unfortunately, reports of these experiences have been few and far between. What is currently witnessed could be defined as the infant babblings of a signed language. Most manual *glossolalia* speakers appear to be "saying" only one word or syllable, much like an individual whose first experience with tongues involved constantly repeating sounds such as "ba, ba, ba." This particular experience is often recognized as only the beginning of the language and certainly not the fullness thereof. Those trained in the linguistics of a signed language, when observing the manual *glossolalia*, could recognize appropriate hand shapes, consistent articulation patterns, and clearly identified grammatical planes. Thus the observed linguistic characteristics of manual *glossolalia* make it clear that they do not represent gibberish—although they do not necessarily show manual *glossolalia* to give expression to a complete language.

Those who would reject the possibility of manual *glossolalia* do so on the basis of their understanding that *glossolalia* must involve speaking (lalein). However, the difference between

spoken language and signed language is mode, not essence. Both spoken and signed language are in essence symbolic representations of human thought, expressed in two modes that can be used interchangeably by those who know both. Spoken and signed *glossolalia*, therefore, may simply be two modes in which the "thoughts of the Spirit" are expressed. Finally, it is difficult to preclude the possibility that manual *glossolalia* are valid, since, as Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

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Gifts Of The Spirit: Natural And Supernatural

Pentecostal scholar Russ Spittler says, "*Glossolalia* is human phenomenon, not limited to Christianity nor even to religious behavior.... The belief that *distinguishes* the movement can only wrongly be thought of as describing the essence of Pentecostalism." I believe Spittler to be correct. The notion that *glossolalia* (or any other gift of the Spirit, including healing and precognition) is essentially "supernatural" is in my view biblically and scientifically untenable. It is biblically untenable because the lists of charismata in the NT include so-called extraordinary gifts (healing, prophecy, *glossolalia*) and so-called ordinary gifts (management, teaching, giving money to the poor, even being married or unmarried (Rom.12:6-8; 1Cor.7:7; 12:8-11). Paul's criterion for a charism is not phenomenological but functional: *pneumatikos* (spiritual), *sarkikos* (fleshly), and *physikos* (natural) are not ontological but

functional terms. They do not answer the question "What is?" but "What does it do to a person or a community?" Therefore, a charism is a natural gift that is given for the common good (*pros to sympheron*, 1Cor.12:7), operates in an ecclesiological and christological context, and is open to judgment by the ecumenical community (1Cor.12:3; 14:22,29). Scientifically, *glossolalia* and other gifts have been demonstrated to be human abilities (Hollenweger) that may or may not be used in Christian spirituality. They are not abnormal, only uncommon in certain cultures. If the "laws of nature"—which are human conventions—have to be changed because of new discoveries, a theology that is based on the difference between "natural" and "supernatural" has to shift the frontier between these two realms correspondingly. Just as music, normal speech, and the bread in the Eucharist are common gifts of creation and may be transformed in the liturgical context, so speaking in tongues and other gifts are natural gifts that many human beings may possess. Just as a cathedral is built of ordinary stones, so *glossolalia* and other gifts are ontologically natural and ordinary phenomena. And just as, when put together in a masterpiece, the stones in a cathedral do not change ontologically but functionally, so speaking in tongues and other gifts can become something that, like the cathedral, proclaims, "God is here." This, however, is not the reigning understanding of the gifts of the Spirit in pentecostalism and the charismatic movement. Usually they are understood to be strictly supernatural. In certain quarters the hallmark of pentecostalism is believed to be its supernatural aspects. In order to distinguish themselves from other, identical phenomena, the gifts of the Spirit are then presented like this:

| Natural | | Supernatural | |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| | | divine | demonic |
| <i>Glossolalia</i> | Knowing foreign languages | Speaking in tongues in a Christian context | Speaking in tongues in a non-Christian context |
| Healing | Medical treatment | Healing in a Christian context | Healing in a non-Christian context |
| Precognition | Meteorology, other prognostic sciences | Prophecy in a Christian context | Precognition in a non-Christian context |
| Exorcism | [No natural equivalent] | Exorcism in a Christian context | Exorcism in a non-Christian context |

The problem with this table is that it has never been established that the Bible separates reality into a natural and a supernatural realm; rather, this is a notion that has unwittingly been taken over from Thomas Aquinas. However, the modern catholic understanding of, for example, the sacraments departs from this Thomistic base. It argues functionally rather than ontologically—a thought that has been taken up by Frank Macchia in relation to *glossolalia*: "It is a kind of primary sacrament or *kairos* event." The Pentecostals "have parted significantly from the conservative Evangelical preoccupation with subjective conversion and

have been led into the vicinity of the ecumenical Lima document (BEM)" (Macchia, 63, 69-70).

This situation understandably has grave consequences for our understanding of the gifts of precognition, healing, and *glossolalia* in non-Christian religions. Traditionally they have been classified as demonic, a recipe for distorted relationships with people of other religions and very much in contrast to the biblical tradition. "Astrology" led the Magi to the cradle of Christ. The Persian king Cyrus, who liberated the Jews from captivity, was called an "anointed," a "Messiah," or, in Greek, "Christ" (Isa 45:1). And Paul freely and copiously quotes from non-Christian religious sources, for instance, in the famous love chapter, 1Cor.13.

The Bible does not say that extraordinary healings and other gifts in a non-Christian context are *by definition* demonic—it depends very much how they are used. They only become instruments of demons *if* used for manipulative or destructive purposes. Phenomenologically there is no difference between Christian and non-Christian *glossolalia* or healing. Both belong to the order of creation.

This has been clearly seen by Miroslav Volt; who states:

Charisms should not be defined so narrowly as to include only ecclesial activities. The Spirit of God is active not only in the fellowship (of the church) but also through the fellowship in the world. The Spirit who is poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17f1.) also imparts charisms to all flesh: they are gifts given to the community, irrespective of the existing distinctions or conditions within the community. Very frequently charismatic is taken to mean extraordinary. Ecclesiologically this restricted understanding of charisms can be found in some pentecostal and "charismatic") churches that identify charismatic with spectacular. A secularized term of this "supernaturalistic reduction" is found in the commonly

accepted Weberian understanding of charisma as an extraordinary quality of a personality. One of the main points of the Pauline theology of charisms is to overcome this restrictive concentration on the miraculous or extraordinary. (1987, 184-85)

The Spirit of God is—as the charismatic theologian Jean-Claude Schwab says—always mediated through human media: through understanding, experience, emotions. That does not mean that God's action is, so to speak, secularized. Rather, his field of action is not reduced to human categories like "natural" and "supernatural."

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Canty's "I Was Just Thinking".

God's special gift just for me. More than a ministry gift.

Canty, G., www.canty.org.uk (*IWT 6, God's special gift just for me*)

At 14 heaven crashed into my 84lb body, and I found myself speaking with tongues almost without realising it. All I could think about was that God had broken in upon me. The effects continue, but - I had joined the battle.

For decades it was reckoned that if people spoke with tongues they must have many other faults too. Pentecostals were useful aunt sallies in many a sermon. Our reputation was condensed from rumour. Why tongues objections? We shall

see, but for a long time our Pentecostal image was hardly prepossessing, I suppose. We were poor, struggling; the church world would forgive that, but - tongues! Spirit-baptism attested by glossalalia!

However, criticism can't kill. In 1906, the first chiropractor (bone setter) was jailed, and the medical world didn't finally accept the practice until 1974. Even football! In 1796 a Derbyshire court jury said "(Football is) a custom which, while it has no better recommendation for its continuance than its antiquity, is disgraceful to humanity and civilisation, subversive of good order and government, and destructive of the morals, properties and very lives of the inhabitants" The 'beautiful game' survives and so does the Pentecostal movement, lately projected to number a billion by the year 2040.

But why object to tongues? Behind the dislike is fear, fear of an 'outside' power invading us. Naturally we guard our personal sovereignty. "I am me". But at Pentecost the Holy Spirit claimed His right to His people. They 'let go and let God' and tongues were heard. I myself yielded, though I could have resisted, but knowing this was God I did not. Yield yourselves unto God; yield your members (as) members of righteousness"

The church started with tongues, though some churches would rather forget their embarrassing lowly beginnings in a mere upper room, with disciples their poor relations. Tongues established the true character of Christianity as spiritual-physical union. For centuries Christianity was regarded as just a spiritual religion. When the Pentecostals began teaching the baptism in the Spirit, traditional teachers opposed it saying the baptism takes place at conversion unnoticed. The Spirit is not in the habit of coming unnoticed. However the Bible is

interpreted the unassailable fact is that Jesus offers every believer a direct, spiritual-physical experience of power. At 14, I easily yielded to the Spirit being used to yielding to others - especially my mother. Although my breeding as a north-easterner meant no 'soft' feelings, tears especially, I was overwhelmed. But the fish and chips, north east was a million miles from the impassive dignity of Eton and Harrow. Sadly, nobody with a stiff upper lip has ever spoken with tongues. Why fear it? God is always to be feared, but His desire to bless living people is plain enough. Supernatural tongues are also natural. We didn't invent tongues. Why would we, such a peculiar thing? It was God our Maker. He formed us, so that we could speak in tongues. We are not freaks - it is all the others who clam up on God. All first Christians spoke in tongues and Peter said it was for all, even those far off. From their early 20th century appearance, Pentecostals suffered opposition and isolation, being driven into a corner, but God was in their corner. They knew the truth. That kept the Pentecostals They knew it could change the world. Pentecost is an intense encounter with the Spirit of God. The baptism in the Spirit is an unique and wonderful experience. To operate other spiritual gifts for ministry, such as healing, bring no special feelings except to the patients, no tingling hands or electric vibrations.. We heal by faith, not feeling. But tongues, a dynamic down-rush from heaven upon one's whole being, is an awesome personal experience, It is mainly for one's self and personal edification. For decades the Christian world admitted Pentecostals existed only like mice behind the skirting. But they endured rejection knowing this was the power Jesus promised for world evangelism. Judging by the earlier struggling Pentecostal

churches, it didn't look like it. Their 'power' apparently amounted to three tongues 'messages' on Sunday mornings. But it had vast implications. For half a century the Pentecostal banner looked a poor fluttering rag, but it betokened that the King was in residence.

The 19th century saints prayed for power to win the world for Christ. The answer came with the 20th century understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Until then believers had no way to know when power had come. They were never sure they had prayed enough. Some came to suppose that praying was power. More prayer, more power! It is still a common idea with talk of 'prayer-power', instead of the power of the Spirit, a gift. Power is not to be generated by effort and time, but comes by the anointing, the baptism in the Spirit.

Just as with any subject, arguments can be brought up against Spirit-baptism and tongues. To despise this unique and wonderful confrontation with the Spirit of God, is revealing. Why be like that? It is hard to know why anybody would not want what the disciples had, but nobody can speak against the truth without revealing their own character. The Bible is our judge. Our reactions show what we are made of, but the truth goes marching on.

"Times of refreshing" - what's that?

Canty, G., www.canty.org.uk (*IWT 7, "Times of refreshing" - what's that?*)

The first Pentecostal meetings I attended as a boy were held in a large hall accessed by a narrow wooden stairway and heated in winter by one huge combustion stove. That was before the days of fire regulations!

I caught the general spirit. We were all keenly aware of the Holy Spirit. In our innocent theology there was more Spirit present sometimes than others. The hall was lighted by single bulbs with warehouse shades, hanging from the high ceiling

on very long flexes. Sometimes they would begin to swing, no doubt due to the rising currents of warm air. But in that faith-filled atmosphere it was a sign of the power of God.

Those very early days were led by little Pentecostal experience. It was all new. Schoolboy as I was the preaching fascinated me. We often heard sermons about things that provoked God's displeasure. We had no doubt that the quality of blessing in a service depended on how God felt about us, and that how we went on could encourage or discourage the favour of His presence. I learned early about, "sin in the camp", perhaps a secret smoker, or 'bobbed hair' of the young ladies, for example, and the Spirit would be absent. It was dangerous doctrine breeding suspicions unless the church was being very successful.

However our sense of the Spirit was not all uneducated imagination. Power did descend sometimes. After being in services practically eight times week for two years, one night unexpectedly I had an Acts 2 experience, nobody 'helping', just as I took communion. But most Pentecostals can recall occasions when they have sensed that God had 'drawn near'. For me sometimes it was as if I was being baptised in the Spirit again.

God is God and odd phenomena is surely not unlikely? More than once I have closed a meeting and nobody moved, as if glued to their seats, perhaps 200 people, with people white faced under Holy Spirit conviction. "Falling under the Spirit" may sometimes be dubious, but during the war it took place when I was preaching, and I did not approve at all, putting it down to nerves and nonsense. I told people to get up again. One such experience was so powerful it changed my ministry to this day. My work now is mainly as a writer exploring for Bible truth. In that very way the strange grip of the Spirit

comes sometimes suddenly upon my mind. Some occasions are different. Talking to the late Duncan Campbell, who led the 1949 Lewis 'revival', he told me of unusual evidences of God's presence, especially people being deeply convicted of sin. He also mentioned hearing the angels singing, and in my own church we had had the same experience, but only once. In Birmingham a pastor told me that everyone in the meeting saw Jesus literally standing before them.

The subject is very practical. Why do these special occasions happen and can we pray for them? What is the 'theology' behind them?

Are they 'special' at all? I am sure we are not to interpret them to mean God is unpredictable. We may see these events as odd, unusual, but God doesn't. He doesn't do odd things as He fancies. Some put it down to His 'sovereignty' - meaning that He just made up His mind suddenly and for His own inscrutable reason to do something abnormal. I don't like that definition of sovereignty. God is faithful, never erratic.

Our basic theology about God is in the hymn "Great is thy faithfulness. His faithfulness is not just to His promises, but to the revelation of Himself in His the Word. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal His disposition, character, nature, that is, His essential heart. He Himself never changes and never does anything which conflicts with His nature. That we can lay down as true. He never acts in an uncharacteristic way. What He does, we can say "That's Him!"

So how do we account for times when to us He seems to excel Himself, and something greater happens than usual? What does it mean?

We must see from Scripture, and from experience, that God is not tied down to any routine. He will do the exceptional, but it is all part of His ongoing purpose and will. In anyone's

career they will have to go beyond what they usually do, but it is a necessary for their general objectives.

God is a living God, not a machine that will do exactly the same things all the time. He is not only living, but personal, with eternal purposes beyond our present awareness. In fact we should rely upon His doing the unusual when the situation calls for it. He doesn't open the Red Sea every day. He sent the Spirit with fire and wind, only once to signalise age of the Spirit. He opened prison gates a couple of times - it was essential then. We cannot so define God as to predict everything He is likely to do.

Nevertheless when God acts, it is as Spurgeon said "a sign and promise" of what He will do. When God told Abimelech to ask Abraham to pray for his healing, that's God, right from the start, and He has never been any different about sickness. I've noticed that when something special happens, people want to cling to it to happen some more. A church I knew had had a wonderful burst of glory one prayer meeting that continued for two more nights. But ever after they looked around and wondered why it wasn't like that all the time, feeling their must be something wrong among them. There was no need. The three days were their mountain experience seeing Jesus, but like the disciples work awaited them in the valley.

What is not the normal to us, is normal to Him. His immutability, His changelessness, is not that of a mountain glacier. He comes as a living visitor. He describes Himself as a fountain, a constant uprush with ever changing beauty and form. I have fine a water feature in my garden. I notice people stand and watch it and it never seems to bore anyone as the same old thing. A fountain is a constant up-rush of water, but it is a new explosion of cascading beauty every second. God is

the infinite author of all change and activity. We see His changelessness in His constant love and kindness