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# The Spirit Moves

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*Out of love for Jesus and the brethren, the author shares the concern of St. Paul: "Now concerning spiritual manifestations, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant . . . (1 Cor. 12:1). This study is presented to the glory and the praise of Jesus Christ.*

## THE SPIRIT MOVES

*Bruce L. Stam*

The Charismatic Movement represents one of the most significant developments in the life of the Church today. During the past decade and a half it has rapidly spread through the "mainline" denominational churches. As a result, a great deal of misunderstanding and tension has developed. Everything from devil worship to divisions in the Church has been attributed to the Holy Spirit Movement.

Since there is much misunderstanding, prejudice and ignorance about the Holy Spirit Movement and the Holy Spirit moving, the following is presented which centres attention on the Biblical basis for this movement.

### TERMINOLOGY

The charismatic movement gives the person and work of the Holy Spirit a special emphasis. By doing so it has helped to stimulate a new and fresh look

into an area of the Christian faith that often has been very neglected. Since the terminology being used by people in the Holy Spirit movement or by those familiar with it is new or at least not often used, two of the major terms are first discussed to establish some basis for further understanding.

A term, frequently used in the charismatic renewal, is “the baptism in the Spirit.” (Two of the many variations of the term are “baptised with the Holy Spirit” and “Spirit baptism”). The term “baptised in (with or by) the Holy Spirit” occurs several times in the gospels (e.g. Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). In each instance the Greek phrase is *en pneumati hagio* and the phrase is in the dative case to indicate genuine instrument and or agent.<sup>1</sup>

Another term used by the charismatic movement and from which it receives its name is *charismata*. This term is used almost exclusively by St. Paul in his Epistles. It is used to denote gifts of a non-material nature bestowed by the grace of God on the Christians.<sup>2</sup> There is reference to the gift of an office, mediated by the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6); to spiritual gifts in a special sense (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31); and to the spiritual gift (which is the gift of redemption (Romans 5:15)<sup>3</sup> The purpose of *charismata* was and is service (*diakonia*).

## CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT - SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Although any biblical study of the Holy Spirit has to include a study of the entire scriptures, this study limits itself to the major texts used to substantiate the existence of the charismatic movement.

In the Old Testament the prophets link the promise of the Spirit and power very closely.<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel declared that the new covenant would include not only cleansing from sins but the gift of a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-37).<sup>5</sup> Here the gift of the spirit is connected with the promise of forgiveness. The prophet Joel also described the blessing and promise of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

As the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist very clearly links the two blessings of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as well.<sup>6</sup> The importance of the connection of these two blessings is indicated by the fact

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1. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 105.

2. W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 887.

3. Ibid.

4. Michael Harper, *Power for the Body of Christ* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logo Books, 1970), p. 21.

5. Ibid., p. 20.

6. Ibid.

that all four gospels include reference to Jesus by John as the One who baptised with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Without a doubt, John saw in Jesus the fulfillment of the promised blessings that the prophets foretold. For him, Jesus was the agent through whom forgiveness and the Spirit would be given to God's people.

In the Book of Acts we see how the apostles understood the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and acted upon it.<sup>7</sup> There we see the unfolding of the blessings promised by the prophets and made a reality of Jesus Christ. The expression "baptised in the Spirit" is used only twice (Acts 1:5, 11:16); in both instances as quotes of the words of Jesus.

In Acts 1:4 the disciples are commanded by Jesus not to leave Jerusalem but to "wait for what the Father had promised." The purpose of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day was that "you shall be my witnesses . . . unto the remotest part of the earth." Since Jesus' commission has not been accomplished to date and is still in effect,<sup>8</sup> there is still a need for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit today.

In Acts 2:1-4 the first baptism with the Holy Spirit is described. "They were all filled with the spirit." The form of the Greek verb *eplesthesan* conveys the impact that the apostles entered into an abiding experience.

Not long after the Pentecost Day experience, we read about the effect of the Spirit in the life of Peter. In Acts 4:8, his speech before the ruling council of Israel is prefaced with the words "then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them . . ." "Filled" is an aorist passive participle, expressing antecedent action relative to the main verb.<sup>9</sup> The Greek would be better translated -- "then Peter, who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, said . . ."

Another outpouring of the Holy Spirit is recorded in Acts 8:4-24 when the evangelist Philip travelled to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to the people. Many of the people believed and were baptised but for some reason they did not receive the Holy Spirit. When the news reached Peter and John they went, prayed and laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. There was nothing vague about the fact that they had received the blessing of the Holy Spirit. A witness to the event, Simon Magnus, the magician, wanted to buy what the believers had received and to control it.<sup>10</sup>

The conversion and personal pentecost of Paul is recorded in Acts 9:1-19. It was three days after the theophany on the road to Damascus that Paul had a personal filling of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 10:1-48 we find ourselves in Caesarea where Peter was summoned to the home of a god-fearing Roman centurion. There good old prejudiced Peter was preaching to the Gentiles when, in the middle of his talk about Christ,

7. Ibid., p. 27.

8. Howard Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken As You Suppose* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1968), p. 51.

9. Ibid., p. 60.

10. Harper, p. 30.

“the Holy Spirit came on all those who were listening in exactly the same manner as he had come on the day of Pentecost.”<sup>11</sup> The comparison of this event with the first Pentecost was used by Peter as a defense for entering the house of a Gentile. Speaking in tongues is unmistakably in evidence.

Twenty to twenty-five years after the day of Pentecost Paul met some disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus. Paul, being the inquisitive type, asked them a very pointed question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They replied that they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit. After Paul had administered water baptism, he laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them. To be noted for our study is the fact that the early Church regarded the reception of the Holy Spirit as a definite discernible experience; Paul expected and received a definite answer to his question.<sup>12</sup>

On the basis of the preceding Bible texts, we note that the “filling with the Holy Spirit” is a definite, discernible experience. It was something that was manifested in some way in tongues, prophesy, vision, etc. While there is the possible danger of over-simplifying and of making the activity of the Holy Spirit mechanical, this seems to be at least a basic principle upon which the Apostles worked and the Holy Spirit operated.<sup>13</sup>

A norm, may be found in the words of Peter, “repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Yet, as the previous texts indicate, God cannot be neatly put into a box. God is almighty and works as he wills. God is a God of variety (John 3:8, 1 Cor. 12:11). The purpose of the gifts of the Spirit is for ministry (Isaiah 11:1-5, 1 Cor. 12:7), and power -- *dunamis* (Luke 24:49).

The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament;<sup>14</sup> nor is the idea of a Christian who has not received the blessing of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> In the early church, Christians were deemed ready for both baptism in water and the blessing of the Spirit after they had believed. If they did not receive the Holy Spirit there and then, steps were immediately taken to pray for them and lead them into the blessing.<sup>16</sup>

## 1 CORINTHIANS 12-14

Sooner or later any discussion of the charismatic movement leads to a discussion of 1 Corinthians 12-14. It is in these chapters that Paul addresses himself to the functions of spiritual gifts in worship, witness, and ordering of the Church. He does not question whether or not the Holy Spirit had filled the

11. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

14. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1962), p. 77.

15. Harper, p. 33.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 33-34.

Corinthian Christians; nor does he deny the validity of the Holy Spirit filling. The question with which Paul deals is how to use the gifts within the context of the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:1, in Greek, does not use the word "gift." Literally translated, the verse would read, "Now concerning the *pneumatikos*, the spirituals . . ." Since the word *pneumatikos*, is an adjective without an expressed object, translators have supplied the word "gifts."<sup>17</sup> Yet the word gifts really restricts what Paul is discussing in these chapters. For example, verses 4 to 7 show that what Paul is discussing here should more accurately be described as "spiritual manifestations." Thus, the attention is shifted from preoccupation with one's particular "gift" to the Holy Spirit's sovereign prerogative in manifesting spontaneously any and all of his "gifts," "ministrations," or "workings" through any and every yielded believer.<sup>18</sup> Verse 4 to 7 would read: "Now there are *varieties* of gifts (*charismaton*) but the same spirit; and there are *varieties* of ministries (*diakonion*) but the same Lord; and there are *varieties* of effects (*energematou*) but the same God who works all things in all persons." In his use of these three terms Paul expresses: the origin of the gifts; the way in which they are experienced -- the body; and the purpose of the gifts.<sup>19</sup>

The term "charismatic" denotes the source of the gift -- divine grace -- becoming concrete. The origin of the gift never lies in the person but in God's grace which surrounds him. The goal of the gifts is that something actually happens, that a person is helped and that the Body of Christ is strengthened.

The great multiplicity of gifts makes it clear that the activity of Jesus extends to the whole range of human experience.<sup>20</sup> The list of gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, includes many of the gifts that are misused and misunderstood. These charisms are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit. They are not natural talents. There are at least seven different lists of gifts -- 1 Cor. 12:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Cor. 12:29-30; 1 Cor. 13:1, 2; 1 Cor. 13:8; Eph. 4:11; Romans 12:6-8 -- and no two lists are the same. None, therefore, is meant to be exhaustive.<sup>21</sup>

## SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Rather than discuss in detail all the gifts listed in the previous verses, some detailed attention is now given to the most controversial of the gifts and most

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17. Ervin, p. 111.

18. Ibid., p. 112.

19. Ibid., p. 111.

20. Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 27.

21. Walter Bartling, "The Congregation of Christ — A Charismatic Body," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. 40. (1969), p. 75.

controversial aspects of the Charismatic Renewal -- speaking in tongues. The gift of speaking in tongues is also the least understood manifestation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup>

There is no scriptural justification for saying that tongues were dividing the Corinthian Church. It was not tongues but teachers that introduced division into the congregation at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10-17). Some present-day writers hold that speaking in tongues still today is not nearly so divisive as dogmatic pronouncements of sundry teachers on the subject. It is the denial of or disobedience to 'the commandment of the Lord' (1 Cor. 14:37) that is intrinsically divisive. The ecclesiastical censures of bishops, synods, conventions or commissions are an unambiguous repudiation of the apostolic decree, "and forbid not the speaking in tongues" (1 Cor. 14:39).<sup>23</sup>

Praying in the Spirit makes it possible to express the inexpressible and to praising God in new languages (Mark 16:17 -- a sign of the followers of Jesus). This gift includes speaking in various languages (1 Cor. 12:10) of men (Acts 2:8-11) or of angels (1 Cor. 13:1). Under some circumstances the languages can be understood by those who hear (Acts 2:6), showing that speaking in tongues is not simple gibberish or well-intentioned mumbo-gumbo attributed to the Holy Spirit. As a rule, however, they are not understood (1 Cor. 14:2, 9). When a person prays in the Spirit his reasoning ability is of no value (1 Cor. 14:14) but he has control over the speaking, being able to begin or stop or hurry it at will (1 Cor. 14:20). This is in contrast with ecstatic speaking in which the person is not in control of what is happening. This is also in contrast to praying with the mind (1 Cor. 14:14, 15, Eph. 6:18, Jude 20). Romans 8:26 tells us that the reason for this type of prayer is that we do not know how to pray as we ought. The content of speaking in tongues is prayer (1 Cor. 14:14), thanksgiving (1 Cor. 14:16, 17), intercession (Romans 8:27, Eph. 6:18), announcing the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11, 10:46) and speaking to God (1 Cor. 14:2).<sup>24</sup>

Much has been said about the speaking in tongues, but what was St. Paul's attitude toward this manifestation of the Holy Spirit? Paul responds positively to speaking in other languages in 1 Cor. 12:20 where he says, "God has appointed . . . various kinds of languages." God would not ordain anything for his church that is worthless, harmful, stupid, mad or unimportant.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore in 1 Cor. 14:2, Paul maintains that the dwelling of the Spirit in men speaks to God in a way that is incomprehensible to man. Because the Holy Spirit lives in us and takes possession of us, our total person is caught up in this prayer, which is more direct and total than prayer with the mind.<sup>26</sup> Finally, in 1 Cor. 14:4 St. Paul says, "He who speaks in a language (tongue)

22. Rodney Lensch, *Fundamentals of the Spirit-filled Life — Course #1* (St. Louis: Impressions Unlimited, 1975), p. 1 (Lesson #4).

23. Ervin, p. 156.

24. Bittlinger, p. 50-51.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

26. *Ibid.*

builds (*oikodomei*) himself up.” What is meant here is the constructive building up of the person. All the potential in dormant people is awakened.

Paul also has some critical comments concerning the use of speaking in tongues in public. (He does not speak against the use of tongues in private devotions.) In a public meeting, not too many are to speak in tongues. Also they should speak one at a time and not without interpretation. What might also be regarded as a critical statement is Paul’s assessment that this manifestation of the Spirit does not build up the listener.<sup>27</sup>

1 Corinthians 13 is placed in a unique position between the discussions of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in chapters 12 and 14. It is significant that Chapter 13 concerns itself with love; love is in a central position in the discussion at hand. God is love and he is at the centre of everything. It is only proper to give central attention to the origin of all Spiritual gifts, the LOVE OF GOD.

Contrary to popular belief and misunderstanding, love is not a *charismata* -- a gift. It is rather, a “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5). In 1 Corinthians 14:1 we read, “make LOVE your aim and desire earnestly spiritual gifts.”

Love is much more than a gift of the Spirit, for gifts of God are originate in his love. This fact is at the heart of the Gospel: “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”<sup>28</sup> God’s love is antecedent to all his gifts. Love initiates the gifts; the gifts reveal the love-source from which they came.<sup>29</sup>

Love does not exclude the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, love gives the gifts their power. Love without gifts is not an option offered by St. Paul; it is love plus the gifts that is the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31) that Paul wanted to show us.<sup>30</sup>

It is true that speaking in tongues as well as the other manifestations of the Spirit are imperfect and will be done away with when the perfect comes (1 Cor. 13:8-10). When Christ appears at his second coming, the imperfect will pass away and be replaced by the perfect. (The indefinite temporal clause here refers to indefinite future time.) We have not yet see the *parousia* -- the perfect.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8). This is also true of his promises . . . and “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and even to the remotest parts of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).

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27. Ibid., p. 104-105.

28. Ervin, p. 149.

29. Ibid., p. 150-151.

30. Ibid., p. 154.