DURING THE second week of July 1971, and coinciding with the Keswick Convention, an international conference was held at the University of Surrey under the title The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This event was widely reported in the Christian press as the coming of age of the NeoPentecostal, or, as it prefers to be called, Charismatic movement. To assemble more than seven hundred people from over twenty countries and an estimated fourteen denominations is no mean feat for a movement scarcely a decade old. Speaking of this gathering, Mr. David DuPlessis, a Pentecostal who has travelled widely promoting interest in the charismatic renewal amongst Christians in the historic denominations, said, 'I believe this conference is the demonstration of what Holy Spirit ecumenism is. The Holy Spirit is creating ecumenicity without organisation, bringing about a unity which organisation so far has failed to achieve.' The Guildford conference, with its daily 'charismatic Mass' arranged by Roman Catholic participants, theological lectures from an international and ecumenical team of speakers, its evening Cathedral services featuring 'singing in tongues', and what an observer described as 'a mood of eager vitality' demonstrates clearly that NeoPentecostalism is a force to be reckoned with. The aim of the movement, according to Michael Harper, Secretary of the Fountain Trust which organised the conference, is not to form a new denomination, but 'traditional Christianity renewed and brought to life by the personal experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit'. This personal experience is the centre of the movement.

NeoPentecostalism is gaining wide acceptance. For that reason alone it demands our attention. Since it claims to be bringing renewal to Christ's church it behoves every serious Christian to examine its claims carefully. As we appraise it however, the question to be asked is not Does it work? but Is it true? If we are to answer that question we must examine the particular teaching which the movement gives.

I have sought to draw material from a wide variety of sources in
order to pinpoint the teaching, but two books in particular have been used. One is the volume *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* by F. D. Bruner, who is critical of the movement. The value of his work is that he has brought together a vast amount of factual material from all over the world. His analysis of Pentecostalism and NeoPentecostalism is in my view highly perceptive, though I cannot agree with his own interpretation of some of the crucial New Testament passages. The other book is by a NeoPentecostal, Dr. J. A. Schep. It is called *Spirit Baptism and Tongue Speaking*, and its importance can be gauged by the fact that David Watson of York, a leading English NeoPentecostal, described it in a review as 'One of the fairest treatments of the crucial issues that I know.'

Dr. Schep remarks in his foreword:

An ever increasing number of church members in the historic denominations feel themselves confronted with the question: Does the Bible really teach, as many claim today, that there is a Baptism with the Holy Spirit, distinct from the new birth and that the special spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 are for today? For many years during my long ministry as a reformed and Calvinistic preacher and teacher I answered that question in the negative, out of ignorance, prejudice and traditionalism. Some years ago, however, I was providentially led to undertake a thorough study of the above question. My prayerful examination of all the relevant Biblical data resulted in a complete change of insight, which was graciously confirmed by experiences following.

From the chapter headings of Dr. Schep's book we can draw what seem to me to be the three distinctives of the NeoPentecostal position: First, there is a Baptism with the Holy Spirit distinct from and normally subsequent to the new birth. Secondly, this Spirit Baptism is an experimental condition with recognisable evidence. Thirdly, there are specific conditions to be fulfilled in order that Spirit Baptism may be experienced. I propose to examine the teaching under these three headings.

1. **There is a Baptism with the Holy Spirit distinct from and normally subsequent to the New Birth**

DR. SCHEP begins with an extended discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:3.

'For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.'

His thesis is that the first part of the verse, 'For by (Greek *en*) one Spirit we were all baptised into one body,' refers to regeneration and faith, the experience of every Christian. The word *baptised* here, he contends, refers primarily to water baptism which is the seal of the inner work of the Spirit as agent. But the second part of the verse, 'and all were made to drink of one Spirit', refers to Schep's opinion to a subsequent,
distinct baptism with or in the Holy Spirit in which Christ is the agent and the Spirit the element. Every believer has been baptised by or of the Holy Spirit, but not all have experienced the subsequent baptism with or in the Holy Spirit. This second baptism, Schep argues, is the baptism promised by John the Baptist in Matthew 3: 11 and parallels, and by Christ himself in Acts 1: 5. ‘Before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’

It has been argued by J. R. W. Stott in an influential tract The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit that both parts of 1 Corinthians 12: 13 refer to the same thing—a baptism, or initial experience of the Holy Spirit identified with regeneration leading to repentance and faith and witnessed to in water Baptism. This, Stott argues, is the only initial experience of the Spirit and any subsequent experience cannot rightly be called a baptism. Furthermore, the preposition translated with in Matthew 3: 11 and Acts 1: 5 is in both cases en. Thus, 1 Corinthians 12: 13a could be translated, ‘For with one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.’ The baptism spoken of here is to be identified both with that promised by John and Jesus and with regeneration. There is only one initial experience, not two.

NeoPentecostal reasoning is that 1 Corinthians 12: 13a, which refers to a baptism which all believers have had, cannot refer to the baptism with the Holy Spirit promised by John and fulfilled at Pentecost because the disciples were already Christians at Pentecost. Thus the preposition en in 1 Corinthians 12: 13a cannot mean with, it must mean by. The interpretation of this part of 1 Corinthians 12 is determined by the interpretation of Acts 2. In fact the NeoPentecostal case rests very heavily on their interpretation of the Spirit passages in the book of Acts.

With regard to Pentecost itself it is asserted that this was an enduement with power according to Christ’s promise, *equipping the disciples, who were already regenerate, for Christian witness and ministry. Their initial enduement with the Spirit in a measure is regarded as having taken place when they were baptised, or possibly, when Jesus breathed on them and said ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’. At all events Pentecost was, we are told, a post-conversion experience. Schep points to Christ’s teaching in John 14 that the Spirit ‘dwells with you, and will be in you’. If the disciples needed an enduement with power, a further experience of the fullness of God, dare we say that we do not need the same?

One of the keynotes of NeoPentecostalism, as of historic Pentecostalism and the holiness movements which preceded it, is this seeking for more. Whether this is expressed as a sanctification experience in the holiness movements, or a Baptism with the Holy Spirit as in the teaching of Finney, Torrey, A. J. Gordon, Andrew Murray and other prePentecostal evangelicals, the unifying factor is a seeking for more, and a recognition of Pentecost as the Biblical prototype of the reception of this more. Pentecost was an experience which gave
power and a new dimension to the disciples’ Christian service. Dare we say that we need less?

The issue to be decided here is whether or not Pentecost was a prototype experience for all believers to receive individually. Neo-Pentecostal writers acknowledge that it was in some sense unique—after all the wind and the tongues of fire did not appear again—nevertheless they see its essential meaning as being that there is a Baptism with the Holy Spirit subsequent to regeneration which believers should seek. I would make the following observations concerning this:

(i) A very important teaching is being built upon a passage of Scripture which is not didactic but narrative. The fact that something happened to particular people at a particular time does not of itself make it the norm for all in all ages.

(ii) It is arguable that Pentecost was a dispensational event. That is, it marked the beginning of the full operation of the new Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31, and made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ. Commenting on Jesus’ words ‘He who believes in me . . . Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water,’ John says, ‘Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.’ This, taken with the Lord’s own words that if he were not to go back to heaven the Holy Spirit would not come and the designation of the Holy Spirit as ‘the promise of the Father’ seem to me to point to Pentecost as being not so much a prototype experience, as the inauguration of a new era in the divine economy. The disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem, the earthly centre of God’s dealings with mankind, until the coming of the Spirit brought into being a new situation in which God’s laws were written in the heart, and all God’s people knew him in a personal and intimate way.

(iii) I think it is unwise to parallel the experience of the disciples prior to Pentecost with that of believers today. Their situation then was surely unique—not only because they met Christ in the days of his flesh which we can never do—but also because they were living at the critical time of the inauguration of the new Covenant.

(iv) The centre of attention in Acts 2 seems to be the sermon by Peter who explains what has happened by reference to what Christ has done. It is Jesus who has ‘received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit’, and ‘has poured out this which you see and hear’ because he is ‘exalted at the right hand of God’. In other words, something new is happening because of the exaltation and session of the crucified and risen Christ. When asked by those ‘cut to the heart’ what they should do, Peter tells them ‘Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’. Neo-Pentecostals are obliged to find two experiences here in order to sustain their theory. But all we are told is that ‘those who received his word were baptised . . .
and they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers'. It would seem reasonable to suppose that from this time on the Holy Spirit in his fulness was given to all who believed as a permanent possession.

We must deal with some of the other Acts Spirit passages more briefly.

In Acts 8 we read of the coming of the gospel to the Samaritans through the ministry of Philip. Many were baptised, but apparently did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and laid their hands on them. Here, Neo Pentecostals claim, we have a clear instance of the gift of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion and water baptism. Commenting on this Bruner points out that Samaria was the church's first decisive step beyond Judaism. There was a deep racial and religious cleft to be crossed. Therefore, he postulates, we have here a unique division between baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, because God would establish unequivocally for the apostles, for the despised Samaritans, and for the whole church in every age that no barriers existed for his gift. That gift is not merited by race or prior religion—He is free and for all. The gift was suspended on this occasion in order that the apostles might be involved in the crossing of the first threshold into the non-Jewish world. To be baptised and not to have received the Spirit was an abnormality.

In Acts 10 and 11 we have the record of the conversion of Cornelius and his household. We are told that while Peter was speaking 'the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God'. The important thing to notice here is that this was not a post conversion experience. Cornelius was a devout man, but he was hearing the Christian gospel for the first time. Water baptism followed this event, it did not precede it. We conclude that here the gift of the Spirit was simultaneous with hearing the gospel and receiving the gift of faith. But Schep, for example, insists that what we have here is a Pentecostal Spirit baptism occurring at the same time as conversion. The two are distinct but in this instance they happened at the same time. Some NeoPentecostals teach that Cornelius’ experience is the ideal, but the faith of most Christians is too feeble or their instruction too sketchy to enable them to receive the whole spiritual enduement at once.

In Acts 19 we find St. Paul asking some people called disciples 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' On discovering that they had not even heard of the Spirit, and that their baptism had been John’s baptism, Paul proceeded to baptise them and lay his hands upon them whereupon 'the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied'. NeoPentecostals believe that Paul’s
question ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit . . . ?’ implies that it is possible to be baptised, to be truly regenerate without having received the Spirit. But surely the question implies that the reception of the Spirit occurs simply with faith, for his next question was ‘Into what then were you baptised?’ If Paul had thought that they were truly converted but lacked a subsequent Spirit baptism, he would have enquired about the instruction they had received, or probed their subjective spiritual state. Bruner states perceptively, ‘The missing Holy Spirit is supplied not through new information about the Holy Spirit, but through the missing Lord. For on learning their ignorance of the Holy Spirit he taught them about Jesus.’

2. Spirit Baptism is an Experimental Condition with Recognisable Evidence

HISTORIC Pentecostals regard speaking with tongues as the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is this which distinguishes them from the holiness movement and from the teaching of some evangelicals who look for evidence of victorious living or power for service. NeoPentecostals seem divided as to the necessity of tongues. Larry Christenson, an American Lutheran, writes: ‘Scripture does not say that speaking with tongues is the only (evidence). But in showing us the pattern Scripture gives no consistent suggestion of any other.’ Schep states ‘the Baptism with the Spirit has been promised, but the promise does not say what outward phenomena are to evidence this experience’. He recognises the danger in seeking a particular manifestation which has not been promised, nevertheless he is clear that those who are baptised in the Spirit will know that it has happened because they will find within themselves a supernatural joy, an exuberant enthusiasm. Even if it is not tongues the evidence will be there, it will be supernatural, and it will be unmistakable.

Tongues are specifically mentioned as occurring on the day of Pentecost, on the occasion of the conversion of Cornelius, and when Paul laid hands on the Ephesian disciples. Though tongues are not mentioned, clearly something observable must have happened in Acts 8, for Simon ‘saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands’. NeoPentecostals who stress the importance of tongues as evidence for the Baptism point out that knowledge that the gift of the Spirit had been given to the Gentiles was obtained specifically from the gift of tongues, and that the manifestation of the gift at Ephesus proves that tongues were not simply to certify the initial giving of the Spirit to the Jews and the Gentiles, as might have been argued had they occurred only in Acts 2 and 10. They argue that if the disciples needed to receive the Spirit with tangible evidence, surely all
other believers need it too. Christenson, for example stresses the objective, positive assurance which the gift of tongues brings. 18

Whatever their views concerning the necessity of tongues as evidence, NeoPentecostals are agreed that the Baptism with the Holy Spirit qualifies the recipient for one or more of the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Following the Irvingites of the last century and the Pentecostals of this they affirm that the gifts were not intended for apostolic times only, but the infidelity of the church occasioned their eclipse and made them appear to have been suspended. Though the reformation achieved much by way of recovery of the marks of the apostolic church, it failed to recognise the permanent character of the charismata.

The reformers taught that the charismata were a special gift of God to the infant church, and that they died out at the end of the apostolic age. It should be remembered that one of the points made by the Roman Catholics in the reformation controversy was that they were the true church, because they had, and always had had the power to perform miracles. Miracles were the proof of God's favour towards the church, and the reformers' inability to produce similar wonders was evidence of their apostacy. Defending the reformers' position, B. B. Warfield in his volume *Miracles, Yesterday and Today, True and False*, argues that the gifts were the credentials of the Apostles 14 validating the truth of the gospel in the absence of the New Testament. They were usually given by the laying on of apostolic hands. They were also for the edification of the church prior to the writing of the New Testament. Each of these uses is superseded by the canon. But there is yet another reason why they should be confined to the apostolic age: miracles attest a period of revelation. Now that we have that revelation in propositional form we no longer need or should expect to experience the charismata. D. D. Sceats points out that to insist that the charismata have ceased in no way denies the occurrence of mighty providences, recoveries of those pronounced incurable by fallible men, in answer to prayer, and other "miracles" worked by God through the agency of natural law, defying mechanistic explanation. Such manifestations occur outside specifically Christian contexts. Tongues can be a plain human phenomenon, induced by well known physiological techniques. Spiritism provides examples of "miracles". So the modern manifestations are no embarrassment to the reformed view, since they are not charismata in the New Testament sense. Where Christians experience such manifestations they naturally invest them with Christian significance, just as the Voodoo practitioner invests them with Voodoo significance. The psychological phenomenon of conversion is an interesting parallel. But all this is not to minimise the place of the supernatural in daily Christian living. Christian life is pervasively supernatural because of the spiritual power available to us irrespective of charismata as regenerate believers indwelt
with the Holy Spirit. Even in the earliest times, charismatic manifestations were no guarantee of true spirituality as Matthew 7: 22-23 makes so plain."

NeoPentecostals counter such reasoning with three basic questions. Where is the scriptural evidence that the charismata have ceased? Does the success of the average local church today corroborate the view that we have no need of these gifts today? And, surely the millions of people exercising these gifts today cannot all be deluded. One writer has said: 'One cannot help noticing that those (gifts) which can be exercised more easily "in the flesh" (preaching, teaching) are accepted, while those which depend more directly on faith and "being in the Spirit" are neglected. Others,' he goes on, 'point to the misuse of the gifts (notably tongues) and conclude that they should be left alone. . . . The corrective to abuse is proper use. Hence it behoves every pastor of Christ's flock to become acquainted positively with the correct use of all the gifts.'

NeoPentecostalism offers the possibility of definite spiritual experience akin to that which we read of in the New Testament. By comparison, the traditional evangelical way of trust and obedience seems to the Pentecostal tame and subjective. Many evangelicals find the real challenge of the charismatic movement to be that they cannot point in their own lives to the kind of experiences which seem to permeate the life of the early church. The question is, are the experiences of NeoPentecostals to be identified with those of the apostolic age?

3. There are Specific Conditions to be Fulfilled in Order that Spirit Baptism may be Experienced

SCHEP states, 'The Word of God shows clearly the road we have to follow in order to obtain the spiritual riches.' It is in this distinctive that the psychology of the movement is most clearly revealed. Neo-Pentecostals claim that the faith which is the evidence of regeneration is not the same and not sufficient for the commitment which leads to Spirit Baptism. Three conditions must be fulfilled if the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is to occur. (1) Conversion. (2) Obedience. (3) Faith. The basis for this is found once again in the Acts passages. It is asserted that the disciples were told to wait, and that that waiting involved getting into a right attitude of heart before they could receive the Baptism. I find this completely unconvincing. The instructions refer to simple waiting without inward conditions. As Bruner puts it 'the condition for receiving the Spirit is not psychological but geographical, not spiritual but spatial'. Furthermore the coming of the Spirit is described as 'the promise of the Father' and as a 'gift'—to impose inward conditions seems to impair the nature of the Spirit's
coming as a gift. If we examine the other Spirit passages in Acts no attention whatsoever seems to be paid to the subjective state of the hearers. What is more, in each case the Spirit comes upon groups of people simultaneously. It is not a question of individuals bringing themselves to a required state of preparedness for the Spirit's coming. This demands that we examine the conditions adduced by Neo-Pentecostals with care.

(i) Conversion is said to be absolutely essential. Spirit Baptism is a subsequent experience for Christians in NeoPentecostal teaching.

(ii) Obedience is viewed as a need to separate oneself from all known sin. Schep insists that the believer must remove everything in his life which is displeasing to God before he can receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit cannot abide in an unclean heart. One writer has stated significantly in this connection, 'Pentecostals and Roman Catholics (in contrast with Lutherans and orthodox Reformed Christians) are psychologically pre-disposed to think of sin in terms of an act, hardly ever in terms of a state.' It seems to me that it is only on the basis of conceiving of sin as acts that one can talk of removing all sin.

After this rigorous dealing with sin, NeoPentecostals say there must be a passive obedience of yielding to God, of becoming submissive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. In this connection expressions such as total obedience, full surrender, and complete heart purification are used. Bruner comments, 'The active is moral, the passive side psychological. The active side seems to require superhuman sinlessness, and the passive side superhuman selfemptying.'

(iii) Faith. NeoPentecostals affirm faith as a third condition, but this is more than the faith which apprehends Christ in his salvation. According to Galatians 3 the faith by which we are justified is the gift of God; it does not proceed from any ability on our part. Salvation is by grace from first to last. But the faith which the NeoPentecostal adduces as essential if we are to receive Spirit Baptism is defined as something emanating principally from the individual. The reason why 'mere' faith given in regeneration is not sufficient to receive the Spirit is that it is not intense enough. It is not coupled with the total yielding, the absolute surrender. The faith which receives Spirit Baptism is linked with the degree of yielding, and the extent to which the Christian has 'gone all the way' with God. This kind of faith never takes on the character of faith until it is absolute. The difference between ordinary Christian faith and Pentecostal faith is that the former involves a confessed lack of ability and a trust in someone else's ability, whereas the latter involves an attempted totality. The former is the despair of all effort, the latter is superhuman effort. It is a work. Works are no less works for being done internally.

The theological and practical centre of NeoPentecostalism is the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, an experience. What in the New Testament is bound up together, regeneration and the gift of the
Spirit, death to sin and power for life, is relocated in a series of acts culminating in an experience. The seriousness of this is that the devotional absolutes of the movement call believers not to grace in Christ, but to inward grovelling in the heart for what in fact is not there, sinlessness and absolute surrender. Bruner writes, 'The believer may be and rightly is called to complete devotion because he has been fully forgiven. However, if the devotion is ordered in order to get God in his fullness then we are not in the presence of the Gospel.' Again, 'Christian discipline never consists in the fulfilling of conditions for receiving more or a fullness not received in Christ, rather it consists in living by faith in Christ, abounding in thanksgiving, walking in the Spirit, and keeping Christ's commandments all in gratitude for past redemption, in loyalty to the present Lord and in anticipation of coming judgment.'

What disturbs me most about the NeoPentecostal movement is that it appears to teach that faith in Christ is not enough. There is more to be had on the basis of faith plus. A recent convert was in my view very near the mark when he said 'Can there possibly be more than Christ! He is everything. He is God.' The doctrine of a subsequent Spirit Baptism seems to do violence to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity quite apart from its shaky attestation in the New Testament. Every Christian is called to a life of trust and obedience which will often involve effort and hardship, but this is in the power of the Holy Spirit who is already given in regeneration. This life will involve experiences—wonderful experiences of the love and power and nearness of God—but these will not be the same for every believer (as I think the book of Acts indicates). Professor A. Hoekema in his book What about Tongue Speaking? pointed out that the reason why NeoPentecostals often do have a greater joy and ability to witness than other believers is not their distinctive doctrine, but the fact that they take prayer and obedience seriously. The Pentecostal phenomena are incidental accompaniments to real blessings as a result of taking the means of grace seriously. Whilst I reject the notion that we should seek a particular post-conversion experience, I have no doubt that as we trust and obey, humbly depending upon the grace of Christ, there will be times when heaven is specially near.

---

1 Quoted in news item in the Christian Weekly Newspaper Group, July 16th, 1971.
2 James Dunn in CWN Group, July 16th 1971.
3 CWN Group, July 9th 1971.
4 Witness the aims of the Fountain Trust as stated in Renewal magazine: '... to encourage local churches to experience renewal in the Holy Spirit. ...'
5 In CWN Group, July 16th 1971.
8 Acts 1: 8.
9 John 20: 22.
10 John 7: 38.
11 John 7: 39.
18 John 16: 7.
16 Acts 2: 33.
15 Acts 2: 38.
21 J. A. Schep, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
26 J. A. Schep, *op. cit.*, p. 84.