

# A Theological Look at the Charismatic Movement

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THE PRESENT charismatic movement or renewal in the churches in this land and in many other countries throughout the world had its roots in the older Pentecostal movement which began around the turn of the century. But it has transcended the latter and gone in a new direction, just as Pentecostalism transcended the older 'holiness' movements out of which it was born, and went in a different direction from them. It is now a sizeable and impressive international and transdenominational phenomenon which cannot be ignored by any serious student of either theology or church history. Like all such sizeable phenomena in the history of Christianity, it is a movement diverse in character and varied in form and emphases, and has provoked almost every conceivable reaction amongst Christians and churches—ranging from blind acceptance of all the worst abuses, to an equally blind total rejection of the whole thing. On the whole, we shall seek to assess the better and more balanced strains of the movement, whilst not being blind to most of its worst abuses at the other end of the spectrum. In an attempt to assess this movement theologically, the simplest approach seems to be to isolate the main issues raised by the movement (its teachings, activities, and experiences or phenomena), and briefly to examine and comment upon each one in turn. As there seem to the writer to be roughly twelve main issues, or areas of challenge and debate, thrown up for us by the charismatic renewal, only a fairly brief and cursory discussion of each one will be possible within the limits of this article.

## *1. The Relation and Evidences of Regeneration and the Baptism and Fulness of the Spirit*

THE movement as a whole unanimously bears witness to the danger of assuming that because a person is born again of the Holy Spirit of

God, he or she is therefore obviously filled with the Holy Spirit and experiencing the Spirit in the fulness of his power under the New Covenant—the post-Pentecost era. Adherents of the movement in this country have generally held that the reception of the Spirit in this power is an experience separable from regeneration, one which they have variously referred to as ‘baptism in the Spirit’, ‘receiving the Spirit’ or ‘being (initially) filled with the Spirit’. The distinction is seen as one of character, not necessarily of time—indeed, ideally as not separated in time—and the ‘baptism’ is seen as an endowment with power for service and witness (Acts 1: 8) though making the presence of Christ much more real and conveying deep assurance at the same time. It is intended for all believers. Such a baptism in the Spirit is often seen as a gateway into the experience and exercise of the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10 (but on this see under two below). On the other hand, leaders of the charismatic movement in Germany, for example, do not teach a separate ‘baptism’, but would merely pray for someone to be ‘filled’, or for the Holy Spirit to manifest himself in them for the exercise of these gifts, whether in the ‘body’ or in individuals.

The expectation and experience of a ‘filling’, ‘baptism’ or ‘sealing’ with the Spirit separate from conversion or the new birth is not confined to the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, of course. Those who oppose it do so on the grounds of Romans 8: 9 and of a particular exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12: 11, basically, and seek to fit the Acts (and other New Testament) evidence into the view that the two experiences and expressions are the same thing; they also tend to argue from evidences for the new birth to the inevitable possession of the Spirit in pentecostal measure (without thereby asserting present *enjoyment* and *display* of that power necessarily, or of all the gifts and graces he wants to give). The present writer has sought to show elsewhere<sup>1</sup> the weakness and limitations of this view. The New Testament argues from the possession of the Spirit to conversion, not vice versa (see Rom. 8: 9; 1 John 2: 20,27; 3: 24; 4: 13; 5: 7-10 etc.). The early disciples and apostles knew, from their experience, or lack of it, who had received the Spirit. As James Dunn has put it, the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is the Spirit as experience(d).<sup>2</sup> The complete equation of the new birth and ‘receiving’ or ‘being baptised in’ the Holy Spirit of Christ seems to founder on this rock, as it also fails to take account of four other factors:

- i. the difference in the experience of Old Testament regenerate people and the New Testament saints’ experience of the Spirit (the questions asked under this heading by the author five years ago have never been answered by the critics);
- ii. the manifest distinction in the two experiences for several groups of people in the New Testament (e.g. Acts 2,8,9 and 19)—

attempts to explain this away have so far proved singularly unconvincing, especially in relation to Paul's question in Acts 19: 2;

iii. the experience of our Lord Jesus Christ himself—it is noteworthy that Dr. Dunn is quite unable to give any convincing grounds for his dismissal of the relevance of Christ's own experience—to say that it is unique (which is obvious to all) does not undermine an 'a fortiori' argument;

iv. whereas faith is the result of regeneration in the New Testament (John 1: 12, 13; 1 John 5: 1), and leads to our adoption (Gal. 3: 26), only those already adopted can ask for and receive the Holy Spirit (Luke 11: 13; Acts 2: 38; Gal. 4: 6).<sup>3</sup>

It is important to realise that whilst there are differences of opinion and emphasis at this point within the movement, the concern of those within it is frequently different from those criticising its teaching and practice from without. Whereas the latter are concerned to debate the meaning of the term 'baptism in the Spirit', in order to deny the need for a 'second experience' or 'blessing' for all Christians, the driving force or concern behind the former is neither a particular view of one term, nor a desire to put everyone through some 'second blessing' routine. Their concern is rather to recapture the New Testament experience of the power of the Spirit of Christ in equipping for effective service, witness and ministry, and they are not generally in the least 'thrown' by the discovery that not a few people have been baptised in the Spirit at their conversion, but rather rejoice, and continue to ask the Lord so to baptise and fill present new converts straight away. They should not assume that one uniform pattern of experience can be proved from the New Testament, and ought not to be surprised therefore at a similar variety today.

When we come to the question of the evidence that a person has been baptised in, and is now filled with, the Holy Spirit—for 'filling' or 'fulness' is not just a once for all event, of course, but a continuing and repeated experience of the Spirit's power—a difference is discernible between many of the old 'Pentecostals' and the majority of the leaders of the present charismatic renewal within the mainline denominations. All agree that the main evidences of regeneration are faith in Christ, love, and righteousness,<sup>4</sup> but the work of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant is so variegated that people have differed over what precisely is the evidence of his reception and fullness. Whereas many of the older Pentecostal denominations (e.g. in particular, the Assemblies of God) taught that the gift of glossolalia was the sole and complete evidence of Spirit baptism, most of the neo-charismatics would not be so dogmatic, which seems wise in view of both the Acts evidence—or lack of it!—(e.g. 2: 17ff.; 8: 17; 9: 17-19; 19: 6), and passages like Ephesians 5: 18-20. At the same time as expecting manifestations of the charismata to follow such baptism, they wisely refrain from iden-

tifying the Spirit with any one of his manifestations or gifts, and look, in addition to any of these, for a powerful awareness of the presence of Jesus, a great desire to praise and love and serve him with the whole of one's being, and, an experience of being filled with his power, in ways which *may* be relatively quiet and peaceful, but at times could be described as overwhelming. (Other things that commonly follow are a renewed peace and joy, a new and greatly deepened love for Christ, for his word and for others, and a new reality in prayer and worship.)

The problem of terminology ('baptism' 'receiving' etc.) regarding the manifold experience and operation of the Holy Spirit initially, can be to some extent paralleled by the dual use of other phrases, like 'in the Spirit', used of the Christian's subsequent position and experience in the New Testament. On the one hand, this phrase is used to refer to the whole sphere or realm of the regenerate Christian's life (Rom. 8: 9; Eph. 2: 18 and 22 etc.); on the other, it is used to describe a person as under the immediate control and powerful influence of the Spirit at that particular time (e.g. in prophetic vision, prayer etc.—see Luke 2: 27; Eph. 6: 18; Rev. 1: 10; 4: 2; 17: 3; 21: 10). Our great concern is to see that no area of the Holy Spirit's operations experienced by the churches of the New Testament believers should be missed or neglected by us today.

## 2. *The Charismata/Pneumatika of 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10*

THE distinctive feature of this movement, in all its phases, has been its insistent belief that these gifts are available to the church today. Whilst there have been differing understandings of the first two in the list ('a word of wisdom' and 'a word of knowledge'),<sup>5</sup> it is agreed that these gifts are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit within and through believers, and this appears to be justified in general by a study, both of the passage and its context, and of instances of the operation of these gifts elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments. But obviously there needs to be a continuing recognition of the great value of all the other gifts and ministries in the church as well, and of the fact that the New Testament does not neatly and completely categorise gifts (e.g. into 'charismata' and 'pneumatika', or into 'natural' and 'supernatural'), although we may choose to do so for convenience of study; and it never grades them in scale of value.

The biblical arguments which have been adduced against the expectation, desirability, or even possibility, of these gifts of the Holy Spirit being received and exercised today have generally been fourfold:<sup>6</sup>

- i. Miracles in the Bible are said to occur in spates at times of crisis or new revelation (e.g. Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus Christ). This may be largely true of the Old Testament, but the new Messianic age was predicted as an *age* of miracles, visions, dreams, prophecy, the

Spirit's universal outpouring etc. The fact that these phenomena ushered it in, in no sense proves that it was not to be so continued.

ii. The miracles of Christ, it is argued, were there simply to attest his own personal authority, so that they could not be expected except in his own ministry. But the Gospels' healings were in fact intended also to confront people with the presence, power and Kingdom of God, and to demonstrate his character (in compassionate healings, or judgment on sin). Is this need no longer present today? Is not the church meant to show Christ to the world?

iii. 2 Corinthians 12: 12 ('The signs of an apostle') is taken to imply that these works and gifts are confined to Christ and the twelve and Paul. This again does not follow from the verse. 'Apostle' has a wider and narrower meaning in the New Testament, which itself also speaks of these gifts in far wider use than that, and as given generally to the church. The fact that they were combined in the apostles' ministry does not prove that they may not be found anywhere else (especially in view of John 14: 12; Mark 16: 15-20 etc.). The same considerations take the power out of similar arguments from Hebrews 2: 3-4 and Ephesians 2: 20.

iv. 1 Corinthians 13: 8-13 is taken to mean that these gifts were meant to pass away, and it is generally assumed that this was to take place when the New Testament Scriptures were all written and available for the church. However, the passage concerned does not state when the gifts were to pass away, but only that they will have done so when 'the perfect has come', which is defined as being when we 'see face to face' and 'know as we are known'. The argument that because we have written Scriptures, therefore there is no need for prophecy, healing, miracles etc., is somewhat strange and ill founded surely, since it entirely breaks down under a comparison with the Old Testament; there were written Scriptures there from Moses onwards, and teachers (the priests, and later the scribes) appointed to expound them to the people; but there were nevertheless also prophets raised up by God to speak his word under the Spirit's direct inspiration—and certainly not all of them were authors of Holy Scripture. We may notice in passing that the New Testament does not identify 'prophet' and 'teacher' as some used to try to do, but always distinguishes the two (Acts 13: 1; Rom. 12: 6-7; 1 Cor. 12: 28f.; 14: 26; Eph. 4: 11).

The grounds for asserting the desirability of the gifts will be further treated later, but two may be mentioned here: i. The promises made to the church as Christ's body and to Christian believers as his members (see e.g. John 14: 10-14; Mark 16: 15-20; Matt. 28: 18-20 in the light of Christ's earlier commissions to his disciples, and passages in 1 Cor. 12-14 already instanced. Incidentally, the common assertion that the gifts of the Spirit are only mentioned in 1 Corinthians amongst the epistles is odd in view of Rom. 1: 11; 15: 18-19; Gal. 3: 1-5; Eph. 1: 19ff. and 3: 20f.; 1 Thess. 5: 19-21; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6-7 and Heb. 2: 3-4; 6: 4-5).

ii. The continuance of the human needs which the gifts

of the Spirit were intended to meet according to the New Testament (e.g. the need of wholeness, deliverance/exorcism, demonstration of God's power, encouragement by God's direct word etc.). It seems difficult to show that such needs are not still present. If God in Christ is still the same, the living God who speaks and acts, is it enough simply to point to the Bible miracles in the face of unbelief today? Is not the church of believers the world's Bible (2 Cor. 3: 2ff.), living letters of the Spirit to all men, manifesting Christ in her character, life and ministry, in the newness of the Spirit's power? Has not the world a right to expect talk of Jesus Christ's compassion and power to be backed by effective action and demonstration of the Spirit? Is not this inevitable if Hebrews 13: 8 is true at all?

Having established the possibility, and even desirability, of the gifts continuing in the church, we have then to compare the modern phenomena with those of the New Testament. This is obviously up to each individual to do for himself or herself. But there is really abundant evidence of the gifts of the Spirit today for any candid observer to evaluate, both in written and attested records, and in local congregations. If the phenomena bear all the same marks as the New Testament phenomena, and if the same results follow today from New Testament methods in their operation, glorifying Jesus the Son of God, then it can only be perverse to close our eyes, avoiding the plain and evident conclusion.

### *3. The Spirit's Testimony and Gifts and the Written Word in Scripture*

ONE issue or area of theological debate raised by the operation of these gifts today concerns their relation to the written word of God in Scripture, in three or four ways. First, in the continuing debate regarding the 'mediate' versus the 'immediate' view of the Spirit's inward testimony and his witness and communication to the heart and mind of the believer, the charismatic movement, except in cases of extreme abuse, rightly refuses to be tied to an 'either/or'. We must aim to steer a middle course between dead orthodoxy and zealous fanaticism at all times, and there is in fact no contradiction between the testimony of the Spirit in Scripture, and His immediate testimony in conformity with it and in fulfilment of it. Only it is vital that present 'words' of the Spirit be tested, in accordance with the New Testament, against the word already given in canonical Scripture (see 1 Thess. 5: 20; 1 Cor. 14: 29; cf. Deut. 13: 1-5).

Secondly, the relationship between experience and truth must not be allowed to become unbalanced. Although it is generally recognised by the leaders of this movement that experience must be grounded in truth and tested by the biblical word of God, yet there is a considerable danger at ground level of blind acceptance of 'experiences', and of

running after these rather than after Jesus Christ and his truth and grace; equally, especially in America, the movement has tended to produce more books on people's experiences than on Christian doctrine and assessment of those experiences. If truth without experience is dead, equally experience unanchored in the word of God will be at best ephemeral and at worst misleading or even evil. There is no warrant whatsoever for conducting any sort of 'experiments' not based upon faith and obedience to the word of God.

Thirdly, the question of the link between renewal in the Spirit and reformation by the word of God is raised by the widespread involvement of Roman Catholics in this dimension of Christian experience in the last few years, particularly in the U.S.A., which has turned some staunch Protestants against the movement as a whole. However, it is clear that the general result of this amongst Roman Catholics has been to increase their understanding and love of God's word,<sup>7</sup> a great revitalising of fellowship and worship, and an enthroning of Christ as central in their lives and thinking. Not all the unreformed practices or doctrines of that body have been repudiated. But we need to be careful neither to assume that the gift of the Spirit is dependent upon a prior completely sound systematic theological understanding, nor yet to cease to seek reformation of the whole church by God's word, just because we have received the power of the Holy Spirit. An international and interdenominational theological 'workshop' is now meeting to consider such things under the auspices of the Fountain Trust, and the breaking down of denominational barriers by the love of Christ has impressed many observers of neo-Pentecostalism.

Fourthly, a new dimension is plainly added in the matter of guidance when the gifts of the Spirit are in operation. Like the early church, we are no longer dependent purely on a general knowledge of God's word, a quiet assurance when praying, or verses 'lighting up' (not to mention the advice of Christian friends, circumstantial evidence etc.). Most of these factors still operate, but the Spirit can also speak direct to a church or individual (see Acts 10: 3ff.; 10: 9ff.; 13: 2; 16: 6-7; 19: 21; 20: 22-23; 21: 4, 11; 27: 23f.).

#### *4. Counterfeits, and the Testing and Regulation of the Gifts*

ONE of the reasons for many people's initial fears, caution and reticence about the charismatic dimension is undoubtedly the fact that in their knowledge and experience many of these sorts of phenomena in the present day had hitherto been connected with spiritism, mediumism, clairvoyance, faith healers, occultism and idol worship. Indeed the Bible warns that Satan and his false prophets and false 'christs' can on occasion perform 'signs' (Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2). Another common fear concerns the control and regulation of the gifts in the church. These

are not unrelated. Dr. Kurt Koch has rightly warned of the dangers of occult traits and influences operating under the guise of the Holy Spirit's gifts, and has given instances of this in several publications.<sup>8</sup> However, he seems to have had so much experience of dealing with occultists that his treatment of 'tongues', for instance, lacks balance as a result. Of the thirty nine instances of 'tongues' given in his little book *The Strife of Tongues*, at least thirty seven are plainly occult or demonic, and would therefore not worry anyone able to discern good from evil, and aware of the manifestations (including tongues) that can occur under demonic influence. What is needed is such an awareness, and discernment between the two. Without this we shall be confused, and people will be held back by groundless fears. (Most of the 'horrifying stories' retailed to the author about the charismata are traceable back to previous occult involvements by the subjects or their family. See below on Exorcism.)

The lessons to be learnt from all this are surely as follows: i. We are not obliged to accept all and every supposed 'manifestation' as of the Holy Spirit automatically. ii. We must test the operation of gifts by a. their conformity to the word of God in Scripture in their content and character (e.g. 'I could not stop myself' is not of God in view of 1 Cor. 14: 32); b. their consistency in the body of Christ in that place; c. their tendency and results; and d. the consensus of the appointed elders, teachers and recognised prophets weighing or discerning (as per 1 Thess. 5: 20-21; 1 Cor. 14: 49; Deut. 13: 1-5; 18: 19ff. etc.). iii. As presbyters, we must not be afraid to regulate the use of the gifts in the body or congregation, according to 1 Corinthians 14. This must be lovingly but firmly done if they are to edify. iv. We must see that their exercise is conducted in love (1 Cor. 13). v. We must see that all occult involvements are confessed, repented of, and repudiated, and folk set free from their effects. vi. We must ensure that people are centred upon Jesus Christ, and not upon any of His gifts or ministries.

### 5. *Demonic Activity, Deliverance and Exorcism*

THE last topic seemed naturally to lead us into this area of concern and debate, to the reality of which the church in this and other western countries has once more woken up, not before time, although reports from the mission field had always indicated this to be a reality and a necessary Christian ministry in other parts of the world. The relative uncommonness of demonic affliction and possession in this country until recent decades can be explained without difficulty by several factors: i. the general prevalence of Christian standards and beliefs, until this century, for many centuries; ii. the severely mentally ill had been locked away in institutions out of public sight; iii. the outlawing of witchcraft, black magic and satanism until the 1950's; iv. a general

turning away from the Gospel, accompanied by a resurgence of spiritism and necromancy due largely to two world wars; v. the recent growth of interest and experiments in eastern occultism of all sorts; vi. the renewed experience of the power of the Holy Spirit by Christians has often forced the enemy into the open, as it did in the time of Christ and the apostles.

Dr. Koch has covered most of this ground fairly thoroughly in the books mentioned earlier,<sup>9</sup> but a few points are worth particular mention here. i. 'Discernings of spirits' are among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but there is no reason why they should not include the activities of the human spirit, good angelic spirits and the Holy Spirit, as well as those of evil satanic spirits. ii. The ministry of deliverance and exorcism should be very carefully controlled and overseen by the elders of the church—this is no area for free-lance operations. iii. A lot of confusion has been caused by the question of whether a Christian can ever be 'demon-possessed'. Quite apart from the complexities of relating the Hebrew term 'spirit' to the Greek word 'daimon' (and its diminutive 'daimonion', which is commoner in the New Testament), the question seems to assume that the only type of satanic oppression of the human spirit, mind or body is 'possession'. But the Greek of the New Testament only has two terms, neither of which reveal the degree of affliction, to describe a person under the influence of a demon spirit, namely, 'to have a demon/evil spirit'; and 'to be demonised' (i.e. under the influence of a demon). The assertion that a Christian cannot be 'possessed' is not the same as saying that a Christian may not, if ground is given for it, be afflicted by an evil spirit on occasion. The only verses generally alleged against this are Colossians 1: 13-14, and 1 John 5: 18-19, neither of which are very conclusive in view of St. Paul's basic concentration on our 'legal' position in Christ (compare Rom. 6, especially v. 14), to which our experience must increasingly conform; and also in view of John's absolute use of the present tenses (compare 'sinneth not'). The most balanced treatment of this whole question will be found in Kurt Koch's *Occult Bondage and Deliverance*.<sup>10</sup> iv. A note of caution must be sounded against becoming almost obsessed by these things and seeing 'spirits' in everyone, as some of the wilder offshoots of the charismatic renewal tend to do at times. It has been well said that 'suspecting of spirits' is not one of the charismata! Like some young women, the devil loves to get everyone chasing him and concentrating on his activity rather than on Christ, whereas the holy angels generally stay hidden in the background so that Jesus may have the preeminence. v. The whole church must urgently learn more of this whole area of spiritual warfare. It can learn a lot, both positively and negatively, from the charismatic movement here.

## 6. Healing

DELIVERANCE from the spiritual powers of darkness is only one aspect of the whole area of healing, that is, of entering increasingly into that wholeness that Christ came to bring us. Healing, especially miraculous healing, is another subject raised by the present charismatic movement, as it was by the earlier Pentecostals. It is fair to say that many remarkable healings, of mind and body, have occurred,<sup>11</sup> though of course there have been cases of those not healed after prayer and ministry. The teachings and practice of those within the movement vary considerably here, though the prayer of faith, anointing with oil and the imposition of hands are all used at times. Some have taught, with many of the older Pentecostals, that you only have to 'believe' and you will be healed. Others believe rather that the Holy Spirit prompts them to lay hands on particular people in his sovereignty, but that it is not God's will to heal everyone until they live out a full number of years.

Within the compass of this article, we can only permit ourselves a few basic observations: i. Looking at the whole teaching of Scripture, it is quite clear that the Lord has declared himself willing to heal his people, those who come to him in faith and obedience, to a far greater extent than the church has generally recognised, and has provided gifts, ministries and means of grace to that end (see Exod. 15: 26-27; 23: 25-26; Deut. 7: 15; 28; Ps. 91; 103: 1-5; 107: 20; Prov. 3: 1-2, 7-8 and 16; 4: 10, 20-23; Isa. 35: 5-6; 53: 3-6; Gospels passim; Acts 3: 1-4: 12; 5: 12-16 etc. etc. Jas. 5: 14-16, as well as other passages already mentioned). ii. There is no incompatibility between prayerfully using medical means where these will effect a cure, and looking to the miraculous healing power of Christ (cf. 1 Tim. 5: 23). The God of nature and means is also the God of grace and miracle. iii. We need to ensure that we are working to a biblical concept of 'wholeness' (salvation and wholeness are practically interchangeable terms in the Bible. The verb *sozo* is used to mean both 'save' and 'heal'). The Lord is willing to heal people's bodies and minds, but he really wants to do it as part of making them whole people, conforming them to the (wholesome) image of his Son at every level of their being and personality. iv. Therefore we must give full weight to the spiritual aspect as paramount, and help people to see that while disease in general is a satanic affliction, it can also be allowed by God with this end in view (cf. Ps. 103: 3; Jas. 13-16). And since man is a psycho-physical unity, we must beware of divorcing healing from wider pastoral care. The book of Proverbs has a lot to teach us about psychosomatic disease and health. v. We need, lastly, to integrate the ministry of healing and prayer for the sick into the whole ministry of the Gospel in the church. As long as it is a separate 'thing', it is bound to be out of perspective.<sup>12</sup>

### *7. The Place of the Emotions and Spontaneity in Christian Life, Worship and Evangelism*

ONE of the major traits of earlier Pentecostalism, in distinction from Protestantism in general, to which chroniclers of the movement like Bloch-Hoell and Hollenweger<sup>18</sup> have drawn attention, is its recognition of the place of the emotions in Christian life, experience and worship. This factor, together with its spontaneity, accounts as much as anything for the way it was able to reach sections of society untouched by historic Protestantism in many parts of the world. The present charismatic movement has continued this trait, but for the most part without being led into the imbalances and excesses which so often characterised earlier Pentecostalism. For instance, it has proved capable of blending spontaneous elements in worship with a generally liturgical framework, and has not in the main despised the intellect or understanding, but seeks to hold both mind and emotions together in balance.

It is at this point that the movement has so much to teach the western church, especially Nordic, Anglo-saxon and Germanic Protestantism, which for years has so emphasised the primacy of the intellect (or logical and abstract understanding) and the will, as effectively to suppress the emotions, intuition and pictorial imagination of the believer. The result has been a mutilated Gospel, distorted worship, and stunted Christian growth, with many pastoral disasters. Obviously the danger of emotionalism for its own sake has to be avoided most carefully, but an overintellectualised culture will very readily see the proper expression of emotion as emotionalism in any case. The Gospel provides for the whole man, and our preaching, worship, fellowship and expectation of the Spirit's ministry must make provision for this too, even if it means that British repression and reserve, and traditional evangelical distortions of the word 'love', go for six in the process. One of the greatest joys of being in a charismatic fellowship or service of worship is the genuinely expressed love of the brethren for each other, and the deep spontaneous praise and love ascending to God with all the people's hearts. We need to beware lest we react like Simon the Pharisee did to the weeping woman who washed the Lord's feet with her tears (Luke 7: 36ff.). A holy kiss might shock some of us, but it was a normal expression of love and peace in the early church (Rom. 16: 16 et alia). Equally we have to be willing to adapt our services to make way for something of the spontaneity characteristic of the worship of the New Testament churches (Acts and 1 Cor. 11-14). The new wine so often needs the bottles or skins to be adapted somewhat to fit it.

In this country, we have not yet seen the neo-Pentecostal movement make great inroads evangelistically amongst the so-called working class on any wide scale, though in some other countries this has hap-

pened much more. There is much ground to recover here, and it may be that still more adaptability is needed by the church to the working man's cultural background and mould. However, charismatic churches often seem to stand more chance of adapting to such a milieu, for the reasons outlined already. The working man is not impressed by intellectual arguments; he is moved by demonstrations of the miraculous power of the Spirit. If the charismatic movement is to be the instrument in God's hand that it is intended to be, then it must never forget that this is how the early church evangelised—in word and deed—and that the power of the Spirit was given above all to enable us to witness to Christ to the ends of the earth (Luke 24: 48; Acts 1: 8; 8: 6-8; Rom. 15: 18-19; 1 Cor. 2: 1-5; 1 Thess. 1: 5 etc.).

In order to balance the commendation of the movement for its recognition of the place of true emotion, there needs to be constant warning against the extreme of anti-intellectualism within the movement, and its leaders are very conscious of this. At the same time, one of the things for which the church is still waiting—and will probably have to wait a little longer—is a magisterial and comprehensive theological study and treatment of the work of the Holy Spirit from within its ranks. This is a pressing need.

### 8. *Law, Love, Liberty and Sanctification*

ALLIED to the question of emotion and spontaneity is that of Christian liberty, on which the movement places a strong emphasis, with its overwhelming awareness of the love of the Lord Jesus, and love of the brethren. This focusses on the question of the Christian's relation to the law, which is now written on the heart of the believer. The security afforded by the powerful experience of God's love mediated by the Spirit enables the charismatic Christian to shake free of so many of the group pressures and evangelical (or other) taboos and 'rules', to a far greater extent than many of his brethren; and to realise as a fact, not a theory, that he is dead to the law and alive to God in a genuine filial relationship of love. The deliverance of the soul from the bondage of evangelical or ecclesiastical legalism is one great contribution to his 'joy in the Holy Spirit', and sets him free to make an adult decision regarding God's will in each particular circumstance. The opposite extreme of antinomianism has not so far been a major or widespread difficulty within the movement, though the leaders are not unaware of the dangers.

The quickening of faith by the experience of the power of the Spirit affects many areas of the Christian life, and transforms the common expectation of defeat by believers into a confident expectation of victory, based on the certainty of our position in Christ and the present reality of the promises of God. This inevitably has its repercussions,

not only in prayer and spiritual warfare, but also in the doctrine and experience of sanctification. There is a welcome relief from the unbelief of the low-expectancy views of sanctification which have bedevilled reformed theology and teaching for many years, and blameless consistency and holiness of life have again become a real possibility. Happily this is not the result of some unscriptural 'second blessing' crisis doctrine of sanctification of the older Keswick variety. Baptism in the Spirit is certainly not viewed in these terms at all—nor indeed was it by earlier Pentecostals. The real possibility of Christian growth and character transformation has been greatly helped by the healing of memories, deepened relationships in mutual love, and deliverance from satanic oppression, which are quite often experienced. Nevertheless, the danger of perfectionism has to be watched all the same, and some of the deviant splinter-groups of the movement have failed to steer clear of it. But the balance of Philippians 2: 12-13 and 1 John 1: 5-2: 2 has characterised the teaching of the majority of neo-Pentecostals, particularly in the mainline denominations.

#### *9. Ecclesiology: the Church as the Body of Christ; Its Structure and Institutions*

IT may well be in the realm of ecclesiology that the Pentecostal and charismatic movements present the biggest single challenge to the institutional church or churches and their ministry. Accepting that the church is the covenant people of God, they have gone on to experience its reality as his family; but the key concept taken up is St. Paul's idea of the church as the body of Christ, ruled by Christ as the head or brain, and energised by the Holy Spirit, with every member equipped to fulfil an important function. Evangelicalism has paid lip-service to this idea for years, of course, and the Catholics have used it as a focal idea for understanding the Eucharist, but in Pentecostal or charismatic churches alone has it become a living reality. This is because every member is open to receive gifts of the Spirit (and hence ministries), and every member is empowered and on fire to bear witness to Christ to the world, and to manifest him, his love, power, life, word and ministry, in it. Indeed the whole pattern of evangelism changes, so that the vicar is introduced by the congregation to those recently converted under their ministry. Those liable to feel most threatened by this revolutionary change are the clergy, especially those who think 'the spiritual ministry' is virtually their sole prerogative. But they learn gradually to become what they were meant to be as presbyters, namely overseers, teachers and shepherds—for more pastoral care, not less, is required in this situation, and they must soon learn to share this with others. The dangers of becoming inward-looking and using the gifts selfishly are ever present, and every local fellowship has to

guard against it. But in most cases the need to restructure the life, ministry and worship of the church in this situation has to be faced.

As observed earlier, those involved in the present charismatic movement have tended to stay in their own denominational churches, to pray for them and work in them. They have not always been wise and understanding themselves, and have been accused on occasion of introducing something divisive, or acting in a clandestine manner with secret or closed meetings in houses, and upsetting the establishment. However, there have generally been faults on both sides in such cases, and where the clergy have refused to look at it at all, or have adopted a dogmatic but unscriptural line (e.g. forbidding tongues and despising prophecy), they have only themselves to blame if things go wrong. Although they may then persuade themselves that 'you see, it was not of God all along', the plain truth is that they have failed in their God-given task of overseeing his work and church in that place, and are simply creating the conditions for abuses, thus repeating mistakes made in the early decades of this century. Having said that, it is nevertheless true that despite the constant encouragement from most of the leadership not to secede, some groups have done this, and are doing it with encouragement from certain elements. In many cases they form separatist house-churches. It will surprise no-one that these tend to be the most unstable elements in the movement, and are most liable to doctrinal and other aberrations. Alas, one observes that in many cases the leaders of such groups lacked sufficient Christian humility and patience to remain, and are motivated in part by a refusal to submit to proper authority.

In the judgment of the present writer, the charismatic movement is doing as much as any other influence—and more than most—to break down barriers and to further love and understanding between Christians of differing denominational backgrounds. It is based on a real unity already experienced in the Holy Spirit of Christ, and does not in any sense involve sweeping differences under the carpet, but rather a frank and open discussion of them, and a complete freedom from any desire to create uniformity, because of an awareness of the manifold patterns of the Spirit's working. This is exciting, and may well prove more productive of genuine unity than any hierarchically conceived and imposed union scheme devised by human ecclesiastical authorities.

#### *10. The Unity of the New Covenant and the Question of Church History*

ARISING from the concept of the church as Christ's body in this world, and also from the reappearance of the charismata on such a wide scale in this century, three specific theological questions arise which we can bracket together under this heading.

The first concerns the relation of the ministry of the church to that of Jesus Christ (apart from his unique atoning mediation on the cross and in heaven as our great High Priest). The answer given by the charismatic movement is quite simply that the church as Christ's body is to continue on earth what he began in the way of proclaiming and spreading God's Kingdom and Gospel in word and deed just as he did, in the power of the same Holy Spirit that was upon him. This seems difficult to fault, not only on the grounds of his various commissions to his disciples (and reiteration of them; cf. in Matt. 28: 18-20), but also of Acts 1: 1-2 which clearly implies the continuance of his word and works through the church, as John 14: 12ff. had led them to expect, and on the grounds of the body of Christ doctrine of 1 Corinthians 12 etc.

The second question concerns the unity of the New Covenant era versus its possible division into 'dispensations', such as apostolic/charismatic followed by canonically scriptural/official. Biblically the onus of proof certainly lies with those who would assert such dispensationalism, since the New Testament does not lead us to *expect* a departure from the charismatic era. (We all recognise that the original apostles themselves were unique as Christ's guaranteed founder-teachers of the universal church.) If we ask why such a presumption was ever read into the New Testament by anyone, the answer is that it was an explanation for an observed phenomenon in church history, namely the cessation of the charismata from somewhere around the middle to end of the third century onwards. That is not a biblical argument, of course, but it poses a question for any serious theologian or church historian.

That question is the third on our list: why did the charismata cease then, and only reappear sporadically, but never on a very wide scale in the subsequent history of the church? To this question three answers have been given, one by anti-Pentecostals, the other two by Pentecostals or neo-charismatics. The first is that they were only associated with the founding of the church, and this was God's plan from the start (this is supported by a particular interpretation of Eph. 2: 20 and Heb. 2: 3-4, which is not very convincing for reasons given under section two of this article). Historically this is not too convincing either, since i. the gifts did not die out within the apostolic generation or even the succeeding one; and ii. those who espouse it are forced to explain away the charismatic phenomena of the present day as either satanic counterfeits or else purely psychological, a position which so increasingly stretches credibility as to convince no-one except those determined to hold on to it at all costs.

A variation on this first view, which is less objectionable and takes more account of the phenomena of history since the third century, allows for the appearance and exercise of the charismata at any time in the sovereignty of God mainly on the grounds of 1 Corinthians

12: 11; but it denies both the general desirability of them, and also that the church has any responsibility to seek them from God. Hence they have sometimes reappeared in times of revival, and sometimes in pioneer missionary settings, but not generally otherwise. The theological objections to this view are that it does not explain why the New Testament does not make this clear, nor why we are told to desire these gifts (1 Cor. 12: 31; 14: 1). Also it seems theologically unbalanced to place the whole weight on divine sovereignty and deny the place of human responsibility, in this or any other matter.

The second answer given to this third question by many older Pentecostals is that in the plan of God there were to be two such outpourings of the Spirit, one at the beginning and the other towards the end of the New Covenant era—frequently referred to by exponents of this view as ‘the early and the latter rain’ (see Joel 2: 23 etc.). The main objections to this view are twofold: i. it is based on exceedingly questionable exegesis of Joel 2 and other passages; and ii. there have been many other outpourings of the Holy Spirit in the history of the church, in which the charismata have sometimes figured, though not so prominently as today; and some of these outpourings were just as powerful as almost anything experienced in recent decades. No real explanation or account of this fact is offered (see below under Revival).

The third answer is that the gifts were always available to the church throughout the New Covenant, but gifts have to be desired and received as well as given (see e.g. 1 Cor. 14: 1). What the church did not seek or expect was therefore not experienced very much. And even when, as in times of revival, some of the gifts were occasionally experienced, this was generally explained in terms of the sovereignty of God, so that no-one felt any responsibility for their continuance or prolonged exercise, when the visitation of God waned. This experience in relation to the charismata can be paralleled to some extent by the failure of the church for many years in many lands to experience Christian assurance, because the teaching given precluded the possibility of it.

To the present writer the third view seems on balance the most acceptable. But the debate focusses a continuing theological issue: Is the church to measure its own experience, or lack of it, by the word of God, or to try to fit the word of God into our experience? This is no mean or unimportant question, and in our submission it seems clear that the first approach is the only one that is finally honouring to God, and that can save the church from settling down in complacency rather than allowing itself to be continually reformed by the word of God in Scripture.

### 11. *Revival and the Charismatic Movement*

THERE have been, and continue to be, many outpourings or visitations of the Spirit of God in power, not merely upon individuals, but upon churches, and indeed whole communities, in the history of the church. These have generally been described by the term 'Revivals'. The question arises of the relationship between these outpourings and the present charismatic movement, sometimes referred to as the 'charismatic revival'—a term which really means the revival of the charismata. Again we have to avoid the two extremes, of exaggerated claims on the one hand, and of exaggerated repudiation on the other. Whilst there have been manifestations of some or possibly all of the gifts of the Spirit at different times during not a few revivals both in the past and in this century, yet there have been revivals without any such manifestations. Therefore we should be extremely wary of either identifying the reappearance of charismata as an evidence of revival in itself, but also just as wary of trying to maintain a complete disjunction of the two. The appearance of the charismata of 1 Corinthians 12 do not betoken revival automatically, but there have been instances of revival connected with this movement in this century in several parts of the world. We should hesitate to say that such instances were due to the presence of the charismata, for that would be to confuse the Holy Spirit's presence with particular manifestations of that presence. Nevertheless a very good case could be made out for the belief that the more people are allowing the Spirit to operate in the full range of his graces and gifts in their lives and churches, the more liberty there is for him to move in power among and through them. For the key to the Spirit's blessing is faith and obedience or, in a word, co-operation with him at every point, and openness to his manifold working. If there is a progression which we ought to be aiming at, it is as follows: i. individual believers to be—and go on being—filled with the Spirit, and open to his fruit, teaching and gifts; ii. each church as Christ's body, manifesting the full-orbed life and ministry of Christ in the world; iii. the Holy Spirit moving in revival power, poured out upon whole churches, communities and areas, bringing widespread conversions and godliness. Very few parts of the world in the last fifty years have come anywhere near the state of affairs in New England in Jonathan Edwards' day, when all on board approaching ships several miles off-shore would be brought to their knees in conviction or worship at the presence of God over the land.

### 12. *Aberrations and Charges against the Movement*

MANY of the charges levelled by opponents of this movement have been dealt with in the course of this article (divisiveness, emotionalism,

instability, satanic delusions, straightjacketing the Spirit, concentrating on the gifts rather than the Giver etc.). Many of the aberrations quoted by critics have occurred, but generally on the 'lunatic fringe' of the movement, the 'intense' splinter-groups, and the semi-occult bandwagoners, who can do immense harm if unchecked and unresisted. The abuses are bound to occur, as in every fresh wave of the Spirit throughout history, but we do not judge the Reformation by the worst Anabaptist excesses. Similarly there are excesses in some quarters here, and one sided teachings and emphases, but we should not judge the whole movement on these if we are not to be very myopic. It is no necessary part of the Holy Spirit's charismatic movement to insist on water-baptism by submersion only for adults only 'in the name of Jesus only', nor to be so obsessed with evil spirits that we can see nothing else, nor to hold semi-Jewish views on Israel and the second coming of Christ, nor to reject the Bible's teachings on the ministry of women (to name but a few of the more unfortunate teachings found in some Pentecostal quarters).

Lastly, the most unfair charge of all, but perhaps one of the most frequently repeated, is probably also the least true—certainly in the writer's experience. This is the charge that the movement concentrates on the Holy Spirit to the detriment of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, no doubt there may be some of whom this is true—though we have not met them. Everywhere our experience has been that the Holy Spirit's power and gifts have brought a new and deeper love for Christ, a new desire to serve him, a new awareness of his reality and presence and power, and a new longing to see his name glorified in people's own lives, in the church, and all over the world. No-one within this dimension of Christian experience would doubt for one minute the Son of God's own definition of the Spirit's work in John 16: 14: 'When he comes . . . he will glorify me; for he will take what is mine and show it to you.' The writer has never seen the love of Christ more manifest than in this movement, and as a Christian pastoral and theological justification of it that goes a long way, as we all move further along the path towards knowing that surpassing love, and being filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3: 14-19).

<sup>1</sup> John Baker, *Baptised in one Spirit*, Fountain Trust, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, SCM., 1970.

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller exposition of these points see *op. cit.* under note 1 above, pp. 8ff. and 22ff.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, 1 John *passim*, and the excellent exposition of its message by Dr. Robert Law, under the title *The Tests of Life* (T. and T. Clark, 1909).

<sup>5</sup> The view that these gifts are simply gifts of teaching and wisdom is found in D. Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Gospel Publishing House, 1947), and A. Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1967). The view that they are specific words of supernatural wisdom and knowledge communicated by God in particular situations seems more in keeping with the expressions used and with St. Paul's normal usage, and is expounded in C. J. E. Kingston,

*Fulness of power* (Elim, 1964), and H. Horton *The Gifts of the Spirit* (AOG, 1934).

- <sup>6</sup> A classic exposition of this position will be found in B. B. Warfield's *Counterfeit miracles* (Scribners, 1918) reprinted under the title *Miracles yesterday and today, real and counterfeit* (Eerdmans, 1954).
- <sup>7</sup> A similar effect amongst Anglo-Catholics in California and elsewhere was observed by a previous editor of this journal, Dr. P. E. Hughes, in an editorial article in the issue of September 1962 (Vol. 76, No. 3).
- <sup>8</sup> K. Koch, *Between Christ and satan* (Evangelisation Publishers, Germany, 1967), *Occult bondage and deliverance* (Evangelisation, 1970), *The Strife of tongues* (Evangelisation, 1965), *The devil's alphabet* (Evangelisation and Marshall Morgan and Scott n.d.).
- <sup>9</sup> See *op. cit.* under 8 above, but also his very painstaking major study, *Christian counselling and occultism* (Kregel Publishers, Michigan, 1965).
- <sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 190ff.
- <sup>11</sup> Among the many books recording and documenting such healings, the reader is referred for example to K. Kuhlmann, *I believe in miracles* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1968), and *God can do it again* (Oliphants, 1970).
- <sup>12</sup> For a biblical study of this subject, see a book by the present writer due to be published by the Fountain Trust in March or April 1973, under the title *Wholeness and Salvation*.
- <sup>13</sup> N. Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement* (Allen and Unwin, 1964); W. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (SCM, 1972).