

Gospel and Spirit

A Joint Statement.

The Background.

A group nominated by the Church of England Evangelical Council and the Fountain Trust respectively met together for four valuable day conferences over a period of eighteen months. We are glad that we did so, and acknowledge that our failure to do so earlier may have helped to prolong unnecessary misunderstandings and polarisations.

We do not all see eye to eye on every point, but we thankfully recognise that what unites us is far greater than the matters on which some of us still disagree. We share the same evangelical faith, recognising each other as brothers in Christ and in the Gospel, and we desire to remain in fellowship and to build yet stronger relationships of love and trust.

Our task has been to try to articulate widely held and representative attitudes among the so-called 'charismatic' and 'non-charismatic' leaders of Anglican Evangelicalism and to bring both to the bar of Holy Scripture. We have sought to understand each other's views better, and to achieve closer harmony and correspondence through examining them all in the light of biblical teaching.

We are now issuing this account of our progress, indicating both agreements and disagreements, in the hope that it may help to promote unity where there is discord, and mutual understanding where there has been mistrust.

We have been struck by the fact that in our discussions, differences of view (usually denoted by 'some' and 'others' (of us) in the text) have by no means always coincided with our 'charismatic' and 'non-charismatic' identifications.

1. The Charismatic Movement and Anglican Evangelicalism.

(a) The Charismatic Movement in the United Kingdom has Evangelical roots, but is now both trans-denominational and trans-traditional, and embraces a very wide spectrum of views, attitudes and practices, not all originating from a recognised Evangelical 'stable'. Anglican Evangelicalism also embraces a wide spectrum of views and emphases, as one would expect

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of a movement that has been developing and adapting itself over four centuries. In our exchanges we have tried to bear in mind the complexity of both constituencies and to avoid facile over-simplifications. Readers of this statement will judge how far we have succeeded.

(b) We are united in thanking God for the real and obvious deeper acquaintance with Jesus Christ and his saving grace which charismatic renewal has brought to many individuals, and the new life and vigour which many churches have come to enjoy as a result. We acknowledge however that with this there have been dangers, and sometimes disasters, which have called for some self-criticism. We rejoice too that renewal of spiritual life is manifestly not confined to 'charismatic' circles and churches, while we share a common sadness that much of the church, both Evangelical and non-Evangelical, seems as yet to be untouched by true renewal in any form. In the quest for a quickening of the whole church we believe ourselves substantially to be making common cause.

(c) During the past thirty years, sections of Anglican Evangelicalism have experienced a notable renewal of concern for the study and teaching of the doctrines of the faith. The main concern of the Charismatic renewal, at least until recently, has been experiential rather than theological. The resulting sense of polarisation and of being threatened at the level of one's priorities, purposes and programmes may not have been justified, but has certainly been a potent cause of both tension and coolness. In our conversations we sought to overcome these inhibitions and build bridgeheads for future fellowship, trust and co-operation, and this we believe we have been enabled to do.

2. Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Spirit: Relating terms and experience.

(a) *All Gospel Blessings Given in Christ.*

We all agree that every spiritual blessing is given to us by God in and through our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3), so that every Christian is, in principle, complete, receiving fullness of life in him (Colossians 2:9-10). The Christ whom together we worship is the Jesus of the New Testament, God's Son incarnate who died for our sins, rose again and now lives and reigns. The gift of the Holy Spirit to believers is part of the ministry to them of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord, and the ministry of the Spirit is always to communicate, exalt, and bear witness to this glorified Christ. We thus agree in our understanding of how the ministry of the Spirit is related to the Father and the Son, and in rejecting the idea that in the Spirit we receive something more wonderful than our Saviour, or something apart from him and the fullness of his saving grace.

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(b) *Initiation into Christ.*

We are all convinced that, according to the New Testament, Christian initiation, symbolised and sealed by water-baptism, is a unitary work of God with many facets. This work is expressed by a cluster of partly overlapping concepts, including forgiveness, justification, adoption, regeneration, conversion (embracing repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour), new creation, death, burial and resurrection in and with Christ, and the giving and reception of the Holy Spirit. These concepts may be logically separated for consideration in teaching and learning; God's initiatory work is itself apprehended and experienced by different individuals in differing ways and time-scales; and certain aspects of it are in fact sometimes absent in evangelism, teaching, awareness and conscious experience. But essentially the concepts all belong together, since together they express the single full reality of the believer's incorporation into Christ, which leads to assurance of sonship, and power to live and serve in Christ.

We are agreed on the need (i) to avoid trying to stereotype or strait-jacket either the work of the Holy Spirit or the experience of individual Christians into a one, two or three-stage experience; (ii) to avoid presenting the work of the Spirit in separation from the work of the Son, since the Son gives the Spirit and the Spirit both witnesses to the Son and forms him in us; and (iii) to present the full range of Christ's salvation and gift for us in all our evangelism and teaching — i.e. to preach a complete, rather than a truncated, Gospel.

(c) *Terminology: 'Baptism in the Spirit'.*

We are agreed that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). It is impossible for anyone to acknowledge sin, confess Christ, experience new birth, enjoy the Saviour's fellowship, be assured of sonship, grow in holiness, or fulfil any true service or ministry without the Spirit. The Christian life is life in the Spirit. We all thank God for this gift.

In recent years there has been, as we said, a fresh enrichment in many Christians' Spirit-given experience of Christ, and in many cases they have called it 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit'. Some of these people have seen their experience as similar to that of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and other comparable events in Acts. Despite the observable parallels, however, there are problems attaching to the use of this terms to describe an experience separated, often by a long period of time, from the person's initial conversion to Christ.

In the first place, this usage suggests that what is sub-normal in the New Testament should be regarded as normal today: namely, that a long interval should elapse between new birth and any conscious realisation or reception of the Spirit's power.

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In the second place, the New Testament use of the words 'baptize' and especially 'baptize into' stresses their initiatory content and context, and therefore refers to Christian initiation, rather than to a later enrichment of Christian experience.

However, we see that it may be hard to change a usage which has become very widespread, although we all agree in recognising its dangers. We would all emphasize that it must not be employed in a way which would question the reality of the work of the Spirit in regeneration and the real difference that this brings in experience from the outset. On that we are unanimous. Some who speak of a post-conversion 'baptism in the Spirit' think of it mainly in terms of an empowering for service similar to the disciples' experience at Pentecost, though all are agreed that we should not isolate this side of the Spirit's work from his other ministries to and in the believer.

Some, stressing the experiential content of the term 'baptism in the Spirit', value it as having played a unique part in awakening Christians out of spiritual lethargy and bondage, and regard it as still having such a role in the future. Others, concentrating rather upon its initiatory implications, prefer to use it only to describe one aspect of new birth.

None of us wishes to deny the possibility or reality of subsequent experiences of the grace of God which have deep and transforming significance. We all affirm that a constant hunger and thirst after God should characterise every Christian, rather than any complacent claim to have 'arrived'. We urge one another and all our fellow-Christians to press on to know the Lord better, and thus to enter into the fullness of our inheritance in Christ (Phillippians 3:8-16).

(d) *Initial Evidence of Having Received the Gift of the Spirit.*

Although speaking in tongues is an initial phenomenon recorded on a number of occasions in connection with receiving the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, the New Testament will not allow us to make it either the only, or the universal, or an indubitable evidence that this gift has been given. Indeed, we believe it is dangerous to appear to identify the Giver with the presence of any one of his gifts in isolation, however valuable that gift might be in itself. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the reception of the Spirit by Christians in the New Testament was something experienced, evidenced and often immediately perceived, rather than merely inferred (cf. Acts 19:2, Galatians 3:2). When we ask what evidence of this reception we might expect, in the light of the New Testament records, the immediate answer must be a new awareness of the love, forgiveness and presence of God as our Father through Jesus Christ who is confessed as Lord, and the joyful spontaneous praise of God (whether in one's own tongue or another),

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issuing subsequently in a life of righteousness and obedience, and of loving service to God and man, a life which manifests gifts of the Spirit as well as spiritual understanding.

3. Spiritual Ethos.

(a) *Emotion and Intellect: Doctrine and Experience.*

We are aware that there is a real danger of exalting the intellect and understanding at the expense of the emotions. We know too that there is an equal danger of reacting against this into an anti-intellectual and emotionalist form of piety. We wish to assert, against both these extremes, the importance in faith and worship of the whole person. We believe the mind must be involved in understanding the faith and applying it, and that the emotions, as well as the will, must be involved in our response to the truth and love of God, as well in his worship as in the compassionate service of our fellow men. Both doctrine and experience, word and Spirit, must go together, biblical doctrine testing, interpreting and controlling our experience, and experience fulfilling, incarnating and expressing our beliefs. Only so can we avoid the two extremes of a dead, rigid and barren orthodoxy, or an uncontrolled, unstable and fanatical emotionalism.

(b) *Worship.*

We believe that what are seen as characteristic features of 'Evangelical' and 'Charismatic' worship and spirituality will complement and enrich one another and correct the imbalances in each, although we recognise that in some situations the two so overlap already as to be almost indistinguishable. Many 'Charismatic' gatherings would benefit from order, teaching, and some robustly doctrinal 'Evangelical' hymns; just as many 'Evangelical' services and prayer meetings would benefit from more spontaneity, greater participation, a more relaxed atmosphere, the gentle, loving wonder and praise of some renewal songs, and learning to listen to God in times of prayer and meditation.

(c) *Faith: Passive and Active.*

A different emphasis appears on occasion regarding the exercise of faith in the promises of the blessings offered to us by Christ in the gospel. 'Evangelicals' have sometimes laid all stresses on the acceptance of Christ and his forgiveness and salvation at the outset, leading to commitment, and expected God then and thereafter to pour out his blessings in Christ without any necessary appropriating prayers of faith on our part – because it is his way to do more than we ask or think, and to give us many things without our asking. 'Charismatic' Christians, however, are among those who stress the need for the exercise of expectant and appropriating faith in prayer for blessings and gifts of God has promised to bestow upon us. Both emphases can find support in the New Testament, and are

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complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Faith must both passively rest in the confidence of our Father's general goodness and generosity, trusting his wisdom to supply what we need as he sees it, but also on occasion pray actively and expectantly on the basis of his specific promises to his children and church, to claim their fulfilment as covenanted by him in answer to our prayers. We all recognise further that sometimes our Father in his wisdom does not answer his children's prayers immediately, in order to teach us patiently and trustingly to wait upon him for his gifts. This saves us from lapsing from a living relationship into any automatic view of prayer, and helps us to trust him to give what we need and ask for in the way and at the time which he knows to be best for us.

4. Church Life, Structures and Relationships.

(a) *The Body of Christ.*

According to the New Testament, the whole church is a charismatic community in which all are endowed with spiritual gifts (*charisma*) and are responsible for exercising them for the common good. The Charismatic Movement has been one of the forces which in recent years have begun healthily to correct an earlier excessive individualism, through recovery of the biblical emphasis upon the Body of Christ. We welcome this, with its corollar of every member being able to play a full part, through the Spirit's equipping, in the church's life, worship, witness and service. We recognize that under God this emphasis has prompted much hard work and patient ministry in the whole field of personal relationships and Christian life in community, and this we all applaud.

(b) *Structures.*

If these gains are to be assimilated, traditional ways of worship, ministry and congregational life must be modified and adapted. The doctrine and reality of the body of Christ cannot adequately be expressed through a pattern of ministry dependent chiefly, if not entirely, on one man, nor through exclusive use of a totally rigid 'set' pattern of worship. Our Anglican heritage at both these points can and should be made flexible, so as to combine with, and contribute to, a genuinely corporate and Spirit-led church life. We see this as a necessary implication of the spiritual renewal of the church, and suspect that few yet realise either how important it is or how far it needs to go. Meanwhile, we welcome the preliminary experiments whereby both 'charismatic' and 'non-charismatic' Christians are currently seeking to discover for themselves what this principle might mean in practice.

(c) *Leadership and Appointments.*

We believe that a clergyman must see himself as an enabler and trainer of others to be the body of Christ in the place where they are. When the

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members of a church are renewed and revived so that they begin to exercise their gifts and to discover and develop their ministries, and lay leadership begins to grow, the pastor's work of oversight, teaching and leadership, and his function as a resource person, though changing perhaps in outward form, becomes more, not less, vital.

Accordingly, we believe that when the living becomes vacant in a charismatically-experienced church, great care must be taken that the functioning body of Christ in that place has a significant voice in the making of the next appointment. It also becomes important that a man be appointed who will gladly and skilfully lead a team, rather than expect to exercise a one-man pattern of ministry. This is just to say that the church, in making such an appointment, must keep up with what the Holy Spirit has been doing in that place, and not risk quenching him by ignoring, under-valuing or seeking to counter his work.

(d) *Keeping Churches and Congregations Together.*

We have no new magical formula to hold churches together; there is only the old one of shared truth and mutual love, humility, tolerance and respect. Where churches split over these or any other matters, there are usually faults on both sides. Important guidelines will include: avoidance of any idea of first and second class Christians, which would engender pride, resentment and stubborn self-justification; willingness by those on all sides to respect each other's convictions, with openness to correction in the light of an honest reading of the New Testament; avoidance of quenching genuine spiritual gifts; respect for the authority of official leaders in the local church; and avoidance of splinter groups developing whose focus is something other (and therefore less) than Jesus Christ himself. We also believe it to be important that those who disagree on these or other matters should be brought together in direct encounter face-to-face, rather than talking about each other without meeting to discuss their differences.

(e) *Roman Catholics and Renewal.*

The renewing work of the Holy Spirit has led Christians of different backgrounds having fellowship together in Christ and in the Spirit, as old prejudices and dividing barriers melt under the new power of God's love in their lives. Protestants and Roman Catholics often associate with each other in this way. We welcome this, but at the same time recognise these dangers:

(i) A unity based on experience at the expense of doctrine would be less than the unity envisaged in the New Testament, and would be dangerous in the long term.

(ii) Personal (and even corporate) renewal has not always meant the dropping of all anti-biblical or sub-biblical traditions and practices.

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We see need to pray for and to encourage reformation by God's word as well as by renewal by his Spirit in all churches. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, however, a massive international community which has only recently begun to question its own historic stances, we recognise that God calls us to be realistic in our expectations, and to allow time (how long is not for us to say) for the forces of reformation and renewal to operate widely enough for changes in official formulations and interpretations of doctrine to become possible, where they are necessary.

5. Spiritual Gifts.

(a) *Their Nature, Range and Variety.*

A spiritual gift is a God-given capacity to serve others by his grace in a manner that edifies them in some way by the showing forth of Christ and his love. Spiritual gifts are listed in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4. We see no biblical warrant for isolating one set of gifts listed elsewhere in the New Testament, nor for treating these lists as exhaustive. Neither the context and terminology of 1 Corinthians 12 nor a comparison of the lists themselves will allow us to elevate one gift or set of gifts above another, although Paul indicates that in a meeting prophecy edifies the church, whereas tongues without interpretation do not. The comparative value of gifts depends upon the degree to which they edify, in the context in which they operate. Whilst observing that not all gifts and ministries have been equally in evidence throughout the church's history, we declare our openness to receiving any spiritual gifts that are consonant with the New Testament, and see no reason why such gifts should not be given and exercised today. A few which have sometimes caused particular difficulties are singled out for special treatment later.

(b) *Praying for Gifts.*

The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the distribution of gifts to particular individuals. The New Testament encourages the congregation to desire and to pray for spiritual gifts, and to exercise those received for the good of others. A congregation may rightly pray expectantly for the Lord to supply a need, and where they see a gift or ministry required to meet that need, it is clearly appropriate to ask him for it.

(c) *Gifts for Every Member.*

The New Testament teaches that every Christian has already received some gift or gifts, and lays upon all the responsibility to recognise what is already given, and to manifest it. It also encourages all to desire, and therefore be open to receive and exercise, a spiritual gift and ministry of one sort or another, and sees the healthy functioning of a congregation as the body of Christ as dependent upon each one contributing in this way. We believe

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this to be one of the most important truths highlighted by the Charismatic Movement, with far-reaching implications for the life and ministry of all our churches.

(d) *Their use, regulation and oversight.*

We believe it is vital that those who claim to have gifts should have those gifts tested by the leadership in the body of Christ in that place, and not be given 'carte blanche' to exercise them as if above being questioned or corrected. Christians with recognised gifts should not be stifled, but rather encouraged in their ministry by the leadership. The exercise of gifts must be overseen by the eldership of the churches and by those more experienced in that field. Such gifts should be kept within the fellowship of the church, and not become a focal-point for a new 'gift-centred' fellowship.

6. On Particular Gifts and Ministries.

(a) *Apostleship.*

Who if any, of the first Christians shared the authority belonging to the Eleven and Paul, and on what grounds, may be debatable, but there is little doubt as to what that authority was. Through divine revelation and inspiration these men were authoritative spokesmen, for witnesses to, and interpreters of, God and his Son. Their personal authority as teachers and guides — authority bestowed and guaranteed by the risen Christ — was final, and no appeal away from what they said was allowable. Such authority now belongs only to the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, under which all our churches and church leaders stand. Though latter-day ministries may in certain respects parallel apostolic functions, yet in their primary role as authoritative instructors the apostles have no successors, and any utterances or gestures of leadership today for which immediate inspiration is claimed must be evaluated by appeal to apostolic standards set forth in Holy Scripture. This is the church's one sure safeguard against being spiritually tyrannised and misled, as has repeatedly happened in church history.

(b) *Prophecy.*

Whilst estimates and interpretations of the New Testament phenomenon of prophecy vary, it is not identified there with the gift and ministry of teaching. Immediacy in receiving and declaring God's present message to men is the hallmark of New Testament prophecy, as of its Old Testament counterpart. Preaching may at times approximate more to prophecy, although its basic character is one of teaching and exhortation. If the possibility of prophecy in the sense of speaking a word from the Lord under the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit is admissible today, what is said will be tested by its general agreement with Scripture, and will not be

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accepted as adding materially to the Bible's basic revelation of God and his saving purposes in Christ. It will not be required that such utterances be cast in the first person singular, nor will those that are so cast be thought to have greater authority on that account.

(c) *Miracles.*

The living God is revealed to us in Scripture as the Creator and Sustainer of all things, whose normal mode of operation is through the processes of nature and history, which he controls. We think there is need to unfold this truth more thoroughly at the present time, teaching Christians to discern the hand of God in all things. At the same time we all believe that miracles can occur today.

Despite the virtual impossibility of arriving at a satisfactory definition of 'miracles' in strictly scientific terms, we are in general agreement concerning their nature and purpose. We follow Scripture in conceiving of miracles phenomenally, as occurrences of an unusual kind which bring awareness of the close presence of God, working out his will of salvation or judgment according to his word, and seeking by these manifestations to stir up the observers and beneficiaries (not to mention others) to new trust and worship. We believe that faith in the living God as delineated in Scripture compels us to be open to the possibility of miracles in every age under the New Covenant, and that the Lord may call some Christians to particular ministries of a more obviously miraculous kind in particular times and places. However, we are never in a position to demand a miracle, since we may never dictate to our sovereign Lord how he shall work in answer to our prayers. Our business is to rest upon and claim his promises in obedience to his word, but to leave the means of the answer to his wisdom. Over-concentration upon the miraculous can blind people to the manifold and wonderful everyday working of God in the world in 'non-miraculous' ways in the spheres of both creation and history. On the precise degree of expectation of miracles which is appropriate today we are not, however, completely agreed.

(d) *Healing.*

We believe that all true wholeness, health and healing come from God. We do not therefore regard 'divine healing' as being always miraculous. God's normal mode of healing is through the processes he has built into the human body and spirit. We also look forward to the resurrection, knowing that only then shall we be finally and fully freed from sickness, weakness, pain and mortality. At the same time, we welcome the recovery by the church of a concern for healing, and rejoice at those who have found new psychological or physical health through faith in Christ, and through Christian ministries and gifts of healing. But we also wish to express caution against giving wrong impressions and causing unnecessary distress through (i) making it appear that

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it is sinful for a Christian to be ill; (ii) laying too great a stress and responsibility upon the faith of the individual who is seeking healing; (iii) emphasising physical health more than the wholeness of the person; and (iv) setting non-medically-trained ministries and gifts of healing in opposition to the work and ministry of doctors and nurses.

(e) *Exorcism.*

Part of the ministry of Jesus Christ in the New Testament and in every age around the world is to set people free from the grip of Satanic forces at work in or upon their personality. We are united in our belief in the existence of such personal spiritual powers, and in both the need and the possibility of Christ's deliverance. For he has been exalted far above all principalities and powers, and God has put them all under his feet. We all can testify that the regular ministry of word and sacrament, together with the prayer of faith which this evokes, can liberate people from bondage to the power of the devil. Sometimes, however, especially in clear cases of demon possession, exorcism may be necessary. Whilst not doubting that Christ gives to some people especially the necessary gifts to exercise this ministry safely and effectively in his name, it is an area fraught with dangers, which drive us to utter several cautionary warnings: (i) a preoccupation with demons (often to the neglect of the holy angels) is generally both dangerous and unbalanced, as is the tendency to attribute every unusual condition to demonic influence or presence; (ii) it is wise to avoid speaking of 'spirits' or 'demons' to those whom we minister personally, unless this is absolutely unavoidable; (iii) the ministry of exorcism should not normally be exercised either by any Christian alone, or by any Christian without proper authority and oversight within the church; (iv) persons in need of this ministry will frequently need help at the psychological/emotional level of healing as well; (v) consultation with medical opinion (preferably sympathetic to a Christian viewpoint) is always highly desirable; (vi) careful pastoral follow-up is essential.

(f) *Speaking in Tongues.*

Many Christians today testify to the value of this gift in their experience. Opinions vary as to how much of modern glossolalia corresponds with the New Testament phenomenon. Most of us would accept that some tongues-speaking, though not necessarily a heavenly language, is nevertheless divinely given and has spiritual and psychological value. We are also aware that a similiar phenomenon can occur under occult/demonic influence, and that some such utterances may be merely psychological in origin and not necessarily edifying or beneficial at all.

Opinions also vary as to the value of this gift to the individual, and (with interpretation) to the church. We consider it necessary to hold to

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the balance of the New Testament in our general attitude to it, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 14, neither exalting it above all other gifts, nor despising it and forbidding its exercise (though always with interpretation if in public). But if we are true to the New Testament we shall seek to test it, as we do the other gifts in their public exercise, by its edifying effects; and we shall regulate its use scripturally, encouraging believers with this gift to 'pray with the understanding also' both in public and in private.

Conclusion.

The Goal of Renewal.

The goal of renewal is not merely renewed individuals but a renewed and revived Church, alive with the life of Christ, subject to the Word of Christ, filled with the Spirit of Christ, fulfilling the ministry of Christ, constrained by the love of Christ, preaching the good news of Christ, and thrilled in its worship by the glory of Christ. Such a church alone can adequately portray Jesus Christ to the world. In preaching, writing and counselling, the Christ-centredness of the Christian life and the work of the Holy Spirit must constantly be emphasised, so that we may all together grow up fully into him, our glorious Head.

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