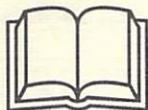


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

August, 2003

LOVE --

- ◇ God's Math
- ◇ The Cure for What Ails Us
- ◇ The Greatest Thing in the World!

* * *

Spiritual Gifts

Christ warned, "*You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God*" (Matt 22:29). These two factors must always be kept paramount in our ministry: the *Word of God* as the basis for all our work and teachings, and the *power of God* in our lives as we minister. The *Word* of God without His accompanying power in our lives becomes ineffective; the *power* of God in our experience, unless grounded in the Word of God, may be misunderstood and thus lead into error." --David Howard in his book, *Hammered as Gold*

"It is sometimes emphasized that the Spirit had a special work in the first century through the Apostles. But to affirm the Spirit worked *uniquely* in the first century does not mean he worked *exclusively* in the first century. The Spirit works in every century enabling us to be what God has called us to be. Just as he inspired the apostles then with the *revelation* of Scripture, he assists believers now in *understanding* it (1 Cor.2:12-15)." --David Langford in *Gospel Tidings*, July 2003.

29th ANNUAL
CENTRAL LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
November 17 - 20, 2003

Theme: GODLY LIVING IN PERILOUS TIMES

MONDAY NIGHT

7:00 p.m. **Perilous Times (II Timothy 3:1-9)** Darren Johnson
All youth ages 10 and up will be dismissed at this time nightly for their session.

TUESDAY

Prayer Time daily, Tuesday - Thursday at 9:30 A.M.

10:00 **Training Faithful Men (II Timothy 2:1-2)** Robert Garrett
11:10 **Titus 1: Godliness in the Church** Julius Hovan
1:15 **Single minded soldier (II Timothy 2:3-5)** Eddie Olberding
7:00 **Prophesied Times** Earl C. Mullins, Sr.

WEDNESDAY

10:00 **An Enduring Farmer (II Timothy 2:6-13)** Mike Abbott
11:10 **Titus 2: Godliness in the Home** Julius Hovan
1:15 **A Diligent Workman (II Timothy 2:14-19)** Dennis LeDoux
7:00 **Pressing Times (II Peter 3:7)** Don McGee

THURSDAY

10:00 **A Sanctified Vessel** Glen Baber
11:10 **Exposition of Titus 3: Godliness in the World** Julius Hovan
1:15 **A Gentle Servant (II Timothy 2:24-26)** Harry Coultas
7:00 **Promising Times (II Peter 3:13)** Dale Offutt

All Sessions at **Glenmora Church of Christ**

P. O. Box 314 Glenmora, La. 71433

(318) 748-4243

Special Service nightly for youth 10 years and up in the fellowship hall.
Speaker: Dennis Royce, Youth Minister at Sellersburg (Indiana) Church of Christ

All messages will be taped by Donald R. Stump, 1720 Plum Creek Rd., Taylorsville, KY 40071 (502-477-2252) Messages can be ordered at the fellowship.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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We Owe a Debt, Like It or Not

Alex V. Wilson

Planning four W&Ws in a row related to spiritual gifts (this is the 2nd), somehow reminds me of the title of one of Tony Campolo's books: *20 Hot Potatoes Christians are Afraid to Touch*. Believe it or not, that book does not even mention miracles, tongues or baptism in the Holy Spirit! (Another book of his is called *How to be Pentecostal Without Speaking in Tongues*. I've barely browsed it, but it sounds interesting.) Folks, I don't get any sadistic pleasure from pushing people outside their comfort zone -- nor in stirring up possible controversy. But if the Lord put several passages and many verses about these topics in the New Covenant scriptures, who are we to shun them? "Speak where the Bible speaks" has long been a principle we've endorsed.

Like it or not, even believers who strongly disagree with every distinctive charismatic doctrine owe a lot to the charismatic movement! Before it began, only Pentecostals emphasized or even taught much *at all* about spiritual gifts -- even the "non-miraculous" ones. Kenneth Kantzer was a leading evangelical professor, writer and editor from the 1950s into the 1990s. One time he said publicly that till around 1960 he had never ever heard (nor delivered) one sermon nor even a Sunday school lesson on the gifts of the Holy Spirit! Yet starting in the 1950s he was head of the Bible department at a leading conservative Christian college.

In a 1979 book that Peter Wagner wrote about the *charismata*, he mentions that he had 32 books on the subject. But 26 of them (that's about 4/5) were written after 1970, about a decade after the charismatic (or neo-Pentecostal) movement began. He adds, "The only non-Pentecostal I know of ... who dealt favorably with all the spiritual gifts as early as 1947 was Alexander Hay, whose book *The New Testament Order for Church and Missionary* never enjoyed a wide circulation in the U.S."

Sadly, this scanty treatment is not new. In the 1800s Baptist A. H. Strong wrote a 1056-page *Systematic Theology*. In it he apportioned barely 10 pages to the Holy Spirit! About the same time, Presbyterian Charles Hodge published a 3-volume set on theology. It contained 2260 pages, but only 13 of them were devoted to the Holy Spirit!! Neither author dealt with the subject of spiritual gifts. Yet those gifts are mentioned many times -- in Acts, Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12-14, Eph. 4:3-16, 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6, Heb. 2:2-4, and 1 Pet. 4:10-11. It's easy to have doctrinal blind spots, isn't it?

Thankfully, since the 1960s much more attention has been given this important subject. The Charismatic Movement forced it on our attention. And though many books and sermons in the '60s and '70s were primarily argumentative and combative, in recent decades there has been greater balance and moderation. Many on each side came to realize that the other had at least some valid points and dedicated disciples. Maybe that realization came due to the mountaintop chapter, 1 Cor. 13, on which we center our attention this month.

What about us? The brothers who plan the Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship have dared to touch the hot potato twice recently. A few years ago they asked Paul Estes to lead a series of lessons on the Romans 12 list of gifts. His studies were very helpful. Later they asked yours truly to expound 1 Cor.12-14. I commend their courage. Every church should hear teaching on the subject and try to apply it in practical ways. God thinks the gifts are important; so should we. Just remember that if it were not for the Charismatic Movement we might *never* have heard sermons or class studies on these topics.

But while the gifts are important, we dare not forget that love is **ultra-important**. In God's math, **charismata minus agape = zilch**. Regrettably, in many places the "greater balance and moderation" mentioned earlier is still absent. Last year W&W received this letter from a dear brother, a minister in Japan:

Recently, a very sad thing happened within the church. One of our members (and his whole family) left us to join another group. He insisted that we begin practicing healings, speaking in tongues, and miracles in our worship services immediately. My study of the scriptures has not led me to this conclusion, however. Before he left the congregation, there were incidents in which this member demonstrated an outburst of his frustration towards me and several other members. Many were shocked by his words, hurt by his actions, and disappointed by his insistence on these practices. He and his family left after this.

The sad part is that there are so few Christians in Japan, we do not need splits and schisms over issues on which honest men differ. I believe the more important thing is how we treat each other when issues arise (John 13:35).

How tragic. And it goes both directions, of course. May our Father help us to be peacemakers. Bridgebuilders. Channels of His love. Each side has much to learn from the other, if we and they will listen, explain, listen some more, clarify, and forgive. If we will pray for and praise with God's other children, remembering Calvary and the empty tomb and the blessed hope. As our brother wrote, "the more important thing is how we treat each other when issues arise." Let's remember God's math.

Folks, we realize we're dealing with some complicated subjects here. (Cheer up, the worst is yet to come! :<) Many of you may have helpful insights from Scripture or your experience that would be valuable for all our readers to hear. And some of you may even disagree with us; imagine that! That's your privilege, it's part of the freedom we have in Christ.

So **here's the plan.** After the October issue, we'll take a break from the 4-month themes of spiritual gifts in general, the gift of prophecy in particular. Then **we'll revisit the subjects again, hearing from you.** Feel free to send us feedback: short observations or testimonies, or regular articles written either by you or someone else.

Thus, Lord willing, in a few months (maybe January 2004) we'll have an issue related to these subjects, with your input put in. You need not agree with us, but you may! So long as what you send is based on the Bible, and is not written in a cantankerous manner, we'll run it -- or parts of it. We reserve the right to condense, especially if several writers cover the same ground in similar ways. Also, if for important reasons you prefer to write anonymously, you may do so. In such a case, inform the editor of your identity, but add "Keep this anonymous or do not run it." If the article is worthy of being published, we'll do so but respect your confidentiality.

Let us hear from you. "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Prov.27:17).

For your information: In case you missed it, last month the article, "Are All Spiritual Gifts for Now?" set forth what we called the "in-between view" regarding the gifts. This is the view the present W&W editor espouses, being neither Pentecostal nor anti-Pentecostal. It seems to me the former go too far and the latter not far enough.

Earlier issues of W&W have also taken this stance. For example, here were themes of some issues in 1992. August: *Miracles Now? Of Course!* We quoted Rufus Mosely: "God is a bit sparing with His miracles. If there weren't any, we'd all be goners; but if there were too many, we'd all become lazy." September: *I am the Lord, who Heals You!* We there quoted E. Stanley Jones, who said, "We believe that God heals the body in one or more of these ways: 1)by medicine, 2)surgery, 3)scientific nutrition, 4)climate, 5)mental suggestion, 6)deliverance from underlying fears, resentments, self-centeredness, and guilt; 7)direct action of the Spirit of God upon our bodies, 8)by the Resurrection." That month the editor also began a 4-part series on God's ministry of healing. The October theme was *There Shall be Showers of Blessing*. That and the Nov./Dec. issue, *God Visited Us, God Visits Us*, dealt with the vast needs and glorious possibilities of

revival if we seek for and the Lord deigns to grant other great spiritual awakenings such as took place in some past times. May He indeed answer the psalmist's (and our?) prayer, "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" (Psa. 85:6).

(While they last, copies of the above mentioned issues are available @ \$0.80 plus postage.)

A Review of 1 Cor. 12, especially its Applications:

1. Christians, our Lord has given us **Presents**: Are we **thankful**?

2. He has given us presents to **Use**: They are abilities for **service**. Are we **using** them? Do we even **know** what they are?

3. He has given them for us to use to **Build up the church, Christ's Body**: Are we doing what we can to build up our fellow-Christians, in the local church and also His worldwide family? And also to build up the church by adding more converts to it?

4. Our all-loving, all-wise **Lord Himself personally selected which abilities to give us**: Therefore -- **have no bitterness, no self-loathing, no envy of others**.

5. Since our abilities and opportunities to serve God are presents - His donations to us -- **how can we be proud of ourself or contemptuous of others?**

6. Finally, an important reminder from Donald Gee, a moderate Pentecostal teacher: "To be more interested in **the gifts** of the Spirit [related to Christian service] than in **the fruit** of the Spirit [related to Christian character] is *immaturity*. To be more interested in the gifts than in **the Giver Himself** is almost *idolatry*." We need to remember those basic truths. At the same time, in no way should we ever neglect nor downplay our Lord's generous gifts to us.

Expositions of 1 Corinthians 12-14

The Cure for What Ails Us

1 Cor. 13: 1-7

Alex V. Wilson

When God's Love invaded the world in Jesus Christ, a new Greek word had to be adapted to explain it: *agape*, that is, self-giving, self-sacrificing love. *Love for the utterly unworthy and unattractive!* The Lord loves us not because *we* are lovable, but because *He* is loving -- even to the *un*-lovable. And that love is the subject of 1 Cor. 13.

But most of us have heard this chapter so often that familiarity breeds contempt -- or at least dullness. When we have known some passage all our life and perhaps memorized it decades ago, it is hard to break out of a *ho-hum* attitude toward it even if we really don't want to. This is where and when I find that various Bible versions may help. And especially the paraphrases like J.B. Philips, and *The Living Bible* (now much improved as the *New Living Translation*), and Eugene Peterson's *The Message*. Of course for precise and in-depth study the New American Standard, New International Version (and -- from what I've heard -- the new highly-praised English Standard Version) are much better. But there's a place for the others too. Listen again for the first time to 1 Cor.13:1-3, in *The Message*:

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, 'Jump,' and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere.

We don't want to be zeros for Christ, to go nowhere. We don't want to amount to nothing in serving Him. So let's set our hearts on Love, the Mt. Everest of all virtues. This chapter reveals several significant facts: Love is essential as motivation of our spiritual gifts. And it is beautiful in all its aspects. Even more, it is unailing and un-fading. In fact, love is *the greatest thing in the world* (as Henry Drummond's book on 1 Cor. 13 called it).

1. Love is Essential for Motivating our Gifts (verses 1-3, just quoted).

Paul mentions at least five spiritual gifts here, to show that each of these gems turns into junk if it doesn't spring from love. I may be a world-champion expert in *tongues*- speaking, or in the gift of *proph-*

ecy. Or perhaps in supernaturally-revealed *knowledge* of mysteries, or special *faith* for performing *miracles*. But if I lack love as my motive, then it all adds up to a big fat 0. Men may shower me with acclaim, but it's nothing so far as God is concerned.

Or I may perform *seemingly loving deeds* -- giving away my possessions to live in a squatter's shack in stinking slums among the sick, starving and addicted. Or I may have a *seemingly total dedication* to Christ -- voluntarily surrendering myself to fanatical persecutors, knowing I'll be burned at the stake. But if in doing such deeds I am devoid of love, then I will not gain anything from God for it!

Paul is not downing gifts here. There's no competition between love, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts He imparts. The gifts minus love are nothing; that's Paul's emphasis here. But love without the gifts is incomplete -- stunted, amputated --like the body of a caring person who lacks hands to help others.

We see here that our *attitude* makes or breaks our *actions*. Small, frail, faltering and inept deeds done for love's sake will have value and bring blessing when loveless deeds of impressive expertise and stupendous effort will amount to zilch. Not that we should be content with being inept or inefficient in serving the Lord, for love will want to do its very best. But above all else, love is what God looks for and longs for: *agape* love. Without it our "service" for Him only annoys and aggravates others, like the noisy gongs and clanging cymbals of the pagan processions in Paul's day: lots of banging but no melody or harmony.

Genuine love is the essential motive for serving our Lord. Without it we gain nothing for God or from God, even if our deeds look loving and seem sacrificial.

2. Love is Beautiful in All its Aspects (verses 4-7). --

One way to demonstrate its beauty is to compile the ways in which various Bible versions translate or paraphrase Paul's fifteen descriptive phrases. So this is what I've done, plus adding a few dictionary definitions. Ponder these sparkling facets of the diamond of love.

- 1) It is patient -- it puts up with difficult people, but it never gives up.
- 2) Is kind -- compassionate -- caring and helping -- cares more for others than for self -- acts to help others -- looks for a way of being constructive.
- 3) Does not envy -- is not possessive -- not upset when others have something it lacks.

- 4) Does not boast when it has something others lack (note the contrast with #3) -- does not parade itself or sing its own praises -- not anxious to impress -- doesn't strut.
- 5) Is not proud/ arrogant/ puffed up-- doesn't cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.
- 6) Is not rude -- doesn't act ill-mannerly/ unbecomingly/ inappropriately.
- 7) Is not self-seeking -- does not pursue selfish advantage-- does not demand its own way.
- 8) Is not easily angered -- not quick to take offense -- doesn't fly off the handle -- not resentful/ irritable/ touchy.
- 9) Does not hold grudges -- keeps no record of when it has been wronged-- doesn't keep score of others' sins.
- 10) Does not delight in evil -- doesn't gloat over other men's sins -- is never glad when others go wrong.
- 11) Rejoices with the truth -- whenever the truth wins out -- is gladdened by goodness.
- 12) It bears up under anything -- patiently accepts all things -- knows no limit to its endurance -- never gives up -- always protects -- always slow to expose -- is loyal no matter what the cost.
- 13) Always trusts -- knows no end to its trust -- never loses faith -- always eager to believe the best [e.g., to give the benefit of the doubt to those accused by unproved gossip].
- 14) Always hopes -- knows no fading of its hope.
- 15) Always perseveres -- keeps going to the end -- endures through every circumstance -- it can outlast anything.

2 Lessons from this Lovely List of Attractive Attributes:

First, Such Love is a CURE-ALL for Sins. At least it would have been for the Christians in Corinth. Notice their problems which love's traits would have solved:

"Love is Kind" and also **"Not rude"** would have prevented their clannish and humiliating treatment of the poor who had no food to bring to the fellowship-meals (1 Cor.11:18-22).

"Does not envy" -- This would cure the pouting or discouragement of those who felt their spiritual gifts were insignificant and worthless compared with others (12:14-17).

"Does not boast" or strut, to impress others -- Those with sensational or "powerful" gifts needed this medicine (12:21-26). So did the members who quarreled among themselves and divided into groups -- "I'm for Paul," "I'm for Peter," etc. (1:10-31).

“Not proud” -- Some of them were conceited know-it-alls, whom Paul rebuked by saying, “Knowledge puffs up but love builds up” (8:1-2; also 1:18-29; 3:18-20; 4:7).

“Not self-seeking” -- This would have solved the problem of meats sacrificed to idols, where the believers who were well taught became stumbling-blocks to those who were “weak” in understanding that idols were really nothing (8:1-13; 10:23-11:1). Paul urges them, “Don’t think only of yourself. Try to think of the other fellow, too, and what is best for him.... Don’t be a stumbling block to anyone” (10:24,32).

“Love is patient and...not easily angered” and **“keeps no record of wrongs”** would have cured them of dragging their fellow-Christians into court and suing them (6:1-11).

“It does not delight in evil” would have mended their *lack* of rebuking and correcting the case of gross sexual immorality by a church-member -- for love is not mushy toward sin not repented of. (Chapter 5.)

If the church in Corinth had practiced Love, they would have had very few of the problems that wracked them. And that’s true of almost every church there is.

Second, Such Love is IMPOSSIBLE for Us in Ourselves:

Give yourself a test by saying the following:

“I am patient, I do not envy nor boast, I am not self-seeking, I am not irritable or touchy” When I do that, my instinctive reaction is first **“Ha!”** And then, **“Ouch!”** This beautiful chapter turns out to be a mirror revealing my ugliness. How can I experience love as my “cure for sins” if I *lack* that love?

Ah, but Wait. There is Good News. Now say the following:

Christ is patient, *Christ* does not envy; *Christ* does not boast, is not self-seeking; *Christ* is not irritable or touchy... -- **YES, that fits! It is true indeed!** And now there’s even **Better News**. Try saying this:

Christ-in-me is patient and does not envy, **Christ-in-me** does not boast and is not self-seeking; **Christ-in-me** is not irritable or touchy -- **That’s VICTORY!** Yes, such loving character is possible -- by His stunning grace! -- by His enabling power, as we trust more and more in Him rather than ourself.

Victory is available -- as I grow in depending on Him. *I should rely upon Him to do for me what I can't do for myself.* May our Lord help us experience this more and more.

We have seen that love is essential to motivate our use of spiritual gifts. And that it is beautiful in all its aspects and traits. Now we'll discover more facts about love.

The Greatest Thing in the World!

1 Cor. 13: 8-13

3) Love is UNFAILING and UNFADING (verses 8-12).

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies -- gifts of prophecy--, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection -- the perfect -- comes, the imperfect disappears -- the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (NIV -- NASB)

Verse 8 shows that the spiritual gifts such as prophesying, speaking in tongues, and miraculously-bestowed knowledge are **temporary, not permanent**. They have an expiration date. They will cease, be stilled, pass away.

Verse 9 shows that *even now--while they are in effect--they are partial, not perfect*.

They are in part, incomplete, imperfect.

Verse 10 says that the imperfect disappears at the coming of "the perfect" (or "wholeness," or "perfection"). "When the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be cancelled" (The Message).

The meaning of **verse 10** has been vigorously debated. Just what is the Perfect, and when did -- or will -- it come? For whenever it came -- or will come --, that is the expiration date for the gifts such as prophesying, tongues-speaking, and supernaturally revealed knowledge. Thus *this verse is a key text in the dispute* between those who believe all such gifts ceased long ago (the cessationist view) and oth-

ers who believe God still grants them today as and when He sees fit to do so (the charismatic and “in-between” views).

Editor Sam Stone wrote in the *Christian Standard*, "In the 20 years that I have been editing this journal, I recall running four different articles about 'the perfect' in 1 Cor.13:10. Each article offered a different interpretation. Which one is right? I'm not sure. I've got my idea, and you can have yours. Each essay was written by a person who believes the Bible is true, has studied it carefully, and thinks his or her understanding is correct."

In other words, he is saying, let's all agree to disagree agreeably on this issue. Its correct meaning is not an open-and-shut case. This is also the point that a Church of Christ publisher attempted to get across during the time when charismatic issues were disrupting many churches. In 1972, Sweet Publishing Company produced a 16-page magazine with six articles on the meaning of "the perfect." Each was written by a different scholar in Churches of Christ, and each took a differing view.

To make a long story shorter, some believe that the perfect "simply refers to God's complete and final revelation of His truth to man, *the New Testament*." When it was finished, the perfect had come and miraculous gifts ceased when that generation died off.

But Lewis Johnson, himself a cessationist, wrote:

That which is perfect cannot be a reference to the completion of the canon of Scripture; otherwise we now, living in the age of the completed canon, would see more clearly than Paul did (verses 9,12). Even the most self-satisfied and opinionated of theologians would hardly admit that. The coming of that which is perfect can only be a reference to the Lord's second coming. That event will mark the end of the exercise of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge." (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

Personally I agree with Dr. Johnson regarding verse 10, but I'll love you even if you take 1 of the 5 or more other interpretations.

Verses 11-12 continue Paul's train of thought: "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (NIV).

Here Paul first mildly rebukes the Corinthians' childish fascination and obsession with the more spectacular spiritual gifts. In the next

chapter he chides them again, pleading, "Brothers, stop thinking like children....In your thinking be adults" (14:20). Their over-emphasis on tongues -- which becomes obvious in chapter 14 --, and their minimizing of love -- the greatest thing in the Christian life -- clearly reveal their immaturity.

He then amplifies the ideas of the *imperfect now* but the *perfect later*. Metal mirrors made in Corinth were famous, but even they gave somewhat distorted reflections -- not nearly as good as seeing someone face to face. In the same way our present knowledge of spiritual realities is blurred and indistinct. Our reasoning is sometimes faulty, and even at best our understanding is fragmentary. But when the perfect comes, at Christ's return, we shall know fully and see face to face.

4) Love is the GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD (v.13).

"In a word, there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love" (NEB).

Faith is great, and Hope is great, but Love is the Greatest. Therefore, as various versions express it: "Put love first." (NEB) "Make love your aim." (RSV) Better: "Follow after love." (ASV) Better still: "Pursue love." (NAS) Whatever you do, don't let it get away!

Now let's conclude with a warning and a plea. Frank Viola gives us a strong warning to remember: "Samson, King Saul, and Balaam are witnesses to the fact that *impressive gifts do not insure godly character All were put out of commission because of their deficiency in spiritual life and character.*"

And here's a plea to consider: Back in the 1960s, many disputes and some extremes (both pro and con) regarding the Charismatic Movement were leading to hard feelings, sharp words and sometimes ugly actions among Christians around the world. Our circle of churches was not exempt. Divisions resulted in various places. At that time this appeal was made in *Word & Work* magazine:

Are we Diligent in keeping Unity?

O that we non-Christmatics might say, "Dear charismatic brethren, we love you. We need you. We need your spirit of praise and worship toward the living God. Without your fellowship we might retreat into extremism. You are fellow-members with us of Christ's body; we dare not amputate any part of His body. We shall spend eternity with you praising God; we want to spend the present with you serving God. We acknowledge that His Word clearly says, "*Do not forbid speaking in tongues*" (1 Cor.14:39), so we shall not oppose your *Scripture-regulated use* of tongues-speaking (1 Cor.14:27-28).

We ask for your forgiveness for our mistreatment of you in any way, and we extend to you forgiveness of your wrongs toward us. We receive you with love, as Christ receives us.”

O that you Charismatics might say, “Dear non-charismatic brethren, we love and need you. We need your deep loyalty to God’s holy Word. Without your fellowship we might rush off into extremism. You are fellow-members with us of God’s indwelt temple; we dare not destroy His temple (1 Cor.3:16,17). We shall worship God with you in heaven; we want to work for God with you on earth. We acknowledge that His Word says that *all* Christians have been baptized in His Spirit but that *not* all Christians speak with tongues (1 Cor.12:13,30). We also realize that speaking in tongues is of limited usefulness in public and seems to be primarily for *private* prayer and praise (1 Cor.14: 2,4,9,12,18-19, etc.), so we shall practice it accordingly. We ask your forgiveness for our mistreatment of you in any way, and we extend to you forgiveness of your wrongs toward us. We receive you with love, as Christ receives us.”

May the Lord of both “sides” help each side thus to seek and extend His love for the other.

Another Approach to “Gifts are Temporary, while Love is Eternal”

“In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul points out that it is love that God has bestowed for the lasting edification of His church. Gifts are the Holy Spirit’s outward expression in works and words, while love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s inward working in our lives through the cross. Gifts are the Lord’s temporary method; love is His permanent method for building up His Body. Hence, to paraphrase the Apostle, ‘when all else fails, love remains’ (1 Cor.13:8).

“While there is no doubt that **spiritual gifts are still operating in the church today** (they will not cease until Christ returns--1 Cor. 13:8-12), it is equally true that **spiritual gifts are often God’s temporary means in a given context**. Accordingly, God often employs the wide use of power gifts to begin a new work. But He then expects that new work to grow into something deeper, greater, and more comprehensive. This does not mean that the gifts disappear, but they take a less prominent role as the church matures from babyhood unto manhood **Gifts may increase or decrease depending upon the context and the need, but spiritual life – and its hallmark, love – are to continue and abound unto eternity.**” –Frank Viola, a pioneer in the current house-church movement

What is the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” and Why is it Important?

In 1 Cor 12:13 ASV, Paul writes, “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body ... and were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Some may think this refers to water-baptism and means exactly the same as Acts 2:38 where Peter said, “Repent and be baptized ... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” But it is quite clear that Paul meant something more than that when he wrote “In one Spirit were we all baptized.” Here is the **background**: [In this section we quote always from the American Standard Version since it alone uses the same terminology in all the passages quoted below: “baptized *in* the Holy Spirit.” Other versions confuse the matter by saying “baptize *with* the Holy Spirit” in the gospels but “baptized *by* the Spirit” in 1 Cor.12:13. In Greek the word is always the same, *en*.]

In Mark 1:8, John the Baptizer said, “I baptized you in water; But he [the Messiah] shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit. [This is also recorded in Matthew and Luke.] Then in John 1:33, John says that the Father told him, “Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:4-5 ASV tells us that after His resurrection Jesus commanded the apostles “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which (said he) ye heard from me: For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.”

Being mentioned in all 4 gospels and in Acts shows that this is something important! Ten days later came Pentecost, and the ascended Lord poured out the Holy Spirit upon His disciples. He baptized them in the Spirit (see Acts 11:15-17 for Peter’s comments about Pentecost.) That marked the beginning of the New Covenant age and the Spirit-indwelt people of God, the Church. From that time on, repentant sinners receive not only forgiveness but also the gift of the Holy Spirit at their conversion. As Paul says, God saves us “through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He pours out on us generously through Christ our Savior (Tit.3:5-6).

Why mention all this? Because almost all Charismatics teach that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a **second** blessing that Christians should seek for **after** their conversion. One writer says,

“The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a 2nd encounter with God in which the Christian begins to receive the supernatural power of the

Holy Spirit into his life. (Acts 1:8.) We are not speaking of the Holy Spirit in His introductory ministry but in His empowering ministry to the believer. Conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit are not only separate experiences, they are given for separate and distinct purposes. By conversion the nonchristian becomes a Christian, while by the baptism in the Holy Spirit the Christian becomes a powerful Christian.” Most Charismatics also teach that tongues is the evidence that a Christian has received Spirit-baptism. That writer continues, “I believe God knew exactly what He was doing on the Day of Pentecost and that He did it right the very first time and that He hasn’t changed His mind since.” (Don Basham)

But that interpretation does not hold water. Let’s lovingly point out to them that 1 Cor. 12:13 is the only passage *in the epistles* which specifically mentions the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And what does Paul say there? He makes it clear that **this experience is not a blessing that divides Christians (“I have it but you don’t”) but unites us because it is a common experience that all believers share.** Notice: “For in one Spirit were we *all baptized into one body*, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were *all made to drink of one Spirit*” (asv; the other versions are similar except they speak of being baptized “by” or “with” the Spirit). Just as all who receive Christ as Lord and Savior are equally redeemed, equally justified, and equally born again, so they all are equally Spirit-baptized. Also, 1 Cor.12:13 says the Corinthians had *all* been baptized in the Spirit, but verse 30 says *not all* of them spoke in tongues.

So there is no basis for telling fellow disciples that they need to seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit, for they have it -- or rather, *Him* -- if they have Christ as Lord and Savior. And they should not seek tongues in particular, but the greater gifts (1 Cor.12:31; 14:1, 12), though the Lord *may* give them tongues. Let us indeed urge one another to be *filled and re-filled* with the Holy Spirit, as Paul did in Eph.5:18. (Also study Acts 2:4, 4:8 & 4:31; plus Acts 9:17 & 13:9; these give instances of believers being filled more than once.)

I believe that in many cases the life-changing ministry-empowering experiences which some Charismatics have had, which they call their Spirit-baptism, were actually fillings by the Spirit. This is not just quibbling over words. A Christian is baptized by the Spirit only once, but may and should be filled with Him over and over. When someone asked D. L. Moody why he urged Christians so often to “Be filled with the Spirit,” he replied, “Because I leak!” Yes, we need our tanks refilled. So, looking to our Lord Jesus, let’s thirst for Him to fill and re-fill us and overflow us with the Spirit (see John 7:37-39).

May we remember that the “one and the same Spirit” who indwells all disciples (1 Cor.12:11) is a Spirit who unites, not divides, God’s people. The same Spirit resides in you, him, her, them, and me. In red and yellow, black and white. In pentecostal, cessationist, charismatic and in-betweeners. That’s a good reason for us to lovingly cooperate with each other and not let Satan split us into warring camps. “We are one in the Spirit, We are one in the Lord ... and they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”

A Spirit Led Church

Denny Boultinghouse

“Every church should be led by the Spirit.” When such a statement does not receive a very strong “Amen!” something is terribly wrong. But I know that many who read that statement will immediately think, “I wonder what he means by that.” Far too many of us immediately shift into a “fear mode” any time the Holy Spirit is mentioned – at least if he is mentioned in the present tense.

If I ask, “Is your church submissive to the Spirit of God?” what would your response be? Many would find that question far too spooky. They would prefer I ask, “Is your church submissive to the Bible?” or “Is your church led by the Bible?”

Submission to the Word of God is vital. Anyone serious about his or her relationship with God must also be serious about the Word of God, but deity is not God the Father, God the Son, and God the Bible. Yes, the Word of God is inspired by God, but Scripture nowhere equates the Bible with the Holy Spirit.

Our teaching on the Holy Spirit has been so biased that some seemingly remove the words “Holy Spirit” from Scripture and replace them with “Bible.” “Live according to the Spirit” becomes “live according to the Bible.” “Grieve not the Spirit” becomes “grieve not the Bible.” “Quench not the Spirit” becomes “quench not the Bible.” If God had wanted “Word” in those places where he said Spirit, he would have said “Word”; instead he said “Spirit,” and so should we.

Some denigrate the reality and work of the Holy Spirit to the extent that they believe God works only through the Word.

If you do not believe that God works in the world today, separate and apart from the Word, why pray? If you believe God works only through the Bible, quit making a mockery of prayer by praying for things you don’t believe he will grant.

Don't you understand that when you pray for the sick, you are asking God to work separate and apart from the Word? When you ask God to bless someone as they search for a job, you are asking God to work beyond the Bible. When parents ask God to protect their children, they are asking God to work separate and apart from the Bible.

Tell me again why you are so fearful when brethren suggest that, based on their study of Scripture, just maybe, the work of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the Bible? Do you fear that the Spirit will somehow violate man's free will? (He won't.) Do you fear that God through the Spirit might do things you can't fully explain? (He will.)

Why do some strive to take the mystery out of the working of God in our world today? No doubt, some feel that if the work of the Spirit could be confined to words, then their human mind would be able to comprehend the activity of God. Then they wouldn't have to acknowledge that some things about God cannot be comprehended with their finite minds.

We all understand that carving a god from stone is idolatry. But by removing the mystery from God, you make God after your own intellect and reasoning. That too is idolatry. To reduce God to a finite formula that can be completely understood is idolatry.

If we are ever to have renewal among the churches of Christ, we must believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible promises us that God has given the Holy Spirit to all who obey him. WE must accept that he has poured his love into our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. The Bible says that our inner being is strengthened by the Spirit. These are just a few of the biblical teachings that affirm the reality of the Holy Spirit in the church today.

What does it mean, then, to be a church that is led by the Spirit? I certainly do not claim to know all that it means, but it does mean that we must have open, humble, submissive hearts before God. It means that we must be on our knees confessing our unworthiness before him. It means the real power for transformation will come from the Holy Spirit and not from American ingenuity, human reasoning, or church programs. It means that in all of this, God will receive the glory.

I pray that our elders, deacons, editors, and Bible school teachers will seek to be led by the Spirit. May the day come when more of our public prayers entreat, "Lord, let this group of your people be led by your Spirit."

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Quotes regarding the Holy Spirit from Various Stone-Campbell Movement Writings Through the Years

(Part 1)

Too often, especially during most of the 1900s, the Holy Spirit was minimized and neglected in the Restoration Movement. (And we were not the only ones; see the editorial.) But there were notable exceptions too, for which we should be thankful.

Barton W. Stone's ministry as an evangelist and reformer preceded Alexander Campbell's. In Stone's magazine *Christian Messenger* and elsewhere he often wrote about the Holy Spirit. Here are sample quotations gathered by Leonard Allen in *Distant Voices*, chapter 3.

To Stone, unity among God's people was of paramount importance. But attempts to unify Christians would not succeed apart from the Holy Spirit. "The great secret [of success in such unity] has been almost forgotten. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer." The "want of this spirit" is the "grand cause of division"; "this spirit restored will be the grand cause of union." "Let every Christian begin the work of union in himselfRest not till you are filled with the Spirit. Then, and not till then, will you love the brethren." "May all that profess the name of Jesus be filled with the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, and goodness."

[Also see the quote from Stone in this month's article, *When did Miraculous Gifts Cease?*]

* * *

Alexander Campbell in the *Christian Baptist*, 1826:

"If any man should infer that I contend for a religion in which the Holy Spirit has nothing to do; in which there is no need of prayer for the Holy Spirit; in which there is no communion of the Holy Spirit; in which there is no peace and joy in the Holy Spirit -- he does me the greatest injustice. All whom I baptize, I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I pray for the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit to remain with all the saints. A religion of which the Holy Spirit is not the author, the subject matter and the perfecter is sheer Deism." [Campbell here alludes to these scriptures: Lk.11:13; Phil. 2:1; Rom.14:17; Matt.28:19; 2 Cor.13:14.]

* * *

For decades **Robert Richardson** was a close co-worker with Alexander Campbell. In the magazine *Millennial Harbinger* Richardson repeatedly urged Christians to pursue true spirituality, not just correct doctrines. Opposing extremism, he pointed out that the advocate of the "Spirit alone" view "imagines himself to have realized the presence of the Spirit in some emotional excitement, some brilliant vision, or some audible revelation." But the advocate of the "Word alone" view "amuses himself with the notion that he has resolved all the mysteries of the Holy Spirit, when he has persuaded himself that this Spirit is merely a visible and tangible New Testament." Indeed "the presence of the Spirit Himself" in fuller measure is the "true want of the Church."

He called the Holy Spirit "God's missionary" to human hearts. He is "imparted to the believer, really and truly, taking up His abode in his person, as a distinct guest, or inhabitant." The Spirit is "God enthroned in man's *moral* nature, renewing and sanctifying the affections, and transforming humanity into the Divine image." [These quotations are found in chapter 9 of the splendid book, *Distant Voices*, by Leonard Allen.]

* * *

The venerable *Christian Standard* is the most influential journal in the conservative Christian Churches. In Dec. 12, 1896, it ran an article by **A. B. Jones**. He wrote, "It is painful to know that a large percent of our preachers have no apparent understanding or appreciation of this prominent New Testament doctrine [--about the Holy Spirit]. They shy around a passage that has the words *Spirit, spiritual* and *Holy Spirit* in it, just as the average sectarian preacher shies around a passage that has *baptism* in it. If we would save our churches from the death of 'natural causes,' ... our preachers must give their attention more to this doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We can never have spiritual churches until we have a spiritual ministry. When our preachers give as much attention to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as they have given to the doctrine of baptism, we will more speedily and more effectively accomplish our mission as a people. **No man can ever become and remain truly spiritual in his heart and life who denies the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.**"

* * *

[More next month. There is much to ponder here.]

When did Miraculous Gifts Cease?

The Testimony of Church History

They lasted far beyond the era of the apostles and the writing and compiling of the complete New Covenant scriptures. Here, in chronological order, are some examples of that fact.

Justin Martyr (100-165) wrote in his first *Apology*, “Many of us Christians have healed and still continue to heal in every part of the world.” He went on to mention exorcisms in Rome of “numbers possessed of evil spirits such as could not be healed by other exorcists.”

Irenaeus was a church leader and important teacher who lived till 203 A.D. He wrote that some Christians “have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions and utter prophetic expressions. Still others heal the sick by laying their hands upon them and they are made whole.” (The full quotation is much longer.) The outspoken **Tertullian (160- 215)** had much to say about the charismata. For example, he wrote, “Seeing we acknowledge spiritual gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift.” Again, he told how a Christian, Proculus, lived the last years of his life in the palace of Severns, the father of the Roman emperor. Why? Because of Severns’ “gratitude for his once having cured him by anointing.” Notice once more: “Many men of rank, to say nothing of the common people, have been delivered from devils and healed of disease.”

Origen was an influential Bible scholar and teacher (sadly he popularized the allegorical style of interpretation) who lived till 254. He mentioned Christians who by the Holy Spirit “expel evil spirits, and perform many cures, and foresee certain events. We too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from madness, and countless other ills, which could be cured neither by men nor devils.”

Novatian was Origen’s contemporary, living till 257. He wrote that the Holy Spirit “is He who places prophets in the church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, offers discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and arranges whatever other gifts there are of charismata.” In the next century **Cyril of Jerusalem**, who died in 386, thought it possible for the newly baptized to prophesy once they came out of the water.

Augustine was one of the greatest church leaders, a man of towering intellect and devotion to the Lord -- though far from infallible. He lived till 430, some time after all the NT books were put together and circulated (though not widely, due to the absence of printing presses). He wrote, “At the church’s beginning the Holy Spirit fell upon the be-

lievers, and they spoke with tongues unlearned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. It was a sign, fitted to the time: all the world's tongues were a fitting signification of the Holy Spirit, because the gospel of God was to have its course through every tongue in all parts of the earth. The sign was given and then passed away. We no longer expect that those upon whom the hand is laid, that they may receive the Holy Spirit, will speak with tongues."

Some thought he meant by his statement that all miraculous gifts had ceased. When he realized the impression he had made, he issued a retraction: "What I said is not to be interpreted that no miracles are believed to be performed in the name of Christ in the present time. For when I wrote that book I myself had recently learned that a blind man had been restored to sight and I know about some others, so numerous even in these times, that we cannot enumerate those we know."

Later, in his famous book *The City of God* (XII, 8) he wrote, "I realized how many miracles were occurring in our own day which were so like the miracles of old, and also how wrong it would be to allow the memory of these marvels of divine power to perish from among our people. It is only two years ago that the keeping of records was begun here in Hippo (a province in north Africa), and already at this writing we have nearly seventy attested miracles." Most were healings. Thus we see from his first quote above that he thought that tongues-speaking had ceased, but his later statements showed that he clearly believed in supernatural healings and other miracles.

On the other hand the great preacher **John Chrysostom**, who died in 407 -- 23 years before Augustine -- seemed to believe all the miraculous charismata had passed away. He made these remarks about 1 Cor.12: "This whole [passage] is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur, but now no longer take place." Why did he disagree with Augustine, his contemporary? Who knows? It is highly probable that then, as now, miraculous gifts were exercised more often in some places than others. But we know from Augustine that at least healings and other miracles were common in his area.

The Reasons WHY?

We conclude that by the early 400s (three centuries after all the apostles were gone) some miraculous gifts seem to have died out -- at least in some places. This raises the question "Why?" Was it due to God's will because they had fulfilled their purpose and were not needed any more? This is the cessationist view, explained last month. It believes God has no desire or reason to bestow miraculous gifts any more. This view is held by most Calvinists, most Dispensationalists, and most followers of Alexander Campbell's theology.

But John Wesley (and later the Pentecostals) disagreed. He felt that the decrease and disappearance of such gifts did not prove the divine desire to withdraw them. In 1750 he said, "The grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves and to [slander] them all as evil madness or imposture." He also wrote,

"The causes of their decline was not as has been [commonly] supposed because there is no more need for them, because all the world were become Christians. The real cause was: the love of many, almost all Christians so-called, was waxed cold. This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were no longer to be found in the Christian church: because the Christians were turned heathen again and had only a dead form left."

Barton W. Stone agreed with Wesley's opinion. He strongly disagreed with Alexander Campbell's assertion that missionaries "capable of confirming their testimony by working miracles" had ceased with the death of the apostles. "By what authority," Stone asked, "have we concluded that no more such men with miraculous powers may be expected in the present dispensation or age?" Richard Hughes comments that Stone "went so far as to argue that Christians might well have worked miracles through the Holy Spirit's power in his own day were it not for unbelief." (*Reviving the Ancient Faith*, p. 101).

It seems to me that Wesley and Stone were closer to the bullseye than Calvin, Scofield or Campbell. But let us not forget the **main point** of our preceding study. As we surveyed testimony from Justin in the middle 100s to Augustine in the early 400s, we saw that the decline in miraculous gifts may be attributed **neither** to the death of the apostles nor to the completion and compilation of the New Testament scriptures. It occurred too late for that.

Thus the weakness of the cessationist view is shown by church history as well as the difficulties in believing that "the perfect" means the completion of the New Testament scriptures. Yet, as explained last month (the "in-between view"), there appears to be *no* clear Biblical evidence that God intended miracles to continue *abundantly* in *all* places and at *all* times throughout the centuries.

It may be helpful to distinguish *miracles* from God's overruling *providence*, which sometimes is supernatural but often is natural. Many answers to prayer are not miraculous in the usual sense, it seems to me. For instance, the preservation of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace was clearly a miracle. But it appeared (to unbelievers at least) merely a peculiar circumstance that the Persian King Xerxes got insomnia and thus was reminded of Mordecai's exposing two would-be assassins. (Esther 6.) Of course we know God overruled so

that the servant who read to the King “just happened” to read about Mordecai’s deed. But no observer that night would gasp, “Did you see that incredible event?”

Returning to our point, the absence of miracles is not always due to sin or backsliding. Sometimes the Lord sees fit to bestow many, other times few, even when His people are walking close to Him. Nevertheless it is also true that there are seasons when He would gladly grant many signs and wonders, but human sin and unbelief block their flow. (See Matt. 13:58; also last month’s W&W about *the In-Between View* presented in the article, “Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?” Also “God’s Parenting Strategy,” in this issue)

Could Each Side be Wrong...and Right?

In his book, *The Holy Spirit in the Latter Days*, Harold Lindsell has some challenging observations on these points:

It is not uncommon for healing evangelists to hold mass meetings in which promises of healing are made and few people are actually healed. I have attended a number of such meetings and noted that the wheelchair and stretcher cases rarely seem to get the healer’s attention, and the victims go away disappointed.... [On the other hand, Lindsell quotes with disapproval a writer who] went to the other extreme when he said, “The gifts of healing and miracles are definitely not for today. The age of the sign miracles died out with the writing of the New Testament....”

[Lindsell concludes:] *When we turn to the Scriptures, we quickly discover that the gifts of miracles and healings appeared sporadically. One can therefore expect that these gifts, if given today, would be rare but not nonexistent....*

In the interests of charity it would be better if two things were promoted vigorously. The first is that there are miracles and healings that take place today, but that, in the main, they derive from prayer rather than from individuals with gifts of healings. Second, those who claim that sign gifts have died out would do well to examine the evidences that seem to contravene their opinion and instead stress the infrequency of the sign gifts, while acknowledging that they do appear here and there from time to time. A mutual spirit of reticence, as to whether what we are seeing afresh today is from prayer or from the gifts of the Spirit, would allow for what is happening. *In the final analysis, we should rejoice in what God is doing and leave open the question whether He is doing it from prayer or from the Spirit’s special gifts.*

What we need is for evangelicals everywhere to become more charismatic and for charismatics to become more evangelical! (Pages 189-193; emphasis added.)

Hmmm. Maybe that’s a good solution.

God's Parenting Strategy

*[Introduction: Philip Yancey's stimulating book, **Disappointment with God** (Zondervan, 1988) has a very thought-provoking take on the question of why God doesn't perform miracles more often for His people's benefit. The bottom line is, *The rareness of miracles is often part of His parenting strategy!* The rest of this article is condensed from chapter 2, "What If."]*

The book of Exodus showed God stepping into human history almost daily. He acted with utter fairness and spoke so that everyone could hear. If God has the power to act fairly, speak audibly, and appear visibly, why does he seem so reluctant to intervene *today*? Perhaps the record of the Israelites in the wilderness contained a clue....

Imagine a world designed so that we experience a mild jolt of pain with every sin and a tickle of pleasure with every act of virtue. The Old Testament records a "behavior modification" experiment almost that blatant: God's covenant with the Israelites. **God resolved to reward and punish his people with strict fairness.** If they were obedient, they were promised protection from virtually every kind of human misery. On the other hand, if they disobeyed they would become "a thing of horror and an object of scorn to all the nations."

Within fifty years the Israelites had disintegrated into a state of utter anarchy. Much of the rest of the Old Testament recounts the dreary history of the predicted curses -- not blessings -- coming true.

God [also] simplified **matters of guidance** when the Israelites camped in the Sinai wilderness. If the [pillar of] cloud moved, God wanted his people to move. If it stayed, that meant stay. God set up other ways, like the casting of lots and the Urim and Thummim, to directly communicate his will. And he spoke his will in a set of rules, codified into 613 laws. Few people complained about fuzzy guidance in those days.

But did a clear word from God increase the likelihood of obedience? Apparently not. They marched when told to sit tight, fled in fear when told to march. They made a national pastime out of inventing ways to break the 613 commands.

I also noticed [this] pattern in the Old Testament accounts: *the very clarity of God's will had a stunting effect on the Israelites' faith.* Why pursue God when he had already revealed himself so clearly? Why step out in faith when God had already guaranteed the results? In short, why should they act like adults when they could act like children? And act like children they did, grumbling, cheating, whining. [Miraculous,] crystal-clear guidance may serve some purpose -- for

example, get a mob of just-freed slaves across a hostile desert -- but it does not seem to encourage spiritual development.

These dismal results may provide insight into why God does not intervene more directly today. Some Christians long for a world well-stocked with miracles and spectacular signs of God's presence. But the follow-the-dots journey of the Israelites should give us pause. Would a burst of miracles nourish faith? Not the kind of faith God seems interested in, evidently. The Israelites give ample proof that *signs may only addict us to signs, not to God.*

What about the Pentecostals and Charismatics, and movements within those Movements?

Alex V. Wilson

◇ Don't read only Part of this Article! ◇

◇ Part 2 is probably more vital than Part 1. ◇

Some readers of *Word and Work* may ask, "Why give so much attention to the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements?" Well, primarily we are focusing on the "gifts of the Holy Spirit," because they are an important Biblical subject. We need to study this subject carefully, and also practically. The Lord has given us gifts to use, not to theorize or argue about.

But in studying gifts we can hardly avoid thinking about those movements which, for better or for worse, emphasize them the most. And get this: "Pentecostalism has become the fastest growing family of world Christianity. It is growing at a rate of 13 million a year, or 35,000 a day. With nearly a half billion adherents, it is, after Roman Catholicism, the largest Christian tradition." (*Christian History* magazine, Issue 58; 1998.) For that reason too, we should examine it carefully. May our Father guide our study of His Word and His people, give us both love and discernment, and empower *us too* as witnesses for Christ. (Acts 1:8.)

"Well," continue our questioners, "don't you think those movements are bad -- heretical, wacko and dangerous?" Here I face a problem. It's as though you were to ask me if I think *California* is good or bad. Or *women* -- good or bad? Or *Congress*.... One-word answers won't suffice, will they? Pentecostal leaders are aware that there are grave faults as well as strengths in the movement -- which is really a number of movements. One leader in describing Pentecostalism

speaks of “a genuine moving of the Spirit of God,” but also of its “weaknesses and extravagances.” In an article called “Treasure and Trash and the Need to be Honest,” an English leader admitted remarking to a friend that the charismatic renewal “is 2/3 phony.” His friend replied, “Yes, but 1/3 is a lot.” Chuck Smith entitled his book *Charisma vs. Charismania*, warmly endorsing the treasures but exposing and deploring 9 common defects. So let’s consider some of the positive and negative aspects of these movements -- starting with weaknesses first, then strengths.

1. What should we think of present-day Pentecostal movements like “Word of Faith” and “the Toronto Blessing”? And how can we evaluate high-profile preachers or celebrities like Bennie Hinn, Paul & Jan Crouch of TBN, etc.?

We all should deplore an attitude of ugly, pugnacious criticism. (Some of us remember being on the receiving end of such mean-spirited attacks.) H. L. Olmstead’s teenage daughter went home one night and “with uproarious laughter” described an emotional tent-meeting she and her friends had seen -- with shouting and rolling on the floor. To her surprise she got a bigtime scolding. Her father told her, “Never make fun of someone else’s religion! That may be the only way those people know how to worship.... They are being exposed to the Bible. Good may be done there. God knows their hearts-- we don’t!” Brother Olmstead’s warning is still needed. To some believers who were inclined to be faultfinders, Paul wrote, “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls” (Rom 14:4).

On the other hand, we do have a responsibility to warn people against outright errors, extremism, fleshly sensationalism and teachers who rip off their audience. Paul exposed many dangerous teachings and sometimes called false teachers by name. (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:1-3; 2 Tim.2:16-18; 4:14-15.) So we will briefly share some evaluations which we’ve carefully documented for accuracy. We do this reluctantly, not judging their hearts but exposing some ideas or practices which seem harmful and/or ridiculous.

Oneness Pentecostals became a splinter group in the movement around 1914.

At first they disputed over whether to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt.28:19) or merely in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5; etc). “But they were soon questioning even the doctrine of the Trinity.” They came to believe that “Jesus was the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” so they rebaptize anyone baptized in the triune Name. Also, most if not all of them

teach that people who have never spoken in tongues are not saved. In 1998 *Christian History* magazine estimated that there are now between 1.5 and 5 million such folks (which is "under 1% of Pentecostals worldwide"). But a newspaper article in 10/01 puts its estimate at 17 million around the globe. (?)

A number of **Word of Faith** or "**name it and claim it**" teachers promote serious errors. *Kenneth Hagin* said that believers are "as much the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ was." Similarly *Kenneth Copeland* says, "You don't have a god in you. *You are one!*"

The "**health and wealth gospel**" which they and others promote says that no real believer in Jesus should be poor or sick. Someone summarized their teaching thus: "The right amount of faith will secure anything, from a cure of cancer to a new, expensive automobile. To be in debt or to be sick shows a lack of faith." Lest you think we overstate the situation, listen to a quote from a book by *Gloria Copeland*: "Redemption from the curse of poverty is part of Jesus' substitutionary work at Calvary. He paid the price for my prosperity -- a heavy price. I will not scorn any part of His work."

But Paul went through times of need as well as plenty (Phil. 4:12). And moderate Pentecostal teacher Charles Farah notes that the N.T. has 13 warnings against riches and none against being poor. Also note 1 Cor.1:26-29; James 2:5; Luke 6:20.

Bestselling author *Benny Hinn*, whose healing meetings are seen on t-v, has made some incredible remarks in public and in his books. He said that to "have dominion" over the animals and birds (Gen. 1) meant Adam could do all they could do. So Adam could fly; he even flew to outer space! On t-v in 1992 "Hinn said that the Holy Spirit was - at that very moment - teaching him that God originally designed women to give birth out of their sides." He has more than once admitted that some statements he made were "very dumb" and "wrong" and he no longer believed them. Yet not long afterwards he would revert to some of those ideas. For example, "not long after saying that the 'faith message' (as articulated by such teachers as Kenneth Copeland) does not 'add up,' Hinn said that speaking out against Copeland was tantamount to 'attacking the very presence of God.'" Charismatic theologian Rodman Williams said Hinn is prone to "extremism and exaggeration" and his teaching is "frequently unsound and unbiblical." (*Christianity Today*, 10-28-91, 10-5-92, 8-16-93.) I myself heard a taped message in which Hinn said God told him that very soon He will empower healers to raise many dead people. Corpses will be placed in front of t-v sets, and loved ones will touch the dead person's fingers to the t-v screen while healers preach -- and the dead will live!

Paul and Jan Crouch founded the far-flung *Trinity Broadcasting Network*. They also host the *Praise the Lord* show. In Jan. 1994 their invited guest, John Hinkle, shared this "prophecy" on the air: "On Thursday, June 9, I [God] will rip the evil from this earth." He said God had spoken that statement to him "in the most awesome voice." Hinkle claimed that on that date "**the most cataclysmic event since the resurrection of Christ**" would take place!! Paul Crouch went right along with this prophecy, and neither of the men ever apologized after it proved to be humbug. Such sensational nonsense is often heard on TBN, and embarrasses careful Bible students.

Rodney Howard-Browne, a preacher from South Africa, came to the U.S. in 1987 and has since gathered thousands of followers. Most if not all of his meetings are marked by many prolonged outbursts of laughter. A magazine sympathetic to him says that those who experience it are "engulfed in outbursts of sometimes uncontrollable laughter, with people rolling on the floor and making loud persistent belly laughs!" Howard-Browne himself said, "One night I was preaching on hell, and [laughter] just hit the whole place. The more I told the people what hell was like, the more they laughed." Several years ago he came to Louisville, Ky., drawing audiences of over 2,000 people -- including many pastors from other lands. A newspaper reporter wrote, "While 'holy laughter' accounted for some of the guffaws, some were clearly sparked by the antics and humor of Howard-Browne." He doesn't try to discourage it. Dennis Pollock of Lamb and Lion Ministries, heard him preach in Texas. While the sermon contained no doctrinal errors, it also contained "almost nothing...about Christ, redemption, sin, justification... [or] eternal judgment."

Howard-Browne had some influence on what has become called "**the Toronto blessing**." This refers to a controversial renewal movement that began in Jan. 1994 at a Vineyard church in Toronto. Meetings continued 6 nights weekly for several years, and people flocked from many nations to attend. Some were greatly blessed. They gave glory to Christ for addictions overcome, marriages salvaged, families strengthened, discipleship renewed. But there were many eerie happenings too. Numerous people swooned and went into trances of longer or shorter duration; others trembled and shook. Such things have occurred in many past spiritual awakenings, as the unsaved or backsliders came under deep conviction of sin. But at Toronto there was also a great deal of uncontrollable laughter, and some people making animal sounds -- barking like dogs, roaring like lions!

In the July '01 *Word & Work* we described the amazing revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801. It too was accompanied by much emotionalism and weird happenings. Barton Stone carefully observed those events and their results -- long-range as well as immediate. He

concluded that some of the unusual phenomena were only self-induced, and that some were Satanic in origin. Yet he believed that much was a true work of the Lord, for as he wrote -- "That cannot be Satan's work which brings men to humble confession and forsaking of sin, to fervent praise and thanksgiving, and to sincere exhortation to sinners to repent and go to Jesus the Savior." However, in following years some people made the spectacular Cane Ridge happenings (which had originally been unsought and spontaneous) into coveted experiences which they urged other people to seek or imitate. That was the height of folly.

Apparently the same thing happened at Toronto. For at least some time, its leaders seemed to encourage the weirdness instead of evaluating it and then accepting what truly seemed to be from the Lord but discouraging the ever-growing excesses. It reached the place where some participants claimed to "wave the Spirit around or simply blow the Spirit toward willing recipients." What preposterous irreverence! By Dec. 1995 John Wimber, leader of the Vineyard denomination, reluctantly severed ties with the Toronto church due to its excesses. Hank Hanegraaff, head of the Christian Research Institute, feels very strongly about it. He believes this movement represented something "extremely dangerous that could be a road to the occult" because of the focus on subjective and chaotic religious experience. He said, "The Toronto Blessing has resulted from the unintended psychological manipulation of gullible and desperate believers." (Reported in *CT*, 9-11-95.) But B. J. Oropeza wrote, "After examining both Scripture and previous revivals, I have concluded that *most* manifestations associated with this renewal are frail human reactions (or over-reactions) to a sense of the Holy Spirit's presence" (*99 Answers to Questions about Angels, Demons and Spiritual Warfare*).

2. In the light of the errors and extremism mentioned above, should we not conclude that all Pentecostals and Charismatics are heretical, unbalanced, extreme and dangerous?

Not for the world do I wish to promote such an evaluation! For one thing, there is a wide variety of views and/or practices which are called "Pentecostal" or "Charismatic." Sometimes critics use these terms as a smear-tactic. In the name of fairness, anti-Charismatics need to explain exactly what it is they disagree with -- and why. Such critics need to define their terms carefully too. Is someone "Charismatic" because he or she...

(1)says "Amen" loudly and often during public meetings?
(2)claps or raises his hands in public worship? (3)likes to watch T.B.N. on TV? (4)believes a Christian *may* experience some life-changing, empowering experience from God after and in addition to

But he also points out *12 positive aspects*, "features which call for unambiguous approval when Biblically assessed." These characteristics of many (not all) charismatics include Christ-centeredness, Spirit-empowered living, "emotion finding expression" (notice carefully that he listed unhealthy emotionalism as a weakness), prayerfulness, joyfulness, "every-heart involvement in the worship of God, every-member ministry in the body of Christ," missionary zeal, deep fellowship, and generous giving.

Bottom Line: Remember that not all Pentecostals and Charismatics are extremists -- though there are plenty of those among them (among us too, probably at the opposite extreme). There are many moderate, godly, spiritual ones, who would benefit from fellowship with us -- *and vice versa!* We can learn from them, and also teach them lessons our Father has taught us. If with proper Biblical discernment we keep our antenna up, we might discover some of the ones who manifest the *positive traits* just enumerated -- Christ-centeredness, Spirit-empowered living, heart-felt worship that is expressive but not excessive, prayerfulness, and more. If we give ourselves half a chance (instead of wrapping iron curtains around us), we might meet, bless, and be blessed by such disciples.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Church of Christ Worldwide (Cramer) will be printing the annual Prayer-Praise Booklet to be ready for distribution by Thanksgiving. Letters will be going out shortly asking for information regarding the various mission endeavors. Copies will be available during the Louisiana Fellowship and the annual Thanksgiving service in Louisville. We've noted a growing interest in Missions Around the World and look forward to providing this tool to be used in churches.

Upcoming Events:

Woodland Senior Citizen's Week is Sept. 7-11. Theme: Be Productive Citizens.

Parksville (KY) - Sept. 21-24, Sun.-Wed. with Kenneth Preston 7:00 p.m. nightly. Homecoming on Sunday!

Ralph Ave. Church of Christ Revival Sept. 21-25 with Bro. David Tapp preaching.

Ladies Annual Retreat is September 26-27 at Camp Kavanaugh (Crestwood, KY) Theme: "Dressed to Meet the King."

Tell City, Indiana - Oct. 5-8, Sun.-Wed. with Dick Reuben.

Oct. 12-15 at Ebenezer with Don McGee. Sunday Homecoming at 11:00 a.m. with Don preaching followed by Fellowship Dinner and

then an afternoon service. Monday - Wednesday services at 7:00 p.m.

LeCompte revival on Oct. 17-19 (Friday-Sunday) with A.J. Istre.

Salem (KY) Revival meeting is being planned for October 6-12 (Mon - Sunday) with evangelist Mike Abbott. Services nightly at 7:00 p.m. and a potluck dinner after the Sunday morning service. (12th)

KY-IND Fellowship...was held the first week in August with a great time of fellowship as usual. There were many inspiring messages on the theme: The Name. Attendance was very encouraging especially during the morning sessions. The ladies, as usual, did an excellent job feeding us each day. The mission offering on Wednesday night was about \$3600.00. A special thanks to the committee who worked long and hard in putting this program together and making sure the meeting went according to schedule. Many commented on the great singing each night at Sellersburg. One was overheard saying: It is worth it to come just for the singing.

From a Recent E-mail: Dead churches erroneously believe you can have evangelism without evangelists. In other words, you can reach the lost without ever having anyone in the church actually reaching out to the lost. They believe you can win souls without soul winners. That's why they die.

Christian One Liners:

Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisers.

People are funny, they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church.

If the church wants a better preacher, it only needs to pray for the one it has.

Mission Reports were made available at this year's fellowship. For information you may contact Goin' Fishing Ministries % Earl Mullins, 2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212, (502) 778-6114,

Japan: (Moto Nomura) recently spoke to about 60 young people who are struggling to come out of the Boston Movement (in recent years called the International Church of Christ) in Japan. He is able to meet at the Ochanomizu (Tokyo downtown Church of Christ) for specifically designed lessons on the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement and the Grace of God. He has also been instrumental in encouraging Chika Hirose to attend Ohio Valley Christian College this fall. She has spent long and difficult hours with her English teacher, Bro. Moto, learning to speak English. Continue to pray for Moto and Yoriko as they both are not in good health.

Signs of the Time Since June of this year: Canadian provinces have legalized homosexual marriages, the US Supreme Court has overturned Texas anti-sodomy laws and the Episcopalian church has embraced an openly homosexual bishop. Could this be what the Apostle Paul made reference to in Romans 1:25 ...they exchanged the **truth of God** for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...

Thought Provokers

“Many years ago, Moses E. Lard -- one of the “greats” of the Restoration Movement whose *Commentary on Romans* is still in use-- made a comment on Romans 12 that went something like this: “The church of the Lord Jesus Christ will never perfectly fulfil its mission in the world as long as we expect one man to be a spiritual jack-of-all-trades. God has ordained that we should be endowed with and should exercise various gifts given according to His own wisdom. As long as these gifts are ignored, buried, and unused, the church cannot but be poor in its spiritual life and in its testimony to the world.” --Gordon Linscott

* * *

“All Word and no Spirit, we dry up. All Spirit and no Word, we blow up. With the Spirit and the Word, we grow up.” --Donald Gee

* * *

“It is the renewal of the Church that God is principally concerned about -- not that of the gifts.

The gifts are for the building up of the Church -- in order that it may become once more a powerful and influential force in the world. It is the recovery of New Testament Church life which is our greatest need today.” --Michael Harper

* * *

“Is it not time for the church to practice the priesthood of all believers and to acknowledge that their equipment for ministry is more than serving tea, counting money or folding chairs?” --George Malone