

THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND
THE GOSPEL TODAY

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I

Our approach to every theological subject must be governed by the *analogy of faith*, or the due proportion that is observed in Holy Scripture. Scripture, according to the Articles of our Church, is the norm or rule that is to be followed in all matters of faith. Therefore it must control every enquiry into questions of doctrine. As the scientist is guided in his enquiry by the analogy of experience, i.e., by what he has observed and proved in the past, so the man of faith must be guided by the analogy of Scripture. Only what is conformable to that rule may be admitted.

While many today are prepared to pay lip service to this fundamental article of the faith, in practice it is frequently neglected. If we were to start consistently from this premise perhaps we should not experience so often the confusion which attends our thinking when some new movement in theology, or some spiritual phenomenon manifests itself in the life of the church. One of the great questions today is: What are we to make of the Pentecostal movement in the churches? Is it of God, or is it not? Is there any firm ground from which we may evaluate and criticize it? Or must we suspend our judgement about it since we cannot be certain? The Word of God is sufficient for this question, as it is for every question. If we find ourselves adrift, without sense of direction, we can be sure it is because we have not used the compass that has been provided.

We may illustrate this from another subject dealt with in the writings of J. C. Ryle. At that time the movement which was agitating the church was the rise of Ritualism. Some of the things advocated by the Ritualists seemed to many to be at worst harmless, and at best positively good. One was the restoration of the Communion service to its rightful place, as they regarded it, as the principal service of the church. Ryle opposed this as an abuse of the sacrament. It is not, he contended, the principal service of the church, and by thrusting it forward on every occasion the Ritualists were elevating the sacrament at the expense of other more important things. They were neglecting the due proportion which we find in Scripture, where the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is mentioned in, at most, five books of the New Testament, while about grace, faith, and redemption; about the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the love of the Father; about man's sin, weakness, and spiritual poverty; about justification and sanctification and holy living, there is line upon line, precept upon precept. Ryle was, therefore, of the opinion that preaching the Word of God was a far more important ordinance than the Lord's Supper.

Proportion is of the first importance. Without proper proportion a portrait is turned into a caricature, a medicine becomes a poison. The right constituents may be there, but unless they are placed in their proper proportions the whole is vitiated.

THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

When we come to examine the work of the Holy Spirit in the light of Biblical teaching, the first thing we must do is to see it in the context of the economy of salvation as a whole. The great purpose of God set forth

in the Bible is his glory in the salvation of mankind. I deliberately paint this on a large canvas that we might see things in their true proportion. That is why the Westminster Catechism deals first, before other things, with the decrees of God in creation and providence. It is only against the background of God's eternal purpose that we understand the economy of man's salvation, and, clearly, that is how the New Testament would have us understand it. "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" . . . "Predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1: 4 & 11). What we witness in Scripture is the working out in time and history of God's eternal plan of salvation. The promises of the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis 3:15, all refer to this. The prophecies of the Old Testament adumbrate this. Sometimes the prophets themselves do not fully understand the significance of their prophecies, says Peter (1 Peter 1: 10 ff.), but they all relate to Christ and the salvation that believers now enjoy. This salvation was manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ, when in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, born of a woman.

But this was not the completion of God's purpose. The redemption effected by the Son upon the cross, and by his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, has now to be applied. A people have to be joined to Christ, the merits of his saving death have to be applied to them. A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people (the Bible describes this company by many different names) has to be called out and united with Christ as his mystical body, and that company of believers is the redeemed humanity. But how is that work to be done? How are they to be called, justified, and glorified? That is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The work of Christ is an objective work of redemption and atonement effected *for* us. The work of the Holy Spirit is an inward, subjective work effected *in* us by applying the redemption to our hearts and uniting us with the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Peter sums up the economy of salvation and the part each person of the Trinity plays in it in the words, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 2).

The principal work of God the Father is foreknowledge, and that means the decree and purpose of God, according to his own will, to save a people in Christ. The principal work of the Son is the shedding of his blood and paying the ransom-price of those who are to be redeemed. And the principal work of the Holy Spirit is to apply that blood to the hearts of God's elect that they may be sanctified, separated to the praise and glory of God.

THE WORK OF REGENERATION

Thus we have isolated for us the principal work of the Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture: it is to call and sanctify the elect people of God; to join them to Christ, that the redemption he has purchased may be efficacious in them. The proper proportion or emphasis that is revealed here is the key to the understanding of the work and activity of the Spirit as a whole. In the New Testament the greatest weight and the most extended teaching attaches to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and this for two reasons.

First, it is the initial work the Spirit does in joining the individual believer to Christ, and is compared in Scripture to the raising of the dead. Raising the dead was the greatest miracle Christ performed in his ministry. The raising of Lazarus was the climax of his ministry in St. John's Gospel. His own resurrection was the great and signal event to which he referred before his death, and to which the disciples testified. In the Epistles we find the work of regeneration performed by the Spirit explicitly compared with that great manifestation of God's power. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ . . ." (Ephesians 1:1, 4 & 5); "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . ." (Colossians 3:1). Again, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). Paul is referring to the redemption of the bodies of believers, which he deals with in this passage at some length, but here he is basing it upon the premise that believers are already quickened or regenerated by the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead. The work of regeneration has everywhere in Scripture this comparison or analogy with the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

This analogy is worked out more fully in Romans 6. The believer is baptised into Christ, i.e. united with him by the Spirit, and therefore shares in the death and resurrection of Christ. The baptism referred to by Paul in Romans 6:3 ff. is the baptism of the Spirit, not simply water baptism, because the Spirit is the real bond of union between the believer and Christ. We may compare 1 Corinthians 12:13 which is a kind of commentary upon this passage, "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The result of this work of the Spirit in us, in uniting us with Christ, is a death unto sin and a new life unto righteousness. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Wherever we turn, then, in Scripture, the regeneration of believers is compared with the greatest miracle of Christ, the raising of the dead, and even the resurrection of our Lord himself. This indicates that the work of regeneration is the principal work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.

Secondly, the magnitude of this work of regeneration is described in Scripture by comparing it not only with the raising of the dead, but also with the work of creation, the other great focal point of God's power. The believer is a new creation in Christ. "If any man be in Christ" (through the bond of the Spirit), "he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Again, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" (the reference is to the fiat by which God created light at the beginning), "hath shined in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 4:6). It is also described as the equivalent of a new birth. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; and this is later amplified into, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3 & 5).

In these two ways we see how the regeneration of the individual is described in Scripture as the pre-eminent work of the Holy Spirit. It is the

implanting of a new principle of life in those who are spiritually dead, the creation and birth of a new spiritual man in Christ, who is alive to God, and capable of knowing and understanding the things of God.

THE NEED TO PRESERVE HIGH VIEWS OF REGENERATION

The radical nature of this spiritual renovation and its true magnitude are sometimes hidden by superficial views of sin and low views of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. In other words, where you have a tendency not to accept the full extent of man's depravity or fallenness, you have a corresponding depreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. In the teaching of Pelagius, who considered man's nature unimpaired by the fall, except for the example of Adam's disobedience, the work of the Holy Spirit is unnecessary altogether. The teaching of Arminius, who viewed man as capable of making the initial response of will to the Gospel and so of accepting grace, also minimizes the work of the Holy Spirit in man's renovation. It is only in the full Evangelical teaching of the Reformers, and others whose teaching has truly reflected the analogy of Scripture, that both the depth of man's sin and incapacity for good, and the greatness of the Spirit's work in giving life to the spiritually dead is fully brought out. If we look at the treatises of Reformed divines like Calvin, Owen, Winslow, and Smeaton, we see that the pre-eminent place in the work of the Holy Spirit is given to regeneration and sanctification; those inward operations of the Spirit in the believer, which unite him to Christ and make him a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; those works which fulfil the plan and purpose of God for the redemption of his people, and bring all things ultimately to their completion in Christ.

This also goes some way to explain the preoccupation of other traditions and theologies with the outward manifestations associated with the Holy Spirit, and the neglect of the work of regeneration. The prevailing tone of Evangelicalism today is Arminian rather than Reformed, and it should not therefore surprise us to find that the contemporary emphasis upon the Holy Spirit, in the Christian and the Church, falls upon gifts rather than grace. The theology of Arminianism instead of reflecting the true proportion of Scripture acts as a distorting mirror, and because of its views of man, sin, and grace, lays a disproportionate emphasis upon the external phenomena rather than the inward grace of the Holy Spirit.

OUTWARD MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

We have seen, then, that the Scripture observes a certain proportion in these matters, which is reflected in a truly Biblical theology of the work of the Holy Spirit, and the principal work attributed to his agency in such a system is that of regeneration.

We must now consider the place that Scripture assigns to the outward manifestations of the Spirit's work in gifts, miracles, and signs. It is these which have assumed prominence in the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements of this century. Those who have taken part in these movements declare that they have rediscovered the apostolic gifts of the New Testament. They argue that the life of the apostolic church is the norm for the church in all ages; therefore, as such gifts were present then, so they should be present

now. Furthermore they contend that the neglect of these gifts has sorely impoverished the church and deprived it of the full gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit has been practically ignored, with the consequence that many Christians know little or nothing about the true teaching regarding the Holy Spirit. These are the sort of claims that are made on behalf of the Pentecostal movement. But the question is: Are they true? Are they supported by Scripture, and by a proper interpretation of the significance of what happened in the apostolic age?

IS THE APOSTOLIC AGE IDENTICAL WITH OURS?

Let us examine the assumption that the life of the apostolic church is to be regarded as normative for the church in every age. There were apostles in the New Testament church. Does that mean there must be apostles in the church today? But that is by definition impossible, for an apostle was an eyewitness of the risen Christ, besides being specially commissioned by the Lord as an eyewitness. That is the significance of St. Paul's words, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God". He was the last to see the risen Christ and receive the apostolic commission, and his apostleship was of an extraordinary character because of the special work he was to do as the missionary to the Gentiles. When, therefore, the apostles died out there were no more apostles in the church. This, in itself, suggests there was something different and unique about the character and life of the apostolic church.

It will not surprise us, therefore, to find that there may be other things, too, associated with the apostles and their ministry, which must not be expected to apply to the church in all ages. The universalizing of everything that is found in the New Testament, and the unqualified extrapolation of what we find in the Acts of the Apostles into the present time, is a method of interpretation which frequently overlooks the significance of the events and ideas it is meant to be interpreting. For example, that theology which mistakenly speaks of the church as the extension of the Incarnation overlooks the obvious fact, that the New Testament tells us plainly that the Incarnation was not meant to be extended, but the era of Christ's bodily presence was to be replaced by the era of the Holy Spirit. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16: 7). Likewise, that theology which argues that the life and character of the New Testament church is to be repeated in every age, and, if it is not repeated, it is because the full Gospel has been lost, overlooks the fact that the apostolic ministry was unique and gave a unique character to many of the things of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles; and therefore we cannot expect that they should be repeated in the life of the church thereafter.

But let us go into this more closely. What the Pentecostalists claim is, that the miraculous gifts possessed by the apostles, should be possessed by the church today. First let us make an important distinction. No one is denying that God can work miracles today. He can do so in answer to the prayers of his people. But the distinctive claim of Pentecostalism is not that God works miracles today, but that certain men are given gifts, by which *they* can perform miracles, in just the same way as the apostles

healed those brought to them, imparted the Holy Ghost to those on whom they laid hands, and generally performed signs and wonders, especially speaking in foreign languages on the day of Pentecost.

THE CONCEPT OF MIRACLE IN SCRIPTURE

Now this claim must be related to the concept of miracle in Scripture as a whole. If we look at the subject we see that miracles did not take place in all ages of the church either in the Old Testament or the New. They were confined to certain times, and the reason for their appearance at those times and not at others is equally clear; they were given as signs to authenticate the revelation that God gave by his prophets or apostles. Thus Moses is the first man in the Scriptures of whom miracles are recorded, and it is clear that he was enabled to work those signs before the people of Israel and before Pharaoh in order to establish the divine revelation he had been given. He was afraid that the people would not believe him. "They will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee" (Exodus 4:1). It was for this contingency that God gave Moses the power to work miracles: "That they may believe that the LORD God of their Fathers . . . hath appeared unto thee" (Exodus 4:5). Now this appears to be the primary purpose of miracles in the Old Testament, to establish the credentials of the prophet and the divine message that he brings.

The same is true of the New Testament miracles. This is brought out specially clearly in the Gospel of John, which is constructed around the 'signs,' or 'mighty works,' that Jesus did. It would be impossible to include all the references which substantiate this position. It will be sufficient to quote some words at the end of the Gospel which furnish the rationale of its presentation. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20: 30-31). This understanding of the miracles of Jesus is corroborated by the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost. The apostle rebuked the Jews who had crucified Jesus for not having believed in him. Their unbelief was inexcusable: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you" (Acts 2:22).

THE SIGNS OF THE APOSTLES

Now when we come to the signs of the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12) we find the same principle controls the significance of what they did. The miracles that accompanied their ministry, whether it was speaking in other languages, healing the sick, or raising the dead, were meant to authenticate the divine message they preached, which is that Jesus is the Christ.

The testimony and word of apostles and prophets, corroborated by works of divine power, have been committed and preserved for us in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We may only expect a continuation of the miracles of the apostles if we also expect further divine revelations. But everything in the New Testament points to the revelation that God has given in Christ being final and complete. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Here the full, final, and definitive revelation of God is contrasted with the partial and incomplete revelation of him given before. This is the vein in which

Scripture consistently speaks of the revelation of Christ. It cannot be supplemented or improved or superseded. It is final and complete. The testimony of the apostles is not a separate revelation, it is an integral part of the final revelation that God has given in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's testimony through chosen men associated with Christ, to the true significance of the Christ event—to the revelation God has given once and for all in him. How, therefore, can we speak of the events and happenings of the apostolic age of the church being normative for the church in every age? To do that is to ignore completely the special character of the apostles' ministry and work, and the fact that they were chosen to be the instruments of revelation.

It will no doubt be urged that the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were not confined to the apostles themselves, since members of the churches exercised them. But we must bear two things in mind. First, these gifts were always associated with the apostles in the church. The title of the book itself is indicative of this, 'The Acts of the Apostles.' They are the principal characters. It is not the 'Acts of the Church.' What happens finds its point of reference and significance in them; it is their ministry which the miraculous gifts given to their hearers attest. Secondly, the exercise of extraordinary gifts in the church of the apostolic age was necessary before the completion of the New Testament Scriptures, and God made special provision for the edification of the church in the absence of the latter.

FURTHER ARGUMENTS FROM SCRIPTURE

Finally, there are some further arguments from Scripture which support this interpretation of the place and significance of extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Acts of the Apostles, where, as we have seen, the miracles of the Holy Ghost have a special place and function in authenticating the testimony of the apostles, the predominant emphasis in the New Testament is upon the inward work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. The teaching epistles make only passing reference to the gifts of tongues and miracles, and where they are mentioned it is to direct the attention of the readers to grace in the heart. The pastoral epistles make no mention of them at all, and here we might expect much to be said if they were to be a feature of the ongoing life of the church in every age. Rather the emphasis is upon the regular ministry of the Word and the character of those to be ordained to this work. Surely, if gifts of this kind marked a man out from his fellow Christians, and were to be an important part of the church's life, we might expect them to be required of future leaders of the Christian community. On the contrary, we find that they are not mentioned. Ministers are to be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach and so on; but nothing is said about being endowed with the gifts of tongues, miracles, etc. This fact is, as Ryle said of another matter, of great significance, and we depart from the analogy of Scripture if we change this emphasis.

THE CESSATION OF EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS

But more than this, it is clear from the whole rationale of miracles in Scripture, that they were confined to a particular period and manifested

for the purpose of authenticating revelation. When that revelation was complete, as it is in Scripture, then we might expect to find that such miraculous powers ceased to be exercised by men. Scripture itself might also be expected to speak to this effect of the cessation of tongues and miracles, which were given to the apostles for a specific purpose; and this, indeed, it does do. It would appear that 1 Corinthians 13 is written for this purpose. Its significance can only be that tongues and prophecy (i.e. in the sense of special revelations exercised in the church) and knowledge (i.e. miraculous knowledge for the instruction of the church before the completion of Scripture) will cease in the church. They were gifts given at its inception, for the infant church, but when the maturity or perfection of revelation is arrived at, then that which is partial shall be done away. The contrast, which is so often assumed to apply to this passage, between the condition of the church now and afterwards in heaven, when we shall see face to face, is not the one that is intended; and such an assumption robs the passage of its true meaning. The contrast is between the partial nature of the charismatic ministry, given to the church at that time, and the full maturity of Scriptural teaching, which was to come shortly when the exercise of such gifts would be unnecessary. This is borne out by verse 13, which speaks of faith and hope and love continuing when miraculous gifts have ceased. This cannot refer to heaven, since in heaven there will be no faith or hope. Faith will be turned to sight, and "what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" The contrast, therefore, is between the condition of the church then, in its infancy, when such gifts were necessary, and afterwards when their exercise will have ceased and have been replaced by the mature and full teaching of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

We have observed, then, in Scripture itself a due proportion with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit, an analogy that we do well to follow in the church today. The permanent and paramount work of the Holy Spirit in all ages of the church is the regeneration and sanctification of God's elect, by which they are joined to their Redeemer and Head to become his mystical body, and share in all the benefits of their redemption by him, and hereafter in the glory of his kingdom. That, we see, is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan, and the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to it, for without that work there is no bond of union between Christ and his people. But the work of the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture by inspiring the prophets and apostles; in establishing the infant church; and authenticating the witness of the apostles by signs and wonders; is, as we have seen, by its very nature a temporary work, confined to a particular period, and not therefore to be regarded as normative for the life of the church in all ages.

II

The history of Christian doctrine and of so-called 'Spiritual' movements in the Christian church generally, which we shall consider in this Section, would appear to confirm the view (advanced in Section I) that the pre-eminent work of the Holy Spirit is that of regeneration, and that miraculous gifts were but for a limited time, at the inception of the church.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

From the earliest times in the church it was generally considered that the exercise of miracles by individuals ceased with the apostolic age. J. B. Mozley in his Bampton Lectures on *Miracles* said that the early fathers, while they acknowledged the supernatural activity going on in their own day, i.e. that God might work a miracle in answer to prayer, nevertheless, with one consent represented miracles as having ceased since the apostolic era. "Miracles of that decisive and positive character that they declare themselves to be miracles no longer took place".

John Chrysostom referring to spiritual gifts said, they "used to occur but now no longer take place". (*Homilies on First Corinthians*).

Augustine said, "In the earliest times the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned, 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' These were signs adapted to the time. For there behoved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, and to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away". (*Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John*).

John Owen wrote, "Gifts which in their own nature exceed the whole power of all our faculties, that dispensation of the Spirit is long since ceased and where it is now pretended unto by any, it may justly be suspected as an enthusiastic delusion". (*Works*, IV, 518).

Matthew Henry, the celebrated commentator, wrote, "The gift of tongues was one new product of the Spirit of prophecy, and given for a particular reason, that, the Jewish pale being taken down, all nations might be brought into the church. These and other gifts of prophecy, being for a sign, are long since ceased, and laid aside, and we have no encouragement to expect the revival of them; but, on the contrary, are directed to call the scriptures the *more sure word of prophecy*, more sure than voices from heaven; and to them we are directed to *take heed*, to search them, and to hold them fast, 2 Peter 1 : 19. (*Exposition of the O.T. & N.T.*).

In more recent times *James Buchanan* wrote, "The miraculous gifts of the Spirit have long since been withdrawn. They were used for a temporary purpose. They were the scaffolding which God employed for the erection of a spiritual temple. When it was no longer needed the scaffolding was taken down, but the temple still stands, and is occupied by his indwelling Spirit; for, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'" (*The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*).

Finally *B. B. Warfield* wrote, "These gifts were not the possession of the primitive Christian as such; nor for that matter of the Apostolic Church or the Apostolic age for themselves; they were distinctively the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them distinctively to the Apostolic Church and they necessarily passed away with it". (*Counterfeit Miracles*).¹

Now can it be that they were all mistaken? That is very difficult to believe when we find that their views corroborate the position we have already seen delineated in Scripture itself. Some seem to think that the view that extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were confined to the apostolic age is a novel one, and something that is arbitrarily forced upon Scripture, being quite contrary to its plain meaning. But the opposite is true. The novelty of teaching lies with the Pentecostal movement, not with those who oppose it.

THE HISTORY OF 'SPIRITUAL' MOVEMENTS

History affords a perspective in which to examine and assess contemporary movements, and it is important for a balanced judgement to take into account this 'long view' of the subject. Even a cursory study shows that those movements in the history of the church which have had pentecostal or charismatic overtones have invariably been aberrant movements, which have finally led into error, even if it has not always been apparent at first.

Montanism was the first expression of this kind. It appeared in the Second Century, after the decline of prophecy and the other charismata of the apostolic age. It was claimed by Montanus and his two female prophetesses, Maximilla and Prescilla, that they were reviving the charismatic gifts of the apostolic age and bringing in the perfection of the Christian life, which had not until then been experienced. Such things were viewed at first not unfavourably by the rest of the church; but in its second stage Montanism proceeded further to regard the revelations received in ecstatic experiences as superseding the revelation of Christ and the apostles. Against these pseudo-prophetic raptures Chrysostom laid down in his Homily on 1 Corinthians the difference between true and false prophets. "It is the property of a diviner to be ecstatical, and to undergo some violence, to be tossed and turned about like a madman. But it is otherwise with a prophet, whose understanding is awake, whose mind is in a sober and orderly temper, who knows everything that he saith". This sobriety of mind and evenness of temper

¹ These quotations, with others in a similar vein, may be found in the appendix to *W. J. Chantry's Signs of the Apostles* (Banner of Truth).

does not exclude strong emotions, varying perhaps according to the subject matter of the prophecy, which appear so frequently in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 23 : 9; Ezekiel 3 : 14; Daniel 10 : 8), but the prophet does not lose his self-control. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets".

This is a serious warning against the irrationalism that was present in Montanism, and is not far beneath the surface in every similar movement claiming charismatic manifestations.²

But Montanism is but one of a number of similar movements throughout the history of the church. Dean Milman writing of this said, "At intervals throughout the annals of Christianity the Holy Ghost has been summoned by the hopes, felt as present by the kindled imagination, been proclaimed by the passionate enthusiasm of a few, as accomplishing in them the imperfect revelation; as the third revelation, which is to supersede and fulfil the Law and the Gospel. The notion [appears] again in the Middle Ages in the doctrine of the Abbot Joachim, of John Peter de Oliva and the Fraticelli; in a milder form it is that of George Fox and Barclay".³

These manifestations of the later *Middle Ages* to which Milman refers were similarly marked by supposed revelations of the Holy Ghost and spiritual ecstasy. John Peter Oliva wrote a commentary upon the Apocalypse in which he asserted the truth of the revelation given to Abbot Joachim, the substance of which was this: that God the Father in the Law had revealed himself in awe and terror; Christ had revealed himself as the wisdom of God in the Gospel. In the third age yet to come the Holy Ghost was to be a furnace and flame of divine love; there was to be a kind of revel of delights and spiritual joys.

Of these charismatic figures of the Middle Ages the strangest was Wilhelmina of Bohemia, who regarded herself as an incarnation of the Holy Ghost. She was very God and very woman. She instructed that after her death the nun Mayfreda was to celebrate mass at the sepulchre and act as her vicar upon earth.

The Reformation was not without its 'spiritual' or charismatic movements, which found expression in the Anabaptists led by Müntzer, and the Zwickau prophets led by Stübner, who opposed Luther at Wittenberg. Melancthon, who was left alone at the time, was unsure how to deal with them. He did not wish to oppose a genuine work of God. When Luther arrived he was in no such doubt. "Paul," he said, "declares that the proofs of his apostleship were made known by miracles; prove yourselves in like manner". "We will do so," they answered. Stübner their leader then addressed Luther, "Martin Luther, I will declare what is happening in your soul. You are beginning to believe that my doctrine is true". Luther, after a brief pause, said, "God chastise thee Satan". At these words all the prophets were as if distracted. "The Spirit, the Spirit", they cried. Luther said, "I slap your spirit on the snout". And so the matter ended.

² J. H. Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects*, 337.

³ *History of Latin Christianity*, I, i, 47.

Fortunately the spiritual movements of that age were not allowed to influence the mainstream of Reformation. Had they done so it is clear that they would have wrested the Reformation from its firm foundation on the Word of God.

This movement caused considerable anxiety to all the Reformers, and it is worth noting one or two features of it. First there was a tendency to depreciate Scripture. As D'Aubigné says, "These men aspired to direct revelations from God instead of meekly desiring sanctification of heart. They asserted that they were called to complete the Reformation so weakly sketched out by Luther. "What is the use," they said, "of clinging so closely to the Bible? The Bible! Always the Bible! Can the Bible preach to us? Is it sufficient for our instruction? If God had designed to instruct us by a book would he not have sent us a Bible from heaven? It is by the Spirit alone that we can be enlightened. God himself speaks to us. God himself reveals to us what we should do and what we should preach." Thus the claim to extraordinary gifts revealed itself for what it invariably is, a challenge to the sufficiency and authority of Holy Scripture. We have seen how Luther dealt with this threat. He would not have the Reformation jeopardized by the pretensions of deluded enthusiasts. The sufficiency of Scripture alone was the ground from which he challenged the supremacy of the Pope, and if this position were undermined from the opposite extreme, the work of the Reformation would be totally undone. He had no hesitation, therefore, in rejecting the movement as Satanic.

There was also another characteristic mark of this movement that is worth noting; that was its emphasis upon joy and ecstasy and euphoria generally. This is how Luther dealt with this subject in a letter to Melancthon. "Ask these prophets," he wrote, "whether they have felt those spiritual torments, those creations of God, those deaths and hells which accompany a real regeneration . . . And if they speak to you only of agreeable things, of sweetness and being transported to the third heaven, do not believe them. Divine majesty does not speak directly to men. God is a consuming fire, and the dreams and visions of the saints are terrible".⁴

The leaders of similar 'spiritual' movements in the Seventeenth Century, such as Naylor and Fox of the Quakers, who set the 'inner light' above Scripture, and claimed extraordinary revelations, John Owen and the Puritans had no hesitation in regarding as misguided fanatics. This explains the words of Bishop Butler to John Wesley, early in the following century, "The pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a very horrid thing, sir, a very horrid thing". There was a misunderstanding between Wesley and the Bishop. The Evangelical movement of the Eighteenth Century had nothing in common with the Charismaticism of the Seventeenth Century for which it seems the Bishop had mistaken it. The manifestation of the Spirit of God in the Evangelical Revival was in the work of regeneration, in conjunction with the proclaiming of the Word. This put it in direct line with the Reformation, not with the aberrant movements which accompanied the Reformation. The spiritual deadness and in-

⁴ R. H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 209.

cient Deism of the Church of England in the late Seventeenth Century tended to make the revival that followed stand out in sharp contrast. But it was in no sense of the word a Pentecostal movement. The Bishop was right in what he said, but his understanding of the nature of the Evangelical movement was wrong.

The last manifestation of Pentecostalism, before the present century, took place in England in 1831. It was associated with a man named Edward Irving, a Presbyterian minister. His followers became known as Irvingites, and later founded the Catholic Apostolic Church. They believed that a new outpouring of the Holy Ghost had re-established the prophetic and apostolic offices, and also the power of speaking in unknown languages and of working miracles. A young woman in Scotland was the first to speak in tongues, and this was followed by similar manifestations in London. Irving was expelled from his church at Regent Square, and founded another church in which tongues and prophecy were a regular feature of the worship. In its later stages the movement adopted many of the ritualistic practices of Anglo-Catholicism, but even in its earlier days sought unity with all baptized Christians, even with the Church of Rome, and envisaged a kind of European Christianity.

SPECIAL MARKS OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS

We may summarise the principal marks of such charismatic movements in all ages of the church under the following heads:

First, we see that such movements are frequently, almost invariably, associated with the giving of *new revelations*, which in course of time are considered to be additional, or even superior to, those of Scripture, thus impugning the sufficiency and authority of the Word of God in all matters of faith.

Secondly, this leads in practice to *the neglect of Scripture*. This is bound to happen. It was true of the 'spiritual' movements of the Reformation period, of Quakerism in the Seventeenth Century, and there is evidence of this today in Neo-Pentecostalism. The excitement and novelty of prophecies and revelations is such that they tend to take over from Scripture. As gifts increase exposition of God's Word decreases. Meetings are filled with sharing experiences, but with only occasional reference to the Word of God.

Thirdly, there is throughout them all an *insistence upon joy and ecstasy and euphoria*. We know that this kind of language features prominently in the vocabulary of Neo-Pentecostalism. Thrills, joy, gladness, happiness, satisfaction, peace, contentment, exciting experience. Some even cheapen the coming of the Holy Spirit by likening it to having a good trip on drugs, 'turning on with Jesus'. All this suggests that there is a certain imbalance both emotionally and doctrinally. It may be objected that 'peace' and 'joy' are words that appear often in the New Testament in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit. This is true; but they are always held in tension with suffering, cross-bearing, personal infirmity, weakness, and consciousness of sin; so that we are never led to rest in our experiences, or to glory in them, but always in Christ and the grace of God. St. Paul said on this very point, "If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which con-

cern mine infirmities". That is, God forbid that I should glory in anything in myself. My only glory is in that which is outside myself, in the cross of Christ and his redeeming grace. But if you compel me to refer to things in myself, then I will glory in my weakness and infirmity, not in my visions, revelations and experiences. Luther again, sums this up very well when he says that in the New Testament the Christian's rejoicing is always in the Lord, not in himself. One of Luther's sayings was, "In mourning joy; in joy mourning. Joyful in the Lord; mourning in ourselves."

Fourthly, *all these movements in the past have been deviations from the mainstream of church history and from orthodoxy.* Even if they have not always shown themselves to be heterodox immediately, this characteristic has manifested itself very quickly. Montanism, the Fraticelli, Spirituals, Anabaptists, Quakers, and Irvingites—all have claimed fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit and a renewal of Apostolic gifts, yet all have been heterodox parentheses in the life of the church. Therefore, however large and important a contemporary movement may be, if it stands in line with such a pedigree, it should immediately alert us to the danger.

Fifthly, *women usually play a prominent role* in all movements of this kind. Women and men are not interchangeable units in society, even though this seems to be the modern notion of equality of the sexes. It would appear to be against reason and common sense, as well as against Scripture, which states that in the beginning God made them male and female. A woman's nature and temperament are more susceptible to subjectivism and emotionalism than a man's, and this should make us suspicious of religious movements in which women have played a leading role.

THE RATIONALE OF PENTECOSTALISM — CONTEMPORANEITY

We must now consider the rationale of Pentecostalism. What is it that gives rise to such movements and makes them significant for people? What is it that makes Pentecostalism tick? I think the answer can be given in one word, contemporaneity. I will try to explain what is meant by that.

The desire of the Christian is to know Christ with an immediacy and reality that makes the intervening centuries vanish. Of course, Christ has promised that he will be in and with his church, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". But he makes it abundantly clear that he will be present in his church through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are warned against wrong ways of seeking contemporaneity. We must not cling to the earthly period of Christ's life and ministry as something that is to be continued in the church. There can be no 'extension of the incarnation'. Christ's bodily presence on earth was for a limited period, to accomplish a particular work, the work of redemption and atonement. With the ascension that work was completed and Christ's bodily presence withdrawn. The Holy Spirit came to be *another* Comforter, i.e., to take the place of Christ, who is present in his church now, not by virtue of the Incarnation, but by virtue of the Holy Spirit. It is he who takes and applies the work of Christ in redemption to the hearts of believers, and makes real

to them their redemption, adoption, and inheritance, which is theirs in Christ; so that they are fully joined to him and made one with him. This is the immediacy, or contemporaneity of Christ with his people, through the Spirit, of which the Bible speaks.

SOME WRONG WAYS OF SEEKING CONTEMPORANEITY

However, because the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, if he is interested in religion, he is continually seeking other ways of realizing the presence of Christ in the church. This unscriptural approach can influence Christians in their thinking too, so that they become carnal in their apprehension of the matter. They are not satisfied with the realization of Christ's presence through faith and by the Holy Ghost in the way that Scripture indicates, and seek out other methods of contemporaneity. The words of St. Paul are forgotten, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Corinthians 5 : 16). In other words, what is important for the believer in his knowledge of Christ is not the outward factual history of Jesus of Nazareth (though no-one is denying the importance of history and facts in the Gospels), but the spiritual significance of these things for the individual believer; and this understanding of, and trust in, the person and work of Christ is given to the believer by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. But where this knowledge of Christ is lacking, there is the tendency to try to make up for it in other ways; to substitute, for the immediacy or contemporaneity of Christ through the Spirit and the Word, other things, which, on the plane of history or objective knowledge, might seem to make Christ real and present.

In *Roman Catholicism*, for example, and what may be regarded as Catholicism generally, this takes several different forms. The principal one is to insist upon the corporal or local presence of Christ in the sacrament, guaranteed by a priesthood in tactual line of succession from the time of Christ. Christ is conceived of as being present in a gross and spatial manner in the bread and wine. Another expression of this same misunderstanding is the preservation of relics, bits of the 'true cross', the holy shroud, etc. This concept is carried further with pilgrimages to the Holy Land, visits to the places where Jesus was born, fed the multitude, carried his cross, etc. All this is supposed to make Christ more real and vivid. In fact it is to remove oneself further and further away from the true apprehension of Christ through the Spirit and the Word; for the more one believes that immediacy or contemporaneity with Christ can be achieved along the plane of history and outward reality, the further one departs from the apprehension of Christ in the Spirit, for the two are mutually exclusive of each other. There are many other facets of this basic misunderstanding in Catholicism: the three hours devotion, the Easter vigil, and so on, are all attempts to recreate and give contemporary character to the historical events of the life of Christ; indeed, nearly all the devotional aids of Catholicism are carnal in this respect and not spiritual, and reveal a total ignorance of the New Testament teaching about the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ and the believer.

But then, if we turn to *Liberal Protestantism*, we find precisely the same confusion of categories, but expressed in a different way. Liberal Protestantism has been preoccupied for the last two hundred years with the reconstruction of the historical Jesus. It now seems to have come to the end of the road, or perhaps it has not. But the whole *raison d'être* of that movement was, that by painstaking historical research a portrait of the *real* Jesus would emerge. We would get behind the façade of the Gospels and encounter the real Jesus: here would be true contemporaneity! But 'the Jesus of history' has proved an elusive quarry. Every age and every scholar produces his own 'Jesus of history'. The truth is we have no Jesus, other than the one to whom the Evangelists and the Apostles bear witness, and whose reality and truth the Holy Spirit inscribes upon the hearts of believers. The Apostle's warning about 'another Jesus', 'another Spirit', and 'another gospel' are very clear (2 Corinthians 11 : 4).

I now come to the last of these mistaken attempts to achieve contemporaneity, and that paradoxically is *Pentecostalism*. You may say, Well, it is very strange that a movement which claims to be chiefly concerned with the Holy Spirit should be guilty of this misunderstanding, and be concerned with establishing the contemporaneity of Christ along the outward, objective, and historical plane, rather than that of the inward operation of the Spirit. But it is in fact true. Pentecostalism seeks to make the history of the apostolic church of the New Testament a 'now' event. Pentecost is now, through the re-enactment of the signs and wonders of the apostolic age. Its rationale is exactly the same as that of Catholicism and Liberal Protestantism. You can know the truth of the Christian Faith through witnessing and participating in the objective phenomena of the New Testament church. Just as Catholicism seeks to reconstruct the externals of the historical events of the life of Christ in order to assure itself of its apprehension of Christ—to point to these phenomena and the possession of them as signs that it is the true church and holds the true faith; so the Pentecostal movements seek to reconstruct the life and phenomena of the apostolic age and to point to the possession of these things as a sure indication that they have the true faith and the full Gospel. But in both cases it is an apprehension of the Christian Faith from outside, and a setting aside of the true work of the Holy Spirit.

I know it is said by some apologists of the Pentecostal movement that they do not wish to make tongues and prophecies and extraordinary gifts generally a test of the true Christian and the true church. But if this is really so then it makes a nonsense of Pentecostalism, for these are its *raison d'être*. These are the things to which it turns for proof of the reality of its faith, not to the Scripture or the inward work of the Spirit in regeneration and effectual calling. If they appealed to the latter, the former things would immediately lose their significance. (Just as the man who has once grasped the meaning of justification by faith no longer has any need of the paraphernalia and machinery of the Roman Church.) One is acquainted with Pentecostalists who have experienced this, and are in consequence in a painful dilemma, because their understanding of the doctrines of grace has made redundant their Pentecostal stance.

I think this analysis also explains another feature of Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement which is puzzling to many people, viz., that the claim to extraordinary gifts and experiences of the Holy Spirit traverses denominational boundaries and particularly the divide between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, for many priests, nuns, and Roman Catholic lay people claim the gifts of the Spirit, without any sense of compulsion to leave the Roman Church. On the contrary, they say that they feel a greater loyalty to the Pope and greater devotion to Mary and the mass as a result of their experiences. But, in fact, this is no true bridging of the differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, because Pentecostalism does not stand in a truly Reformed position. It is, as we have seen, of the same genre as Catholicism itself. That is why there is common ground between them. They both appeal to certain external signs and phenomena for their apprehension of Christ and the Gospel. The Ecumenical movement has not been slow to exploit this, nor the Roman Church to see the advantage that accrues to it from this popular perversion of Protestantism.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

What, then, is the work of the Holy Spirit today? It is to regenerate the people of God; to unite them with their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by effectually calling them and working in them saving faith in the promises of God in the Gospel, thus sealing in them the redemption that Christ has purchased for them. There is perhaps no better exposition of this than that found in Book III Chapter I of Calvin's *Institutes*, entitled, "The Benefits of Christ made Available to us by the Secret Operation of the Spirit".

The following is a summary of its contents:

As long as Christ is separated from us, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. We obtain these blessings by faith. But we must ask, what is the source and origin of faith? It is the result of the secret operation of the Holy Spirit in us. It is by the testimony of the Holy Spirit within that the redemption, which Christ has purchased, is sealed upon the hearts of believers. The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself.

The Holy Spirit is the seed or root of spiritual life in us. Without him we are dead before God. The coming of Christ was to be associated with the outpouring of the Spirit in a special manner as the prophets declared. These are some of the titles Scripture uses when it speaks of the Spirit in relation to the salvation Christ has brought: *The Spirit of Adoption*, because thus united to Christ we have become the children of God, and can boldly cry, 'Abba, Father'. For the same reason he is said to have *sealed* us, and given the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts, because he impresses upon us, and applies to us the saving work of Christ. He is repeatedly described as *Water*. He receives this name from his energy in cleansing and purifying, but also because

his secret irrigation causes the fruits of righteousness to bud and grow. As those sprinkled with the Spirit are restored to full vigour of life he obtains the names of *Oil* and *Uction*. Because he is constantly employed in the work of subduing and destroying vice, and inflaming in our hearts the love of God, he is described as *Fire*. He is described as the *Fountain* from which heavenly riches flow to us, and the *Hand* by which God controls and rules in us.

Until we are partakers of the Spirit, Christ is, as it were, unemployed, because we view him coldly apart from us, and so at a distance from us. Only through the Spirit are we united with him, and it is owing to this union alone that Christ has not come in vain. This union of the Spirit is the sacred marriage by which we become bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and so share in all the blessings of our head. By the grace and energy of the Spirit we become his members and we in turn possess him.

Faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit, and those passages of Scripture which speak of his power and operations deal in a great measure with it. It is by faith that the light of the Gospel is brought to us; it is a supernatural gift of the Spirit, by which those who would otherwise remain in unbelief receive Christ. Paul says, "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1 : 13), thus showing that he is the internal teacher, by whose agency the promise of salvation, which would otherwise only strike the air or our ears, penetrates into our minds. Similarly he declares in 2 Thessalonians 2 : 13 "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth", by this passage briefly reminding us that faith itself is only produced by the Spirit. Therefore it is faith which gives the true contemporaneity that we seek, the real apprehension of Christ. John explains this even more clearly, "We know that he abideth in us by the Spirit that he hath given us." Again, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit". By the Holy Spirit working faith in us, Christ becomes ours and we become his. "Therefore, as we have said that salvation is perfected in the person of Christ, so, in order to make us partakers of it, he baptizes us 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Luke 3 : 16), enlightening us into the faith of his Gospel and so regenerating us to be new creatures".

You will notice that Calvin takes all the terms which are employed by Pentecostalists to refer to something additional, or subsequent, to regeneration, such as "baptism with the Holy Spirit," and relates them all to this principal work of bringing us to faith in Christ and uniting us with him. This is the soundest exposition of these terms; and it is strange that the term 'baptism' should be used by Pentecostalists to refer to something received subsequently to, or after, regeneration, when baptism itself stands for an initiatory rite, and, therefore, must refer to the entrance of the believer upon faith and life in the Spirit.

In conclusion, we have seen that there have been, and still are, two extremes in the life of the church with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit, which need to be avoided. The one is the denial that such a work is necessary at all to man's regeneration; that everything can be attributed to man's natural powers and the moral influence of the Christian religion. This position is met with in Pelagianism, Deism, Socinianism, and Rationalism, and it is present in much liberal thinking today. The other is the belief that revelations and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to the apostolic church for a distinct and special purpose, can be received and exercised today by Christians. This is met with in Montanism, the 'Spiritual' movements of the Middle Ages and the Reformation period, Quakerism, Irvingism, Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism. The middle path between these two is the Scriptural and Reformed position, which regards the work of regeneration, in faith and repentance, as the principal work of the Holy Spirit, who unites believers with Christ and seals the redemption of Christ upon their hearts; and so fulfils and consummates the purpose of God for his elect, who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, but are predestinated, called and justified in time by the secret operation of the Holy Spirit of God.