

The Charismatic Movement and Evangelism Today

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Two Concerns

As I thought about the topic you have assigned to me, two concerns seemed to be evident: 1. The appearance of the modern charismatic movement and its success in winning converts have unsettled us. 2. We wonder about the spirit of evangelism evident today, nationally and internationally, especially in the light of our own mission efforts and our confession. Obviously, both of these concerns in some way or other are affecting the work of the ministry in our congregations. They are not distant problems of other church bodies about which we may be interested only in a detached way. Like many other movements in the church, both of these areas cross denominational lines and WELS members and their pastors meet up with or are taken up with them to a greater or lesser degree. It is the intent of this paper, therefore, to look at the modern charismatic movement, to weigh its basic creeds and claims in the light of the Scriptures, and to determine, insofar as this is possible, the relationship between the charismatic movement and the spirit of evangelism being generated today.

I. The Charismatic Movement

Undoubtedly our interest in the charismatic movement—if it had not been there before—has been spurred by personal contacts and/or media information. We were perhaps put on the spot by someone, a friend, a member of the congregation, a student, who asked for our evaluation, privately or publicly. Our immediate reaction may have been either a reserved interest, a cautious word, or an outright condemnation. Be that as it may, we were forced to react, if for no other reason than that given by a Methodist minister. “They butcher the English language,” he remarked. “They are emotional and excitable. They are noisy. In fact, they are very much like we Methodists used to be. But, my brethren, they are reaching the masses, and the people are hearing them.” The questions raised by the appearance of the modern Pentecostals are common to us all. And the search to answer them drives us into the Scriptures to hear God’s Word and promises regarding the work of the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

What do we understand by modern Pentecostalism or as some prefer to call it, the charismatic movement? Historically, charismatics trace their origin to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day. The Book of Acts and First Corinthians in particular furnish the background and record for the early history of the movement. Modern Pentecostalism claims to be a resurgence of the original Pentecostal power after centuries of decline. Many today claim the modern movement first emerged in the Holiness revival sparked by John Wesley. The imprint of Methodist revivals in this country is unmistakable. The organization as a self-conscious group probably stems from Charles Fox Parham’s Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, founded at the turn of the century. It was greatly expanded through the work of Aimee Semple McPherson around the First World War in her International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. From these revivals the movement has grown in a half-century to include, according to a liberal guess, an estimated twenty million Pentecostals today. We all undoubtedly knew of its existence before and treated it as a sect which lay outside of our confessional and organizational structure. But in the last decade, Pentecostalism has made major inroads into the old mainline church bodies. The Missouri Synod and the Roman Catholic Church are two prime examples. Our own Synod has not been unaffected. In a sober assessment of the Pentecostal scene, Prof. Gerlach of our Seminary

concluded, “In my judgement, the charismatic movement is the most significant as well as the most disturbing trend on the Christian scene today.”¹

Despite the diversity, Pentecostals do have a common creed. A historian of the movement and at the same time a participant, Dr. Steve Durasoff, summarized the four basic tenets of Pentecostal faith in his book, *Bright Wind of the Spirit: Pentecostalism Today*. According to him, these are *Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Healer, the Baptizer in the Spirit, and the soon-coming King*.² Nothing less than this is the “full Gospel.” In explanation of the creed, he makes the following observations [the enumeration is mine]: 1. Pentecostals believe in miracles. They expect the supernatural most anytime, anywhere. 2. Pentecostals live right. They are dedicated to holy living. 3. Pentecostals pray in unknown languages—they are glossalalics. They worship with the heart as well as the head. 4. Pentecostals seek to share Jesus. They are zealous witnesses. 5. Pentecostals challenge traditional churches. They are disquieting. 6. Pentecostals evoke criticism. They are misunderstood.³

The distinctive doctrine in this Pentecostal creed is the experience of Spirit-baptism. This baptism, different from water-baptism, occurs apart from any ministry. Reportedly, Jesus Himself baptizes the person at any time, any place. It may be a hushed experience with prayer, or an ecstatic, explosive outbreak accompanied by waves of joyful exhilaration. Even though human responses vary, one thing is said inevitably to result—each will speak in tongues. And whatever the measure of added power may be, one thing is certain: “recipients become more effective witnesses of the reality of Jesus in their every-day lives.”⁴ “This is the positive result of the Pentecostal experience,” Dr. Durasoff explains. “Baptism is not an end... Rather, it is an open door, a beginning of greater experiences in God. The Pentecostal becomes a channel through whom the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit may be transmitted to help others at their moment of greatest need.”⁵

A good place to catch the spirit of Pentecostalism in an organized form is by viewing the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International. The local chapters of the organization—of which there are more than five hundred in the United States—are dedicated to promoting efforts of spreading the “full gospel,” not only by giving monies in abundance, but especially by the members’ own witnessing efforts. Evangelism is said to be the heartbeat of the groups. Their meetings are dedicated to encouraging one another to take Christ into the marketplace, the factories, and the offices. Commenting on their work a Chicago editor noted that they were enlisting the enthusiasm of hundreds of thousands of laymen, and singled out their qualities as “sophisticated, educated, and *wise in the ways of big business*.”⁶ The men seek the meetings, it is said, to enjoy the ecumenical fellowship, and more importantly, to “receive something directly from God.” Accordingly, the FGBMFI does not see itself in competition with any denomination as such. Members maintain their membership in local churches. Pentecostalism is transdenominational in character, and a ten-point statement of doctrine, as part of this businessmen’s fellowship, safeguards the members from being asked to forego their church affiliation. Nevertheless, the constitution of the organization places great stress upon love rather than doctrinal accord as the true basis of unity.

The anti-clericism that pervades this lay organization can be heard in such expressions as “I do not believe that Christianity should be promoted by professionals but by amateurs, as in the beginning.” Another claimed a divine revelation that God would in these last days raise up a ministry among laymen, witnessing as they did in the Early Church, and then the Lord would come. Such missionary fervor is particularly inspired from two sources. The one is Spirit-baptism, and the other is derived from the fourth part of the Pentecostal credo: Jesus, the soon-coming King. For Pentecostals preach the doctrine of the millennium, for the most part, pre-millennialism. “This concept,” Dr. Durasoff again explains, “coupled with the witnessing power received

¹ Joel Gerlach, “The Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Renewal.” Paper delivered to the Northern Wisconsin District Convention of the Wisconsin Ev. Luth. Synod, August 8, 1972.

² Steve Durasoff, *Bright Wind of the Spirit: Pentecostalism Today* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p 243, also p 149.

³ Durasoff, *Bright Winds*, pp 1–3.

⁴ Durasoff, *Bright Winds*, p 5.

⁵ Durasoff, *Bright Winds*, p 5.

⁶ Durasoff, *Bright Winds*, p 149.

when baptized in the Spirit, adds a sense of urgency and haste to winning as many people to Christ as possible.”⁷

The power to witness as a major theme in Pentecostal evangelism is also the subject of Evangelist Dornfeld’s Crusade for Christ.⁸ I mention this former graduate of our Seminary, since he recently visited New Ulm several times and distributed his leaflets. He writes:

For 22 years I had pastored Lutheran churches in the Wisconsin and in the Missouri synod. In 1956 my wife and I received the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. Since then we have seen and heard things we did not experience before in our ministry. I have heard my wife give messages in tongues and interpretation or in prophecy. I have seen my youngest daughter in a trance, transported in the spirit to the Japanese mission field, speaking and singing in a foreign language, which someone present identified as Japanese. God was supernaturally confirming her call to the mission field. Personally I preach with more freedom since I have experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and I pray with more faith for the sick. And if this experience had not done any more for me, I am thankful that it has set me free to praise the Lord. Expressions such as ‘Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Glory to God!’ flow over one’s lips quite naturally when the Praiser has come *in His fullness*.

By this time, those who do not possess the charismatic gifts have gained the impression that they are not truly Spirit-filled Christians even though the Spirit has come to them in water-baptism. The impression is not wrong. For charismatics maintain that at the time we are brought to faith, the Spirit has only *come to the believer*, but by the Spirit-baptism He fills the believer. For this reason we who have been converted and profess Christ’s name are missing an essential ingredient in our life of faith and witness, namely, the gift of tongues. Hence, were we to seek and gain the baptism of the Spirit, we would become more effective witnesses of the reality of Jesus in our daily life. Above all, we would then really be teaching the full gospel. Without the charismatic gifts, our evangelism-zeal and evangelism-message leave something to be desired.

II. The Pentecostal Creed and its Claims in the Light of Scripture

What shall we say to these things? To answer, let us hear what the Scripture tells us about the work of the Holy Spirit and His gifts relative to the task of evangelism. It is not the intent of this paper to explore the entire question of the charismatic gifts themselves. But since questions have been raised about the gospel and claims have been made about a “full gospel” with the incorporation of tongues, it is necessary for us to view such claims in the light of God’s Word and promise.

What we are especially concerned about are the apparent distinctions between the gospel and a full gospel, between Christians and Spirit-filled Christians, as well as about the place of the charismatic gifts of healing and especially tongues in the Christian mission. The implications of such a study will follow. To organize our study of the charismatic creed in the light of the Scripture, let me summarize in three statements:

1. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh to redeem us by His suffering and death on the cross, is the full gospel which He commanded us to preach in His great commission. In itself the gospel is sufficient to accomplish the purposes of evangelism which God ordained.
2. By this gospel all believers, whether weak or strong in faith and knowledge, receive the entire Spirit of God, who is in constant war against the flesh, which remains in us as long as we remain on the earth.
3. This same Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers to edify the body of Christ.

⁷ Durasoff, *Bright Winds*, p 243.

⁸ A.G. Dornfeld, *Crusade for Christ Reporter* (St. Charles, Missouri: Mid-America Tract Mission, Inc. Vol. 9, No. 1, n.d.), p 1.

1.

There is much concern today about indifference to our commission to preach the gospel. And rightly so. The church has borne this concern ever since the risen and ascending Lord gave that command and assignment: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). But equally important are the questions *how* this is done and *what* is preached. For throughout the history of the church “other” gospels in the church have vied with the true gospel for the allegiance of men. It is, therefore, also imperative that we know what the gospel is, as basic as this may sound, and how it works.

What then is the gospel? In his introduction to the New Testament, Luther states:

Evangel [Gospel] is a Greek word meaning glad tidings, good news, welcome information, a shout, a something that makes one sing and talk and rejoice. When David defeated the giant Goliath, there was a great shout, and an encouraging message was passed round among the Jews to say that their terrible enemy had been killed, and that they were free to enjoy liberty and peace; thereupon they sang and danced and made merry. Similarly God’s evangel, the New Testament, is a good piece of news, a war-cry. It was echoed throughout the world by the Apostles. They proclaimed a true David who had done combat with, and gained the victory over sin, death, and the devil. In so doing, He had taken [rescued] *all* who were enchained by sin, threatened by death, and overpowered by the devil. Though they had merited no rewards, He redeemed them, justified them, gave them life and salvation, and so brought them peace and led them back home to God. For these reasons they sing thanks and praise to God, and they will ever continue to be happy if they remain firm in the faith.

This kind of war-cry, this heartening news, this evangelical, divine message, is called a new testament. It is also like a testament when a dying man decides how his property shall be divided among certain heirs, whom he names. In the same way, Christ, before His death, decided and commanded that this evangel was to be proclaimed to all the world after His death. He thereby gave *all* believers possession of all His goods: namely, His life, by which He had vanquished death; His righteousness, by which He has washed away sin; and His holiness, by which He had overcome eternal damnation. No poor fellow chained in sin, dead, and bound for hell can hear anything more comforting than this precious and comforting message about Christ; the sinner cannot help exulting from the bottom of his heart and rejoicing over it when he accepts its truth.⁹

This then is what the gospel is, God’s precious covenant with us in Christ.

But *how* does God’s work of redemption come to us, how does what Christ did become ours? Scripture tells us that Christ’s work on our behalf becomes ours by the work of the Holy Spirit. He works faith and trust in Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the devil in our hearts by the hearing of that good news, the gospel. Thus, the New Testament tells us, whoever believes in Christ’s work of redemption receives the gift of the Holy Ghost (Ac 2:38–39). By the preaching of the gospel we are reborn, made holy before God, enlightened by His gifts, and transformed in life to the mind of Christ this is the new life the Holy Spirit brings us *by* the gospel. And though we hold what we have in utter weakness (Ga 5; Ro 7), yet the Word and promise of God remain sure, and by it the Spirit helps us in our infirmities.

But *what* the gospel is must never be confused with *how* God works. To do so would be to confuse and commingle the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit of God, the work of God’s justifying sinful mankind in Christ with His work of sanctifying them by the Spirit. Such confusion results in the perversion of the work of both, equally as serious as falsely separating the work of Christ from the work of the Spirit as though the one did not really have to do with the other. No, they are one ball of wax, a unity in effort. Yet each must be taught without confusion and without separation. The Spirit works through the Word, that is the simple truth which the

⁹ The translation is from John Dillenberger, *Martin Luther* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p 15.

Lutheran confessions draw from the Scripture, in speaking of the work of the ministry (AC, V). In saying so, we avoid confusion, and the mystery of God's work among us is preserved. For the foundation remains the gospel itself. There is no other foundation than Jesus Christ and Him crucified, as Paul tells us repeatedly. This is the full message of salvation, and no second foundation is laid within us, such as faith itself or the activities of faith. To do so would be to preach a righteousness plus, the righteousness of Christ plus the life of faith that follows and to raise the spectre of requirements for holiness.

No, rather, as the gospel of free grace in Word and Sacrament is there for all people—"Christ died for all"—so the Spirit of God is present in the gospel and is received by all who hear by faith. In his Pentecost sermon Peter says, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Ac 2:38–39). There is no question here of a distinction between the gospel and a full gospel capped by a tongues experience, some superior or additional experience which makes the gospel more complete. The work of evangelism performed by Peter preached the same gospel of Christ crucified by which believers of all times become believers and receive the Spirit.

The secret of understanding the distinction of the gospel from the Spirit's work and yet at the same time maintaining their intimate unity lies with what the Scriptures tell us generally about the Triune God. They reveal that God's work among us is the work of the Trinity in concert. Thus the Father is Creator, but in creation all three persons are active. The Father creates all things *by* the Word (Jn 1) and *through* the Spirit (Gn 1). Likewise, the Son is our Redeemer; yet He was sent by the Father (Ga 4:4) and raised by the Spirit (Ro 8:11). So also the Spirit is Lifegiver. Yet He does not operate independently. He gives new life by testifying to the work of the Son (Jn 14); and in turn, having come to know the Son, we come to know the Father (Jn 14). This basic truth of the work of the Trinity in our midst as a unity, in concert, has led to the confession that the Spirit works new life in us only through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which we now are able to stand before the Father. Jesus Himself made this point to His disciples, saying, "When the Comforter will come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of *Me*" (Jn 15:26).

Thus the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the full gospel. Nothing is added to it by the Spirit to make it more full or to supplement its inadequacy. It is so, because it proclaims the righteousness of Christ as a righteousness foreign to us, yet done on our behalf and intended for us. Christ won salvation apart from us on the cross. Our trust therefore rests solely on His work which was accomplished without any sort of contribution on our part to make the good news of salvation a full gospel. The full gospel of Christ's righteousness, though foreign to us, becomes ours through the work of the Holy Spirit. The sole purpose of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to take the things of Jesus Christ and to bring them to believers. The work of the Spirit is to glorify Jesus and to magnify His work. Jesus tells us that the Spirit will not make the believer Spirit-conscious, but Christ-conscious. He says: "Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself. But whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak. He will show you things to come. He shall glorify *Me*, for He shall receive of Mine and show it unto you" (Jn 16:13).

What wonder therefore that the Apostle John makes the work of the incarnate Christ, His work of redemption, the touchstone to be used in testing the spirits. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 Jn 4:1–3). The true gospel, unperverted, is the test which separates the Spirit from the spirits. This true gospel is the subject of Christ's mission command: Preach the gospel.

2.

What has been said about the gospel, as Christ's work alone without distinction, being the full gospel, applies equally to any attempt to distinguish between Christians and Spirit-filled Christians. Such a distinction

is not the intent of Scripture. The question here is not whether there is a baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture tells us that there is. John the Baptist pointed to the office of the Holy Spirit when he said (Mt 3:11), “I baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I...He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” John’s word was fulfilled on Pentecost, when the Spirit of God came on the disciples and cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them and they spoke in foreign tongues. All six passages in the New Testament using the terms Spirit-baptism have reference to John’s words.¹⁰ The question here rather is whether the Spirit-baptism made a different Christian, a Spirit-filled Christian, who had what other Christians were lacking. The apostles made no such claims. Their baptism was no different from the baptism every Christian receives. Paul tells us that there is “one faith, one baptism,” not two separate ones (Eph 4:5). Again in I Corinthians 12:13, he writes, “For by *one* Spirit we are all baptized into one body...and all have been made to drink into one Spirit.” This passage caused one writer to exclaim in colorful fashion, “Now friends, the church is not like one of those great passenger ships that have a second-class section and a first-class section. Pentecostal literature (encouraging the seeking of Spirit-baptism and tongues) speaks of ordinary Christians and Spirit-filled Christians. God’s ship is a one-class ship. Either we are Spirit-filled Christians or we are not Christians at all.”¹¹

How True! For God does not give us His Spirit in bits and pieces. All believers, whether weak or strong in faith, receive the entire Spirit of God by the preaching of the gospel. That is the Word and promise of Christ. The fact that we receive the Spirit wholly and that He dwells in our hearts by faith does not mean that we are no longer sinners or that faith never wavers. The fact is that we can lose the Spirit by our sinning. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!”—so the Word of God warns (1 Cor 10:12). Reflecting this, our Confessions say, “When holy people, aside from the fact that they still possess and feel original sin and daily repent and strive against it, fall into open sin (as David into adultery, murder, and blasphemy), faith and the Spirit have departed from them. This is so because the Holy Spirit does not permit sin to rule and gain an upper hand” (SA, III, III, 43f). The lesson here for the believer concerns the constant battle between the Spirit and our flesh (Ga 5 and Ro 7). As totally sinner yet totally saint throughout our earthly life, we need the constant attention of the Word and Spirit of God. For the Spirit not only calls me by the gospel but also keeps me in the faith unto my end, a continuous work throughout my life.

But what then do the Scriptures mean when they speak about those who are filled with the Spirit? The Missouri Synod study on the charismatic movement noted the passages that express the filling and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and concluded: when the Spirit descended on a group of believers, it always stated or strongly implied that *all* were filled with the Spirit.¹² The passages do not indicate that one or more persons were ever denied the Spirit’s full gift because of insufficient preparation. Nor do the passages suggest a partial filling by the Spirit and a later coming in His fullness and power when the believer sought the baptism of the Spirit by earnest prayer. Furthermore the Scriptural exhortation to be filled with the Spirit does not make an equation of these terms with the possession of charismatic gifts. Significantly, when Christians in the apostolic church received the Spiritbaptism, they received it solely as a gift.

Now certainly we all pray for the gift of the Spirit as the Scripture enjoins us to: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Pastors ascend the pulpit with the prayer, “O Lord, open Thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.” Hearers respond to the sermon by singing, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me!” But these earnest prayers seek only that which God has promised to all who believe. And as His children who know and acknowledge our sinfulness, we frequently pray for those gifts we already possess, so that we might stand in the battles of life.

¹⁰ The reference here is to Acts 1:5, Acts 11:16, and to the passages parallel to Matthew 3:11, namely, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33.

¹¹ The writer is Kurt Marquardt. The place of reference has been lost to this writer.

¹² To be found in “The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology,” a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, January, 1972, p 13f. A helpful list of sources on this topic is attached to the study.

What concerns us with regard to Spirit-baptism and being filled with the Spirit is that these expressions not be used as a *means* to equip us for the work of evangelism. As indicated in the previous section, Word and Sacrament are the means of grace. In and through them the Spirit of God gives the life, the power, and the success. If we seek power, it is to be found in the hidden power of the gospel, which as a still small voice is able to make out of a stony heart a living, beating heart of faith (Eze 11:19). A Christian armed with the Word of God is able to defeat even the devil's power.

3.

What then about spiritual gifts? How shall we look on them? The Scripture would have us know that God distributes spiritual gifts to all believers. These spiritual gifts are not reserved for a select few in the church. Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12–14 is prefaced with the thought that all Christians have been given a gift of one kind or another. For all together—and this is the point—make up one body. And though there are diversity of gifts and divers operations, yet there is only one Spirit. Unity in diversity! That is true of the human body and is true, in a spiritual sense, of the church as the body of Christ. Such a statement does not mean unity in diversity with regard to doctrine, as false ecumenists would have us believe. The reference is to divers kinds of people and divers forms of action which make up the church. All work together in one body and all spiritual gifts therefore are given to edify that body.

If then the Spirit's work is to lead men to honor Christ by confessing their faith in Him, He manifests that work through a variety of gifts and services with which He continually endows the church. At various places Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit. Because of their importance to our discussion, I want to examine those lists more carefully. In Romans 12:6–8 Paul says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 tells us that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, then discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. Ephesians 4:11–12 tells us that the ascended Savior gave to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. 1 Timothy 3 speaks of the peculiar qualification of a bishop and of a deacon, and Titus 1 of the bishop likewise. In Galatians 5 Paul makes reference to the fruits of the Spirit as being love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Two things are evident from Paul's catalogues of spiritual gifts. First, the spiritual gifts mentioned relate to the ministry of the gospel. Their purpose is the edification of the church. Highlighted among them are the qualification of church leaders, ministers, and teachers. The emphasis in them is their use for a clear, unhindered testimony to the gospel. Second, the gifts of healing and tongues are dealt with extensively only in 1 Corinthians. And Paul's discussion of these—should we call them more miraculous gifts?—is also noteworthy. Though he undertakes a lengthy discussion of tongues, he does not do so to highlight this particular gift nor to encourage nor to assist the Corinthian Christians in acquiring it. On the contrary, Paul's discussion seeks to show the dangers and abuses of tongues when they are not rightly used.

Paul recognized the eagerness of the Corinthians, and he did not wish to squelch it. But apparently the possession of certain spiritual gifts had led to pride and confusion. The apostle therefore wishes to redirect their zeal into seeking those things that are long-lasting and edify. He highlights faith, hope, and love as the gifts especially to be cultivated for their enduring qualities. He recommends gifts that edify for their service to the church. "You are, I know, eager for the gifts of the Spirit," Paul tells them; "then aspire above all to excel in those which build up the church" (1 Cor 14:12, NEB). Paul also had the gift of tongues. Nevertheless he did not spread the gospel of tongues in the congregation to awaken their zeal. The great missionary recognized the limits of the use of the gift when he said, "However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind,

that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor 14:19, NASB). The truth remains that the Spirit imparts the gifts diversely as He will and does this in response to the needs in the kingdom. *He* raises up prophets and gives the apostles utterance.

III. Conclusion

What are the implications of our study for the work of evangelism today?

1. With regard to *evangelism* itself, the Scriptures tell us that the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sin of mankind is the full gospel. This message of redemption is not to be confused with the new life of faith that follows it. In our preaching, the work of Christ must not be commingled with the work of the Spirit, nor separated from it. The teaching of the cross remains primary; the works of the Spirit and His spiritual gifts follow after.
2. With regard to witnesses, the Scripture knows no essential difference between Christians and Spirit-filled Christians. All Christians have the same Spirit. And the work of evangelism is carried on by the same Spirit, who distributes divers gifts among His people. He gives His gifts for the edification of the body of Christ, and they are received in the crucified and resurrected Christ.
3. With regard to *witnessing*, there is no substitute for getting to know the works and ways of God as He has revealed them to us. God has not only given us the command to evangelize. He has also given us the means to do so, by recording His name for us in the Scriptures. If we are to evangelize, we need to learn the Word of God as He has revealed it to us, solely as His mysteries, so contrary to human understanding, yet so joyous and wonderful in its message. Here Paul’s advice to Timothy is in order: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15).

In conclusion, let us consider three general observations which the Scriptures make concerning the confession of our faith. First of all, they tell us that it is the *nature of a Christian to confess his faith*. Jesus observes, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” (Mt 12:34). That is, what we have in our hearts will come out through our mouths. People will be able to tell that we are Christians by what we say. We cannot hide the fact. Where there is a Christian, there is a confessor. The Psalmist says, “I believe, therefore have I spoken” (Ps 116:10). Now, that is true not only of the Christian, but of all men. All people can be known by what they say. The unbeliever also lets us know what he believes by what he says. Jesus applies the Psalmist’s words to the Pharisees, calling them a generation of vipers. “How can ye,” He says, “being evil, speak good things?...A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Mt 12:34f).

We can indeed know every person by what he says. And a Christian by his very nature will show and speak of his faith, although he needs much encouragement to do so because of his sinfulness (Lk 9:26). In the chapter most commonly read for Mission Festival, Paul tells us, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Hence we do not have to look far and wide for God’s Word. It is engrafted in a believer’s heart. And so Paul continues, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach” (Ro 10:8–10). Christians are confessors, for that is the nature of faith.

But Christians are not so many separate individuals. Although faith is a personal matter and one cannot believe for another, yet the Scriptures also tell us that it is the *nature of a Christian to join together with his fellow-believers* in confessing his faith. We call this church. Hearts united in faith will unite in carrying out Christ’s mission command. Concerning this unity Paul admonishes us: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:3–6). Unity of faith, therefore, expresses itself in unity of confession.

One final observation completes the presentation and is part of the other two. Scripture also tells us that it is the *nature of a Christian to be separate from those who teach contrary to God's Word*. Here Christ's words are heard: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mt 7:15). Any preachment or any movement which is indifferent to Christ's words of warning is marked already. Divisions result, and unity is disturbed. In our zeal to carry out the first part of Christ's great commission, "Go ye and preach the gospel," we must never forget that the mission command has two all-embracing parts. Not only are we to carry the message to *all people*, but we are also to teach them "to observe *all things*" whatsoever Christ has commanded us.

The Spirit help us to it!

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