

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHARISMATIC LIFE AND RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH TODAY IN EVANGELIZATION REPORT

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Everyone agrees that world evangelization depends upon the working of the Holy Spirit. However, there are differing views among Christians (i) as to how one "receives" the Holy Spirit, and (ii) as to how the Holy Spirit, once received, manifests himself. The way in which we handle these questions will have an effect upon our expectation and experience of the Holy Spirit's working in world evangelization.

A first step toward gaining understanding and mutual regard among Christians with differing views is to consider the ways in which these questions have been answered historically in the experience of the church. The group devoted about one-half of its time to laying this necessary groundwork. Members of the group who represented different points of view, and different historical traditions, dealt with the basic question: *How do you "receive" the Holy Spirit?*

1. The classic view of the historic churches.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a part of the gift of salvation. The experience of the Holy Spirit comes as one reckons upon this fact and puts it into practice. Three principles underlie this position: (i) all believers participate in the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13, Rom. 8:9); (ii) Pentecost and the other experiences of receiving the Holy Spirit in *Acts* are descriptions of historical, non-repeatable phenomenon; and (iii) believers are called continually to experience more of the fullness of the Spirit. There is no formal second step or stage in Christian maturity.

2. The "second blessing" view.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is received through a definite experience subsequent to salvation.

a. *Sanctification-as-experience.* This view developed in Wesleyanism. The emphasis was on holiness. Christians who are genuinely converted nevertheless see great deficiencies in their life, e.g., lack of inward purity, power, consistency. By faith one may appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit, and through an experience of sanctification have the carnal mind cleansed. Three conditions are involved: (i) ask (Luke 11:13), (ii) obey (Acts 5:32), and (iii) believe (Gal. 3:14). Three results may be expected: (i) power to witness (Acts 1:8), (ii) love of God (Rom. 5:5), (iii) purity.

b. *Baptism with the Holy Spirit in the holiness tradition.* This teaching was a historical outgrowth of the foregoing position, developing in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. The Spirit-filled life is deemed the express will of God (Eph. 5:18). That which God commands accords with his will, and one may therefore pray for it with confidence (I John 5:14-15). One appropriates this blessing by faith. Feelings or

special manifestations may come but are not essential; the essential is to believe and receive. The result is that a life of defeat and carnality is transformed into a life of fruitfulness.

c. *Baptism with the Holy Spirit in the classical pentecostal tradition.* The Holy Spirit is received in a way that parallels one's receiving of Christ. The new birth is called a baptism (I Cor. 12:13). In an exactly similar manner, one receives the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In salvation, the Spirit baptizes into Christ's Body, the church; when we are endued with power, the Lord Jesus Christ baptizes us in the Holy Spirit. At this baptism (and subsequently) the Holy Spirit manifests his presence by speaking with unknown tongues (Acts 2:4, 10:44, 19:6). As a result of this baptism, believers make themselves available to the Holy Spirit for his "charismata." In the life of the early church these gifts opened doors of evangelism in an explosive way.

d. *Baptism with the Holy Spirit in the neo-pentecostal movement.* Around 1960 the experiences which had characterized classical pentecostal churches began to spread into the historical churches; in some sectors of this new movement, the understanding of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was similar to that of classical pentecostalism, though speaking in tongues was not usually considered the "necessary sign" that one had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The experience of tongues, however, has been widespread.

Among churches with more of a sacramental tradition (Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholic, Orthodox), the baptism with the Holy Spirit is understood in a more "organic" sense, i.e., the outgrowth or actualization of the relationship with the Holy Spirit which is established in salvation. In this view there is an appreciation both of the "crisis" and the "growth" motifs in sanctification, baptism with the Holy Spirit usually being regarded under the former category. While there is no doctrine of tongues as initial evidence, the experience of tongues is common.

The result of this brief historical/theological survey, which was amplified by several appropriate testimonies, was an appreciation of the variety of ways in which Christians experience the reality of the Spirit, and the variety of ways in which they explain or verbally communicate that experience. The group manifested a marked willingness to listen to one another, and a genuine appreciation for one another's experience, even where it may have involved points of disagreement. This formed the background for the most significant area of agreement in the group. Christians with differing experience and understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit can and must hold one another in high regard as they join together in the task of world evangelization; a spirit of dogmatism and exclusivism will grieve the Spirit, whereas a spirit of openness to one another will lead to an increase of love and understanding, which will greatly aid the spread of the Gospel.

The study group not only voiced this kind of an idea, but became a forum where the members experienced this very thing in a significant measure through various kinds of action and interaction. While the ideas presented helped to clarify certain misunderstandings, the more important outcome was a marked change in *attitudes* which could be seen as the meetings progressed: Christians of widely differing backgrounds and points of view expressed a fresh appreciation and regard

for one another.

Against the background of such understanding in the study group, the participants were challenged with this question: How does my understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit contribute to the work of world evangelization? Working in a number of small groups, the participants cited various ways in which we should expect and/or are already experiencing the working of the Holy Spirit, as well as areas where problems may exist, or where further work needs to be done.

Prelude

a. All were agreed that there can be no evangelization without the empowering, the guidance, and direction of the Holy Spirit. He sets us free to witness joyously to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We rejoice that this whole Congress has been characterized by this theme.

b. There was great stress on the need of waiting for the power. This is Jesus' command. The whole church needs to enter into this kind of "waiting prayer" and renewed study of the Scriptures.

c. And one of the missing facts in church life today has been a deep spirit of repentance — not simply vaguely or generally, but specifically and concretely — from hardness of heart, false pride, unbelief, and concern with the wrong priorities. This is a crucial prelude to the "fullness of the Spirit" and evangelization.

Developing strategies

A. We were made keenly aware of what the Spirit is doing among young people. There is a fresh openness and life among many of them. We need to listen and learn from them.

b. Wherever the Spirit has come, every believer becomes a fresh witness, natural and real. Often then there is great need for a teaching, enabling ministry.

c. There is new liberty whenever the Spirit comes, not just in the exercise of the gifts, but in church life and strategy. Notice the richness and diversity in much of the para-church movement.

d. Often hard places have been penetrated when the Spirit has come. Here different situations were spoken of: Jews for Jesus; the evangelization of gypsies in one country; and Christ coming among materialists, the Hindus, Muslims; and even the nominal ones in other places. Impossible without the Holy Spirit.

e. The manifestation of the miraculous through spiritual gifts often become signs in the evangelistic task. We should expect this.

f. There is always a wonderful sense of unity, of being in "one accord," when the Spirit comes. This in itself becomes a powerful way of drawing people to belief.

g. The whole Church needs to take seriously, and learn from, the house church and small group movement. The Lord is doing something very real here.

Further areas for study

a. In view of the resurgence of the pentecostal and neo-pente-

costal movements, we need a "theology of the charismatic life." Not a polemic, but careful thinking and study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

b. What is a charismatic church? What is its style of worship and ministry?

c. What is an authentic ministry of deliverance, particularly in view of the heightened manifestation of the occult and demon possession?

d. There is a great need for understanding. How can we learn from one another, and speak the truth in love?