

The Messianic Gift of the Spirit

An interactive study with special regard to the questions, problems and emphases
of Pentecostal-charismatic Renewal

by
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PREFACE

As a pastor of a congregation in a large, metropolitan area, virtually every week I receive phone calls from people who are hunting for a church home and who wish to find out more about our church. Two kinds of questions far outstrip all others with regard to frequency. They are the questions about worship style and the questions about the Holy Spirit. This latter category is a main impetus behind the present study.

Questions about the Holy Spirit come in various forms, though the following are a fair sampling. “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?” “Is your church Spirit-filled?” “Is this a charismatic church?” or more negatively, “This isn’t a charismatic church, is it?” “Is this a full-gospel church?” “Do you believe in spiritual gifts?”, and so forth. Sometimes, depending upon how the caller phrases his/her question, it is difficult to tell whether or not the caller is positive or negative, though in almost all cases, the caller has a predisposition one way or the other toward the Pentecostal-Charismatic question.

I am always amused and sometimes mildly annoyed by the questions, “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?” or “Is your church Spirit-filled?” I cannot think of a church or denomination in all Christendom that would not answer “yes” to such questions. **All** Christians believe that they are filled with the Spirit, whether Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist or Pentecostal. More precisely, what the caller really means to ask is, “Do you practice speaking in tongues?”

Unfortunately, the theology of the Holy Spirit as constructed by Pentecostal-Charismatics and non-Pentecostal-Charismatics is often approached on both sides by tendentious argumentation and less than adequate exegesis. This tends to widen the rift between brothers and sisters in Christ, and at the same time, it does not assist the earnest seeker in properly assessing the biblical data. Whether this present study will be any more effective, of course, will be up to the reader to decide, but it is hoped that as the reader works through the biblical data, a clearer perspective regarding the issue will emerge.

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The Messianic Gift of the Spirit

Interactive Study Procedure

This study is designed to be interactive. The reader will not be merely “hearing” theology, but also “doing” it. He will, in fact, put on the hat of a theologian in his own right, at least in a simplified way. Much of the study is set up in a question/answer format, punctuated by short discourses of theologically or historically pertinent information. Answers to the questions are provided at the end, but if full value is to be derived from the study, the reader is advised to ignore these answers at first, instead working out the answers for him/herself based on the biblical passages cited. A careful effort has been made to reference all the relevant passages from Scripture. Only after personal interaction with the Scriptures and the questions should the reader compare his/her own answers with those provided by the author. It may well be that at some points the reader’s personal answers will differ from those provided. This is not necessarily bad, and in fact, it will have provided the opportunity for the reader to have worked out the theological issues without being unduly influenced by the author’s views.

The following underlying principles for doing theology should help to insure that your own study is also reasonably objective and without undue bias.

Openness and Honesty

Any constructive approach to theology, especially when addressing a subject as polarized as this one, must allow Holy Scripture to speak without being forced to say something it does not intend. If the theologian is to be open and honest, he/she must recognize and distinguish between:

- ❖ What Scripture clearly states (the absolutes)
- ❖ What Scripture may infer (the possibilities and probabilities)
- ❖ What Scripture does not say (silence)

The above three categories exist in a decreasing hierarchy of certainty. Clear statements in the Bible obviously carry more theological weight than inferences. Inferences carry more weight than silence. To ground one’s conclusions on arguments of silence or inferences alone raises doubt about plausibility. On the other hand, to refuse to come to grips with inferences impinges on openness.

Interpretive Guidelines

The following three principles are foundational to any valid interpretation of Scripture. They are by no means the only principles, but they are initially the most important ones.

- ❖ *Human Fallibility*: The student of the Bible must always remember that there are no infallible interpreters. Scripture alone is final and sufficient.
- ❖ *Context*: There is more than one context to any given passage:
 - ♦ Local Context (within the passage itself)
 - ♦ Larger Context (within the section, book, writings by a single author, Testament, etc.)
 - ♦ Historical Context (within a certain time and place in history which is affected by cultural considerations)
 - ♦ Linguistic Context (within a given language with given grammatical and idiosyncratic properties)
- ❖ *Clarity*: Unclear passages must give way to clear passages. This is another way of saying that inferences or areas of silence must give way to unambiguous statements in the text of the Bible.

With the above guidelines in mind, one may begin this interactive study of the gift of the Holy Spirit today. Before actually approaching any particular passage of Scripture, however, it will be well to survey the theological landscape of the 20th century to see how this particular issue has developed within American Christianity.

The Question Before Us

The 20th century saw an emphasis on the experiential aspect of the Holy Spirit unparalleled in the history of Christianity. This accent arose from two separate but similar movements, Pentecostalism and Charismatic-renewal. Against this accent, there arose a strident, reactionary stance among some evangelicals, notably those of the Baptist tradition, which minced no words in denying the legitimacy of Pentecostals and their sister Charismatics. Finally, as might be expected, there developed a more moderate middle-ground which, while not adopting the theology of Pentecostalism, at the same time refused to reject outright the phenomena of speaking with tongues as did the reactionary evangelicals. Following is a brief description of this history.

Pentecostalism

Arising out of the holiness movements of the late 19th century, particularly the

streams of Wesleyan Methodism and Black Christianity¹, a new theology of the Holy Spirit was developed which focused upon the phrase “the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”² The essential theological uniqueness of Pentecostalism is the belief that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a personal experience which is unmistakably marked by the phenomenon of speaking in other tongues. While a minor stream of Pentecostalism (the Apostolics) assert that one must speak in tongues in order to be saved, most Pentecostals see the baptism in the Spirit as an experience which follows salvation. While it is usual for Pentecostals to affirm the Christianity of those who confess Christ but have not spoken with tongues, it is also usual for them to regard as underprivileged, underpowered and inferior, such Christians who have not “received the baptism.” The following summary describes the central features of majority Pentecostalism as it developed in the early 20th century:

THE MAINLINE PENTECOSTAL VIEW

- a) There are two primary works of grace--salvation and the baptism in the Spirit. Salvation is for the soul, and the baptism in the Spirit is for empowerment to do the work of the church.
- b) The baptism in the Spirit has as its unmistakable authentication the phenomenon of speaking with tongues.
- c) The baptism in the Spirit is desirable for every Christian. The only prerequisites are purity of life and sufficient faith.
- d) When one is baptized with the Spirit, the recipient has at his/her potential disposal all of the nine spiritual gifts listed in 1 Co. 12:8-10. He/she should seek God for the manifestation of these gifts in the life of the church.
- e) Christians who have experienced the first work of grace (salvation) should immediately begin to seek the second work of grace (the baptism in the Spirit). Until they have experienced speaking in tongues (the sign of the baptism in the Spirit), they are usually treated by fellow Pentecostals as adolescent Christians who have not yet spiritually come of age.

¹ For a fuller history, see: J. Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); V. Synan, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1975); R. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979)

² It may be noted that the phrase “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” though often used, is a misnomer and never appears in the New Testament. The New Testament speaks of baptism “in” or “with” the Holy Spirit, but never “of” the Holy Spirit. The constructions in the Greek New Testament are not genitives, but rather, they are datives using the Greek preposition *en* (= in/with).

Reactionary Evangelicalism

Pentecostalism and its emotional character was culturally unacceptable to much of the larger evangelical community. Some of the extreme physical demonstrations in Pentecostal of worship were highly offensive. Added to this was the fact that Pentecostals regularly called for Christians to abandon their own evangelical denominations in order to join the new Pentecostal denominations. Non-Pentecostal evangelical churches were often characterized by the Pentecostals as being “dead,” “dry” and “unspiritual.” Evangelicals resented this attitude held forth toward them by the Pentecostals that they were some sort of second-class Christians.

Based largely upon the works of B. B. Warfield, the Princeton theologian at the turn of the century, many evangelicals and most Baptists adopted the position that speaking with tongues was a sign gift intended to authenticate the message of the apostles during the first century. It was a sort of temporary “voice of God” until the canon of the New Testament could be completed. However, when the New Testament message was complete, and the various books of the New Testament had all been written, the sign gifts were no longer necessary.³ As such, the Pentecostal phenomenon was a grand mistake. The Pentecostal practice of speaking in tongues was a deception attributed to psychological, emotional or even demonic deviation.⁴ Following is a summary of the essential stance of this reactionary stream of thinking:

THE CLOSED NON-PENTECOSTAL VIEW

- a) There is only one primary work of grace in the life of the believer--salvation. While God may perform many added works of grace within a believer's life, there is no single one that should be categorized as a “second work” that is subsequent to and second only to salvation.
- b) The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians at the time they believe the gospel. The work of the Spirit is primarily internal and invisible, not external and demonstrative.
- c) The sign gifts (particularly speaking with tongues) do not extend beyond the apostolic age. They fulfilled their function when the New Testament canon was completely written.
- d) Modern practices of tongues-speaking are both inappropriate and invalid, whether performed in sincerity or not.

³ G. Osborne, “Tongues, Speaking in”, *EDT* (1984) 1103.

⁴ Evangelical books which take this position regarding speaking in tongues are: M. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1974); A. Hoekema, *Tongues and Spirit-Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); W. McRae, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

A Middle Position

Under the leadership of its founder, A. B. Simpson, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (founded 1887) became the proponent of a more moderate position. After much study, Simpson felt compelled to reject the Pentecostal viewpoint. However, he was not willing to reject tongues-speaking altogether. He settled on the middle-ground that tongues might be **an** evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit, but certainly not the exclusive evidence. As such, tongues-speaking was allowed but not encouraged. Simpson's dictum "seek not--forbid not" eventually became known as the "Alliance position." It affirmed that tongues-speaking was a spiritual gift that could be experienced in any age of the church, but it denied that tongues-speaking was a necessary sign of the baptism in the Spirit.⁵

This position, while largely in the minority for several decades between the early 20th century and its midpoint, gained ground rapidly after the 1970s. As one Baptist theologian stated, "...tongues has been neither as significant as Pentecostals claim nor as insignificant or as bad as some non-Pentecostals claim."⁶ A major evangelical seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, has adopted this posture, and it is represented in various evangelical churches.⁷ The tenants of the middle position go something like this:

THE OPEN NON-PENTECOSTAL VIEW

- a) There is only one primary work of grace in the life of the believer--salvation. While God may perform many added works of grace within a believer's life, there is no single one that should be categorized as a "second work" that is subsequent to and second only to salvation.
- b) The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians at the time they believe the gospel. There is no such thing as an "unfilled Christian."
- c) The work of the Spirit is both internal/invisible and external/demonstrative. It guides as well as empowers with spiritual gifts.
- d) No spiritual gift may be relegated exclusively to the apostolic age. On the other hand, no gift is universal among Christians as though all or even most Christians should necessarily experience it. Gifts are given at God's sovereign initiative, and they are not to be begged or demanded.

⁵ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 145; Osborne, 1103.

⁶ E. Hinson, "The Significance of Glossolalia in the History of Christianity," *Speaking in Tongues: Let's Talk About It*, ed. W. Mills (Waco, TX: Word, 1973) 61.

⁷ Representative of Fuller Seminary's position is C. Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1979). Representative of other moderate stances is C. Smith, *Charisma vs. Charismania* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1983); C. Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1978).

- e) Spiritual fruit, not spiritual gifts, are the measure of Christian maturity.
- f) Speaking in tongues is better exercised as a private devotional praise to God rather than a demonstration in public worship.

Charismatic-Renewal (Neo-Pentecostalism)

Charismatic-renewal, though quite similar to Pentecostalism in its theology of the Holy Spirit, has a different historical starting point. Instead of arising within conservative Protestant Christianity, as did Pentecostalism, Charismatic-renewal arose within mainline denominations, both Catholic and Protestant, beginning in the 1960s. In general, it is a trans-denominational, ecumenical movement that affirms the importance of speaking in tongues.⁸ In its earlier period, it did not issue the call for “come-outism” that characterized the early Pentecostals. Furthermore, Charismatics did not arrive with all the stringent holiness baggage of behavioral codes and taboos that were so common among the early Pentecostals. Theological differences were largely set aside in order to accommodate the freedom of charismatic expression in tongues and related gifts. Charismatics were free to remain in their own denominations, whether Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran or whatever, but were able to come together through secondary organizations, such as, the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new phenomenon appeared in the rise of Pentecostal-charismatic churches. These were generally sovereign bodies without any denominational affiliation, and often enough, they were composed of remnants of classical Pentecostals along with those Charismatics who had left the mainline denominations. These churches are usually less ecumenical than were the early leaders of charismatic-renewal. On the other hand, they have avoided the more culturally despised practices and demands of classical Pentecostals. These churches frequently mushroom in size, though they maintain a fairly fluid constituency.

Summarizing the tenets of charismatic-renewal is more difficult than for the foregoing groups because of its trans-denominational, ecumenical character. Three general observations can be made, however.

THE CHARISMATIC VIEW

- a) Demonstrative spiritual gifts in general and tongues-speaking in particular are an important form of public and small-group worship. Tongues-speaking is equally important for one’s private devotional life, and the private use of

⁸ R. Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) 41-45; M. Hamilton, ed., *The Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); J. Sherrill, *They Speak With Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, NJ: Spire, 1964); K. and D. Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (New York: Paulist, 1969).

tongues-speaking is often referred to as one's "prayer language."

- b) There is not a consensus among Charismatics as to whether or not tongues-speaking is the necessary authentication of the gift of the Spirit. Protestant Charismatics tend to say "yes," while Catholic Charismatics tend to say "no."
- c) Charismatic-renewal tends to view the human predicament as the misery of being dominated by the personal forces of evil (as distinct from historic evangelicalism, which views the human predicament as the misery of being captive under sin).⁹ As such, charismatic-renewal focuses on the need to combat the demonic adversary, and therefore, frequently engages in exorcisms.

Thus, modern Christians are polarized over the issue of speaking with tongues. Scholarly works along with popular ones have arisen to defend and/or attack the phenomenon of glossolalia.¹⁰ In this study, we shall seek to address the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit particularly in light of the foregoing 20th century debate.

The Holy Spirit Before Christ

Much of the modern discussion about the gift of the Spirit arises from the documents of Luke-Acts and the Pauline corpus. However, it must be recognized that before the time of Christ, there was a clear precedent for the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit coming upon people. This action of the Spirit in the Old Testament is the natural place to begin a study such as this.

At times, Pentecostal-Charismatics have insisted that in the Old Testament era the Holy Spirit only came "upon" individuals, but did not fill them. This conclusion is not greatly different from that of many non-Pentecostals, who maintain that the Spirit came on people at one time and then later left them.¹¹

Such assertions appear to be an attempt to argue for the uniqueness of the gift of the Spirit as something entirely distinct and unique in life of the church after the Day of Pentecost. With this assertion in mind, it is appropriate to examine carefully the relevant Old Testament passages.

⁹ D. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 39.

¹⁰ A scholarly work defending the Pentecostal-charismatic position may be seen in J. Williams, *The Gift of the Holy Spirit Today* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1980). Two scholarly works rejecting the Pentecostal-charismatic position are F. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) and J. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).

¹¹ See discussion in L. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 11-12.

OT Verbs and Prepositions Regarding the Holy Spirit

The following passages may be examined in an English translation of the Bible. The transliterated verbs and prepositions used in the Hebrew text have been provided for you below.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Ex. 31:3	Bezaleel	<i>male'</i> (fill)	<i>be</i> (in/with)
Ex. 35:31	Bezaleel	<i>male'</i> (fill)	<i>be</i> (in/with)
Nu. 11:17	70 Elders	<i>sim</i> (put)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Nu. 11:25-6	70 Elders	<i>nuah</i> (rest)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Nu. 24:2	Balaam	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Nu. 27:18	Joshua	none	<i>be</i> (in)
Dt. 34:9	Joshua	<i>male'</i> (fill)	none
Jg. 3:10	Othniel	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Jg. 6:34	Gideon	<i>labash</i> (clothe)	none
Jg. 11:29	Jephthah	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Jg. 13:25	Samson	<i>pa'am</i> (impel)	none
Jg. 14:6	Samson	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Jg. 14:19	Samson	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Jg. 15:14	Samson	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'al</i> (on)
1Sa. 10:6	Saul	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'al</i> (on)
1Sa. 10:10	Saul	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'al</i> (on)
1Sa. 11:6	Saul	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'al</i> (on)
1Sa. 16:13	David	<i>tsalah</i> (rush)	<i>'el</i> (toward)
1Sa. 19:20	Saul's men	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'al</i> (on)
1Sa. 19:23	Saul	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'ai</i> (on)
2Kg. 2:15	Elisha	<i>nuah</i> (rest)	<i>'ai</i> (on)
1Ch. 12:18	Amasai	<i>labash</i> (clothe)	none
2Ch. 15:1	Azariah	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'al</i> (on)
2Ch. 20:14	Jahaziel	<i>hayah</i> (was)	<i>'al</i> (on)
2Ch. 24:20	Zechariah	<i>labash</i> (clothe)	none
Ne. 9:20	Israel	<i>natan</i> (give)	none
Ne. 9:30	Prophets	<i>'ud</i> (warn)	<i>be</i> (in/with)

Is. 63:11	Israelites	<i>sam</i> (set)	<i>bequireb</i> (among)
Eze. 2:2	Ezekiel	<i>bo'</i> (come)	<i>be</i> (in)
Eze. 3:24	Ezekiel	<i>bo'</i> (come)	<i>be</i> (in)
Eze. 11:5	Ezekiel	<i>naphal</i> (fall)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Mic. 3:8	Micah	<i>male'</i> (fill)	<i>'et</i> (with)

1. Were persons filled with the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? If so, who, with what effect, and to what purpose? [answer](#)
2. Does there seem to be any substantial difference between being “moved upon” by the Holy Spirit and being “filled with” the Holy Spirit? [answer](#)
3. Was the action of the Holy Spirit as it moved upon or within individuals normative or exceptional, i.e., did it produce results more or less to be expected and experienced by the entire congregation of Israel or only for a few special individuals? Explain. [answer](#)
4. At whose initiative did the Holy Spirit come? Did anyone expect the Spirit to come, or did anyone seek God that the Spirit might come? [answer](#)
5. Was the coming of the Holy Spirit momentary, was there some kind of permanence, or both? [answer](#)

New Testament References to the Old Testament Experience of the Spirit

There are a few places in which the New Testament refers to the action of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament or in which the action of the Holy Spirit is pre-Christian. Examine them in light of the passages you have previously studied in the OT.

PASSAGE	PERSON(S)	VERB	PREPOSITION
1Pe.1:11	Prophets	none	<i>en</i> (in)
2Pe.1:21	Prophets	<i>phero</i> (move)	<i>hypo</i> (by)
Lk.1:15	John	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Lk.1:35	Mary	<i>eperchoma</i> (come upon)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Lk.1:41	Elisabeth	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Lk.1:67	Zechariah	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Lk.2:26	Simeon	<i>chrematizo</i> (revealed)	<i>hypo</i> (by)

Lk.2:27 Simeon *erchomai* (came) *en* (in/by)

6. What similarities do you notice when comparing the New Testament references with the Old Testament ones? Are there any significant differences, and if so, what? [answer](#)
7. What seems to be the general purpose of an infilling with the Holy Spirit in these New Testament passages? [answer](#)

The Old Testament and the Promised Holy Spirit

When the prophets began to address the tragedy of the exile, they also were obliged to address the problem of what appeared to them to be a withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from Israel. Up until the exile, the visible *kabod* (= glory) of Yahweh dwelt in the Most Holy Place of the Tent of Meeting and Solomon's Temple. However, when the temple was destroyed by the Babylonian armies, the sacred "home" of the Spirit was also destroyed. Similar to the earlier destruction of Shiloh in the days of Eli (cf. 1 Sa. 4:12-22), Ezekiel depicted the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit in the most graphic terms when the *kabod* of Yahweh rose above the cherubim, moved to the threshold, passed through the court, out by the east gate of the temple, and over the eastern hills (Eze. 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23).

It is primarily against this background of the withdrawal of the Spirit in the exile that prophecies were given to the effect that the Spirit would be abundantly restored.

PASSAGE	PERSON(S)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Eze. 11:19	Israel	<i>natan</i> (put)	<i>be</i> (in)
Eze. 36:26	Israel	<i>natan</i> (put)	<i>be</i> (in)
Eze. 36:27	Israel	<i>natan</i> (put)	<i>be</i> (in)
Eze. 37:14	Israel	<i>natan</i> (put)	<i>be</i> (in)
Eze. 39:29	Israel	<i>shaphak</i> (pour)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Jl. 2:28	All people	<i>shaphak</i> (pour)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Jl. 2:29	Men/Women	<i>shaphak</i> (pour)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Is. 11:2	The Branch	<i>nuah</i> (rest)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Is. 32:15	Israel	<i>'arah</i> (pour)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Is. 42:1	The Servant	<i>natan</i> (put)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Is. 44:3	Descendants	<i>yatsag</i> (pour)	<i>'al</i> (on)
Is. 59:21	Israel	[implied] (is)	<i>'al</i> (on)

Is. 61:1	The Prophet	[implied] (is)	'al (on)
Zec. 12:10	Jerusalem	<i>shaphak</i> (pour)	'al (on)

8. To whom was the restoration of the Holy Spirit promised? [answer](#)
9. When was this promise anticipated? [answer](#)
10. Are there any differences to be noted between the era previous to the exile and the era of restoration, at least with regard to the Holy Spirit? [answer](#)
11. In the restoration, what effect would the Holy Spirit have? [answer](#)
12. You will have noticed that the verbs “to pour” are verbal metaphors picturing the Holy Spirit as water. This helps explain the prepositions “on” and “in” inasmuch as water can be poured “on” things as well as poured “in” things. How important is it to understand these prepositions as metaphorical, or to ask it another way, should one understand the Holy Spirit to be a substance, like water? If not, to what do the prepositions “on” and “in” refer? [answer](#)

The Transition to a New Era

One thing that marks the transition between the old community of Israel in the Old Testament and the new community of faith begun by Christ in the New Testament is the renewed action of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual action is emphasized particularly in the accounts of the preaching of John the Baptist as well as in the Luke-Acts documents.

The Return of the Quenched Spirit

Prophetic authority, according to the synagogue teaching of Jesus' day, was directly related to the possession of the Spirit. The prophet was one in whom the Spirit dwelt (cf. Eze. 2:2; 3:24; 11:5; Mic. 3:8; Zec. 7:12). As the Old Testament period drew to a close, the Jewish community concluded that the prophetic sequence of inspired speech and action had broken off. This closure is reflected in a late psalm (74:9)¹² as well as in the Apocrypha (1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41)¹³. Flavius Josephus,

¹² Psalm 74 is generally assigned to the period from the 5th to the 2nd century BC, cf. A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 518. Some scholars see in 74:9 evidence to favor a Maccabean date, cf. A. A. Anderson, *Psalms* (London/Grand Rapids: Marshall, Morgan & Scott/Eerdmans, 1972) 2.542.

¹³ 1 Maccabees, written about 100 BC, uses phrases such as “....since the time prophets ceased to appear among the

the Jewish historian from the same century as Jesus, remarked that since the return of the Jews from exile, “...there has not been an exact succession of prophets.”¹⁴ It was traditionally believed among the Jews that when the last of the prophets died, the Holy Spirit ceased from Israel.¹⁵

The Old Testament prophets had viewed the return of the quenched Spirit in terms of the end of history and the advent of Messiah, as we have already seen. The hope for a Spirit-possessed Messiah and a Spirit-endowed community is expressed in later Jewish thought also. The Messiah was expected to be God’s agent *par excellence* in the outpouring of the Spirit at the end of the world.¹⁶ Thus, the general attitude of the Jewish community with respect to the Holy Spirit at the time of the birth of Jesus was one of expectation. The Old Testament way of speaking about this event was that it would happen “in that day,” and “in that day” the Spirit of Yahweh would become active and powerful again. In light of this expectation, the references to the action of the Holy Spirit in the opening narratives of the four gospels is highly significant.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Lk. 1:15	The Baptist	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Lk. 1:35	Mary	<i>eperchomai</i> (come upon)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Lk. 1:41	Elisabeth	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Lk. 1:67	Zechariah	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Lk. 2:26	Simeon	<i>chrematizo</i> (revealed)	<i>hypo</i> (by)
Lk. 2:27	Simeon	<i>erchomai</i> (came)	<i>en</i> (in/by)
Mt 1:18	Mary	<i>heurethe en gastri exousa</i> (she was pregnant)	<i>ek</i> (by)
Mt. 1:20	Mary	<i>eimi</i> (is)	<i>ek</i> (by)
Mt. 3:16	Jesus	<i>erchomai</i> (come)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Mk. 1:10	Jesus	<i>katabaino</i> (coming down)	<i>eis</i> (to)
Lk. 3:22	Jesus	<i>katabaino</i> (coming down)	<i>epi</i> (upon)

people....” to indicate that the prophetic sequence was broken off.

¹⁴ *Against Apion*, 1:8.

¹⁵ D.Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 80-82; J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1971) 80-82; E. Schweizer, “Pneuma,” *TDNT* 6 (1968) 332-455.

¹⁶ G.Lampe, “The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke,” *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967) 163.

Jn. 1:33	Jesus	<i>katabaino</i> (coming down)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Jn. 3:34	Jesus	<i>didomi</i> (give)	none
Lk. 4:1	Jesus	<i>pleres</i> (full) ¹⁷	gen. (of)
Lk. 4:1	Jesus	<i>ago</i> (lead)	<i>en</i> (in)
Lk. 4:14	Jesus	<i>hypostrepho</i>	<i>en</i> (in)
Lk. 4:18	Jesus	[implied] (is)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Lk. 4:18	Jesus	<i>chrío</i> (annoint)	none
Mt. 3:11	“you”	<i>baptizo</i> (dip)	<i>en</i> (in/with)
Mk. 1:8	“you”	<i>baptizo</i> (dip)	dat. (in)
Lk. 3:16	“you”	<i>baptizo</i> (dip)	<i>en</i> (in/with)
Jn. 1:33	undesigned	<i>baptizo</i> (dip)	<i>en</i> (in/with)

13. In what events may one see a return of the quenched Holy Spirit? [*answer*](#)
14. What kinds of effects did the return of the Spirit produce, and how similar or dissimilar are these to the effects produced by the Spirit in the Old Testament? [*answer*](#)
15. In view of the general climate of Jewish opinion about the Holy Spirit during the intertestamental period, what do you think the gospel writers might have been trying to communicate by describing these various activities of the Spirit surrounding the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry? [*answer*](#)
16. What do you think was the impression of the Jews regarding a baptism with the Spirit when they went out to hear John the Baptist preach? [*answer*](#)
17. The one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit would also baptize with fire. To what does this refer?¹⁸ [*answer*](#)
18. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, even though he already had been conceived by the Holy Spirit at birth. This anointing (cf. Ac. 4:27; 10:38) seems to have manifested itself in

¹⁷ This word is not a verb, but it is cognate with the verb *pleroo* (= to fill).

¹⁸ Pentecostal-Charismatics sometimes speak of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire as referring to the tongues of fire as described in Ac. 2:3. Other evangelicals quite appropriately point out that in this context John's statement can only be a metaphor for cleansing and/or judgment. It can hardly refer to what happened at Pentecost.

Jesus' mighty words and deeds. This being so, then is it possible to contend that when a new operation of the Spirit occurs that there was no dimension of the Spirit previously? [answer](#)

19. With regard to Jesus himself, is it possible to maintain any substantial difference between the ideas of the Spirit being “upon” him or being “within” him? [answer](#)

Jesus and the Spirit

After the opening narratives of the gospels, there are comparatively few descriptions of the Holy Spirit's action either within or upon persons until one reaches the Book of Acts. However, what references exist demonstrate that Jesus' ministry was characterized by the presence and power of the Spirit. Even Nicodemus admitted to Jesus that “....no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (Jn. 3:2). It is probably in this context that the warnings against blaspheming the Holy Spirit were given, that is, that Jesus' opponents must not reject what was obviously a divine work of God (cf. Mt. 12:32; Mk. 3:29; Lk. 12:10). Some of the passages which use the word *pneuma* (= spirit) in referring to Jesus are probably not in reference to the Holy Spirit in any case, but rather, are in reference to his human spirit (cf. Mk. 2:8; 8:12; Lk. 23:46).¹⁹

PASSAGE	PERSON	VERB	PREPOSITION
Mt. 12:18	Jesus	<i>tithemi</i> (put)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Lk. 10:21	Jesus	<i>agalliao</i> (exult)	dat. (in)
Mt. 10:20	Disciples	<i>laleo</i> (speak)	<i>en</i> (in)
Mk. 13:11	Disciples	<i>laleo</i> (speak)	[implied] (in)
Lk. 12:12	Disciples	<i>didasko</i> (teach)	none
Lk. 11:13	Disciples	<i>didomi</i> (give)	dat. (to)
Jn. 3:5-8	A Person	<i>gennao</i> (to be born)	<i>ek</i> (of)
Jn. 4:23-24	Worshipers	<i>proskyneo</i> (worship)	<i>en</i> (in)

20. What was the source of Jesus' power to do miracles? [answer](#)

21. Jesus gave to his disciples the same authority to do miracles and to speak

¹⁹ As is well known, the original documents of the Greek NT did not have punctuation and capitalization. Thus, when the word “spirit” appears, unless it has a qualifier such as the word “holy,” it must be interpreted as either human or divine based on the context. Sometimes it is unclear as to which is meant.

boldly just as he himself had (of. Mt. 10:1, 7-8, 19-20; Mk. 3:14-15; 6:7, 13; Lk. 10:17-19). Is it not possible that Jesus enabled them to do these things through the endowment of the Spirit? If so, could this be analogous to the Old Testament incident in which God took the Spirit which was upon Moses and divided it upon the 70 elders of Israel (Nu. 11:17, 25-26)? [answer](#)

22. Given that at least selected individuals already had been filled with the Spirit and gifted to prophesy in the early gospel narratives (i.e., Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, John), is it possible that Jesus may have been referring to a present dimension of the Holy Spirit for his followers, during his own lifetime, when he made statements about the gift of the Spirit (Lk. 11:13), about worshiping in the Spirit (Jn. 4:23-24), about being born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-8), and about being given words with which to answer their accusers (Mt. 10:20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:12)? [answer](#)
23. In the context of the entire discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-21), to what does “being born of the Spirit” seem to refer? [answer](#)

The Promise of the Father

If the testimonies of the four evangelists indicate that the suspension of the Holy Spirit during the so-called 400 Silent Years had ended, they also indicate that a further dimension of the Holy Spirit’s activity would be realized after the death and resurrection of Jesus. On the one hand, the work of the Holy Spirit would continue as it had occurred during the missionary trips of the 12 apostles and the 70 disciples during Jesus’ lifetime. In fact, Jesus’ assurance to his followers of the presence of the Holy Spirit seems equally applicable to the period of Jesus’ lifetime as well as to the time of the post-Easter community (Mt. 10:20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 11:13; 12:12). On the other hand, the fact that Jesus was “going away” (Jn. 14:1-4) meant that the disciples were to enter a new era. It is in the context of Jesus’ departure that the added dimension of the Holy Spirit was promised.

Most of the references to the coming of the Holy Spirit are to be found in the Fourth Gospel, though Luke also has one clear parallel prediction. (In fact, the phrase “the promise of the Father” comes from this passage in Luke 24:49.) Furthermore, most of the discussion in the Fourth Gospel regarding the Holy Spirit appears in Jesus’ final extended discourse which occurred during the Last Supper and immediately after as the group was on its way to Gethsemane (cf. Jn. 13:1-2; 14:31b; 18:1).

John uses a special word for the Holy Spirit which is peculiar to the canonical literature that bears his name. This word, *parakletos*, is formed from two other

words, *para* (= alongside) and *kaleo* (= to call). Idiomatically, it means “one who is called to someone’s aid,” and depending upon how it is used, it can mean “one who appears in another’s behalf,” a “mediator,” an “intercessor,” a “helper,” and on rare occasions a “lawyer.”²⁰ English translators have struggled to capture the nuance of the word in several ways. They have rendered it as “Comforter” and “Advocate” (KJV), “Counselor” and “Advocate” (RSV), “Counselor” and “One who speaks in our defense” (NIV), “Advocate” and “One to plead our case” (NEB), “Paraclete” and “Intercessor” (NAB), “Helper” and “Advocate” (NASB) and “Friend” (Williams).

The Paraclete

PASSAGE	PERSON	VERB
Jn. 7:38-39	Believers	<i>lambano</i> (receive) implied (give)

24. This passage describes the Spirit as “streams of living water.” Such imagery comes from the Old Testament promise of the Spirit (Is. 44:3; cf. 32:15). How does Jesus seem to be applying the prophecies from Isaiah to the experience of the Spirit? [answer](#)
25. John clearly indicated that later the Spirit would be received by Jesus’ followers, and that at the time Jesus was speaking, the Spirit had not yet been given (lit., *oupo gar ev pneuma* = “for the Spirit was not yet”). In what sense had the Holy Spirit not yet been given? (From our previous study of the Old Testament and the infillings of the Spirit in the opening narratives of the New Testament, we must concede that the Spirit had been given to at least some individuals in some sense.) [answer](#)
26. John also indicated that the Spirit would not be given until after Jesus had been glorified. Based on the way the Fourth Gospel uses the expression “glorified,” to what event does John refer (cf. Jn. 12:16, 23-24; 13:30-32; 17:1)? [answer](#)

The coming of the Paraclete would in some sense also be the coming of the Father and the Son to indwell the believer. Jesus says not only that “another Paraclete” would come, he also says that this Paraclete is the very one which the world did not recognize even though he was even then living with the disciples (Jn.

²⁰ BAG (1979) 618.

14:17). Furthermore, Jesus says that the Paraclete will come, but he also says, “I will come” (Jn. 14:18). Again, he states that “on that day” (i.e., on the day when the Paraclete comes), the disciples would know that Jesus himself was in them. Finally, he says that “we,” the Father and the Son, would come and live with the believer. All of these statements serve to demonstrate the unity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, even though the plural pronouns maintain a distinction between the divine Persons (to use Nicene vocabulary). Thus, to receive the Holy Spirit is in some sense to receive the Father and to receive the Son as well.

Another important element in the following verses is the fact that the Holy Spirit is described as a Person. The Holy Spirit is not an “it” but a “he.” The Personhood of the Holy Spirit is implicit in the designation *Paracletos* (Friend, Helper, Counselor, etc.) as well as in the fact that John uses the masculine pronoun “he” to refer to the Spirit, though technically the word *pneuma* (= Spirit) is neuter in the Greek language. This means that the Holy Spirit must not be viewed as merely a field of force or a mystical power. The Holy Spirit is *someone*, not some thing!

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Jn. 14:16	Disciples	<i>didomi</i> (give)	dat. (to) ²¹
Jn. 14:17	Disciples	<i>eimi</i> (to be)	<i>en</i> (in)
Jn. 14:26	Disciples	<i>pempo</i> (send)	none

27. What is the difference between Jesus as the Paraclete and the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete? [answer](#)
28. According to Jesus, what would be the function of the “other Paraclete” when he would come? [answer](#)

Jesus counseled his disciples thusly: “Remain in me, and I will remain in you” (Jn. 15:4-5). The first part of this advice seems to refer to the disciples’ loyalty, faithfulness and intimate relationship with Jesus. However, to what does the phrase refer, “I will remain in you?” Could it mean that in some sense Jesus already indwelt the disciples? Even if in some sense Jesus was “in” the disciples, there was certainly the anticipation of a greater action in which he would indwell them through the Paraclete.

²¹ It is of interest that some early manuscripts (p66, 2nd and 3rd century; B, 4th century; W, 5th century) read “for he remains with you, and he is in you.” If this reading is followed, then the passage would seem to indicate that in some sense the Holy Spirit already indwelt the disciples, even though a future indwelling was promised.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Jn. 15:26	Disciples	<i>erchomai</i> (come)	none
		<i>pempo</i> (send)	dat. (to)
		<i>ekporeuomai</i> (proceed)	<i>para</i> (from)

29. Who would send the Holy Spirit? From where would the Holy Spirit proceed? Compare your answer in light of Jn. 14:26 and 16:7. [answer](#)

30. What function would the Holy Spirit have when he came? [answer](#)

One of the things the Holy Spirit would do when he came was to “convict” the world (*elencho* = “to bring to light,” “to convince,” or “to reprove,” depending on the context).

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Jn. 16:7-11	Disciples	<i>erchomai</i> (come)	<i>pros</i> (to)
		<i>pempo</i> (send)	<i>pros</i> (to)
Jn. 16:13-15	Disciples	<i>erchomai</i> (come)	none

31. In what sense was it “good” that Jesus was departing? [answer](#)

32. According to 16:8, what would be the purpose of the Holy Spirit when he came? What do you think each of the three phrases in 16:9-11 mean? [answer](#)

33. According to 16:13, what would be the purpose of the Holy Spirit when he would come? [answer](#)

34. According to 16:14-15, what would be the purpose of the Holy Spirit when he would come? [answer](#)

One of the intriguing aspects of the Fourth Gospel is that it records the giving of the Spirit after Jesus’ glorification in death and resurrection but before he ascended into heaven. Traditionally, one thinks of the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,

and indeed it was given then, but Jesus also bestowed the Spirit upon his disciples on the evening of his resurrection, when he appeared to them in the locked room. The act of breathing or blowing upon them, coupled with the imperative statement, “Receive the Holy Spirit,” makes any other interpretation unlikely²². Like God’s breath of life, which was breathed into the first human (Ge. 2:7), and like the inbreathing of the Spirit pictured by Ezekiel (37:9-10, 14), Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Jn. 20:22	Disciples	<i>lambano</i> (receive)	none

35. What seems to be the purpose of the gift of the Spirit according to Jn. 20:21? According to John 20:23? [answer](#)

The Father’s Promise

While the Fourth Gospel contains the majority of references to the future coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus’ death and resurrection, it is Luke who records the words of the Lord that specifically anticipate the Day of Pentecost.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Lk. 24:49	Disciples	<i>Exapostello</i> (send out) <i>enduo</i> (clothe with)	<i>Epi</i> (on)

36. What is the promise of the Father? (You may wish to refer to Luke’s second document in the New Testament as you answer this question, cf. Ac. 1:4-5.) [answer](#)
37. Where did Jesus say that this promise would be fulfilled? [answer](#)
38. What effect would the fulfilled promise have on the disciples in the context of Lk. 24:47? [answer](#)
39. According to Lk. 24:52-53, where did the disciples go to await the

²² It may be granted, of course, that some interpret this passage as a symbolism of what would later happen at Pentecost, but the language of the text is so against such an interpretation that it has not won the view of many scholars, cf. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 392; R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) 11.1038. It is far more natural to interpret what happened here as the giving of the Spirit after Jesus’ glorification, just as was promised (cf. Jn. 7:39)

fulfillment? [answer](#)

There is one other gospels passage that Pentecostal-Charismatics sometimes use in reference to the Holy Spirit. This is the reference to “new tongues” in Mk. 16:17 as a sign which would follow believers.

It is only fair to point out that the ending to Mark’s Gospel has a difficult textual problem, and that the passage in question belongs to what is known by scholars as the “longer ending,” an ending that does not appear in some of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. Both Eusebius and Jerome of the 4th century considered the longer ending to be spurious.²³ If indeed this passage does not truly belong to the gospel, then a discussion of it may be beside the point. On the other hand, the so-called “longer ending” is very old and may reflect an independent witness to the closing words of Jesus. It certainly does not conflict with anything in the other gospels, and in fact, for the most part it simply summarizes what the other gospels recount in more detail.

Although some have attempted to take the phrase “new tongues” to simply refer to a new way of speaking (i.e., new language habits as opposed to the degenerate language habits exhibited by non-Christians), most scholars agree that the reference to “new tongues” probably refers to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues as it is recorded in the Book of Acts. In any case, it is difficult to see how an upgrading of ordinary conversation could qualify as a “sign,” especially since the other signs mentioned are unquestionably intended to be taken as miraculous.

Regarding this passage, then, the following questions are appropriate:

40. Can Mk. 16:17 be used to support the idea that all believers will necessarily speak in tongues? (Sometime Pentecostal-Charismatics try to build such a case based on this verse.) [answer](#)
41. Can Mk. 16:18 be used to recommend the deliberate handling of snakes and the deliberate drinking of strychnine? (Some Appalachian Pentecostal groups in Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky regularly practice the handling of poisonous snakes and the drinking of poisonous substances as part of their worship.)²⁴ [answer](#)
42. How do the signs mentioned in Mk. 16:17-18 relate to passages such as Ac.

²³ A. Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 257.

²⁴ J. Nichol, 151-157.

2:4; 3:6-8; 5:12; 28:3? (While there is no example in the New Testament of anyone being miraculously saved after drinking a deadly substance, there is such an account from other early Christian writings.)²⁵ [answer](#)

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Even though the Fourth Gospel describes the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the evening of resurrection day (Jn. 20:19, 22), Luke shows that the more significant bestowal of the Spirit, and certainly the most public one, was yet to come after Jesus' ascension to the Father.

The Day of Pentecost

For some 40 days, Jesus made a variety of post-resurrection appearances to the apostles, men chosen by God to perform a special role as eye-witnesses of the living Lord (Ac. 1:3; 2:32; 3:15; 4:20; 5:32; 10:39; 13:30-31). Both in the gospels and in some of the letters (cf. 1 Co. 9:1; 15:4-8), the New Testament describes the special function of these witnesses. On one of their encounters, Jesus instructed the Apostles to stay in Jerusalem and await the gift promised by the Father (Ac. 1:4; cf. Lk. 24:49). Whatever their experience in the Holy Spirit had been up to that time, it is clear that Luke understands there to be something greater yet to come.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Ac. 1:5	Apostles	<i>baptizo</i> (dip)	<i>en</i> (in/with)
Ac. 1:8	Apostles	<i>eperchomai</i> (Come upon)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Ac. 2:1-4	Disciples	<i>pimplemi</i>	gen. (of/with)

43. For what purpose did Jesus promise to send the Holy Spirit?²⁶ [answer](#)

44. For Luke, the prediction of a baptism with the Spirit, as preached by John the Baptist, was to be fulfilled at a very particular time. When does Luke understand this fulfillment to have occurred? [answer](#)

45. Does the fact that the disciples waited until Pentecost for the gift of the

²⁵ Papias is credited with the story that Barsabbas Justus (cf. Ac. 1:23) drank a deadly poison but by the grace of God suffered no harm, cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III.39.9.

²⁶ It is worth noting that the idea of "power" in Ac. 1:8 primarily refers to ability or capability, though certainly this ability was to be supernaturally given. The derivative connection between the Greek word *dynamis* (= power) and our English word "dynamite" should not be pressed too far. The tendency of Pentecostals to interpret this word in explosive, emotional or sensational terms reads more into the word than is warranted.

Spirit in any way indicate that Christians should "tarry" for it today? (Pentecostals frequently have "tarrying services" in which candidates seek to be filled with the Spirit accompanied by the sign of other tongues. They find theological justification for this tarrying and seeking process from the fact that the disciples waited for the Spirit until the day of Pentecost.) [answer](#)

46. It is commonly assumed that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was in the upper room where the disciples were staying nights (cf. Ac. 1:13). Is this assumption warranted in light of Lk. 24:52-53? [answer](#)
47. Several groups of disciples are mentioned in the opening chapter of Acts. These groups include the apostles (1:2, 13, 26), a group made up of some women including Mary, Jesus' mother, and Jesus' half-brothers (cf. Mt. 13:55), and a group of believers numbering about 120 persons who were present when a replacement for Judas Iscariot was chosen (1:15). Which of these groups are the "they" of Acts 2:1? In other words, was the baptism with the Spirit given to the apostles or to the whole number of disciples? [Not a few interpreters believe that the outpouring of the Spirit was only for the 12 apostles, since they are the direct antecedents mentioned in 1:26, and since they are the only ones specifically mentioned later (cf. Ac. 2:14). Others interpret that the whole group was present to experience the baptism with the Spirit.] [answer](#)
48. What phenomena accompanied the baptism with the Spirit? [answer](#)
49. What seems to have been the content of the other languages which were spoken (cf. 2:11)? Some interpreters say that the purpose of the gift of languages was evangelistic, that is, that the phenomenon of other tongues enabled the gospel to be preached in the native tongues to those listening. Does this interpretation seem justifiable? [answer](#)
50. Pentecostals frequently use the phrase "baptism *of* the Spirit" even though that precise expression does not appear in the New Testament. (The New Testament Greek expression may be translated as "baptism *in* the Spirit" or "baptism *with* the Spirit," but never "baptism *of* the Spirit.") Does this unintentional lack of precision have any theological implications, and if so, what? [answer](#)

The Phrase “Baptism with the Spirit”

Because the phrase “baptism with the Spirit” is so popular, especially among Pentecostal groups, it will be well to reflect on some of the theology associated with this phrase. Interpreters understand the baptism with the Spirit in different ways. There are at least five major ways to be considered, two of which are Pentecostal and three of which are non-Pentecostal. Pentecostals all agree that the baptism with the Spirit is a crisis experience for each individual believer, usually accompanied by ecstasy and always accompanied by the sign of glossolalia (other tongues). Non-Pentecostals do not necessarily look for either ecstasy or other tongues.

Traditional Pentecostal View

Most Pentecostals believe that the baptism with the Spirit is a personal experience that happens to individuals after they have been saved. As such, they understand the baptism with the Spirit to be a second work of grace, the first work being salvation itself. In this view, the baptism with the Spirit is an empowering of the believer so that he/she may exercise the gifts of the Spirit, particularly those mentioned in 1 Co. 12:8-10. Speaking in other tongues is the unmistakable and necessary sign of this experience.

Minority Pentecostal View

A minority of Pentecostals believe that the baptism with the Spirit is part of salvation itself, and since they also believe that speaking in other tongues is the necessary sign of this experience, they are forced to conclude that a person is not saved until he/she has spoken in tongues. Here, too, the baptism with the Spirit is an individualized experience.

Traditional Christian View

In the teaching of the Reformers, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, the baptism with the Spirit coincides with baptism in water. The first is inward, the second outward. For the Eastern Church, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is also associated with the laying on of hands by the priesthood.

Majority Evangelical View

Most evangelicals view the baptism with the Spirit as synonymous with regeneration. It is the gift of the Spirit given at the moment of faith in Christ. While it may coincide with water baptism, it usually occurs prior to water baptism. The baptism with the Spirit, for them, is the placing of the believer within the body of Christ.

Minority Evangelical View

Finally, due of its limited usage in the New Testament, some evangelicals understand the baptism with the Spirit to be a once-for-all event, like the cross and the resurrection. It happened once on the day of Pentecost, and it is non-repeatable. It is more of a corporate event than an individualized event. It happened to the church collectively, not merely to individuals in the church. Because of that one historical baptism with the Spirit, all believers since that time are able to share in the gift of the Spirit when they believe the gospel.

Sorting through these views is a complicated task which is not made easier by the fact that in many cases the contenders for one or more of these views are militant, insisting that the subject be seen only in their particular way. As this study progresses, it will be well for the reader to keep these different perspectives in mind as he attempts to reach conclusions of his own. With regard to Pentecostalism, the Book of Acts must be carefully considered, inasmuch as Pentecostal theology is very much a “theology of Acts,” that is, it draws its primary data from this one book and, in particular, from four passages within this one book (Ac. 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44-46; 19:1-7).

Peter’s Response

The events of the day of Pentecost created intense interest. Some observers concluded that the disciples were inebriated (cf. Ac. 2:13). Peter, however, stood up with the eleven other apostles to explain the significance of the occasion.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Ac. 2:17-18	All people	<i>ekcheo</i> (pour)	<i>epi</i> (on)
Ac. 2:33	Disciples	<i>ekcheo</i> (pour)	none
Ac. 2:38-39	Listeners	<i>lambano</i> (receive)	

51. When Peter explained the events of Pentecost by using the prophecy of Joel, what are the implications of his words, “This is what was spoken by Joel?”
[*answer*](#)
52. What are the implications of the outpouring of the Spirit on all people, men and women, old and young? [*answer*](#)
53. To whom did Peter say the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was to be given?
[*answer*](#)

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts, which is a narrative and theological history of the earliest Christian communities, is a document filled with references to the Holy Spirit, so much so that it might properly be called “the gospel of the Holy Spirit.”²⁷ Before surveying the references to the Holy Spirit after the Day of Pentecost, it will be well to comment briefly on the nature of Acts as a biblical document.

First, Acts is somewhat different than a gospel or an epistle. It is a sequel to Luke’s gospel, and it narrates significant events in the life of the early church. One of the themes in Acts, which is also a theme in the Third Gospel, is geographical progression. In Luke, the progress begins in Galilee, moves toward Samaria and Judea, and finally reaches its goal in Jerusalem. In Acts, the progress begins where the Third Gospel leaves off in Jerusalem, and it moves toward Judea and Samaria, finally reaching its goal in Rome.²⁸

Second, Acts carries an epoch motif which was begun in the Third Gospel. Luke seems to divide history into three special epochs, the Period of Israel, the Period of Jesus’ Ministry, and the Period of the Church.²⁹ The Book of Acts especially addresses this third epoch.

Third, Acts is a transitional book. It describes the gospel as it crossed social, racial and class barriers. The church in Acts is still in its formative stages. Certain practices that occur early on, as in the communal character of the Jerusalem church (Ac. 4:32ff.), are short-lived. Certain experiences that occur early on, as in the release of the apostles from prison by an angel (Ac. 5:18-21), do not happen later in the book. Certain patterns of leadership that occurred in the beginning had to be expanded as the church grew and as the apostles became scattered and threatened with death.

This transitional nature is also applicable to certain aspects of the book’s data regarding the Holy Spirit. At first, all non-Jewish groups who received the gift of the Spirit were investigated by the Jerusalem church (Ac. 8:14; 11:1ff., 20-23), though later such investigation is carried no further. Also, certain phenomena associated with the gift of the Spirit were occasional rather than universal, specifically the sound of wind and tongues of fire, both of which occurred only once (Ac. 2:2-3), and glossolalia, which occurred three times (Ac. 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

Fourth, Acts is a book of narrative; it describes what happened in the life of the

²⁷ There is even a commentary on the Book of Acts by this title, See A. McBride, *The Gospel of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Hawthorn, 1975).

²⁸ K. Wolfe, “The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship,” *SWJournTheol* 22 (2, 1980) 60-71.

²⁹ J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 181-187.

earliest period of the church. Precisely because it is a book of narrative, the reader must be careful in drawing from it theological conclusions about the way the Christian church ought to be described for all times. The effort to “get back to the early church” can sometimes be misdirected. In some ways, it will be impossible to “get back,” and in other ways one probably should not want to “get back,” even if possible. In the same way that the sojourn of Israel in the desert could not be considered characteristic of her whole national history (e.g., Israel received manna from heaven and water from the rock while in the desert but it not after entering Canaan), so the events in the formative years of the church cannot be construed as necessary for all times. This is not to impinge upon the sovereignty of God, however. It is only to caution that the effort to reproduce the early church in modern times is an exercise that has limitations.

Pentecostal-Charismatics tend to view the Book of Acts as the charter description of the church for all times, but this approach has some built-in weaknesses. Granted, the Holy Spirit can and does move according to the sovereign purposes of God. No theologian can pronounce a moratorium on any work of the Spirit just because he doesn't happen to care for it personally. However, neither can anyone demand certain kinds of phenomena today just because they happened once or even a few times in the early church. To do so would be as inappropriate as demanding manna from heaven because God once gave it in the desert to Israel. The integrity of the church depends upon her fidelity to the gospel, not upon her ability to reproduce sensational phenomena.

Filled with the Spirit

One of Luke's favorite expressions, as has already been noted in the birth narratives of the Third Gospel, is the description of being “filled with the Spirit.”

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Ac.2:4	Disciples	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Ac.4:8	Peter	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Ac.4:31	Believers	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Ac.6:3, 5	Deacons	<i>pleres</i> (full)*	gen. (of)
Ac.7:55	Stephen	<i>pleres</i> (full)*	gen. (of)
Ac.9:17	Saul (Paul)	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Ac.11:24	Barnabas	<i>pleres</i> (full)*	gen. (of)
Ac.13:9	Paul	<i>pimplemi</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)
Ac.13:52	Disciples	<i>pleroo</i> (fill)	gen. (of/with)

[* This word is not a verb, but it is cognate with the verb *pleroo* (= to fill).]

54. What were the various effects produced upon believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit? [answer](#)
55. Does the description “filled with the Spirit,” as used by Luke, seem to refer to persons who had never before received the Spirit? (When Pentecostal-Charismatics speak of being “Spirit-filled,” they usually are referring to a single crisis experience in which they spoke in tongues and at which time they received a fullness of the Spirit that they had never experienced previously.) [answer](#)
56. Does there appear to be any particular external phenomena that always accompanies being filled with the Spirit? (Pentecostal-charismatics usually say that speaking in other tongues is the expected sign of being filled with the Spirit. Is this conclusion theologically justifiable?) [answer](#)
57. In any of these cases did anyone “tarry” for the Holy Spirit or plead with God in order to be filled with the Spirit? Did anyone who was filled with the Spirit expect some particular phenomenon, or does the infilling of the Spirit with its accompanying phenomena seem to have been a wonderful surprise? [answer](#)
58. Does there seem to be any difference between the expressions “filled with the Spirit” and “full of the Spirit?” [answer](#)

Communications by the Spirit

In several instances, Luke records that the Holy Spirit communicated to the church or to individual believers special information.

PASSAGE	PERSON(S)	VERB	PREPOSITION
Ac.5:32	Believers	<i>martyros</i> (witness)*	gen. (of)
Ac.8:29	Philip	<i>lego</i> (say)	dat. (to)
Ac.9:31	The church	<i>plethyno</i> <i>paraklesis</i> (increase in encouragement)	gen. (of)
Ac.10:19	Peter	<i>lego</i> (say)	none
Ac.11:12	Peter	<i>lego</i> (say)	dat. (to)

Ac.11:28	Agabus	<i>semaino</i> (indicate)	<i>dia</i> (through)
Ac.13:2	Church	<i>lego</i> (say)	none
Ac.13:4	Missionaries	<i>ekpempo</i> (send)	<i>hypo</i> (by)
Ac.15:28	Leaders	<i>dokeo</i> (seem)	dat. (to)
Ac.16:6	Paul	<i>koluo</i> (prevent)	<i>hypo</i> (by)
Ac.16:7	Paul	<i>ouk eao</i> (not permit)	none
Ac.20:22	Paul	<i>deo</i> (bind)	dat. (by)
Ac.20:23	Paul	<i>diamartyromai</i> (warn)	dat. (to)
Ac.20:28	Bishops	<i>tithemi</i> (put)	none
Ac.21:4	Paul	<i>lego</i> (say)	<i>dia</i> (through)
Ac.21:11	Agabus	<i>lego</i> (say)	none

[* This word is not a verb, but it is cognate with the verb *martyreo* (= bear witness).]

59. What kinds of things did the Holy Spirit communicate to believers in the early church? [answer](#)
60. How do you think that this communication was given? Was it intuitive and subjective? Was it objective? Is this kind of communication related to the spiritual gifts as described in 1 Co. 12? [answer](#)
61. How frequently do you think this kind of special communication occurred in the early church? [answer](#)
62. Is there any evidence that this kind of communication was expected, sought after or considered to be the general experience of all believers? Is there any reason to believe that if such communications had not been given, the early Christians would have begun to seek for their manifestation? [answer](#)

Receiving the Holy Spirit

It may be that Luke uses the vocabulary of “receiving” the Holy Spirit in a somewhat different way than the vocabulary of being “filled” with the Holy Spirit. While the vocabulary of being “filled” seems generally to refer to a momentary experience that happens to believers who already have the gift of the Spirit, the vocabulary of “receiving” seems to refer to the giving of the Spirit to those who did not yet have it. There are four different accounts that speak of believers receiving the Spirit, those added to the church at Pentecost, those at Samaria, those at Caesarea

Philippi, and those at Ephesus. It will be worthwhile to examine each of them individually.

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB
Ac. 2:38	Observers who believed	<i>lambano</i> (receive)

63. With what other Christian actions is the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit associated? [answer](#)
64. Is there anything in this statement by Peter to indicate that the gift of the Spirit must be accompanied by a sign, such as, speaking in tongues? [answer](#)
65. Inasmuch as 3000 responded to Peter's call for baptism (Ac. 2:41), should the reader assume that these same believers received the gift of the Spirit? If so, then is it significant that there is no record of any further phenomena occurring as had previously occurred in Ac. 2:1-4? (Those Pentecostals who require the gift of the Spirit to be accompanied by other tongues must contend with this significant silence. If 3000 persons were speaking in tongues, such a sensation is hardly the sort of thing Luke would pass over.) [answer](#)

PASSAGE	PERSON(S)	VERB
Ac. 8:15	Samaritans	<i>lambano</i> (receive)
Ac. 8:17	Samaritans	<i>lambano</i> (receive)
Ac. 8:18	Samaritans	<i>didomi</i> (give)
Ac. 8:19	Samaritans	<i>lambano</i> (receive)

66. Who came to Samaria and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the gift of the Spirit? Is there any significance to the fact that they were apostles from Jerusalem, and if so, what? [answer](#)
67. The Samaritans did not immediately receive the gift of the Spirit when they responded to Philip and were baptized. What implications may be drawn from this fact? [answer](#)
68. Why do you think that the Samaritans did not receive the gift of the Spirit when they believed the gospel and were baptized? (There are essentially four positions that different Christian theologians defend.)

- a) Churches that practice infant baptism often understand this to be an early example of confirmation, that is, that the Samaritans' baptism had to be confirmed by an apostle (or someone in apostolic succession) before they could receive the gift of the Spirit.
 - b) Some scholars prefer to view the Samaritans' faith as insufficient or defective, that is, they gave intellectual assent to Philip's message, but they did not at that time make a life commitment to it.³⁰ Only when they had made such a life commitment did they receive the gift of the Spirit.
 - c) Classical Pentecostals and many Charismatics say that this passage describes a second work of grace. As such, they assume that the Samaritans had been regenerated by the Spirit when they believed Philip, but only later were they baptized in the fullness of the Spirit (empowered for service) when Peter and John prayed for them.³¹
 - d) Other scholars suggest that God sovereignly withheld the Holy Spirit from the Samaritans so as to avoid a rift in the early Christian church. Since the gospel had not yet reached beyond Jewry until Philip's trip to Samaria, there was the danger that the Samaritans might not be fully accepted in the community of faith. The presence of two apostles when the Samaritans received the Spirit insured that such a rift would not occur.³² [answer](#)
69. Given Simon's reaction to Peter and John's power to bestow the Spirit through the act of laying on of hands (8:18-19), does his reaction indicate that there was some observable phenomenon accompanying the gift of the Spirit in this instance? [answer](#)

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB
Ac. 10:44	Cornelius' Household	<i>epipto</i> (come upon)
Ac. 10:45	Gentiles	<i>ekcheo</i> (pour out)
Ac. 10:47	Cornelius' Household	<i>lambano</i> (receive)

³⁰ This view is built upon the idea that the Greek verb *pisteuo*, when used with the dative, signifies assent to a propositional statement but not necessarily a commitment to God, cf. J. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), p. 65.

³¹ H. Ervin, *Spirit Baptism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987) 72-73; H. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) 25-40.; cf. Dunn, 55; F. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 65.

³² I. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 157-158; F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 182-183.

Ac. 11:15	Cornelius' Household	<i>epipto</i> (come upon)
Ac. 11:16	Followers of Jesus	<i>baptizo</i> (dip)
Ac. 11:17	Cornelius' Household	<i>didomi</i> (give)
Ac. 15:8	Cornelius' Household	<i>didomi</i> (give)

70. Compare the reception of the Holy Spirit at Cornelius' home with the reception of the Holy Spirit in Samaria, particularly as the gift of the Spirit relates to water baptism. What are the differences, and what implications arise from these differences? [*answer*](#)
71. What phenomena accompanied the giving of the Spirit at Cornelius' home? [*answer*](#)
72. According to Ac. 10:46, what seems to have been the content of the phenomena of other tongues? How does this compare with the earlier recorded incident in Ac. 2:11? [*answer*](#)
73. Did Peter's sermon contain any references to other tongues? [*answer*](#)
74. Did anyone "tarry" or seek the giving of the Spirit and/or the phenomena of other tongues, or was it once again a wonderful surprise for all concerned? [*answer*](#)
75. Given that this incident was the crossing of a major racial barrier for the early church, what seems to have been the purpose for the sign of other tongues as it is later explained in Ac. 11:15-17 and Ac. 15:8? Would the sign of other tongues have been as important on other occasions as it was here? [*answer*](#)
76. Peter said that the Holy Spirit came upon these Gentiles just as it had upon the apostles "at the beginning" (11:15). Why did he go back to the original event at Pentecost in order to find a parallel? [*answer*](#)

PASSAGE	PERSON(s)	VERB
Ac. 19:2	Disciples knowing only John's baptism	<i>lambano</i> (receive)
Ac. 19:6	Disciples knowing only John's baptism	<i>erchomai</i> (come)

77. Does not Paul's question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you

believed?” seem to indicate that the gift of the Spirit is normally to be expected at the response of faith in Christ?³³ [answer](#)

78. What were the theological limits of these disciples in Ephesus, that is, what did they know, and what did they not know? [answer](#)
79. What phenomena occurred in this instance of the giving of the Spirit? How does this compare with the other two cases described in Ac. 2:1-4 and Ac. 10:44-46? [answer](#)

Before leaving the subject of receiving the Holy Spirit as it is described in the Book of Acts, it is worth mentioning that a minority of Pentecostals (Oneness Pentecostals) say that the sign of other tongues is indispensable to salvation itself, that is, that one cannot be saved without receiving the Spirit and that one cannot receive the Spirit without speaking in tongues. This position is not defensible in the text of Acts. In the various accounts of conversion in Acts, and there are at least 32 of them, the consistent pattern of salvation is described as faith in the gospel. At no place is there any indication that failure to speak in tongues leaves one outside of God’s saving grace. This becomes abundantly clear in the following brief survey of conversion descriptions in Acts:

PEOPLE/PLACE	RESPONSE	PASSAGE
Observers at Pentecost	Faith, repentance, baptism	2:37-38, 41
Jews in Jerusalem	Believed the message	4:04
Jews in Jerusalem	Believed in the Lord	5:14
Priests in Jerusalem	Obedient to the faith	6:07
Samaritans	Believed the good news, accepted God’s Word, baptized	8:12, 14
Ethiopian, Gaza Road	Belief, baptism	8:36-37

³³ The KJV renders this passage “since you believed,” and accordingly, some interpreters have attempted to use this passage as evidence for a second work of grace. However, the temporal aorist participle *pisteusantes* is a participle of coincidence, and it indicates, not a separation between conversion and receiving the Spirit, but rather, that they are normally considered to be simultaneous. As such, more precise translations render the phrase “when you believed” (ASV, RSV, NAB, NEB, NASB, TEV, JB, Williams, Weymouth, Phillips, Berkeley, C. H. Rieu, etc.). Scholars are generally agreed that the Greek text does not favor the notion of subsequence, cf. A. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1930) 111.311; F. Bruce, 385; Marshall, 306; M. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946) 1:551; E. Trenchard, “Acts,” *The New International Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Marshall Pickering, 1986) 1300.

Saul, Damascus	Baptized	9:18
Jews in Lydda & Sharon	Turned to the Lord	9:35
Jews in Joppa	Believed in the Lord	9:42
Godfearers in Caesarea	Believed, received the Word, baptized	10:43, 47- 48; 11:1
Greeks in Antioch	Believed, turned to the Lord	11:21
Sergius Paulos, Paphos	Believed	13:12
Jews and Proselytes at Pisidian Antioch	Believed, converted	13:39, 43
Gentiles at Pisidian Antioch	Honored the Word of God, believed	13:48
Jews & Gentiles, Iconium	Believed	14:01
Citizens of Derbe	Put their trust in the Lord	14:21-23
Gentiles in Asia Minor	God opened the door of faith	14:27
Gentiles in Asia Minor	Converted, heard the message, believed, purified by faith, saved by grace, turned to God	15:3, 7, 9, 11, 19
Lydia & Household at Thyatira	Opened her heart, baptized, believed	16:14-15
Jailer & Household at Philippi	Believed, baptized	16:30-34
Jews & Greeks at Thessalonica	Were persuaded	17:04
Jews & Greeks at Berea	Believed	17:12
Greeks at Athens	Repented, believed	17:30, 34
Jews & Greeks at Corinth	Persuaded, believed, baptized	18:4, 8
Citizens of Achaia	By grace believed	18:27
Jews & Greeks at Ephesus	Heard the Word, believed	19:10, 18
Citizens of Ephesus	Repentance and faith	20:21
Jews in Jerusalem	Believed	21:20
Gentiles	Turned from darkness to light and received forgiveness	26:18
Those in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, Gentile nations	Repent and turn to God	26:20

The Gift of the Spirit in the New Testament Letters

In general, it can be said that the gift of the Spirit in the New Testament letters is largely assumed. There are no narrative descriptions, such as one finds in the Book of Acts. At the same time, there are some important points to be considered which arise in the context of the various epistles.

Receiving the Spirit

Though it is only occasional, in some passages in the epistles, the New Testament writers discuss the Holy Spirit in ways that help us fill out the picture of this messianic gift.

PASSAGE

Ro. 5:5; 8:9, 11, 15-16, 23; 14:17

1 Co. 2:12; 3:16; 6:11, 17; 12:3-7, 13

2 Co. 5:5

Ga. 3:2-5, 14; 4:6

Ep. 1:13; 2:18, 22; 4:30

Phil. 2:1

1 Th. 4:8

2 Th. 2:13

2 Ti. 1:7, 14

Tit. 3:5

He. 6:4

1 Pe. 4:14

80. What may be gleaned from the above passages about the gift of the Spirit in these early Christian communities and the conditions under which they received it? [*answer*](#)
81. Were there any signs described that accompanied the gift of the Spirit? [*answer*](#)
82. Is there any indication that Paul or others considered the Christians in the churches to be divided into two groups, those who had been baptized with the Spirit and those who had not? [*answer*](#)
83. At what point in their Christian experience does it seem that the believers in the churches received the gift of the Spirit? [*answer*](#)

The Purpose of the Gift of the Spirit

Various passages in the letters contribute to our understanding of the purpose of the messianic gift of the Spirit.

PASSAGE

Ro. 8:9-11, 13-17

1 Co. 6:17; 12:13

2 Co. 1:22; 5:5

Ga. 4:6

Ep. 1:13-14; 2:18; 4:30

84. How important is the gift of the Spirit in terms of being a child of God? [answer](#)

85. Is it possible to be considered a New Testament Christian believer (a child of God) and yet not have the gift of the Spirit? [answer](#)

86. In light of these passages as well as those in the Book of Acts (cf. Ac. 10:45-46; 11:1-2, 9, 15-18; 15:8-9, 11), what is a believer's guarantee that he/she has been accepted by God? [answer](#)

PASSAGE

Ro. 7:6; 8:2, 4-6

2 Co. 3:18

Ga. 3:3; 5:16-18, 22-25

Ep. 5:18

87. No one questions that the Holy Spirit empowers God's people for service, but apart from this empowering function, what seems to have been Paul's primary emphasis as to the purpose of the gift of the Spirit? [answer](#)

PASSAGE

Ro. 8:11, 23, 26-27

Ep. 6:18

1 Co. 2:9-16; 12:4-11

Ep. 1:17-19; 3:16-21

Col. 1:27

88. What are some other functions for which the gift of the Spirit is given? [answer](#)

How Does One Know He/She Has Received the Gift of the Spirit?

One of the most crucial questions with regard to the gift of the Spirit is the question of assurance, that is, how does one know if or when he/she has received the gift of the Spirit. Is there some external sign? Is the evidence subjective or objective? All believers in the apostolic age were assumed to have received the Spirit. What were the conditions, and how did they know they had received it?

As we have seen, various phenomena and effects are described in Luke's writings, including empowerment (Lk. 24:46-49), wind, fire and tongues (Ac. 2:2-4, 33; 10:46; 19:6), voluble praise (Ac. 10:46), prophecy (Lk. 1:15, 41-45, 67; 2:27-32; Ac. 19:6), and healing (Ac. 9:17). However, in no passage does Luke single out a particular phenomenon and infer that it should always happen or that a sign is necessary to validate the gift of the Spirit. To be sure, in some cases, such as, the household of Cornelius in Acts 10, the external phenomenon served as a convincing factor for observers, though there is no reason to believe it was necessary for the recipients themselves. How do the passages in the New Testament letters fill out our understanding of the assurance of the gift of the Spirit?

PASSAGE

Ep. 1:13-14; 3:16-17
 Ga. 2:20; 3:2, 14
 1 Co. 12:3
 1 Th. 1:6

89. According to Paul, what seems to be the critical condition for receiving the gift of the Spirit? [answer](#)

PASSAGE

Ro. 5:5; 8:16
 1 Jn. 3:19-24; 4:2-3, 13, 15-16; 5:10-12

90. What is the believer's inward assurance that he/she possesses the gift of the Spirit? [answer](#)

PASSAGE

Ro. 8:5, 14; 14:17
 1 Co. 2:14-15
 2 Co. 3:3
 Ga. 5:22-25

2 Ti. 1:7
1 Jn. 4:12

91. What are more or less observable evidences which indicate that a believer possesses the gift of the Spirit? [answer](#)

PASSAGE

Jn. 1:12-13; 3:3-5
Tit. 3:5
1 Pe. 1:22-23
1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9-10; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18

92. What does it mean to be “born” of the Spirit or “born again?” [answer](#)

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In the New Testament letters, particularly those of Paul, the reader encounters various references to what are called “gifts,” that is, endowments given to believers through the Holy Spirit that resides in them. The primary word for “gift” is *charisma*, a word very closely associated with the Greek word *charis* (= grace). *Charismata* (the plural form of *charisma*) are gifts or favors freely and graciously bestowed through the Spirit³⁴. They are grace-gifts, unmerited and unachieved. It is from the Greek word *charisma* that we derive the popular term “charismatic”, which usually is taken to mean one who seeks to experience the divine enabling of the Spirit, especially speaking with tongues.

The word *charisma* does not in every instance in the New Testament refer to divine enabling expressed by believers. Eternal life itself is spoken of as a *charisma* (Ro. 5:15; 6:23). The privileges of Israel as the people of God (cf. Ro. 9:4-5) are regarded as *charismata* (Ro. 11:29). However, several passages refer to spiritual gifts in a special sense, a sense that seems to refer to the gracious enabling of Christians to do, say, or experience things that they could not do, say or experience under their own human powers or volition. It is these latter with which we are concerned here.

Gift-Lists in the New Testament

Several passages list examples of this divine enabling. Some are defined and described, while others are only mentioned by name without explanation.

³⁴ F. Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965) 235.

PASSAGE	CHARISMATA
Ro. 12:6-8	Prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, generosity, leadership, showing mercy
1 Co. 1:5-7	Speaking (= prophecy?), knowledge
1 Co. 7:7	Celibacy (and, by implication, marriage)
1 Co. 12:8-10	Message of wisdom, message of knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, different tongues, interpretation of tongues
1 Co. 12:28-30	Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, assistance to others, administration, different tongues, interpretation of tongues
1 Co. 13:1-3	Tongues, prophecy, understanding mysteries, knowledge, faith, voluntary poverty, martyrdom ³⁵
1 Co. 13:8	Prophecy, tongues, knowledge
1 Co. 14:6	Tongues, revelation, knowledge, prophecy, word of instruction (= teaching?)
1 Co. 14:26	Hymns, teaching, revelation, tongues, interpretation of tongues
2 Co. 1:10-11	Answered prayer for deliverance from death
2 Co. 8:7 ³⁶	Faith, speech (= prophecy?), knowledge, diligence, love, financial giving
Ep. 4:11	Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers ³⁷
1 Ti. 4:14	Ordination to leadership
2 Ti. 1:6	Ordination to leadership
1 Pe. 4:8-11	Fervent love, hospitality, speaking (= prophecy?), serving

93. Sometimes spiritual gifts are thought to be a measurement of spiritual maturity, especially within the Pentecostal-charismatic movement which

³⁵ Some interpreters understand the gifts mentioned here to be hyperboles, that is, intended exaggerations which do not necessarily correspond to real possibilities. Most scholars, however, see them as comparable to the descriptions of gifts elsewhere in this section of 1 Corinthians.

³⁶ This passage does not contain the word *charisma*, but the context seems to indicate that Paul is referring to spiritual gifts.

³⁷ The words “pastors” and “teachers” are governed by the same definite article and conjunction in the Greek text rather than by separate ones, as are the other gifts mentioned, so that the reader should probably take the two roles as complementary and coordinated in the same person, cf. A. Wood, “Ephesians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 58. A discussion of this so-called “Granville Sharp Rule” may be found in H. Dana and H. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965) 147.

places great emphasis upon the gift of tongues. In light of the fact that the Corinthians excelled in spiritual gifts (1 Co. 1:7) and in light of the Corinthians' general spiritual condition (1 Co. 1:11; 3:1-4; 4:18-19; 5:1, 6; 6:7; 8:9-12; 11:17, 21) is such an assumption necessarily so? [answer](#)

94. Sometimes spiritual gifts are assumed, by definition, to be spectacular and phenomenal. In surveying the above give lists, do you think such a conclusion is necessarily the case? [answer](#)
95. How are spiritual gifts to be related to what Paul describes as spiritual fruit (cf. Ga. 5:22). Are they the same or different? Do they overlap? In light of 1 Co. 12:29-31, are all believers to exhibit every spiritual gift? Do you think all believers are to exhibit the full range of spiritual fruit? [answer](#)
96. According to 1 Co. 12:7, what seems to be the primary purpose of the manifestation of spiritual gifts? [answer](#)
97. According to 1 Co. 12:11, 18; Ro. 12:3; Ep. 4:7, 11 and He. 2:4, by whose will and purpose are spiritual gifts distributed to believers? Sometimes Pentecostals and Charismatics urge believers to seek that God would give to them specific gifts, especially tongues, on the basis of 1 Co. 14:1. In light of the above passages, does it seem appropriate that Christians can choose which gifts they are to experience? [answer](#)

Gifts within the Imagery of the Body of Christ

In addressing the nature of spiritual gifts in his Corinthian correspondence, Paul develops at length the metaphor that a congregation of Christians is like a living organism made up of various bodily parts. Each bodily part performs a function which, by analogy, represents a spiritual gift that each member exercises as a contribution for the benefit of the whole (1 Co. 12:12-13, 27).

It is also well to keep in mind the nature of Paul's instructions regarding worship in the Corinthian churches. Paul's comments on worship are not offered from a neutral point of view, but rather, they are intentionally corrective. He bluntly prefaces his remarks to the Corinthians that their worship patterns "do more harm than good" (1 Co. 11:17). The factionalism over leadership that characterized the Corinthian house churches (cf. 1 Co. 1:12-13; 3:3-4, 21-23) seems to have carried over into their exercise of spiritual gifts. Some Corinthians seem to have elevated certain spiritual gifts as more important than others (1 Co. 12:15-27). The frequency with which the subject of speaking with tongues arises would seem to indicate that

this particular gift was especially problematic and in need of some careful controls. Thus, when one reads Paul's various comments, they must be read within the context of correction, not neutrality.

98. In 1 Co. 12:14-20, what do you think Paul is trying to say about spiritual gifts when he discusses the roles of bodily parts in a living organism? What is he saying about unity in the church? What is he saying about diversity? Does not his question, "If they were all one part, where would the body be?" seem to indicate that there is no single gift that is for everyone in the church? Does his discussion about how each part belongs to the whole (1 Co. 12:21-27) not seem to indicate that every gift is important to the body, not just some gifts? [answer](#)
99. In 1 Co. 12:21-26, what do you think Paul might be saying about attitudes of superiority by persons who wish to elevate particular gifts? To what do you think Paul may be referring when he speaks of bodily parts that seem to be weaker or less honorable? What might Paul be saying about those who would devalue some gifts as dispensable? [answer](#)
100. In 1 Co. 12:27-31, Paul seems to categorize some gifts according to rank. What are these, and why do you think he considers them to be priorities for the church? Why do you think Paul asks the series of rhetorical questions beginning with, "Are all....?" What answer does he expect?³⁸ What do you think Paul means by the "greater gifts?"³⁹ [answer](#)

³⁸ It is worth pointing out that in New Testament Greek it is possible to ask a question so that a negative answer is expected, and this is the case here, cf. E. Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament* (New York: Scribners, 1965) 229-230. As such, the rhetorical questions may best be translated as follows (cf. NASB):

All are not apostles, are they? [No!]

All are not prophets, are they? [No!]

All are not teachers, are they? [No!]

All do not have miraculous powers, do they? [No!]

All do not have gifts of cures, do they? [No!]

All do not speak with tongues, do they? [No!]

³⁹ There is uncertainty as to how this verse is to be translated inasmuch as it can be rendered as an imperative or an indicative, cf. W. Orr and J. Walther, *I Corinthians [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 287-288. If it is rendered as an imperative, it should be translated, "But eagerly desire the greater gifts," (i.e., desire to exercise those gifts that God deems appropriate and edifying for the congregation). If it is rendered as an indicative, it should be translated, "But you are eagerly desiring the greater gifts," (i.e., you are vying with each other for the gifts that in your opinion are superior--something that you should not be doing).

The Most Excellent Way

It is probable that the latter half of 1 Co. 12:31 should be taken as the introduction to what follows in 1 Co. 13. The “most excellent way” is the way of love.

101. The word “excellent” is a superlative term. When Paul speaks of the “most excellent way” in 1 Co. 12:31, with what is he comparing the way of love? In other words, the “most excellent way” is superlative as compared with what? [*answer*](#)
102. Do you think Paul is treating “love” as one of the spiritual gifts, or is he treating it as something apart from the gifts? [*answer*](#)
103. When Paul speaks of the “tongues of men and of angels” in 1 Co. 13:1, to what does he refer? Is the reference to the languages of angels simply a hyperbole and hypothetical, or is there a language of other tongues that is not a human language? Sometimes Charismatics speak of a “prayer language” or a “heavenly language.” Is this concept valid? How does the expression “unknown tongue” relate to this concept (1 Co. 14:2, 4, 13-14, 19, 27, KJV)? [*answer*](#)
104. Everyone agrees that according to 1 Co. 13:8-12 love is permanent while spiritual gifts are not. However, there is sharp controversy as to how the temporary nature of spiritual gifts should be understood. The controversial theological questions are: “When will spiritual gifts cease to function?” and, “Do some gifts cease before others?” In seeking to answer these questions, the reader will want to carefully examine the following summary of three major positions. [*answer*](#)

B. B. WARFIELD POSITION

Building upon the theology of the Princeton evangelical theologian B. B. Warfield, a scholar from the turn of the century, many evangelicals argue that certain *charismata* (in particular, tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings and miracles) are temporary in the sense that they were signs during the apostolic age intended to authenticate the message of the apostles (of. 2 Co. 12:12; Ro. 15:18-19; He. 2:3-4).⁴⁰ The gifts mentioned in 1 Co. 13:8 were a sort of temporary expedient to guide the fledgling church until the New Testament canon could be completed, after which these gifts gradually faded away.⁴¹ Accordingly, Paul’s description of “that which is

⁴⁰ G. Osborne, 1103.

⁴¹ J. MacArthur, *The Charismatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 163-171; Hoekema, 103-123; Unger, 138-145;

perfect” (1 Co. 12:10) is sometimes taken to be a direct reference to the completed New Testament. As such, it is felt that modern experiences of tongues are misguided and inappropriate, and when they occur they are evaluated as psychological disorders, emotional imbalances, or even demonic possessions. Such modern expressions are not considered to be a work of the Holy Spirit.

PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC POSITION

The Pentecostals and Charismatics are forced to agree that tongues-speaking and related gifts declined in the early history of Christianity and remained at a low ebb until the 20th century. However, they generally interpret this decline as evidence that the church itself declined in its fidelity to the teachings of the apostles. The church of the Middle Ages was a spiritually bankrupt institution. Only those few scattered groups who believed in the “fullness of the Spirit” qualify as true Christianity as it was meant to be. Restoration toward full apostolicity began with the early reformers, continued through the revivalism of the 17th--19th centuries, and was finally realized in the Pentecostal movement itself. As such, if a congregation wishes to be faithful to the pattern of the New Testament, that congregation should seek to express itself in the gifts of tongues, interpretation, healings, and so forth. Churches that do not do so are missing out on the power of God, and while they may be Christian in some sense, they do not have the “full gospel.” Thus, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are “Spirit-filled” churches or “full gospel” churches or “New Testament Churches.”

AN INCLUSIVE POSITION

Those in the middle position take issue with what they feel are the weak exegetical and historical conclusions of the Warfield position as well as the overly negative attitudes of Pentecostals toward the history of Christianity. They point out that 1 Co. 13:8-12 patently speaks of the end of the age when Christ comes, not the end of the first century when the apostles died or when the New Testament canon was completed. (The mass of New Testament scholars are surely on their side in this contention.) They also point out that important church leaders after the apostolic age speak favorably of glossolalia, including Irenaeus (2nd century), Tertullian (3rd century), Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century), Luther and Calvin (16th century), and Wesley (18th century). They contend that the notion that certain gifts such as tongues must necessarily have ceased does not seem to have been very strong in the general history of Christian thought.

On the other hand, they understand that the substance of Paul’s discussion in 1

Corinthians 12-14 indicates that such gifts are capable of serious abuse. They are aware that the occasions of tongues-speaking in church history are relatively rare, and in some cases these experiences have occurred among clearly heretical groups. To be sure, various movements within the history of Christianity have experienced tongues-speaking, such as, the Montanists of the 2nd century, the monks at Greek Orthodox monasteries and the Roman Catholic missionary Francis Xavier (both in the Middle Ages), the Protestant French Huguenots of the 17th century, the Roman Catholic Jansenists of the 18th century, and among the modern Pentecostal-Charismatics. Tongues-speaking and related gifts need not be dismissed categorically, but because many of these expressions are subjective experiences that have uncertain benefits and drawbacks, they need not be accepted categorically, either.

Regarding the above different positions, which have so severely fragmented evangelical Christianity not to mention caused numerous congregational splits, the following questions are appropriate from all sides:

105. Is it possible that certain gifts of the Spirit appear in the apostolic period in ways or with a frequency that may not characterize all of the church age?
[answer](#)
106. Is it not characteristic of God's dealings in sacred history that he uses miraculous phenomena at certain times and not at others, or more at some times than at others? [answer](#)
107. Is it not presumptuous to place a moratorium on any work of the Spirit, and to declare that it cannot ever happen again? [answer](#)
108. Even if one agrees that all spiritual gifts are possible for the church today, must he/she also approve of all or even most of the apparent manifestations of these gifts in the modern church? [answer](#)
109. Is it possible that the polarized sides of this controversy have over-reacted to each other, that is, that tongues-speaking is not as wonderful as the Pentecostal-Charismatics seem to think, and it is not as terrible as the B. B. Warfield camp seems to think? [answer](#)

Controls for Speaking in Tongues in Public Worship

Unusual manifestations were not isolated phenomena in the Christian communities of the 1st century. Prophecies, healings, ecstasies, exorcisms, miracles and speaking in tongues characterized many of the Hellenistic religions, such as,

those associated with the oracles of Delphi, Dodonna and the Cult of Asklepios.⁴² Wandering wonder-workers, called *theioi andres* (= divine men), purported to perform a variety of miraculous signs.⁴³ Simon Magi, called “The Great Power,” may very well have been one of this latter sort (of. Ac. 8:9-11). So serious was the similarity between these pagan expressions and some Christian spiritual gifts that Paul was forced to warn, “No one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed’” (1 Co. 12:3). Such pagan “spiritual influences” led the worshiper back toward idolatry (1 Co. 12:2).

As such, then, Paul is concerned for the Corinthian congregation that they not make an automatic equation between extraordinary phenomena and the presence of God. If an outsider was to be convinced that “God is really among you,” it ought to be on the grounds of intelligible communication, not ecstatic and unintelligible utterances (1 Co. 14:23-25). Intelligibility was of first importance for Paul with regard to public worship. Edification and intelligibility are closely related, because edification comes from the content of what is said, not the emotional, ecstatic or spectacular nature of how something is said.

110. Why do you think that Paul encouraged the Corinthians to especially desire the gift of prophecy (1 Co. 14: 1)? [answer](#)

111. When a person speaks in tongues, to whom does Paul says they are speaking (1 Co. 14:2)? To whom does Paul say they are not speaking? (Granted, even though the speaker is addressing God and not the congregation, the congregation may still add the “Amen” of agreement if the communication is understood to be a valid Christian expression, cf. 1 Co. 14:16-17.) If, indeed, the one who speaks in tongues is not speaking to other people but rather to God, then does this fact not call into question the Pentecostal-Charismatic practice of directing speeches in other tongues toward the congregation or toward certain members of the congregation for advice, warning and direction? Pentecostal Charismatics have coined an expression for this practice called “a message in tongues,” though the expression does not appear in the Bible. What are the implications, if any, of using such a non-biblical expression? [answer](#)

112. What does Paul explain to be the purpose of prophecy in a congregation (1

⁴² L. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 29-30; H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 171-176.

⁴³ Johnson, 29-30.

Co. 14:3)? To whom is prophecy addressed? How does this compare with speaking with tongues? [answer](#)

113. What is the primary difference between the gift of speaking with tongues and the gift of prophecy with regard to edification (1 Co. 14:4)? [answer](#)
114. Why do you think that prophecy is more appropriate for congregational worship than speaking with tongues (1 Co. 14:5)? How may the church be edified through hearing someone speak in tongues? [answer](#)
115. What seems to be the point of Paul's illustrations about the flute, harp, and trumpet with regard to speaking with tongues (1 Co. 14:6-12)? [answer](#)
116. If someone is in a congregation of believers and intends to speak in tongues, what should he/she also do (1 Co. 14:13)? If neither the speaker nor anyone else is capable of interpreting the utterance in tongues, what must be done (1 Co. 14:27-28)? [answer](#)
117. What seems to be the difference between praying with one's spirit and praying with one's mind (1 Co. 14:14-15)? [answer](#)
118. What seems to be Paul's definition of the content of speaking with other tongues (1 Co. 14:16-17)? How does this compare with the descriptions by Luke (Ac. 2:11; 10:46; 19:6)? [answer](#)
119. Sometimes Pentecostal-Charismatics use 1Co.14:5a and 14:18-19 to suggest that Paul wishes all believers to speak in tongues. Is this suggestion valid in light of 1 Co. 12:30 and the discussion about the body not being only a single part (1 Co. 12:14-20)?

Part of the problem with the above Pentecostal-Charismatic suggestion is that it depends upon breaking up the syntax of Paul's sentences. Paul does not simply say, "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues." Rather, he says, "I would like everyone of you to speak in tongues, but..." By analogy, suppose a group of children were consuming large quantities of ice cream, and one of their parents spoke up and said, "I wish all of you would eat ice cream, but I would rather that you ate a balanced meal." Would we then say that the parent was attempting to urge everyone to eat more ice cream? Similarly, someone might say, "I take more naps than any of you, but when I'm with a group, I would rather spend five minutes awake than forty hours asleep." Would we then say that this person

was urging everyone to take more naps? Paul's statements in 14:5a and 14:18-19 both contain the conjunction "but," and this syntax must not be ignored. Thus, what does Paul really want to say by his statements in 14:5a and 14:18-19? [answer](#)

120. While Paul freely admits that he speaks in tongues, in what situation does he imply that he does not do so (1 Co. 14:19)? [answer](#)
121. Why do you think Paul accuses the Corinthians of thinking like children (1 Co. 14:20)? [answer](#)
122. What is the meaning of the passage Paul quotes, and why do you think he quotes it (1 Co. 14:21-22; cf. Is. 28:11-12)? In what way are tongues a sign to unbelievers? How is this different from prophecy, which is for believers? [answer](#)
123. Given Paul's comments in 1 Co. 14:2, 4-11, 19-20, 23, do you think that Paul would have been in favor of speaking in tongues in a public worship service without an interpretation? [answer](#)
124. What is the single most important goal of members who wish to contribute something to the congregation in corporate worship (1 Co. 14:26)? If this single most important goal is edification, how is edification to be defined? Is it primarily something emotional, or is it rather something intelligible to the mind? [answer](#)
125. What sorts of rules does Paul lay down for the Corinthians regarding speaking with tongues in a public worship setting (1 Co. 14:27-28)? With regard to prophecy (1 Co. 14:29-33)? [answer](#)
126. What is Paul's final conclusion with regard to speaking with tongues (1 Co. 14:39-40)? [answer](#)

The Author's Answers to the Study Questions

It is only natural that the reader should wish to know the opinion of the writer on the various questions which have been posed throughout the foregoing interactive study. The following answers have been composed with this in mind. However, it is still in order to encourage the reader to work out the answers for him/herself prior to reading my own answers. There is no substitute for direct interaction with Holy Scripture, and while the reader may be a non-professional in biblical studies, without expertise in Hebrew, Greek, theology, and so forth, the English Versions are very adequate so long as one does not approach them tendentiously and without due regard for the context of the various passages studied.

1. The assumption that people in the Old Testament were only moved upon externally by the Holy Spirit but not filled with the Holy Spirit cannot be upheld. Bezaleel, the artist in the desert sojourn, was filled with the Holy Spirit in order to complete his artistic work on the Tent of Meeting and its furnishings (Ex. 31:3f.; 35:31f.). The Holy Spirit was resident in Joshua, Moses' successor (Nu. 27:18; Dt. 34:9).⁴⁴ The teaching office of Moses and the other leaders of Israel is described as the product of the gift of the Spirit (Ne. 9:20). Micah the prophet claimed to have been filled with the Spirit. While it is true that frequently the action of the Holy Spirit is described in metaphors that depict it as an external force, it is equally true that the Old Testament is not exempt from metaphors that depict the Spirit's work as an internal, residing force. [back](#)
2. There does not seem to be any substantial difference between being "moved upon" by the Spirit and being "filled with" the Spirit. What might appear to be a difference is largely just a variation in the metaphors themselves, but the action of the Spirit in both cases seems clearly to be for the empowering of special persons so that they might do a specially chosen work for God. [back](#)
3. The action of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament seems to have been exceptional. It benefited the few individuals who were especially marked out for it. The action of the Spirit does not seem to have been normative for the entire congregation of Israel. In fact, when the Spirit rested upon the 70

⁴⁴ Of course, it is a moot question as to whether the unqualified word *ruah* (= Spirit) should be capitalized in these passages (see NIV footnote). However, Ronald Allen is probably correct in suggesting that the passage indicates Joshua to be the Spirit endowed leader of the people, cf. R. Allen, "Numbers," *EBC* (1990) 2.946. Equally noteworthy is the observation that this residence of the Spirit seems to be a permanent endowment rather than a temporary state, cf. P. Budd, *Numbers [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1984) 306-307.

elders, Moses exclaimed, “I wish that all Yahweh’s people were prophets and that Yahweh would put his Spirit on them!” (Nu. 11:29). In the subsequent history of Israel, the gift of the Spirit was usually given in order to empower a leader for war (Jg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:19; 15:14-15; 1 Sa. 11:6; 1 Chr. 12:18) or to perform other feats of strength (Jg. 14:6). The transfer of leadership from Saul to David was described as a transfer of the Spirit of anointing from the one to the other (1 Sa. 10:1; 13:14; 15:28; 16:13; cf. Nu. 11:17; 27:18; 2 Kg. 2:15). The gift of the Spirit also was given to enable persons to utter prophetic oracles (Nu. 24:2; 2 Chr. 15:1; 20:14; 24:20; Ne. 9:30; Eze. 2:2; 3:24; 11:5; Mic. 3:8). Sometimes, the act of prophesying took the form of trances and other ecstatic states (1 Sa. 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23). In all these occasions, the gift of the Spirit is clearly exceptional and reserved for special individuals. It was not generally given to the congregation of Israel. [back](#)

4. Without exception, the gift of the Spirit came out of divine initiative. Typically, no one ever expected to be moved upon by the Spirit, nor did they seek God that the Spirit might come. In many cases the Spirit’s action was both a shock and a surprise. I suppose it might be argued that Samson’s dramatic suicide prayer (Jg. 16:28) was a prayer for the Spirit, even though the term Spirit is not in the passage, but even if so, such a prayer is clearly unusual. The idea of seeking for a demonstration of the Spirit is clearly foreign to the Old Testament. [back](#)
5. The action of the Spirit seems to have been momentary in some cases and more or less permanent in others. While it caused the 70 elders to prophesy at first, this was the first and only time (Nu. 11:25)⁴⁵. When the Spirit rushed upon the judges to incite them to holy war, the description seems to indicate a temporary state. On the other hand, when David was anointed king, the text clearly states that the Spirit came upon him in power from that day forward. Of course, David later prayed that God would not take from him the Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:11), but his prayer is directed toward his position as the king, and in effect, he prayed that God would not retract his kingship as he had done to Saul (cf. 2 Sa. 7:15-16; cf. 1 Sa. 13:13-14). [back](#)
6. The most striking similarity is that Luke seems to be using the identical

⁴⁵ The KJV rendering, “...the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease...,” is a misunderstanding of the Hebrew text, which means just the opposite, “...they did so no more” (cf. RSV, NASB, NEB, ASV), cf. J. Marsh, “Numbers,” *IB* (1953) 2.198. The mistake has been corrected in the NKJV.

framework in describing the action of the Spirit as do the Old Testament writers. The fact that John, the prophet of messiah *par excellence*, as well as Elisabeth, Zechariah and Simeon were all filled with the Spirit, precisely in order that they might proclaim prophetic oracles, is surely after the pattern of the 70 Elders of Israel (Nu. 11:25), Balaam (Nu. 24:2f.), Amasai (1 Chr. 12:18), Azariah (2 Chr. 15:1f.), Jahaziel (2 Chr. 20:14), and Zechariah ben Jehoiada (2 Chr. 24:20). Once again, it is worth noting that the Spirit not only moved externally upon those in the Old Testament (2 Pe. 1:21), but the Spirit was “in” them as well (1 Pe. 1:11). At this point in the New Testament narratives, there does not seem to be any qualitative difference in the action of the Spirit as compared with the OT. [back](#)

7. The general purpose of an infilling of the Spirit in these passages is singular: the Spirit is given so that its recipient might be the mouthpiece of God in proclaiming a prophetic oracle. [back](#)
8. The promise of the gift of the Spirit in the eschatological restoration was consistently made to Israel (Is. 32:15; 59:21; Eze. 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Jl. 2:28-29).⁴⁶ The figure of speech shifts on some occasions, to be sure. Israel is described as the offspring of the Servant of Yahweh in one case (Is. 44:3), that is, the servant Jacob (Is. 44:1-2). Similarly, Zechariah refers to Israel as Jerusalem on another occasion (Zec. 12:10). Nevertheless, the consistent promise is that the gift of the Spirit is for the exiled nation that had been divinely restored.

There is an important exception, however. The gift of the Spirit is also to be given to a future leader, alternately described as the Branch (Is. 11:1), the Servant of Yahweh (Is. 42:1)⁴⁷, and a prophetic evangelist (Is. 61:1). This figure, of course, Christians understand to be the Lord Jesus Christ. [back](#)

9. The time of fulfillment is nowhere specifically stated, except that it is anticipated after the regathering of scattered Israel (Eze. 11:17-18; 36:24-27; 37:12-14; 39:28-29) and the restoration of the land (Jl. 2:18-29). The deserted land would then become fertile once again (Is. 32:14-15; 44:3-4). However, the time of fulfillment is obviously to be associated with the

⁴⁶ Joel's phrase *kal-basar* (= all flesh) is sometimes taken to refer to Gentiles, but the context militates against this interpretation. Allen is almost certainly correct when he says Joel is referring to the community of Judah, Cf. L. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah [NICOT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 98.

⁴⁷ As is well known, the figure of the Servant in the four Songs of the Servant in later Isaiah moves fluidly between corporate identity and the individual. We cannot address this figure here, but one may pursue it further in a brief way in R. Harrison, *ISBE* (1988) 421-423.

coming anointed leader (Is. 22:1ff.), a messianic figure who would bring justice to the nations (Is. 42:1) and preach good news to the poor and the oppressed (Is. 61:1ff.) [back](#)

10. With regard to the Holy Spirit, it seems that the primary difference between the era before the exile and the era associated with the restoration is one of degree. Earlier, we noted that the action of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was occasional and exceptional. Only special individuals were privileged to experience the gift of the Spirit. In the restoration, however, the gift of the Spirit is envisioned for all Israel (Eze. 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Is. 44:3; Zec. 12:10). Joel, in particular, delimits the action of the Spirit, so that it is equally to be poured out on all flesh, young as well as old, female as well as male (Jl. 2:28-29). [back](#)
11. The effects of the Holy Spirit in the restoration would be many. In addition to the more stereotyped phenomena associated with mysticism, such as, dreams, visions and prophecies (Jl. 2:28), there would be a profound internal change. Hearts of stone would be transformed into warm, living hearts of flesh--hearts filled with undivided commitment to the Lord (Eze. 11:19-20; 36:26-27). People would respond to the Lord in true penitence (Zec. 12:10), and the impurity of sin would be cleansed (Eze. 36:25; Zec. 13:1). Even the land would be affected, for it would become fertile and safe (Is. 32:15-17). No doubt this tremendous spiritual transformation is to be associated with the coming great leader, who would be the bearer of the Spirit *par excellence* (Is. 11:1-2). He would champion the causes of justice, righteousness, and peace (Is. 11:3-10; 42:1-9), and he would preach good news to the poor (Is. 61:1-3).

All these factors suggest that the gift of the Spirit, at least from the standpoint of the Old Testament, is to be viewed as an eschatological event to be associated with the age to come. It would truly be a messianic gift bestowed upon the people in the messianic age. [back](#)

12. It is probably important not to press the biblical metaphors beyond their immediate metaphorical value. While the metaphors do indeed depict the Spirit as a substance that can be poured as well as something with which one can be clothed or filled, the point of such figures of speech is to describe the action of the Spirit, not the ontological nature of the Spirit. The Spirit should not be conceptualized as a substance. To extrapolate out of the metaphor such notions as being "half full of the Spirit" or to attempt to differentiate

between being “filled with” the Spirit as opposed to being “moved upon” by the Spirit is overinterpretation. [back](#)

13. The description of several infillings of the Holy Spirit in the infancy and inauguration narratives of the early chapters in Luke are deliberate. Theologically, they herald nothing less than the dawning of the messianic age, and the accent is upon the fulfillment of God’s messianic promises.⁴⁸ It is to be noted, of course, that the gift of the Spirit to John, Elisabeth, Zechariah and Simeon is prophetic, and against the background of Judaism’s concept of the quenched Spirit, such spiritual activity marks the end of the era of spiritual drought. Even more so does Jesus’ anointing with the Spirit herald the return of the quenched Spirit and the inauguration of the messianic era.⁴⁹ [back](#)
14. There are several effects produced by the return of the Spirit, and the Gospel of Luke, more than any other, gives attention to them. Prominent among these effects is the gift of prophetic speech, which inspired the Blessing of Elisabeth (Lk. 1:41ff.), the Song of Zechariah (Lk. 1:67ff.), and the *Nunc Dimittis* of Simeon (Lk. 2:25ff.). The fact that the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from birth marks out his prophetic role as the forerunner of the messiah (Lk. 1:15). While the Magnificat of Mary (Lk. 1:46ff.) is not directly associated with the gift of the Spirit, she was earlier told that the Spirit would come upon her (Lk. 1:35). Thus, it seems that Luke’s concept of the gift of the Spirit is largely prophetic, that is, the gift of the Spirit produces inspired speech. To this may be added the action of the Spirit in revelation (Lk. 2:26).

The other gospels agree in kind, though they concentrate upon Jesus himself. Mary’s pregnancy was by the action of the Spirit (Mt. 1:18, 20). The inauguration of Jesus’ ministry was characterized by the gift of the Spirit that propelled him into his messianic-prophetic role (Mt. 3:16//Mk. 1:10//Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:33). As the bearer of the messianic Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:34; Lk. 4:1), Jesus was gifted to preach the messianic good news (Lk. 4:14, 18).

The similarity between this prophetic action of the Spirit and the effects produced by the Spirit in the prophetic period of the Old Testament

⁴⁸ P. Minear, “Luke’s Use of the Birth Stories,” *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. Keck and J. Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) 117; R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) 36-46.

⁴⁹ J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Scribners, 1971) 76-85.

are obvious. Jesus' teaching may have superficially resembled the theologizing of the scribes, and on occasion he even debated points of law with them so that he was considered by some to be the "Rabbi of Nazareth." Nevertheless, Jesus was not depicted in the gospels as merely a theologian. He was completely lacking in formal studies, something no budding rabbi could afford to neglect. Instead, Jesus was regarded as charismatic in that he was considered to be a prophet, exhibiting both the power and authority of the Spirit (Lk. 24:19).⁵⁰ [back](#)

15. It seems apparent that the primary thrust of the evangelists was to mark Jesus as the messiah, and as such, to mark his advent as the beginning of the messianic age which would be characterized by the return of the quenched Spirit. [back](#)
16. John's message of a coming "baptism with the Spirit" would almost certainly have been received by the Jews who heard him as the announcement of the messianic age's inauguration. John's use of the verb *baptizo* (= to baptize) seems to have been intentionally chosen for its value as an analogy with his baptism in water (Mt. 3:11//Mk. 1:8//Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33). The question may be raised as to whether or not this verb should be assimilated with the other metaphors of "pouring," "anointing," and "filling." The answer is almost certainly affirmative. It seems highly unlikely that the Jews would have understood John to be referring to anything other than the messianic gift of the Spirit which was to be given to all God's people in the messianic age. If the messiah was coming, he would certainly give the gift of the Spirit. [back](#)
17. The imagery of fire almost certainly depicts purification and judgment (Mt. 3:11//Lk. 3:16). The context of the imagery militates against any other interpretation, for the metaphor is buttressed by the further analogy of the burning of the chaff with unquenchable fire (Mt. 3:12//Lk. 3:17). The baptizing action of the messiah involves two elements, both of which point to a separation. Some will be gathered into the divine granary--theirs will be a baptism with the Spirit. Others will be swept away in judgment--theirs will be a baptism of fire.⁵¹ [back](#)

⁵⁰ J. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 68.

⁵¹ G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 37.

18. The New Testament sees no self-contradiction in the fact that one who is anointed with the Spirit may already have been the bearer of the Spirit. The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus confirmed his messianic role (Jn. 1:33) and his true identity as the Son of God (Mt. 3:16-17//Mk. 1:10-11//Lk. 3:22). This in no way detracts from the fact that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in birth (Mt. 1:18, 20; Lk. 1:35). The assumption does not stand that when one is filled with the Spirit or anointed by the Spirit such action assumes an absence of the Spirit previously. [back](#)

19. There is probably no substantial difference between the Spirit being “within” Jesus and being “upon” him. Such prepositions are probably metaphorical, and there is no reason to assume that they are intended to distinguish between different operations or modes of the Spirit’s action. In Luke, especially, both expressions are used to describe the same thing. Jesus, “full of the Holy Spirit,” came to Galilee to preach “in the power of the Spirit,” and his mission was initiated by the “Spirit of the Lord” which was “upon him” (Lk. 4:1, 14, 18). [back](#)

20. The source of Jesus’ power in ministry was the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:18). The opposition narratives, in which Jesus warned his critics against blaspheming the Spirit, presuppose that the Spirit was the source of Jesus’ power (Mt. 12:24, 32//Mk. 3:22, 29//Lk. 12:10; cf. Jn. 3:2). [back](#)

21. Jesus authorized his disciples to perform miracles during his public ministry, and it seems quite possible that they were empowered to do so because they were endowed with the Spirit. There is no New Testament passage that specifically says that this is the case, but the analogy of the Spirit upon Moses being dispersed upon the 70 elders of Israel is fitting (Nu. 11:17, 25-26), particularly since Jesus also chose 70 disciples to represent him in his public ministry (of. Lk. 10:1).⁵² We do know that Jesus promised his disciples that if they were arraigned before the local councils and synagogues, the Spirit of the Father would speak through them in their defense (Mt. 10:17-20//Mk. 13:9-11//Lk. 12:11-12). Furthermore, in Jesus’ teaching on prayer, he encouraged his disciples to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:13), and there is no indication that he only meant this for

⁵² There is a textual discrepancy in the manuscripts between 70 and 72 with the evidence about evenly divided, cf. B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: UBS, 1971) 150-151. However, the number 70 was a well-known entity in Jewish and Christian traditions and is probably to be preferred (Ex. 1:5; 24:1; Je. 25:12).

a future time, such as, the post-Easter era. [back](#)

22. Since others, such as Elisabeth, Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and John, had clearly been filled with the Spirit in the birth and infancy narratives of the gospels, there seems to be no reason why there could not have been a dimension of the Spirit available for the disciples during the public ministry of Jesus. He certainly encouraged them to ask the Father for the Spirit (Lk. 11:13), and he announced that the time had arrived for true worshipers of the Father to worship him in the Spirit (Jn. 4:23-24). Jesus himself gave expressions of praise to God through the Holy Spirit (Lk. 10:21), and there is no reason why similar expressions could not have been offered by his disciples. Jesus challenged Nicodemus to be born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-8), and again, there is no hint that he was speaking solely of a post-Easter event. The fact that Jesus promised the disciples that they would be given words of defense by the Holy Spirit who would speak through them presupposes that they were to be Spirit-endowed in some sense (Mt. 10:20//Mk. 13:11//Lk. 12:12). [back](#)

23. Jesus' metaphor about being "born of the Spirit" seems to refer to the response of faith (Jn. 3:1-21). While the dialogue begins with this metaphor of birth, the bulk of the discussion revolves around the issue of faith. Jesus speaks the truth, but his testimony is rejected (3:11-12). His goal, however, is for everyone to believe in him and so gain eternal life (3:15-16). This response of faith in God's Son is what separates those who will be condemned from those who will be saved (3:17-18). Thus, the metaphor of new birth by the Spirit (3:5) points toward faith in Jesus, God's one and only Son (3:18). Once again, this action of the Spirit does not seem to be postponed until the post-Easter era. There is every indication that Jesus desired faith from Nicodemus then and there through the action of the Spirit. [back](#)

24. When Jesus spoke of the coming Holy Spirit as "streams of living water" (Jn. 7:38-39), he probably was alluding to the predictions in Isaiah where the Spirit is described as "water on the thirsty land" and "streams on the dry ground" (Is. 44:3; cf. 32:15). This passage in Isaiah is from the section which anticipates the *Ebed Yahweh* (= Servant of the Lord), and in this passage, the Servant is described as the nation Israel.⁵³ Thus, the oracle

⁵³ All of the names used, Jacob (44:2, 5), Jeshurun (44:2), and Israel (44:5), seem to be used in a corporate way. *Jeshurun* (= upright one) is a poetic name for the nation (cf. Dt. 32:15; 33:5, 26)

envisioned the gift of the messianic Spirit upon Israel in the great restoration. When Jesus said that the Spirit was later to be given to those who believed, he pointed toward a future time when the messianic gift was to be given to everyone in the messianic community. [back](#)

25. In the sense of a general outpouring upon all the messianic community, the messianic Spirit had not yet been given (Jn. 7:39). To be sure, the gift of the Spirit already had been given in special circumstances to special people. However, there had not yet been a general endowment of the Spirit upon all the disciples. Such an endowment awaited a future fulfillment which would not be accomplished until after the glorification of the Messiah. [back](#)
26. The Fourth Gospel employs the vocabulary of glorification to refer to Jesus' death on the cross (Jn. 12:16, 23-24; 13:30-32; 17:1) and his return to the Father (Jn. 17:5). This same idea about death as a way of glorifying God is also used with respect to Peter (Jn. 21:19). As such, then, Jesus indicated that the general outpouring of the messianic gift of the Spirit would not occur until after his passion. [back](#)
27. The use of the expression "another Paraclete" implies that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are to be considered Paracletes (Jn. 14:16-17, 26). In his visible, physical presence, Jesus was the Paraclete for his disciples. The Holy Spirit would serve to compensate the disciples for the loss of the physical Jesus after his return to the Father. Jesus, in his earthly ministry, would no longer be their visible teacher and guide. Yet the Spirit would perform these same functions that Jesus had performed in the flesh, so enabling the disciples to continue his mission. The difference between Jesus as the Paraclete and the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete is one of visibility but not accessibility. The action of the Paraclete, which was once visible and tangible in the life of the earthly Jesus, will be just as real in the future, though in an invisible way. [back](#)
28. As the "other Paraclete," the function of the Holy Spirit would be to abide with the disciples until the end (Jn. 14:16), while reminding them of the teachings of Jesus. Later, Jesus said that the Spirit would not "speak on his own," that is, he would not speak as an independent authority apart from Jesus or bring a new message different than that of Jesus (Jn. 16:13). Instead, the Spirit would testify to those things that Jesus had already taught, bringing glory to the Son (Jn. 16:14-15). [back](#)

29. The Holy Spirit would be sent by the ascended Christ (Jn. 16:7), yet at the same time, the Spirit would proceed from the Father (Jn. 15:26; cf. Ac. 2:33). It also is correct to say that the Father would send the Spirit (Jn. 14:26). This dynamic interplay between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is paradoxical, and it points toward the interpenetration of the Persons in the Godhead. The threeness and the oneness of God are suprarational. The Nicene Creed, which seeks to explicate the being of God, was the result of much controversy in the 3rd and 4th centuries of the church.⁵⁴

Though a final version of the Nicene Creed was accepted by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381 and later was recognized by the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, an additional clause was later added in the West, the famous *filioque* clause (= and the Son). The original draft of the creed simply stated, “I believe in the Holy Spirit...who proceedeth from the Father.” The *filioque* clause expanded the line to read, “I believe in the Holy Spirit...who proceedeth from the Father. and the Son.” This addition was categorically rejected in the East and eventually contributed to the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the eastern view, Jn. 15:26 only speaks of the Spirit as proceeding from the Father, and furthermore, the addition had no ecumenical approval. In the western view, the additional phrase is intended to safeguard the belief that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.⁵⁵ [back](#)

30. The function of the Holy Spirit is always Christocentric. He comes in the name of Christ in order to teach the disciples and remind them of the words of the Lord (Jn. 14:26). His role will be to “testify” about Christ (Jn. 15:27). [back](#)
31. It was “good” that Jesus was returning to the Father so that the Holy Spirit could be sent to the disciples (Jn. 16:7). The implications of this teaching seem to be that if it was good for Christ to be the Paraclete among the disciples, even though he was localized and confined to one geographical place at a time, the Holy Spirit, as the other Paraclete, would be even better, since he would have no such limitations of time or space. [back](#)
32. The purpose of the coming Holy Spirit, according to Jn. 16:8, would be to convict the world with regard to its sinfulness, to testify to righteousness, and to convince people of the reality of judgment.

⁵⁴ For a full treatment, see J. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) 223-279.

⁵⁵ G. Bromiley, *EDT* (1984) 415.

Each of the phrases in Jn. 16:8 are enlarged in the succeeding verses. While the Paraclete serves as an advocate and counselor to the disciples, he also serves as the counsel for the prosecution toward the unbelieving world. In both respects, he duplicates the work of Christ. He will expose and refute the world's rejection of Christ. He will demonstrate to the world that condemned Jesus that Christ was in the right and they were in the wrong. The NEB captures this thrust in a dynamic equivalency, where it reads: *When he comes, he will confute the world, and show where wrong and right and judgment lie. He will convict them of wrong, by their refusal to believe in me; he will convince them that right is on my side, by showing that I go to the Father when I pass from your sight; and he will convince them of divine judgment, by showing that the Prince of this world stands condemned.* Of course, standing behind those who condemned Christ was the arch enemy Satan, the prince of the world. In his death and resurrection, Christ destroyed Satan's dominating power (cf. Jn. 12:31; He. 2:14-15; 1 Jn. 3:8).⁵⁶ It is this aspect of Christ's messianic work to which the Holy Spirit will testify.

Thus, the Fourth Gospel clearly describes the purpose of the Holy Spirit in Christocentric terms. This Christocentric testimony of the Spirit is very different from the emphasis that appears among some Pentecostal-Charismatic groups--an emphasis on mysticism, emotionalism, and the ability to harness the Spirit as though it were an impersonal force. [back](#)

33. The Paraclete will guide the disciples into truth, but the context indicates that it is particularly the truth about Jesus that is in view (Jn. 16:13). The Spirit does not function as an independent entity. He does not speak on his own, but the content of his testimony comes from God himself. As the succeeding verses show, the content of that testimony is about Jesus Christ. [back](#)
34. Once again, the witness of the Paraclete is Christocentric (Jn. 16:14-15). He brings glory to Christ, he takes the things of Christ, which ultimately are the things of the Father, and reveals them to the disciples. Just as the Son glorifies the Father (Jn. 7:18; 17:4), the Paraclete glorifies the Son. [back](#)
35. The climax of the Johannine theology of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel comes in the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus on the evening of Easter (Jn. 20:22). According to Jn. 20:21, this endowment of the Spirit was associated with the disciples' commission to participate in God's mission to

⁵⁶ F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 318.

the world. According to Jn. 20:23, this commission is further described in terms of the forgiveness of sins. The power of absolution, based on the proclamation of the gospel and the response of faith, is granted to the entire community of disciples. It is probably true that Jn. 20:23 must be read in light of 20:29, where the decisive issue is faith.⁵⁷ The two passive voices, “...they are forgiven” and “...they are not forgiven,” imply divine agency. The role of the disciples, as empowered by the Spirit, is to declare the gospel, but it is God who effectively remits or retains sins. [back](#)

36. The promise of the Father (Lk. 24:49) is clearly explained by Luke as the gift or baptism with the Spirit (Ac. 1:4-5). It is the bestowal anticipated by the prophets and proclaimed by John the Baptist. Unlike the occasional endowments of the Spirit upon special individuals or special groups, recorded both in the Old Testament and in the gospels, the promise of the Father was the messianic gift of the Spirit to the entire community of faith. [back](#)
37. Jesus indicated that this promise of the baptism with the Spirit would be fulfilled in Jerusalem (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:4). No particular location in the city was specified. [back](#)
38. In the context of Lk. 24:47, the effect of the gift of the Spirit would be to propel the disciples into God’s evangelistic mission. They would preach repentance and forgiveness of sins among the nations. Jerusalem would be the center, and the proclamation of the gospel would issue forth unto all peoples. [back](#)
39. According to Lk. 24:52-53, the disciples went back to Jerusalem to await the fulfillment. Continually they stayed in the temple courtyards, praising God and waiting. [back](#)
40. The assumption that Mk. 16:17 supports the viewpoint that all believers should seek to speak in other tongues is unwarranted. To be sure, various signs are indicated as accompanying the believers, including the phenomena of tongues, the exorcism of demons, divine protection from deadly threats, and miraculous healings. However, there is no hint that such signs must be evident in the lives of all believers. Rather, it seems that such signs will be evident within the corporate community of believers, and the Book of Acts

⁵⁷ R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) 1044.

bears this out. In the actual testimony of Acts, only a relatively few individuals experienced such signs. [back](#)

41. It is a great tragedy that some primitive Pentecostal groups have appealed to Mk. 16:18 as authorizing the handling of snakes and the drinking of poison. When such practices are used as tests of faith, they amount to little more than tempting God, something that even Christ refused to do (cf. Mt. 4:7; Lk. 4:12). [back](#)
42. In Mk. 16:17-18, the signs described as accompanying the community of believers were, in fact, evidenced in the early Christian church. On three occasions, languages of praise were expressed (Ac. 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). Several notable healings were performed (Ac. 3:6-8; 5:12, 15-16; 6:8; 8:7; 9:18, 34, 40; 14:8-10; 20:9-10; 28:8-9). Exorcisms were also performed (Ac. 5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 19:12). Paul, on one occasion, was spared death after being bitten by a viper (Ac. 28:3-6). [back](#)
43. The baptism with the Spirit, as Jesus explained it prior to his ascension back to the Father, would empower his disciples to be his witnesses. Their evangelistic work would begin in Jerusalem and move to Judea, Samaria and the nations of the earth (Ac. 1:8). [back](#)
44. In Luke's theology, the baptism with the Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Luke records Jesus' promise given prior to his ascension back to the Father, "In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 1:5). Then, when the Day of Pentecost came, all the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:4). Later, Peter would describe this event which happened "at the beginning" as the fulfillment of what John the Baptist had preached (Ac. 11:15-16). [back](#)
45. There seems to be no justification for the idea that Christians should "tarry" or wait for the baptism with the Spirit. To be sure, the disciples waited until the Day of Pentecost, but this waiting period was for an entirely different purpose than is sometimes supposed. In Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, waiting for the baptism with the Spirit is a matter of intense seeking, the attempt to build a sufficient quantity of personal faith, and the effort to become wholly yielded in order to earn the right to receive the Spirit. At Pentecost, none of these elements were present. Rather, the assembled disciples simply waited because Jesus told them to do so (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:4). After Pentecost, there is never described another waiting period for the

gift of the Spirit.

It seems apparent from the text of Acts 1 and 2 that the decisive factor in the bestowal of the Spirit was not some particular psychological or spiritual condition of the disciples, but rather, the arrival of a calendar date, the Day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:1). This festival, from the ancient calendar of annual Hebrew feasts (Lv. 23), was the second of the three annual festivals to which each male was obligated to appear before Yahweh (Dt. 16:16). In the Old Testament, Pentecost (Weeks) was a celebration of agriculture in which the nation thanked Yahweh for his faithfulness in providing the harvest (Lv. 23:15-21; Nu. 28:26-31). In Judaism, Pentecost was associated with the renewal of the covenant with Noah (Jubilees 6:17-31), and it is not unlikely that the baptism with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost symbolized the renewal of God's covenantal promise with all humankind (cf. Ge. 9:8-17). [back](#)

46. It is possible that the bestowal of the Spirit at Pentecost was in the upper room, though not necessarily so. Some scholars believe that the disciples were in the temple complex, since Lk. 24:52-53 seems to indicate that they spent their daytime hours there, perhaps spending the nights in an upper room (Ac. 1:13). The Greek term *oikos* (= house) in Ac. 2:2 can refer to either a house or the temple, so the answer is uncertain. Wherever they were when the Spirit descended, it seems almost certain that they must have moved quickly into the temple courtyards, otherwise there would not have been space to accommodate such a large crowd of observers.⁵⁸ [back](#)

47. While certainty is not possible, it seems more likely that the group which was baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the full group of 120 believers. To be sure, only the apostles are mentioned specifically in Ac. 1:26, the special group to which Matthias was added, but the whole company of those present at the selection of Matthias was certainly the entire 120 (Ac. 1:15ff.). Following the description of the 120 believers, Luke indicates that it was the whole company who offered the candidates Joseph Barsabbas Justus and Matthias (Ac. 1:23), and it was the whole company who prayed for a divine choice in the casting of lots (Ac. 1:24). Acts 2:1 directly follows this narrative, implying that it was the full group of about 120 believers who received the Spirit on Pentecost. [back](#)

⁵⁸ F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 56.

48. There were three unusual phenomena that accompanied the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. There was a noise, similar to a violently blowing wind (Ac. 2:2). There were tongues of fire which separated and came to rest upon each of the disciples (Ac. 2:3). Each of the disciples was enabled to speak in other currently known languages which he/she apparently had never learned (Ac. 2:4, 7-8). [back](#)

49. The content of what was spoken in the other languages was easily understandable by the observers, since the speakers were all speaking in the known dialects of the Roman provinces from which these observers had come (Ac. 2:5-11a). Luke describes them as “declaring the wonders of God” (Ac. 2:11b), a description which in light of other similar occasions (cf. Ac. 10:46; 19:6) probably should be taken to indicate expressions of praise and worship. The idea that the languages were evangelistic, that is, that the disciples were preaching the gospel in foreign languages, is doubtful. In actual fact, a clear presentation of the gospel was made by Peter (Ac. 2:14ff.), but there is no indication that it was given in any language but one, and we should assume that it was in either Greek or Aramaic. Thus, the idea that the purpose of the gift of languages was intended as a miraculous crossing of language barriers for evangelism is suspect and probably not correct. [back](#)

50. This usage may possibly lend itself to an interpretation that emphasizes “the baptism” as a phenomenon which the Spirit induces rather than as the gift of the Spirit which the Lord Jesus bestows.⁵⁹ In some Pentecostal-Charismatic groups, the phrase “baptism of the Spirit” seems to refer to the phenomenon of tongues. In their view, the baptism is the gift of tongues which the Spirit bestows. However, the baptism with the Spirit is the giving of the Spirit itself, not a phenomenon which the Spirit produces. [back](#)

51. The primary implication of Peter’s declaration, “This is what was spoken by Joel” (Ac. 2:16), was that the messianic gift of the Spirit promised long ago by the prophets had been given. Those listening to Peter could be assured that they were even then living in the “last days.” God’s final act of salvation had begun to take place. The thrust of Joel’s prophecy was that God would pour out his Spirit upon all his people, not just on the few. This outpouring

⁵⁹ Even more precisely, the noun-phrase “baptism with the Spirit” does not occur in the New Testament either. It always appears as a verb-phrase, i.e., to be “baptized with the Spirit.”

would include both women and men, young and old (Jl. 2:28ff.)⁶⁰ Such a bestowal of the gift of the Spirit upon the entire community of faith heralded the gift of salvation for all who would call upon the Lord (Jl. 2:32//Ac. 2:21), and as is obvious, this gift of salvation, open to all, is the focus of Peter's sermon (Ac. 2:22-41). Thus, the baptism with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the event that heralded the availability of salvation to all who would put their faith in Jesus Christ--he who died on the cross and who was raised by the Father as the Lord over all (Ac. 2:23-24, 32-36).[back](#)

52. The implications of the gift of the Spirit for all people, young and old, male and female, are that old barriers would be broken down through the Spirit. Patriarchalism, in which the male gender dominated all culture and, in fact, all spiritual life, had now been dissolved (cf. Ga. 3:28). Women as well as men were gifted with the Spirit, and in the early church, one sees them taking active roles in the ministries of the church in ways that would never have been possible in Judaism. The same was true for the youth and their elders.

Jesus had begun this process of liberation by adopting an almost revolutionary attitude toward women. He accepted them as disciples (Lk. 8:1-3), guaranteeing their security by his strong rule of chastity (Mt. 5:28). He spoke to women as equals (Jn. 4:7-9) and refused to tolerate the degrading suggestions of male prejudice (Lk. 7:36-50). He turned the tables on an unbalanced legal system that favored male offenders over female offenders (Jn. 8:1-11). One of the greatest confessions of faith in the gospels, every bit as potent as that of Simon Peter (Mt. 16:16), is found on the lips of Martha (Jn. 11:27). The faithfulness of Jesus' loyal women disciples stands in sharp contrast to the fearfulness of the Twelve (Mt. 26:56; Lk. 23:37; Jn. 19:25). Furthermore, it is to women that Jesus first appeared so that they might be witnesses of his resurrection (Jn. 20:11-18).

Thus, in the early church women are to be found serving in active roles, sometimes even as leaders (Ro. 16:1, 3, 6-7, 12; Phil. 4:2-3; 1 Ti. 3:11). They were free to take part in public worship (1 Co. 11:5), something that would never have occurred in Judaism. They were gifted to prophesy and to teach (Ac. 2:17; 21:9; 18:26). [back](#)

53. According to Peter, the promised gift of the Spirit was to be given to those who were listening to him, to their posterity, and to all who were afar off--all

⁶⁰ I. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles [TNTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 73.

whom God would call (Ac. 2:38b-39). Peter's statement, of course, is a reflection upon Joel's prophecy that the Spirit would be poured out upon "all people" (Jl. 2:28; Ac. 2:17). [back](#)

54. There is no standard pattern of effects produced upon believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, tongues of fire separated and came to rest upon each of them, and they all spoke in other languages (Ac. 2:3-4). Peter, on another occasion, was inspired to defend the healing of the cripple before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Ac. 4:8). The Jerusalem church as a whole was filled with the Spirit so that they were emboldened to preach the gospel in the face of severe persecution (Ac. 4:31). The effect of the Spirit on the early deacons⁶¹ was wisdom in decision-making (Ac. 6:3, 5). The infilling of the Spirit in Stephen enabled him to see a vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Ac. 7:55). When Paul was filled with the Spirit, he was healed of blindness and inspired to preach that Jesus was the Son of God (Ac. 9:17, 20). Barnabas, also full of the Holy Spirit, was instrumental in the conversion of a great many people (Ac. 11:24). Paul, when he was at Paphos, was filled with the Spirit so that he pronounced a judgment upon a sorcerer who opposed the group (Ac. 13:9). Finally, while undergoing severe persecution, the disciples at Pisidian Antioch were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (Ac. 13:52). [back](#)
55. The expression "filled with the Spirit," as used by Luke, does not seem to mandate that the person(s) involved had never before received the Spirit. Peter was filled with the Spirit at Pentecost (Ac. 1:13; 2:4), yet he was later filled again (Ac. 4:8). The Greek verbs are the same in both cases. We would certainly assume that the believers who were filled in Ac. 4:31 had already been filled earlier, and many of them had probably been present at Pentecost and were among the original 120 disciples. Stephen was filled with the Spirit just moments before his death (Ac. 7:55), but we know that earlier he was also described as being "full of the Spirit" (Ac. 6:5). Paul was filled with the Spirit at his conversion (Ac. 9:17), but later, he was filled with the Spirit again (Ac. 13:9). These various passages in Acts militate against the idea that being "Spirit-filled" is a single, crisis experience at which time a person receives the "fullness of the Spirit." Rather, these fillings of the Spirit seem more analogous to the Old Testament pattern, that is, they seem to describe occasional and temporary infusions of the Spirit in special circumstances.

⁶¹ The title "deacon" is not used in Acts 6, but the function of these leaders is usually taken to be analogous to that of deacons.

While speaking in tongues is one of the phenomena occasionally described, it is by no means universal or even usual. [back](#)

56. There is no particular external phenomena that always or even usually accompanies the infilling of the Spirit. The idea that other tongues is to be expected is not theologically defensible. [back](#)
57. In none of these cases, except at Pentecost, did anyone “tarry” for the infilling of the Spirit, and that one exception was merely a matter of the calendar date, as discussed previously (see answer #45). There was no special pleading, no coaching, not even any particular expectations. There is no evidence that anyone expected to speak in tongues, even on the occasions when they did so. All phenomena which were exhibited seem to have been wonderful surprises. [back](#)
58. There may be a slight difference between the verbal form “to be filled with the Spirit” and the noun form “full of the Spirit.” The former seems more descriptive of a temporary and occasional infusion, while the latter seems to be a continuing quality or state of being. [back](#)
59. The communications of the Holy Spirit to the early believers were various. The Spirit enabled the apostles and the Christian community at large to bear witness to the passion and resurrection of Jesus (Ac. 5:29-32). There were a variety of personal communications through the Spirit, such as, the direction of Philip to meet with the Ethiopian official (Ac. 8:29), of Peter to accompany the delegation from Cornelius (Ac. 10:19; 11:12), and of Paul to avoid Asia and Bithynia (Ac. 16:6-7).⁶² The whole community of Christians in Judea, Samaria and Galilee was encouraged by the Spirit after Paul’s conversion (Ac. 9:31). The Spirit was active in the appointment of special ministries, such as, the ministry of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to Asia (Ac. 13:2, 4) and the appointment of Ephesian bishops and pastors (Ac. 20:28). Also, the Spirit assisted the Jerusalem leaders in coming to a wise resolution over the theologically difficult problem of circumcision (Ac. 15:28-29).

Some communications by the Spirit were predictive, such as the

⁶² We would like to know more about these personal communications, of course. Were they simply powerful, subjective impressions, and if so, how were they to be distinguished from merely human inclinations. If they were externally communicated, what form did this take? Did they come in an audible voice? These are questions that must be left open due to the lack of data.

prophecy by Agabus that there would be a severe famine over the entire Roman Empire (Ac. 11:28), a famine that the disciples later perceived as having been fulfilled during the reign of Claudius Caesar (AD 41-54). By far the most intriguing predictions are the ones concerning Paul's trip to Rome. Paul himself seemed deeply convinced by the Holy Spirit that he should go to Jerusalem, so much so, that he described it as though he was divinely compelled to make the trip (Ac. 20:22). Of course, as he had written earlier to the Roman Christians, he had misgivings about the reception that might await him there (Ro. 15:31). To add to this air of uncertainty, there were communications to Paul by the Spirit that prison and hardships awaited him in Jerusalem, though how these communications came to him are not described (Ac. 20:23).⁶³ Some disciples at Tyre, Syria actually urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem, and this urging was also given "through the Spirit" (Ac. 21:4). Finally Agabus, who had earlier predicted the great famine, now predicted that Paul would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles if he went to Jerusalem (Ac. 21:10-11), with the result that the other Christians pleaded with Paul not to go (Ac. 21:12). Paul, for his part, remained solidly convinced by the Spirit that he should in fact continue on to Jerusalem, and he did exactly that (Ac. 21:13-16). These passages seem to indicate that there could occur apparently contradictory spiritual directions, and if so, then personal choice was also a factor in deciding what was to be done. [back](#)

60. Communication by the Holy Spirit seems to have come in various ways. The text directly indicates that sometimes it came through prophetic utterances (Ac. 11:28; 20:22-23; 21:4; 21:11), and such utterances seem to parallel very closely the descriptions given in 1 Corinthians 12:8, 10; 14:4, 26-31. On other occasions, however, the method is not specified and remains unclear. The ordination of leaders is said to be at the Spirit's direction (Ac. 13:2, 4; 20:28), but no circumstances are supplied. In some cases, the work of the Holy Spirit seems to have been performed subjectively, working itself out through the discussion of godly leaders (Ac. 15:28). Private communications are even more ambiguous. Did the Holy Spirit's messages to Philip (Ac. 8:29), Peter (Ac. 10:19; 11:12), and Paul (Ac. 16:6-7) come to them through powerful, subjective impressions, or did they hear an audible voice, such as Paul heard on the Damascus Road (of. Ac. 9:4)? Did Paul simply encounter insuperable obstacles in his efforts to go east (Ac. 16:6-7), and so decide that it was not the Spirit's purpose for him to go that way, or was there some

⁶³ It is not unusual to ascribe these communications to prophetic utterances, and this may very well be the case, though such a conclusion is not required.

more direct method of communication involved? How were the churches in Judea, Samaria and Galilee encouraged by the Holy Spirit (Ac. 9:31)? Were there prophetic utterances to this effect (cf. 1 Co. 14:31), or was there simply an outflow of mutual love between Christians that was attributed to the work of the Spirit (of. 2 Co. 1:3-5)? These are questions that remain open and unanswered due to the lack of biblical information. [back](#)

61. It is difficult to say how often communications from the Spirit occurred in the early church. The New Testament at no place gives a definite indication. In the accounts of Acts, the occasions cited seem to have occurred in significant periods of transition. The experience of Philip, Peter, Saul and James was directly related to the extension of the gospel into non-Jewish circles (cf. Ac. 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2, 4; 15:28; 16:6-7), and as is well known, such an extension was a major theological theme in Acts. The Spirit's encouragement of the church following the severe persecution leveled against the Christians by Saul (Cf. Ac. 9:31) and Agabus' prediction of the severe famine (cf. Ac. 11:28) were obviously occasions of great import for the church. Such descriptions suggest that special communications by the Spirit were not very frequent, but rather, that they occurred in connection with particularly significant events. Even the various communications connected with Paul's visit to Jerusalem were of tremendous import for the whole church (cf. Ac. 20:22-23; 21:4, 11). It has been argued that the utterances directed to Paul "in every city" (cf. Ac. 20:23) indicate that prophetic utterances were commonplace in the New Testament churches. This line of reasoning is not compelling, since all of these utterances were concerning one specific event, the arrest of Paul and his eventual journey to Rome, an event that would shape the entire future of the church and change the ministry of its greatest missionary. [back](#)
62. There is no evidence that such communications by the Spirit were ever expected. On no occasion did the early Christians seek for such communications or consider them to be the general experience of believers. While it is true that on one occasion the Spirit singled out Saul and Barnabas for missionary work during a period of worship and fasting (cf. Ac. 13:2), nothing in the text suggests that the purpose of worship and fasting was that there would be a prophetic communication. If such communications had not been forthcoming, there is no reason to think that the early Christians would have begun to seek for such manifestations. Such communications were given at the will of the Spirit, not the will of the church. [back](#)

63. In Acts 2:38, the gift of the Spirit is also associated with repentance and water baptism, both of which, given the content of Peter's sermon, seem to serve as expressions of faith. [back](#)
64. Nothing in Peter's sermon or conclusion indicates that the gift of the Spirit must be accompanied by a sign. To be sure, the 120 disciples had spoken in tongues earlier that same day. However, they also had experienced a sound like wind and the separation of tongues of fire that rested upon each of them (cf. Ac. 2:2-3). None of these phenomena were included in Peter's sermon as part of the gospel or explained as expected signs that would accompany the gift of the Spirit. The phenomena of wind and fire were never repeated, so far as the biblical record goes, and the phenomenon of other languages are specifically described on only two other occasions (cf. Ac. 10:46; 19:6).

Those who approach the gift of the Spirit as though there should be some personal authenticating sign that the Spirit has been given to them, such as the phenomena of other tongues, probably miss the greater focus of Peter's sermon at Pentecost, that is, that the messianic gift of the Spirit has been given to the entire community of God's people (cf. Ac. 2:17-18). The issue at hand is that the messianic gift of the Spirit has now been bestowed, because Jesus of Nazareth has been exalted to the right hand of the Father as both Lord and Christ (cf. Ac. 2:36). Nothing in Peter's sermon suggests that there is some personal authenticating sign by which an individual can detect that he/she has received the Spirit. Rather, everything in Peter's sermon suggests that if men and women believe the good news about Jesus, the gift of the Spirit is theirs! [back](#)

65. The reader is probably expected to assume that the 3000 converts who were baptized also received the gift of the Spirit (cf. Ac. 2:41). This seems to be the thrust of Peter's words in Acts 2:38, when he says, "You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

It is probably significant that there is no record of further phenomena, such as, speaking in tongues. While arguments from silence are not as strong as arguments from direct statements, they are not to be completely discounted. There is such a thing as a significant silence, that is, silence where a description or explanation would be expected if something noteworthy had occurred.⁶⁴ This is one of those cases. [back](#)

⁶⁴ Literary critics realize that any text conveys its meanings through the oppositions expressed, and that in reading texts it is important for the reader to notice what is *not* expressed in the text. What is absent, may in fact, be significant, of. E. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press,

66. Peter and John were sent by the Jerusalem church to Samaria after they had heard that some Samaritans, due to the preaching of Philip, had believed in the Lord Jesus (cf. Ac. 8:14). Since none of them had received the Holy Spirit, Peter and John laid hands upon them so that they might receive the Spirit (cf. Ac. 8:17). It is probably significant that the delegation sent by the Jerusalem church was made up of apostles. It seems that the Jerusalem church practiced an investigative action on each occasion that the gospel reached beyond the Jewish boundaries so as to confirm new people groups as belonging to the church. Otherwise, there was danger that the church might develop along schismatic lines. Accordingly, Peter's encounter with Cornelius, the Gentile soldier, necessitated a rather detailed explanation on the part of the apostle when he returned to Jerusalem (cf. Ac. 11:1ff.). The explanation convinced the Jerusalem church to accept these new converts (cf. Ac. 11:15- 18). Similarly, a delegation from Jerusalem was sent to Antioch, Syria when it was learned that the message about Jesus was being preached to Greeks (cf. Ac. 11:20-23). When Paul and Barnabas had finished their first preaching tour in Asia Minor, they returned to the Antioch church to report on their work (cf. Ac. 14:26-27) and later shared the same report with the Jerusalem church (Ac. 15:12). All this seems to form a pattern, and if so, then the delegation of apostles to Samaria to investigate and affirm Philip's ministry is far from incidental. It was a necessary step in preserving the unity of the church and affirming the progress of the gospel in the paradigm that Jesus had given at his ascension, that is, that the gospel was to be preached in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and among the nations (cf. Ac. 1:8). [back](#)
67. The text of Acts clearly states that the Samaritans, even though they believed Philip and were baptized, did not immediately receive the gift of the Spirit (cf. Ac. 8:12-16). This separation of faith from the gift of the Spirit has long puzzled interpreters. Such a circumstance at least indicates that baptism in water does not automatically denote a bestowal of the Holy Spirit. How was it clear that the gift of the Spirit was not given to them at the first? Pentecostals argue that since tongues-speaking was the authenticating sign, the absence of tongues-speaking was decisive to demonstrate that the new believers had not yet received the Spirit. This is a possible but by no means

1989) 238. It is somewhat on the order of Sherlock Holmes' statement to Watson concerning the "curious incident of the dog in the night-time." Watson protested, "The dog did nothing in the night-time." "That," said Holmes, "was the curious incident!" (cited from the short story "Silver Blaze").

necessary explanation. It could just as well have been that there was no inward confirmation in the hearts of the new believers. In any case, when the Samaritans did receive the Spirit at the visit of Peter and John, nothing is mentioned in the text about tongues-speaking. [back](#)

68. It is probably appropriate to point out that other passages in the New Testament seem to demonstrate that the separation of the gift of the Spirit from faith and baptism was unusual rather than usual. Paul states that the Galatians received the gift of the Spirit by believing the gospel (Ga. 3:2, 5, 14; 4:6). There is no specific mention of the Philippians' reception of the Spirit, other than the description that they had become believers and were baptized (of. Ac. 16:11-15, 25-34), but it is probably to be assumed that they received the Spirit when they believed the gospel (cf. Phil. 2:1). Similarly, at Thessalonica both Jews and Greeks were persuaded concerning the message of Jesus (cf. Ac. 17:1-4), and while no direct mention is made of the gift of the Spirit, Paul certainly considered them to have received it (cf. 1 Th. 4:8; 2 Th. 2:13). It is well-known that the Corinthians had received the Spirit (cf. 1 Co. 2:12; 3:16; 6:11, 17; 12:3-7, 13; 2 Co. 5:5), and this reception is to be associated with their faith and baptism (cf. Ac. 18:8). The same can be said for the Ephesians. When they believed, they were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ep. 1:13; of. 2:18, 22; 4:30). Titus' reception of the Spirit seems to have been associated with his baptism (Tit. 3:5), and since the statements to Titus have been shifted from the second person (you) to the first person (us), the implication is that the gift of the Spirit is usually to be associated with water baptism. Though Paul has no personal knowledge of the Romans, he can assume that inasmuch as they are believers, they have received the gift of the Spirit (cf. Ro. 5:5; 8:9, 11, 15-16, 23; 14:17). In none of the epistles of the New Testament is there any suggestion that the church was composed of Christians who were filled with the Spirit and others who were not. In fact, Paul words to the Corinthians are especially instructive. "All of us were baptized by one Spirit into one body," he declares, and "all of us were given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Co. 12:13). The very unity of the church rests upon the common presence of the Spirit in all its members (cf. Ep. 4:3-4).

To return to the original question, then, the normal pattern in the New Testament was that those who came to faith were immediately blessed with the gift of the Spirit. If so, why did not the Samaritans receive the Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem? Each of the four theological positions merit consideration.

The first position, that is, that the Samaritan situation is an early example of baptism followed by a later confirmation, has two weaknesses. The notion of apostolic succession seems anachronistic, at best. Nothing in the Book of Acts or the other documents of the New Testament advocate confirmation to be performed by anyone in an apostolic office. The practice of confirmation, which is a sacrament in the Eastern and Roman churches, is a later development in Christian history, and its early history is somewhat uncertain. It only received sacramental status through Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas in the 12th and 13th centuries.⁶⁵ Furthermore, if such an act of confirmation was normal and necessary, why is there no other example of it in the New Testament? Certainly the multitude of other believers in the New Testament were not confirmed.

The second position depends upon a carefully exegeted nuance in the Greek text. As such, when the text says that “they believed Philip as he preached the good news” (cf. Ac. 8:12) and they “accepted the word of God” (cf. Ac. 8:14), this amounted to something less than genuine Christian faith. The difficulty with this position is that the distinction between intellectual assent and genuine faith is hardly discernable in the use of *pisteuein* with a dative object.⁶⁶

The classical Pentecostal-Charismatic position, which takes the passage as proof of a second work of grace, falters along the same lines as the first position. If this was normal, why then do not the other conversion accounts in Acts and the Epistles bear some clear testimony to such a bipolar experience of conversion followed by a later baptism in the Spirit as a second work of grace? To be sure, other passages are sometimes interpreted in such a way as to buttress this idea, but none of them are clear separations between conversion and the baptism in the Spirit. To take an exceptional situation and build upon it a major theological structure flies in the face of sound hermeneutics.

The fourth position, that God sovereignly withheld the Spirit temporarily so as to avoid a rift in the early church, has won the support of many if not most evangelical scholars. It fits well with the theological emphases in Acts as a whole and it fits the theological point of this narrative in particular. Inasmuch as this situation was the first crossing of the Jewish

⁶⁵ G. Singer, *EDT* (1984) 266-267.

⁶⁶ In general, it should also be said that Dunn’s opinion has not won a great deal of support among New Testament Greek scholars. Howard Ervin has offered a convincing challenge to Dunn’s thesis, and for those with expertise in Koine Greek, they can follow it in *Conversion-Initiation*, 28-32.

nationalistic barrier with the gospel, in keeping with the geographical paradigm in Acts 1:8, God made sure that the Jerusalem church would not miss the point. As such, the delay of the gift of the Spirit had nothing to do with the Samaritans themselves. Rather, it was divinely staged for the benefit of the delegation from Jerusalem so as to convince them that the gospel could indeed cross into previously untapped ethnic groups. [back](#)

69. Simon's reaction to Peter and John's power to bestow the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands (Ac. 8:18-19) may very well suggest that some observable phenomenon accompanied the gift of the Spirit in this instance. As a *theios aner* (= divine man), Simon's stock in trade was superstition and mystical sensationalism.⁶⁷ Just what the phenomenon may have been is unstated. It could have been glossalia (and most Pentecostal-charismatics are convinced that it was), though some other phenomenon, such as, ecstatic prophecy would have been equally impressive. [back](#)
70. The primary difference between what happened at the household of Cornelius and what happened at Samaria concerns the relationship between water baptism and the gift of the Spirit. In Caesarea, the gift of the Spirit *preceded* water baptism (Ac. 10:44-48). In Samaria, they were baptized first and only later received the gift of the Spirit (Ac. 8:16). The most suggestive thing about this difference is that it seems to indicate that water baptism and the gift of the Spirit, though closely related in conversion-initiation, are not identical. The one does not presuppose the other. One who has been baptized may or may not have received the gift of the Spirit. On the other hand, just because one has come to genuine faith and received the gift of the Spirit does not mean that he/she may omit the act of water baptism. [back](#)
71. The phenomenon of other tongues accompanied the gift of the Spirit at Caesarea (Ac. 10:46). This is the second time in Acts that this phenomenon is described. [back](#)
72. According to Acts 10:46, the content of the other tongues seems to have been praises directed toward God. The comparison with Acts 2:11 demonstrates a similar content in the tongues-speaking of the 120 disciples at Pentecost, for they spoke "the wonders of God." As such, then, the

⁶⁷ The *theios aner* was a well-known figure in the Greco-Roman world. Such persons wandered throughout the prominent cities as far as India purportedly demonstrating miraculous powers, cf. E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 306.

tongues-speaking seems to have been directed toward God, though on the Day of Pentecost, it benefited the human observers in that they heard people speaking praises toward God in their own native dialects. This accords well with Paul's statement, "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God" (1 Co. 14:2). Tongues, then, are not primarily directed to a human audience but to a divine listener. [back](#)

73. No. [back](#)
74. No one "tarried" or sought for the experience of speaking in tongues. There is no evidence of coaching on the part of Peter. Just as on the Day of Pentecost, the phenomenon of other tongues was a wonderful surprise to all concerned. [back](#)
75. The sign of other tongues seems to have been for the benefit of the Jews who accompanied Peter to Caesarea (Ac. 10:23). Peter's statement, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have," seems aimed directly at the Jewish Christians present. That Peter would phrase his statement on baptism in just this way suggests that he considered it likely that there might be some opposition to such an act of inclusion within the general body of Christians, who at this point had no Gentile members. Luke's emphatic, "So he [Peter] *ordered* that they be baptized..." likewise emphasizes that such an inclusive act was only appropriate, and Peter's Jewish compatriots had better be prepared to accept it!

As one reads Peter's defense to the Jerusalem church, where there was at first opposition to such inclusion (cf. Ac. 11:2-3), it becomes apparent that the phenomenon of other tongues expressed by these Gentiles when they received the gift of the Spirit seems to have occurred especially for the benefit of Peter's Jewish friends. Peter made the connection between the predictions of John the Baptist, what happened on the Day of Pentecost, and what happened at Caesarea (Ac. 11:15-16). That the phenomenon of Pentecost was repeated here was critical, for it gave Peter the necessary foundation for saying, "If God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" (Ac. 11:17). Peter's point was well taken. The messianic gift of the Spirit had been given to Gentiles, and the Jewish church must not oppose God! Peter's argument was decisive, and the Gentiles were accepted as true Christians (Ac. 11:18). If the phenomenon of other tongues had not

occurred, Peter's outreach to these Gentiles might well have been rejected by the Jerusalem opposition party. However, not only Peter but his entire company could verify that God had divinely bestowed the Spirit in a way that could not be refuted.

Still later, at the Jerusalem conference, Peter repeated his position once again (Ac. 15:8). Only God could evaluate faith, and the fact that he bestowed the Spirit in a way that could not be refuted indicated his acceptance of Gentiles as true Christians. He forgave these Gentiles of their sins, just as he had the Jews, purifying their hearts by faith (Ac. 15:9). All of them, whether Jews or Gentiles, were saved by the same divine grace (Ac. 15:11).

The question remains as to whether or not the sign of tongues would have been as important on other occasions as it was in Caesarea. There is no reason to think so. The sign of tongues was not for Cornelius and his household in any case; it was for the Jews who were inclined to reject them as genuine Christians. As such, this second occasion when other tongues were described seems to have been a critical juncture in the movement of the gospel into new ethnic groups. [back](#)

76. Peter made a direct connection between what happened at the household of Cornelius and what happened at Pentecost, specifically with reference to the phenomenon of other tongues (Ac. 11:15). That he went back to the original event not only suggests that he wished to emphasize that the Gentiles were to be included as recipients of the messianic gift of the Spirit, which was for "all people" (Ac. 2:17), but it also suggests that the phenomenon of other tongues was not a usual conversion experience. If those who came to faith had regularly experienced the phenomenon of other tongues, he need not have gone back so far in time. He could merely have said, "These Gentiles received the same gift as the believers last week in Joppa or last month in Lydda." That he went all the way back to Pentecost implies that the phenomenon of other tongues was an exceptional expression not generally typical of conversion-initiation. [back](#)
77. Yes. Paul's question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed," does seem to imply that the gift of the Spirit is normally to be expected at the response of faith in Christ. [back](#) Such an implication harmonizes well with the other data in the NT (See Answer [#68](#)).
78. The theological limits of the disciples whom Paul discovered in Ephesus had

to do with their knowledge of the messianic gift of the Spirit. Similar to Apollos, who “knew only the baptism of John” (Ac. 18:25), these disciples had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit (Ac. 19:2b). What this statement probably means is that they had not yet heard that the baptism with the Spirit had occurred, a baptism that John had predicted the messiah would accomplish.

A particularly knotty question is the actual status of this group with respect to Christianity.⁶⁸ Luke calls them “disciples” (Ac. 19:1), and Paul assumes that they were believers, at least at some level (Ac. 19:2). Accordingly, some commentators credit this group with being Christians, though to be sure, Christians with some serious theological deficiencies.⁶⁹ In quite the opposite way, others suppose that they could hardly have been called Christians, since they had not received the gift of the Spirit.⁷⁰ Still others leave the question open due to lack of data, but they also point out that there is evidence for a John the Baptist sect as late as the 2nd century, a group originally in a friendly relationship with the Christian communities, but later, because of its claim that John and not Jesus had been the messiah, in a state of rivalry.⁷¹ Whatever their status with regard to Christianity, the fact is clear enough that they were deficient in their understanding of the Holy Spirit. [back](#)

79. As at Pentecost (Ac. 2:4) and Caesarea (Ac. 10:46), the Ephesian disciples spoke with tongues when they received the Spirit (Ac. 19:6). This is the final description of the phenomenon of other tongues in the Book of Acts. Luke also says that they prophesied on this occasion. His use of the verb “prophesy” is most similar to his description of Zechariah in the birth narratives of John the Baptist, when John’s father “was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied” (Lk. 1:67). Such a description suggests that the content of the other tongues was praise language (cf. Lk. 1:68ff.), and if so, then this description harmonizes well with the phenomenon of tongues at Pentecost and at Caesarea, which also was described as praise language (Cf. Ac. 2:11; 10:46). [back](#)

⁶⁸ For a treatment of the difficulties of the passage, see E. Kasemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964) 136-139.

⁶⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, 384-385; J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967) 187; R. Dillon and J. Fitzmyer, “Acts of the Apostles,” *JBC* (1968) 201-202; G. Lampe, “Acts,” *PBC* (1962) 916.

⁷⁰ Marshall, *Acts*, 305; R. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *EBC* (1981) IX.493.

⁷¹ W. Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 202-203.

80. Possibly the strongest implication with respect to the way the gift of the Spirit is treated in the New Testament letters is that it is assumed to have been received by all the Christians in all the churches. When Paul writes to the Romans, whom he had never even seen, he speaks of the Spirit as the common gift to all believers (Ro. 5:5; 8:15-16, 23), and the same is true in his letters to other churches (1 Co. 2:12; 3:16; 6:11; 12:4-7, 13; Ga. 3:2, 5; Phil. 2:1; 1 Th. 4:8; 2 Ti. 1:14; 1 Pe. 4:14). Anyone united to the Lord is one with him in Spirit (1 Co. 6:17). The most basic confession of Christians, "Jesus is Lord," cannot be truly articulated except by the impetus of the Holy Spirit (1 Co. 12:3). In fact, Paul is bold to say that anyone not having received the messianic gift of the Spirit does not belong to Jesus Christ (Ro. 8:9). It is the gift of the Spirit that enables the Christian to have access to God the Father (Ep. 2:18). The Spirit is the resident power in each believer to resurrect him/her at the end (Ro. 8:11, 23; 2 Co. 5:4-5). In a corporate sense, the Spirit not only lives in individual Christians but also in the church as a corporate entity (Ep. 2:22). [back](#)
81. While there are inward characteristics that are motivated by the Spirit within the believer, such as, love (Ro. 5:5), righteousness, peace, joy (Ro. 14:17), self-discipline (2 Ti. 1:7), and so forth, there are no signs directly associated with the gift of the Spirit in the New Testament letters. [back](#)
82. No, there is no indication that Paul or others considered the Christians in the churches to be divided into two groups, those who had been baptized with the Spirit and those who had not. Quite to the contrary, Paul writes to the Christians and declares that without exception they had *all* been baptized by one Spirit into one body and had *all* been given the one Spirit to drink (1 Co. 12:13). [back](#)
83. The messianic gift of the Spirit seems in all cases to be simultaneous with the experience of basic Christian faith. Paul associates it with justification by faith (Ro. 5:1, 5; 1 Co. 6:11; Tit. 3:5-7). He also associates the gift of the Spirit with sonship, for it is the Spirit that speaks through the believer to recognize God as his Father (Ro. 8:15-16, 23; Ga. 4:6). It is only through the gift of the Spirit that one can truly understand the saving work of Christ (1 Co. 2:12). To unite with the Lord Jesus is, in fact, to unite with him in Spirit (1 Co. 6:17). The basic Christian confession of faith is motivated by the Spirit (1 Co. 12:3), and it is the Spirit that baptizes all believers into the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:13). Paul's emphatic, "We were *all* baptized by one

Spirit into one body,” and “we were *all* given one Spirit to drink,” leaves no doubt that the gift of the Spirit is fundamental to the genuine experience of Christian faith. The Spirit serves as a guarantee of the salvation that will not be consummated until the return of the Lord Jesus (2 Co. 5:5; Ep. 1:14). Paul’s question to the Galatians, “Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?” is obviously intended to be answered on the grounds of their basic faith in Christ (Ga. 3:2, 5). To the Thessalonians, Paul connects the sanctifying, saving work of the Spirit to their belief in the gospel (2 Th. 2:13; Cf. Tit. 3:4-7). The gift of the Spirit is, in fact, part of the promised blessing of Abraham that was to be given to the nations, and it is by their basic faith in Christ that they receive the promised Spirit (Ga. 3:14). When a person comes to faith, he/she is included in Christ and is marked by the seal of the Holy Spirit (Ep. 1:13; 4:30). [back](#)

84. The residence of the Holy Spirit within the believer is indispensable in terms of being a child of God. As mentioned earlier, the Spirit enables believers to have access to God the Father (Ro. 8:15-16; Ga. 4:6; Ep. 2:18). It is the indwelling Spirit that will resurrect believers in the end of the age (Ro. 8:11; 23; 2 Co. 5:4-5), and by inference, if one does not have the messianic gift, he/she will not be raised in the resurrection of the just. [back](#)
85. It is not possible to be considered a New Testament Christian believer (a child of God) and yet not have the gift of the Spirit. Paul bluntly says, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Ro. 8:9). [back](#)
86. The messianic gift of the Holy Spirit serves as God’s guarantee that a person has been accepted by God. This was true in Acts (Ac. 10:45-48; 11:9, 17-18; 15:8-9), and it is clearly verified in the epistles (2 Co. 1:22; 5:5; Ep. 1:13-14; 4:30). [back](#)
87. Paul’s primary emphasis as to the purpose of the gift of the Spirit seems to have been the power of the Spirit to enable believers to live a new life (Ro. 7:6; 8:4-6; Ga. 5:16-18, 22- 25), a life free from the domination of sin (Ro. 8:2; Ep. 5:18). The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is to transform him/her into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Co. 3:18); this is the ultimate goal (Ga. 3:3). [back](#)
88. In addition to the Spirit’s work, which enables believers to live the Christian

life, the Spirit also is the power of resurrection (Ro. 8:11, 23), the motivation for prayer according to God's will, even in the midst of uncertainty (Ro. 8:26-27; cf. Ep. 6:18), the means by which one discerns God's purposes, and even more important, his nature (1 Co. 2:9-16; Ep. 1:17-19; 3:16-21; Col. 1:27), and the dispenser of the charismata (1 Co. 12:4-li). [back](#)

89. According to Paul, the essential condition for receiving the gift of the Spirit is one's basic faith in the gospel. He speaks of hearing the gospel and believing it (Ga. 3:2; Ep. 1:13-14; 1 Th. 1:6); he speaks of Christ dwelling in the Christian's heart by faith, surely an indirect reference to the indwelling Spirit (Ep. 3:16-17; Ga. 2:20); he says it is by faith, that is, by believing the gospel which was preached, that one receives the promise of the Spirit (Ga. 3:2, 14). Alternatively, Paul can speak of the basic Christian confession of faith, "Jesus is Lord," as being prompted by the Holy Spirit (1 Co. 12:3).

It is important to observe that faith is consistently defined as one's belief in the gospel itself, not simply belief in the Holy Spirit. Among many Pentecostal-Charismatic groups, faith is usually defined as the belief that God will fill the candidate with the Spirit if and when they have sufficient faith for it. Here, faith is not belief in the gospel, but it is object-oriented toward the experience of speaking with tongues. When the candidate has sufficient faith, he/she will be filled with the Spirit and speak with tongues. Such an approach has no precedent in the Bible. Never does any Christian leader in the New Testament urge his converts to have faith strictly for the experience of the Spirit. Rather, they are to have faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Spirit is to be expected as the natural result of that faith. The gift of the Spirit to the household of Cornelius occurred in the same way (Ac. 10:44; 11:14-17; 15:7-9). [back](#)

90. The believer's inward assurance that he/she possesses the gift of the Spirit is twofold: it consists of an attitude of confidence towards God and the motivation to love others. First, there is an inward witness of the Spirit in every believer's heart that urges him/her to seek God as his/her Father (Ro. 8:15-16). This new relationship with God testifies to the indwelling of the Spirit. It is a relationship of faith (1 Jn. 4:2-3, 13-16; 5:10-12). If this relationship of faith is there, then the Holy Spirit is also there. Second, God's love has been poured into the believer's heart by the gift of the Spirit (Ro. 5:5). The assurance of the indwelling of the Spirit is directly related to the believer's obedience to the command of Jesus to love others (1 Jn. 3:23-24). It is perhaps noteworthy that in the passages of 1 John (3:24b; 4:13;

5:10), which are the only such passages in the New Testament concerning assurance regarding the gift of the Spirit, there is no mention of any sign or phenomena. Rather, the assurance is internal. [back](#)

91. There are some concrete evidences of the indwelling Spirit that are observable beyond a simple inward assurance. They consist of behavior and attitudes that are God-oriented (Ro. 8:5b, 14; 1 Co. 2:14-15; 2 Co. 3:3) as well as qualities of character, such as, love, righteousness, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Ro. 14:17; Ga. 5:22-25; 2 Ti. 1:7; 1 Jn. 4:12). [back](#)
92. Jesus introduced the metaphor of new birth in his conversation with Nicodemus. In the Fourth Gospel, the metaphor of new birth is analogous to other metaphors for spiritual change that comes through faith in Christ, such as, the metaphors of living water and living bread.

In the prologue to the gospel, John defines the metaphor of new birth as the experience of faith in Jesus (Jn. 1:12-13). When Jesus introduced the metaphor to Nicodemus, this same faith is central to its meaning, for to be born again (or to be born from above) has to do with believing the message of Jesus (Jn. 3:3-18). The surrounding context of the new birth metaphor in John 3 is filled with phrases regarding “accepting Jesus’ testimony” (Jn. 3:11), believing Jesus’ testimony about “heavenly things” (Jn. 3:12), and believing in the mission of Jesus as the one who would be lifted up on the cross (Jn.3:14-18).

The other New Testament passages that adopt this metaphor are similar. In Titus, for instance, Paul speaks of renewal or rebirth by the Spirit as the experience of salvation (Tit. 3:4-7). Peter does the same thing by connecting rebirth with “obeying the truth” (1 Pe. 1:22-23). John, also, connects the idea of being “born of God” with believing that Jesus is the Messiah (1 Jn. 5:1), and he also explains that the results of new birth are the Christian’s lifestyle of righteousness and love (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9-10; 4:7; 5:4, 18).

In any use of metaphors, it is wise not to extend them beyond their original use. Christians who attempt to stretch the metaphor of new birth in ways not used by the biblical writers do so inappropriately. The primary emphasis of the new birth metaphor in the New Testament is faith in Christ as the Savior. This faith is in itself spiritual rebirth. To use the metaphor in any other way is to go beyond the bounds of sound interpretation. [back](#)

93. It is a mistake to assume that spiritual gifts are a measurement of spiritual maturity. The Corinthians, who did not lack any spiritual gift (1 Co. 1:7), nevertheless could not be addressed as spiritual (1 Co. 3:1). Though they undoubtedly experienced the phenomenon of speaking with tongues (1 Co. 14:1-25) as well as other sensational gifts, their Christian community was filled with quarreling (1 Co. 1:11), factionalism (1 Co. 3:1-4), arrogance (1 Co. 4:18-20), ambivalence toward sexual immorality (1 Co. 5:1-2), inappropriate boasting about tolerance (1 Co. 5:6), lawsuits (1 Co. 6:1-6), insensitivity to each other (1 Co. 8:9-12; 11:21), and public worship that did more harm than good (1 Co. 11:17). In fact, their unspiritual behavior prompted Paul to say of them that in living the Christian life they had “already been completely defeated” (1 Co. 6:7)! Spiritual gifts notwithstanding, it is hard to see how anyone could hold up the Corinthian church as the paradigm for spiritual New Testament Christianity.

Part of the modern problem is that spirituality often tends to be defined in mystical ways. Persons are thought to be spiritual because they are other-worldly, moody, cryptic, introspective, emotionally sensitive, and inclined toward intuitive knowledge. People who experience mystical phenomena, such as, speaking in tongues, visions, and prophecies, are *ipso facto* assumed to be spiritual. Such is not necessarily the case, however, for biblical spirituality has more to do with discipleship and living the Christian life than it has to do with mysticism (of. Ro. 8). Even biblical prophecies, on occasion, have been given by very unspiritual people (cf. Nu. 22-24; Jn. 11:49-53), and trances can occur to those whose motives are evil (1 Sa. 19:18-24). [back](#)

94. For some people "spiritual gifts" refer especially to such things as speaking with tongues, healings, miracles, and so forth. This emphasis upon the sensational character of certain gifts has led many to assume that spiritual gifts are always sensational. However, as one peruses the gift lists in the New Testament, it becomes apparent that many of the gifts are unobtrusive and low key. In fact, the most sensational ones are described primarily in connection with only one church, the Corinthian church.⁷² In other places, however, Paul speaks of such gifts as serving, encouraging, exhibiting generosity, and showing mercy (Ro. 12:6-8). Similarly, Peter lists such things as hospitality and serving (1 Pe. 4:9-11). Even in 1 Corinthians, there are some gifts listed which are not particularly sensational, such as,

⁷² However, see Ga. 3:5.

assistance, administration, and hymns (1 Co. 12:28; 14:26). To be sure, some of the gifts of the Spirit are undeniably sensational, but they must not be allowed to overshadow those spiritual gifts which are not. [back](#)

95. Spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit do not seem to be the same thing. The former seem to refer to Spirit-endowed abilities that are to be used for the up-building of the entire church. Spiritual fruit, on the other hand, are godly character traits. Gifts involve doing, while fruit involves being. Furthermore, Paul is quite clear that no single gift is for every Christian (1 Co. 12:29-30), yet he seems equally clear that the full range of spiritual fruit is to be expected from all believers (Ga. 5:16-18, 22-25) [back](#)
96. The primary purpose of the manifestation of spiritual gifts is for the common good of the church (1 Co. 12:7). This being so, then any exercise of spiritual gifts that is primarily selfish or egotistical is inappropriate. Furthermore, while a spiritual gift might have a beneficial effect upon the one who exercises it, such a self-benefit must give place to the benefit of the larger group. [back](#)
97. It is very explicit in the New Testament that the distribution of spiritual gifts among believers is by the sovereign will and purpose of God, not the will of the recipient. Paul says that the Spirit bestows gifts to each person “just as he [the Spirit] determines” (1 Co. 12:11). Using the metaphor of the church as a body, Paul states that the parts of the body, that is, the spiritual gifts and functions within the body, have been arranged just as God wanted them to be (1 Co. 12:18). The appointments are divine (1 Co. 12:28)! Whatever grace-gifts have been given, they have been bestowed in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given (Ro. 12:3), and so each Christian has been gifted with grace just as Christ apportioned it, whether prophets, apostles, evangelists, and so forth (Ep. 4:7-12). The writer of Hebrews summarizes the position well by saying that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have been “distributed according to his [the Spirit’s] will” (He. 2:4). This being so, then the notion that one ought to seek God for a particular spiritual manifestation seems ill-founded. To be sure, Paul says to “eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Co. 14:1), but this is not at all the same thing as saying that a Christian can pick and choose among the spiritual gifts like commodities in a market. Christians may very well seek to be open to the working of the Spirit, and in fact, they should hope that the Spirit uses them to up-build the church; however, the choice of particular

spiritual gifts and the timing of their manifestation is God's prerogative. [back](#)

98. Paul's familiar metaphor of the church as a body (cf. Ro. 12:4-5; Ep. 1:22-23; 4:4, 12, 15-16, 25; 5:23, 29-30; Col. 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15; 1 Co. 6:15; 10:17; 11:29) is particularly adaptable to his discussion about spiritual gifts in 1 Co. 12:14-20. Here, he extends the metaphor by speaking of the parts of the body as representing the various spiritual gifts or functions within the church. Given the sectarianism of the Corinthian church, which had affected so many other aspects of church life (cf. 1 Co. 10-13; 3:1-9, 21-23; 6:1, 7-8; 11:17-23), it is not surprising that this divisiveness spilled over into the Corinthians' exercise of spiritual gifts as well (cf. 1 Co. 12:25). Thus, in 12:14-20 Paul emphasizes the unity and diversity of gifts within the church. Their unity consists of the fact that they all belong to the same body. Their diversity consists of the fact that there are many gifts within the body, each performing a distinctive function that is important for the good of the whole. No spiritual gift ought to be devalued as unimportant, and neither should any gift be elevated as though it were the only important one. Furthermore, no gift is universal within the church, for as Paul says, "If they were all one part [or one gift], where would the body be" (12:19)? [back](#)
99. Paul's language in 1 Co. 12:21-26 strongly suggests that there were those in the Corinthian church who were filled with attitudes of superiority about the particular spiritual gift which they exercised. They were like the eye which says to the hand, "I don't need you!" or the head which says to the feet, "I don't need you!" However, some parts of the body, even though they seemed to be weaker, were important, just as some spiritual gifts, even though they might be less sensational than others, were necessary. Even more to the point, the manifestation of some gifts were like the parts of the body that must be treated with special modesty, that is, they must come under certain guidelines. While Paul does not immediately indicate which gifts he thinks must be so treated, he later develops careful guidelines for the use of tongues (cf. 1 Co. 14). It is apparent he would prefer this particular gift to be exercised with "special modesty." All spiritual gifts, then, were worthy to be used for the good of the whole church. Each part of the body, that is, each Christian with his/her respective gifts, should be equally concerned for all the others. No gift is dispensable. [back](#)
100. In 1 Co. 12:27-31, Paul seems to categorize some gifts according to rank, and these are the gifts of (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) teachers, and all the

others after that. While Paul does not say why he considers them of first importance, it is to be observed that they are gifts of leadership within the church especially important for establishing foundations (cf. Ep. 2:20), and we may assume that they are ranked first for that reason.

The series of rhetorical questions beginning with, “Are all....?” seems intended to point out that no single gift should be considered universal in the church, that is, there is no single gift that all Christians possess. Paul certainly expects the answers to these rhetorical questions to be, “No!” What Paul means by the “greater gifts” is not immediately clear, but in the later discussion of 1 Co. 14, he certainly ranks the intelligible gifts as greater than tongues, which cannot be understood apart from an interpreter (1 Co. 14:5-19). Some gifts might be “greater” at certain times because of a particular need in the church, while not as important as at some other time. Some would understand the aspect of “greater” to be such a contextual meaning.

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101. When Paul speaks of the “most excellent way,” he is probably contrasting the way of love with the attitude of divisiveness and sectarianism exhibited by the Corinthians toward each other. [back](#)
102. Love is probably not to be considered a gift of the Spirit. Rather, it is a character trait and motivation produced by the Spirit. When such a character trait and motivation is absent, even though a spiritual gift might be exercised, the gift is worthless (1 Co. 13:1-3). [back](#)
103. No one doubts that speaking in tongues can be a known human language (cf. Ac. 2:4-11). What is questioned is whether or not speaking in tongues can be anything other than a known human language. This question was not an issue until relatively late in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, when outsiders began a more intensive investigation into the phenomena of tongues-speaking. Among these investigations were tape-recordings of tongues-speaking which in turn were analyzed by linguists. To date, no known human languages have been discovered in these various investigations.⁷³ To be sure, there have been many testimonials by

⁷³ Early Pentecostals urged that their tongues-speaking was a valid foreign language, and many early Pentecostal missionaries went overseas with the expectation that when they arrived they would be able to speak the national language of their chosen destination without language study. However, a number of bitter disappointments led to the demise of this expectation, and by the second generation of Pentecostals, their missionaries began taking the more practical course of formal language study, cf. G. Wacker, *Heaven Below* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2001), pp. 44-51.

Pentecostals and Charismatics who have visited countries other than their own, and in so doing, they have reported that they have heard illiterate people speaking in tongues in English, Egyptian, Hindu dialects and so forth. However, such reports are generally second hand and irrecoverable for analysis by linguistic experts.⁷⁴

This factor, that modern tongues-speaking cannot be proved to correspond to any known human languages or dialects, has provided some substantial grist for the anti-Pentecostal mill. By attempting to prove that tongues-speaking in the New Testament was invariably performed in known human languages, the anti-Pentecostal theologian can dismiss the modern phenomena of tongues-speaking as something other than that which occurred in the early church, and in so doing, finds grounds for rejecting the modern experience altogether.⁷⁵

In defending themselves against such charges, many Pentecostal-Charismatics have appealed to the expression “tongues of angels” in 1 Co. 13:1. If it can be supported that speaking in tongues can be performed in a heavenly language or in an angelic language, then they have defused the charge that tongues-speaking must be done in known human languages. The anti-Pentecostals, for their part, simply dismiss such a defense as a failure to understand that Paul was merely resorting to hyperbole, an intended exaggeration that was hypothetical and not to be taken at face value.⁷⁶

So, then, could Paul have been referring to something other than known human languages when he spoke of the “tongues of angels?” This is a question that is difficult to answer with finality. It should at least be pointed out that the notion of speaking in the languages of angels was not an unknown idea in Paul’s world. Within Jewish mysticism, there existed the cult of *merkavah* (= chariot) transcendentalism, a worship form in which the worshiper, when reaching a peak of ecstasy, was believed to have been caught up in the fiery chariot of Elijah into the heavenlies, where he associated with angels and sang with them.⁷⁷ It is possible that Paul has this

⁷⁴ J. Kildahl, “Psychological Observations,” *The Charismatic Movement*, ed. M. Hamilton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 137-138.

⁷⁵ John MacArthur, Jr., a well-known radio preacher and anti-Pentecostal, offers seven reasons why tongues in the New Testament means known human languages. He goes on from there to suggest that the tongues which are spoken by modern Pentecostal-Charismatics are either satanically inspired, a learned behavior which is very human and not supernatural at all, or a psychological inducement, cf. J. MacArthur, Jr., *The Charismatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 159-162, 174-179.

⁷⁶ MacArthur, 162-163.

⁷⁷ E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 432; P. Alexander, “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J.

sort of thing in mind, but even if so, it does not necessarily follow that he approved of it.⁷⁸ The point at which he is driving in 1 Co. 13:1 is that any experience not motivated by love is empty. In summary, it is possible for one to build a defense for tongues-speaking in something other than known human languages, but such a foundation is not particularly strong.

As for the expression “unknown tongue,” found in the KJV, it should be pointed out that there is nothing in the Greek text that corresponds to the word “unknown”. The translators have simply added this modifier so as to clarify that it was unknown to the hearers. They did not intend to convey the idea that tongues were something other than known human languages. The careful reader will notice that the word unknown is always in italics in the KJV, a device indicating it was added by the translators and is not to be found in the Greek text. Even more to the point, the NKJV eliminates the word “unknown” altogether. [back](#)

104. As a general conclusion, Paul says that spiritual gifts will cease to function “when perfection comes,” or alternatively, when “we shall see face to face” (1 Co. 13:10, 12). These expressions almost certainly refer to the *eschaton* when Christ shall return at the end of the age. The notion that they should be interpreted as the completion of the New Testament canon of Scripture is refuted by nearly every major scholar.⁷⁹ Whether some gifts cease before others is a moot question. Certainly it would seem that the gift of apostleship to the Twelve had a terminus when they died, but others apart from the Twelve were also called apostles, more or less in the sense of missionaries, and it is not clear that these functions should cease at any particular time prior to the return of the Lord. [back](#)
105. It seems possible that certain gifts of the Spirit may have occurred in ways or with a frequency in the apostolic period that may not characterize the

Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) I.223ff.

⁷⁸ That Paul could appeal to unusual religious practices for the sake of illustration is evidenced by his reference to those who baptized for the dead (1 Co. 15:29), but aside from the Mormons, no one assumes that he approves of such a practice.

⁷⁹ For a sampling, see F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 128; G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 644-646 [see esp. Footnote #23]; F. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 309-310; R. Lenski, *I and II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963) 566, 570; W. Mare, “1 Corinthians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 10.268-270; p. Marsh, “1 Corinthians,” *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 1377; L. Morris. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians [TNTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 186-188.

entire church age. The sacred history of the Bible seems to demonstrate various rises and declines of such gifts. The miracles attendant to the ministry of Moses and Elijah were not apparent in the same way or to the same extent during the ministries of Isaiah and John the Baptist, for instance. The veritable plethora of miracles accompanying the public ministry of Jesus was not duplicated in either number or frequency by the early church. In the history of the church, this same ebb and flow is also to be observed. [back](#)

106. It certainly seems characteristic of God's dealings in sacred history that he uses miraculous phenomena at certain times and not at others, and more at some times than at others. To recognize such fluctuation is not at all the same thing as declaring a moratorium on some gift of the Spirit. It is only to recognize that inasmuch as God is sovereign in his bestowing of spiritual gifts, one must not attempt to either restrict him or manipulate him. [back](#)
107. It would seem to be presumptuous, to say the least, to declare that God cannot or will not do some particular work of the Spirit again. God cannot be forced into someone's theological box. [back](#)
108. It may well be that the manifestation of any spiritual gift is possible for the church today, and this author agrees that such is the case. However, it is also the author's opinion that much of what occurs under the rubric of spiritual gifts is at least questionable. Many of these spiritual manifestations may not be genuine works of the Holy Spirit, but rather, humanly motivated mysticism that is more psychological than anything else. Whether that is so or not, the fact remains that Paul urges the Corinthians to critically examine the exercise of spiritual gifts, "weighing carefully" what is done (1 Co. 14:29) and "testing all things" (1 Th. 5:21). Such evaluation surely means that some expressions are to be disapproved. [back](#)
109. It would seem to this author that both polarities in the gifts controversy have over-reacted to each other, and further, that both have overstated their respective cases. On the one hand, the Warfield theology that the so-called "sign-gifts" should cease at approximately the close of the first century has no sound exegetical support in the New Testament. Furthermore, historically it is suspect as well when one reads the ante-Nicene fathers. On the other hand, the urging of people to seek for the manifestation of spiritual gifts, particularly the more sensational ones, surely seems to conflict with Paul's corrective measures in 1 Corinthians. It has always seemed strange to the

author that in the very passages where Paul is trying to argue for control and limitation, Pentecostal-Charismatics argue that the church needs more and more manifestations. In general, the conclusion of E. Glenn Hinson regarding the significance of tongues is probably worth repeating and extending to the entire issue: “Taking the historical evidence as a whole,” he writes, “you will likely conclude that tongues has been neither as significant as Pentecostals claim nor as insignificant or as bad as some non-Pentecostals claim.”⁸⁰ [back](#)

110. Prophecy is to be preferred, particularly preferred over speaking with tongues, because it is first of all intelligible. Tongues, by their very nature, are unintelligible to anyone who does not already understand the language (1 Co. 14:9-11), and as far as public worship is concerned, tongues are as valueless as the words of foreigners and perform no other function than simply an act of “speaking into the air.”

However, the intelligibility of prophecy over tongues is not the only reason for comparison. Some would argue that since Paul says, “He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets” (1 Co. 14:5), that therefore, tongues which are interpreted serve the same function in public worship as prophecy. This conclusion is not warranted. Paul points out that there is a fundamental difference between the orientation of prophecy and tongues. Prophecy is directed toward the congregation, and it consists of messages for strength, encouragement and comfort (1 Co. 14:3). Tongues, on the other hand, are not directed to the congregation but to God (1 Co. 14:2). One who speaks in tongues utters mysteries of prayer toward God (1 Co. 14:2, 14-15), and tongues serve as a form of exalted praise and giving of thanks (1 Co. 14:16-17). Thus, in the way Paul describes it, prophecy is inspired by the Spirit but directed toward the congregation. Prophecy is for the edification of the church (1 Co. 14:4b). Tongues, on the other hand, are directed by the individual toward God, and they are for the personal edification of the one who speaks (1 Co. 14:4a).

The question then arises, why should tongues be interpreted at all if they are not oriented to the congregation. The answer lies in the fact that the congregation is able to give assent to the prayer or praise that is directed to God in other tongues through a corporate “Amen” (1 Co. 14:16-17). Only in this way can the gift of tongues have any value for congregational worship.

⁸⁰ E. Hinson, “The Significance of Glossolalia in the History of Christianity,” *Speaking in Tongues: Let’s Talk About It*, W. Mills, ed. (Waco, TX: Word, 1973) 61.

Thus, if one speaks in tongues in public worship, he/she should pray to be able to interpret for the benefit of the listeners, not so they may be exhorted by it, but so they may give their assent to it (1 Co. 14:12-13). [back](#)

111. Paul clearly says that one who speaks in tongues speaks not to men but to God (1 Co. 14:2).⁸¹ This description harmonizes well with both the Book of Acts as well as 1 Corinthians. Luke says that at Pentecost those who spoke in other tongues (Ac. 2:4) were “declaring the wonders of God” (Ac. 2:11, See Answer #49). When the household of Cornelius was filled with the Spirit, Peter’s Jewish compatriots “heard them speaking in tongues and praising God” (Ac. 10:46, See Answer #72). The Ephesians who received the Spirit when Paul laid his hands upon them “spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Ac. 19:6), and it should be noted that Luke’s use of the verb “prophesy” is akin to the language of praise (cf. Lk. 1:67-68, See Answer #79).

Similarly, Paul describes speaking in tongues as a form of “prayer” (1 Co. 14:14-15), “singing” (1 Co. 14:15), “praise” and “thanksgiving” (1 Co. 14:16-17). This being so, then the Pentecostal-Charismatic vocabulary of a “message in tongues” and the practice of directing utterances in tongues to the congregation along with interpretation as a surrogate for prophecy is at least questionable if not a misuse altogether. There certainly are implications for using a non-biblical expression, such as, “a message in tongues.” Language tends to create reality in the mind of the hearer. This author has discovered that inasmuch as the expression “a message in tongues” is so

⁸¹ All the English versions agree that the term *theos* (= God) should be capitalized, even though it is anarthrous (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, ASV, NAB, TEV, JB, NEB, Goodspeed, Phillips, Weymouth, Williams, Wuest). In spite of this unanimous testimony, John MacArthur, Jr. has suggested that the anarthrous use of *theos* may then be left uncapitalized, making it read, “For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to god (i.e., a pagan god),” Cf. *The Charismatics*, 161. In so doing, he has relegated all those who speak in tongues to paganism. If the traditional translation is accepted, he argues that at best it is intended as a satire, and that since the Corinthians were using the gift of tongues to speak to God, they were perverting it.

This is specious exegesis, and it says more about MacArthur’s anti-Pentecostal-Charismatic bias than it does about Paul’s advice. In the first place, the anarthrous use of the word *theos* to refer to God (not pagan deities) is common enough in the New Testament and in the writings of Paul (cf. 1 Co. 10:20; 2 Co. 5:11, 13; Ga. 2:19). We would hardly think that Paul’s closing benediction to the Romans should read, “To the [pagan] god who only is wise...” (Ro. 16:27)! As for the suggestion that Paul was using satire, the context argues against this interpretation. Paul’s language is given in two balanced pairs:

“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God.

[On the other hand] the one who prophesies speaks to people.”

The parallelism of the statements gives not the slightest hint of satire, but rather, the parallelism is obviously intended to distinguish between the essential nature of tongues and the essential nature of prophecy.

frequently used in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, most of the people using it actually assume that it is, in fact, a biblical expression. They usually express surprise and mild confusion when they discover that it is not. [back](#)

112. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, Paul describes the purpose of prophecy as a verbal source of strength, encouragement, and comfort to the congregation. As such, prophecy is addressed to the congregation, not to God. Speaking in tongues, on the other hand, is directed to God rather than the congregation (1 Co. 14:2), as discussed earlier (see Answers #109 and #110). [back](#)
113. There is, as mentioned earlier (see Answer #109), a fundamental difference between the orientation of the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy. In 1 Corinthians 14:4, Paul describes this difference as one of edification. The essential nature of the gift of prophecy is for the edification or up-building of the congregation.⁸² The essential nature of the gift of tongues is for the edification or up-building of the individual. This distinction is significant with regard to the Pentecostal-Charismatic use of tongues in public worship, for often enough, the use of tongues in public worship is viewed as an emotional, psychological or spiritual benefit to the congregation, something that Paul's description seems to deny. [back](#)
114. Prophecy is more appropriate for public worship than tongues, because it is intelligible. Paul's comments clearly indicate that he considers intelligibility to be the primary factor. A congregation cannot be edified by what it cannot understand. The use of tongues in public worship can edify the congregation only if the tongues are interpreted. Even then, however, there is limited value inasmuch as tongues are not oriented to the congregation but to God, and the congregation hears the interpretation so that they may give the affirming "Amen" (see Answers #109 and #110). [back](#)
115. Paul's lengthy illustrations about the flute, harp and trumpet with regard to speaking in tongues is directed toward the question of intelligibility. One who comes to a congregation speaking in tongues will offer no edification. Only if that person speaks through one of the intelligible gifts, such as revelation, knowledge, prophecy or instruction, will there be up-building (1

⁸² It is probably worth pointing out that the Greek verb *oikodomeo*, though literally referring to the erecting of real buildings, comes to have the non-literal connotation of strengthening, benefiting, and establishing. It does not necessarily have any emotional overtones, cf. *BAG* (1979) 558.

Co. 14:6). By analogy, musical instruments communicate nothing in particular if one is not familiar with the melody being played (1 Co. 14:7). A war trumpet is worthless if the soldiers are not familiar with the signals or if the trumpeter does not clearly sound the commonly understood intonations for charge or retreat (1 Co. 14:8). This factor of intelligibility is critical with regard to the use of tongues in public worship. When one is alone and speaks in tongues, there is a level of personal edification (1 Co. 14:2b, 4a). However, when one is in the congregation of believers, tongues are nothing more than meaningless sounds, or as Paul puts it, the speaker is merely “speaking into the air” (1 Co. 14:9). Certainly languages have meaning, and the world is full of dialects that are properly understood by those who are familiar with them. Such dialects have no meaning for foreigners, however (1 Co. 14:10-11). By analogy, tongues are meaningless and have no edifying value unless they are understood by members of the congregation. One cannot be edified by what one does not understand! Since the Corinthians were eager to experience and express spiritual gifts in their congregational worship, Paul instructs them to prefer those gifts that have edifying value. In short, he intends for them to use the intelligible gifts in public worship, for these are the only kind that will strengthen the church. [back](#)

116. Paul’s directive is quite clear. If a Christian is inclined to speak in tongues in a congregational setting, he/she should pray for the ability to also interpret the utterance for the benefit of the congregation (1 Co. 14:13). This instruction logically follows from what Paul has already said about the relationship between intelligibility and edification (see Answers #112, #113 and #114). This is why later Paul will say that if there is an utterance in tongues, “someone must interpret” (1 Co. 14:27). If neither the one who speaks in tongues nor anyone else is capable of interpreting the utterance for the benefit of the congregation, then the speaker should remain silent (1 Co. 14:28). If the speaker has never experienced the gift of interpretation of tongues, and if there is no person present who is known to possess this interpretive gift, then the one inclined to speak in tongues must curb his/her inclination, speaking to him/herself and God. This latter phrase, “speak to himself and God,” stands in contrast to the phrase “in the church” (1 Co. 14:28), and probably should be taken to mean that tongues-speaking should be conducted in private prayer.

This particular instruction by Paul is probably the one most consistently passed over in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles. Tongues-speaking without interpretation in a congregational setting is frequent, when

according to Paul, it should not occur at all. Various rationales are offered, of course. Some argue that the absence of any interpretation on the three occasions in Acts when tongues-speaking occurred contradicts Paul's directive. Others assume that tongues-speaking has some sort of psychological, emotional or spiritual edification in itself without interpretation. Both of these explanations are weak, however. The cases in Acts were surely exceptional in many ways. At Pentecost (Ac. 2:4), interpretation was unnecessary, since the listeners were already fluent in the languages being spoken (cf. Ac. 2:13). At the household of Cornelius, the occasion of tongues speaking was a convincing factor to Peter's Jewish compatriots that these Gentiles, whom the Jewish Christians were not predisposed to accept, had indeed been accepted by God and filled with the Spirit (Ac. 10:45-46; 11:15, 17-18; 15:8-9). The occasion at Ephesus is less clear (Ac. 19:6), but in any case, Paul's instructions for public worship are issued later, and one may grant a certain amount of flexibility in situations that occurred before his directives were given. The second argument, that is, that tongues-speaking offers congregational edification without interpretation, Paul flatly contradicts (see Answers #114). [back](#)

117. The primary difference between "praying with one's spirit" and "praying with one's mind" is the factor of intelligibility (1 Co. 14:14). Paul seems to be using the phrase "praying with one's spirit" to refer to tongues-speaking, and in this kind of prayer, the mind is "unfruitful," that is, the language of prayer is incomprehensible since it is uttered in tongues. Paul prays in both ways, as he states (1 Co. 14:15), though of course he does not pray in tongues (or sing in tongues) when he is in a congregational setting (1 Co. 14:18-19). [back](#)
118. Paul defines the content of speaking in tongues as utterances of praise and thanksgiving to God (1 Co. 14:16-17). This description compares very closely with the accounts of tongues-speaking in the Book of Acts (See also Answer #110). [back](#)
119. The use of 1 Co. 14:5a and 14:18-19 to suggest that Paul intends to urge all believers to speak in tongues is invalid. Only by either reading these passages out of context or by breaking up the syntax of the sentences is such a position possible. Paul's statement is a conciliatory remark, somewhat on the order of Moses' statement, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them" (Nu. 11:29b).

Paul already has indicated that all believers do not speak in tongues (1 Co. 12:30). Furthermore, he has indicated that there is no single spiritual gift that is universal among Christians (1 Co. 12:14-20). While theoretically Paul could indeed wish that all Christians had been blessed with such a gift, in actuality he knew that this was not the case. What he really intends by his statement is to show that prophecy, because it is intelligible, is more appropriate for edification. Speaking in tongues has value for personal edification in private prayer, but in the congregation of believers, it has no edification value (1 Co. 14:18-19), unless, of course, it is interpreted for the benefit of the church (1 Co. 14:5). [back](#)

120. That Paul says he speaks in tongues more than all the Corinthians surely means that this gift was freely and regularly exercised by the apostle (1 Co. 14:18). As such, the value of the gift for personal edification must not be dismissed. At the same time, Paul implies that he does not exercise this gift in a congregational setting. “In the church,” that is, in a congregational setting, Paul says that intelligible words of instruction are called for (1 Co. 14:19). [back](#)
121. Paul seems to view utterances in tongues in a congregational setting as a result of immature thinking (1 Co. 14:20). Because the Corinthians have placed an inordinate value on tongues-speaking in their worship services, Paul accuses them of spiritual infancy. [back](#)
122. When Paul quotes Is. 28:11-12 in 1 Co. 14:21-22, he does so to point out that people who speak in other languages are not necessarily to be received as spiritual persons. In the Isaianic oracle to Ephraim, the fundamental issue is Israel’s “stumbling, bumbling life during the last decades of its existence.”⁸³ The nation is described as a collection of drunkards (28:1) who were led by inebriated priests and prophets (28:7). The filth and vomit of debauchery is everywhere in the nation (28:8). Like bumbling schoolmasters, these religious leaders had nothing to offer above an infantile level (28:9). Their recitation of alphabetic letters, *tsaw* (= tsade) and *qaw* (= qoph), was hardly better than baby talk.⁸⁴ Since the teaching of the nation’s

⁸³ J. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985) 362.

⁸⁴ Notice the NIV footnote in 28:10, which suggests that these words were possibly meaningless sounds or even a mimicking of the prophet’s words. With this opinion many if not most scholars would agree, cf. Watts, 363. The sounds may be examples of onomatopoeia, or they may be vulgarisms or colloquialisms approximating our term “burble, burble,” cf. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39 [OTL]* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 245.

religious leaders was so anemic, Yahweh promised them that he would speak to them in foreign tongues (28:11), here referring to the harsh-sounding language of the Assyrians who would invade Israel from the north. These oppressive and vindictive foreign schoolmasters would soon be teaching the Israelites their lessons, and it would be the terrible judgment of God upon them.⁸⁵ It would come like an overwhelming scourge (28:1b) and like a message of sheer terror (28:19b). Yahweh had decreed destruction against the whole land (28:22b).

This invasion of the holy land by foreigners with strange languages was nothing more than what was promised the nation in the Deuteronomic blessings and cursings. If the nation obeyed the covenant, she would be blessed (Dt. 28:1-14). If she broke the covenant, she would be cursed (Dt. 27:14-26; 28:15-68). A specific part of the curse for disobedience would be an invasion by foreigners who would speak in strange tongues (Dt. 28:49). Now, this Deuteronomic curse would fall upon Israel because of her broken covenant with the Lord, and she would be invaded by the Assyrians, people of “foreign lips and strange tongues” (Is. 28:11). Such devastating tragedy would happen to the very people whom God had originally promised rest in the land of Canaan (28:12; Ex. 33:14; cf. Dt. 3:20; 12:10; 25:19), and it corresponds to Yahweh’s oath that because of disobedience, rest would be withheld (cf. Ps.95:11).

In citing this passage, Paul forcefully reminds the Corinthians that they had better reassess the unqualified value they placed on tongues-speaking. In the case of Israel, foreign languages were not a sign of blessing but a sign of cursing upon an unbelieving nation (1 Co. 14:22a). Prophecy, by contrast, was a message of edification and comfort for believers (14:22b). The structure of Paul’s argument is as follows:⁸⁶

14:20 Exhortation: Redirect your thinking (about the function of tongues)

14:21 Old Testament Text: Tongues do not lead to obedience

14:22 Application: So then...

Assertion 1--Tongues are not a sign for believers but for unbelievers

Assertion 2--Prophecy is a sign for unbelievers not for believers

⁸⁵ R. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39 [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 228.

⁸⁶ Fee, 677.

It is unfortunate that Pentecostal-Charismatics frequently refer to Is. 28:11-12 as a prediction about speaking in tongues in the New Testament church and do so in a favorable way. Such a usage betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the message of Isaiah and probably derives from a proof-texting method in which the verses are taken out of their context in order to support some extraneous point.

As to how tongues are a sign to unbelievers in a Christian congregation, Gordon Fee (who, incidentally, is himself a Pentecostal) is probably correct in saying that it is a sign in a negative way, that is, it is a sign that functions to the disadvantage of unbelievers, not to their advantage.⁸⁷ Prophecy, on the other hand, functions as a gift that is to the believers' advantage, since it is an intelligible utterance.⁸⁸ [back](#)

123. No. It seems highly unlikely that Paul would advocate speaking in tongues in a public worship setting without an interpretation. He is especially concerned with the issue of intelligibility (See Answers #110, #114, #115 and #116), and since tongues are unintelligible to the congregation, they are inappropriate for public worship. The public use of tongues is especially detrimental for any outsiders who may be visiting, for their natural reaction will be that the tongues-speakers are insane babblers (1 Co. 14:23). A clearly explained communication in the listener's own language, on the other hand, is profitable, for in this way he/she can be convinced of the integrity and genuineness of the Christian message (1 Co. 14:24-25). [back](#)
124. According to 1 Co. 14:26, the single most important goal of members who wish to contribute something to the congregation in corporate worship is the strengthening of the church. This motive must stand behind all expressions in public worship, whether hymns, instructions, revelations, tongues or interpretations. [back](#)
125. Paul sets down three fundamental rules for the use of tongues-speaking in public worship (1 Co. 14:27-28). First, tongues-speaking of any sort, even when permitted, must be limited to two, or at the most three, utterances in a given worship service. Pentecostal-Charismatics sometimes suggest that this only means two or three utterances at a time before an interpretation is given or only two or three utterances by any single person, but Paul's obvious

⁸⁷ Fee, 682.

⁸⁸ Fee, 683.

concern in the entire chapter seems clearly to be that tongues-speaking should not dominate the assembly. Second, Paul forbids more than one person to speak at a time. Simultaneous tongues-speaking bursting out in various parts of the congregation is directly prohibited. Third, Paul restricts the public use of tongues to when there is an interpreter present. If the speaker has never interpreted the languages, and/or if there is no known person present who can be presumed to be able to interpret the languages, the speaker must keep silent so long as he/she is in a congregational setting. The instruction that the speaker should “speak to himself and to God” probably means that he should wait until he is in private to exercise this gift. Earlier, Paul indicated that the speaker him/herself should pray for the interpretation if there is any inclination to speak in tongues (cf. 1 Co. 14:13, See Answer #116).

With regard to prophecy, Paul also sets down some guidelines. Again, only two or three prophetic utterances are allowed in a given service (1 Co. 14:29). As before, only one speaker at a time is allowed (1 Co. 14:30-31). All utterances are to be submitted to evaluation, and nothing is to be received uncritically (1 Co. 14:29b). No one is compelled to speak out beyond their power to restrain themselves (1 Co. 14:32), and God does not approve of disorder (1 Co. 14:33).

Three further points may be extrapolated from these rules for public worship. First, if Paul forbids more than one person to speak aloud at a time, then by principle, he also would forbid competing prayer, that is, the sort of public prayer where everyone prays aloud at the same time with a different prayer. Competing prayer is also a regular practice of Pentecostal-Charismatics, and since they have become accustomed to it, they probably do not realize how disconcerting such prayer seems to anyone who is not familiar with it. (What if everyone chose their own hymn, and they all sang different music at the same time?) Second, since the spiritual urge to speak out is under the control of the one feeling it, the notion that one cannot help him/herself from speaking in tongues or speaking out in a public worship service is flatly contradicted. Third, the gullible acceptance of every utterance as though it were the audible voice of God from heaven is seriously misguided. Paul’s instruction is that all such utterances must be evaluated. Elsewhere, he says, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. *Test everything*. Hold on to the good” (1 Th. 5:19-21). [back](#)

126. While Paul sets forth careful guidelines for the exercise of the gift of

tongues, he does not forbid it (1 Co. 14:39). He prefers prophecy, but he allows tongues. All such practices, however, must be performed in an orderly and fitting way (1 Co. 14:40), and the term “fitting” suggests that Christians must avoid practices that are socially offensive. Earlier, Paul alluded to parts of the body that must be treated with “special modesty” (1 Co. 12:23b), and it would seem that he had in mind such manifestations as tongues-speaking. Still, corrective teaching is not the same as prohibition, and in the end, Paul does not forbid tongues-speaking. The plain sense of this statement ought to serve as a warning to the anti-Pentecostal-Charismatics not to be presumptuous. The antagonism sometimes demonstrated by those in non-Pentecostal circles toward their Pentecostal-Charismatic brothers and sisters is surely inappropriate, and it usually does not reflect the love of Christ. [*back*](#)

The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

(A Personal-Pastoral Response)

Preliminary Statement

I should mention, first of all, that my own perspective toward this subject is that it is secondary in the Christian faith. This is not to say that it is unimportant, but that it is not the most important. I believe that fellow-Christians may maintain some differences of opinion on this subject without it constituting a threat to the unity of the church. Thus, what I offer is not to be considered as a dogma but as an attempt to do justice to the biblical record.

Some General Observations About the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is first of all a Person--Someone, not something. Whatever language is used in Holy Scripture to describe the action of the Holy Spirit is to some degree metaphorical inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is not merely an external force that moves people, but rather, the Holy Spirit is integral to the Divine Nature Himself who creates and maintains relationships with men and women. Thus, in my thinking, the biblical language of “filling”, “coming upon”, “baptizing”, “moving”, and so forth, are ways of describing special relationships between human beings and God. At the same time, God’s sovereignty is demonstrated by the fact that the Holy Spirit may establish a relationship with a given individual in unexpected, unsought, and in some cases, even undesired ways.

My observations lead me to believe that the Holy Spirit has been active in every age, from the patriarchs to modern times. Most of the phenomena ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament documents are only a repetition of things that happened earlier in the Old Testament time periods. However, the Holy Spirit has not established his relationship with people in precisely the same way in all eras of time. Some periods may see the Holy Spirit working in more dramatic and externally observable ways while other periods may see the Holy Spirit working largely behind the scenes. As a case in point, Elijah, a man of the Spirit, did many sensational and unusual signs, while John the Baptist, filled with the Spirit from birth, performed not a single miracle (Jn. 10:41). What is true in the history of the biblical eras I believe to be true in the history of the Christian church. At some periods, the Holy Spirit has demonstrated himself in more externally observable ways, and at other times he has not.

The primary difference between the Old Testament relationship of the Holy Spirit to humans and the New Testament relationship is, I believe, more a matter of

degree than kind. This is to say that after the coming of Christ, the Holy Spirit's work is broader in terms of the amount of people who are touched by it. It is not so much that the Holy Spirit begins an entirely different work in the New Testament church, but that he begins a more extensive work in the New Testament church--a work that touches all believers rather than selected ones. As such, the relationship of the Holy Spirit to men and women is not for the few but for the many, not for special individuals but for all of God's people.

At the same time, it must be admitted that the work of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete adds a dimension not present in the Old Testament. This greater dimension of the Holy Spirit's work is that of comfort, conviction, assurance, guidance and testifying about Christ. The presence of supernatural phenomena, such as utterances, healings, miracles and so forth, are not the new work of the Spirit. They are simply the occasional and continuing work of the Spirit that is also present in the Old Testament.

On the Baptism with the Spirit

I believe the term "baptism with the Holy Spirit" refers to this broader application just named, that is, the work of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete. The phrase "baptism with the Spirit", apparently coined by John the Baptist, appears only a few times in the New Testament documents. In every case, this phrase is directly connected with the preaching of John, either in describing or recalling the content of his preaching. In the opening of Acts, the Baptist's prediction, that is, that God's people would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, was declared to be fulfilled at Pentecost. In my interpretation, this was a once-for-all event, much like the cross and the resurrection of our Lord. It corresponds with what Jesus meant when he used the expression, "When the Spirit of truth is come...." It is non-repeatable in the same sense that the passion of Jesus is non-repeatable. At the same time, the effects of this special moment in history are still being experienced, so that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ share in the benefits of that moment. In my opinion, the baptism with the Spirit was a collective event more than an individual one. It was the moment in salvation-history when God immersed the church with the Holy Spirit so that the church could accomplish its mission to the world, even in the bodily absence of our Lord.

This understanding of the baptism with the Spirit is somewhat different than, say, either the Baptist or the Pentecostal understanding. For the Baptist, the baptism with the Spirit is a synonym for the gift of the Spirit, and it is primarily a personal reality which occurs in the moment of faith toward the gospel. For the Pentecostal, the baptism with the Spirit is an experience subsequent to salvation which empowers him or her with spiritual gifts. Both of these positions see the phrase "baptism with

the Spirit” as describing a repeatable phenomenon that is individualized for each Christian, both in the early church and in the modern church. If this were intended to be so, it seems strange to me that the vocabulary never stuck in the early church. Nowhere do the apostles talk about the “baptism with the Spirit” as an individualized experience. In fact, in the letters of the New Testament, the phrase is absent altogether. Granted, every believer is said to be filled with the Spirit, sealed with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and so forth, but the vocabulary of being “baptized” with the Spirit is strangely absent from any discussions of individual Christian experience. Other than in descriptions of John the Baptist’s preaching, the only place where the baptism with the Spirit is ever said to have happened is on the day of Pentecost.⁸⁹

Thus, I tend to believe that the way in which both Pentecostals and Baptists use the phrase “baptism with the Spirit” is a misnomer. To say that one should expect to be baptized with the Spirit is like saying that one should expect Christ to be crucified for every believer, one at a time. To say that every believer experiences the baptism with the Spirit is like saying that every believer personally experiences the death of Jesus. What all believers experience are the multiplied benefits of the fact that God baptized the community of faith with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Because God baptized the church with the Holy Spirit, every believer can rest assured that he or she has been filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

I should also add that I do believe that every Christian who is truly a Christian is filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit and that this filling and sealing is effective for the individual as well as the corporate body. The gift of the Spirit is dispensed at the moment of true faith in Christ. It is part and parcel of what it means to be regenerated and born from above. The Spirit creates new life in the believer, and without it, he or she would still be spiritually dead. I further believe that from the time of conversion, the Holy Spirit continues to work in the lives of all believers to lead them, empower them, convict them and assure them. I do not believe that there is some single crisis experience that indicates a believer has received the “fullness” of the Holy Spirit, such as the Pentecostal would say. In fact, I will resist all efforts to institutionalize the work of the Holy Spirit by using vocabulary such as “fullness of the Spirit”, “full-gospel”, “Spirit-filled” and “Spirit-baptized”. These kinds of phrases serve only to create an elitism that ultimately divides the body of Christ into first and second-class Christians. I do not intend to rule out crisis experiences altogether, of course, since I have had crisis experiences in my own life that I deem to be of the Holy Spirit. The same could be said of Luther, Wesley, and many others. I only wish to say that because such crisis experiences may happen sometimes does not indicate they must

⁸⁹ Even Paul’s statement in 1 Co. 12:13 is a corporate rather than an individual description, although I think Paul is using the term somewhat differently than did John the Baptist.

happen all the time, and because they happen to some Christians does not mean they must happen to all Christians or should even be sought by all Christians.

Thus, I do not believe that a Christian should seek to be “baptized” with the Holy Spirit, at least in the sense that the Pentecostals would have it. Granted, Paul says to be filled with the Spirit, but I have a hard time believing he meant anything even remotely close to what a Pentecostal would mean when he or she says the same thing. I find not the slightest evidence of this Pentecostal approach in the New Testament. What happens in the altar services of most Pentecostal churches has not a single New Testament precedent, and for the most part, I consider it to be an adding to the gospel of an element that has caused not a little distortion concerning what the Christian faith is all about in the first place. I do not disclaim the sincerity of Pentecostal people, and I emphatically affirm them as my brothers and sisters in Christ. At the same time, I do disclaim their theology of the Holy Spirit. Historically, I believe that the Pentecostal theology of the Holy Spirit was forged by some sincere but uneducated people who were not well equipped to deal with extensive biblical studies. On the other hand, without hesitation I confess Pentecostals as members of the body of Jesus Christ, regardless of what I perceive to be as a misdirection and/or a misplaced emphasis on their part regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

On the Gifts of the Spirit

I believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are many. Paul’s use of lists (whether sins, gifts, graces, or something else) are suggestive, not exhaustive. Thus, when Paul lists gifts of the Spirit, whether in 1 Corinthians, Romans or Ephesians, he is not intending to compile a complete tally. Rather, he is either intending to discuss the general nature of spiritual gifts (Romans and Ephesians), or he is intending to correct the abuse of some specific spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians).

In some sense, all believers are gifted by the Holy Spirit to function within the body of Christ. Paul compares spiritual gifts to bodily parts which do their respective tasks for the benefit of the entire body. He even extends his metaphor to indicate that any attempt to assert that all members of the body should have the same function is a gross distortion. This fact in itself cuts directly across the Pentecostal teaching that all believers can and ought to speak in tongues. It seems to me that the whole context of 1 Corinthians 12 is an assertion in precisely the opposite direction from what Pentecostals take it to be. What Paul is driving at is that there is no single gift that all believers possess, including speaking with tongues.

Furthermore, it seems to me significant that when Paul is discussing the general nature of gifts (such as in Romans and Ephesians), he does not mention the more sensational kinds of gifts. It is only when he is addressing a church that is consumed with sensationalism in the first place that he feels compelled to address the

more sensational gifts, such as, tongues, interpretation of tongues, spontaneous prophecy and so forth. This being so, then it seems to me that the more generally desirable gifts which ought to be operative in greater measure in the church should be the kind that are described in Romans 12, a passage where Paul is not dealing with an obstinate problem. The kind of gifts that are addressed in 1 Corinthians, on the other hand, are probably to be found less frequently in the church, since they are so susceptible to abuse and misunderstanding. In fact, that conclusion seems to be precisely what Paul attempts to urge in 1 Corinthians. He wants to lessen the occurrences of these more sensational gifts.

There is to be noted a double emphasis in Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts. First, he affirms that gifts are given sovereignly, that is, individual believers have no authority to select or choose what gifts they receive. When Paul says to "eagerly desire spiritual gifts", he cannot mean that every believer is free to pick and choose whatever gift he or she wants. Rather, he says to desire the "greater" gifts, especially prophecy, and to try to excel in gifts that build up the church. Second, he affirms that gifts must be controlled by the one who possesses them. Gifts are never described as overpowering a believer, but rather, a believer is obliged to control the expression of his or her gift. The final criterion for when or when not to express a gift is edification, that is, its benefit to the Christian community. If it is not intelligible, it must be restrained. If it will cause the outsider to doubt the credibility of the Christian faith, it must be restrained.

This leads me to three conclusions. First, the Pentecostal notion that gifts are to be chosen and sought is patently against Paul's teaching. Second, the Pentecostal assumption that a person must be given liberty to exercise his or her gift, however he or she deems, is unfounded and even forbidden in the New Testament. Thirdly, the Pentecostal ideal that edification can be primarily defined as emotional uplifting and as primarily self-directed must be rejected. Edification, in Paul's language, is primarily directed toward the church, not the individual, even though some gifts may edify the individual. Furthermore, edification is not primarily emotional but life-oriented, that is, it is not so much about what one feels as much as about how one lives the Christian life. This being so, then some gifts, such as speaking in tongues, have only a limited capacity for edification. Other gifts, such as serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, showing mercy, and so forth, have a broad capacity for edification. I think that it would be a rare occasion when speaking tongues would be edifying to the congregational body. This is why I think Paul encourages tongues-speaking to be done in private, rather than in a congregational setting, unless there is an interpretation. However, when there is an interpretation, then any edification comes from the content of the intelligible message, because it is issued as a praise toward God, not from the emotional overtones that might accompany it or any

ecstasy that is expressed in tongues-speaking.

While on the question of tongues-speaking, I should share than I do not agree with the Pentecostal differentiation between tongues-speaking in Acts and tongues-speaking in 1 Corinthians. Furthermore, I do not find any New Testament precedent for the Pentecostal notion of a “message in tongues”, i.e., a message of warning, direction or judgment to the church. Rather, Paul says that the one who speaks in tongues speaks to God, not to men. Tongues-speaking is a means of praise to God, not a means of communication to the church. In a public gathering, it is interpreted only so that the church may give the “Amen” in agreement with the praise offered. Even on the day of Pentecost, the phenomenon of tongues-speaking does not seem to have been evangelistic. Rather, the strangers in Jerusalem listened to those who were filled with the Spirit as they “declared the wonders of God” in their native languages. The gospel was preached later, not in other tongues, but by Peter in the commonly understood language of all (Greek or perhaps Aramaic).

If the question is posed as to how often spiritual gifts should be exercised in the church, then I must respond with another question: of which gifts is one speaking? If one is speaking of the gifts that are clearly up-building in the sense of promoting the Christian lifestyle of the believer, such as prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, showing mercy, and the like, then they should be exercised often. If one is referring to tongues-speaking and mystical experiences, however, then they should be exercised rarely. There is no limit on the former gifts, but there is clearly a limit on the latter (two times in a given service is enough, and three times is the absolute maximum). The limitation of “two, or at the most, three” is not some sort of goal toward which to aim. It is not “at least two or three,” but “never more than two or three.” This seems to indicate that Paul felt like even two or three times was unusual. Because of the absence of any description of tongues-speaking in the other letters of Paul, not to mention the other letters of the New Testament, it seems probable to me that what was happening in Corinth was unusual in itself. Corinth was not the norm but the extreme for even the New Testament congregations with respect to demonstrative gifts.

Finally, I must also add that I do not follow what might be labeled the “sign-gift theology”, that is, the teaching that certain gifts were exclusive signs of the apostolic age intended as a sort of surrogate authority until the canon of the New Testament was completed. This teaching, derived largely from the polemics of B. B. Warfield near the turn of the century in his debates against the perfectionist movement, seems to have serious problems on both exegetical as well as historical grounds. Exegetically, the passage in 1 Co. 13 about certain gifts ceasing is more naturally interpreted to refer to the *parousia* of Christ, not the completion of the New Testament canon. Historically, while certain demonstrative gifts declined in the

church, they did not disappear altogether. Even in their decline, the Apostolic Fathers never interpreted that they must necessarily have declined because they were no longer available. The observation of a decline cannot be used as a demand for cessation. On the other hand, it is appropriate to point out that the apostolic era included an abundance of these special gifts, more so than perhaps any other era of time, inasmuch as they were accepted marks of apostleship.

Final Remarks

My highest concern is not with sorting out the theological intricacies of the baptism and gifts of the Spirit. In my observations, the intensity of trying to accomplish this has resulted in one of the most serious divisions in the Christian church. It has resulted in judgmentalism and the spirit of pride, hypocrisy and pressure tactics. I must be frank in admitting that most of the phenomena which I have seen in Pentecostal ranks I consider to be the result of emotional excess and psychological inducement. Although I was reared as a Pentecostal, I do not even know for sure how to evaluate my own mystical experiences, whether miraculous or psychological. In the final analysis, it is not all that important. The important thing is the gospel itself. Again, to be frank, I am uncomfortable with the demonstration of public mysticism. Mysticism, due to its subjective content, has no clear meaning for a congregation. By contrast, the Word of God does. I can do without the one, but not the other. Mysticism, while permissible, is unnecessary. The Word of God is absolutely necessary.