

Mid-Winter Ministerial Conference  
January 24-27, 1956

Signs of Christ's Return

We of the Church of God are vitally interested in the return of Jesus Christ. Our people are anxious to learn the latest in the fulfillment of prophecy. As Ministers we aim to acquire every bit of information that has any bearing on the signs of Jesus' return. I am sure that when we return to our home churches some will inquire about the thinking of our Ministers on this vital subject. For this reason we thought it would be profitable for us to pool our information.

To open the discussion we would like to ask a few questions and to make a suggestion or two.

The Disciples became disturbed when they realized that Jesus was going to leave them. Jesus assured them that He would return again so they asked for signs that would herald that event. Jesus gave them a series of signs. We have chosen to consider those recorded in Luke 21.

These signs are:

1. Appearance of many false Christs
2. Rumors of wars and commotions
3. Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom
4. Earthquakes in different places
5. Famines and earthquakes
6. "Fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven"
7. Liberation of Jerusalem from Gentile rule
8. Signs in sun, moon and stars
9. Distress of nations with perplexity - confusion
10. Sea and waves roaring
11. Men's hearts failing them
12. Powers of heaven shall be shaken

Let us now consider some of these twelve signs.

Every little while we read of some person who claims to be something special in his service to God. So far few of them claim to be Christ and we feel that they are no serious threat toward mass deception. However, the fact that so many are making claims to unusual powers would seem to establish a trend that bears watching.

One of the latest to come to our notice is Bishop Homer A. Tomlinson of the Church of God, Pentecostal. He has announced the purchase of 330 Sq. mi. of land in Palestine, where he plans to establish the "Holy Nation of the Church of God". He frequently rides a white horse and claims to be one of the four horsemen of Revelation, a dubious honor even if true. Tomlinson expects to join the other three riders soon. These are said to be "war", "famine" and "death" so he will be fitting company.

Revelation 6 seems to present the rider of the white horse as a false christ, so it is possible that the Bishop may yet announce himself as the Messiah.

We pass over signs two and three and pause on point four long enough to note that earthquake activity is increasing. We are not able to report any increase in famine or pestilence, although there are some ominous warnings given from time to time.

Point six causes us to pause and wonder. "Fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven." The word "heaven" is translated from the Greek word "ouranos" which is the root word for "uranium". Some students think this is a clear reference to the atom bomb, which was "triggered" by uranium. We must admit the atom bomb did create some fearful sights. We notice, though, that Jesus used the very same word when He said: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus wasn't referring to atomic energy - or was He? - when He made his statement. However we must not overlook any possible clue to the coming of Jesus.

Many believe that Jerusalem was liberated by General Allenby in 1917. He did free Jerusalem from Turkish rule but we contend that the city is still partially under Gentile dominion. We feel that this sign is still unfulfilled.

Sun spot activity is upsetting our weather in many areas. This may be a sign as it could lead to great disasters, drought and famine.

"The powers of heaven shall be shaken." Again we discover the root word for uranium. If this statement of Jesus can be interpreted as meaning "the powers of uranium shall be shaken", then we must be close to the return of Jesus. The following verse (27) states: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Jesus continued by saying: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." V. 23

Matthew 24 is supposed to be a parallel account to Luke 21. In the third verse of Matthew the Disciples asked Jesus: "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" The word translated "coming" is found some 24 times in the New Testament. It is translated "coming" in every instance except in 2 Cor. 10:10 and Phil. 2:12, where it is translated "presence." (Incidentally, the Companion Bible and the Emphatic Diaglott gives the word "parousia" in 1 Thess. 2: 19, but Young doesn't agree) In the majority of cases the word "parousia" clearly means "coming", yet the word does carry the meaning of "presence". It is possible they could have been asking for signs of His presence.

Now turn with me to Isa. 63: 1-6. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save; Wherefore art thou red in thy apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed has come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

This passage stands alone, seemingly unrelated to what precedes it, or to what follows. It appears to be a statement of future events as there is no part of history that corresponds to these events. It must be future history. It certainly is not recorded history.

Most students feel that this passage has reference to the Messiah. If this is true, when will He tread the winepress alone? Why doesn't the Church help him? Is it possible that He does this before He calls His Church?

Edom is a name applied to the descendants of Esau, and Bozrah was their principle city. Some think that Edom is used as a symbol of the entire Arab

world, including Egypt.

The very day in 1948 when Israel declared itself a new nation, it was attacked by the Arab armies. The Arabs were determined to kill Israel at its birth. They were defeated, not by Israeli arms, but by the intervention of miraculous powers. In most cases the Arabs surrendered because they were confronted by three old men with long white beards, dressed in white robes, who told them to surrender or be killed. These three old men never appeared to the Israeli soldiers, but were seen by the Arab soldiers.

In the Negev Desert the story was different. Here the small Israeli army was surrounded by Arab and Egyptians. Military men didn't concede Israel a chance for victory. The Jews considered themselves trapped and were ready and willing to accept annihilation. The sudden surrender of the Egyptian Army caught every one by surprise. When pressed for an explanation of their surrender they said that an old man with a white beard and wearing white robes, stood before their army and addressed them in a clear strong voice heard by every man, telling to surrender or be killed.

This event happened in the land of Edom. Is it possible that Jesus is already taking a hand in the judgment of Edom? Is He ready to tread the winepress of judgment alone? Have we, in this strange appearance, the sign of His presence?

In this instance, the stranger who appeared acted more in the capacity of a saviour than an avenger. Obadiah in his message to Edom said: "We have heard a rumor (tidings) from the Lord, and an ambassador (messenger) is sent among the heathen (nations)" V 1. It looks as though this messenger was giving Esau, a child of Abraham, an opportunity to forsake his perpetual hatred and accept the Jewish people as brethren and thus make peace with them. Was this the final offer of grace to Edom that he might escape punishment? Was the greatest Son of Abraham calling for peace among His brethren?

Obadiah warned Edom against using "violence against thy brother Jacob." We know the Arabs are plotting mischief against Israel and they seem willing to ally themselves with communists and other enemies of Israel. They apparently have refused to listen to the ambassador, if that was who the stranger was. The destruction of Edom fore-told by Isaiah (34:4-6) and Obadiah must be close at hand.

Whether we interpret the statement in Matt. 24:3 to mean "sign of his coming" or "sign of his presence", we feel that we can all agree that the return of Jesus is very near. We, as shepherds of the Church of God must keep our flocks in readiness for the appearing of the Chief Shepherd.

Harry Sheets

LUKEWARMNESS TOWARD THE GENERAL CONFERENCE  
AND WAYS AND MEANS TO CORRECT IT

MID-WINTER MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
1956

By-Emory Macy  
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The reason for the seemingly "lukewarmness" of the brethren living at a distance from the General Conference can be classified in three reasons.

(1) Lukewarmness because of distance:

Devout brethren living at a distance from the General Conference think of going to Oregon as a pilgrimage to the mecca of the Church of God. To some it only comes once in a lifetime.

A laboring man must plan such trips months in advance. Such a trip requires a savings of \$200-\$400 to cover the expenses of the average sized family traveling for a period of 3-4 months.

The average laboring breadwinner does not get sufficient vacation time to make the trip to General Conference. If he did get sufficient time, the dates may conflict with those of the General Conference.

Distance hampers the brethren's zeal toward the General Conference because they remain uninformed of General Conference workings.

(2) Lukewarmness toward the General Conference is because the local church work has precedence:

This problem has been brought to mind when I have attempted to promote interest in the General Conference to the brethren in Texas. Statements, such as the following, express the people's views: "Why should we send money to Oregon and let our treasury suffer?" "Isn't this the Lord's work, too?"

Some time ago, when one of the General Conference workers was in Texas, we encouraged a generous contribution toward the worker's expenses because of the distance traveled to render services to us. The following week I was met with this statement, "Preachers have traveled the same distance from Texas to Oregon and rendered similiar services there, for little or no acknowledgment." The Texas State Conference feels it is missionary minded and has its own field. It has no congregation that is self-supporting. The late Bro. S. E. Magaw wrote a letter of inquiry about the Texas work, and in my reply I sent him a map of the United States of which I cut out the state of Texas and placed Gatesville directly over Oregon, Ill. The territory covered was bounded by lines running from Duluth, Minn., westward through Cass Lake to the Red River Valley, southward to the southern boundry of South Dakota, westward again to central Nebraska, southeast through Kansas City, Memphis, Dayton and Blanchard.

Many local congregations and state conferences are struggling with the same financial problems as those of General Conference. When the local treasury is depleted it is difficult to encourage the brethren to support the empty hand of the General Conference. There is not a minister present today who is not selfishly interested in his own church treasury, whether he lives far from or near to the General Conference.

There is much need for evangelism in every state and district conference. When the word "evangelism" is used in the Texas State Conference it is applied in terms of working in the local field. The term "going to the Conference" means the local conference. General Conference is thought as being a northern institution into which few Texans have ever explored.

(3) Lukewarmness toward General Conference because of public opinion.

One who is not familiar with a subject or place need only to ask questions for information. Then private opinion is formed by the information received. If such information is bias or warped, underestimated or exaggerated, then the opinion formed will be either pro or con.

If there is a lukewarmness toward the General Conference because of information about the conference; then, that lukewarmness may be caused by the General Conference's action and attitude toward the brethren living at a distance or perhaps the fault may be with the one who misrepresented the conference.

The ministers and their families are the only representatives of the General Conference in many fields. There are less than twenty-five people from Texas who have ever witnessed the conference in action. The remainder have formed their opinions from reading the Restitution Herald, or conversing with the General Conference workers and their own pastors.

An opinion was expressed, some time ago, upon the conference grounds in Oregon, Ill., that "The South is still fighting the Civil War against the North." At the time, I thought it a selfish attitude for the South. Now, after eight years in the southwest, I look back and can see that the North is also selfish in its bias opinion of the south and that feeling is present in the General Conference.

The General Conference is a democratic organization, run only by-the-people-present at the conference meeting. (As it should be.) If a motion was presented to have the General Conference in Atlanta, Little Rock, Harlingen, or Los Angeles, how many northerners would vote for it and make the same effort to be present in some out-of-Oregon place? It must be remembered that roads from Dallas or Flagstaff to Oregon is the same distance as it is from Oregon to Dallas or Flagstaff.

The General Conference should be evangelistic minded. But it cannot be more evangelistic minded than the people behind it. Last year, the Texas Conference invited a minister of one of our larger self-supporting churches to be guest speaker at its conference. The minister was forced to decline such invitation on grounds that he was financially unable to hire a substitute pastor to occupy his pulpit in his absence. This same church is reported as being missionary minded and have a missionary society yet, refused its pastor to do evangelistic and missionary work outside of its own community. Would it not be more consistent for a missionary minded church to offer its pastor to do mission work and use the mission fund to support such projects.

The Restitution Herald has done much in directing the opinion of the brethren living at a distance. Doctrinal subjects have helped the isolated brethren to study. People are interested in people. The brethren living at a distance are interested in the activities of the churches everywhere.

I believe the problem with the Restitution Herald is "how can we interest our people to read it?"

The General Conference workers shape the opinion of the people more than any other one thing. When the worker representing the conference presents the General Conference as an organization that is interested in the presentation of the Gospel, and

that he, himself, is proud to be a part of it, then lukewarmness can be partially corrected. Lukewarmness, in terms toward the General Conference, has been created by the voice and pen of our preachers and by the group of General Conference workers who were not sympathetic with the conference problems, policies and teachings.

We cannot speak for all state conferences that are separated from Oregon by distance. We can only voice the opinion of the brethren in Texas. Every year, notices of the dates of the Texas Conference are published in the Restitution Herald along side those of other conferences and that of the General Conference, and a hearty invitation is extended to everyone. Should we classify northerners as being lukewarm and uninterested in the Texas work because they are not attending our business meetings?

WAYS AND MEANS OF OVERCOMING THE LUKEWARMNESS and to promote greater cooperation within the General Conference.

People must see to believe. People must be present to take an active part in the business of the General Conference. If these two statements are true, then the problem is still distance, is it not? We must bring the people to the conference or take the conference to the people.

#### SUGGESTION No. 1

Take the conference to the people. Give as many people, as possible, the opportunity to voice their opinion regarding national affairs. Have the General Conference in the eastern, western and southern part of the United States and not just part of Oregon. The daily attendance may not be as high, but over a period of five years more people would meet at the General Conference and conference would know the needs of the people, as a whole.

The General Conference (so called) is not the General Conference of the Churches of God in the United States & Canada. One only needs to check the history of the conference to realize that the controlling interests have always been within the short radius from Oregon. We feel this has long-fulfilled its mission. Today, the Church of God has outgrown its infant stage, we must "grow up into him in all things." It is not our thoughts to discourage having state and district conferences at Oregon, Ill., or Dewart Lake, Indiana. But, let the Church of God, as a whole, have a general conference. Let the people of the Church of God run the conference. Let us put lukewarmness to the test.

#### SUGGESTION No. 2

Improve the conference program. As long as mortal people must make decisions there will always be mistakes made and as long as people have the right to formulate an opinion of their own infallibility will never be a reality. Some lukewarmness toward the General Conference is accentuated by the reported afterglow from the conference meetings. The spirit within the meetings may be forgivable but not too easily forgotten by those who are present from a distance, for their first time.

### SUGGESTION No. 3

Every conference worker and layman must be enthusiastic about the conference, its program and for whatsoever the conference stands. We are living in a day in which we read and hear so much about loyalty-tests and a vote-of-confidence. If a worker of the General Conference cannot conscientiously subscribe to every standard of the conference and for which it stands, be it right or wrong, he cannot improve the present lukewarmness. Conflicting reports never encourage cooperation, even though one report may be correct.

A salesman must sell the product of the company. No salesman can be successful by pointing out the faults of his company. No company can command high respect, if it constantly covers up its mistakes and refuses to improve or profit by them.

### SUGGESTION No. 4

A united sales effort. The Church of God has the best product to sell that is offered to the unchurch world. "Eternal life in kingdom of God upon the earth." Various departments of the General Conference such as Sunday School and Berean are promoting their own field and they are reaching out into the world.

It has been suggested the General Conference should have a travel executive to represent and to promote the conference. In the business world this means is sometimes used to promote sales. But is the business of the General Conference to increase book sales or to increase free gifts to a common purse, or to increase contacts to the unchurch world? Heretofore, much effort has been spent in wool-clipping from organized churches and conference. Adult evangelism has been confined to making church contacts.

### CONCLUSION:

The seemingly lukewarmness toward the General Conference would soon be limited if the brethren could see the conference and sit in on the sessions. The General Conference would be of greater assistance to the brethren if it could show them how to contact the unchurch world; how to persuade the dull of hearing; how the churches can be more attractive and appealing; how the gospel-of-the-kingdom can be the power of God unto salvation. There are a few brethren left in the Church of God who do not take comfort in the words "We are living in the 'last days.'" Therefore, there is supposed to be a 'falling away.' "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" Prov. 6:10, 11.

It is high time the lukewarmness in all the Churches of God be limited and the zeal for evangelism be a reality.



## PRAYER FOR THE SICK IN OUR DAY

by  
CYRUS J. SHAW

Men of all ages have sought and hoped in a God of miracles. This appears to be true whether the god was "the great white spirit" of the American Indian, or that of the magicians of Pharaoh, whose rods were swallowed by the rod of Aaron, or the god of the priests of Baal who met disaster in open combat with the "God of Elijah", or the one sought at the Wailing Wall, made famous, not by the wall itself, but because the seekers thereto found a sense of relief from the burdens which took them there or the "unknown God" at Mars hill whom Paul declared to be The One True God.

We are no different in our day, but like men of all ages, are seeking and praying to a God of miracles. However, we may have failed to proclaim Him, as the "I AM THE LORD THAT HEALETH THEE," Ex. 15:26. Not one of us wishes to fail God, but people seem to affect us more at times than does His word. The "God of our closet" is usually greater than the God we preach. In our own closet the sky is not the limit. We have prayed for rain, knowledge, wisdom, for almost every gift in His book, for knowledge for the children in their school work - even asking that a knowledge of mathematics be given to one of them, for daily protection, daily bread, and for many other things, including healing for almost every kind of ache, bump, and disease that befalls our complex day. Only a present day God of MIRACLES could possibly answer our daily prayers.

While I am writing this article (January 14, 1956) at this very paragraph, a sister who has been a member of the Church of God for 20 years called rejoicing over the recent progress of her child in his school work and even his improved attitude with the other children. We rejoiced with her because we had recently taught her to pray to a God of Love, "whose eyes are over the righteous and whose ears are open to their prayers." She gave God the glory for answering prayer.

There are so many places in the scripture where God has wrought deliverance to the people because someone thought to pray, that for this discussion, it is only a matter of which to select. Suppose you and I received word from God as Hezekiah did to set our house in order: "for thou shalt die, and not live." I dare say there is one part of this we would do. We would "set our house in order." We might even track down some of those we had offended and, this time, we would be in "dead" earnest to make things right. Hezekiah began to pray, and was able to tell the Lord of good he had done. God heard his prayer and not only healed his body, but delivered the city out of the hand of the king of Assyria. And for good measure He turned the sun back ten degrees for a sign of His guarantee, Isa. 38:1-8.

It was the goodness of God to both Abraham and Abimelech that Sarah was returned unharmed. But it was the prayer of Abraham that moved the hand of God from the house of Abimelech so they might again bear children, Gen. 20.

An amazing prayer by the servant of Abraham when he sent him after a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24) shows he believed in a God of miracles even down to the finest point. Part of his prayer was this: "Send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham." This wasn't enough. He added many details which included what HE would say, and also what the DAMSEL would say. The damsel was to say, "Drink; and I will give thy camels drink also." He was to know the right damsel by what she said. She came and said all he had requested of God that she would say. But it took more to convince him than just what she said. As she drew water for the camels, "he, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit 'whether' the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." I wonder if we would still be wondering? It was after the last camel had finished drinking that he brought out the golden earring and bracelets for her hands. Often God does more than we even "ask or think."

After Solomon had ended his prayer of dedication of the Temple, the Lord appeared to him by night and said, "I have heard thy prayer" (2 Chron.7 12:14), and gave this covenant to His people with the conditions contained therein. "If my people, WHICH ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land". This to me is an ETERNAL COVENANT to any people of any age.

In praising the Lord David said (Psalms 103 2:3), "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities; Who healeth ALL thy diseases." I believe this to be God's divine will for His people and I believe He anointed Jesus of Nazareth to carry out His will.

We listen to Jesus as He stands up to read in His own home town, (Luke 4 18:19) "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, BECAUSE he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to HEAL the broken hearted, to preach DELIVERANCE to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The people in the synagogue "wondered at his gracious words," but they acclaimed Him no greater than "Joseph's son." Jesus said, "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, HEAL thyself."

Seeing a man that was born blind (St. John 9 1:4), Jesus said to his disciples, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the WORKS OF GOD SHOULD BE MADE MANIFEST IN HIM." The "works of God", in this case, was the healing of this blind man.

Peter at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:38) said, "The word which God sent unto the childred of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (the word contained healing, Isa. 57 18:19) That work, I say, ye know.... How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing ALL that were oppressed of the devil; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM."

In the "great commission" of Christ, given for the salvation of men, is divine healing for the body. Among other things, these words are found in Mark 16:17-21. "And these signs shall follow them that BELIEVE; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with NEW tongues; (should we expect less than a new tongue from a "new man"?) THEY SHALL LAY HANDS ON THE SICK, AND THEY SHALL RECOVER, and these words are added, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." I can speak for myself, that I desperately need the Lord to work with me, and there is no greater blessing under the sun, than to see the Lord confirm his word.

The great commission as given in Mat. 28 19:20, is that they should "teach all nations, Teaching them to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the END OF THE WORLD." I assume he meant this present world. I feel certain that part of what He meant for them to "teach and observe" is found in Mat. 10:1 as follows. "He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." In verses 7 and 8 of this same chapter Jesus told them to preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."

When Jesus sent the seventy out (Luke 10:9) He said, "Heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME NIGH UNTO YOU," and thus we see that Jesus made divine healing a part of the preaching of the kingdom of God.

After Jesus had ascended, the record says of Philip as he preached at Samaria (Acts 8:5-13) that "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women". This scripture is absolutely true, but it doesn't say in this verse WHY THEY BELIEVED Philip. These people had long been bewitched with sorceries by Simon. They had given heed to him "from the least to the greatest". But the people "gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, HEARING AND SEEING the miracles which he did."

James says of the unchanging character of God that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom is NO VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING," James 1:17. The apostle Paul says of Jesus Christ that he is "THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOREVER," Heb. 13:8.

I believe we will agree that God did have and maintain a covenant of healing for His people. I believe the Father gave this covenant of healing to His Son because of His great LOVE for suffering humanity, and made the scope of it conform to His day of grace. Certainly it was administered on this scale by Jesus even to those who could only "touch the hem of His garment".

Keeping in mind the statement of James, which shows the Father to be the source of "every good gift", with whom is NO VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING, and the words of Paul that Jesus Christ is "THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOREVER", we can rejoice as Peter and John did when they were in trouble and found this to be true. Peter and John had gone to the temple (Acts, chapters 3 and 4) and had spoken these words to a lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The man did more than walk. He went with them into the temple "walking, and leaping, and praising God."

The people were filled with "wonder and amazement." Jesus was not dead. Peter explaining why the lame man was able to walk said, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, HATH GLORIFIED HIS SON JESUS....Whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." The people there were also witnesses but to some this was not a pleasant thought. Peter also said that it was "by the NAME OF JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth...doth this man stand before you whole."

After being commanded "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" Peter and John were released and returned to their own company. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord" and prayed that they might have boldness to "speak thy word". Notice what they asked God to do so they would speak His word in boldness. "And now Lord behold their threatenings; and grant unto 'thy servants', that with all boldness 'they' may speak thy word, BY STRETCHING FORTH THINE HAND TO HEAL; and that SIGNS AND WONDERS may be done by the NAME of thy holy child Jesus."

God answered their prayer and such a revival broke out that "multitudes of both men and women" were added to the Lord. Places were sought where even the shadow of Peter might "over shadow some of them". Great multitudes of Sick Folks were brought to the services "and they were healed EVERY ONE". In this healing service beginning with the lame man the Apostle Peter has brought forward at least three important facts that can bless people so long as there is a need in the land.

1. That when God "GLORIFIED HIS SON JESUS" HIS COVENANT OF HEALING WAS A PART OF THAT GLORY.
2. That the healing was by and through the NAME of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.
3. That the source of the gift, the method of administration, and the UNCHANGEABLE CHARACTER OF BOTH FATHER AND SON in relation to OUR PRESENT DAY, was further established.

Several years after the beginning of the church, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Paul was called "by Jesus Christ and God the Father" "TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME, THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE HEATHEN; IMMEDIATELY I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD."(Gal.1) Paul received his knowledge of the gospel by direct revelation and the pattern was the same to the Gentiles as that of Peter to the Jews. God even wrought "special miracles by the 'hands' of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." And so we see healing and miracles in a "SPECIAL" way was brought to the gentiles.

Paul wrote to THE Church Of God at Corinth (Gentiles), "Concerning SPIRITUAL GIFTS, I would not have you ignorant", explaining that "there are diversities of gifts, but THE SAME SPIRIT". This is the SAME HOLY GHOST or HOLY SPIRIT that Peter promised the converts on the day of Pentecost and it was to be given to "ALL THAT ARE AFAR OFF, EVEN AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALL." Acts 2:38-39. The GIFTS of the Spirit are NOT the fruits of the SPIRIT, but are special manifestations of God's power within that One and "selfsame SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. chapters 12-14). In the gifts listed by Paul are the gifts of MIRACLES and HEALING. Paul said (1 Cor.12:31) for us to "COVET EARNESTLY the best gifts; and yet I show unto you a more EXCELLENT WAY." Some teach that the "MORE EXCELLENT WAY" of FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY ended the gifts, but FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY are also GIFTS, Rom. 5 1:5--- 1 Cor.12:9. The MORE EXCELLENT WAY is for ALL Christians and produces the FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT. But the GIFTS are to be sought within that MORE EXCELLENT WAY. After showing the more excellent way, Paul says, "Follow after CHARITY, and DESIRE spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may PROPHECY. If our own MINISTERS and TEACHERS in the CHURCH OF GOD were to EARNESTLY COVET the gift of TEACHING I will say that NEVER will we "Heap to 'ourselves' teachers having itching ears", for the reason we would be ALL taught of God by the same spirit. 1 John 2:27, 1 Cor. 2:9-13, St. John 14:26.

It seems to me that healing is Not separate from SALVATION. Many ways to minister to the sick are taught in God's word. The Church, as one member or a group, is the channel of the 'gifts' of healing.

In James 5:14-20, the elders of the church are to minister by praying over the sick and anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: "And the prayer of FAITH shall save the sick, And the LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP; and if he have committed sins, THEY SHALL BE FORGIVEN HIM." No wonder the elders should be SPIRITUAL men. We should not say that the sick would not be raised, nor his sins forgiven, until WE have prayed the prayer of Faith in this manner over our sick.

Mark 16:18..."They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Mat. 8:17, Speaking of Jesus, said, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

1 Pet. 2:24 "By whose stripes ye were healed."

Paul Phil. 4:6 "BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING; But in EVERYTHING by PRAYER and supplication with THANKSGIVING let your requests be MADE KNOWN UNTO GOD."

1 John 5:14-15, This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask ANYTHING according to his will, he heareth us; and if we KNOW that he hear us, WHATSOEVER WE ASK, we KNOW that we HAVE the petitions that we desired of him." Paul gives the method by which we may "PROVE what is that Good and acceptable, and perfect, WILL OF GOD." Rom. 12:1-2.

Pro. 3:6, "In ALL thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

David Ps. 84:11, "No Good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Peter 5:6-7 "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt YOU in due time; casting ALL YOUR CARES upon him; for he CARETH FOR YOU."

Paul, Rom. 10:17 "So then faith cometh by HEARING, and HEARING by THE WORD OF GOD."

God has "Quickened" several scriptures to me in time of need. Each time they serve for the problem at hand. The words I now write were quickened to me a few days ago when I was sick. I had been sick for two days, and had fasted that long. I had used these same scriptures to comfort others, but now needed to be impressed with them for my own good. Here are the words that were made to stand out in BOLD TYPE about three or four o'clock in the morning. "FOR WE HAVE NOT A HIGH PRIEST WHICH CANNOT BE TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES". I was up for breakfast and was shortly back to normal.

How can you and we prove that Jesus is risen from the dead if we only have words to prove it?

I appreciate being asked to prepare this paper and consider my coming here another blessing from God. I hope I have brought some thoughts that will be a blessing to each of you.

I was glad for the Communion Service and thought of these words of Jesus, St. John 6:57 "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; So he that eateth me, even he shall LIVE BY ME."

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS truly risen with "healing in his wings" and because "HE LIVES, WE LIVE".

May the God of glory give us faith to preach a RISEN Christ.

Yours in Christ

## BROADCASTING RELIGION

Kenneth Milne Minister's Conference January 25, 1956

Today there are 70,000 more people on the earth than there were yesterday. This year there will be 25,000,000 more people in the world than there were last year. The population of the world is increasing. The Christian message is pertinent to the whole the world. "Go ye therefore, and teach all....." But how may we reach and teach the old and new generations? By what miracles of communication may we GO, ASK, SEEK, FIND, "TEACH ALL"? Radio and television are the miracles that have come to us for just such a time as this.

One of the questions that have been asked in my presence many times by ministers as well as laymen is "Why broadcast religion?" In my dealing with ministers as chairman of the Radio Committee of the Pacomb Ministerial Association I find that there are very few of the ministers who have seen the great possibilities in broadcasting religion.

Radio is the only saturation medium of communication. I am going to quote from a small booklet entitled "Broadcasting Religion" Compiled by Dr. Charles H Smitz Director of Broadcast Training and Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches. Dr. Smitz gave a lecture on this subject to radio men and ministers in our era. The Training school was held at our church.

Now for his quotation, "It is in over 95% of the homes of our Country.

42,800,000 radio households  
23,500,000 radio-equipped automobiles  
34,000,000 secondary and portable sets in homes  
900,000 sets in institutions, dormitories and barracks  
4,100,000 sets in other places

OR a total of 105,300,000 radio sets in this country (1952)  
As of January 1, 1952, there were 2,235 standard AM stations 647 FM."

As disciples of Jesus we should broadcast:

To make of radio and television the great home missions media.  
To help the shut-in and the shut-out  
To break through the shell of hardened church-goers  
To reach the people for whom life has become a meaningless blur.  
To find the people who have no promise to live by.  
To enlighten the misinformed with factual information about our church.  
To win young people to Christ.

The latest book published on the subject of radio work is "The Television-Radio Audience and Religion" This book was released October 1955. It is a survey taken by Yale University in the city of New Haven, Conn.

Some of the findings from this survey are: Our churches must turn their attention to developing a policy for television and radio programs, instead of leaving these matters to a few specialists or using the programs mainly for specialized fund-raising or teaching projects.

Now we should look at some of the findings that are published in this book.

## BROADCASTING RELIGION II

Three of five households watch or listen to some religious program with regularity.

Family groups find programs based directly on the Bible the most interesting and useful of all religious programs.

Many of the church groups found early in the history of radio that it could be the means of reaching the masses and such groups as, Jehovah's Witness (WBEB Brooklyn, N.Y.) The Pillar of Fire (KPOF Denver, Colo. and WAZZ Zarephath, N.J.) The Foursquare Church (KFSG Los Angeles Calif.) The Moody Bible Institute (WBI Chicago, Ill) and the National Holiness Association (WAVL Appolo, Pa.) own and operate their own non commercial radio stations. I also should mention KFVO at St Louis Missouri Synod Lutheran.

Other groups who do not own radio stations have seen the need for a program sponsored by their denomination and put on from coast to coast and even around the world. To name a few: Revival Time (Assemblies of God) Herald of Truth (Church of Christ) Life and Light Hour (Free Methodist) Brotherhood Hour (Churches of God Anderson, Ind). These groups have long awakened to the value of the radio.

Many of these groups who have been using radio for years are now contemplating the use of television. In a recent conversation with the manager of the Pillar of Fire radio stations he told me that at their General Conference next August that the General Superintendent is going to ask for an appropriation to build and operate a television at their general headquarters as well as the possibility of placing a half hour program each week on the Mutual Network.

This brings us to the subject of a Unified Approach to Radio Broadcasting. This can be done by us in two ways. First we could produce a National program either a fifteen minute or a half hour. This could be taped at a radio station and many tapes then could be made from the Master Tape. We could distribute them as the Revival Time Broadcast is carried. The Local church or churches in the area of local station sponsors the program. All Mail is sent to the National headquarters. Then each church is sent the list of responses for their own station. Anything that is offered is sent as well as published at the headquarters. The program is unified. It represents the teachings of the Church. No teaching that is not fully endorsed by the Body of ministers is aired. The man who is in charge is not permitted to air any pet idea that he may have. The main purpose is to give the listening public a picture of what their church stands for.

Another method is to encourage our brethren to use the radio in the locality where they work. Then to have literature or a radio correspondence course that would be printed at the General Conference. This would involve having a National Radio Committee working with the General Conference board.

What I would like to see is an approach that will give the public a true picture of our work. We know that on fundamental Doctrine we all agree. Then let us make an effort to get these truths before the public.

### BROADCASTING RELIGION III

We cannot in considering radio work ignore Television. No matter what may be our personal opinions of this media we all will have to agree that it is here to stay. Its influence is constantly gaining an influence that can be either for good or evil. I wish to quote from the Book: "The Television-Radio Audience and Religion. "Television is one more threat to the influence of the church because it is one more secular voice speaking to the public, tempting and wheedling and persuading and informing and arguing and amusing people in accord with whatever interests move the sponsors and managers of the program. It cannot be ignored by the churches; it might, however, be used. Somewhere the ministry of the Protestant churches must be made aware of the total role of mass media in the lives of their constituents, and the machinery of the churches must be geared to a careful and thoughtful educational process to make the constituents conscientious stewards in relation to the use of these media. The principles of Christian ethics apply to both the producer and consumer of the media, but thus far the churches have made little conscious attempt to think through the obligations of either group."

"The effective use of these media must be based upon a well-thought-out strategy that is in turn based upon a complete and inclusive social theory."

"The closest parallel in recent history of the Church would seem to be what has been known as mass evangelism. Most of the pitfalls of mass evangelism apply also to radio and television: the temptation to use spectacular methods; the tendency of the least stable members of the audience to be most responsive; the advocacy of simple techniques as a substitute for the long and sometimes arduous struggle for basic changes in life style; the reduction of the infinite variety of the Christian life to a stereotypical least common denominator; and the failure to attach individuals in an audience to a permanent group relationship or a permanent pastoral relationship that can build a quick emotional response into constructive and lasting character change.

"There is not as yet on the horizon of religious broadcasting the program that will compare in 'success' with the mass evangelist of earlier days. The danger is that there will be. The danger is that some creative genius will develop a program that is so 'successful' by the standards of commercial users of the media that the fundamental purposes of the Christian Church will be ignored or denied. And the sobering fact is that too many church leaders interviewed in this study seemed to be looking for this kind of program---'the answer to Fulton Sheen'---rather than planning a much more diversified, if less dramatic, ministry through radio and television to the varieties of persons that inhabit this country. In this field as in any other the is not spectacular substitute for the responsible ministry which sees each human being as one in need of a savior and supplies that need."



BROADCASTING RELIGION IV

Books recommended for further study of radio and television.

**Broadcasting Religion**

National Council of The Churches of Christ Broadcasting and Film  
Commission 220 Fifth Ave. New York \$1.00

**The Television-Radio Audience and Religion**

Everett C Parker

David W Barry

Dallas W Smythe

Harper & Brothers Publishers New York \$6.00

**Manual of Gospel Broadcasting**

Wendell P. Loveless

Moody Press \$3.50

**Religious Radio What to Do and How**

Everett C Parker

Elinor Inman

Ross Snyder

Harper & Brothers New York \$3.00

THE  
GIFT AND  
GIFTS  
OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT

by

*William M. Wachtel*

# The Gift and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

by William M. Wachtel

## A Power-Conscious Age

Today we live in a power-conscious age. Almost daily we hear of new and more powerful atomic or hydrogen bombs, or new and more powerful airplane engines and automobile motors. Man is constantly looking for new ways to tap the powers of the universe. People have become accustomed to thinking in terms of power, of force, of energy in various forms. This is a characteristic of our age.

## The Power of God

Two thousand years ago, long before the age of modern inventions, there was made available to human beings the greatest power in the universe--in fact, the very power that created the universe in the first place. This power was not expressed or demonstrated in great engines, motors, or bombs; but in the lives, deeds, and accomplishments of a small, despised group of people called Christians. This power was not used to harness great rivers or build tall buildings, but it was used nevertheless to break down the stoutest barrier on earth--the human heart in its resistance toward God!

We have taken over into our language the Greek word used in the New Testament to express this power of which we speak--the word dunamis. From this root word have come our common words "dynamite," "dynamo," and "dynamic." It will be noticed that each of these words conveys the thought of power, even great power.

Significantly, the word dunamis is related to the verb dunamai--"to be able"; and so is once translated "ability" (Matt. 25:15). It is related also to dunatos--"strong" or "mighty," and so is sometimes translated "strength" or "might." It is often translated "miracle" or "mighty work" and even "wonderful work." But the underlying meaning is "power"--and it is so translated seventy-seven times.

The Church of God believes that the Holy Spirit is the power of God, and that these terms are practically synonymous and interchangeable. This view is supported by such scriptures as the following: Luke 1:35--"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee" (ASV); Luke 4:14--"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee"; Luke 24:49--"clothed with power from on high" (ASV), cf. Judges 6:34 (margin)--"But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon. . ."; Acts 10:38--"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power"--(Diaglott: "with holy Spirit and Power"). (See R. H. Judd's One God: The God of the Ages, pp. 48-65.)

## Witnesses to All Nations

When the Lord Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, His disciples asked Him if He intended to restore the Kingdom to Israel at that time. (Acts 1:6.) Our Lord did not answer that He had no intention of restoring the Kingdom to Israel, as some schools of

thought claim. Rather, in His answer He brought in the time element. It was not, in other words, a matter of whether or not the Kingdom would be restored--it was, instead, a matter of when it would be restored.

He told them that some very important work had to be done--implying that it had to be done first, before that Kingdom could come. He gave them His program for this present age. That program consisted of gospel witnessing both in the Holy Land and to the "uttermost part (Diaglott--"remotest parts") of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This echoes His previous declaration that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14).

The disciples were hoping and planning for the Kingdom to come "immediately" (Luke 19:11), but Christ had in view the fact that the "Nobleman" must first go away to the "far country" to receive the royal authority (Luke 19:11-27), and that He must be gone a "long time" (Matt. 25:19). While He was gone, the disciples were to carry on the work of proclaiming the gospel. They were to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). They were to "teach ("make disciples of"--ASV: cf. Diaglott) all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

### The Promise of Power

This did not mean, however, that they must do this vital task in human strength alone. Christ meant that they should carry on His work through the power to be given them from above. In almost the same breath as He told them they must be His witnesses, He told them that they would receive power (dunamis), the Holy Spirit coming upon them. (Acts 1:8.) This passage in Acts is but a reiteration of what Luke had already recorded in his Gospel--"And (Jesus) said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:46-49). Thus, the mission of gospel witnessing carried with it, inseparably, the promise of power (dunamis) from above.

This "promise" is mentioned also in Acts 1:4,5--"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Christ here describes the power they were to receive, as "the promise of the Father," and adds that He (Jesus) had spoken to them of it. When had the Father made this promise, and when had Jesus spoken to them concerning this promise?

We know that God has made many promises of various kinds to His children, and that Jesus' teachings included reaffirmations of God's promises. But, here He is speaking of some specific promise of the Father. In the passage just quoted, the "promise" is linked with what John had called being "baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5; Matt. 3:11). It was, therefore, a promise which specifically concerned the working of God's Spirit in the lives of human individuals.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church on the day of Pentecost, the members were "baptized with the Holy Ghost" according to the promise of Acts 1:5 (cf. Acts 11:15,16). Right then, the Apostle Peter referred to this event as "the promise of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:33), showing that the promise and the baptism with the Holy Spirit were the same thing.

### The Old Testament Basis

Again we ask, When had God made the promise which concerned the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon His people, i.e., their being baptized with the Holy Spirit? Peter was careful to give his hearers this important information--Acts 2:16ff: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. . ." (cf. Joel 2:28ff). This, then, was the specific promise Jesus designated as "the promise of my Father" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4)--it was the promise of the Holy Spirit's being poured out upon His people. (Other Old Testament references to a promised outpouring of God's Spirit are found in Isaiah 44:3 and Ezekiel 36:25-27.)

### Jesus Confirmed the Promise

Now we ask, When had Jesus spoken to His disciples about the promise of their receiving the Holy Spirit? It is true that there is no record of His quoting from or even alluding to the specific prophecy of Joel concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, but there are many recorded instances in the Gospels where He mentioned the working of the Spirit in the lives of His followers.

The main references to the definite coming of the Spirit are found in the Gospel of John. Among the first of these is this recorded in John 7:37-39--"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified" (ASV). Here is a definite allusion to the coming of the Spirit upon those who believed on Jesus, and we notice that its coming is related to the time of His being glorified. This tallies perfectly with Peter's declaration on the day of Pentecost--"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:32,33).

The next mention of the coming of the Spirit is recorded in John 14:16,17--"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. . ." "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name. . ." (14:26). The following chapter also contains a reference: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (15:26). John 16:7ff begins with this clear promise: "It is expedient for

you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. . . ." Finally, we read in 20:21,22--"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (In this last reference it is significant that the disciples' receiving the Holy Spirit is again connected with their being sent forth as witnesses.)

From a study of the above scriptures, it is clear that the "promise of the Father"--the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples--was amply confirmed and testified by the Son.

### The Gift of the Holy Spirit

We look now at that to which we have been leading step by step --the gift of the Holy Spirit. What is this gift? To whom was it promised and whom does it concern? What connection does it have with the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit included in the title of our study? May we seek for the answers to these questions with an impartial spirit of inquiry, putting aside preconceived opinions, willing to follow wherever the truth may lead.

What is this gift? Interestingly enough, this phrase--the gift of the Holy Spirit--occurs but twice in the Bible. The first occurrence is in Peter's stirring appeal to his hearers on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The other occurrence is in Acts 10:45, at the conclusion of Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his household: "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Since the expression--the gift of the Holy Ghost--is the same in both passages, we believe that the meaning is also the same. Our belief is strengthened by the more precise nature of the original language in which the expression was written. The English word "gift" is actually translated from nine different words in the Greek, all having distinct shades of meaning and often different usages. In these two passages, however, the same word for "gift" is used--dorea--strong presumptive evidence for their identity of meaning.

The key to the meaning of the expression "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is found in Peter's report, to the church at Jerusalem, of Cornelius' conversion: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift (Diaglott: "the same gift") as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15-17.) In these verses, we notice that the gift (dorea) which the Gentiles received was the same gift the disciples had received "at the beginning" (v.15). Moreover, this is the force of the word "also" in Acts 10:45--"on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Cf. Acts 15:8--"God. . .bare them witness, giving them (the Gentiles) the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us (Jews)."

Furthermore, Peter links this event with being "baptized with the Holy Ghost" (v.16). The Diaglott makes the connection even clearer: "John indeed immersed in water; but you shall be immersed in holy Spirit. Since, then, God imparted the same gift to them. . ." Taking these scriptures at their face value, is it not reasonable to conclude that "the gift of the Holy Spirit" and being "baptized with the Holy Spirit" are the same thing or, at least, two aspects of the same thing? We have already seen that "the promise of the Father" and being "baptized with the Holy Spirit" are the same thing--a fact which suggests that all three of these expressions are synonymous, or practically so!

### The Content of the Gift

If, then, these three expressions--the promise of the Father, being baptized with the Holy Spirit, and the gift of the Holy Spirit--are but different designations of the same thing, we now ask, What is that thing? What is the content, the exact nature, of this gift?

It is obvious that the meaning of the word "gift" is that which is given--"anything given, a present" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary). What, essentially, was given to the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and what was given to Cornelius and his friends? Notice, now, the question is not, What was the effect of the gift? or, What happened when this gift was received? Rather, the question is, What was the gift itself? What did it consist of?

Let the Scriptures themselves answer this question: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:38,39). This verse shows that it was the Holy Spirit itself that the disciples were to receive. The word "given" also brings out this fact. (The word "given" is a supplied word in A.V., but it does occur in some ancient MSS., and commentators agree that the sense requires it here.)

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me. . ." (Acts 1:8). Again, it was the Holy Ghost itself that was to come upon the disciples, infusing them with power. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:44,45,47.)

When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin and defended his continued preaching of the gospel, (after he had been warned to cease,) he said, "We are his (Christ's) witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom (Gk. "which") God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). This again indicates that it was the Holy Spirit itself that was given.

To us, this points out clearly that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is the Holy Spirit, as given. By a similar construction, we say the gift of eternal life is eternal life, the gift of a new watch is the watch itself. Compare this with Acts 2:33, where "the promise of the Holy Ghost" is (the coming of) the Holy Ghost.

(The word "of" is quite elastic: sometimes it indicates agency or mood--e.g., "the gift of God" means "the gift given by God"; "a gift of love" may mean a gift given in love, in the spirit of love.)

A further scripture that bears on our study of what the exact nature of the gift of the Holy Spirit is, is found in Luke 11:13, where our Lord promised: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Though here the Lord did not mention the "gift of the Holy Spirit" by name as such, He clearly implied it and defined it.

### Outward Manifestations

From all this, we conclude that the Scriptural phrase "the gift of the Holy Spirit" means essentially the Spirit itself, as given to men. Whatever outward manifestations or effects came from the gift or accompanied the gift could not accurately be called the "gift" or even part of it. The gift itself was the Spirit--the phenomena that happened to accompany it were only accessory.

We may illustrate this point by comparing this gift to an ordinary human gift--say, a Christmas present. The gift may be, for example, a tie. It may be wrapped in one of many different kinds of paper, having various colors and designs, wound around with any choice of gay ribbon, with card attached. No matter what wrapping or box may contain the gift, the gift remains the same--a tie. The circumstances of its wrapping form no essential or necessary part of the gift itself, but may be varied to suit the giver. It is the gift itself that counts!

Likewise, we believe, the gift of the Holy Spirit, whatever outward manifestations or (be it said reverently) "wrappings" may accompany it, remains the Spirit itself. As with any gift, the Giver has the option of "wrapping" it as He pleases, and the recipient of the gift has no reason to complain of how it comes "wrapped"!

Thus, when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost, these manifestations occurred: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4). Three specific phenomena are mentioned: the sound from heaven as of wind, the tongues of fire, and the speaking with other tongues.

However, when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to Cornelius and his friends, these were the manifestations: "They heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:46). No mention here of a sound of wind from heaven, nor of tongues of fire upon their heads. Furthermore, when the Spirit was given to twelve of John the Baptist's disciples, later on, we read that "the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:1-7). Here, also, no mention of wind or tongues of fire. Also, the first example says nothing of their "prophesying" on the day of Pentecost, and the last example says nothing of John's disciples' "magnifying God." (These terms may be synonymous in this case, but are not necessarily so.)

It seems clear, then, that though the gift--the Holy Spirit--was the same in each case, the external accompaniments of it were



somewhat different. Does this not teach us that just as the gift came by the sovereign will of the Giver, so the external phenomena that surrounded or attested that gift came also by His sovereign will and were varied in accordance with His will? This seems to be the intent of Hebrews 2:4, where the writer speaks of the way of salvation preached by the Lord and His apostles, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." It was God's will that dictated the working of His Spirit, not the will or desires of man!

### The Gifts of the Spirit

This brings us to a consideration of the gifts, as distinguished from the gift, of the Holy Spirit. The phrase "gifts of the Holy Spirit" occurs only here in the Bible--Hebrews 2:4. The word translated "gifts" (merismos) means, actually, "distributions" (so margin and Diaglott) or "apportionments." We notice here that these "distributions" are associated with "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles." They therefore concern outward manifestations of various kinds, sent of God to bear witness to His approval on the message preached. (There are many examples of this in the Book of Acts, e.g., 3:1-16; 8:5-8; 13:1-12; 14:1-18; &c.) These distributions, as we have seen, were under the sovereign control of God, who gave them.

The Apostle Paul wrote in similar vein in 1 Corinthians 12 "concerning spiritual gifts" (v.1--"gifts" is supplied by ellipsis). The passage speaks of several different gifts, as verse 4 declares. The general designation of these gifts is either pneumatika (literally, "spiritual things"--1 Cor. 12:1; 14:1); or charismata (literally, "gifts" or "gracious gifts"--1 Cor. 12:4,9,28,30,31); or even the combination of the two words: charisma pneumatikon (literally, "spiritual gift"--Rom. 1:11). In this paper, we shall define our study of the "gifts" of the Spirit as meaning the charismata (or pneumatika), as contrasted to the "gift," the dorea, of the Holy Spirit.

What were these gifts and how were they given? As listed by the Apostle Paul, these gifts included "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," "faith," "healings" (Gk.), "working of miracles," "prophecy," "discerning of spirits," "kinds of tongues," and "interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:8-10; cf. 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8). It seems evident that these gifts were altogether supernatural or miraculous in character and origin. (What is meant by "the word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" may seem obscure to us now, but in their context these expressions obviously refer to something beyond the natural.)

How these gifts were given, i.e., their origin and distribution, is also described by Paul. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. . . But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:4-6,11).

First of all, we notice that these gifts were bestowed in accordance with the will of the Giver--it was by the sovereign choice of the Lord that it was determined what gifts should be given, and to whom. Furthermore, we see that there were "diversi-

ties" (Diaglott--"varieties") of gifts; not all members had the same gifts. Paul says, "To one--this; to another--that; do all have this? do all have that?" (1 Cor. 12:8-10,29,30). To each member was given "the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of all" the members (v.7, Diaglott). Each had a manifestation of the Spirit --the manifestation was different, but the Spirit was the same.(V.4) In other words, they had all been given the same Spirit--the Holy Spirit of God--but the manifestation of that Spirit was different in each case and was under the direction of God's will.

### The Gifts and the Gift

This would seem to supply us with a key as to the relationship between the gifts and the gift of the Spirit. We have already seen that the outward phenomena that accompanied the gift (dorea) of the Spirit were not essentially a part of that gift, but that the gift was the Spirit itself. Now, as we have examined Paul's teaching concerning the "gifts" of the Spirit, we have seen that they were different among the members of the church (just as the phenomena in Acts accompanying the "gift" were different), but that each member had the "same" Spirit. They were many members, but all one body--the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12,27). This suggests that there is a parallel between the "gift plus different phenomena" of Acts and the "Spirit plus different manifestations" of 1 Corinthians.

The probability of this parallel is made stronger by Paul's declaration in 1 Cor. 12:13 (ASV)--"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." To us, Paul is here referring to what we have already studied as the baptism with the Holy Spirit. We say this because he uses the word "in" (Gk. en), and in practically every case where this preposition is used with baptism, it signifies that in which the subject is immersed! (Matt. 3:6,11; Mk. 1:5,8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:26,31,33; Acts 1:5; 11:16.)

This, then, appears to indicate a very close relationship between the baptism with the Spirit in Acts, accompanied as it was by various outward manifestations and phenomena, and the baptism of the Spirit mentioned here by Paul in 1 Corinthians, accompanied by various "gifts" (charismata) of the Spirit. Again we caution, however, that the "gift" and the "gifts" must not be confused, and that one must not immediately jump to the conclusion that the possession of the "gift" (dorea) requires also the possession of one or more of the "gifts" (charismata).

### To Whom Was the Gift Promised?

Having examined the content and nature of the "gift" (dorea) of the Holy Spirit and its connection with the "gifts" (charismata) of the Holy Spirit, we turn now to the question of the extent of the promise of the Spirit: i.e., to whom was the Spirit promised and whom does the promise concern? Our study of this question will relate mainly to the "gift" of the Spirit: to whom is the gift promised? We have already discovered that "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is the Spirit itself, as given to men, and that it is synonymous (or practically so) with "the promise of the Father" and "being baptized with the Holy Spirit."

It is logical to begin by looking at the first occurrence of the phrase "the gift of the Holy Spirit," to learn to whom it was promised. This, of course, was on the day of Pentecost, as we have seen. It was during his "gospel invitation" that Peter made the famous appeal--"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"--followed by the promise: "...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Then he added, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (v.39).

From these words we learn the extent of the promise. It was first to those of the immediate audience who would obey the gospel--"Jews. . .out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Secondly, it was to their obedient descendants, as designated by the phrase "your children." Thirdly, it was to those described as "afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It is obvious that the first and second designations refer to the Jews and their descendants, including the Jews of the Dispersion, scattered among the nations (as implied in the very make-up of the audience which heard Peter's words. (Acts 2:5-11,22,36.)

### The Gentiles Included

What, then, is implied by the words, "all that are afar off"? It might be urged by some that this merely designates the Jews living outside the Holy Land, those of the Dispersion. But this would surely be superfluous, in light of what we have already seen concerning the make-up of Peter's audience and the promise as addressed to them.

The phrase "afar off" was often used as a metaphorical expression to denote the Gentiles. This began in the Old Testament, e.g., "He will lift up an ensign to the nations (Gentiles) from far" (Isa. 5:26; cf. 49:1; 57:19; 66:19; Micah 4:3). The expression was based, of course, on the fact of physical distance separating Israel from the nations, but also on the spiritual separation between them. (See Numbers 23:9.) In Ephesians, Paul used this expression to denote the Gentiles: ". . .ye being in time past Gentiles. . .at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. . .But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes (Gk. "then, at that time") were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. . . And (he) came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (2:11-13,17).

The standard commentaries support this view of the expression "afar off" as used by Peter in Acts 2:39. Prof. A. T. Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament says, "Those 'afar off' from the Jews were the heathen. The rabbis so used it" (Vol. 3, p. 36). Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: "'Afar off'--the Gentiles, as Ephesians 2:17" (N.T., p. 176). Matthew Henry: ". . .the remotest nations of the Gentiles, and every one of them too, all that are afar off" (Vol. 5, p. 27, italics his). Clarke, Bullinger, Alford, Irwin, and Vincent all hold a similar view. (See their comments in loc.)

As if the words "afar off" were not enough, however, Peter adds a further clarifying clause--"as many as the Lord our God shall call." To whom is the "call of God" extended? Is it restricted to the Jews? Or, does it pertain to the Gentiles as well? A mere concordance study of the word "call" as used in the New Testament can answer these questions easily. A few relevant passages may be quo-

ted: Romans 9:24--"Even us, whom he (God) hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles"; 1 Cor. 1:24--"Unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks. . ."; Eph. 4:4--"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called (Jews and Gentiles alike, Eph. 2:11-19) in one hope of your calling." From these passages it is clear that God's call includes the Gentiles, and therefore the terms of the promise in Acts 2:39 must necessarily include them also. (This does not mean, of course, that Peter understood at the time all the implications of what he said; he would have to learn later that the Gentiles could become members of Christ's body without submitting first to circumcision and the law of Moses.)

Furthermore, if the Gentiles as well as the Jews are called upon, in the gospel requirements, to "repent, and be baptized," why should it be thought strange if the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit should also happen to include the Gentiles as well as the Jews? What reason is there for the Church of God to teach men to obey the Lord's command to believe, repent, and be baptized, if we do not also hold before their eyes the promise of this marvellous gift--the Holy Spirit?

All these considerations bring us to the firm conviction that the gift of the Holy Spirit was as much for the Gentiles as for the Jews--it was for all who were called of the Lord and who obeyed that call by obeying the gospel. Moreover, if the Gentiles are still "afar off" and if the Lord is still calling men and women by the gospel, then it is certain that the promise of "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is still in effect--and that it will remain in effect as long as the present age lasts!

### The Purpose of the Gift

We turn now to an examination of the purpose of this gift. To understand its purpose for us, however, we must first understand its purpose as originally given. Looking back once more at that which was pointed out earlier, we see that the mission of gospel witnessing carried with it, inseparably, the promise of power (dunamis) from on high to fulfill that mission. Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). What they waited for and received was the Holy Spirit, the Power of God. This, as we have seen, was "the gift of the Holy Spirit."

What this gift was to mean in the witnessing and lives of the disciples may be learned by the way in which Jesus foretold of it to them. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter ("Helper"--Diaglott), that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:16,17,26). "But when the Comforter is come . . . he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness ("testify"--Gk.)" (John 15:26,27). "And when he (the Comforter) is come, he will reprove ("convict"--Diaglott) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. . . He will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:7-14; cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12).

The apostles' mission was to be witnesses unto Jesus "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). To assist them in this task, they were given the "gift of the Holy Spirit," with the effects of that gift as foretold. The words and teachings of Christ were all brought back to them, as well as new things they could not bear before (John 16:12)--resulting finally in the writing of what we now call the New Testament. An example of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is seen in Paul's witnessing to Felix "concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled" (Acts 24:24,25). It was under a state of conviction that Felix trembled or was "terrified" (Diaglott); and as the work of convicting was to be particularly that of the Spirit (John 16:8), we assume that it was the Spirit working here, through Paul.

As the apostles and early church carried out their mission--the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19,20)--the Power of the Lord went with them, equipping them for their work. The very thing which made them equal to this humanly impossible task was that promised "gift." This power, the dunamis of God, was as "dynamite," turning the world "upside down" (Acts 17:6); it was a "dynamo," giving divine energy that worked in them "mightily" (Eph. 1:19; Col. 1:29); and the result of all this was a witness that was marvellously "dynamic"!

### Our Mission Today

The Church of God still considers itself to be under the Great Commission. The gospel must still be preached "for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14), for the end has not yet come. If we are not under the Great Commission, we may as well close our doors, fold our arms, and stop preaching--cease "occupying" till the Lord comes. (Luke 19:13.)

If we are under the Great Commission, however, we are also subjects of the Lord's promise to be with those carrying out this Commission--"Behold, I am with you all the days, till the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20, Diaglott). The Lord worked with His early church as "they went forth, and preached every where" (Mark 16:20); and we may be sure that He works with His church today, as His work is carried on, because the consummation is still future!

We have already discovered that the gift of the Holy Spirit--the Power of God--was promised to Jew and Gentile alike, and that this promise remains in effect as long as the present age lasts. How, then, may we expect this Power--God's promised gift--to work in us today? This question involves many far-reaching implications and presents a number of problems, most of which this writer does not feel prepared to discuss at present.

### God's Power Today

We do believe, however, that just as the extent of the Lord's working was consonant with the mission and needs and nature of the early church, so is the extent of His working today consonant with the mission, needs, and nature of the modern church. Whether or not the extent of His working is, or could be, the same--the fact of His working is, or should be, the same.

Whatever power the Lord may have for His church today, let us not repeat the ancient sin of Israel, committed when "they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41). They said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? . . . Can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people" (vv. 19,20). It is not a question of "can God?"--"for with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). It is rather a question of "will God?"

We have already seen that God exercises the working of His Spirit "according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4), and that even the "gifts" (charismata) of the Spirit are distributed "as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11). It should be, then, not what we will, but what He wills. If God desires to work with His church today in a manner similar to that in which He worked before, or if, on the other hand, He desires to work in a different manner, who are we that we should reply against God? (Acts 11:17; Romans 9:20.) Our task and privilege are to seek His will, learn His will, and comply with His will, whatever it may be!

Some indication of what His will may be, with respect to the continued working of His Spirit in the church, is found in the many verses of the New Testament which set forth the operations and results of the Spirit at work in the church. For the sake of brevity, we shall merely cite a number of these references, without enlarging upon them. Listing will be made in the order of occurrence.

1. Acts 20:28 - Church overseers (lit., "bishops") or elders appointed by the Holy Spirit.
2. Romans 5:5 - Love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.
3. Romans 8:4 - Righteousness of the law fulfilled by those who walk after the Spirit.
4. Romans 8:9 - We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if God's Spirit dwells in us. (Cf. Gal. 5:25.) We cannot belong to Christ without the Spirit.
5. Romans 8:14 - The sons of God are those who are led by the Spirit of God.
6. Romans 8:16 - "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."
7. Romans 8:23 - ". . .ourselves. . .which have the firstfruits of the Spirit."
8. Romans 8:26 - "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities. . .the Spirit itself maketh intercession."
9. Romans 14:17 - ". . .joy in the Holy Ghost." (Cf. 1Thess. 1:6.)
10. Romans 15:13,19 - ". . .the power of the Holy Ghost. . .the power of the Spirit of God."
11. Romans 15:16 - "Sanctified by the Holy Ghost." (Cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2.)

12. 1 Cor. 2:11-14 - Revelation of things of God by the Spirit.
13. 1 Cor. 2:12 - Contrast between spirit of world and Spirit of God.
14. 1 Cor. 6:11 - Washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
15. 1 Cor. 6:17 - "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."
16. 1 Cor. 6:19 - Body is temple of the Holy Spirit.
17. 1 Cor. 12:1 - "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."
18. 1 Cor. 12:3 - "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."
19. 2 Cor. 1:22 - "(God) hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (cf. 5:5; Eph.1:14).
20. 2 Cor. 3:3 - God's law written in the heart by the Spirit. (Cf. Hebrews 8:10.)
21. 2 Cor. 3:17 - "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."
22. 2 Cor. 3:18 - Transformation of character is by the Spirit.
23. 2 Cor. 13:14 - Communion ("joint-participation"--Diaglott) of the Holy Spirit. (Cf. Phil. 2:1.)
24. Gal. 3:2,3,5,14 - Spirit received through the gospel and through faith.
25. Gal. 4:6 - "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."
26. Gal. 4:29 - "Born after the flesh. . .born after the Spirit."
27. Gal. 5:5 - "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."
28. Gal. 5:16 - "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
29. Gal. 5:18 - "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."
30. Gal. 5:22,23; Eph. 5:9 - "The fruit of the Spirit. . ."  
(All admit that Christians must have the fruit of the Spirit now, but some think it is possible to have that fruit without having the Spirit itself. To such we reply, As well try to have apples without an apple tree, as have the fruit of the Spirit without the Spirit!)

31. Gal. 6:8 - Sowing to the Spirit. (Cf. Romans 8:11-13.)
32. Eph. 1:13 - "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (cf. Eph. 4:30).
33. Eph. 2:18 - Our access to the Father is by the Spirit.
34. Eph. 2:22 - God indwells His people through the Spirit. (Cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:14.)
35. Eph. 4:30 - "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God." (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:19 - "Quench not the Spirit.")
36. Eph. 6:17 - "The sword of the Spirit. . .the word of God."
37. Eph. 6:18 - Prayer and supplication to be made in the Spirit. (Cf. Jude 20.)
38. 1 Thess. 4:8 - God has "given unto us his holy Spirit." (Cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:13.)
39. Titus 3:5 - Salvation is by the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
40. Hebrews 6:4 - "Those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift (dorea), and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."
41. Jude 19 - Those who have not the Spirit are "sensual"-- (Gk. psuchikos, translated "natural" in 1 Cor. 2:14).

It seems obvious from a study of these scriptures that the mission, the needs, and the nature of the modern church require the presence and working of God's Spirit--His Power--among us and in us today, just as the early church required the presence and working of the Spirit. These scriptures were not written to and for the early church alone--they were written for us also. If we reject them and their teaching, we may as well reject the Bible itself!

"Some people have the attitude that Christ worked with the early church until He was sure that it would have a successful beginning and then He left it on its own power and to its own destiny. Christ, however, did not wind up the church like a clock on the Day of Pentecost and then hope that somehow it would continue ticking until He returned. The church is not like a mechanical clock; it is more like an electric clock. One can wind up a mechanical clock and forget it until it runs down, but an electric clock requires electric power each second it functions. In like manner, the church is powerless and victorious Christian living is impossible unless a constant connection with Christ is maintained. They who ignore Christ's direction of His church through His Spirit fail to recognize Christ's vital relationship with His people" (Alva G. Huffer, in paper Pentecost, End or Beginning of the Holy Spirit, p. 13).

### Is the Word the Spirit?

Before drawing this paper to a close, we wish to examine briefly an objection that is often raised to some of the views presented



in this paper. This objection may be stated in words such as these: "The Word itself is the Spirit--the written Word is all the Spirit we have today." The advocates of this idea usually use the words of Jesus in John 6:63 to support it: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

We reply that, logically speaking, this objection must of necessity confine the Spirit to the written Word not only in our own day, but also in the days of those to whom Jesus spoke, including the Twelve! (John 6:6-70.) But this will be affirmed by no one, for all believe that the Spirit worked as a Power beside the written Word in those days.

We reply further that, by the same logic as this objection, one could say, "Life itself is the Word--the written Word is all the life there is"--for Jesus said, "My words. . .are life." But, though the promise of life is recorded in the written Word, we all know that the very life itself, which has been promised, is not identical or synonymous with the written Word.

What our Lord meant by these words may be discerned by remembering that in the Bible the word "is" (or "are") often carries the thought of "to mean" or "to signify." Thus, for example, when our Lord takes the bread and says, "This is my body" (Matt. 26:26), we believe He means, "This signifies, or represents, my body." When He tells John the Revelator that "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20), we know He means, "The seven stars represent, or stand for, the angels; and the seven candlesticks . . .represent the seven churches." There are many other examples of this usage in the Scriptures.

We may therefore state His words as we understand them: "The words that I speak unto you, they mean (or signify) spirit, and they mean life." The words of the Saviour mean eternal life to those who receive and obey them. Likewise, His words mean the Holy Spirit, the receiving and results of that Spirit, for those who believe and act on them. And so we assert once more that the Spirit and the Word are not the same thing, and that John 6:63 cannot be used to support the claim that they are.

Having said this, however, we must add that we do not believe that the Spirit works strictly on its own, without the Word. We believe that the Spirit works through the Word or with the Word, i.e., always in harmony with the teachings and promises and characteristics of that Word. The Spirit might be thought of as the Power behind the Word, for the Word is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). The Lord, working through His Spirit, is able to use that sword with telling effect, convicting men of sin. "For the word of God is quick ("living"--Diaglott), and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). That which makes the Word of God alive and powerful--not just another book of inanimate words--is the Spirit of God which is ever active to use and to energize that Word!

### In Conclusion

As we observed at the beginning of this paper, we are living in a power-conscious age. By this we mean that the world in general

is deeply aware of the physical, the natural powers in the universe that have been discovered and exploited one by one. Likewise, the church should be power-conscious--aware of the spiritual, super-natural Power that is revealed in God's Word. And as the physical powers are being utilized by mankind, so should the spiritual Power, the Holy Spirit, be received by the members of the Church of God and permitted to work in our lives, in our service, and in our fellowship together. This is the promised gift of the Holy Spirit--the Spirit itself dwelling within us! May we not "grieve" or "quench" God's Holy Spirit, but allow the Lord to work in us "as He will"!

January, 1956

MIDWINTER MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

## The Question of Christian Baptism

I must confess that I feel very inadequate to discuss the above-named subject, but I do have a few thoughts that might be helpful.

I see no hope of immediate unity upon this subject. Unity does not come in a moment on any subject. As we study and pray and seek the will of God we come closer together. It is one of the tests of the Christian life that we are to strive to learn to love one another in spite of our differences. As Ministers we should realize that we cannot settle this question of baptism, for our churches are congregational and we are just one member of many in each of the churches. We can, however, help to mold the thinking of the congregations.

I have called this subject, "The Question of Christian Baptism." It seems to me that there is but one Christian baptism as taught in Eph. 4:5. Some point to Acts 19:4 as an example of re-baptism. I believe that the individuals mentioned in the first part of Acts 19 experienced their first and only Christian baptism when they heard Paul's teaching concerning Jesus Christ, and were baptized in His name.

I am going to begin this study by refreshing your minds concerning a very important Bible doctrine. Jesus said in Matt. 7:1-2, "Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Paul touched upon the same subject in Romans 14:4,10. He said, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth, Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand..... But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Peter taught in I Peter 4:17. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God."

We are going to need the mercy and forgiveness of God. It may be that our understanding of baptism will be acceptable with God, but there will be many shortcomings in our lives where we will need God's mercy if we are to have a part in His great kingdom. One of the greatest lessons that we should learn from the teachings of Jesus is that we fall far short of the high standards of conduct He taught. Who is able to love God with all his heart and soul and mind? Who is able to love his neighbor as himself? The best that we can do will never be good enough to earn our salvation. We need Jesus as our Saviour; we need the mercy and forgiveness that God has provided through Him. Jesus taught that we must be merciful if we hope to obtain mercy, we must be lenient if we expect God to be lenient.

Let us, then, proceed upon the principle taught by Paul in I Cor. 11:31-32. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Let us examine our own understanding and teaching concerning baptism before we examine the teachings of others.

One of the verses that we frequently use in teaching concerning baptism is Acts 2:38. We will read it before we proceed. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Too often we have seen one element in this verse. We have seen only, "Baptism." There are two other very important teachings in the verse we have read. One of them proceeds baptism. It is repentance. Under the preaching of Peter the people began to see what great sinners they were. Some of them had, no doubt, helped to crucify Jesus and they now realized what a terrible crime it was. Their feeling of sorrow and remorse was described by the words, "They were pricked in their heart." Peter commanded them to repent.

It is all too common for individuals to be baptized by leaders of the Church of God without being required to show an act or speak a word of repentance. How this terrible condition came to be in a group that professes to be careful students of the Word of God I do not know, but I know it has caused untold harm in our midst. We do not know what the candidates said or did in repentance on that day when Peter preached to them, but we have many other examples of prayers and confessions of repentance. It might help to notice a few examples. The publican in the account of the Pharisee and the publican that went up into the temple to pray is an example. (Luke 18:10-14) The publican didn't say much, just seven words, but they were very important words, and they were directed to God. He said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The words of the Prodigal son in Luke 15:21 are a good example of a prayer of repentance. He didn't say much either, but he made his feelings known to his father in the few words that he did say. Jesus' teaching in Matt. 10:32-33 is another example. He said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." One of the most logical ways to confess Jesus before men is with the mouth God has given us. Jesus said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12:37) The only way we can escape the condemnation of the idle words that we have spoken is to use the mouths that have spoken them to repent of them. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10) (See also Heb. 13:15, Ps 51:1-12, and you name them)

I feel that the initial repentance should consist of a prayer directed to God in which the candidate confesses his realization of his sinful condition before God, his sorrow for his sins, and his faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. I feel that this initial confession of repentance should be followed by a life of repentance by word and deed as God reveals more and more of our needs to us. One of the first deeds to follow repentance should be Christian baptism.

The third element in Acts 2:38 is the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Although it may be that the Holy Ghost is not given today to the extent that it was in the days of the Apostles, I believe that God's spirit or influence is important in all true conversions. We should learn to ask God for His Spirit to come into our hearts and lives, and teach others to ask for it. Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" I believe that all true Christians have the, "Firstfruits of the Spirit," (Rom. 8:23) or the, "earnest of the Spirit," (2 Cor. 1:22. 5:5)

Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe what?" we might ask, "Believe that we should be baptized?" No, I do not think that that is what is meant.

Is believing the good news that God is going to establish an everlasting, righteous kingdom upon the earth the knowledge that we need to understand in order to be baptized? Although some may have taught that knowledge of the coming kingdom is the necessary knowledge preceding baptism, I believe that we will have to go deeper than that. There is no salvation in the knowledge that God is going to establish a righteous kingdom upon the earth. That fact is good news only after we have learned that God has made it possible for us to enter and enjoy that kingdom.

I believe that John 3:16 is the heart of the gospel. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The same great truth is expressed in many places, Rom. 5:8-9 being another example. "But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Jesus is the Way, the only Way, into life eternal. We may have given the destination too much prominence in our teachings. The destination is important, but the Way is more important. Without God had provided a Way there would no one reach the destination. I believe that we can become so fascinated meditating upon the coming glory revealed in God's Word of prophecy that we neglect to study and teach the finished work of redemption that was accomplished by Jesus. As a result we have members who are converted to the belief that God is going to establish an everlasting, righteous kingdom upon the earth, and are not converted to faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

These failings that I have mentioned may be extreme cases, but I feel that we have such cases. Nor are the examples used the only shortcomings we have. We can find others if we but look for them.

We have members who insist that all who are accepted as members in the Church of God be baptized by a member of the Church of God, usually an Elder or Minister. This is to say, indirectly at least, that no other individual or group can properly understand or administer Christian baptism. When we go another step and say that baptism is one of the essential steps in the plan of salvation we are saying in effect that our group is the only group that has any hope of salvation. I have never been willing to sit in wholesale judgment of others in this manner. If they are condemned I am willing to let God do it, and if God should accept some of them I am willing to abide by His judgment. There is not one doctrine that we of the Church of God believe and teach, but what is believed and taught by other individuals and groups. We do not own Bible doctrine.

Let us pause a moment and consider where this extremely narrow view will lead, and has led in many instances.

We have examples of "properly" baptized individuals who have never given any indication of a changed life. I know of a man who has brought reproach on the name of his church by his manner of life, but he is still considered to be a member of the church. He seldom, if ever, attends church, but he is still a member of the church. When he gets drunk and causes trouble he is pointed out as a member of the Church of God. Were he to return to the church he could vote or hold office in the church without being required to give any indication that he had repented of his sinful ways. The important thing, you see, is that he was put into the water by a Church of God Minister. I doubt that he began his membership with any true repentance. If he did he has drifted back to the ways of the world. I doubt that anyone tried to help him understand the need of the Power of God in his life when there was an opportunity. He can still change his way of life, but it is doubtful that he will. The church had its opportunity, and it led him to church membership rather than to Christ. Church membership didn't change his life.

On the other hand we have those who come to our churches who give every indication that they have accepted Christ as their Saviour, and are striving to live the Christian life. They are not members because they were baptized by some other church group. We never count their names on our membership lists, but we count their dollars in the collection plates. We might call them informal members, and oftentimes they are better members than the "properly" baptized members. I have enjoyed the help and encouragement of a number of such people. Many times they put our members to shame.

I think that our trouble has been that we have baptized people into the Church of God (I am speaking of our visible church group) rather than baptizing them into the body of Christ. We have taught them our requirements rather than trying to teach them God's requirements. We should realize that we deal with externals, and that God deals with internals. A true confession of faith is external, coming from an inner faith that only God can see. A Christian baptism is external, coming as a result of faith in Jesus Christ and a desire to follow His example. Good works are external. Many worldly people have a high degree of good works motivated by pride and the joy that helping others might bring them. The good works of Christians should be motivated by the love of God and the desire to serve and obey Him. We can become members of the Church of God solely by meeting the outside requirements. We become members of the true church by first meeting the inside requirements and fulfilling the outside requirements as a result of an inner faith. It may be that we should strive to teach some of our own members what true Christian baptism is before we seek to teach others. It may be that some of the other groups could teach us a few things, for some of them have given more attention to the redemptive work of Jesus than we have.

I feel that the Church of God has an important mission to fulfill. I believe that in the matter of baptism we can be of help, but we should approach the task humbly. One of our members told me of a Minister who said in his sermon, "When a Minister of another group sprinkles a little water on a person and says, 'I baptize you,' he lies." That is a good example of how not to try and help others. If the task isn't accomplished as a result of love and concern for others it will not be accomplished. Paul said in Rom. 14:1, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." And in Gal. 6:1, Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

I believe that baptism should be by immersion, for that is one of the basic meanings of the word. I believe that baptism should be in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, but until I hear a better reason than has been presented to me to date, I would accept the formula given by Jesus in Matt. 28:19, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Some say that this is a triune baptism, and so it might be understood by some, but it is not necessarily so. Some say that it is the name of Jesus Christ that is important as brought out in Acts 4:12, but I think it is the person and work of Christ that is important. This fact is brought out by the Goodspeed translation which reads, "There is no salvation through anyone else, for there is no one else in the world who has been named to man as our only means of salvation." Jesus used the title "Son" of himself in John 8:36 when He said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." According to the reasoning of some that it is only the name, "Jesus Christ," that is important these words would have no meaning. I believe they have great meaning. We could find many other examples where the different names and titles were used, and they are all meaningful as long as we understand who is meant.

I believe that we should teach that baptism is a type of death, burial, and resurrection as brought out in Romans 6. I believe that we should also teach that it is a type of dying out to the old or fleshly way of life, and the beginning of a new way of life in Christ. Let's remember that it takes a few minutes to be baptized, but it takes the remainder of our lifetimes to fulfill those few words, "walking in newness of life."

I also believe that when people come to us who have been baptized by other groups that we should do what we can to teach them the meaning and purpose of baptism. If they then still want to unite with us and are still satisfied with their former baptism we should receive them. We should try to make it plain that they are not changing their standing before God by being accepted as members of our church, and that the responsibility is theirs. (Some of our people seem to think that when we receive them we become responsible for all their sins.) Each case should be decided on its own merits. We have baptized many who did not understand the purpose of baptism. We have baptized many who have had wrong conceptions. It was called to my attention lately that a person who has been a member of the Church of God for years had not understood the teaching that we go to the grave at death. It wasn't that she was improperly taught, for she had some of the best teachers. It was simply that she had not grasped the teaching. I had many wrong conceptions at the time I was baptized, but I knew I wanted eternal life. I learned that I needed a Saviour, and that God had provided one for me in the Person of Jesus Christ. I did not understand the complete meaning of eternal life, nor do I yet but I am seeking to, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18) Only eternity will reveal the full meaning of our heritage in Christ.

## BAPTISM

Is baptism necessary for one coming out of another religious group other than the CHURCH OF GOD (of the faith of Abraham), but holding doctrines nearly identical with the CHURCH OF GOD?

First we inquire, who are the organizations which hold doctrines nearly identical with the CHURCH OF GOD (of the faith of Abraham)? And, Why do they stand separate?

I am aware of two organizations which hold some fundamental doctrines like the CHURCH OF GOD (of the faith of Abraham), but deny the one thousand years reign of the Saints on earth with Christ, immediately following his return. (They also deny the restoration of mortal Israel to their land.) These two are the well known Seventh Day Adventists and the Advent Christians.

A third, Church of God (seventh day), is of those fallen from grace. (See Galatians 5:4). The first two stand separate because they deny the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. The third stands separate because they seek justification by keeping the law God gave to Israel from Sinai.

Jesus taught the GOSPEL, the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. Luke 8:1. The chosen twelve were thoroughly instructed in it. Jesus commanded them "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Adding, "He that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:15,16.

The apostles and their co-labourers in Christ taught the people concerning the kingdom, promising them a reigning together with Christ if they would prove faithful, in the one faith. (See Acts 20:25; 28:31; 8:12; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26,27; 3:21; 20:4,5; 5:10; Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 4:8.)

"...Faith cometh by hearing...the word of God." Romans 10:17.



Therefore, to have faith in the promises of God concerning the kingdom of God one must hear the "word of the kingdom" (Matthew. 3:19), which includes the reign of the saints with Christ for one thousand years on earth.

When Philip went down to Samaria to preach Christ to them, he taught them of the "THINGS concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" <sup>It was after the people believed such things</sup> they were baptized. In other words, being baptized follows believing the gospel. This order is true of Acts 8:12 and Mark 16:16.

Baptism is unto the remission of sin. Acts 2:38. Baptism is also a seal, as truly as circumcision in the flesh was to Abraham. (Colossians 2:11-13; Romans 4:11) After coming to the faith one must be baptized (sealed in the faith) to have forgiveness of sin and stand justified.

According to Matthew 28:19 Jesus taught the apostles "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them..." That work was to be carried on by them, and by faithful men. (See 2 Timothy 2:2). This shows that the rite of baptism was commanded to be performed by those entrusted with the gospel.

To deny the one thousand years reign of the saints with Christ, on earth, after he returns, is to deny the gospel. Let us not jeopardize the life of another through laxity, fear of the people or personal feelings. Instruct those coming to the faith of their need for baptism to be followed by growing in grace and the knowledge of the truth.

*Lyle Rankin*  
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