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Notes on "Spirit-Baptism" and "Prophetic Utterance"

VICTOR BARTLING

The two subjects in the title fall into the difficult area of Pneumatology and are prompted by what is called the modern "charismatic" or "Pentecostal" movement. Both subjects deal with the exceptional gifts of the Holy Spirit in the early church usually called "charisms" (*charismata*). Strictly speaking all gifts of the Spirit are supernatural, Spirit-given, hence charismatic, so, for example, also the three basic endowments granted to all Christians: faith, hope, love. In the following notes, for the sake of convenience, we shall call the exceptional gifts (for example, "speaking in tongues" and "prophecy") "charismatic," and the spiritual endowments granted to all baptized believers we shall call "normal."

Let it be further stated at the outset that the unbiased investigator of the Biblical data finds himself frustrated in his inability to form a clear conception of many, if not all, of the 20 or more charisms mentioned in the four lists we have in the Pauline epistles: 1 Cor. 12:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11. Take only *glossolalia*. Just what was it? Even the "speaking in tongues" on Pentecost has been understood in various ways by New Testament interpreters. As to 1 Cor. 12:1-11, as early as the fourth century Chrysostom, preaching serially on Corinthians, says (Homily XXIX):

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This whole passage is exceedingly obscure; and what creates the obscurity is both ignorance in these matters and the cessation of things which happened then but do not now occur.

One wonders at the facile identification made by modern glossolalists of their "tongue-speaking" with that mentioned in the New Testament. The outsider who knows from experience only the normal gifts of the Spirit is inclined to question such identification. But then he finds himself in the predicament that while we are told that "tongues . . . will cease" and "prophecy . . . imperfect . . . will pass away" (1 Cor. 13:8-9), we are not told *when*. So he must be open to the theoretical possibility that the Spirit may use these modern alleged charisms for His purpose, but surely not in contradiction to the Spirit-given directives and controls set forth especially in 1 Cor. 14:26-33.

I. SPIRIT-BAPTISM

A. Charismatic Spirit-Baptism

The term "Spirit-Baptism" or "Baptism of the Spirit" is not found in just this form in the New Testament. It is based on the pre-Ascension promise of the resurrected Lord as He charged them to "wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, 'you heard from Me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 1:4-5; see Luke 24:49). The same prophetic

promise was given through John the Baptist. (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33)

In view of the verbal form in this promise, "baptized with the Holy Spirit," we will not quibble about the term "Spirit-Baptism." But when in the modern Pentecostal movement, speaking in tongues is regarded not merely as a sign of possessing the Spirit but is elevated to *the* sign; or when nonpossessors of this gift are regarded as deficient in Spirit endowment; or when many of these charismatics set their Spirit-Baptism in opposition to "water-Baptism"—applying this term to the Christian sacrament, which is often regarded by them as "water only"—then we must protest most vigorously.

One frequently hears with reference to tongue-speaking that it is "all over the place" in the New Testament. Is it? It is not mentioned at all in the gospels (unless appeal is made to Mark 16:17, which occurs in the so-called Long Ending, which is almost certainly not an original part of this gospel). It is found more or less directly in four incidents recorded by Luke in Acts. In the rest of the New Testament it is found only in the didactic treatment of charisms by Paul in 1 Cor. 12—14, where he uses the word "tongues" some 20 times. Tongue-speaking as *spe-*

cifically connected with the term "baptized with the Holy Spirit" occurs only in one event in Acts, the conversion of Cornelius. (10:44-48; 11:15-17)

The passages in Acts that are most frequently adduced by "charismatics" are those in the list that appears at the bottom of this page. The passages are listed by chapter sequence and are presented as a point of reference.

In this list, as already stated, only in item 6 (the event at Caesarea) is glossolalia *specifically* associated with the prophecy of Spirit-Baptism. In item 4 (Samaria) neither "speaking in tongues" nor "baptized with the Spirit" are mentioned in so many words in connection with the postbaptismal gift of the Samaritans prayed for by Peter and John. Here the terms used are "receiving the Holy Spirit" and the Spirit "falling upon them." In the phrase "receiving the Spirit," "Spirit" is used by metonymy for the Spirit's gift (agent for effect). One may assume that glossolalia is meant, since the sequel indicates a perceptible charism (story of Simon the magician) and also in 19:1-6 (item 7) the verb "falling upon" is used, with the effect of glossolalia. (Incidentally, in the latter passage the idea of Spirit-

<i>Scripture Passage</i>	<i>Place of Event</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
1. Acts 2:1-4 (Pentecost)	Jerusalem	Jewish disciples
2. Acts 2:38-41	Jerusalem	Jews and proselytes
3. Acts 4:31	Jerusalem	Jewish converts
4. Acts 8:15-20	Samaria	Samaritans (mixed race)
5. Acts 9:13-19	Damascus	Paul's conversion
6. Acts 10:44-48 (11:15-17)	Caesarea	Romans (at least in part)
7. Acts 19:1-6	Ephesus	Greeks (presumably)
<i>Add to Acts</i>		
1 Cor. 12—14	Corinth	Greeks (predominantly)

Baptism is not explicit, but only implied in v. 4.)

How about the basic passage, item 1 (Pentecost)? Here the phrase is, "They were all *filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." In his report of the Caesarean episode (11:15-17) Peter expressly refers to the Lord's promise of being baptized with the Holy Spirit as fulfilled (at least in part) by the Pentecostal glossolalia, so that in *this context* "filled with the Spirit" is synonymous with "baptized with the Spirit."

However, one must note that only here, in Acts 2:1-4, does "filled with the Spirit" clearly refer to tongue-speaking. Item 3 (Acts 4:31, the young congregation) says that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *spoke the Word of God with boldness*." No glossolalia here. Nor is there glossolalia indicated with regard to Paul's being filled with the Holy Spirit in connection with his baptism (item 5, Acts 9:13-19). Rather it refers to the *normal* Spirit-endowment in Holy Baptism (this will be treated later in these notes). The other passages in the category of fullness of the Spirit all speak of phases of the Spirit's working other than glossolalia. (These are the passages: Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 4:8; 13:9; Eph. 5:18. There is no call here to ecstatic utterance.)

One passage remains on our list, item 2 (Acts 2:38-41). As the effect of Peter's Pentecost sermon, his hearers asked him what to do. "And Peter said to them: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.' . . . So those who received his word were baptized, and

there were added that day about three thousand souls." Here there is no mention of any charismatic gifts. Luke is careful to mention them where these are present. Instead of three thousand speaking in tongues the report says: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The Greek words rendered by "the gift of the Spirit" are *tên dôrean tou hagiou pneumatos*. The genitive *ton hagiou pneumatos* is the genitive of apposition: The Holy Spirit Himself is the gift of Baptism, regenerating, illuminating, sanctifying, keeping man in the true faith. The New Testament frequently speaks of God's *giving* His Spirit to His reborn children. (See, for example, 1 Thess. 4:8; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5. Here is the fulfillment of our Lord's promise of the gift of the Paraclete: John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.)

One should also note other baptisms in Acts where no charismatic gifts are mentioned: the Ethiopian eunuch (8:36-38); Saul-Paul (9:18); Lydia and her house (16:15); the Philippian jailer (16:32); many in Corinth (18:8).

The reader of Acts is always impressed by the prominence of the Holy Spirit in this account of the early church. Justly the book has been called "The Gospel of the Holy Spirit." Luke's view of the origin and development of the Christian church is that it is basically and conspicuously the work of the Holy Spirit. "The last days" of Joel's prophecy (2:17 ff.) are decisively introduced by the divine action of pouring out the Spirit (2:18). Pentecost marks the beginning of a new era. It marks the *advent of the Spirit* as the Incarnation marks the *advent of the Son*. Not that

either the Son or the Spirit had been absent from the world previously. But each advent was a new beginning of a new mission. "God sent forth His Son"; and when the Son's mission was accomplished, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son to take up the work under new conditions. Pentecost inaugurates this second divine mission.

There is only one Pentecost as there is only one Calvary and one resurrection of the Lord. But as the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are enduring powers, so is the one Pentecost an enduring power, for the Paraclete abides in the church forever (John 14:16) and does His work, endowing His people with the power to witness to the Lord. In the *infancy* of the church, among other charismatic gifts, He endowed *some people* (see 1 Cor. 12:10) with the "gift of tongues," unintelligible to the speaker and the hearers without an interpreter to set forth the meaning of those sounds.

Glossolalia and other charisms were palpable signs understood by the people of *those days* as signs, palpable in nature, of the invisible presence of the Spirit. (Both pre-Christian Judaism and pagan religious cults knew the phenomena.) In his narrative Luke follows the outline of the march of the witnesses as was directed by the Lord in His last words before the Ascension: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). At the successive crucial stages in the onward march Luke notes what may be called an extension of Pentecost in virtue of the repetition of the gift of tongues: *Jerusalem — Samaria — Caesarea — Ephesus*. Call it

Baptism of the Spirit, if you will. But be aware that outside the relatively few passages in Acts and the discussion by Paul in 1 Cor. 12—14 there is no reference to "tongues" in the rest of the New Testament. Nowhere in Luke or in Paul is Spirit-Baptism presented as something to be sought beyond the Baptism instituted by Christ (Matt. 28:19). That contention is pure invention. What a preposterous insinuation that unnumbered grace-endowed and humble men and women throughout the Christian centuries who were mightily impelled by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit and extended the church to the ends of the earth were lacking something because they were not tongue-speakers! Oh, poor Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Brenz, Paul Gerhard, Wyneken, Walther, and countless others! For they held with St. Paul: "I would rather speak five intelligible words for the benefit of others as well as myself, than thousands of words in the language of ecstasy." (1 Cor. 14:19 NEB)

B. Normal Spirit-Baptism

The validity of the term "Spirit-Baptism" as a designation for the charismatic gifts of the Spirit bestowed on several groups in the early period of Gospel witness has been granted. Still more valid would be the employment of this term for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which bestows the Spirit Himself as the gift with all the powers and graces needed to create and sustain the new life (see above on Acts 2:28-41). A close study of the charismatic-Baptism texts in Acts shows their connection with Gospel preaching and Holy Baptism with its normal gift of the Spirit.

What Luke both implies and teaches is even more clearly taught in the apostolic writings. Very interesting is the statement of Paul in the chapter in which he begins his discussion of spiritual gifts: "For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. For indeed we are all brought into one body by Baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for us all to drink" (1 Cor. 12:12-13 NEB). Thus through Baptism we are all united with one another and with the same Spirit of God who dwells in us all. Earlier in this letter Paul asks the clique-fractured Corinthians: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (3:16; on the indwelling Spirit see also Rom. 8:11 and 2 Tim. 1:14). To the Galatians Paul writes: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:27). Here the Spirit is not expressly mentioned, but the text is surrounded by teaching about the Spirit (3: 2-3, 5, 14; 4:6; 5:16-18, 22-25). We lift out a significant passage for our discussion: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (5:22). This list might be greatly expanded from other passages. All these fruits grow in the garden watered by the Spirit. Each gift is truly charismatic in nature, but at the same time each is normal—supernaturally so, for the Spirit dwells within and does His work. *All* Christians are "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom. 8:14). Paul says further: "You are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Anyone who does not

have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him." (Rom. 8:9)

A full discussion of Holy Baptism, its power and gifts, is not called for in these notes. But it will be apropos to take a quick look at three passages that charismatics tend to misinterpret in the interest of their obsession with charismatic Spirit-Baptism. These passages are John 3:5; Titus 3:4-6; Eph. 5:25-26.

In John 3:5 our Lord says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born *of water and the Spirit* he cannot enter the kingdom of God." There is one preposition both in the Greek and the RSV: "born *of (ex)* water and the Spirit." Here the outward and the inward aspects of Baptism are clearly defined. The wording indicates a single experience, not two baptisms, one of water and one of the Spirit. The act of Baptism and the reception of the Spirit are simultaneous.

Similar is Titus 3:4-6: "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Here again there is one preposition both in Greek and English (RSV): "He saved us . . . by (*dia*) the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit." Regeneration and renewal are coordinated. Regeneration emphasizes the creation of the new life, renewal the power of the Spirit given in Baptism to sanctify and preserve that new life.

Finally, we look at Eph. 5:25-26: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having

cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word."

From the time of Zwingli ("The Holy Spirit needs no wagon") down to Karl Barth, antisacramentalists have vainly tried to "dewaterize" these passages by asserting that "water" and "washing" in these passages are picture words to represent the baptism of the Spirit apart from any material water. However, very early in the church "water" and "washing" (the visible side of Holy Baptism) were quite naturally used for the Sacrament. One may point to Acts 22:16, where Ananias says to Paul: "Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Then there is 1 Cor. 6:11, where Paul speaks to people who had a vicious past (vv. 9-10) about the revolutionary watershed in their lives: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

The antisacramentalists, whether spiritualizers or charismatics, often assert that the orthodox teaching of Baptism as a means of grace involves magical notions, human attempts to manipulate God. However, in Baptism God is the Actor, and His action is not symbolized but performed by Him. The New Testament knows no human mediating priest. *Who* baptizes is indifferent (see Acts 10:48; 1 Cor. 1:17). The person of the baptizer does not secure the efficacy of Baptism; that lies in the name of Jesus, that is, His presence wherever His name is named. Because the risen Lord is present, Baptism is efficacious: man becomes the possession of the Lord of all and receives the Spirit of the exalted Lord.

Happily there is a growing consensus in the ecumenical church that "*Baptism not merely looks toward but effects incorpora-*

tion into Christ." (*One Lord, One Baptism*, published for the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961], p. 56)

We do not want to assert that all charismatics who emphasize their view of Spirit-Baptism denigrate and thus degrade God's institution of Holy Water-Baptism. But if they concentrate on, or even centralize their avowed charismatic experience, exalting Spirit-Baptism over Baptism with water, they do so to their own spiritual impoverishment and the confusion of the Christian community, the body of Christ. The shift from the objective Word of God (and that includes the sacraments) to "experience" undermines the foundation. Subjectivity in religion leads to rationalism, and rationalism leads to spiritual anemia, and that has often led to spiritual death. The exaltation of charismatic Spirit-Baptism over kerygmatic and normal Spirit-Baptism in Christ's institution is like missing the mighty stream while enthralled by the bubbles and spume.

We hope we have shown that the term Spirit-Baptism might well be used for the normal working of the Spirit through Word and Sacrament; but we judge that because of the connotations that have gathered about that term by its specialized use on the part of charismatics, noncharismatics should avoid its use for the Spirit's normal workings.

II. PROPHETIC UTTERANCE

The gift of "prophecy" is included in the Pauline lists of charisms: Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28-29; Eph. 4:11. The chief function of the New Testament prophet was to convey divine "revelations" (1 Cor.

14:26-30) of temporary significance that proclaimed to the church what it had to do in special circumstances. His message, according to 1 Cor. 14:3, was one of edification, exhortation, and consolation, and it included on occasions declaration of God's will in particular cases (Acts 13:1 to 4), rarely predictions of future events (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). Paul in 1 Cor. 14:5 rates prophecy higher than glossolalia, because it has a better chance to "edify" (build up) the church, while the highest gift and most potent for edification is that of love (1 Cor. 13; 8:1). Like glossolalia, so too *prophēteia* in the church at Corinth got out of hand, and confusion and disorder reigned. So Paul laid down the regulation that no more than two or three prophets were to speak in one meeting (1 Cor. 14: 29-30), and when they had done so the rest were to pass judgment on the teaching that had been given. Paul declares: "And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32), that is, they are responsible for their use of their gift. The human element might come in and distort the impression the Holy Spirit had meant to convey. Paul himself once found it necessary to neglect a command given him by prophetic voice (Acts 21:4). The two tests that were decisive were (1) loyalty to the command of the Lord as conveyed in the apostolic message (1 Cor. 14:37-38) and (2) moral rectitude ("You will know them by their fruits" [Matt. 7:16]).

Before the New Testament was comprised in the canon the apostles were the

canon or standard of the truth just as the canonical Scriptures later became. And when that came about, the day of the prophet in the sense of conveyer of fresh revelation was ended. The day of the diligent pastor and teacher fully dawned. Digging into the depths of the inexhaustible Scripture, praying for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to "open the Scripture" to them, applying the Law and the Gospel in the Scripture first to themselves, then fervently applying the message to their hearers — the pastors and teachers without claiming any exceptional charisms supplanted the prophets of the church in its infancy. The pastors and teachers were also "gifts" of the ascended Christ "to equip God's people for work in His service, to the building up of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-12 NEB)

Such preaching and only such preaching may be called "prophetic" preaching, based not on alleged new revelation but on the God-breathed prophetic and apostolic Word. On this same foundation the simple layman and laywoman, again without claiming an exceptional charism, are used today by the Lord of the church and by His Spirit to glorify God and speak to the fellow members of the body of Christ for edification, exhortation, and consolation.

As to the claim of the gift of prophecy through charismatic Spirit-Baptism at the present day, we point to the closing sentence of the introduction of these notes.

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