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Integrity

Editorial: "There is One Body and One Spirit"

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“There Is One Body And One Spirit”

Paul's graphic description of the church in the Ephesian letter portrays a body of men and women who before their experience of Christ were alienated from God, hostile one toward the other, "having no hope and without God in the world." The apostle views the church as the body of believers reconciled to God and to one another in Christ (Eph. 2:14-16). Barriers have been removed, hostility has been erased, and they have "put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Now to what source does the apostle credit this fashioning together of believers formerly so hostile to each other in one Body? The answer is crystal clear as he writes, "Spare no effort to make fast with bond of peace the unity which the Spirit gives. There is one body and one Spirit." (Eph. 4:3, 4a NEB) God's Spirit through God's Good News "has broken every barrier down." and now we are to give all diligence to maintain that Spirit-given oneness and unity. There is one body and one Spirit.

As with the human body, so the apostle pictures the Body of Christ as having many members, and these members have their spiritual gifts. We could hardly pursue the concept of Body without discussing the gifts in the Body; and how thrilled we are to present a well researched, balanced, Biblically grounded article from the heart and mind of J. Harold Thomas, now serving the Lord in Conway, Arkansas.

Diane Kilmer picks up the stream of thought where Harold Thomas leaves off with the question, "What Is My Gift". In her own personal and penetrating style Diane pursues this question with the believer who wonders and doubts just what his/her gift might be, and how it might best be used in the Body.

While the Spirit creates the unity in the Body, members often grievously destroy what the Spirit has affected. We rejoice in this issue to read the words again of former Editor-in-Chief, Hoy Ledbetter, whose article on "The Holy Spirit and Unity" will challenge our intellect, warn

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“Now Concerning Spiritual Gifts. . .”

J. HAROLD THOMAS

Conway, Arkansas

The widespread witness to personal experiences of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by believers among all segments of professed Christians which arose in the last decades still challenges the attention of all Christendom. The testimonies to the experience and exercise of charismatic manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit had been made in modern times by those within minority Pentecostal groups and rarely elsewhere. But in the 50's - 70's there was a great wave of such testimonies from within most of the major bodies of Christendom. It was met with the whole spectrum of responses ranging from a welcome acceptance to the firmest denials. Many books were written to express the reaction.

Personally, I accepted the challenge to re-study the ministry of the Holy Spirit with a desire to be objective and thorough. Since there is no pure objectivity in man and since the subject of the Holy Spirit is very large in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit Himself transcends human comprehension, what I will say is not ventured as a final word. But I will dare to express some observations, and it does take some daring. I could hardly expect to agree with everybody.

That the Holy Spirit looms large in the Bible and especially in the New Testament is acknowledged by all. John promised that Jesus would "baptize with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11). Jesus reiterated the promise to His disciples (Acts 1:5). The book of Acts records the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) and more than fifty times direct references are made to Him.

What John promised concerning the Messiah baptizing with the Holy Spirit, on the surface, at least, would relate to all who

responded in faith to Jesus. I have long been unsatisfied with the interpretation that held that baptism to be only for the Apostles. Certainly what Joel promised (Joel 2), which was realized on Pentecost, in its detail could hardly have been limited to the Apostles. It spoke of women as well as men, old men as well as young men, being endowed by the Spirit to prophesy. The emphasis in the prophecy was to the fact that the pouring out would be upon all flesh—as many as the Lord should call. (Cf. Acts 2:39 and Joel 2:30-32.)

The interpretation that distinguishes between "measures" of the Holy Spirit such as "baptismal measure," the "gift or indwelling measure" and the "gifts measure" has required a forcing of the Biblical language and the failure to take into consideration passages that do not concur. That a baptism of the Spirit was a measure is artificial. The "baptism" is a coming of the Spirit with its power upon or within a person. The term is used only in reference to those who received the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 1:8, 11:15-17) and the household of Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11) in the records, but in my opinion the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not limited to those two occasions. Rather, I feel that the "baptism" of the Spirit is for all obedient believers and concurs with the reception of the Spirit when one is born again.

We will note four areas of scripture which deal with the exercise of spiritual gifts. They are I Peter 4:7-11; Ephesians 4:7-16; Romans 12:3-13; I Corinthians 12-14. Generally we observe the consciousness of gifts of the Spirit disclosed by these passages.

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What Peter had to say may be largely summed up in three sentences:

(1) Let the gifts be used for the good of all.
(2) Let God be acknowledged as the giver of all gifts.

(3) Let God be glorified through Jesus Christ in the exercise of the gifts.

Peter's reference appears to be more to categories of gifts—speaking and serving—rather than the more specific gifts catalogued by Paul. However, the context would suggest love and hospitality as other specific gifts of the Spirit.

Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4:7-16 focuses on the objective for which the gifts were given rather than on instructions concerning the exercise of the gifts. He refers to leaders who possessed the gifts: apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors and teachers. This was not to imply that only these leaders possessed gifts, (he speaks of every joint and every part as having something to contribute to the ultimate maturity of the body) but to emphasize that all gifts and all receivers of gifts were to build up the whole body, to help it achieve the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

In Romans 12:3-13 the analogy, as it is in Ephesians 4, is that of the church and a physical human body. The gifts mentioned are first those related to leaders—prophesy, serving (*diakonian* in the Greek), teaching and exhorting. But to the gifts others are added: contributing, aiding, acting in mercy. In the context hospitality is mentioned (as it is by Peter). The responsibility to use one's gift with fervor and cheerfulness in the consciousness of contributing to the well-being of the whole body is the thrust of the passage.

The area of scripture most informative with respect to spiritual gifts is I Corinthians 12-14. It presents the longest listing of such gifts, though, I am sure, with no view to being exhaustive (I Corinthians 12:8-10; 27-28). It makes it clear that these were bestowed by the Holy Spirit and were not to be claimed as merited or as an entitlement to any superiority over any other

believer (I Corinthians 12:7 and 11).

—Rather since possessors of the gifts were members of the one body, everyone was the beneficiary of every gift and there was to be an awareness of how interdependent upon one another were all possessors of gifts (I Corinthians 12:12-26).

—The passage reveals that possessors of gifts were not precluded thereby from pride or other serious failings (I Corinthians 12:21; 14:20).

—Not all gifts have the same value for the public assembly of the believers. Speaking in tongues, for instance, unless there was an interpreter present, did not edify the assembled body and was to be restrained (I Corinthians 14:11-25). Prophesying, on the other hand, was profitable for the whole assembly and its exercise was encouraged (I Corinthians 14:4, 5, 19, 22, 23-25, 31).

—But even gifts profitably exercised in the assembly were to be exercised in humility and not for self exaltation. There was to be courteous deference to others (I Corinthians 14:26-34).

—The possession of a spiritual gift or gifts was not of such a nature of ecstasy as to make a person unable to control his/her actions. The tongue speaker could abstain from speaking in the public assembly. The prophet could defer to another prophet and bide his/her turn to speak (I Corinthians 14:27; 30-33).

—A spiritual gift could be sought and prayed for according to this body of teaching. (There is no suggestion that the presence of an Apostle to lay on hands would be necessary.) (I Corinthians 14:1, 13).

—Specifically concerning tongues what appears in I Corinthians 12-14 differs from what appears in Acts 2.

—In Acts 2 the tongues that were spoken were understood by everyone, each of his native tongue (Acts 2:5-12).

—In I Corinthians 12-14 the outsider did not understand what a speaker was saying (I Corinthians 14:2, 23). Even the one who was speaking in a tongue did not

understand what he was saying unless he also had the gift of interpretation (14:13). The tongue speaker might be edified (14:4) though the exact nature of the edification is not clearly detailed.

—The passage which declares tongues to be a sign not for believers but for unbelievers (14:22) is difficult but it should not be construed to contradict what we have just observed.

—Three exhortations emerge in relation to the exercising of the gifts: (Apparently among the Corinthians the possession of their gifts had resulted in undue pride and a desire to show them off.)

- 1) Let everything be done in love (the message of chapter 13).
- 2) let everything be done for building up the church (14:26).
- 3) let everything be done decently and in order (14:40).

Many still ask the question: Were all the gifts of the Spirit miraculous or were they in some cases natural gifts or abilities sanctified by the Spirit and enhanced by Him to serve the needs of the body of believers? Many gifts indisputably were bestowed upon believers who did not possess such as natural abilities. Among these would be healing, working of miracles, speaking in tongues, interpretation. On the other hand administration, teaching, helping, serving, the utterance of wisdom or of knowledge, hospitality are natural abilities with which people are endowed and such persons who were filled with the Spirit could well have been blessed with an increase and enhancement of their natural abilities. It would be foolish to deny that possibility. Thoughtful persons, however, should make little differentiation between gifts that were altogether miraculous or gifts supernaturally sanctified, increased and enhanced. Natural abilities are God-given, and godly people will thank God for them not less than would they thank Him for the miraculously bestowed gifts.

But what about the miraculous gifts? Are they still given? My personal answer to this

relates to what I believe about the Holy Spirit. He is a person. He is co-existent with God, eternally and unchangeably integrated with the Father and the Son in the majesty and mystery of the Triune Godhead. He is alive and well. He indwells believers. He empowers believers; He intercedes for believers. To deny that the Spirit gives gifts, apportioning to each believer individually such gifts as He wills, to me appears to be unmitigated assumption (I Corinthians 12:11).

I have recited the arguments to the effect that the miraculous gifts (as tongues, etc.) were conveyed to others than the Apostles only through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. But I was never able to make I Timothy 4:14 fit my conclusion, nor Acts 9:17 nor I Corinthians 14:13.

Concerning I Corinthians 13:8-10 I am not sure that "that which is perfect" refers to the completed written word. I cannot conceive of Paul saying that he himself and that first-century church possessed less than the complete revelation of Christ. (Compare Galatians 1:8; Acts 20:27.) Moreover, I do not as yet see that the believers in Jesus have come to know fully as they are fully known (I Corinthians 13:12).

As long as believers read the scriptures for themselves and do not have their conclusions framed for them by those who set themselves up as authorities there will be those who read I Corinthians 12-14 along with what they read elsewhere in the word of God and believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to believers of every time this side of Jesus' return. And some will seek them and some will testify to their reception of them. And some, as I have observed in our time, will appear to be the better for their experience in a number of ways.

The arguments that the spiritual gifts such as tongues etc. experienced by the first-century church were only for that earliest time are not logically conclusive and they are assumptive in relation to the Holy Spirit. Those gifts were given by the Holy

Spirit at His discretion. They were to confirm the word (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:4) and to edify the believers (I Corinthians 14:4, 13 ff). The specific reason for which some were not apparent for centuries may be conjectured (the further confirmation of the word unnecessary, the abuse of gifts such as tongues, unbelief); but the basic general reason is that the Holy Spirit did not bestow them. To say that He will never bestow them again is to assume that one knows fully the mind of the Holy Spirit or the limits of the range of circumstances under which He would bestow the gifts.

I wish to add that I have misgivings about

a view held by many that sees the ministry of the Holy Spirit today limited to the influence of the written teaching we have in the Bible. This contradicts the teaching of Romans 8:26-27 which presents the Holy Spirit as our intercessor when we pray. It discounts the personal indwelling of the Spirit in the believer which is repeatedly taught. And when such a view expresses itself in derision of all testimonies of believers to experimental manifestation of the Spirit's activity in their lives, I tremble in the light of Jesus' teaching about blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31-32).

What is My Gift?

DIANE G. H. KILMER

Lansing, Michigan

After a study on the spiritual gifts the next question that naturally arises is, "What is my spiritual gift?" Let us assume that pertinent scriptures such as Romans 12:1-8, Corinthians 12, and others have been closely examined. For some Christians, determining what their own gift is for the upbuilding of the church is easy — the gift is obvious to themselves and to others. But for some of us, it may not be so clear. We have read the "lists" and we are still not sure what our gift is. Then we feel confused and even left out. We may question the truth in Romans 12:6 that everyone receives a gift from the Lord that is specifically for helping each other mature in our Christlikeness. If we do not think we have been given a gift, we may feel less responsible toward our church. We might even become inactive altogether. "After all," we may think, "they don't need me over there. I have nothing to contribute."

Instead of allowing ourselves to head

down such a depressing spiral, let me encourage you. Believe Romans 12:6! Forget the question, "What Is My Spiritual Gift", for a while. And instead, do what you know you are supposed to do!

Prompting from the Spirit

Yes, do what you already know you are supposed to be doing! During private prayer or during a quiet moment during the day, pay attention to the ideas that come to your mind. If the idea will be helpful to Christ's family and should bring nothing but glory to God—do it! Obey. That idea is likely to have been a prompting from the Spirit.

The prompting may be to write a note of encouragement to someone. It might be to draw a picture that perfectly captures and illustrates a spiritual truth that will be helpful in a class or for the entire congregation. You may be prompted to make a phone call and you may not even know why

you are calling. Perhaps a song — new or old — comes into your mind that you just know would be encouraging for the congregation to sing next Sunday. An idea may come to your mind that may be the perfect way to help someone with your time or money. In a quiet moment you may be convicted of your own sin. It might be something you have nourished or held with pride that has been devious in God's family. Obey, however, what the Spirit suggests to you to resolve the sin. Sometimes you might be moved to study a particular passage in the Bible that answers the exact question someone later asks you. Or perhaps to your mind comes a clear plan that resolves an administrative problem at church.

Maybe you will get an idea that would lead the local church family in a new direction of service. Such an idea that affects a group should, or course, be tested by asking other brothers and sisters to think about the idea, pray about it, and then to corporately seek God's guidance about it. Such action taken as a group sorts out the Holy Spirit's promptings from what may have just been our own thought or something Satan whispered in our ear.

All the possibilities for what the Holy Spirit may prompt you to do cannot be listed here. Because, as it is taught in I Corinthians 1 :6: ". . .there are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men."

Obey the Spirit's Promptings

Practicing obedience to the Spirit's promptings will become so natural that we can become like Virgil. Virgil is a dear 78-year-old Christian man in my home congregation for whom walking in the Lord has become as natural as breathing. One Sunday night Virgil shared with our congregation what had happened to him the week before. He had visited a long-time minister friend of his in the hospital just an hour or so before the old preacher died. By softly singing encouraging hymns and reading hope-building scriptures, Virgil was able to

lovingly minister to the dying friend and to the family gathered around the bed. And please note: Virgil began his story to us by saying that it was getting to be supper time and he was driving home when he suddenly got the urging from the Lord to get to the hospital right then to see his friend! Virgil had practiced obeying the promptings of the Spirit often enough in His life that he could recognize the urgent thought as a call from God and not just his own whim.

After a few weeks, months, or even years of trying to "do what you know you are supposed to do," it should be much easier to figure out what gift or gifts God has given you. In looking back, you will notice that the actions that you are moved to do to build up the church will often fall into the same type(s) or categories. For example, perhaps you find that you often seem to know just the right encouraging word to use at just the right time. God has given you the gift of encouraging. Or another example might be that you find yourself regularly knowing just the right helpful action to take to serve another when no one else may have even sensed a problem. You have been given the gift of serving. In looking back over what you believe the Holy Spirit has asked you to do, the things for which you have been gifted usually seem easy, natural, and even enjoyable to do. And you will often (but not always!) notice some sort of positive response when you have practiced your gift. For example, an encourager will see lifted spirits, a server will see thankfulness, a minister of mercy will see relief in people's faces, a teacher will see eyes suddenly lit up with understanding and joy. Others should be able to confirm what you think your gift is.

Important To Know Your Gift

If for many years you have been doing what you believe the Lord has been wanting you to do, you may be wondering why there is even any need at all to determine what your gift is. Let me give you a couple of reasons.

First, it can confirm again in your mind that God has purposes planned for you today. By the time I had been an active Christian for a dozen years I found myself often in a role of encouraging people in what they were doing in the Lord and speaking up when actions and ideas seemed to veer away from Him. In my own mind I had nicknamed myself one of "God's cheerleaders." It was just a few years ago during a study of spiritual gifts that I learned another name for what I felt moved to do: exhorter. When I realized there was a name for what I did in the church and that God had planned to equip his body with me in a particular position, I felt special. Not better than anyone else, but special in the sense that I belonged to the church body and that there would be something missing — the body would not be quite whole — if I did not exercise my gift.

The Holy Spirit and Unity

HOY LEDBETTER

Atlanta, Georgia

The connection between the Holy Spirit and unity should be so well known that this article would be superfluous except for the most immature. However, observation of the contemporary church (not to speak of outsiders) makes us wonder if we have learned our lessons all that well. I am skeptical enough to pursue the discussion and to ask you to look with me at three groups who tread—sometimes trample—the Lord's temple. They are: (1) those who abuse the Spirit, (2) those who are devoid of the Spirit, and (3) those who cooperate with him in achieving his purposes.

Abusing the Spirit

Although the Christians at Corinth were

There is second reason why it is helpful to know what gift or gifts you have been given. If you ever have choices in how you may serve the church, knowing what God has equipped you to do allows you to discern the most effective way you can help the body.

We do not need to be anxious over what our gifts are. We simply must do what we know the Lord wants us to do. And Paul helps us clarify what our priorities must be in church life:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

". . .there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above your selves."

(I. Cor. 12:27; I. Cor. 12:25;
Rom. 12:10)

abundantly supplied with spiritual gifts, they practiced a highly egocentric religion. That they often put themselves, rather than God, at the center of life is evident throughout 1 Corinthians. In their fascination with wisdom and passion for spiritual gifts they lost the distinction between the human and the divine. One practical effect of this preoccupation is discussed in 1 Corinthians 11, where the apostle insists that their eating together could not possibly be the Lord's supper, for they could not wait for one another (probably because they were too eager to begin using the more ostentatious charismata, such as tongues). In countering their very unspiritual contempt for the church, Paul stresses again

and again (in chapter 12) that there is only one Spirit, and therefore there can be but one undivided body, so division over the Holy Spirit can in no way be initiated by the Holy Spirit.

Paul also declares in this connection that love is greater than any spiritual gift; love is, after all, the prime fruit of the Spirit. And he insists (in chapter 14) that worship must be edifying to all; edification is more important than tongues. Another important point is that people who have special gifts also have the last word on when and whether they are to be used, so order must never yield to confusion under the pretense that the spiritual impulse cannot be restrained.

That the Corinthians, who apparently had so many gifts, should have used them destructively shows what difficulty the Spirit encounters among people who think they have achieved some sort of spiritual superiority. Egocentric ecstasies have left a trail of broken churches down through the centuries. This fact warns us that while, on the one hand, we must not usurp the Spirit's office by trying to create unity ourselves, yet, on the other hand, we cannot leave it all to him and neglect our part. He creates, we maintain.

Devoid of the Spirit

Jude introduces us to some spiritual delinquents who "set up divisions," whom he further describes as "worldly people, devoid of the Spirit" (19). Why divisions would occur among those devoid of the Spirit is plain from their behavior: "These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loudmouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage" (16).

They are grumblers. The term indicates those who secretly voice their discontent and suggests a conspiracy. Such murmurers aid and abet division by hacking away at the body as they, in secluded settings and before inclining ears, keep whining about those aspects of the church they are unhap-

py with and criticizing individuals who do not sympathize with them. We should give such people due credit for the massive damage they do.

They are also malcontents, people who find fault with their lot in life. As they see it, life (specifically life in the church) has been unfair to them. They can never think of the service they should render because they can never get over what they are not getting. They may blame the whole church, or some vague "they," but probably will concentrate upon the leaders and seek occasions to criticize them in the presence of those whom they have encouraged to dwell upon what is wrong (rather than what is right) with their congregation.

Such malcontents are really people who follow their own passions. They may talk a great deal about doing God's will, or complain that others do not do it, but his will actually has nothing to do with it; they are essentially ruled by their own desires.

Jude also styles them loudmouthed boasters. We all know this sort; not sure but cocksure, they can't change their minds and won't change the subject. There is no use debating such people; the mind of the bigot, as Oliver Wendell Holmes noted, is like the pupil of the eye: the more light you pour upon it, the more it will contract. They have the truth and are beyond persuasion because they can never consider the possibility of being wrong. Mr. Dooley would say that they do what they think the Lord would do if only he knew the facts of the case.

However, they are not too proud for some useful servility; they flatter people to gain advantage. Although they are customarily negative, they can speak in positive terms when they want to use somebody. Since the flatterer is an obvious liar, why does he succeed so often? Perhaps the answer is found in George Bernard Shaw's advice: "Always let your flattery be seen through, for what really flatters a man is that you think him worth flattering."

Those egotists who labor under the con-

viction that our destiny is to be determined by their genius invariably claim some special spiritual maturity. It may be called wisdom, possession of the Holy Spirit, or something else. But wisdom is justified of her children, and the presence of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by the unit he creates and the fruit he produces. Division, regardless of the cloak it hides under, comes from those who are "devoid of the Spirit."

When Timothy was urged to "guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit" (2 Tim. 1:14), the consolidating work of the Spirit was being frustrated by certain "pompous ignoramuses" (to use the NEB's colorful term) who had "a morbid craving for controversy" and disputes that "produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among men who are deprived in mind and bereft of the truth" (1 Tim. 6:4-5). Despite their lofty claims, people who love controversy do not love truth. They love to argue!

The word "morbid" in this text literally means "sick"; the tendency to debate and choose sides is not an indication of a healthy body, it is a symptom of disease. In paraphrase, the results of this sick attitude are: resentment whenever another seems to have any good points; rebellious unrest which disrupts the unity of the group and ends in angry disputes; publication of statements which damage another person's reputation; the constant tendency to suspect (without supporting evidence) the other person of being or doing wrong; and persistent and noisy arguments. In such an irritating atmosphere people are bound to get on each other's nerves, and sooner or later will want to either get out or get rid of their opponents.

The Holy Spirit, however, has given truth which will disallow such behavior. But that truth must be guarded. Unity and unifying behavior do not arise from man's fallen nature; they issue from the Spirit and can be lost quickly if not attended constantly. It follows that when we are preoccupied with

controversial questions and quibbles, we should suspect that the Holy Spirit is in the process of being evicted from our lives.

Led by the Spirit

Turning to the positive side, in Philipians 2 Paul holds that the "fellowship for [or, created by] the Spirit" requires Christians to be of the same mind, to maintain the same love, to be united in spirit and intent on one purpose, and to have humility of mind. Each one of them is to regard the other as more important than himself, and, instead of looking out for his own personal interests, each one is to look out for the interests of others. This is the attitude which must prevail in a fellowship created by the Holy Spirit.

There is no room in this communion for the selfish ambition which begets sects and perpetuates party squabbles—a sin which often slips into lively churches. Forbidden also is empty conceit, the "delusion of grandeur" which enables the deviant to build a party around himself. The unselfish attitude demanded is actually that of the selfless Christ who gave himself—and ultimately his very life—for our sakes.

But this unity is not (and never was in the New Testament church) the coming together of likeminded people (although such often make up churches today where real diversity is a stranger); it is the action of the Spirit who is no respecter of persons. Man may destroy it, but he cannot make it. Yet the very fact that the apostle gives directions to men indicates that human cooperation and organization are essential to its maintenance.

A good example of the way the Holy Spirit creates unity is found in Acts 15. Among those who had become Christians in Jerusalem were Pharisees and other conservatives who believed that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were circumcised and kept the Law of Moses. Like people naturally do when their convictions are elevated to matters of life and death, these brethren tried to bind on everyone else their

conception of God's plan of salvation. Their attempt, which extended to Antioch where Paul and Barnabas were ministering, provoked considerable debate, and the whole church convened in Jerusalem to arrive at a decision. Defining the rites of initiation into God's community was too basic a question to be ignored. The potential for irremediable division was tremendous.

We all know the outcome of that debate; I will only glance at the way consensus was attained. Although "the apostles and the elders, with the whole church" (Acts 15:22) deliberated carefully, they were not alone in handling this hot potato. And in announcing their decision, they gave first credit to him who was the real Chairman of their meeting, to wit: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials" (Acts 15:28). Thus the Holy Spirit created unity in one of the most challenging situations in the early church.

As a Jewish male Paul had always been taught to thank God daily that he was not a Gentile or a slave or a woman. All the more striking, therefore, is the fact that, under the prompting of the Spirit, he wrote a point by point repudiation of that prayer: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

The power behind this comprehensive declaration can only be appreciated by those who have known the fear and hatred of extreme religious and racial apartheid. That special power was further attested when Paul announced to the Ephesians that Christ had ended the hostilities between Jews and Gentiles and had made both one, declaring that "through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). Although the Lord had the active role in this unification, still the Jews and Gentiles themselves had a part to play, for unity inspired by the Spirit has to be maintained by God's people. This fact is brought

out in Paul's requirement that they live "with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love," and specifically that they be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3). It is the Spirit's job to create unity, it is ours to maintain it.

Although the fruit of the Spirit is, I believe, to be the subject of a future article, the virtues listed in Galatians 5:22-23 have such a strong bearing upon unity that I must encroach slightly upon that theme. I have never known a division to occur except in the absence of one or more of those virtues.

At the head of the list is love. If love's significance in the unity of the church requires any sustaining argument, it should be enough to note the way Paul urged it upon the Corinthians as a corrective to their sectarianism, which is the background of his lengthy definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13. In producing love the Holy Spirit also produced unity, and unity can be maintained in a truly loving atmosphere no matter what difficulties it faces.

Next on the list is joy. I have often wondered how much division has occurred in the church because we have not caught the joy of the early saints. When the Romans came down with a spell of exclusionism, Paul reminded them that "the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink [think of other issues we may fight over!] but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Not only does joy eliminate the negative, whining attitude which so often leads to strife, but when the Spirit is in control, our focus is upon peaceful relations, treating others right, and encouraging each person's joy. Such concentration hardly allows room for fighting.

Peace, which essentially means right relations and is the spiritual twin of joy, is inevitable among those who truly serve "the God of peace." If we are led by the Spirit, we will "pursue what makes for peace," and the peace of Christ will "rule in our

hearts." In other words, we cooperate with the Spirit in the maintenance of fellowship.

Patience, the condition of being long-tempered (as opposed to short-tempered), is an answer to those people who seem to think we should not have to put up with ugly and immature folks in the church. Schismatics have little appreciation for the virtue of patience. The Spirit, however, leads us to live with people who may annoy us a great deal.

Kindness is suggestive of mellow graciousness, sweetness of temper, and the beautiful grace of lowliness. Since it is one of the great qualities of God, it makes us treat people the way God has treated us; and God not partial but "he is kind to the ungrateful and selfish" (Lk. 6:35). How do you treat ungrateful and selfish people?

Goodness probably means generosity. We naturally think of the question put to the grumbling workers in Jesus' parable: "Is your eye evil [i.e., envious] because I am good [i.e., generous]?" We know from experience that this attitude is diametrically opposed to that of sectarians. Its significance for fellowship requires no argument.

The value of **faithfulness** to the concord of the church should not pass by unnoticed. Not only are those who are loyal to the body not easily separated from it, but faithful people by definition encourage others to trust them, and that trust is the remedy for the base suspicions and anxieties which accompany divisive tendencies.

Gentleness is best illustrated by the gentle horse: strong but obedient, powerful yet not destructive. It is opposed to the bellicose attitude and stern disposition which put people at a distance. It is able to recognize its own ignorance and is willing to learn. The Bible binds it upon those who restore offenders and correct opponents. It is courteous and tolerant, submissive yet not spineless, and can be angry but never sinfully so. The gentle person is, as was gentle Jesus, under God's control.

Finally, Paul lists as a fruit of the Spirit **self-control**, a term used elsewhere to en-

join sexual purity but which probably has a broader application here. While sexual misconduct can touch off bloody battles even in the church, unity requires a more general restraint which guarantees that each member's conduct will be ruled by something other than his passions. Self-control is an effective antidote to some of the negative qualities we have already discussed.

Paul's discussion of the union of man and Spirit in Galatians 5 ends with an appropriate exhortation: "Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another" (NASV). We need this directive when we start claiming something that isn't there—acting as if our superior insights, extraordinary experiences, and prestigious gifts guarantee us a special standing with God; when we are fond of challenging others to theological debate and think that knowledge builds up when actually it only puffs up; when we suppose that our emancipation should be the norm for everyone and place our liberty before other people's scruples; when we resent those who can go beyond what our own conscience will allow and deplore their successes and applaud their failures; when we tend to weep when some members rejoice and rejoice when they weep; when, in other words, we begin to frustrate the unifying activity of the Spirit. If indeed we have fellowship with the Spirit, then let the Spirit determine our conduct.

Let him also determine our attitude toward unity. If we have made peace with division in the church; if we are comfortable with it, even when it is caused by people for whom we think we have no responsibility; if we do not regard the existence of opposing churches as a scandal, the result of sin to be repented of; and if we do not see it as a problem which we have some interest in solving; then, although we may, perhaps, be good members of our parties, we are not good Christians. We may have tuned out the grieving Spirit, and "any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

Empowerment of the Christian Life

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Several days ago I received a returned check from one of my clients at the clinic marked "insufficient funds." It then became necessary to call this husband and father to inform him that the check had been returned, the reason for it, and that I was sending it back to him. His response was much like that which would characterize you or me: embarrassment, anger, attempted explanation. "I don't understand, I just made a large deposit, that bank is always fouling me up, and I am going to change my accounts to another bank!" What was he saying in all these purported explanations of failure? In essence, he did not have adequate financial resources to cover the check drawn, and it became the occasion for very confused and disordered responses.

But this incident has a very close proximity to our spiritual efforts in that we frequently find ourselves with "insufficient funds" to live dynamic and victorious lives. Confronted with our human inadequacies, our sins and failures, our sometimes colossal mistakes as Christians, we become deeply disturbed and seek plausible explanations. Our attempted efforts to explain the reasons for such muddled Christian living have a striking similarity to the man whose check was marked "Returned for insufficient funds." We may blame others for our personal failures: spouse, employer, elders in the church, minister, law officer, and the list goes on. As believers in the risen and living Lord, we need not employ such explanations of life's failures, nor allow our spiritual reserves to reach "Insufficient Funds."

Promised Power

During His last post-resurrection appearance, the disciples were asking Jesus about the kingdom, the future of Israel, trying to get some direction and clarification after the terrible trauma of His trials and death. In response to their understandable questions, Jesus reminded them of the "promise of the Father" made earlier that they would receive the Holy Spirit; and how He further assures them that the presence of the Spirit would mean new strength and spiritual dynamic. "But you shall receive power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." (Acts 1:8) Granted that the Holy Spirit in the apostles' lives may have enabled them to engage in unique functions no longer deemed necessary by God or in evidence in the church, it nevertheless remains that the presence of the Spirit is always associated with power, energy, dynamic. Failure to recognize this unlimited source of power in the believer's life has led very frequently to spiritual defeats, sins and blunders, and the disconcerting return of our efforts marked "Insufficient Funds."

The apostle Paul's life as a called and committed servant of Jesus Christ evidences he was in possession of this source of strength and power. He was falsely accused and often misunderstood; he was whipped with cruel lashes and beaten with rods, once stoned and left for dead. In his travels for Christ he was shipwrecked and adrift at sea; and he experienced dangers from so many sources: robbers, fellow Jews as well as Gentiles, false brethren. Toils and hardships, sleepless nights, hunger and

thirst, cold and exposure characterized his life style (II Cor. 11:23-29). How could this man endure and yet continue to minister according to the purposes of God for his life?

The explanation of Paul's sustained and victorious life for Christ is his keen awareness that he had access to a new source of empowerment. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you." (Rom. 8:11) This was the striking difference between Paul's two life styles, the first under law and the second under grace. Under law he struggled constantly for perfect obedience, yet realizing that even when he kept the outward dimensions he failed grievously with the inner intent. Knowing what was right, he did the wrong; and knowing the wrong, he nevertheless pursued it. (Rom. 7:13-24) His conflict was so intense as to be characterized "wretched." And who would deliver him from such wretchedness, conflict, guilt, and a sense of failure? Listen to the relief, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our lord. . . For the law (principle, reality) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. . . If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life. . ." (Rom. 7:25-8:11)

Whether attempting to live by God's will and failing no matter how diligently he tried, or experiencing the bitterness which life sometimes thrusts upon him, the apostle found his empowerment in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This was one of the distinguishing differences between life under law and under grace. Law demands perfect obedience, but not offering an assurance for rendering such obedience, can only end in conflict, guilt, and condemnation (Rom. 8:1-4). Grace not only demands upon us that we know and do the will of God, but provides an assurance of the power to live obediently.

Power to Succeed

The human ego needs success to assure its self esteem and sense of importance. Students need success in their academic ventures, and business men need realistic returns from their investments. Not only is it human and necessary to want and need success, it is likewise rather human to claim success in terms of human striving, strenuous efforts, and enviable smarts. But how does this correlate with the Christian perspective on life? While the apostle Paul had all these dimensions going for him—human striving, strenuous efforts, and enviable smarts—he never claimed success in his ministry based upon these traits. Once when claiming to work harder than any of the other apostles, he immediately offered the corrective, "though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me." Speaking to the Roman church about his successful ventures among the Gentiles, he dared suggest that he had "reason to be proud of my work for God." Yet he continued immediately in a clarifying vein, "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit . . ." (Rom. 15:17-19) It is so tempting to attribute our success even in Christian ministry to many sources other than the power of God's energizing and dynamic Spirit who works creatively to bring about fulfillment of His will. We speak of our capable leadership, our marvelously gifted minister, our competent staff of teachers, and our committed membership. And all of this may well be true! But in my years of serving in the Kingdom I simply have not heard it affirmed very frequently that all our successes need be attributed to the "power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:19) Why such failure to recognize God's spiritual dynamic within us? Human pride and ego? Perhaps our fragile egos need all the recognition they can get, even if it means robbing God's Spirit of the honor due him.

Strengthened in the Inner Man

The prayers of the apostle Paul reflect insight into the power of the Holy Spirit which could well deepen our commitment and enrich our worship and prayer life. In Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21 we have recorded two of the apostle's prayers, and in each there is his intense concern that the believers in the congregations who read this letter lay hold of this transforming and energizing power of the Spirit. And what a refreshing way of praying when contrasted and/or compared to the prayers which so frequently characterize both our private and public worship! Paul prays that Christians might know (experience) "the immeasurable greatness of his power (*dunamis*). . . according to the working (*energeia*) of his great might (*kratos*) which he accomplished when he raised him from the dead. . ." (Eph. 1:19, 20) Now when we remember that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was raised from the dead (Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:20), and that it is the power of this same Spirit with which Paul wants believers to be endued, we can better understand the intensity of the apostle's prayer for the believers who were likely to receive this document.

In a very similar prayer found in Ephesians 3:14-21 the apostle desires that they be "strengthened with might (*dunamei*) through his Spirit in the inner man." What Paul has personally experienced of the sustaining power of God's Spirit, he desires for these brethren also. It is redemptive power, power displayed in the resurrection of Christ and encountered in the proclamation of the gospel. This power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is present within us, working to do for more abundantly than we can ask or think. (Eph. 3:20,21) And this claim for the Spirit's empowerment is almost incredible, were it not for the affirmation that by his power Jesus was raised from the dead! Any power which can raise a dead person can certainly energize our lives, sharpen our

moral and spiritual discernment, and assure us of victorious Christian living.

Spirit Creates and Unifies

One of the most remarkable descriptions of the church to be found in Scripture is Paul's portrait in Ephesians 2:11-22 of the reconciled Body. Jew and Gentile have been separated by the "dividing wall of hostility," hating and being hated. But the blood of the cross has reconciled them both into one body, and hostility is brought to an end (or it should be). Now through the risen Lord, and that power which raised him from the dead, "we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2:18) The Holy Spirit, raising Jesus out of death, now animates the gospel message so that it is "the power of God unto salvation," breaking down barriers between man and God, man and man, thus giving all men equal access to God the Father; and having been reconciled to God and to one another, these saved believers constitute the church of the living God. Brought into being by the creative working of His Spirit, the church is indeed that "dwelling place of God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2:22)

Not only is the church the product of God's creative Spirit at work through the gospel, but the unity which the church enjoys is attributed to the Spirit also. Exhorted to live up to their calling, Christians are urged by the apostle to "spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives." (Eph. 4:3 NEB) Since the glorified Lord has been enthroned at the Father's side, the Spirit through the glorious gospel of God convicts and converts, breaks down walls of hostility and fashions men of all backgrounds together in the Body of Christ; and this Body is one, united through a common experience of forgiveness by grace. And Paul attributes this to the Spirit. Neither the church nor its leaders spell out the conditions of unity and fellowship; but rather does the Spirit make

all persons one in Christ. Members of the Body through attitudes and actions may mutilate and even destroy that Spirit-given unity; and such behavior must indeed grieve the Spirit of God.

This perspective of unity and fellowship being the fruit of the Spirit's power must be restored to the church. Man hasn't the power nor the wisdom to map out an adequate basis for uniting all men, although we have seen church leaders assume this awesome task. So we witness lists of views and practices which are deemed "essentials," and to which all members of the Body must conform. But such lists are woefully inadequate, reflecting human prejudices and fears; whereas the Spirit of God, having fashioned us into membership in the Body of Christ, enables us to love the unloving, to accept the brother of weak conscience or varying views. In truth, it is the Holy Spirit in the believer that empowers him to obey Paul's injunction to "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Rom. 15:7) Unity and fellowship in the Body of Christ can only be experienced by the empowerment of each believer with the indwelling of God's Spirit.

In all his daily conflicts and struggles the Christian finds assurance through the promised presence of God's Holy Spirit. Dwelling in us to empower in our weakness, let us dare to claim the Spirit's presence of

the victorious life in Christ. The Christian need not have his efforts end in defeat and discouragement, for he has adequate resources upon which to draw; and need never have stamped across his life, "Failed because of Insufficient Funds." For he has none other than God the Spirit indwelling and empowering his every thought and deed. The words of Aurelius Augustine speak with such relevance: "Command what Thou wilt, O God; then give what Thou dost command."

Editorial

Continued from page 66

our conscience, and touch our deepest emotions. Every reader of *Integrity* will welcome back this brother and his scholarly, Scriptural article on this most urgent theme of unity in the Body.

The present writer concludes this issue with an article on the Spirit's power at work within the Body, corporately and individually. Residing within the Body, this Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead is present to empower the believer's life, energize his ministry, and assure victory in both life and death.

Joseph F. Jones, Chairman
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