

HOW LONG WERE THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REMAIN AVAILABLE?

The main point of this thesis is: what do the Scriptures say concerning the period during which the Holy Spirit gifts would remain available. It is concerning this point that four arguments are sometimes advanced to prove that the Holy Spirit gifts would not remain available after the second century. The arguments are as follows:

1. Only apostles could transmit the gifts and when the last of the apostles died, the gifts gradually ceased.

2. Acts 2:39: Peter limited the outpouring of the Spirit to two generations.

3. 1 Cor. 13: the “perfect” refers to the completed revelation of God which came when the Apocalypse was given, hence the partitive gifts have ceased.

4. Joel 2: “former rain” refers to the Spirit of Apostolic times and “latter rain” to the greater outpouring which will take place at the second advent. Between these two outpourings there would exist a period of “drought” as far as the Spirit gifts are concerned.

APOSTLESHIP

1 . Apostleship. It is commonly believed that (a) There were only 13 apostles (the “12” and Paul) whose qualifications could not be possessed by others. (b) These 13 alone had the power to bestow the gifts through laying on of hands. (c) Except for the exceptional case of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit was always given through laying on of apostles’ hands. (d) Seeing no one else could possess the qualifications for apostleship, the gifts gradually ceased after the death of the last apostle - John.

Now it should be pointed out that (a) there were many more apostles besides the “13”, showing that the qualifications for apostleship were not restricted to the “13”. (b) Others besides the “13” laid on hands for the transmission of the Holy Spirit, and although belonging to a different category of apostleship, were nevertheless equal in power and authority. (c) The case of Cornelius was not the only “exceptional” case where God poured the Holy Spirit directly from the vault of heaven, confirming that our God is an exceptional God, and is always ready and willing to do a

“new” and exceptional thing! (d) The suggestion that John was the last apostle is based upon tradition and cannot be supported by Scripture. And, if we have to appeal to history for such information then we can also appeal to statements made in historical works which affirm that there were other apostles besides John living at the end of the first century.

Let us now deal with these points in detail. (a) There were many more apostles besides the “13”, proving that the qualifications of apostleship were not restricted to the “13”. There were two main categories of apostleship, both differing in qualification, yet both possessing the same power and authority. The two categories were (1) apostles to the circumcision (Jews), commonly designated “The 12”, and (2) apostles to the Gentiles.

It is generally conceded that the qualifications of the “12” as recorded in Acts 1:21-22 could not be possessed by others in succeeding generations. It seems that the number of these apostles was fixed. God did not want more than 12, nor would He have less. In the book of Revelation we find that the ultimate position which they occupy is again a special one (21:14). Their eagerness to make up exactly the number 12 in Acts 1 was more than likely due to the fact that Christ promised 12 thrones over Israel to the 12 apostles (Matt. 19:28).

The apostles to the Gentiles, among whom Paul played a prominent part, obviously did not have the same qualifications as the “12”, but did not, on this account, possess an inferior apostleship. Paul himself did not and could not fit into the category of the “12” because he had not accompanied Jesus from the baptism of John to the ascension. Nevertheless, as he said himself: “He that energized Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same energized me towards the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:8).

OTHER APOSTLES BESIDES THE TWELVE AND PAUL

There were many apostles to the Gentiles besides Paul; their number was not fixed and their qualifications were not such that they could be restricted to any particular generation.

In Eph. 4:11 the “apostles” are clearly not the original “12”, for those were appointed when the Lord was still on earth, whilst these date their appointment to apostleship after the ascension of the Lord - they were the gifts of Jesus to his body after his glorification and ascension. Other apostles besides the “12” and Paul were:

1. Barnabas: Acts 14:4-14.

2. Epaphroditus: (Phil. 2:25). The word ‘messenger’ in this verse comes from the same Greek ‘apostolos’ from which apostle has been translated. Two unnamed brethren are referred to by the same word in 2 Cor. 8:23. And in the same verse it could well be implied that Titus was an apostle.

3. Silvanus and Timothy: (1 Thes. 2:6). The “we” in 2:6 clearly refers to the writers of the Thessalonian letter, namely Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, (1:1). Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were first to take the Gospel to the Thessalonians as recorded in Acts 17:1-14. They were “sent” (apostello) by God to do the foundation work of preaching Christ. In view of the fact that Barnabas and Silas were apostles, it would not be stretching Acts 15:22 too much to say that “Judas surnamed Barsabas” was also an apostle. Seeing that apostles possessed all the gifts, it is evident that they could minister in all five capacities mentioned in Eph. 4:11. We therefore read in 2 Thes. 2:6 that Silas and Timothy were apostles, and in Acts 15:32 and 2 Tim. 4:5, we read that Silas and Timothy also ministered as a prophet, and Timothy as an evangelist.

4. Rom. 16:7 speaks in terms of Andronicus and Junia being “of note among the apostles.” It does not say that they were regarded as notable by the apostles, but rather that among the apostles they were notable ones. As J.B. Norris says on page 29 of First Century Ecclesia: “Andronicus and Junia were well known to the apostles, but it is almost certain that the meaning is that Andronicus and Junia were distinguished for their work as apostles at Rome or elsewhere.”

5. In 1 Cor. 4:9 we read: “God has set forth us the apostles last.” The us refers to Paul, Apollos and Peter v6, 3:1-23.

6. In Revelation 2:2 we read “thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” It seems clear from this verse that the early churches expected to have other apostles apart from Paul and the original 12, because when the book of Revelation was written, John was, as we are led to believe, the only survivor of the “12”, and by that time Paul had been martyred. If there were to be only 13 apostles and John was the only one left, the need for “testing” those who say they are apostles, does not seem to be necessary. If it was so clear that there would only be 13 apostles, it seems difficult to believe that one would be foolish enough to pose as an apostle and that others would be foolish enough to be deceived into thinking they were.

7. The seven messages recorded in Rev. 2 to 3 are addressed to the “angel of the church ...” ‘Angel’ comes from the Greek ‘aggelos’ and means ‘one sent’; ‘a messenger,’ and it is significant that “apostolos” also means ‘one sent’ and is actually translated “messengers of the churches” in 2 Cor. 8:23. The apostles were “messengers of the churches” or “angels of the churches.” Speaking to the Philippians, Paul says: “Epaphroditus ... your messenger” (Phil. 2:25). If the deductions from these verses in the Apocalypse are correct, it would prove that John was not by any means the last apostle. He was probably the last of the “12” but not the last apostle in the full Scriptural usage of the term.

As a matter of interest, there is a section in the Didache (a first century Christian treatise) which speaks in terms of numerous apostles existing from the last years of the first century. However, the Didache is not an inspired document and all matters must in the final analysis be determined according to the Scriptures.

8. Ananias was obviously an apostle, for it was through the laying on of his hands that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Ananias told Paul that “the Lord, even Jesus, ... hath sent me ...” This being “sent” (apostello) constituted Ananias an apostle.

These then, are the other apostles besides the 13. And, it would be natural and reasonable to assume that there were many more of whom we have no record.

It was the Holy Spirit that constituted a man an apostle, whether sent down directly from above or transmitted through the laying on of hands. Men were constituted apostles through both means; all was done according to the will of Yahweh who is Spirit. As long as the Holy Spirit continued, apostles continued. There could be no apostles without the Holy Spirit. It has been popular to put the cart before the horse by saying the gifts only continued for as long as apostles continued. The truth of the matter is the reverse. The apostles could only continue for as long as the Spirit continued. The source and giver must be put before the receiver! This has an important bearing on what will be said later for we believe that Yahweh withdrew the Spirit because of apostasy, and as a result apostles ceased to exist. This is in contrast to the view that the Spirit ceased to exist when the 13 apostles died.

Now it is evident, that if it is believed that the Holy Spirit gifts are available today, it must also be believed that it is possible for men to be

constituted apostles today. This is a simple deduction from the record concerning the operation of the Holy Spirit as contained in Eph. 4. On the basis of verses 7-13, it is believed that the Holy Spirit is available today, and that as a result of its re-bestowal, there would again be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. It is commonly agreed that the "Perfect Man" of v13 was not and has never been attained, and in view of the fact that Paul teaches that the grace - gifts of Christ which constituted men "apostles ..." would remain available "till ... a perfect man ...;" it must be concluded that (1) apostles ceased because the Spirit ceased: (2) If the Spirit ceased before the "perfect man" was attained, then it must have ceased for another reason. All the indications of Scripture point to apostasy as the reason. (3) The grace - gifts are still available to the church and would be re-bestowed if she restored herself to her original mode of thinking and disposition, particularly in matters pertaining to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit gifts as believed and taught during apostolic times.

There is no reason to be shocked at such a deduction. Much misunderstanding has arisen from a limited conception of the title "apostle," by confining it strictly to those generally known as the "12" and Paul. The word has, as we have seen, a far wider reference. Today, the title "apostle" has assumed a specialized exclusive sense which was not attached to it in apostolic times. The belief that Christians today could be made apostles through the indwelling of the Spirit is no more foolish or arrogant than the belief that Christians could (and most assuredly will) be given Divine - Spirit nature at the last day. After all, who were apostles, but plain, simple ordinary men made strong by the Spirit of Yahweh for His own glory and honour. There should be nothing more distinctive and exclusive today about the title "apostle" than there is about the title "teacher," for both find a place in Eph. 4:11.

This then, brings us to the end of section A, showing that there were many more apostles than the 13, demonstrating that the qualifications for apostleship to the Gentiles could be possessed by any whom Yahweh chose in any generation, and that on the basis of Eph. 4 there could be apostles today. Let us now consider the next point.

OTHER APOSTLES COULD CONFER THE HOLY SPIRIT

It might be conceded that there were more apostles than the 13 but at the same time argued that only the 13 could confer the Holy Spirit. Such however was not the case. We have the record of several besides the 13 who could transmit the Spirit through laying on of hands. There is the

example of Ananias (Act. 9:17). Paul's message to Timothy not to lay hands suddenly on any man also implies that Timothy practised laying on of hands. This is understandable, for we have already seen that he was an apostle. He was in charge of the large church at Ephesus, and would have been able to lay on hands for all the various reasons for which hands were laid. On page 219 of "Faith in the Last Days" John Thomas states that he believed Timothy was able to impart the Spirit.

A careful comparison between Acts 8:14-18 and 11:19-24, implies very strongly that Barnabas could impart the Spirit. In the former reference, we read about Peter and John being sent forth to Samaria (where Philip had preached) for the purpose of giving the new believers the Holy Spirit. In the latter reference Barnabas is sent forth to Antioch where the Gospel had just been preached. Why was Barnabas sent? We are not told directly, but verse 24 carries with it a strong implication: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit ..."

We have no record of Apollos imparting the Spirit, but the way in which Paul (and some of the Corinthians) associated Apollos with himself and Peter in 1 Cor. 3, suggests that he was of the same standing. The R.S.V. translates Paul's words in v8 in terms of regarding Apollos as "equal." All the way through the chapter, Paul attributes the same power and authority to Apollos as he does to himself and Peter.

One final example is that of Aquila as recorded in Acts 18:24-28. It was through his and his wife's ministrations that Apollos was instructed concerning the more perfect way. Apollos only knew of John's baptism and had to learn the more perfect way involving baptism into the Name of Jesus, and subsequent baptism in the Holy Spirit. (Chapter 19:1-6 bears this out also). It is evident that Apollos received the Holy Spirit through the ministrations of Aquila, because he left for Corinth soon after, and entered into a mighty ministry there. And when Paul wrote to the Corinthians at a later date, he referred to Apollos' work in terms of building on the foundation that he had previously laid, and referred to him as an apostle. Obviously, Apollos departed from Aquila with the Spirit! It would seem then, that Aquila was able to impart the Spirit. It seems clear then, that others besides the "13" could confer the Spirit. It would be reasonable to assume that there were others besides those mentioned in the New Testament who could also transmit the gifts through laying on of hands.

This brings us to the next point:

OTHER EXAMPLES OF RECEIVING DIRECTLY

FROM ABOVE

The experience of Cornelius and his household receiving the Spirit directly from above without the imposition of the apostles' hands is not the only exceptional case in the New Testament (not to mention the Old Testament). The book of Acts presents us with three clear cases of this taking place, and one not so clear. The first example, of course, is in Acts 2 where the initial bestowal took place. It is commonly believed that only the 12 apostles were filled on this occasion. After carefully reading the account, it is doubtful that only the 12 received it on this occasion. Certainly more than the 12 received the Spirit when it was poured forth directly from above in Acts 4. A careful reading from verses 23 to 32 reveals that the "company" or "multitude of them that believed" were all charged with the Spirit. John Carter agrees with this on page 169 of the May 1955 Christadelphian magazine.

The third very clear example is that of Cornelius (Acts 10:44). The fourth is not certain, but worthy of consideration, namely, Acts 8:39. The Western text reads: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon the eunuch, and the angel of the Lord caught away Philip." Even if the best attested text does not explicitly speak of the eunuch receiving the Spirit, this is probably implicit in the statement "he went on his way rejoicing" compared with Acts 13:52 which refers to the disciples who were filled with the Holy Spirit being filled with joy.

Philip was not an apostle and was therefore unable to give the Spirit to the eunuch. There were no apostles in the area and the eunuch was returning to Ethiopia where, from all accounts, there were no apostles. Yahweh, who is gracious and merciful (not as legal minded and constitutional as we make Him sometimes) is an exceptional God, always ready and willing to meet exceptional cases in an exceptional way. It is more than likely that he poured forth His Spirit upon the eunuch and sent him rejoicing on his way. And, without a doubt He is the same exceptional God today and can work in the same exceptional way!

The last point concerning John not necessarily being the last apostle, has really been covered so there is no need to pursue it any further.

So then it can be agreed that apostles alone, (among men) had the power of bestowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit on others. But for the reasons that have so far been presented (and which will be dealt with in more detail later) it cannot be agreed that the gifts ceased because the apostles ceased.

ACTS 2:38-39

Let us now consider the second reason that is sometimes given for believing that the Holy Spirit was only available to a couple of generations. It is based on Peter's words to the people on the day of Pentecost when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. He said that the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit was "unto you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Act. 2:38-39).

If Peter had only said that the promise was available to "you and to your children," one might be justified in restricting the promise to a couple of generations. But examples could be given from Scripture to show that the word "children" often signifies posterity or descendants, and is not limited to a single generation.

However, be that as it may, Peter went on to say: "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This is an all embracing statement and cannot be restricted to those in the early period of church history.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:9-10

The third reason that is sometimes given for believing that the Holy Spirit gifts are not available today is based on 1 Cor. 13:9-10 which says: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." It is argued that the "perfect" of v10 refers to the completed revelation of God which came when John received the Apocalypse. To support this, it is pointed out that "telios" signifies "complete," or "having reached its end." Attention is then directed to 1 Cor. 2:6 where Paul states that he taught the deeper things of divine wisdom to "them that are perfect" or mature in spiritual understanding. It occurs again in 1 Cor. 14:20 "In understanding be men" - the word "men" being a translation of the Greek word elsewhere rendered "perfect."

Some also quote Eph. 4:11-12 and point out that "perfecting" means "fully equip," and affirm that the completed Bible accomplished that, for it provides all that is necessary to fully equip God's people for the work of serving. There is therefore, they say; no further need for the Spirit gifts until the second advent of Christ. They also contend that the "perfect" of 1 Cor. 13:10 could not have relation to the return of Christ, and the perfection of nature which will be granted to the righteous, because this would mean that the power of the Holy Spirit would then cease, whereas, in fact, it shall then reappear!

The conclusion that is commonly reached is that Paul, in 1 Cor. 13 taught that the quality of love far transcends in importance any of the gifts of the Spirit, and seeing that the gifts of the Spirit were to be withdrawn, believers should not put their confidence in such acquisitions, but in the development of faith, hope and charity; virtues which will gain for them an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God. This view is based largely on assumption and contains certain contradictions.

On the basis of 1 Cor. 2:6 and 14:20, it is said that “telios” in 1 Cor. 13:10 refers to the completed canon of Scripture. Now, if “telios” did not come until A.D. 96 when John received the Apocalypse, how were those mentioned in 1 Cor. 2:6 able to attain to “telios” 40 years before it came? And why would Paul in 1 Cor. 14:20 exhort them to be “telios” when such would not be possible for another 40 years? A check of all the places in the Bible where the adjective “telios” appears, as well as the verb “teleioo,” reveals that they are never used to refer to the completion of the canon of Scripture. They are used to refer to Christians who had attained to “telios” long before the Apocalypse was given, and to those who will attain to divine nature. There are certain moral senses in which the words are used also - a moral status to which Christians must attain and upon which the giving of the Apocalypse could have no bearing.

When we look honestly at 1 Cor. 13:8-13, there is a total absence of any definite declaration of the Lord’s intention to cause the gifts to cease upon the completion of the New Testament. There is not one positive statement to that effect in the Scriptures.

This section of 1 Cor. 13 provides a contrast between the permanence of love and the impermanence of the partitive gifts. As far as the impermanence of the partitive gifts is concerned, there is no disagreement. It is the time factor upon which the disagreement arises. The time factor is introduced by the words: “when that which is perfect is come.” Here the disagreement arises; the issue almost rests squarely here. What then, is referred to by the expression that which is perfect?

“THAT WHICH IS PERFECT”

Scripture itself answers the question very clearly for us, without having to enter into involved analysis. The answer is contained in Eph. 4:13. Ephesians 4 and 1 Cor. 13 are very similar passages; they are almost parallel passages, explaining each other. They both deal with the same subject, namely: the purpose and duration of the Spirit gifts. In 1 Cor. 13, Paul teaches that the gifts in their partitive state would continue till that

which is perfect is come. And, in Eph. 4:13 he tells us what he means by “that which is perfect.” He says the gifts would continue “till we all come... to a perfect (telios) MAN.” Becoming a “man,” v11, corresponds with the coming of “that which is perfect” in v10. When this takes place we will see “face to face.” As we read in Isa. 52:8 “Hark, your watchmen lift up their voice, together they sing for joy; for EYE to EYE they see the return of the Lord to Zion” (R.S.V.). When this takes place we shall “know even as also we are known.” Or, in the words of Eph. 4:13: “... come to the KNOWLEDGE (epignosis) of the Son of God.” Such will bring about “the unity of faith” in the fullest and completest acceptance of the term.

The churches never attained to the ideal of Eph. 4:13, not even in the first century. They certainly had not attained when Paul wrote to the Ephesians in A.D. 61. Neither had they attained when Paul later wrote to Timothy. In fact, the contents of his letter reveals that conditions in the churches were rapidly deteriorating; apostasy was setting in fast. John’s epistles, written about A.D. 90, also indicate that false prophets and anti-Christ were on the increase. And, Christ’s messages to the Asian churches in A.D. 96 reveal that nothing like Eph. 4:13 had been attained. The rest is history.

Sapped in faith, in holiness, in doctrine, in aloofness from the world; the church relaxed its grasp of the gifts, which, as manifestations of the Spirit, invited persecution. They relied less upon the Spirit and leaned more upon the state; they abandoned the powers of faith and fell back to justification by works, until the Divine and marvellous glory of the first splendid hours of faith was replaced by scarlet robes and crosses and censers of gold, and over the portal of Yahweh’s spiritual temple was inscribed - Ichabod. The time arrived of which Paul had spoken: “Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.” The Spirit was quenched.

History repeated itself! The glory that was withdrawn from the temple of the Old Testament church because of apostasy was also withdrawn from the New Testament church, which was the “temple of the Holy Spirit.” Like Samson, the church was a strong man by the Spirit of God, till Delilah got at him and he was shorn of his power. And, like the church, Samson for a time thought he was just as strong as ever! He became blind, and wretched and naked. The signs of Divine approval in the form of acts of power were no longer with him. But, when he repented and renewed his vow; when he looked up to heaven and sought the first works, Yahweh answered by sending the power forth, enabling Samson to achieve more in one last act than he had during his whole life. And who knows what the church could achieve for Yahweh during this, her last hour if she were to

pray the prayer of Samson which was prayed again in more amplified form in Act. 4:24-31? Is it not significant that this prayer in Acts 4 is the only recorded prayer in the New Testament offered up by the church?

Now in Eureka Vol. 1, pages 163-164, John Thomas confirms what has been said with regard to “that which is perfect” referring to “perfect man.” And he also confirms the fact that the gifts were withdrawn because of apostasy. (Not that this necessarily means that a church lacking Spirit gifts is apostate. It has simply inherited a situation caused by apostasy). John Thomas says that the partitive gifts “were abolished before the time - before the arrival of “the perfect thing,” for this has not yet come, nor will it till after the resurrection. The knowing and prophesying in parts might probably have continued if “the Mystery of Iniquity” had not spoiled and desolated everything ... as a punishment for apostasy, all the lightstands went out for want of the golden oil of the Spirit ...” He then goes on to explain how “the perfect thing” relates to the “perfect man,” which means seeing face to face and knowing even as we are known. Also see Eureka pages 196-197 (unabridged edition).

Now, it has been argued that the “perfect” in 1 Cor. 13:10 could not have relation to the return of Christ, because this would mean that the power of the Holy Spirit would then cease, whereas in fact, it shall then reappear. The argument maintains that “perfect” in 1 Cor.13:10 does not refer explicitly to the return of Christ. The fact that it is in the neuter gender would prove this alone. As has already been explained: it has reference to the future state or condition of the church. Nevertheless, the coming of Christ has a very obvious connection with that coming perfect state, for such cannot be attained until we see our Lord “face to face.”

The mistake that is made is in thinking that the power of the Holy Spirit would cease if the “perfect” had relation to events around the time of Christ’s return. Paul does not say that the Holy Spirit would cease. He says it is “that which is in part” that shall be “done away.” Paul teaches that the Spirit in its partitive state will cease, not that the Spirit itself will cease. He is teaching that when the church attains to the “perfect man” - when each and every member partakes of Divine nature and is fully endowed with the Spirit without measure, the fragmentary nature of the Spirit will cease. Gone will be the opportunity to boast of the possession of gifts that others may not possess or vice-versa. The partitive will give place to the fullness. The “earnest of the inheritance” will give place to the inheritance itself.

On pages 164-165 of Eureka, John Thomas gives the same interpretation.

He explains how that Paul, in 1 Cor. 13:11, illustrates the relation of the general assembly of the saints to the order of things in his day, and to the order of things after the resurrection, by reference to himself as a child, and as a man. He explains that when the body of Christ becomes a “man” - “a perfect man,” ... there are no childish things found with it. Then every saint of the body will be in accord seeing face to face or eye to eye. Distribution of gifts to individuals only will not recur. Then all will be official and spiritual. Every individual member of the Perfect Man will be omniscient and omnipotent. There will be no knowing from parts then; for all the elements of the Perfect Man will be equally wise and equally knowing. That which is “from parts” will be non-existent and every saint “shining as the sun.”

DID THE GIFTS CEASE WHILE LOVE CONTINUED?

Some feel that 1 Cor. 13:13 negates all this. On the basis of this verse it is thought that while prophecies, tongues and knowledge “cease,” faith hope and charity continue. And it is affirmed that there must be a period in which the things that abide, continue after the other things have ceased. It is affirmed that faith and hope only abide till the Lord returns, when faith will be turned into sight and hope will be realized. Accordingly it is said, if faith and hope end at the Lord’s return, prophecies, tongues and knowledge must have ceased long before.

But, this line of reasoning is based upon a faulty assumption, namely, that the faith and hope of which Paul speaks is in the return of Christ. However, Paul makes no mention of this event in connection with what he says about faith and hope. Actually, he is not referring to any particular event connected with Christ at all; he is speaking of faith and hope in terms of being eternal divine principles that will, like love, never end - not even at Christ’s return!

Paul says: “now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three.” If words mean anything at all, this means ALL THREE ABIDE without distinction! The verse does not apply different periods of duration for these three virtues. It has been assumed that faith and hope, instead of being associated with love in this quality of permanence, as Paul declares them to be, are contrasted with it instead, making them transitory and love eternal. But this is at variance with Paul’s view. Paul says all three ABIDE. He represents the three as all alike continuing.

As one scholar has expressed it: “When Paul takes the three words, and couples them with a verb in the singular, he is not making a slip of the pen

or committing a grammatical blunder which a child could correct. But there is great truth in that piece of apparent grammatical irregularity; for the faith, the hope, and the love, for which he can afford only a singular verb, are thereby declared to be in their depth and essence, one thing, and it, the triple star, ABIDES!

All three abide without distinction but the greatest (in quality not permanence) is love. It might be thought that the way in which Paul says “NOW abideth ...” defeats what has been said. Well, Vine has an interesting comment to pass upon this word in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words: “Some regard as temporal; but if this is the significance, the clause means, ‘but faith, hope, love, are our abiding possession now in this present life.’ The objection to this rendering is that the whole course of thought has been to contrast the things which last only for the present time with the things which survive. And the main contrast so far has been between love and the special (then) present activity of prophecy, tongues, knowledge. This is something of a disappointment, and even of bathos, in putting as a climax to these contrasts the statement that in this present state faith, hope and love abide; that is no more than can be said of (the then existing) prophecies, tongues and knowledge. If there is to be a true climax the “abiding” must cover the future as well as the present state. And that involves as a consequence that “now” must be taken in its logical meaning, i.e. ‘as things are,’ ‘taking all into account’ ... this logical sense of “now” (nuni) is enforced by the dominant note of the whole passage.” The fact that Paul’s very next statement tells them to “desire spiritual gifts” also supports what has been said here.

FAITH AND HOPE ABIDE ETERNALLY

It is certain that love will continue eternally; and hope will not cease at the parousia of Christ, for the hope will ever look forward to the accomplishment of God’s eternal purposes, a hope characterised by absolute assurance; and where hope is in exercise, faith is its concomitant. Faith will not be lost in sight.

Throughout Christ’s millennial reign, he and the saints will have “faith” in Yahweh’s purpose to become “all in all.” This will be their “hope” even though Yahweh will fulfil it through their labours. 1 Pet. 1:12 implies that angels exercise faith and hope in their immortal state. Even now Christ has faith in his Father’s purpose to send him to the earth again. This is his “hope.”

Faith and hope then, with love, abide for all eternity in all their greatness. Faith will never end because the finite mind even in the glory that lies ahead will always have in front of it something of infinite meaning of the knowledge and glory of Yahweh to investigate. And “hope” will certainly abide. No doubt wider horizons will pass before us in the future angelic state as they now do before the angels who “excel in strength, doing His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word.” If this were not so there might be a certain element of truth in the remark sometimes passed by the scoffer who imagines that our future eternal existence will be dull, boring and uninteresting. But Paul assures us that “hope” will always abide which means that there will always be something to eagerly, earnestly and joyfully anticipate. In the words of Ps. 16:11: “In thy presence is fullness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Now, it has been said by those who do not believe in the availability of the Holy Spirit gifts that “Paul therefore taught that as the gifts of the Spirit were to be withdrawn, believers should not put their confidence in such acquisitions, but in the development of faith, hope and charity; virtues which will gain for them an eternal inheritance in the kingdom.” It is agreed of course that believers must develop faith, hope and love, and not base their confidence upon possession of the Spirit gifts. However, Paul was not exhorting them to do this because he expected the gifts shortly to be withdrawn, otherwise his very next remark to “desire spiritual gifts” (1 Cor. 14:1) would defeat all that he had set out to establish.

In 1 Cor. 13 Paul sets out to emphasize that there were virtues that were much more important and much more to be desired than spiritual gifts - virtues which, although less ‘showy’ and less ‘spectacular’ than the partitive gifts, were much more enduring in quality and permanence. The Spirit in its fragmentary, partitive manifestation would one day cease, but unlike the gifts, these virtues were to continue and were now available for all. The Corinthians were very unbalanced in their attitude. They centred too much attention on the ‘supernatural’ and not enough on the less spectacular but more important virtues that should be manifested in the life of every Christian - the possession of which will gain us an entry into the kingdom of God. Hence, Paul sets out to balance the account. He tells them that it is lawful and expedient to covet and desire Spirit gifts so long as they covet the best gifts (such as prophecy which ministers edification, exhortation and comfort to men 1 Cor. 14:3). But, at the same time he teaches that the way of LOVE is a “more excellent way.” In chapter 13 he sets forth the 15 characteristics of love, and shows how the exercising of

all spiritual gifts must be motivated by such, otherwise they will be like “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” Such exhortation was designed to put an end to the strife that had developed in the Corinthian church through members being carried away with jealousy towards those who possessed superior gifts to their own (ch. 12:15-) and through those having superior gifts despising those who had inferior gifts.

It is important to note that Paul nowhere teaches that they were to forget about the Spirit gifts and focus all their attention upon faith hope and love. This is quite clear at the end of his discourse where he says “follow after love and desire spiritual gifts.” This is, as it were, the conclusion to the matter - a summary of what he was seeking to establish. And, to re-emphasize the point that he was not seeking to decry the gifts, he again ends the chapter with these words: “covet to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues” (1 Cor. 14:39). Hence, in order that the Corinthians do not misunderstand him to be decrying the gifts of the Spirit, he tells them three times that it is quite in order to desire spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1; 14:39).

The “more excellent way” is not so much a way to be desired to the exclusion of the gifts, but a more excellent way of operating the gifts. It is therefore unreasonable to treat the gifts as though they were negligible, and to divert seekers on to what is considered to be the safer road of love. Such an interpretation has led many into the opposite extreme to that of the Corinthians, causing them to altogether reject the supernatural gifts of God for which Jesus himself said we ought to pray (Lk. 11:13). Such an attitude towards this matter of Spirit gifts is as extreme and unbalanced as that of the Corinthians. We are very much in need of Paul’s balanced outlook: “follow after love and desire spiritual gifts.” Love must be our first aim and then Spirit gifts.

The Corinthians were abusing the gifts, but abuse of the things of God does not invalidate use. The Corinthians were also abusing knowledge and Paul had to tell them that “knowledge puffeth up but love builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1). But no one on those grounds would be justified in decrying knowledge imagining that all we require is love! The unbalanced application of Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 13, if applied here, would amount to such.

IS THE BIBLE A COMPLETE SUBSTITUTE FOR THE SPIRIT GIFTS?

It is correct to say that “perfecting” in Eph. 4:12 means “fully equip.” But it is not correct to then affirm that the completed Bible provides all that is necessary to fully equip God’s people for the work of the ministry; therefore there is no further need for the gifts until the return of Christ. Such a statement would be purely assertion for which there is no Scriptural support. It basically implies that the New Testament is to be equated with “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.” Or, in other words, the New Testament is a complete and perfect substitute for the Holy Spirit.

The importance of the New Testament cannot be disputed. It is a record of “the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world begun.” But this does not make it a substitute for the manifold working of the Holy Spirit. It can be conceded that in some senses the New Testament can be equated with the Holy Spirit (i.e. in the sense of Heb. 10:15-17) but in many other senses such equation is impossible. Without going into all the details, some of the reasons why this is believed will be presented. The points may be stated as follows:

1. The Holy Spirit continued to operate for at least 50 years after the completion of the canon of Scripture. If the Apocalypse was the “perfect” of 1 Cor. 13, the gifts should have ceased around the period of A.D. 96. The fact that they continued to operate for quite some time afterwards teaches that the Apocalypse was not the “perfect” of 1 Cor. 13, and is not a substitute for the Holy Spirit.

2. One who went forth to the “work of the ministry” in the days of original Christianity was not fully equipped if he went forth with “word only” (1 Thes. 1:5-; Rom. 15:17-19; 1 Cor. 2:4). Those who embarked upon such work did so with the seal of the Holy Spirit like Philip (Act. 8:5-8); Stephen (Act. 6:8); Timothy and Paul (2 Tim. 1:6, 14; 4:5). Such Divine attestation proved that they were ministers of Yahweh and His son and proved that Jesus Christ truly was son of God and that he had been raised from the dead. They witnessed to Christ with power. The Divine power that was with them was the outstanding mark about them, distinguishing them from all other religionists. The “perfecting of the saints” involved equipping them with this power for the work of the ministry. This was particularly a work of the apostles (Act. 8:14-17; 19:1-6). The written Word is unable to do this.

All of Christ’s post-resurrectional commissions to go forth and preach the Gospel involved Holy Spirit power - the Lord confirming the Word with signs following (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-20; Lk. 24:47-49; Jn. ch. 14, 16, 17; Act. 1:4-5, 8). He did not give different commissions for different

dispensations. These represent the only kind of commission that Christ ever gave to his followers. If we want to go forth and preach the Gospel we can only do so according to these commissions unless we want to follow an unscriptural course and go forth lacking in equipment. And, if it be contended on the basis of Rom. 10:18 and Col. 1:23 that the commission was fulfilled, then it might be said that (1) we are no longer obliged to go forth preaching the Gospel, and (2) it is difficult to understand why Paul, after having made such statements as those in Rom. 10 and Col. 1, should later write to Timothy to tell him to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5).

The work of an evangelist involved preaching the Gospel with signs following as evidenced in the ministry of Philip the evangelist. There is nothing mentioned in the commissions given by Jesus that the commission would cease to apply after the Gospel had been preached to the world of Paul’s day. Paul’s advice to Timothy to do the work of an evangelist after the Gospel had already been preached to the then known world, teaches that he did not believe Christ’s commission had been fulfilled. It was impossible that it could be.

The world is an ever growing and changing system; old generations go and new generations come, necessitating the continual application of “go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel.” If this were not so all forms of Christianity would have died out. It cannot be argued that the promised signs of speaking with new tongues and healing etc which Christ promised should follow “them that believe” (Mk. 16:17-18), can only be applied to the apostles for it is quite evident that other than apostles did this work eg. Stephen (Act. 6:8); Philip (Act. 8:5-8); the disciples at Ephesus (Act, 19:1-7).

3. If the “full equipment” for the work of the ministry did not arrive until A.D. 96, then such brethren as Paul were not “fully equipped” when they went forth on their missionary journeys. And not having possession of the Apocalypse, they cannot have been able to fully equip those to whom they ministered. It has already been shown that this cannot be correct because brethren had attained to ‘telios’ 40 years before the Apocalypse was given (1 Cor. 2:6).

4. The implication of the view that the completion of the canon of Scripture negates the need for the gifts of the Spirit, is that if Paul and his co-labourers possessed a written copy of the book of Revelation they would not have required the Holy Spirit. That this cannot be correct should be evident enough without further comment.

5. The fact that we all petition God to guide us into all truth and help us call to remembrance the Word when called upon without warning to give an answer for the faith that lieth within us, clearly implies that we acknowledge (even if it be unconsciously) that there is ‘something’ from God that we require beyond the printed pages of the Bible before we can be fully “equipped.”

6. 1 Cor. 13 and Eph. 4 teach quite clearly that the partitive gifts which constituted men “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers” would remain available until “that which is perfect is come,” which is the “perfect man.” Eph. 1:13-14 confirms this where we read that the seal and earnest of the Spirit would remain available “until the redemption of the purchased possession.” The saints are the “purchased possession” (Act. 20:28) and will not be redeemed until the return of Christ (Rom. 8:23). The word ‘earnest’ means ‘part of the purchase money or property given in advance as security for the rest.’ An ‘earnest’ is a deposit; a down payment of a price to be paid in full at a later date. We therefore read in other places that the Spirit was a “taste of the heavenly gift ... tasted ... the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:4-5); to receive it was to be a “partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Pet. 5:1).

The possession of the Holy Spirit was the Divine foretaste or deposit of their future blessed inheritance. Now reason alone teaches that a deposit must remain if the inheritance is to be purchased. For example, it would be unusual for a land owner to give his son a portion of the farm he is going to inherit as a token of the inheritance, then take it back, but expect his son to believe he is going to get the full inheritance. Because of this principle, the various arguments that are developed to make Eph. 1:13-14 mean what it clearly and unmistakably cannot mean are not convincing. Some prefer to change the word “until” to “unto” or “for” and the Greek word in the original would allow such a change. But, whatever way it is translated, the sense of the verse which the word “earnest” demands, cannot be altered. Whether we say “this ring is until, unto or for the wedding,” the meaning of what is said is clear enough. The word “earnest” comes from the Greek ‘arrabona,’ and significantly enough, ‘arrabona’ in modern Greek means an engagement ring.

7. The following quotations imply that the brethren of the first century were expecting Christ’s return in their own day (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 13:11-12; 16:20; 1 Cor. 7:29; Phlp. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:17, 7; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude v13). The way in which Paul uses the pronoun “we” in 1 Cor. 15:51-52 and 1 Thes. 4:17 implies that he expected to remain alive until Christ’s return. This is understandable, for Jesus had told them that he would only leave

them for a “little while” (Jn. 16:16). Also, the Gospel had been preached to the world of their day and generation, no doubt giving them good reason to believe that the stage was set for the return of the bridegroom. And, on the basis of Christ’s remark concerning “this generation” in Matt. 24:34, they could easily have understood this as applying to themselves. It does seem then, that the first century Christians were expecting Christ’s return in their own day. Such being the case, it is evident that the Spirit was expected to remain available until Christ’s return for it was still operating freely during this period that the brethren expected him. This is certainly taught in 1 Cor. 1:5-8: “... so that you come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ...” If it was so clearly understood that the Apocalypse must first be given and the Spirit gifts cease before the coming of the Lord, it is difficult to understand how and why they should be expecting him whilst the Holy Spirit was still operating.

8. I doubt that John Thomas would have said that the partitive gifts were abolished “before the time” and that they “might probably have continued if ...,” if he believed the Apocalypse was the “perfect” of 1 Cor. 13 and if he believed the written Word was expected to be a complete and perfect substitute for the Holy Spirit.

9. If the completed Word is to be equated with the Holy Spirit, and if, as some advocate, we today who possess the complete canon of Scripture in written form are more honoured and privileged than those who possessed the Holy Spirit; then to be consistent, it should, on the basis of Heb. 6:4-6, also be advocated that we cannot restore to repentance those who fall away after having had possession of the Bible!

10. It has been argued that no extra knowledge has been added to us since the Apocalypse was given, therefore there is no further need for the Holy Spirit. The implication of this argument is that the Holy Spirit was only given for the purpose of revealing new truths; that, in effect, every time one spoke under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he always uttered new revelations. If such was the case, then we must only have a fraction of the revealed will of God for there would have been literally hundreds of prophets speaking under inspiration during the 100 odd years that the Spirit was working. And if they gave utterance to some new revelation every time they spoke, then it is evident, when the size of our New Testament is considered, that it could not possibly contain such a volume of revelations.

However, it is evident, particularly from the working of the Holy Spirit

among the prophets in Old Testament times, that they did not give utterance to some new truth every time they spoke under inspiration. More often than not, they reiterated truths and revelations that had been given by other prophets before them. In fact, much of what the Old Testament prophets said under inspiration was already enshrined in the book of the Law, i.e. the five books of Moses, in condensed form. The work of a prophet was not merely to predict future events or reveal new truths. A prophet more often than not “spoke to men to edification, exhortation and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3; Act. 15:32). And such was a gift to desire and covet (1 Cor. 12:31, 14:1, 39).

A prophet like Jesus, was “anointed” to speak to edification of men. His message was not of private interpretation, subject to error. Because he was anointed to speak, the “waters of living water” that flowed forth from him were “Spirit and truth.” A prophet was not left to the mercy of fallible human memory when ministering the Oracles of God. The Spirit “called to mind” and led into all truth. It was therefore not necessary for a prophet to carry “notes” with him everywhere he went. All that was necessary was that he should give himself continually to prayer and the reading of the Scriptures, and the Spirit would call to remembrance the Word that was needful to be ministered, quickening and anointing him to speak it forth as required (Jn. 14:26) This was a work of the Holy Spirit for which the written Word could not be a substitute.

Such ministration of the Word like this was a gift of the Holy Spirit for which Paul tells us to covet and desire. Because it is such a struggle for such a large percentage of Christians to minister the Word to the edification, exhortation and comfort of men, it is surprising that they say they cannot see a need for the Spirit gifts today!

Some of course have been blessed with a natural ability to minister the Word, but this is not the gift of prophecy mentioned in the New Testament. If it was they would never give wrong interpretations of Scripture. The message of a man speaking under the anointing of God would be of a far greater quality than anything that is spoken through natural endowment - no matter how great that might be.

This is particularly apparent in the experience of Jesus. Before he received the anointing of God, he would, as Robert Roberts points out on page 82 of Nazareth Revisited, have been a regular attendant at the synagogue, and took part in the exercises conducted there, especially that one exercise of which his whole life was a glorification - the reading of the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets.” And, no doubt the people of his home town, like

the doctors of the law at Jerusalem (Lk. 2:47), would have been amazed at his understanding of the Word. But, when he received the anointing of Yahweh and preached under the influence thereof, the people noticed the difference: "... they were astonished and said, whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" (Matt. 13:54).

Yes, the anointing of God makes all the difference! The same difference can also be seen in the experience of the disciples before the Holy Spirit dwelt in them and after it dwelt in them. There is a difference between God being "with" us and God being "in" us. This difference is beautifully explained by Robert Roberts on page 457 to 459 of *Nazareth Revisited*, where he comments upon Jn. 14:17 "... he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Suffice it to say at this stage, that Yahweh is "with" us by His all pervading Spirit in a providential manner, but it is His will to be "in" us with power by His Holy Spirit through a baptism therein like those in New Testament times."

When arraigned before the authorities and powers, it was not necessary for the disciples of Christ to think beforehand what they would say; it was not necessary to premeditate; "But whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 13:11). And the Holy Spirit was also given in order that the Word of God might be ministered with boldness (Act. 4:29-31). The Holy Spirit also confirmed the Word with signs following as we have seen, and guided and directed the missionary work in a very special way of which all who are acquainted with the book of Acts are well aware.

The Holy Spirit also played a very important part in appointing brethren for various offices (Act. 13:2; 1 Tim. 1:18). The personalities, prejudices and preferences of human fallibility did not have as much play in the making of such appointments as they do when there is no Holy Spirit ministration. The presence of the Holy Spirit did not of course, prevent the occasional clash of personalities as witnessed in the dissension between Paul and Barnabas over Mark. (Although there are good reasons to believe that the Holy Spirit had more to do with the splitting up of Paul and Barnabas on that occasion than what is generally thought).

These then, and many others, are all operations of the Holy Spirit for which the written Word cannot be a substitute; operations which we could very well do with today in order that our "work of the ministry" might be more active and effective.

The hand of God was very visible during the days of original Christianity.

Not of course to the exclusion of His providential working or to the exclusion of human initiative. And the Spirit of God in the sense of His Power, conferred no superior moral status upon those who received it. Its possession could and should stir up a man to zeal in God's work in holy living, being a witness that the doctrine which had been given them was true. But the bestowal of the Spirit neither prevented apostasy nor built up character. It was an external witness to the Divine purpose; in itself it made none who possessed it any holier than one who did not have it.

From what has been said in this section two points emerge:

(1) The Apocalypse was not required before one could be fully equipped for the work of the ministry. (Not meaning of course that the Apocalypse is unimportant! The Spirit itself testifies that those who read and hear the Word of the prophecy are blessed. The point being made is that the giving of the Apocalypse has no connection with the withdrawal of the Spirit gifts).

(2) The Apocalypse was not required to make a man "wise unto salvation." If it was, then all who died before A.D. 96 had no hope of salvation. In fact, many Christians would fail to gain salvation, for relatively few understand it.

The giving of the Apocalypse then, cannot be used in the way that it has been to prove that the Spirit gifts were expected to cease after the giving of it in A.D. 96.

Now, it should be made quite clear that while it is true that the New Testament alone does not fully equip us for the work of the ministry (i.e. in the full New Testament usage of the term), this does not mean that the New Testament alone is therefore unable to make us "wise unto salvation." There is a difference between being equipped for salvation and being equipped for the work of the ministry. Even in apostolic times there were those who were made wise unto salvation but who were not called to, or equipped for the work of the ministry. (And many of these even possessed a gift of the Spirit!)

2 Tim. 3:15-17 is often quoted to prove that the Spirit gifts are no longer available or necessary. It is claimed that because Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation there is therefore no need for the gifts. If such was the case on the basis of what Paul says in 2 Tim. 3:15-17, you would have expected the Spirit gifts to have ceased when Paul penned those words to Timothy. But instead of anything like that taking place, the opposite in fact was taking place. Paul exhorted Timothy to "stir up the gift of God

which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6-7). He also told him to “do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (4:5). Obviously, the “Scriptures” alone, although able to make wise unto salvation, were not sufficient to fully equip for the ministry.

EPHESIANS 6:17

Eph. 6:17 is also often quoted to prove that there is now no need for the gifts of the Holy Spirit: “And take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” On the basis of this verse it is said that the written Word is our substitute for the Holy Spirit. The passage is usually read to mean that “sword” and “spirit” refer to one and the same thing, namely, “the Word of God.” In other words, the passage is read to mean that Paul was saying: “Take the sword which is the Spirit which is the Word of God.” However, Paul did not express it that way. He said the “sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.” In other words, he is saying to take the Spirit’s sword which is the Word of God. The same thought is probably conveyed in Heb. 1:3: “The Word of His power.” The sword is the Word of God and the Spirit is the power that wields it through the “anointing” to which reference has already been made. Such an interpretation of Eph. 6:17 might be effectively illustrated by a similar phrase such as “The son of the Almighty which is the Word of God.” To apply the aforementioned interpretation of Eph. 6:17 to this example phrase would mean that we would have to equate the son with the Almighty and make both refer to “the Word of God.” Such an interpretation would suit the Trinitarian but would not suit us! It should be quite clear that we cannot equate the sword with the spirit and make both refer to the Word of God; not in this case anyway.

EPHESIANS 5:19

In Eph. 5:19 Paul exhorts the Ephesians to “be filled with the Spirit.” And, according to John Thomas on page 214: “Faith in the Last Days,” “Spirit” in this verse refers to the taste of the powers of the age to come. Hence in Eph. 5:19 Paul exhorts them to be filled with the Spirit (or, as he put it to Timothy, “stir up the gift of God”) and in 6:17 he tells them to take a firm grip of that Spirit’s sword which is the Word of God. The anti Holy Spirit gifts interpretation and application of Eph 6:17 really makes Paul contradict himself, for if 6:17 is taken to mean that the Word of God is our substitute for the Holy Spirit and that it is wrong to seek the Holy Spirit, then Paul’s exhortation in the same epistle to “be filled with the Spirit” sets him at variance with himself. Not only that, but as we have already seen in Eph. 1:13-14 and 4:11-13, Paul taught quite clearly the

continuance of the Spirit until the “redemption of the purchased possession” which takes place when the church attains to a “perfect man.” And, if Paul was teaching that the Word of God was a substitute for the Spirit in Eph. 6:17, his exhortation to Timothy several years later to “stir up the gift of God” does not add up at all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH THE SPIRIT AND WORD

There are two things needful to a course of steady and consistent action; namely, the Holy Spirit as the power of action, and the Word to give proper direction. To use an illustration - on a railway we should find steam of little use without the iron rails firmly laid down: the former is the power (through fire) by which there is action, and the latter the direction. And, as all Bible students are well aware, the Holy Spirit was the life breath - the motivating force, power and drive in the early church. They were “set on fire for God.” As Paul expresses it: “I strive according to His energy which energises me with power” (Col. 1:29). In the early church the “work of the ministry” was done “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith Yahweh of armies” (Zec. 4:6).

One modern commentator, in comparing the power of God in action in the early Christian church, with the traditional forms and historic pride of some churches today, has the following comments to pass: “We cannot help being disturbed as well as moved, for this (the book of Acts) surely is the church as it was meant to be. It is vigorous and flexible, for these are the days before it ever became fat and short of breath through prosperity, or muscle bound by over organization. These men did not make ‘acts of faith,’ they believed; they did not ‘say their prayers,’ they really prayed. They did not hold conferences on psychosomatic medicine, they simply healed the sick. But if they were uncomplicated and naive by modern standards we have ruefully to admit that they were open on the God-ward side in a way that is almost unknown today. We in the modern church have unquestionably lost something.”

When this issue that we are advocating comes down to fundamentals, the only charge that can be levelled against us is that we are guilty of advocating original Christianity. I believe that we are, in the fullest and completest sense “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;” truly “seeking the old paths!”

Today and for years in the past, strenuous efforts have been made to impart life and vitality to the church by laying great emphasis upon the need for the continual prayerful reading and study of the Word. And such

efforts are of course, good and proper. But, when the energizing of the Holy Spirit in the form of “gifts” is denied and rejected, the result is failure to attain to the spiritual vitality that was characteristic of the Spirit filled Christians of the first century. It leaves us “short of breath.” It is impossible to restore the church to anything like its “first works” through the energizing of the Word alone.

Knowledge, speech and oratory - no matter how profound and extensive, never have and never will be a substitute for the energizing of the Holy Spirit. Apollos was “an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures ... instructed in the way of the Lord and enthusiastic” (Act. 18:24-25) but he yet had to learn “the way of God more perfectly” and this involved baptism in the Holy Spirit as the sequel shows. Moses was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds” (Act. 7:22) but was not by any means fully equipped for the work of the ministry. His effort to deliver Israel with “word only” resulted in failure and Yahweh sent him out into the wilderness for forty years to teach him that it is “not by might nor by power” that the work of the ministry is achieved, but “by my Spirit saith Yahweh of armies.” It was not until Moses “unwound” as it were; when he came to an end of himself trusting no longer in his own words and wisdom, that God could use him to effect a mighty deliverance. It was not until Moses, in sharp contrast to what is said about him in Act. 7:22, regarded himself as not being eloquent but rather slow of speech and of a slow tongue (Ex. 4:10), that Yahweh could send him forth in the power of His might.

The Word of God then, “washes,” “sanctifies” and “regenerates” (Jn. 15:3, 17:17, Jam. 1:18, 1 Pet. 1:23). And the Holy Spirit empowers for service; i.e. anoints for the ministry (Act. 1:8, Eph. 4:11-12).

THE EXPERIENCE OF JESUS

The distinction between the two purposes of the Word and Spirit are clearly set forth in the experience of Jesus. For the period prior to his ministry he read and studied the Scriptures by which he was made “wise unto salvation.” But this alone did not fully equip him for the work of the ministry. He had to be empowered for service; he had to be baptised in Spirit. He had to be “anointed” to preach (Lk. 4:18). This constituted him “Christ.” The power of the Spirit anointed and quickened the Word that he had studied from childhood, wielding it with great force and power to the honour and praise of God. Hence, the words that were breathed forth from the lips of Jesus were “Spirit” (Jn. 6:63). His words, being anointed, were “God-breathed,” and therefore not of private interpretation being subject

to error. Being “Spirit” they were obviously “truth.”

The same was also true of his brethren: “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 Jn. 2:27, 20). And again: “Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us” (1 Jn. 3:24, 4:13).

An interesting point emerges from these testimonies in the epistle of John, which goes towards confirming what has been said. It is generally conceded that these epistles of John were written about A.D. 90. And it is evident from what John says that the anointing power of the Spirit was still very active among the brethren at this stage. Now, at the time when he wrote these epistles, all the gospels and other epistles had been written and communicated to the churches. From what is said in Col. 4:16 it is reasonable to infer that it was customary for the churches to obtain written copies of all inspired writings. There would be no doubt, great interchange of epistles amongst the churches, each taking a copy for their own future reference.

Now, seeing that Paul’s second epistle to Timothy (written between A.D. 62 and 68) was the last of the epistles to be written (excluding the epistles of John which are now under consideration), all the churches would have in their possession written copies of the gospels and epistles quite some time before John wrote his epistles in A.D. 90. If therefore, the Spirit was only given for the purpose of completing the canon of Scripture, why was it so obviously active among all the brethren in A.D. 90 when it was, at that stage, only necessary for John to possess it? Would it not be unnecessary for the Spirit to continue operating among all the brethren from the time that Paul wrote his last epistle to the time that John wrote his epistles and the apocalypse (a period of about 30 years) when it was only necessary for John to possess it? In view of this, along with the other points that have been presented, it would seem that the written testimony was not expected to be a substitute for the Holy Spirit.

Reverting to what has been said concerning “anointing,” it is significant that the title of “THE CHRIST” is given to the church in 1 Cor. 12:12. (The definite article is supplied by the Diaglott and Rotherham). The church then, is supposed to be “the anointed”; anointed with the Holy Spirit like those of the first century. That this was the case is certainly evident when the context of 1 Cor. 12:12 is considered. They had “drunk of one Spirit” - v13. Like Christ personal, the church also was anointed

with the Holy Spirit for the work of the ministry. They were his representatives doing his “works” as mentioned in Jn. 14:12. In view of this, one cannot help wondering whether or not a church is justified in regarding itself as “the Christ,” if it lacks the “anointing” and if it vigorously opposes the prospect of such during the days of probation.

MORE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN SPIRIT AND WORD

The same distinctions between Word and Spirit are also clearly seen in the parable of the 10 virgins (Matt. 25). The “virgins” represent the saints (2 Cor. 11:2). The “lamps” represent the Word of God (Ps. 119:105). The “oil” represents the Holy Spirit (1 Sam. 16:13, Lk. 4:18, Heb. 1:9). Putting it into a modern illustration, the saints are like a piece of wire; the Word is like a bulb attached to one end of the wire, the Holy Spirit is the power house.

The same distinctions can also be seen in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15). After he repented and was converted, the father placed upon him the “best robe” v22. This represents the robe of righteousness that is put on through baptism into the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father then placed upon his finger a “ring.” This represents the seal of the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). (Remember that “earnest” comes from the Grk. “arrabon” and “arrabona” in modern Greek means engagement ring). Next, “shoes” were placed upon his feet. This represents the “work of the ministry” upon which one embarks after having been sealed by God. (Cp the usage of “feet” in Rom. 10:15 and Eph. 6:15). The “fatted calf” and “music and dancing” represents the marriage supper and accompanying joy.

In connection with these things it is worth noting that when Eliezer went forth to procure a bride for the only begotten of the Father, (Gen. 24) he took with him “all sorts of CHOICE GIFTS from his master” (v10 R.S.V.). These were given to the prospective bride (v22) as an “earnest of the inheritance” that she was to receive with the only begotten son.

Under the Law (Which was typical of things pertaining to “the Christ” Col. 2:17 Rotherham), three main things were required of priests before they were fully equipped for the service of Yahweh.

1. They had to possess a good understanding of the Word of God as contained in the Law.
2. They had to wash in the laver.

3. They had to be anointed with oil. The New Testament counterpart for these three items should be evident enough without further explanation. Suffice it to say that the anointing oil was a very holy and sacred thing; something that was not to be belittled or despised. And, the Holy Spirit is like that also: “And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that speaketh against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.”

Some final examples of the distinction between Word and Spirit are found in:

(1). 1 Tim. 4:13-14. In verse 13 Timothy is instructed to devote attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine. And in verse 14 he is told not to neglect the gift that is in him.

(2). Heb. 6:5. The Hebrew Christians had tasted both the “good Word of God” and the “powers of the age to come.”

(3). In 2 Cor. 6:4-7 we read that true ministers of God recommend themselves to those to whom they minister by “the HOLY SPIRIT ... by THE WORD OF TRUTH.” Also Act. 8:14-17: Received Word and Spirit.

With these words we will now consider the fourth and final main point concerning the prophecy of Joel.

JOEL'S PROPHECY

The anti-availability of the Holy Spirit gifts view may be resolved into four main points:

1. In Acts 2 Peter drew attention to the prophecy of Joel 2:28 where the prophet, in predicting the outpouring of the Spirit, likened it to the giving of rain.

2. In Hebrew, “former rain” can be rendered “teacher,” and thus the margin of the A.V. provides “teacher of righteousness” as an alternative rendition.

3. The “teacher of righteousness” is the Lord Jesus. The “rain” was the Spirit of apostolic times and the “latter rain” refers to the outpouring of Spirit at the second advent.

4. Between these two outpourings there would exist a period of “drought” as far as the Spirit gifts were concerned. Unfortunately all four points are incorrect.

1. A careful examination of Peter's words and those contained in the second chapter of Joel will reveal that Peter was not drawing attention to the section dealing with rain. This is contained in v23. Peter quoted from v28-32.

2. "Former rain" comes from the Hebrew word "moreh" and only appears in Joel 2:23 and Ps. 84:6 where it is used in reference to literal "rain" which, says David, "fillethe the pools." According to Gesenius, "moreh" can, by extension, mean "teacher," but as we shall see, such an extension does not fit into the general context of this chapter, and that if it did, rather than support the anti view, it would destroy it and support our view instead.

That the extended meaning of "teacher" does not apply to Joel 2:23 is further confirmed by the fact that such reliable translations as Rotherham, R.S.V. and others, do not render it as such. The majority of modern translations of the Bible render "moreh" in Joel 2:23 as "rain."

3. The anti-view believes that the "rain" of Joel 2:23 refers to the outpouring of Spirit during apostolic times, thereby equating the "rain" of v23 with the "Spirit" of v28. Now, it is true that "rain" is sometimes used in Scripture to signify the Spirit, (although the Heb. "moreh" is not used in such cases); but such is not the case in Joel 2:23. The "rain" of v23 is not synonymous to "Spirit" of v28. Joel 2:28 is a different section from that in which v23 is contained. The two sections, although relating to the same period, are dealing with two different aspects of blessing. The verses leading up to the end of v27 are dealing with literal rain which will be sent upon the literal land of Israel after it has been literally impoverished by the northern invader. Yahweh promises to remove the army and send forth the former and latter rain, causing the floors to be full of wheat and the vats to overflow with wine and oil. As Ted Spongberg says in his study notes on Joel: "Primarily, and as the context requires it, Moreh would mean "the former rain," which was as necessary to germination of the seed, as the "latter rain" was to the filling out, maturing and ripening of the grain."

It seems clear that v23 is speaking about the blessing that will accrue to the land of Israel, and v28 is speaking about the blessing that will accrue to the people of the land through the outpouring of the Spirit. The R.S.V. and Rotherham's translation of Isa. 44:3 teaches the same two-fold aspect of blessing: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing

on your offspring” (R.S.V.).

It is generally believed that “rain” in Ps. 68:9 refers to the Levites who were Yahweh’s “gifts for men” - v18. Paul bases his exposition concerning Spirit gifted men in Eph. 4 upon this verse in Ps. 68. It is generally accepted that the “Levites” were a type of the Spirit gifted men given by the Lord to the church. If this is true, then once again our view finds added support, because the Levites continued during the period that the old covenant was in force. They did not cease when the canon of the Law was completed upon the death of the apostle Moses! This certainly ties in perfectly with point number:

4. It has been affirmed that there was a “drought” between the former and latter rain. Now, it is quite true that there has been a drought of the Spirit for many centuries, but this has not been in fulfilment of anything mentioned in Joel chapter 2. There was never a drought between the former and latter rain. It is important to recognise this point.

To appreciate the significance of these two periods of rain, it is necessary to study them in relation to the land of Palestine, for it is the rainfall of that land to which the prophet is referring. Israel’s agricultural year was marked by a rainy season and a dry season. The rainy season commenced soon after the feast of Tabernacles (October) and continued until the more copious showers before Passover (April). The period between Passover and Tabernacles was usually dry, during which grain, vine and fruit harvests were completed.

There was no “drought” between the former rain and latter rain. The “drought” was between the latter rain and the former rain. In view of this, if it be insisted that “rain” refers to Spirit, we would have to conclude that the Spirit would remain available up until the more copious out pouring takes place at the second advent of Christ, and good reasons have been presented to support this. We have seen that the Spirit is an earnest of our inheritance, designed to remain available until the redemption of the purchased possession. It is to continue in its partitive state until “that which is perfect is come.”

END TIME APPLICATION OF JOEL’S PROPHECY

It is generally believed among Bible students that Joel’s prophecies relate to the end time, and that when Peter said “this is that which was spoken of by the prophet of Joel” in relation to the outpouring of the Holy

Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he did not mean it was “a fulfilment of that prophecy by Joel,” but that it was “that same Spirit spoken of by Joel.”

Believing this to be the case, those who believe that there cannot be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit prior to Christ’s return, apply Joel’s prophecy to the period after Christ’s return, and maintain that it refers to the immortalization of the saints.

But the prophecy of Joel will not allow this application. It is clearly taught in Joel 2:28-32 that the outpouring will take place “before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” Verse 28 says the Spirit will be poured out “upon all flesh” i.e. mortal bodies not immortal, and the effect will be that “old men shall dream dreams and young men shall see visions.” In the immortal state there will not be “old” and “young” men! Neither will immortals “dream dreams” because they will not get tired and sleep.

It seems very clear from the context of Joel’s prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, that it relates to the period prior to the return of Christ. This means that the outpouring that took place on the day of Pentecost was a foreshadow of end time events.

REVELATION CHAPTER ELEVEN

That there will be a specific outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit prior to Christ’s return is taught in Revelation chapter eleven. The Lord says in verse 3: “I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy 1260 days.” As a result of receiving this power, the witnesses are also able to command fire to devour their enemies, to stop rain from falling, to turn water into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues. Moses and Elijah performed these kind of wonders and Mal. 4:5 confirms that the Lord is going to send Elijah “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

The book of Revelation refers to other witnesses besides the two in chapter eleven and it is reasonable to believe on the basis of Joel’s prophecy, that they also will be empowered by the Holy Spirit at the same time.

The 1260 days referred to in Rev. 11 during which power will be given to the witnesses, is a specific end time period referred to elsewhere in the Word of prophecy. It is referred to in Dan. 12 as “a time, times, and an half,” and forms part of a time sequence involving 1290 and 1335 days,

which all have their starting date when the daily sacrifice is taken away. And Dan. 7:21-27 tells us that the Lord comes at the end of the 1260 days.

The daily sacrifice refers to lambs that were offered each day by Jewish priests upon the altar at Jerusalem on the temple mount in the precincts of their temple. It is therefore clearly implied in this prophecy that the Jews must be back in their land, in possession of Jerusalem and the temple mount, with a temple and altar upon which they are offering the daily sacrifice, before the 1260 days prophecy can be fulfilled. And Rev. 11:1-2 confirms that this will be the case. It refers to the temple and altar existing at the time of the 1260 days. Reference to “the holy city” (Jerusalem) in v2 in connection with the temple and altar makes it clear that it is a Jewish temple and altar at Jerusalem to which reference is being made.

Reference in v2 to the court of the Gentiles, also indicates that it is a Jewish temple and altar and Jewish worshippers who worship there. A court for the Gentiles was a specific design feature of Jewish temples.

In this prophecy, a measuring rod was given to John, not for measuring lengths in cubits for the purpose of building up a structure. No! The rod was for measuring the length of time during which the city of Jerusalem, temple, altar and Jewish people will be trodden down by the enemy; and it was 42 months which is 1260 days. (Elsewhere the “rod” is a symbol of chastisement and discipline).

This 42 months is a measured period of chastisement upon the Jewish nation, during which there shall be divine wrath upon them due to sinfulness. In v8 the city of Jerusalem is likened to Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was known for gross immorality such as homosexuality, and the Israeli government has legalized homosexuality and there is widespread atheism and agnosticism in the land.

The court of the Gentiles, which is outside the temple, represents the Gentiles i.e. non Jews. This court was not measured because the Gentiles were not going to be “trodden down” during this period. They were in fact, going to do the treading down.

To those who compare Scripture with Scripture in order to let it interpret itself, there can be no doubt that in Rev. 11:2, Jesus is quoting a statement he made in a prophecy earlier, recorded in Lk. 21:24. He said: “Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Then in Rev. 11:2 he said: “The holy city (Jerusalem) shall be trodden under foot by the Gentiles 42 months.” These are obviously

parallel statements and are practically identical in the Greek. Both teach that Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles. The only difference is that Lk. 21:24 does not give a specific time period during which the treading down takes place, but Rev. 11:2 does.

Lk. 21:24 says the period would be “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,” whereas Rev. 11:2 says it would be “42 months,” i.e. 1260 days or “a time, times and an half.”

Herein lies the revelation, demonstrating the true nature of the book which has appropriately been entitled “REVELATION.” Jesus reveals here that “the times of the Gentiles” he has in mind is the short 3½ years end time tribulation period which leads up to his second coming.

There have been a number of “times of the Gentiles” of different durations during Israel’s long history, during which Gentiles have invaded and occupied Israel, but the final climactic one will be 1260 days. And it is clear that there will be a Jewish temple and altar at Jerusalem at the time. It also seems clear that during this time of unprecedented trouble and persecution by savage anti-God forces, that God’s people will be given the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them in their witnessing work.

It is therefore very dangerous and unwise to claim that the power of the Holy Spirit will not be made available until after Jesus returns. Such conviction could lead to denying and rejecting it when it happens, resulting in the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.