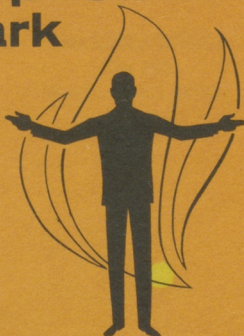


Charisma Series/p9



Baptized in the SPIRIT

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Box 292
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Printed in the U.S.A.

©Dove Publications 1970
Pecos, N.M.
Special Charisma Edition 1971

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I

BAPTIZED IN THE SPIRIT

There is a passage in the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians which is disarming to most Christians. The passage is:

Are you people in Galatia mad? Has someone put a spell on you, in spite of the plain explanation you have had of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Let me ask you one question: was it because you practised the Law that you received the Spirit, or because you believed what was preached to you? Are you foolish enough to end in outward observances what you began in the Spirit? Have all the favors you received been wasted? And if this were so, they would most certainly have been wasted. Does God give you the Spirit so freely and work miracles among you because you practise the Law, or because you believed what was preached to you? (3:1-5)

The main message of the letter is that we come into the right relationship with God (are justified) through faith in Jesus Christ rather than by following the Jewish Law. In the above passage Paul is making the point that the Galatians are going back on their Christian faith by agreeing to the idea that people need to be circumcised in order to be justified. His main argument is this: isn't it true that you experienced the work of the Spirit among you because you had faith in the Christian message and not because you followed the Law? Therefore you know from experience that you are justified by faith and not by following the Law.

What is so disarming about this passage is the glimpse it offers into the life of early Christian Churches. The basis of Paul's argu-

ment is the *experience* of the Spirit. In order for his argument to have any force to the Galatians, they would have had to have experienced being given the Spirit and experienced miracles being worked among them. If Paul asked a modern parish of Christians, "Does God give you the Spirit so freely and work miracles among you because you practise the Law, or because you believed what was preached to you?" most of them would not be able to make sense of the question. Their instinctive response would be, "What do you mean, 'God give us the Spirit so freely and work miracles among us'? What are you talking about?"

The challenge of this passage for us comes from the fact that Paul simply takes it for granted that the Christians to whom he is writing have had these experiences. He does not feel that he has to explain what he is referring to or argue that it is possible to experience such things. He just expects that the Christians to whom he is writing know what he is talking about. He expects that they have experienced the giving of the Spirit and the working of miracles, and he expects that these are distinct enough experiences and common enough experiences that he can simply refer to them.

Nowadays in the Church it is again beginning to be possible to refer to people's experience of the work of the Spirit among them and expect them to know what is meant. As the charismatic renewal grows and spreads into all parts of the Church, people are begin-

ning to experience the Spirit given so freely and miracles being worked through faith. In other words, they are beginning to experience the life of the Spirit.

The life of the Spirit

For early Christians, the Holy Spirit was an experience before he was a doctrine. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, he promised that he would send the Spirit upon his followers. And he promised them that the Holy Spirit would do things among them that they could experience. He told them that they would be “clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49), that they would “receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He said that “the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you” (Jn 14:26). He said that his followers would know the Holy Spirit: “I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you” (Jn 14:16-17).

In the life of the early Church, the Holy Spirit was someone who was with them and acted among them. When the Christians in Jerusalem prayed for courage to speak the gospel message, “the house where they were assembled rocked; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). Stephen

“filled with the Holy Spirit” was able to gaze into heaven and see Jesus (Acts 7:55).

The Holy Spirit guided them. Philip was led by the Spirit when “the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and meet that chariot’” (the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch), and after baptizing the eunuch “Philip was taken away by the Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 8:29, 39). Paul was led by the Spirit in his missionary journeys when “they travelled through Phrygia and the Galatian country, having been told by the Holy Spirit not to preach the word in Asia. When they reached the frontier of Mysia, they thought to cross it into Bithynia, but as the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them, they went through Mysia and down to Troas” (Acts 16:6-7).

The Holy Spirit spoke to them frequently. When some prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch, “one of them, Agabus, stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world, and this took place in the days of Claudius” (Acts 11:28). When some of the leaders of the Church at Antioch were praying and fasting, “the Holy Spirit said, ‘I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2). Before Paul was taken prisoner by the Jews and given to the Romans, the Spirit constantly kept warning Paul about what would happen. He described this experience to the elders of Ephesus by saying, “I am on my way to Jerusalem, but have no idea what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit in town after

town has made it clear enough that imprisonment and persecution wait for me" (Acts 20:21).

The Holy Spirit did many other things among the early Christians. Paul lists some of the kinds of things the Spirit does in a Christian community in I Corinthians: "To one person is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit."

But the most important thing which the Spirit did for the early Christians was to let them experience God's love for them and his union with them. In the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul says, "The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God." Paul clearly expects the Christians he is talking to to have had an experience of God's love given through the Spirit. The same thing is true of John, who expects the Christians he is writing to to be able to use their experience of the Spirit as a test of whether they are living in God or not: "We can know that we

are living in him and he is living in us, because he lets us share his Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

The whole New Testament is alive with the fact that the early Christians were able to experience the presence of the Spirit in them and his work among them. And it is this experience which is returning with the charismatic renewal. The very same things are happening now which were happening then. Today people are reporting experiences of being filled with the Spirit, of being led by him, of having him speak to them, experiences of inspired speech, of prophecy, of discernment of spirits, of healing, of miracles. They are, in other words, beginning to live the life of the Spirit.

The life of the Spirit is a life in which a Christian can experience the Holy Spirit living in him and working through him. Most Christians today are not living the life of the Spirit. They live their Christian lives on the basis of doctrine. They were taught about Christ and about how to live as Christians. They decided to do it and they have been trying to pattern their lives according to Christ's teaching. They believe that Christ is real and that he hears them and helps them. But they do not feel that they are in much contact with him. They do not experience his presence nor do they see things happen which they can tell are his working.

The life of the Spirit changes that. When a person is living the life of the Spirit, he knows by experience that the Holy Spirit is in him. He does not have to "take it on faith"

in the sense of believing it without any experience to indicate it is true. When a person is living the life of the Spirit, he begins to experience the Holy Spirit making it possible for him to praise God and worship God with a new freedom. He experiences the Holy Spirit making the scriptures come to life and making Christian doctrines make sense. He experiences a new ability to talk to people about Christ, a deeper peace and joy.

The life of the Spirit also involves an experience of a new kind of community life—a community living “in the Spirit”. The life of the Spirit is not meant to be an individual life. The Spirit is given to form us into the body of Christ, and the life of the Spirit is a life which a community lives as well as an individual. A person who is part of a community that is living the life of the Spirit can experience the community being led in worship by the Spirit, being guided by the Spirit, being taught by the Spirit. The community as a whole experiences the presence of the Spirit.

When I talk about “experiencing” things I do not necessarily have something emotional in mind. “Experience” to us often means “emotion” or “feeling”. We say something is “an experience” if we mean that it is a great event or a striking happening. We can, however, have experiences that are not especially emotional. Suppose I meet my friend’s cousin. I may have heard of him before, so I knew he existed. Then I met him, and I “experienced” the fact that he existed.

The meeting may not have been particularly emotional or striking, but the difference is that before I had just heard of him and now I know him by experience. This is the most important sense in which we experience the Holy Spirit.

Before I first began to hear about the charismatic renewal I had wanted to experience the life of the Spirit. I had always known that what happened in the New Testament and among the great saints could happen today. I never could see why it should not happen now, among us, if God is the same. And I was always unimpressed by the argument that the workings of the Spirit were only for the beginnings of the Church—to get it started. If ever the Church needed the work of the Spirit to make it effective and alive in the world it is today.

I also knew that the presence and working of the Spirit must be something more than just interpreting circumstances or events as the Spirit's working. Many Christians today know that the Holy Spirit should be in their lives, and so they decide to interpret what happens to them as the work of the Spirit. If circumstances turn out a certain way, that is the Spirit leading them. If someone tells them something helpful, that is the Spirit speaking to them. If they get a good idea, that is the Spirit inspiring them. I have never felt very easy about that approach. I always knew that the experience of the Holy Spirit for the early Christians and for the great saints was more than just interpreting what

happened to them as the work of the Spirit. It was a distinct, recognizable experience.

My first exposure to the charismatic renewal came through reading *The Cross and the Switchblade*. It was in that story that I could see that the leading of the Spirit could be something a person experienced and not just something that he could deduce from circumstances. And I could see that it brought results. I could also see in that story that the Holy Spirit had the power to cure people from drug addiction much more effectively than psychological methods. Shortly after that, I read about the gift of tongues and what that could mean to a person. I discovered at the same time that many people were experiencing the workings of the Spirit that I was reading about.

Soon I began to talk with people who had experiences of being filled with the Spirit. Friends of mine began to tell me about a new ability to pray as the result of the Holy Spirit. They shared about praying for people for healing, and the results that came from it. They told me about the gift of prophecy, and how it was returning to use. And I soon began to experience all these things myself. I began to see from personal experience that the Lord would do for us all the things he did for the early Christians.

I also gradually have come to experience a community that lives in the Spirit, as our community has been built up in the life of the Spirit. I have seen gatherings for worship happen regularly in which there is a free,

spontaneous spirit of worship and praise and in which the Spirit of God has brought about a remarkable unity among very different people. I have seen the Spirit give guidance to the community as a whole, the same message coming through many people, often independently of one another. I have seen a people be knit together and grow in numbers, not so much because of a plan, but because the same Spirit was living in them.

I was early convinced that we needed these workings of the Spirit if the Church was to stay alive and make headway in today's world. I knew from my own experience in trying to bring people to faith in Christ that some kind of power was needed. And as I began to see that these things did not have to happen sporadically, but could happen regularly ("so freely" as Paul said to the Galatians), I began to become convinced that they were normal for Christians. The life in the Spirit, the life in which a person experiences the presence of the Spirit and his working, is the normal Christian life.

When I say "normal" I do not mean "average". I do not mean that most Christians today are experiencing these things. They are not. But I mean that the life in the Spirit is the "norm" for the Christian life. This is the way it was meant to be. This should be the expected standard. There is no good reason why it cannot be.

My experience has been that most Christians would like to live the life of the Spirit, but they do not know how to begin. Catholics

especially have been taught a great deal about the spiritual life. They know a lot about it. Many of them have given up a great deal and entered religious orders so that they can live a deeper spiritual life. But they often do not know how to start. They do not know how to get into that contact with the Spirit that allows them to experience his presence and to let him produce the spiritual life in them. It is for this reason that it is important to understand what it is to be baptized with the Spirit because the life of the Spirit only becomes possible after having been baptized in the Spirit.

Baptized in the Spirit

We can best understand what it means to be baptized in the Spirit by seeing what happens to people when they are baptized in the Spirit. The New Testament contains a number of passages which describe people receiving the Spirit. From these passages we can discover some interesting things.

In the nineteenth chapter of Acts, Paul comes to Ephesus. When he arrives, he comes across a group of "disciples". He probably noticed something missing right away, because he began by asking a question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" Now, think what a strange question this is. What would a group of modern Christians say to this? Probably, "What do you mean, 'receive the Holy Spirit'?" That is, as a matter of fact, almost the answer the group of disciples gave. They told Paul they

had not even heard there was such a thing as the Holy Spirit which they could receive. But what is strange about the question is that Paul expected them to know the answer. He expected them to be able to tell whether they had received the Holy Spirit or not.

When Paul got their answer, he knew that they were not yet fully Christians, and so he told them the good news about Jesus. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the moment Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak with tongues and to prophesy." When Paul was done, these disciples had definitely received the Holy Spirit. They knew it, and so did he. There was a change in them.

The same definite coming of the Holy Spirit characterizes the passages in Acts where there is description of what happened when Christians received the Holy Spirit. It was certainly true at Pentecost. At Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit was manifested by "what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven" and "something that seemed like tongues of fire". But it also made a distinct change in the apostles because they began to speak in tongues and even looked like they were drunk.

The same thing was true when the Spirit came upon the group of Samaritans who had believed because of Philip's preaching. Peter and John came and laid hands on them "and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:17). Acts then goes on to say, "When Simon saw

that the Spirit was given through the imposition of hands by the apostles, he offered them some money". In other words, the giving of the Holy Spirit was obvious enough and good enough that Simon could see that something was going on and that it would be worth a small investment to obtain the same power.

Finally, the same thing happened when the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his friends. Peter and some other Christians went to Cornelius' house, because God insisted upon it, and they told them the good news. However, it was clear all along that they were not inclined to feel that these gentiles could become Christians. But "while Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange tongues and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?'" (Acts 10:44-47). In other words, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon these pagans produced a definite, manifest change (it had to for the Jewish Christians to accept it).

From the passages in the New Testament, it is clear that when people are baptized in the Spirit, they know it. They experience the Spirit coming to them in such a way that they can recognize it. They can recognize it, in other words, not only in themselves but also

in others. The result of being baptized in the Spirit is that the Spirit enters their life and begins to make things happen in a way that they can experience.

Nowadays, people are experiencing the same thing happen. The Holy Spirit is coming to people in a way that they know it and can recognize it from experience. Increasing numbers of people are being baptized in the Spirit in a way that is similar to what happened in the New Testament.

What happens at the moment when people are baptized in the Spirit varies a great deal. One person I prayed with for the coming of the Spirit said that he felt like an electric current was running through him. Another felt "a strange warmth" fill him. Many simply feel a deep peace, or a joy. Some even laugh. But the most important part of what happens when a person is baptized in the Spirit is not any physical sensations or emotions. It is the change that comes from having the Holy Spirit live in us in a new way. It is a new kind of contact with the Lord. People have described it in the following ways:

Immediately I was filled with peace. And it wasn't just a feeling. I think it could best be described as if I met Jesus Christ without seeing him. It was just as if Jesus Christ came up to me and said, Hi. It was just like I knew him all along. That night was the big turning point in my life.

The next week I received the baptism of the Spirit and I spoke in tongues right away. It has made all the change in the world. Now I say I believe in God, but not because of a theory but because I've met him.

At one prayer meeting there was silence and I was meditating. It seemed to me that if I had a gift to give in response to Christ's love, it would be myself.

And then something very curious happened. It was very much like the words came, 'Do it'. So I said, 'OK'. After the prayer meeting was over, for good measure I went up to the chapel and knelt down and said, 'I don't understand but all right.' And I left the chapel and I started to feel a tremendous happiness, more than I've ever felt in my life. It was maybe a week later that I prayed in tongues. There are effects. Basically you are no longer loose and questioning who God is. You know Jesus Christ is risen, loves you, is concerned about you personally.

In other words, the same type of thing is happening now as happened to the early Christians. And from the experiences which people are now having, we can draw the same lessons: that when the Holy Spirit comes to them, they know it, that people can experience the Holy Spirit coming to them in a way that they can recognize, and that the result of being baptized with the Holy Spirit is a change in their lives that involves experiencing the Holy Spirit in their lives in a new way.

What then is it to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? Perhaps the most obvious description of what happens when a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit comes to him in a way that he can know it. As a result of this coming of the Holy Spirit, he experiences a new contact with God.

But there is something more to being baptized in the Spirit than that. When a person is baptized in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit not only comes to that person in a new way, but he also makes a change in him. His life is different because his relationship with God has been changed. God is in him in a way in which he was not before. He has made his home in him in a new way.

As a result of the change which the Holy Spirit makes in a person, that person can then begin to experience the presence of God in him. He can know God in a way he never did before — by immediate experience. He can also begin to experience the Holy Spirit working in him in a new way. The Spirit guides him, speaks to him, teaches him, lets him know God and know that God loves him.

Another way of saying what it is to be baptized in the Spirit is that it is an introduction to the life of the Spirit. It is a beginning, the doorway, to the life of the Spirit. What makes the life of the Spirit in a person possible is the presence of the Holy Spirit in him doing all the things which God promised the Holy Spirit would do. Therefore, the only way for a person to experience the life of the Spirit is for the Holy Spirit to be in his life in a new way (to dwell in him in a new way). There has to be a change such that the Holy Spirit begins to do all these things. When that change occurs, a person has been baptized in the Spirit.

Being baptized in the Spirit is an introduction to the life of the Spirit, but it is also an introduction to the Christian community. I can remember the first time I went to a “charismatic” prayer meeting. I felt “out of it” — and only partly because some of the things people did were strange to me (like praying with their hands lifted up). I could pray with my hands lifted up (and did, somewhat self-consciously), but I still could not be fully part of what was happening there,

because they had experienced something I had not. The Spirit was moving in them both individually and as a group in a way he was not moving in me. I needed some way of "getting into" what they were "into". Or rather, I should say, I needed to let it into me.

If a community is living in the Spirit, the only way of coming into the life of that community is by being baptized in the Spirit. A person cannot simply join (even if he "joined" he could not take part in its life). And since we need a community that is living in the Spirit in order to live in the Spirit ourselves, being baptized in the Spirit should not only mean coming into a new life with the Spirit. Normally it should mean coming into a community as well. "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13).

Being baptized in the Spirit is just a beginning, an introduction. It puts us into the kind of relationship with God that makes it possible for us to live the life of the Spirit. If we do not realize that it is just a beginning but instead start to think of it as a one-time spiritual experience which is an end in itself, we can develop some bad attitudes, for instance, the attitude that once I have had an experience of the Holy Spirit, I have "got it". From now on, all through my life, I am numbered among those who have "got it". From the way people sometimes talk, a person might get the idea that God is mainly concerned about who has once had this experience and who has not. Those who have

had it are the sheep, and those who have not are the goats.

Once we are baptized in the Spirit, we have not “got it”. But we can have it. The “it” is the Holy Spirit living in us and working through us. Once we have been baptized in the Spirit, we can have the Holy Spirit live in us and work through us. We have experienced the Holy Spirit in a new way and that experience makes it possible for us to live with him in a new way. But that experience is not a guarantee that we always will. People who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit can end up farther away from God and from the life of the Spirit than people who have not. And what God is interested in is not people who once had the experience of being baptized in the Spirit, but he is interested in people who are now living in the Spirit.

Another bad attitude that comes from thinking of being baptized in the Spirit mainly as a single experience is the attitude that once I have been baptized in the Spirit I have all I need to live the Christian life. In a way this is true (the Holy Spirit is all we need to live the Christian life), but in a way it is all wrong. When we are baptized in the Spirit, we are in a new relationship with God, but we have to know how to grow in that relationship. It is like being married. We can be fully and completely married and still not have a good married life. We can be baptized in the Spirit and still not live in the Spirit very well. We have to learn how to live the life of the Spirit.

The key to learning how to live in the Spirit is the experience of living in a community of people who are living the life of the Spirit. Being part of a community that is living in the Spirit is so important that it is almost true to say that when we are baptized in the Spirit, we receive as much of the life of the Spirit as the community we are part of is experiencing (fortunately this is not completely true). If the community we are part of has learned to yield to the gift of tongues, when we are baptized in the Spirit, we will speak in tongues much more readily. If the community we are part of either is closed to the gift of tongues or has difficulty in yielding to it, we will have a much harder time speaking in tongues when we are baptized in the Spirit. If the community we are part of experiences the guidance of the Spirit deeply in a regular way, we will experience it easily and soon. If the community we are part of does not know what the guidance of the Spirit is, we will have a hard time discovering it for ourselves.

The life of the Spirit is something which is shared with us by the community we are a part of. If the community has faith in something (tongues or guidance or whatever it might be) it will be able to impart that faith to us. There are, of course, exceptions. The Holy Spirit often gives an individual more than the community he is part of. But as a general rule, the Lord prefers to work with people as a body and not individually. He prefers to give the gift of prophecy, for in-

stance, to a body through an individual and not to an individual for his own use when the body cannot receive it.

In other words, being baptized in the Spirit involves coming into a new relationship, a relationship with God and with a Christian community. It is a beginning. Without it, we cannot live the life of the Spirit. But being baptized in the Spirit is only a beginning. We need to learn how to live the life of the Spirit in a community of Christians who are living the life of the Spirit together.

The gift of tongues

The gift of tongues is so important for beginning the life of the Spirit that it is not possible to ignore it when talking about being baptized in the Spirit. Normally when a person is baptized in the Spirit he has a definite experience. Commonly this experience is connected with the gift of tongues. This experience is important for him in being able to live the life of the Spirit.

We saw above that when the Holy Spirit came upon people in the Acts of the Apostles, his coming was something which they could experience. But more than this, their experience was not something hidden inside themselves. It was obvious to others as well. Onlookers could see that they were experiencing the Holy Spirit. It was manifest.

There are three passages which describe how the fact that they were receiving the Spirit was manifest. In Acts 10:45, 46 it says:

Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should

be poured out on the pagans too, *since* they could hear them speaking strange languages (tongues) and proclaiming the greatness of God.

In Acts 19:6 it says:

the Holy Spirit came down upon them, and they began to speak with tongues and prophesy.

In Acts 2 (4, 11), it says:

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance", and the onlookers described what was happening (v. 11) by saying, "we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.

We can presume that what happened in Acts 8 was the same, even though it is not explicitly stated. Whenever the coming of the Holy Spirit upon people is described in Acts, the gift of tongues is mentioned as one of the results. But the significance of what happened to them is lost to most Christians today, because they do not understand the gift of tongues.

"Tongues" just means "languages". To "speak in another tongue" means to speak in another language. The same Greek word is sometimes translated "tongue" in English, sometimes "language". When the Holy Spirit came upon people in the New Testament, then, they began to speak in a language they had not learned (Acts 2:6-11) and did not understand (I Cor 14:2, 13-14).

But to realize that they began to speak in another language still does not help very much. Why on earth would they want to speak in a language that neither they nor (usually) anyone else understood? The answer to this can be found in I Corinthians 14.

In I Corinthians 12-14, Paul is trying to

deal with some problems in the Corinthian Church. The problems seem to be that some people were speaking in tongues in the Church gatherings without having what they said interpreted into a language everyone could understand (14:6-19, 27-28), that a number of people would speak in tongues or prophesy at the same time, producing a kind of babble in the Christian meetings (14:26-33), and that people would prefer to speak in tongues rather than to prophesy (14:1-12). There seems to have been a kind of spiritual rivalry underlying these problems (12:14-26).

Paul wrote I Corinthians 12-14 to deal with these problems. In I Corinthians 12-14, he presents a framework for understanding how the spiritual gifts should be used in Christian gatherings so that the Church would be built up by them. He says that each spiritual gift (tongues included) is a working of the Spirit which is given to build up the Church. Therefore, it has to be used in Christian gatherings in a way which does build up the Church, a loving way. Therefore, a person should only speak in tongues in Christian gatherings in a way which builds up the community, i.e., one at a time and with an interpretation.

The explanation Paul gives of the spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12-13 is a good one for providing guidelines for how to use the gift of tongues in public gatherings, but it does not provide a complete explanation for the gift of tongues—as is obvious from I Corinthians 14. From what Paul says it is clear that

people were not praying in tongues only when it was helpful to the community. At times there was a profusion of tongues and such a jumble of sound would not have communicated anything. However, Paul does not imply that when people are speaking in tongues this way, a way that is not helpful to the whole gathering, that they are not speaking in tongues at all. Nor does he say that their speaking in tongues is not an inspiration from God. We might have expected him to say either of these two things if he thought that speaking in tongues was only for building up a community and nothing else. In fact, he even claims to speak in tongues more than everyone else—and he certainly does not do all that speaking in tongues at the community gatherings.

In other words, the inspiration from God to speak in tongues is not always a spiritual gift for the building up of the Christian community. Sometimes it is and sometimes it is not. Part of Paul's advice is: learn when to speak out in tongues to the whole gathering and learn when to keep it to yourself.

What else is the gift of tongues, then? The way Paul talks about it in I Corinthians 14 gives us a good understanding of what it is. In I Corinthians 14:2-5 he says,

Anybody with the gift of tongues speaks to God, but not to other people; because nobody understands him when he talks in the spirit about mysterious things. On the other hand, the man who prophesies does talk to other people, to their improvement, their encouragement, their consolation. The one with the gift of tongues talks for his own benefit, but the man who prophesies does so for the benefit of the community. While I should like you all to have the gift

of tongues, I would much rather you could prophesy, since the man who prophesies is of greater importance than the man with the gift of tongues, unless of course the latter offers an interpretation so that the church may get some benefit.

In I Corinthians 14:13-19 he says,

That is why anybody who has the gift of tongues must pray for the power to interpret them. For if I use this gift in my prayers, my spirit may be praying but my mind is left barren. What is the answer to that? Surely, I should pray not only with the spirit but with the mind as well? And sing praises not only with the spirit but with the mind as well? Any uninitiated person will never be able to say Amen to your thanksgiving, if you only bless God with the spirit, for he will have no idea what you are saying. However well you make your thanksgiving, the other gets no benefit from it. I thank God that I have a greater gift of tongues than all of you, but when I am in the presence of the community I would rather say five words that mean something than ten thousand words in a tongue.

In other words, when a person speaks in a tongue, he speaks to God (that is, speaking in tongues is prayer) for his own benefit (it is usually private prayer). When he speaks in tongues his spirit is praying. He is praising God and blessing him (blessing God was the normal form of Jewish and early Christian thanksgiving).

To make the point which I want to make about what happens when a person is baptized in the Spirit, we have to see one other thing, namely that prophecy is sometimes prayer. Sometimes a prophecy is given that is an inspired prayer to God. A clear example of this occurs in the second chapter of Luke where it says,

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for he has visited his people, he has come to their
rescue. . . .

This is probably the kind of prophecy which happened when the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples at Ephesus. It would not make sense for the Lord to have inspired a number of them to speak prophetic messages at the same time. Probably he inspired them all to praise God prophetically.

What could people see when the early Christians were baptized in the Spirit, then? They could see that as the Holy Spirit came upon these Christians, they began to pray inspired prayers of praise, sometimes in words they did not understand, sometimes in their own language. The first manifestation of the presence of the Spirit in them was an inspired prayer of praise. They were lifted up in the Spirit to praise the Lord because they were having a direct experience of his presence and his glory for the first time.

This is why the gift of tongues is so important. It is a new gift of prayer, a gift of praise (at first, although later it can be other kinds of prayer). It allows us to yield to the Spirit and respond to the presence of the Spirit in a way which we could not before. It is therefore a kind of gateway to the full life of the Spirit.

The scriptures do not say that every Christian must speak in tongues. But the implication of the Acts passages is that the speaking in tongues is very common; perhaps the implications of I Corinthians 14:5 is that it is for everyone, and my own personal experience is that it can be for everyone. In our community, it is usual for people to pray in

tongues when they are prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit (if they have been properly instructed and prepared), and the few exceptions pray in tongues within a matter of days or weeks. The problem with receiving the gift of tongues does not seem to be with God giving it so much as with people being able to yield to it.

Some people, mostly from Pentecostal denominations, hold that tongues is the "initial evidence of receiving the Spirit". They mean by that that until a person has prayed in tongues, he has not been baptized in the Spirit. But a look at Acts has shown us, not that tongues is the initial evidence, but "inspired praise" is the initial evidence. Sometimes this comes in tongues, but it can also come in English.

Do we want to say, then, that only if a person has had this experience of inspired praise has he been baptized in the Spirit? I do not think we can say that from the scripture. From the scripture all we can say is that this experience is the *normal* first sign. This is the way it should happen, not the way it always has to happen.

I know of people who have asked to be baptized in the Spirit and who have not been able to pray in tongues at first. But before the gift of tongues has come, other manifestations of the presence of the Spirit in them have come: they have felt the presence of the Spirit in them, the scriptures have come to life, they feel a new guidance of the Spirit.

It is even true that sometimes people are

not aware that something has happened when they are baptized in the Spirit. They have no conscious experience at the time. But they can look back and say that something happened at that point. They know something happened because now they can experience the Holy Spirit in them. I know one girl who told me, when I asked her what happened when she was baptized in the Holy Spirit: "Nothing at all. When they prayed over me, nothing happened at all. Except that since then my whole life has been completely different." And she went on to describe what her life had been like since then, and it was clear to me from the description that she was living the life of the Spirit. Even though the beginning of the life of the Spirit was not a striking experience to her, she was now experiencing his presence and working each day.

A person has been baptized in the Spirit when he can experience the Spirit living in him and working through him. If there are no traces at all of the presence of the Spirit in him, he has not been baptized in the Spirit. But even if he did not experience much of anything when he was prayed with for the Spirit, but later notices changes and finds himself living the life of the Spirit as a result of being prayed with, we can tell he was baptized in the Spirit.

Often the reason why some people have difficulty in yielding to this new form of prayer (and to the gift of tongues) even though they have been baptized in the Spirit

is a simple one — they have inhibitions which need to be overcome. The Spirit is in them, inspiring them to pray in this way. But they cannot let it come out. Often they have been taught not to be expressive, or are afraid of expression and of their own emotions. Sometimes they are afraid that God will not do it for them, and so they cannot put faith in what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in them. One reason why the gift of tongues is so important for modern Americans is that it is easier for them to yield to the Holy Spirit in tongues than it is in English. They can more easily overcome their inhibitions by by-passing their minds (which is what happens in tongues — I Corinthians 14:14) than through their minds.

From experience I would say that a person is not fully in the Spirit unless he has yielded to this kind of prayer. It is not until he experiences the presence of the Spirit moving in him, yields to it, and experiences something new that he could not do on his own, that he knows what it is to live the life of the Spirit. He needs a direct experience of what it is to do things “in the Spirit” — to do things with full control and full action and yet to have what we do formed by the Spirit into something more than just our own work.

There is a release and a fullness that comes from praying in tongues. It is in this experience that a person begins to experience the deep joy of the Holy Spirit. Even though a person can be baptized in the Spirit without any experience at the initial moment, I do

not think it should happen that way. In the New Testament it was normal for people to receive the Spirit in a way that they and everyone else knew it, and it can still be normal now. Having such an experience is a great help in entering the life of the Spirit.

A couple of weeks ago I happened to be in the hall of one of our parish buildings when the people who had been prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit came out of the prayer room. They were all aglow and joyful (one could hardly speak). They had experienced a fullness of the Spirit and knew it. It was not hard for me to see it either. Once a person sees someone who has been baptized in the Spirit the way the apostles were, it is not hard to see why onlookers might have thought that the apostles were drunk.

What it is not

Not conversion: Being baptized in the Spirit is not having a conversion to the Lord or a deeper conversion to the Lord.

Sometimes it is true that people are converted to the Lord at the time of being baptized in the Spirit—or converted to him in a new way. I know of a seminarian who had been getting farther and farther from faith in Christ. He wanted to be a Christian, but he found himself distant from Christ and unable to find a way of having much of a relationship with him. He was tending towards leaving the seminary and maybe the Church. When he first heard about the charismatic renewal and came to his first prayer meeting, he was curious, but he could not accept what

he heard. All he could say was that he would be willing to give it a try and see what would happen. He asked to be prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit. When he was, he experienced God in a way he never had before, and that experience was for him a real conversion. From then he began to live for Christ with full faith.

But being baptized in the Spirit does not always involve having a deeper conversion. When I asked to be prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit, I came having tried to give my whole life to God for a number of years. I had been praying daily for some length of time each day, been reading the scriptures and spiritual books regularly, been spending most of my time working to bring others to Christ, been trying to pattern my life on Christ's teaching, etc. When I was prayed with, something happened. I began to pray in a new way, experience the presence of God in a new way, experience the guidance and working of God in a new way. But I did not become any more dedicated or any more turned toward God. In fact, in a certain sense I became less dedicated, because once I began to experience the Spirit working in me in a new way, I didn't try as hard as I used to (I didn't have to).

Conversion is a turning towards Christ. It is something *we* do. After I was prayed for to be baptized in the Spirit, I was no more converted than I had been before. Baptism in the Spirit, however, is something *Christ* does (he is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit). He gives

us something new. The result of it is that God begins to work in us in a new way. More happens in our Christian life, because God is doing more.

Our part in being baptized in the Spirit is not conversion. Conversion should come before. Our part is “receiving” or “drinking” or “letting ourselves be baptized”. What happens when we are baptized in the Spirit is a gift from the Father. He gives us the Spirit in a new way. Our part is to accept that gift, to receive it, to give the Spirit a welcome into us.

Not a realization: Being baptized in the Spirit is not a new realization of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in us.

Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is a change in people’s relationship with God. The result of it is that the Holy Spirit begins to work in them in a new way. He begins to speak to them, to guide them, to teach them, to work through them, to make them realize God’s presence in them and love for them.

When people are baptized in the Spirit, they do realize the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a new way. All of a sudden, whole areas of Christian truth are opened up to them. They read the scriptures and passages that were flat before become some of the most interesting passages in scripture. They go to mass, and prayers that they had “just said” before become charged with meaning. Every mention of the Holy Spirit produces light and understanding.

Such a new realization of the doctrine of

the Holy Spirit is a result of being baptized in the Spirit, but it is not the same thing. What happens when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit begins to do things in us that he never did before. This is more than a realization. It is a change in what is happening. Something new is happening.

The fact that being baptized in the Holy Spirit is different from having a deeper realization of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is important when we come to the point of wanting to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. We cannot begin the life in the Spirit solely by realizing more who the Holy Spirit is. Realization on our part cannot by itself produce a change in our relationship with him. It may prepare for it, but it cannot do it.

We are only baptized in the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit begins to work in us in a new way. It is something he does in us, not that we grow into through greater realization. We can only begin the life in the Spirit by receiving the Spirit from the Father.

Not a devotion: Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is not a greater devotion to the Holy Spirit.

What was said above is also true about the difference between being baptized in the Holy Spirit and being devoted to the Holy Spirit. Usually we are given a greater devotion to the Holy Spirit *as a result of* being baptized in the Holy Spirit, but the two are not the same thing. Being baptized in the Spirit comes when the Holy Spirit begins to

do new things in us. And it does not come about through trying to be more devoted to the Holy Spirit, but by receiving the Spirit.

Not a sign of spiritual maturity or holiness: Being baptized in the Spirit is not a sign of spiritual maturity or holiness. Rather, it gives a person a relationship with the Holy Spirit which will allow him to grow in holiness more quickly and easily than he could do by himself.

A year after I was prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit, I was reading C. S. Lewis' book *The Four Loves*. It is a book which is filled with spiritual wisdom and it shows that the author was a man of real spiritual maturity. At the end of the book, however, he talks about loving God, and he describes a kind of love of God which he says is the most important kind, but that he himself has not experienced and does not expect to experience until he gets to heaven. The kind of love he describes (what he calls an appreciative love of God) is exactly the love people experience when they have been baptized in the Spirit and can praise God in tongues or English. When I got to the end of the book, it was clear to me that C. S. Lewis had not been baptized in the Spirit when he wrote that book.

At the same time, I could see that C. S. Lewis was an excellent Christian. He was a better Christian than many people that I knew who had been baptized in the Spirit. He showed more spiritual wisdom, more faithfulness to God, and more fruit in his

service than most who have been baptized in the Spirit.

Shortly after reading *The Four Loves*, I found myself talking to a college student who had had little if any faith a month previously, and who had not lived a very spiritual life. When she was prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit, she had a deep experience of the Holy Spirit (one which gave her an appreciative love of God right away), and she has gone on from that time to grow in the Christian life. But when she was baptized in the Spirit, she was not even close to the spiritual maturity that C. S. Lewis had when he wrote *The Four Loves*. She probably isn't even now.

Spiritual growth takes time. Any process of maturing takes time. Relationships need to grow. Changes in our pattern of living have to develop. If we are going to have a deep relationship with God, and if we are going to be able to live a life that is like the one Christ taught us about, we have to expect it to take time. We need to grow into it.

The work of the Spirit in us, however, is a gift. A gift can be given right away, all at once. And because it is a gift and not something that we have to grow into, it can be given at the beginning of the process of spiritual maturity as well as any place along the way. It happens when a person knows that God is offering it to him and seeks it.

The gift of the Spirit is given to us to make spiritual growth much easier, and it does. People who are baptized in the Spirit can

grow more quickly than people who are not. I spent a number of years in Christian work before seeing the charismatic renewal and I have spent a number of years since then. Both times I was working with the same kind of people — college students. Since we have been praying with them to be baptized in the Spirit, their spiritual growth has been much more rapid. The Spirit of God is producing a much deeper holiness in them. And it is not that these students are trying so much harder than the others were. Many of the others tried just as hard (and some of them are now experiencing a new rate of growth now that they have been baptized in the Spirit). It is not that they are trying harder, but that they are experiencing more. The Spirit of God is doing more of it in them.

On the other hand, being baptized in the Spirit is not at all the same thing as spiritual perfection. A person who has been baptized in the Spirit still needs to go through a process of spiritual maturing. One of the greatest dangers facing people who have experienced a filling with the Spirit is the misconception that they have arrived at spiritual maturity because of it. Being baptized in the Spirit only introduces a person to a new relationship with the Holy Spirit.

People are sometimes scandalized that a new Christian who has just come to faith in Christ can be baptized in the Spirit while there are many faithful Christians who have dedicated themselves to Christ for years and have not been baptized in the Spirit. Rather

than a source of scandal, it should point out to us an important lesson: everything God wants us to have comes in the way he wants us to receive it. Spiritual maturity comes to us through a process of effort and dedication. We cannot have it without putting in time in faithful service of God, no matter how much we pray for it. The gift of the Spirit, on the other hand, comes to us through asking in faith. It is a gift. We need to recognize that God is offering it and receive it from him in faith. No amount of dedicated service can earn it. But we can have it once we realize he is offering it and ask for it.

That also means that the years we have spent in serving the Lord before we have been baptized in the Spirit are not worthless. If we spent time in growing in our relationship with God before we were baptized in the Spirit, we will be farther along in spiritual maturity after we are baptized in the Spirit than someone who began his Christian life with being baptized in the Spirit.

Not everything we need: Being baptized in the Spirit is only part of what is needed to be fully in Christ.

If a person has been baptized in the Spirit but is only partly converted to Christ, he will not be much of a Christian. If a person has been baptized in the Spirit but does not understand the basic truths of Christianity or does not love the Lord, he will not be much of a Christian. A person who has a full tank of gas will not get very far if he has four flat tires. Or even with a full tank of gas and four

good tires, he will not be able to keep moving if he has a broken fan belt. In other words, we need everything that is part of being a Christian, if we are going to live the Christian life the way it was meant to be lived. We need everything which the Lord has provided for us.

Receiving

When the Jews on the day of Pentecost saw the first Christians who had just been baptized in the Spirit, and when they heard Peter's explanation of what it was that had just happened, they asked, "What must we do?" That is the question. How do we begin the life of the Spirit?

The heart of Peter's talk was the Lord Jesus. He said to the Jews: it is because of Jesus that we can have the Holy Spirit. It is because Jesus is Lord and Christ, because he has died and risen, that we can have the Holy Spirit. Because of what he has done, the Father has given him the Holy Spirit to give to us. Peter said,

Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the out-pouring of that Spirit.

Peter just said the same thing John the Baptist had said when he first pointed Jesus out. Probably the words which Peter heard when he first saw Jesus are,

Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. (Mark 1:7-8)

In other words, Jesus is the baptizer in the

Holy Spirit. He is the one we have to come to if we want to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus himself said the same thing. He told all the people on the feast of Tabernacles that if they wanted new life, living water, the Holy Spirit, they would have to come to him,

'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me!

Let the man come and drink who believes in me!'

As the scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water.

He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

(John 7:37-9)

Those who want the Holy Spirit and the new life he brings have to come to the Lord Jesus.

Peter went on to assure his listeners on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was for everyone. The Lord wants everyone to be baptized in the Spirit:

The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.

The same message came to us in the early days of the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church when we were wondering if what was happening to us was for everyone. One of the first prophecies we were given contained the words, "My Spirit is for all, for all, for all".

The normal way in which people can make contact with Jesus is through his body, through the community of Christians in whom he lives. Just as people normally first hear about him through Christians and so come to faith, they are normally baptized in the Spirit in a Christian community. And

they should be. Since the life of the Spirit is lived in a body, the body of Christ, a person should be baptized in the Spirit in the body of Christ. In being baptized in the Spirit, he should enter into the life of a Christian community.

People can be baptized in the Spirit without the help of any Christians. The Lord himself (the baptizer) and the Holy Spirit are all that is absolutely essential. A number of people in our community have prayed for the Holy Spirit on their own and have been baptized in the Spirit without the help of any other Christian. One girl, in fact, was baptized in the Spirit and given the gift of tongues before she even knew that there was such a thing — simply because the Lord in his mercy knew that she had a special need of it. But it is rarer and more difficult for people to be baptized in the Spirit on their own, because the Lord wants us to be part of a community. Normally, then, what a person who wants to be baptized in the Spirit should do is to go to a community of Christians who have been baptized in the Spirit and ask their help.

In the New Testament (and in the early Church) the normal way in which Christians helped someone receive the Spirit was through prayer with the laying on of hands. In the eighth chapter of Acts, it says,

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the imposition of hands by the apostles. . . .

The same thing happened in the ninth chapter when Ananias prayed for Paul and in the nineteenth chapter when Paul prayed for the disciples at Ephesus.

In most communities of people who have been baptized in the Spirit, prayer with the laying on of hands is the normal way of helping someone be baptized in the Spirit. It seems to be a natural way of helping people receive the new life in the Spirit. When people are well prepared and are prayed for with the laying on of hands, it is rare for them not to experience the Holy Spirit coming to them and it is rare for them not to speak in tongues.

But the person who comes to be baptized in the Spirit is not passive. His part is to come to the Lord to be baptized in the Spirit. Prayer with the laying on of hands is not a substitute for coming to the Lord. It is only meant to be a help, and if the person himself does not turn to the Lord and receive the Spirit from him he will not be baptized in the Spirit.

The condition that has to be met, therefore, before a person can be baptized in the Spirit is simply having turned to Jesus as Lord and Savior and Baptizer. The instructions Peter gave the Jews on the day of Pentecost were,

You must repent, and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The condition, then, is being "in the Lord", being a believer, a person who has turned to Christ. When we are in that condition, he can baptize us in the Holy Spirit. Some people are baptized in the Holy Spirit years after having first accepted Christ as their Lord. Others commit their lives to him only at the time they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. But however it happens being "in the Lord" is the only condition which qualifies us for being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Once a person belongs to the Lord, he can pray for the Holy Spirit. All he has to do is ask in faith, that is, he simply has to ask, knowing that the Lord wants him to be baptized in the Spirit and is offering him the chance. Luke has a passage which I sometimes think was kept in his gospel in its present form, because it was used to prepare people to be baptized in the Spirit:

So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a fish? Or hand him a scorpion if he asked for an egg? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

In other words, what a believer has to do to be baptized in the Holy Spirit is simply to ask. God is anxious for him to have it. In fact, God wants us to have it more than we want it ourselves. He wants us to have it because he loves us and he wants to live in us by his

Spirit. We simply need to come to him and receive the gift from him.

There seem to be a variety of obstacles people have that keep them from receiving the fullness of the Spirit. Sometimes people do not want it—or do not want everything God is offering (usually tongues). Because they are asking and yet are telling God they only want certain things, he is not free to give them the full life of the Spirit. Sometimes people do not believe that being baptized in the Spirit is anything all that definite. All they are really asking for is “a blessing”, a little bit more devotion to God. And that is usually all they receive—not realizing that God wants to give them much more.

Most often the problem is fear: either fear that it is wrong to ask God for things for ourselves, or fear that what happens will be “just me”, that is, psychological and not spiritual at all, or fear that “God won’t give it to me”. The only answer to such fear is to trust God’s love. He loves us and wants us to have the Spirit. If we ask him, he will give it to us.

Often people have difficulties in getting through these obstacles. At root, all these obstacles amount to a lack of faith, and often a person has a difficulty in overcoming his lack of faith by himself. That is perhaps the root reason why the life of the Spirit is lived in a community. A community can impart faith to someone who does not have it—effortlessly and painlessly in fact.

In my experience, if a person comes to a community of Christians who have been bap-

tized in the Spirit and who have faith in the full working of the Spirit (who believe that a full experience of the Spirit is available to everyone), and if that person is well prepared, he can be baptized in the Spirit with no difficulty. Our community seems to be at that point now, and people seem to be entering the life of the Spirit and speaking in tongues with no difficulty at all. It took us a while as a community to grow in faith, and it has taken us a while as a community to learn how to prepare people (even now, people are sometimes prayed with before they are ready). But now there seems to be enough faith and wisdom to help anyone who comes.

The father wants us to experience his love. He wants to give his Spirit to us. He wants his people to be able to lead those who come to them to a full life in the Spirit. He wants to do for us everything he did for the early Christians — and maybe more.

II

UNDERSTANDING BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT

In the early Church being baptized in the Spirit was easily understood. When a person became a Christian, he asked for the Spirit and received it. He had no previous experience as a Christian to relate his baptism in the Spirit to.

Now it is not so easy. Most people who are baptized in the Spirit in the United States today have been Christians for some length of time before. Many of them have had definite experiences of the presence of the Spirit in them. They usually do not feel that they can say with the simplicity of the early Christians that they just "received the Spirit" when they had the experience which is commonly described as being baptized in the Spirit.

Once we sort out the relationship of the new experience of being baptized in the Spirit to previous spiritual experiences and changes, it becomes clearer that being baptized in the Spirit means different things for different people. Different people, depending on their situation, can expect different things to happen to them when they are baptized in the Spirit. For this reason, what it means to be baptized in the Spirit deserves some more careful thought.

Talking about it

There are a variety of ways of speaking

about the coming of the Holy Spirit into a person's life. The rest of our thinking about what it means to be baptized in the Spirit will be clearer if we first see how some words are used (or could be used).

In the New Testament, there are five descriptions of people entering into a union with the Holy Spirit: the day of Pentecost itself (Acts 2), the "Samaritan Pentecost" (Acts 8:4-25), Paul's conversion (9:10-19), the "Gentile Pentecost" (Acts 10:1-11:18), and the conversion of the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-12). It seems clear that the same thing happened in all five events. There is another event in which the same thing happened, the Johannine Pentecost (John 20:19-23), but because of the complications in understanding the meaning of the passage, it is better to omit considering it at this point.

The five events are referred to in the New Testament by the following terms (other places in the New Testament in which these terms are probably used to describe the same thing are added in parenthesis):

(being sent) what the	Luke 24:49,
Father promised	Acts 1:4, 2:33
the gift of God	Acts 8:20, 11:17
receiving the gift of	
the Holy Spirit	Acts 2:38
receiving the Holy Spirit	Acts 8:17, 19,
	10:47, 19:2
(John 7:39, 14:17, 20:22, II Cor	
11:14, Gal 3:2, Rom 8:15)	

being filled with
the Holy Spirit Acts 2:4, 9:17
(note: this term is also used for special
“fillings” subsequent to the initial
“filling”: Acts 4:8, 4:31, 7:55, 13:9,
Eph 5:18, Lk 1:41, 67)

being baptized in the
Holy Spirit Acts 1:15, 11:19
(Mk 1:8, Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16, Jn 1:33,
I Cor 12:13)

being clothed with
power Lk. 24:49
(Acts 1:8 — similar)
the Holy Spirit comes on Acts 19:6
(Lk 2:27)

the Holy Spirit falls Acts 10:44,
upon (comes down on) 11:15

the Holy Spirit is
poured out on Acts 2:33, 10:45
the Spirit is given Acts 8:18
(Jn 7:39, I Jn 3:24, 5:13, Lk 11:13,
1 Th 4:8, II Cor 1:21, 5:15, II Tim
1:6)

What seems to be the same thing is referred to in other places in the New Testament in the following terms: receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14), being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13, 4:30), being born of water and the Spirit or being born again from above (Jn. 3:5-8, similar — Gal 4:30), the Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts (Gal 4:6), and the Holy Spirit is supplied (Gal 3:5), the Holy Spirit descends on and

alights or remains—the description of Christ's baptism (Mk 1:10, Lk 3:22, Mt 3:16, Jn 1:32-3).

The terms which are used in the New Testament to describe the entering into a union with the Holy Spirit are interchangeable. "Being baptized in the Holy Spirit" is used to refer to the same thing as "receiving the Holy Spirit" or "the Holy Spirit falls upon". In other words, "being baptized in the Holy Spirit" does not refer to a special experience of the Holy Spirit that is different from "receiving the Holy Spirit".

The list of terms from the New Testament all suggest that something happens to a person. To be more precise, they suggest that something (the Spirit) comes to him or is given to him and his part is to receive. They are all (except perhaps "being sent what the Father promised") metaphors. The change is described as if water is poured out or on or into a person, or as if a gift were being given and received; or as if clothing were being put on a person by someone else. The most commonly used terms are those that say in one form or another: the Holy Spirit is given and received.

An unmetaphorical way of stating what happens is to say that there is a change in our relationship with God. This change is produced by God. Our part is to receive it (let it happen). Because of this change God (the Holy Spirit) enters our life in a new way, so that we begin to experience him doing in us those things which God promised that the

Holy Spirit would do in the life of the believer: he gives us the seven gifts (he teaches us, guides us, deepens our union with God, brings scripture alive, and gives us an apostolic boldness and zeal), the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.), some of the charismatic gifts (tongues, prophecy, healing, miracles, etc.), and lets us be an active part of the Christian community.

A simple definition of what it is to be baptized in the Spirit is: to be baptized in the Spirit means that we have a change in our relationship with God such that we can begin to experience in our lives all the things which God promised that the Holy Spirit would do for believers.

There is another way we might want to talk about it. Most Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is in them even before they are baptized in the Spirit—through their faith in Christ, through baptism, through confirmation. But they do not experience in their lives all the things which God promised the Holy Spirit would do and which the early Christians experienced. If the Holy Spirit is in us, there must be some barrier or block to our experiencing his presence and working. Therefore, we could describe our being baptized in the Spirit as the release of the Spirit in us or as our being opened to the Spirit.

The most common term for this change in our relationship with God is the term “baptized in the Spirit”. For a variety of historical reasons, this was the term which was given to this experience of the Spirit at the beginning

of the Pentecostal Movement in 1900. It has been used not only by members of Pentecostal churches, but also by people in the mainline Protestant Churches and in the Catholic Church. Probably the best reason for using it is historical: this is the term by which most people talk about it today.

There is, however, another reason for using this term. If we were to speak about a person receiving the Spirit or being given the Spirit when they were baptized in the Spirit, many people would assume by that that we were denying that the Spirit had ever been given to the believer before that in any way at all (whether through faith in Christ or through baptism or through confirmation). It is true, in the New Testament, all these terms mean the same thing — they all refer to the same experience. When the New Testament says that the Holy Spirit was given to a believer, it means that he experienced the full working of the Spirit. The giving of the Spirit was experienced. But we can select one of the New Testament terms (being baptized in the Spirit), and use it to refer to the change in a believer's life that comes when he first begins to experience the presence and working of the Spirit. The Spirit may have been given in some way before, but when a person is baptized in the Spirit he begins to experience him in a new way, the same way believers in the New Testament did.

The most common form of this term nowadays is the noun form. People speak about "the baptism of the Spirit" and "receiving

the baptism of the Spirit". This is, however, not a scriptural use of the term. In the New Testament what we receive (or have) is the Holy Spirit himself (or the gift of the Holy Spirit). And we are baptized in him.

There is a reason for not using the term "the baptism of the Spirit" any more than necessary besides scriptural fanaticism. When we start talking about the baptism of the Spirit, we begin to start thinking of it as a thing. The image that comes to mind is some mark on the soul or some merit badge. People often think of "the baptism of the Spirit" as an assured status. If we have the baptism of the Spirit, we have made it. All the world is divided into Christians who have the baptism of the Spirit and Christians who don't. In other words, to talk about what happens as being baptized in the Spirit helps us to realize that it is only a (past) experience which provided us an introduction to an ongoing life in the Spirit. What is important is not "having the baptism in the Spirit", but actually living the life of the Spirit.

Two events — or one?

There are some knotty theological problems connected with understanding what it is to be baptized in the Spirit. They are worth considering, however, because once we understand the reason for these problems, we can understand more clearly what happens when a person is baptized in the Spirit.

The most common theological problem connected with being baptized in the Spirit is the question of whether coming to Christ

and receiving the Spirit are one event or two. Is a person automatically baptized in the Spirit when he becomes a Christian or is that something that has to happen subsequently. This question is usually raised by Conservative Evangelical Protestants, but sometimes it is raised by Catholics in a slightly different framework (one that is usually concerned with the sacraments of baptism and confirmation).

First of all, being baptized in the Spirit *can be* different from coming to Christ. This is true in present day experience; it is true in the scriptures; and it was true in the early Church.

Many people today have had two different experiences in their coming into a deeper relationship with Christ, and these experiences have had different effects in their lives. One of the first people I ever knew who could talk about being baptized in the Spirit was a Conservative Evangelical who had all of his experiences "in proper form". He "received Jesus" at a Billy Graham crusade and then became part of a Conservative Evangelical Church. As a result of his conversion he felt that he "knew the Lord", and he lived a good Christian life because of it, a life that was by no means empty of all Christian experience.

Some years later, he was convinced by some friends of his who had a similar background that there was something more. He could see it in them. So he asked to be baptized in the Spirit and he was, speaking in tongues right

away. His prayer life began to be one of praise and worship. The scriptures spoke to him in a new way. The presence of God in him became more experiential and flowing. He could sense the guidance of the Spirit. In other words, he began to live the life of the Spirit. When he was baptized in the Spirit, he had a different experience from when he received Christ.

One of the first Catholics I ever talked to who had been baptized in the Spirit had a very similar experience. He had come to know Christ in an adult way on a Cursillo. After that he had a personal relationship with him and lived a good Christian life for a number of years. Then he was baptized in the Spirit and received the gift of tongues. As a result of that he too began to live the life of the Spirit with a new prayer life, a new experience of the presence of God, a new experience of God's working in his life. For both of them being baptized in the Spirit was different from coming to Christ.

The same thing can be seen in the scriptures. The descriptions of people receiving the Spirit in Acts show that the people involved did not receive the Spirit until after they had turned to Christ, believed in him, and been baptized.

This is especially clear in two accounts. When the disciples at Ephesus received the Spirit, they received him after believing and being baptized when Paul laid hands on them.

When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *the moment Paul laid*

hands on them, the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy.

Luke seems anxious to emphasize that it was the laying on of hands which was the reason for the coming of the Spirit on them, not baptism.

The same thing is true in the eighth chapter of Acts. The account of how the people in the Samaritan town received the Spirit seems to be designed to emphasize the fact that it was not baptism but the laying on of hands which gave the Holy Spirit:

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them; they had *only been baptized* in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the *Spirit was given through* the imposition of hands by the apostles. . . .

In other words, in both passages, receiving the Holy Spirit came subsequently to believing and being baptized. The difference between being joined to Christ and receiving the Spirit is confirmed in passages in the New Testament which mention the two in a parallel but separate way. The clearest instance is in Titus 3:5:

It was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us by means of *the cleansing water of rebirth* and by *renewing us with the Holy Spirit* which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Another instance is in the third chapter of John where Jesus is talking to Nicodemus:

I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born through *water and the Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

The early Church (in fact the Church to-

day) kept an awareness of the difference between being joined to Christ and receiving the Spirit in the twofold rite of initiation (baptism and "confirmation"). Whenever people were brought into the Church they were both baptized and had hands laid on them for the Holy Spirit (and then were fed with the Eucharist).

Many of the writers in the early Church, spoke about the difference between being joined to Christ and receiving the Spirit. In the earliest "Church order", the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (c217), the prayer for the laying on of hands for the newly baptized is as follows:

O Lord God, who didst count these thy servants worthy of deserving the forgiveness of sins by the laver of regeneration, make them worthy to be filled with thy Holy Spirit and send upon them thy grace that they may serve thee according to thy will.

Tertullian in *On Baptism* (ch 6) written about the same time as the *Apostolic Tradition*, shows the same view:

Not that in the waters we receive the Holy Spirit, but cleansed in water . . . we are prepared for the Holy Spirit.

Augustine in one of his sermons (c 400) is even emphatic about the point:

This distinction between the reception of baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit shows us clearly enough that we should not think that those whom we do not deny to have received baptism forthwith have the Holy Spirit.

The same view can be traced in many other fathers of the Church.

But on the other hand, being baptized in the Spirit *should normally not happen at a different time* from coming to Christ. This

seems to be true both from the scriptures and from the practice of the early church.

Probably the instance of the reception of the Spirit in Acts which was most normal was the instance in Acts 19. When Paul brought the group of 12 disciples into the fullness of Christian life, he first baptized them and then laid hands on them for the Holy Spirit. In other words, even though there were two different things which Paul did, they occurred right together. He did not wait for a while between the two. The experience of those disciples of entering the Christian life for all practical purposes was one experience. They entered from Judaism (or semi-Christianity) to the full life of the Spirit.

That this was the most normal way (and the way in which it happened to the Samaritans in Acts 8 was not), is confirmed by the practice of the early Church. The normal way in which a person in the early Christian community was led into the full Christian life involved one event in which the new Christian was baptized, anointed, had hands laid on him and was given communion. All these things were done at the same time. Even though there were a variety of rites in this one event, for all practical purposes there must have been just one experience for those who entered the Christian life. They were baptized and received the Spirit all at once. They went from learning about Christianity to the full life in the Spirit without going through two stages.

If it is true that the normal way in which

people came into the Christian life included being introduced to the full life of the Spirit, then when writers in the New Testament wrote about the Christian life, they were addressing communities of Christians who had all been baptized in the Spirit. The only two groups they knew of were non-Christians and Christians baptized in the Spirit. The former were not part of the Christian community. They did not have to deal with Christians who were part of the Christian community but who were not baptized in the Spirit.

The New Testament writings confirm this view. There is never any urging in the letters in the New Testament for some of the Christians to receive the Spirit. New Testament writers never refer to two groups among the Christians — those who have received the Spirit and those who have not yet received the Spirit. In fact, consistently the New Testament writers presuppose that those who are listening to the letters have all been baptized in the Spirit. Even when they are acting in an unspiritual way, the writers do not call into question whether they have received the Spirit. Rather, they say that they are not living up to (or according to) what they have been given (I Cor 1-6, esp 2:12, 16, 3:16, 6:11, 17, 19; Gal 3:2, 4:6, 5:25).

It is for this reason that New Testament writings so easily equate the new life in Christ and the life of the Spirit. When Jesus talks about the new life which is given from above in the third chapter of John, he is talking about the life of the Spirit. He does

not suggest that there are two lives (or two births). There is one: the life from above, the life of the Spirit (rather than of the flesh). When Paul talks in Romans 8 about what the new life that is given to us through faith in Christ does to us he sees only two options: living according to the flesh and in sin and living according to the Spirit and in Christ:

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. 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. . . . For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Even the passage in Titus which indicates a difference between what happens in the baptismal washing and the giving of the Holy Spirit only talks about one result for the two of them:

It was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life.

In other words, the renewal of the Holy Spirit is part of justification by grace, the new birth.

If it is true that there can be a difference between being joined to Christ and receiving the Spirit, then it is permissible to talk about baptism in the Spirit as something different from becoming a Christian, and it is permissible to talk about it as a renewal of confir-

mation (and not just as a renewal of the whole process of initiation). It is also permissible to appropriate different effects in the believer to the union with Christ and the union with the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, if being joined to Christ and receiving the Spirit normally come together and are talked about in the New Testament as one event (perhaps a two-fold event, but one event nevertheless), then the two should not normally be separated in thought or action. Normally, therefore, a person should be joined to Christ and baptized in the Spirit at the same time. Normally we should not talk about the difference between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit in a believer (Christ is at work in us through his Spirit). And normally coming into the Christian life should be seen as a process including baptism, the laying on of hands, and receiving the eucharist (becoming a full part of the Christian people in their common gathering). Moreover, the purpose of baptism should normally be explained as bringing people into the full life of the Spirit in the Christian community, even though baptism itself (in the sense of the water bath) is only one step in the process.

Evaluating today's Christianity

We have difficulties in understanding what is going on when people are baptized in the Holy Spirit, because we are living in a different situation from the early Church. We are confronted with a large number of people who are Christians, but whose ex-

perience of the Christian life is not the same as the experience the early Christians had. They are missing something. They are not living the full life of the Spirit. Sometimes, in fact, their relationship with Christ is perfunctory. When we try to apply New Testament ideas to the modern situation, what can we say about it? Most of the Christians we are dealing with are in the category which probably did not exist in the New Testament: the member of the Christian Church who believes in Christ but does not experience the Holy Spirit.

There seem to be two ways of dealing with this situation. The approach which has been taken by Conservative Evangelicals is to say that because Christians today do not have the same experience of the Christian life that the early Christians did, they are not Christians at all (or that because they do not have the same experience of the Holy Spirit as the early Christians did, they have not received him at all).

Conservative Evangelical theology grew out of the Evangelical Awakening (mostly begun through the work of Wesley) in the 18th and 19th centuries. The early Evangelicals were concerned that Christians of their day seemed to be lukewarm and to lack the kind of experience of Christ that the early Christians had. They also discovered personally that it was possible to have a real experience of Christ. Many of them then made the step of saying that it was this experience which was the experience of salvation and

which made people Christians. By “salvation” they meant that which let people go to heaven.

The center of Evangelical teaching, then, has been “saving people”, that is, bringing them to a salvation experience. This experience comes through turning to the Lord and praying for him to “enter our lives”, “be our Lord and saviour” or however it is expressed. This experience is described as “being saved”, “being born again”, or “receiving Jesus”. Some Evangelicals teach that once a person has had this experience, he will automatically go to heaven, no matter what he does afterwards. Most Evangelicals say that it is this experience that makes a person a Christian. All those other people who believe in Christ and are trying to live according to his teachings are simply not Christians at all.

Toward the end of the 19th Century, many Evangelicals began to feel that they were still not having the same experience as the early Christians had. They began to see that there was more. At the start of the 20th Century, some Evangelicals (mostly from the Holiness Movement) began to discover that if they prayed in faith to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, they could experience the same things happening to them that happened to the early Christians. They could experience the full life of the Spirit with all the spiritual gifts. As a result of this discovery, the Pentecostal Movement developed.

The early Pentecostals were mostly Evangelicals who took the same approach to the

new experience which the Evangelicals took to the old. This new experience is the second step. Once you have been "saved" then you get "filled". Moreover, only those who have exactly the same kind of experience that the early Christians had, have the Holy Spirit at all. All other Christians, even when they seem to experience something of the Holy Spirit or some of the workings of the Holy Spirit, are simply not "Spirit-filled" at all.

Many Evangelicals, however, could not accept the Pentecostal experience. They pointed out (to their own satisfaction) that in the New Testament a person received the Holy Spirit (was baptized in the Holy Spirit) when he was joined to Christ (was saved). The Pentecostals, of course, having experienced something more, were convinced that what the Evangelicals were talking about as being baptized in the Spirit was not what the New Testament was talking about as being baptized in the Spirit. And they could point to New Testament passages where the two experiences were different (Acts 2, 8, 10, 19). Some Pentecostals in a desire to be accommodating (or "ecumenical") have stressed that they did not mean to imply that when a person was saved he had not received the Holy Spirit at all (and they might even try to sort out which New Testament passages referred to the Holy Spirit as he was possessed by those who were "saved" and which passages referred to the Holy Spirit as he was possessed by those who were also "filled"). Finally, some Pentecostals have even come up

with two different experiences of receiving the Holy Spirit, the first being the one by which a person is “saved”, the second the one by which he is “baptized in the Holy Spirit”.

There is a second way of dealing with the present-day situation in which there are many Christians who do not experience the same thing which the early Christians did. Catholic teaching takes this approach. Catholic teaching holds that those who have been properly prayed for to be joined to Christ and to receive the Spirit (baptized and confirmed) are Christians in good standing and have been joined to Christ and received the Spirit even if they do not seem to have any direct experience of Christ or of the Spirit.

Catholic teaching is based on the view that once the Church has prayed in faith for someone to be joined to Christ and filled with the Spirit, it has happened. The way Catholics would say this is that these people have been baptized and confirmed and are now part of the Church. They may lose their faith (stop believing) and fall into sin (turn away from Christ). In that case they would be no longer “living as Christians/Catholics/in grace” and they are no longer in union with Christ. But as long as they still have faith (believe) and are not living in serious sin (have repented) and have been baptized, they are Christians in good standing.

When a Catholic teacher would take a look at the present situation among Christians and would notice that most of them do not seem to be experiencing what the early Christians

experienced (or what the Church prayed for in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation), he would not say that therefore they were not Christians or were not joined to Christ at all or had not received the Spirit at all. He would say that they needed to have the sacraments take full effect. They needed some kind of revitalization or growth or release or renewal. But he would never say that they had not been saved at all and had not received the Spirit at all.

There is strength to both approaches to the present situation. The Evangelicals (including the Pentecostals) have discovered that there is no reason not to have the same experience that the early Christians had. They have discovered that those who want to can pray to the Lord in faith and they will have a definite experience which will put them at the same level of experience which the early Christians were at.

The Catholic approach, however, has the advantage of not simply writing off the Christianity of millions of people who believe in Christ and are living good Christian lives, even though they are not experiencing Christ or the Holy Spirit in the same way that the early Christians did. Catholic teaching also has the strength of keeping clear the fact the most important test for a person's Christian life is the fruits of it, whether he is living the Christian life, not what kind of experience he has had (Mt 7:21-28, I Cor 12:1-3, Gal 5, I Cor 6:9f, I Cor 13, Rev 21:6-8, etc.)

But however the two approaches differ in

the way they talk about things and how they make use of the New Testament terms, they agree on two points: 1) what the New Testament describes as the norm of Christian living should be there completely, 2) most Christians today are deficient in their Christian lives. They do not experience what the early Christians experienced or what should be there.

There is, in fact, a problem for all kinds of Christian teachers whether they are Evangelical Pentecostals, Catholic Pentecostals, Evangelicals who are not Pentecostals or Catholics who are not Pentecostals. The problem is how to talk about the person who is in the category which the New Testament writers do not explicitly cover—the Christian who has not experienced being baptized in the Spirit the same way which the early Christians did. Since the passages in the New Testament about the life “in Christ” or “in the Spirit” refer to people who have been baptized in the Spirit, they do not simply apply to people who have not been. But since these people are in some way Christians, these passages are not completely inapplicable to them.

We may not be able to work out a way of talking about these things which will satisfy everyone, but we can keep two things clear. The first thing we need to keep clear is what the early Christians experienced. That way we can know when we are not experiencing what they experienced. That way, too, we will avoid the rationalizations and confusions

that come from using New Testament terms to describe situations that are different from those the New Testament writers were talking about. The second thing we need to keep clear is that if we seek in faith, the Lord will work in our lives the same way he worked among the early Christians. We can make the New Testament terms a description of our Christian communities by letting the Lord work among us in full freedom.

The spiritually experienced

Before going on to try to say what being baptized in the Spirit means today, we need to consider another category of people—those who have a great deal of spiritual experience, but have not had the same kind of experience which the early Christians have had. The people in this category are often monks and nuns and other “religious”. They are people who have given their lives completely to seeking a deeply spiritual life, and who have often experienced real workings of the Spirit in their lives, but who have not had the same kinds of experiences which the new Christians had in Acts (a definite experience of a filling with the Spirit which involves a gift of inspired praise), and who do not seem to experience the charismatic gifts.

Traditionally spiritual growth has been described in terms of the purgative way, the illuminative way and the unitive way. In the purgative way a person is cleansed from sins and imperfections. In the illuminative way, a person comes to know Christ and grow in Christ-like qualities. In the unitive way, he

experiences a love of God, and he experiences God doing more in him to give him a deeper relationship with himself. In particular, he begins to experience God giving him a gift of prayer (infused contemplation) so that prayer is no longer something he works at but something God works in him.

It is in the third way, the unitive way, that a person begins to experience the Holy Spirit working in him. In the first two ways, what happens is in large part due to our efforts. In the purgative way, we turn from sin. In the illuminative way, we seek to know Christ and to pattern our lives on the virtues he taught us about. For the unitive way, however, is reserved the direct experience of the Spirit and his working in our lives. As Bouyer puts it in his *Introduction to Spirituality*, "In the unitive way the presence, the activity of the Spirit within us, becomes as it were the object of direct experience". The way in which the activity of the Holy Spirit in us is most commonly experienced is in infused contemplation which is the Spirit inspiring a person to prayer.

A common view of these three "ways" (possibly the most popular view of the three ways, but not the only view) is that they are three stages of the spiritual life, each one of which takes a certain length of time. A person, then, would have to begin with a certain amount of purification before he could begin to be illuminated, and finally after a period of spiritual growth, he could then begin to experience a deep union with God and the

work of the Holy Spirit in him. In other words, the Holy Spirit would be given only to people who had received a developed state of spiritual growth.

According to this view, because a person did not experience the presence of the Spirit working in him until he had reached the unitive stage did not mean that the Spirit was not working in him. He could not have grown in the Christian life at all if the Spirit had not been working in him. The whole Christian life is a work of grace. It is the experienced working of the Spirit (what we have described as living the life of the Spirit) that did not come until the unitive stage. In other words, according to the approach summarized in the three ways, a person was not baptized in the Spirit until he had reached a certain amount of spiritual maturity.

The difference between what is happening now in the charismatic renewal and what happened in some traditional forms of spirituality is that in the charismatic renewal, people are being baptized in the Spirit at the beginning of their spiritual growth. Before the charismatic renewal, it was not common for people to experience the gift of the Spirit and infused prayer until some years had passed in their spiritual growth. True, traditional spiritual writers have always known that it did not have to take many years. They knew it could happen at any time. But they did not normally expect it to happen until a person had spent many years in spiritual growth. Now we know that the Spirit can be

given freely even to beginners in the spiritual life. This is clearly the way it was given in New Testament times. Many of the people who were baptized in the Spirit in Acts had just heard the gospel for the first time. And the Corinthians and Galatians who were experiencing so many workings of the Spirit had only been converted a few years before. They were “new Christians”. Most of the people in the community I am part of began their spiritual growth only after having been baptized in the Spirit.

Probably the main reason for the difference in the two experiences is the difference in expectation. The charismatic renewal is a renewal that could be called “expectant in faith”. The basis of it is the discovery that if we expect God to do for us what he did for the early Christians and if we ask for it, we will receive it. Since many spiritual men traditionally did not expect to experience the working of the Spirit until they had gone through a process of purification and illumination, they did not have faith that it would happen, and so they did not see it happen. The Lord seems to give to us according to our faith.

But we should not simply assume that because the experience of the Spirit comes earlier in the charismatic renewal than it comes in most traditional forms of spiritual life, that the people who followed the traditional forms simply have an inferior form of spiritual life. The point of what I have been saying is not necessarily that it is inferior, but that it is

different, and we need to understand the difference to see what being baptized in the Spirit can mean to someone brought up in traditional spirituality.

First of all, those who have been growing according to a traditional spirituality often have a great deal of spiritual maturity even if they have not been baptized in the Spirit. They are living at a higher level as Christians than many who have been baptized in the Spirit. They are serving the Lord better, loving God and their neighbor more. They may be deficient in some experience, but they are not therefore worse Christians according to the New Testament standards for judging Christians (doing the will of the Father). In fact, when a person is a new Christian who has just been baptized in the Spirit, he needs to go through much of the same growth process which is sketched out in the treatment of the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. He is not a formed Christian when he is baptized in the Spirit.

Secondly, because a person has been formed in traditional spirituality means that often his experiences of the Spirit will be somewhat different from that of those who have been part of the charismatic renewal. Our experiences tend to go according to our expectations, because that is often the only way we will allow them to happen to ourselves. For instance, if a person has a certain view of interpersonal relationships, all his relationships with other people will turn out that way, because that is what he is looking for.

As a result, someone in the charismatic renewal will allow the Lord to give him the Holy Spirit quickly in one sudden experience, because that is what he is looking for. At the same time, he will be hesitant about accepting a gradual release of the Spirit as being the real article, because what he has been seeking is the complete experience. On the other hand, someone formed in traditional spirituality will be more inclined to have the Spirit released in him gradually, and he will have trouble yielding to a sudden leap in his spiritual experience.

Third, those who have been brought up in traditional spirituality have been used to a different approach to relating to God than what they find in the charismatic renewal. Almost always, they are not used to making the kind of act of faith in the promises of God which new Christians often find so easy. They are used to waiting patiently with nothing discernible happening. Moreover, sometimes they expect that the Spirit will be given to them because of their submission to God's will (rather than by asking in faith). Sometimes, if their formation has not been healthy, they have even been used to suppressing their own emotions and desires and to having a fear of believing that God wants to give them gifts (rather than wants them to suffer).

Because of the differences between the charismatic renewal and traditional forms of spirituality, people who have been brought up in traditional spirituality often have special difficulties in understanding what it is

to be baptized in the Spirit. Sometimes this difficulty comes from their very maturity in the spiritual life. After many years of spiritual growth, they find it difficult to ask for the same thing that some college freshman who has just been converted to Christianity is asking for.

Sometimes this difficulty comes from the fact that they have experienced some of the life of the Spirit. When they hear a description of what happens when a person is baptized in the Spirit, they feel that in some ways they need it and in other ways they do not. So they find that they cannot ask for it unambiguously or in full faith.

Sometimes this difficulty comes from their formation. If they have not been taught to claim the promises of the Lord in the scriptures, but have been given a semi-stoical attitude (wait in patient submission to see if perhaps the Lord might give some favor and have faith in his love even if you do not experience anything) and a fear of their own desires and emotions, they will find it very difficult to open up to the work of the Spirit. They will, as a matter of fact, find it difficult whether the life of the Spirit is described to them in the traditional way or in the way in which it has been lived in the charismatic renewal.

Because of these difficulties, living in a community of people who are living the life of the Spirit is also important for people who have been brought up in traditional spirituality. What the charismatic renewal has to offer

them is a new, more effective attitude of faith. This new attitude of faith is not so different from what they have had that they will be able to understand it easily (large differences are often easier to grasp and big changes easier to make). Nor will it involve a total overthrow of their previous teaching and patterns of life. What they need is a series of adjustments throughout their whole Christian mentality, and usually such adjustments come only through being part of a community that is living in a new way.

Fully in Christ

What then is it to be baptized in the Spirit? In one way it is the same for everyone—a change in their relationship with God such that they experience the full working of the Spirit (everything which the early Christians experienced or which was promised in the New Testament). But, because different people have very different relationships with the Holy Spirit when they are baptized in the Spirit, significantly different things happen to them.

There seem to be three main categories of things that happen to people when they are “baptized in the Spirit”. Firstly, it can be a complete coming into the full life of Christ (the full life of the Spirit)—from nothing to everything. It is this for non-Christians (people who did not believe in Christ before they were prayed with to be baptized in the Spirit), for nominal Christians (people who call themselves Christians for one reason or another, but whose “Christian lives” exist

without understanding, without conviction, without prayer, without any experience of Christ or any trace that he has affected their lives), and for fallen away Christians (people who once were Christians but had completely fallen away until they came to be prayed with). For people in this category, when they are baptized in the Spirit, they are joined to Christ and are born anew.

Secondly, being baptized in the Spirit can be a transition from a Christian life lived “according to doctrine” to a Christian life lived “according to the Spirit”. It is this for people who believe in Christ and are trying to live the Christian life (with some degree of devotion), but who have no direct experience of the working of the Spirit in them. Their Christianity is a matter of teachings which they believe, practices they do, and a morality they keep. For people in this category, when they are baptized in the Spirit, they are introduced to the work of the Spirit in them in a way which they can experience. They begin the life of the Spirit.

Finally, for some, being baptized in the Spirit can mean something like “a charismatic release”. It is this for people who are already “spiritual”, who have had some formation in spirituality and have experienced the presence and working of the Spirit in some kind of way. But there are things missing in their life of the Spirit. Usually, they will not have the kind of direct faith that can ask for results and see them happen. Usually they will not be experiencing “in-

spired praise" (the gift of tongues). Usually they will not be experiencing the other spiritual gifts (prophecy, discernment of spirits, healing, etc.). What being baptized in the Spirit means to people in this category is not a simple reception of the Spirit. Rather it is a freeing of the Spirit in them in such a way that they can experience all the normal workings of the Spirit. It might be even more proper to speak of what happens to them as a freeing of their faith rather than as a filling with the Spirit or as being baptized in the Spirit.

Perhaps we should mention one last group — those who have experienced all the New Testament workings of the Spirit, but have not realized it. There are many people like this, and there have been many through the centuries. Often people have experienced the gift of tongues and not known what has happened to them and did not ever think "that babbling" could be anything as significant as the gift of tongues. Or they have experienced prophetic revelations and promptings, but have not known that such things could be spoken as a message from God. It is only in a climate in which all the workings of the Spirit are accepted and talked about that such gifts can be discovered and grown in.

To recognize that being baptized in the Spirit can mean different things to different people does not mean that being baptized in the Spirit is less important for some than for others. If we are determined to be Christians, we will want to have everything Christ wants

us to have. Rather, recognizing the differences points to a need to sometimes help different people in different ways.

Our difficulties in understanding what it is to be baptized in the Spirit illustrates an old truth which is at the basis of all learning — we can understand only what we have experienced. Very learned theologians and exegetes who have never experienced a community in which everyone was baptized in the Spirit and in which the spiritual gifts are a normal part of life often have a struggle to grasp a passage in the New Testament that is perfectly clear to some new Christian who has just experienced what the passage is referring to. Moreover, people who come from different traditions will often interpret the same truth in different ways, because they are trying to relate it to different experiences.

In order to be able to take the New Testament the way it was written, we have to have communities which are the same as the New Testament communities. For instance, once we have communities in which everyone is baptized in the Spirit, we will be able to read Romans as a clarification of everyone's experience of redemption and not as a great theological mystery that we believe in faith but would never take as an accurate description of what has happened to us.

Our goal has to be fully in Christ. We must want everything which the Lord is offering to us. We should be working to build Christian communities which are experiencing the full life of the Spirit, communities in which every

member has been baptized in the Spirit and which are built up by the spiritual gifts. There must be communities which can take those who come seeking Christ and lead them into the full life of the Spirit.

We need, in other words, a restoration of the community life which existed in the early Church in the New Testament period and in the first few centuries. And along with this, we need a restoration of the Christian initiation in which new Christians were taught what the Christian life was, were freed from evil spirits, were baptized in water and in the Spirit and were fed with the body and blood of Christ. Once they are fully in Christ, everything which was said in the New Testament about Christians will apply to them.

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