

And that, I believe, might be to bring home to us more effectively than much traditional language the figure of Jesus as one in whom the transforming presence of God to the world is to be seen, and through whom his love and purposes can be made effective in our own lives.

### Notes

1. The issues discussed in this paper are dealt with at greater length in my book, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (S.C.M., 1974).
2. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton, editors, *Christ, Faith, and History* (C.U.P., 1972), pp. 111-130.
3. "Le point de départ et le substance même du dogme est moins un enseignement qu'une personne" (*Le Problème du développement du dogme*, RSR XXV, 1948), p. 158.

## The Spirit of God and the Human Spirit

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"Spirit" belongs to the group of words which raise enormous semantic problems. (a) It is an old and practically universal word (*ruach, pneuma, Geist, Esprit, Spirit*). (b) Its meaning is not universally agreed upon. (c) Its contour is lacking in precision. What is to be included in, and what is to be excluded from it? (d) Even within the limits of one particular language, the word has undergone important changes of meaning (cf. the extreme case of the English language where *pneuma* or *spiritus* is translated either "spirit" or "mind"). (e) Finally, the word "spirit" has been discarded in scientific circles (cf. "soul;" psychology has become the science of the soul "without soul"). The word is hardly used outside the church, and even in the church it is used only in theological language.

Since the word "spirit" is extensively used within the Bible and in theology, we cannot discard it. Therefore, we must attempt a definition.

1. *The human spirit*. "Life" manifests itself in different dimensions: plant life, animal life, human life. By "spirit" we understand the dimension of life which differentiates human life from the other forms of life. It is this that thus constitutes its specific human dimension. (a) As such, it is a gift of God. (Genesis 2:7) When a person dies, the spirit returns to God. (Ecclesiastes 12:7, James 2:26) (b) In religious language, "spirit" is the center of life in which communion with the Spirit of God is lived. "It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God," (Romans 8:16 and many other references). (c) Human life always has two dimensions: *thought* and *action*. Both need a source of inspiration: *meaning* and *power*. Therefore, we define "spirit" as the *ruach*, the *pneuma*, "wind," the driving force which produces the "unity" of meaning and power.

2. *The Spirit of God.* If we are going to maintain the expression in our theological language, we must start from the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. What the doctrine of the Trinity is not: (a) This doctrine is not to be understood and explained in mathematical terms: three persons in one Godhead. "One is not three, and three are not one." (b) *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa.* When we speak of the Spirit of God, we speak of God himself. It is here that it becomes extremely difficult to use the term *persona* within the Trinity. If God is Spirit, and if we stress the word *persona* in its modern sense, then, in speaking about the Spirit of God, we speak about "the Spirit of the Spirit," which is nonsensical.

The doctrine of the Trinity attempts to express the fact that there is only one God; that God through the ages manifests the fullness of his being in such a way that we need complementary affirmations in order to speak about him as the one God. In the Old Testament he is Creator, God of the Covenant. In the New Testament, we are given a bridge over the gap between God and humanity. Whereas the presence on earth of Jesus Christ was limited in time and space (thirty-three years in the land of Israel), the doctrine of the Spirit affirms that this same presence of God is now permanent. The Holy Spirit continues the divine presence in the realm of human life which was inaugurated by Christ. How is this presence manifested? As the *sophia* and *dunamis* of God. It is in these terms that we find the point of connection, of possible relation between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the human being. As *sophia*, the Spirit of God brings meaning. As *dunamis*, the Spirit gives power, and unites them.

In all human discourse, it is extremely important to mark clearly one's reference point. This is important for one's own thought. It is important for the one who reads or listens. Above all, it is important in order to

do justice to the subject. Our subject, "The Spirit of God and the Human Spirit," requires such clarification. Briefly stated, my position is as follows: The reality of the presence of the Spirit of God is of such a nature one can only hope to speak about it in an appropriate way if one participates in the reality about which he or she speaks, i.e., existentially.

We can only hope to perceive the new life by our fullest possible participation in its fullest manifestation. I quote John Oman from his book, *The Natural and the Supernatural*,

If in this limited experience man perceives a higher reality "which is seeking to reveal itself through our whole experience in this present world then we must reach out after our farthest vision and follow even the dimly discerned beckoning of its requirements, as they speak to us of what is beyond demonstration and only discerned in moments of deeper insight and higher consecration."<sup>1</sup>

Reality (witness of the Spirit of God to the spirit of the human) must be allowed to speak for itself, both in its actual manifestations and in its potential development, or to use a theological phrase, in its eschatological perspective.

We have made an important discovery. Knowledge of the relation between the Spirit of God and the human spirit requires a life in communion with the Spirit of God. We must not speak about this relationship in general, as though it were a universal experience. This is in flat contradiction with the Bible. Indeed, if we turn to the Bible, there is no reference pointing to this relationship in such universal terms. Ecclesiastes 12:7 points to no such universal relationship. In addition to my own Old Testament studies, I discussed this matter at length with Professor J. Schoneveld, Professor of Old Testament in Brussels. Every intervention of the Spirit of God occurs within the fellowship of God's own people. So it is in Isaiah 45:4: "For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel, my chosen, I

shall call you by your name." I have checked rather carefully the New Testament references. There can be no doubt. The manifestation of the Spirit of God is limited to the fellowship of believers.

For our present purpose, it matters little whether this manifestation is individual (the believer), or collective (the church). But we should carefully notice this biblical indication. The Spirit of God is "the Spirit of Christ," (John 15:26, 16:14) and as the message of Christ was received by some and not by all, likewise the Spirit was received by some and not by all. Christ made this distinction very clearly. "The Father will give you . . . the Spirit of truth to be with you for ever." (John 14:16) "You know him for he dwells with you, and will be in you." (John 14:17) The world, however, "cannot receive him, because it neither sees him nor knows him." (John 14:17) The Spirit of God calls together the people of God. He is the "Spirit of holiness," (Romans 1:4) "the Spirit of revelation," (1 Corinthians 2:10) "the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29) and "the Spirit of glory." (1 Peter 4:14)

It is said in the New Testament, and constantly repeated, that the "Holy Spirit dwells within us," (2 Timothy 1:14) but never is this affirmed of the non-Christian believer. Quite the contrary is said: "worldly people, devoid of the Spirit." (Jude 19)

It may well be that in this ecumenical and pluralistic age, we shrink from repeating these biblical statements. Indeed, they may sound like an expression of intolerable presumption on the part of the church. This, unfortunately, has happened, but this need not be so, for we must understand God's purpose. The Spirit has not been given to the *koinonia* of the church in order that the church might boast in his possession. The Spirit of God has been given to the church for the sake

of humanity. The church is an instrument, not an end in itself!

The church is the first manifestation of a potentiality which seeks complete actualization in the whole of humankind. Pride and presumption are therefore excluded. If the presence of the Spirit is a privilege, it is also a responsibility.

The presence of the Spirit is not to be understood as a quantitative difference. The action of the Spirit of God manifests itself not only *to* the spirit of the individual but also *in* the person. One who has the Spirit has become a *pneumatikos* in opposition to the *sarkikos*, who does not possess the Spirit of God. That person has received something which the other has not received. First Corinthians 2:13 speaks about those who possess the Spirit of God and distinguishes them from those who have not received, i.e., do not possess, the Spirit.

It is important that we should beware of a mistake which unfortunately is often made, namely to understand this "possession" or this "absence" of the Spirit in terms of a quantitative differentiation. In other words, the possession of the Spirit of God is not an addition to human personality. It is not a new function which is added to the other functions of the mind. If we accept the traditional scheme which discerns three major functions in the human mind—intellect, will, and feeling—then we should never understand the "gift of the Spirit of God" as the addition of a fourth function, as if the difference between the *pneumatikos* and the *sarkikos* could be explained in terms of a greater or smaller number of mental functions.

This is a very common error, maybe not among trained theologians, but in what we may call popular piety. It may well result from the way in which the gospel is preached in mass evangelism. This type of gospel preaching follows a precise pattern: Its first

affirmation is that natural *anthropos* lacks something—faith. The second step is that people need to receive that which is lacking. Third, it proclaims that God offers to a person the faith which one cannot obtain through one's own merits. And finally, when a person accepts the gospel, one is said to have received the faith. In the same line, we may replace the word "faith" by the expression "the Spirit of God." The *sarkikos* is one who does not possess the Spirit of God, and this is understood as a great lack. This one is invited to receive the Spirit of God, and if the person accepts this offer, he or she is then said to possess the Spirit. Thus, the difference between *pneumatikos* and the *sarkikos* is a difference between the "haves" and the "have nots." In a certain sense, of course, this is true, provided however that we do not interpret this difference mathematically, that is, quantitatively. The absence of the Spirit of God is no reduction of the number of functions of the human mind; it's no psychological lack. Nor is the gift of the Spirit of God the addition of a new element to the human mind. All interpretations of the presence of the Spirit of God in the human spirit, in terms of "quantity" must be rigorously banned from our understanding and language. The absence or presence of the Spirit of God in the spirit of an individual is not a psychological difference.

We have already indicated that the possession of the Spirit of God is put in close relationship with knowledge, and we must now come back to this point in a more detailed way. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of knowledge and understanding. Once again, we refer to the classical passage in 1 Corinthians 2:8-10, "None of the rulers of this age understood this . . . . But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,' God has revealed to us through the Spirit."

Knowledge is a gift of the Spirit. I would like to add one or two biblical references. In 1 Corinthians 12:8, Paul says that knowledge is one of the many gifts of the Spirit of God to the body of the church for the common good: ". . . to another (is given) the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit . . ." In Romans 15:14, the apostle expresses his joy because the Christians in Rome are "filled with all knowledge." I need not labor the point any further.

The words *Yada-ginoskein* constantly come back throughout the Bible. It is important, therefore, that we should understand as exactly as possible what is meant by *Yada-ginoskein*, and especially what is not meant by these words. There is a type of knowledge which is usually referred to as "scientific knowledge," that is, the objective knowledge of reality in its manifold manifestations. This, indeed, is the most common significance which we attribute to the word "knowledge." I am, of course, aware of the fact that *Yada-ginoskein* has another meaning which might be defined as "existential knowledge," or "knowledge by participation in the reality of the object of knowledge." To this latter, we shall return. At this time we are more concerned with the more "scientific" definition of knowledge.

The important fact which we should clearly keep in mind when we speak about the Spirit of God producing knowledge in the human spirit is that this should not be understood as if a person under the influence of the Spirit of God would arrive at some sort of knowledge reserved to the *pneumatikos* and which would not be accessible to other people. In the modern, scientific sense of the word, there is no such thing as "esoteric knowledge" which is the exclusive possession of those who have the Spirit of God.

Scientific knowledge has its boundaries which, of course, are being broadened every day as research

progresses. What I am trying to say is that these boundaries of knowledge are identical for Christians and non-Christians alike. The amount of knowledge available to the human mind is the same for everyone. Faith does not subtract anything from it, nor does it add anything to it. A Christian doesn't know *more* than any other person when it comes to factual knowledge provided by scientific research.

Of course, some people possess greater knowledge than others. Some are more intelligent than others. Some are more interested than others. But these differences do not affect our main proposition: The scope of possible knowledge is identical for both the *pneumatikos* and the *sarkikos*. Whatever the Bible may say about a particular type of "knowledge" which is revealed by the Spirit of God to the human spirit, we should not interpret these biblical statements in a quantitative way of *more* or *less*.

We thus reach an important conclusion, both for the human being as knowing subject and for reality as the object of knowledge. The impact exercised by the Spirit of God upon the human spirit should never be interpreted in terms of a quantitative difference, neither in the psychological structuring of human personality nor in the area of objective knowledge. And yet, as we have seen, the Bible speaks repeatedly and clearly about "knowledge" as the gift of the Spirit. How, then, are we to understand the teaching of the Bible on this subject?

We come back to the other definition of knowledge, namely "existential knowledge," or "knowledge by participation." In what way is this type of knowledge different from objective knowledge? If the difference is not one of quantity or extension where does the difference lie? The difference resides in the fact that existential knowledge adds *meaning* to the object of knowledge.

Let me use an example. When I had completed high school I wasn't sure about my future. My wife and I had married early and three years after our wedding we had two girls. The babies made us very happy, of course, but caring for a family also meant quite a responsibility. For a while I seriously considered taking a position in business; one day I applied for a job in a carpet factory. Soon after I had sent in my application, I received a letter from the manager in which, among other things, I was asked to undergo an eye test to measure my color-sensitivity (which of course is very important in the manufacturing and sale of carpets!). Well, I submitted to this test and what happened? The doctor at the test center opened a little booklet, turned to page one, which had nothing but a number of colored dots neatly arranged in a circle. He asked: "What do you see?" Well, I saw a large number of dots, and that was all! He asked me: "Don't you see something else?" And I said, "No." Then he turned to page two. Here again, a great number of colored dots were printed on a surface limited by a circle, and again the man asked: "What do you see?" I looked more closely, trying to see something which obviously I was supposed to notice. But however hard I tried, I only saw dots! So, we went on to page three, and to page four, and then when he turned that page, I immediately said: "Five!" There it was! Only dots of course, but in such a combination of colors, that in the middle of those hundreds of dots, those in the center clearly fell together in the form of the figure five! Well, to complete the story, I further discovered the number eight, and that was all, with the result that I didn't get the job. A few months later I entered a theological college. So, you see, had it not been for a certain degree of color-blindness, I might not have entered the ministry.

But why do I tell you this story? I choose it because

it illustrates the point I am trying to make: Colored dots are just colored dots until, all at once, they acquire a new dimension, a new meaning. They become a number if the eye is sensitive to the interior disposal of the colors. Now this "additional dimension" is not the result of an increase in the number of dots, the *expansion of the object of knowledge*, as we tried to correct earlier, but the result of the *injection* into that given and unchanged field of observation of another element, which I call *meaning*.

My example is quite imperfect, of course, since it was taken from the physical world and therefore cannot be applied as such to the realm of the spirit. And yet, it helps us to understand the point with which we are concerned. Colored dots reveal figures to those eyes which have a high color sensitivity; likewise, reality. Both the knowing subject and the object of knowledge are loaded with particular meaning according to the existential insertion into reality of the inquiring mind. In the previous sentence I used the verb "load"—"to be loaded with." I chose this verb intentionally because "weight" is a good symbol for defining *meaning*. Indeed, "meaning" is the *weight* we attach to particular aspects of reality.

Summarizing our investigation, we could define the relation between the scientific knowledge and existential knowledge (that is, knowledge with the inclusion of meaning) in the following way. The human mind is constantly in search of reality. On the one hand, this means that we assemble all possible data of objective knowledge. As we have seen, in this search all people are in an equal position as knowing subjects. They are faced with an object of knowledge, the boundaries of which are identical for everyone, as the number and color of the dots in the color sensitivity book are the same for everyone. But the human mind, in raising the question, "What?", simultaneously raises

the question of meaning, of "the weight of the what," of the importance of that which is perceived as objectively existing. The Spirit of God is not an addition to, but a transformation of the spirit of a person. The way in which we have conducted our inquiry thus far now allows us to unmask one of the most subtle errors which has beguiled Christian thinking. This error consists, as we have already indicated, in conceiving the possession of the Spirit of God as an addition to the human spirit. Now, what are the dangers of such an interpretation? They are twofold and, hopefully, I shall be able to demonstrate that they are corollary.

1. If the possession of the Spirit of God is an addition to the human spirit, then obviously the life of the Spirit is lived in a *vase-clos* (closed vessel), i.e., in a realm of its own, unrelated to the other dimensions of the knowing subject and of the object of knowledge, which remains apart from that dimension of life which thus becomes an artificially created "spiritual realm." This is the type of piety which we can describe in an appropriate way as "Sunday religion." Here, the inspiration of the Spirit of God and his injunctions are introducing one to an area which is totally unrelated to the day-by-day course of life on earth.

There are many examples of this type of religious life. There is the example of the scientist who works all day in the laboratory and who at 5:30 p.m. hangs her white jacket on a coatrack, then goes out to another form of life on the assumption that there is no common denominator between the laboratory and the church. Or, there is the example of the medical doctor who objects to the reference made to science by his pastor, claiming that he did not come to church to get another lecture on science but to get a "spiritual message" (should I call it a "spiritual kick"?). We could multiply the examples endlessly, but we need not do so. These examples, and others we could give, all point

to the widespread tendency to separate the church and the world to the extent that they become two different worlds, it being understood, of course, that the "area of the Spirit" functions in its own right, quite independent from and unrelated to the other aspects of life.

2. The corollary error unavoidably claims the autonomy of the non-religious or non-spiritual realms of life. This claim of autonomy, uttered on behalf of any dimension of life, is just as devastating as the previous error. Having granted the influence of the Spirit of God in some remote corner of human life, the other functions of the human mind, whether intellect, will, or feeling, then claim their own autonomy. If for once we may use religious language, this may well be the most profound and therefore the most subtle manifestation of sin. It does at one and the same time pay tribute to God, after having localized him in an unimportant, remote corner of personality and reality, and also claims one's autonomy in the other areas of life which are, as we are aware, the only important ones which really matter in the long run. Now what the Bible teaches about the impact of the Spirit of God upon the human spirit is not an addition to it but its thorough-going and fundamental transformation. In Romans 12:2, Paul exhorts his readers: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

In other words, God is after the transformation of our being *as it is* and in its totality. God wants us to be changed in our intellect, in our will, and in our feeling. He wants to radically change our values. As a matter of fact, the indwelling of the Spirit means nothing less than the radical reevaluation of all human values. There is not a single element in the human personality which remains unaffected by this renewing power of the Spirit of God. So, unless I am entirely mistaken in my interpretation, this is precisely what is meant by the

biblical message of repentance. Repentance is the discovery of the failure, the *échec*, of all I am and all I do outside the determinative impact of the Spirit of God on the human spirit. The message of the Bible is not the announcement of the arrival of *Superman* upon the stage of world history, that is, the natural person *plus* something. It is the manifestation and realization of the *new person*, psychologically identical to the old person spiritually, but a new creation.

The gift of the Spirit of God adds not only meaning, but also power to the human spirit. The relationship between *meaning* and *power* is obvious. A simple observation of human conduct reveals unmistakable evidence that the absence of meaning always results in a paralyzing lack of power. Let us take just one example. Two people are getting married, but they really don't believe in the value of marriage. No sooner is the wedding over than they are faced with the inherent problems of sharing life together. They run into problems of communication, of sharing, of only doing for the partner what is required. The number of problems which they encounter is not greater than the number of problems encountered by a couple who really believes in marriage. So what happens? Lacking the understanding of the meaning of marriage, they simply split up, whereas the other couples go on wrestling with their problems. *The lack of meaning results in a lack of power.*

On the contrary, the discovery of a new meaning releases an unexpected and astonishing new energy. The biblical example of this, of course, is Peter. Before the outpouring of the Spirit of God, he was just a big mouth, a braggart, full of noise, signifying nothing. At the table of the Last Supper he cried out, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." (Luke 22:33) Hardly a few hours later, he had denied Jesus three times (Luke 22:54-62)—lack of meaning, lack

of faith. But then came Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit of God in the spirit of Peter, and the weak was made strong, the hesitant became steadfast, the frightened became unafraid, the coward was turned into the unwavering and the faithful follower of his Lord. The Spirit which is meaning or wisdom, *sophia*, is equally the Spirit of power, *dunamis*. These two qualifications of the Spirit of God relate to each other in an unbreakable unity.

The fact that the impact of the Spirit of God upon the human spirit has to do with meaning, rather than with the expansion of factual knowledge, produces a strange and unexpected situation. Whereas, on first thought we might be tempted to believe that the manifestation of a new meaning might result in the clarification of the ambiguity of human life, we soon discover that it rather adds a new element of ambiguity.

Meaninglessness may of course manifest itself for what it is, namely, no meaning. It is obvious that this is the problem with which many people are wrestling. They are aware of a sort of vacuum in their lives. Some seriously search for meaning; others have given up the attempt and go on living in a kind of silent desperation. Where no meaning is seen for what it is, the situation is simple and unambiguous. The problem, however, arises when the no meaning presents itself in the disguise of meaning, or, to use a number of images, when emptiness pretends to be fullness, when darkness takes the form of light, when the fake pretends to be genuine.

Let us briefly turn to two passages in the Bible. In John 8, we read the discussion between Jesus and the Jews about freedom and bondage. Jesus says a shocking thing. He tells the Jews they are slaves. This produces an immediate and violent reaction. "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to anyone." (v. 33) The situation of the

Jews, which in the "meaning framework" of Jesus, is seen as bondage, but is understood by those who are in that existential situation as freedom. This gives us a perfect example of what I have called ambiguity. It affects all situations where real freedom encounters not slavery-manifested-as-slavery, but slavery-experienced-and-understood-as-freedom. And then comes that statement of Jesus which throws full light on the ambiguity of the situation: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed," (v. 36) that is, not a slave who kisses his chains and takes his bondage for freedom, but free *indeed*, really free, genuinely liberated.

For my second illustration, I refer to one of the words from the cross: "Father, forgive them; *for they know not what they do*. (Luke 23:34) These words should not be understood as a reference to objective, factual knowledge, because on that level they knew exactly what they were doing. They were putting a man to death by crucifixion. None of those who were playing a responsible part in that tragic event would have denied that; and yet, when we move into the realm of meaning, the words of Jesus unmask their so-called knowledge for what it really was, that is to say *ignorance*. They pretended to know what they were doing, and yet they did not know! Their ignorance had taken on the form of knowledge.

We do not invent meaning; we *discover* it. It is there; we have no power over it. What do we "grasp" or "discover" in reading the Gospel stories? Why is it people read the Gospel their life long and yet do not "know" Jesus Christ?

When, therefore, we speak of the impact of the Spirit of God on the human spirit as the introduction of a new meaning, we should, in the first place, study very carefully the way in which this new meaning tends to increase rather than to diminish the ambiguity. As I indicated above, the opposition may present itself in



its true character, namely the opposition of good and evil-understood-as-evil; yet, this is rarely the case. Most of the time, the opposition is between good and evil-as-good; between light and darkness-as-light; between beauty and the ugly-as-beautiful; between knowledge and ignorance-as-knowledge.

In the second place, we should be constantly aware that in situations in which truth faces falsehood-as-truth, no real dialogue, no real communication, is possible. When a particular aspect about the reality of life is charged with a different meaning, then the conversation of two partners-in-dialogue is nothing else but a dialogue of sounds (a dialogue of deaf people). In the words of Luther, no talking, no preaching, no singing is of any avail. Communicating meaning, a new meaning, therefore, is beyond our human strength, as we all know from our Christian experience. We know that we must witness to the gospel, but we also know that nothing will get across to those to whom we bear the witness unless and until a power-other-than-ourselves will, as it were, fertilize our words, thus transforming that which is received as nothing more than a tale-told-by-a-fool into a meaning-giving and power-releasing creative word.

In all that we have said so far, we have done hardly more than break ground for our major thesis. We have tried to explain that the influence of the Spirit of God in the human spirit produces meaning and power. We have stated our conviction that it is only through existential participation that we can come to the understanding of this new meaning and power. We have seen that the possession of the Spirit of God by the human spirit is not an addition to human personality but its transformation, and we have noted how the emergence of a new meaning results in a new situation in which ambiguity is not removed, but rather increased. We must now raise the basic question: What is the content

of this new meaning? If the Spirit of God inflates a new understanding, a new vision of life, what is its specific content?

My answer is not better than many other answers. I only hope that it will not be worse. I would put it like this. By the illumination of the Spirit of God, the human spirit understands life as diversified unity. The realization of this new reality was potentially accomplished by Jesus Christ, and it is at present activated by the Spirit of God.

That the life of the human race manifests a great diversity is so obvious that I need not labor the point. All men and women are vaguely or clearly aware of the interior diversity within their own personalities, and even if they cannot state it in precise words, they know that there is a difference between thinking and willing; and that feeling is still different from these two. There is also a great diversity from one individual to the other; there are men and women, there are artists, philosophers, and social reformers. There are practice-oriented people and there are theory-oriented people. There are black people and there are white people. Both individually and socially, we discern an immense variety in human life.

The description of human life in these terms allows us to offer a definition of sin. In the first place, sin is everything which threatens the diversified unity of life. It's the introduction of dissonance in the harmony that life is intended to be. The devastating influence of sin manifests itself in two ways. It may attack the unity, either of a person as an individual, or of humanity as a whole. In that case, it produces a style of life in which the different elements either follow separate courses (a double life!) or clash. This was the experience described by Paul in Romans 7:24. "I want . . . , but I do not! I do . . . what I hate. I will . . . but I cannot. I act . . . but I don't understand what I do." This

agonizing antagonism brings him to the fringe of despair. "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Second, sin manifests itself in every negation of the rightful existence of the diversity. Sin occurs wherever diversity is ruled out. This happens when the white pretends that only his culture is valid and thus discards the culture of the black community. It happens when the people of the Northern Hemisphere discard African culture as unimportant, to be substituted as rapidly as possible by their culture. It happens when the male makes the female into an object of pleasure and thus deprives her of her most intimate personality.

Sin occurs when the musicians deny either the unity of the orchestra or the diversity of the instruments. In the latter, it is the violinist saying to the pianist, "Since you are not a violinist, you are not a musician and you don't belong to the orchestra." In the former, it's the violinist and the pianist and the flutist who all want to play their own piece of music. Both ignore the harmony of the orchestra, and what they produce is cacophony, not harmony.

In this distorted world, the reconciling work of Christ is the inauguration of a new reality, that is, a world in which things fall into their proper place, where unity is established and where the diverse elements are allowed to occupy their proper place. In Christ this new reality has been potentially established. Its actualization is the work of the Spirit of God. Its full realization still lies ahead, of course, so that at present we can neither fully grasp it nor completely realize it. Today we are living "between the times" of the potential and the actual.

We have not yet attained perfection, and the proof of the present state of imperfection is given by the life of the church itself, where these reality-threatening and destructive powers are still at work. Let me just indicate some of them.

1. Time and eternity constitute a diversified unity, but again and again, Christians either deny their unity or their diversity. Some Christians are so concerned with time they forget about eternity. Others are so concerned with eternity that they have written off the dimension of time as unimportant.

2. The social and the individual constitute a diversified unity, but some have become individualistic to the point that they could not care less about the social, while others are concentrating on the social to the extent of ignoring or rejecting the claims of the individual.

3. Praying and working constitute a diversified unity, but some Christians declare: "If you pray, don't work. If you take it into your own hands, you show a lack of confidence in the power of God." The others declare: "If I act, why should I pray?"

4. Mission and development constitute a diversified unity, but some want to be missionaries, preaching a spiritual gospel, baptizing converts and building churches. Others want to be volunteers in Third World development programs, use their technical skills and build factories and schools of agriculture.

But if we put ourselves at the highest possible spiritual level by an existential act of participation in the new life of the Spirit, we shall commit ourselves to the realization of the unity in diversity of the new reality. How this new life will be in its final completion, we don't know yet. In Paul's words, "We are still dependent on a mirror, and even so we look at a riddle." We know in part, but the fact that we do not yet know perfectly, nor are allowed to take the last step to that perfection when God will be all and in all, is neither important nor necessary, as long as we have found that manifestation of meaning for evaluating the immediate situation with which we are confronted here and now, and we receive that amount of power which is required for acting accordingly. This is what I understand by the

presence and prompting of the Spirit of God in the human Spirit.

### Notes

1. John Oman, *The Natural and the Supernatural* (Freeport, New York: BFL Communications Books for Libraries, 1972), p. 109.

## The Gifts of the Spirit in the Church

*Peter Stephens*

Had this Institute been held ten years ago it is unlikely that there would have been a paper on "The Gifts of the Spirit in the Church." It is the charismatic movement in the church that has brought this subject to the fore, and what I have to say will, I hope, lead into a discussion of that later. Nevertheless, my immediate concern is to focus attention on two or three critical chapters of the New Testament, chapters 12 and 14 (and to a lesser extent chapter 13) in the First Letter to the Corinthians. I want us to see them at first in their own light, rather than in the light of questions which you and I want to put to them.

### I. Paul

Paul appears to face a situation in which some people have certain spiritual gifts (*pneumatika*), and moreover set a very high value on those gifts. It is in response to this situation in which he sees perils for the Corinthian church that Paul engages in his only sustained discussion of spiritual gifts. However, such gifts are not limited to Corinth, nor indeed to churches founded by Paul, nor to letters written by him. They exist in the church at Rome, which he did not found. (Romans 12) They are referred to in 1 Peter 4:10, which (I think we may still hold) he did not write.

It is important to note the words which Paul uses to describe these spiritual gifts. He begins by referring to *pneumatika*, which is probably the word used by the Corinthians. But he very quickly uses other words, in particular *charisma* (grace gift) and *diakonia* (service). Paul seems to be the one who introduces the word *charisma* into theology;<sup>1</sup> it shows at once the way he understands spiritual gifts. An instructive use of this same word is seen in Romans 6:23, where he says: "The wages of sin is death, but the *charisma* of God is