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RESPONSE TO PAPER

"AN APPROACH TO THE CURRENT CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT"

by David Ewert

The purpose of this response is not to review the Paper but to focus attention on certain issues for further discussion. I find myself in basic agreement with the scriptural presentation as well as with the suggested guidelines in dealing with the current Charismatic Movement. It should be pointed out that Br. Ewert's assignment did not call for a general treatment of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, but for a discussion of the gifts of the spirit - esp. those gifts which are usually identified with the Charismatic Movement in our day. What are some of our problems and concerns?

1. It appears that we often have a problem of semantics. Since all the references in the Gospels and in Acts concerning the "Baptism with the Spirit" refer to an historic event (Pentecost) and the only reference to the Epistles (I Cor. 12:13) describes a corporate initiation into Christ, would it not be advisable, if not mandatory, to eliminate this term from our vocabulary when describing personal experiences?
2. How do we explain the phenomenon of a "^{renewal} crisis experience" subsequent to conversion in the terminology and framework of the New Testament?
3. How is the "gift of discernment" (which is also a charismabn) exercised in establishing the authenticity and genuineness of the other charismata? What criteria or tests can be applied to expose "fake healing" and other spurious gifts?
4. What is the relation of the charismata to Christian ethics? Can the former be genuine when the latter is virtually non-existent?
5. In the modern charismatic movement "speaking in tongues" is generally accepted as the sign of the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit". Is this scriptural? Paul states that all Christians at Corinth had been baptized by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13) yet he denies that they all have the gift of tongues (I Cor. 12:30). Jesus Christ, who was uniquely baptised with the Holy Spirit never spoke in tongues according to the New Testament record.
6. By some people in the charismatic movement "speaking in tongues" is regarded as the manifestation of a deeper spirituality, or a higher degree of sanctification. Is there any scriptural evidence for this view? On the two occasions where this phenomenon is described in Acts (after Pentecost) it is a sign of true salvation, not sanctification. (cf. Acts. 10:46; 19:6) It would thus

appear to be related primarily to the infancy of the Christian life.

7. According to Br. Ewert the main thrust of I. Cor. 14 is to relegate tongues to private use. In his commentary on I Corinthians, Werner de Boor contends that it is more proper to refer to this phenomenon as "praying in tongues". The benefits derived from this experience appear to be restricted to the individual's personal devotional life. Would "tongues" be any problem, if this principle would be observed? C. Stacey Woods, for many years General Secretary of Inter-Varsity International, makes this observation: "I know of no instances in Inter-Varsity around the world where the practice of tongues has brought more blessing, more conversions, more effective witness on the campus. The contrary has very often been true".
8. According to the Paper, certain spiritual needs have surfaced through the charismatic movement. When Paul discovered a deficiency in the experience of the Disciples of Ephesus, he did not give them a discourse on the Holy Spirit, but pointed them to Jesus. (Acts 19:4) Is not this the remedy for the weaknesses in our churches today? An emphasis on the centrality of Christ in our theology, a confession of Christ's lordship in every area of life, and a renewed love for Him and his Kingdom will also produce Spirit-filled Christians in our day after the pattern of the New Testament.