

The Holy Spirit and the Local Congregation

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Our theme is the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the local church, and for a biblical lead on this we naturally turn to 1 Corinthians 12-14, the classical passage on the subject. It is a passage which cannot but make painful reading for thoughtful evangelical Christians today.

Now why do I say that? Because Corinthian public worship, as there described, was such a chaotic uproar? Because of the apparent unseemliness of services in which, as it seems, many talked at once, some in ecstatic gibberish, and women screeched to be heard above the general noise (cf. 14: 26-35)? Because of the amount of rivalry and self-display that there was in connection with leading the prayers, and singing, and preaching? Do I mean that it is painful to contemplate a situation in which such disorders, liturgical and moral and spiritual, had become a matter of course? No, I do not mean that. What I mean is that these chapters make painful reading because, whatever evils they confront us with, they do in fact show us a local church in which the Holy Spirit was working in power. Reading this passage makes one painfully aware of the degree of impoverishment and inertia which prevails in our churches at the present time. If our only reaction to reading these chapters is to preen ourselves and feel glad because our churches are free from Corinthian disorders, we are fools indeed. I fear that many of our churches today are orderly simply because they are asleep; and with some one fears it is the sleep of death. After all, it is no great thing, is it, to have order in a cemetery! The Corinthian disorders were due to an uncontrolled overflow of Holy Ghost life. The real and deplorable carnality and immaturity of the Corinthian Christians, which Paul censures so strongly elsewhere in this epistle, must not blind us to the fact that they were enjoying the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a way in which we today are not.

At the start of the epistle, Paul had written (1: 4): "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift . . ." This was not empty politeness. Paul had not got his tongue in his cheek; he meant what he said. The Corinthians really had been "enriched" by Christ in the manner described. Consequently, when they met for the fellowship of worship they brought with them gifts and contributions in abundance. Whereas congregations today too often gather in a spirit of aimless and unexpectant apathy, scarcely aware that they come to church to receive, let alone to give, the Corinthians met with eagerness and excitement, anxious to share with their fellow-believers the "manifestation of the Spirit" (12: 7) that was theirs. "When ye come together", wrote Paul (14: 26), "every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine (some instruction, NEB), hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation". Public worship at Corinth was the reverse of a drab routine; every service was an event, for every worshipper came ready and anxious to contribute something that God had given him. In the words quoted, Paul is not (*pace* our Brethren friends) prescribing an order for worship, making a rule that Christian worship always and everywhere should take the form of an American tea, where every guest brings something for the common pool; he is just describing the actual state of affairs in one particular church, and giving directions, not for

creating it, but for handing it once it had arisen. The state of affairs itself, however, was the spontaneous creation of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, when the Corinthians met for worship the presence and power of God in their midst was an experienced reality. There was a sense of God among them that struck awe into men's souls, as at Jerusalem in the early days (cf. Acts 5: 11-13), and gave every word that was spoken in God's name heart-searching force. Hence Paul—who, remember, knew the church, having watched over the first eighteen months of its life, and could therefore speak of it at first-hand—could write to them almost casually words that would sound staggering, indeed fatuous, if spoken to a congregation today. “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place”, Paul declared, “and all . . . prophesy” (that is, announce the message of God in intelligible speech—whether by direct inspiration or biblical exposition we need not here determine), “and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you (among you, R.V.) of a truth” (14: 23-25). Can you imagine that being seriously said to any local congregation of your acquaintance today? Yet Paul could say it to the Corinthians in a matter-of-fact manner, without the least sense of unreality, as if it were unquestionably true. How was this possible? It could only have been possible if in fact the statement was one whose truth both Paul and the Corinthians had repeatedly proved in experience. This alone can explain why Paul made it, and why he expected the Corinthians to accept it, as he clearly does. Evidently, then, it had happened more than once at Corinth, and no doubt elsewhere in Paul's experience, that a casual visitor, coming in by accident to a church service, had heard all that was spoken as a message from God to his heart, and had gone out a changed man. Nor should we be surprised at this; for the same thing has happened many times since Paul's day under revival conditions, when the sense of God's presence among His people has been strong.

Granted that the Corinthian disorders were grievous, yet the Corinthian church was being carried along by a great surge of divine life. Disorder, as such, is demonic, and not to be desired, but it remains a question whether Holy Ghost life, with all its exuberance and risk of disorder, is not preferable to spiritual deadness, neat and tidy though that deadness may be. It is true that there is no problem of disease or malfunctioning where death reigns, but is lifelessness therefore the ideal? Three centuries ago, in his *Discourse of Spiritual Gifts*, John Owen reviewed the Puritan revival (for revival it truly was) and frankly acknowledged the extravagance and misuse of spiritual endowments that had disfigured it. “By some, I confess”, he wrote, “they” (that is, “the eminent abilities of a number of private Christians”) “have been abused; some have presumed on them; . . . some have been puffed up with them; some have used them disorderly in churches, and to their hurt; some have boasted . . . all which miscarriages also befell the primitive churches”. And then he went on to say: “And I had rather have the order, rule, spirit, and practice of those churches which were planted by the apostles, with all their troubles and disadvantages, than the carnal peace of others in their open degeneracy from all these things” (*Works* ed. T. Russell, Vol. IV, p. 359). Frankly, and before God I say it, so had I, and I hope my readers feel the same. But it cannot be denied that if one thinks as Owen does, 1 Corinthians 12-14 makes, as we said, painful reading.

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We ought to stop here for a moment and ask ourselves why it is that we know so little of the power of the Spirit in our churches today. Both Testaments tell us that to enjoy a rich

outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a characteristic privilege of the New Testament Church. For a church to lack the Spirit's powerful working in its corporate life is therefore by biblical standards unnatural, just as heresy is; and this unnatural state of affairs can only be accounted for in terms of human failure. The New Testament has a phrase for the failure in question: we may, it says, *quench* the Spirit by resisting or undervaluing His work, and by declining to yield to His influence (cf. Acts 7: 51; Heb. 10: 29). The image is of putting out a fire by pouring water on it. It is noteworthy that in 1 Thess. 5: 19 the words "quench not the Spirit" are flanked, on the one hand, by exhortations to follow the good, and to rejoice, pray, and give thanks, at all times, and, on the other hand, by warnings against disregard for "prophesyings" (the messages of God, however and by whomsoever declared), failure to discriminate, and evil involvements. It is natural to suppose that these things were connected in Paul's mind, and that he wished his readers to gather that heedlessness of these exhortations and warnings at any point was likely to quench the Spirit, not only in the Christian's personal life but also in the common life of the church. It is noteworthy too that while one may effectively put out a fire by dousing it, one cannot start it burning again simply by stopping pouring water; it has to be lighted afresh. Similarly, when the Spirit has been quenched it is beyond man's power to undo the damage he has done: he can only cry to God in penitence to revive His work.

It seems undeniable that evangelicals today inherit a situation in which the Holy Spirit has been quenched. Why and how this has happened since the last widespread movement of the Spirit over the country, in 1859, is far too broad and complex a question to try to answer here, though the general devaluing of the Bible and its Gospel since that time has plainly had a great deal to do with it. But we need to ask ourselves whether we who down the years have stuck to the "old paths" of evangelical faith in connection with the Bible and the Gospel may not ourselves be guilty of contributing to our present barrenness in other ways, by our own Spirit-quenching attitudes and inhibitions on the practical level, which impede and stifle the Spirit's work in our congregations. Here are some specific questions which it seems to me that we who are clergy need to put to ourselves:

Are we not quenching the Spirit by *clericalism*? By that I do not mean the priestly pretensions of the heirs of the Oxford Movement, but rather the subtler clericalism which proceeds on the assumption that apart from the Sunday School all spiritual ministry is the clergyman's preserve, and which therefore declines to encourage lay initiative in this department. How much responsibility do we give our laymen in connection with evangelism? visiting? prayer meetings? home meetings? How often do we ask our lay readers to preach? How much help do we give them to develop their preaching gifts? Do we train our laymen as conscientiously as we train our curates? Do we treat our lay readers as colleagues in the ministry? How often do we have them in to a staff meeting? It is irony indeed when the foremost critics of prelacy in the diocese appear as last-ditch defenders of it in the parish! We need to examine ourselves.

Again, are we not quenching the Spirit by *formalism*? By that I do not mean the blatant formalism of some ritualists, but the subtler formalism which assumes that Prayer Book services as set, simply and straightforwardly read, must under all circumstances constitute spiritual worship, and so ignores the possibility that some may not understand them and neglects to teach their meaning and to train Christians in the Prayer Book way of worship. How hearty and intelligent is the worship of our own congregation? How much Prayer Book teaching have they had from us during the past three years? How much do we propose to give them during the coming twelve months? How much thought do we and they regularly give

together to the problems of ordering worship—the problem, for instance, of making the two sacraments genuinely congregational acts? There may be more of the evil of formalism in the use of prescribed forms into which people do not enter than in the use of prohibited ones into which they do! Here, too, we need to examine ourselves.

Again, do we not quench the Spirit by *conventionality*? By this I do not mean the unprincipled and superficial conventionality that follows all the latest fashions in churchmanship and theology, just to keep “with it”, whatever “it” may be, but the subtler conventionality which, however much times change, remains wedded to the way things were said and done about a hundred years ago and refuses to face the possibility that these ways may need amending today if we are to make contact with people at the point where they now are.

And do we not quench the Spirit by *complacency*?—not the blatant complacency of those who refuse to allow that anything in the Church is really wrong, but the subtler complacency of simply accepting as normal a situation in which nothing is happening and contentedly jogging along in it year after year. Once more, we need to examine ourselves—for these attitudes in the clergy will certainly quench the Spirit, as they will frustrate the congregation, in any local church, and will effectively keep us from seeking the revival which we desperately need. But I must not pursue this line of thought further at present.

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The New Testament witness to the Holy Spirit is summed up for us in the creedal phrase, “the Lord and giver of life”. He is “the Lord”, a divine Person, free and sovereign, who as Vicar of Christ on earth (for there is no better phrase than that to describe Him) exercises Christ’s authority and continues His ministry of teaching and guiding His people. The lordship of the Spirit resolves into the lordship of the Christ whose Spirit He is. And He is “the giver of life”, who brings us to the new birth, who changes us from glory to glory, who brings forth in the regenerate the fruit of Christ-like character, who strengthens and equips for service, and who will one day, at the Saviour’s word, raise the dead. I propose now to speak of His work as Lord and Life-Giver in connection with the local church, first as *creating* it, second as *animating* it, third in its *order*, fourth in its *growth*.

(i) *The work of the Holy Spirit in creating the local church.*

The work whereby the Spirit creates the local congregation is identical with the work whereby He creates the Church universal, of which each local church is a visible manifestation. What work is that? It is the work of causing sinful men to hear and respond to the divine summons to repentance and faith in Christ, and of uniting them savingly to the crucified and risen Lord. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul speaks first of the Spirit as the One who leads men to faith (“no man can say that Jesus is the Lord”—the primitive baptismal confession—“but by the Holy Ghost”, verse 3), and later on of the Spirit as grafting all who believe into Christ (“by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”, verse 13). No doubt it is right to find in the latter passage an implicit reference to Christ as the baptizer, and to understand the words as in effect an exposition of the promise, “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mt. 3: 11). Yet the Spirit is not a passive element, to be manipulated, like the water in water-baptism; He must be thought of as the agent, rather than the instrument, of the Saviour’s action. In this verse, Paul uses the imagery of both sacraments (“by one Spirit are

we all *baptized* . . . and have all been made to *drink* into one Spirit”) to denote the single reality to which both point; which is, precisely, saving union with Christ.

This union is a creative act on God’s part. “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5: 17, RSV). It is mysterious in character, for it is a fresh putting forth of the power that raised Jesus from the dead. The risen Jesus is at present out of our sight, and neither His life nor that which Christians enjoy in union with Him is open to human inspection. “Your life is *hid* with Christ in God” (Col. 3: 3). But this vitalizing union with Christ is none the less real for being mysterious, as appears from its transforming effects. From man’s standpoint, it is nothing less than a new birth, a regenerating act of God whereby, as Christ explained to Nicodemus, one is born afresh of the Spirit in the course of coming to faith in Jesus as one’s divine Saviour (Jn. 3: 3-15). Its effect is to make it natural—one might almost say, instinctive—for the future to believe God’s truth, to eschew sin, to love God and His children, and to fulfil His commands (see 1 Jn. 2: 29, 3: 9, 4: 7, 5: 1). Those born again are indwelt by the Spirit, as branches in the vine which is Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit grows in them. Analysed christologically (as always by Paul), this new birth consists of union with Christ in His death and resurrection, leading to fellowship with Him henceforth in His risen life (see Rom. 6: 1-13; Col. 2: 12—3: 4). Some speak of the Church as the extension of the incarnation, but the basic biblical objection to that is surely that it locates our union with Christ at the wrong point. Biblically, if the Church is the extension of anything, it is the extension of the resurrection. Union with Christ in His death—co-crucifixion (Gal. 2: 20, 6:14; Rom. 6: 6) and co-burial (Rom. 6: 3; Col. 2: 12), as Paul puts it—means, first, that our guilt is gone (“he that hath *died* is justified from sin”, Rom. 6: 7, RV—as the NEB puts it, “a dead man is no longer answerable for his sin”); second, that our former life under the rule of sin is gone, and a new life of fellowship with Christ and righteousness, discontinuous with the old life, has begun. (“Reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead indeed unto sin* . . . sin shall not have dominion over you”, Rom. 6: 11, 14.) For resurrection with Christ means effective deliverance from slavery to sin to live in the Spirit, being conformed to Christ ever more thoroughly in mind and heart, attitude and outlook. By His Spirit, Christ Himself is not merely with us, to direct us, but in us, to make us observe His directions; so Paul writes: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*” (Gal. 2: 20). This is what union with Christ means; and it is the Spirit who is the agent of it all.

Union with Christ implies union with all others who are Christ’s. In Christ, my fellow-believer is my brother, for we both belong to the same family. More than that, he is in a real sense part of me. Because we are both vitally linked to our common Saviour, we have a vital link with each other—we are, in Paul’s phrase, “members one of another” (Eph. 4: 25); as the NEB puts it, “all of us are the parts of one body”. On this foundation rests the New Testament teaching about God’s covenant people, the Church. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul portrays this double union—with Christ, and in Christ with each other—by no less than four “organic” metaphors for the Church: the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the new man in Christ, the temple. Three of these images point directly to the Church’s subjection to Christ: He is the body’s head, the bride’s husband, and the cornerstone of the temple (head of the arch, fixing the rest in place). (See Eph. 1: 22f., 5: 23ff., 2: 20ff.) Three of the images point to the Church’s destiny in Christ: the body, the new man, and the temple, *grow* towards a predestined perfection (see 4: 12-16, 2: 21). And three of the images point to the new relationship of mutual involvement and dependence which binds the regenerate together in Christ. In the body, all are members of one another; in the new man, racial distinctions (and sexual and social distinctions too, Gal. 3: 28) are transcended (2: 15f.); in the temple, the stones are fitly framed together” for firm integration (2: 21). From these passages we learn

that in and under Christ Christians are called to “fit in” with each other, to feel for one another, and to stand together in love, loyalty, and care.

Now all this applies directly at the local level, for the local church is no more—and no less—than an outcrop, a microcosm, of the Church universal. Paul applies the body-image to local church life in 1 Cor. 12 and Rom. 12, just as he does to the life of the universal Church in Ephesians. “Ye are the body of Christ,” he tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12: 27). The local church, then, must not be thought of as a club, a mere human organization, but as a divine creation, a sample of the Church universal, called to glorify Christ by being an exemplary sample of the work that He is doing in different places all over the world. It is better not to speak at all of church “members”, for in the New Testament “members” are not subscribers to a society, but parts of a body, and it is not the church that has “members”, but Christ. The right to belong to the local church rests on the claim to belong to Christ, and on that alone. If we go, as we should, with modern ecumenical theology in emphasizing the supernatural status of the local church, as the body of Christ visibly exhibited, then we should let this emphasis lead us—as, unhappily, it does not always lead ecumenical theology—to a renewed insistence that everyone who links himself to the outward fellowship *must be born again*; for only the regenerate are members of Christ.

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(ii) *The work of the Holy Spirit animating the local church.*

As an outcrop and sample of the Church universal, created in Christ by the Holy Spirit of God, the local church has its own proper life to live—a life lived on very different principles and for very different ends from the life of the world around. The church’s life, we are told, must be one of *love*—a life of gratitude to God, in which we seek to imitate our Saviour by love towards all men, and particularly those who are both His brethren and ours. “The members”, wrote Paul, “should have the same care one for another” (1 Cor. 12: 25). Specifically, this life of love is to be a life of *fellowship*, whereby we share (for that is what “fellowship” really means) the good things that God has given us individually. No churchman is self-sufficient; we all need each other and what God has given each other; we must learn, therefore, to express our love in the give-and-take of Christian fellowship. And this loving fellowship must take the form of *ministry—diakonia* in Greek, literally in English “service”. “By love *serve* one another” (Gal. 5: 13). In this basic sense, the church’s ministry is a vocation to which every Christian is called.

It is for this life of ministry, in which every part of the body is called to make its own contribution (Eph. 4: 16), that God gives *gifts*. Gifts and ministry are in this sense correlative; God gives each man his gift, not primarily for himself, but for others, to be used for their good in the fellowship of the body’s life (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 7). The body-image provides on each occasion the context in which Paul’s teaching about spiritual gifts is set out (see Rom. 12: 4ff.; 1 Cor. 12: 4ff; Eph. 4: 8ff.). We may summarize this teaching in the form of answers to four questions.

(1) *What are gifts?* Their names give clues to their nature. Eph. 4: 8 calls them Christ’s *domata* (presents). In 1 Cor. 12 (five times) and 1 Pet. 4: 10 they are referred to as *charismata*, gifts springing from divine *charis* (grace). In 1 Cor. 12: 1 they are termed *pneumatika*, literally “spirituals”—that is, powers from the Spirit (cf. “distributions of the Holy Ghost”, Heb. 2: 4, RV, margin). 1 Cor. 12: 6 calls them *energeiai*, “operations”; the

verse after terms them “the *manifestation* of the Spirit”, implying that by their use the divine life of God’s people is exhibited both to themselves and others. But what, essentially, are they? Is there a common formula covering such varied abilities and activities as those listed in (say) 1 Cor. 12: 28-30? Yes, there is; it is this: a spiritual gift is *an ability to express and communicate in some way one’s knowledge of Christ and His grace*. It is not a mere natural endowment, though usually it is given through the sanctifying of a natural endowment. Spiritual gifts have a spiritual content: they display the riches of Christ, by manifestation of something received from Him. All forms of service which do this involve an exercise of spiritual gifts, for profit (1 Cor. 12: 7) and edifying (cf. Eph. 4: 12, 16).

(2) *What kinds of gifts are there?* Very many; there is no reason to treat even 1 Cor. 12: 28-30 as an exhaustive list, and it is doubtful whether in principle such a list could be compiled. Paul compares the variety of gifts in the body of Christ to the variety of functions in the human body, where ear, eye, hand, foot, and many inelegant organs, all have a part to play in the healthy functioning of the whole (1 Cor. 12: 15-25). Gifts vary in value, according to whether they give more or less help to others; thus, speaking the word of God in intelligible terms is better than speaking it in a tongue. “Covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor. 12: 31; cf. 14: 12-19). What are the best gifts? Clearly, ministries of the word: wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, power to teach and apply truth, the gifts that qualify men to be apostles, preachers, evangelists, and pastors. In 1 Cor. 12: 28ff., these gifts are mentioned first; in Eph. 4: 11, they alone are in view. But the list in 1 Cor. 12 mentions other gifts, fitting men for other forms of service: extraordinary gifts like healing and miracles, more ordinary ones like “governments” (skill in administration!) and “helps” (the Greek word suggests the idea of “taking over”). These, though unspectacular, are as much needed in the church’s life as preaching abilities, and so are many more forms of service not listed here at all. In Rom. 12: 6ff., Paul’s charge to his readers to use their gifts starts, as one might expect, with the ministry of the word, but it soon broadens (verses 8ff.), without any sense of a change of subject, into a general plea for the exercise of Christian graces towards others—showing mercy, kindness, consideration, hospitality, and so on. For in fact to show these qualities in serving others is to enjoy the privilege of exercising one’s spiritual gift no less really than a clergyman does when he preaches. No doubt “gifts” and “graces” are distinct in idea, but in practice much of our employment of the former is simply an exercising of the latter, informally or spontaneously, in giving such help as we can, according to men’s needs.

(3) *Which persons have gifts?* Every single Christian, says Paul (Rom. 12: 6; 1 Cor. 12: 7; Eph. 4: 7, 16). All can serve others in some way, and all are called to do so; and such service, whatever its form, falls under the definition of an exercise of gifts. This is a doctrine of the ministry of all believers. Peter teaches the same: “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4: 10).

(4) *What purpose have gifts?* Edification, as we saw; which means, literally, a “building up” of Christians, leading them forward towards their ultimate perfection. The reason why Paul views speaking in tongues as a comparatively insignificant gift is because, at most, it only edifies the speaker, whereas comprehensible utterance of God’s word edifies the whole church (1 Cor. 12: 4). The public exercise of gifts must always be regulated “unto edifying” (14: 26).

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(iii) *The work of the Spirit in the local church's order.*

Order (*taxis*) means arrangement; disorder means lack of arrangement. Order is required in local church life (1 Cor. 14: 40); but of what sort, and to what end? The purpose of order, as Paul explains it (cf. 14: 26f.), is to allow gifts to be exercised to edification. Church order is meant, not to stifle gifts, but to secure a situation in which all gifts may be used to the best advantage. We need to ask ourselves: does our existing church order—by which I mean, not primarily our Prayer Book uniformity, but the overall pattern of congregational life—have this effect in our local churches? Our Brethren friends would shake their heads at this point, for their constant complaint is that the Church of England has a “one-man ministry”, which represses gifts among the unordained by removing all room for their exercise. I venture to say that if this is really true, it is a damning indictment, and we need not look any further to find out what it is that is quenching the Spirit in these days; but I am also bold to say that it ought never to be possible to accuse an Anglican parish church of having a “one-man ministry”. And I do not mean by that that all churches should have one or more curates! I mean, simply, that the structure of their congregational life should be such as to call forth and utilize all the gifts of all the congregation. Thus, others beside the clergy have God-given gifts of wisdom, knowledge, speech, prayer; what note are we taking of these gifts in our own congregations, and what arrangements do we make for their responsible and edifying exercise? Others beside the clergy have gifts of pastoral care; what responsibilities in this field do we delegate to persons so gifted among our own flocks? The Church of Scotland has its lay eldership, many evangelical Free Churches have a pastoral diaconate, Methodism in the days of its greatest spiritual effectiveness had its class leaders; what have we? What provision is made in our churches to meet the need which has been met at different times and in different places by the evangelical society, the class meeting, the group Bible study, the cottage meeting, the revival fellowship meeting, and similar institutions—the need, that is, for a decentralized fellowship of prayer, study, testimony, and evangelism, in groups so small as to admit of no “passengers”, but encouraging each member to make a full contribution of all that he has to give? Is it not a happy sign that in several churches recently there has been a retreat from the pattern of more and more weeknight meetings “up at the church”, and a serious attempt to rediscover the—surely healthier—pattern of more small meetings in people’s homes? This, at least, is clear: that where spiritual gifts are neglected and inhibited, the local church fails to fulfil its calling to be the body of Christ in action in the place where it is set, and effectively quenches the Spirit by ingratitude for what He has given; and therefore we need constantly to seek His guidance in developing a pattern of congregational life in which all gifts may be used to the full. The right pattern will vary from church to church, and from one year to another in the same church, and only the Spirit, who gives the gifts, can show us the way to order each church’s life here and now so that His gifts will find full employment.

(iv) *The work of the Holy Spirit in the local church's growth.*

As the human body grows and keeps fit through exercise, so the local church will advance towards maturity through the faithful exercise of spiritual gifts within its fellowship; and as it grows inwardly stronger, so its outreach will become more effective. But in applying this truth we have to start from where we are. We have to ask: how can we foster gifts in Christian people? And the answer is: through feeding them with the word of grace till their heartfelt cry is, “What can I do for my Lord? how much can I do for the One who did so much for me?” When men and women, clergy with their laity and laity with their clergy, are constantly taking this question back to God in prayer, then spiritual gifts become apparent, as

the Spirit's way of indicating His answer to the question in each case. But how far the clergy and laity of the Church of England—even, as it seems, evangelical clergy and laity of the Church of England—are from such a state of heart! We need grace to be discontented with things as they are, grace to refuse comfort till God has changed them, grace to lay hold of God and not let Him go till by His mercy the power and gifts of the Spirit are shed abroad abundantly again. Then God's work will be revived, and our long-stunted churches will at last grow. May that day come soon!

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