

interpreted otherwise later in this section ~cf. 12:31; 14:1, 13).

Chapter Three

UNIFIED NATURE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS: A SPIRITUAL BODY

12:12-31a

A. DECLARATION OF UNITY (12:12-13)

12For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

12:12-Christ, a many-membered body. Having differentiated between spiritual gifts and non-Christian phenomena (12:1-31, and having shown the unified origin of widely varying spiritual gifts (12:4-11), Paul now shifts the focus to the singular organism through which spiritual gifts function. To refer collectively to Christians under the figure of a human body is a favorite Pauline analogy (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; Col. 1:18, 22). It is the body figure that dominates 12:12-31a, where the writer teaches several important lessons regarding the duties of various members.

Creation of the body comes into view first of all jvv. 12-13~, and in His description the Holy Spirit, through Paul, makes a point of declaring the unity of this body. Actually, the purpose of the twelfth verse illustrates the way a group of such varied

individuals 12:4-11 can constitute one organic whole. The resolving of this seeming paradox comes from a parallel in everyday life, the human body. Though the body is one organic whole, its various parts perform widely differing functions, so that no two parts of the body are exactly the same.

A threefold occurrence of "body" in verse 12 generates intense interest in this organism. In each case, it refers to the physical body as commonly known by everyone. This physical body is one entity despite the many components that make it up. Conversely, it is also true that all the segments of the physical frame, though they be overwhelming in number, still blend together into one structure. This visible counterpart of a spiritual reality demonstrates effectively that "oneness" does not necessarily exclude multiplicity, nor does the "many" rule out the "one." In other words, a unified spiritual company characterized by wide variety in its individual parts is a valid possibility. Christians gifted in extremely diverse ways can be, and have become, parts of one organic whole without losing their diversification.

This body unit includes all Christians, as Paul notes initially in verse 12 and confirms with assurance in verse 13. He reveals the unifying life that combines Christians of all generations and places them into one body in the closing part of verse 12: "so also is Christ." It is involvement in His personality that supplies the cohesive force to this conglomeration of individuals. But this involvement requires further elaboration.

The following aptly describes the nature of the involvement. 'It is with Christ spiritually as it is with the human body

physically. One life principle and true personality pervade each of them. Whatever affects any member of the spiritual body affects Christ, for He lives His life through the body jcf. Acts 9:5). When a spiritual gift operates through any member of the body, it is a manifestation of Christ's life at work, indwelling the collective body through the person of the Holy Spirit. In some mysterious way this organism operates in widely scattered areas from generation to generation as an exhibition of the resurrected Christ. He assuredly dwells within each individual member of the body (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, but more significantly in this passage, He indwells the collective body that is His church and supplies to that body a pervading unity that nothing can destroy. This body possesses one life, and that life belongs to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

12:13-How the body gets members and puts life into them. Verse 13 proves the likeness of Christ to a human body stated in verse 12. Though His name is not in verse 13, the Holy Spirit, with whom He is one *cf.* 12:4-5, replaces Him, as the Spirit's agency in constituting and permeating the one body of Christ is delineated. One factor is clear-cut: the same unity that pervades the physical body jv. 12) also characterizes the spiritual body ("one Spirit ... one body ... one Spirit," v. 13). The appropriateness of this principle as a remedy to the Corinthian schisms X1:12-17; 12:25) goes without saying.

Another feature that marks both physical and spiritual bodies is the allinclusiveness of their scope.' No member is excluded from being a part in the physical body; the same must be, and is, true of its spiritual counterpart ("we all ... we all," v. 13~. Not one single person in Christ is excluded from

participation in His body. Verse 13 talks about a body that is all-encompassing and universal. Religious and racial backgrounds are of no consequence when including in or excluding from this body ("Jews or Greeks," v. 13~. Neither does it matter to what social stratum a person may belong ("slaves or free," v. 13~. The only prerequisite is a genuine faith in Jesus Christ as Savior (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18, 21-24~.

Verse 13 makes two informative statements about this body, one having to do with its formation and the other with its inner life.

1. Formation of the body of Christ: "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Including himself along with his readers, Paul by this statement marks the divine action whereby all Christians at the moment of conversion become parts of Christ's body. Baptism in this instance has no direct connection with the ordinance of the same name, but looks at a spiritual act well known to both Old and New Testament traditions.' It has roots as far back as the words of Moses in Numbers 11:29: "Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" The prophet Isaiah likewise looked forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit to be "poured out upon us from on high" (Isa. 32:15. He also recorded God's promise, "I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring" (Isa. 44:3. All these were promises to God's earthly people Israel.

The most notable Old Testament instance of this teaching is Joel 2:28-29 where, along with other promises, the prophet quotes the Lord God as predicting, "I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind." It was because of such written anticipations

as these that various Jewish sects of the intertestamental period, such as the one at Qumran whose teachings have been discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls, had definite expectation of a coming age of the Spirit. It was also in this light that John the Baptist by divine revelation came preaching, "He who is coming after me ... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" Matt. 3:11; cf. Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33.

The Lord Jesus also spoke frequently about a future coming of the Spirit: "This He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39. Later, on the evening before His crucifixion in a discourse preparing His disciples for His departure and the beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost, He extended to the church some of the benefits of that promise to Israel by adding further to His disciples' expectation: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you" (John 14:16-17). Just a few days later, the Savior once again kindled His followers' hopes by reiterating the Baptist's promise: "For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).^

A climax to these anticipations came on the day of Pentecost when Peter provided an explanation for the spiritual phenomena that people had witnessed. He proclaimed the arrival of the predicted outpouring by observing the applicability of Joel's words to the occasion (Acts 2:16-21~. Such a provision was not heretofore available, but now the

initial members of the body of Christ were partaking of that very provision (but not fulfilling the promise, for only to Israel was the promise made and only Israel can reap its fulfillment. It is referred to as "the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33, 39~ and "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38; cf. John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39~.

Repeatedly Acts as well as the New Testament epistles refers to this baptism as a "pouring out" (Acts 2:17-18, 33; 10:45; Rom. 5:5; Titus 3:6~, with a consequent "falling upon" (Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15) or "coming upon" (Acts 1:8; 19:6. They specifically identified the occurrence with the baptism of the Holy Spirit spoken of by John and Christ when Peter analyzed it for the Jerusalem church: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 11:15-16).

All these passages are but a fraction of the total number of references to the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and His coming on each occasion subsequently when a person became a Christian. Those are enough, however, to show the prominence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the minds of Paul and other early Christians. This prominence caused Paul to draw upon the earlier terminology of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and Peter. It is as a result of this "pouring out" that a person becomes a member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit's coming to a person at conversion includes many aspects and accomplishments, but this particular one deserves special mention in the present context of 1 Corinthians.

From one perspective, the agent of this baptism is the Spirit, as seen from the words "by one Spirit" (v. 13).¹ From another perspective, Christ Himself is the baptizer (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Nor should the Father be omitted, as He also is ultimately involved as agent (Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 12:18. Yet, this is not an inconsistency, as it is common in the Bible for all three Persons to be active agents in performance of the same task, for example, in the creation of the world. All three are a common source of the gifts, as already noted (vv. 4-6). So Christ is the baptizer in a remote sense, and the Spirit is the agent of baptism in the more immediate sense. The immediate context strongly establishes His agency (vv.8-9,11~.

Other words of clarification regarding this baptism by the Holy Spirit are in order. For example, it is important to observe that this act was not a once-for-all occurrence limited to the day of Pentecost; it also occurred in connection with the Samaritan believers (Acts 8:16), those of Cornelius' household (Acts 10:44-45; 11:15-16), and the disciples of John in Ephesus (Acts 19:6). The assertion that baptism by the Spirit was a once-for-all Pentecostal provision into which Christians enter does not satisfy terminology showing that the happening was subsequently repeated. This spiritual baptism is repeated each time a person converts to Christ. It is at that moment that the new Christian takes up his assigned position in the body of Christ and receives gifts that befit this position.

Another important aspect is that baptism by the Holy Spirit does not occur at some time subsequent to conversion and is not synonymous with the filling of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18. The Spirit's filling speaks of His control over the Christian life and comes about in the lives of only those Christians who

yield themselves to God's will. The Spirit's baptism, on the other hand, is common to all Christians, and in this respect is distinct from the issue of whether a Christian is under the Spirit's control at a given moment. In fact, in only one case does the filling of the Holy Spirit take place in connection with Spirit baptism and that is only because of the unique character of Pentecost as the birthday of the Christian church (Acts 2:4). Throughout the rest of Acts, filling or fullness is separate from the moment of initial baptism or indwelling.

Neither was speaking in tongues an essential part of or a necessary adjunct to Spirit baptism. Speaking in tongues occasionally accompanied Spirit baptism (Acts 2:17-18, 33; 10:44-45; 11:15-16; 19:6) in the days immediately after the initial outpouring, but that was not the norm for first-century Christianity, not even for the period of the book of Acts. It is certainly not the norm for twentieth-century Christianity when the need for such evidential gifts as tongues has long since ceased to exist. Holy Spirit baptism is only one of a number of transactions that the gift of tongues verified in the book of Acts. Other accomplishments of the Spirit at conversion that this gift also verified include the regeneration (John 3:6) and sealing (Eph. 4:30) of a new believer, but tongues cannot be construed as inseparable from these. By the same token, the gift was not a necessary accompaniment to baptism of the Spirit.

In only three instances did tongues verify the Spirit's being poured out. It is far better to note that baptism by the Spirit needs no outward verification, indeed, in most instances it has had no outward sign to certify its occurrence. It was and is a purely invisible action whereby the Spirit of God places the

believer in Christ into the mystical relationship known as the body of Christ. Once a part of that body by Spirit baptism, the firstcentury believer may or may not have exercised the gift of tongues. The will of God was determinative in this matter seev.11~. Since the first century, when God chose to cease bestowing the tongues gift on believers altogether see discussion of 13:8ff~, Spirit baptism has had no outward verification.

2. Inner life of the body of Christ: "We were all made to drink of one Spirit" (12:13). Associated with the momentary happening known as Holy Spirit baptism is the initiation of another relationship in which the Spirit is also prominent. At the same time He performs the inner baptismal act, He also takes up residence within the individual Christian. This residence is otherwise known as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.'

The figure of being "made to drink of one Spirit" "of" is absent from this expression in the Greek texts is in complete harmony with the scriptural custom of referring to this Person by the symbol of water. Furthermore, the way water becomes a part of man's inward physical makeup well represents His inward presence. It is in these terms that the Lord Jesus spoke concerning the coming of the Spirit, not only to baptize, but also to indwell those who believe in Him John 7:37-39; 14:16-17).

By adding a reference to this additional function of the Spirit, Paul reinforces a dual emphasis found in the Acts history of Christianity's first thirty years. Receiving "the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33), receiving "the gift of the Holy Spirit"

(Acts 2:38), and receiving "the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:47; 19:2 appear in conjunction with the Holy Spirit's baptism, just as an inner reception is in the present Corinthians verse. That was part of the promise of Joel 2:28-29 that Christ extended to include the church. The spiritual baptism of a person into the body of Christ also entails God's taking up a permanent abode within that person. His coming to indwell occurs more frequently in Acts than the baptism itself (in addition to the Acts passages just cited, see Acts 1:4; 2:39; 8:15, 17-19; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; 15:8). Paul also amplifies the indwelling ministry by frequent references to it (Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2; cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19).

The references to divine residence within the believer reveal that it is a relationship beginning concurrently with the Spirit baptism. For this reason, the same applies regarding a possible connection between indwelling and speaking in tongues as already stated regarding baptism and tongues: speaking in tongues is not an essential part of or a necessary adjunct to being "made to drink of one Spirit." As stated in connection with verse 10, tongues were abilities possessed by only a limited number of first-century Christians, whereas Paul emphatically notes that all Christians have been made to drink of one Spirit.

The presence of the Spirit within Christians individually carries with it His consequent presence within the body of Christ collectively. That is the life principle of the body and explains how Christ is the body (v. 12) as its true personality. Through the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the second Person lives His life in the various members, the visible evidences of that life being its manifestation through spiritual

gifts.

It is, then, because of one body with one personality that the Scripture declares in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 a unity underlying the functioning of spiritual gifts.

B. INTERRELATION BECAUSE OF UNITY (12:14-26)

1. NEEDINESS OF LESSER MEMBERS (12:14-20)

14For the body is not one member, but many.

15If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

16And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

18But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

19And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20But now there are many members, but one body.

Just as cooperation among members of any human body is essential to the orderly functioning of that body's activities, so is cooperation essential in Christ's spiritual body, His church.