

X. The Contemporary Relevance of Spiritual Gifts

A. The Contemporary Relevance of the Spirit's Ministries in General

The ministries of the Holy Spirit are manifold and varied. They include creation, revelation, inspiration of Scripture, restraint of sin, power to cast out demons, the conception of Christ's human nature, conviction of sin, regeneration, baptism into union with Christ's Body, indwelling, sealing, distribution of spiritual gifts, filling, sanctification, production of Christian character, leading, assurance of the new birth, intercession in prayer, spiritual blessing and fruitfulness, and fullness.

Some of these varied ministries clearly continue today. Some clearly do not. And some are in dispute among evangelical Christians, particularly with regard to their present continuance or discontinuance.

All of the major ministries of the Holy Spirit related to the application of salvation -- regeneration, indwelling, filling, and fullness -- continue today. Some of His other ministries also continue today, including restraint of sin, conviction of sin, baptism into union with Christ's Body, sealing, distribution of spiritual gifts, sanctification, production of Christian character, leading, assurance of the new birth, intercession in prayer, and spiritual blessing and fruitfulness.

Some ministries of the Spirit -- creation in the *ex nihilo* and immediate senses, inspiration of Scripture, and the conception of Christ's human nature -- do not continue today. Of course, creation in the mediate sense -- God's creative activity employing previously-existing material and secondary causes -- continues today.

Among those ministries that are in dispute among evangelical Christians are continuing special revelation, especially in the form of the gift of prophecy (in the sense of revelatory prediction of future events), the gift of miracles, the gift of healing, the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of interpretation of tongues, and the gift of power to cast out demons. Some Christians believe that these supernatural sign gifts have ceased; other Christians believe that they continue in the Church today. This is the main issue between charismatic and non-charismatic Christians.

B. The Contemporary Relevance of the Supernatural Sign Gifts

1. The gift of prophet/prophecy

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., in *Perspectives on Pentecost* (pp. 58-72), states:

I want to make clear that our discussion here is controlled by the following assumptions: (1) what Paul says in Corinthians 12-14 applies to prophecy as a whole in all its aspects, as it functioned at Corinth; (2) granting relative