The obvious conclusion which Cullmann draws is that the Lord speaks of the Spirit. Tradition are one and the same. Now this is a point to be made here, and it is here that we return to the consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit and tradition to the Gospel according to St. John and the pneumatic passages of chapters xxi–xxvi. In these chapters the work of the Spirit is described as being to teach all things, to bring all things to remembrance, to lead to all truth, to show things to come, and to bear witness (xv. 25, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 13). He is called the Voice of Truth. According to xvi. 12-14, He is the Lord’s spirit in Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear He shall speak. He is to take of the things of Christ and manifest them to the apostles. Therefore we must think of the means by which the Lord is at work in the New Testament tradition is by His Spirit. We are familiar with the phraseology of our Lord in speaking of coming Himself and of sending His Spirit, as though these were synonymous terms, and correspondingly, just as Paul sometimes claims the personality of the tradition and sometimes the Lord, so we find references to the Spirit speaking in the New Testament. Thus in the Apocalypse, time and time again in the messages to the churches there occurs the refrain ‘let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches’. Again, in 1 Timothy iv., ‘the Spirit speaketh expressly’ that some shall depart from the faith in the last days. This compares closely with Thessalonians iv. 15, where ‘we say unto you by the word of the Lord’ is followed by reference to the second advent. The Spirit speaking and the Word of the Lord are coterminous. So in 2 Corinthians iii we have the contrast between the Old and New Covenant, the difference being that the New is a ministry of the spirit, and in the same passage there is that difficult equation that ‘the Lord is that Spirit’. Cullmann points out this close language and then refers to the prophecy of Jeremiah xxxi., in which it is said that the New Covenant is concerned with a law written on the hearts. Ezekiel xxxvi. 26 reveals further that the means of the Law being written on men’s hearts is the Spirit within them. The Lord as the new Law and the old law were joined together.

When therefore the apostles are claiming authority for the traditions which they hand on, they are doing so because the Spirit is at work in them. This means that the Lord is working through them and their tradition is therefore not the traditions of men. Yet the Spirit is the only way the Lord, or the Spirit was not the sole prerogative of the apostles. The Church of succeeding generations also has the Spirit. Is it therefore true, as the Roman Catholic theologians and as Chrysostom said, that ‘I once had the Spirit and therewith the same One who produces and delivers everyth­ing, even as at this time’? The answer of the Scripture is in the negative, for although the gift of the Spirit is not limited to the apostles, there is a limitation in John xv. 27 which is most important. The Spirit is to bear witness of Christ, and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning’. The special witness of the Spirit is in this way limited to eyewitnesses. In other words, the apostles possessed a unique gift that was not prescribed. Cullmann emphasizes this point by reference to John xvii., where the apostles are prayed for separately from those who should believe on Christ not through their word. Peter was conscious of his other gift as the testi­mony of the Christ was dealt with in a passage which emphasizes the tradition. Paul is speaking of the Spirit’s revealing work in 1 Corinthians ii when he says of the message which God had kept from previous generations ‘the Spirit revealed unto us by his Spirit’, and ‘we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God’. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.’

The Spirit is concerned with the handing on of the tradition as well as its revelation. Luke is careful in the prologue of his Gospel to point out that he wrote in order a declaration of those things which he had received, and that he was fully believed among us, even as they delivered (parradoxon) them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word’. This limitation to the apostolic eyewitness is borne out by Ephesians iii. 4, 5, where Paul speaks of the ‘mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known’. As it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit’. Two classes were entrusted with the revelation of the truth, one of which was the apostles and the other the prophets. We have no record of the testimony of the charismatic prophets, but have the testimony of the apostles, and they received the truth ‘by the Spirit’.

Conscious of this ministry of the Spirit through the apostolic eye­witness, Gentile churches no difficulty in placing the same eyewitness test­imony on a level with the prophecy of old time, when holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit was at work in both Old Testament Scripture means by which the Lord is at work in the New Testament.

If this conception of the work of the Spirit in the content and transmission of the tradition is correct, and the work He exercises in this respect is limited to the apostolic witness, then any tradition which occurs beyond the apostolic should be the tradition of men. Also, we speak rightly when we say that the Lord spoke to us, when we really mean that the Word of God has come home to us in a certain way, the way that is not looking back to a static book, for just as the Spirit was active in speaking through the apostles then, so He is active in speaking through the eyewitness now. The Word of God is indeed the Spirit’s sword.

D. J. V. LANE.

The Nature and Purpose of the Charismata

There have been many divergent evaluations of the nature and purpose of the charismata, or spiritual gifts, which occupy such a prominent place in the life of the early Church. From the various accounts of the lists of the charismata which were given in the New Testament (Rom. xii. 6-8; 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, 28-30; cf. Eph. iv. 7-12) it is evident that their number, variety, and diffusion were considerable. Yet each gift had its specific role in the effective working of the Holy Spirit and was intended to edify the Body of Christ.

Liberal theologians have been prone to deny the miraculous character of the charismata and represented them as the natural manifestations of primitive enthusiasm. By the end of the second century this spirit of enthusiasm gave way to a second of enthusiasm. In which the official tended more and more to supersede the charismatic ministries. The spiritual gifts began to disappear, but, being the product of an abnormal mental state, were liable to emerge under similar conditions in later religious revival. In such gifts, such as prophecy, healing, tongues, were regarded as particular manifestations of familiar phenomena of the Hellenistic age.

By way of contrast, the Roman Catholic theologians have acknowledged the divine origin of the charismata, and have gone on to affirm the enduring power of certain gifts in the Church, notably the miracles of healing and other miraculous powers. Support for this general point of view included the performance of certain gifts in the Church, notably the miracles of healing and other miraculous powers. Support for this general point of view included the performance of certain gifts in the Church, notably the miracles of healing and other miraculous powers. Support for this general point of view included the performance of certain gifts in the Church, notably the miracles of healing and other miraculous powers. Support for this general point of view included the performance of certain gifts in the Church, notably the miracles of healing and other miraculous powers. Support for this general point of view included the performance of certain gifts in the Church, notably the miracles of healing and other miraculous powers.
the cessation of the charismata is usually placed in the fourth century when Christianity had acquired the support of the civil power. The theory lost none of its popularity despite the fact that as early as 1749 Dr. G. C. G. Middleton pointed it out in his famous Free Enquiry that it was contrary to patristic evidence. The silence of the Apostolic Fathers led him to state that 'we lose the interval of about half a century . . . after the death of the Apostles . . . we find not the least reference to any standing power of working miracles . . . but on the contrary the strongest reason to presume that . . . the extraordinary gifts of the Apostolic age were by this time actually withdrawn.' He found it impossible to believe that the gifts were withdrawn during the first half of the second century and then restored. Middleton agreed with current Anglican opinion that the distinctive Christian gifts were given for the purpose of founding the Church, but held that this had been accomplished in apostolic times.

In 1917, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield delivered a series of lectures, originally published under the title Counterfeit Miracles (given another title as Miracles: Yesterday and Today (1953). Leaning heavily on Middleton, Warfield sought to reinstate the view of the theologians of the post-Reformation era that the charismata ceased with the apostolic age. In addition to the argument from silence propounded by Middleton, Warfield examined the writings of the later Fathers and came to the conclusion that there was much greater abundance and precision of evidence, such as it is, for miracles in the fourth and succeeding centuries, than for the preceding ones. The date for the cessation of the charismata suggested by the Anglican school was purely artificial and based on a preconceived theory rather than the facts of history. We are compelled to accept one of two alternatives: either that miraculous powers have never been withdrawn, as the Romanists claim; or that they lasted only as long as the apostolic age. After examining the evidence for the validity of the ecclesiastical miracles Warfield saw no necessity for the latter alternative. The charismata were a test of Christianity, but the New Testament, not directly for the extension of the Church, nor for the authentication of the apostles as the messengers of God. The possession of these gifts and the power to confer them on others, constituted one of the signs of an apostle. The gifts ceased gradually with the death of those on whom the apostles had conferred them.

Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas has regarded the charismata as a testimony to Israel. The gifts are seen to be in operation up to the end of Acts, but not afterwards. 'These facts seem to show that the miraculous gifts recorded in Acts were specifically and solely for Israel; that they were demanor of the power to vindicate the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, but not intended for permanent exercise in the normal conditions of the Christian Church when Christ had been rejected by Israel . . . Acts iii. 19-21 plainly shows that if only the Jews had then and there accepted Christ would have come back according to His own promise, but as they wilfully refused to accept Him, and maintained this refusal on every occasion when the offer was made, the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit came to an end, and the normal graces of the Spirit were given for the extension of the Church and the purpose of founding the Church, and as associated with the Apostle Paul.'

In the face of this rather bewildering variety of opinion, one may well ask, What is the truth about the nature, purpose and continuance of the charismata? To answer the question it is clearly necessary to give close attention to the teaching of the New Testament in an effort to formulate a distinct and complete doctrine of the charismata. The subject has been obscured by hazy theories defended in the smoke of controversy, and there has been surprisingly little thorough examination of biblical evidence. There is need for an accurate definition of terminology, and an enquiry into the relation of the charismata to Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church and its ministry. Investigation will have to be made into many subsidiary problems, such as the nature of the Pentecostal phenomena mentioned in patristic and Hellenistic literature. This enquiry is now in progress.

References:
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References:
5. See this glossolalia, p. 129f.