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cause conflict in order to clear the way for straightforward testimony and more effective service, both of which can easily be hindered where [p. 124](#) they experience internal conflict. Rather than turn the distress into a virtue, the distress should be the stimulus to reach the common mind that the Apostle set as a goal.

In answer to the question, Where should we draw the line? it will be necessary to keep in mind that the churches' confessions are subordinate standards, under and not alongside of Scripture. It should also be kept in mind that the church should be on the move, as its people, led by the Spirit, are led in community to reformulate its views, including those expressed in the confessions.

Here we touch on a crucial point. The church is a communion of believing saints and therefore its scholars, no less than the others, should be a community of faith-ful academics who lead the church so that as a whole they come to new insights. In such a common search, as in the normative model of the New Testament ([Rom. 12](#), [1 Cor. 12](#)) the diversity of viewpoint should serve the common good. This can happen only if it is clear at every step that the views that are propounded came from a sincere desire to understand and apply the gospel truth, the things 'most assuredly believed' by God's people.

The church is very much like a fragile vase that can so easily be shattered. It would appear that only God can put together again the shattered fragments of the world church today. This should not, however, cause us to turn away from the task of preserving the basic oneness, but should rather spur us on to 'maintain the unity' ([Eph. 4:3](#)) and to grow together into the full maturity of faith ([Eph. 4:16](#)).

CONCLUSION

In our discussion of pluralism we have considered it under only four headings: culture, religion, politics and church. Pluralism has become in recent years, and may be expected to become in greater measure in the coming decades, an issue of great importance. There should be as little plurality as possible in our evaluation of pluralism.

Other areas in which a plurality is present, which we have not discussed, also need to be looked at closely. They too affect the life and witness of the church. We would therefore do well at another time to direct our thoughts and our pens to consider: 1) plurality in Scripture, 2) plurality in life style (with special reference to family and personal ethics) and 3) the presence of co-existing world views which deeply affect how we respond to the many kinds of pluralism in human society today.

Paul G. Schrotenboer is former General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. [p. 125](#)

Charismatics, Grace and Works

Bryan D. Gilling

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Dealing with a vital contemporary issue, this article uses the classical categories of Calvinism and Arminianism to analyse the basic question of human free will and God's sovereignty—in the charismatic movement in particular, but evangelicalism in general. The appeal of the author is that we should move from the danger of a Pelagian understanding of the gospel to a 'healthy synergism' concerning the theology of grace. We would be glad to receive and publish responses to this article by those who hold rather different views.

Editor

There have been lakes of ink and forests of wood expended in discussing the pros and cons of the charismatic movement's claims regarding spiritual gifts. Very little, however, has been said about other theological trends within the movement. This article seeks to point up some common tendencies which go beyond what may be regarded as a more or less healthy synergism towards a Pelagian understanding of faith.¹ We also observe some of their causes, while noting that these problems are not peculiar to charismatics but extend potentially to all groups not rigidly Reformed in outlook.

Part of the absence of comment on this area may be due to the widespread openness of many observers to a similarly Pelagian general position, although without the specifically charismatic applications. Another reason may be the difficulty of defining the theology of the charismatic movement as a whole. Charismatics are generally seen as those who, while remaining within the 'mainline' denominations, espouse, to some extent, Pentecostal teachings, especially regarding baptism in the Holy Spirit and the 'sign' gifts of [1 Corinthians 12](#), particularly speaking in tongues. They may, therefore, be virtually indistinguishable in most of their theory and practice from any other [p. 126](#) members of their denomination, or alternatively may develop ideas and meetings identical with traditional Pentecostalism.

SOME PROBLEM AREAS

The pivotal issue is the priority (or otherwise) ascribed to the human will over God's grace in the initial work of salvation. What is the nature of faith and how is it exercised? If one accepts that rigid and therefore double predestination is too far to one extreme, there must be some association of divine grace and human freewill. Along a continuum of human freedom to will and to act, where does the charismatic movement stand? To assess charismatic views regarding the actions of God and man, we shall examine several related issues: healing, confession, baptism in the Spirit and justification by faith.

To simplify matters, and at the risk of attacking 'straw men' since it will sometimes overstate the case, much of our illustration will be from sources closer to the Pentecostal end of the spectrum. Many, particularly in Britain, would agree only with milder formulations.

How does healing come about for a Christian? Kenneth Hagin, an American Baptist, explains that there are two aspects to it: the degree of 'healing virtue' ministered and the degree of the individual's faith which gives action to that virtue. Both are necessary. Man may thus control both the administration and the reception of this healing virtue and if

¹ We shall regard Pelagianism as a position holding that human beings can of their own free will turn towards God, and that God will then grant them the grace to assist in that decision to continue in new life; but that people are still free at any time, before or after conversion, to resist and reject that grace.

the recipient has no faith then even what virtue is ministered is rendered useless.² This faith is made operative only by a lengthy process:

If I were you: I would come expecting a miracle. I would believe that it is God's will for me to be healed. I would build up my faith by attending both afternoon and evening services and listening to the Word of God preached. I would use a point of contact [*seedfaith principle; see below*] to release my faith. And I would let my faith go to God and accept my healing from him.³

This expression of faith in God's grace seems to involve at least six human works.

It is difficult, also, to avoid the impression that what effects healing is an impersonal power, analogous to electric current, and likewise brought into action by the operation of the right switch. p. 127

We need to realize that this [healing] power is passive and inactive until faith is exercised. It will not operate on its own.⁴

We, rather than God, appear to be the operators of this switch. He, it seems, always wills our healing so that 'Healing does not fail because of the will of God, but because of the unbelief of his children'.⁵ This claim, in turn, seems based largely on a controversial exegesis of [Mark 6:5f.](#) (taken out of context and disregarding [Matt. 13:58](#)) and of [1 Peter 2:24b](#) (also taken out of its context), and puts the responsibility for healing on the potential recipient. But note, for example, [Mark 2:5](#), where it is the friends' faith which is efficacious and such passages as [Acts 3:1-10](#) where faith is not mentioned at all.

The required faith seems to be brought into existence by another human act, audible expression.

There is no faith without confession. Confession is faith's way of expressing itself.... Now faith is of the spirit and there is not [*sic*] faith without confession. *Faith then grows with your confession.*⁶

That faith might be received as a free gift of God's grace, so that no-one might boast, seems to be overlooked; and again God's power is curtailed by human action. 'There is no action on the part of God without our confession [i.e. 'thinking faith thoughts and speaking faith words']'.⁷

Human words assume a semi-magical power. On the one hand they may work in a negative, faith-destroying way, so that

Every time you confess your doubts and fears, you confess your faith in Satan and deny the ability and grace of God. When you confess your weakness and your disease, you are openly confessing that the Word of God is not true and that God has failed to make it

² *Healing Belongs to Us* (n.p.: Faith Library, 1980) 23.

³ R. F. DeWeese, Oral Roberts' associate, quoted in D. E. Harrell, *All Things are Possible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) 92.

⁴ K. Hagin, *Healing*, 25.

⁵ Quoted in J. I. Packer, 'Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement', *Churchman* 94 (1980) 25, n. 41. 'Healing is primarily a faith proposition on the part of the individual who receives': K. Hagin, *The Key to Scriptural Healing* (n.p.: Faith Library, 1978) 13.

⁶ K. Hagin, *How to Turn Your Faith Loose* (n.p.: Faith Library, 1978) 22.

⁷ E. W. Kenyon, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne* (n.p.: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 1969) 157.

good.... The believer who is always confessing his sins and his weakness is building weakness, failure, and sin into his consciousness.⁸ p. 128

This would, though, be difficult to square with such biblical examples as Christ in Gethsemane or Paul's boasting in weakness in Corinthians [12:9f](#). Surely a person who refuses to relinquish all pretence of self-sufficiency is not one on whom the Christian gospel of a God-provided Saviour can have much impact.

On the other hand, words may work positively.

The Word in your lips becomes a living thing, just as the Word in Jesus' lips could rule the sea, the wind and the waves.... That is your confession, that his Word now has become the healer in your lips ... the pulpit of Jesus Christ.⁹

Either way, once more God is bound to observe human channelling of his action.

Perhaps the basic belief of the charismatic movement, which it has in common with Pentecostalism, is that the experience of the 120 at Pentecost should be normative for all Christians and, associated with that 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', an evidential sign of this second baptism is speaking in a language unknown to the speaker. This baptism is a crisis experience occurring at any time after conversion (and therefore usually after water-baptism). There are some, particularly in Britain, who instead of positing two stages now see the distinct second stage as not ideal so much as 'God's provision for a regrettable situation', making up for inadequate teaching and expectation at conversion and therefore for an impoverished experience. However, most still hold to two stages, conversion initiation and baptism in the Spirit; while at times some Pentecostal groups have added still more, such as sanctification and obedience to apostles.

How then is the second stage attained? Our concern here is not with whether or not tongues and other miraculous gifts are 'for today'. Thankfully God is not bound to any one way, always, forever; and to no-one is it given to know exactly how the Spirit will graciously act in any specific individual's life. We shall restrict ourselves to assessing the human part in the event as portrayed by some of a more strongly Pentecostal persuasion.

We find that:

Some have had the superficial conception that the Lord gives his Spirit as a reward for making matters right. But this is not so. The heart must be made clean. When all conscious sin has been taken away, then we really are in a place where it becomes easy to trust him.¹⁰
p. 129

This attitude poses several problems. First, it makes a distinction between the Lord and His Spirit which fails to do justice to the New Testament passages which suggest, in fact, a very close identity (phrases such as 'the Lord is the Spirit' [[2 Cor. 3:17](#)] and 'the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit' [[1 Cor. 15:45](#)]). It seems to insist that one can 'have' the Lord without also receiving the Spirit at the time of conversion, which is when justification, 'this work of making matters right', takes place. This contradicts the New Testament testimony that in fact from the moment of our adoption as sons of God, i.e. justification, we also have the Spirit of his Son in our hearts bearing witness to the fact by crying, 'Abba! Father!' (e.g. [Romans 8](#), especially [4ff.](#), [9ff.](#), [15ff.](#), [23](#), [26f.](#); also [Gal. 3:13f.](#); [4:6f.](#), etc.). This is summarised in [Rom. 8:9b](#): 'Any one who does not have the Spirit of

⁸ E. W. Kenyon, quoted in D. W. Clark, 'An Implicit Theory of Personality, Illness and Cure Found in the Writings of Neo Pentecostal Faith Teachers', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 12 (1984) 282.

⁹ E. W. Kenyon, quoted in Clark, 'Theory' 283.

¹⁰ Quoted in F. D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1970) 249.

Christ does not belong to him'. Without having received the Spirit one cannot be a Christian of any sort. Nor can one receive the Spirit only in part, for 'it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit' ([John 3:34](#)).

Furthermore, this attitude declares, 'As sinners we accept Christ; as saints we accept the Holy Spirit.'¹¹ Somehow, 'the heart must be made clean' in order to receive the Spirit, yet since he has not been received sinners must achieve this on their own—no mean feat and certainly not one the writer of [Romans 7](#) could attain to!. It also cuts straight across Jesus' teaching in [Luke 18:9–12](#) where the man conscious of no sin is not forgiven whereas the one almost frantic under conviction of sin is justified.

The New Testament knows of no saints who do not already possess the fulness of the Spirit of God. There are none more 'highly qualified' as Christians than others, or who deserve God's blessings more than others. The Pentecostal blessing came upon all the disciples, not only those who had 'tarried' sufficiently. All who were baptized into Christ's death are now slaves of righteousness (cf. [Rom. 6:1–10](#); [Col. 2:11–15](#); [3:1–4](#)). To those who attempt now to earn God's gift of the Spirit, given when we became sons, we may ask, with Paul, 'Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit are you now ending with the flesh?' ([Gal. 3:2f.](#)). With regard to the teaching of a separate Spirit-baptism accompanied by signs, Pinnock asks, 'Why is not the promise of our Saviour and the witness of the Spirit in our hearts crying 'Abba!' sufficient for us? Can it be wrong to walk by faith and not by sight?'¹²

p. 130

The process of sanctification seems thus to be turned into one whereby one becomes a saint *before* one receives the 'full' gospel. 'Utter and complete baptism in the Holy Spirit ... is reached only where there is a perfect yielding of the entire being to Him....'¹³ But this is impossible legalism. How is it ever possible to know if one believes perfectly? What mortal can achieve the absolute? In our present life 'between the times' we can at best only confess, 'I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin' ([Rom. 7:25](#)). 'Perfect yielding of the entire being' is out of the question until the Parousia.

Yet this counsel of despair continues to be demanded:

No person can receive or retain the Pentecostal experience without complete and unconditional obedience to all the revealed will of God. *The Bible gives no shortcuts or easy routes*. It is only when the person is entirely consecrated and fully obedient that the Spirit will come in.¹⁴

This 'victorious-life' teaching ignores the biblical evidence that it is *only* sinners who receive the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit and sin *do* dwell in the same heart (e.g. [Romans 5–8](#), especially [7:13–25](#)), and the whole point of Colossians that when we have Christ, i.e. at conversion, we have everything; there is no distinction between Christ *for* us (conversion) and Christ *in* us (Spirit-baptism) (e.g. [Col. 2:2f.](#), [9–15](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [3:25ff.](#)). To continue to insist otherwise is to reverse the biblical sequence of grace, then obedience.

¹¹ Quoted in Bruner, *Theology* 233.

¹² 'The New Pentecostalism: Reflection of an Evangelical Observer' in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (ed. R. P. Spittler; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 191.

¹³ R. M. Riggs, quoted in J. R. Williams, *The Pentecostal Reality* (Plainfield: Logos, 1972) 74.

¹⁴ Quoted in Bruner, *Theology* 253, n. 41.

The extreme consequence of this teaching assumes that one is sanctified before receiving the Spirit and that afterwards one is maintained in a sinless state. This is exemplified in a statement from the Pentecostal Latter Rain Movement,

The mystery of the new covenant is that these laws are now written in our hearts.... We now no longer steal or curse or kill, not because the law forbids it, but because grace has given us a life that *cannot* steal or curse or kill.¹⁵

To say this it is necessary to take verses such as [1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18](#) but ignore others such as [1 John 1:8](#), and to dismiss the whole of the New Testament's ethical teaching which, though written to Christians, [p. 131](#) becomes redundant for those who have achieved real spirituality (or perhaps *gnosis*?). Interestingly, it is precisely the *pneumatikoi* of Corinth whom Paul has to upbraid as 'still of the flesh' ([1 Cor. 3:3](#)), who wrong and defraud other Christians ([1 Cor. 6:8](#)), who are arrogant and undiscerning ([1 Cor. 5:2](#)) and who boast as though they have already acquired, through their own effort, every conceivable spiritual blessing ([1 Cor. 4:7f.](#)).

What of faith itself? How is it viewed? One illustration is that of the 'seedfaith' principle developed by Oral Roberts. By planting some sort of 'seed' a Christian is assisted to 'release' faith and God then responds to meet the need. A common expression of this is in seedfaith moneyboxes, which, operating on this principle, induce God to bestow prosperity on the believer. Paul Yonggi Cho advocates a process of incubation or imagisation which involves four steps: having a scripturally appropriate goal, visualizing its end results, praying for God's assurance, and audibly confessing the outcome.

Kenneth Hagin has a separate four, following Abraham's experience: he had God's Word; he believed it; he did not consider contradictory circumstances; he praised God.

Follow these four steps, and you'll always get through to God. They are four steps to certain deliverance, healing, prayer, or whatever it is you are seeking.¹⁶

In the same book a chapter title is 'Faith is an act'. Elsewhere, he claims that faith alone is inadequate.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that if you just believe in your heart you'll get an answer. It teaches that if you believe with your heart and say it with your mouth, whatever you want shall come to pass.¹⁷

This emphasis on human initiation seems very widespread.

Is it true that the man must always make the first move when co-operating with God, to bring about a miracle? Answer: Yes. If we go through the miracles of the Bible we will find that the man always did something which constituted a step of faith.¹⁸

The lunatic fringe extends to Rev. Ike's message, 'You can't lose with the stuff I use'.¹⁹ [p. 132](#)

Amongst the many like examples Bruner amasses, he selects one for special analysis.

¹⁵ Quoted in W. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (trans. R. A. Wilson; London: SCM, 1972) 327.

¹⁶ *What Faith Is* (n.p.: Faith Library, 1980) 27.

¹⁷ *How to Turn Your Faith Loose* 12.

¹⁸ Quoted in Bruner, *Theology* 249, n. 35.

¹⁹ Quoted in Harrell, *All Things* 235.

He is offered [not given] to us freely without money and without price [except faith]. We simply [including tongues] extend our hand of faith [whose hand is extended?], lay hold on him [a work], appropriate him [another work], and receive him as our own.²⁰

When K. Hutten attacked similar attempts to empty the doctrine of justification of faith of any meaning, the response came.

Hutten's basic error is that he speaks of grace without conditions, and the Bible knows of no such thing. The doctrine of grace without conditions is a master stroke of Satan, with which he has already deceived millions of people and led them to damnation.²¹

This extraordinary statement does contain some truth; there *are* conditions to having a full, proper relationship with God. But the gospel is that Christ has fulfilled these conditions. Galatians and Hebrews, particularly, are at pains to explain precisely this point. 'He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself' ([Heb. 9:26](#)); therefore, 'a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ ... because by works of the law shall no one be justified' ([Gal. 2:16](#)). Humankind is unable to work in any way which can make us acceptable to God. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, estranged and hostile, doing evil deeds until God acted in Christ to reconcile us to himself (cf. [2 Cor. 5:17-21](#); [Eph. 2:1-10](#); [Col. 1:19-23](#)). Throughout the Bible the whole pattern is that God acts first in gracious love to reconcile rebellious, self-centred human beings who, every time they exalt themselves, run the risk of exchanging the truth about God for a lie and worshipping the creature instead of the Creator—the *primaeval* sin and the Pelagian error.

However, the Pelagian standpoint is steadfastly maintained, that 'salvation is open to all by an act of 'free will', which must be continually reaffirmed by a godly life'.²² The stress on one's individual work in order to become and remain a Christian is relentless.

Any sin not confessed to God can bring man to the point where he falls outside the forgiveness of God.²³ p. 133

When only a certain type of piety is acceptable as genuinely Christian, the activity of the Holy Spirit is thus also channelled and those who have not 'believed for the blessing', been 'Spirit-filled' or experienced the 'Super Nine all the time' are at best second-rate Christians or (at worst) not spiritually alive at all.

The picture is of a God who lays all his blessings on a table, cries out, 'Come and get it ... if you can!', and leaves us to work our way through the maze of right and wrong approaches with which it is all hedged around.²⁴

To this it is only possible to reply, again with Paul, that in Christ 'the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him' ([Col. 2:9f](#); [1:19](#)).

To be fair, many in the charismatic movement would reject as extreme the statements on which we have been commenting. Besides, many evangelicals (particularly those in

²⁰ Quoted and annotated in Bruner, *Theology* 248.

²¹ Quoted in Hollenweger, *Pentecostals* 319.

²² R. Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 32, n. 5.

²³ Quoted in Hollenweger, *Pentecostals* 319.

²⁴ T. Small, *The Forgotten Father* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980) 155. He also observes that, 'it is a delusion of the rally mentality that God has a limited three or four things he can do in people's lives, and it depends on the decision people can be induced to make whether he can do them or not.' *Father* 156.

groups with a revivalistic tradition) hold decidedly Arminian views. Tom Smail quotes Billy Graham's appeal for a 'decision for Christ':

When you come to the moment of decision, your father can't help you, your mother can't help you, your best friend can't help you and—I say it with all reverence—*God himself* can't help you.²⁵

Smail himself, especially in *Reflected Glory*,²⁶ advocates separation of Arminian theology from Pentecostal experience. The two do not have to go together if one regards the experience as a making up for what was not received at conversion due to the inadequate preaching of Christ as bestower of the Spirit. Since faith comes, not by exhortation, nor by 'working-up', but by hearing the preaching of Christ ([Rom. 10:17](#)), the answer is 'to declare the full Christ'. The human response is then created by the message and is thus itself part of the gift. He would also argue that faith is not the ground but the means of reception of God's blessing, since it takes its value solely from the object on which it is set, not from its quality or quantity as worked up in the believer. He sees, still, a use for the word 'appropriation': [p. 134](#)

Faith is a trusting which has become a taking, it is a believing which does not inertly wait for the blessing to be delivered, but so trusts the reality of the promise made by God, that it stretches out its hand to accept what it sees him offering.²⁷

His ideal, however, seems so seldom met in practice that now he largely agrees with Bruner that 'there is more danger than I used to realise that the Pentecostal baby will be totally immersed in the Arminian bathwater and lost without trace.'²⁸

SOME ROOT PROBLEMS

During our discussion we have come across several problems which seem to lie at the heart of the whole attitude. The first is hermeneutical rather than theological: it is the assumption that the New Testament in general, and Acts in particular, is a paradigm of what God *will* do rather than of what he *can* or *may* do. Conscious imitation of the early Church has been the foundation of virtually every Christian reform or renewal group since at least the time of Wyclif and Hus, but for each group in its own unique set of circumstances the question must be asked: to what extent *does* God desire us to be exact replicas of first-century Mediterranean Christians? Specifically, are all the New Testament manifestations of the Spirit available and intended for all Christians everywhere, for all time? Does the New Testament and particularly Acts claim to provide an exact pattern for all to expect to follow? If some paradigm is contained in the seemingly random experiences portrayed, how may we in the twentieth century come by that same experience?

Whatever our answers to those questions surely it cannot be maintained that our experience can be generated by our own 'tarrying', 'seeking', 'confessing', or other acts of self-purification; any more than the New Testament Christians attained a sufficient level of merit to warrant their supernatural experiences. If the acts recorded are anyone's they

²⁵ Quoted in Smail, *Father* 154.

²⁶ *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²⁷ *Reflected Glory* 151.

²⁸ Smail, *Father* 155.

are those of the Holy Spirit, not of the apostles. And if the book of Acts shows us anything it is the great flexibility and variety in the way he works, and that he always works as he alone wills.

Another key problem has (strangely) been that of an inadequate view of the Holy Spirit. Seldom has he been seen as a person, particularly one with his own inscrutable purposes hidden from mortals, but rather as a supernatural power source which can be [p. 135](#) varied by a person exercising faith; as if faith were a tap regulating a flow of 'living water', or an accelerator pedal controlling the 'revving' of our spiritual power plant. This misses 'the fact that he works primarily by generating awareness and communion and that whatever power and wisdom he gives derives from that'.²⁹ The evidence for the Spirit is not tongues but faith expressed in the prayer, 'Abba! Father!' ([Gal. 4:6](#); [Rom. 8:16f.](#)) or in the confession, 'Lord Jesus' ([1 Cor. 12:3](#); [1 John 4:1ff.](#)), and in the indispensable qualities of Christian character ([Gal. 5:22](#); cf. [Matt. 7:16ff.](#)). As C. F. D. Moule observes, no mortal can perceive the precise moment of visitation by the Spirit of God. At best, only different focal points of a protracted reality may be distinguished with any clarity, as in his example of an ongoing loving relationship with focal points such as holding hands, kissing and the wedding ceremony.³⁰

What we must *not* do is to think and speak of the Holy Spirit as a magical power which God gives us to make us 'successful' Christians. This was the error of Simon Magus, and it continues to be the error of some revivalist and pentecostalist preaching.³¹

A blatant example of precisely this abuse comes at the end of some advertising literature requesting financial gifts:

God bless you and now we command Holy Ghost fire to come upon each one that reads this book, in Jesus' Name. Look up and shout Hallelujah! And you will feel the garment of power begin to wrap around you by the Holy Ghost.³²

To do this sort of thing is virtually an attempt to suborn the Spirit of God to one's own ends. It hardly keeps him as another Counsellor of the same kind as Christ, but reduces him to no more than a convenient genie activated by human rubbing of the bottle in the right way, or to another paranormal force in a semi-animistic world view.

These tendencies, it would seem, stem from what amounts almost to a blasphemous desire to recreate God in human image—the full Pelagian error—as perceptions of and relations with God are defined and determined by *my* ideas and *my* experience. A man-centred, not God-centred, theology develops.

As one moves nearer the extremes of Pentecostalism this may perhaps be linked ever more directly to the variety of social deprivation theories applied by sociologists to the origins of the [p. 136](#) movement. If this were so one could see the anthropocentrism of the charismatic theology linked in some way to a desire to replace one's inability to manipulate society, becoming socially successful, with a more profitable ability to manipulate God himself. Though that would, I think, be pure speculation at the present time, the theology may well be seen as another re-emergence of mankind's *primaeval* desire to usurp God's place, to be like God. Only Christ has not counted equality with God

²⁹ J. V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God* (London: SCM, 1972) 200.

³⁰ *The Holy Spirit* (London: Mowbrays, 1978).

³¹ Taylor, *Go-Between God* 202.

³² Quoted in Harrell, *All Things* 104.

a thing to be grasped; we children of Adam need to be constantly on our guard against our desires to control our own destinies independent of all else. Again, perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that the rise of the charismatic movement has paralleled the flourishing of the 'Me' decades and the 'Now' generation.

CONCLUSION

We have considered a number of key areas in Christian life and teaching to examine the charismatic understanding of how these come about. In every case they have been seen to be shot through with a strongly anthropocentric, Pelagian emphasis and there seems little doubt that the nearer the charismatic movement veers towards full-blown Pentecostalism, the stronger that emphasis becomes. Yet we have also seen examples of charismatic insistence on more historic Protestant tenets. The bulk of current evangelicalism, too, seems tarred with the Arminian brush. It has been instructive that only Bloesch, Bruner, Packer and Smail have even begun any criticism on these grounds.

Throughout this essay I have criticized the movement's tendency to have mere mortals attempt their own salvation and earn its blessings. We should end by noting that that has largely eventuated through a desire to revitalize a complacent 'once saved, always saved' outlook, and a Christianity which has often seemed to deny the Spirit any real power at all. One must agree thankfully with Packer's enthusiasm:

With radical theology inviting the church into the barren wastes of neo-Unitarianism, it is (dare I say) just like God—the God who uses the weak to confound the mighty—to have raised up, not a new Calvin or John Owen or Abraham Kuyper, but a scratch movement, cheerfully improvising, which proclaims the divine personhood and power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit not by great theological eloquence, originality, or accuracy, but by the power of renewed lives creating a new, simplified, unconventional and uncomfortably challenging lifestyle. *O sancta simplicitas!*³³

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Creation, Covenant and Work

William J. Dumbrell

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The central thesis of this exegetical study is that man basically relates himself to his fellow human beings, and the world around, by work. It is through his work that he becomes aware of God's plan of new creation, and of his own role in it as the agent responsible for bringing harmony into a world full of evil. It makes an excellent alternative to the Marxist anthropology, that man is the product of his producing activity, as it supplies the missing

³³ *Keep in Step* 230–1.