Spiritual Gifts Paper

Assignment 7-2 for ST5534 Systematic Theology 1

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Spiritual gifts are often misunderstood and because of this misunderstanding we see a divide between continuationist’s and cessationist’s. My personal beliefs have shifted a few times within my life but for the most part I would stand with cessationism. I believe there is more evidence supporting cessationism rather than continuationism. I am not willing to say with full confidence though that some gifts have stopped as Erickson deals with this in his chapter on the Holy Spirit when he says, “In my judgment it is not possible to determine with any certainty whether the contemporary charismatic phenomena are indeed gifts of the Holy Spirit. There simply is no biblical evidence indicating the time of fulfillment of the prediction that tongues will cease.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

I would say that before this weeks lesson I was in the camp that was confused on this topic and had some misunderstandings. I have attended many churches in my life so far and each has dealt with this issue differently from full on pentecostal to heavily cessationist. I think I have always leaned more towards discontinuity because it was how I was raised so there is a level of comfort to it. I do remember a time when I was really close with a friend from high school and we attended many worship services where people would be baptized in the Holy Spirit and come away speaking in tongues. I had an uneasy feeling to this though and couldn’t put my finger on why. I always felt it didn’t make sense to give someone the ability to speak in tongues unless it was going to be beneficial in advancing the gospel and an interpreter was present. After reading Erickson’s thoughts on this issue I am glad to know that he seems to agree when he says, “Then, the procedure laid down by Paul so long ago should be followed. Thus, if one speaks in tongues, there should be an interpreter so that the group as a whole may be edified. Only one should speak at a time and no more than two or three at a session (1 Cor. 14:27).”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Within the church today we see these gifts play out in many ways but most importantly they play out in functions of the body of Christ so we can effectively reach, train and send people. I choose to take the side of Erickson again who says “In the final analysis, whether the Bible teaches that the Spirit dispenses special gifts today is not an issue of great practical consequence. For even if he does, we are not to set our lives to seeking them. He bestows them sovereignly; he alone determines the recipients (1 Cor. 12:11).” I believe that if the spirit chooses to work in these ways then it is for a purpose of making some advancement in the gospel and I am all for it when we see biblical roots stemming from the practice of them as I stated before on following Paul’s example with speaking in tongues.

I was a leader this past weekend on a men’s retreat in which certain topics like this one were brought up by some of the guys in my group. I started with hearing both sides out and trying my best not to come off as attacking or uninterested in one side versus the other. I tried to understand both sides and then theologically explain my opinion with this topic and point these individuals to what Gods has to say on it and not what our preconceived notions may have been on this topic. I felt very much like this quote from Graham and Feinberg when they say “for example, someone may speak of how the Holy Spirit has given them the gift of prophecy, whereas to my mind In the light of this, the open but discerning position means a certain generosity toward those who are enthusiastic for Christ and who believe in a living God who acts in history today, but whose theological skill in articulating the nature of their experiences, ministries, and gifting may be lacking.”[[3]](#footnote-3) I was beyond thrilled to have a chance to utilize the knowledge I have received in this course and I have plans on further discussing with one of the gentlemen later this week to do a deeper dive on this issue.

1. Christian Theology 3rd Edition, Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Christian Theology 3rd Edition, Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Cole, Graham A., and John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Baker Crossway, 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)