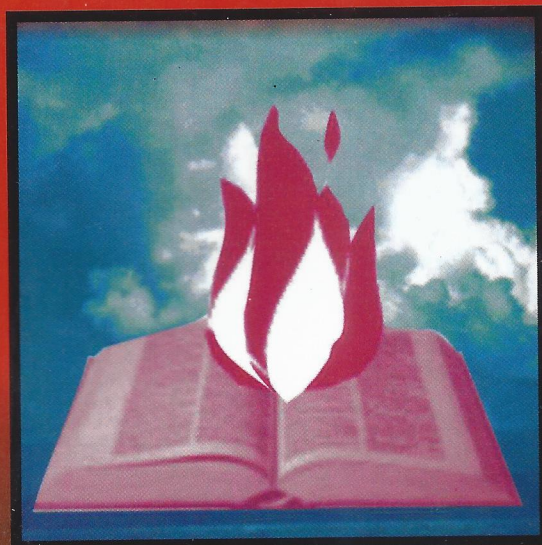


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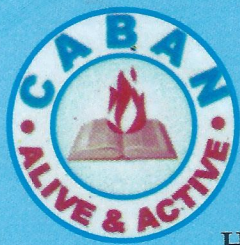
# **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHARISMS IN THE BIBLE**

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## About the Book



**T**he Holy Spirit is the parting gift of the Father and Jesus to the church, as a community and as individuals. For this reason, the church has always celebrated and rejoiced in the companionship and gift of the Holy Spirit.

However, the last century has seen serious abusive claims on the actions of the Holy Spirit, both within the church and in individuals. Such aberrations have their fair representation in Nigeria, a country that is heavily Christian and with as many Christian denominations as one may find anywhere worldwide.

To address this dangerously festering phenomenon in the particular Nigerian context, the Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria (CABAN) organised a conference on the role of the Holy Spirit, with a focused review of **the Holy Spirit and Charism in the Bible**. As is characteristic of CABAN conferences, great minds came together to deliberate on the subject matter; and this 10th Volume of the CABAN ACTS is the fruit of their deliberations.

It is no doubt a very rich, albeit in-exhaustive, collection; one that would be useful for lecturers, pastors, religious educators, pastors, pastoral agents and seminarians as they deal with the different claims and expressions of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Our collective hope is that all Christ's Faithful would avail themselves of information contained therein, so that our devotion to the Holy Spirit may be pure and undefiled.

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**The Holy Spirit and Orthodox Christian Utterances:  
A Study of 1 Corinthians 12:1-3**

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**Introduction**

1 Corinthians 12:1-3 is one of many New Testament texts that expose the tensed theological atmosphere of the early Church. The problem introduced in 1 Cor 12:1 with the phrase "... concerning spiritual matters...."<sup>1</sup> and the reference to division (*he skisma*) in 1 Cor 12:25 show that there were problems in the Corinthian church, some of which were caused by their lack of understanding of the workings of the Holy Spirit in their midst and their misuse of spiritual gifts.<sup>2</sup> It seems the community had appealed to Paul's own teaching in order to correct the confusions that ensued. Paul responded with the aim of giving them a correct understanding of these matters, as he says: "I do not want you to be uninformed."

In the Corinthian community, further questions were raised concerning orthodox Christian confessional utterances. In fact, a reference to this problem is inferred at the beginning of the letter where Paul thanks God for enriching believers in speech and knowledge and for making them strong with the ability to bear authentic witness to Christ (1 Cor 1:5-6). This note of thanksgiving opens up a conversation on an actual

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, the phrase "*peri de tōn pneumatikōn*" (1 Cor 12:1) is translated "Concerning spiritual matters..." following a reading of the verb as genitive plural. The text concerns both gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as persons who claim to speak authoritatively under the influence of the Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> The church at Corinth suffered many internal problems. A division of the members into social class which is mentioned in 1 Cor 1:26 must have been the origin of the problem at communal meal and food distribution (1 Corinthians 11); the internal conflicts referred to 1 Corinthians 1-4 reflect the problem of factionalism and alternate allegiances to different apostles. There were also cases of sexual immorality (1 Cor 5), litigation (1 Cor 6:1-11), association with prostitutes (1 Cor 6:12-20), participation in pagan cult meals (1 Corinthians 8), the growing freedom of women in the church (1 Corinthians 11), controversy and doctrinal differences on the truth of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15).



experience that measures the relationship between knowledge and discourse. The first appeal Paul made to them is that they all "agree to say the same thing" (1 Cor 1:10) and that there be no division. In fact, what each person was saying was connected to certain leaders who had preached to them (1 Cor 1:12). The experience concerns the 'spirituals' who claimed to speak authoritatively on the basis of the foundational superior knowledge they had received.<sup>3</sup> To these, Paul responds by encouraging them to desire to know the wisdom that comes from God which the cross of Jesus reveals and which is sign that they possess the Spirit (1 Cor 1:18-2:16). The ability to understand and interpret correctly the meaning of the cross, according to Paul, is what distinguishes the person who possess the Spirit from another who is worldly minded.

The unspiritual person<sup>4</sup> does not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, and he is unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person (*ho pneumatikos*) discerns all things, and he is himself subject to no one else's scrutiny (1 Cor 2:14-15).<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious from Paul's response that the knowledge which these people claimed to have denigrates the cross of Jesus, considering it a sign of weakness and foolishness (1 Cor 1:18). Since Paul dedicates his first catechesis to this matter, then the problem must be of vital importance to faith. These arguments about the spirituals and the knowledge they claimed to have are very related to the arguments in 1 Cor 12:1-3, which introduces an allied question concerning the orthodoxy of the doctrinal expressions of the spirituals.

It is important in these introductory lines to determine the scope of the problem of orthodox expressions in the Corinthian church. Orthodoxy is adherence to the comprehensive and accepted creeds of the church. A definition of orthodox Christian faith in 1 Corinthians 15 includes a

<sup>3</sup> In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul defends the foundational doctrine he gave to the church on a discourse that was based on divine wisdom, hidden and revealed in Jesus, with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power (vv. 1-5). This divine wisdom is different from lofty speeches that are based on worldly wisdom.

<sup>4</sup> This phrase could also mean "the worldly minded person."

<sup>5</sup> All citations in this paper are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

broad range of vital truths about aspects of Jesus' life: his death, burial, resurrection and appearances, as Paul explains in vv. 3-8,

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in 'accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (...)

Doctrinal errors happen when only a few selected aspects of Jesus' life are accepted to the neglect of others.<sup>6</sup> Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 12:2-3 shows that orthodox expressions and practice obviously caused problem in the Corinthian church. "Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, 'Let Jesus be accursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." By implication, the Holy Spirit alone can inspire orthodox confessions of faith, and there are utterances which a person under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit cannot make.

In the section that follows this introduction, the essay exposes the background of the text under study. The third section undertakes an interpretation of the text in which it describes the nature of the problem and situation that necessitated Paul's teaching on matters relating to expressions or definitions of Christian faith that are considered not orthodox during worship. This section shows how the creedal formula "Jesus is Lord"<sup>7</sup> in 1 Cor 12:2-3 relates to belief in the salvific relevance of the cross, death and resurrection of Jesus. It also investigates other related texts in order to discern the nature of the problem of orthodoxy expressed through the formula. The fourth section relates the question of unorthodox utterances during worship to similar problems in the contemporary church.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies. Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 29.

<sup>7</sup> The creedal formula is the shortest in the New Testament. The expression is also found in Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11; Acts 8:16; 19:5.



### **Background of 1 Corinthians 12:1-3**

This background explains the religious backdrop of the Corinthian church, the role the text of 1 Cor 12:1-3 plays in the first letter to the Corinthians, and the specific problems addressed in the text.

The letter introduces a church divided by personal loyalties to church leaders (1 Cor 1:12-17; 3:4) and by interpersonal issues (3:1-3; 11:18-19). Dissension in the church was also provoked by some who claimed to possess some form of higher knowledge based on affiliation to a spiritual leader or another (3:1-9) or ability to interpret spiritual matters (2:11-13; 8:1-2; 12:1-2). This must have prompted Paul's defense in 1 Corinthians 9 of the freedom-from-law gospel that he preached and of his rights as an apostle. The Corinthian church reveals a high appreciation of ecstatic manifestation of the Spirit, religious enthusiasm and hysterical excitement on the basis of which members prided themselves of being the spirituals (1 Cor 3:1). This phenomenon became problematic because some members of the church understood these external ecstatic manifestations as evidence of spiritual sophistication and superiority as 1 Corinthians 14 suggests.<sup>8</sup> Parallel texts like 1 Thess 5:19-22; Gal 3:2-5 and Rom 12:6 give evidence that in the Pauline churches, there were great charismatic fervency and dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, manifested at their prayer and worship gatherings. Evidently, Paul's preaching of God's gracious work in Jesus Christ to the churches must have centered on the activities of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:4; Gal 3:3).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul dedicates a large section, comprising four chapters (12-15)<sup>9</sup> to the topic of gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 is the introduction to this larger section which is divided into three parts. The first part (1 Cor 12:4-31) is an exposition of all the gifts and explanation of how they must be channeled to the unity of the church, since they are inspired by the same Holy Spirit. In order further to divest the attention of the community from exhibitionism and

<sup>8</sup> Rom 12:1-8 resembles 1 Cor 12:1-31 very closely because both discuss the same subject matter: claim to spiritual superiority, haughty attitude and obsession with showing off in self-conceit. See also 1 Cor 4:18; 8:1; Gal 5:26.

<sup>9</sup> The Commentaries I have seen usually separate 1 Corinthians 15 from 1 Corinthians 12-14. The connection of the topic of resurrection to the creedal formula mentioned in 1 Cor 12:2-3 warrants that 1 Corinthians 15 be read together with chapters 12 to 14.

hysterical expressions, Paul dedicates the second part (1 Corinthians 13) to drawing their attention to the most excellent of all spiritual gifts, that is, love. The third part (1 Corinthians 14-15) addresses the particular problems that stimulate division in the church, which are, the gifts of tongues and prophecy on the one hand and problematic doctrinal matters related to the interpretation of the event of Jesus Christ, on the other hand.

1 Corinthians 12:1-3 introduces the entire section with an ample statement that anyone led by the Spirit cannot blaspheme the name of Jesus. This text that introduces the last section of the letter shows that the church was as divided by doctrinal differences as by loyalties to different leaders. Under the influence of the spirit, some members of the church were uttering speeches that did not conform to the doctrine which the community had received from Paul. In the context of the dissension that disturbed the peace of the church, Paul gives a detailed catechesis on this doctrinal base of the church. For further investigation into this particular question concerning orthodox expressions, it could be asked if this circumstance is related to any of the concerns that inspire Paul's letters in other churches.

James Aageson had compared the language of 1 Corinthians with that of the Pastoral Letters and he thinks that doctrinal orthodoxy is not in question. According to him, 1 Corinthians certainly has different theological problems.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it is argued here that the letter might differ from the Pastoral letters in not addressing the problem of ecclesial leadership, but in spite of terminology difference, 1 Cor 12:1-3, particularly, addresses doctrinal problems concerning the resurrection, which is fully discussed in 1 Corinthians 15. The prevalence of the verb of speaking in 1 Cor 12:2-3<sup>11</sup> shows that the content of verbal confession of the lordship of Christ is its central concern.

Evidently, Paul sets criteria for discerning the origin of such utterances either to the Holy Spirit or to other influences. At this early stage in the

<sup>10</sup> Cf. James W. Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 85.

<sup>11</sup> The verb *legō*, *eipōn* in v. 3 and the adjective *aphōvos* in v. 2 which denotes a state of no speech.



life of the church, whatever error Paul was trying to correct had not developed to the full blown doctrinal errors which the post apostolic church discussed and corrected. However, since every religious experience seemed to be adduced to the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Paul had asked another church with a similar experience to subject it to scrutiny.<sup>12</sup> It was necessary to explain how utterances inspired by the Holy Spirit could be distinguished from the ones inspired by other sources. In 1 Cor 12:1-3, Paul introduces all problems related to spiritual matters with this highly important matter.

### Interpretation of the Text

"Now concerning spiritual matters, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed" (1 Cor 12:1)

The text opens with an expressed wish that the Corinthians be not uninformed regarding matters concerning the workings of the Holy Spirit in their midst. The text is Paul's explanation to them of the correct understanding of this matter. The verb *agnoeō* means 'to be uninformed, ignorant, not to know.'<sup>13</sup> We can comfortably call this passage a catechesis on discernment of spiritual matters or on the ability to interpret the mind of God in matters concerning the gifts which God has bestowed on the members through the Holy Spirit. In v. 3, there is more emphasis on who speaks through the Holy Spirit and who is able to interpret spiritual matters.

It appeared that the Corinthians used the term '*pneumatikos*' to refer to spiritual manifestations and persons capable of such signs. For instance, *ho pneumatikos* in 1 Cor 2:15 means the spiritual person, whose powers of judgment are directed by the divine spirit; and in 1 Cor 3:1, the same term means the person who possesses the Spirit (also 14:37; Gal 6:1).<sup>14</sup> It is evident from Paul's teaching that those who exhibited these external

manifestations understood them as evidence of their personal worth and sophistication. Certain people were revered in the community for such reasons (cf. 1 Cor 1:4, 8), and the gift they prided most about is the ability to speak in tongues and to interpret them (cf. 1 Cor 13:1).

Paul's first corrective to this matter is to introduce another vocabulary, which explains both the origin and goal of such spiritual realities. In v. 4, he introduced the word *charismata* (charisms), a word believed to have been coined by him, which explains the spiritual manifestations in the community as gracious divine gifts.<sup>15</sup> The charisms describe God's gifts to members of the community by which they become effective instruments of God's grace. The semantic difference between *pneumatikōn* and *charismatōn* lies in the shift of focus from the one who possess the spiritual gift to the same person as instrument of God's grace. The new terminology reinterprets the verbal display of spiritual inspiration or external manifestation of spiritual signs as God's gracious gifts and not as personal achievement of the speaker. Paul's next point of correction is cautionary.

### The Discernment of spirits (12:2)

"You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak."

This idea of being led astray to idols that could not speak suggests, according to some scholars, that experiences of ecstatic inspiration were in view.<sup>16</sup> The circumstances that necessitated this recall of their former life in paganism is obscure. A similar reference to their former life is mentioned in 1 Cor 8:7, where Paul says that Christians who were accustomed to idols might be scandalized if those who do not believe in the reality of idol eat such meals. Therefore, the warning in 1 Cor 12:2

<sup>12</sup> The same injunction is seen in 1 Thess 5:21.

<sup>13</sup> This meaning goes with the accusative of the person (*ou thelō hymas agnoien*). Cf. W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich. *A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Second Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also 1 Cor 15:47 *ta pneumatika* (spiritual things or matters) Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 12:13; 9:11; 15:46. *Spiritual gifts* 1 Cor 12:1; 14:1.

<sup>15</sup> All except one (1 Pet 4:10) of its 17 occurrences in the New Testament appear in Paul's Letters. Cf. MarySylvia Nwachukwu. "The Pentecostal Phenomenon in the Church and the Corinthian Hermeneutic (1 Cor 12-14)." in Amuluche Greg Nnamani (ed.), *The New Religious Movements: Pentecostalism in Perspective*, Proceedings of the 21st Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria 2006 (Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007), 20.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 595.



might easily be understood as caution against mixing Christianity with pagan influences. There must have been manifestations of behaviors or utterances that appeared strange which are viewed from three perspectives in this essay.

Firstly, the description of idols as dumb is emphatic (*ta eidōla ta aphōna*), highlighted by the contrasting phrase in verse 3, "...speaking by the Holy Spirit" (*en pneumatī Theou lalōn legei*). Often, the identity of a spirit is discerned through the utterances of the one it possessed. Where the possessed does not speak but exhibit strange ecstatic behaviors, then dumb spirits could be in view. Such strange behaviors must have been exhibited or approved by community members with some level of authority; therefore, Paul speaks of the fact of being misled or enticed to dumb idols.<sup>17</sup> Caution is therefore important in order to forestall the infiltration of Gentile elements or idolatrous forms of worship into Christian worship. Secondly, there is a credible biblical record of seemingly inspired utterances and wonderful signs which originate from sources other than the Holy Spirit. For instance, the mediums and prophets that exhibit ecstatic frenzy whose authority is not recognized in the Bible (cf. Matt 7:15; 24:11, 25; 1 John 4:1-3; Rev 2:20). There is also the case of the slave girl referred to in Acts 16:16, who prophesied under the influence of an evil spirit. According to this second perspective, Paul seemed to be reminding the Corinthians that speaking in tongues and prophecy have parallels in paganism. In the third place, Paul draws attention to an important criterion for the discernment of the utterances of those who claim to possess the Spirit.

#### *Category for Recognizing Orthodox Utterances (12:3)*

*"Nobody speaking by the Holy Spirit cannot say 'Jesus is accursed,' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."*

The meaning of this text is considered alongside factors that caused division in the church. A line of interpretation might relate to the Corinthian church's assessment of church leaders who preached to them, and the affiliation to one or the other was a source of division among the

<sup>17</sup> The verb *apago*, meaning "to lead away, to arraign" has the sense of force or constraint as the following passages show: Luke 13:15; 23:26; Matt 26:57; Mark 14:44, 53; Acts 12:19; 23:17.

Corinthians (1 Cor 3:21). The letter mentions Paul, Apollos and Cephas (1:12; 3:22), but the reference to Apollos has more weight, as it is seen from Paul's admonishment in 1 Cor 3:4-6; 4:1-6 by which he intended to stop them from comparing and boasting about one leader over another. What the Acts of Apostles says about Apollos might help us to understand the problem in Corinth. Acts describes him as an eloquent man, versed in the scriptures, a former follower of the way of John the Baptist (Acts 18:24-25), who after being instructed, became a powerful refuter before the Jews that Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:26-28).<sup>18</sup> Yet, it seemed Apollos' ministry as a Christian preacher was not accompanied with the experience and power of the Holy Spirit which Paul taught was vital to Christian life. When Paul visited the nascent church in Ephesus after Apollos had been there, Paul discovered that the converts knew only the baptism of John; they did not have an experience of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). Apollos was also a regular visitor to Corinth (Acts 19:1; 1 Cor 16:12). Probably, some Corinthians, who admired Apollos for his rhetoric and eloquence, had followed his line of teaching and judged Paul as inferior to Apollos (4:3-6, 18-20).<sup>19</sup> Members who attached themselves to Paul might also have thought less of Apollos as unspiritual. In the midst of the controversy over these two leaders, Paul asked the church not to divide according to belonging to each of the leaders (1:12). They should rather consider all their leaders as God's servants, working together for a common purpose. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (v. 6 - 1 Cor 3:5-9). Paul might, therefore, be asking them in 1 Cor 12:3 to accept all their leaders as God's servants, since whoever is able to say "Jesus is Lord" is speaking by the Holy Spirit.

Another line of interpretation of the text might relate Paul's directive to the utterances of some church members who adopted the teaching of one of the church leaders. The content of their utterances was a source of worry for the Christian community. This point is proved by Paul's

<sup>18</sup> He was an Alexandrian Jewish Christian convert who preached both in Ephesus and Corinth. His conversion to the Christian way was thanks to the instructions of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26). His preaching as a Christian convert continued to focus on John's preaching of repentance (Acts 19:3).

<sup>19</sup> Paul encouraged them to choose his own example of leadership and to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor 4:7-17).



defense of his teaching against that of those who teach human wisdom. His teaching, he says, was "not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God" (1 Cor 3:4-5).

I find interesting William Barclay's interpretation of the sentence in 12:3a: "...no one speaking by the spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed.'" This sentence, according to him, might have arisen from four different situations:<sup>20</sup> (a) Origin from the Synagogue: the prayers at the synagogue included a curse on all those who had renounced their faith. After the death of Jesus, the Jews must have pronounced *anathema* on him. (b) Jews would have forced fellow Jews attracted to Christianity to pronounce this curse as a condition for remaining in the synagogue. Paul recounts in Acts 26:11 that he was forcing Jews attracted to Christianity to blaspheme. (c) Christians under persecution were compelled either to curse Christ or to die. (d) Under ecstatic frenzy, someone in the church must have blasphemed the name of Christ while speaking in tongues and claimed to be speaking under the influence of the Spirit.

The three foregoing lines of interpretation serve as backdrop to the exposition of the meaning of the positive confession of Jesus as Lord.

*"Jesus is Lord!"*

A confession is a public declaration of truth or someone's declaration about his/her convictions. The confession of Jesus' lordship, in this case, is a public statement of belief in the lordship of Jesus. What does it mean to profess that 'Jesus is Lord'? In one of the texts where this creedal formula appears (Rom 10:9-10), the confession of the lordship of Jesus Christ represents a public expression of belief that God raised Jesus from the dead, a confession that is necessary for salvation and which constitutes the climatic worship of God by all creation.<sup>21</sup>

(. . .) if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one

<sup>20</sup> See William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2009), 125-126.

<sup>21</sup> The early Christians' interpretation of Ps 110:1 underlies the development of the belief in the Lordship of Christ. See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 247.

believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved (Rom 10:9-10).

In the text cited above, Paul juxtaposes this act of verbal confession with the act of belief in a manner that suggests that they either correspond to each other or that one derives from the other.<sup>22</sup> This means that verbal, public confession of Jesus is possible because of faith. The verbal confession is not an empty one; it is inspired by a deep-seated faith, the content of which is that God raised Jesus from the dead.<sup>23</sup> So, what one says is conditioned by what one believes.

In 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul gives a detailed teaching on the resurrection, he says, "if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain" (1 Cor 15:14). Faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is both the beginning of orthodoxy and the doctrinal base of the church. Therefore, if the confession of faith in the resurrection is so important here as proof of orthodoxy, then the problem in the Corinthian community was not simply pedestrian. Certain utterances which do not conform with this belief was a cause of dissension.

Philippians 2:5-11 is another text to look at for better understanding the nature of the controversy behind 1 Cor 12:2-3. The text has a clearly pedagogical tone. The church appears to be experiencing adverse circumstances (Phil 1:28-30), suffering disunity and rivalry (Phil 2:2-4) and harboring Judaizers who were preaching the necessity of circumcision as an entry requirement for Gentiles. These Judaizers did not deny the divinity of Jesus, but they emphasized legalistic matters of religion more than life in the spirit. They thereby hinder the work of proclamation of the new life in Christ (Phil 1:17; 3:2-4). The Letter to the Philippians is, therefore, a letter of encouragement to a church suffering some internal disagreements and persecution. In 2:5-11, Paul presents Christ to them as a model of true humility and Christian service by

<sup>22</sup> In the sentence, both verbs are expressed in the subjunctive aorist, showing that they both correspond.

<sup>23</sup> Paul expresses the content of this faith wherever it is called into question, and he adduces the resurrection of Jesus to the action of God. Cf. Rom 4:24; 8:11.34; 10:9; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; Eph 2:6.



pointing to Christ's total humility exhibited both in his Incarnation and passion.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phi 2:5-11)

Imitation of Christ or having the same mind with Jesus is achieved through answering the call to self-emptying like Jesus Christ for the good of others and rising to newness of life that looks toward God (cf. Rom 6:3; Col 3:1-3). Believers are those who accept Jesus as Savior and are committed to sharing in his life through dying to themselves and living for him alone (cf. 2 Cor 5:14-15). Since it is clear that the confessional formula 'Jesus is Lord' (Phil 2:11) is an expression of belief in the resurrection of Jesus, Paul did not miss the opportunity to develop the practical implication of this open confession (Phil 3:18-20).

This teaching reiterates the basic New Testament teaching about the goal of the mission of the Holy Spirit, which is to glorify Jesus Christ and to lead Christians to living the new life in Christ (cf. John 14:25; 16:13-15). Paul states that all those who profess the lordship of Jesus Christ have entered the realm of the Holy Spirit. Their minds are henceforth set on the things of God, not on earthly things. A mind that is set on earthly things derives its knowledge from worldly wisdom and this is the root of unorthodox discourse and practice (1 Cor 2:4-5,14).

*"Nobody speaking by the Holy Spirit can say 'Jesus is accursed'"*

The opposite of the confession of Jesus as Lord is public denial of Jesus, "let Jesus be cursed." What does the blasphemy "Let Jesus be cursed" mean? The idea of one being cursed is not foreign to the biblical tradition. Its background is Deut 21:22-23 which pronounces God's curse on someone who is put to death by hanging because such a one is found

guilty of capital offense. The law recommends the immediate burial of such persons so that their bodies do not defile the land. This text is important for understanding how the death of Jesus was also interpreted in relation to Old Testament legal categories. The crucifixion of Jesus was perhaps considered by these people as sign of God's curse.

Paul understood this Deuteronomic law as foreshadowing the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>24</sup> In the letter to the Galatians (Gal 3:13), for instance, he re-interpreted this law within the covenant relationship between God and Israel. Paul refers to what the law says about Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law" (Gal 3:10; cf. Deut 27:11-26). The letter to the Galatians appears to be Paul's response to Galatians' acceptance of some Jewish intruders who were enforcing Jewish law on the new Christian converts as entry requirements.<sup>25</sup> Paul regarded this intrusion as a perversion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His response underscores the merits of Jesus' death within the covenant relationship. Since all who are under the law are under a curse if they do not obey it (Deut 27:26; 2 Kings 22:13; Gal 3:12) and no one could be justified before God by the law (Gal 3:11), God mercifully handed his Son over death to suffer the penalty of death for all. Paul says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles...through faith" (Gal 3:13-14). The covenant perspective changed the meaning of Christ's death, giving it a redemptive meaning. All those who believe are exonerated from this curse because Scripture foresaw that God would justify by faith all those who believe like Abraham (Gal 3:8, 11, 14).

In view of the above, the saying "Let Jesus be cursed" could be seen in relation to a controversy with members of the church who adopted a philosophical teaching that negated the divinity of Jesus. The Apollos group, as pointed out above, might be responsible for this form of teaching. Taking a lead from the teaching of the Alexandrian Jew, they must have interpreted the Jesus event on the basis of a gnosis which Paul

<sup>24</sup> The cross of Christ is in some texts referred to as a tree. Cf. Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29.

<sup>25</sup> The occasion of the letter is stated at the very beginning of the letter (Gal 1:6-9) and in 3:1-5.



calls human wisdom. An incipient form of earliest heresies - Christological or Trinitarian - might be operative here.<sup>26</sup> Such controversy might have occasioned the elaborate teaching on divine wisdom and on the power of Holy Spirit to lead to understanding of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 2). The controversy, it is believed, also inspired the elaborate treatment of the topic of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul described it as the foundational message and pillar of Christian faith.

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you-- unless you have come to believe in vain... Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:1-12)?

The evidence of Paul's query in 1 Cor 15:12, "How can some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead?", shows further that factors responsible for the controversy surrounding the divinity of Jesus Christ is internal to the community.

#### **Unorthodox Confessional Statements by Contemporary Christians**

The presentation of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 shows that the worshipping community was first of all defined by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. The bulk of the teaching of this chapter is on the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the unity of the church. In introducing the entire section in 1 Cor 12-15, Paul draws the attention of the community to the Christological content of all inspired utterances which claim legitimacy of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:1-3). The basis for Christian faith is the confession of the Lordship of Christ. Paul

<sup>26</sup> Adoptionist and Arian heresies were the earliest most dangerous and pernicious errors. Adoptionists held that Jesus was a man endowed with special power from God. Arius, the father of Arianism, denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. For him, Jesus was a semi-divine being, created in time, not begotten eternally, higher than any other being but different in essence from the Father. His ideas resemble the adoptionist theory of Lucian of Antioch, even though the Arian controversy is called Trinitarian, not Christological, because the point at issue was the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Trinity. Cf. Brown, *Heresies*, 95-98, 106-107.

underlines the importance of knowledge of God's mysteries for every confession of faith.

Jesus is Lord! or Praise the Lord! is a public confession of faith in the mouth of contemporary Christians all over the world. The two texts of Rom 10:9-10 and Phil 2:5-11 which expose the meaning of the creedal formula helped to identify the problems addressed by 1 Cor 12:1-3, which are also the problem of contemporary Christians.

*The first of these problems is lack of correct Christological basis to Pneumatology.*

Across all Christian denominations, there is growing attraction to lively liturgical/worship sessions, supported by hymnic choruses and manifestation of spiritual phenomena. These settings support the prevalence of private experiences of the spirit over rigid liturgical sessions that emphasize catechesis and doctrinal exposition. This over-emphasis on external phenomena of the spirit is often carried along without basic understanding of meaning of the Christ event for the new life the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:2-3 shows that any confession of Jesus' lordship which does not take account of his death and resurrection is basically defective. Confession of the lordship of Jesus, as it is described in Pauline texts, relate to the practical implications of belief in his death and resurrection. In today's church, as in the Corinthian church, due to the ability of some church members to manifest extraordinary signs, they are revered as highly spiritual. Those who possess these gifts also consider others as not as spiritual as they are. Christians who are bearing witness to faith in the midst of trial are not considered as spiritual because they do not speak in tongues. A Christian confession that is primarily confined to the sphere of the numinous and hysterical, without attention to the mystery of Christ is baseless. 1 Corinthians 12:2-3 is also read as an injunction not to attribute to the Holy Spirit anything that conflicts with the truth about the event and mysteries of Jesus Christ.

*The second doctrinal aberration among contemporary Christians conceives the lordship of Christ in materialistic terms.*

It is becoming common place, in many Christian churches, to interpret the lordship of Christ as the power of Jesus Christ to solve all human problems: healing from sickness and diseases, granting of material



wellbeing, protection from evil forces, and so on. This interpretation views Christ only as a super-being and miracle worker. Such interpretations encourage Christians to reject suffering or consider it as coming from the devil. Those who promote this teaching judge the efficacy of a church according to how effectively it takes care of the material needs of its adherents. Interpretations such as these reject the basis of Christian faith, which is the redemptive implication of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Instead, the confession of the lordship of Jesus is particularly given in view of suffering in this world and hope of the glory that awaits those who believe in Christ. Both the resurrection of Jesus Christ and ours are attributed to the power of God, as Paul says it in Romans 8: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8:11). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian is guarantee of future glorious life of our mortal bodies given to suffering and death in this present life. According to 1 Cor 15:44-48, the resurrected body is totally unhindered by any of this world's delimiting factors. This meaning of the lordship of Christ needs to be echoed again and again over and against materialistic interpretations of Christ's lordship which insinuate themselves into interpretations of the gospel in a number of ways. The clear evidence that suffering is essential for final redemption is God's gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe. Paul has something to say to those whom he calls the enemies of the cross:

For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself (Phil 3:18-20).

*A third anomaly is the often emphasis on legalistic and ritual requirements in the church to the neglect of life in the Spirit.*

Today, some churches promote what one could call neo-judaizing tendencies that give prior place to tithes, contribution to church projects, monetization of sacraments, and many other ritual requirements over that of the workings of the Spirit. Against this form of teaching, one refers to the New Testament teaching that the death and resurrection of Jesus have brought an end to formerly perceived salvation through observance of law; being led by the Spirit has become the law of God. The church must always remember that the gospel of Jesus Christ ought to be preached "not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God" (1 Cor 2:4-5). It is the task of the church to help members grow in the experience of the Holy Spirit.

### Conclusion

I bring two convictions to the conclusion of this essay. The first concerns the nature of the word of God. The word of God, is a symbolic entity that requires interpretation. In its history, the church has been weary of wrong interpretation of the Word of God and so had instituted a tradition of interpretation that goes back to the apostles. What we read from 1 Cor 12:1-3 is one out of many preventative measures the church has taken to preserve both the deposit of faith and the image of God that the word reveals.

Secondly, the understanding of the word depends, not on human intelligence, but on openness to the Holy Spirit. Today many who claim to speak authoritatively by the Spirit give interpretations of the word that are worldly based, materialistic, denigrating of the cross of Christ and lacking in Christian hope. These characteristics reveal interpretations of the gospel that are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Christians must pay attention to this nature of scripture as different from other kinds of human teachings because it contains a kind of wisdom that is not of this world. Therefore, we can understand the mysteries it contains only through the Holy Spirit.