



ARE YOU CHARISMATIC?

Ralph Williams, Humble, Texas

The "Charismatic movement" is very popular and widespread today. There are churches, preachers and individuals claiming to be charismatic. What does it mean? The word basically refers to "a gift of grace." It is used to refer to belief that the Holy Spirit is at work today granting believers supernatural gifts of tongues, healings, etc., as in the first century. In this country the movement reportedly began in the Mid-West about the turn of the twentieth century when a religious gathering felt that they received a "Pentecost experience." In those days the term "Pentecostalism" was used to identify such convictions and practices. Today it is called the *new* or "Neo-Pentecostalism," "Charismatic," and sometimes "Tongues."

Two points of vital importance are involved. First, since this is a Bible issue, we can learn conclusively all we need to know about it from the Bible itself (1 Thes. 5:21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9). Anyone who refuses to allow the Word of God to answer the question, and instead relies upon feelings and personal "testimonies" fails to love the truth. He places himself in a position to believe a lie and be lost (2 Thess. 2:9-12). Second, if God expects His children to be "charismatic" today, then we must seek it and wholeheartedly support it. But if God's plan doesn't include miraculous "gifts" for us, then our duty is spelled out in such passages as Jude 3; 2 John 10-11 and Eph. 5:7-11.

Purpose Of Gifts

Tongues were never a sign of one's personal salvation, as some think today (1 Cor. 14:22). Assurance that we are saved is based upon knowing and obeying the truth (1 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 1:7; 2:3). The purpose of "gifts" rather was to reveal and confirm Heaven's message (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4). Inspired men didn't ask unbelievers to accept their words as Divine; rather they proved (confirmed) by miraculous signs that God was truly speaking through them. One cannot understand the purpose of "gifts" without understanding the meaning of *confirmation*. To "confirm" means to "establish . . . to prove its (the word's) truth and divinity" (Thayer, p. 99). "Confirm" is a term used frequently in legal affairs. The U. S. Constitution was confirmed Sept. 17, 1787 by the signatures of George Washington and 38 other statesmen. Does anyone think the Constitution needs resigning (re-confirming) today? That document was confirmed 200 years ago. No one could confirm (sign) it today, even if he wanted to. Just as

our nation stands upon the foundation of the Constitution, the Lord's church is founded upon the New Testament. Both documents, the one civil and the other spiritual, were confirmed in their beginning. The very nature of "confirming" takes place at the beginning of a thing and not throughout its existence. The miraculous gifts of first century Christians are to New Testament truth what the signatures of the colonists are to our Constitution. Neither the gifts nor the signature can be duplicated today.

Therefore, to want a current confirming action (signature or tongues) suggests either misunderstanding or doubt. The validity of the Bible and the Constitution is generally accepted. So if one called for modern-day signatures (or miracles) we would give him the benefit of doubt and say he didn't understand the nature of confirmation.

To separate the "gifts" from their purpose is unscriptural. Since the functions of gifts in the first century was to reveal and confirm the Word of God, men today have the same gifts they would want to publish a supplemental New Testament with their newly revealed truths. Otherwise they do not have the same gifts if they have not the same purpose behind the gifts. But of course they can reveal no new truth today since "all truth" was given in apostolic day (John 16:13; Jude, verse 3).

Gifts To Cease

Paul's statement regarding "gifts" in 1 Cor. 13:8-10 agrees perfectly with this matter of confirmation. It shows they were temporary in duration and not permanent. When the "perfect" Word of God (James 1:25) came, completing the New Testament revelation, the gifts dealing with truth "in part" ceased. They were no longer needed. Tongues, supernatural wisdom, prophecy, etc. had done their work in revealing and confirming various truths as "parts" of the whole. The whole ("perfect") revelation of God was the object of gifts to begin with, so they were laid aside when the mission was accomplished.

Some think "that which is perfect" in 1 Cor. 13:10 refers to Christ, but the context disallows it. The "part" and the "perfect" refer to the same thing — God's revelation at different points in time. For a period in the first century it was "in part" until *perfected*. Clearly the Lord Jesus was never "in part" so the "perfect" cannot refer to Him and His second coming. Further

Holy Spirit Baptism

Eugene Britnell

Those who believe that miraculous gifts are in evidence today contend that people other than the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Some say this included the 120 (Acts 1:15). Others say that all who were converted on that day received Holy Spirit baptism. Some even contend that the new birth today includes Holy Spirit baptism.

The Bible teaches that only the apostles received the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

In the first place, the Lord promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles only. Read John chapters 14, 15 and 16. Speaking to the apostles (Acts 1:2) just before his ascension, Jesus said, "... but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). They were sent to Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) to wait for that promise which was fulfilled on Pentecost.

In addition, the language of Acts 1 and 2 proves that to be true. We are told in Acts 2:1, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Who were the "they"? When chapter one closes, the subjects are Matthias and the eleven apostles. We know that a personal pronoun refers to the antecedent noun. The "they" of Acts 2:1 refers to the apostles. Note the following: The sound filled the house where "they" were; there appeared unto "them" tongues; "they" were all filled with the Holy Spirit; the multitude heard "them" speak. They said "these men," but there were women among the 120 (Acts 1:14). "But Peter, standing up with the eleven" (Acts 2:14), not the 120 or the thousands who gathered. When the people wanted to know what to do for remission of sins, they addressed their question to "Peter and to the rest of the apostles" (Acts 2:37). Evidently they believed that the apostles only had received power and knowledge through the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, could answer their question.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, they were able to "speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The result was: "Every man heard them speak in his own language" (v. 6). The people discussed what this could mean, and asked, "How hear we, every man in our own language, wherein we were born?" (v. 8)

The crowd was composed of "Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven" (v. 5). There would have been many different languages represented (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, etc.). But what amazed the people was that they could hear and recognize the languages spoken by the apostles as "their own language" yet they knew that the apostles were all Galileans (Acts 2:7) and therefore, unaided by miraculous

power, could speak only the same language — their native tongue.

The people today who claim to speak in tongues will not give honest consideration to these facts. They know that they cannot speak in foreign languages which they have never learned. So, to deceive people (and perhaps themselves in some cases), they speak gibberish; a meaningless jargon which is not a recognized language of any people, and unknown to both God and man!

The Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in languages which were known to the hearers but which had not been learned by the speakers. No man or woman living today can do that!

I now invite your consideration to a clear lesson from Acts chapter eight.

Because of persecution in Jerusalem, the disciples were scattered. Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ. He confirmed his message by miracles (verses 7 and 8). As a result, those who believed "were baptized, both men and women" (v. 12). Thus the church was established in Samaria. But then we read, "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (verses 14-17.)

Now some questions and conclusions are in order. Since Philip could perform miracles, why didn't he impart the Holy Spirit to the new disciples through his hands? Answer: Only an apostle could do this. Where did Philip get his power? Answer: From the apostles. Why did the apostles in Jerusalem send Peter and John to Samaria to lay hands on some? Answer: Only apostles, who had received Holy Spirit baptism, could lay hands on others and thus enable them to perform miracles. But those who had received such power from the apostles could not pass it on to others (as we see in the case of Philip). Therefore, the conclusion must be: When the apostles and those upon whom they had laid their hands all died, miracles ceased!

We are all aware of the fact that many of the leading preachers of our time, especially those on television and radio, claim direct guidance from God through the Holy Spirit. But their claims don't make it true. And this is not new. If you believe all those who claim a "hot-line" to heaven, I suggest that you read Jeremiah 23. Back then, there were self-styled prophets who tried to pass their dreams and opinions off on the people as God's word, even telling them "He saith." God said they caused the people "to err by their lies." He said, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied."

There is one thing for sure: when a preacher today claims some modern revelation from God, he is admitting that he is not satisfied with what God has revealed through His written word, the Bible. (see next page)

Rom. 10:1-3). Seekers of God need to remember that not all religious activity originates with the Holy Spirit. There are unholy spirits at work as well (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; 1 John 4:1).

more, "faith, hope and love" were to continue abiding after the "perfect" came. That is true regarding the New Testament revelation, but it is not true regarding the second coming. Faith and hope at that time will naturally cease to "abide."

Tongues

The Charismatic movement strongly emphasizes "speaking in tongues." The preceding discussion of I Corinthians 13 should prove such gifts ceased at the close of the first century. But there is another basic Bible difference: What is done today is not what was done in the early church. "Tongues" were genuine human languages, such as Parthian, Egyptian, Arabian, etc. (Acts 2:6-11). If an American today could travel to Arabia and preach the gospel to Arabians in their native tongue, never having studied the language, that would be a true gift of the Holy Spirit. "Tongues" were an aid enabling inspired men to preach to all nationalities under the great commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). In time, the New Testament was written down permanently and translated into other languages. Most people admit the "tongues" of today are not human languages. To reject the explanation of Acts 2 as to what constituted "tongues" and create disagreement by making "tongues" of First Corinthians 14 mean something else is to "wrest the scriptures" (2 Peter 3).

Healings

The gift of healing also receives special emphasis among Charismatics. Yet what is supposedly done today differs greatly from the supernatural healings of Christ and His apostles. They healed the blind, dumb, palsied (Matt. 9); the halt and maimed (Matt. 15); every sickness and disease (Matt. 9:35); raised the dead (John 11; Acts 9); and were unhurt by poisonous vipers and drinks (Mark 16; Acts 28). The *quality* of their miracles was distinctive also: (1) Always instantaneous. Recovery periods were never necessary. (2) No mere partial improvements, but always complete recovery. (3) Bonafide cases which even opponents and enemies acknowledged (Acts 4:16). (4) With or without faith of the sick. When compared with New Testament healings, the claims and cases of today clearly show the miraculous element is missing!

Other Gifts Missing

First Corinthians 12 lists nine other "gifts" besides tongues and healings. Why then do Charismatics seek to perform only these two while neglecting all the rest? All the gifts stand or fall together. In fact, in I Cor. 12:28 Paul lists the gifts of "helps, governments" between healings and tongues. Which Charismatics practice these two gifts? Or can even tell us unmistakably what they were? Again, where are the gifts of "discerning spirits," inspired "wisdom" or supernatural "knowledge" today? These missing gifts clearly show that men are attempting what is not God's will for today, and therefore are violating the Scriptures.

Missing Deadly Signs

Mark 16 is said to justify tongues and healings; yet

sandwiched between these two gifts are the "taking up of serpents" and "drinking any deadly thing" signs (vv. 17-18). Some "old line" Pentecostals have at least tried to be consistent. Recognizing all these signs belong together, they have not neglected the deadly ones. Time and again the news media has reported deaths through snake handling and drinking poison within certain Pentecostal groups. Neo-Pentecostals don't claim or attempt these deadly signs. By whose authority do they ignore them when Jesus lists them right along with the others? Again, this proves that men today cannot do what first century Christians did because it is not God's will. The signs belonged to the first century, not the twentieth!

Doctrinal Truth Ignored

Second John 9-11 limits one's personal faith to "the doctrine of Christ," and fellowship only with those who abide in and teach such doctrine. Charismaticism violates both precepts. Truth regarding doctrinal matters is overlooked while tongues and healings are magnified. If one claims these gifts, fellowship is extended and his doctrinal position elsewhere matters little. The Lord's teaching that "there is one body (church) . . . one faith" (Eph. 4:4, 5) is denied in practice and sometimes in teaching. Charismatics are found in *many* differing denominations holding *many* different faiths, and thereby contradict New Testament truth.

Holy Spirit Divided?

This brings up the basic error of Charismaticism. It requires the Holy Spirit to approve contradictory faiths and religious division. Methodist, Mormon, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal groups all claim the Holy Spirit is working through them with charismatics. How then can any one group question the doctrinal position of any other? Yet their positions on baptism, the Godhead, church organization, etc., are totally irreconcilable. Does the Spirit of God really endorse such confusion? Does He contradict Himself in approving division (see I Cor. 1:10)? He would if He truly is charismatizing those in all these *diverse* religious bodies! But it doesn't take Solomon's wisdom to see that the Spirit of Truth is not a Spirit of error and contradiction (Matt. 12:25; I Cor. 14:33; Gal. 1:6-9; I John 4:1, 6). This one point will show the fallacy of the Charismatic movement -- to thinking people.

Evidence Or Emotions?

The evidence of God's Word must be the groundwork of personal faith (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31). However, Charismaticism appears more concerned with feelings, human testimonies, and "experiences" than with what the Bible says. To turn from God's Word to these subjective standards is to open the door to one's own deception and damnation (Prov. 16:25; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 Thess. 2:10-12).

We urge Charismatics to examine their Bibles carefully in the light of these truths and Bible references. Their zeal is commendable, but if it is not according to God's righteousness their worship is vain (Matt. 15:9;

(see bottom of next page)

We kindly, yet confidently, challenge any man or woman living today (including all the famous radio and television preachers) to prove by evidence (the kind that we cannot deny - Acts 4:16) and scripture that they can perform, or cause God to perform, miracles such as we read about in the New Testament. We are ready and willing to meet any of the Charismatic or Pentecostal preachers in public discussion. We will affirm that miracles ceased near the close of the first century, and that they all are either ignorant of the truth, or they are fakes, liars and impostors!

As you see, we have devoted this issue to a study of the Holy Spirit and his work. No religious subject is more misunderstood. We urge you to give careful consideration to what we have presented and study every scripture cited (Acts 17:11).

If you are not a Christian, may we call attention to the answer of the Holy Spirit (through the apostles) to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Those who asked the question were believers in Christ and the gospel message. To them, Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (unto, ASV) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37, 38.) Those who obeyed these commands were added by the Lord to his church, the body of the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4; 5:23). If you will do now what they did then, the Lord will do now what he did then!

RELIGIOUS HUCKSTERS WITH WATERED-DOWN GOSPEL

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In central Arkansas, I lived down the street from a carnival owner, who confided in me one day and spoke of a number of his sideshow employees who had left the carnival business and had taken up preaching. Without losing a lick, he explained, they would move their tents into other towns and open up business as "God-ordained, Spirit-filled preachers of the gospel, with a hot-line to heaven." This brought them more money than they had enjoyed while working at the carnival.

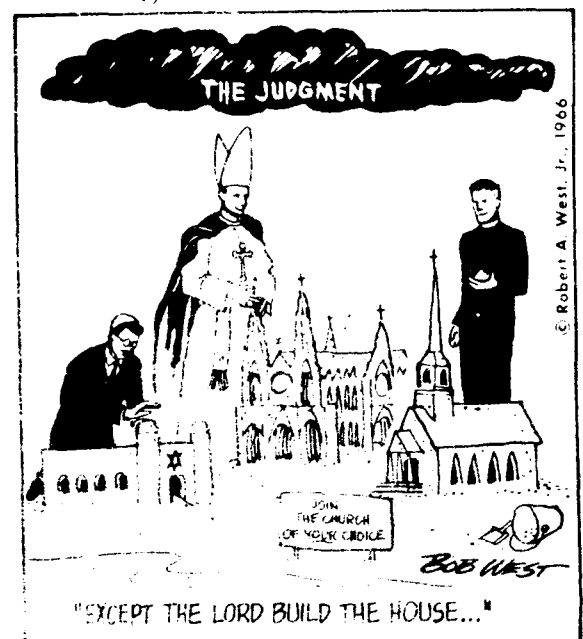
The more I listen to radio and television preachers today, the more I realize that there is definitely a pattern in their presentation. These religious hucksters even sound like experienced carnival barkers, panhandling at a side-show.

But as far back as the days of the apostles, there were warnings against this kind of "preacher." Brother Peter spoke of those who would "make merchandise of you" (2 Peter 2:3). And the apostle Paul let the people know that he was NOT "handling the word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. 4:2). That word "deceitfully," with the word "corrupt" of 2 Corinthians 2:17, gives us this idea: hucksterizing, peddling, getting base gain from, adding to, adulterating, falsifying, counterfeiting, and trading in. This perfectly describes the religious racketeers in our day who are constantly claiming great powers, offering miracles for money, begging, speaking of "love offerings," "prayer partners," "sending in your tithes and donations," and promising to multiply your contributions to them fourfold, while they preach a watered down gospel with a lot of meaningless "amens" and "halleluliah, praise the Lords" thrown in.

Yet it is interesting to remember that such "carnies" were also at work in the days of Peter and Paul. These preaching hucksters were deceivers then, and they are still deceiving the unsuspecting today.

From THE SOWER

Our Religious World



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