

CONFUSION IN THE CHARISMATIC CAMP: Can Heretics Be Helped?



1A. THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT:

One startling religious phenomenon of the twentieth century is the rise of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement with its emphasis on the "charismata," or spiritual gifts. The movement progressed in three distinct phases called "waves." The first wave is that of traditional/classical Pentecostalism, the second wave that of the charismatic movement/neoPentecostalism and the third wave the signs and wonders movement. Ryrie has a good summary of the progression of these waves:

The first wave was the inauguration of the Pentecostal movement in the first part of the 20th century with its emphasis on receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. The second wave is labeled the Charismatic Movement beginning in 1960 which emphasizes the fullness of the Spirit as evidenced in an openness to all spiritual gifts. The Charismatic movement in this case also penetrated mainline denominations and was not confined to Pentecostal churches. The third wave emphasizes power and deliverance through kingdom authority. . . The contemporary Signs and Wonders movement began largely through the ministry of John Wimber in the 1980's. Since the kingdom of God is now person and power, and since Christians must do what Jesus did when He was here on earth, we must expect the signs and wonders of the kingdom. Thus all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are present and active in the church today. The movement emphasizes the exercise of healings, words, of knowledge, and exorcism. Prophecy and tongues have a place in some cases, but these gifts of the Spirit are not so prominent as others (*The Holy Spirit*, 1977, 201-202).

Even though the movement had its beginning in the early 1900's, a rather recent date in terms of church history, by the end of this past century, Charismatics had infiltrated all mainline denominations and made strong inroads into Roman Catholicism and evangelical churches. Discerning evangelicals are concerned with a number of problem areas. Doctrinal and denominational differences are often ignored in light of the Charismatic's common experience of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues. Because of their lack of biblical orientation, the Charismatics display a confusion in certain major areas of biblical theology. The one belief held in common among the Pentecostals and Charismatics is the belief that the supernatural spiritual gifts of New Testament times should be practiced today, including tongues, miracles, healings and prophecy.

(For a detailed discussion of the origin and nature of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements, see the January and February issues of the *Faith Pulpit* by George Houghton, Th.D. The web page address is www.faith.edu).

2A. THE CONFUSION ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF SPIRIT BAPTISM:

1b. The Charismatic view:

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

A basic tenet of the charismatic movement is the insistence on a second work of grace with a resultant empowerment to perform supernatural feats. This distinctive belief of the Charismatics involves insistence on two baptism of the Holy Spirit, one at the moment of salvation for every believer and one subsequent to salvation, whereby the Holy Spirit baptizes the individual with power. As evidence of the second baptism, the individual is able to speak in tongues. As Basham, a charismatic evangelist, observes about this post-salvation experience: "The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the doorway into the supernatural realm of the Christian life." Basham agrees with another charismatic teacher that "speaking in tongues is the prayer part of the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (*A Handbook on Tongues, Interpretation and Prophecy*, 34).

2b. Biblical considerations:

We believe it is illegitimate to make Spirit baptism or tongues speaking a second work of grace, as if God had not given us all we need in Christ at salvation. Unger rightly observes that:

Misunderstanding of the baptism of the Spirit and the gift of tongues destroys a sense of the oneness of the believer (1 Cor. 12:12-31). This is one of the most serious efforts of modern glossolalic movements. Like all error, especially that which concerns the basis of Christian unity, as the baptism of the Spirit does, unsound doctrine divides God's people, who ought first and foremost to recognize their unity in Christ. It was this positional unity of all true believers that Jesus prayed for in His high priestly prayer (John 17:20, 21) and which was realized in the newly-born church at Pentecost, the body of Christ (Acts 1:5; 5:14;11:16). (*The New Testament Teaching on Tongues*, 1971, 84).

3A. THE CONFUSION ABOUT THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

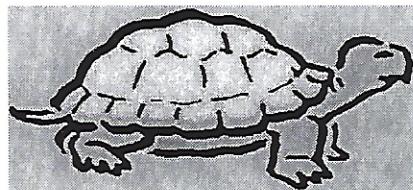
The charismatic movement elevates and exalts the third member of the Trinity. The Savior's teaching on the Church Age ministry of the Holy Spirit is clear:

John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

It is only reasonable that the Spirit-led believer would want to do what the Spirit Himself does, and that is to magnify Christ. How distorted the emphasis of the Charismatics is can be seen by a stroll through any charismatic bookstore. Sometime ago I browsed in just such a store in Des Moines. I counted fifty volumes directly dealing with the Holy Spirit and not a single doctrinal volume on the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder this unbiblical emphasis leads to unbiblical practices.

George Zeller has an excellent illustration of the ministry and function of the Holy Spirit:

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit's ministry is to testify or bear witness of Christ, to point to Christ. The Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, but to the Lord Jesus.



What do you see in the illustration above? Your first response would probably be to say, "A turtle!" But actually it is an arrow and a turtle. The arrow does not want to be seen. The arrow merely bears witness to the turtle and points to the turtle. The arrow is a witness. It draws attention away from itself and wants you to focus on the turtle.

The Spirit of God bears witness of Christ. He wants us to see Him and Him alone. When the Holy Spirit is at work in an assembly of believers, Christ will be exalted and magnified. If the main focus is on the Holy Spirit, then something is wrong. The Holy Spirit does not promote Himself.

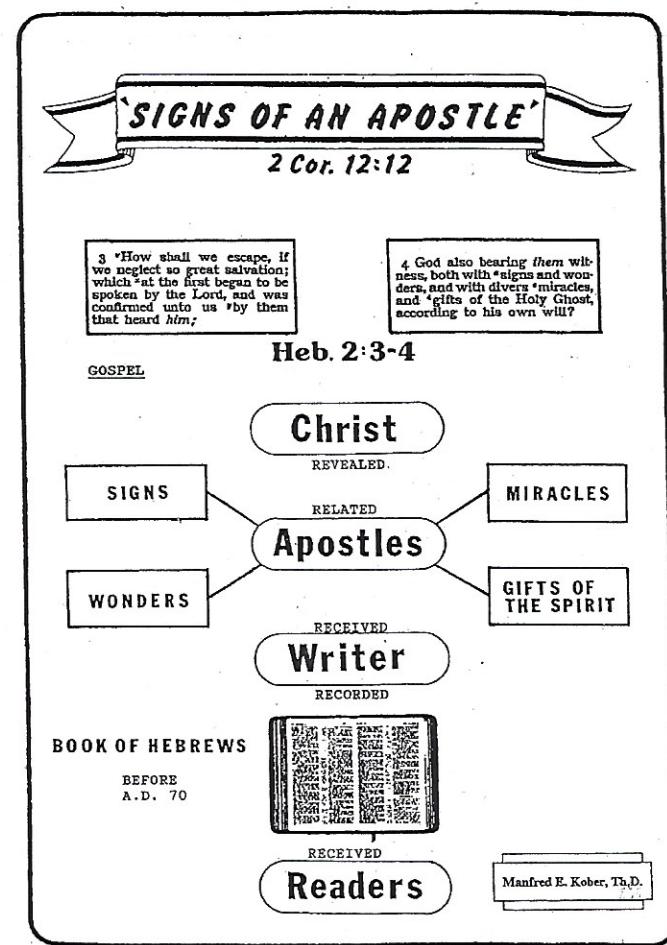
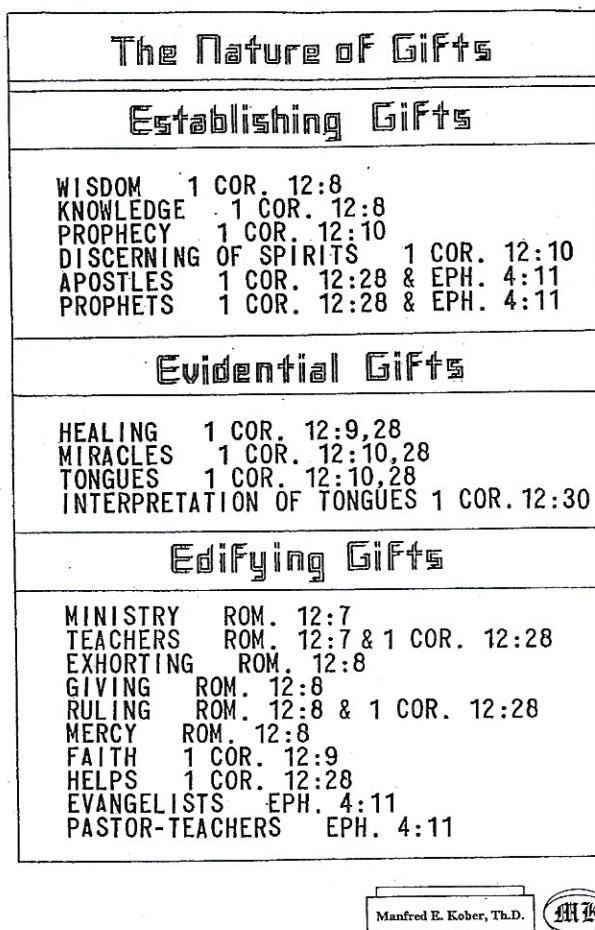
"He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:14). The main ministry of God the Holy Spirit is to GLORIFY THE SON. When the Spirit of God is at work in my life, what will be the result? The Lord Jesus Christ will become more precious to me and so will His Word, the Bible. The Spirit-filled person is the person who is filled with Christ--occupied with Him, delighted in Him, rejoicing in Him, resting in Him, trusting in Him. The Spirit of God's ministry is to make believers more and more Christ-like: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed [are constantly being changed] into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

23. Is it God's will for every sick person to be healed?

For a solidly scriptural treatment on the spiritual gifts and the charismatic movement see:
<http://mariettafellowship.org/doctrine/charis35.htm>

4A. THE CONFUSION ABOUT THE ENDURANCE OF GIFTS:

Our charismatic friends insist that since the person of the Spirit and His power have not changed, neither have His gifts. All His gifts are still bestowed today. This position is untenable, however, in light of the clear statement of God's Word that certain foundational and evidential gifts have ceased. Indeed, by the time the book of Hebrews was penned, just before A.D. 70, gifts identified as "signs and wonders and . . . divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" had ceased (Heb. 2:3-4). The diagrams below will illustrate the importance of dispensational distinctions in the function and cessation of certain sign gifts:



The early sign gifts did not occur apart from apostolic contact (Acts 8:14-17). As we will see subsequently, the gift of tongues, supposedly an evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, can also be consigned to the period of the early church. Paul clearly shows the temporary nature of tongues in 1 Cor. 13:8. He teaches that at the time that prophecies and knowledge shall have been

rendered inoperative (passive form of katargeo) tongues would have ceased on their own account (middle form of pauo). When did prophecy cease? It ceased with the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and the conclusion of the New Testament canon (Rev. 22:18-19). When God had established His church and completed His written Word, prophecies were no longer needed. At such a time tongues would already have ceased.

5A. THE CONFUSION ABOUT THE EXERCISE OF TONGUES

- 1b. Even if the gift of tongues were valid for the twentieth century, the Charismatics generally violate several clear guidelines for the proper exercise of that gift.
 - 1c. When tongues were spoken in the early church:
1 Corinthians 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.
 - 2c. The speaking had to be in sequence.
 - 3c. An interpreter had to be present.
 - 4c. Women were not to speak, whereas charismatic meetings are comprised frequently of a majority of women, many of whom give charismatic utterances.



1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

- 5c. Unsaved Jewish people had to be present in the meetings. The sole purpose of tongues was that they be a sign to unbelieving Israel.

6A. THE CONFUSION ABOUT THE ELEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL:

As stated earlier, the newest form of Pentecostalism, known as the Third Wave, or Vineyard Christian Fellowship, was founded by John Wimber. Like the Charismatics before him, he insists on the presence of all spiritual gifts in the church today. But he goes beyond that by emphasizing power evangelism. For the gospel to be rightly preached, miraculous signs should accompany the proclamation to convince the unsaved of the veracity and genuineness of the message. In a recent book one of his disciples writes of the healing mandate of the Great Commission. According to the Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus' "disciples are to teach their converts to do everything He commanded

them. Must not this include announcing the Kingdom, casting out demons and healing the sick?" (Don Williams in *The Kingdom and the Power*, 189). "Christians who do not pursue miraculous signs according to the biblical model of ministry are setting themselves up for Satanic deception" (*Ibid.*, 191). Who is deceived? The elements of the gospel are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Through total trust in the substitutionary death of Christ we receive eternal life. The apostles preached this gospel, and God granted them supernatural signs confirming the divine origin and complete truthfulness of their message. As was noted above, as the apostles passed from the scene, so did these gifts. This is clearly indicated by the writer to the Hebrews (2:3-4) who reminds second generation Christians of the fact that when they first heard the gospel it was accompanied by various supernatural sign gifts—miracles no longer evident at the time of the writing of his epistle to the Hebrews. Wimber and his associates also stress the continuing gift of prophecy. However, they draw an unbiblical and thus improper distinction between apostolic prophecy which was inerrant and prophecy communicated through Christians then and now which may well contain errors of fact judgment.

We believe that it is unscriptural to insist that all spiritual gifts still exist today. And yet, while we maintain that certain establishing and evidential gifts have ceased, we hold that edifying gifts are still for today. It was noted earlier that the same Spirit who baptizes the believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) at that moment bestows on the believer a gift or gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). At the moment of salvation the Spirit immerses the believer into the body, implants him into a special place in the body, imparts to him a gift (or gifts), and impels him by His power to be active as a part of the body of Christ. In A.D. 63 the Holy Spirit still pleads through Peter that everyone use his spiritual gift, that of speaking or serving, to minister to others and to magnify the Lord.

1 Peter 4:10-11

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

(The above is an expansion of *Faith Pulpit* article by the author, "Confusion in the Charismatic Camp," April 1994.)

