

**MODERN CHARISMATA
VS.
THE REVELATION OF GOD**

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PART 1

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Enough years have gone by since the rise of the so-called modern Charismatic Movement to allow the movement to reach its mature characteristics. It seems to satisfy a significant enough need in the human psyche to guarantee its survival for years to come. But the more it matures and, like many movements before it, takes on a certain air of venerability, it will increasingly continue to cause confusion in the ranks of Christians everywhere. The confusion arises, I believe, because of a gross and widespread misunderstanding of the biblical doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the biblical gift of tongues, and the spectacular miraculous phenomena of Scripture.

These three things—the baptism of the Holy Spirit, tongues, and special miracles or "signs and wonders"—are closely related in Scripture, and together they form the essence of a very important work of God that has to do with the validity of Scripture itself. The revelation of God has been uniquely authenticated to His people and to the world by these very special works of God which the Modern Charismatic Movement now seeks to duplicate or to counterfeit. And by their attempt to revive the same works that God Himself terminated with the close of the canon of Scripture, not only do they deceive themselves and others but they undermine the uniqueness of the very revelation of God.

I purpose therefore in the following pages, to examine the spirit of the Charismatic Movement in its more settled form. Also I want to answer the questions from Scripture: What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? What is the gift of tongues? What are signs and wonders? And what purpose do all these respectively serve?

In the first Epistle of John we find instructions for such an examination in the following words: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world . . ." (4:1).

This passage instructs us not to believe every spirit but rather to try all spirits. The reason we must try them is to see whether or not they are of God. Every new movement that has arisen since the days of Jesus cannot be from God. Therefore, we need to have eternal vigilance in trying the many spirits abroad today. In response then to this commandment to try the spirits, I want to examine the spirit of the Charismatic Movement to determine if this phenomenon is really of the Spirit of God. But first I want to take a brief look at the historical background of this phenomenon before we go into the Scripture to try the spirit of this movement.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

We will be able to understand the nature of the movement more clearly with a look at its history and how it has developed up to now. It grew out of the Pentecostal Movement which arose in the late 19th century.

The Old Holiness Movement. The doctrine of "holiness," or a supposed state of sinless perfection, considered by some to be a special or a second work of grace at a distinctive time after conversion lies at the base of the Pentecostal Movement. This doctrine goes back a long way. It began to be defined in the Methodist movement. John Wesley himself believed in such a theology, and many of the people who followed Wesley said they had reached such a state of holiness. But speaking in tongues was not a part of this early movement. At first it was not as well defined as it is today in the "holiness" movement. But this doctrine began to take deeper root in the late nineteenth century and began to express itself in different church groups.

The Rise of Pentecostalism. As the great revivals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries died out, a spiritual vacuum was created. The Pentecostal Movement appears to have grown out of this vacuum as a misguided human effort to sustain the euphoria that the Holy Spirit had created in the period of the Great Awakening (c. 1735-1865). As these pentecostal tendencies increased there grew a division disassociating the old-line holiness movement from the new pentecostalism. The greatest difference in the older holiness movements and the new pentecostal movements was a greater sensationalism in the latter with speaking in tongues.

Among the earliest developments of the Pentecostal Movement are those meetings and events which led to the formation of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). Among the principal men involved in this developing phenomenon were Richard G. Spurling, Sr. and Jr., both involved in an organization called the "Christian Union" formed August 19, 1886. Its purpose was to ". . . sit together as the Church of God to transact business as the same . . ." (C. T. Davidson, Upon this Rock, p. 292).

It might be noted that such an act presumes that "the church of God" had not been perpetuated throughout the centuries, intact and doing business, from the days of Christ and that it had no identifiable existence. Such an act is presumptuous indeed in view of the words of Christ that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is the rejection of the biblical principle of the perpetuity of the church that lies at the base of most of the so-called "churches" that have originated since the first centuries.

The Pentecostal Movement continued to develop. In 1896 a series of pentecostal meetings, where a second definite work of grace was preached, was conducted in Cherokee County North Carolina. It was said that over one hundred persons were "baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire and spoke in other tongues . . ." (Davidson, p. 295). This, if not the first occasion where speaking in tongues was practiced among the modern pentecostal movements, it was among the earliest. But about the same time, Davidson wrote: ". . . the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification—sanctification as a second definite work of grace—was brought to life, more vividly than ever. Holiness was being preached and lived in many areas, and 'fire-baptized' groups were now springing up nearly everywhere, especially in the Mid-West, the South, Texas and elsewhere. Here and there an occasional one could be heard to 'speak in tongues' a strange experience that appeared to lift him out of the mediocre to a kind of exalted plane with God" (p. 295-296).

Pentecostalism Spreads. The march of this phenomenon continued to spread. In 1901 in a farmhouse near Topeka, Kansas there was a small school called Bethel Bible College. The school was run by a Charles Parham who encouraged the student body to seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit. On New Years Eve a student, Agnes Osmond, claimed that she had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues. Before long practically the whole student body had had the same experience.

The word spread as far as Houston, Texas to a black Nazarene evangelist named William Seymore. Seymore went to Los Angeles and about 1906 is said to have spoken in tongues. He went to a Nazarene Church on Bonnie Brae Street and gave his testimony of the "baptism." But the elders of the church, it is said, would not accept his testimony; whereupon Seymore found an abandoned Methodist Church on Azusa Street and began to hold meetings. Most of the Nazarene congregation followed him, and in 1906 there broke out the famed "Azusa Street Revival." It continued for years and spread the tongues movement all over the country.

Meanwhile in Cherokee County, North Carolina, the Spurling holiness group by the leadership of A. J. Tomlinson on June 13, 1903 became the "Church of God" (which later moved to Cleveland, Tennessee). Many people believe the Azusa Street group was first in the tongues movement; it seems apparent, however, that the North Carolina group has the dubious honor of priority. (But there were other groups forming in various places that may have preceded this group.) The Tomlinson group further claims that the Church of God was restored in 1903 for the first time since 325 A.D. C. T. Davidson, Church of God historian, wrote: "Therefore, the Dark Age period is from 325 A.D. to June 13, 1903, when the Church of God was uncovered in what is now Fields of the Wood, Cherokee County, North Carolina, United States of America" (Upon this Rock, p. 281).

It is a most remarkable leap to go from the Catholic apostasy under Constantine, ignoring the thousands of churches who rejected that apostasy and stood true to the faith--the Donatists, Paulicians, Waldensians, Albigenses, Anabaptists, and finally the Baptists. But such is the reasoning that spawned the early Pentecostal Movement which has now blossomed into the more modern and widespread Charismatic Movement.

Over the half-century that followed the Azusa Street meetings and the origin of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), many other pentecostal churches sprang up. (There are over two hundred movements claiming the name "Church of God.") The largest Pentecostal Movement is the Assemblies of God (originated 1914). Until about 1950 these movements grew in number and membership until their combined membership numbered in the millions. But they were regarded by most of Christendom as somewhat fanatical and of low prestige. The religious establishment viewed them with little esteem not realizing that within three decades all the traditional denominations were to be infiltrated with the same excesses.

Rise of the Modern Charismata. In the 1950's a very charismatic faith healer came along named Oral Roberts. At first he worked among the traditional pentecostal churches until he and his setup man decided they would bypass the churches and go directly to the people. Soon the Full Gospel Business Mens Association held its first meeting in Los Angeles, and since that time the movement began to grow in prestige, wealth, and influence. The old-line established denominations did not join pentecostalism, but pentecostalism joined them through the prestigious businessmen who got the "baptism" but remained in their own traditional churches and formed charismatic sub-units within their decaying denominations.

It was around 1960 that this tongues-speaking movement began to break out of the confines of the pentecostal churches and made its way into the main-line denominations—the Anglicans and the high-church people, the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, and some Baptists and practically every denominational movement.

When it began to break out in the old liberal denominations, the news media decided this was a news-worthy story. It was not much news-worthy as long as it was confined to the Pentecostal groups -- people who seemed to identify with a social strata that was not wealthy or highly educated as a rule. But when it got into the high-church, into the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, etc., then this was news. And so the news media picked it up and began to give it publicity and the more publicity it got, of course, the more the upper class of the social strata began to be drawn to it. It soon became "respectable" in all of the main-line denominations. So when they found that it satisfied a need in the human psyche, it caught on like wild-fire and moved very rapidly.

In 1967, the Charismatic Movement made its way into the Catholic church. Then the Catholics also began to have the experience, and they too began to speak in tongues. Even the liberals became involved; they saw it as a golden opportunity to promote ecumenism. George Gardiner said that he knew of rank liberals who had received the so-called "baptism of the Holy Spirit" even though they deny the deity of Christ.

So now there is this big influence that pervades much of Christendom, and it has drawn many together around the experience — not around the Word of God—but around the experience. They believe that God is pouring out His Spirit upon them, confirming, and validating the movement by the phenomenon of tongues. Are we then to believe that God has now approved all denominations, Catholic and Protestant, just as He approved and authenticated the Jerusalem church in the first century? Behind it all we can easily see the deceitful and crafty hand of Satan attempting to validate the empty shell of Catholicism, Protestantism, and even liberalism.

Salient Characteristics of the Charismatic Movement. **First,** a leading characteristic of this movement could be catalogued under the heading of subjectivism—a reaction produced by a state of the mind or resulting from a feeling or temperament. The movement is subjective in nature. Its proponents do not have an objective, well-thought-out and delineated system of biblical doctrine to support it. Most of its adherents really do not feel this necessity. It is a system of religion that is based upon subjective experience.

Second. It centers on emotional sensations . It is a system of religion that involves a state of general excitement of the emotions or feelings. It tends to appeal to the senses — to satisfy the needs of a human being to feel sensations. Its appeal is to that part of the human being which responds by the five senses, particularly feelings and emotions. The true application of objective Scripture truth to the human spirit by God's Holy Spirit, which may indeed evoke certain emotions, is not sufficient for everyone. Some find a need to have both the psychic and physical enter into the religious experience. This is one of the characteristics of the old pentecostalism. And the Charismatic Movement has the same tendencies in certain psychic experiences, bodily movements and gestures. It is subjective, and in some degree sensuous — of the senses — in nature.

Third. It is sensational in nature which also is complementary to and almost always existing alongside of an experience of emotional sensations. In other words, it is the kind of thing that appeals to the flesh. Everything must be exciting; visual and lively manifestations are essential or "the Spirit" is not present. There is a certain sensationalism that must be sustained by what is asserted to be the miraculous, or by signs and wonders. If miracles are not happening, things are dull. Also often sensationalized are the ordinary "works of the flesh." These must be personified as demons — the demon of hate , of anger, etc.—then "cast out" in the name of Jesus. True biblical sanctification or Christian growth (see Col. 3:5-1 A) is too dull, too slow. So there is an effort, often very transparent, to maintain the euphoria by various means of artificial sensationalism.

Fourth. The major hallmark of this movement, the major identification tag, is speaking in unknown tongues. This is known today in theological circles as glossalalia. That is the new buzzword for the movement. The big thing is to discuss whether or not you have had the experience of glossalalia — have you spoken in tongues? Glossalalia is the hallmark--the major feature of the movement.

THE SEVERAL SPIRITS CONSIDERED

There are certain factors involved in the rise and popularity of this phenomenon that help to explain it. We should give some attention, as we examine the spirits, to the task of explaining the phenomenon in some reasonable way; but even if we were not able to discover the cause of the phenomenon, we still, as we shall later demonstrate, would be bound by the Scripture to avoid it.

There is a limited number of spirits that could be responsible for what we see. It has to be one or more of four kinds of spirits: 1) the spirit of man—psychological, deceived, or deceptive, 2) the

spirit of fallen angels — satanic spirits, 3) the spirit of righteous angels (some claim the gift of "unknown tongues" is the language of angels), or 4) the Spirit of God. There are no other spirits in the universe known to man. Since righteous angels always work in perfect response to the Spirit of God, and fallen angels to the spirit of Satan, we may eliminate them and consider only three spirits—human, Satanic, or God. We will consider the part, if any, that may be played by Satan or God at appropriate places later, but first we will consider the various ways in which the human spirit may be involved.

The Psychological Factor Considered. If the phenomenon of tongues is of the spirit of man, it would be either: 1) a purely benign psychic phenomenon, i.e., a more or less innocent but misguided psychological reaction, or 2) it could be an exercise in deceitfulness — some few may be just playing a joke or attempting to deceive to gain followers or money. I think that would be a small but prominent minority. I have heard a few people say that they had participated in tongues deceitfully—thinking it showed spirituality--claiming to have something they did not really have. But a very small minority, I would say, is in that category. Then 3) some of it could be that some restless souls weak in faith, not satisfied with objective Scripture truth in these dry times, have allowed themselves to be deceived by others as they have sought a more sensational "faith."

Filling a Psychological Vacuum. As we consider what might be behind this phenomenon, its persistence suggests that it satisfies a psychological need. We all today are pressured by a society that causes tension. Psychologically we need a release mechanism — something to turn us loose. Many people are all up-tight inside. And there has to be some kind of an explosion, so to speak, of the psychic energy within a person; one feels a need to "explode" psychologically. Many people are in despair of finding true spiritual comfort and fulfillment in the deadness and liberalism of old-line protestantism or in the legalistic tendencies of a decaying fundamentalism. People who are caught in the rat-race of human existence today want to go somewhere to seek some kind of release from this feeling. They may find it in the phenomenon of a psychic "surrender"—an abandoning of themselves to total liberty of the psyche in "glossalalia." You might call it a wreckless abandon of emotional control. It feels good. And since it is considered to be "of God," it is thought to be all right—even to be sought after. Many are methodically taught how to speak in tongues, and anyone can do it if they submit to the instructions.

Now in some ways the abandoning of certain inhibitions that we have may be a good thing, and I think that we ought to abandon the useless and harmful ones. But we ought to do it according to the objective truth of God's Word, because He says in His Scripture that we shall know the truth and the truth will make us free.

The central issue here is the Word of God versus human experience. Jesus taught a freedom based on objective truth: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31). There will be no need, if we enter properly into the truth of God's Word, for any kind of a psychological release from the cares of the world, from the pressures of the times. We can be continually relieved all the time as we go about our daily business. We do not have to get up-tight, and so we should have no need for such psychological relief. If we continue in His Word, then we are His disciples (learners) indeed. We can learn the truth, and the truth makes us free from both our own personal inhibitions and hang-ups and also from the stresses and pressures the world puts upon us.

Now those who seek these charismatic kinds of releases, obviously are not satisfied with the liberty of truth but are unwittingly seeking some kind of reassurance through emotional sensations.

Divine Healers and the Psychosomatic Factor. Under the stresses of our day, anxiety and tension play a startling role in the physical symptoms experienced in the body. It has been commonly reported that well over fifty percent of the symptoms treated by doctors have a psychosomatic basis. These tend to be stomach and intestine-related symptoms, headaches,

muscular related, and a variety of generalized, vaguely described aches and pains throughout the body.

The so-called divine healing emphasis so common to the Charismatic Movement does not center its activities around diseases like leprosy, leukemia, coronary heart problems, lung cancer, and the like. My experiences and observations in attending some of the healing services, and in questioning those who have been "healed" afterwards, has revealed that the "healings" have been of the vague unverifiable psychosomatic symptoms. In cases also where I have personally known or known of the patient's situation, these symptoms have returned in a few days after the psychological disposition of the person returned to normal.

All this suggests that most healings are not divine miracles but psychological phenomena. Yet I would not say God has never healed a simple soul who, in ignorance of all the biblical problems of the movement, has appealed to Him in faith and He was pleased to comfort them with a quiet, unobtrusive miracle. But if so, this in no way validates the movement in the slightest part. The preponderance of evidence points to a psychological basis for this movement.

Liberalism and a Failing Fundamentalism as Factors. Many religious people today are pressed with a certain sense of frustration by the lack of response to the things they deem to be true. We can all feel the oppression of the mass hypocrisy of the world, and we feel the need to have a sense of spiritual vindication for what we believe in the face of all the opposition. We need a release from that kind of problem, which should come in the comfort of the Holy Spirit through the Word. But some may resort to a mere psychological release to serve the purpose if they are not careful. When one, especially a Christian, is far from the truth, there is a sense of desperation in his life. As liberalism grew, a sense of emptiness was felt by true believers across the board in all the old-line denominations. It has also been felt as a tendency toward legalism, and shallowness has grown up in fundamentalism today. Since liberalism moved in around the turn of the century, a sense of shallowness, emptiness, and deadness has been felt by the people remaining in the liberal denominations. They recognize the deadness, and they long to have something that is alive. So they are looking for an experience to vindicate their profession.

Because the charismatic experience does seem to satisfy a psychological need, some seem to have become addicted to it. The experience of speaking in tongues, according to some who have been caught up in it and have broken free, can be addictive. The experience is a psychological high which ultimately results, after it is over, in disillusionment — a psychological low. Then it is necessary to seek greater and greater highs to maintain the euphoria; this is a form of addiction. Liberals have had many fine things to say about the charismatic experience, and many of them see it as grounds for ecumenical progress. The liberal is glad to see this movement coming about that there might be a unity of Catholic, Protestant, and all the other major groups. Dr. George Gardiner, who was once deeply involved in the Charismatic Movement but who turned from it, said that there are rank liberals who deny the diety of Christ but who still have received the charismatic "baptism" and have spoken in tongues. These are not what one could call Christian at all in their theology. Yet many liberals everywhere have sensed the deadness that liberalism has created. It seems then that the Charismatic Movement has moved in to fill up the vacuum or void that is sensed by both liberals and by believers in the old-line denominations.

Out of a sense almost of futile desperation many have reached out to embrace this thing which creates an emotional sensation and fulfills a psychological need in the lives of many people. I think that is really the best explanation of why most people are attracted to the movement. And in some measure the artificiality of growth-oriented fundamentalism has contributed to the same effect. On the surface then the movement appears to be mostly of the spirit of man with the spirit of Satan (which we will discuss later) standing by to help and to deceive.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Within this movement, I have no doubt that there are many sincere Christians. They doubtless mean well. But I think their error is based on a misunderstanding of three main biblical doctrines. The error is based first upon a misunderstanding of the completeness and sufficiency of spiritual regeneration or the new birth, as it is put forth in the Scriptures, and the accompanying truth of justification by faith and the imputed righteousness of Christ. They misunderstand that completeness in Christ is imparted when the Holy Spirit of God takes up a permanent residence in the believer through regeneration. Regeneration is an initial and perpetual work of grace in a believer. The works of grace God does in our behalf are without number, but there is no special "second" work of grace distinguished in the Bible.

Along with a misunderstanding of regeneration is a misunderstanding of the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as it is expressed in the Scriptures. There is indeed a teaching in the Scriptures of the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and misunderstanding it, the Charismatics put that title on the phenomenon they have experienced. If a man seeks some kind of experience by long misguided prayer or emotional agonizing, he will find something, but such is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There was, for example, a man who was a minister in a large liberal denomination. As one might expect, he felt something was missing; and he set out, purposely, to pray until he found the "baptism"—until he had the experience of tongues. After a long period of prayer, he had some kind of experience. He had an experience that resulted in the moving of his lips, and he even said he spoke in a language that others could understand. And so after seeking it, he "found" it. He called it, as most of the others do, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The reason I put it like that is to show the difference in having an experience and in putting a biblical label on it. I do not deny the fact that he had some kind of experience, but I am denying that what he had is what the Bible means when it uses the term "baptize in the Holy Spirit." We must keep these terminologies straight in our mind or else we go astray in the Scriptures and deceive ourselves and others. We have no right to call a thing by a scriptural term unless it really has the same meaning placed upon it by Scripture.

Usage of the Phrase in Scripture. The phrase "baptized with [in] the Holy Ghost" is mentioned six times in Scripture (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16). It is a phrase coined by John the Baptist as a prophecy. It has the same meaning and import as the phrase used by the prophet Joel: "pour out my spirit" (2:28). This special work of God began, as Peter explained (Acts 2:16-21), on the day of Pentecost. It is clear from the broad teachings of Scripture that this work of God, called the baptism of the Holy Spirit, was a manifold institutional work for the primary purpose of authenticating or validating, and empowering the church that Jesus had built. The work of authenticating the church as an institution and the inspired writers of the New Testament Scriptures who were part of the church was done by the signs and wonders that resulted from the baptism of the Holy Spirit (of which tongues was only a small part). The authenticating aspect of the work is now complete, but the work of empowering the church spiritually continues to this day.

However, to truly understand the essence of the biblical doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit requires some background both from the Old Testament and the New Testament teachings concerning the house of God. To supply this background, I want to quote rather extensively from a book which deals with this subject called *The House of God*, by William C. Hawkins and Willard A. Ramsey (published by Hallmark Baptist Church, Simpsonville, SC, 1980):

The Tabernacle Authenticated. "When God, having given specific details, told Moses to build the tabernacle, Moses set about the task. After the tabernacle was finished—every bolt and screw and all of the coverings in place — it stood there complete but empty.

Was God's name in that tabernacle?

How were men to know that this was the place where God chose to dwell? How was the world to know? How were all the children of Israel to know God told Moses to do this? He gave Moses the instructions. Moses said God would dwell there. The people had Moses' word for it. But how are ordinary people to know that God has put His name in a certain place or institution as opposed to all others?

Were there not other so-called gods on this side of the desert? Some said, 'Here is where God lives.' Others said, 'Over in Egypt is where God lives.' Everywhere today, as well as then, people are saying 'here' is where God lives.

What about this question? Who will settle the matter?

Only God Himself can settle this question, and He did. God Himself attested to the fact that this tabernacle was where He would dwell: ". . . So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:33-35).

After the tabernacle was finished, the glory of the Lord overshadowed it, saying miraculously and visibly before three million witnesses: 'This is my house.' There was God's attestation to the fact that He had accepted this tabernacle as the place to put His name. And without this miraculous attestation, the people would have had nothing but Moses' word as evidence that this was God's house. God's house is the place where God represents Himself through human agencies. It is the place through which God executes His business on earth, where He meets with men and works through them for the extension of His purpose" (The House of God, pp. 17,18).

The Temple Authenticated. "As God had told Moses, He in like manner told Solomon to build Him a house. And Solomon, as Moses had done, built the temple exactly as God had commanded: 'So was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord' (I Kings 7:51).

A new house was built. They brought in and established the ark of the covenant again in the house. And when this temple that Solomon had built in all its beauty and all its glory was completely finished and everything was totally in its place, there it stood — just a house.

Was God in this new house?

Was His name there? Was there evidence to the people that God had accepted this place for His name? All they had was Solomon's word.

But when the house was finished, again God authenticated and validated before all the people the house that He had told Solomon to build: 'And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. Then spake Solomon, the Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever' (I Kings 8:10-13).

The old portable tent was now obsolete, but the 'house of God' moved on as a memorial of God's name 'unto all generations'" (The House of God, p. 21).

The Church Authenticated. "Just as Moses prophesied (Deut. 12:10-11) that the temple itself would be built and supersede the tabernacle, so Joel prophesied that a new institution would supersede the temple. In the book of Joel we find the prophecy of this new thing that God would do: 'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered:

for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call (Joel 2:28,29,32; cf. Acts 2:16-21).

This you recognize immediately as the prophecy of the special work of the Holy Spirit which occurred at Pentecost. That God would establish a new format for His house was no strange thing by now. It was no strange thing at all to a Jew that the Spirit of God would come and dwell among them. He had long been with them in the tabernacle era and in the temple era. He had been in their midst long before this. He had filled the tabernacle; He had filled the temple. He had worked with the Jews all these years. But Joel said that God would pour out His spirit upon all flesh--not merely Jew, but all flesh—both Jew and Gentile. Now this was a strange thing to a Jew. Never before had the Gentiles as such (without becoming Jewish proselytes) been included in the institution of the house of God as the authenticated representatives of the name of God before the world. But now God would bring forth another format, another shape to His house which would include not merely the Jews but the Gentiles also.

This prophecy from Joel was repeated by John the Baptist who said: 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire' (Matt. 3:11).

This was another prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Jesus had said concerning the former house just prior to His death, 'Behold your house is left unto you desolate' (Matt. 23:38). Therefore, on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ, the veil of the temple having been rent, the obsolete temple format of the house of God which had served its course now stood 'desolate.' But the house of God moved on. The name of God would be kept in memorial to 'all generations' (Ex. 3:15). There would be no break, only the adaptation of the form to the most functional design God's wisdom could provide.

When Jesus came to the earth, He came to die. But He also came to establish a new kind of house to continue as a pillar and a ground of His truth. He came to build a new tabernacle for God to inhabit—a new temple not made of stone—a better institution that would bear the 'mystery of godliness' before the world. He chose twelve men, and the Scripture says the apostles were placed first in the church (I Cor. 12:28). He had chosen these men. Teaching them day by day, He had traveled with them up and down Palestine. He told these twelve that 'upon this rock (He was referring to Himself as the rock) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18). So He had established, built, or formed a living institution. As Moses had built a physical tabernacle and Solomon a physical temple, so Christ built a living church.

There it was in its infancy before Pentecost under the personal direction of Christ. He gave to His apostles (foundational blocks in the church) the institution of the Lord's supper; He commanded them by the Great Commission that they should go into all the world, that they should preach the gospel, that they should baptize men and teach them to 'observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (Matt. 28:20). On the last day He was with them He led them out as far as Bethany, and they watched the Lord Jesus ascend bodily up into the heavens. When He had ascended, an angel stood by and told them not to go immediately out to fulfill the great commission, but rather to wait for that which Joel and John foretold (Acts 1:5). And we find them, in the last part of this chapter, waiting—one hundred and twenty people.

This group waited in an upper room with the apostles, with those whom the Lord Jesus had trained. This was Christ's assembly. Christ had said, 'I will build my church'—that is, 'my assembly.' There they were--assembled, organized, commissioned. This assembly had ordinances, officers, and members in particular. They elected an officer to fulfill the place of Judas. It was a new house, finished and ready.

But was it God's house?

How were men to know where the name of God would now be placed ? God had said He would be in the tabernacle, and His glory filled the tabernacle. It was authenticated. God had said He would be in the temple, and His glory filled the temple. It was authenticated. Now Christ had built His church--His assembly. But how is the world to know that this is the 'house of God'—the place where the name of God is?

They were to be shown in the same way that He miraculously and visibly authenticated the tabernacle and the temple. God likewise miraculously and visibly authenticated His church: 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts 2:1-4).

This was the authentication and empowering of the new format of God's house. He poured out His Spirit on that day, upon the people in that specific assembly who were waiting with the apostles. That assembly of believers was localized at Jerusalem on that day, and God authenticated it as His choice of a new house — of the place where He would place His name. With this miraculous, visible demonstration God put the world on notice and said in effect, 'This is the place I have chosen now to put my name.' An institution full of types of something to come was no longer suitable. What God desired now was an institution that was filled not with furniture, but with the warm hearts of people made righteous--of those who were born again of the Spirit of God, who had repented of their sins, trusted in the Savior, and had been obedient to the ordinances and commandments of God. God chose a house not of lifeless stone but of 'living stones,' built into 'a spiritual house' (I Peter 2:5). This was to be a house of people, both Jews and Gentiles. God authenticated the church that Christ had previously built during His personal ministry. This church was waiting at Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. He came upon them miraculously, visibly, and demonstrated that certainly the church is the house of God" (The House of God, pp. 23-26). It is apparent from this that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a broad work of God to authenticate and empower His church and the writers of Scripture. To help us to visualize the relationship of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to tongues and other spiritual gifts and to the church today, please see the special illustration on page 28.

The non-charismatic protestant, evangelical, and fundamentalist world also makes a great error in their understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They make it a work wherein the Holy Spirit as the administrator of the baptism places the believer in the body of Christ. This is the inverse of what the Scripture teaches. John clearly says, "he [Christ as the administrator] shall baptize you with [in, Gk. en] the Holy Ghost [as the medium]" (Matt. 3:11; so in all other places mentioned in Scripture).

The non-charismatic protestant error is derived from an interpretation of I Corinthians 12:13 that is inconsistent with all six of the other places where Holy Spirit baptism is mentioned in Scripture. If I Corinthians 12:13 refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit at all, it would be necessary to realize that the reading should not be "by one spirit" which would make the Holy Spirit the administrator (contrary to all other references). But rather the proper understanding would be "in (Gk. en) one spirit." That is the true reading, but since the administrator is not named, and since the medium is not the Holy Spirit but the church, this reference cannot be speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (as I once supposed). I now believe it is simply water baptism, and the meaning of the verse is: "For in [Gk. en] one spirit [i.e., a unified attitude, or spirit; led of the Holy Spirit] we were all baptized [water baptism] into one body" [a unified body—the local church; cf. Col. 1:24; Eph. 1:22,23],

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*Temporary work of God in spectacular "signs and wonders" to authenticate the church and the inspired writers of the Scriptures

**Perpetual empowering of the church by non-miraculous spiritual gifts and the performance in response to prayer, etc., of quiet, unobtrusive miracles in accordance with God ' s sovereign purpose

- Raising the dead
- Special healings (blind, deaf, lame, leprosy, etc.)
- Delivery from prison (by angels, earthquake)
- Immunity to snake-bite
- Speaking in other tongues (other languages)

- Faith
- Hope
- Charity
- Wisdom
- Interpreting Scripture
- Knowledge
- Prayer
- Personal sanctification
- Teaching/preaching
- Comforting saints
- Healing (through prayer and/or medical)
- Controlling circumstances (through prayer, leadership, sound mind, etc .)

*This class of activities ceased with the close of the canon of Scripture, their purpose being complete (I Cor. 13:8-13).

**These special ministries of the Holy Spirit continue today, and will until Jesus comes (John 14:16).

Compare also Acts 2:41,42 which shows in practice the very essence of this Scripture. Now this interpretation is compatible with all Scripture truth and to the original Greek language. To review, in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was the administrator ("he shall baptize"). It is clear from Acts 2 that the assembled church was the subject—the institution baptized showing it to be the true house of God. This parallels the work of God in authenticating: 1) the house of God — the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), and 2) the house of God—the Temple (II Chron. 5:13), then finally the church as an institution. Now that work of God (Acts 2:16-21) and its continuing effects are all comprehended in the phrase "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Speaking in tongues was only a small, temporary aspect of this great work.

THE DOCTRINE OF TONGUES IN SCRIPTURE

The third point of error in the Charismatic doctrine is that they do not understand the true scriptural significance of the doctrines of tongues, of miracles, or of signs and wonders. They have little concept of a unique authentication and confirmation of a finished revelation from God. But

biblically, it is the church and the Word of God that have been confirmed by signs and wonders. (We shall study this in detail later.) Since the close of the canon of Scripture, God does not perform special works to validate individuals in their own personal individual opinions and experiences. Such must be tested by the Word which has been uniquely validated. Since this doctrine of tongues is a major issue with Charismatics, we will give detailed attention to it below.

An Examination of the use of Tongues in Scripture. Now with the characteristics and background of the movement itself and with a biblical analysis of the baptism of the Holy Spirit before us, I want to go to the Scripture and study the usage of the phenomenon of tongues (only a small part of the many signs and wonders) just as we find it in the Scripture. There are not very many passages of Scripture that deal with this subject, and so I think we can take a look at every one of them.

The first place we find a mention of tongues is in the book of Mark. It reads: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:17-20).

Now here is a prophecy that God would be "confirming the word" with signs, and one of those signs, and only one, is that they would speak with new tongues. Let me say here in passing, that if we are going to seek and emphasize tongues as a sign of a special work of God, we must, to be consistent, also emphasize and purpose to handle snakes, drink deadly poisons, etc., as some have done. There will always be those who seize upon some detail of Scripture and misinterpret it to create a carnal sensation. We need not be surprised at this; but if snake handling is not to be sought after, then neither are tongues. Both these, as all other gifts, are given as needed according to God's sovereign purpose. Neither of them can be acquired merely by seeking.

Tongues in the Early Church. We move next into the book of Acts where many instances of this prophecy of Mark were actually fulfilled, and we will see the execution of it. The disciples were gathered in one accord in an upper room on the day of Pentecost, and "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Now, here is the first mention of tongues-speaking as it began to be experienced by the early church—a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in Mark. The word other in this passage comes from the same root as our word heterodox, meaning different. They began to speak with different tongues, not unknown tongues but simply languages other than their native tongues. And by this miracle the men who were gathered together at Jerusalem each heard the language of his own home town, though they were from many places in the world. The account continues, "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6).

The term language (v. 6) and the phrase "his own tongue" (v. 8) — those two words, language and tongue—both translate the same Greek word. It denotes the idea of dialect. We get our term dialect from it — that is, our mode of speaking, the sound or phonetic utterance of a people that signifies a certain meaning. It is simply a different national language.

What then do we learn from this occasion? Simply that glossalalia was a miraculous work of God — a sign and wonder — to give His people the ability to speak known languages, not unknown tongues. They spoke in other languages even though they were not learned — they had not studied the language. It was a miraculous demonstration of God confirming this new work.. It was one among many miracles that identified the hand of God upon His church. It was done before many thousands of people so that it could not be mistaken or denied.

In the tenth chapter of Acts we have the next instance of tongues: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized . . ." (vv. 44-47). These people were in the home of the first Gentile convert, Cornelius, and the Holy Spirit enabled the newly converted Gentiles to speak with tongues — to speak with a language in such a manner that the Jews could understand and recognize that they were miraculously speaking a true language. It would have meant nothing had they merely babbled; no miracle could have been demonstrated that way. So we have nothing more or less here again than a language being spoken -- God enabling them by miraculous powers to speak a language (most likely Hebrew) for the purpose of authenticating the fact that God had indeed received the Gentiles and that they were to be included in the church. This was to confirm to the Jews that the church was for both Jews and Gentiles. Whatever was done here, Peter recognized it as the same thing done at Pentecost (see Acts 11:16, 17). Therefore, we know it was a miraculous known language as at Pentecost. So it served there a very sound, practical purpose.

There was another occasion of tongues in Acts 19:6 confirming Paul's baptism (in water) to certain disciples who had been innocently mistaken with regard to John's baptism. In this miracle God confirmed Paul's ministry to them. We must interpret this as a true language to be consistent with the other occasions in which we know the tongues were known languages.

Tongues in the Corinthian Church. Now the next time we meet with this phenomenon, in any lengthy discussion, is in the book of I Corinthians, and I think we ought to do a considerable amount of study in this book because it is here that the problems of the abuse of the gift of tongues arise. This abuse has some things in common with the Charismatic Movement and the modern use of tongues.

As we turn to the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians, we see a listing of some of the different gifts God gives to His servants.

It is worthy to note in passing that it is from the subject of this chapter — gift, charisma — that the term charismatic is derived. Today we say those who are gifted have charisma — they have a gift.

Hence, we read concerning spiritual gifts: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits [and that is what we are trying to do now]; to another divers kinds of tongues; To another the interpretation of tongues; But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (I Cor. 12:7-10).

Now we want to focus on the phrase "divers kinds of tongues." Notice the word "divers" is in italics, so it is not in the original text. But the word "kinds" is the Greek term *gene*, and it conveys the idea of a race of people, a people descending from a common background or ancestry. It is translated in some places "nation" or "nationalities." It carries the idea here of nationalities or groups of people with different languages. Therefore, when we read "kinds of tongues" it means here national languages. Once again we have the same phenomenon we have seen before—God giving a miraculous gift to someone which enables him to speak in another language, not in an unknown tongue. This gift of the Holy Spirit is therefore not an ecstatic utterance; it is another language. There is no such thing as an ecstatic tongue described in the Scripture. No word or line or phrase or verse in the Scripture must be interpreted as being an ecstatic utterance or an unintelligible tongue. They just did not do that. Not even here in this weak church in Corinth. Paul's whole mind and thrust was that the gift of tongues was the ability to speak a national language. In this listing of gifts he teaches that the Spirit of God may sometimes give the gift of

different national languages to people. But it does not say He gives them the gift of ecstatic utterances or babbling. We saw none of that in Acts, and we should expect none of it here. Now notice once again in verse 28: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly, teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Again the term diversity here is the same Greek term that was used for kinds in verse ten. It is the idea of nationalities or different lineages of people who share a common language. Those then are the gifts that the Spirit of God gives, and He does not give an unknown tongue.

An unintelligible ecstatic utterance then is not of the Spirit of God. Now we are beginning to close in on the fact that the modern tongues movement is of another spirit. God gave simply the miraculous gifts to declare a language that people speak and know, but even this is not intended for everyone at any time.

Tongues, a Temporary Gift. As Paul, at the end of chapter 12, turned his attention to the permanent gifts which God desires His people to possess universally, he emphasized the superiority of love throughout chapter 13. He deliberately led the thinking of his readers away from the sensational, spectacular gifts, preparing them to look to the "best" gifts and outlines the qualities of the greatest of all the gifts—love.

Now as Paul, throughout chapter 12, gradually prepares his readers for the near future decline of the spectacular signs and wonders, in verse 8 of chapter 13, he expressly foretells their ultimate demise, especially naming the gift of tongues. When these special signs had served their purpose of confirmation and as a sign of judgment upon Israel, they were to simply disappear — and they did as the canon of Scripture drew to a close. Then Paul named the great gifts of the Spirit that will abide when the special signs have ceased: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor. 13:13).

Paul Rebukes the Abuse of Tongues. Now we go on to chapter fourteen and follow Paul as he tries to wean the people away from the abuse of these more spectacular gifts. Despite this fact here is the main body of Scripture that is used to support the modern idea of the ecstatic utterance that means nothing in itself. We read: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue [Now notice that the term "unknown" all the way through this passage is in italics. That means that it was not in the original Greek. It should read "he that speaketh in a tongue," (that is in a language).] speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man (those who do not know the language) understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries" (14:1,2).

Paul's assumption throughout this chapter is that some of the Corinthians were speaking in languages that those present could not understand. If no one present is able to understand the language, he is speaking mysteries insofar as men are concerned. He is speaking only to God, because God is the only One who understands all languages. If there is no one in the audience who understands that language, this chapter teaches that he ought to be quiet. God does not bring forth such a message if there is no one in the audience to understand the language. It was brought forth by some spirit, but definitely not by the Spirit of God, for "God is not the author of confusion" (14:33). So here again, we must conclude that the utterance discussed in chapter 14 is nothing other than a known language, not an unknown tongue.

Going further, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (14:3). Now Paul is speaking all the way through this chapter of the superiority of using plain, direct language for teaching—telling forth the truth. In other words, Paul is saying that to prophesy or speak forth plainly is superior in its work and in its usefulness than to speak in a language unknown to the audience. The church at Corinth, we learn from the beginning of the book, was not a spiritual church. The people sought after men and sought after the praise of men; it exalted men, and they had divisions and strifes with one another. They were a sensuous people. They wanted the sensational—wanted things to appeal to themselves and to the carnal nature.

Now there is no question that they had heard of the miraculous gifts of language that we read about in the book of Acts. And in those days there was in most of the world around Asia Minor, Rome, Jerusalem, and down as far as Egypt, a number of languages that were fairly common. But not all the common people spoke them. There was Greek, Hebrew, Latin and other languages commonly spoken in those days. So most of the learned people, trained and educated people such as Paul, could speak probably all of the common languages. Paul said, "I speak in tongues more than ye all" (v. 19), hence I suggest that many of the people at Corinth, proud of their ability to speak naturally in other languages and thinking it added some kind of dignity or self-exaltation would apparently get up and speak in one of the languages they knew just because they felt it would somehow aggrandise them or in some other way would appeal to the flesh.

If they had been speaking a miraculous language as a true gift of the Spirit, it would have edified the church, and Paul would not have rebuked them. God's Spirit never gives a gift that does not edify. Hence we know whatever they were doing was not of the Spirit of God. It is most likely then that their tongues were not miraculous gifts but rather just a learned language—possibly feigning a miracle. If they were speaking gibberish, a babbling tongue, as the charismatics do today, it did not edify and definitely was not of the Holy Spirit. But nowhere in the Scripture do we see a hint that such a thing has occurred with or without God's approval.

It takes intelligence to edify. If God is not the author of confusion, then the Holy Spirit would never lead anyone to speak unintelligibly. And so Paul could be paraphrased: "If you get up and speak in Aramaic when all the rest of the people there speak Greek, you may be edifying yourself because you happen to understand Aramaic, but these who speak in Greek are not edified; therefore sit down." Paul continues: "but he that prophesieth [or speaks forth intelligibly] edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues [languages], but rather [I would prefer] that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he [the one speaking] interpret. . ." (14:4,5).

Then if interpretation is made, people are edified. That again is evidence that Paul is not talking about mere gibberish but simply one who can speak in, let us say, Latin when the rest of them speak only Greek. If he does speak in Latin, then he or someone else ought to interpret. "Now brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" (14:6). An intelligent spirit is not edified unless there is intelligence imparted. Therefore an ecstatic utterance cannot be edifying to a person who does not understand. [For] "even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air" (14:7-9). Paul says such language is worthless, and thus he rebukes this activity; it, therefore, is not of the Holy Spirit. This passage, I Corinthians 14, cannot be used to justify today's charismatic movement. It is a direct rebuke to it. Language is of no value unless it conveys intelligence.

Now, further analyzing, in verse 10: "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification." Now this word "kinds" appears again and it is the same word that we looked at in chapter 12, *gene*, which refers to national languages. The term "voices" (*phone*) here is the word from which we get our word "phonetics" and expresses a certain national sound, or language; it is clear again that Paul is not dealing at all with ecstatic utterances. He is dealing with languages that mean something; none of them is "without its signification" or its distinctive meaning. Every one of these languages has a distinctive meaning, not an ecstatic utterance, "therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice [the language], I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (14:11-12).

Now "meaning" is not really the primary thing sought in charismatic tongues--edification is not their hallmark. Sensation and personal ecstasy are primarily sought and emphasized. The big sign and stamp of acceptance in the charismatic movement is the speaking in unknown tongues. It is not how well can you edify the church. That is not the thing that they spend laborious hours seeking after; that is not primarily the thing that they go out to meetings or into private isolation to seek. They do not go and privately, in long sessions of prayer, seek to edify the church. But they do go in long sessions of prayer, and long times of fasting, praying, training, and seeking to speak unintelligibly. They seek to do that which Paul rebukes. This cannot be of the Holy Spirit.

The Scripture says, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in [a] tongue pray that he may interpret" (14:13). Thus it is forbidden to speak in a tongue without interpreting. But only rarely does someone claim to interpret. And when one does "interpret" an unknown tongue, no one can tell if he has interpreted accurately — or if it is truly of God. Because if it is not a known language no one could tell if the translation was correct or if it was fake. This kind of tongue could not be for a "sign" (v. 22).

Paul continues, "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen . . ." (14:15,16). The use of the term "unlearned" is once again an indication that that which had been spoken was a real language and not an ecstatic utterance, because learning would have nothing to do with understanding if it were not a known language. If a learned person, such as Paul, were present, he could understand. Learning would have everything to do with his understanding if it were a real language, which it evidently was.

Now in verse 18 again: "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." I do not know of any place in the book of Acts where Paul himself spoke in what was called an unknown tongue or even a miraculous language, but he was a very learned man and he went all over the Mediterranean world preaching. He no doubt had occasion and necessity to use the languages he knew many times. It is not that the Lord could not have given him the gift of miraculous tongues; He may have on occasion. We just do not know whether or not God gave Paul a miraculous gift of language. He did speak with other tongues a lot. But he said, ". . . I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words, in [a] tongue."

Tongues as a Sign of Judgment. At this point Paul begins to explain why miraculous languages were chosen as the signs to confirm the truth. "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that they will not hear me saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (14:20-22).

Tongues in the modern glossalalia movement are presumed to be a sign to the believer. It is said to be a sign that one has had the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or a second blessing—a sign of some confirmation from God on one's own holiness or Christian life. But Paul says it is not a sign for the believer, and here again we find the Charismatic Movement to be incompatible with Scripture. Tongues are not to show that the believer has had a second blessing, but is a much more significant sign.

The teaching of this passage (14:20-22) is very important for the understanding of God's purpose in using the specific miracle of tongues. Broadly speaking we have already seen from Scripture that God's main purpose for the use of "signs and wonders" was the confirmation of His Word (Matt. 16:20). But among all the signs and wonders that were used by the Lord, such as physical healing, raising the dead, etc., the miracle of tongues (languages) played a double role. Paul, in his discussion of tongues, is now ready to explain to the Corinthians God's reason for the

choice of tongues as a sign. After chiding them for their childish understanding, he quotes a very significant Old Testament passage which they should have understood (14:21,22; cf. Isa. 28:11,12).

In commenting on this passage James Gardiner, a former charismatic, made the following points: This passage is quoted by Paul from Isaiah 28:11,12, and is in a context of judgment upon Israel. Gardiner cites three other similar prophecies: Deuteronomy 28:49, Isaiah 33:19, Jeremiah 5:15, and notes that these also are in a judgment context. These prophecies were made concerning Israel and no one else. Judgment did indeed fall upon Israel, including Judah, and they were scattered abroad and deported to other countries. They grew up speaking the languages of foreigners. God, therefore, as a reminder of this judgment and of yet another judgment to come (which began at the siege of Jerusalem 70 A.D. and has continued even to this day), spoke miraculously to the people of Israel on Pentecost and a few other occasions in other languages or tongues.

The terrible inconsistency that God's chosen nation had been so scattered by judgment that they could not understand the message of their Messiah in their native tongue is a serious rebuke. They should have recognized it as a clear sign of fulfilled prophecy. The judgment that was yet to come upon them came in 70 A.D. by the Romans, in which the first-century Jews were finally blotted and purged from their homeland.

Although God spoke to them in miraculous languages as He confirmed the Word of the New Testament, still they would not hear — just as Isaiah had said. Tongues therefore were for a sign to the unbelieving Jews and to no one else. Paul cited the prophecy concerning the Jews as an explanation of the tongues phenomenon. It was a sign meaningful to the Jews, but Paul made the point that any other ordinary Gentile unbeliever coming in to the assembly would think they were mad (I Cor. 14:23). It would not be a sign to him; it would be meaningless or worse yet, ridiculous.

Gardiner noted then that after the Roman judgment fell on the Jews in 70 A.D., the tongues just died away as a phenomenon. They "ceased" (I Cor. 13:8). The prophecy was fulfilled completely, and the sign had no more purpose. Thus, the revival of unknown tongues today arises among people who are still "children in understanding" (v. 20).

Limiting the Abuse of Tongues. In verse 23 Paul says, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (I Cor. 14:23,24).

Obviously, God would never give a person a "gift" to confuse a stranger. God would never give a man words to deliver to the people that were not intelligible and that could not be understood. It is wholly out of character with this chapter, with the book of Acts, and with the whole Bible. It is out of character with the attributes and purposes of God.

Finally we read, "If any man speak in [a] tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three" (14:27). Paul had already limited the use of different languages by requiring interpretation, and now he is limiting it by number. If you go to a meeting and someone gets up and speaks in another known language, he must interpret, but even so do not let this happen more than two times or at the most three in extreme cases where the crowd is of mixed languages. And a further limitation is that they speak by course, that is, one at a time. But the Charismatics, while trying to justify tongues from this chapter, do not follow these clear instructions.

If these limitations are observed, all is normal.

Edification and teachings occur. But these languages were never intended for a sign that someone has received the "second blessing" or to get in a crowd and have a "personal" time with God publicly. You can see so clearly right in this passage, that this has absolutely nothing to do with an indication of a special "second blessing" or baptism of the Holy Spirit on an individual. God intended it to be nothing more than a communication of intelligence or information to people,

one speaker at a time, with full interpretation. "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church" (14:28). If the charismatic tongues are of the Spirit of God, they will always be interpreted. But the fact is, they are rarely interpreted; and even if they are, no one can tell if they have been properly interpreted because they are unintelligible.

Now Paul's teaching is so different in spirit to what is passed off as the work of the Holy Spirit today. The modern tongues movement is completely out of character with what we have found in Scripture. Therefore, it is not of God but of some other spirit.

We must try the spirits and see whether they are of God. The spirit of going and seeking, praying, agonizing, and being taught to obtain the "gift" of the unknown tongue, as many do, is not of the Holy Spirit. Some, of course, have reached the point in practice where they do not have to seek. They can just automatically spell it out. But the Spirit that is exhibited in Paul's teaching is different from the spirit that is exhibited by this behavior.

Now we have tried the modern charismatic spirit by the Word and have found it is not of God. We have looked at all the passages that deal with tongues, and we can see from this that there is just no Scripture to support an ecstatic utterance or a modern gift of miraculous languages as a sign; but there are many to rebuke it. And so those who engage in this kind of utterance should go before God and admit that it is not of God's Spirit because it is not of His Word. At best it is an unscriptural work of the flesh, and those who do it should repent, forsake it, and be set free from the bondage of this psychological addiction. At worst it is a presumptuous and deceitful work prompted by Satan, not God.

PART II THE MIRACULOUS AUTHENTICATION AND CONFIRMATION OF SCRIPTURE—A FINISHED WORK OF GOD

We now leave the direct treatment of the modern Charismatic Movement and turn to a study of the great doctrine of Scripture that it tends to counterfeit, namely, God's authentication of Scripture by mighty signs and wonders. It is unlikely that many, if any, of the adherents to the movement consciously realize that its major thrust in the emphasis on so-called miracles, tongues, healings, and other "wonders" in reality tends to undermine the unique work of confirmation which God reserved for those times and persons He used for producing Scripture.

The so-called "signs and wonders" of the Charismatic Movement are transparently contrived, possibly by well-meaning people hoping to add credibility to the faith. Probably few of them realize that if the signs and wonders claimed by many of them truly were of God, it would put them on a par with the original writers of Scripture; it would open again the canon of revelation and the words of those so confirmed would become new Scripture.

We have already shown negatively that the works and words of the Charismatic Movement are not of God, and now we want to show positively that the signs and wonders which God used uniquely to confirm Scripture have never been and will never be repeated. By these broad truths and the words of Christ Himself we can know that all works claiming to be of the same character as the original, unrepeatable wonders of God are counterfeit.

We turn now to a study of God's great work of authentication and confirmation of His Word.

SIGNS AND WONDERS--THE SIGNATURE OF GOD

There is a broad and important doctrinal principle that permeates the whole of Scripture that appears not to be clearly recognized by most interpreters of Scripture. It is the principle of God's works in the authentication and confirmation of His Word and its writers through many signs and wonders. The miraculous ability to speak in other tongues was given, Paul says, for a sign. But it

is only a minor one of many such signs and wonders. I want to deal now more broadly with the whole topic of signs and wonders so that we might understand what God's purpose is for all the marvelous works He has performed throughout the Bible. This will help us to realize "how firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word." It will also help us to be on guard concerning the counterfeit of these things. There are three Scripture passages that I want to consider which set forth clearly the principle of confirmation and authentication of the Word of God by means of signs and wonders.

Confirming the Word. The first, as we have seen, is Mark 16:17, 18, 20. Let us review verse twenty: "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Now we want to get the concept before us of confirming the Word. Mark tells us that those early believers went everywhere to preach the Word, and the Lord was working with them for the purpose of confirming the Word which would later be canonized as Scripture. This was done with signs and wonders which have long been God's unique signature upon revelation.

Distinction between Miracles and Signs and Wonders. Now we need to pause to distinguish between signs and wonders, which phrase is used in many passages of Scripture, and the more general term miracles which is not exactly synonymous with signs and wonders. A sign or wonder, of course, as it is given in the Scripture, is indeed a miracle. All signs and wonders are miracles, but not all miracles are signs and wonders.

Now I do not mean to leave the impression that miracles have ceased today. This is not the case. But I am saying, as we shall presently see from the Scriptures, that signs and wonders have ceased—and for a very good reason. But first I want to distinguish between a miracle that is a sign and wonder, and a miracle that is not a sign and wonder.

God's purpose for signs and wonders, as stated in the book of Mark, was to confirm the Word. A sign and wonder then would be a special event — a miraculous work of God that is visible, spectacular, and easily discernable to men as miraculous. The only purpose of signs and wonders is to authenticate to the world the message and works of God.

To illustrate, suppose you were to take an automobile trip, and before you started you prayed that the Lord would give you safety. Christians frequently pray for themselves and for others, that the Lord will keep them from the hazards on the highway. We pray those prayers, and we believe that God hears them. Suppose now that you were driving down the highway in your automobile, and the front-wheel axle should develop a fatigue crack and was just about to break. God, in response to the prayers of His people for your safety, might connect it back together flawlessly so that you would go on your way not knowing, never knowing, that a miracle had taken place. I believe God works quiet, unobtrusive miracles in some such sense as that every day. The woman with an issue of blood was quietly healed when she touched the Lord's garment (Luke 8:43-48). If the Lord had not chosen to make this known by inquiring who touched Him, no one but the woman need even have known that she had been miraculously healed. If it had remained unknown, it would have been no less a miracle; but it would not have been a sign or seen as a wonder. As we pray, God often works for safety, or in healing, in causing our financial situations to resolve themselves according to His own purpose, or in causing our crops to grow, etc. God still works miracles in answer to prayers today.

But now if it were the purpose of God to confirm before thousands of people that a given individual was uniquely His spokesman or His peculiar servant, or to confirm and validate some proposition of truth, then He would perform, not a quiet, unobtrusive miracle, but a sign and wonder. He might allow that axle to actually break and let the wheel run off and be racing down the road. Then He might have a very spectacular thing happen; an angel perhaps could swoop down and catch the wheel, hold up the front end of the car and put it back on in the sight of thousands of people so as to confirm that this was indeed a work of God — an overt miracle. God

might then announce that the driver of the car was His special spokesman — just as He did for Moses (Ex. 19:9), and for Christ (Matt. 3:16,17).

Now that would be a sign and wonder. It would not be any more miraculous than the first case, but it would be carried out in a visible, impressive way. In just this way God did perform many signs and wonders, things that were spectacular, for the purpose of confirming the truth of Scripture and its writers so that there would be one and only one body of truth in the world that had the unique signature of God upon it. We saw in Mark 16:20 that these signs would follow those who believed, but it is not said that they would follow all believers at all times. Once again, the whole idea was to confirm God's truth. And this brings us to the second Scripture passage relating to confirmation and authentication of the Word.

Jesus Confirms the Promises—Romans 15:8. In Romans we read, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (15:8). That was one of the major ministries of Jesus. It was further confirmation of the truth of the promises or the covenants made unto the fathers in the Old Testament. This was one of the big categories in His work, and we are going to discuss this in greater detail later.

God Bearing them Witness—Hebrews 2:3. Then the third passage concerning the confirmation of Scripture truth is in the book of Hebrews. These three verses, and others, agree that God was working according to a plan or principle to validate and establish the truth of His Word. This third passage says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?" (Heb. 2:3).

This is a summary of the work of God in the confirmation of His Word. This great salvation — the Gospel, the Word or truth of God's covenant which was spoken by the fathers—is what Christ came to confirm. It "first began to be spoken by the Lord." It was picked up by those that "heard Him," and then it was confirmed "unto us" by the "witness" of God. God openly and visibly bore them witness that what they wrote was the truth. How did He do it? By "signs and wonders."

The Many Signs of Jesus. Now let us consider the works of Jesus as works of confirmation (Romans 15:8). In the Gospel of John we will note the confirming work of Christ as He confirms His Word before the apostles by signs: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book" (John 20:30). These Gospel wonders were done in partial fulfillment of this ministry of confirmation 1) of His Messiahship, 2) of the ones who would write the New Testament Scriptures, and 3) of the foundation of the church.

Confirmation of the Church and Apostles. Then after the resurrection of Jesus, this work of confirmation follows on into the book of Acts: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know . . ." (Acts 2:22). Christ did these wonders publicly, as God's sanction of His life, work, and message.

Jesus continued the work, after His ascension, through the apostles. They picked up the work, being empowered by the Holy Spirit, and the narrative continues: "and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:43). Then further on we read: "By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus" (4:30). And again it says, "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people" (5:12). Remember Hebrews 2:3 says that God had confirmed the words of them that heard the Lord; these miracles comprise that confirmation.

Continuing now with our survey of signs and wonders, we find: "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (8:13). The confirmation continues through Paul: "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his

grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (14: 3). These wonders comprised a progressive, cumulative body of proof in confirmation of the words of those who heard the Lord—primarily the apostles who gave us the New Testament Scriptures.

Now I want to consider two more verses: Paul said, "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:18,19). Finally, turning back to I Corinthians 14, we have gone full circle: "Wherefore tongues are for a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (14:22). Now it is easy for us to see that tongues were only one of many signs and wonders performed as God used the broader principle of signs and wonders, dazzling and sensational miracles, for the once-and-for-all confirmation of His Word.

The Sham of Modern Charismatic "Miracles." How transparently anti-climatic it is to point to today's obscure "wonders" such as an "unknown tongue" when we so readily recall that God opened the Red Sea, brought enough water from a rock to satisfy more than two million people, spoke audibly from Sinai, stopped the universe for Joshua, spoke of Jesus from heaven, healed lepers, stilled the storms of the sea, and raised the dead! This is a chain of evidence that is impossible to negate, and it demonstrates that the master of the universe is the author of the Bible.

It is therefore ludicrous for Christians of the twentieth century to seek the same credentials that were given to the writers of Scripture. But it is especially inconsistent to single out "unknown" tongues from all the other possible signs and wonders, e.g., the healing of leukemia, or raising the dead; the handling of serpents, or drinking of poison (as some have done with just as much scriptural consistency as those who seek the sign of tongues). The reason is obvious: unknown tongues can be faked or psychologically mimicked by deceived and misguided people who are not satisfied with the quiet but firm foundation of faith that now comes to us through the Word which was fully confirmed long ago by mighty signs and wonders.

Therefore in the midst of his discussion of the proper place of gifts, Paul tells us that there are certain gifts that will always remain and are to be sought after—faith, hope, and love (I Cor. 13:13). And he tells that certain gifts will fail, cease, and vanish away (I Cor. 13:8). Their purpose will have been accomplished, and it does not take a very astute theologian to discern the class of gifts that have ceased. Yes, it is the class of special confirming signs and wonders of whatever kind, but "tongues" are named specifically (13:8). The purpose of this class of miracles was to confirm the Word, and the Word "was confirmed" (Heb. 2:3) — a finished, past-tense, unique, work of God never to be repeated.

We should therefore never expect God to repeat these signs and wonders again unless there is more Scripture to be written. Since the canon of Scripture is closed (Rev. 22:18), any further use of these great signs of confirmation would destroy the uniqueness of God's signature upon the Scripture and would place the words of individuals today on a par with those of Moses and Paul. Some who claim to have had the gift of tongues consider themselves to be practically at that level anyway and are lifted up with pride, sometimes claiming to have been the recipient of new revelation.

COUNTERFEITS--THE MARK OF SATAN

Along with these great works of God, there has been and will continue to be the counterfeiting of these powers by Satan. I want to show now that there is—and this is a biblical principle--a second miracle-working force in the world counterfeiting the miracles of God. God is not the only One who works miracles. God allows the Satanic or demonic forces to work miracles whenever He is pleased to do so.

Satanic Duplication. A classic example of this truth is the contest between Moses and Pharaoh: "And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And he (God) hardened Pharaoh's heart (by permitting this demonic sign), that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said" (Ex. 7:10f).

God permitted Satan to produce an inferior duplication of the miracles of Moses, because God knew Pharaoh's heart was at enmity against Him. God knew that Pharaoh did not want to obey Him and that Pharaoh wanted some little shred of justification to defy Him. God thus permitted Satan to provide it, and by this means God "hardened Pharaoh's heart." God knew that to force or drive Pharaoh to the wall with unequivocal evidence would not accomplish repentance. So He permitted Satan also to work through the magicians to throw down their rods, and they became serpents likewise. And that very fact Pharaoh seized upon to vindicate himself and said in effect, "See my people can do it too." He ignored the fact that Moses's serpent swallowed up the others which, though just a subtle hint from God, should have been enough to have convinced Pharaoh. But Pharaoh hardened his heart. And God permitted this whole scene to confirm Pharaoh in his hardness.

Now we can see in this the principle that there is a Satanic power in the world that, as God permits, can and does duplicate the miracles of God for deceptive purposes. Again we read of this principle, and I want to establish it well, in the New Testament: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (I Thess. 2:8,9).

The Satanic forces are going to try to duplicate and, as God permits, do duplicate some of the signs and wonders with which God has confirmed His Word. Now, in chapter 13 of Revelation, speaking again of the anti-Christ and his associates, we read: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth ... And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast ..." (Rev. 13:11-14).

These are things that are coming to a culmination in the end times, but it shows that Satan deals in signs and wonders. And if Satan can do such great signs, it is no problem for him to instigate deception of the gullible, whether directly or indirectly, by means of tongues or other shadowy and obscure "wonders." Since the tongues phenomenon fulfills such a psychological need for sensuous demonstration where faith in the Word itself is weak, it is tailor-made for deceit. Jesus Forewarns of Satan's Duplicity. Toward the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus, He gave His disciples a solemn warning that Satan would attempt to obscure, duplicate, and undermine His work of confirmation by means of counterfeit "signs and wonders" performed by false prophets: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24).

It is therefore positively certain that we have to sort out the "signs and wonders" of satanic origin from those of God, and the only way we can do that is to have a thorough knowledge of the teachings of the confirmed Scripture concerning all these issues.

Attempts to counterfeit the miracles of God are going on today as Jesus warned: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there; believe it not Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; he is not forth: behold he is in the secret chambers; believe it not" (Matt. 24:23,26) .

In the newspapers, some years ago, there was an account about a Charismatic leader who said that Christ had appeared to him in his own private prayer room or "secret chamber" and that he

had seen Christ and Christ had spoken to him. If this were true, it would be powerful reason to go and hear this man's message. But we should "go not forth" to see him, because Christ said, "believe it not." Remember what John said--examine the spirits because false prophets, many of them, have gone into the world. There are going to be very convincing signs and wonders shown by forces that are not of God. That is a truth of Scripture.

Identifying the Counterfeit. How then are we going to identify the counterfeit? In this context the Lord expresses a tremendously important and significant principle: "Behold, I have told you before" (Matt. 24:25). We have the Bible filled with God's truth, the validity of which rests upon the confirmation of God by means of signs and wonders so that we can trust it and know

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that it came from God. If Satan then does similar "signs and wonders," does that not muddy the water and confuse the unwary as to whose word is God's Word? Now we have two sets of signs to contend with; one set is of God and one set is of the very opposite of God.

How can we know which is right?

The principle expressed by Christ in Matthew 24:25 is the secret: He has told us beforehand. God has revealed and confirmed the Word; and the very Word that was confirmed contains notification that there are two sets of miracles so that we may watch out for them. Furthermore, the Word that was confirmed teaches us that the signs and wonders used to confirm the Word were unique; they were to cease, and were never to be given again. Therefore, when we see things that resemble those confirming signs continuing today we may know that the author of them is either man, Satan, or both in cooperation. God's wonders ceased when the Scripture was complete. Our guide is no longer signs, but Scripture alone.

If God today should grant to people in the twentieth century the same signs and wonders He did to those who heard the Lord and who wrote the Scriptures, then our words would have the same credentials as the Scriptures. This would clearly undermine the credentials of the carefully and uniquely confirmed Scriptures. And that is why the Charismatic Movement is so strategically important to Satan today; it cuts at the very foundation of scriptural authority though, I am persuaded, most of those involved do not know it and do not mean to do so.

Therefore Christ has told us beforehand, saying in effect: "I confirmed the Word uniquely; I will not do this again. Therefore, when you see someone claiming the same type of signs you may know it is false because I have told you beforehand." Therefore, if the Word that is confirmed contains its own notification of uniqueness and its own warning of two kinds of works, then we are set on guard in such a way that we will be able to discern which spirit is of the truth and which is not of the truth — which is of God and which is not of God.

How is it then, that we are to make the determination today of what is of God and what is not? Is it by miracle, or is it by Scripture? Here we are today and we do not see the same kind of confirmation that we read about in the book of Acts — not among the Pentecostals or anywhere else. They are not raising the dead nor instantly restoring the twisted limbs of lifetime cripples. But if they were, we still are warned not to go after them. But, as yet, they are not doing those kinds of miracles; they are seizing upon cheap, imitation miracles—healings that cannot be tested, or unintelligible jabber that cannot be tested, a "sign" that anyone can fake.

I do not say that all who speak with "tongues" are deliberately fake. Most, I believe, have learned a psychological response and are deceived as to what it is. But they are asking us to believe that their tongues and other "wonders" are works of God, when we have seen that the very claim itself is contrary to the Word of God. Today, we do not look for signs for confirmation of what we believe or of what we are. We follow a confirmed Scripture. It tells us God's signs and wonders are past but that Satan is still in business. And now we know.

THE IMMUTABLE WORD--CONFIRMED BY OATH

Now, let us look back in time and consider the marvel of what God has done over the centuries to establish by miracle and by oath an immutable foundation for His Word and for our faith. It is important to understand that fact. God has made His own case for the Scripture, and those miracles of the book of Acts are only the latter extension of the great work of confirmation that He began long ago. The confirmation and validation of the Scriptures spans many centuries of history, and it is this long-term, unified confirmation that makes the case.

The Big Picture of Confirmation. As we look back to Exodus we will see God, as He gave the first Scripture through Moses, beginning to validate and confirm the writers of His revelation. In Exodus chapter nineteen the occasion is recorded in which God gave to Israel the Law—the Ten Commandments. He told Moses to gather the children of Israel around the base of Mt. Sinai, and He would come down on the mountain and speak to them with an audible voice. God wanted to demonstrate for all time that He, not Moses, was the author of His Law and of the books Moses wrote. He would speak audibly as sign and wonder to the people: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever"

(Ex. 19:5). It was to confirm that what Moses wrote was indeed the Word of God. Now that is a powerful confirmation. It was a wonder that God used to confirm His Word through Moses to all generations—not just to those who heard it. How did it work? There were several hundred thousand people gathered. Here is a story written down that the people heard the audible voice of God, and it was written down in a day when these several hundred thousand people all were able to hear the voice of God and believe. They could see and observe. Their children and their descendants could remember the occasion, and they carried the story with them as personal eyewitness experience. Now if Moses wrote that God came down and spoke to them with an audible voice—to several hundred thousand people—and if God did not do that, all of them would know that Moses was a liar. They would never have received such a writing as authentic, much less as the very Word of God. They would have said to Moses, "No, God didn't do that; we didn't hear any such thing. You wrote that all the people were gathered here and heard his voice, but we didn't hear it." There would be a great hue and cry throughout the nation saying, "Moses, you are a deceiver. You are trying to become the leader among this people by using God as a tool to gain control of us."

But they did not say that; therefore, we know even today that they actually heard the voice. They knew it really happened. It was a sign and a wonder, and that nation received Moses's writings as the Word of God. Today, thirty-five centuries later, we cannot disannul that confirmation. There is no reasonable or logical way anyone can make the witness of several hundred thousand people, with their children, and their children's children, to be of no force. They acknowledged that Moses's writings were accurate, which means they did hear God's voice. And if they heard God's voice, that means God spoke through Moses to bring the first Scripture to mankind. These accurate writings therefore contain their own authentication. God's witness has power. This witness stands today as impregnable proof of the authenticity of Moses's writings.

Similar proofs could be developed from the crossing of the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho, Elijah's offering, etc. Many such signs have been given in the Old Testament. But once the phenomenon of revelation from God had been established with Moses, the question "has God spoken to men in Scripture?" was no longer at issue. The only question remaining was, "by whom has He spoken?" The total sequence of God's witness to His Word by signs and wonders has now firmly established the credibility of all the writers of Scripture down to the Apostle John. Since then the mighty signs and wonders of God have been purposely and conspicuously missing.

Jesus, the Ultimate Confirmation. Now the final great and major phase of the confirmation of God's Word to us, as we have seen, was the ministry and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writings of the Gospels are laced with many events witnessed by and known to the

people of the early first century. Such stories as the appearance of the angelic host to the shepherds, the star of the wise men, are all signs and wonders to place the confirmation of God upon the colossal event of the incarnation. These things were not done in a corner. God confirmed each event as He went along, event by event, in a long train. All of these wonders were meshed together; all of them were solidly tied into each other: Caesar decreed the taxation. The shepherds saw the angelic host. The wise men saw and followed the star and discussed the birth of Christ with the learned men at Jerusalem. Herod killed the babies. Nothing was out of place—nothing crossed up. If skeptics have cast doubt on one account, another rises up to take its place. The great body of truth remains unshaken.

Jesus, whose birth was confirmed by the witness of angels and the miraculous star, went to a man called of God to identify the Messiah to Israel. John the Baptist was to baptize Jesus in the River Jordan, and there were throngs of people present. The Scripture says that all Judea came out to John's baptism. Then John baptized Christ; and as He came up out of the water the people saw, descending from out of the blue as far up as you could see, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. They watched as He got larger and larger and came and settled upon Jesus. Then they heard a great voice out of heaven blanketing the land, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16, 17). God Himself, again with His own voice just as He had done on Sinai, confirmed the life, the person, and the work of this individual known as Jesus of Nazareth and declared Him to be His own Son. Thousands heard it. And some of John's disciples heard it who later became apostles of Christ. They received the story in a book that they themselves had heard God speak from heaven and accepted it as the Word of God. If they had not heard the voice of God, they would never have received those writings as the Word of God. But not only did they receive them, they died for the message they contained. This is confirmation that cannot be answered to this day.

That same Jesus, after God's own verbal declaration, went about in the land of Judea performing those miracles that were beyond nature — that can only be done by the power and permission of God: healing the blind, raising up people who were already in the coffin—dead people, bringing one out of the tomb after four days. He confirmed His Word by His ministry and by His life. Then further confirming it through His death and His wonderful sacrifice, He allowed Himself to be crucified. His disciples saw it all, and they acknowledged the books that contained these accounts that they themselves had seen Jesus raise the dead were indeed true—the words of God. Peter insisted, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables . . . but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (II Pet. 1:16). Now if these men had not been eyewitnesses of these things, they would never have died in defense of books that said they were eyewitnesses. The Word is confirmed absolutely.

As Jesus hung on the cross, the sun became black and the land was darkened; there was a tremendous earthquake. The heavy veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom, and again the Word, the purpose, and the events of God's covenant were confirmed. Christ was a minister to "confirm the covenants" made to the fathers. Three days later, after they had sealed Him in a tomb, He came out of the tomb and showed Himself alive to many hundreds of people. His disciples saw Him, touched Him, handled Him, and they received the books with these accounts as the Word of God. Then Christ bodily and physically ascended up out of their sight against the laws of gravity in front of many people.

Jesus included in these Scriptures the warning that there would be false prophets and false signs. He indicated that those whose words and deeds do not agree with this great movement of truth in His revelation were to be rejected as false prophets. And He told us beforehand that there would be false signs in the latter days; thus the confirmed Word will judge them all.

Now, all these things are meshed and locked together by thousands of witnesses who never knew each other. They cover centuries in time. No natural explanation can account for all of them; they uniformly claim that the Bible is the Word of God — confirmed by supernatural events. Then after the ascension of Jesus into heaven He continued His confirmation through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. He continued the signs and wonders to validate the growing cloud of witnesses who were in this chain. He validated the work of the apostles and the church by continuing these signs and wonders until the Scriptures were complete. And so He tied the Scripture together from beginning to end—from Moses on Sinai to John on Patmos — by signs and wonders.

Then He cut these wonders short and made the Scriptures unique.

The Scriptures, God's Final Standard. Today we judge a work not by whether it is miraculous, not by whether it is a "sign," not by whether it is a "wonder," but by whether it agrees with this uniquely confirmed Word. Then how do we try the spirits? Not by whether the spirits can speak in an unintelligible language; but by whether the spirit is speaking and acting in accordance with the will and purpose of God's Word .

Now today if someone should come along and should raise the dead, and should do some mighty wonderful works, we do not go after them immediately. The mighty works of God have had priority over the deceitful counterfeits of Satan, and they have served their purpose. Christ has told us beforehand that there would be deceitful works to follow. So we are forewarned. Therefore, knowing some thing about the confirmed Word, we do not automatically go with the modern-day workers of "wonders." If you do not know the Word, you may go after them. But remember Paul's warning: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ; Rut though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6).

I think it would be pretty hard to argue with an angel from heaven. But suppose you had gone to a Charismatic meeting and all of a sudden you saw someone coming through the roof, leaving no hole; an angel came from heaven and settled down in the midst of the people. Suppose the angel began to preach things which are contrary to the Word which has been confirmed by a long and unequivocal chain of truth, saying, "I am a messenger of God, and God has sent me with a new revelation." What should you do?

Do not believe him.

That is a commandment.

It matters not that it is an angel from heaven; it does not matter what kind of sign or wonder he does. It matters not what kind of miracle a person is able to perform — what manner of tongue he may use. Today it is not up to us to decide, apart from the Scripture, whether a miracle is from God or not. All we have to decide is: Do the teachings conform to the Word that is already confirmed? Do they teach the things that are true? Is their body of doctrine truth? Is their mode, manner, witness, and purpose scriptural? Does it conform to the will and purpose of God as expressed in the confirmed Word? That is all we need to discern.

The confirmation is not really, after all, in a single miracle; but it is in the consistent, inter-meshing integration of all the mighty works of God. If there were not that long, intertwining chain of events that have confirmed each other over centuries, a single miracle — one standing alone — would hardly be decisive. And so today it is the Word itself that confirms the truth. Try the spirits of what sort they are, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. But the only test we can apply to any spirit is the test of conformity to the confirmed Word of God. The Bible alone bears the unique signature of God.