The Cessation of the Sign Gifts

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> Referring to the charismatic movement Hollenweger states that "in the not too distant future there will be more Christians belonging to this type of Christianity than to the Anglican community. They will number almost as many as all other Protestants together." He feels that the numerical and perhaps the spiritual center of Christianity will shift to "Indigenous Non-white" or "Third World Pentecostal" churches. The validity of such a prevalent force is an issue that cannot be ignored.

The Essential Question: From God or Not from God?

As with any other doctrinal issue it is important to know the truth or the error of the "charismatic" position. This is not a purely doctrinal matter, since in the charismatic movement in all its various forms, such as Pentecostalism, neo-Pentecostalism, "power evangelism," and the "signs and wonders" movement, emphasis is placed on phenomena and subjective experiences. These experiences, which transcend doctrinal considerations and doctrinal boundaries, are the raison d'etre of the movement. They are not merely the daily outworking of one's doctrine as distinct from his doctrinal position, but are usually crisis events that allegedly go beyond normal, traditional Christian experience. These so-called "spiritual" experiences are either from God or not from God. There can be no neutral or partially true position. Either they are biblically true or they are false experiences. If they are

biblically false then the issue is much more serious than merely another view of the Christian life, since the charismatic movement involves a spiritual experience that attempts to be in direct contact with supernatural forces. Whether the charismatics are correct can only be determined from the Scriptures and other relevant facts. By the very nature of the issue, the "gifts," such as tongues, healings, and signs and wonders, so prevalent in today's charismatic movement, are either from God or not from God. There can be no middle ground.

Evidence Contrary to the Validity of the Phenomena

Several factors give evidence that the phenomena of the charismatic movement are not the gifts and activities of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. On the other hand charismatic proponents have given no evidence, other than their assumption, that these are the same phenomena. That their numbers are growing, that the followers are enthusiastic, and that there are alleged miracles are not evidence that the phenomena are from the Holy Spirit, since all these occur in other religions. To argue that the New Testament gifts could occur today or that no verse rules out such a possibility is not enough; it must also be shown that the modern charismatic "gifts" are the same as in the New Testament. The proponents of the charismatic movement have been unsuccessful in proving either the first (the possibility of the gifts today) or the second (that these are the same phenomena). Are all phenomena automatically from the Holy Spirit simply because someone makes such an assertion, unless a verse can be found that directly states they are not? It is not enough merely to assert that charismatic phenomena are New Testament phenomena. There must be evidence that they are the same.

The Evidence Of History

If the miraculous gifts of the New Testament age had continued in the church, one would expect an unbroken line of occurrences from apostolic times to the present. If they are of God, why should such miracles be absent for centuries?

The entire controversy exists because the miraculous gifts of the New Testament age did cease and did not occur for almost 1,900 years of church history and certainly have not continued in an unbroken line. Questions about their presence today as well as differing opinions, even among charismatics, regarding the nature of tongues, prophecy, and certain other gifts are due to the fact that they ceased. Chrysostom, a fourth-century theologian, testified that they had ceased so long before his time that no one was certain of their characteristics.

History contradicts the charismatics. Though some have attempted to prove that tongues and other miraculous gifts have occurred in the postapostolic history of the church, the very paucity and sporadic nature of alleged occurrences is evidence against this claim. Referring to alleged instances of tongues-speaking, Hinson, a church historian, sums up the situation this way: "The first sixteen centuries of its history were lean ones indeed. . . . if the first five centuries were lean the next were starvation years for the practice in Western Christendom and doubtful ones in Eastern Christendom."

After a few alleged instances in the second century there is a gap of almost 1,000 years before a few more occur. Obviously it would not have been difficult to produce evidence for these gifts during the apostolic age. Why then is there such a dearth of evidence if the gifts continued throughout church history? The alleged instances are even more rare if restricted to genuine believers, and if hearsay evidence is omitted. If instances of the gift of healing rather than supposed answers to prayer are considered, the alleged instances all but vanish. That these miraculous workings ceased in the past can hardly be

refuted, and this is recognized by many charismatics. Dayton feels that many charismatics actually prefer to grant that certain gifts ceased, since they regard today's phenomena as a latter-day pouring out of the Spirit.

Explanations are unrealistic. It is one thing for a doctrine such as justification by faith to be temporarily lost due to man's frailty. It is another thing entirely for miraculous signs and wonders to be missing. Those at Pentecost were not expecting to speak as they did.

In Acts no tongues speaker was previously aware of the existence of the gift; yet they spoke. They could hardly have had faith in their ability to perform miracles or to speak in tongues, since they were unaware of such gifts. They did not obtain or lose the ability because of their belief or lack of belief in the charismata. If God gave these gifts during the history of the church, they would have occurred regardless of man's frailty. To argue that the gifts faded away in the postapostolic church because of a failure to believe in miracles evades the facts of history and has no biblical support.

First Corinthians 12-14 implies that the early church was only too inclined toward such gifts rather than against them. In almost every religion men have been inclined toward the miraculous rather than toward rejecting obvious miracles. And yet some argue that miracles ceased or nearly so in the early church—an era when belief in the supernatural was rampant and when the signs and wonders actually occurred—because of disbelief in miracles! Yet it is claimed that in the most rationalistic of ages, when no miracles were occurring, 19- and 20th-century Christians believed to the extent that the gifts reoccurred, and reoccurred on the scale of today's claims. Since modern Christians are so receptive to signs and wonders and modern man is so willing to believe the charismatic claims, on what basis can one assume that the early Christians would

refuse to do so? Those willing to believe religious miracles are always plentiful. To claim that this "miraculous infusion" of the Spirit gives joy, purpose, power for service, and revitalization of the church, and at the same time claim that such a tremendous working was ignored, rejected, and allowed to drop out of the early church which experienced it, is illogical. The only reasonable explanation for the lack of these gifts in church history is that God did not give them. If He had given them, they would have occurred.

Since these gifts and signs did cease, the burden of proof is entirely on the charismatics to prove their validity. Too long Christians have assumed that the noncharismatic must produce incontestable biblical evidence that the miraculous sign gifts did cease. However, noncharismatics have no burden to prove this, since it has already been proved by history. It is an irrefutable fact admitted by many Pentecostals. Therefore the charismatics must prove biblically that the sign gifts will start up again during the Church Age and that today's phenomena are this reoccurrence. In other words they must prove that their experiences are the reoccurrence of gifts that have not occurred for almost 1,900 years.

"Latter day" Explanations are Inadequate.

Many Pentecostals hold that the sign gifts did cease and that they have reoccurred in these "latter days." This must be demonstrated from Scripture, however. There is no biblical evidence that there will be a reoccurrence in the church of the sign gifts or that believers will work miracles near the end of the Church Age. However, there is ample evidence that near the end of the age there will be false prophets who perform miracles, prophesy, and cast out demons in Jesus' name (cf. Matt. 7:22-23; 24:11, 24; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). During the Church Age there will be false leaders who fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15). During the

Tribulation period, there is no indication that believers, other than the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12, will perform miracles. Those performed by the two witnesses are exceptional, and their actions are comparable to those of Old Testament prophets rather than to those of the apostles. The two witnesses are not part of the church, and if they were, they could hardly be considered typical of the church.

The "latter rain" arguments are incorrectly based on verses that actually are referring to seasonal rainfall in Israel. Hosea 6:3 and Joel 2:23, for example, refer not to some unusual outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days of the Church Age. They refer instead to spring rains, in contrast to early rains in the fall.

The arguments based on the expression "in the last days" in Acts 2:16-21 are also invalid. If the "last days" referred to in Acts 2:17 includes the day of Pentecost, the beginning of the Church Age, and "if this is that" (v. 16) includes Pentecost, then it cannot mean at the same time the "last days"of this Church Age. On the other hand if the "last days" do not include Pentecost, then Pentecost was not a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, and Acts 2:16-21 refers specifically to Israel and is still future. Either way this passage gives no evidence for a reoccurrence of miraculous gifts during the "last (latter) days" of the church. The present charismatic movement is characterized by phenomena that began in the church about 100 years ago, which apart from any historical connection or evidence are claimed to be the same as the miracles performed in the apostolic age. It is simply naive to accept this claim without some direct historical link or solid biblical evidence that these present phenomena are the same as those in the days of the apostles. The most reliable evidence would be a direct historical link with the apostolic gifts due to their continuity in the church. However, as already argued, history testifies to the contrary. The gifts ceased and there is no reason to expect their

presence or reoccurrence today.

Lack Of Similarity With The New Testament

For any phenomena to make credible claim to be the same as the gifts and miracles of the apostolic age there must be great similarity between the two. Any phenomena can be intentionally duplicated or copied. Therefore similarity alone cannot prove the modern phenomena are genuine. Conversely a lack of similarity is definitely evidence against the claim that they are the same as the New Testament gifts and miracles.

An examination of the New Testament reveals that the modern charismatic phenomena are not sufficiently similar to those of the apostolic age. Where are the tongues of fire and the rushing of a mighty wind as on the day of Pentecost? Do missionaries blind their opponents as Paul did? Do church leaders discern hypocrisy and pronounce the immediate death of members as in Acts 5:1-11? Do evangelists amaze an entire city with miracles as did Philip (8:5-8)? Are they then taken to another place of ministry by the Holy Spirit (vv. 39-40)? Are entire multitudes healed by merely being in the shadow of the healer (5:15)? Do prophets give specific prophecies which come to pass soon after (11:27-28)?

The miracles and signs of the apostolic age were clearly and overtly miraculous. Even the opponents of the gospel could not refute the miracles of the apostolic age. But today's "signs and wonders" cannot be verified even by those who are neutral or friendly to the movement. A detailed comparison with specific individual gifts shows an amazing lack of similarity between the New Testament gifts and the modern "charismatic" gifts.

The gift of healing. The New Testament gift of healing is a specific gift to an individual enabling him to heal. It is not to be confused with healing performed by God in answer to prayer.

New Testament healings include those with verifiable afflictions and handicaps such as the man who was crippled from birth (Acts 3:1-10). The healings were instantaneous, complete, and obvious to all. The man crippled from birth had never walked, but he was instantly able to walk and jump. The healings in the apostolic age never failed regardless of the faith of the recipient. They did not depend on direct physical contact (5:15). There were no preliminaries, healing meetings, or incantations. The healer merely stated to the individual, even when the individual was unaware of the intention to heal (3:1-10), something equivalent to the words, "In Jesus' name, stand up and walk." The healings were usually in public, performed on unbelievers, and often en masse.

The modern charismatic movement made little impact on the basis of speaking in tongues alone. It was not until "healing" was added that the movement began to grow in significant numbers.

Today's healers admittedly often fail. This is blamed on the lack of faith of the sick rather than on the healer. The alleged healings are seldom instantaneous or complete. They usually are not healings of objectively verifiable illnesses; they often pertain to internal disorders such as "emotional healing." Rather than being irrefutable, they are unverified or even denied by those neutral. They involve healing meetings, preliminaries, incantations, and usually repeated visits. They are not performed in the streets, en masse, or at a distance. In a crowd they are usually performed on only a select few. They are never performed on those who are not aware of the "healer" or his intention to "heal."

There is little correspondence between modern-day charismatic "healings" and the healings recorded in the New Testament. The differences are so vast that many of today's healers are careful to point out that they do not have the gift of healing, but

are merely those to whom God often responds with healing. No one heals today in such a way that it is clearly the New Testament gift of healing.

Exorcism of demons. The miraculous ability to exorcise demons directly also needs to be differentiated from answers to prayer (James 5:14). The exorcisms in Acts concerned those clearly recognized as "possessed," including a girl with a mantic gift (Acts 16:16-18). They were clearly differentiated from those who were merely ill (5:16). They were not nebulous cases of emotional problems such as "personality meltdown," frustration, tension, the "demon of worry," the "demon of drugs or alcoholism," as is often the case in alleged exorcisms today. Such can hardly be considered demonism in the New Testament sense.

The New Testament instances of exorcism never failed, were without preliminaries, were instantaneous, were usually performed in public, often en masse, usually on unbelievers, and in the case of the mantic girl (Acts 16:16-18) apart from any cooperation of the demonized. Today's "exorcisms" often fail, often require repeated sessions, are usually unverified as demonism, are never en masse, seldom if ever occur in public, and are only on the cooperative "faithful." Many cases are similar to common psychiatric or religious counseling sessions that are claimed to be "demon exorcism." This is not to suggest that genuine cases of demon possession may not exist. The point is that merely claiming to exorcise demons gives no evidence that one is actually doing so.

Raising the dead. Dorcas had been dead for some time when Peter apart from fanfare instantaneously raised her (Acts 9:40). The incident regarding Eutychus (20:7-12) concerns a boy who fell three stories and was dead. Paul with no fanfare pronounced him alive. In the apostolic age with all the miracles, exorcisms, healings en masse, and so on, there are

only these two low-profile incidents of raising the dead. This action was apparently rare even for the apostles. There is no reason to expect this today. No modern-day "raising of the dead" has been verified. Wimber refers to a man who fell, hit his head, was apparently unconscious for three minutes, and "came to" with a bump on his head. After Wimber and others prayed the bump eventually went away. This is incredible, not as a miracle, but that anyone would consider this as a possible raising of the dead. Would anyone have been convinced by such a "miracle" that Jesus was the Son of God or that the apostles represented God?

The gift of tongues. The nature, purpose, and other characteristics of the gift of tongues, including a complete exegetical discussion and refutation of the concept of private or devotional tongues is included elsewhere. The tongues of the apostolic age were genuine miracles, since they were the ability to speak previously unlearned foreign languages, rather than the "charismatic tongues" of today, which can easily be duplicated. The only passage describing the nature of tongues speaking is Acts 2:4-11, where they are definitely languages. Peter stated that the tongues-speaking in Cornelius's house (10:46) was the same as on the day of Pentecost (11:17). And there is no reason to assume the instance in Acts 19:6 was different. Since 1 Corinthians 14 repeatedly states that the tongues-speaking in Corinth was in an assembly of believers, why then was it mysterious and why was there lack of understanding? It was because the believers did not understand the foreign languages of the tongues-speakers. The mystery was not because the tongues in 1 Corinthians differed in nature from the tongues in Acts.

New Testament tongues were verifiable foreign languages. The term *glw'ssa* means "language" and is never used for ecstatic speech. By contrast, today's "tongues" have never been verified as actual languages. All objective studies by impartial linguists

indicate that they do not have the characteristics common to languages.

The New Testament gift of tongues is specifically said to be a sign for unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). This is how it functioned at Pentecost. All instances were public, not private. The people who spoke in tongues in Acts (2:4; 10:46; 19:6) were not previously aware that the ability or gift existed, and in Acts 10:46 and 19:6 the people were not previously aware of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They could not have been seeking or in any way exercising belief in such a gift, and yet they received it. There is no indication that the New Testament speakers spoke in a trance; they were in control of the phenomenon. Perhaps the most outstanding contrast is usage. The gift of tongues in the New Testament functioned, as did all the other gifts, for ministry to others (1 Cor. 12:1-30; 1 Pet. 4:10), rather than primarily for the benefit of the speaker as in the modern charismatic movement.

There is no similarity between today's tongues and the New Testament gift. Today's charismatic proponents are wrong regarding the nature, purpose, use, and every other aspect of tongues. There is no reason to assume merely on the basis of their claim that they are correct in identifying their tongues-speaking—which can easily be duplicated and is common to man—as the New Testament gift of tongues.

Conclusion. The "charismatic gifts" of today are not similar to the New Testament phenomena either in general perspective or in the details. There is no evidence to conclude that they are the same; there is every reason to conclude that they are not. The historical fact that the New Testament gifts ceased long ago and the fact that there is no historical link whatever between the charismatic phenomena and the New Testament gifts require the same conclusion. The only remaining possibility for giving credence to the modern charismatic claims would be to produce

direct statements of Scripture that the apostolic phenomena will always be present in the church, or that they will specifically be in the modern church despite their cessation through most of church history. Even if this were produced, there must also be evidence that the charismatic phenomena are somehow the same phenomena referred to in the passages. However, there is no specific biblical evidence such as this. There is no biblical statement that requires a denial of historical fact or that requires an equation of such dissimilar entities merely on the assertion of the proponents. All objective evidence is contrary to the charismatic claims. It is not sufficient to assert that by faith their claims must be taken contrary to the evidence. This is existential naivetT, not faith. Faith is trust in biblical evidence rather than in experience.

Biblical Evidence For Cessation

No Bible verse specifically states that tongues, signs, and wonders will continue throughout the Church Age. Nor is there a verse that specifically states they will cease at the end of the apostolic age. However, this does not mean that one cannot take a position on this issue. Many doctrines, such as the Trinity, are not directly stated but are derived from the study and correlation of passages of Scripture. There are several indications in the Scriptures that the gifts of tongues, healing, and miracles (signs and wonders) will not continue. The charismatic movement in all its forms rests not on exegetical evidence that the gifts will continue, but on the assumption contrary to history that since they occurred in the apostolic age they should also occur today. The foundation for this assumption is nonexistent.

The New Testament church was not characterized by power and miracles as the charismatics assume. It was characterized by the problems addressed in the epistles (including, e.g., the problems that beset the Corinthian church) and the problems of

the churches described in Revelation 2 and 3. Miracles were performed with very few exceptions only by the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12). Those who "turned the world upside down" were the apostles, not the churches as a whole. The charismatics assume that the church today should be like their imaginary church. They assume that the entire church today should be able to do all the apostles did in the New Testament.

If the church as a whole had performed miracles, it is only an assumption, apart from evidence, that this should be true today. This assumption is not interpretation. The assumption that the miraculous events recorded in the Book of Acts should occur today is "a distinct hermeneutic, a distinctively Pentecostal manner of appropriating the Scriptures." This development of theology on the basis of narrative rather than on direct teaching of Scripture is always a precarious methodology.

General biblical evidence. Moses performed a series of miracles. However, they did not continue throughout the Old Testament nor were other believers expected to do the same. The Old Testament prophets occasionally performed miracles, but Israel in general was not expected to do so, nor did the miracles continue throughout Israel's history. The fact that some individuals on special occasions in biblical history performed miracles did not result in others doing the same or in a continuity of those miracles. So there is no reason to assume that since the apostles and a few members of the early church performed miracles, they are to be expected today.

Specific biblical evidence. In addition to evidence from history there is also specific biblical evidence that certain gifts were temporary. The term "apostle," commonly used in ancient times in the sense of "representative," in a few passages describes representatives of a local church. This is not the New Testament gift of apostleship. Nor can this term, contrary to its normal meaning and contrary to the New Testament

descriptions, be equated with the modern missionary merely on the basis of etymology. The only individuals in the New Testament who clearly possessed the miraculous gift of apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and could perform miracles as required of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12) were the Twelve and Paul. Perhaps Barnabas and James can be included. Almost every branch of the church, including most Pentecostals, has held that apostles in this sense have not continued in the church. The charismatic reliance on the narrative of Acts is often avoided when defining "apostles" or "prophets," as too restrictive. These gifts can be precisely delineated, however. Imprecise use of Scripture is a common failing among charismatics. No matter how one tries to broaden the term "apostle," there is little doubt that apostles such as the Twelve and Paul did not continue. If they did not, then all things are not as they were in the New Testament church, all miraculous gifts did not continue as in the beginning church, and at least one gift in the New Testament did not continue.

In addition the New Testament sets standards for an apostle that preclude the continuance of this gift. Not only must an apostle be able to perform miracles (2 Cor. 12:12), not only was the early church very careful about granting anyone, even Paul, the title of "apostle" (Gal. 2:1-10), but also an apostle must have seen the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 9:1-2; Acts 1:22-26). Paul explicitly stated that he was the last one to see the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:8), and he specifically connected this fact with his apostleship. This requirement for apostleship refers to genuine appearances of the resurrected Christ and not to "visions." There have been no resurrection appearances since the apostolic age. Paul clearly stated that the last appearance was to him. (Revelation 1:12-18 refers to a vision, and is not an appearance of the resurrected Lord in bodily form on earth.) Therefore apostles in the sense of the Twelve and Paul cannot occur today.

When Paul wrote that all gifts were given to the church (1 Cor. 1:7) and benefited the church, he did not mean that all believers were apostles or performed miracles, but that the apostolic, miraculous ministry was experienced by and benefited the Corinthian church. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:20 that the apostles and prophets are the foundation for the universal church. This at least implies that they were only for the beginning, and this accords with the other specifics mentioned above. Since "apostle" in the full sense of the gift was only a temporary gift and did not continue in the church, the biblical precedent is established that some gifts given in the apostolic age did not continue and were only temporary. It is contrary to Scripture to assume that all gifts and all happenings of the apostolic church are to continue and to be expected in today's church.

Since the ones who performed the miracles were only in the beginning church, it is logical that the miracles themselves were only for the apostolic age. Since the ability to perform such miracles was evidence of apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12), then with rare exceptions others could not have performed such signs and wonders, and they would not continue when the apostles ceased. In addition to this implication the temporary nature of miracles is directly supported by Scripture. Mark wrote that the apostles went forth in accord with the Lord's instructions and preached (aorist tense) everywhere and the Lord confirmed their word with signs. This is all placed in the past at the time of Mark's writing (Mark 16:20; the time of the present participle is relative to the past tense of the main verb). The same is true in Hebrews 2:3-4, which says miracles were performed by eyewitnesses of the Lord (apostles), and were performed by God to confirm the word of the eyewitnesses. All this was past at the time Hebrews was written (the main verb is past tense and the participle is relative in time to the main verb "was confirmed"). In both cases the signs, wonders, and

miracles are referred to as being in the past at the time of writing; they were not referred to as occurring at that time. In both passages miracles were performed by the apostles (eyewitnesses) and are described as intended by God as evidence to authenticate the apostles' preaching.

James 5:14 does not instruct the sick to look for a healer or for someone with the ability to heal. Rather it instructs the sick to call for the elders and they are to pray for him. This is basically in accord with the procedure in noncharismatic churches, but is in direct contrast to what would be expected if the gift of healing were available for believers. Either the gift was not to be used to heal believers, or the only other option is that it had ceased.

Conclusion. There is ample biblical evidence that the miraculous gifts ceased with the apostolic age. To assume that such gifts are permanent is contrary to the Scriptures in general and to the biblical precedent that some gifts such as full apostles of the Lord definitely ceased. History is against the charismatic claims. The dissimilarity between the New Testament gifts and the alleged gifts of the charismatics also contradicts their claims. The assumption that because these gifts existed in the apostolic age they should also exist today is a gratuitous assumption contrary to objective evidence. It is also an assumption contrary to scriptural principles and specific biblical evidence. There is no teaching in Scripture that the church should look for such miraculous gifts, nor are they referred to in the passages discussing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-18), the life of faith (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:12-17), and requirements for church leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9) as necessary for the believer to lead a spiritual life.

Characteristics That Refute Charismatic Claims

Various present-day forms of the charismatic movement are offshoots of Pentecostalism. All have the same basic ideology and all have arisen because of the modern Pentecostal movement. The primary focus for the individual, no matter how their theologians may describe it, is experiential. Many people in the charismatic movement emphasize the miraculous nature of this experience seemingly for personal benefit more than service to others.

Theological Associations

In Pentecostalism the doctrine of Christian perfectionism assumed a specific form in the inaccurate concept of a postconversion crisis experience, a "second blessing." This teaching with its concept of an effusion of power from the Holy Spirit resulted in the expectancy of and search to obtain overt "power" as described in Acts.

The movement crosses all theological boundaries. Speaking in tongues is present in non-Christian religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, and in cults such as Mormonism. Healing, miracles, and exorcisms are also common in non-Christian religions. In conventional Christian circles the charismatic movement includes Protestants and Roman Catholics, liberals and conservatives, and individuals in many denominations. Those who believe in the inspiration of the Bible, justification by faith, and many other doctrines—as well as those who do not—are also involved.

Questionable Theology

The concept of the "second blessing" or "baptism or fullness of the Spirit" presupposes that while Jesus' death on the cross paid for sin, it is insufficient to empower for service, to enable one to be spiritual, or to give effectiveness in prayer. This differs drastically from the teaching of the New Testament. The view that only those who speak in tongues have real communication

with God is contrary to the biblical teaching that all believers have full access to God. Romans 8:26 states that all believers are helped in prayer by the Spirit with inaudible, non-uttered, internal groanings.

The tongues movement presupposes that communication with the spiritual realm is more direct when it is apart from the mind. Such a concept, though found in various religions, is contrary to biblical Christianity. This emphasis on a level of communication that bypasses the mind and is not direct communication from the believer to God is a dangerous teaching. This interest in "supernatural" events, not primarily as convincing signs but as the daily experience of believers that supposedly places them in contact with the supernatural, is dangerous. This middle-level, spirit realm, called the "excluded middle," is an area of charismatic emphasis.

The emphasis on experience, particularly in this level above the rational, often results in emphasizing "experience" over Scripture. In a recent nationally televised program on the subject of televangelism several charismatically oriented evangelists appealed to the "call" as the license for a sinning preacher to continue his ministry. They made no appeal to the Scriptures.

Similarities To Non-Christian Religions

The modern-day charismatic movement is disturbingly similar to practices common in paganism, while at the same time it lacks correspondence to biblical miracles. Trancelike states and communications on a level apart from the mind are common in paganism. An emphasis on physical healing and exorcism for the benefit of adherents is common. The experience of a power or force "overcoming" the participants is similar to pagan practice. The bizarre and often wild practices of early

Pentecostalism seem similar to pagan religion.

The idea of contact and interest in the spirit world, the "excluded middle" between God and man, is also common to pagan religions.

The Effects Of The Movement

All groups and doctrinal persuasions of Christendom have experienced theological and moral problems with both their leaders and laymen. As other Christians have experienced, so a number of charismatic leaders have led lives that are morally or ethically contrary to Scripture. If not more common, this is at least as common as among noncharismatics. Therefore it may be safely concluded that all the alleged miracles and so-called tongues-speaking have not produced any genuine spiritual advance over noncharismatics. It has produced enthusiasm for the miraculous, but this is not to be equated with spirituality.

All these supposedly miraculous events have produced no advance in biblical knowledge or spiritual living. The basic doctrines common to the movement are not original with charismatics. Their main claim to biblical knowledge is the assumption that the current church should be like the early church. Since the movement has not produced more spiritual believers or any advance in biblical or theological knowledge, what has it accomplished? Is it not amazing that a movement that claims to have restored power for service, ability to communicate with God more than others have, ability for self-edification, power to heal and perform other miracles, and ability to prophesy and receive direct revelation, has produced no significant advance in spirituality or in biblical or theological knowledge? Is it not inconsistent that a movement which claims to be in direct contact with the Holy Spirit, to have all gifts such as prophecy, apostleship, and the word of knowledge, to communicate directly with God by tongues-

speaking and other means, can at the same time include Roman Catholics, conservative and liberal Protestants, amillennialists, premillennialists, Calvinists, Arminians, those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and those who reject Christ's vicarious atonement on the cross?

Apparently the Holy Spirit is not concerned with communicating any information to correct all these differences, many of which are crucial and some of which are incorrect. All this direct communication with the Spirit has apparently done nothing to correct even basic errors. It has not even produced unity among charismatics regarding the nature and purpose of many of the gifts. This movement has solved no theological issue, produced no advance in biblical knowledge, and has not produced more spiritual Christians. Would such an effusion of the genuine Spirit of God produce so little? Other than enthusiasm there seems to be no spiritual advantage to this movement and the noncharismatics are not missing out on any genuine spiritual benefit. On the negative side the movement has split churches, and through its televangelists the movement has had one of the most significant negative impacts on the testimony of the church in recent history. These characteristics are evidence that the charismatic phenomena are not the New Testament phenomena, that the genuine gifts are not present.

Conclusion

In every attempt to prove that the New Testament gifts exist today, the charismatic movement fails. The objective evidence of history and lack of correspondence with the New Testament indicate that the genuine miraculous gifts ceased and have not reoccurred. Biblical evidence indicates that these gifts ceased with the apostolic age. The theological associations and results of today's so-called miraculous gifts are contrary to gifts given by God. The movement has not produced Christians who are more spiritually mature, as would be expected of a genuine

occurrence of the New Testament gifts. Apparently a Christian experiences no spiritual loss by not becoming involved in the charismatic movement.

On the other hand there is a dangerous similarity to non-Christian practices, there is a dangerous interest in supernatural phenomena that give no evidence of being from God, and there is a disturbing interest in the spiritual world somewhere between God and man. Since evidence points to the cessation of the miraculous gifts in the apostolic age, no one can be confident that the charismatic phenomena are from God. Since believers are warned to avoid contact with the intermediate spiritual world and since they should do only what they are confident God approves, no one should experiment in the realm of the charismatic phenomena.

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