

What Does *the* Bible Say *About the* CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT?

*"We have also a more sure word of prophecy;
whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a
light that shineth in a dark place, until the day
dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"
(2 Peter 1:19).*

AT THE TURN of the previous century, the present-day Pentecostal Movement came into being, emphasizing "speaking in tongues" and "divine healing." Their failure to "rightly divide the Word of truth" led to many false teachings regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit and produced confusion in the minds of the saved and unsaved religionists alike. This Pentecostal Movement arose mainly from within various Protestant churches, but the Pentecostals were soon forced out, either because of their unusual beliefs and practices or, in some cases, because they felt unhappy in churches that had become theologically liberal and worldly in position and practice. At least two things can be said for most of these early Pentecostals—they utterly repudiated the liberalism of the ecumenical movement and would not condone mixing the world with the church.

In the 1960s a new movement took shape, sharing the basic doctrines of Pentecostalism but advocating a "stay in" rather than a "come out" policy with regard to church affiliations. This movement is commonly known as the "charismatic movement." It involves not only various Protestant churches but Roman Catholic churches as well. In fact, if one is able to "speak in tongues" or if he has experienced

a "healing," he is accepted by the charismatics with little or no regard to his church affiliation or doctrinal deviation. When you hear Roman Catholics talk about how their "baptism in the Holy Spirit" has given them a greater love for the Mass, you know that this cannot be attributed to the Holy Spirit but rather to a false spirit.

In the 1980s, yet another movement appeared on the religious scene that made the Pentecostal/charismatic false teachings even more appealing and dangerous. Why? Because this movement promoted the same, basic unscriptural doctrines held by Pentecostals and charismatics while, in its inception, disclaiming any relationship to either of these groups, thus making it especially attractive to evangelicals and fundamentalists who did not want to wear the label of either group because of their deviant teachings and practices.

The impetus for this new movement came largely from several widely circulated books and many lectures to evangelical groups around the world by the late Dr. John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, and Dr. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary Institute of Church Growth. Both men greatly influenced each other and, as they experimented with various teachings and practices related to "healing, miracles, signs and wonders," they soon went even beyond the Pentecostal and charismatic errors. They claimed that the exorcising of so-called "territorial spirits" was essential to complete the task of world evangelization and that God had re-established the offices of prophet and apostle, with those supposedly holding these offices receiving direct messages from God for the church and exercising divine authority over the church. This newest movement is often referred to as "Power Evangelism," "Healing, Signs, Wonders and Miracles Evangelism" or the "Third Wave of the Holy Spirit." Ecumenical in scope and decidedly worldly in practice, the three so-called "waves of the Holy Spirit" (Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement and Power Evangelism) have now blended into a powerful coalition that is rapidly spreading. This poses a great threat to the purity of the church and the gospel.

Other pastors and Bible teachers have dealt at length with the specific dangers of the charismatic movement and how

scripturally unsound the movement is. Our purpose in this leaflet is to briefly point out some of the real dangers of this movement so that God's people will be informed and forewarned. We realize that there are many true believers involved in this movement. But that fact in no way decreases the dangers inherent in it. It is important to look at principles, doctrines and positions and not to look solely at the individuals who comprise this movement. The Word of God must be the only basis for conclusions drawn—we must not judge by personal relationships or prejudice.

The CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT Is Unbiblical Because...

- ✓ It accepts tongues, interpretation of tongues, visions, dreams, prophecies, etc., as being present-day messages from God to His children. This is a grave danger. Once you accept "extrabiblical messages" (those which are in addition to the Bible but not necessarily contrary to the Bible per se), it is not long before you will be accepting "anti-biblical messages" as being valid (those which directly contradict God's Word). The charismatic movement has done and is doing exactly that. In reality, all extrabiblical messages are anti-biblical messages because God's Word specifically warns against adding to the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). The charismatic movement defends these extrabiblical, anti-biblical messages on the basis that "new winds of the Holy Spirit are blowing." They say, "Who knows what the Holy Spirit may do?" Let no one forget, however, that the Word of God is a completed revelation and was given by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). We can be sure of one thing—the Holy Spirit will never contradict Himself. It was the Holy Spirit who warned about adding to the Word of God. Therefore, those who add to God's Word cannot claim to be authorized or empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ It encourages its followers to stay in apostate Protestant churches as well as Roman Catholic churches and other churches which preach and teach a false gospel by asserting that if the supposed "gifts of the Spirit" are present in false religious systems then joining them in

evangelism, worship, service, etc. is acceptable. God's Word plainly tells believers that those who preach another gospel are "accursed" (Galatians 1:6, 9) and that those who fellowship with false teachers are partakers of their evil deeds (2 John 10-11). Satanic deception through false tongues, supposed miracles and the like help to bring together what God's Word declares must be kept separate. The charismatic movement is promoting the ecumenical movement and the Roman Catholic Church by overlooking serious doctrinal error, with eternal consequences, for the sake of "unity in the Spirit." This is very dangerous!

- ✓ It sells and promotes, like the new evangelical movement, most of the new Bible versions and translations, many of which add to or take from the Word of God. This is also very dangerous because it destroys confidence in the written Word by causing the reader to question the divinely preserved text. The new Bible versions water down and actually change vital teachings of the Word of God as well.
- ✓ It places unscriptural and undue emphasis on physical healing. This stumbles many precious believers who are falsely taught that it is always God's will to heal. Both the Scriptures and experience teach that God may use physical afflictions for refining, correcting and chastening (Hebrews 12:3-11; Job 23:10). God's Word teaches that He can heal anyone, anytime, but that He does not heal everyone, every time. Paul learned this truth when God explained why his thrice repeated prayer for personal healing was not granted (2 Corinthians 12:1-10) and also when one of Paul's faithful helpers, Trophimus, was unable to accompany him because of sickness (2 Timothy 4:20). When we pray for healing for ourselves or others, we must never forget that such healing is always God's prerogative based upon what He knows is best for each of His children, not upon "demanding" or "claiming" such healing as do the charismatics.
- ✓ It, unlike its predecessor, Pentecostalism, fosters and encourages a spirit of worldliness in the church and in the individual believer. Rather than striving for true holiness and godliness in speech, dress, music,

entertainment, etc., the charismatic movement prides itself in using worldly means to entertain their own and attract the lost. This is also very dangerous. Read 1 John 2:15-17.

- ✓ It encourages women to forsake their God-given place in the home and in the church. This results in disorderly homes and disorderly churches with women assuming places of leadership in direct violation of the Word of God. It is strange, inconsistent and sad to hear charismatics using the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians to justify speaking in tongues as a gift of the Spirit for our day when that very same chapter says plainly, "Let your women keep silence in the churches..." (1 Corinthians 14:34). To countermand God's command to women is dangerous—for women, for the home and for the church.
- ✓ It promotes and encourages what is called "coming under the power," a dangerous practice in which certain leaders "lay hands" on people, causing them to "swoon, faint, slump down, experience the power" etc., thereafter remaining unconscious or semi-conscious for several seconds or longer. The charismatics attempt to use John 18:6 to justify this practice, which is another example of how they twist the Scriptures to justify and defend their practices. There is no Scriptural precedent, example or command for this experience. Hypnotic suggestion and the desire for an extrabiblical experience open one up to either pretended or demonically energized results that parallel those of the occult.
- ✓ It glories in "miracles" and often accepts a "miracle" as the basis for validating a person's message or practices, even though the message or the practice is unscriptural. This is dangerous since the Scriptures plainly teach that the last days will be days of great deceitfulness (2 Timothy 3:13). God warns that the coming of the Antichrist will usher in a time of "all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11). We read in Revelation 13:3 that the deadly wound of the Beast was healed and that the "Second Beast" deceived men by the use of miracles, even having the power to give life to an image (Revelation 13:11-18). The validation of a man's message and methods today is not "miracles"—it is conformity to the Word of God. It is dangerous to accept any other basis of

judgment. The false notion that miracles must accompany the preaching of the gospel in order for the lost to be saved today is definitely unbiblical. The one true gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ Jesus is still, and will ever be, God's power "unto salvation" to every one who believes the simple gospel message (Romans 1:16). Undoubtedly multitudes today are trusting in a charismatic "experience" for their salvation due to these false teachings rather than upon the sure promises of God's Word. John 1:12; 3:36; 5:24; Romans 10:13-17.

✓ It confuses and misleads believers as to scriptural teachings concerning prayer. Using Matthew 18:19 ("...if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing...") as a basis for claiming healing, financial blessings or solution of any problem, they ignore what God says in 1 John 5:14-15 ("...if we ask any thing according to His will..."). The charismatic teaching that it is never God's will for any believer to be ill or in trouble of any kind is neither scriptural nor actually true in their own ministries and personal experiences. Yet, over and over again, charismatic leaders say to people in public meetings or to multitudes over the airwaves, "Let's agree together that every person listening or watching be healed—in Jesus' name." Are all such healed then or later? Of course not! By twisting and misapplying the Scriptures, they are deceiving millions.

✓ It promotes dangerous and unscriptural teachings concerning the present power of Satan and the believer's attitude toward this "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Charismatic leaders whip their audiences into a veritable frenzy as they speak of binding Satan, casting him out of individuals and into the pit, etc. They talk of "stomping on Satan" and "chasing him out of this world." Such teaching completely ignores the believer's scriptural instructions. We are to "resist" Satan (1 Peter 5:8-9); to "put on the whole armour of God" that we may be able to stand against Satan's cunning attacks and quench all his fiery darts (Ephesians 6:10-17), not forgetting the scriptural example of Michael the archangel's attitude when dealing with the devil (Jude 9).

We believe that a careful examination of the biblical text reveals that "speaking in tongues" ceased with the completion of the Canon of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:8). We

firmly believe that it is wrong to teach believers to tarry for or seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly teaches that all believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ are not His at all (Romans 8:9b).

We firmly believe that the erroneous teachings of the charismatic movement have obscured many true and blessed teachings regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin (John 16:8-11); intercedes in prayer to the Father on behalf of the believer (Romans 8:26-27); comforts, teaches and guides believers into the truth of the Word (John 14:15-26; 16:7, 13) and who has "sealed [us] unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit has a blessed and important ministry in the life of every believer, and we dare not neglect, belittle or pervert this wonderful ministry. The Holy Spirit uses the written Word, which He gave through the New Testament apostles and prophets, to guide us into all truth. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to do or say anything contrary to the Bible, God's holy, inerrant, infallible and eternal Word (2 Timothy 3:16).

Someone may ask, "What if the charismatic movement is right and you are wrong about 'speaking in tongues' being for our day? Is it possible that God does want His people to have this gift now?"

The answer is clear—if "speaking in tongues" is for our day, then surely it ought to be practiced and used according to the Scriptures and not what is being practiced in the modern "tongues" movement. For example, not all believers could expect to have this gift (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31), and "tongues speakers" were to remain silent unless an interpreter was present (1 Corinthians 14:28). The one speaking understood what he spoke in the unlearned, foreign language (it was never unintelligent gibberish), and unless he or an interpreter would make the message or prayer known to the rest of the church, his understanding was "unfruitful" (unprofitable) with respect to the edification of the rest of the church (1 Corinthians 14:4-6, 12-17 cf. 12:7). Also, men were to have the leadership in the church, and the women were to submit to their Spirit-enabled ministry. No woman was

to speak in tongues in the churches (1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34). Charismatics consistently try to explain away these truths by taking them out of their essential textual and historical context.

If the charismatic movement were of the Holy Spirit of God, it would be exercising spiritual discernment and calling for separation from false prophets, apostate churches and unscriptural practices. It would also be exposing the false gospels and other heresies taught by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, not joining with them in evangelism, prayer and worship.

For all of these reasons and many others like them, we sound this word of warning: Beware of the unbiblical teachings and practices of the charismatic movement.