

Thirdly, Paul indicates that these gifts would cease. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. 13:10). Some take this to be Heaven. I take it, along with such as Jonathan Edwards, to be the Scripture, because:-

(a) There were other words used, even within this epistle, that could have been used to denote the second coming of Christ, e.g. 'telos'.

(b) The word used for perfect ('to telæon') is neuter and means 'the complete thing' – a strange way of referring to Christ. Not once in its 18 occurrences does it refer to the Parousia or heaven, whereas 'maturity', which this word means, is used regarding the Scriptures.

#### **4). CHARISMATICS TODAY.**

Firstly, I have met those who claim to speak in tongues. When I ask, "Do you understand what you are saying?" the answer is often, "No." This is not the tongues of Scripture, which were known languages: Paul's whole argument to the Corinthians is that without understanding there is no edification, whether one is the speaker or the hearer.

Secondly, one is often asked: "If tongues are not from God, where are they from?" This question troubles some. However there are moslems, and other sects, who today claim to speak in tongues. They would equally say that God is speaking through them.

Thirdly, we believe that God does heal. Our argument is – are there men with this specific gift today? New Testament cures were immediate and spectacular. People bed-ridden from birth got up and walked. There were no partial cures and no absolute promise of cures: Paul prayed three times, yet the thorn remained.

Fourthly, charismatics today forever speak of what the Spirit is doing, especially what He is doing for them. But Christ says that the Spirit will not speak of Himself, but rather will glorify Christ (John 16:13-14).

Fifthly, it is said that the Church has lacked these gifts because of worldliness. The church at Corinth had abundant gifts, yet Paul could not speak to them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal (1 Cor. 3:1). They were not 'Spirit-filled', but had gifts sovereignly bestowed.

Lastly, such gifts cannot be the sign of a Christian, for Christ warned of some who will say: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:22-23).

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:  
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I.i.  
Victor Budgen, The Charismatics and the Word of God, Evangelical Press.  
Walter Chantry, Signs of the Apostles, The Banner of Truth Trust.

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# *Charismatic Confusion*

by **Rev. James Gracie**

Edinburgh Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

**B**ELIEVE that the 'Charismatic Movement' is one of the greatest threats to the Reformed Faith and the Gospel today. Reading its literature one thing is clear: the 'Charismatic Movement' and the true Reformed Faith do not, cannot, sit side by side; one must give way. Charismatics believe that they have a battle to win, and one of the first enemies to be overcome is Reformed theology. It does not take long to realise how opposed to the doctrines of Truth and Grace the whole theory is, and Satan's subtlety in adopting a garb of biblical respectability while presenting another gospel, which is not another.

It is common for Charismatics to accuse 'cessationist' writers (i.e. those who believe the extraordinary gifts are ended) of appealing to history and disregarding Scripture. However, every cessationist book that I have read bases its arguments squarely on the Word of God. It is understandable that Charismatics do not wish to consult history: it is not on their side.

#### **CHURCH HISTORY**

As early as the second and third centuries A.D., Christian theologians were confirming that the extraordinary charismatic gifts had passed away. Origen (185-254), Chrysostom (347-407), Augustine of Hippo (354-407) are but a few of the early Church Fathers who record that such gifts were unknown in the Church by the end of the second century. There are even evidences that some argued their invalidity for the New Testament Church which had come of age. Moving on we find that neither the Reformers, Puritans, Covenanters, the eighteenth century revival movements which gave birth to the great Disruption spirit of 1843 in Scotland, nor the revivals recorded in New England by Jonathan Edwards, ever sought to further such an evident work of the Spirit by seeking the gifts of tongues, etc. The Westminster Confession of Faith reflects all the Confessions of the time by asserting the Holy Scripture to be most necessary, "those former ways of God revealing His will unto his people being now ceased." Pentecostalism responds thus:

"During the Reformation God used Martin Luther and others to restore to the world the doctrine of justification by faith. Later on the Lord used the Wesleys and others in the great holiness movement to restore the gospel of sanctification by faith. Later still he used various ones to restore the gospel of Divine healing by faith, and the gospel of Jesus's second coming. Now the

Lord is using many witnesses in the great Pentecostal movement to restore the gospel of the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire with signs following. Thank God, we have preachers of the whole gospel.” (Pentecostal Fellowship of North America)

Two points may be made on this statement. Firstly, Scripture tells us that the Church has a sure foundation to build upon (Eph. 2:20). Her theological understanding of her foundation is deepened and strengthened through the process of time and controversy, but that is quite different to the idea that she did not have the ‘whole’ or, as is commonly said, the ‘full’ Gospel. To suggest that God left the Church for nearly 2000 years without the whole Gospel is preposterous. It is to say that for that time she built on only a partial foundation.

Secondly, how are we to know even today if we yet have the ‘full’ Gospel? Perhaps tomorrow God will restore to the Church some other aspect that He has hitherto hidden. The truth is that we have a solid, complete foundation – the whole Gospel – the Word of God.

Let us turn to Scripture and see what it has to say on this subject.

### **1). WHAT ARE THE CHARISMATIC GIFTS?**

The Greek word ‘charis’ means grace or favour. The picture is of a benefactor bringing gifts. In the spiritual realm this involves the indwelling of the Spirit. It also includes the idea of gratitude. The ‘charismatic’ gifts are set out for us in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10: there are nine gifts enumerated: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretation. These extraordinary gifts fall into two distinct categories:-

1. Those gifts which exceeded the natural faculties of man’s soul, e.g. miracles and healings. Man has no inherent power, neither the faculty within him, to perform such acts. So it is said that, “[the Lord] granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” (Acts 14:3).

2. Those gifts which heightened or improved existing faculties of the souls of men – wisdom, knowledge, utterance, etc. Every Christian has these, but here the Holy Spirit manifests Himself by extraordinary endowments of existing faculties of the soul. Thus John Owen:-

“Where these were bestowed on any in an extraordinary manner, as they were on the apostles and evangelists, they differ only in degree from those that are ordinary and still continue, but are of the same kind with them.”

If we can prove – as I believe we can – that such extraordinary gifts are no longer within the Church, then the former group (miracles, healings, etc.) would pass away completely, since there is no abiding faculty within man for him to perform them. However, the latter (wisdom, knowledge, teaching, etc.) should remain, not as extraordinary gifts, but as ordinary gifts given to the whole body of Christ.

### **2). WHAT WERE THESE GIFTS GIVEN FOR?**

**The Old Testament.** When Moses came back to Egypt, God gave him the power to work miracles. Why? “That they [the Israelites] may believe that the Lord God of their fathers...hath appeared unto thee.” (Exod. 4:5). There was an attestation of the Divine call to the Prophetic office. When Elijah stood on Mount Carmel he said, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.” (1 Kings 18:36). The Psalmist ties in the gifts with the Prophetic office: “We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.” (Psa. 74:9). Signs and true prophets were synonymous. Further, in Deuteronomy 18:20-22 we have the cardinal test of a true prophet:

“But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou shalt say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.”

We see this test in action when God’s judgement came on Hananiah for prophesying simply what he thought the people wanted to hear, and that falsely (Jer. 28). The test is not, as often thought, simply of the individual utterance of the prophet. Rather it is of the prophet himself. One false prediction proved him false, and this stands true for all ‘prophets’ today. The idea that we can have a true prophet making mistakes is unbiblical. Where does this leave the many ‘prophets’ of our day, like John Wimber, who, when David Watson of York was dying of cancer, predicted wrongly that he was cured?

**The New Testament.** Imagine having to go to a heathen nation, which not only does not have the written Word, but has never seen the written Word! Our Lord foresees this problem, and provides the answer: “Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” (Luke 21:15). But surely this contradicts Paul’s injunction to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:15) and his statement about Scripture (3:16)? Why do both Testaments tell us to have the written Word as our study all the day? The answer is that our Lord was speaking to apostles who did not then have the complete written Word. God therefore gave them special endowments of wisdom and knowledge, and power to do miracles, to the extent that even Peter’s shadow could effect a cure. Why? That the early Church would give heed to so great salvation, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him [i.e. the apostles], 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. 2:3-4). These signs bore witness to the apostles themselves.

The signs were evidences of a true apostle. At Pentecost the apostles were together when the Holy Spirit fell. When the Gospel came to Samaria (Acts 8) many believed, yet only when Peter and John laid their hands upon the converts did they receive the Spirit in such a way that Simon desired this power which the apostles had (v.18). Why did not Philip – who could perform miracles – convey the gifts? The answer must be that he was not an apostle. Every recorded instance of men receiving such gifts occurred under direct apostolic ministry. Thus Paul refers to them as ‘signs of the apostles’ (2 Cor. 12:12). The question really is, not whether miraculous gifts are in the Church today, but, are there prophets and apostles today? Many charismatics would affirm that there are.

### **3). THEIR RELEVANCE TODAY.**

Rather than encourage us to seek further, extra-biblical, revelations, these gifts should do the opposite. They should do just what they did for the early Church, i.e. give authority to the apostles’ words, which are now written in the New Testament. Their relevancy today is:-

Firstly, in the Old Testament we find three offices defined which, we are told, Messiah will assume on His coming.

1. **The Priestly Office.** – throughout the Old dispensation the Aaronic Priesthood stood. With the coming of Messiah, this office ceases, for He has fulfilled the Priestly office. We now no longer need an earthly priest – Christ is our High Priest. Indeed, we are all priests in Him.

2. **The Kingly Office.** – the sceptre departs out of Judah at the coming of Shiloh – we need no Pope or King – Christ is the only Head of the Church and we are all kings in Him.

3. **The Prophetic Office.** – with Christ the Prophetic office is also fulfilled – Hebrews 1:1-2. The gradual unfolding of revelation through the Old Testament prophets ends in the final revelation in the Son: “God has spoken (the tense expresses indefinite past time) by His Son.” Full stop. The Prophet of all prophets has now come. Even the apostles themselves could not reveal anything more than He revealed. They simply reflected His light. “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26). To suggest that there are prophets and apostles in today’s Church, or new revelations, is an open attack upon Christ’s finished work. Fulfilment of the prophetic office is foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15, and confirmed in the Parable of the Vineyard, where the owner sends the husbandmen His own Son – last of all (Matt. 21:37).

Secondly, we find no provisions made within the Pastoral Epistles for the office of apostleship, or any reference to the gifts that we are now dealing with. Why? Surely because they were not to continue. With no instructions given, how are we to know who are apostles?