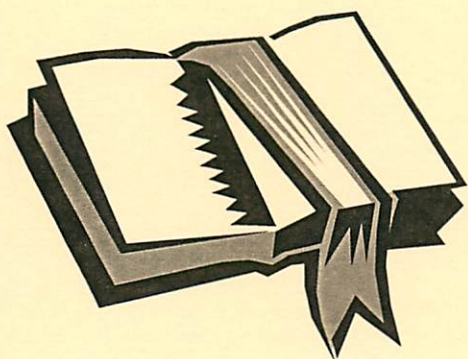


*Temporary Offices and Temporary
Spiritual Gifts*

A Defense Against Pentecostalism



By Rev. Thomas Miersma

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Temporary Offices and Temporary Spiritual Gifts

By Rev. Thomas Miersma

Preface

The Christian church, in every branch of it today, is in various ways confronted with a serious corruption of the Word of God. One subject has become, time and again, a subject of much fascination, that is the subject of the gifts of the Spirit. This is especially true of those gifts which are special or striking, such as tongues and miracles of healing. At the same time, one subject has almost been completely ignored or corrupted in the modern Christian church, and that subject is the offices in the church and the special place of apostles and prophets.

Christ instituted a church having a certain form. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, gives gifts to His people. This subject is therefore not only one concerning the Spirit, or the structure of the church but is rooted in a true knowledge of Christ as Savior and Lord. He is the head of the body and it is the Holy Spirit given Him and poured out on the church, Acts 2:33. It is the Spirit of Christ Who gives gifts, "as He will," I Cor. 12:11.

Introduction: Offices and Gifts

The Word of God and Christ Himself by the apostles ordained a certain institutional form and order for His church. This is plainly set before us in such a passage as I Timothy 3. God has given two vital offices or functions: that of elder or bishop (literally overseer) which is one of government (I Thess. 5:12, 13) and that of deacon which is one of ministering

to the poor and afflicted (Acts 6). I Timothy 3 gives qualifications for these offices to the church, as they are set in the body of the church, and men are called and sent to this work by the church (Acts 6:3). The office of elder is one of government. The term elder, drawn from the Old Testament, and the term bishop refer to the same office, as is clear from Acts 20, where Paul sent to Ephesus and “called the elders of the church,” Acts 20:17. It is these elders whom he then addresses as “overseers,” Acts 20:28. It is the establishment of this office of elder in the body of Christ or in congregations gathered through missions which formed mission fields into instituted churches. We read, therefore, that Paul having preached in Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra returned to these mission fields, confirming the souls and ordaining “elders in every church,” Acts 14:21-23. For the same reason, Titus is left in Crete to “ordain elders in every city,” Titus 1:5. The church instituted by Christ is to be governed by a body of elders.

Within that office of elder or government, the Word of God also makes a certain distinction. There are those called of God not only to rule in the life of the church but to preach. We read, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine,” I Tim. 5:17. While all the elders are to be honored, the apostle distinguishes between those who rule, and those who “labour in the word and doctrine,” that is, those who preach, who, he explains, must be supported by the church, I Timothy 5:18. It is in connection with this calling to preach, that the Word of God speaks of a number of preaching offices: apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor and teacher, Eph 4:11. The latter, “pastor and teacher,” is the abiding office of the ministry of the Word in the church. The preachers, also the apostles, were elders, as Peter indicates in I Peter 5:1, declaring

that he also is an elder. At the same time, it is clear from the New Testament that the body of the elders, was broader than the pastors alone. There is even a distinct gift of “government” (I Cor. 12:28), and ruling with diligence is mentioned as the exercise of a spiritual gift given to the church, Rom. 12:6, 8.

The church instituted by Christ, therefore, is composed of ministers of the Word or teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons. To exercise these offices God gives gifts to the church as the body of Christ. The apostle Paul speaks of this in Romans 12:6-8. He describes these gifts from the viewpoint of their exercise. They include gifts of prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, ruling, giving. While it is clear that these gifts are given to the church as the body of Christ, it is also clear from the very nature of the offices set down in Scripture and the exercise of these gifts, that they belong to the qualifications for those offices and are exercised by them. The same principle is found in I Cor. 12: 28-30 where the apostle speaks of apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, and tongues. Apostles, prophets, and teachers are preaching offices. Helps and governments involve the exercise of authority which is found in the offices in the church. When “governments” is mentioned, for example, the reference is certainly to a spiritual gift, but the idea of it is also that one does not exercise it by a self-willed lording it over others. There is an office of elder in the church.

There is an important point therefore which must be noted in considering this matter, namely, that the Word of God points us to: 1) gifts, 2) the exercise of those gifts, and 3) offices in the church. These three elements are joined together. All three are set in the body, the church, by the Spirit, as He will. We may not separate them from one another. We may not individualize

them. We may not take one or two of them and speak of them as if everyone in the church has them or should have them. The Apostle Paul asks, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" I Cor. 12:29, 30. The answer to his question is plainly, "No!" To teach, therefore, that all should have the gift of tongues as a kind of second blessing is plainly contrary to the express testimony of Scripture, and those who teach such things err. The Holy Spirit works spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, for the welfare of the body, the service of the gospel, not the aggrandizement of men. He works them, moreover, sovereignly "as He will," I Cor. 12:11. It is in the light of this principle that we may turn to the specific concern of this pamphlet, of special offices and special gifts, both of which were temporary.

Temporary Offices in the Church and Temporary Gifts of the Spirit

The Word of God sets forth in the New Testament certain special gifts which were found in the church, including miracles, tongues, and special gifts of knowledge and revelation. One of the issues or questions that occurs in connection with these gifts is their place and intention. Do they continue today? If not, why not? Now there is a Scriptural answer to these questions which is important. To understand that answer, the subject must be treated in a certain context. That context is the historical situation of the New Testament church and the offices which were given in the church. Scripture consistently connects the gifts of the Spirit with the offices in the church. The special or exceptional gifts of the Spirit are connected with the temporary offices of apostle and New Testament prophet.

I. The Office of Apostle

In treating the office of apostle there is an important distinction which needs to be kept in mind between that which was unique to that specific office and that aspect or function of it which continues in the New Testament form of the church institute. The word apostle refers to one who is called and sent and has a broader idea. When we speak of the office of apostle, however, we are speaking of a unique office.

Three qualifications were specific to the unique character of the office of apostle.

1 The apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, having seen the risen Lord.

2 They were called directly by Christ, personally, to that office.

3 They were directly and personally trained for their labor and office by the Lord Himself.

All the elements were necessary. Let us examine these qualifications more closely.

1. Eyewitnesses

There were many others who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection. He appeared to above five hundred at once on a mountain in Galilee, I Cor. 15:5-8. In Paul's case this plainly occurred on the road to Damascus, and it is this to which Paul refers in I Cor. 15:8. Being an eyewitness was necessary. Paul says in I Cor. 9:1, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free?"

have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

2. Personal and direct call

The personal call of Christ to that office was necessary also. The term apostle itself means "one sent" and the idea of it is that of one called and sent by Christ. The principle or function of that calling and sending still abides in the church in this respect: Christ, by His Spirit in the heart, calls men to seek office in the church, subjectively. He also calls and sends men to the labor of the ministry of the Word, and to be elders and deacons, objectively, by an external call to office through the church (Acts 6:3; Acts 13:2; Rom. 10:15), see also The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 31. This includes ordination to office in the case of the ministers of the Word by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (eldership), as was the case with Timothy (I Tim. 4:14), and it includes gifts to perform that office (II Tim. 1:6). Both the subjective and objective aspects of this one call to office are necessary, which is why spiritual qualifications for office are set down in the Scriptures (I Tim. 3; Titus 1:6 ff.).

In the case of the apostles, this calling to office was a direct, immediate, and a personal-physical call by Christ Himself as head of the church. They were called to be "fishers of men," as Jesus showed in the miracle of the draught of fishes. Paul also was a "chosen vessel" for the same purpose (Acts 9:15). Paul must be understood as having seen Christ directly in heaven in such away that the barrier between heaven and earth was opened in his call.

The apostles, together with the prophets, had also a unique task to perform: laying the foundation of the New

Testament form of the church institute. Paul indicates this in Eph. 2:20, when he says that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets...." of which Christ Himself is the chief Cornerstone.

3. Instructed by Christ

Included in this call is also that the apostles were personally and directly instructed by Christ for their calling and office and trained by Him. This is reflected in Jesus' promise in the upper room to the eleven (Judas having already left), that is, that He would give His Spirit Who would "...teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). In the case of Paul, who had not walked with Jesus those three years, Jesus gave that instruction also directly, probably during his sojourn in Arabia. He repeatedly emphasizes that he did not learn his doctrine from any other disciple and describes that experience in II Cor. 12. That he is referring to himself in II Cor. 12:2-4 is plain from verse 7. This is why Paul repeatedly quotes from that direct instruction, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you..." (I Cor. 11:23; I Cor. 7:10).

Offices Set in the Body, the Church

As to the place of that office, there are a couple of other elements which need to be considered to rightly understand the gifts of that office. The church is a body, a living organism, in which the members are bound and united together, as Paul describes it in I Cor. 12. The offices, all of them, are set in the body. They do not exist independently of it. Hence, the normal order is calling by Christ through the church. The apostolic office, while laying the foundation of the church and having a

calling made directly by Christ, was nevertheless set in the body (Eph. 4:11, 12). The principle in Eph. 4:12 makes it clear that by the offices set in the body, it is, properly speaking, the body itself which preaches. The body is not simply edified or built up by the preaching (Eph. 4:12), but is edifying or building itself up (Eph. 4:16), "edifying itself in love." This is true of the apostolic office also, which is why Paul, though an apostle, is called and sent to do mission work by Christ through the church (Acts 13:2).

The second element is that there is a sequence to how Christ gave the offices, particularly that of the ministry of the Word, to the church. This is found not only in Eph. 4:11, apostles...prophets...evangelists...pastors and teachers, it is also found in I Cor. 12:28, "first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues..." The office of the ministry was unfolded in the life of the church in harmony with the need to lay the foundation and then build upon it. The role of New Testament prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher must be seen in this light. There is a certain development which was going on in the church, in its New Testament institutional form. (More on this below.)

"The Signs of an Apostle"

It is in the context of that organic unfolding and development, as the church grew into its full New Testament form and institution, that God gave both certain temporary offices and temporary gifts which were necessary to lay the foundation of the New Testament church. The word preached, that Christ was the fulfillment of the promises, the true promised Messiah or Christ, had to be confirmed specifically for believers

by signs and wonders. There were also special gifts needed for the work, of which divine inspiration in the giving of the Scriptures was one. This was also the case with miracles and gifts of healing (which Paul evidently distinguishes in I Cor. 12:28). These gifts belong to the apostles, in the life of the body or church, and were found in connection with their labors, also among their co-laborers. They were gifts given to the church, but centrally residing in the office of apostle.

Mark 16

In the latter part of Mark 16, Christ is speaking to the "eleven" (Mark 16:14). It is to them, and in them, to the church, that Christ gives the commission to go and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15, see also Matt. 28: 19, 20). With this commission, Christ also gave the promise of a twofold fruit upon the labor (faith and unbelief in Mark 16:16). He also promised the disciples that certain gifts and powers would accompany their preaching labors among those that believe (Mark 16:17-18).

What is often overlooked in this discussion, however, is the purpose of these signs: "...The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following..." (Mark 16:20), that is, their function was to confirm the apostolic Word. They were not intended for just any purpose.

Secondly, the language of Mark is also overlooked. It is speaking of the apostles when he says, "so then after the Lord had spoken unto them ...(the eleven of verse 14) ...And they (the apostles) went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them...." (Mark 16:19, 20). That this included the co-labors of men like Philip and other office

bearers, in the light of the organic reality of the church as a body, does not lessen the fact that Mark is speaking specifically of the apostles.

Thirdly, it should also be noted that Mark speaks of the matter as a promise made which was fulfilled. "And these signs shall follow..." (Mark 16:17)... "And they went (past tense) forth... with signs following," (Mark 16:20). The viewpoint of Mark is that Jesus promised it, it happened as promised, and it is now fulfilled and finished. He speaks of something accomplished, not something continuing in the church. There is nothing in the text which suggests or intends to speak of something perpetual in the special gifts of the apostles in the church.

The gospel having been declared, confirmed, and set down in the Scriptures, the function of these signs is, in fact, fulfilled. They served the laying of the foundation of the church. That does not mean there is no abiding element, as both the commission to preach the gospel abides, and the miracles confirming the gospel are recorded in Scripture. The miracles, which are intended to confirm the faith of believers, are now recorded in Scripture, and they are sufficient for our faith. The Scriptures were written by eyewitnesses of these things. To require miracles today is to declare that the Bible is insufficient for faith.

Hebrews 2:3, 4

In connection with the discussion of Mark 16 and the concept of apostolic gifts to confirm the word, Heb. 2:3, 4 also needs to be considered. "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?" (Hebrews 2:3, 4)

The point of the text in Hebrews 2:3, 4 is that the gospel was first preached by Christ Himself and then by the apostles, and that God bore them witness and confirmed their words with wonders, miracles, and gifts. The point of the text is that these extraordinary gifts were signs given of God to confirm the word of the apostles in their preaching. They pointed to Christ confirming the gospel of Christ. That was their function by the hand of the apostles.

Moreover, God was Himself by them bearing witness to the truth that Jesus was indeed the promised Christ. This was the function of healings and other wonders to confirm the Word. The text also speaks of this as something past and now accomplished. It is clearly implied that God bore them witness, and that witness having been established, the need for it has also ceased. It is something past. It is also not something ongoing in the church or among those to whom he is writing. They, the Hebrews, are not themselves doing wonders, miracles, etc., which is what Pentecostalism requires.

II Corinthians 12:12

It is in that connection that the statement of the Apostle Paul also has significance. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds," (II Cor. 12:12). The statement, "signs of an apostle," is rather clear. The miracles Paul did were a proof of his apostolic office and his preaching, which is what

Paul is defending throughout much of II Corinthians.

Exactly, however, in that they were marks of his office, they were bound to that office. When the apostles passed away, these signs of their office also ceased. This is both scriptural and an historical fact. It is the testimony of the early church that the extraordinary gifts of tongues, miracles, healings etc., all passed away with the death of the apostles. When teachers have come in the history of the church, claiming their restoration, they have been condemned as heretics. This was the case of Montanus (about 150-200 AD), who claimed he was the promised Paraclete or comforter, together with his women prophetesses.

To this must be added the explicit statement of Paul that certain of the gifts found in the church were temporary and would cease: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away," (I Cor. 13:8). The apostle says that they shall cease and they did.

II. Prophetic Office and Gifts Connected with it

To put this matter in its proper perspective, it is also necessary to say something about the other temporary office of prophet and its character.

New Testament prophets

New Testament prophets were added to the apostles as the second office of preaching and teaching in the church. The word prophet must be carefully understood. It

means literally to "tell forth." The idea of it is that one is given to tell forth God's word. This is not only something respecting the future as in predictive prophecy. Predicting the coming famine or Paul's imprisonment, as was done by Agabus, is only one aspect of the prophetic office and a very minor one.

To tell forth the Word includes the special gifts of expounding the Scriptures, when as yet the New Testament was not written. The Church at first had only the Old Testament as written Scripture. They did not yet have either the gospels or epistles. They needed special gifts of the Spirit to expound that Old Testament, without being able to compare Scripture with Scripture. It is this to which the Apostle refers in I Cor. 14:26-33.

There were special preaching gifts including special revelations of knowledge. Revelations of the gospel were also given by means of tongues. The prophets, under the influence of these gifts, would come with a psalm or a doctrine which they would expound in preaching. The reference to psalms must be taken in the ordinary sense of the New Testament, that is, as a reference to the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament. Likewise the reference to doctrine or teaching is a reference to the consistent declaration of the Scriptures on a certain point and Jesus' own instruction which was given to the church by revelation. This is true also of the purpose of speaking in tongues, which was to tell forth "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). It is under this work of the Spirit that New Testament worship was originally conducted, the prophets speaking by turn, (I Cor. 14:29). While women also were partakers of this gift, in that they also were able to know the Scriptures for themselves and confess the wonderful works of God in Acts 2 and elsewhere, they were forbidden to exercise this gift in the public worship of the church and forbidden to

preach (I Cor. 14:34, 35).

Special gifts for preaching

It is specifically this special gift serving the preaching, that is, of tongues and knowledge in its special character as involving in some measure direct revelation, that the Apostle Paul says will cease or fail and pass away in the church. It was temporary, served a specific purpose but was not intended to continue. Its principle function was not future prediction but the giving of the New Testament Scriptures under divine inspiration by men like Luke, Mark, James, and Jude, along with the apostles. The spiritual principle of it continues in the church in connection with the Scriptures, in that all believers are anointed with the Spirit and have the "unction of the Holy One" to know and understand the Word of God in the Scriptures for themselves (I John 2:13, 14, 21, 27). This is the office of believer. Moreover, the function of telling forth the Word in an official way now abides in the third office of the ministry and that of teacher (I Cor. 12:28).

Role of tongues

It is in that light that the gift of tongues must be understood. It was a gift given to serve the preaching of the gospel, to enable the apostles and prophets to tell forth the wonderful works of God.

As given on Pentecost, the point of it was twofold: it was a sign that the gospel was going to the nations and that Gentiles as Gentiles would be gathered into the people of God, and it was a sign of warning to the unbelieving Jews of Judea that the gospel was being taken from them.

Until Pentecost the promises of Christ by the types and shadows of the Old Testament and the Scriptures had been given in one language, that of the Jews, namely, Hebrew. With the coming of the Spirit, the gospel is preached in "other tongues" (other than Hebrew, Acts 2:4, 11). The Jews in Jerusalem who could not understand those other tongues heard only the noise of a drunkard (Acts 2:13), while the Jews from other countries heard an amazing wonder: the gospel preached in their own native tongue of the land in which they were born.

It is for this reason that the apostle says that tongues are a "sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not," I Cor. 14:22. It is also the reason why he makes the point that prophesying is more useful and profitable, as it edified all. The trouble in Corinth is that they approached these special gifts, not in harmony with their divine purpose, but out of sinful pride in having them. For the same reason he points out that speaking in an unknown tongue when there is none to interpret or when one does not know what one is saying is unprofitable both for the speaker and hearer.

It is also clear that all of these special gifts were not universal, not given to everyone in the church, nor intended for everyone, nor were the offices in the church for everyone, I Cor. 12:29-30. As with the telling forth of God's Word, (prophecy) the principle remains in the church, though the special gift has failed and passed away. The same thing is still true of tongues. The special gifts of tongues have ceased. In I Cor. 13:8 the term is literally "cease of themselves." The gospel is still proclaimed in other tongues to those who have never heard the gospel. The principle and the commission to go into all the world and preach remains. It is only the special character of the gift which has ceased. The Pentecostals, with their second

blessing idea, totally miss the point, intention, and purpose of tongues.

I Corinthians 13:8

The point with much of this is that it confirms what the apostle says also in I Cor. 13:8. Concerning this passage, there is, in a sense, a certain organic unfolding of what is said. Verse 8 emphasizes that the extraordinary gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge shall fail, cease of themselves, and pass away. It is all incomplete and partial (verse 9). A better perfection is coming (verse 10). These gifts belong to childhood (verse 11). The New Testament church is in its infancy; it must be brought to adulthood. When that adulthood comes, these childish things will cease, fail, and pass away.

Does that mean prophecy, in the sense of telling forth God's word by preaching out of the finished Scriptures, preaching the gospel to the nations (the real purpose of other tongues) and knowledge by the Spirit ceases? No, but doing so by extraordinary gifts (miraculously) ceases. This is adulthood as opposed to being a child.

But that adulthood is still not perfection. Even under the preaching of the gospel and the ordinary gift of the Spirit to know God's Word, we are still seeing through a glass darkly. We do not yet see face to face. Full adulthood and perfection can only come at Christ's return. The apostle looks at this matter as having certain phases of development to it: from special gifts, to their ordinary use in the church, to perfection at Christ's coming.

III. The Office of Evangelist

There is one other temporary office that needs to be mentioned, as those holding it also partook in some measure of the special gifts of the Spirit. In Eph. 4, the Apostle Paul also mentions the office or function of evangelist, which is not mentioned in I Cor. 12. What this function or office was is not difficult to determine. The word itself means to gospelize. Timothy is told to do the "work of an evangelist." Philip is also called an evangelist. The evangelists were co-laborers with the apostles. Peter, John, Paul, and the others could not be everywhere at once. The apostles had with them co-laborers who assisted them in the work, particularly of missions. This work was not independent from that of the apostles. Philip, for example, preached to the Samaritans. When a group was formed, Peter and John were sent to that work (Acts 8:12-17). In like manner, Titus is left in Crete by the Apostle Paul to finish the work there (Titus 1:5) and set things in order. In the same way, Paul remains in Athens while Silas and Timothy remain in Macedonia to finish the work there (Acts 17:14, 15).

Insofar as there was a distinct office of evangelist, as is suggested by Eph. 4:11, it was that of a coworker/assistant to the apostles in their missionary labors. What the office emphatically was not was that of someone who went to those who were already Christians, or where the gospel had been preached, with a view to stirring them up by some kind of religious pep rally. It was always in connection with mission work where the gospel had never gone before and always in connection with forming and establishing churches. Titus was to ordain elders in Crete. The distinction is somewhat between that of a ground breaker, Paul, and one who finishes and lays the foundation upon that plowed ground. It is for this reason that

Paul, while he labored extensively in Corinth, says that he did not baptize many there and was not sent to baptize, I Cor. 1:13-17. The work of teaching and baptism, following it, was evidently conducted by his co-laborers, since we know that a large church was formed in Corinth and that Paul labored there for an extended period of time.

Again, while the distinct character of this function as a coworker with the apostles has ceased, the principle of it abides in the present office of the ministry of the Word, which is not only that of pastor and teacher but also that of an evangelist. Timothy, manifestly, as Paul's life was drawing to a close, was laboring as the pastor of the church in Ephesus (II Tim.). It is particularly the function of missionaries sent by Christ through the church to do the work of an evangelist, though every preacher is engaged in gospelizing those who hear. Moreover, none of these men simply roamed around at will. They certainly were not unsupervised. They were under the apostles' direct supervision and instruction as to their work. Hence we have an epistle like Titus. Their work was always among the unchurched, where the gospel had not yet gone. The purpose of it was always to establish in good scriptural order, churches. They were not laymen, but ordained office bearers, called to that labor as were Barnabas (Acts 13:2) and Timothy (I Tim 4:14).

The Warnings against False Miracles and Gifts

It is in the light of these principles that historic Christianity has always maintained that these gifts, also of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues were apostolic gifts belonging to the laying of the foundation of the church. They ceased with the death of the apostles.

The Scriptures also warn us against false teachers and false prophets (II Peter 2:1). They warn us against false miracles and signs and wonders which belong to the spirit of antichrist (II Thess. 2:9). The fact is that false miracles of healing, tongues, etc. are found in Hindu temples to this very day. Moreover these pagan phenomena have a common characteristic with the Pentecostals: they are uncontrolled phenomena which seize the worshiper. This is what Paul means when he says the Corinthians were "carried away" unto dumb idols (I Cor. 12:2). They were out of control. Order, not chaos, is the work of the Spirit (I Cor. 14: 32, 40).

To claim, as the Pentecostals do, that God has now restored these special gifts is without Scriptural foundation. False references to the latter rain in the land of Canaan taken from the Old Testament prophets are just that, false references that twist the Scriptures. To maintain that these gifts have either continued or been restored in the church opens one up to all the medieval nonsense of Rome, to miracles of Mary, weeping statues, and the apocryphal stories of the medieval saints. It also opens the door to the lies of the Mormons and other cults of additional revelation.

Historic Christianity has always rejected such claims as deceitful delusions. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was in part about removing these abuses and superstitions from the church, which is one of the reasons why Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers also opposed the false visions and prophets associated with many Anabaptist groups.

Conclusion

The Word of God warns of "false prophets" who come with

false signs and wonders, “that if it were possible, (which it is not) they shall deceive the very elect,” Matthew 24:23. Try the spirits whether they are of God. Search and evaluate them in the light of the Word of Truth. The standard is not what we think we see, nor what we feel, but the Scriptures. The church has a calling to preach the Word. Seeking today after “signs” in the place of preaching is a mark of unbelief (I Cor. 1:22). It is the labor of preaching by the offices in the church that abides. By that preaching Christ calls, gathers, and builds His church.