Does God Still Give Prophecies?
Selected Scriptures
90-54

In our study of this most fascinating and important subject of the Charismatic movement in our contemporary time, we come tonight to message number three in our series; and we are going to be building on the prior message dealing with "Does God Still give Revelation?" as we talk about are there still prophecies from God, another very important component of understanding and assessing the Charismatic movement.

Certainly, in my mind, the most disturbing aspect of the Charismatic movement and their thirst for supernatural experience and supernatural encounter is their claim that God is still revealing Himself verbally to them. As we saw in our last study, they claim that God is speaking to them; that is a constant claim. In fact, there probably is nothing more commonly expressed among Charismatics than that, "The Lord told me." Or, "Jesus told me." They believe that the Lord is still telling them specific things in specific terms. God is still breathing out revelation.

It has been a curiosity to me and should be to us, I think, that if God is still giving revelation, the only ones that He gives it to are Charismatics. Nobody else seems to be getting revelation with the exception of the founders of various cults. But apart from the cults and the Charismatics I don't see people within the framework, the broad framework of Christianity, claiming revelation.

Now, I want to be very clear that when I talk about the fact that God is no longer giving revelation, I don't want to be misunderstood. I do believe that the Holy Spirit does lead Christians. Romans 8:14 says that, "As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the children of God." I believe the Holy Spirit guides us. I believe He empowers us to witness, to speak, to write, to act with spiritual power and impact. I believe the Holy Spirit impresses His will on our minds leading us to praise, leading us to obedience, leading us to righteousness, leading us to spiritual service. We as believers can be confident of his moving on our minds to lead us to truth. However, He does not speak to us in audible words. He does not place inaudible, but specific words in our minds. He is not breathing out any more revelation.

We noted the importance of understanding that in our last study, and if you weren't here you'll want to get the tape. You remember that Jude said that, "Scripture was once for all delivered to the Saints." And when it was delivered it was done. He was not only speaking of past Scripture when he wrote that, he was speaking of present Scripture which he himself was even writing, and he was speaking of future Scripture yet to be written by Apostles and their associates to complete the New Testament. He identifies the composite of God's revelation and says, "It was once for all delivered to the Saints," in God's plan.

And after all the Scripture was complete and "once for all delivered to the Saints" the Early Church said, "The canon is closed." Now that word "canon" needs definition. We mentioned last time that it

comes from a word "kanon" which is a reed. That reed was used as a measuring stick, and so the word "kanon" in the Greek came to mean a rod, or a bar, or a measuring rule, or standard, or limit. We would call it a measuring rod, or a measuring stick, a ruler, a yardstick; something by which other things are measured.

In the more spiritual sense it became a standard by which you measure truth. The Scripture metaphorically then became the standard of all truth; the standard of all spiritual ideas, concepts, and theology. And so the Canon of Scripture, that is Scripture completed, and the rule was "once for all delivered to the Saints."

Just to give you a little deeper insight into that, the Old Testament Canon was closed about 425 B.C., 425 years before Christ. The last prophecy was written by Malachi, placed into the canon. There was no question which books were inspired by God. No question. It was clear to the people of God what they were. In fact, under the leadership of the scribe Ezra, there was some work to pull all of that together, and the consensus of the people of God was very clear on what the 39 inspired books were.

How did they know? Two simple ways. One, the writer, well known to be a spokesman for God, claimed to be speaking and writing the inspired Word of God. First principle, the writer, well known as a spokesman for God claimed to be speaking and writing the inspired Word of God. Second principle, there were no errors of history, geography, or theology at all in the book. And if the writer was familiar to them, claimed the inspiration of God, and wrote without error, they knew they had inspired revelation.
Now there were many attempts made by Satan to infiltrate the Old Testament Canon with uninspired books. At least 14 of them have been accumulated and together they are called the Apocrypha. You find them in a Roman Catholic Bible. They are not a part of our Bible. They are not inspired books. They are books 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the rest of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (not to be confused with Ecclesiastes), Baruch, the Song of the Three Holy Children, the History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manassas, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. All spurious. We call them Pseudepigrapha - false writing. They were clearly fakes. How do we know they were fakes? They were written long after the canon was completed and they lacked the prophetic quality and authorship to stamp them as inspired Scripture. None of their writers claimed divine inspiration and some openly disclaimed it. And Apocrypha books contained errors of facts, errors of ethics, errors of doctrine.

For example, some of the Apocrypha books advocate suicide. Some of them advocate assassination and some of them teach praying for dead people. Therein lies one of the reasons you find them in a Catholic Bible. The Old Testament Canon was unquestioned; it is still unquestioned because it is so evident what was inspired.

The New Testament writers then came together to write the remaining 27 books of Scripture. And they had similar tests to determine a book's canonicity. One, was the book authored by an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle? They knew who the Apostles were and they knew who their close associates were. The key question about the book's inspiration was tied to Apostolic authorship or one closely associated. For example, the Gospel of Mark was written by Mark, and Mark was not an Apostle but a close associate of Peter, who was. The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written by Luke who was not an Apostle but a very close associate of Paul, who was. The Apostles were known to the people, their associates were known to the people, and when

Apostles wrote and claimed inspiration the people were secure in the veracity of their writings.

Another test applied by the Early Church was the test of content. Did the writings square with what the Apostles taught? In those early years of the Church, heretics such as the Gnostics tried to slip in phony books, but none of them ever made it. If it didn't square with Apostolic doctrine - it didn't pass. And the doctrinal aberrations were very easy to spot.

A third test was this; is the book regularly read and used in the churches? In other words, did the people of God readily accept it? Read it during worship and make its teachings a part of their daily living?

A final test was determined that would sort of pull it all together and that was the book recognized and used by succeeding generations after the Early Church?

All of those tests applied leave us with the 27 books that we have in our New Testament. They all were written by authors who were either Apostles or closely associated with Apostles. Their content is in complete and total agreement and harmony with all the teaching of the Apostles, and with all other books of the New Testament and Old Testament. All 27 of them were read in the churches and used by the Church and by succeeding generations even until now.

There was also a formidable group of fakes that came in the New Testament period, books like the, Epistle of Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Shepherd of Hermas. And then there were false books called the Gospel of Andrew, the Gospel of Bartholomew, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip. They all failed to make it in because they couldn't pass the test of authenticity.
The false books then of the Old Testament and New Testament, what we call, as I said, Pseudepigrapha, were attempts to pollute the Biblical text with spurious revelation. Now, listen to me. That attempt didn't end in those days; it is still going on and before we are done tonight we are going to see that in clear terms. People and groups have continued to claim their works and their writings are inspired by God, and are true, and authoritative and binding. And whenever they do that, it leads to aberrant doctrine. Revelation 22:18 warns about this. It says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book."

Now, someone will scoff and say, "Well, that's only a warning that applies to the Book of Revelation and not the entire Bible." Before you congratulate yourself, by the way, too loudly on such reasoning, realize this, Revelation is the last book ever written, all the way as late as 96 A.D. It is the last book penned; it is therefore the last book in the Bible. Therefore, if you add anything to the Book of Revelation, you are adding it to the Bible and you put yourself in danger of the curse of Revelation 22:18.

Now, someone will immediately say, "Now, wait a minute. If that's true then why don't these people who add to the Bible go up in smoke? Go up in flames or have some personal holocaust that takes their life." Well, one thing is clear, God does keep His word. He doesn't keep it by your timetable or mine but by His own; and He may be withholding the force of that curse until "Judgment Day."

Christ has put His stamp of authority on the Scripture. The Church has clearly discovered the canon

of God's Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and has abandoned every spurious attempt to pollute it with false writing. To add anything to Scripture or to downplay the singular, unique, inspiration of Scripture, then is to not only go against the Word of God and the warning of Scripture and the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, but it is to bring yourself into the very dangerous place where you are susceptible to the curse of God. And, of course, what happens when you introduce something as true is you open up a spiritual free-for-all, unintentionally perhaps.

The Charismatic movement today has initiated that free-for-all as serious as any error in that movement is the error of claiming revelation from God. It is reckless; it is indiscriminate. Now, within that revelation claim, there is a specific category that I want to deal with tonight and that's the matter of prophecies.

Yesterday, I was watching television, and I have been watching Channel 40 frequently lately, in order to glean some illustrations of this. And a preacher from Texas, by the name of Larry Lee came on and told about a prophecy that he had had, that he gave to a certain individual. Verbatim, God gave it to him; verbatim he gave it to this individual. This is common. This was not any big prophecy with far reaching implications or application; this was a personal prophecy for one guy, and he repeated that prophecy from God that was given to that man as expressing the very will of God, in the very words of God. This is routine for them.

There has arisen recently a very interesting group that is sort of leading the prophetic parade, if we can call it that, and they come from Kansas City. They have gathered the name, "The Kansas City Prophets." They are the subject of much writing today. They are self-proclaimed prophets in Kansas City and they serve as a good example of how far prophetic abuses can go. They are very popular. I was shocked, absolutely shocked, to find out within the last week, that one of their leaders is speaking in Westminster Church, the Church of G. Campbell Morgan and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in the city of London. That is the level to which they have ascended, these Kansas City Prophets.

Invited to speak as guests in a Kansas City church, these self-styled prophets each prophesied that the Lord had told them that the Church was to disband; that the Church's leaders had no right to challenge the prophecy and that if the Church failed to heed the prophecy, 'Ichabod, the Glory Has Departed,' would be written above the door. Now, imagine a man coming into the pulpit of this Church, telling you he had a "Word from the Lord" that you're to disband, and if you don't disband according to the "Word from the Lord," Ichabod would be written over your Church.

The Prophets had allegedly received a message from God saying that all the Christians in Kansas City were to be under the authority of the Prophets' home church. So that all the Christians of Kansas City were to leave their churches and go to the Church known as the Kansas City Fellowship. Similar prophecies were delivered in and around Kansas City and other churches and incredibly, one church at least, actually responded by dropping its ties with the Assemblies of God and aligning with the Kansas City Fellowship. Now that's a novel approach to church growth. But it has more in common with the methodology of cults than it does with the work of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, the Kansas City Prophets admit that they have prophesied falsely on occasion - they admit it. They specialize, they say, in predictive prophecy. They foretold, for example, that a nationwide revival would sweep across England in June of 1990, one year ago. Hundreds of thousands were going to turn to Christ and the movement would then spread to the entire European continent. Like many of their predictions, the revival never materialized.

One of their prophets concocted a novel explanation of why so many of their prophecies go unfulfilled, and I am quoting, here's what he said, "I figure, if I hit two-thirds of it, I'm doing pretty good. God told me that. 'If I release, if I release the 100% Rhema right now, the accountability would be awesome, and you'd have so much 'Ananias and Sapphira' going on that the people wouldn't grow, they'd be too scared.' But He said, 'If it was on target, it would kill instead of scaring the people to repentance.'"

Now, I don't even know what that means. But apparently what he meant was God told him I have to be wrong once and a while or people would be too frightened of what I say. Kansas City Fellowship Pastor, Mike Bickel adds, "Now, the 'two-thirds,' you know when Bob first said it, I said, 'two-thirds?'" He said, "Well, that's better than it's ever been up to now, you know. That's the highest level it's ever been."

In other words, these so-called prophets claim they have a Word from the Lord but the odds are one in three at best that it will be false. No wonder their prophecies have thrown so many churches into hopeless confusion. And what a blasphemy against the God who is supposed to be the author of these. Oddly enough, despite their poor track record, the Kansas City Prophets have garnered an international following. They have aligned with John Wimbers' Vineyard Christian Fellowship, and they now speak worldwide about the modern day prophetic ministry.

In a forward to a book endorsing the Kansas City Prophets, written by Dr. John White, he writes, "Battles about prophets have plagued the Church from time to time. Early last century it was the Irvingite Controversy in London with the leading prophet having to confess after years that he had been deceived. Many of us have found that hearing from God is no easy thing. In fact, the Church has had so many bad experiences with prophets that we now react too rapidly and fearfully. We could be in danger of discarding a live baby in our horror over dirty bath water."

My question is who says there's a baby in the dirty bath water? White, for example, fiercely defends the Kansas City Prophets, although he acknowledges that they have, "made mistakes." He seems to believe that criticism of them is inherently satanic. Quoting White, he says, "Satan fears those words that come fresh from God's lips. Because Satan so dreads the fresh word, he will arouse controversy wherever it comes forth miraculously through the lips of a real prophet, or from the lips of an evangelist, aflame with the Spirit."

Now, do you see what a trap that is? Because if you hear a prophecy and you reject it, ah ha! That's satanic. So you're trapped. Curiously, White believes that controversy about the Kansas City Prophets is strong evidence of their genuineness. In a section titled, mistitled really, "Beware of False Prophets," White quotes Jesus' warning about false prophets in Matthew 7:15, Matthew 24:11, and Mark 13:22.

Then White writes this, listen to this. "We are warned that it is to happen. Most scholars feel the words of Jesus apply particularly to the last days. They may be approaching us now. How are we to discern the false from the true? For one thing, true prophets will be unpopular."
Listen to me; let me say this as plainly as I possibly can. That is the worst imaginable starting point for a discussion of how to discern false prophets. Whether they're unpopular or not doesn't mean anything. Jim Jones was unpopular, except with a few deceived souls. Certainly, those who speak truth are often unpopular, but notoriety and unpopularity is not a test of authenticity. Saddam Hussein is unpopular. And Jesus and John the Baptist went through periods of their ministry when they were

enormously popular. That doesn't prove anything. The only test of a true prophet is the accuracy of his prophecies.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says, "How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously." Simple. Deuteronomy 18:21-22. If it isn't true it isn't from God. And what was the penalty under the Law for such a prophecy? Verse 20 adds, "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have commanded him to speak, that prophet shall die." There weren't, in those days, a lot of false prophets running around loose.

Astonishingly, in a five page discussion, of how to discern false prophets, White never once, in five pages, never once speaks of accuracy or truthfulness as a test of their integrity. In fact, he explicitly states that he believes that those are not valid tests of a prophet's credentials. He believes that lying prophecies do not necessarily disqualify a person from speaking for God. He concludes his section on discerning false prophets with this statement, "Prophets are, of course, human beings. As such, they can make mistakes and lie. They need not cease to be prophets for their mistakes and failings."

That statement not only betrays an appalling ignorance of Scripture, but it betrays a very strong desire to legitimize prophecy at any cost. Biblically, a prophet spoke the mind of God. Every prophetic message contained a "Thus saith the Lord," if not explicitly, implicitly. A prophecy in the Biblical sense is not the prophets' opinion, it's not the prophets' speculation, it is the Word of God and it could never be wrong. Never.

It is not a mere impression on the prophet's mind. It is not a guess. It is not a divination. It has nothing whatever to do with sooth saying; it is a Word from the Lord. And the Lord never made a mistake. And since the prophet speaks a Word from the Lord, he was held at the highest level of accountability and judged with the utmost severity if he prophesied falsely.
It stands to reason that since a prophet is a mouthpiece for God's own words, every authentic prophecy would be true, reliable, and inerrant. Otherwise, God's a liar, for we must downgrade the meaning of prophecy and embrace some secondary level of inspiration where you sort of give your opinion. We would have to devise some kind of theory in which God somehow enables contemporary prophets to deliver a message that maybe true or maybe false; it's sort of up for grabs.

Beloved, the ecclesiastical landscape is literally filled with Charismatics who are saying, "God talked to them and God gave them prophecies," and they're pushing those prophecies at the Church. That is serious, that is disastrous, and the results of it are all around us.

Last Sunday, in connection with talking about discernment, I quoted from Bill Hamman, who wrote an article in the magazine called *Charisma*, which is one of the chief magazines of the movement. And in that article he shared his belief about prophecies and I need to repeat that because you need to hear it in this context.

Hamman believes, "All personal prophecies are conditional, whether or not any conditions are made explicit." That is, he says, "Prophecies can be canceled, altered, revised, reversed, or diminished. For prophecy of this kind to come to pass requires the proper participation and cooperation of the one who receives the prophetic word."

So in Hamman's scheme, the fact that prophecy goes unfulfilled is no proof it was false to begin with. If circumstances change or if the prophet himself lacks faith, God may change the prophecy in any way or even cancel it. So everything is up for grabs. First, he may be right, he may be wrong. If he's right, and he doesn't follow through with the right amount of faith, or circumstances change, even though it once was right, it now is wrong. It should come to pass, it might not come to pass, if it does come to pass it's okay if it doesn't come to pass it's okay. Just, endless, useless double talk. Obviously, Hamman would deny that he puts modern prophecies on the same level of Scripture, but in practice it's absolutely impossible to discern any distinction.

Now how do you determine if a prophecy is true? Here's what Hamman says, listen to this. "I have sometimes heard people say, 'I didn't witness with that prophecy.' But after questioning them, I discovered that what they really meant was that the prophecy didn't fit their theology, personal desires, or goals, or their emotions reacted negatively to it. They failed to understand that we don't bear witness with the soul, the mind, the emotions, or will. Our reasoning is in the mind, not the spirit. So our traditions, beliefs and strong opinions are not true witnesses to prophetic truth. The spirit reaction originates deep within our being. Many Christians describe the physical location of its corresponding sensation as the upper abdominal area."

What is he saying? He is saying, "Ignore your beliefs. Ignore your theology. Ignore your reason. Ignore your logic. Ignore your common sense, and wait for a feeling in your upper abdominal area, so you will know whether a prophecy is true." Foolish. Nonsense. That kind of thinking, however, permeates the Charismatic movement. In the end, many prophecies are judged on nothing more than some kind of feeling in the gut. That is precisely why error and confusion run rampant in the Charismatic movement. You cannot have an approach to theological data like that without having Satan move in and confuse everybody.

The fact remains throughout the history of the Church, no genuine revival; no orthodox movement has ever been led by people whose primary authority was based on private revelations from God. None in the history of the Church. Many groups have claimed to receive new revelation, but all of them have been fanatical, heretical, cultic, and fraudulent. Both Charismatics and non-Charismatics need to consider whether there is a parallel between these groups and the modern Charismatic movement. It moves more, and more, and more into heresy and aberration, because it is not controlled by the Word of God.

Several major heresies will illustrate this for you, and I will give you a little history flow here. Let's take an old one from the second century, Montanism. Montanism. Montanus was a second century heretic from Phrygia, who believed he was a prophet sent by God to reform Christianity with new revelation. He believed he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in all his teaching and he wrote the very Word of God, and spoke the very Word of God.

Two "so called" prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, were instrumental in the spread of Montanism. And I warn you at this point, that in most cults there has been a dominating influence by a woman, which, of course, steps outside the provision of Scripture, indicating clearly to us that women are not to teach in the Church, but are to learn in submission. And so, there is a reversal of that kind of role, usually in cultic activity. It was true in Montanism back in the second century.

Of these women, Eusebius, one of the early fathers wrote, "Montanus also stirred up two women and filled them with the bastard spirit, so that they uttered demented, absurd, and irresponsible sayings." Some historians have taken that to mean that these women spoke in tongues. Hippolytus, another early writer, wrote about the Montanists and said this, and, of course, these have been translated into English. He said of the Montanist, "They have been deceived by two females, Priscilla and Maximilla by name, whom they hold to be prophetesses, asserting that into them the Paraclete spirit entered. They magnify these females above the Apostles and every gift of grace, so that some of them go so far as to say that in them there is something more than Christ. They introduce novelties in the form of fasts and feasts, abstinences, and diets of radishes, giving these females as their authority."

Montanism spread rapidly throughout the early church and reached Rome by the second half of the second century. Eusebius described its birth and early growth with these words, "Montanus, they say, first exposed himself to the assaults of the adversary through his unbounded lust for leadership. He was one of the recent converts and he became possessed of a spirit and suddenly began to rave in a kind of a ecstatic trance and to babble jargon, prophesying in a manner contrary to the custom of the Church, which had been handed down by tradition from the earliest times.
"Some of them had heard his bastard utterances; rebuked him as one possessed of a devil, remembering the Lord's warning to guard vigilantly against the coming of false prophets. But others were carried away and not a little elated, thinking themselves possessed of the Holy Spirit and of the gift of prophecy."

There you are in the second century. Satan already attempting to counterfeit and confuse in the Church with supposed new revelation. Tertullian, one of the leading Church fathers converted to Montanism in the later years of his life and wrote this description of a Montanist church service. Here is his description. "We have among us now a sister who has been granted gifts of revelations, which she experiences in church during the Sunday services through ecstatic vision in the spirit. And after the people have been dismissed at the end of the service, it is her custom to relate to us what she has seen. 'Among other things,' says she, 'There was shown to me a soul in bodily form and it appeared like a spirit, but it was no more something void of qualities, but rather a thing which could be grasped. Soft and translucent and of ethereal color in a form at all points human.'"

And I ask, does that sound familiar? Tertullian sounds like he might have been describing a 20th century Charismatic church, and somebody having a vision of something. Montanus and his followers claimed to receive revelation from God and they claimed that it supplemented the Bible. They believed the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla. Montanus believed he was living in the last days immediately before the return of Christ. He taught that the Kingdom would be set up in his own village, and that the Kingdom would be in Pepuza, and he would have a prominent role in it. Those and other false prophecies were among the chief reasons the rest of the Church considered his movement heretical. He opposed formalism in the Church. He wanted everything to be free flowing, no structure, no form, let it all happen. And he boldly intimidated Christians by claiming his followers were more spiritual than those who had only the dead letter of the Scripture. Sound familiar?

In most respects you might say Montanus held to an orthodox theology, Trinity, Deity of Christ, etc., but the movement was schismatic. They believed themselves to be the True Church. The rest of the Church branded Montanism as a serious heresy to be rejected. Augustine wrote against the movement and at the Council of Constantinople, the movement was decreed the equivalent of

outright paganism.

It's sad to say, but much of the contemporary Charismatic movement could be branded neo-Montanism. One Charismatic leader, Larry Christianson, who has written a very popular book on tongues, around for many years, claims, believe it or not, "The Montanist movement as part of the Charismatic historical tradition." So even they want to be identified with Montanus.

Let's move in history to another movement--Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholicism. You might not understand the close parallel between the Charismatic movement and the Catholic movement. You might be curious about why there are so many Charismatic Catholics; that would tell you a little bit about the affinity that they have for each other. The similarity between the Charismatic view of revelation and the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is worth a look.
A good place to start is with the Roman Catholic concept of tradition. Roman Catholic scholar Gabriel Moran will help us with that. He gives three classifications of revelation or tradition. Dogmatic Tradition; that is the revealed truth made known by God in Scripture before the death of the last Apostle. That would be Scripture. Dogmatic Tradition is often called by Catholics Primary Revelation.

Secondly, he says, "There is Disciplinary Tradition." Disciplinary Tradition. What does he mean by that? He says, "Well there is a tradition including the practices and liturgical rites of the Church, in Apostolic or Post-Apostolic times, that are not a part of divine revelation in Scripture. Disciplinary Tradition is commonly called Secondary Tradition. 'Tradition then,' said the French Roman Catholic George Tavard, was 'the overflow of the Word outside sacred Scripture. It was neither separate from nor identical with Holy Writ. Its contents were the other Scriptures through which the Word (audio skips) made Himself known.'"

Ask yourself the question, why do they believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary? Why do they believe in the Immaculate Conception? Where do they find that? Where do they get Purgatory? Where do they get lighting candles for the dead? Where do they get that? It does not come out of Scripture, you say. Yes. But it comes out of their Secondary Tradition, which is the equivalent of Scripture in terms of its authority. It was decided by the Pope or the Church or the Council.

Another Roman Catholic with a view similar to what Charismatics are saying today is Caspar Schatsguier, who died in 1527. He taught, "That an intimate revelation from the Holy Spirit is an everyday possibility. Once known beyond doubts," he said, "It is as binding as the teaching that came from Christ's own mouth." And there is the third level of revelation. Dogmatic Tradition and Scripture, Disciplinary Tradition in the ceremonies and the development of Catholic tradition, and then there is that Personal Revelation that comes through some revelation from the Holy Spirit that comes to an individual.

Now all of that raises the question, where does the Bible end? Because of their interpretation of the word "tradition," Roman Catholic doctrinal teaching is utterly open-ended. Church councils and Popes can still bring in new doctrines, and individuals can have new revelations from the Holy Spirit. So there is always the possibility of adding something that is equal in authority to the Scripture.

The Council of Trent, meeting from 1545 to 1563, was convened to solidify Catholic opposition to the Protestant Reformation. And here is what that Council said, "The Holy, Ecumenical and General Synod of Trent, having this aim always before its eyes, that errors may be removed and the purity of

the gospel be preserved in the Church, which was before promised through the Prophets in the Holy Scripture, and which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first published by His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached through His Apostles to every creature as a source of all saving truth and of discipline of conduct.

"And perceiving that this truth and this discipline are contained in written books and in unwritten traditions, which were received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ Himself, or by the same Apostles at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and were handed on and have come down to us following the example of the orthodox fathers, this Synod receives and venerates," listen to this, "with equal pious affection and reverence, all the books, both of the New and Old Testaments together with the said traditions as having been given from either the lips of Christ or by the dictation of the Holy Spirit and preserved in unbroken succession in the Catholic Church."

They have all kinds of revelation. According to that, God has been giving revelation through the Roman Catholic Church since the New Testament era on. From the unwritten traditions handed down, it's a short step to the concept of the infallibility of the Pope, who is the successor, supposedly, to Peter. And the Roman Catholic theology teaches that when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra", that means out of the seat of authority, he does it with supreme apostolic authority. Nothing lacking whatsoever.

Since the Roman Catholic Church then allows for additional revelation they're very comfortable in the Charismatic realm, in terms of this particular issue. They too, like the Charismatics, go beyond the Scriptures. Their doctrines of Penance, Purgatory, Papal Infallibility, Prayers for the Dead, the whole Sacramental System, doesn't come out of the Bible at all. At all.
My concern is, the Charismatic movement is building a tradition. An unbiblical, extrabiblical, tradition that stands alongside Scripture as equal. They are doing exactly what historic Catholicism did. When you ask, for example, a Charismatic person, "How important is it to be slain in the spirit?" There are some who would say it's absolutely essential to be slain in the spirit. When you ask one of them, "Where in the Bible is slaying in the spirit discussed?" You probably will get an answer that's something like this, "I'm not sure but it's got to be there somewhere." Press the issue, "Find it for me. It isn't there." "That doesn't matter, Jesus told them to do it! That's the tradition."

Moving into another category, let's talk about neo-Orthodoxy. Moving away from Montanism and Catholicism and looking at liberal theology in the form of neo-Orthodoxy. It's a term, it's a title for a theology that denies the inerrancy of Scripture, the inspiration of Scripture. Neo-Orthodox theology says the Scripture not the objective Word of God, but it's the subjective Word of God. In other words, it would go something like this; the Bible, as the words sit on the page, was not written by God. But when you read these words written by man God can make them alive to you and they become inspired to you. That's neo-Orthodoxy.

It is not the Word of God, but it becomes the Word of God in you as God kind of warms it up and makes it apply to you. Sitting on the shelf it is not the objective Word of God, but some of its truths will pop out at you and they become to you the Word of God.

J.K.S. Reed puts it this way, "God marches up and down through the Bible magisterially, making His Word come to life at any point throughout its length and breadth. So too it is rightly said that the Bible becomes the Word of God. The Bible becomes the Word of God by stated and steady appointment." In other words, God just zaps you with it and it becomes the Word of God, because of its effect on

you.

Emile Brunner says, "The Spirit of God is imprisoned within the covers of the written Word, and He is released in your experience." Mystical. So neo-Orthodoxy says, "The Bible's not all there is. God is still giving revelation." C.H. Dodd, one of the most popular neo-Orthodox writers says, "If the Bible is indeed the Word of God, it is so, not as the last word." Not as the last word. God has more to say. If it is the Word of God--it's not the last word. So the inspiration of the Bible depends on subjective experience.

Now, what do you get then out of this? If you follow the path, God is still talking and God is still speaking, and prophecies are still coming from the Lord, you are following the tradition not of historic Christianity, not of Reformation theology; you are following a tradition of Montanism, Catholicism, and neo-Orthodoxy. You're falling into the traps that have led to those kinds of errors. This is not in line with historic theology.

And one last illustration. The Cults. The Book of Mormon says this. This is right out of the *Book of Mormon*. "Do you not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold. I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do you suppose that I know of their surety? Behold. I say unto you, they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. And this is the Spirit of Revelation which is in me."

The *Book of Mormon*says this is the Holy Spirit's revelation. The Mormons put two other books, written by Joseph Smith, on a par with Scripture. *The Doctrine and Covenants*and the *Pearl of Great Price*. From these "further revelations" pour error, after error, after error concerning God, Christ, the nature of man, theological chaos, damning heresies. By the way, did you know what the seventh Article of Faith is in the Mormon religion? Here's the seventh Article of Faith, listen to it, "We believe in the gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelations, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues." They're very comfortable in that arena, because they believe in ecstatic experiences and extended revelation. Christian Science, which I always think is a ridiculous name because it isn't Christian and it isn't scientific. It's like Grape Nuts; they're not grapes or nuts. Christian Science is another cult. A cult that bases its teaching on truths supposedly given by God in addition to Scripture. The *Christian Science Journal*, July 1975, states, "Because it is not a human philosophy, but a divine revelation, the divinity-based reason and logic of Christian Science necessarily separates it from all other systems." It is divine revelation. That same issue of the *Christian Science Journal*calls Mary Baker Eddy "The Revelator of Truth for this Age." Another woman, by the way.

Mrs. Eddy wrote, "I should blush to write of Science and Health with Keys to the Scriptures, as I have, were it of human origin and were I, apart from God, its author. But as I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of Heaven in divine metaphysics, I cannot be super modest in my estimate of the *Christian Science*textbook."

She says, "I can boast about it because God wrote it. God is its author." And although the errors of Christian Science regarding God, Christ, and the Scriptures are well documented in many books, Mrs. Eddy was convinced that she was used by God to reveal His truth for her day. The truth was that she was simply a dupe of Satan.

Perhaps the most visible cultists in our nation are called Jehovah's Witnesses. Tireless in their

efforts, they go from door to door spreading their doctrine of salvation by works, negating the grace of God through Christ; a damnable heresy. They claim Jesus was a created being, not God the Son. And how did they come up with that? They got it from God! In *Watchtower Magazine*, it says, "*The Watchtower*is a magazine without equal on earth. This is not giving any credit to the magazine publishers, but is due to the great Author, capital A, of the Bible with its truths and prophecies who now interprets its prophecies." Boy, God is sure giving a lot of conflicting theology out.

And then there is the Worldwide Church of God founded by Herbert W. Armstrong; *Plain TruthMagazine*, *The World Tomorrow*television program. And where did they get their start? Mrs. Armstrong had a vision, and the angel laid out the whole system for Mrs. Armstrong. She told her husband and a new cult was born. And then there is Sun Myung Moon, self-styled Messiah from Korea. Says he's the divine messenger from God, and God gave him ultimate truth. "Not from Scripture, not from literature, not from man's brain," he says.
Virtually every cult, every false teaching ever spawned is built on the premise that its leader or leaders have access to new revelation. And it even goes into the New Age stuff all the way from Edgar Casey to L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology, who claim direct revelation of some kind from God. You see, Charismatic's acceptance of modern prophecies represents a turn down a perilous road away from historic Christianity. The marker may read "Something More," but the road of new revelation is a path of something less.
Some Charismatics, by the way, are troubled with the problem. Stephen Strang writing in *Charisma*magazine says, "When it comes to something such as personal prophecy, we believe that extremism is more deadly than when dealing with less volatile issues. That is because there is an element of control involved when one individual is able to speak for God to a group of individuals. It isn't always easy to tell when a person is really speaking for God or speaking carnally, or maybe even speaking for the enemy.

"What an amazing mess that is. You don't even know who they are speaking for. We believe there are some who purport to prophesy that actually get their unusual ability to know the future, not from the Holy Spirit, but from the Spirit of Divination." That's false by the way, because no spirit, no demon spirit knows the future, they only know the past. "And there are some Charismatics who are so eager to know God's will, or to get a word from God to be singled out in service where the special gift may be manifested, that they are susceptible to spirits that are not from God." In other words, they want to show off so they are vulnerable.

Strang has identified the central problem, but he offers no solution. How do we know if a true prophet is speaking? How do we know if a message comes from an evil spirit or divination? How do we know if it comes out of somebody's imagination? What he is saying is we don't know.

Now if we don't draw the line at Scripture, we are hopelessly caught. Once you go beyond Scripture everything's out of control. Out of control. This is a major issue. The Charismatics have never given sufficient attention to it, supplied sufficient answer.

In closing, turn to 2 Timothy, chapter 3. 2 Timothy, chapter 3, a familiar text: I only read it to pull all these loose ends, in a sense, together. "The question I pose at the end is this, Who needs new revelation? Who needs it? Why? Why would God give it? What would be the purpose? If," listen to me carefully, "if the indwelling resident Spirit can lead you into the will of God, then you don't need some more revelation to do it. That's why the Spirit is there." Right? "As many that are led by the Spirit are the children of God." He's there to lead you. You don't need some revelation to do it; He's

there to do that.

Now, secondly, you say well, maybe God's giving more revelation because we need it for our spiritual lives. 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, adequate, complete, equipped for every good work."

Listen, beloved, you don't need new revelation for direction in your life; the Spirit is there to lead you. You don't need new revelation for the virtue of your life; the Scripture is able to make you perfect. What's the point of allowing this confusion? Only this, that Satan uses it to pollute the clear stream of revelation laid out in the Word. And to confound and confuse the otherwise discernible leading of the Spirit of God in your life. Be warned of the prophecies that claim to be from God.

Father, we thank you for the time in the Word tonight. What a very vital subject. We pray that you will give us discernment, that we might examine all things; find what is good and cling to it; find what is evil and shun it. For Christ's sake. Amen.

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