SPIRITUAL REALITY
OR
SUBTLE DECEPTION?

A Critique
of Some Common Patterns and Ideas
Rooted in the
"Signs & Wonders" Movement

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Chuck & Shannon

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FIRST THOUGHTS

What is it like to experience God? What should we expect? How can we know for sure that He is really there and involved in our lives? These are honest questions that Christians and non-Christians sometimes ask, yet rarely voice out loud. What kind of answers satisfy these questions? Where should the questioner look and what standard is necessary for determining the truthfulness of various answers? Is anecdotal evidence enough? What about the opinion of a respected advisor? Would miraculous signs convince us, or an overwhelming ecstatic experience—something a person can feel?

There is an intense desire rooted in every human heart for connectedness with our Creator—to somehow experience Him. This draws us to explore the nature of spiritual reality and question what a relationship with God should be like. God purposefully created us as personal, spiritual beings and until we are confident in our relationship with Him and His purpose for our lives, we will be restless and lacking peace. This confidence is not an emotional illusion that makes us arbitrarily feel that all is well. Instead, it comes from a deep-rooted conviction that we stand accepted before God and relating to Him within the boundaries of His Divine plan.

The Bible clearly tells us that to know God is both a spiritual and a personal experience. Yet it doesn't take long for a Christian to discover that there are many different ideas about what experiencing God is really like. The extremes span a wide spectrum from subdued reverence to loud raucousness, from silent reflection to speaking with strange sounds, from sedate living to wild behavior. Which experiences are genuine and which are false?

In the last ten to twenty years, a novel approach to Christian experience has arisen which has captured the hearts and imaginations of many: the Signs and Wonders movement (S&W). The movement has sometimes been called the "3rd Wave of the Holy Spirit"*. At the forefront of this movement is the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (aka "Toronto Blessing," formerly the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church). All such new movements should be examined and tested in light of Scripture. This one, in particular, must be closely scrutinized because of the definition of faith it offers the Christian world.

Our goal in this paper is to address some of the erroneous perspectives about faith offered by the S&W movement—faith that is based on emotional experiences and purported "supernatural" events and which involves a fundamental misunderstanding of Scripture. In particular, we want to consider the real dangers which are associated with the underlying and subtle errors of the S&W movement. Much of the following information that represents the S&W movement's teaching can be verified from many of their own writings and webpages.

This is not a scholarly critique, but an appeal to those who have had some contact with the movement and who will recognize the teachings addressed herein from their own experiences with the S&W or similar movements.

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* *Some within the S&W movement see classical Pentecostalism which began in the early 1900's as the so-called "First wave," and the Charismatic movement of the 60's and 70's as the "Second Wave."*

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Assuming we want to arrive at the truth, what standards do we use to evaluate the conundrum of conflicting ideas about experiencing God? We believe there are two foundational standards vital to a clear understanding of God's plan for us in this area.

The first standard of truth by which we should measure the veracity of spiritual experiences or ideas has to do with *God's intention for His relationships with humans*. Throughout the Bible God communicates His invitation to a personal, spiritual relationship which can only be attained by accepting Jesus Christ into our lives as our personal Lord and Savior.

The Scriptures propound the truth that our sin has separated us from God because we have rejected His rule and authority over us. When, under conviction by the Holy Spirit, a person repents of his sins and accepts the substitution of Christ's death on the cross for his own, he is adopted into the family of God as a forgiven child. The new-born child of God finds himself redeemed from sin, reconciled to God, regenerated (made new in Christ) and given the assurance of eternal life with God forever. These are the spiritual realities of being a Christian. This is the foundation for having a personal relationship with a spiritual God through Christ Jesus.

These things are all indisputably true because God's Word says so. Our faith in these truths, however, is clothed in human experience, and as a result we can struggle with issues of our faith in a God whom we cannot physically see, hear or touch. We hear others speak of their "spiritual experiences" and we may even sense His presence in our lives in various ways that we label "spiritual." But the distinction be-

tween what is truly spiritual versus what is emotional, intellectual or even imaginative is not always clear. This blurred line comes from the fact that God has made us unified creatures, complete with body, mind and spirit (1 Thess 5:23*), with interplay among all three. It can also come, however, from being unfamiliar with what God has revealed about the nature of faith. If we don't strive to become familiar with how God designed faith, we can be left with nagging doubts that what we call "spiritual" may not be the real thing. We may question whether our desire for spiritual experiences has caused us to *over-interpret* our natural human experiences and embellish them with *super-spiritual* significance.

The second standard of truth which needs to be established, then, has to do with *God's intention concerning the nature of faith*. Foundational to the Christian life is having a true understanding of the essence and outworking of faith. The importance of this must not be underestimated. In His Word, God defines faith for us: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1-2a NKJV). He continues, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." (11:6). This definition of faith will be fleshed out in the following pages, but for now let us first highlight that the quality of faith is a substance or evidence (not simply a wish or emotion) of things hoped for and not seen (things somewhat removed from our direct and total

* *Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New International Version.*

apprehension of them). Second, faith is also applied to believing that God exists. Third, faith means believing that God rewards those who earnestly see Him. Lastly, faith is required for pleasing God. These four aspects are at work in matters of true faith.

Anything called faith that does not embrace one of these four, or that discredits them, is a fake. If we get this wrong, we err at the most basic level in following God. We are not talking about simply using biblical terminology and concepts that sound scriptural. That may be an imitation of faith, but it is not the faith described in Hebrews 11.

The God of the Bible is One who reveals Himself and His truth:

> "I have revealed and saved and proclaimed— I, and not some foreign god among you. You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God" (Isaiah 43:12).

His revelation is the "substance" and "evidence" of faith. Pertaining to the discussion that will follow, we as the authors of this paper encourage you as the reader to test everything presented here with God's revealed Word, the Bible. This is the true test for all teaching, whether ours or anyone else's:

> Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:11).

So we have two standards for truth: God's intention for His relationship with humans and His intention for faith. Your familiarity with Scripture regarding each of these will increase your grasp of these standards. So let Scripture be your starting point and your ending point. God is the author of your faith (Hebrews 12:2); therefore, you must look to His Word to define for you the nature of your relationship with Him and the experience of true faith. "All

Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

TESTIMONY OF THE AUTHORS

First, a word about the authors of this paper is in order. This is a father and daughter effort, both of whom have had first-hand involvement in the things we are discussing. While our two experiences are separated by nearly thirty years, the commonalities of what we have encountered are remarkable. At one time we each embraced (to a degree) some of the thinking that we are now setting out to critically examine. We provide our testimonies simply to show that we are not speaking as outsiders, but have struggled intensely and personally with the issues presented here.

[Chuck]: I put my faith in Jesus Christ in 1972, through the witness of individuals within the charismatic movement. Before then, I had lived in a false world of my own imagination, conditioned by the media, music, marijuana, alcohol and popular opinion. Eventually I tired of the superficial hollowness of it all, of people making up their own truth and embracing it as a crutch for getting by in the world. I attempted to study various ways of life and thinking, but none satisfied my deep need for reality, for knowing what was *really* true in the world.

Through the witness of a faithful follower of Christ. God had planted His seed in me, that is, the truth of who I was and who God was. In simple faith I surrendered to the reality of my own sinfulness and the overwhelming knowledge that He loved me in spite of my sinful nature. The transformation that took place in my life can only be described as miraculous. Changed from being a person unsure of anything, I began to see my life in terms of actually "knowing" Jesus Christ. Faith was not simply wishful thinking, nor just a spiritualized

interpretation of life and God; faith was a newly planted intuitive and intimate knowledge of the God who loved me. He was, in the words of a common saying in those days, "the Answer." It did not matter what the question was, He was *always* the answer, because He was THE ANSWER. For me, this was an intensely personal experience. I was not just following the crowd anymore. In fact, many close friends and some family members rejected me because of my faith. Yet I was undaunted because of my overwhelming amazement that an infinite, holy God would love someone like me!

Within a few months, however, I became bogged down in the struggle of faith. My salvation experience had been profound and very emotional, but I was unable to discern the difference between the *faith* which brought me into relationship with Christ and the subsequent *emotions* (as wonderful as they were) which engulfed me in the early days of my salvation. Searching for the emotional highs that I thought were supposed to characterize true faith, my Christian life became littered with "healing" meetings, efforts at "speaking in tongues," and desiring to experience the truly supernatural. This was natural because those who introduced me to Christ promoted those things as a means to greater spiritual life. They seemed to find a sort of spiritual ecstasy in these activities, and I tried to enter into it all. But when I continually failed to experience an inner reality of those things, I became increasingly disenchanted.

At first I interpreted this disillusionment as a problem with me. I knew without a doubt that I was saved by the blood of Christ. There was no doubt that God was able to do miracles or that He wanted to do them, but I was constantly faced with the thought that I must not have enough faith. Everything I was taught at that time told me that if

I just believed God enough, then He would do all these and greater things in my life (John 1:50). I struggled to believe God but nothing happened. What was wrong with me?

After some time my thoughts turned back to my conversion experience in a different way. The process of my coming to Christ had inculcated in me a sense of reality as well as faith. Before salvation, I would have accepted just about anything in order to be part of the crowd; I really had no thoughts of my own on which to base my life. However, my salvation came about when I chose with adamant (though now I would say healthy) skepticism to settle for nothing less than that which was real.

I came to see among my circle of Christian fellowship at that time what appeared to be a departure from what was *truly* real. Many were settling for what seemed to be watered down miracles or things that were not easily verifiable. I remember often seeing people have one leg "made to be longer" than the other, and then the process reversed. (This is a simple "trick" that I later learned to do at home by simply shifting my hips while seated in a straight back chair!) Yet when Jesus performed miracles in the Bible, He healed the dead, repaired a severed ear, made those lame from birth to walk and the blind to see—all things that could not be objectively denied.

Some of what I was expected to believe in my charismatic community were things that could not be so easily established, like second or third-hand stories (or more distantly removed). Most of these tales seemed to be more the stuff of urban legends than spiritual realities. When people I knew claimed personal miracles, they always seemed to be related to things like healed ulcers or psychosomatic issues that

could not be readily confirmed. When I questioned any of these, I was told to just have faith.

I believed that God could still do miracles, but I came to see that the clamor for miraculous events that *could be seen* replaced my simple confidence in the Lord whom *could not be seen*. Committing myself to studying Scripture and growing in faith, I saw biblical teaching emerge which strained against the tenets of the charismatic perspective. And it is with great alarm that I see some of the same things in the S&W movement today.

I am very thankful for the witness of my "charismatic" friends, since it was their enthusiasm that opened my eyes to the lack of life in me. But, I have since parted company with them (though with a certain amount of sadness) in the matter of walking by faith because of my allegiance to the Lord and His Word in regard to outward signs.

[Shannon]: God's seed was planted in me at a young age. From birth, my parents taught me the truth of God and as a little child I embraced His plan of salvation in Jesus as the answer to my sinfulness. In simple and profound childhood faith, I confessed my sin and asked Jesus to come into my heart.

I remember thinking the next day, "I'd better keep asking Him into my heart to make sure He's there every day." Again, I knelt by my bed with my parents and invited Jesus back into my heart. I had new sins for Him to forgive and it seemed to me quite natural that His presence might have left during the day—I didn't want to take the risk of not inviting Him back. After my prayer, my parents explained to me how the Bible said Jesus died for sin once for all; I didn't need to keep asking Him to forgive all my sin and come into my heart. Yes, it was good to confess the sinful things I had done during the

day, but that didn't change the fact that Jesus was still in my heart. He had marked me, I was His, He would never leave me. This assurance was the second milestone of my Christian walk (salvation being the first). And the biblical truths I grasped from that conversation years ago have been foundational to my faith ever since.

My childhood exposure to the Old Testament stories of miracles and plagues, prophecy and face-to-face encounters with God all combined with faith—I believed that my God was the God who did all those things. I really believed the song that says, "My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do." I never struggled with whether God did or did not do miracles and I saw Him do some in my life. (I was cured—"inexplicably" from a human point of view—from four years of pain related to Crohn's disease.) God's miraculous power was one tenet of my faith, but it was not the only one.

I also believed the stories where God allowed people to suffer when it didn't seem to make sense: Joseph being sold into slavery, then being imprisoned for years; Job losing all his family, possessions and health; and all the believers listed in Hebrews 11 who suffered persecutions and hardships. I believed that God was Sovereign and that He determined how He would act. Sometimes He acted in providing miracles, sometimes He acted in providing strength to persevere under trial. *My* way would probably be to heal everyone and make life happy and easy through miracles, but *God's* ways are different than mine. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

My conviction regarding these two aspects of God's character shaped how I lived out my faith. I prayed for healing and miraculous provisions, but I acknowledged that God might not choose to act that way. He was free to display this power how and when He wished. He was not required to answer every prayer with a "yes."

I also believed that God's greatest miracle was the transformation of human hearts. True, the Gospels and Acts have plenty of miraculous accounts, but the emphasis in the New Testament is the miracle He works in the human heart that turns from sin, believing in Jesus. God brings such people from spiritual death into spiritual life. In contrast to this great miracle in the spiritual realm, miracles in the physical realm were a parenthesis or side-note to the substance of my faith. In other words, God's supernatural physical acts were not the barometer of my faith.

Faith issues were not a struggle for me until I encountered the S&W movement during my last year at a well known Christian college. There, I met some students who seemed to have a spiritual vibrancy, a "something" that I did not have. The more I listened to their confident "inside knowledge" of God, the more I questioned the daily challenges of my faith and lack of spiritual excitement. Some of what they said and did was "off the wall," but I couldn't shake the nagging feeling that somehow I was missing out. I slowly turned away from the simple confidence I had enjoyed since childhood to pursue this new way of knowing God.

For several months I was on an emotional and spiritual roller-coaster. Ecstatically believing that God was just at my finger tips, about to pour His incredible, supernatural gifts and life into me, I would soar on excitement for a couple days. But when no true break-

through occurred, I would plummet into self-examination, self-defeat—a sort of despair. "I must not have believed hard enough," I would think, and so I would set to work bolstering up my faith. On the outside the movement promised me a God who wanted me to experience, feel and have everything, but on the inside I was left tossed about, never able to believe enough or open myself enough to obtain the spiritual reality for which I longed.

Another few heart-wrenching months ensued in which I did not know what God wanted for me. I wasn't sure what to pray for or to whom I should listen. I was afraid of what might happen if I didn't believe all the things my friends said about God—would I be like a Pharisee, thinking that I believed, even though I was far from God. But I also couldn't find peace with a God whose acceptance and blessing were dependent upon my having *more* faith, *more* openness.

The more that I studied Scripture, the more I saw that simple faith in Christ Jesus was enough. It made me completely acceptable before God. " … and you are complete in Him…" (Col 2:10 NKJV). I could not find any place in Scripture where God required *more* from me. Instead, I found passages where the disciples asked for more faith and Jesus clearly told them that *more* was not the point, simple faith was:

> The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you (Luke 17:5-6).

Lastly, God has promised that He is the One, not I, who will complete my salvation:

> I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day. (2 Timothy 1:12)

Now, two years after the climax of that experience, I still feel the firsthand pain of not having examined earlier the "new truths" that enticed me. I made the mistake of *feeling* them out, instead of starting with God's Word and using it as my standard for truth. Now I know that my faith is too precious for me to be so careless with it and that everything which claims to bring new insight to my faith must be tested.

[Both]: It is not our desire to be judgmental or be pharisaical as we give this critique of the S&W movement. Perhaps some will feel we are being vicious and trying to destroy the work of God and in the process are destroying people's faith. It gains us nothing to do these things—instead we want to help build others up in true faith. We have a deep concern for sincere people who have become spiritually shipwrecked or are on the road leading there, since we both have been close to that condition ourselves. We are disturbed about those being lulled by that which seems ever so close to the truth yet is far from it. Mixing error with truth is one of the most dangerous concoctions for undermining true faith.

MISLEADING TEACHING

We believe that the Holy Spirit, working in conjunction with the Scripture, is sufficient to lead every person into Truth. Our comments here are meant to address this foundational issue, namely the Scriptures' comments regarding the Holy Spirit's work in creating spiritual reality. Since the Spirit authored the Scriptures, the two will never be in conflict. We will be looking particularly at those S&W teachings which can undermine a person's ability to properly evaluate purported "movements of the Spirit," as well as those teachings which call into question the proper interpretation of Scripture. On a technical note, we have organized the subsequent discussion by highlighting certain assertions and ideas of the movement and following them with responses.

1. "GOD WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE DECEIVED IF YOUR HEART IS SET ON CHRIST"

This statement seems to undergird much of what we have heard and read from leaders and participants of this movement. In a strange sense it is understandable that they say this. Some of the things that happen within the S&W movements (shaking violently, making grunting noises, barking like a dog, falling down, uttering strange sounds that they call "tongues") appear unacceptable to the rational mind and incongruent with God-given order and human dignity. But when the assertion is embraced—God will not allow you to be deceived—a person's resistance to false doctrine and questionable practices is decreased. In fact, the phrase seems to be an encouragement to go head-long into the "fullness" of any experience without much

critical thinking. This teaching implies that if you are pulled along by it you don't have to worry about being deceived, because God won't allow it.

When, as a seeker, I [Shannon] began to question whether certain practices or beliefs of the S&W movement were from God, the above statement was the answer I received: "God will not allow you to be deceived if you set your heart on Jesus." This was the answer that could quell all fear of being misled. For that reason, it was a very dangerous answer. This teaching would free a believer from any intellectual or moral responsibility to apprehend and submit to the truth. The burden is placed on God to guide unconditionally what the Christian will believe.

In one respect this is an easy place to be, for the Christian doesn't have to think critically or worry about getting it wrong. He or she only needs to float along being directed by whatever wind seems to come by—after all, it is believed, the Holy Spirit is the wind and He will do the guiding. The Christian is to believe and just let go of his mind and self-control and allow God's Spirit to fill his spiritual sails. This statement, though, contravenes Scripture.

Scripture warns about not being clear-minded and not being self-controlled:

> Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance (1 Peter 1:13-14).

The winds that blow us along when we are not clear-minded and self-controlled are the winds of our flesh, the world or the devil. Nowhere in Scripture does God promise that He will protect the passive,

inactive Christian from these influences. Instead we are commanded to actively "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). Yes, God keeps the Christian who is seeking and holding onto truth from straying, *but He holds that same Christian responsible for standing guard against false teachings and doctrines*. The S&W movement lulls the Christian into a false sense of security, because "God would not let you be deceived," as they would teach Christians to believe.

The statement has an element of truth in it. The Bible says that if we ask for bread, the Lord will not give us stones (Luke 11:11). True, but there are many other conditions for asking in faith. For example, we need to ask according to the will of God (1 John 5:14), in the name of Jesus (John 16:23), as we abide in Christ (John 15:7). We need to be careful about reading too much into Luke 11. God wants to give us something far greater than visible miracles or sensational experiences; He wants us to have the joy of walking by faith, not by sight or feeling.

The statement itself, as used, is inherently self-conflicting. If it were absolutely true (that "God would never allow you to be deceived if your heart is set on Jesus"), Christ-centered believers would never disagree. The reality is, however, that godly people disagree.

For example, our hearts (as authors of this paper) are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not agree with many of the manifestations of the S&W movement. Now, since God (according to their assertion) would not allow a Christian to be deceived, then our thinking must be correct, right? Therefore, the proponents of the S&W movement must be deceived. But they would assert that God would not deceive them and that we are being deceived. That is the problem—both sides can't be right. But, to use the terminology of the

statement in question, God *is* allowing someone to be deceived—whether it be them or us. Therefore, the statement must be qualified before it can be accepted.

God does at times allow His people to be deceived, to have their hearts turn away from God. Consider that God allowed Eve to be deceived in the garden of Eden. She had initially acted like her heart was set on God; in fact, she acknowledged and apparently was submissive to God's prohibition concerning the tree—initially. Her problem was that she allowed herself to be deceived.

Also consider the children of Israel who demanded a king in 1 Samuel 8-9. God gave them a self-centered king by the name of Saul, even though He knew their request was also a rejection of Himself as their King. The results were disastrous for Israel.

God sometimes allows a person's life to be controlled by the desires of his flesh (which includes being deceived by the experience of the senses). God can do it with people who refuse to acknowledge Him in their lives:

> Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done (Romans 1:28).

He can certainly also do it with people who claim to have faith, but pursue sensational things which they can see and feel rather than the revealed truth of the unseen God. The reality of the matter is that Christians are deceived from time to time by our experiences; we sometimes just plain "get it wrong."

God is *displeased* with anything that substitutes itself for pure, simple faith in Himself. We first come to Christ by faith, not by sight, and God intends for us to continue walking by faith and not by

sight! "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him" (Colossians 2:6).

When we walk by sight, we allow our fleshly desires to direct us, which can lead to seeking physical experiences of God and His work that He may not have promised. This change of focus is a deception, sidetracking us from faith into the pursuit of sensual experiences of the divine. Things which appear to be miraculous manifestations of the Spirit can easily become a replacement for faith. But that is something the Lord Jesus vehemently condemned when He said that it is "an evil and adulterous generation that seeks after signs" (Matthew 16:4).

My [Chuck] experience was that when I began to challenge the veracity of miracle stories presented to me and stopped seeking for God to prove Himself miraculously to me, I was accused of *lacking* faith. Ironically, seeking after miraculous signs is not evidence that a person is believing God, but rather it might be seen as evidence that he is lacking faith!

When a person seeks signs and miracles hard enough, his flesh will find a way to produce false substitutes (illusions of the supernatural). This may mean embellishing the reality of a story, passing on "Christian urban legends" or believing any story without verifying its truthfulness.

Do you remember the childhood game where a whispered message is passed from one person to the next down the line, with the end result being substantially different than the original statement? This demonstrates how easily the "facts" can change when a story is told by word of mouth—and it can also happen in relating miracle stories, especially when people are hungry for such sensationalism.

When Jesus healed, we often find His stunning warning to not tell anyone (Luke 8:56, Matthew 8:4, etc.). What a stark contrast to the seeking and retelling of "miraculous events" that often happens today. Could it be that Jesus didn't want people to believe in Him vicariously through human stories of miracles that are second hand or third hand (or more)? We think so. Yes, it is true that all the miracles recorded in Scripture, including the resurrection, are technically second hand stories to us. But they are recorded under the inspired guidance of God through His *appointed* witnesses:

> Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a *witness with us of His resurrection*…to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs" (Acts 1:21-22, 25 emphasis added).

Those miracle stories surrounding the ministry of Jesus Christ are in a class by themselves. In His great upper room prayer at the Last Supper, Jesus acknowledges those who come to faith through the *apostles'* testimony:

> My prayer is not for them [His disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message (John 17:20).

Thomas (whom people like to call "doubting") was gently chided by Jesus for not believing the other apostles' testimony of the resurrection, but wanting instead his own tangible, physical experience of God. "Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'" (John 20:29). We likewise are chided by the Lord when the testimony of the apostles (as recorded in the miraculous stories of Scripture) is

not enough for us, and instead we seek our own personal proof of God in our lives.

If we say God will not allow us to be deceived, we could just as well say God will not allow us to sin. Yet even the S&W movement leaders would admit to sinning at least once in a while. Scripture is fairly clear about this: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Of course God *allows* us to sin at times (though He doesn't *lead* us into sin) and He allows us all to be deceived. We *can* be deceived by our "old man," that is why we must continually "reckon" our old man to be dead (Romans 6). In thinking we can't be deceived, we lower our guard against subtle lies which lead us away from the simple truths of Scripture.

Many are misled without being aware of it. People may zealously seek God with a sincere heart, but without full knowledge of the truth (Romans 10:2). One's motive for desiring the supernatural may not be as forthright as he thinks. He may allow himself to be misled, unconscious of what is happening. That's why, for example, Peter warns God's people to "… be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position" (2 Peter 3:17).

The statement can be a tool in the hands of Satan, who is the father of lies, the great deceiver (2 John 1:7). The arch-enemy of our faith, the great manipulator himself can use the statement—"God will not allow you to be deceived"—to maneuver a person to accept error without discernment. To be sure, Satan can pose as an angel of light when false prophets or teachers speak their smooth, "almost-true" prophecies and teachings. "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

"God will not allow you to be deceived …" sounds reassuring, but in reality it discourages a person from seeking the truth in Scripture. Satan knows the power of the Word in refuting his deception, for he remembers well Jesus' use of Scripture in the wilderness temptation. He will go to any length to keep us from using the Word to uncover his activities among us.

We are not asserting that all promoters of the S&W movement are manipulators or are controlled by Satan. We do believe, however, that many of them are caught up in using manipulative techniques without realizing what they are doing. God clearly tells us in His Word, "Do not be deceived" (see 1 Corinthians 6:9, 15:33, Galatians 6:7, James 1:16). These warnings would be useless if God would never allow it to happen! On the other hand, our enemy the devil would be delighted if we dropped our guard and gave up our concern about being deceived. Yes, Christians can be deceived and God continually warns us about just such a thing.

A closer look at the first deception in the Bible is instructive (Garden of Eden in Genesis 3). Deception is not always obvious. This means that the person being deceived does not know that he or she is being deceived. Eve was seduced by an ever-so-slight misquotation of God's instructions. God had said there was only one tree they were not eat of. But the Serpent said to her, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from *any* tree in the garden'?" (3:1 emphasis added)—you can almost hear him sniffing in contempt. By subtly implying that God was withholding something from her, the enemy was creating discontent in Eve and a distrust in what she knew of God. He was essentially asserting, "You don't have a full understanding about God, Eve. Let me give you a new, fuller revelation."

Eve's response, in turn, showed her own subtle distortion of God's command:

> "God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and *you must not touch it*, or you will die' " (3:3 emphasis added).

Notice that she adds to God's Word. God never said they couldn't *touch* the tree, just that they couldn't *eat* it. This may seem small and incidental, but consider the following. This is the first recorded interchange in Scripture that has to do with interpreting God's Word—and what God said was changed twice, once by Satan and once by Eve! The Divine Author included this interchange in Scripture and clearly wants us to take note. One cannot tamper with the Word of God, no matter how trifling it may seem, without serious repercussions.

Satan's final "new revelation" to Eve amounted to suggesting that she let herself go from holding fast to the truth God had already revealed, because in the end it would be good for her:

> "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (3:4-5).

Notice how Satan plants the desire for something that God did not want Eve to have—the knowledge of good and evil. The S&W movement seems to create a similar dissatisfaction in people, making them desire more emotion and *new* knowledge through contemporary prophecies and experiences. In many ways, the S&W experiences have the similar attraction as street drugs—it promises a break from the mundane, a release into an overwhelming, sensational experience under the heading of "knowing God."

Eve "bit" in more ways than one. Notice her desire for the experiential:

> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (3:6-7).

In addition to gaining new knowledge of and "enlightenment" about good and evil, she was enticed by her visual experience and the prospect of the fruit's taste. Even though the boundaries had been clearly defined, she desired something "more," beyond what God had already revealed and provided. The end was tragic: she and Adam found themselves completely exposed. They found fig leaves to cover their physical nakedness, but found no help for their spiritual nakedness (3:10). The result of their desire for something more than obedience to God resulted in the fall of all mankind!

One can't help but notice a parallel between this story and the S&W movement. Satan contradicted God's clear statement, "You will not surely die." We (the authors) attended a healing meeting at the Toronto Airport Church in Canada to make first hand observations. Similar to Satan saying, "You will not surely die," the speaker there asserted quite emphatically, "God does not want you to be sick. Sickness is a deception."

First of all there is no clear statement in the Bible supporting such a claim for us today. Secondly, if the preacher was right, then why didn't God or someone else tell the miracle-working apostle Paul that he made a mistake in leaving Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20) or that he was deceiving Timothy when he gave the advice to

take a little wine for the stomach's sake (1 Timothy 5:23)? If the preacher in Toronto was right, Timothy's problem should have been solved by faith, since sickness is not part of God's plan. Do the leaders of the S&W movement never catch a cold or have a fever? Interestingly, the speaker who made the statement was wearing glasses—apparently he did not believe God's healing power extended to correcting his vision problems! Many self-evident contradictions, like this, seem to go unnoticed by those wrapped up in the movement.

So the assertion that "God will not allow you to be deceived" is a manipulative technique to keep people from questioning their experiences. By failing to do this, many gullible people allow themselves to be guided and controlled by things that may not be in line with the revealed will of God.

2. "THE FRUIT IS IN THE PROOF."

This statement has an element of truth in it, like the previous claim. After all, Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them" (John 7:20). Both of us, as writers, can testify personally that there are many in the S&W movement who have borne some good spiritual fruit, for which we praise God.

It is a misunderstanding of Jesus' words, however, to conclude that "fruit" is the validation of any movement. First, there are Christians on both sides of this S&W issue who have spiritual fruit in their lives—so fruit cannot be the ultimate arbiter on which perspective is right. Second, the Lord commands us to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). The bottom line isn't as simple as saying that we need to look for "fruit-proof," because false apostles can imitate fruitfulness

fairly well. As noted previously, even Satan can make himself look like a shining follower of Christ (2 Cor 11:13-15).

Jesus cautioned about using outward tangible activities as the sole measure of our faith:

> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' " (Matthew 7:21-23).

Even having spiritual "wonders" to back up the right words is no guarantee of living in the truth. Scripture is clear that neither words nor works nor fruit are the proof of either true faith or right doctrine.

What about the lack of fruit in the lives of many proponents of the S&W movement? This void is not often mentioned. Our observation, limited though it may be, noted inner confusion, tension, an absence of peace and lack of self-control. A continual dissatisfaction with what they have already received in Christ keeps many people seeking more and greater ecstatic experiences.

S&W proponents claim that this is simply the believer's desire for all that comes with being "blessed in the heavenly realm with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). But they neglect the fact that God has identified the scope of this blessing: it is in the heavenly realm, it is spiritual and it is *in Christ*. It is not necessarily physical or visible.

Dissatisfaction and lust for the supernatural breeds a lack of self-control stemming from misapplication of Scripture. In failing to control their desires and submit themselves to God's established

boundaries for "every spiritual blessing," they redefine those blessings to include whatever experiences they wish for or crave. Their understanding of "every spiritual blessing" leads them to override God's intentions and replace them with their own desires. 2 Peter 1:5-6 says that growth in our spiritual walk includes "self-control" which keeps us from being "ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter goes on to assert that anyone lacking qualities such as self-control is "nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from past sins." This is a weighty verdict for anyone who neglects the Spirit's real fruit in him.

True, there are "fruitless" Christians in all areas of Christianity and we can't point the finger at S&W only. But the concern is that S&W proponents ask people to judge them on the basis of "fruit." This invitation is a double standard for it says, "Look at the fruit for proof where it is good, but turn a blind eye where it is absent."

The ultimate reality, however, is that a person's fruit or good works does not validate his message. Many religious groups and denominations have done many good works through the centuries with orphanages, hospitals, etc. Some even promote conservative family values. Their good works certainly don't validate their beliefs. Recently my car was on empty so I stopped at a service station to fill the tank. As the gas began to pour into my tank, it dawned on me that I had left my wallet and money at home. Red-faced, I went inside and told the attendant what happened. He smiled and said to go ahead and put in enough gas to get me home and that he would trust me to pay him when I got back. Now, you may say, that was Christlikeness in action, that certainly the fruit of the Spirit showed in his kindness.

Does this prove that he believes and lives by the truth? He was a Muslim!

What then is the point of Jesus' statement that "by their fruits you will know them?" Clearly He was presenting a general truth, which must be understood in conjunction with other Scriptures. Generally speaking, a genuine Christian *will* have the evidence of fruit, but not all people who have what looks like fruit are walking in the truth. We are to test the spirits and discern false teachings by comparing them to Scripture.

3. "DREAMS CAN BE RELIABLE MEANS FOR INTERPRETING GOD'S WILL"

At times in Scripture God used dreams to guide his people. However, the S&W movement, in our opinion, embraces a dependence on dreams for guidance that is unhealthy and even detrimental to the Christian life. Our observation is that dreams in this movement are selectively interpreted with few objective guidelines.

The signs of Joel are misapplied by the S&W movement. Let's look at one of the primary passages used to support guidance by dreams today—a prophecy from the book of Joel that is quoted by Peter in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost:

> In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams (Acts 2:17).

Since Jesus' ascension to heaven Christians in every age have thought that they were living in the "last days." But there are some difficulties in applying this prophecy to Christians then and now. For example, if the dreams Joel (and Peter) speak about are to be relied

upon today as supernatural communication from God, then why do we not see the other signs identified in the prophecy?

> I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord (Acts 2:19-20).

This part of the prophecy clearly refers to things that are still to come, but what about the dreams or visions? Paul had some dreams (i.e. visions) of guidance in Acts 16:9-10 (see also 18:9). Is that evidence that the first part of Joel's prophecy is for today? Let us consider another way to interpret Joel's prophecy and why Peter quoted it at Pentecost. A short while before Pentecost, Jesus had fulfilled another prophecy when He presented Himself as King and made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem:

> Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9, compare Matthew 21:5 where it is quoted in connection with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem.)

The nation of Israel rejected Jesus' fulfillment of this prophecy and refused to accept His authority over them as King—instead they crucified Him.

Then, at Pentecost, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was offered to Israel a second time, through Peter's sermon. Thousands repented and turned in faith to Christ, which seems phenomenal by our standards. But that was only a minute portion of the nation. As a whole, the people of Israel continued to reject their King. The actions of Israel's religious leaders in the ensuing chapters of Acts display this rejection.

Now, look back at Matthew 24:29 where Jesus referred to the same signs that are in Joel's prophecy and said that they would accompany His return.

> 'Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken" (Matthew 24:29).

Had Israel as a nation repented, the signs of Acts 2 and Matthew 24, some have suggested, might have come in full force at that time, followed ultimately by the return of Christ. This may be what Peter referred to when he proclaimed:

> Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus (Acts 3:19-20).

That of course, did not come to happen. Instead, at Pentecost Israel rejected the kingdom of God a second time and therefore Christ did not return to earth at that time. As a result, the signs of the last days which Joel, Jesus and Peter spoke of were taken away. Israel had a brief foretaste of them at Pentecost, but when it was clear that the nation of Israel would not accept her King, the signs of the last days were postponed.

We find ourselves today in the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). God, having offered His kingdom to Israel twice and having been rejected twice, postponed the events of the last days so that He could gather a church from among the Gentiles and in-graft them into His people (Romans 11:11-32). We now live in the in-grafting days.

Though we are approaching the last days, we are not there yet. The prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter in Acts 2, does not support the

claims that God has given us dreams today as a sign, for guidance or anything else.

At times, it may be true that God uses dreams to help us identify or clarify things in our lives. Sometimes dreams allow our minds to work in ways that our conscious thinking won't allow. Once, when I [Chuck] was in college, I solved a complex mathematical problem in my sleep. My mind had become so overloaded with studying late into the night, that I fell asleep soundly. I was startled out of my slumber when I realized that in my dream my mind had wandered into an area of the problem that I had ignored while I was awake. The clarity of the answer jarred me awake, and sure enough, it proved to be the correct answer.

God can very easily use this kind of thing in other areas, as well as bringing to mind Scriptures we may have overlooked when dealing with a problem while awake. However, we need to be very careful for we have no scriptural basis for *seeking* such dreams as a normal course of divine guidance. Dreams can be easily distorted and manipulated according to one's mental or emotional state. Even the Apostle Paul apparently had to give some thought as to whether a night-time vision he received was truly the Lord's leading or not:

> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, *concluding* that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:10 emphasis added).

Why would we ever *seek* after guidance through cryptic, emotion-colored dreams when He promises us clear guidance and wisdom through His Word as we combine it with faith? "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). This is certain and solid.

Someone might say that spiritual audio/visual manifestations make God's guidance more credible or more "real." If so, then we must ask whether God was mistaken when He commanded us to walk by faith. The answer, of course, is no.

God's Word does not present dreams as an habitual form of guidance or of His communication with us. Rather, He left us His enduring, objective Word, the Bible. Regarding this, Scripture emphatically says, "...for You have exalted above all things Your Name and Your Word" (Psalm 138:2). His Name and His Word supersede *all* else, even audio/visual and super-sensational dreams. It is foolish and frighteningly arrogant to override His Word with something *we* perceive as being a better form of guidance.

4. "WE SHOULD ABANDON OURSELVES TO GOD"

This is a common phrase among Christians, in general—and it captures a genuine spiritual principle. But, in the context of the S&W movement, this assertion is often used to encourage people to seek that which is extreme, out of the ordinary, intense or even crazy. What exactly is it that happens when a person "abandons" himself to God? What really is being desired? Some answer these questions by saying, "If this (any imaginable experience or manifestation) is what God wants to give me, then I want it." This sentiment appears sincere, but may be just a way of saying, "I really want to experience God in this certain, emotional way."

There is a sense in which we should abandon all fleshly living and thinking, and give ourselves over completely to God's control. But, giving ourselves over to God's control does not mean letting go of our God-given rationality and "abandoning" ourselves to experi-

ences rooted in what flows spontaneously from the flesh, unchecked by the mind. (This issue is further addressed later in this booklet.) This type of thinking inactivates God's safety system for us and ignores the flesh's eagerness to be given room to flourish. It is a deception of Satan and does not come from the Holy Spirit.

Self-control is a key aspect of spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:23). The Christ-centered Christian is to engage his mind, "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). Paul says to the charismatically super-charged, but fleshly, believers in Corinth, "Do all things decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). God's Word never advocates letting go of oneself to wild excesses of emotionalism. When biblical characters had a physical reaction to spiritual realities, it was never because they sought them.

In Scripture, when God manifested Himself the effect was awe-inspiring and overwhelmingly dreadful (in that the human recipients were overcome with dread). Think of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3), Isaiah in his dream of God's holiness (Isaiah 6), Ezekiel (Ezra 1:28-2:1), Daniel (Dan 8:18) and John (Revelation 1:17), who fell facedown, whose power left them and who did not stand until the Spirit of God lifted them to their feet or gave them strength by touching them.

Godly men of the Bible didn't waltz their way into God's presence with barking or hysterical laughing (as some in the S&W have done). Some use David's reaction at the return of the ark to Israel as a justification for dancing and presumably laughing as a spiritual manifestation (2 Samuel 6:15-16). But it is not at all clear that his dancing was

an ecstatic manifestation of the Spirit rather simply an response of joy. Scriptural evidence indicates that to experience a physical manifestation of God was not jolly and delightful, but overwhelming, a fear-inspiring event that left individuals weak and horribly aware of their sinfulness in the face of God's holy awe-fulness.

Against this biblical backdrop, the S&W invitation to "abandon ourselves to God" must be reckoned. How do their supposed manifestations of God line up with those in Scripture? Why do they seek such experiences, when godly men of old never did? We believe that the answers to these questions leave much to be desired in the S&W movement.

5. "DON'T TRY TO FIGURE THIS OUT WITH YOUR MIND, JUST LET THE SPIRIT GIVE YOU GOD'S WISDOM"

One person quipped, "Don't think, just drink." Some say that you should experience it first then figure it out later, that you can't really understand unless you've been "immersed" in the experience first. Even the suggestion of using Scripture to evaluate experiences in the S&W movement are often dismissed as "using your mind" rather than trusting the Spirit. This mentality is supported by the idea that the mind is part of our fallen flesh and, as such, is an obstacle that keeps us from truly experiencing God.

The Bible says that the Christian mind is to be renewed, not negated (Romans 12:2). The redeemed mind is part of the new self which is "being renewed in the knowledge and image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:10). The blatant slogan "Don't think, just drink" lures the Christian away from his responsibility to use the God-given checks and balances of a renewed mind. It leads him to accept that

emotions and experiences flowing from a mind in neutral gear must be from God.

This perspective ignores the fact that things can seem "so real," even when they may not be true. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." God repeats this word for word later in Proverbs 16:25. He wants us to get the point! And He wants us to use Scripture to equip ourselves for understanding and discerning truth from error:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-17).
>
> For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

The Spirit wants us to use our minds; that is why God gave them to us. Scripture does not tell us to rely on experiences, but rather to rely on God's Word as the only true standard by which we can distinguish truth from error. This requires us to *think*, that is, to use our minds. When studying Scripture to determine truth, we ought not pit the Holy Spirit's role in enlightening us against the use of our minds. Many Scriptures corroborate this principle:

> "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord (Is 1:18).
>
> "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16).

Most false teachers do not want their followers to use their minds in studying Scripture for themselves. This is reminiscent of the organized church during much of its history. Clearly there was a desire to keep the general populace in ignorance, so no one could question the religious hierarchy's interpretations of Scripture. The Apostle Paul, however, was not that sort of teacher:

> Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scripture every day to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:11).

It is clear that Paul did not expect the Bereans to suspend judgment by superficially accepting what He taught them. The writer of Acts is commending the Bereans for applying their full intellectual capacity to "examining" Scripture. Paul, for his part, was not afraid of that kind of scrutiny; in fact, he seemed to invite it.

The Berean attitude which Scripture commends seems to be written off as "Phariseeism" by many in the S&W movement. But Paul is clear about this:

> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Paul further emphasizes the importance of clear thinking and reasoning from Scripture in guarding against false teaching:

> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what

> their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

Peter echoes the importance of using the mind, a principle found throughout Scripture:

> This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles (2 Peter 3:1-2).

6. "SOME THINGS THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES IN BELIEVERS WILL LOOK FOOLISH, BUT THAT'S OK."

Some in the S&W movement say the activities of the Spirit may look foolish to people who are judging in the flesh and not in the Spirit. The activities referred to include making animal sounds, uttering unintelligible gibberish and behaving in ways that resemble alcoholic intoxication. In the matter of these activities we can agree with the movement at one point—humans acting like this certainly do look foolish.

Proponents of the S&W movement appeal to Scripture passages for support:

> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27).

This passage does not refer to the kind of strange actions mentioned above, though. Paul tells us earlier what he is talking about:

> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

It was the message of the Gospel that would seem foolish to the world, not the Christians' behavior. The idea that all people are sinners in need of forgiveness through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross cuts across the humanistic core of all man-made religions and philosophies of life. To the world, a God who dies for His creatures who rejected Him *is* foolish.

Trying to use these verses from Corinthians to validate foolish behavior seems more like manipulating Scripture to justify preconceived notions. It undermines the hard work of studying Scripture and wrestling with a God who calls us to live in His presence even when we do not sense it physically. Such a calling echoes in the biblical admonishment to:

> Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

Os Guiness puts it this way:

> The foolishness-is-faithfulness argument of the movement is evangelical anti-intellectualism at its deepest and most pious sounding … Such purported piety, however, is fallacious. For one thing, Christians who boast of "foolishness" overlook the relativity and irony in Paul's statement [in 1 Corinthians 1:12, 18]. The cross is certainly folly to those who are perishing—because their vantage point is wrong and their perspective distorted ... Objectively speaking, the gospel in itself is not folly but wisdom...
>
> Christians who take a perverse pride in Christian foolishness confuse childishness with childlikeness, and thus irrationality with simplicity. True faith is unquestionably childlike and simple, but never childish or simplistic.

When Paul encountered fleshly childishness in Christians, he considered it a sign that they were walking by the flesh, rather than the Spirit. He told the Ephesian believers that they should not give control* of their lives to things like wine, instead they should give control to the Holy Spirit:

> "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

In admonishing them in the immediately preceding verses, he made it clear he was talking about practical daily living:

> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is (Ephesians 5:15-17).

In general, we are concerned that applied spiritual wisdom goes unheeded. It is clearly an important point with God; He devoted the entire book of Proverbs to the instruction of believers in wisdom. This book begins, "The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight …" (Proverbs 1:1-2). In fact, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (1:7).

In direct contrast with Scripture, John Arnott, pastor of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship states, "So when you come to Him tonight asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit, I don't want you to even entertain the thought that you might get a counterfeit." In other

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* *"Be filled with the Spirit" is parallel to "get drunk with wine." Both have the idea of "control." Wine in excess controls a person; being filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit.*

words, he encourages people to forget about the Bible's repeated warnings to be wary of counterfeits, false prophets and false doctrine, but instead to trust him (pastor Arnott) when he says his teaching and the Toronto "experience" is not counterfeit. This kind of teaching should raise huge warning flags in the hearts and minds of all Christians.

Ron Allen, another proponent of the S&W movement, says, "God's not nearly as worried about heresy or noise or mess or distress than [sic] we are..." Yet, over and over in Scripture, God warns us against false teachings and false prophets. It is understandable, then, that the "blind leaders of the blind" will always protect themselves and deny those Scriptures which would encourage honest evaluation.

In the end, giving oneself over to the childishness of foolish behavior under the guise of the Spirit's control renders the believer foolish in the truest sense of the word. This is clearly not God's desire for those whom He has created in His very own image. One can hardly imagine the Lord Jesus Christ acting in such a way, He Who "… is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being" (Hebrews 1:3).

7. "NEW REVELATION THROUGH DREAMS AND PROPHECIES GIVES AUTHORITY TO CERTAIN INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE"

This assertion touches on a fundamental issue of our Christian faith. What is the authoritative avenue for God's message to us? In the end, this affects everything we believe. Can just anyone claim to be a prophet and become a direct channel from God for interpreting Scripture or giving authoritative direction to others on matters of

truth? How you answer these questions will have a huge impact on everything else.

The Berean Christians were highly commended not only for the use of their minds, but for their allegiance to the written Scriptures (as we have seen above). For them, any new teaching had to check out with the Scriptures they already had! Nothing else would do! It did not matter if it seemed to fit their experiences, or if it sounded so good they wanted to believe it. It did not matter how spiritual or successful the teacher appeared to be. Their first, final and sole arbiter was the written Word of God. This point cannot be overstated. Its essential role as foundational for our faith, was emphasized by the Lord Jesus Christ when He often began His teaching with: "It is written …" Further, the Bible emphasizes that "…faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Consider how profound was the Bereans' persistence on this matter. The risen and ascended Jesus Christ had visited Paul in person on the road to Damascus. He was a venerable missionary with great success. He had the evidence of a changed life, the proof of exceptional fruit. He had performed miracles. He had the most impressive resume of perhaps any Christian in history. Still the Bereans were commended for their attitude! They understood what God had already taught them in His Word:

> ...for You have exalted above all things Your Name and Your Word (Psalm 138:2).
>
> For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life (Proverbs 6:23, see also Psalm 119:104).

We agree with one writer who has responded:

> It is very difficult, if not impossible, to conclude anything other than the fact that however much and emphatically it may be denied by [S&W proponents], we are faced with a movement which is asking us to deny the absolute sufficiency of Scripture. The Bible is being displaced as the practical, authoritative absolute for God's people by a capricious, fickle, experience-oriented faith. The whole counsel of God's Word is no longer the "litmus test" for judging whether something is or isn't of God, but, rather, "fruit-proof." Once a movement, any movement, slips the bounds of what is normative and revelatory in Scripture and goes after new revelation, no matter how much its proponents profess to venerate and revere the written Word of God, we inevitably see Scripture overthrown by experientialism.[1]

If one is to believe that God is giving additional revelation by way of modern day prophets, one would also have to believe the new prophecy was *as* authoritative as the written Word. Often this is not the case, but there is no explanation for why in one case God's Word is completely binding, yet in the other, God's Word (presumably through present day prophets) is less authoritative. What God says is authoritative—by definition. God's Word cannot have greater and lesser authority depending on the form which it assumes (e.g. Scripture versus modern prophecy). Therefore, if a person today claims to be a prophet, then his prophecy must be absolutely authoritative in the lives of all Christians. Such implications are clearly heretical, yet the implications are often neglected when people embrace the idea of modern prophecy (we will discuss this more later).

[1] *The source of this quote has been lost, but it captures the idea well.*

8. "USE OF FIRST PERSON JOURNALING TO REPRESENT THE VOICE OF GOD"

Journaling and praying for many in the S&W movement frequently involves writing or speaking words as though God were speaking through them and to them. The process is sort of a dialogue carried out as one prays or journals and "listens" to what God says in turn. For example, one might write in their journal, "Lord, I am lonely and you seem so far from me" followed by, "My child, I see you as you sleep at night, and I want to come and hold you close in my arms. But, you love your parents more than me, that's why you don't feel my presence. Don't meet with your parents tomorrow, instead spend the time with me and feel my arms around you. Wait until you are overcome with words too deep to be uttered. Let them out in praise for Me."

The motives behind such practices are often sincere. In the Bible God offers very personal invitations to "pour out your hearts to Him" (Ps. 62:8) or "cast all your cares upon Him" (1 Peter 5:7), and we desire to hear His "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). On a human to human level, we (as relational beings) expect give and take interpersonal communication, a dialogue where both parties to the conversation share their thoughts and feelings. The type of prayer and journaling described above results from a literal application of human interactions to our relationship with God. It seems like a logical conclusion that a personal relationship with God will involve communication from both parties. Although this is true, there is a misapplication of what that will look like.

There is danger in applying dynamics from our human world to the spiritual world. Yes, God describes our relationship with Him

in human terms, that He is our "father," "friend," "brother," etc. But we must not assume that *all* aspects of human relationships apply to our relationship with God. The familial images are keys to understanding our relationship with Him, but they are always to be understood in the greater spiritual contexts of scriptural truth.

For example, God is spiritual and our relationship with Him is primarily spiritual. We commune with Him on a spiritual level, but He does not promise to commune with us in an *audible* dialogue. Rather, He points to Scripture as His written communication to us.

The distinction between the "commanding" Word of God and my imaginative thoughts of what God would say to me is blurred. There is no clear boundary in this kind of spiritual journaling unless you measure each thought against the Word of God. But if one did such measuring, then wouldn't God be speaking through the truth of Scripture recalled in my mind? That is an important distinction.

Perhaps here is a good place to note that the spontaneous remembering of Bible verses or scriptural truths is a wonderful aspect of the Christian walk. When we "feast" on the Word of God so that it dwells in us richly (Colossians 3:16) the Holy Spirit can more readily apply those truths to the forefront of our minds at appropriate times, reminding us of God's thoughts towards us, our position before Him, etc. This is part of the wonderful fellowship we have with God through His Word. The integral factor of this fellowship, however, is that it is mediated by the Word of God.

Failing to make this distinction can create confusion, an unnecessary burden and false guilt, depending on the "message" we write or speak to ourselves. The human mind is fertile, and as it "dialogues" with God, the imagined thoughts of what God *might* be saying can be

highly conditioned by the person's emotional state of being. It can also be *pre-conditioned* or *pre-directed* by recent discussions or teachings, whether false or true.

Giving away a ten dollar bill because a person believes God told him to do so, may seem benign. But what happens when an insecure person imagines that God will be unhappy with him unless he does something extreme, like falling down and violently shaking his body in order to prove his love for Jesus? Such things flow from the imaginations of the fallen heart, not from a wise and loving God.

By analogy, someone could imagine a father asking his daughter to prove her love for him by kissing his feet every morning. If the daughter was insecure in her love for her father, the question might continually plague her, "Well, do I love my father *that* much?" However, a loving earthly father would never ask his child to debase herself, just to prove her love to him. Would God be any different with us? But someone who was insecure about God's love might well find himself being plagued by the question, "If I really loved God, then why would I not let myself do the strange things I see others doing." Eventually, this kind of thing could be projected on to God by the use of first person journaling, where God, in the person's imagination, asks them to do that foolish thing and maybe even things contrary to Scripture.

This sort of transference can also happen in connection with our deep desires, subtle or repeated suggestions from others and a host of other psychological influences on our lives. The point is that we are on shaky ground when we imagine God to be speaking directly to us in our thought lives.

It is true that the Lord "lays burdens" on each of us to do certain things, but first person spiritual journaling may present commands and "truths" that reflect more the obsessions of immature spirituality than anything else.

First person journaling is like putting words in God's mouth, then believing they are God's words to us. When pushed on the matter, some may say it is just a form of spiritual "processing" that aids in our spiritual meditations. But we are not convinced.

Can God use such first person journaling? We would be hard pressed to give a blanket "no," in view of the fact that God can use even rocks to praise Him (Luke 19:40). In a sense, the written Word of God contains first person dialogue, particularly where the prophets record God's speaking. But one needs to be very careful about putting words in God's mouth and using this kind of self-speak as a normal means of discerning God's will. (Whether or not prophecy is a present day gift will be discussed below.)

9. "IT IS GOOD TO SEEK SUPERNATURAL GUIDANCE AS A NORMAL WAY OF DETERMINING GOD'S WILL"

The person who seeks miraculous signs is acting wrongly despite protestation of affection for Christ. As mentioned earlier, God's Word has revealed His will to us on this subject: "He [Jesus] answered, 'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!'" (Matthew 12:39). Now, I don't mean that all Christians who seek signs are "wicked," but this does raise the question of why a Christian would want to do something that God says is wicked.

Some would use Gideon and his fleece test as an example, but it is a bad one (Judges 6:36-40). God had told Gideon he was to go

into battle, but instead of simply obeying God, Gideon wanted affirmation of God's Word to him. He prayed regarding a lamb's fleece that he would leave out on the ground overnight. In the morning, if there was dew only on the fleece, he would know it was God's will to fight the enemy. It happened as Gideon asked. Then, in lack of faith, he wanted another confirmation and so prayed for the reverse to happen: dew on the ground, but a dry fleece. The next morning it was again as he had asked.

The first thing to take from Gideon's story is that his sign-seeking was certainly *not* a credit to his faith. God had already clearly revealed His intent for Gideon to go to battle, there was no need for further revelation–God's Word was clear on the matter. Secondly, if one *were* to use this story as a guide for sign seeking, then the type of signs sought should be so evidently *supernatural* that they cannot be explained by any natural causes. Gideon's stipulations (sort of double-reverse miracles) were so clearly defined that the *only* way the events could happen was if God performed undeniable miracles.

Modern day sign-seeking is often broad and accommodatingly flexible—the stipulations for what are truly signs are vague enough that often many things could count as a sign. In addition, the signs sought can often be manipulated to fit the circumstances that would have arisen anyway. A broad request for "some sign" is made to God, and a person is on the lookout for anything that might possibly seem like an answer from God. This leaves much room for interpretation (very similar to interpreting horoscopes which are sufficiently general to fit just about anyone's circumstances). We don't believe that all S&W followers are consciously manipulating events to obtain the

"signs" they want, but we do believe that self-deception can keep many from seeing how superficial or contrived such signs really are.

The real issue is that when God clearly defines His will, it is a lack of faith to insist He prove it to us by some other more tangible means. He calls us to live "by the Word of God" (Matt 4:4).

10. "IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE GOD IS DOING THESE THINGS, YOU ARE PHARISAICAL, OF THE FLESH"

This point is succinctly stated in the words of William De Arteage of the Toronto Church:

> "...Revivals are killed when the Pharisees convince the population that it's not of the Holy Spirit at all, that it's all flesh or demonic, depending on their theology … you see, this drains the faith of the people. They don't expect anything. They'll say, 'Oh, they're just a bunch of locos sticking up their legs in the air, doing all sorts of things' " (Toronto Airport Vineyard, October 13, 1994).

Don Nori of Destiny Image adds:

> "It is amazing that when a portal is finally discovered, a portal that opens eternity in an enormous flood of God's true Presence…men are quick to condemn, criticize, and accuse. It is even more amazing that most criticism comes from folks who have never experienced revival in the settings that they are repudiating … Finally, jealousy is the intruder in the heart that keeps many criticizing revival."

Notice that Nori believes it is impossible to fairly evaluate a movement without having "experienced" it personally.

We believe this is patently false. To use an analogy, we have never personally "experienced" arsenic, but we understand that arsenic ingested in sufficient quantities will kill us. Therefore, we do not need to experience arsenic firsthand to understand its inherent danger. We have never been to Salt Lake City to "experience" Mormonism first-

hand, but we do understand that the foundational tenets of Mormonism are seriously flawed to the point of being "another gospel" bearing no resemblance to the Gospel truth of Scripture. Experience isn't necessary for proper evaluation. What is necessary is the knowledge of basic principles of the movement and how they measure up to God's Word.

This assertion is an *ad hominen* attack that avoids serious discussion of the issues. A carefully reasoned appeal to the Word of God must be characteristic of all who seek to identify and expose false teaching and practices. This is the only antidote to the many neutralizing statements like this which are meant to remove honest objections to the movement.

Others instill fear by insinuating that anyone who continues to oppose such movements is in danger of opposing a "move of God." This is another manipulative ploy to silence critics without discussion. We respond that, of course, no true Christian who loves the Lord will want to resist a *genuine* movement of the Holy Spirit, but we also maintain that a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit *will* withstand and be supported by careful scriptural scrutiny of the highest order.

Godly men and women encourage careful scriptural examination of the truths they profess to preach and teach. On the other hand, false teachers attempt to manipulate and intimidate by throwing out mindless charges of being God-mockers in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

A genuine teacher of the truth, on the other hand, does not fear the light of Scripture and godly reasoning that makes it clear:

> But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God (John 3:21).

> But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light (Eph 5:13).

11. "IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE ANOINTING THEN YOU CAN'T KNOW THESE THINGS"

This is spiritual elitism at its finest (or worst). Many eastern religions rely on such notions as attaining a "higher conscience" that only the initiated or the elite can understand. If this were not so serious, it would almost be laughable. Do you remember the childhood story about the emperor's new clothes? In this insightful tale, the emperor wanted to test the loyalty of his subjects, so he was advised to wear a special suit of clothes that only those loyal to him would be able to see. Those who were disloyal would not be able to see the clothes. He paraded around in these "special clothes" and everyone admired how beautiful his garments were. The emperor, however, was actually naked, but no one would openly admit what they secretly "suspected." Why? Because they didn't want to be seen as disloyal. I wonder how many today suspect something might be amiss within the S&W movement, but are afraid of appearing "un-anointed" or "unspiritual" and so reserve judgment altogether.

This spiritual elitism is really the idea that "I don't need to defend my beliefs, because if you knew what I knew, you wouldn't challenge me." The apostle Paul eschewed such spiritual snobbery when writing to the Corinthian believers:

> Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other (1 Corinthians 4:6)

Paul warns the Colossians (though he speaks of angel worshippers, his words apply equally to "experience worshippers"):

> Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God (Colossians 2:18-19).

We all have access to the deepest "mysteries" of the Christian life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that, "In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (Ephesians 1:8b-9 NASB).

I once had a Mormon "missionary" proclaim to me, when he could not answer my biblical questions, that he was calling on the witness of the angel Moroni. End of conversation! What he was saying was that my objections were a result of my ignorance. I hadn't attained the spiritual knowledge and "consciousness" that he had attained. Clearly, this was an avoidance tactic when my visitor did not want to discuss my concerns any more.

Likewise, when someone in the S&W movement claims to have a higher knowledge of these things, there are no grounds for further sincere discussion, for they see themselves as having an upper hand and refuse to test their position with Scripture. Again, such claims are discussion stoppers and avoid responsible discussion and biblical concerns.

12. "WE NEED TO ELEVATE THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR TEACHING AND PRACTICE"

There has been a resurgent emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the last 100 years of church history, as we previously noted: the rise of Pentecostalism in the early 1900's, the splash of the Charismatic emphasis of the 1960's and 1970's and now the S&W movement. This is somewhat ironic in view of the Scripture's own teaching about the Holy Spirit:

> " . . . when He, the Spirit of truth, is come . . . He shall not speak of Himself . . . He shall glorify Me [i.e. Jesus]: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-15 KJV).

In other words, the focus of the Holy Spirit (as the third person of the Trinity) is not for Himself to become prominent, but to give prominence to Jesus Christ (the second person of the Trinity). The Spirit's role is to reveal Jesus and make sure that He is glorified. John's gospel clearly states that the Holy Spirit does not seek or want glory for Himself.

To be sure, in many non-Charismatic churches there has been little or no teaching about the Holy Spirit and what it means to "walk by the Spirit." These truths are important and need to be taught. Correct teaching on the Holy Spirit, though, does not overemphasize the Spirit, but focuses on His role in exalting Jesus Christ as we walk in obedience to God.

OUR FOUNDATIONAL AUTHORITY

Our main concern about the S&W movement is the free-lance use of alternate sources of truth and guidance from God. The standard for Christian authority must be the written Word of God, not experience or new revelation. Even the apostle Paul made this clear when he warned us "… not to exceed what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Some might erroneously justify present day revelation using Paul as an example because he was God's channel of new revelation (the penning of many of the New Testament letters). However, Paul was a specially authorized agent of God's truth as an apostle. Peter verified Paul's writings as being Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). The apostle John was so sure of his own inspired authority in penning the book of The Revelation, that he included this significant warning:

> 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. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Revelation 22:18-19).

No Christian today has that kind of authority. Repeatedly in Scripture we are drawn back to the Word of God, not to supernatural experiences as our authority for life and godliness:

> ... evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteous-

> ness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:12-17).

What was it that Paul believed would protect Timothy from being deceived? It was the knowledge of the written Word of God. Scripture supplies all that is necessary for being thoroughly equipped; no group has its own special insights:

> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21).

FALSE PROPHETS DO NOT VALIDATE THE S&W MOVEMENT.

Most, if not all, cults claim extra-biblical revelation Leaders of the S&W movement must give serious consideration to how similar some of their subtle teachings are to that of many cults. The supposed validation for their teaching is an appeal to "supernatural" signs and wonders. Once people are duped into thinking a present day, so-called prophet is a source of revelation from God, they are ripe for believing just about anything the prophet might say. In this kind of climate, leaders of cults or Christian movements are then free to disregard what the Scriptures say and impose their own doctrines. Jesus anticipated this would come:

> For false Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible (Matthew 24:24).

One S&W leader makes an astounding statement which inadvertently admits to the condition about which the Lord prophesied:

> "… the general level of prophetic revelation in the [S&W] church was about 65% accurate at this time. Some are only about 10% ac-

> curate, a very few of the most mature prophets are approaching 85% to 95% accuracy. Prophecy is increasing in purity, but there is still a long way to go for those who walk in this ministry. This is actually grace for the church now, because 100% accuracy in this ministry will bring a level of accountability to the church which she is too immature to bear at this time; it would result in too many 'Ananias and Sapphiras.' That so many the (sic) prophetic ministries are still missing so much is also meant to work humility and wisdom in them so that they will be able to handle the authority and power coming in the near future." (The Prophetic Ministry, The Morning Star Prophetic Newsletter, Rick Joyner, Vol 3, No. 2, pg. 4).

This surprising admission shows that in regards to prophecy the movement is directly contrary to Scripture. The accuracy standard for a prophet is nothing less that 100%:

> But a prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

This makes no allowance for *even one* false prophecy, let alone a 85% "success" rate. If a person claimed to make a prophecy which then turned out to be false, he was to be put to death! Now, certainly we live today in the time of grace, but if God was so serious about false prophecy in the days of ancient Israel, how much more now that we have the completed, revealed Word of God as His written revelation to us today.

It does no good to claim that prophets today are different than prophets in the Bible. There is no biblical basis for saying there is such a thing as a prophet who can be wrong at times. People who

claim equality with inspired writers of Scripture, in regards to receiving divine revelation, are charlatans (see 2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

FALSE SIGNS & WONDERS DO NOT VALIDATE THE S&W MOVEMENT.

Scripture is clear that even if the miracles are real, they do not prove that the teaching is from God:

> If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and Him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey Him; serve Him and hold fast to Him (Deuteronomy 13:1-4).

While the S&W movement may not be leading people to worship other gods, the passage shows that miracles by themselves are not sufficient to prove something is from God. This is particularly true if the person working those miracles is teaching error. Our final authority is God's Word, not those of a self-proclaimed prophet or miracle worker.

SPIRITUAL THIRST SATISFIED IN CHRIST

Why have so many of God's people become so discontent and dissatisfied with their Christian walk that they are willing to exchange the absolute sufficiency of Christ for unbridled experientialism? Having Christ as our daily provision for everything we need, are we no different than the Hebrews who wandered in the wilderness?

> "Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty" (John 6:31-35).

The people of Israel wearied of God's daily provision of manna, given to sustain them in their journey through the wilderness. They began to grumble and complain against their Lord, bemoaning having ever left the bondage of Egypt (Deut 11:4-10). Unsatisfied, they cried out for something different than what God had *already* provided for them. In the same way, many today are not satisfied with Christ, the Bread of Life, who can fully satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst. They cry out for new forms of spiritual satisfaction, more excitement, more emotion. Like illegal drugs, these things can never satisfy the thirsting of the soul. Only Christ can! And in Christ we have *everything* we need for the kind of life God wants us to lead:

> His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:3).

There is nothing more that we need, no experience, no emotions, no miracles, and no sensations. We have Christ and He is sufficient!

CONCLUSION

We have sought in this pamphlet to expose some of the erroneous and subtle teachings of the Signs and Wonders movement—things we have discerned in our experiences and brief study of the movement. We do not pretend that we have delved into the depths of all the issues; we have merely presented some important ones in overview. We pray that you, the reader, will study Scripture as you consider this presentation—so that you will be like the Bereans, to see if these things are faithful to the Word of God. Above all, we pray you will be encouraged to walk with our Lord Jesus Christ—by faith, and not by sight or feelings.

To God be the glory!