

BASIC BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

15. FALSE TEACHINGS IN THE CHURCH – 1

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| 1. Matthew 7:15 | 5. 1 Timothy 4:1-4 |
| 2. Mark 13:5,6,22 | 6. 2 Timothy 3:1,5-9 |
| 3. Acts 20:29 | 7. 2 Peter 2:1-3 |
| 4. Galatians 1:8,9 | 8. Jude 4 |

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE

DOCTRINE is the teaching of THEOLOGICAL TRUTH as RECORDED IN HOLY SCRIPTURES. The teaching of correct and sound DOCTRINE in the CHURCH is of the utmost importance. Sound DOCTRINE must be faithfully TAUGHT and TRANSMITTED and PROPAGATED, as the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:1-2: “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” And to Titus, Paul says: “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

Over the years, even from time of the Apostles, men have sought to corrupt and pollute the DOCTRINE of the Church. Unsound doctrine and false teaching will lead to false beliefs and subversion of the faith. The greatest peril is the undermining of our very SALVATION.

THE DOCTRINE on which the CHRISTIAN CHURCH is founded has been preserved for us in GOD’S WORD, THE HOLY BIBLE. There are three ways in which this DOCTRINE may be corrupted:

1. By adding to it.
2. By subtracting from it.
3. By distorting or misinterpreting it.

By using one or a combination of the above, false “Christians” movements and groups have arisen. These lead their followers away from the truth. Their end is destruction.

THE DOCTRINE OF OUR CHURCH

This has been defined in Lesson 14 “THE CHURCH”. Essentially, our doctrine is founded on the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

THE TOUCHSTONE

While various articles of doctrine may be the target of attack by false teachers, yet the most vital and central one - THE TOUCHSTONE - is the PERSON and WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.

All false Christians groups go astray on one or more aspects of the Person and Work of our Lord.

We shall now deal briefly with the major “Christian” groups and movements which are founded on false doctrines.

I. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

By placing the major DOCTRINES of the PROTESTANT CHURCH AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH side by side we shall see the difference quite clearly.

	SUBJECT	PROTESTANT	ROMAN CATHOLIC
1.	BIBLE	Bible alone sufficient, the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice.	Bible + Traditions of the church (supplemented by the Apocrypha).
2.	SALVATION	Faith in Christ alone works follow after salvation.	Faith + works - self-effort of penance, mass, indulgences, etc.
3.	PRAYER	Christ the only Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). There is no scriptural basis for a human intermediary.	Christ, the virgin Mary, the Saints, the RC priests - all act as intermediaries to God.
4.	WORSHIP	God is Spirit and abhors imagery and idolatory. (Second Commandment)	Adoration and worship of images of Mary, the Holy Family and the saints is part of RC Practice.
5.	INFALLI-BILITY	Only the Bible is infallible and inerrant.	The “infallibility of the Pope” is RC dogma (187)

Other errors in Doctrine are these:

- a. After death, purgatory.
- b. Auricular Confession of sin is necessary.
- c. The corruption of the Lord’s Supper into the “Mass”.
- d. The Superstition of “transubstantiation”.
- e. The distinction between “venial” and “mortal” sins.
- f. The superstition of “holy articles” and relics.
- g. Prayer for the dead.

SUMMARY

The Roman Catholic System is founded on a whole framework of man-made, extra-Biblical and corrupt Doctrines. This system offers no salvation, only enslavement to the RC Church.

II. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

This is a movement spearheaded by the leading churchmen in the World Council of Churches since its formation in 1948 to unite all Christendom in one visible organic union. More recently, the movement has received increasing interest and approval by the Roman Catholic Church.

The main distinctives (features) of the Ecumenical Movement are these:

1. Membership

All so-called “Christian” churches are eligible, irrespective of faith or doctrine. In its membership are liberal-modernist, neo-orthodox, marxist-socialist churches, as well as evangelical and fundamental churches.

2. Aim

- (a) To bring about by human means a visible union of all churches.
- (b) To propagate the unscriptural “Social Gospel” - the transformation of society by man’s own efforts.
- (c) To unite eventually with other major religions e.g. Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, etc.

The final result: A One-World Religion with a super Religious Authority. This is the harlot of Revelation 17, 18, whom the Lord Jesus shall utterly destroy at His coming.

3. Attitude to the Bible

- (a) The Bible contains God’s Word, as well as man’s writings, and therefore not infallible and inerrant.
- (b) The Bible is not the exclusive revelation of God’s Word. The sacred writings of other religions also contain light and truth, and therefore merit our careful study.
- (c) The miracles of the Bible are not necessarily accurately recorded and historically authentic. The dominant view is that they are purely myths and legends.

4. Message

- (a) Jesus Christ is one of the ways to God.

- (b) Man is the victim of circumstances. Through improvement and self-culture he can work out his own salvation.
- (c) Man can bring about the Kingdom of God or social action, political agitation and violent revolution (where necessary).
- (d) Christ's Second Coming is regarded as fiction.

The prophetic Word of God clearly foretells the formation of the One-World Super Church at the end time. This is the work of Satan: to form the counterfeit church and deceive the world. The trend of events shows that things are moving towards this inevitable goal. Protestant Church denominations are uniting. The Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches are seriously studying ways and means of drawing nearer to each other. Inter-faith meetings (Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and others) are becoming acceptable.

However, all Bible-believing and God-fearing Christians must have nothing to do with any of the activities of the Ecumenical Movement. Not only should we refrain from any form of participation in joint religious functions, but we must not in any way condone/approve of the Ecumenical Movement or any other non-Christian body. This means that a true believer must not appear to approve or commend Roman Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism or any other religion.

To do so would constitute an act of compromise or even betrayal of our faith.

III. THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

Since the early sixties a movement of "spiritual renewal", unprecedented in history, has been spreading through the churches of the world crossing all denominational barriers and affecting all the mainline Protestant Churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church.

Those involved and affected by the movement, also known as "charismatic renewal", claim that the movement is the work of the Holy Spirit. Among the claims made are these:

1. Lives are changed, souls are saved. Christians are revived, and there is new interest in spiritual things.
2. God is giving new revelations as charismatics "prophesy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit".
3. Charismatics place greater importance on experience than on the authority of Holy Scripture.
4. Charismatics teach that every believer, after conversion, needs a second work of grace called "baptism of the Holy Spirit".
5. Many unfounded claims of miraculous healing are made.
6. The charismatic tongues speaking phenomenon is said to be a return to the Pentecostal experience.

The validity of these claims must be examined in the light of God's Word. Not experience or feeling, but the **truth of God's Word must** be the standard and arbiter.

Now we shall examine each of the claims.

1. **Good reports**

Firstly, we must recognize the fact that the Charismatic Movement has caught the imagination of both true believers and nominal Christians, of born again Christians and unsaved ones. In their zeal, Charismatics reach out to others with their witness and testimony. Hence the upsurge of "conversions" and "spiritual renewal".

We hear of similar good reports from the Christian cults (which do **not** have the truth, and whose doctrine offers no salvation). One of the fastest growing cults is Mormonism. We even hear of good reports of "lives changed" and "interest in spiritual things" from non-Christian groups e.g. among followers of Hare Krishnan, Sai Baba, Buddha and others.

Good reports in themselves do **not** prove that a movement or religion is good or true. We repeat: the only trustworthy and reliable judge is God's Word.

We therefore conclude that claim of good results by the Charismatic Movement proves nothing. The whole movement itself must be carefully studied in the light of God's Word. We must examine all facets of the activities and doctrines of the Charismatic Movement.

We therefore proceed to examine the other claims one by one.

2. **New Revelations**

Among the claims of some Charismatics is their insistence that the Bible is not our final source of God's revelation. They maintain that God is still sending new revelations through their members by tongues, prophecies and visions.

They hold this belief in common with Roman Catholicism, neo-orthodoxy, Christian Science, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness and Sun Myung Moon ("the moonies").

This attempt to add to the Bible on the basis of "further revelation" leads to cults, heresy and corruption in the Church. It undermines the authority of God's Word.

We maintain, together with all the Church Fathers and Reformers, as well as all the great theologians of our Reformed faith, that with the final revelation of God to the Apostles, the Bible was complete and no further revelation is necessary. All that we need for our salvation and holy living has been adequately revealed and recorded in the Bible. Nothing must be added.

The Charismatics' claim is false.

3 **Experience and Feeling**

Human experience and feeling is liable to erroneous interpretation. It is often purely **subjective**. Only God's Word, the Bible, is our unchanging and unchangeable standard of reference.

Experience and feeling must not be placed above God's Word.

4. **“Baptism of the Spirit”**

The Charismatics' claim that believers should seek “baptism of the Spirit” as a second work of grace is without Scriptural foundation.

Every born again believer, at the time of his conversion, has already been baptized in the Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Nowhere in the Bible do we find any hint that a believer must seek this “baptism of the Spirit”. However, the Apostle Paul repeatedly exhorts believers to be “filled with the Spirit” and to “walk in the Spirit” and to bear “fruit of the Spirit”.

5. **Miracle Healing**

Too much sensationalism, exaggeration and misreporting has gone into claims of “miracle healing”. It is granted that Charismatics do recover from common ailments after being prayed for. (So do non-Charismatics). God in His sovereign grace and mercy heals both believers and unbelievers, as He also sends rain on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45).

However, to make all sorts of bizarre claims of healing by the Holy Spirit is quite a different matter (puppies raised from the dead, washing machines are “healed”, empty gas tanks are supernaturally filled, people are “slain” [knocked flat] by the Holy Spirit.)

Almost all, if not all, claims of miraculous and supernatural healing are without basis and false. This area of healing is one of the most sensational and deceptive.

6. **Tongues Speaking**

The claim that Charismatics' tongues phenomenon is a return to Pentecost is false. At Pentecost, **genuine foreign languages** were spoken. The audience heard “the wonderful works of God” in their own tongue (Acts 2:11). Over a dozen languages were recorded (Acts 2:7,8).

The tongues “spoken” by Charismatics is not any identifiable language. It is referred to as “glossolalia”. Chamber 20th Century Dictionary defines it as “abnormal utterance under **emotional** religious emotion”.

Such unintelligible babblings are by no means confined to Christian groups. From the Encyclopaedia Britannica we find that glossolalia was practised mainly by the Pentecostals, extreme left-wing Protestant, radicals, Roman Catholics and Mormons.

We also observe glossolalia being practised by Chinese temple mediums when under trance, as well as other heathens.

St. Paul cautioned the Corinthian Christians with these words: “ ... in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding ... than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue” (1 Corinthians 14:18,19).

Conclusion

If the tongues phenomenon is seen among unsaved persons and even heathens, how can it be the work of the Holy Spirit?

Charismatic Renewal promoting Ecumenism

Lately, it has been recognized by ecumenists that the widespread occurrence of the Charismatic Movement in Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches holds great promise of becoming a unifying force in their ecumenical programme.

The Pope therefore appointed Cardinal Suenens, Primate of Belgium, as spokesman for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement.

Similarly, the Protestant World Council of Churches appointed Dr. Bittlinger as consultant on charismatic renewal to the WCC.

The Charismatic Movement is being used to bridge the gap between the two main divisions of Christendom. The entire concept and inspiration is unscriptural and corrupt. It cannot be the work of the Holy Spirit.