

Losing your sword

Introduction

I have been asked to comment on this subject in some detail, even though I have mentioned it in many papers. The reason is that there is a great weakness in the church today because so many have been deceived about the importance of the word of God. In Charismatic circles especially, it is now unfashionable to study the Bible or even to take one to church. So-called preachers hardly refer to it and say nothing about its importance.

I say now very clearly – this is a result of the Devil’s strategy. Such people are deluded. They are already in a snare of the Devil and worse will follow.

This is a massive victory for Satan in assaulting the church. He knows that the most important weapon in the church’s armoury is the word of God and the faithful application of it. If he can get supposed believers to abandon and ignore the Bible in favour of some mystical nonsense, then he has nothing to fear.

This paper seeks to explain why this matter is so important – and never more so than today.

The sword of the Spirit

Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Eph 6:13-18**

If you want to withstand the attacks of demons and deception, you need to know how to use the sword of the Spirit – the word of God. All the other aspects of the saints armour are preparatory and defensive: knowing the truth, being righteous, preaching the Gospel, living by faith, understanding salvation and prayerfulness. Only the use of God’s word is active in repulsing the enemy in direct resistance.

Jesus showed us how to do this when he suffered the temptations in the wilderness. He did not ask for help from the Father. He did not request legions of angels in support. He used the word of God in active resistance to the enemy’s attacks.

This was not just random quoting the Bible. It was based on a deep understanding of Bible doctrine and affirming the truth of its doctrine that befitted the specific attack. It denied the temptation of Satan by standing on the ground of Biblical truth relative to that temptation.

The Devil’s attacks will always involve deception and twisting the word of God into a lie. For example, ‘the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of

the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me' (Matt 4:8-9). The Devil did not own these kingdoms or anything in the world; he had no right to offer Jesus anything at all. Furthermore, everything in the world was made by Christ and for him (Col 1:16). There was nothing Satan could offer the Lord – he owned everything. What Satan wanted was to pervert the worship of God – he always seeks to do this. Failing to establish the importance of the word of God always results in corruption of worship.

Jesus responses were always based on the truth of God's word directly applied to the situation to thwart the Devil and to establish the truth of the matter. The truth always brings liberty and victory. Jesus did not need to go and study a scroll for a few hours to respond; he knew the truth of the Scriptures and applied it in faith. He was steeped in the word. The word was in his heart because he had studied it from his childhood; his heart was prepared for battle.

The Devil can overpower people, even Christians, because he has thousands of years of knowledge from observing human behaviour. What the Devil cannot overpower is the word of God: 'For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword' (Heb 4:12).

What is the word of God?

Question: Why is the word of God so powerful?

Answer: It is powerful because it is the manifestation of the mind of God.

When modern Charismatic preachers tell their students that the Bible is a dusty old book that has no relevance in the realm of the Spirit; that the Bible is old truth and what is needed is a 'now' word of God in the Spirit, they prove that they know nothing about God and are speaking lies. The essence of this Charismatic doctrine is an emphasis upon man instead of God – and this is blasphemy.

The Logos

Of first importance in explaining the word of God is the Johanne Logos doctrine.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. Jn 1:1-5

The prologue of John's Gospel is one of the most important passages in all Scripture.

'The Word' here is a proper noun referring to Jesus. It is the English translation of the Greek word *logos* generally meaning a word or what someone has said; thence: a saying of God, a declaration, a dictum, speech, doctrine, instruction, teaching, narrative, reason, thinking, or an account.

The Logos in John denotes Jesus Christ as the essential Word of God, the expression of the mind of God. He expresses the wisdom and power of God in physical expression, such as in

creation; the cause of life. When God created, he spoke a word.¹ This refers to the action of the Second Person of the Trinity creating all for himself:

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Col 1:16-17

Greek philosophers used the term *logos* to speak of creative power. Heraclitus used it for the principle which controls the universe. The Stoics employed it for the soul of the world and the Stoic-influenced Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius used it for the generative principle in nature. However, the Galilean fisherman John does not derive the term from Greek or Roman philosophers but from the OT; the word that was with God and was God.

John also uses this term in his other works:

He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. Rev 19:13

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life. 1 Jn 1:1

One reason for John's clear teaching was to separate his doctrine from the contemporary Gnostics. These either denied the real humanity of Christ (Docetic Gnostics) or separated the aeon² Christ from the man Jesus (Cerinthian Gnostics).

The term is used to explain the pre-existence of Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity. He was the Word that was with God in eternity (i.e. in perfect equal fellowship with God) and was God. Jesus is the Logos that became human ('flesh' verse 14, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth').

The Greek construction leaves us in no doubt that the Logos is God (thus denying Sabellianism – a type of modalism).³ As Luther observed, this verse also dispenses with Arianism. The Logos is eternally God. The Second Person is the eternally generated Son.

So the Logos doctrine shows us that Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the manifestation of the inner thoughts of God. When God expresses himself, it is Jesus that is seen. Thus Jesus is the declaration of God.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power ... Heb 1:1-3

The written word

The Scriptures are the written word of God – the inner thoughts of God manifest in time in words. The Bible is the collection of the thoughts of God about any subject. In other words, the Bible is the manifestation of the will of God.

¹ Heb 11:3, 'the worlds were framed by the word of God'. ² Pt 3:5, 'by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water'.

² A sort of Gnostic angel or emanation from God.

³ The subject is made plain by the article ('the word') and the predicate without it ('God'). See Robertson's Word Pictures.

In the same way that Jesus is the expression of God in the form of personality, the Bible is the expression of God in words. This is why the Bible is the manifestation of Jesus. As Jesus declared the thoughts of God as the true prophet, so the Bible is the written down testimony of Jesus as the spirit of prophecy, ‘the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (Rev 19:10).

The Scriptures are nothing less than the manifestation of Christ. Every detail is, in some manner, a testimony to Christ. Jesus is the focal point of the Bible.

Jesus himself taught this.

Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Lk 24:27

The Bible is the word of God, the expression of God, and as such it is the testimony of Jesus. It concerns himself.

Whether this is typology, prophecy, allegory, history or doctrine, it all speaks about Christ as the Word of God. We could make a long list here but that would be tedious. In brief, the Tabernacle speaks about Christ as the dwelling place of God. The offerings speak about aspects of the death of Christ. The feast days speak about the work of Christ. The prophets are subordinate aspects of Christ as the prophet. The priesthood is a subordinate aspect of the High Priesthood of Christ. David the king is a picture of Christ the King. And so on.

Everything in Scripture speaks about Christ; it is a testimony to Christ.

When you have a Bible, it is not a dusty old book of the sayings of men long ago, you have the testimony of Christ as the Logos. You have the most powerful book in the world. Because it speaks about Christ, you will never fathom the depths of the truths contained in that book. It will never get old and boring but will continue to startle you every day of your life. It is the power of the Logos encapsulated in words chosen and inspired by God.

Inspiration

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Tim 3:16

Since the Bible is inspired by God in every detail it is a powerful tool in the hands of believers. It is something sent down from heaven to be held and used by men for good. Nothing delivered to us by God ever gets old or boring – it is something that contains divine power.

The Bible is a storehouse of treasures that God gives his people for practical use. It is profitable to learn good teaching, to reprove you when you are going astray by proving what is true, to correct you when you are wrong and to instruct you in righteousness. If you don't study the Bible you cannot be righteous or understand doctrine. The idea of abandoning this is insane.

The idea of abandoning a gift given by God and ignoring it is also blasphemous. No true believer could ever do this. If a father gave his son a gift as a token of his favour, the son would treasure it his whole life. It is a means of contact with his father. The Bible is such a treasure; It is a gift from God. Throwing the Bible away is dishonouring God.

Summary

Churches that have the Bible as the sole authority for their doctrine and practice are evangelical, orthodox and blessed. They are putting God first and seeking to obey his will as expressed by his own words breathed out into men. They are glorifying Christ, the foundation of the written word and the manifestation of God.

Religious groups that claim to be Christian but deny, ignore or downplay the word of God, or minimise its authority in developing doctrine and practice, are unorthodox. What they all do in practice is place the words of men above the mind of God. It is blasphemy of the first order.

The choice is simple: do you obey God or do you follow men instead of God. That is the choice. All groups that downplay the authority of God's word prefer the words of men; whether that is formal authority in leadership (such as popes, archbishops and Charismatic apostles and prophets), or mysticism (the inner feelings of men given over to passivity and delusion), or the revelations of some prophet, or the directions of some messiah figure – they all place more importance on man than God.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Bible-denying groups often centre upon the ministry of the Spirit, which they claim to have control over in various ways.

Firstly, anyone who claims to control the Holy Spirit, or acts like he is manipulating the Spirit, is a false worker and a charlatan. No one who loves God and serves Jesus would blaspheme the Spirit in this way. The Spirit is God and proceeds from the Father and the Lord Jesus in order to apply the work of salvation to us, sanctify us in practice and preserve us to the end.

It is occult to claim to manipulate the Spirit and this is worthy of all condemnation. Yet many Charismatic leaders have felt free to do this to their own destruction. For example when a leader 'blows' the Spirit upon people, or 'throws' the Spirit on people, as if he is God's master. Others command the Spirit to appear in a meeting, as if he is at their beck and call.

Bible-denying preachers claim that their ministry is of the Spirit and then diminish the value of the Bible or castigate it as a dusty old tome. This is also blasphemy and shows that they know nothing about the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the direct author of the word of God. God the Father inspires the words; the Lord Jesus is the basis of the words but it is the Spirit who brings these words to men and applies inspiration to their minds, overseeing what they write. The Spirit is the reason why we have a Bible at all. As well as the writing of it, the Spirit oversees the protection of it throughout history so that it is not cast into oblivion.

The Spirit loves the word. He is fully active in its origin and its preservation.

But the Spirit is also the applier of Scripture. Without the Spirit we would never understand a word of the Bible. The Spirit works in our souls to enlighten us about the Bible revealing Jesus to us. He brings revelation to the higher mind; he excites our passions about what we read and he strengthens our will to obey it.

The Holy Spirit always works on the basis of the word because his prime ministry is to reveal Jesus to the elect.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Jn 14:26

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. Jn 16:7-14

Notice what is promised here:

- The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.
- He teaches us all things.
- He teaches by bringing remembrance of the words of Jesus.
- He guides us into all truth – that is, the truth that is in Christ.
- He does not speak on his own authority but always reveals Christ.
- He speaks what he hears from Christ.
- He glorifies Christ by taking the things of Christ and declaring them to the elect.

So, the Spirit does not act unilaterally of his own authority. He never works as a maverick agent. He works on the basis of the Father's will and the glory of Jesus. So when Charismatic leaders focus upon the Spirit with no reference to the Father or the Son they are acting wrongly. When leaders disassociate the Spirit from the context of God's word or Jesus' testimony, they are acting falsely.

The Spirit always works on the basis of the word of God.

If you downplay or reject the Bible you will alienate and grieve the Spirit of God.

No leader that claims to have the Spirit but diminishes the Bible is telling the truth. They are not spiritual, they are not of God; they are of the Devil. Every single person that downgrades or rejects the Bible is acting from satanic impulses.

The way you confirm true godly ministry is to see a person humbly explaining and applying the word of God by the power of the Spirit. This is true prophetic ministry.

Make no mistake here. The Spirit does not operate in men who make a fuss about the Spirit and ignore the word of God and the testimony of Christ.

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Rev 19:20

The sacrifice

Throughout history godly men have understood the divine gift of the word of God and gave their lives that the church may have a copy in their own language. There is not time here to talk about these great men of God, many of whom died a cruel death to do this work since Satan tried everything to stop them being effective. Perhaps most famous is William Tyndale, martyred for trying to deliver a Bible in readable English to Britain.

It is a disgrace to these men of God who gave their lives in this service when church leaders say the Bible is unnecessary. Such impostors are not fit to tie up the shoelaces of men like Tyndale.

In the Dark Ages superstition, ignorance and deception reigned over all because the Bible was prohibited by the Roman Church from being available to ordinary folk. Only priests that could read Latin in a monastery could read anything at all of the one Vulgate translation chained to a lectern, or rich people that had some parts on expensive hand-written scrolls.

It took the Reformation (apart from a few pioneers)⁴ to focus upon making the Bible available in vernacular languages all over Europe. Hundreds of years of darkness were reversed as more and more versions appeared beginning with Luther's German translation. This is why the Reformation was so powerful and changed all of the western world and brought forward the modern age.

The application of the Bible is immensely powerful. It not only changes people; it changes nations and improves culture.

Many men sacrificed their lives to make these vernacular translations, often being burned at the stake by Catholic persecutors.

Historic church leaders and groups who denied the Bible

Throughout church history there have been many leaders and organisations that denied the Bible to Christians for personal use, or downplayed the authority of the Bible, or emphasised the words of a man more than the Bible. They all went very seriously astray as they fell into great delusions. Make no mistake; if you diminish the authority of the Bible you will immediately begin to be deceived and will eventually be doomed.

The Roman Catholic Church

Roman Catholic leaders denied access to the Bible to ordinary believers for centuries during the Dark Ages. In general they denied that Scripture was the final word on doctrine and taught that the church is the arbiter of truth; in particular the declarations of a single man, the pope, when he spoke from authority (*ex cathedra*).⁵

This is why so many Catholic doctrines are unscriptural – they do not derive from the words of the Bible but from men. This is the great issue. All those who deny the importance of the Bible substitute, in its place, the words of men. This is always the case.

⁴ Such as Wycliffe and a few others.

⁵ With the full authority of office (especially that of the Pope, implying infallibility as defined in Roman Catholic doctrine). 'Cathedra' means 'seat', i.e. the official chair of office.

As a result the Roman Church gradually developed a multitude of doctrines and practices that are utterly unbiblical and put men into bondage. These include: the idea of Purgatory, worship of Mary (idolatry), the errors of the Mass, five extra sacraments, meritorious salvation, papal infallibility, a human sacerdotal⁶ priesthood, and so on.

The Zwickau Prophets (Storchites) [early 16th century]

These were three men from Zwickau, Saxony that were part of the Radical Reformation (precursors to the Anabaptists) around 1522. They were Nicholas Storch, Thomas Dreschef and Markus Stubner; however there were others closely involved as well and Thomas Muntzer was a big influence (who was a leader in the Peasant's Revolt; 1524-5).

They caused a disturbance in Wittenberg in 1522 when Luther was being held for safety in the Wartburg Castle. On his return, at the request of the town council, Luther preached against these radicals calling them 'Schwarmer' ('fanatics'). The prophets denounced Luther and left the city.

These 'enthusiasts' (Charismatics) were 'spiritualists'. That is they believed in the direct revelation of the Spirit as their primary authority. This is a repeated characteristic of those who diminish the Bible to this day. They were also millennialists – expecting the imminent end of the world - and attempted a form of communism. Their beliefs go back to a sect in Bohemia who held to the 'Taborite Creed'.

They taught that, '*the Bible is not useful in the education of man, but that men can only be taught by the Spirit*'.⁷ Melancthon stated that Storch received inspiration from dreams and the appearance of an angel who promised him lordship of the Earth. Antinomianism reigned with their revelations, including the dissolution of marriage and men being able to take any women whenever they wanted promiscuously.

The Munster tragedy [Mid 16th century]

Munster was a town in Westphalia. There, in 1534, extremists, under Jan Matthijs, preached millennialism and prophetic change, similar doctrines to those propounded by Thomas Müntzer and the Zwickau Prophets. The foundation was abandoning the Bible and accepting the revelations of so-called prophets.

Anabaptists poured into the city and forcibly gained control in elections, making all those unwilling to be baptised to leave. The city was then declared the 'New Jerusalem' and the church became identified with society (a deviation from normal Anabaptist principles). Anarchy reigned.

The surrounding Catholic rulers did not accept this subversion and besieged the city. Matthijs was killed in battle and Jan van Leyden took over, a man who considered himself to be the third 'David' and ruler of the world. His emblem was inscribed 'king of righteousness'. Polygamy and forced communism were introduced in the midst of social chaos. The end came in 1534 when the besieging forces took the city and restored the legitimate authorities.

As in other cases, abandoning the Bible led to subjective deception resulting in anarchy, polygamy, cultic authoritarianism, social chaos and death.

⁶ Denoting a doctrine which ascribes sacrificial functions and spiritual or supernatural powers to ordained priests.

⁷ Letter to the Duke Johann of Saxony, 18 December 1521, probably written by Nicholas Hausmann.

The French Prophets [Late 17th century]

Also known as the Camisards or Cevenols.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV, Protestantism was outlawed in France. As many as half a million Huguenots (French Protestants) emigrated, but great numbers were caught escaping and enslaved. Nearly half of the Huguenot population lived in southern France and thousands continued to worship in rural woods and fields; this time being known as 'The Church in the Desert'. With many of the pastors martyred or escaped, the French prophets emerged around 1688. Individuals (mostly young illiterate women) began to prophesy as a spiritual power came upon them, giving messages to the people. Most had no knowledge of the Bible at all. These prophecies would follow trembling, crying, visions or falling over in ecstasy. One woman, Marie Boîteuse, was supposed to have wept tears of blood. They also claimed to speak in tongues during trances. By 1700 the numbers of these prophets had swelled into thousands.

When the messages encouraged violence, war developed in 1702 after the 'spirit' told Abraham Mazel to free imprisoned Protestants by killing the Roman Catholic abbot who had jailed them. Unsurprisingly, after two years, the Protestants were defeated. The Protestant cause was only rescued by the raising up in 1713, of a young Biblical preacher, Antoine Court, who, despite his youth, called for repentance and reformation. A synod in 1715 re-established the foundation of the authority of the Bible, condemned the prophets, formalised church reforms (including forbidding women preachers) and condemned violence. The prophets, as usual, declared all sorts of judgments would fall on their opposers. In fact, Court ministered in southern France until leaving for Lausanne in order to train French ministers to carry on the cause.

The source of the spiritual power inspiring this rise of prophetic ministry shows itself in familiar historical forms:

- It was focused upon women leaders.
- It did not rely upon the Bible and in fact replaced it with words from the 'spirit'.
- It caused a subjective approach to the Christian life.
- It resulted in several forms of Charismatic experiences - visions, crying, falling over etc.
- It led to violence in speech, attitudes and actions.
- It caused breakdown in the church.
- It required the preaching of a true Biblical message to effect repair to God's work.
- There were many prophecies about imminent end of the world.

These features are also found in several later Charismatic movements. Despite the clear occult source of this aberration, the French prophets were to have a significant influence upon later Charismatic sects like the radical Quakers and the Shakers. By the end of 1707 there were about 400 French Prophets in London but the movement dissipated after the failed prophecy of the bodily resurrection of one of their members, Thomas Emes in 1708. Those that fled to England had a particularly notable effect upon Jane and James Wardle who had a powerful experience from the hands of the French Prophets in 1747, resulting in their separation from the Quakers.

The New Light Prophets [18th century]

This group operated in New England under the leadership of Congregationalist minister James Davenport (1716-1757) who had gathered a following in the Great Awakening and preached to large crowds in the open air like Whitefield. However, Davenport also led the crowds in singing praise, sometimes for hours. Jonathan Edwards considered that

Davenport was an 'enthusiast' (Charismatic) who had opened the door to Satan to obstruct true revival. This was because in 1742 Davenport began to hear inner voices, and then became a leader in what became familiar as the New Light Prophets.

This group believed that a 'second Reformation' had begun which included the restoration of the supernatural gifts. In time other manifestations occurred as members began to fall to the ground, shake and see visions. These actions were seen as evidence of the Spirit's power, especially in conversion. Davenport himself went to extremes when he claimed the gift of discernment as the ability to see who was truly elect. Churches were split as he pronounced leaders were not really believers.⁸

A seminary was started which did not use the Bible, in favour of subjective 'spiritual' revelation to train prophets. Music was used to enhance the atmosphere of meetings and preaching became theatrical and dramatic as fresh revelations interrupted meetings. Some of his hymns celebrated the lack of self-control in God's service, much like modern Charismatic choruses of the Toronto school. In 1743 a bonfire was organised to burn Puritan books. At a second bonfire, led by the 'spirit', Davenport began removing his clothes and burning them. When an observer condemned Davenport of having the Devil in him, Davenport came to his senses and accepted the charge. Gradually the movement dissipated as Davenport now declared the work to be evil and sought forgiveness for corrupt actions.

Davenport was a pattern for so many who followed. His problem began when he implicitly followed subjective impressions rather than the word of God. He led great worship times, preached powerfully, gathered a large following, worked in the midst of great revival, enchanted great crowds, wrote hymns, started a Bible School, disciplined prophets - and yet he later claimed that it was all Satanic, 'misguided zeal' provoked by 'the false spirit'.

I have been much led astray by following impulses or impressions ... without a text of scripture; and my neglecting also duly to observe the analogy of scripture [the general, unified, doctrinal content of the Bible] ... this ... corrupted my experiences.⁹

The Quakers [17th century]

The Quakers (Society of Friends), founded by George Fox in the 17th century, began as a reforming group of Biblical believers seeking primitive church simplicity but gradually fell into more and more errors. The predominant reason for this was its inherent mysticism based upon the Inner Light doctrine. This taught that the immediate activity of the Spirit in a church meeting was more important than the written word of God. Meetings would wait in silence until someone began to shake under the power of the Spirit and then release a word that had spiritual authority. Of course this was just the subjective views of people; the words of men not God.¹⁰

There was no way to prove the source of such subjective words, which could have been wishful thinking, emotive feelings about a Biblical subject, demonic deception, deliberate misleading for gain, or many other things. There was no way to prove the veracity of such outbursts, but they were accepted as truth. This is utter folly.

⁸ See G W McHale & Michael Haykin, *The Toronto Blessing, A Renewal from God? Vol 1*, Canadian Christian Publications, (1995), p82+.

⁹ James Davenport's Retractions from John Gillies, *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revival*, Banner of Truth, (1981), p357-358.

¹⁰ David Starkey (the historian) was raised in a Quaker environment and mockingly stated that the Inner Light revelations that he heard showed that the 'spirit' had read the Guardian headlines.

As a result the Quakers spawned more erroneous groups (e.g. the Radical Quakers, the Shaking Quakers etc.) and the heresies continued to develop until today the Society of Friends is just a thoroughly apostate, liberal social group.

The Shakers [late 18th century]

These began as an offshoot of the Shaking Quakers in Britain that emigrated overseas to America, establishing a community near Albany in New York colony in 1774. They gradually became more and more apostate, especially after they followed Mother Ann Lee who became a new messiah figure. From this point they became more and more occultic and erratic engaging in all sorts of idiocy, such as dancing around the room to shake off sin or engaging in spiritualism.

The degeneration followed abandoning Scripture and accepting the words of leaders, especially Ann Lee as a female Christ, instead.

Mormonism

The 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints', a religion founded in the US in 1830 by Joseph Smith Jr [1805-1844].

The sources of this religion are the extra-Biblical revelations given to Smith. These visions were given by a sort of angel. The main extra-Biblical source was the *Book of Mormon*, supposedly found in the earth, but there were others.¹¹ In fact one influence was Freemasonry as Smith was a Mason.

Mormonism also taught the office of formal prophets in the church and revelations of these people were the foundation of doctrines. Note the following:

- *'When compared with the living oracles those books [Bible, Book of Mormon, Book of Doctrines and Covenants] are nothing to me; those books do not convey the word of God direct to us now, as do the words of a prophet or a man bearing the holy priesthood in our day and generation. I would rather have the living oracles than all the writing in the books.'* Brigham Young,¹² *Conference Report*, (Wilford Woodruff, president), October 1897, p22-23.
- *'Here are the living oracles of God, and they are worth more to the Later-Day saints than all the Bibles, all the Books of Mormon and of all the Books of Doctrines and Covenants that are written. ... The living oracles of the church are worth more than all of them.'* Marriner W Merrill (Quorum of the 12), *Conference Report*, October 1897, p6.
- *'We have the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrines and Covenants, but all these books, without the living oracles and a constant stream of revelation from the Lord would not lead any people into the Celestial Kingdom.'* George Q Cannon (First Presidency), *Gospel Truth*, p252.
- *'The Lord said of the President of the Church, "His word ye shall receive as if from mine own mouth" (Doctrines and Covenants 21:5). ... That which would be of greatest importance to you would be the words of the current President of the Church, for his words are directed to our day and our needs.'* Ezra Taft Benson, *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p137-138.

These non-Biblical works inspired a multitude of errors, heresies and aberrant practices. Some include: worshipping angels, worshipping many gods on other worlds, claiming God is a material being, claiming that gods were men before they became gods, denial that Jesus is God's son, polygamy, an Aaronic priesthood, baptism for the dead, and so on.

¹¹ Pearl of Great Price, Book of Doctrines and Covenants.

¹² (1801–77) Mormon leader after Joseph Smith's death in Illinois in 1844, Young became the dominant figure of Mormonism, leading the migration west to Salt Lake City, ruling over the new community with autocratic firmness.

Smith himself was brutally murdered in 1844 after criminal offences. Mormon history is riddled with great iniquities, including mass murder and many leaders ended up in prison. Mormonism was banished from Illinois. This is what happens when the Bible is ignored.

Christian Science

The 'Church of Christ Scientist' was founded by Mary Baker Eddy [1821-1910] in 1879 who was influenced by PP Quimby (see 'New Thought'), whom she plagiarised and adopted his occultism and Mesmerism.

She published *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures* in 1875 copying whole portions of Quimby's teaching and summarising his doctrine in the whole book. Yet Eddy claimed that the book was dictated by God, having precedence over the Bible. It is a mixture of occultism, the mind sciences and Christianity, with an emphasis on positive thinking. In practice its worship is to an abstract, pantheistic being and the main attention is upon healing by mind-control and denying the existence of pain and death.

The followers of Mary Baker Eddy believed that her revelations were absolute and unalterable truths; thus they gave Eddy powers that only belong to God. This is blasphemy of the first order. *Science and Health* was stated to be '*the voice of truth to this age*'.¹³

Errors include: God is mind, spirit, and health. Jesus was a man and as matter, did not exist. Christ was not God but merely an idea. Christ is the ideal truth that comes to heal sickness. The Holy Spirit is 'Divine Science' who reveals the divine principle. Sin is an illusion, heaven and hell do not exist, redemption does not exist, sickness and death do not exist.

As in many cases where people ignore the Bible, the leader was hypocritical and sinful. Eddy was troubled with illness her whole life and died as a suffering recluse. She was also married three times, divorcing her second husband.

Seventh Day Adventists

Organised in 1860 originally following the teachings of William Miller (hence 'Millerites') who claimed that Christ would imminently return to Earth, but the prophecies failed multiple times.

While many in this movement would claim to worship Jesus, the reality is that the cult gives every appearance of reverencing Ellen G White, their 'prophetess' who rescued the movement with her teachings and writings (many plagiarised) after its initial downfall. One part of her teaching was the need to honour the seventh-day Sabbath, which also resulted from a vision.

SDA teaches many errors, such as: 'soul sleep' (saints are unconscious between death and the resurrection); annihilation of the wicked instead of everlasting punishment; a false view of the atonement denying the efficacy of the cross;¹⁴ Satan as the scapegoat for sins; sinners contribute in dealing with sin through their efforts in probation ('synergism'); it denies assurance and rejects the Lord's Day, which is called 'the mark of the beast'.

The work of Christ in redemption is denied in the Biblical sense and the testimony of God's word is thoroughly contradicted by the visions and teaching of a woman.

¹³ 'The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany', p456-7.

¹⁴ *We dissent from the view that the atonement was made upon the cross*, Ellen G White, 'The Great Controversy', p489.

Summary

Note the pattern. First a group neglects the Bible in favour of the speeches of a certain leader(s). These can be doctrinal (e.g. Catholicism), authoritarian (e.g. The Shakers) or prophetic (e.g. New Light Prophets or Mormonism). Gradually, the Bible is dismissed completely in favour of following what is claimed to be 'The Spirit', which is really the subjective impulses of a man or woman. The actual source of these impressions is the imagination of the old nature or demons and often both.

Under the 'Spirit' the leader emphasises exuberant worship, passivity and antinomianism. Gradually exotic phenomena begin to arise, such as screaming, emotionalism, falling down backwards, laughing, jerking and so on. These are taken as an act of God. Eventually, the spirit of the movement descends into gross sin. Very often the chief leader becomes completely authoritarian and the work becomes a cult.

The lies of modern church leaders who deny the Bible

God chasers ... are not interested in ... dusty truth known to every one. They are after the fresh presence of the Almighty, ... The difference between the truth of God and revelation is very simple. Truth is where God's been. Revelation is where God is. Truth is God's tracks. It's His trail ... the masses of people are happy to know where God's been. ... A true God chaser is not happy with just past truth; he must have present truth. God chasers don't want to just study from the mouldy pages of what God has done [i.e. the Bible]; they're anxious to see what God is doing.

Tommy Tenney; *The God Chasers*, Introduction.

It is no more the primary purpose of the church to teach the scriptures than it is for British Rail to promote timetables.

Gerald Coates; *Evangelicals Now*, July 1996, quoted in *Contending Earnestly For the Faith*, 4.2, p8.

The word will do you no good.

Paul Cain; speaking at the *School of Prophecy*, Anaheim, Nov 1989 session 7.

The second mark of a God mocker is a fear of confrontation and change. They are so stuck in religious tradition that they are closed to new revelation.

Stephen Hill (Brownsville Church, Pensacola); *The God Mockers*, chapter 1, (1997)

I am about to release prophecy on the church as you have never seen it before... I have a secret plan, and that plan is being unfolded ... Listen to the prophets — the little prophets, the big prophets, listen to those who speak one line and to those who speak volumes.

Glenn Foster; Prophecy published by the Sweetwater Church of the Valley; *Life for the Nations*, 7 October 1994

We're moments away. I think the culture is already there. And the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defence.

Rob Bell, former pastor of Mars Hill church, speaking on Oprah Winfrey's show 'Super Soul Sunday' (2015).

The lies of modern Charismatics are no different from the many historical aberrant movements that arose. They are merely claiming and teaching the same old lies of the Devil. Their methods are very similar and the results are the same (emotional worship, aberrant behaviour, passivity, authoritarianism, gross sin etc.).

Examples of Bible denying Charismatic leaders

Paul Cain

There was a time in the 1990s that everyone wanted to be Cain's friend (although I had already testified that he was a false prophet). He dominated John Wimber for a period, inspired the Kansas City Prophets, was hosted and sponsored by all the mainstream UK Charismatic leaders, like Terry Virgo, had books written about him as a premier prophet, and even became co-pastor of Westminster Chapel with RT Kendall.

His false prophecies led many people to poor choices (such as in those who believed a global revival would begin in London in a certain Wimber conference). He openly taught utter nonsense, yet people believed it (such as the Joel's Army Dreaded Breed teaching) and advocated long-outlawed Latter Rain errors.

In all the time of his fame he not only taught heresy and encouraged bad practices, but was an alcoholic homosexual. His gross sins meant that nothing he ministered was of any spiritual value whatsoever (let alone its obvious error). He was nothing but a sinner masquerading as a spiritual leader. The dominant item he taught was to deny the value of the Bible and encourage the trust of false prophets.

Eventually his sins found him out and he was put out of ministry for a time, yet amazingly most Charismatics still claimed that he was a man of God. Such is the delusion that snares people who do not trust in God and his word.

So, for year after year many millions of Charismatics accepted blatant false teachings, ignored the Bible and imbibed false prophecies because they trusted the words of a gross sinner instead. They chose not to trust in God's own words proved true over thousands of years, but instead chose to accept the words of an alcoholic homosexual because he was called a prophet. This is a type of madness that results in blasphemy.

Rodney Howard-Browne

This character was one of the pioneers of the Toronto Blessing, which was a scourge on the Lord's people. It introduced years of focusing on mysticism at best and downright demonic practices at worst. It caused havoc in the churches and split families. Many people were so deluded that they became mentally ill. It was a great evil.

He became infamous for his maxim '*Don't think; drink*'. By this he means do not be concerned about testing the Toronto Blessing, don't think about doctrine, don't examine Scripture to test what is happening; just imbibe what is claimed to be the Spirit.

It is this claim of all heretical and cultic movements that is so dangerous – the claim that what they teach is the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit when they have no proof whatsoever that it is so. Time always shows that this claim is false and dangerous.

In this case only those gullible enough to accept what he said fell for it but this was a very large number of people. The Toronto movement encompassed millions of people and thousands of leaders including many famous names. They all switched their brains off and just drank. However, what they drank was toxic.

Any leader who encourages people to not search their Bibles and prove what is true immediately qualifies for being labelled a false teacher. Avoid such people.

John Wimber

Wimber was very likeable and did preach from the Bible; but Wimber is an example of the danger of someone who teaches that authority rests in the Bible plus. In other words, he included many other sources of authority as well as the Bible in his teaching. This is as dangerous as ignoring the Bible altogether.

Wimber adopted many diverse sources for his brand of Signs and Wonders doctrine. These include: Charismatic mystics,¹⁵ Roman Catholic priests and academics, Eastern religions, eastern mysticism, Mesmerism, Quakerism, the occult and even folklore. As a result he downgraded the value of studying the Bible, even while he applied the Bible. He was a doctrinally very confused man.¹⁶

In fact the origin of Wimber's brand of healing and exotic phenomena was the occult.¹⁷ This was found in the teaching and ministry of a convinced occultist called Lonnie Frisbee (on top of Wimber's Quakerism). He was able to do 'The stuff' (i.e. psychological effects) before he became a professed Christian. He was responsible for the exotic effects later found in the Toronto Blessing long before Wimber. The impact of the falling over (slain in the Spirit), screaming, shouting, etc. was an occult technique based on induced passivity and hypnotism that was branded as proof of supernatural Christianity.

In fact Frisbee later went on to denounce God, become apostate and returned to witchcraft, proving all along that he was no real Christian at all. Yet he is the root of the Signs and Wonders Movement that Wimber became the figurehead of. Indeed it was Frisbee that originated the famous Wimber slogan, '*Power Evangelism*'.

As Wimber introduced all sorts of teachings and practices that had no foundation in Scripture, churchgoers were gradually abandoning their Bibles as they embraced the psychological manipulation of people through Wimber's mystical methods. Thus Wimberism (the Third Wave) was responsible for people ditching their Bibles in favour of supposed spiritual activism.

A summary of some Charismatic prophets

All prophetic movements in the history of the church, from the Montanists onwards, ended in ignominy, failure and heresy. Very many ended in scandals and licentiousness. A few ended in warfare. A list of all the failed, scandalous prophets would require a large book; I will give a sample here.

- Charles Parham (key founder of Pentecostalism): prophesied a global, millennial revival to end the world in the 1920s. Arrested for sodomy. Known as a racist.
- John Dowie: founded a healing commune that produced many future leaders of the AOG. Was charged with alcoholism and sexual impropriety by his wife and son.
- Early Pentecostal prophets claimed that missionaries speaking in tongues made learning foreign languages unnecessary. This was a total failure.
- AA Allen: drunk and stupefied in a hotel room the night before he preaches in a 'revival'. Arrested for drunk driving during a healing revival in 1955; fled bail. Divorced his wife. Died of alcoholism in a hotel room.

¹⁵ Such as Lonnie Frisbee and Catholic mystics.

¹⁶ See my paper 'Unholy Alliances'.

¹⁷ For example, his people taught the importance of seeing coloured auras around individuals to indicate spiritual issues.

- William Branham: misogynist¹⁸ and arch-heretic that relied upon occultism. Prophesied that the millennium would begin in 1977.
- Franklin Hall: occult ideas. Taught a mystical immortality. Claimed Christians could hover, fly in space and be free from accidents. Wore unclean clothes for months or even years claiming that he did not smell.
- Latter Rain prophets: taught occultism, heresy and mysticism. Outlawed by the Assemblies of God.
- Sam Fife: expelled from the Baptists for adultery. Fife believed that he was God's mouthpiece and that he could not die, even if his plane crashed (i.e. he had attained the state of perfection). He is now dead.
- Maria B. Woodworth-Etter: arrested for obtaining money under false pretences and other offences, divorced first husband, went into trances. Called 'The Voodoo Priestess'. Prophesied the destruction of San Francisco in 1890.
- Max Wood Morehead - the principal Pentecostal leader in India in 1907, issued flyers stating that '*Judgment is coming, in ten months Columbo earthquake first [then] Ceylon sunk [into the] sea.*' This prophecy was to be fulfilled on 16 October 1907,
- Bob Jones guilty of sexual abuse and fornication at the height of the Kansas City Prophets fiasco.
- Earl Paulk: Influential Charismatic leader and Word Faith heretic. A group of women in his church alleged that they had had sexual relations with him then one filed a lawsuit in 2001 claiming that he molested her. In 2005 a married woman church member sued him for sexual manipulation. Paulk said that spiritually exalted leaders can have multiple sexual relationships and it isn't adultery.
- Catholic Apostolic Church: proto-Charismatic church in Victorian London. Despotic authoritarianism by apostles and prophets ruined many lives and spawned heresies. Caused a major scandal before it withered.
- Paul Cain: prophesied that a revival would begin in London in October 1990. Later relieved of ministry for alcoholism and homosexuality.
- Smith Wigglesworth - predicted Christ's return before 1900 and told people that he would not die but live to be raptured. Once punched a man with great force to exorcise a demon – the man died three days later.
- Kathryn Kuhlman: had an affair with a married man who divorced his wife to marry her. She then divorced him. Stated to feel 'oneness' with the pope.
- Benny Hinn: occultism¹⁹ and heresy. Claimed to heal many people who died shortly afterwards. Rich lifestyle. Investigated for tax evasion. Was divorced after admitting an 'inappropriate relationship' with leader Paula White (also divorced). This followed reporters witnessing Hinn and White spending three nights in a hotel under assumed names (i.e. lying).
- Eddie Long: Was accused of seducing four young men in exchange for cars, clothes and trips. He settled out of court. His wife filed for divorce.
- Kong Hee: founder of a mega church in Singapore, was convicted for embezzlement of church funds and sentenced to eight years in prison.
- David Yonggi Cho: leader of the world's biggest church, was sentenced to three years in prison (suspended) for corruption in 2014. He was responsible for \$12 million in losses.

¹⁸ Stated 'every sin that ever was on the Earth was caused by a woman ... the very lowest creature on the Earth'. Said that women were not worth 'a good clean bullet'.

¹⁹ E.g. necromancy – he gets an 'anointing' from Kathryn Kuhlman's grave.

- Kenneth Copeland: occultism and much heresy. Super-rich lifestyle with multiple homes, limousines and private aircraft. Said that God was the greatest failure in the universe. Denied that Jesus' death paid the price of sin. He has his own airport and a fleet of planes, one of which alone cost \$60 million.
- Jim Bakker: Spent over \$270,000 to silence a former employee who accused him of rape. Embezzled money from his ministry. Ended up in jail.
- Billy James Hargis: In 1974 Time magazine alleged that he had seduced two members of his college (one a male, one a female); the pair were engaged.
- Peter Popoff: investigators discovered that his words of knowledge were communicated to him by radio via an earpiece. After this he became bankrupt.
- Todd Bentley, guilty of adultery and violence at the height of the 'Lakeland Revival.
- Roberts Liardon: Prominent Charismatic leader admitted that he had a homosexual relationship but continued in ministry.
- Douglas Goodman: leader of Victory Christian Centre in the UK was sentenced to three and a half years for indecent assault on four female church members.
- Ted Haggard: Eventually admitted to long-term homosexual relationships and using homosexual prostitutes.
- Zachary Tims: admitted a yearlong affair with a stripper that led to his divorce. In 2011 he was found dead in a hotel in a suspected drug overdose.
- Gerald Coates guilty of multiple failed false prophecies, some that caused major social panic. Yet he continued to live in a former stately home as head of a denomination. Prophesied that a revival would take place in Westminster Chapel in October 1996, and that an earthquake would devastate Lake Taupo, New Zealand in April 1991.
- Gilbert Deya: a Kenyan Charismatic and leader of a denomination in the UK. Claimed to produce miracle babies for money. It turned out that these were kidnapped from Kenya. The Kenyan authorities are trying to get him extradited for kidnapping. He was also charged with sex crimes including three counts of rape and an assault on a minor.
- Tony Alamo: had a cultic ministry to young people suffering from homosexuality, abortion issues and sexual deviance. Exploited children. Convicted of 10 sex trafficking offences relating to minors and given 175 years in prison.
- Lonnie Frisbee: a practising homosexual and former witch (later he denounced Christianity and returned to witchcraft) who was the origin of the Signs and Wonders Movement and a key person in the success of both Calvary Chapel and The Vineyard. He died of AIDS.²⁰
- Phil Sharp: Messianic Christian leader and prophet. Had multiple wives. Lived in a commune. Recently committed suicide in Africa.

When will people learn from history and avoid all prophetic movements?

Note that many false prophets die bad deaths (see later). These include dying of AIDS, dying of alcoholism in a dreary hotel, dying of a drug overdose, dying in public shame, dying bankrupt, dying in prison; and so on. God's judgment on false prophets is severe; both now and in the future judgment.

²⁰ See my paper 'Lonnie Frisbee'.

Signs of Bible denying churches

From an assessment of the groups in history that have denied or abandoned the Bible in practice, we can state that the following typical characteristics that can appear in such churches.

- The use of alternative scripture sources for authority.
- Adoption of false sacred texts.
- Authoritarian church leaders of various sorts.
- Women church leaders.
- Formal female prophets in leadership.
- Occult characteristics: falling over backwards, frenzied dancing, jerking, uncontrolled laughter, uncontrolled screaming, animal noises etc.
- Expectation of miracles and settling for fraudulent healings.
- Antinomianism and licentiousness.
- Sexual immorality, polygamy, promiscuity.
- A lack of academic intelligence. [Very often in history supposed prophets have been either illiterate or poorly educated.]

Replacements for God's Word

In short, in every case the alternative for the inspired word of God found in the Bible are the words of men puffed up to have a false authority.

Authoritarian leaders

This is where the authoritative words of a leader in a church or a cult become the driving force of the direction of the church. In the worst cases these words actually form doctrine. Instead of a church leader exposing the teaching of the Bible, he introduces his own agenda and doctrines, which the church accepts because they have submitted to the authority of a man.

Examples: the pope in the Roman Church. David Berg in the Children of God. Mary Baker Eddy in Christian Science. Ann Lee in the Shakers. In all these cases the leader established doctrines that are opposed to the Word of God.

Formal Prophets

Prophets are accepted as authoritative in various streams of the Charismatic Movement and some Pentecostal churches.

The formal office of prophet, as one who hears directly from God and passes that down to ordinary Christians, has been cancelled. There are no more authoritative prophets. Instead all God's children are prophets in Christ, the true Prophet. The idea of formal prophetic ministry is thoroughly Old Covenant and has no place in the New Covenant.

Jesus made this clear when he stated that John the Baptist was the last of the prophets. There are no more.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Matt 11 :13

The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. Lk 16:16

Personal prophecies

These are supposed authoritative and directive words from a person in the church prophesying over another person. However, there is no one that has the authority in the church to issue a direct prophecy to you or anyone else. We are all subject to one another (1 Pt 5:5) and no one has the authority to tell you how to live your life. Elders can advise and direct and even admonish, as they are respected, but not in a domineering manner (1 Pt 5:2-3).

Even apostles in the early church that did have divine authority did not act as lords over people but acted as nursing mothers (1 Thess 2:7), or fathers (1 Cor 4:15).

Each individual is responsible for his life choice to God and the Holy Spirit guides each one of us in the way that we should go, usually through the application of Scripture.

Charismatic Apostles

Charismatic apostles are nothing of the sort. A Biblical apostle is merely a worker sent out from the home church to plant and establish a new church. After this task, he returns to his home church in the rank he had before (e.g. elder). In other words, he is a missionary.

Charismatic apostles are archbishops. They act as supreme authority over denominations consisting of multiple churches; thus they have authority over local elders when there is no such Biblical authority. Charismatic apostles are a sham.

However, these false apostles generate great authority through the church system they create, which is authoritarian and cultic. Thus Charismatic apostles can end up with very significant power over gullible people.

In this authoritarian situation, it is common for Charismatic apostles to have greater authority than God's word. Very often they issue commands and strategies that oppose God's word. As such they are as dangerous as Charismatic prophets. I have personally heard one such apostle declare that his church was there to authenticate his own personal ministry as apostle. This is one of the most blasphemous arrogant things I have ever heard. The church's ministry is to be a testimony to Christ and the Gospel.

Charismatic apostles are like leaders of cults. Cults are centred around the leader who has supreme authority over the flock in every area of life. This is not only unbiblical but it hinders people from seeking their purpose from the Bible. Cults focus upon a man instead of God and leaders often pretend that they have a special revelation that is above all else.

Sometimes authoritarian and cultic leaders push people into tragedy. Such was the case with Jim Jones, a Pentecostal apostle whose control led to the suicide and murder of scores of people.

The Rhema word

This aberrant doctrine arose in the Third Wave Charismatic period, but mainly in Word of Faith circles. Since then it has become a common teaching in many Charismatic circles so that it is seen by many as axiomatic. However, no one in history ever taught such a distinction before.

The doctrine claims (with no foundation) that there are two types of word from God. The first is the *logos* which is the Biblical record of God's word. This is considered as ancient, dead and formal. Then there is the *rhema* word from God, which is an utterance or impression supplied by the Holy Spirit in a personal way for now; abbreviated as a 'now

word'. Since it is a present work of the Spirit (supposedly) then it has more authority than the written sacred word.

In some way this idea is a development of the teaching of Karl Barth and others that the Bible's words are only inspired when they are directly applied by the Spirit to form a personal revelation to the reader. It was also developed from some ideas initiated by Watchman Nee.

Firstly, there is no Scriptural support for such a doctrine. It is never articulated as such by the apostles, neither is there any support for it in the Greek text. *Rhema* and *logos* are used interchangeably in some passages' e.g Acts 10:44: 'While Peter was still speaking these words [rhema], the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word [logos]'. This verse alone destroys the idea of a special *rhema* doctrine.

Rhema is found, for example, in Matt 12:36, 18:16, 27:14; Acts 10:37, 28:25; Rm 10:8; 2 Cor 13:1; Eph 6:17. It is not common in the apostolic letters where *logos* predominates. It is used for the preaching of the Gospel in Rm 10:8 and 1 Pt 1:25; nothing like a prophetic word. It is the historic sacred text in Eph 6:17 and Heb 6:5. It is used for a person's doctrine in 2 Cor 13:1. In many places in the Gospels it simply means 'a saying'.

Secondly, there is no source of authority. Who is to say that this or that person speaks by the power of God? What if he speaks by the inspiration of Satan or is just fired up in his imagination? There is never any method of supporting such claims for authority. Furthermore, we know that many famous prophets, admired the world over, were later proved to be false workers and their famed prophecies were worthless. Just because a leader commands a large audience for a time, this means nothing.

The idea of a *rhema* 'now' word as a personal prophecy is just utter nonsense. This is not taught in Scripture and is just a modern fallacy carried out by people that do not know their Bible.

A replacement sacred text

It is surprising that any sects that developed their own scripture still claimed to be Christian. We could name the Mormons or Christian Scientists, which simply prove that denying the Bible leads one into occultism. On the other hand the Jehovah's Witness made their own twisted translation of the Bible to form a foundation for their doctrines – which is just fraud.

Many cults may not have actually produced their formal alternative sacred text but did, in effect, affirm the higher authority in practice of the words of the leader. Examples include the Children of God that followed David Berg's newsletters in disobeying Scripture and many other cults (e.g. SDA following Ellen G White or Christian Scientists following Mary Baker Eddy).

A warning from the Bible

Apart from clear doctrinal teaching that any person claiming to be a prophet who: a) utters failed prophecies²¹ and b) utters true prophecies but the effect is to lead people away from God's word,²² is to be killed, there are many examples of false prophecy and its results.

²¹ Deut 18:20-22, 'the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart,

One in particular is important (1 Kg 13). In this case the person was a genuine prophet of God who faithfully fulfilled his prophecy which was accompanied by astounding signs, including judgment and healing. Yet this prophet failed to obey a very minor instruction of the Lord (to not eat or drink until he got home). For this failure of obedience this true prophet was immediately judged and was killed by a lion (not a pleasant way to die) and was not buried with his fathers (a great dishonour).

This demonstrates the importance of faithfully sticking to all that God says, all that is in his word. It also shows how serious the condemnation of someone that fails to obey God.

The cause of this true prophet failing was actually the false prophecy of a self-styled prophet who persuaded the true prophet to disobey God and eat during the homeward journey. The testimony of a true prophet was ruined by listening to a false prophet.

Trusting in false prophet will ruin your life even if you have previously had a good testimony.

So the lessons of this story are:

- A true prophet can be ruined if he fails to obey God's word implicitly.
- False prophecy always ruins your testimony because it perverts God's word.

Modern Charismatic self-styled prophets are not true prophets, they are false prophets and charlatans. How much more serious will their judgment be for disobeying God's word? Dishonouring God's word and pretending to be a prophet is a grave issue indeed.

Conclusion

Christians are privileged above all men because they have been given written words that fully and unswervingly represent the mind of God and manifest the character of Jesus.

These words, found intact in the Bible, have been proved to be authentic and authoritative over 2,000 years. Despite continual attacks on the Bible no one has ever successfully succeeded in destroying it. These attacks included: literally trying to destroy it (e.g. by burning all available copies); attacking the accuracy of the translations of base manuscripts; denying the validity of certain schools of faithful manuscripts; denying that its contents are inspired; attacking the miraculous and supernatural events described in the text; seeking to negate its efficacy by producing dozens of rogue translations; denying that claimed authors (such as Moses) wrote the books claimed for him; and so on.

Nations that founded their culture on the Bible prospered dramatically (note the rapid development of Western Europe after the Reformation). Nations that rejected the Bible had backward cultures (which is why there is mass migration to Christian cultures). When

“How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?” -- when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him’.

22 Deut 13:1-5 , ‘If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other gods” -- which you have not known -- “and let us serve them”, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the LORD your God.’

a nation changed from a primitive country to founding policies upon the Bible, the nation began to prosper and develop (e.g. India).²³

The modern fascination with prophets and prophetic movements is nothing new. These have been around since the beginning of the church, e.g. with Montanism.²⁴ All historic prophetic movements ended up in chaos, sinfulness, and apostasy. The reason is because they are all based on trusting in men rather than God – in other words, idolatry and blasphemy.

Why would anyone not want to see the mind of God exposed in his own words? Why would anyone not want to see Christ manifest in multiple ways? The Bible is the mind of God represented in inspired words and given to men. It is a priceless gift.

If you want to grow in grace and spiritual power then you must study the Bible earnestly and seek to find more about God and his attributes. There is no shortcut to spiritual development; it only comes by arduous study of Scripture and applying its doctrines to your life.

Anyone diminishing the value of the Bible is a fraud and a false teacher. Avoid such people.

Truly prophetic people will expose what the Bible teaches and do so with the power of the Spirit. The Spirit never works without being founded upon Scripture. He inspired it and always works on the basis of it. Anyone claiming to be operating under the power of the Spirit yet demeans the Bible or denies its doctrines, is a fraud, a liar and a false worker. Avoid such.

True Christians will love the Bible because it manifests Christ. Everything in it teaches us something about the Lord. True Christians are also evidenced by their love of the Bible and their desire to obey it. Any claimed ‘Christian’ movement that denies the Bible is a work of the Devil. Be warned!

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²³ Despite its Hindu and Muslim foundation, India was changed by the benefits of the Raj and the promotion of Christian principles. It also has a significant Christian minority. The beginning of India’s development as a powerful nation only began when Christian principles began to change society – e.g. the elimination of suttee (wife burning).

²⁴ An ecstatic, prophetic, Charismatic movement based in Phrygia in the mid-2nd century.