

Signs & Wonders & Snares Oh My!

**Taking The Road Back Home
From Christian Mysticism**

April S. Fields



Eight:Twelve Publishing
Buford, Georgia



Published by Eight:Twelve Publishing - an imprint of:
Faithful Publishing
faithfulpublishing@yahoo.com

©2012 April S. Fields. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy and quote portions of this book providing the context is accompanied with the copyright notice and contact.

Scripture taken from 1901 American Standard Version in public domain.

Oswald Chambers quote from My Utmost For His Highest, April 29 - ©1992 and authorized by the Oswald Chambers Publications Association, Ltd.

(Ecclesiastes 8:12) Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his [days], yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him:

(Philippians 3:8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ

A Yellow Brick Rabbit Trail

Blessed is how I describe my life because, for many reasons, but in the context of this composition, for most of my sixty-five years, I have been able to keep my spiritual equilibrium in balance by staying far away from manmade dogma and doctrine. With the exception of the testing/sifting of one ten year period, when I became involved with the ministry of a person whom I thought had a clear anointing from God, I can claim to have had a personal relationship with Christ that had nothing to do with nor depended on religion.

My “Signs and Wonders Decade” launched in January of 1999. I was surfing on the web and came across a website crudely done but nevertheless filled with inspired teachings that simply resonated with something inside of me. I spent nearly a year just reading and marvelling at the author’s command of Scripture and spiritual insight. I finally got up the nerve to contact him by email and before too long, I was up to my neck in volunteering to help him spread his teachings.

In the first five years as a follower and devoted volunteer I was genuinely plugged in to a doctrine for the first time in my Christian walk. This was mostly because his teachings, at least in the beginning, rejected much of what churchianity was shoveling out. By

contrast, he seemed to have something new to say, refreshing, honest, and fearless. His message of God being Sovereign, completely in charge, not subject to or threatened by Satan, spoke to me in words I had not heard from other mainstream religious principles.

In spite of being a Christ follower all of my life, I felt as though I had tapped into a new kind of spiritual empowerment.

Uncharacteristically, I let my guard down and dived in, enthusiastically helping this person get his teachings on his website cleaned up and then began the process of learning how to format and publish with the intentions of getting his teachings into books. Quickly others soon joined in as the first book was circulated and in a phenomenally short time his unique interpretations were being broadcast on internet radio and published in books and on his website. But, in spite of what appeared to be God blessing this ministry, in the form of money flowing in, something turned and by the sixth year I was beginning to see tiny cracks and confusing contradictions in the doctrine. It seemed that rather than the minister being a servant of God, he had become something of a tin god himself. He felt compelled and called to work 18 hours a day, 7 days a week, micro-managing every detail of the ministry, in spite of numerous qualified volunteers. By 2005 he had reversed himself on several doctrinal issues, and he often engaged in ugly word wars with anyone who dared to challenge his authority on his website, publishing for all to read their private emails.

Whereas in the early years I was full of confidence and assurance that I was fully engaged in God's work, by the waning of the tenth year, I was beset by angst and conflict. I stopped listening to the weekly teaches because they no longer enlightened and fed me. I felt a vague sense of stagnation along with growing doubts about my own salvation. What I understood later was that I had been effectively segregated from a personal relationship with Christ, and

amalgamated into another person's interpretations of what it meant to be Christ-like but in a new and revised version of legalism, touted as perfectionism.

As anyone who has been brain-washed and then broken free can tell you, once you have been indoctrinated you are more likely to doubt yourself before you dare to doubt the indoctrinator. Over the waning months of 2008 I was at a breaking point and I cried out to God for a clear direction. On New Years Day of 2009 I woke up to hear in my head, "If you discovered [name] teachings today, would you follow him?" I sat up and said aloud, "NO!" That morning I composed and sent a vague resignation letter by email. When his initial gentle pleadings did not change my mind, he quickly turned ugly, and bared his teeth and then his true dark side revealed itself.

I can sum up a half dozen ranting emails by affirming that his response to my leaving was not representative behavior of a man of God. Clearly his interest was not in the condition of my soul but rather how it might reflect badly on him for anyone to leave his ministry. Further, instead of wishing me well, he accused me of having a "Jezebel Spirit" and thereby deflecting all blame to me.

In the past three years, since I moved on, many other devoted followers have seen the truth and left this man and the Signs and Wonders ministry that he rules with an intimidating knowledge of Scripture he wields like a weapon to control his flock. Some claim it has become a cult, and from personal experience I cannot argue against that it meets most of the criteria of a cult. Should it be exposed? I don't know. God assured me, when I left, that those who would hear His voice would come out just as I had, and, indeed, many have.

Perhaps he and those who continue to justify him, and routinely purge his failed prophecies from his website, are now being used to sift those who simply cannot/will not hear and see. I am not

sure that is something I am mandated to interfere with. I do know he has openly, in his website and on broadcasts, spoken curses on people who have left and has claimed, in his website, that he believes that no one could be blessed who leaves his ministry. That alone should be enough to make people run the other way, but instead he seems to continue to attract followers. I have been told people are still selling their homes and moving to his location. God alone knows why.

Unfortunately, he is not unique. There are many others worse than he. As we progress into this final era it surely will worsen as the call to come out will be misinterpreted into a hundred siren calls to follow yet another Jesus.

Regardless of the distress and hassle of disengaging from someone after having worked for and trusted him for ten years, in spite of the time it took to recover, I know that I learned more than I lost for the experience. All things come together for good for those who love the Lord. And this is something I do feel mandated to share with anyone who will pay attention.

When I was finally able to break free, by His grace, I wisely chose to retreat into solitude, to get completely quiet with God again. I didn't run to some other source looking for a replacement. I didn't seek to bring this man down or garner people to my side. I didn't need support or vindication. All I wanted was my personal relationship with Christ restored. I simply stood silent in repentance for having allowed myself to be pulled off the narrow road down an exciting rabbit trail.

It took at least a year to regain my prayer life. As I slowly stumbled down the unmarked road back, eventually the unnecessary layers of a man's doctrine slowly dropped off of me and fell away, I found I could talk to Jesus again and He would talk back in the way I can hear. The single most significant and affirming truth that was given to me that helped me to heal, was understanding that I had not

received my salvation from, by, or through the Signs and Wonders Man. I received my salvation by the mercy of Christ crucified.

For the record, I do believe God gives us signs. Prophetic dreams and visions are given to warn and prepare His people, most particularly when they are in desperation mode. But Satan is always looking for ways to minimize and obfuscate real prophecy and he does this by mimicry and counterfeiting. What better way to hide true warnings than to flood the sheep with a tsunami of false prophecy?

The most effective liars know the most believable lie is best offered up with a kernel of truth at its center. Recognizing the fakes takes practiced discernment, learning to listen with sharpened hearing. We are warned to test the spirits but that simply means we are to allow the Holy Spirit operating within us to guide us and alert us when we are being enticed and lied to. Our responsibility is to pay attention instead of allowing our ears to be tickled and our passions swept away by tintilating spiritualism. Flesh is weak when it comes to the attraction of anything sensational because the flesh, by its nature, is sensual.

When I was young in Christ, I readily confess I thought I needed little signs, physical things I asked for to confirm the directions I felt I had been given. It's easy to rationalize this by claiming I simply didn't trust my faith. But as a spiritual grown-up now I understand that this really translates to childlike, immature faith. I believed God could do anything, I just wasn't sure He'd do it for me.

I realized eventually, as I matured, that there is a time for things that children need, like a security blanket, but sooner or later we must grow up and put away childish things. Faith is not faith if it is constantly needing affirmation by signs. Do not forget that Satan knows how to use signs and wonders too. He knows how to feed and appeal to what our SELF craves and/or fears and show us what we

want to see. It is so important for us to know ourselves, especially our weaknesses, lest we be tempted and tested by them. It is in our weaknesses where we are vulnerable and where Satan is allowed to manipulate us, and, in the very least, he draws our attention and focus away from those things we ought to be seeking and trusting. This, in turn, dulls our spirit, not enhances it. We might feel all tingly, exhilarated, spiritually awed and in tune, but these are clear signs that we are in tune to the wrong spirit.

Once we are successfully pulled away from our real source, we forget where our strength comes from and then we are weakened to the point that we stop seeking it altogether and, thus Satan racks up yet another win.

(2 Corinthians 10:4-5) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

(2 Corinthians 11:4) For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Prophecies, Dreams & Visions

During my recovery from leaving a ten year stint volunteering for a Signs and Wonders ministry, first and foremost, I had to face and identify the enticements and snares that pulled me in to insure that I would never be similarly vulnerable ever again. No one likes to admit having been duped but I cannot minimize my own bad judgment in choosing to align myself with an individual's teachings, regardless how enlightened they seemed to me at the time.

However, in all fairness, in the beginning, there was enough Scriptural truth in the foundation of his message so that I can see, in retrospect, that I was drawn in by my own inherent soft spots, gently lulled into a state of spiritual semi-consciousness and finally coaxed into the exciting world of heightened spirituality, where demons and familiar spirits and the study and awareness of evil becomes the real focus, disguised as spiritual warfare, of course. I forgot, or at least temporarily set aside, the previous decades of listening, trusting and obeying the still small voice and I began seeking and trusting instead the exciting call of prophesy, dreams and visions.

In humbled retrospect, I know it was a subtle process, so very subtle, my conversion to Signs and Wonders Theology. It was both occult and legalism but cleaned up in a new package of stunning

reinterpretation of Scripture reinforced with just enough adrenaline pumping supernatural infusion. Miracles! How do you argue with miracles? Healings, inanimate objects repaired! I now refer to all of this as Christian Mysticism, not to be confused with genuine healings which are very real. But I had never been exposed to the language of evangelical or fundamental Christianity/Religion, so I became immersed in new words and phrases that planted notions in my head about “proper” Christian precepts and living.

Though I realize there is nothing wrong with Christian terms and words, I’ve come to understand now that sometimes these words and phrases are cleverly employed as psychological triggers. “Thus saith the Lord” is one such phrase that has been established to instantly assure the listener that the words coming forth are irrefutably from the Lord Himself.

In the years, since retreating back to my original relationship with Christ, I have done so older but wiser, repentant and certainly with a more fine-tuned discernment. But no one can really explain to someone else hard earned wisdom and what to avoid. People usually need their own experiences in order to learn. But I fear we have less time to waste, running to and fro after the flood of false teachings and doctrines that are readily available in books, websites and audio media. Some of which provide a nice income for the authors and some are even free, which can be a hidden snare as well.

The only real tell is not always instantly visible, even with discernment. If I had to set a criteria I’d first look to whether or not the message is timeless (applicable to any age) or is it hooked into current headlines. Do the prophecies set dates? Do the dreams and visions name names or vilify individuals? Does the messenger assert authority like a boss rather than a servant?

If, after failing the first tests, I still have questions about the veracity of a word presented as prophetic, I ask one last question:

What is the harm if it isn't really coming from God if it sounds good?

This can be identified as Deception by Spiritual Arrogance. Those who anoint and appoint themselves as prophets of God are wide open for familiar spirits to take over. If they are able to attract a following their overt good words are an enticement to believe other things. Not so good. When someone claims to be a spokesman for God, where is the accountability when dreams, visions and prophecies are not fulfilled?

How easy it is to justify and make excuses for someone just because you have a sense of loyalty to him or her. Their authority and false teachings then become distractions away from the Gospel, which then pull followers away from what we are supposed to be focused on. But more often than not, even when the truth is plain as day, people stay mired in false teachings, continue to believe the wildest prophecies, make excuse when they fail, and never ask the hard questions because it's just too hard to admit that they have been deceived. Many fall away in despair and lose whatever faith they began with.

This, then, is the harm false prophets do to the Body as a whole-when parts are damaged-the classic tactic of divide and conquer.

No doubt we do live in precarious times. Technology has made it possible like never before for humans to be able to communicate with so many so quickly. Ideas, religions, doctrines and self-proclaimed leaders rise and garner to themselves willing followers both in bonafide denominational organized religions and errant off-the-path cults. Wounded, disillusioned Christians often leave denominational churches only to reattach themselves to some other kind of religious bondage sooner or later. Many are attracted by the excitement of signs and wonders and "thus sayeth the Lord" prophecies.

Unfortunately spiritually emotional people are vulnerable because they prefer to believe and trust someone else, even in the stark face of real undeniable evidence of wrong-doing, than hold that person's words and behaviors up to the hard light of Scripture. What they want is what has always been a snare for seekers/believers, they want a flesh and blood leader to tell them what and how to believe. They want a prophet who is God's spokesperson to herd them rather than take the scarier lonely road to study and humble themselves to hear from the Lord themselves. Maybe it just boils down to not really believing that God can and will speak to us individually.

Well, apparently it's easy to find a leader. All one has to do is pick one of hundreds presented on the web and through forwarded emails. The wolves are out there prowling for prey. All you have to do is find the one that is saying what you want to hear and you've got yourself someone and some thing to believe in.

Warning: Do so at your own peril.

(Jeremiah 23:16) Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.

(Deuteronomy 13:1) If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and he give thee a sign or a wonder, (13:2) and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; (13:3) thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or unto that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (13:4) Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear

him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

(Matthew 7:15) Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. (7:16) By their fruits ye shall know them. Do [men] gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (7:17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Not wanting to throw the baby out with the bath water, make no mistake, there is an unseen spiritual world and we do battle against dark principalities. But what is more important to know is that we aren't mandated to do anything but have faith and trust that Christ is our defender. If He be for us, who can be against us? I like to believe that not even Satan and his minions can see you if you are hiding in the light of Christ. But you cannot hide in the light even as you continue to delve and dabble in the darkness, giving more attention to things of darkness than they are due.

The inevitable fruit of this kind of activity is fear and control. Look to the fruit. If you are following the teachings of someone that you are not sure of, but you are afraid to question, challenge or leave, you are in bondage to fear. And fear is not from God.

(2 Timothy 1:7) For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.

I know that some will read this and instantly relate because they have also learned from hard experience that signs and wonders have their place in a believer's life but can be dangerously addictive. Prophecy junkies abound and the numbers who are addicted to this spiritual cocaine are growing daily. I also know there are those who

will reject this call to wisdom for different reasons, may God open their eyes before it is too late.

But to those who are just beginning to dabble perhaps because you are disenchanted with religion as usual, I admonish you to choose prayerfully and wisely who and what you follow. While there are Scriptures that reference the reality of Satan and his fallen angels, there are many more Scriptures that point to Christ within us being the center of all things that we should be focused on.

I struggled with whether or not to include my personal history. On the one hand, I don't think it is relevant to this accounting but on the other hand, it is pertinent to the bigger story, which is about where we all are in what I refer to as this Era of the Last Beast. There is no debate that apostate religion has morphed into a devouring beast and, as such, it is important to know that one can be a real Christian without being associated with a church or a doctrine, or without becoming a follower of a human man's ministry. But no matter how strong your faith, nor how independent you are, anyone can be fooled by a wolf in sheep's clothing. At least once.

(Matthew 12:38-39) 38 Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Back To The Beginning

A few months into my ninth year, my family had good reason to leave the Baptist Church we had been attending. I visited a few over the years but I never joined another church again. Nevertheless, I don't recall not having Jesus to depend on or go to so I did not develop my relationship with Christ by or through a denominational doctrine. My mother and I had "church" by ourselves. We read the Bible, sang hymns and prayed.

From the age of ten I established a discipline of reading the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and then starting over again. I was not aware that as I aged in body I was also growing in the spirit and therefore in the year or so it took me to reread a Scripture, I had matured enough to receive a better understanding and I often would read a Scripture that I had read many times and see it as though I had never read it before.

Even now, I never get over the humbling sensation of having a word of knowledge open up to me through the Spirit of the Word though I have read the letter of that word dozens of times. The body finally stops growing but the capacity for the spirit to grow does not end until you draw your final breath.

As I gained chronological years and spiritual muscle, I had a vague sense that I was in a type of wilderness, separated from religion, but I couldn't define it as such and it wasn't until many years later that I fully appreciated how that shaped me for this era. Isolated as I was, I still felt there were others like me, somewhere, and I hoped that one day I'd get to meet them. I admit it was a little lonely for spiritual fellowship as an outcast, but I was blessed to have had a normal, fulfilling life and all that includes, marriage, children, grandchildren.

It was decidedly more difficult when I was young, growing up without church affiliation, because I often had to dodge the inevitable question, "So, where do you attend church?" When I was immature and less confident in the "why", I usually gave a canned response, "I haven't found a good church yet", rather than telling the truth, i.e., "I don't need religion, I have a personal relationship with Christ." In retrospect, even in my tender forming stages I guess I fully understood that answer would not only not fly, it would surely have opened a debate I was not yet mature enough to defend myself against.

While I wasn't strong enough to support my position then, I completely understood that: God = Religion = Church to the masses. If you don't go to church, you can't have religion and therefore you can't possibly be saved. Though this concept counters (*Mark 14:58*) *We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands,* it is commonly accepted, subliminally, that Jesus lives inside the walls of a church building, thereby making it holy, and further, He only speaks to whomever is in charge of that building, and/or, on a grander scale, that denomination. At least that is the conclusion one can draw from the condition, power and influence of what is considered to be "The Church" nowadays.

In spite of the isolation and sense of rejection, all through the years I hung on and remained held out. Now, not only am I confident in the “why” I am so grateful that God segregated me from what I did not know at the time that the Christian church was slowly evolving into, i.e., not just religion but counterfeit religion, almost identical in nature to Judaism as was administered to the Jews by the Pharisees of the first century AD.

Apparently it is much easier to recognize this as an outsider looking in than someone deeply invested in all things church.

Over the years, as I was being gently shaped outside of religion, my curiosity about religion caused me to study it in general, Christian religions, specifically. There are many. When I began my research, I was already too formed up to be enticed by any denominational creed so I managed to study within a safe degree of objectivity. I love to dig into the under layers, the history, ferreting out and shining a light on the forgotten things, situations, times and people that launched a tenet. Historically speaking, humans quickly lose sight of the beginnings of a belief system, usually within less than 100 years of its start. Christianity is no different. Even the first century church, not even yet referred to as Christian at that time, had its issues with those who were determined to reshape it, to overwhelm and dismiss everything Christ taught. Judaizers infiltrated the Church at Galatia, seeking to reincorporate Jewish law into the doctrine of the followers of The Way, among other things. Paul warned against this over and over.

So, in less than 100 years after Christ came, taught, was sacrificed and rose to completely fulfill and put an end to the Mosaic Law, those who preferred rigid dictums and rules were already working as hard as they could to change and improve the truth, to amalgamate and reassemble the New Covenant to pull the sheep away from the simple Gospel of Christ crucified and make it more complex and

compliant with the old Law. It should not come as a surprise that over the centuries, it hasn't gotten better. New off-shoots come and go periodically; others evolve and build on the ruins to create something else. The Protestant Revolution/Revival was the biggest turning upside down of what had previously been dubbed Christianity in the form of Roman Catholicism. Now, centuries later, we have an evolved Roman Catholicism and multiple interpretations of Protestantism - none of which represents Christ Crucified as was the original intent.

It seems that, in His infinite patience and mercy, God keeps giving mankind opportunities to come back to Him. And mankind does as it always does, takes the opportunity and then runs off with it, reinterpreting it to suit the sensibilities of the most worshipped idol in history: the god of SELF. And the god of SELF is just a facade that the spirit of antichrist works quietly, freely within. Self loves to be puffed up, to be petted and made to feel important. Self loves to have "extra, secret knowledge" Self loves power over others. Those who are convinced they are "prophets" and who believe they hear from God often feel empowered with all of these added on enhancements. But all of these traits are in complete disobedience to Christ.

(Matthew 16:24-25) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Humans are attracted to the concept of “seeing” and “knowing” the future, and that includes Christians who are told over and over again that it’s not what we should be seeking. Oswald Chambers addressed this issue in *My Utmost for His Highest*.

Our natural inclination is to be so precise—trying always to forecast accurately what will happen next—that we look upon uncertainty as a bad thing. We think that we must reach some predetermined goal, but that is not the nature of the spiritual life. The nature of the spiritual life is that we are certain in our uncertainty. Consequently, we do not put down roots. Our common sense says, “Well, what if I were in that circumstance?” We cannot presume to see ourselves in any circumstance in which we have never been.

Certainty is the mark of the commonsense life—gracious uncertainty is the mark of the spiritual life. To be certain of God means that we are uncertain in all our ways, not knowing what tomorrow may bring. This is generally expressed with a sigh of sadness, but it should be an expression of breathless expectation. We are uncertain of the next step, but we are certain of God. As soon as we abandon ourselves to God and do the task He has placed closest to us, He begins to fill our lives with surprises. When we become simply a promoter or a defender of a particular belief, something within us dies. That is not believing God—it is only believing our belief about Him. Jesus said, “. . . unless you . . . become as little children . . .” (Matthew 18:3). The spiritual life is the life of a child. We are not uncertain of God, just uncertain of what He is going to do next. If our certainty is only in our beliefs, we develop a sense of self-righteousness, become overly critical, and are limited by the view that our beliefs are complete and settled. But when we have the right relationship with God, life is full of spontaneous, joyful uncertainty and expectancy. Jesus said, “. . . believe also in Me” (John 14:1), not, “Believe certain things about Me”. Leave everything to Him and it will be gloriously and graciously uncertain how He will come in—but you can be certain that He will come. Remain faithful to Him.

For a number of years I have trusted and depended on a handful of God’s tried and true Bible-based teachers and servants for encouragement and edification. While I am sure there are more than I am aware of I list these links for anyone who is searching for foundational, spiritually rich guidance. Interestingly enough, the first four of these good men are already with the Lord, and yet their teachings still feed the flock. This is what I refer to as “timeless” teachings.

A.W. Tozer Devotionals

<http://www.cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer>

Oswald Chambers Devotionals

<http://utmost.org/>

David Wilkerson Devotionals

<http://davidwilkersontoday.blogspot.com/>

T. Austin-Sparks

<http://www.austin-sparks.net>

Michael Boldea

<http://mikeboldea.blogspot.com>

<http://www.handofhelp.com/index.php>

Ultimately, the best lesson I earned for my experience is that we don’t need a “new” thing - we just need the original thing.

