

# Think on These Things

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## Doctrinal Distinctives of the Charismatic Movement, Part I

by Gary E. Gilley, Pastor-teacher

The focus of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements has always been centered on shared experiences, not theology. This is especially true of those in the charismatic movement which transcends all denominations. Thus, for example, there are Catholic charismatics, who believe in a sacramental form of salvation, and there are Lutheran charismatics who believe that infant baptism is redemptive, and there are Baptist charismatics who believe they are saved through faith alone. While these three types of charismatics might vary widely in their views of the fundamentals of their faith, what they have in common is an experience — the experience of speaking in tongues. While all charismatics do not personally speak in tongues, all would accept the validity of tongues-speaking. This experience does have a doctrinal framework, of course, which could be expressed in the following two statements:

**The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace that brings power in the life of the believer.**

**The evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.**

The logical conclusion of these statements is that a person who has not been baptized by the Holy Spirit is a "second class" Christian and is not experiencing the power of God in their life. If the charismatics are correct, an important ingredient is missing from the spiritual life of most Christians. If they are wrong they have elevated a questionable at best, or at worst, a fraudulent practice to the centerpiece of Christian living. It would seem vital that believers would want an answer to this puzzle, but such is often not the case. Instead one finds an ambivalence in most circles — If speaking in tongues works for you then fine, if not, no big deal. But we are not talking about the latest fad in sneakers here, we are discussing an important element of truth. If the baptism of the Holy Spirit is truly a subsequent experience, with the evidence of speaking in tongues, then all Christians should seek this baptism. If it

is not, then this theology should be exposed and denounced. One can't have it both ways.

The biblical foundation for the unique theological position of charismatics is found almost entirely in the book of Acts.

Four passages are critical:

*Acts 2:1-8* — The day of Pentecost where tongues were first spoken.

*Acts 8:14-18* — In Samaria where the new believers did not receive the Holy Spirit until the apostles came, even though there is no record of tongues being spoken.

*Acts 10:44-48* — At Cornelius' house when the Gentiles received the Spirit.

*Acts 19:1-7* — When John's disciples received the Spirit at conversion and spoke in tongues.

A careful study of the above passages, and others, will reveal that it is extremely difficult to base doctrine on the book of Acts. Acts is a book of history, tracing the transitional nature of the early church. Note the transitional nature and the diversity of the reception of the Holy Spirit in these four passages. For example, there is no speaking in tongues in Acts 8; no wind or fire except in Acts 2; some, who were already saved, received the Spirit, along with some new converts, etc. However now, according to Romans 8:9 and I Corinthians 12:13, the Holy Spirit is always received at the moment of conversion.

It should also be noted that most converts, even in the book of Acts, did not speak in tongues. The following believers apparently did not speak in tongues: 3000 at Pentecost (2:41), 5000 men (4:4); the eunuch (8:35-38); Saul (9:3-18); Sergius Paulus (13:7-12); at Antioch (13:43); Lydia (16:14,15); Philippian jailer (16:27-34); Berea and Thessalonica (17:4,12); Athens (17:34); Crispus (18:8); and at Ephesus (19:18). "It would be impossible to build a consistent doctrine about the Holy Spirit from Acts. This is why the epistles were written — to give us doctrine. No apostolic sermon contains an appeal to be baptized with the Spirit" — J.R.W. Stott.

The epistles clearly teach that the purpose of Spirit

baptism is to bring us into the body of Christ — Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26,27; Ephesians 4:5 (one baptism); Colossians 2:12; I Corinthians 12:13 (12:14-26 point out that not all speak in tongues).

So how do charismatics deal with the apostolic teaching that Spirit baptism occurs at the moment of conversion, brings us into the body of Christ, and is not accompanied with tongues? They deal with it by teaching that there are actually two Spirit baptisms in the New Testament. This view holds that the first baptism, called the baptism of repentance, happens to all believers and brings them into the body of Christ. The second baptism is the baptism with the Holy Spirit or endowment with power, which is signified by tongues. The first is baptism **by** the Holy Spirit, the second is **with** the Holy Spirit. The charismatic position is that when Paul referred to tongues in I Corinthians 12-14, he was speaking to believers who had received the first baptism (by the Spirit) and were thus part of the body of Christ. As part of the body of Christ some had received the gift of speaking in tongues — but not all. Obviously then, not every believer will receive the gift of speaking in tongues. On the other hand when a Christian has received the second baptism (“with” the Holy Spirit) the evidence will be speaking in tongues as a SIGN of that experience. Therefore, according to this view, some Christians have the gift of tongues, but all Christian who have received the second baptism will evidence this fact with at least an initial experience of speaking in tongues. It is easy to see that the clear teaching of the epistles is being overturned by a poor understanding of the book of Acts. Even Acts refutes this “two-baptism” view when in 11:17 Luke declares the tongues “experiences” of chapters 2 and 10, which were signs, as gifts. Tongues, in the early church, were “sign-gifts.” What they were signs of will be discussed below.

In addition, opposition to this position is found in Ephesians 4:5 which says that there is **only one baptism**. The distinction between “by” and “with” cannot be sustained. The same Greek preposition “en” is used both in I Corinthians 12:13 and in Acts 1:5. In I Corinthians 12:7-13 we are told that God has already given the gifts as He wills. He tells us that we do not all have the same gifts (read 12:4, 7-11, 14-18 and 28-31). In all of the New Testament only I Corinthians 12:13 explains the purpose of the baptism of the Spirit, which is to bring us into the body (church) of Christ. To claim that its purpose is to give us power from God, and is evidenced by speaking in tongues, is without biblical basis.

### **The Purpose of Biblical Tongues**

Most New Testament scholars agree that tongues in the New Testament were foreign languages — not incoherent gibberish. Acts 2:4-8 is the only passage in the New Testament that sheds light on the nature of tongues. At that event those who heard tongues spoken by the apostles

were able to understand them in their own language. The apostles apparently spoke in languages they did not understand — but they spoke in known languages, understandable to the listeners.

Why did God use tongues in the early church? Much debate has taken place over this question. The major theories are presented in the following few paragraphs, with a short commentary following each theory:

#### ***The First Theory — Church Edification***

The idea is that the gift of tongues was and is given for the edifying of other believers. However, the whole purpose of I Corinthians 14:1-19 is to emphasize that tongues were worthless for this purpose.

#### ***The Second Theory — Evangelization***

At Pentecost it was Peter’s gospel message — not tongues — that brought people to Christ. With Cornelius (Acts 10) it was new Christians who spoke in tongues and no unsaved people were present. At Ephesus there was no indication that any unsaved people were present when tongues were spoken (Acts 19:6). Tongues at Corinth were clearly not evangelistic. In fact, Paul remarked that unbelievers observing them would likely be repelled, just as they were at Pentecost (I Corinthians 14:23 and Acts 2:13).

#### ***The Third Theory — Proof of Spirit Baptism***

In the New Testament many believers are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit, with no mention of speaking in tongues. Spiritual baptism always has reference to our baptism into Christ. The difference between baptism and filling is found in Ephesians 5:18. We are commanded to be filled, therefore it is not universal among Christians, whereas baptism is.

#### ***The Fourth Theory — Devotional***

Paul said that he would rather pray and sing with the Spirit **and** the mind than with just the Spirit alone (I Corinthians 14:14-15). The purpose of tongues is as a sign (Mark 16:17), not for personal spiritual growth.

#### ***The Fifth Theory — Condemnation***

According to I Corinthians 14:21, which quotes Isaiah 28:11,12, tongues were a sign to the nation of Israel that God was bringing judgment upon them for their sinfulness and rejection of Christ.

#### ***The Sixth Theory — Apostolic Authentication***

Since, on the testimony of Jesus, tongues were a sign, it remains only to determine what they were a sign of (Mark 16:17). In II Corinthians 12:11-13 Paul appeals to signs and wonders as the proofs of the apostolic office. If that is what they were, then that is their purpose. No unusual manifestation of the Spirit’s presence (no sign) ever occurred except in the presence of an apostle or by those who had been directly ministered to by an apostle.

*I believe that a combination of these*

*final two theories ring true.*

**Tongues, as a sign gift, point out two things: the judgment of Israel, and in a secondary sense, to the authority of the apostles.**

### **Support for the Apostolic Authentication Theory**

**There are five facts that show the distinctive character of the apostolic office:**

- ⇒ The church was founded upon them (Ephesians 2:20).
- ⇒ They were eyewitnesses of Christ’s resurrection (Acts 1:22 and I Corinthians 15:7-9).
- ⇒ They were special authorized agents (Luke 6:13).
- ⇒ The fact of their appointment was authenticated by signs. The absence of miracles would invalidate the claim of one who asserted that he was an apostle (II Corinthians 12:12 and Acts 5:11-13).
- ⇒ The fact of their apostolic authority (II Peter 3:2, 15-16; I Corinthians 4:12 and II Thessalonians 3:6,14).

### **Tongues as a sign**

**Mark 16:17-20** — While the canonical authority of this text is questionable, we nevertheless find that signs were to be manifested by the apostles and by those to whom they ministered. In verse 20 Mark already (by AD 68) considered these signs past.

**Acts 2:14-21; 4:3** — Only the apostles spoke in tongues or performed signs on these occasions.

**Acts 8:13** — Philip was not an apostle but had the apostles’ “hands” laid upon him (6:6). However, his converts performed no signs or wonders. Only when apostles came from Jerusalem and laid hands upon Philip’s converts was there any unusual demonstration of the Spirit’s presence in them (8:15-17).

*Note: Acts records new groups (Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles and Old Testament believers) in the initial act of receiving the Holy Spirit which would later be the mark of all Christians (Romans 8:9).*

**Acts 10** — God employed a series of supernatural visions in order to have Peter be the one to present the Gospel to Cornelius.

**Acts 19** — 19:2 should be translated, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” These men were not yet converted. In 19:6 tongues came to authenticate Paul as an apostle.

**II Corinthians 12:12** — Some at Corinth who had been converted under Paul received the gift of tongues to validate Paul’s claim to apostleship.

### **All signs are temporary**

Jesus predicted signs only in association with the

apostolic ministry. Mark considered the signs as past (AD 68). Hebrews 2:3-4 was written around the same time and also considered the signs as past.

The last recorded miracles in the New Testament took place about AD 58 (Acts 28:3-9). In AD 60 Epaphroditus became sick but he was not healed miraculously (Philippians 2:25-30). About AD 62 Timothy had a stomach ailment which remained uncured (I Timothy 5:23). Around AD 64 one of Paul’s associates was so seriously ill that Paul had to leave him behind, uncured (II Timothy 4:20). Yet earlier Paul had been instrumental even in restoring life to the dead.

### **Some gifts were temporary**

All signs may be considered as spiritual gifts, but not all spiritual gifts were signs. The gifts of miracles, healings and tongues were sign gifts. All the sign gifts were temporary (compare Acts 11:17 with Mark 16). As with the miracles of Jesus, they served to authenticate the position and authority of the apostles.

### **Support for the Judgment Upon Israel Theory**

The argument runs as follows: God had warned Israel on several occasions (Isaiah 28:11,12; 33:19; Deuteronomy 28:49,50; Jeremiah 5:15) that when they found themselves invaded and surrounded by those speaking in languages they did not understand, it was a sign to them that they were being judged by God for their disobedience. When, at Pentecost and in the early years of the church, tongues were spoken in the presence of Jews, it would be a sign to them that judgment was coming because of their rejection of the Messiah. That judgment came with the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple and the scattering of the Jewish people in AD 70. At that point the purpose of tongues (as a sign to disobedient Israel) had been fulfilled and therefore tongues ceased. This, I believe, was the primary purpose for tongues.

### **Tongues Have Ceased Biblical Evidence**

I Corinthians 13:8-10 *“Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.”*

This passage was written around AD 55, and clearly states that tongues shall cease. The question is when? The answer to that question is often seen as hinging on the meaning of the word “perfect” in the text.

### **What is that which is perfect? Here are three views:**

**The Rapture** (a view often held by tongue speakers)  
However, the term “that which is perfect” cannot refer to

the Lord because of the neuter articles. It can be translated “when the perfect thing arrives.” This view also contradicts other Scripture which states that there will be prophecy after the rapture — during the Tribulation (Revelation 11:3-13) and during the Millennial Age (Joel 2:28).

#### **The Canon**

Not even the New Testament allows us to know fully, there is much that we still do not know.

#### **The Eternal State**

This is when we will see face to face, and is the best understanding of “perfect.” The passage is therefore teaching that both prophecy and supernatural knowledge will cease forever at the point when God ushers in the eternal state. But carefully notice that tongues are not named among those gifts which are said to be made inoperative by the arrival of the perfect. Therefore, tongues could cease prior to this event. With prophecy and knowledge the verb “shall cease,” meaning “to lay aside” or “render inoperative” is used. With tongues a different verb is used meaning “to stop” or “they will be done away” It carries with it the idea of a natural cessation.

It is also important to note the voice changes: “will be done away,” is in the passive voice, meaning that they will be forced to stop by an outside agent (i.e. that which is perfect). However, “cease” is in the middle voice, which allows for the possibility that, they could cease in and of themselves, naturally when their purpose is fulfilled.

This passage of Scripture does not give definitive evidence that tongues have ceased and are no longer operative today — but it allows for such a view. Paul implies that tongues will cease when their purpose is fulfilled. If, as demonstrated above, the purpose of tongues was to authenticate the apostles and their message, and to serve as a sign to Israel of judgment for rejecting their Messiah, then tongues have fulfilled their purpose. Phrased another way, since there are no longer apostles to authenticate, and since Israel has already been judged (in AD 70), tongues no longer have a purpose in the church today. Tongues cessation should then be expected with the passing of the apostles and the judgment of Israel. Both the testimonies of Scripture and of church history verify this fact. There is no record of anyone speaking in tongues in the New Testament after AD 70. What is the record of church history?

### **Church History Evidence**

#### **Apostolic Fathers**

It is significant that the gift of tongues is rarely alluded to, hinted at, or found in the Apostolic Fathers. The Fathers wrote to defend Christianity, to correct Christians, to explain doctrines, etc. after the death of the apostles. Yet they did not mention tongues in a favorable light, and for the most part totally ignored them.

#### **Some examples:**

- ◆ Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) wrote about spiritual gifts but did not mention tongues. He never mentions anyone speaking in tongues.
- ◆ Montanus (AD 126-180) did speak in tongues, but was regarded as demon-possessed by Christians of his day (refer to the section “History of Tongues,” *Think on These Things*, Vol. 5, Issue 3).
- ◆ Irenaeus (AD 140-203) said he had heard that some spoke in tongues. He had, however, been influenced by the Montanists and did not speak in tongues nor apparently witness it.
- ◆ Tertulian (AD 150-222) was converted to Montanism for a period of time. He wrote about one lady who spoke in tongues and was a Montanist. This was the last witness to tongues-speaking by any of the Church Fathers.
- ◆ Origen (AD 185-253) said that in his day no one spoke in tongues.
- ◆ Chrysostom (AD 347-407) made no mention of tongues being spoken in his day.
- ◆ Augustine (AD 354-430) no tongues spoken during his life.

*Church history does not prove any doctrinal issues. However, in this case church history verifies what we would expect from a study of the New Testament: That tongues, having fulfilled their purpose, ceased to exist by AD 70, and were not found in the history of the church.*

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## Doctrinal Distinctives of the Charismatic Movement, Part II

by Gary E. Gilley, Pastor-teacher

If, as was demonstrated in our last paper, the gift of tongues has fulfilled the purpose for which it was designed, and therefore has ceased, what is going on today? That is, how do we explain the present day phenomenon of speaking in tongues, if the Holy Spirit is no longer bestowing this gift upon people. What is the origin of speaking in tongues in the modern church?

Certainly there is more than one origin. Tongues can be demonic, as is demonstrated by documented tongues-speaking in pagan religions. Tongues can be faked for the purpose of peer-approval. After all, if you attend a church which teaches that speaking in tongues is a sign of spiritual maturity, the pressure to conform could be enormous.

My personal opinion is that the majority of tongues-speaking in the modern church is a learned response. In other words, people are being taught, either directly or indirectly, how to speak in tongues. Let's take a look at this theory.

### Characteristics of the Modern Movement

**The nature of tongues:** Clearly, tongues in the New Testament were languages, understandable by those who knew the language being spoken. This is not the case today. Linguists have described modern tongues as a form of ecstatic speech, similar to that which occurs all over the world in many religious practices. Interestingly, the first Pentecostals believed they were speaking in foreign languages for the purpose of propagating the gospel on the mission field. Some early Pentecostals even rushed to foreign countries without any language training, and began preaching the gospel, trusting that the listeners understood them. When it became obvious that they were not understood, these zealous missionaries had to come home and revise their understanding of this phenomenon (see *Christian History Magazine*, "The Rise of Pentecostalism," Vol. XVII, page 2).

**The absence of spontaneity:** Contrary to the spontaneous

and surprising reception of tongues in the book of Acts, modern day promoters of tongues present formulas and instructions designed to teach people how to speak in tongues. Usually these instructions include a prescription to begin by making sounds of some kind, such as by repetition of a phrase.

Charismatics present speaking in tongues as an act of faith. It is something which you must knowingly begin, and trust that God will continue. Larry Christenson, a Lutheran minister, said:

In order to speak in tongues, you have to quit praying in English . . . You simply lapse into silence and resolve to speak not a syllable of any language you have ever learned. Your thoughts are focused on Christ, and then you simply lift up your voice and speak out confidently, in faith that the Lord will take the sound you give Him and shape it into a language. You take no thought of what you are saying. As far as you are concerned it is just a series of sounds. The first sounds will sound strange and unnatural to your ear, and they may be halting and inarticulate (have you ever heard a baby learning to talk?) — (quoted by Robert Gromacki, p. 41, in *The Modern Tongues Movement*)

Harold Bredesen gave these instructions to tongues seekers at Yale:

1. Think visually and concretely, rather than abstractly: for example, try to visualize Jesus as a person.
2. Consciously yield your voices and organs of speech to the Holy Spirit.
3. Repeat certain elementary sounds, such as 'bah-bah-bah,' or something similar. Bredesen then laid his hands on the hand of each seeker, prayed for him, and the seeker did actually speak in tongues (quoted by Gromacki, p. 42).

John Kildahl, in an interesting book entitled *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, explains it this way: When I hypnotize someone, I begin by saying "lie

back . . . Shut your eyes . . . Relax . . . Breathe deeply . . . And listen to the sounds of your breathing as you relax, you can feel yourself getting tired and drowsy.’ A sample of a tongues leader teaching someone to speak in tongues is, “The Lord is in your presence . . . He is with you now . . . Open yourself to Him . . . Let all your anxieties flow out of you . . . The Lord wants to give you the gift of His Holy Spirit . . . Open your mouth, and He will give you utterance.” The hypnotist has essentially a two-pronged strategy: that of sensory deprivation and of developing a special kind of relationship, in other words, a relationship of dependence and trust (p. 37).

**Disillusionment:** Christenson cites two universal temptations in regards to tongues. One is artificiality — the temptation to think, “I am just making this up.” He says to repel this temptation with all vigor. The second temptation is ineffectuality — when the enthusiasm of tongues has dimmed, a person may begin to neglect or cease to use tongues. Christenson says that every gift of God involves stewardship and therefore one must resolve to use it all the rest of his life. This amounts to saying that the “gift” which was sought and begun by artificial means, must be continued at all costs, even when common sense says it is a hollow mockery.

Kildahl claims that when tongues are an important life goal there is always a relationship to a leader or a group which conveys a feeling of acceptance and belonging. If confidence is lost in the authority figure then quite often the person will stop speaking in tongues. Kildahl, in his studies, said he “found no tongue-speaker who was unrelated to a glossolalia authority figure whom he esteemed. Those who had spoken in tongues but were now indifferent to it in this research had in each case had a falling out with the leader of the tongue-speaking group” (p. 53).

**The Modern Gift of Interpretation:** If tongues-speaking is problematic, the interpretation of tongues is more so. While tongues can be faked, or explained as a heavenly language, interpretations are not so easily handled. The interpretation of tongues is the supernatural ability to understand and interpret a message in tongues for the benefit and edification of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:5-19). The progression should be: God gives a message in tongues to Joe who speaks that message at a church service, but doesn’t understand it. Sally is then given the ability to understand what Joe has said and relays it to the church. It is at this point that the modern gift of tongues breaks down most dramatically. A number of studies have been done that are anything but supportive of the charismatic position. Tongues speaking has been recorded and then played back to those claiming the gift of interpretation. In every experiment of this nature of which I am aware, these

recorded messages have been interpreted differently by each interpreter. In one instance, John 3:3 was recited in the German language, but the interpreter claimed that Acts 19:2 had been recited in French. Another time Psalm 23 was recited in Hebrew but the interpretation had nothing to do with Psalm 23. Sometimes the interpretation contradicts the clear teaching of the Lord. Interpretation has always been found wanting (see the *Handbook on Tongues*, pages 80,95).

Kildahl and his researchers taped several people speaking in tongues for interpreters:

In no instance was there any similarity in the several interpretations . . . When confronted with the disparity between their interpretations, the interpreters offered the explanation that God gave to one person one interpretation of the speech and to another person another interpretation (p. 73).

Such studies poke gaping holes in views held by charismatics and reveal tongues for what they are — a learned response, not a supernatural gift from the Holy Spirit.

### **Natural Explanations**

Kildahl offers the following possible explanations for the modern tongue movement:

A motor automatism — Some tongues are the result of a trance-like condition.

Ecstasy — Some tongues result from a strong and unusual emotional excitement.

Hypnosis — Due to repeated suggestions as to what is expected of one and the repeated appeals to yield oneself to the “power,” many writers have concluded that hypnotism is frequently involved in causing tongues.

Psychic catharsis — In his research Kildahl found that anxiety was a prerequisite for developing the ability to speak in tongues. Additionally, persons with a low level of emotional stability tended to be extreme in their affirmation of the benefits of glossolalia.

Kildahl, page 40:

Research proved that glossolalists are more submissive, suggestible and dependent in the presence of authority figures than non-tongue-speakers. This was important because one has to follow a leader’s suggestions to be hypnotized. Research also proved that tongue speakers think about some benevolent authority person when they began to speak in tongues.

Kildahl, page 54:

Hypnotizability requires that the subject be trusting enough to turn himself over to someone else and place his destiny in his hands. If one can be

hypnotized, then one is able under proper conditions to learn to speak in tongues.

Kildahl, page 74:

It is our definite opinion that those who have the necessary psychological characteristics can learn to speak in tongues. This gives rise to the question, "If it is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit, why must it be demonstrated and taught?" I have observed the same routine everywhere I have been:

- 1) A meeting devoted to intense concentration on tongue speaking, followed by
- 2) an atmosphere of heightened suggestibility to the words of the tongue speaker leader, after which
- 3) the initiate is able to make the sounds he is instructed to make. It is the same procedure that a competent hypnotist employs. I have reached the conclusion that tongue speaking is a learned phenomenon.

### **Other Matters**

#### **Why the present interest in tongues?**

In our society there is an unsatisfied longing for a genuine religious expression in the midst of the pressures of a secularized society. People are longing for an authentic relationship with God, but they are not as interested in knowing God in truth. If spiritual maturity can be attained attending emotionally charged meetings and receiving instantaneous supernatural experiences that deliver spirituality, why do the hard work of Scripture study, memorization, prayer and walking by the Spirit? The charismatic movement has offered a shortcut to godliness. That this shortcut is really a detour leading people to a dead end, is often not recognized until one has traveled far down this detour and has come face to face with disillusionment. By then many have hopelessly lost their way and know of no scriptural compass to guide them safely back to the path of truth.

#### **"Forbid not to speak in tongues" (I Corinthians 14:39).**

Charismatics will often throw the above words in the face of one who disagrees with their view on tongues. But it must be remembered that these words were written in AD 55 to a group of people who had received this gift from the Holy Spirit to authenticate the apostleship of Paul, and to warn Israel that judgment was coming for their rejection of the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had not yet ceased giving the gift. The purpose for the gift was still alive and well, (see Part I).

### **The Affects of Charismatic Doctrine Upon Other Areas of Theology**

So what? Why not live and let live, after all, what harm does the charismatics' views cause? Why not just leave them alone? These are good questions. If all we are

doing is nitpicking over the fine points of Christianity, then we should indeed back off. But charismatic doctrine undermines the teachings of Scripture and authentic Christian living. Below we will briefly outline how the teachings of the charismatics taints, to some degree, every doctrine found in the Word of God. The following are some examples:

#### **Theology in General**

Those who teach charismatic doctrines tend to downplay theology. John Wimber said, "When are we going to see a generation who doesn't try to understand this book (the Bible), but just believes it?"

Charismatic doctrine places experience above truth of Scripture. Jack Deere said, "The idea that fallen humanity, can arrive at pure biblical objectivity in determining all their practices and beliefs is an illusion" (*Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, p. 46). His solution? Experience and modern prophecies. (Read his book)

Both Paul Cain and John Wimber are credited with coining the phrase, "God will offend your mind to reveal your heart" (*The Father's Blessing*, p. 182). This is a reference to the charismatic view that the Holy Spirit will often do an end run around our rational thinking ability, including the understanding of Scripture, to reveal truth to us. John Arnott teaches, "Do not take control, do not resist, do not analyze; just surrender to His love. You can analyze the experience later; just let it happen" (ibid. p. 127). This is a sure recipe for disaster.

#### **Bibliology**

There are several concerns here:

##### Charismatic doctrines undermine the authority of Scripture.

Take, for example, a quote from this charismatic author:

Ultimately this doctrine (the sufficiency of Scripture) is demonic even (though) Christian theologians have been used to perfect it (*Spiritual Warfare*, page 11, Thompson).

##### They believe in extrabiblical revelation.

Today, after years of practical experiences and intense study on the subject of God's speaking, I am convinced that God does indeed speak apart from the Bible, though never in contradiction to it. And He speaks to all of His children, not just to specially gifted prophetic people. And He will speak to us all in amazing detail (*Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, by Jack Deere, p. 214).

This is the error of all cults as well as the Roman Catholic Church. If God is still giving revelation today, how are we to discern when God is speaking and when He is not? The charismatics tell us that as long as the revelation does not contradict Scripture, then we can be assured that it is from God. However, that leaves the door

wide open for every kind of error. For example, the Roman Catholic Church’s doctrines of purgatory, the doctrines concerning Mary, while they may contradict Scripture, for the most part simply add to the divine revelation. The Mormon’s view that the Book of Mormon is the story of the gospel coming to America is the same type of error.

It is also their belief that prophets today make mistakes.

Anyone who has experience in helping to nurture “baby prophets” realizes that they have difficulty in distinguishing the words that the Spirit speaks from those that come from their own hearts or even from evil sources. At first they make many mistakes (*Some Said It Thundered*, page XIV). Prophets are, of course, human beings. As such, they can make mistakes and lie. They need not cease to be prophets for their mistakes and failings (ibid., page XVI).

As can be seen from these quotes the charismatic view of revelation would throw the believer into a sea of subjectivity. God considered the authenticity of His Word as so important that He required the death penalty for Old Testament prophets whose prophecies did not come true (Deuteronomy 18:20). How do we discern which prophet is right and which has made a mistake? When do we know that a prophet has spoken truthfully or has lied? Are we at the mercy of fresh revelation or can we still go to the Scriptures to find, “Thus says the Lord”? While charismatics give lip service to the authority of Scripture, in practice their “words of knowledge,” prophetic revelations, and messages in tongues reign supreme. Thus the undermining of the Word of God is perhaps the greatest error that charismatics have fostered among God’s people.

### **Soteriology**

There are many gospel messages among charismatics since charismatics are found in every type of denomination and church background. Even in denominations such as the Vineyard Church, the gospel often takes such a backseat to the “gifts and phenomenons of the Spirit” that the content of the gospel is muted at best. For example, in John Wimber’s book on evangelism, *Power Evangelism*, he never once discusses what the gospel is. The book is devoted instead to what Wimber believes to be the only authentic New Testament evangelism, something he calls “power evangelism.” In Wimber’s mind “proclamation evangelism,” in which a person is shown from Scripture the message of salvation, just won’t work. To win substantial numbers of people to Christ one must first soften them up by performing some miracle, or by giving a “word of knowledge.” Not only does power evangelism miss the boat scripturally, it also serves to confuse the unsaved. The emphasis is upon signs and wonders rather than Christ. Some are being attracted to the show rather than

the cross.

### **Ecclesiology**

Many within charismatic circles hold to some form of dominion theology, which confuses the church with Israel, and teaches that we are looking for a latter day revival that will sweep multitudes into the kingdom and transform society before the return of Christ.

In addition, the majority of charismatics are highly, and unbiblically, ecumenical. Many are actively pursuing reunification with the Roman Catholic Church and some even consider the Pope to be an evangelical Christian.

The purpose of the church is often distorted as they concentrate on the showy gifts (miracles, tongues, prophecies) rather than the balanced functioning of the body.

### **Eschatology**

Some charismatics are not looking for the return of Christ, but for the “latter rain” in which they believe there will be a special outpouring of the Spirit that restores the supernatural gifts to the church and bring a great revival. They do not believe that Christ can return until the world is prepared for Him by the “latter rain.”

Earl Paulk says that the pretribulational rapture position is a “heresy” inspired by Satan to rock the church to sleep. His view is not based upon a thorough study of Scripture, but on a supposedly new revelation from God (*Biblical Perspectives*, Vol. 4, #4, page 6).

### **Pneumatology**

Many believe in a second work of grace often called the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” (see Part I). This baptism gives the believer special powers and gifts. Others, such as the Vineyard Movement, would not agree with the term “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” but teach essentially the same thing. They say the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives is powers, signs and wonders.

### **Angelology/Demonology**

Angels, demons, and “spiritual warfare” are popular today in charismatic circles. Based upon experience, rather than Scripture, a whole new theology has been developed concerning angels and demons that completely misrepresents the teachings of the Word. See our paper on “Spiritual Warfare” for a better understanding of this subject.

So the charismatic movement is not just a harmless segment within evangelical christianity, but a devastating error that undermines many of the cardinal truths of the Word of God.



# Think on These Things

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## The History of the Charismatic Movement

by Gary E. Gilley, Pastor-teacher

What began in a corner at the turn of the twentieth century is now barreling down main street, with flying colors, at the close of that same century. What was once known as the Pentecostal movement has now splintered into numerous diverse, yet overlapping movements: Pentecostal, Charismatics, Vineyard, Word of Faith, Holy Laughter.

The goal of our papers on this subject will be to inform, clarify, document and warn concerning some of the teachings and practices of those claiming to be charismatic (the term we will use, rightly or wrongly, as a generic handle for all the above-mentioned splinter groups). The salvation of the charismatics is not at issue here. We believe many to be born again. Indeed over half of all "evangelicals" plant their spiritual feet in some wing of this movement. On the other hand, we do not assume their salvation either. Our study will concentrate on their views and practices surrounding the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and Scripture. We will begin with a short history of the movement as a whole, in future papers we will examine the various branches as they exist today.

While the charismatic movement has taken on wings during the twentieth century, similar views and manifestations can be found on occasion throughout history.

In ancient times the practice of speaking in unintelligible languages during religious ecstasy was not unknown. From eleventh-century B.C. Egypt come reports of ecstatic speech, and later in the Greek world the prophetess of Delphi and the Sibylline priestess spoke in unknown tongues. Amongst the Roman mystery religions, the Dionysian Cult was known for this practice.

Several of the early church fathers mention glossolalia in the church. Irenaeus (d. c. 200) and Tertullian (d. 200) speak favorably of it, Chrysostom (d. 407) disapproved, and Augustine (d. 430) declared that the gift was only for New Testament times. The Montanist movement of the late second century

included prophetesses, claims of new revelation, speaking in tongues, and an ascetical and legalistic outlook; the movement was declared heretical by the official church and speaking in tongues seems to have been rare in the church after this time.

During the middle ages speaking in tongues was reported in monasteries of the Orthodox church. In the seventeenth century it seems to have been practiced in France amongst the Huguenots (Protestants) and the Jansenists (pietistic Catholics). In the nineteenth century glossolalia was practiced in America amongst the Shakers and Mormons, and in Scotland and London amongst the followers of Edward Irving, who saw this as the latter-rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit prior to the pre-millennial return of the Lord (quote taken from Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology* and Walter Elwell's *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Montanists," "Pentecostalism," and "Tongues, Speaking in.")

The rest of this paper is an adaptation of an article entitled "The New Charismatics," by Michael G. Moriarty, *Biblical Perspectives*, Vol. IV, No. 3, May-June 1991.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "charismatic?" Do you think of a group of people hungry for the Lord, walking in the power of the Spirit, spiritual in worship, aggressive in evangelism and abounding in love, or, do you see individuals who are experience oriented, imperialistic in outlook (only they have the full gospel), elitist in stance, uncontrolled in worship, and devoid of any real grasp of the Bible that goes beyond mere proof-texting. Maybe you are in the neutral camp, having become so confused over the issue, hearing good and bad, that you have chosen not to take sides. Besides, charismatics have grown rapidly and have become more diversified; therefore, it would be misleading to place all under an identical banner.

Nevertheless, the majority of believers who are viewed as "charismatic," i.e., Oral Roberts, Larry Lea, Earl Paulk, Dick Iverson, Ken Copeland, Bob Tilton, etc. . . , are

proclaiming today that the "charismatic movement" is over and God's "new move" is underway. Bill Hammon, a revered "modern prophet" in the charismatic community, says: "The 'Joshua Generation' is leading forth, and the priestly pastors are carrying the ark of God's restorational presence across Jordan. The journey of the charismatic movement has fulfilled its purpose of bringing the church to its Jordan River. Now the cloud by day and the fire by night have been taken away, and the prophets and prophetic ministers have arisen to provide protection, direction and timing for the church's moving. . . . The prophets, however, are seeing on the horizon of God's purpose for His church, a restorational wave of such incomprehensibly gigantic proportions — like a thousand-foot tidal wave — that it staggers the imagination and faith of both those who have prophetically seen it and those who have heard of it. It will be greater than all previous restoration movements combined." This new restorational movement advocated by most current charismatics has generated a groundswell of charismatic leaders to open themselves up to new spiritual revelations and deeper doctrinal truths. The theological menu served in most charismatic churches today is filled with novel ideas, new doctrinal teachings, and unusual practices.

While there are some basic differences existing between new movements arising among charismatics, their overall theological outlook (e.g., the restoration of modern apostles and prophets) and eschatological direction is the same. The New Charismatics are proclaiming that a new supernatural move of God's Spirit is sweeping the entire globe. This new move will be so revolutionary that the entire course of human history will soon be changed. But in order for this glorious dream to work, the majority of the Christian churches must unite in philosophy and purpose. Therefore, one of the goals of the New Charismatics is to make charismatics and noncharismatics (and nonChristians as well), "New Charismatics." In other words, charismatics subscribing to new restoration ideas deeply desire that all believers will taste this "new move" of the Holy Spirit and unite with them in their efforts to supernaturally transform the world.

Most refer to this thriving new development expanding throughout the world as "restorationism" or "Latter-Rain restorationism." They believe that history is moving toward a spiritual climax where God's power will be poured out on the church like never before. Restoration promoters believe that this new move could be the Lord's final move where the church will be endued with new power to Christianize the world before Jesus returns. In order for this dominion pursuit to be realized, the five-fold ministry expounded in Eph. 4:11 (apostle, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) needs to be recognized by the

Church at large and given room to exercise their supernatural gifts and God-ordained authority.

Some contemporary restoration movements that fall under the umbrella term "The New Charismatics" are: Kingdom Theology, popularized by the nebulous Bishop/prophet, Earl Paulk; the Word of Faith/Positive Confession Movement led by faith teachers like Ken Hagin and Copeland; and the Third Wave or Signs and Wonders movement, popularized by controversial Vineyard pastor, John Wimber. These groups have a common bond that promotes God's moving in a new supernatural way through signs and wonders, that the church must be restored to first century apostolic Christianity before Jesus returns, and that modern apostles and prophets will play a key role in this process. To understand new developments and teachings spreading through the charismatic world we need to go back in history to briefly examine some of the influential "higher life" movements of the twentieth century, beginning with Pentecostalism. Tracing the origins of these movements will give us a better insight into how certain teachings originated and developed over the years and why certain charismatic doctrines are emphasized so strongly today.

#### **THE PENTECOSTAL EXPLOSION**

The Azuza Street revival of 1906-13 was the launching pad that launched a world-wide Pentecostal renewal. The main feature of this Pentecostal outpouring was the "baptism with the Holy Spirit," an experience subsequent to salvation, which is evidenced by speaking in other tongues. This was the crown jewel restored by what many called the "second Pentecost." There were, however, spiritual flashes that preceded Azuza which prepared the way for its inauguration. On January 1, 1901, in Topeka, Kansas, Agnes Ozman, a student at Charles Parham's Bethel Bible School, spoke in tongues. Sometime later Parham himself had the same experience and from then on preached that all believers who sought the tongues experience diligently, would be recipients of the blessing. Most recognize Parham as the founder of the Pentecostal movement.

Parham, an avid holiness preacher, was nurtured in the culture of religious experience. In his search for something more, tongues became the celebrated encounter filling that void. In 1905 a zealous black holiness preacher by the name of William J. Seymour came under the tutelage of Parham in Alvin, Texas, a few miles south of Houston. It wasn't long before Seymour received the tongues experience and took the Pentecostal message to Azuza Street in Los Angeles. While there were spiritual ignitings before the flame reached Azuza, it was there that the flame turned white hot and began to spread all over the world. After Parham and Seymour received tongues experiences,

they began an ambitious effort to spread what they believed to be the restoration of a glorious apostolic doctrine: the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Parham taught that Christ's return would occur on the heels of a world-wide Latter-Rain revival in which the Holy Spirit would restore miraculous gifts generating a great end time harvest. This Latter-Rain expectation died out in the early 20's as Pentecostalism adopted certain tenets of dispensationalism.

Nevertheless, Pentecostalism stands as a classic restoration movement spawning several new sister movements that view the church as returning to her New Testament glory. The classic restoration motif of Pentecostalism that allegedly brought a greater hunger for spiritual reality was the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" evidenced by speaking in tongues.

### **THE NEOPENTECOSTAL DELIVERANCE REVIVAL**

One of the notably significant, yet controversial, phenomena to powerfully emerge with Pentecostalism is the doctrine and ministry of divine healing. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century the practice of healing existed in America. But energizing Pentecostalism nourished independent evangelists who brought a "new" emphasis to the healing arena that attracted a popular following. The significance of the deliverance (healing) revival, reaching its zenith between 1947 to 1958, lies in its uniqueness to popularize a concept of salvation that includes health and healing as an essential part of deliverance for the believer.

Pentecostal religion continued to span the globe through the 30's, but by the mid 40's, as the careers of many independent evangelists peaked, here was a "new" emphasis; the miraculous! "Spirit Baptism" was still preached, but it was no longer the focus of the revival meeting. The shared heartbeat of "every service was the miracle - the hypnotic moment when the Spirit moved to heal the sick and raise the dead."

Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, did not favor the revival and viewed the deliverance evangelists as "independent extremists." Pentecostal leaders were disgusted by the lack of integrity among the revivalists who often made claims marked by absurd exaggeration. The display of alleged miracles had become so outlandish that revival meetings had turned into "personality cults." Historian David Harrell quotes one Pentecostal leader who reported: "The healing evangelists live in constant dialogue with angels and demons, the Holy Spirit and the spirits of diseases from the abyss; some experience electric currents through their hands when they pray with the sick, others have a halo around their heads when they are photographed, and others again have oil appearing on their hands when they pray." Many of today's

"televangelists" have adopted the melodramatic preaching styles of the deliverance revivalists of the mid-twentieth-century.

### **THE LATTER-RAIN MOVEMENT**

Three pioneers at the forefront of the Deliverance Revival were William Branham, Oral Roberts, and Gordon Lindsey. These men bore remarkably different personalities, but were unquestionably the fuel that kept the revival running. Branham ignited the revival stirring crowds with apparent miracles and prophetic abilities. Roberts was the popularizer with his heart tugging message that God is good and wills that His people prosper and be healed. He was the first to bring healing crusades inside the homes of millions who had never been exposed to the healing message by initiating a national weekly television program. Lindsey was the organizer, bringing cohesion with superb administrative skills.

Branham's teachings profoundly influenced a new sect springing from the neopentecostal deliverance revival known as the "New Order of the Latter-Rain." Branham also shaped the thoughts and practices of many key Pentecostal figures.

The Latter-Rain movement was a loosely directed, and enthusiastic union of cobelligerents united by their fierce opposition to mainline denominations. This meteoric movement created quite a stir among Pentecostal denominations, like the Assemblies of God, and boasted of being a fresh revival displacing the "apostasized" Pentecostals. While its impact was on a small scale, its effects were nevertheless felt world-wide, and it became one of the several catalysts for the Charismatic Movement of the '60's, the Independent Charismatic Movement (Word of Faith/ Positive Confession charismatics) of the '70's and the New Charismatics surfacing in the '80's and '90's. In reaction to the spiritual dryness existing in Pentecostal circles, the "New Order of the Latter-Rain" viewed itself as a refreshing oasis returning to the "full gospel" of the first-century church.

The doctrinal system of the Latter-Rain included Pentecostalism's baptism of the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and the New Pentecostal deliverance revivals miraculous healing thrust. But the fiery movement had its own distinctives as well. Let's briefly look at seven of the new teachings that shaped the Latter-Rain.

**Restorationism** -- This further development of restoration theology viewed God as progressively restoring truths to the church since the Reformation.

**Fivefold Ministry** - The teaching that God is restoring apostles and prophets to the church to function with the three other gifted offices: evangelists, pastors, and teachers

(Eph. 4:11). Apostles and prophets provided direction with new revelations that would play a major role in paving the way for Christ's second coming.

**Laying on of the Hands** - A ritual performed by modern apostles and prophets to impart the Holy Spirit and other spiritual blessings and gifts.

**Prophecy** - Views the practice of "personal prophecy", as being restored to the church. Prophecy would no longer be restricted to general words of exhortation, but would include personal detailed revelations for guidance and instruction.

**Recovery of True Worship** - The belief that God's manifested presence is dependent upon a certain order of worship involving singing in tongues, clapping, shouting, singing prophecies, and a new order of praise dancing.

**Immortalization of the Saints** - The belief that those believers moving in the truth of Latter-Rain restoration, not necessarily all in the church, will attain an immortal state before Jesus returns.

**Unity of the Faith** - The doctrine that the church, usually perceived to be a band of overcomers in neopentecostal ranks, will attain unity in the faith before Christ returns.

### THE OLD CHARISMATICS

Most historians date the beginning of the charismatic movement on April 3, 1960. On this day, Father Dennis Bennett of St. Mark's Episcopal parish in Van Nuys, California, announced to his congregation that he had received the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit, and how this accompanied "speaking in unknown tongues." After receiving much opposition, Bennett resigned from his position at St. Mark's and accepted an invitation to become vicar of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington, which grew to be one of the strongest charismatic churches in the Northwest. For a decade it was one of the major centers from which speaking in tongues would spread world-wide, especially in the mainline denominations.

The significance of the Charismatic Movement resides in the penetration of the Pentecostal tongues practice into mainline denominations. This created a new openness to the full range of spiritual gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:8-10 (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues) that had never been there before. Certainly not all mainline churches supported this new movement, but thousands of people inside mainline churches were experiencing "speaking in tongues" and other spiritual manifestations. This bred a strong conviction that all of the supernatural "sign gifts" (e.g. tongues, healing, miracles and, in some cases prophecy) were for today.

Although charismatic outpourings continued to spread through mainline churches, many denominational leaders left traditional churches to start independent churches.

Before long, these mushrooming churches came under the influence of Word of Faith/Positive Confession teaching propagated by independent charismatics, such as Hagin, Copeland, Charles Capps, and others. Their main emphasis was faith teaching, divine healing, and financial prosperity. Believers who consistently made a positive confession about their physical and spiritual situation and demonstrated great faith would receive abundant blessings from God.

The most militant movement to rise up alongside of the charismatic movement was the "Manifested Sons of God." This aberration gleaned many of its doctrinal distinctives from the Latter-Rain Movement and thrived during the 60's and 70's. Following the teachings of William Branham, the Manifested Sons claimed that denominations were pagan organizations with a Babylonian foundation. Many who broke their denominational ties and joined the Manifest Sons of God believed they were entering the only arena where salvation was possible. The more militant Manifested Sons spiritualized the second coming by teaching that Jesus and His church would become one in nature and in essence. Being one with Christ would corporately result in a Body of "little Christ's in the flesh" manifesting Jesus Christ on earth as His ongoing incarnation.

Another movement to rise up during the Charismatic Movement became known as the "Shepherding" or "discipleship" movement. This movement grew out of the Latter-Rain/ Charismatic tradition and attained its greatest impetus during the mid 70's. Shepherding arose out of a concern for effective discipleship and put great emphasis on the need for submission to spiritual leaders. The movement originated from the ministry of five teachers out of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida - Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, Dered Prince, Don Basham, and Ern Baxter (a Branham disciple).

By the late 70's the Shepherding movement caused a deep split within charismatic circles because of the strict control many shepherds exercised over their members. By the mid 80's the term "shepherding" was dropped since the movement gained a bad reputation for its cultic authoritarian abuses. Nevertheless, the "shepherding" concept still thrives in various circles today under labels, such as "covering," or "covenant relationships."

The growth of the Charismatic Movement and other fringe movements springing up in the '60's and '70's that placed more emphasis on subjective experience than on biblical truth opened up a "Pandora's box" in the Christian world. The Charismatic movement has been harmful to the Church by opening many doors to the ever-present influence of experiential and unbiblical ideas. This will become evident upon examining some of the dangerous new trends sweeping through the charismatic community today.

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