

Sign of the Times

An Examination of Charismaticism in History

I. **What is the Charismatic Movement?**

It is a wide-based but loosely linked movement that is predicted upon the emphasis of the supernatural activity of God resulting in the heightened spirituality of the believer. Major agreement on: continuation of the sign of gifts (tongues) and the baptism of the Spirit as the second blessing.

II. **Where Did the Charismatic Movement Come From?**

A Pre Christian History of "Charismatic- Tongues Activity"

Many people are unaware that many of the charismatic manifestations evidenced or expounded in the modern church have been experienced in both religious and philosophical writings of the past that predate the events of Acts 2. Dr Robert Gromacki gives a short history of the experience outside the pages of sacred scripture.

"Glossolalia is not unique to the Christian religion. Reports of its occurrence are found in non-Christian religions and philosophies, both past and present. Such reports may be completely or partially true, or totally false. It is impossible to make such an historical judgment. The evidence must be accepted as is. Even if the phenomenon and its report are true, this does not demonstrate absolute identity with either the Biblical glossolalia or the present tongues movement. Biblical glossolalia had its source in God, whereas non-Christian glossolalia, if true, had its source in Satan. The main purpose of this section is to show that the phenomenon of speaking in tongues can be performed or simulated by human or satanic activity. If it could be done in the past, it can likewise be done today in this way. The experience, itself, cannot be the test of its source.

Report of Wenamon

The 'Report of Wenamon' gives the most ancient account of frenzied religious speech. It was written about 1100 B.C. from Byblos on the coast of Syro-Palestine. In this report a young worshiper of Amon became possessed by a god and spoke in an ecstatic language. The text reads: 'Now, when he sacrificed to his gods...the god seized one of his hobble youths, making him frenzied, so that he said: 'Bring the god hither! Bring the messenger of Amon who hath him. Send him and let him go.'¹ This frenzy continued throughout the night.

A few observations are in order here. First, the man spoke frenzied speech which may or may not have been another language. Second, this was a religious phenomenon because the man was engaged in worship. Third, his god considered

him worth of protection and respect. Finally, his frenzied speech was the direct result of his possession and control of or by a god.

Dialogues of Plato

In his dialogues, the great Greek philosopher, Plato (429-347 B.C.) revealed an acquaintance with religious, ecstatic speech. In the *Phaedrus*,² he wrote about certain families that were engaged in holy prayers, rites, and inspired utterances. The participants were possessed individuals and out of their minds (loss of control of mental faculties, but not insanity). The usage of these religious exercises even brought physical healing to the worshiper. Plato called prophecy madness and identified madness as a divine gift. He said that the prophetess of Delphi and the priestess at Dodona when out of their senses conferred great benefits upon certain individuals, but when in their senses few or none.

In the *Ion*³, Plato stated that good poets compose their poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. They are not in their right minds because God takes away their minds and uses them as his ministers. God speaks through diviners and holy prophets while they are a state of unconsciousness. In the inspired utterance, God is the speaker, not the man. He also compared the poets to the Corybantian revelers who became ecstatic in both utterance and action and to the Bacchic maidens of the Dionysian cult.

In the *Timaeus*⁴, Plato stated that when a man receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled in sleep or he is demented by some distemper or possession. This person (diviner) cannot remember what he has said. These utterances are accompanied by visions which he cannot judge either. Thus, interpreters or prophets are needed to expound the dark sayings of the diviner.

Certain facts must be noted about Plato's observations. First, the speaker of inspired utterances had no control over his mental faculties. Second, he did not understand what was said. Third, there was the need of interpretation by another. Fourth, visions and healing accompanied the speaking. Finally, the person was under divine possession.

Virgil

In the *Aeneid*⁵, Virgil (70-19 B.C.) described the Sibylline priestess on the isle of Delos. She attained her ecstatic state and speech in a haunted cave where drafts and winds made weird sounds and music. When she became unified in spirit with the god Apollo, she began to speak with tongues, sometimes understood and sometimes incoherent.

Pythoness of Delphi

Chrysostom, the great church father, described the Pythoness in this way:

...this same Pythoness then is said, being a female, to sit at times upon the tripod of Apollo astride, and thus the evil spirit ascending from beneath and entering the lower part of her body, fills the woman with madness, and she with

disheveled hair begins to play the bacchanal and to foam at the mouth, and thus being in a frenzy to utter the words of her madness.

Because of her ability to produce ecstatic utterances under divine inspiration and possession, she was frequently worshiped and consulted for advice and predictions. Martin added: 'Priests were apparently in attendance to catch her every utterance, and to interpret her cries and babblings whenever they ceased to be coherent.'

Mystery Religions

In the Graeco-Roman world, there were many mystery religions or cults. Among them were the Osiris cult which originated in Egypt, the Mithra cult which began in Persia, and the Eleusinian, Dionysian, and Orphic cults which started in Thrace, Macedonia and Greece. Although there is little evidence for glossolalia in the records of these cults, Martin believed that there were good reasons for assuming that such ecstatic speech were prevalent among them.⁸ First, the entire system of beliefs, initiatory rites, and religious practices was centered in the concept of spirit possession or identification. Second, the Christian terms for glossolalia (*pneuma and lalein glossais*) came from the Greek vernacular which existed long before the New Testament was written. Third, in the account, *De Dea Syra*, Lucian of Samosata (A.D. 120-198) described a clear case of glossolalia uttered by the itinerant devotees of the Syrian goddess, Juno, stationed at Bambyce or Hieropolis in Syria.

Kittel added that comparable phenomena could be found in the divinatory manticism of the Delphic Phrygia, of the Bacides, and of the Sybils.⁹

Concerning worship of the occult and magic, he wrote:

The unintelligible lists of magical names and letters in the magic pap, (voices, mystical), which are used in the invoking and conjuring of gods and spirits, may also be analogous to this obscure and meaningless speaking with tongues. With these mystical divine names etc., in which there are echoes of all the various oriental languages, we may certainly couple the view that they derive from supraterrrestrial tongues used by the gods and spirits in heaven, each class having its peculiar *phone or dialektos*.¹⁰

Present Occurrences

Stolee reported that ecstatic speech is found in Mohammedanism.¹¹ The dervishes of Persia constantly utter the name of Allah, accompanied by violent shaking of the body and trances which issue in foaming at the mouth. These violent motions lead to physical exhaustion and partial unconsciousness. During this period of ecstasy, they preach moral sermons.

The Eskimos of Greenland are reported to have engaged in glossolalia.¹² Their religious services are led by the angakok, the medicine man or priest. In these services, there is a definite attempt to get touch with the nether world. The services are characterized by drum beating, singing, dancing, and nudity of both men and women. Peter Freuchen in his book, *Arctic Adventure*, observed glossolalia in this way:

Suddenly one of the men, Krisuk, went out of his head. Unable to contain himself to the regular rhythm of the service he leapt to his feet crying like a raven and howling like a wolf. In ecstasy he and the girl, Ivaloo, began to yell in a tongue I could not understand...Certainly it was not the usual Eskimo language... and if there is such a thing as speaking in tongues I heard it then.¹³

V. Raymond Edman, chancellor of Wheaton College, gave these accounts of contemporary pagan glossolalia in Tibet and China:

One of our Wheaton graduates who was born and reared on the Tibetan border tells of hearing the Tibetan monks in their ritual dances speak in English with quotations from Shakespeare, with profanity like drunken sailors, or in German or French, or in languages unknown. Quite recently a retired missionary of the China Inland Mission told of the same experience.¹⁴

Summary

Occurrences of glossolalia among non-Christians have been reported by both pagan and Christian writers. The similarities of these instances to Biblical glossolalia are quite apparent. The person was engaged in religious worship; he was controlled by a divine being; he lost control of his mental faculties; he spoke in a different language, and there was need for interpretation. However, one must not conclude that pagan glossolalia evolved into Christian glossolalia or that Christian glossolalia is a refinement of pagan tongue-speaking. The sources are entirely opposite, God and Satan or self. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Satan can perform this phenomenon. He has done it in the past; he may be doing it today." (The above pre Christian history is from Robert Gromacki *The Modern Tongues Movement* 1972 The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. p.5-11)

- A. The Early Church
(Acts 2:1-4, 8-9; 10:44-48; 19; I Cor. 12, 14)

- B. The Early Church Leaders
 - 1. Justin Martyr 110-165 AD

In his famous *Dialogue with Trypho*, he wrote: "For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us." 20 He later confessed: "Now it is possible to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God..."21 At first glance, this would appear that the spiritual gifts, including the gift of tongues, were in existence in the time of Justin. However, the extant gifts were those which Israel once had, and it is nowhere stated in the Old Testament that speaking in tongues was a normal or even rare activity of the Israelites. Justin, himself, defined the nature of the gifts that were then present. He related the prophetic gifts to Solomon (spirit of wisdom), to Daniel (spirit of understanding and counsel), to Moses (spirit of might and piety), to Elijah (spirit of fear), and to Isaiah (spirit of knowledge).22 These gifts cannot be identified with the spiritual gifts of First Corinthians 12.

2. Irenaeus 120-202 AD

Irenaeus is called the first and most orthodox of the church fathers. He studied under Polycarp of Smyrna, a pupil of John the Apostle. After some missionary service, he became Bishop of Lyons in France. His refutation of Gnosticism, *Against Heresies*, is regarded as his most important work. In this book, he wrote the following comment upon First Corinthians 2:6

...terming those persons "perfect" who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God...23

Certain things must be noted about this quotation. First, he does not say that he spoke in tongues. Second, his usage of "we hear" indicates a secondhand acquaintance of the phenomenon rather than an eye-witness observation of it. Third, in his description of those who have the prophetic gifts and tongue-speaking, he is probably referring to the Montanists, whose influence was rather strong at this time.

3. Montanus 126-180 AD

Eusebius characterized him in this way:

...a recent convert, Montanus by name, through his unquenchable desire for leadership, gave the adversary opportunity against him. And became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner contrary to the constant custom of the church handed down by tradition from the beginning. Some of those who heard his spurious utterances at that time were indignant, and they rebuked him as one that was possessed, and that was under the control of a demon and was led by a deceitful spirit, and was distracting the multitude... And he stirred up besides two women, and filled them with the false spirit, so that they talked wildly and unreasonably and strangely, like the person already mentioned.²⁴

4. Tertullian 160-220 AD

This North African church father is regarded as the father of Latin theology. Converted in middle age, he later joined the Montanists. He labored in Carthage as a Montanist presbyter and author. His belief in the continued existence of spiritual gifts is seen in this statement: "For, seeing that we acknowledge spiritual *charismata*, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift..."²⁵ He then described a woman who had gifts or revelation, ecstatic visions, talks with angels and with God, gifts of healing, and understanding of some men's hearts. In his dispute with Marcion, he wrote:

Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer—only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him...Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty, and they agree, too, with the rules, and the dispensations, and the instructions of the Creator; therefore without doubt the Christ, and the Spirit, and the apostle, belong severally to my God.²⁶

As a Montanist, it is to be expected that Tertullian would embrace the spiritual gifts, including tongue-speaking. On the technical side, it may be stated that Tertullian does not say that he, himself, had spoken in tongues. That he did may be quite probable, but an explicit statement is lacking. Augustine stated that Tertullian later left the Montanists and founded a new sect which was later reconciled to the Catholic congregation at Carthage.²⁷ If this be so, it may be that Tertullian became disenchanted with the pneumatic excesses of the Montanists.

5. Origen 185-254 AD

“Moreover, the Holy Spirit gave signs of His presence at the beginning of Christ’s ministry, and after His ascension He gave still more; but since that time these signs have diminished, although there are still traces of His presence in the few who have had their souls purified by the Gospel, and their actions regulated by its influence.”

These signs could not include glossolalia because Christ or His apostles did not speak in tongues while He was upon the earth. They must refer to instances of divine healing which were definitely decreasing. (The preceding references are from Gromacki)

C. The Medieval Church 300-1200

1. Chrysostom 345-407

On his commentary on I Corinthians concerning spiritual gifts he said, This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place “ Hom 29.I

2. Augustine 354-430

In his comments concerning First John he states, “ In the earliest times, the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned. As the spirit gave them utterance. These were the signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away” On Baptism, Against the Donatist Schaff III, 16-21

D. Pre-Reformation Church 1300-1500

1. Vincent Ferrer – Dominican Priest
Tongues – 1350-1419

2. Francis Xavier – Jesuit Priest
Tongues – 1506-1562

E. Reformation Church 1500-1700

1. Luther

1. The Camisards – French Prophets 1688-1706
500 people, started by women – tongues & visions

2. The Jansenits – Catholic Group 1705

3. The Shakers 1747
Leader: Anna Lee (Mother Ann Lee)
She claimed to be the female Christ.

- F. Post Reformation 1800
 1. Irvingites – Edward Irving 1792-1834
Irving was the Angle – Teacher
Not Apostle: He didn't speak in tongues. Church did have 12 apostles and women leaders.

 2. The Gift Adventists – Massachusetts

 3. Splinter Groups – Quakers and Mormons

- G. The Pentecostal Church 1789-1960
 1. Holiness Movement 1780
The need for a second blessing for sanctification
 - a. Cause: Theology of John Wesley, Charles Finney 1788-1830.
Sociology of Darwin, secular life, German Bible criticism.
 - b. Effect: Higher Christian Life Writings of Hanna Smith, W.E. Boardman, and Phoebe Palmer.

 2. The Pentecostal Church 1906-1960
Holiness Movement leads to Pentecostalism
"Separatists"
 - a. Evidence: Baptism of Spirit, Tongues

 - b. Organizations: Nazarene church, Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ

- H. Neo-Pentecostal Church (Charismatic Movement) 1960
Second Wave
 1. Circumstances:
Van Nuys, CA – Episcopal Church, Dennis Bennett, 1960
 - a. Oral Roberts leaves Pentecostal Church for Methodism, 1968

 2. Organization:
Old Pentecostal separated; Neo-Pentecostal integrated into the mainline churches
Leaders: Oral Roberts, Kathryn Kuhlman, Rex Humbard, and David Wilkerson

 3. Differences from Pentecostal

<u>OLD</u>	<u>NEW</u>
Separate	Integrate
Tongues	Not essential for spirit baptism

Non-educated	Educated, middle & upper class
Mission oriented	Inner oriented – self
Moral taboos	not so rigid
Mainly male leaders	More women in leadership

III. What is the Neo-Charismatic Movement – Third Wave 1975-1992

- A. Curse (Deliverance) Movement (Derrick Prince)
- B. Prosperity Theology (Robert Tilton)
- C. Fourth Dimension (Paul Cho)
- D. Signs and Wonders - Vineyard (John Wimber)

EMERGENCE OF THE VINEYARD MOVEMENT

I. The Leaders

- A. Peter Wagner
 - 1. Position: Missionary & Church Growth with Fuller Seminary; Third World Phenomenon
 - 2. Perspective: Church Growth is quantitative
 - 3. Problem: Validation: Quality vs. Quantity?

- B. John Wimber
 - Jazz Musician – Conversion (1962) – Quaker (1970) – Charismatic (1977) (Wife followed Dryness-Discovery pattern)
 - Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Anaheim. In ten years (1981-1991) went from home Bible study to 6,000 in church. Scores of other congregations around the country (Wimber says 50,000 followers in 1987). A mini denomination. Similar to Calvary Chapel in growth.

- C. Fuller Theological Seminary
 - The Miraculous and Church Growth M.C.S.I.O. Wimber & Wagner, 1982. Moratorium in 1986 over controversy.

II. The Situation

- A. First Wave: Pentecostal, 1900

- B. Second Wave – Neo-Pentecostal 1960 charismatic movement

- C. Third Wave: Signs and Wonders 1987 -?
Or former and latter rains

III. The Significance of the Signs and Wonders Movement

The distinction between charismatic and non-charismatic evangelicals is becoming blurred. Today we have Third Wave, non-charismatic evangelicals. Today non-charismatic conservatives have adopted a charismatic view of signs and wonders without charismatic label. (In Korea, Pastor Paul Cho has a movement/philosophy called the Fourth Dimension.)

EMPHASIS OF THE VINEYARD SIGNS AND WONDERS MOVEMENT (Characterization is the goal, not creating a caricature)

I. Perspective of World Views

- A. Complaint of Western World View
 - 1. Secular – Worldly
 - 2. Rational – Western explanation of all experience
 - 3. Material – Empirical
 - 4. Mechanical – Cause & Effect (No room for divine intervention)

- B. Correction of Western World View
Concept of Excluded Middle (by Paul Hiebert, Fuller Seminary
Anthropology/World Missions)
 - 1. Eastern View: Three Levels of reality
 - a. #3 Transcendent realities of Heaven & Hell – cosmic
 - b. #2 Spirit – ghosts, demons, goddesses
 - c. #1 Natural World – material things
 - 2. Western View: (Immanuel Kant → Agnosticism)
 - a. #2 Spiritual – Pneumonia
 - b. #1 Natural – phenomenal

The Western Christian has excluded the middle world of reality, assuming Kant's view. Those in Signs and Wonders Movement believe they have bridged the gap of East & West by proclaiming a gospel authenticated in miraculous power.

C. Consequences of World View

The West has been rational, skeptical and materialistic but it is not proof that West is overly influenced or unbiblical.

Wimber: "Could it be that many western evangelicals have subconsciously developed a theology that excludes the possibility of supernaturally inspired dreams and visions, harmonizing Christian doctrine with western materialism?" (Power Evangelism, p. 84)

But since western Christianity has had such enormous impact on history of western civilization, could it not be that western rationalism is an appropriate philosophical expression of Christian doctrine?

**Just because the East has a second level, doesn't mean it is true. Just because a "Word of Knowledge" is desired, doesn't mean it will be forthcoming.

Theology comes from Exegesis.

II. Presence of the Kingdom

- A. Kingdom Theology
 - 1. The Kingdom is now, but not yet.
(Between inauguration and consummation)
 - 2. Therefore kingdom power now.

- B. Kingdom Methodology
 - 1. Proclamation – Sermon – Message
 - 2. Demonstration – Signs – Miracles
(Power Encounter)

- C. Kingdom Theology Evaluation
 - 1. Distinction of Christ's method and ours
 - 2. Distinction of pre and post Resurrection ministry method
(pre: Matt. 10:6 post: Luke 24:47)
 - 3. Distinction of Apostolic ministry and ours
 - a. Purpose of power gifts: authenticate message & messenger
 - b. (Acts 14:3; Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 12:12)
 - c. Confirm Apostolic claims; Eph. 2:20 Apostolic foundation only;
 - d. also Heb. 2:3-4)

III. Power Evangelism

- A. The Practice:
The Power Encounter: Kingdom of Satan vs. God (I Kings 18 – Baal vs. God of Elijah)

- B. The Purpose:
 - 1. "A spontaneous, spirit inspired, empowered presentation of the gospel"
(Power Evangelism, p. 35)

 - 2. Supernatural miracles authenticate message and messenger

- C. The Problems:

1. The Model:
Mt. Carmel is not model (I Kings 18)
*OT is not NT model (hermeneutical issue)
*OT model didn't work: North Kingdom didn't repent (captivity in Assyria)
*Baal worship continued
2. Wrong assumption: the more powerful the evidence, the more persuasive the argument.
FACT - Jesus' raising of Lazarus (John 11:38-53)
Pharisees plotted to kill him anyway
Apostles' message & miracles didn't stop
Murder plots (Acts 4:15-17)

What are needed are not new objects (miracles & power) but new eyes to see the object already given in scripture (regeneration). "They have Moses and the Prophets. If they don't believe them they will not believe if a man is raised from the dead." Wimber sees the Holy Spirit more as "it" than "He" (p. 24) with his focus on power not person, force that works not divine being who wills.

3. The Method:
If programmatic evangelism is not biblical then God uses only Power Evangelism. This means God must only operate by physical miracles, not inner transformation. (But what about Joni Eareckson Tada?)

EVALUATION OF VINEYARD MOVEMENT

Commendable

1. Founders are men of character and compassion. John Wimber admits personal and ministry failure (Power Healing, p. 15).
2. The movement brings focus on reality of spiritual warfare.
3. The movement brings focus on God who can and will exercise His power.
4. The movement brings focus on worship.
5. The movement brings focus on depending on God's Spirit to lead.

Criticism

1. Worldview perspective (excluded middle)
2. The assertion that message and miracles must go together in evangelism raises question: Is it true?
3. There is no biblical evidence that contemporary Christians can and should do what Christ did.
4. If all gifts still operate and office of Apostle still operates, how do we deal with a closed cannon? (Issue also of prophecy, i.e., Kansas City Prophets Experiment).
5. The Signs and Wonders Movement is marked by unbiblical patterns:
 - Healing & exorcisms in NT were quick; not over a long period of time.
 - There are no healing clinics in the Bible.
 - Healing never played such a dominant role in the Bible.

Conclusion

1. God does do miracles today.
2. God does heal today.

BUT: "Greater is he who believes and does not see." John 21

God does will and wish to win the lost. God is sovereign, but He always acts in accordance to His Word. All ministries and methodologies must be evaluated and evidenced by the inerrant Word of God.

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