

TENETS OF CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

- Two extremes seem to characterize much of evangelicalism today:
 1. A Neglect of the Holy Spirit – this is evident from a failure to truly rely on the Holy Spirit to do His sanctifying work through the Word of God; results in a lack of biblical preaching, worldly and fleshly efforts to grow the church, a lack of emphasis on holiness and obedience, an focus on entertainment, etc.
 2. An Overemphasis on the Holy Spirit – this is evident from an unhealthy preoccupation with supposed evidences of the work of the Spirit including visions, emotions, some dramatic phenomena, etc.
- It is this latter extreme that characterizes much in the charismatic movement
- This is a dangerous extreme because the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Christ

John 15:26 ~ When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of me

- Thus, when the Spirit becomes the focal point of a ministry it has lost its primary focus on Christ and His work

The “Holy Spirit” found in the vast majority of charismatic teaching and practice bears no resemblance to the true Spirit of God as revealed in Scripture. The real Holy Spirit is not an electrifying current of ecstatic energy, a mind-numbing babbler of irrational speech, or a cosmic genie who indiscriminately grants self-centered wishes for health and wealth. The true Spirit of God does not cause His people to bark like dogs or laugh like hyenas; He does not know them backward to the ground in an unconscious stupor; He does not incite them to worship in chaotic and uncontrollable ways; and He certainly does not accomplish His kingdom work through false prophets, fake healers, and fraudulent televangelists. By inventing a Holy Spirit of idolatrous imaginations, the modern Charismatic Movement offers strange fire that has done incalculable harm to the body of Christ. Claiming to focus on the third member of the Trinity, it has in fact profaned His name and denigrated His true work...It is a sad twist of irony that those who claim to be most focused on the Holy Spirit are in actuality the ones doing the most to abuse, grieve, insult, misrepresent, quench, and dishonor Him.

John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, xiii

HISTORY OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

First Wave

- Began as the Pentecostal Movement in the early 1900’s under the leadership of William J. Seymour...it was characterized by ecstatic spiritual experiences accompanied by miracles, dramatic worship services, speaking in tongues, etc.
- The movement began with a meeting on April 9, 1906 when Seymour, a student of Charles Parham, was invited to speak at a church in Los Angeles
- He arrived on February 22, 1906 and began preaching that speaking in tongues was the first biblical evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit
- By March 4, the church was padlocked and Seymour was forbidden to preach anymore at the church because he had not yet experienced the blessing about which he preached
- So he began to hold Bible studies and prayer meetings at the home of one of the church members and a few others who had not rejected his preaching

- The group grew and continued meeting, praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit
- On April 9, the first member spoke in tongues; a couple days later 6 others did; and on April 12, Seymour did as well
- The group grew and they eventually began renting a building on Azusa Street in downtown LA
- By mid-May 1906, anywhere from 300 to 1,500 people would attempt to fit into the building
- The movement was largely considered a cult by those within the evangelical church

Second Wave

- Before 1955, the tenets of Pentecostalism were not embraced by the religious mainstream
- But that changed in 1960 when the first wave broke out of Pentecostalism and move into evangelicalism
- The beginning of this second wave is usually dated to Easter 1960 when Dennis Bennett, rector at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, CA claimed to have received the anointing of the Spirit
- The movement spread to other mainline churches where pastors began publicly describing their Pentecostal experiences and began holding meetings where the sick were prayed for, healed, and anointed
- Bennett was fired from the Van Nuys church but went to a dying liberal Episcopal church in Seattle which suddenly began to grow and report the same kind of Pentecostal experiences
- The result was that by the end of the 1960's, many desperate and weak mainline churches were embracing charismatic doctrine and seeing much numerical growth as a result
- The Catholic Charismatic Renewal began in 1967

Third Wave

- In the mid-1980's, charismatic theology infiltrated evangelicalism when two professors at Fuller Theological Seminary began to teach tenets of the charismatic movement
- This resulted in the Third Wave expression of the charismatic movement with its emphasis on power evangelism, reconstructionism (i.e. taking back the world for Christ), a restoration of kingdom theology, and a focus on signs and wonders
- The Vineyard Movement is an example of the Third Wave or neo-charismatic organization

CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT'S TEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS¹

1. Experiencing Jesus – personal encounter with Christ then Spirit baptism
“a greater reverence for Jesus, a greater submission to His will”
2. Power – for godly living, witnessing, and obeying God's Word
“all Spirit-empowered ministries manifested supernatural influences”
3. Worship – praise from innermost being and now on higher dimension
“true worship brings one into the presence of God”
4. Prayer – strong desire to engage in successful prayer
“praying in the Spirit...solicits a greater response from God”
5. Sign-gifts – all the gifts of the Spirit are meant for the church today
“the most prominent gifts were speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy”

¹ Extracted from Michael Moriarty's *The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends* [Zondervan, 1992], 71-73.

6. New Revelations – anyone Spirit-baptized can hear the voice of God
“one who knows God intimately should expect to hear from God personally”
7. The Word – “word-people” are the real purveyors of the “full Gospel”
“for one to know the deeper truths...the Holy Spirit must reveal it directly”
8. Demonic Activity – the Spirit-baptized are fully conscious of Satanic powers
“Spirit-baptism brings one into a new dimension of spiritual realities”
9. Apocalyptic – increased expectancy of the Lord’s return
“most charismatics sensed that history was moving towards its climax”
10. Evangelism – new ability and zeal to share the Gospel with unbelievers
“for one to have many converts, he needs to be baptized by the Spirit”

5 QUESTIONS WHICH DIAGNOSE THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

- These 5 questions frame the major emphases of the Charismatic Movement today
- In all of these the prominent agent or activator or enabler or empowerer is the Holy Spirit, whose working should not be questioned or rejected

Are the Works of Jesus to be Reduplicated by the Church Today?

- The basic assumption in the charismatic movement is that the miracles of Jesus, the signs and wonders of Him and His apostles are to be duplicated in the life of the church
- Without them occurring, real evangelism and real ministry are probably not taking place
- Their accusation against the contemporary church is that the church is weak and failing because of a lack of Spirit’s power
- Thus, their formula is: Words + Works = Kingdom Message
- The expressed desire of the charismatic movement is to be like the early church; hence the emphasis on signs and wonders
- They would point to Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 as a working model of how this operates

Are Apostles and Prophets Being Restored to the Church Today?

- The charismatic movement believes this is necessary in order to bring the church to full maturity, unity, and power and to have her triumphant before the Lord’s return
- Also, a restoration of these offices will enable the anointed of God to unlock the biblical truths that have lain dormant for centuries
- Their expressed desire is to belong to a triumphant church because kingdom power and authority are available to the subjects of the kingdom; therefore, believers must expect signs and wonders, over manifestations of victory over the enemy and over evil opposition...it means proclamation and demonstration!
- They point to the following passages as working models of this assumption:

Ephesians 4:11 ~ And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers

Acts 3:21 ~ whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (i.e. Christ is held in the heavens until the prophets speak with his power)

- A Response:

- We must understand the foundational nature of the church:

Ephesians 2:19-20 ~ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone

- We must understand that the signs were indicative of a true apostle and that the purpose of miraculous signs was to authenticate the apostles as God's messengers:

Acts 2:22 ~ Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know

Acts 2:43 ~ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 4:29-30 ~ And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.

Acts 5:12 ~ At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico

Acts 14:3-4 ~ Therefore they spent a long time *there* speaking boldly *with reliance* upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles

Romans 15:18-19 ~ For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ

Hebrews 2:3-4 ~ how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

2 Corinthians 12:12 ~ The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

- We must understand that Paul was the last of the apostles, with none being added after him (no apostolic succession):

1 Corinthians 15:8 ~ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also

Jude 17 ~ But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ

- We must remember the promise and necessity of revelation through the apostles:

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

- So we must conclude that the office of apostle/prophet is no longer in operation today

Is Special Revelation Still Taking Place Today?

- The assumption here is that God still speaks to His people today whether through prophetic utterance or through a word of wisdom/knowledge or through some other accepted mode of revelation like dreams, visions, or angelic messengers
- The authority comes from revelatory interpretation which, when given to and then through an anointed spokesman, is above analysis, critique, or rebuke
- The problem comes with knowing how to rate or evaluate ongoing revelation with the closed revelation of God's Word. Is it on par? At a different level of authority? With allowable errors?

Must Believers Enjoy Health and Wealth Today?

- The assumption here is that God always intends to heal and this is assured if the recipient of healing exercises faith, but healing may not always occur immediately...it's in the atonement!
- Furthermore, believers are redeemed from the curse of the law which includes poverty and disease
- It's a seed-faith principle in operation...name it and claim it...confess it and possess it...it's the royal privilege of the child of God to ask for it in the name of Christ and it will be given
- The following passages represent working models for this assumption:

Mark 10:29-30 ~ Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Gal 3:13-14 ~ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith

Exodus 15:26 ~ And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.

- A Response:
 - We must understand that men were given the ability to heal in order to introduce new revelation
 - All three ages of miracles and healing (time of Moses, time of Elijah/Elisha, time of Christ and the apostles) coincide perfectly with when God was giving His written Word in substantial quantities
 - Those doing the miracles were essentially those heralding an era of revelation
 - Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha and Christ and the Apostles all possessed the gifts of healings and miracles because they were introducing a time when God was going to reveal Himself and give Scripture
 - Thus, signs like miracles and healings were like huge billboards designed to get people's attention: God is speaking!
 - We must understand that men were given the ability to heal in order to authenticate the messengers of new revelation
 - The miracles and healings substantiated and authenticated the claims of the prophets and apostles that they spoke on behalf of God
 - Healings were designed to convince the people that God was working in and through these men...that they were messengers sent from God and that what they said was true

- We must understand that men were given the ability to heal in order to confirm the message of new revelation
 - The ability of these men to perform miracles and healings was to confirm that what they were saying was true....It separated the true prophets from the false prophets
 - It was to authenticate the messengers of Scripture and to confirm the message of Scripture
 - That is why only a few people in Scripture had those gifts
 - Only those who were speaking on behalf of God and only those closely associated with them
 - There is no indication that anybody and everybody in the church had the gifts of healings and miracles
- Thus, people do not have the gift of healing today since there is no new revelation being given today (Jude 3, Revelation 22:18-19)
- How can “healings” that happen today be explained? Some possibilities:
 1. God healed them – even though the gift of healing is not in operation today, God still does heal
 2. Medical treatment worked
 3. The body healed itself
 4. Deliberate deceit on the part of a false prophet
 5. Satanic involvement – see 2 Corinthians 11:14

Is Spiritual Warfare Ongoing Today?

- Those in the charismatic movement assume this warfare is going on today and it must be something believers engage in
 - But the warfare they propose is that of binding Satan, casting out demons, confronting spirits, rebuking the evil, sending them to the pit, renouncing demon’s presence
 - Yet this completely misses the heart of spiritual warfare.....A Response:
 1. Satan is probably not around to hear you since he is not omnipresent, nor is he omniscient
 2. Satan and his forces are exceedingly more powerful than you!
 - Even the archangel Michael himself didn’t pull rank on Satan the way many swaggering televangelists do.
- Jude 8-10** ~ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed
3. God’s plan for believers to resist the devil, stand firm in His power with the weapons of warfare described in Ephesians 6 is far better