

after the tradition which he received of us... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

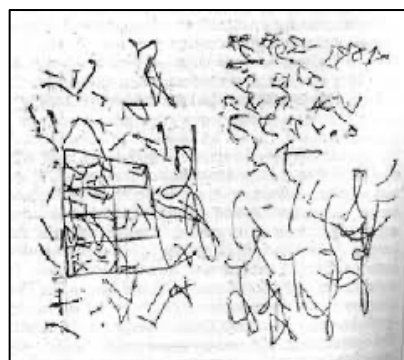
A brother (i.e., a believer) who walks disorderly is one who walks out of line of what Scriptures have stipulated. To such a person who is in unrepentant disobedience, the Bible says that we are to identify such a person and he is to be separated from fellowship. It is the hope that the shame from the separation of fellowship will help the brother see how serious his sin is, so that he will repent from it. This separation is not to be done in hatred towards him, but lovingly as a fellow brother in Christ. The attitude of admonition is important. It is to be done in hope of helping the brother see his sin and turn from it for his own soul's sake. Note also that this separation is not to be done without admonishment. In other words, it must be made known to the brother why he is at risk of being separated from fellowship. If the brother is still unrepentant, he is to be excommunicated and counted as a heathen man. Nevertheless, at any point if he understands his fault, repents of his sin, and returns to the church, he is to be received as a brother.

AGAINST CHARISMATISM

One of the issues in the B-P Church in Singapore that resulted in the dissolution of the Synod was that of tongue speaking. There were a group of leaders who were sympathetic to the Charismatic practice of tongue speaking, while the rest believed that Scripture states that all such tongues have ceased. How did the Charismatic movement come about? What do the Charismatics teach? And what does the Bible say about the issue of Charismatism?

HISTORY OF CHARISMATISM⁴³

The Charismatic movement can be divided into three waves: 1) Pentecostalism, 2) Neo-Pentecostalism / Charismatism, and 3) Neo-Charismatism / Third Wave Charismatism. The Charismatic movement stemmed from the Pentecostal denomination which began in 1901 at Bethel Bible College founded by Charles Parham in Topeka, Kansas. One of his students, Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues, apparently Chinese, after receiving the baptism of the Spirit, and she was unable to communicate in English for 3 days. In 1906, tongues-speaking broke out on a larger scale at the Azusa Street Revival under the black holiness preacher, William J Seymour. From there, the Pentecostal denomination was born, their distinctive being so-called tongue speaking.



Agnes Ozman writing in "Chinese".

⁴³ Jeffrey Khoo, *Charismatism Q&A* (Singapore, Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2019), 17-19.

In the 1950-60s, the practice of tongue speaking began to spread across the denominational boundaries. One notable figure that was a catalyst to this spread was Father Dennis Bennett, an Episcopal Minister who began teaching the practice of speaking in tongues within the Anglican Church. Pentecostal practices began to spread into the mainline denominations and even the Roman Catholic Church. This later developed into the teaching of the health and wealth gospel, also known as the Word of Faith Movement.

The Third Wave Charismatism was headed by C Peter Wagner and John Wimber, who wanted to distance themselves from the Pentecostals and Charismatics. They emphasised signs and wonders and the continuation of the apostolic sign gifts in the present (prophecy, miracle healing, etc.). This is also called the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR).

EVALUATION OF CHARISMATISM

The Charismatic Movement consists of millions, can it be possible that all of them are wrong? To understand what is wrong about the Charismatic Movement, we must go back to the Bible. In this section we shall evaluate the teachings of the Charismatics in light of Scripture.

TONGUE SPEAKING

The Charismatics teach that the gift of tongue-speaking is still in operation today. Initially, they taught that Christians should seek a “second baptism” of the Holy Spirit, and a mark of this would be that they would be able to speak in tongues – actual known languages that the individual has not learnt. However, when the Pentecostals began sending missionaries overseas without any training in the respective languages, they failed to be able to speak the languages, and they pivoted and said that the tongue-speaking was not actual languages, but “ecstatic utterances”. They explain that their gibberish utterances are expressions of their emotions to God that only God and they understand. They would use 1 Corinthians 13:1 as a justification.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

They claim that they are speaking the “tongues of angels”, languages that men do not understand. They claim that Paul spoke of such tongues. Is this true?

The word ‘*tongues*’ in the Bible is translated from two different words that both refer to actual languages. The first word is the word “γλῶσσα” (*glossa*), which is where we get the English word for glossary (e.g. Acts 2:4). The second word is the word “διάλεκτος” (*dialektos*), which is where we get the English word for dialect (e.g. Acts 2:8). Therefore, we know that the gift of tongue speaking is the God-given gift of speaking actual known languages without studying them prior.

To understand what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 13:1, we must understand the context in which Paul said that. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 states,

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

In this passage, Paul was speaking of the importance of having love as the motivation of the exercise of our spiritual gifts. Paul was arguing for this importance by using hyperboles. Paul was saying that even if he could speak with the tongues of men and angels if there was such a thing, even if he could understand all mysteries, and even if he would give all his goods to the poor, it would be profitless if he did not have love as his motivation. These were statements that were extremes that were used to prove his point. In the instances where angels spoke to men in the Bible, they used the language of men.

Furthermore, the Bible explains that the true gift of tongues does not profit the person who does not understand the language. Paul later stated in 1 Corinthians 14:1-5,

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.”

Paul explains that the chief gift is not the gift of speaking in tongues but the gift of prophecy – the gift of speaking God’s Word in a manner that others can understand. This is because the effectiveness of the exercising of the gift is the edification and comfort of others, which can only come from understanding. The true gift of speaking in another language will not benefit those who do not know the language because it cannot edify or comfort them.

Finally, Paul explains that tongues will cease. Though the practice of tongue-speaking was present in apostolic times, it is no longer in operation today because it has ceased. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 states,

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge refer to revelatory gifts. Prophecies shall fail, meaning that it will be done away with and become inoperative. It is in the passive voice, meaning there will be something external that will act upon it to cause it to fail. Tongues shall cease, meaning that it will stop, and it is in the middle voice pointing to how it will cease on its own. Knowledge shall vanish away, meaning that it will be

done away with and become inoperative. It is also in the passive voice, meaning there will be something external that will act upon it to cause it to vanish away. The question is, what is this external thing that will cause these revelatory gifts to cease? Paul explains that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge are only knowledge in part, but there will come a time when perfect revelation comes which will cause all things in part to be done away with. This would have to refer to the Bible. This means that when the canon of Scripture, the complete revelation of God is given, these other revelatory gifts will cease and become inoperative because they are no longer needed.

HEALTH AND WEALTH GOSPEL

Another doctrine that the Charismatics teach is the health and wealth gospel, which is in fact another gospel. They teach that it is always God's will for a believer to be healthy and wealthy. In fact, they say that Christ died to take away all our diseases. They try to prove this from Isaiah 53:5.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Are the Charismatics right to say that Jesus died to make us healthy? The confusion about Charismatism is that they take that which is true and twist it for their own agendas. To understand this, we have to look into the larger context of Scripture.

When Christ heals us with His death, was it a physical healing or spiritual healing? The Bible tells us that Christ's death heals us both physically and spiritually. Matthew 8:14-17 applies this text to the physical healing that Jesus performed during His time on earth.

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

However, in addition to this, 1 Peter 2:21-24 tells us that the healing is spiritual, whereby we are healed from our sins.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

The question then is not whether Christ heals us physically, but **when** does Christ heal us physically? The Bible tells us that our bodies will be healed in the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 states,

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our corruptible bodies will put on incorruption, whereby we will no longer have the sickness and death that we are familiar with in this life. However, this is not promised to us when we are still in this body. When Christ came, He gave a glimpse of the power of the resurrection through the healing miracles He performed, the greatest of which was His resurrection from the death where He conquered death.

Furthermore, concerning wealth, the Bible is clear that wealth is not a measure of one's spirituality. In fact, Christ says in Luke 12:15

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

Moreover, we are called to focus on the spiritual and trust God for the provision of our physical needs. Matthew 6:31-34 states,

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

The Bible also states that the life of a Christian is not a smooth-sailing life. It is a life of suffering. Philippians 1:29 states,

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;”

The Bible is also clear about how the saints of God suffered for Him in this life.

SIGN GIFTS

Another doctrine that the Charismatics teach is that of the continuation of the sign gifts in the present. They believe that just as Christ, the Apostles, and Prophets had

the gift of signs and wonders, the church today also should have these gifts continuing. They would refer to passages like Mark 16:14-18 to prove their argument.

“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

They say that those who believe in Christ will have the ability to perform all these sign miracles. In addition to this, they would point to John 14:12 to prove this.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

Did Jesus mean that as believers, we will be able to perform miracles and even greater miracles than Jesus did? To understand this, we must examine the passages above more closely.

First concerning Mark 16, we must observe the uses of the pronouns in this passage. This incident happened between Christ and the disciples. Note that Christ said to **‘them’** (the disciples) that *“**he** that believeth and is baptised shall be saved”*, and the signs shall follow *“**them** that believe”* (i.e. the disciples). Furthermore, the sign gifts were for the authentication of the ministries of the apostles, especially regarding the revelatory aspect of their ministry, which is no longer in operation after the completion of the canon. That is the reason why shortly after the apostolic period, the sign gifts have ceased, and even in times of great revival like that of the 16th Century Reformation, such sign gifts did not resurface.

Secondly, concerning John 14:12, we must understand the context of John 14. John 14:9-12 states,

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus said that the works He did showed that He is from the Father. What are these works? The works are not so much the works of miracles exclusively, but the total work of obedience. Jesus obeyed the

Father when He was on earth. However, because Jesus has returned to heaven, believers now must continue this work of obedience on earth, and the effect of this obedience will span a greater scope – the gospel being spread throughout the world. Hence, this is not speaking of miracles but obedience and evangelism.

Furthermore, Matthew 24:24 warns us of those who will claim to do great signs and wonders in the name of Christ.

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

The Bible warns us that there will be false Christians who will show convincing miracles in the last days. They are not of Christ but of the devil, and Christians must flee such false teachings of the Charismatics.