

Pentecost and the Coming of the Holy Spirit

Part 6--Excursus on the Charismatic Movement

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Many modern “Christian” historians and authors describe the rise and spread of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement as a great modern revival; as, first, a breath of fresh air upon a dying, formalistic Protestantism and, then, a great reviving force upon Roman Catholicism. There is no question but that the spread of the Pentecostal experience and doctrine throughout Protestant denominations and the Papal church that has taken place from the 1960s onward has been astounding. Also, the fastest growing denominations in the United States in the last thirty years have been Charismatic (e.g., the Assemblies of God). The major doctrinal distinctives of the Charismatic movement—the baptism in the Holy Spirit, tongues speaking, prophecy, the gift of healing, the emphasis on having a personal experience (together with a sensationalist eschatology and very entertaining “worship services”)—are primary reasons for the movement’s growth and popularity. Given the fact that the Charismatic movement is one of the most popular and growing forces in professing Christianity today, and the fact that it is commonly viewed as a reviving force, we need to briefly examine the question: Is the Charismatic movement a great modern work of God (i.e., a true revival) or is it a gigantic corrupting fraud? Jesus said that Christians can identify a true or false prophet by his fruits (Mt. 7:15-20). The fruits that our Lord spoke of refer to teaching (or doctrine) and ethics (or behavior). An examination of the Charismatic doctrine and behavior will prove that the movement is not a great revival as many suppose but rather is a great corrupting tide leading multitudes toward heresy and apostasy. This sad truth will be demonstrated under a number of different topics.

(1) One can tell a lot about a movement by examining its origins. For example, the great revival that sprang from the Protestant Reformation has its roots in the rediscovery of the Scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone by Luther and Zwingli and the rediscovery of biblical principles of worship primarily by Calvin and Knox. The reformation was a great revival founded upon the bedrock of Scripture. The Holy Spirit used God’s truth to awaken Europe, then America and beyond. But, what is the origin of modern Pentecostalism? Was it founded upon a rediscovery of a great doctrine lost through neglect and declension? No. On the contrary, the doctrine of Spirit baptism as a second work of grace grew directly from the heretical soil of the second-blessing “holiness” movement of the nineteenth century. Many holiness teachers in the eighteenth century rejected the orthodox doctrine of sanctification¹ as a lifelong process

¹ The biblical doctrine of sanctification is probably best defined by the Westminster Confession of Faith: “They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

of spiritual growth, in which sin is never completely eradicated in the believer. Methodistic holiness teachers taught that Christians could receive a “second blessing” which gave the Christian in one moment “entire sanctification.” The sinful nature was supposedly completely eliminated in the believer. And, thus, the believer was perfect and sinless. The second blessing doctrine of entire sanctification, or sinless perfection, is condemned by the Apostle John: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8). The original Pentecostals took the second blessing doctrine one step further and taught the “baptism of the Spirit” as a third blessing. Although most Pentecostals eventually rejected the idea of entire sanctification, nevertheless the fathers of modern Pentecostalism were heretical.

“In 1901 Charles F. Parham carried the prevalent ‘Pentecostal’ insistence on ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit’ (as described in Acts 2) to the conclusion that tongues should still be the sign of a Pentecostal experience. Parham’s student, W. J. Seymour, popularized this new Pentecostalism beginning in 1906 at the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, after which this movement grew into its many varieties....The original Pentecostal teachers, Parham and Seymour, taught a Methodistic Holiness view of a ‘second blessing’ of entire sanctification in which the sinful nature was eradicated. This, they said, was followed by a third blessing, ‘baptism of the Spirit,’ accompanied by tongues.”² Within twenty years of the founding of modern Pentecostalism by Charles Parham, many people became Pentecostal who had Baptist rather than Methodist holiness backgrounds. These new Pentecostals rejected the second blessing idea of entire sanctification. Thus, the third blessing, “the baptism of the Spirit”³ became the “second blessing.” Pentecostal theology has retained the second blessing idea to the present. Pentecostalism and the modern Charismatic movement did not grow out of the careful exegesis of God’s Word but rather out of heretical “holiness” revivalism.

(2) The most compelling evidence that the Charismatic movement is not of God is the rejection of the biblical definition of the gospel by the vast majority of Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers, teachers, authors and adherents. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 16:13), who came to exalt Christ (Jn. 15:13-14) not man. Yet, when one examines the preaching and teaching in Charismatic churches (with very rare exceptions) one finds the false gospel of Arminianism or semi-Pelagianism. This perversion of the gospel states that salvation is a cooperative effort between God and man (synergism) in which man has the decisive role. Man (it is said) allows God to save him by an act of the human will. In this system, regeneration and saving faith are not gifts of God that flow from the merits of Christ, but rather the new birth is God’s response to faith as an autonomous self-generated act of man. In the other words men are saved *because* of faith

This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (13:1-3).

² George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford, 1980), 93.

³ The phrase “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” is commonly used by Charismatic s, is unbiblical. The Bible always uses the phrase baptism *in* or *with* (Greek: *en*) the Holy Spirit. This is because the Holy Spirit is not the one baptizing. It is Christ who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He receives this privilege as the divine-human mediator, as part of His glorification by the Father.

and not *through* faith which is God's gift to the elect. Further, the great biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone has been replaced by the expression: "accept Jesus as your personal savior." The doctrine of justification which has God the Father declaring the believing sinner perfectly righteous on account of Christ's merits (which takes place outside the believer in the heavenly court) is replaced by the subjective experience of asking Jesus to dwell in one's heart. Such a view is closer to Romanism than the great creeds and confessions that arose out of the Reformation. Furthermore, a Roman Catholic, Buddhist, eastern mystic, Russian Orthodox, or any flaming heretic would have no problem asking Christ to come into his heart. But believing in Jesus and His objective work of redemption *according to Scriptures* requires a radical change of mind concerning God, creation, sin, Jesus, etc. There is not one example in the New Testament of Jesus, the apostles or evangelists ever using the expression "accept Jesus as your personal Savior."⁴ The message is always "repent" and/or "believe the gospel".

(3) There is a general tendency within the Charismatic movement to elevate having an experience over belief in orthodox doctrine. This dangerous tendency is totally contrary to the work of the Holy Spirit which is to lead believers into a belief in the truth (Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:13-16) and the teaching of the apostles who were obsessed with advocating and defending orthodox doctrine (see Ac. 20:29-32; Rom. 16:17-18; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Tim. 1:18-19; 4:1-3, 16; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2, 15-18; 3:10, 14-17; 4:3-5; Tit. 1:9; etc.). When debating various Charismatics regarding tongues, prophecy, "healers" and other Pentecostal distinctives this author repeatedly runs into the argument that: "I have had (or, my friend or relative has had) this or that experience." Given the fact that Christian Scientists, Mormons, Hindus, mystics and a multitude of bizarre cults claim similar experiences is ignored. In examining any issue, the most important question is, "What saith the Scripture?" (Gal. 4:30, KJV).

The most troubling thing about the Charismatics' implicit existentialism is their extension of the right hand of fellowship to blatant, damnable heretics on the basis of these infidels receiving "the baptism of the Holy Spirit," "tongues" and so forth. Many Charismatics have built bridges of acceptance and extended ecumenical cooperation toward Roman Catholics solely on the basis of their acceptance of Pentecostal experiences. After these Romanists have supposedly received Spirit baptism and the gift of tongues, do they turn from their heretical teaching on salvation and their gross idolatry (e.g., the mass, the worship of Mary and the saints, the use of statues, etc.)? No. The exact opposite is the case. They give testimony after testimony about how their Charismatic spirituality has deepened their love for and participation in the mass (the mass is an explicit denial of the sufficiency and "once for all" nature of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross); their adoration (i.e., worship) of the virgin Mary (mariolatry); their increased use of the confessional and penance (i.e., salvation by works). Roman Catholic author Edward D. O'Connor writes, "Some people have been brought to a frequent use of the sacrament of Penance through the experience of baptism in the Spirit. Others have discovered a place for devotion to Mary in their lives, whereas previously they had been

⁴ The apostle John does use the phrase, "But as many as received Him" (Jn. 1:12). However, in the same verse receiving Him is defined as belief in Christ: "to those who believe in His name." To receive Christ does not mean we ask Him to come and live in our hearts. It means that we trust in Him—His person, work and words. To divorce becoming a Christian from a biblical knowledge of who Jesus is and what He has done is absurd. It fills the pews with unregenerate, ignorant, antinomian entertainment-seekers.

indifferent or even antipathetic towards her. One of the most striking effects of the Holy Spirit's action has been to stir up devotion to the Real Presence in the Eucharist."⁵ In other words, the Pentecostal experience has enabled Papists to be more faithful Judaizers and idolaters. Obviously, such things cannot be the work of the Holy Spirit.

(4) The Charismatic movement is revealed as false by its disregard of God's law-word. A true revival brings greater obedience to the Bible not antinomianism (i.e., anti-law-ism). There are many examples of a blatant disregard of Scripture within the Charismatic movement. (Once again keep in mind that we are talking about a large movement. There are rare exceptions to these examples of lawlessness).

a) Among Charismatic churches there is a total disregard of the Lord's day—the Christian Sabbath. This sinful behavior is probably due to wide-spread acceptance of dispensationalism (i.e., the idea that the whole Old Testament law [even the Ten Commandments] has been abrogated and is not binding in the new covenant era). Contrary to Charismatic thinking, the Bible teaches that although the day has changed (from the seventh to the first day of the week) the Sabbath is perpetual.⁶

b) It is very common among churches in the Charismatic to permit women to preach and teach in *public* Christian assemblies. Many women "preachers" even have celebrity status, are popular guest speakers in various churches and conferences, and even frequently appear on "Christian" television programs. The apostle Paul says that such behavior is unbiblical, shameful and unspiritual. He says, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church....If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:35-35, 37). Almost a decade later the apostle writes, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). In both 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, Paul appeals to the pre-fall creation of Adam and Eve (which established the covenant headship of the man) as the primary reason for women not being able to teach (1 Cor. 11:8 ff.; 1 Tim. 2:13 ff.). The apostle does this to shut the mouths of those who argue that Paul was culturally conditioned in order to circumvent the plain teaching of God's Word.

⁵ Edward D. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1917), 14-15 [As quoted by Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians*, 226]. Gromacki writes, "Some searching questions must obviously be asked. How can Protestant Pentecostals accept the Charismatic Catholics as brethren in Christ without leading these converts out of the Roman Catholic Church? How can they fellowship with them without criticizing the clear errors of the Catholic system?... Also, do the Protestant Pentecostals regard the Roman Catholic experience to be the same as theirs when the Catholics do not equate the two and when the Catholics base their experience upon the sacraments? How can the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International [this organization is one of the best financed and organized proponents of Pentecostalism in the world] publish and circulate the booklet *Catholics and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* containing testimonies of Catholics who express great love for the Roman Church and its sacraments?" (*The Modern Tongues Movement*, 159-160). Can one kiss the Son of God and the ring of antichrist at the same time? Can one serve God while at the same time preaching a false gospel and worshiping idols? Can one promote Christ's kingdom and Satan's dominion at the same time? "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols" (2 Cor. 6:16; cf. 6:14-18)?

⁶ See Brian M. Schwertley, *The Christian Sabbath: Examined, Proved, Applied* (Holt, MI: Reformation Forum, 1997).

c) Most Charismatic churches have adopted the carnal Christian heresy. This teaching asserts that one can accept Jesus as Savior and then at a later time (if one decides to get serious about Christianity) he can repent and submit to Christ as Lord. According to this demonic doctrine, people who “accept Jesus as their personal Savior” yet who continue to *habitually* lie, fornicate, steal, commit adultery, love the world and act like the heathen are merely carnal Christians. As a result of this teaching, church discipline (which is one of the marks of a true church) is almost non-existent in many Charismatic churches. (One can remember the slap on the wrist that Jimmy Swaggert received from the Assemblies of God for repeatedly committing adultery with a prostitute. When this author was a Charismatic and attended an Assembly of God church in California, the senior pastor’s daughter became pregnant as a result of fornicating with a pagan. The response of the church’s leadership to the illicit relationship was to have a baby shower party at the church). When statistically people who claim to be Christians get divorced, fornicate, commit adultery, and vote, think and act almost the same as the heathen general population, one cannot say that such disobedience and lukewarmness is a genuine revival of the Holy Spirit. Further, the Bible is crystal clear that Jesus saves both from the guilt and the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:4-7:6; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:15-17; Eph. 2:10; Col. 3:1-5, 7; 1 Jn. 3:9); that people who do not repent but rather habitually commit sin are not saved (Heb. 12:14; 1 Jn. 1:6; 2:3-4; Mt. 3:7-10; 7:21, 23; Gal. 6:7-8; Lk. 13:5; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9-11; Jas. 2:20; etc.); that Jesus must be believed in as *both* Savior and Lord (Ac. 16:31; 2 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 10:9).

d) Charismatic churches have probably done more to corrupt the worship of God in the last generation than any. They have turned the reverent worship of God into a stage show with rock groups, dancing, stage plays, comedian pastors, slap-happy camp fire songs and so forth. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24). Worship that is not based on divine warrant from God’s Word is sinful will-worship (see Col. 2:20-23). By and large the Charismatic movement is the great worship corrupting force in “Christendom” in this generation, a fountain of non-authorized human traditions.

e) The special claims of Charismatics to have the special sign-gifts such as the gift of healing, prophecy and tongues has been exegetically, theologically and even empirically proved to be a lie. It is obvious to any unbiased observer that what is occurring in Charismatic churches today (babbling gibberish, making unprovable prophecies, foot lengthenings, etc.) has nothing in common with what occurred in the apostolic church (speaking real foreign languages, making very specific verifiable prophecies, amazing obvious healings and even raising the dead to life).

f) Charismatics are notorious for sloppy, shallow, and even unbiblical theology. One of the most popular Charismatic speakers (Rev. Benny Hinn) taught that were nine persons in the godhead. After being confronted about his heresy he recanted but months later began teaching the nine person view again. Kenneth Hagin and his disciples (Kenneth Copeland, Fred Price, Charles Capps, etc.) teach a cultic view of faith and a heretical doctrine of the atonement; yet, they are wildly popular and have been embraced by many Charismatic leaders.⁷ It is not by accident that all the great theological works

⁷ The plagiarism by Kenneth Hagin and the many blatant heretical teachings of the “word of faith” movement have been documented and analyzed by: D. R. McDonnell, *A Different Gospel: A Historical and*

written since the beginning of the Reformation (including works on the Holy Spirit) were written by non-Charismatics: Martin Luther, John Calvin, Zwingli, John Knox, Bucer, George Gillespie, Samuel Rutherford, Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Charles Hodge, John Murray, etc. Also, it is telling that throughout church history those in favor of the advancement of speaking in tongues (i.e., nonsensical gibberish) have virtually always been heretics (Montanists, Jansenists, Quakers, Irvingites, Shakers, Mormons, Charles F. Parham, W. J. Seymour, etc.). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice” (Jn. 10:3-5). If Charismatic theologians have a greater Spirit-blessing than other theologians, then why are their works inferior and unbiblical?

When the Charismatic movement is analyzed doctrinally, ethically and historically and their “supernatural gifts” are examined empirically, it is revealed as a gigantic fraud and a great force for declension in evangelical Protestantism. The Charismatic movement is not a genuine revival but rather is a man-invented, man-centered, man-generated movement.

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