

# **“Spirit-Baptized ‘Christians’”**

## *The Pentecostal Movement In America*

A glance back in history during the period of Martin Luther up until the nineteenth century will show that movements in history have committed themselves to the restoration of the first century gospel. This seems strange, but the Puritans, Baptists, Methodists, and Alexander Campbell were all working toward this end. Another strange fact is that these movements have differed, sometimes significantly, in their understandings of just what should be restored.

Some movements concentrate on the form and structure of the church (Puritans, Baptists, and Alexander Campbell). Other groups focused on the character of the early Christians (Barton W. Stone and the Anabaptists). Still others, like the early Mormons, sought to restore to a latter-day church the same direct communication with God that had characterized God’s people in ancient days. Holy living became the central theme of the “Holiness movement” which began in the late nineteenth century, while the restoration of spiritual empowerment motivated the people who came to be known as Pentecostals early in this century.

Near the turn of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement grew directly out of people’s desire to restore the first century church. The Holiness followers emphasized an ethical restoration, being mainly concerned with a sanctified life. Pentecostals sought to restore the apostolic gifts of the Spirit, particularly speaking in tongues and healing. The movement began at Charles Parham’s Bethel College in Topeka, KS, where a student, Agnes Ozman, manifested the “gift of tongues” on New Year’s Eve, 1900. Others in the Bethel group, meeting in an “upper room,” soon began to speak in other “languages” as well. Robert Maples Anderson, a Pentecostal historian, said that the scenario was “almost exactly as Pentecost is described in the second chapter of Acts.”

A. J. Tomlinson took charge of this movement, and many groups of churches emerged with titles which included the terms Pentecostal, Holiness, or Church of God. Today there are more than thirty separate groups including the Pentecostal Church of God of America; United Pentecostal Church; Church of God in Christ; Church of God (Cleveland, TN); Church of God; and, the Assemblies of God. Most of these bodies are relatively small. Some of these groups have removed the name associating them with holiness movements. Some of these churches, known by nondescript names (i.e.,

World Harvest Church, World Outreach Church, etc.), have grown to enormous size.

By 1910, Tomlinson was teaching the standard Pentecostal view of church history that the primitive church remained true to its original faith for a number of years but then "departed from the faith" and "was lost to view." Now in these latter days, however, the true church of God had been restored in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee.

Pentecostals believe that sanctification and speaking in tongues were inseparable in the lives of the earliest Christians. From their perspective, the holiness restoration was incomplete. To restore holiness apart from other gifts of the Spirit only recovered a part of the primitive faith. Pentecostals wanted a complete restoration of the Holy Spirit's activity. Since the Spirit empowered the Christians first in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the "Pentecostal" experience, complete with all the phenomena which began with the church in Acts 2, became an essential event for these people.

Pentecostal churches embrace justification as the first work of grace, sanctification as the second work of grace and speaking in tongues as the third work of grace. Even though many of the Pentecostal churches have been divided over disagreements on leadership and doctrine, they share five basic convictions: First, the experience of salvation. Every person must receive a personal visit from God. At that time a person experiences the forgiveness of sin, the rebirth of his soul, the gift of being sinless and holy -- able to live "wholly for Jesus," and the baptism of the Holy Spirit that enables the recipient to "speak in tongues." Water baptism for the remission of sins became an "outward sign" which manifested an "inward grace." Second, heart religion. Pentecostal services are evangelistic and extremely emotional. Worshipers sing upbeat religious songs, shout, clap, dance, pray loudly, and work themselves into a frenzy. Most Pentecostal churches use instrumental music. Some are called "Holy Rollers" because they actually roll on the ground under the spell of an emotional fit. When their speech is no longer coherent, they believe they have been possessed and are speaking in tongues like the apostles in Acts 2.

Third, strict moral standards. Tobacco, alcoholic drinks, card playing, dancing, and going to the movies are usually strictly prohibited. Fourth, premillennialism. Christ is coming soon to end the world and to judge all men. Before He destroys the devil and takes the faithful to heaven with Himself, He will live on earth for a thousand years. Virtually all early Pentecostals spoke of restoration in the context of an imminent millennium. In this, Pentecostals were reminiscent of both Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, and even of Joseph Smith, the Mormon "prophet." Tomlinson

taught that restoration of the primitive church in the mountains of North Carolina would eventually unify all Christians and hasten the "millennial dawn." Fifth, faith healing, or healing without the help of medical science. If a person has a strong enough faith, he can be cured instantly even of "incurable" diseases like cancer. If one watches some of the prominent religious channels on television, you will see many episodes of "faith healing." This specific idea is still very prevalent and seems to be rising in popularity.

A. J. Tomlinson thought that "restoration" because the church had "departed from the faith" was going to occur in the context of an imminent millennium. The Pentecostal's concern for first times (restoration) and last times (millennium) explains their common "former rain/latter rain" terminology (found originally in Deuteronomy 11:14, Joel 2:23, and James 5:7). The first Pentecost in Jerusalem was the "former rain" which launched the Christian age. Now, a second Pentecost -- a "latter rain" -- would conclude the Christian age just prior to the millennial era.

After reviewing all the information concerning the Pentecostal church, one must ask themselves, "Do they really have the correct emphasis behind their organization?" Is speaking in other tongues the main point of Acts 2? Notice that many were not convinced until after Peter's sermon was finished. The latter part of the chapter does not even concentrate on speaking in tongues, but upon the salvation that is now available to man.

Pentecostals say that the only real evidence of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues did continue in the early church, but in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 Paul points out that this gift is only one among many spiritual gifts (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues). Why do the Pentecostals not believe in these other gifts? In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul stressed that there was a better way to show the influence of the Spirit within us. He also stated that the gifts were only temporary, to be done away with when the "*perfect*" comes. That "*perfect*" was the completed word of God.

Some of our denominational friends want to apply this "*perfect*" to Christ, but this does not fit the context. The words "*that which*" are used instead of "*He who.*" "*That which*" grammatically fits miracles. Also, "*in part*" and "*perfect*" are in opposition to one another. "*In part*" will be "*done away*" (vs. 10). We have a full revelation of Christ and nothing about Him shall be "*done away*" (1 John 1:1-4). But "*in part*" does fit miracles. Christ or His coming are not dealt with here. But the completed revelation versus the incomplete revelation is under discussion in the context.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul discussed at length the problems posed for worshipers at Corinth by speaking in tongues. These same problems -- disorder, many competing voices, nothing really learned -- are also quite evident in modern Pentecostal services. Paul also stated that tongues were signs to unbelievers and prophecy was a sign to believers. The Pentecostals have it backwards! They use speaking in tongues as signs to other believers.

Pentecostals really had the same idea that everyone else had when they decided to restore the primitive church. The problem, however, was one of misdirection. Pentecostals wanted to go so far back to the primitive church that they missed the entire point of spiritual gifts existing in the place of the completed word of God (cf. 1 Kings 17:24; Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Let us recognize the Pentecostal's misgivings and put an emphasis on the proper form and structure of the church. Although Pentecostals can be very difficult to teach, do not give up on them. They need the gospel too!

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