

## NEO-PENTECOSTALISM

The three previous issues dealt with Prophecy, Revivalism and Keswick. This issue is dealing with a fourth in a series of five stumbling blocks to true Spiritual Awakening today.

Pentecostalism, though taking many varied forms, has one common denominator which is present in all its various movements: speaking in tongues, a language that the speaker has not learned and does not understand. It appeals its validity to the phenomenon in the book of Acts and I Corinthians.

Church history reveals that tongues and other supernatural sign-gifts diminished and disappeared, at least from an obvious display, long before the end of the fourth century. We can notice this fading away in the New Testament itself. Irenaeus (born around 120 A.D.) notes "many brethren in the Church who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages." Tertullian (born around 150) speaks of an obscure kind of speech which was prevalent among the Christians. But Justin Martyr (born around the beginning of the second century) witnesses to the presence of spiritual gifts and names seven different kinds, but not tongues. And Chrytostom (347-407) places tongues in the past.

There have been, however, various and scattered out-breaks of speaking in tongues in isolated spots down through the years. Charles Wesley, for instance, writes of his encounter with the French Prophets, a group that was noted for bodily contortions and unintelligible speaking. "I lodged at Mr. Hollis's, who entertained me with his French Prophets, equal, in his account, if not superior, to the Old Testament ones. While we were undressing he fell into violent agitations and gobbled like a turkey-cock." Wesley subsequently attempted to exorcise the devil out of the man.

In the period between 1828 and 1830 there was an outbreak of supernatural speaking among the Anglican Irvingites. This became the origin of the Catholic Apostolic Church which later split to form the New Apostolic Church. Its first church in America was established in 1851 at Potsdam N.Y. This movement has all but died out. Two other small movements had their beginning prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Churches of God originated in 1886 under the preaching of Baptist R. G. Spurling, and the Holiness Church was established through the preaching of Methodists Hardin Wallace, James A. Singer and Henry Ashcroft in 1896.

### Origin

Classic Pentecostalism, however, is a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. There is nothing vaguely similar to it anywhere in Church History. It has its true beginnings in the 1906 Azosa Street revival of Los Angeles which was initiated by W. J. Seymour, a young negro preacher. Seymour was a student of C. F. Parnham, in whose Topeka Bible College he, with his students, set out to seek a Baptism in the Spirit similar to that at Pentecost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. The outbreak of speaking in unknown languages, with other supernatural phenomena in the Azosa Street Mission, was widely publicized, since its principals were in touch with Evan Roberts and the Wales revival, which was at that time drifting toward Pentecostalism. Preachers and missionaries from all over the world flocked to the tiny mission to "get the Baptism" and returned to perpetuate its gospel. Thus from this movement practically every Pentecostal denomination now in existence can trace its beginnings directly or indirectly.

This paper, however, is not concerned so much with Classic Pentecostalism as represented in the historic Pentecostal denominations as it is with Neo-Pentecostalism. This movement, whose advocates prefer to call themselves Charismatics, in an effort to rid themselves of identification with Classic Pentecostals, began in the early 1950's. This outbreak of tongues-speaking began to occur in all Protestant denomination and did not produce new denominations. Rather, its adherents were encouraged to stay in their own church and encourage others into their experience.

David duPlessis is the main personality whose influence and teaching urged this "stay in your church and evangelize the Baptism" emphasis. A Dutch African Pentecostal, he was to a large degree sponsored by John Mackay, President of Princeton, and is closely aligned with the World Council of Churches and is openly ecumenical. Oral Roberts, David Wilkerson, Catherine Kuhlman, Derek Prince and a host of others have been strong instruments in promoting Neo-Pentecostalism; but its single most powerful vehicle is the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International. Founded by wealthy California dairyman Demos Shakarian, it sponsors "businessmen's prayer breakfasts" in elite hotels, engages the most eloquent and impressive speakers to give the sensational testimonies and then opens an invitation for the guests to receive the "Baptism." Its methods and manners are smooth, sophisticated and deeply appealing. It has a powerful attraction to the wealthy and affluent professionals and businessmen.

Catholics began to get into this movement in 1966. A small lay group of the Duquesne University faculty, influenced by Wilkerson's The Cross and The Switchblade and Sherrill's They Speak with Other Tongues, gathered to seek a pentecostal prayer group led by a Presbyterian woman. Contact was made with an Episcopal woman who invited them to attend a pentecostal prayer group led by a Presbyterian woman. Within a month, four of them spoke in tongues. This eventually led to the Dupuesne weekend of February, 1967, when about 30 students received the "Baptism." Excitement soon spread to Notre Dame, which became the center for Catholic Pentecostalism. By 1972, they numbered 12,000. David duPlessis wrote in *Logos* journal July, 1975, of 20,000 participating in a Congress on the Charismatic Renewal of the Catholic Church in Rome at St. Peter's Basilica. Participants came from 58 countries, and the Congress was attended by 10 leading Protestant Charismatics.

### Similarities and Differences

In many ways Classic Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals are embarrassments to each other. They have similarities, but the chief dangers of Neos may be detected in some of the differences.

In Theology. Pentecostal denominations are for the most part very dogmatic in doctrine, many believing that they are the only true church and none outside them are saved. Neos, on the other hand, are anti-doctrinal and ecumenical. They want as little emphasis on dogmatic truth as possible, preferring to center fellowship around supernatural demonstrations. They are both, however, subjective and empiric.

In Soteriology both. Both are Arminian, Wesleyan. Some Neos believe in a form of eternal security, or “once saved, always saved,” but it generally takes the form of “once filled, always filled with the Spirit.” This effectively opens a wide door for antinomianism. Conversion is not the objective of the Charismatic movement and is seldom, if ever, preached.

In Sanctification. Most Classic Pentecostals subscribe to some form of Wesley’s Perfectionism, a three-stage salvation: Three successive crises in Conversion, Sanctification, and Spirit Baptizing. Neos, on the other hand, while preaching the Holy Spirit, have little or nothing to say about personal holiness, sin or repentance. They have a strong aversion to anything negative. In a special introduction to a book on the Azusa Street revival, Arthur Wallis misquotes Matthew 5:6 under the heading of “The Thirst For the Spirit” as “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst, for they shall be filled.” The Neo had obviously rather insert the Spirit or Power there than the scriptural “righteousness.”

### Sweeping the World

Neo-Pentecostalism, many church leaders supposed, if ignored, would quietly go away. But it has not. It is the hottest thing on the religious scene today, and is growing every day. In fact, many who stoutly opposed it in its beginnings, we are dismayed to learn, have capitulated to its charms and themselves become strong Charismatics. More and more, it is being viewed by reserved church leaders and genuine Spiritual Awakening. The reason for this is a monument to Satan’s subtility and man’s gullibility in ignorance.

### Its Convincing Appeal

- 1) There are many areas in which it is orthodox in its teaching. The Virgin Birth, Blood Atonement, Bodily Resurrection, Expectancy of the Lord’s Return, Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures, its Literal Accuracy, are all attractive to the fundamental believer.
- 2) A spirit of “love” pervades the atmosphere of its meetings and surrounds its advocates. I have put love in quotations because I do not believe it is true love. It is a false love that seats itself in human emotions, not in the Holy Spirit. But this generation is so inexperienced in discerning of spirits that it cannot tell the difference. Contrasted with the bitter, contentious, railing sectarian spirit that pervades most churches, this looks like the real thing.
- 3) There is an apparent transformation of persons. Many immediately break with outward sins, gain release from drugs, alcohol, sexual sins, etc. Young, rebellious teenagers become devoutly religious, forsaking many weird pursuits. This again looks good, when contrasted with the feeble results of the average church ministry. The fallacies of some of these “conversions” are pointed out in my booklet *True and False Tongues*.
- 4) A Spirit of worship. The mode of worship is spontaneous, free and expressive. One cannot help being deeply impressed with some of the tongues and interpretation demonstrations, the spontaneous “singing in the spirit” (an outbreak of singing in tongues in unison), and the hearty praises to God that permeate the meetings. When this is put in contrast with the dry, dead, dull, lifeless plodding through the programs and liturgies of most churches, it looks awfully good to an emotionally starved man. Everyone wears a bright happy smile, and there is much hugging and outward demonstrations of joy and praise.
- 5) Much talk about Jesus. This generation of Christians is so ignorant that they will accept anyone who gives proper homage, as they suppose, to the name of “Jesus.” But I think we shall discover that this can be a fetish for any kind of god. It can be in no way related to the Christ of the Bible, but is more closely related to the same kind of god the kids have in mind when they chant “Hare Krishna.”
- 6) Much interest in the Bible and Christian literature. In a church atmosphere where few people take serious interest in Bible study and devotion, where there is no thirst for the printed word of truth, to find a group of people who devour books and give a lot of attention to the Bible is refreshing indeed. The tenor of this interest, however, will betray its true character. A flood of Neo-Pentecostal books has hit the market . . . enough, in fact, to stock whole bookstores with nothing but religious hogwash. Biblical interest, too, is confined to a narrow spectrum of interests that can be interpreted in Charismatic light.
- 7) Apparent prosperity of its adherents. One of the things that gives the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship such a powerful influence is the testimony of affluent people. Jesus, and the “Baptism” is made to be synonymous with the “good life,” i.e., lots of money, good health, power and prestige. What a contrast with the humble Nazarene, whose sole possessions, the garments He wore, were gambled away beneath the ignominious cross upon which He died!
- 8) Kind and warm people. Without doubt, the kindness and sincerity of many Neo-Pentecostals cannot be questioned. They are the finest folks you will ever meet anywhere. But it is not kindness, nor sincerity, nor honesty that protects us from error: it is truth. And when truth is set aside for experience, deception is sure.
- 9) This is the age of rebellion. It is the predominant spirit of this hour. All authority is suspect and despised. Neo-Pentecostal’s de-emphasizing of the authority of the pulpit, its so-called body ministry, its removal of absolutes in doctrine, its spontaneous free expression without restraint, is made to order for such a mood of rebellion.

### This is Not True Spiritual Awakening

That this is a fact may be readily seen in the following:

- 1) It does not correspond to the experiences in the Acts of the Apostles. I have several close friends and am acquainted with hundreds of Pentecostals, but I have not yet met the person who has an experience according to Acts 2:4. The languages spoken then were manifestly known languages and were understood by those present. In every other case in the book of Acts the experience was identical. Had it not been, the Apostles would immediately have rejected it. The only reason they accepted Samaritans, Romans, and Greeks into their fellowship, believing God had granted them saving repentance, was that “the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning. (Acts 11:15) . What is found in I Corinthians 12 and 14 is a different story; and even then, Paul suspects counterfeit (I Corinthians 12:1-3). No reference anywhere identifies the Corinthians’ tongues speaking with a baptism in the Holy Spirit. I have heard people during demonic deliverance speak in a language they had not learned and was understood by persons present. In these cases, the source of the tongue was a demon. See my book, Practical Demonology.
- 2) It produces a defective evangelism. The movement does not seek the conversion of sinners to Christ. It does not preach repentance toward God and faith toward Christ Jesus. It evangelizes tongues, signs and wonders. Nothing else. Even lost sinners are urged to expect to speak in tongues as evidence of God’s acceptance. Therefore, when tongues appear, all other pursuit toward God and holiness is abandoned.
- 3) If one follows the movement, he will be amazed how consistently parents who become involved in it lose and alienate their children. Divorce and broken homes run rampant among them. This is because one or more members of the family becomes so super-spiritual that he becomes intolerant of the others, unable to share life with them, and either drives them away or withdraws from them himself.
- 4) The great revivals of the past have literally transformed communities and cities and whole areas of the country. As near back as Mordecai Ham, under whose ministry Billy Graham claims conversion, when he finished his ministry in an area, the movie house, saloons and dance halls were all out of business. But the areas in which Neo-Pentecostalism flourishes greatest, are still as rotten and corrupt as ever. It produces no moral change for the better in the community whatever. What a contrast!
- 5) The discord, confusion and chaos the movement has fostered is unbelievable. There is nothing in Christian History with which to compare it. There has always been division over doctrine. Truth and lies must ever be at odds with each other. This kind of division must come. But this monster sets truth at odds with truth. It makes a bed where truth and lies may sleep together, yet sets two brothers of the same theological persuasion at each other’s throats over a meaningless experience. God cannot be the author of such a thing.
- 6) For all its orthodoxy and fundamentalism, it yet embraces many heresies. Antitrinitarianism appeared in the second century under Sabellius; but it has enjoyed its most phenomenal growth in recent years. Its strongest group, the United Pentecostal Church, is one of the fastest growing denominations. Tongues is evidence of the Holy Spirit, and therefore salvation, according to the U.P.C. This is the only logical conclusion Pentecostalism can arrive at.  
Teaching that believers should seek a Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a false doctrine found nowhere in the Bible. Teaching that this Baptism is the apex of Christian experience . . . that it is evidence of entire sanctification and that all who have it are in a superior state of spirituality is another false doctrine.  
A common erroneous premise that comes down to us from Finney and upon which Pentecostalism is based is that God waits for men to get things done, that man must seek God to get the power to do it, and he eventually will get it if he pays the price. This is altogether contrary to the principle of grace which rules all the economy of God.  
Neo-Pentecostals readily accept cults and heathen religious into their fellowship if they have had the “Baptism with the evidence of speaking in tongues.”
- 7) But the chief mischief is this. This thing has passed itself off for true Spiritual Awakening when it could hardly be further from it. When a man thinks he has found what he was looking for, he will abandon the search. Even so, the devil has thrown out this bone with a strong aroma and flavor of fresh meat. Foolish and ignorant men will continue to gnaw on it, but it will yield no lasting nourishment. In general, it produces a brief appearance of success, joy and victory, then disillusionment, defeat and despair.

May we in our day urge men to forsake this broken cistern, this mirage in the desert, this poison spring lying in the path of men dying of thirst. May we return to the God of grace and truth, the Fountain of Living Waters that we may boldly and without apology offer a Redeemer Who truly saves to the uttermost.

- C. M.