



Faith Pulpit

Some Reflections on the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements, Part 1

I. Their Distinctive

While there are many beliefs held by Pentecostals and Charismatics, the one which is held in common among them and which distinguishes them from others is the belief that the supernatural spiritual gifts evident in New Testament times ought to be practiced today, including tongues, miracles, healings, and prophecy.

II. Their Heritage

The modern Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements are of fairly recent origin. While certain phenomena might have been observed occasionally in the later 1800s, the movement itself did not begin until the early 1900s, with the first of three distinct waves.

A. The First Wave: Traditional/Classical Pentecostalism

1. Its History

The first wave began with the ministry of Wesleyan evangelist Charles Parham and his Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. He assigned his students the study of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and asked whether tongues-speaking ought to be evidence of this work of the Spirit. His own conviction was that the two were associated, and he was strengthened in his position when, in early 1901, one of his students spoke in tongues.

W. J. Seymour, a black evangelist who studied under Parham in Houston, Texas, was invited by a Nazarene lady to speak at her church in Los Angeles. He accepted the invitation, but the church leaders

did not accept his Pentecostal emphasis and locked the church doors so that he could not preach there. He and those who followed him moved to rented quarters on Azusa Street, and from there, in 1906, the Azusa Street Pentecostal Revival spread.

Because the Pentecostal message was not accepted by already-existing groups, new independent Pentecostal churches and denominations sprang up. In 1914 the Assemblies of God denomination was founded, and about the same time what is known today as the United Pentecostal Church was formed. Some of the more well-known Pentecostal leaders and evangelists were A. A. Allen, Oral Roberts (in his early days), and Aimee Semple McPherson.

2. Distinctive Views

Many of the early Pentecostals came from Holiness and Arminian backgrounds that emphasized one's responsibility to turn from sin and one's ability to choose to do what is right. They tended to hold to traditional evangelical doctrine, although a significant number of them denied the Trinity, emphasizing a "oneness" teaching of Modalism in which God is sometimes seen as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit.

The traditional Pentecostals often shared certain characteristics with fundamentalists—belief in the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, man's sinfulness, Christ's substitutionary death for our salvation, a dispensational and premillennial outlook on future events, and strict standards for holy and godly living—yet the two groups did not work closely with each other. This separation was due, at least in part, to differences over the issues of continuing revelation, the place of emotionalism in church meetings, the doctrinal basis for victory in one's Christian life, and the validity and significance of the so-called supernatural sign gifts of the Spirit today. The Pentecostal conviction that the outward sign of Holy Spirit baptism was speaking in tongues was especially emphasized.

B. The Second Wave: The Charismatic Movement/Neo-Pentecostalism

1. Its History

In the mid to late 1950s, clergy and laymen from a number of major Protestant groups experienced a speaking-in-tongues phenomenon. Instead of leaving their Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist denomination, they used the charismatic experiences as a means of renewal for themselves personally, their local church, and their denominational groups. The Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, begun in the early 1950s, served as a bridge between the more traditional Pentecostalism of the first wave and those who would become a part of the second wave, including pastors and lay people from the mainline Protestant groups who were open to the Pentecostal phenomenon. Key leaders among this neo-Pentecostalism have been Oral Roberts (since the mid to late 1960s), Dennis and Rita Bennett, Pat Boone, Pat Robertson, the editors of Christian Life

magazine, and David DuPlessis. The widely publicized ministries of Jim and Tammy Bakker with their PTL Club and Jimmy Swaggert—although all three were from traditional Pentecostal backgrounds—also greatly contributed to the spread of the second wave.

By 1966, some Roman Catholics at Duquesne University (Pittsburg) had been reading John Sherrill's book, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, and David Wilkerson's *The Cross and the Switchblade*. They were impressed with the power and results seen in these charismatic reports, and on January 20, 1967, a Roman Catholic theology professor at Duquesne spoke in tongues. By March of that year the phenomenon had spread to Roman Catholics at the University of Notre Dame and shortly thereafter to Roman Catholics at the Newman Center, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan became spokespersons for the tongues aspect of the second wave.

2. Distinctive Views

Leaders from the first wave of classical Pentecostalism came out of backgrounds that involved basic traditional doctrines, and these teachings were carried over into their new movement. Many of the clergy who became a part of the second wave often had formal denominational education which was more liturgical and accepting of higher critical views of the Bible. This training would not have grounded them in the fundamentals of the faith as evangelicals and fundamentalists understood them. When these people accepted Charismatic views, they did not necessarily repudiate all that they had been taught in their formal ministerial training, nor did their lifestyle standards conform to those of the older Pentecostalism. In fact, major denominational leaders who were not attracted to Charismatic phenomena watched these neo-Pentecostals very closely in their respective groups, to see how it changed them attitudinally and doctrinally. What they found generally was that the Charismatic experience made these men more loyal to their denominational groups and traditions. The major change was an emphasis upon devotional experience, described in language borrowed from the more traditional Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism.

C. The Third Wave: The Signs and Wonders Movement

1. Its History

In the early 1980s the Vineyard Christian Fellowship movement began with the ministry of John Wimber in California. He believed that people would become convinced of the genuineness of Christianity by seeing miraculous signs and wonders from God more than by being convinced doctrinally. He not only practiced this belief in the church he pastored, but he also teamed up with missions professor Peter Wagner to teach and encourage its practice in the Signs and Wonders class at Fuller Seminary. Others who emphasized these signs and wonders include Christian psychologist and author John White, former Dallas Seminary professor Jack Deere, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity

School faculty member Wayne Grudem. Support for this emphasis has also come from the ministries of such recognized Christian leaders as John Piper.

2. Distinctive Views

The movement's supporters come from various evangelical backgrounds and do not necessarily want to be identified with traditional man-centered Pentecostal views. Some, in fact, have strong Calvinistic convictions. But all stress the presence of genuine signs and wonders from God today. Tongues-speaking is not emphasized as much as in the more traditional Pentecostal groups, but healings and especially the gift of prophecy are very prominent.

D. Other Contemporary Charismatic Emphases

Also present in more recent years are the ministries of several others who have a strongly charismatic approach and emphasis. These include those who emphasize a "health and wealth" gospel; the ministries of charismatic teachers such as Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagin, and Kenneth Copeland; and the current ministries of Oral and Richard Roberts, John Arnott and the Toronto Blessing, Paul Cain and the Kansas City Prophets, and Rodney Howard-Browne and John Kilpatrick of the Brownsville Assembly of God Church and the Pensacola Outpouring Revival.

Dr. George Houghton

Former VP of Academic Services at [Faith Baptist Bible College](#) | [Other Articles](#)

George Houghton, former vice president for academic services and college dean at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, is a graduate of Bethel College, Central Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, and holds a Master's and a Doctor of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. He retired in 2010 after serving for 36 years at the institution.