

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - Part 4: *The Charismatic & Pentecostal Movement*

More than 1,800 years after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of the first Pentecost (AD33), Pentecostalism began in 1901 followed by the charismatic movement in 1955.

A. How did the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement Begin?

1. **1901: *The Pentecostals Emphasized Speaking in Tongues as Evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.*** On 1 Jan 1901, Agnes Ozman, a student in Charles Parham (1873-1929)'s Bethel Bible College (Kansas), asked others to lay hands on her so that she might receive the Holy Spirit. She spoke in 'tongues' and later other students also spoke in 'tongues.' In 1906, Parham's black student, William Seymour, pastored a church located at Azusa Street, Los Angeles, where daily revival meetings were held for 3 years leading to the formation of black Pentecostal churches. The Assembly of God denomination was founded in 1914 in Arkansas. By 1994, the Church of God in Christ became the largest Pentecostal denomination in USA with 6.5m members.
2. **1950s: *The Charismatics in Mainline Churches Spoke in Tongues but Emphasised More on Healings.*** Dennis Bennett (in California) was the first Episcopal clergyman who went public with his tongues speaking in 1960. Charismatic movement then spread to other mainstream churches: Larry Christenson in the Lutheran church, Harold Bredesen in the Dutch Reformed church, James Brown in the Presbyterian church, and Richard Winkler in the Episcopal church. In 1967, the charismatic movement reached the Roman Catholic church through a student retreat at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. By 1976, 30,000 charismatic catholics met in Notre Dame University for a conference. The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International was organized in 1951 in Los Angeles, and popularized the charismatic message in their noon lunch meetings of businessmen. A splinter group of the charismatics emphasise the "prosperity gospel": health and wealth come to the "born again" - preached by Kenneth Hagin (1917-) and Kenneth Copeland (1937-). Hagin was influenced by Esek Kenyon (1867-1948) who used positive attitudes in order to create health and wealth.
3. **1983: *"The Third Wave" led by C. Peter Wagner.*** They emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in healing, casting out demons, prophesying, and signs and wonders. John Wimber's Anaheim Christian Fellowship grew to over 5,000 members, and spread abroad to Britain and Europe. The Vineyard Christian Fellowship founded in 1986 had over 200,000 members. In 1994, the "*Toronto Blessing*" began at the Toronto Airport Vineyard church, marked by 'slaying in the Spirit,' "holy laughter," shaking, crying, people barking and crawling like dogs - alleged manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

B. Was the Holy Spirit at work in Charismatic churches?

1. ***The Spirit in Charismatic churches.*** The true Spirit in Scripture is not an electrifying current of ecstatic energy, a babbling of irrational speech, or cosmic genie who grants wishes for health and wealth, does not cause people to bark like a dog or laugh like hyenas, knock people backward to the ground unconscious (*'slain in the spirit'*), incite them to worship in chaotic uncontrollable ways. The Holy Spirit does not use false prophets, fake healers, or fraudulent televangelists. Charismatics claim to possess a power from the Holy Spirit. If this were true, they ought to be producing leaders of Christlikeness instead of being plagued with scandals, immorality and fraud (eg. Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Ted Haggard, Todd Bentley). Todd Bentley claimed the Holy Spirit told him to kick a lady in the face with his biker boot in order to heal her! Benny Hinn threatened his critics: "*Those who put us down are a bunch of morons ... sometimes I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun - I'll blow your head off!*" Are these the actions and words of godly Spirit-filled servants of God?

2. ***A New Work of the Spirit?*** Charles Parham claimed that his students at Bethel college received tongues of foreign languages which would help them in foreign missions. However, when his students went to the mission fields, their newly-acquired ‘tongues’ were not understood by their hearers in China, India and Japan.
3. ***Testing the Spirits – do we need new revelation?*** Jonathan Edwards contended that a true work of the Holy spirit can only be measured on the basis of biblical criteria (found in 1 Jn 4). “Emotional experiences may be powerful, but they are no proof that God is truly at work. ... enthusiasm often spread even when evangelists proclaimed false doctrine. And Satan could simulate true awakenings.” (John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, 34). We need to “test the spirits” against 5 principles:
- a) Does it point people to the Scriptures? Charismatic churches regard new revelation as more important than Scriptures, focused more on health and wealth than on Christ and holiness. Charismatic author Jack Deere called *Sola Scriptura* a demonic doctrine because “*we must be able to hear His voice both in the written word and in the word freshly spoken from heaven.*” But the Holy Spirit, author of Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20-21), will guide people into all truth (Jn 16:12-15).
 - b) Does it exalt the true Christ? 1 Jn 4:2-3, Jn 14:26, 16:14 reminds us the Holy Spirit points people to the Saviour, Jesus Christ.
 - c) Does it oppose worldliness?
 - The scandalous lifestyles of charismatic televangelists and their prosperity gospel tells us that their hope is not in Christ, but in the riches and pleasures of this world. In 1986, Jim Bakker’s adultery with his church secretary was exposed. He was later imprisoned for stealing \$158m of church funds. Jimmy Swaggart was caught visiting prostitutes. In 2005, Paul Cain admitted he struggled with homosexuality and alcoholism. In 2006, pastor Ted Haggard of the charismatic New Life Church in Colorado Springs was found to have paid a homosexual escort for drugs and sexual favours over 3 years. In 2010, Benny Hinn was photographed holding hands with another divorced televangelist Paula White after spending 3 nights together in a 5-star hotel.
 - J. Lee Grady, an editor for *Charisma* magazine, wrote “*I have no personal vendetta against these people, but I have no problems saying they are the modern counterparts of Nadab and Abihu. They are spiritual hoodlums. They are playing with strange fire. They have no business remaining in ministry, and they will answer to God for the damage they have caused.*”
 - *Strange Fire*. Despite God’s detailed instructions on worship, Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire” before the Lord. They were consumed by God’s fire (Lev 10:1-3). Likewise, much of contemporary charismatic worship are a ‘strange fire.’ MacArthur comments, “*The irony is inescapable: the movement that claims to be most in tune with the Holy Spirit is simultaneously least concerned about personal holiness and purity at the level where Scripture sets the highest standard – the qualifications for those who preach and teach. A true work of the Spirit produces holiness in people’s lives. When the leadership of a movement is continually stained by scandal and corruption, it calls into question the spiritual forces behind it. The Holy Spirit is actively involved in sanctifying His people – empowering them to combat the flesh while growing in Christlikeness. Unrestrained fleshly desires, on the other hand, are characteristic of false teachers (2 Pet 2:10,19).*”
 - d) Does it elevate the truth? The Holy Spirit leads us to all truth. 1 Jn 4:5-6 “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” In Pentecostalism, spiritual experience trumps biblical truth. Rolling of tongues are justified because “I felt close to God when I pray in tongues.”; being slain in the Spirit are promoted because it makes people

feel good. *“The sad fact is that biblical truth has never been the hallmark of the Charismatic movement, where spiritual experience is elevated over sound doctrine ... The clear teaching of Scripture about languages was twisted in order to redefine tongues as nonsensical gibberish and thereby fit the modern phenomenon.”* – MacArthur. *“It is not the doctrine, it is the experience of the Holy Spirit which Pentecostals repeatedly assert.”* – Frederick Dale Bruner. Bizarre behavior that marks charismatic worship is the result of unrestrained emotionalism, emptying of mind, and loss of rational control, which are contrary to true biblical worship (in truth, Jn 4:24). *“This idea of emptying the mind is foreign to Christian thought. It has much in common with pagan practices such as transcendental meditation, mystical rituals, hypnosis, and other mind-emptying procedures that often open the door to demonic influences. A person who is eager to have a spiritual experience that bypasses the mind may be opening herself up to spiritual entities she wants no part of ... when one looks for a short road to spirituality, bathed in mystical or miraculous experiences, he can become vulnerable to Satanic deception.”* – Mark Moore, *Fanning the Flame*.

- e) Does it produce love for God and others? (1 Jn 4:7-8 let us love one another, for love is of God). Biblical worship produces a love for God and others. Charismatics now claim that tongues speaking is for self-edification. But apostle Paul says spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of others (1 Cor 12:7, and true love seeks not its own 1 Cor 13:5).

4. *Exposing the Counterfeit Gifts*

- a) ***Apostles Among Us?*** Peter Wagner claimed that the year 2001 was the beginning of the Second Apostolic Age marked by the office of apostleship. In 2000, Wagner appointed himself as the Presiding Apostle over the International Coalition of Apostles, collecting annual membership fees of US\$828, \$350 and \$450 for new apostles, international apostles, and married couple apostles. Clearly a fraud and scam! The last living apostle John died in A.D. 100. The biblical criteria for apostleship are: (a) physical eyewitness of the resurrected Christ; (b) personally appointed by Christ; and (c) authenticated by miraculous signs. Paul explained that apostles and prophets were limited to foundation age of the church (Eph 2:20). Eph 4:11-13 does not teach that a five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were given to the church for all ages until the second coming of Christ. Apostles and prophets were for the foundation only, and temporary – within the first century. Every subsequent age builds the building superstructure upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets (Christ as cornerstone). The other three – evangelist, pastor and teacher – have continued to edify saints of every age.
- b) ***Fallible Prophets are false prophets.*** Scriptures warn that false prophets who are most dangerous are the wolves who come in sheep’s clothing and disguise themselves as teaching in Christ’s name “The Lord told me” and claim the Holy Spirit’s authority (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Pet 2:1). Many will be deceived (Mt 24:11, 24). Their marks: (a) false doctrine and heresy (Deut 13:1-5); (b) unrepentant sinful lifestyle (Mt 7:20-23); (c) false claims of revelation from God (Deut 18:20-22). Jack Deere, Benny Hinn and Oral Roberts have all prophesied falsely. Oral Roberts promised a cure for cancer. Charles Spurgeon: *“I tell them once for all I will have none of their stupid messages... Never dream that events are revealed to you by heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies to the Holy Ghost.”*
- c) ***Do the modern tongues match the biblical tongues/languages?*** In Acts 2:4, followers of Christ spoke known authentic foreign languages fluently - an undeniable miracle given to authenticate apostles & disciples as true gospel messengers (1 Cor 14:20). Paul wished all spoke tongues, but even more that you prophesied (1 Cor 14:5). Paul says, even if he can speak ‘tongues of angels’, but spoke without love, it does not edify (1 Cor 13:1). He confronted the proud Corinthians who felt superior because of their gifts of tongues. Though Paul was gifted with many foreign languages, he used them for preaching the gospel and to

authenticate his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 12:12). 1 Cor 14:39-40 “covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues” – exhorted them to prioritize prophecy over tongues. The exercise of gifts must be conducted in a decent and orderly manner (v.40). It must be interpreted (1 Cor 12:10; 14:27). But tongues have ceased (1 Cor 13:8). Charismatic ‘tongues’ are unintelligible sounds, falsely called heavenly speech and angelic tongues. Sceptic’s Dictionary: “*When spoken by schizophrenics, glossolalia is recognised as gibberish. In charismatic Christian communities, glossolalia is sacred and referred to as ‘speaking in tongues’ or having the ‘gift of tongues.’*”

5. ***Fake Healings and False Hopes.***

- a) Oral Roberts broadcasted the prosperity gospel: “seed-faith” message – money and material things given to his ministry were like seed kernels planted that God would multiply and produce many times more material blessings back to the donor.
- b) Benny Hinn the faith-healer’s popular Christian TV show “This is Your Day” has 20 million viewers in US and 200 countries worldwide. Hinn’s monthly miracles crusades took money from desperate dying people: “*Make a pledge, make a gift, Because that’s the only way you’re going to get your miracle ... As you give, the miracle will begin.*” When the sick did not recover, Hinn blamed their lack of faith, or not giving enough money. False teachers served money (Mt 6:24). Hinn raised US\$100m p.a. and flaunted luxury cars, diamond Rolex and rings. In 2009, Hinn admitted he lied and did not have medical verification of any of the healings.
- c) Healing ministries of Christ and apostles were powerful, successful, and authenticated a true message of the gospel (Jn 10:38; 2 Cor 12:12; Rom 15:18-19). NT healings were completely successful (Mt 14:36). They did not require the recipient to have faith (Lk 17:11-19; Mt 8:28-29) or money (eg. blind, beggars, lepers and cripples). Such miracles ceased with the death of the apostles.

C. **The Spirit’s True Ministry**

1. **Salvation.** The Spirit convicts us of sin (Jn 16:8-11), gives new birth (Tit 3:5), indwells believers, assures (Rom 8:14-16) and seals our salvation (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 4:30).
2. **Sanctification.** (a) A Spirit-filled Christian is holy. When people fall down in the Bible overwhelmed by the heavenly glory of God (Gen 17:3, 1 Ki 8:10-11, Mt 17:6, Acts 26:14) or an angel (Dan 8:17, 10:8-11), there was no intermediary. Such incidents are very rare – a few apostles fell forward on their faces in worship; unbelievers fell backward (Jn 18:1-11; Acts 9:4). Spirit-empowered behaviour is self-controlled (Gal 5:23, 1 Cor 14:32), sober (1 Pet 1:13; 5:8), and orderly (1 Cor 14:40). To be continually under the holy influence of the Spirit is marked by a holy life (Eph 5:18; Rom 5:8-9; 2 Cor 3:18; 2 Pet 3:18; Gal 5:23), with minds, hearts and wills submitted to God’s Word. (b) He walks in the Spirit (Gal 5:25) not yielding to lusts. God’s Word the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), helps us win the war against sin and temptation (Mt 4:4, 7, 10; 1 Pet 2:1-3). (c) Makes us Christlike (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18) through the Spirit’s indwelling (Rom 8:9), sanctification (12-13) and intercession (27).
3. **Scriptures.** Holy Spirit, the Author of Scriptures (1 Cor 2:10; 2 Pet 1:20-21), our Truth Teacher sent by Jesus to teach us God’s Word (Jn 14:17, 26; 2 Cor 4:6) in our hearts so that we understand and submit to Him (1 Jn 2:27). The Spirit gave additional revelation (Jn 16:13-15) – the rest of the New Testament. Let us study the Bible diligently and obey God’s Word with all our hearts, to love God and love our neighbour.

References: 1. *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship.* John MacArthur, Nelson Books, 2013. 2. *Pentecost – Today?* Iain Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, 1998. 3. *Charismatic Chaos,* John MacArthur, Zondervan, 1992. 4. *The Charismatic Phenomenon,* Peter Masters & John Whitcomb, The Wakeman Trust, 1982. 5. *The Healing Epidemic,* Peter Masters, The Wakeman Trust, 1988.