

CHARISMATIC SPIRITUALITY

A discussion by Barry Chant. Originally published in *Lukas*, December 1993.

To define charismatic spirituality is no easy task. The fields are vast and the crops varied.

Of course, this applies to some extent to any Christian modality. Anglicanism, for instance, is a variegated plant, as diverse as liturgical Anglo-Catholicism and conservative evangelicalism. And if we were to evaluate Baptist spirituality from the preaching of Rev Jerry Falwell we might gain a rather different impression than from the ministry of Dr Billy Graham.

The charismatic movement is even more multifarious. In simple terms, the movement can be divided into three major areas - the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Third Wave movements - but within each of these parts, there is a plethora of subdivisions. There are historical factors which partly explain this.

1. HISTORY

The Pentecostal movement traces its origins to several nineteenth century developments.

Edward Irving

In England, the first of these was the Catholic Apostolic Church. Led by Edward Irving (1792-1834)¹, this nineteenth century church is now virtually non-existent. In its day, however, it attracted a great deal of attention. Irving himself was renowned as a preacher and leader, and had many influential friends, including Christian philanthropist Henry Drummond, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the historian Thomas Carlyle.

Irving's Christology brought him into disrepute: his earnest stress on the true humanity of Christ was interpreted as heresy, and he was dismissed from the Church of Scotland.

The new church developed an unusual ecclesiology - office holders were nominated 'angels', apostles and prophets, although Irving himself was just a deacon. Irving was also an early advocate of a premillennial view of the return of Christ, in contrast to the prevailing postmillennialism of the day.

¹ For a discussion of the ministry of Edward Irving see A.M.Renwick and A.M.Harman, *The Story of the Church*, IVP, 1985, p.184; J.D.Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, pp 203, 517; Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984, pp.187ff; A.Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1983.

But it was his pneumatology which interests us here, as he also believed in and promoted the exercise of spiritual gifts, including prophecy and tongues, although he never spoke in tongues himself.

Little evidence has come to light that Irvingism had much direct effect on the early development of Pentecostalism, but some relationship has been claimed.²

The Welsh Revival

The Welsh Revival of 1904-1905 was another antecedent of Pentecostalism. The role of Evan Roberts (1878-1951) here is well-known. Acknowledged features of this awakening include an emphasis on repentance ('Bend the Church and save the world'); the significant role of music; an emphasis on the Spirit rather than the Word, to the extent that preaching would sometimes be abandoned for the sake of corporate worship; and a recognition of the validity of emotion — and perhaps even emotionalism — in Christian worship.³

Several early Pentecostal leaders were touched by this revival, including the esteemed British Bible teacher and author, Donald Gee; the extraordinary Jeffreys brothers; the Apostolic Church pioneer Daniel Williams; and the renowned Joseph Smale⁴

The Apostolic Church, in particular, traces its origins to the Welsh revival.⁵

Wesleyan Perfectionism

The primary antecedents of Pentecostalism are to be found in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition⁶ Interestingly, this movement developed more significantly in the United States than in England, where Wesleyan perfectionism tended to languish during the late nineteenth century.⁷

The Wesleyan-Holiness movement was the result of a development of Wesleyan Perfectionism. Based on John Wesley's The Plain Account of Christian Perfection, the idea grew that perfection was possible through a discrete experience of sanctification. One writer has summarised it as follows - 'Entire sanctification normally takes place instantaneously in

² See James Worsfold, *A History of the Charismatic Movements in New Zealand*, Puritan, 1974.

³ Douglas, 1978, p.851; S.Burgess,G.McGee and P.Alexander (eds), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, p.881; W.Pratney, Revival, Whitaker, 1984, 173ff; 188ff; E.Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904*, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1987.

⁴ Burgess et al, 1988, pp.881f; see also T.N.Turnbull, *What God Hath Wrought*, Puritan, 1959.

⁵ Turnbull, 1959.

⁶ Douglas, 1978, pp.474f; Burgess et al, 1988, pp.406ff; K.S.Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969, Vol III, pp.16f; V.Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

⁷ As it apparently did to some extent in Australia, too. 'I am sometimes grieved to find how little is known, even by many Methodist people, of Entire Sanctification.' J.Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs*, London: Charles H.Kelly, 1900, p.300.

an emotional experience similar to conversion. At this point one is cleansed from inbred sin and enabled to live without conscious or deliberate sin.⁸

In Wesley's own writings, the matter is not as clear-cut as this. In his *Sermons*, he seems to argue that perfection means avoiding deliberate sin⁹, although here, too, it is difficult to nail this down precisely.¹⁰ Notwithstanding this lack of precision, what developed was the idea that there was an experience subsequent to conversion at which entire sanctification took place, usually in an emotional, or at least, in a clearly defined manner. This was possibly based on Wesley's own dual entry into an experiential knowledge of God, initially through the Aldersgate conversion on 24 May 1738, where his heart was 'strangely warmed' and he felt for the first time that he did trust in Christ, and then a few months later, in January 1739, at the Fetter Lane Society, where the power of God 'came mightily' upon them.¹¹

This sanctifying event was sometimes called a 'second blessing'. In the late nineteenth century, it became common to call it a 'baptism in the Holy Ghost.'

This terminology was popularised by Holiness preachers, including the notable revivalist Charles Grandison Finney (1798-1875), Holiness propagators Walter and Phoebe Palmer and evangelists Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) and R.A. Torrey¹². In Australia, Methodist preachers like the indefatigable John Watsford urged his hearers to a Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit.¹³

From 1800-1910, the Holiness Movement grew elevenfold in the United States, especially in non-urban areas. It was characterised by Arminian theology, camp meetings, interdenominationalism and emotional and physical demonstration of faith. In Australia, there was a widespread desire for revival, as Christians of all persuasions met together to pray for an outpouring of the Spirit of God.¹⁴

The Keswick Conventions

⁸ Douglas, 1978, p.474

⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1985, Vol I, Sermons 1-33, pp332f; Vol II, Sermons 34-70, pp.97-124.

¹⁰ H.Lederle agrees — see H.Lederle, *Treasures Old and New*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1988, p.9

¹¹ J.Pollock, *John Wesley 1703-1791*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989, pp. 95,106; John Capon, *John and Charles Wesley: the Preacher and the Poet*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988, pp.99f,108

¹² See R.A.Torrey, *How to Obtain the Fulness of Power*, London: Oliphants, 1955?; C.G.Finney, *Lectures on Revival*, Minneapolis: Bethany, 1979; *The Promise of the Spirit*, Minneapolis: Bethany, 1980

¹³ J.Watsford, 1900, p.286 — 'We need today the Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit on all our churches. Then we should have all the missionaries we require — missionaries full of the Holy Ghost and fully equipped for their work.'

¹⁴ B.Chant, *Heart of Fire*, Unley Park, S.A.: Tabor, 1984, pp.27ff

The Keswick movement provided another rich antecedent for modern Pentecostalism. Commencing in England in 1875, Keswick encouraged Christians to a new revelation of Christ where they would find all they needed in Him. Then, by simply resting in Him and trusting, they would lead a sanctified life. Again, there was usually some kind of crisis entry point into this new life of faith.¹⁵

When Keswick evangelist, George Grubb, visited Australia, the rollicking Irishman urged his hearers to an experiential encounter with God.¹⁶

The Healing Movement

During the mid-1800's, there was a remarkable resurgence of interest in divine healing. In several countries simultaneously, there were prominent conferences, rallies and healing services.

Johann Blumhardt, a Lutheran pastor, began to teach divine healing 1843 in the small village of Mottlinger, in Germany, and in 1852 established a 'faith home.' About the same time, in 1851, Dorothea Trudel opened several healing homes in the Swiss village of Mannedorf, on Lake Zurich. In 1867, Otto Stockmayer launched a healing ministry in Switzerland and later wrote on the subject (Sickness and the Gospel). It may also be noted that the great Charles Spurgeon regularly prayed for the sick, with evident success.¹⁷

In America, in 1846, Ethan O. Allen began to teach a correlation between Christian perfection and physical healing. He was followed by Charles Cullis, who embarked on a ministry to the sick in 1870.

The early 1880's saw a blossoming of books on divine healing. Carrie Judd Montgomery wrote *The Prayer of Faith* (1880); in 1881, Cullis published *More Faith Cures; or, Answers to Prayer in the Healing of the Sick*; in the same year, William Boardman issued 'The Lord That Healeth Thee' and A.B. Simpson experienced divine healing. In 1882, Andrew Murray became convinced of the veracity of divine healing and A.J. Gordon published his first treatise on this subject, *The Ministry of Healing*. This was soon followed by R.L. Stanton's *Gospel Parallelisms: Illustrated in the Healing of Body and Soul* (1883) and *The Atonement of Sin and Sickness* by R. Kelso Carter (1884); in the same year, John Alexander Dowie began his extraordinary healing ministry in Melbourne, Victoria; in 1885, Maria Woodworth Etter began to pray for the sick publicly in America.

Many people whose interest in the supernatural power of God was awakened through these healing ministries later became Pentecostals. This was particularly true of the followers of

¹⁵ J.C. Pollock, *The Keswick Movement*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964; B. Chant, 1984, pp.27ff; H. Lederle, p.11ff

¹⁶ W. Lawton, *A Better Time to Be*, Kensington, NSW: NSW University Press, 1990, pp.95ff; B. Chant, 1984, pp.28f; J. Watsford, 1900, p.276

¹⁷ P.G. Chappell, 'Healing Movements' in S. Burgess and G. McGee, 1988, pp.353ff. Following details on the healing movement are mainly from this source. See also E. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God*, Vol 1, Springfield: GPH, 1989, pp.26ff

John Dowie, many of whom became significant Pentecostal leaders around the world¹⁸ It is interesting that Dowie also experienced and spoke of the need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit¹⁹

The Fullness of the Spirit

In India, the celebrated Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) so encouraged the orphans under her care to prayer, that they began to cry out to God for His blessing with round-the-clock prayer meetings.²⁰

Around the turn of the century, evidently as a consequence of these various trends, Pentecostal phenomena began to occur.

In Australia, in 1870, Joseph Marshall, a farmer, was conducting meetings near Portland, Victoria, in which he encouraged his hearers to be filled with the Spirit, as indeed some were - but with a distinctive new phenomenon, that of speaking with tongues.²¹ These may have been the earliest Pentecostal meetings held anywhere in the world. These were followed forty years later by similar experiences at a Keswick convention at Eltham, Victoria.²²

In 1901, in Topeka, Kansas, a Holiness preacher named Charles Parham (1873-1929) had begun a small Bible school. On 31 December, 1900, the students had come to the conviction that the initial evidence of being baptised in the Spirit was glossalalia, and they were praying for an effusion of the Spirit. A young lady named Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues.²³

Something similar occurred in Poona, India, where orphan girls and widows spoke in tongues at an emotional prayer meeting for revival.²⁴

The best-known early Pentecostal meeting was in Los Angeles in an former Methodist church building in Azusa Street. Here, under the leadership of a black, one-eyed, unsophisticated and uneducated Holiness preacher named William Seymour (1870-1922), an extraordinary revival occurred. From 14 April, 1906, meetings were held night and day continuously for three years. The revival was noted for being both of humble origins and multi-racial. It was also

¹⁸ B.Chant, 1984, pp.23ff; B.Chant, 'The Australian Career of John Alexander Dowie,' paper presented to the Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 10 August, 1992

¹⁹ E.Sheldrake, *The Personal Letters of John Alexander Dowie*, Zion, Ill: Wilbur Glenn Voliva, Publisher, 1912, p.334; R.Ottersen, *Peace to Thee!*, Zion: Christian Catholic Church, 1986, pp.14,16

²⁰ P.Ramabai, *A Testimony*, Poona, India: Ramabai Mukti Mission, 9th ed, 1968; H.J.Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of Her Life*, London, England: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1914, p.101; T.Nichol, *The Pentecostals*, Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1971, p.52; B.Chant, 1984, pp.30f; Burgess and McGee, 1988, pp.755f; Douglas, 1978, pp.833f

²¹ *The Good News*, April, 1910, pp.3,5; B.Chant, 1984, pp.35f; Interview with Mrs D.Reekie, 14 August, 1991.

²² B.Chant, 1984, p.31

²³ Burgess and McGee, 1978, pp.660f

²⁴ Chant, 1984, p.31; see also other sources for Pandita Ramabai quoted earlier.

characterised by emotional worship, glossolalia, healing, prophesying and other like manifestations.²⁵

People came from all over the world to witness what was happening. The beginnings of the Pentecostal movement in several countries can be traced back to Azusa Street.

In 1908, Australia's first Pentecostal church was commenced in North Melbourne, Victoria, by Sarah Jane Lancaster, more commonly known as 'Janet' or 'Jeannie' Lancaster, who had a Pentecostal experience earlier that year. She had been formerly a Methodist.²⁶

Because of this emphasis on seeking the fulness of the Spirit, Pentecostalism has been charged with being a 'Third Person' rather than a 'Second Person' movement. The desire for the Spirit, however, was only ever in order that Christ might more truly be glorified and more faithfully served.²⁷

The Second Blessing

To return to William Seymour. Seymour had been influenced by Parham and was also a strong advocate of the second blessing teaching. With the coming of the Spirit, however, he adopted a three-stage position - conversion, sanctification and baptism in the Spirit. He taught that the Holy Spirit would only come into a clean vessel, so sanctification was a prerequisite.²⁸

One prominent minister who received the Spirit at Azusa Street in 1907 was William Durham (1873-1912), a Baptist pastor, from Chicago. Soon crowds flocked to his church. He rejected the Holiness sanctification teaching in favour of what came to be called the 'finished work', that is that justification and sanctification take place contemporaneously, at conversion, with sanctification continuing progressively after that.²⁹ Being baptised in the Holy Spirit, with the sign of speaking in tongues, was seen as an experience subsequent to conversion - but as an empowering, rather than a sanctifying experience. Its purpose was to enable the believer to witness and serve more effectively.

Durham returned to Azusa St in 1911 and there were crowded meetings, but Seymour rejected the 'finished work' teaching, which resulted in a parting of the ways. In April 1914, about 300 leaders of the 'finished work' group called a general council at Hot Springs, Arkansas, and

²⁵ Burgess et al, 1988, pp.31ff; F.Bartleman, *Another Wave Rolls In*, Voice, 1970.

²⁶ Chant, 1984, pp.34ff

²⁷ This was my own experience, in my first attendance at Pentecostal meetings. I had never seen people who so openly and fervently expressed their love for Jesus. Then when I was baptised in the Spirit myself, I experienced an upsurge of love for Him that still affects my life, some forty years later.

²⁸ 'The Apostolic Faith Movement', leaflet published at Azusa Street by W.Seymour — 'Sanctification is second work of grace ... Sanctification is cleansing to make holy ... You know that they could not receive the Spirit if they were not clean.'

²⁹ W.Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1972, 1988, pp.24ff

combined under the name *Assemblies of God*. It was basically a white group. The *Holiness* group continued under various names such as Apostolic Faith Mission, Church of God and Pentecostal Holiness Church, some being black fellowships. The majority of contemporary Pentecostal groups hold the 'finished work' position. In Australia, it is virtually universal.³⁰

Initially, nearly all of these groups emerged within existing churches or denominations. Usually, their desire was to revive them from within. However, in most cases, the old wineskins found the new wine too volatile, and refused to accept it.

From these early developments, the Pentecostal movement has grown into a world-wide phenomenon of an estimated 200 million adherents in the 1990's.³¹

Because of the diversity of its origins, there are many different theological and ecclesiastical traditions reflected in it. But all of them are united in a common conviction of the need not only to be born again, but also to be baptised in the Holy Spirit, normally with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The Charismatic Movement

In the last quarter of a century, two other major developments have occurred. The first of these is the Charismatic movement. essentially, this is a resurgence of Pentecostalism, but with two major differences. The first is that although it began in the same way as its predecessor, that is, as a revival and renewal movement within mainstream churches, it was not rejected by them, but rather accommodated.

Today, there are Charismatic churches and fellowships in most major denominations. In Australia, there are Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Baptist, Churches of Christ and Lutheran Charismatic fellowships, all at least tolerated and most comfortably accepted, by the church hierarchies.

The second major difference lies in the theology of Spirit-baptism. While many charismatic people hold to the Pentecostal position that glossolalia is the normal initial evidence of being baptised in the Spirit, many deny this and argue either that another gift of the Spirit is equally acceptable, or that no discernible sign is needed at all.³²

³⁰ Although complicated by the existence of at least two groups who hold that being born again involves three stages, repentance and faith, believer's baptism in water by immersion and baptism in the Spirit. These are the Revival Centres of Australia and the United Pentecostal Church, both of whom have little or nothing to do with the rest of the movement.

³¹ D.Barrett and T.Johnson, *Our Globe and How to Reach It*, Birmingham, Al: New Hope, 1990, p.65; F.Jansen (ed), *Target Earth*, Kuilua-Kona, Hawaii: University of the Nations, 1989, p.166; see also D.Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, Nairobi: Oxford, 1982;

³² For a summary of various views see Lederle, 1988, pp.37ff; see also D.Watson, *One in the Spirit*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973; D.Bridge and D.Phyphers, *More Than Tongues Can Tell*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982

The Third Wave Movement

In more recent times, a new development has occurred, commonly known as the Third Wave. It is best represented by such well-known figures as C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber, who seem reluctant even to advocate a discrete baptism in the Spirit, emphasising that this may well occur at conversion, with or without tongues.³³ In practice, Wimber personally encourages glossolalia and strongly preaches and teaches the need for signs and wonders in ministry today.³⁴

This lack of precision over baptism in the Spirit has resulted in a fairly broad line of demarcation between Pentecostals and Third Wave advocates, although a healthy mutual respect is evident.

2. AUTHORITY

In spite of the immense diversity within Pentecostalism and the general differences between Pentecostal, Charismatic and Third Wave movements, there are obvious areas of commonality.

Peter Hocken, a Catholic Charismatic and Secretary of the inter-denominational Society for Pentecostal Studies in the U.S., recently suggested that each of the major streams of Christianity could be identified by its understanding of the major source of authority, especially for the individual.³⁵ Referring to Leslie Newbigen's concept that the Catholic Church can be seen to exist where there is an acknowledged Apostolic Succession, the Protestant churches where Scripture is rightly expounded and the Pentecostal churches where the Spirit is recognisably present, he suggested that the salient features of each stream could be identified by asking the simple question, 'Where is the ultimate source of authority seen to lie?' In the resultant discussion, something like the following, admittedly over-simplified, schema emerged—

Church	Perceived Authority	Authentication
Catholic/ Orthodox	Tradition	Sacraments
Protestant/Evangelical	Scripture	Faith
Liberal	Reason	Social action
Pentecostal/Charismatic	Experience	Charismata

³³ K. Springer, *Riding the Third Wave*, Basingstoke, Hants: Marshall Pickering, 1987, pp.30ff, 246ff

³⁴ See his books *Power Evangelism*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986 and *Power Healing*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

³⁵ Conference on Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Europe, Zurich, 5 July 1991.

No doubt, members of all the churches or traditions mentioned here would want to protest at such unqualified and narrow descriptions as these. Scripture, for example, could be included as an authority in every case and faith could be listed as a response. But what is illustrated here is the distinguishing element or emphasis of each one: or in other words, that quality by which it is generally perceived to be distinguishable from other branches of the Christian Church. It is a matter of emphasis, not exclusivity.

For the purposes of this paper, the following discussion will be restricted mainly to the evangelical and charismatic areas.

Scripture or Experience?

For evangelicals, authority lies firmly in Scripture. The supreme test of all doctrine is how well it is grounded on the Bible.³⁶ Charismatics readily endorse this. For them, too, the Bible is the Word of God and the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and doctrine.³⁷ But they also see a danger that the Bible on its own can be sterile and unmoving, if this conviction is a purely intellectual one. They would agree with Jonathan Edwards when he says, 'Take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the Word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing'³⁸

For charismatic believers, it is the experience of God which is significant. In this way, their knowledge of Him is authenticated. A Pentecostal Church in Korea recently advertised its philosophy as: '1. Stand firm on the Word 2. Get assurance from experiences 3. Witness by personal actions.'³⁹

At first glance, to the evangelical ear, this sounds unthinkable. Interestingly, it is almost a summary, although in simplified form, of Jonathan Edwards' argument in The Religious Affections.

In this classic treatise, Edwards argues strongly that the Bible alone is the standard of faith and practice. He says, for example—

The Scripture is the Word of God and has nothing in which is wrong, but is pure and perfect; and therefore those experiences which come from Scripture must be right ... Those experiences which are agreeable to the Word of God are right, and cannot be otherwise ... Spiritually to understand the Scripture is to have the eyes of the mind opened to behold the wonderful spiritual excellency of the glorious things contained in it, ever since it was written; to behold the amiable and bright manifestations of the divine perfections, and of the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, and the

³⁶ See J.Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956; F.F.Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, London: Pickering and Inglis, 1971

³⁷ For example, nearly all Pentecostal creeds begin with a statement of the authority and infallibility of Scripture. See Chant, 1984, pp.356ff.

³⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1746, 1986, p.200

³⁹ Church Full of Grace and Truth advertisement in *Holy Spirit World*, Seoul: World Holy Spirit Club, 1992

excellency and suitableness of the way of salvation by Christ, and the spiritual glory of the precepts and promises of the Scripture ... which things are, and always were, in the Bible ...⁴⁰

He is careful to point out that it is the whole testimony of Scripture, not just isolated passages, which must be considered.

But he also presents a powerful case for the place of tangible experience in Christian living when he points out that 'he who has no religious affection is in a state of spiritual death' and that it is one of the ploys of Satan to 'bring all religion to a mere lifeless formality.'⁴¹

Indeed, he goes further and says—

Nothing is more manifest in fact, than that the things of religion take hold of men's souls no further than they affect them ... I am bold to assert that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any person, by anything of a religious nature that ever he read, heard or saw, that had not his affections moved.⁴²

Exactly what Edwards means by the word 'affections' has been the subject of some debate. In fact, he himself admits that it is a difficult word to define. He goes to some pains to point out that affections arise from the will and the inclination of the heart, rather than physical feelings, yet makes it clear that bodily sensations are irrevocably involved. In fact, 'never is there any case whatsoever' where the affections are aroused without the body being affected. Furthermore, Edwards frequently specifically names such qualities as hope, fear, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, compassion and zeal as affections — all of which could be equally well designated emotions. 'Upon the whole,' he concludes, 'I think it clearly and abundantly evident that true religion lies very much in the affections.'⁴³

There can be no question that Edwards saw emotion as playing a valid, in fact, essential role in Christian experience.

Of course, the majority of his book is taken up with guidelines for distinguishing true affections from false. He shows clearly how that emotions on their own are of little worth. In fact, it is only when they are consistent with Scripture and when they also result in upright living that they can be taken as valid.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Edwards, pp.71,206

⁴¹ Edwards, p.49

⁴² Edwards, p.30

⁴³ Edwards, pp.24-31,47

⁴⁴ 'Christian practice is the chief of all the signs of saving grace.' Edwards, p.370

Which takes us back to the third part of the Korean church's slogan - 'Witness by personal actions.'

Evangelicals tend to be apprehensive about the validity of experience. It is too subjective, too subject to uncontrolled variables, too prone to deception or imitation. They are suspicious of experience which is not authenticated by doctrine.

Charismatics, on the other hand, have become suspicious of a sterile evangelical orthodoxy that leaves people's hearts untouched. They are suspicious of doctrine without authenticating experience.

In some ways this is a weakness. At a recent conference of Pentecostal leaders, some of the delegates lamented the fact that there had been too much teaching and not enough inspirational preaching. If this represents an unwillingness to do the hard work of biblical exegesis, or even worse, the priority of emotion over Scripture, it is a serious matter.

On the other hand, perhaps it also points out a weakness in current evangelicalism.

Let us take Rev I.M. Wright, an Evangelical pastor. He goes to a charismatic meeting and hears them singing over and over again simple melodies with few words. He is disturbed that the songs contain either too little substance or incorrect doctrine. Then the preaching offends his basic exegetical principles and ignores sound hermeneutics. In an open prayer and praise time, he is impressed by the people's fervour but dismayed by the unscriptural content of some of the petitions.

His astonishment is complete when, in spite of what he sees as evident deficiencies, several people turn to the Lord and show all the signs of a sound conversion. How can people be born again in such a woolly and undisciplined context?

Pastor Ivor Blessing is a Pentecostal minister. He attends an evangelical gathering where sound doctrine is at a premium. Everything is correct and precise. The Scriptures are appropriate and the hymns are chosen for their theological content rather than their singability. The preaching is systematic, thoughtful and exegetically sound. Christ is truly glorified in all that is said and done. He is excited by what he has heard and at one point during the sermon, can barely restrain himself from calling out 'Hallelujah!'. He would love to lift his hands in adoration during the closing hymn. He manages a whispered 'Amen!' at one point, but is quickly discouraged from doing so again by the many obvious glares of disapproval around him.

He is bewildered to observe how people can hear such wonderful truths and not get excited about them.

This very issue was faced at the beginning of this century in Sydney, when Evangelicalism, especially of the Moore College variety, opted for the objectivity of Nathaniel Jones rather than the subjectivity of George Grubb - and the course of evangelicalism in that city was largely decided as a result.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Lawton, 1990, p.98 - 'Grubb's preaching of "imparted righteousness" conflicted with Jones' declaration of "imputed" righteousness.'

For the Evangelical, authenticity is judged by adherence to Scripture. For the Charismatic, experience is what authenticates the Scripture.

I think Edwards would, if he had to choose, be on the side of the Charismatic!

How can they sit and hear of the infinite height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus, of His giving His infinitely dear Son, to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of men, and of the unparalleled love of the innocent, and holy, and tender Lamb of God, manifested in His dying agonies, His bloody sweat, His loud and bitter cries, and bleeding heart ... and yet be cold and heavy, insensible and regardless?⁴⁶

Of course, to present two extremes like this, is, in a sense, to set up false alternatives. Although I am a Pentecostal, I sympathise greatly with Rev Wright. All my senses are jarred by shallow doctrines and infantile songs. I, too, strongly affirm that the Scriptures are the standard by which all Christian experience and understanding must be judged. I am convinced that there can be no valid subjective knowledge of Christ in us without a sound objective trust in what He has done for us.

Yet, it must be acknowledged that the Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal has reawakened us to the valid role of experience as an authenticating factor in spirituality.

It is interesting to reflect on the way in which both Spirit and

Word are evident in the ministry of Jesus. An analysis of Luke chapters three to six of Luke is very instructive in this regard. There is a clear synthesis present which Christians seem to find difficult to achieve.

Experience as an Authenticating factor

David Du Plessis tells of a conference where he addressed a group of theologians and commended them for their doctrinal truth. The problem was, he said, that they had the truth on ice. It was like a T-bone steak in the freezer. It needed to be taken out and set on fire!⁴⁷

In her extraordinary book Chasing the Dragon, Jackie Pullinger tells how, in her ministry among drug addicts and gang members in Hong Kong's renowned walled City, she would pray for people to be filled with the Holy Spirit immediately they agreed to turn to the Lord. Sometimes, they had not even read one word of the Bible. They knew only what they had been told by Pullinger or one of her workers.

She reasoned, however, that if these young men could have an experience with God where they would be touched by His power, this would hold them until they could be taught the

⁴⁶ Edwards, p.52

⁴⁷ D.Du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1970, pp.16f.

Scriptures. When they spoke in tongues, at least they would know that God was powerful and real. They would then have time to sort out the rest later.⁴⁸

I think there is something to learn here. In our Western society, we have persuaded ourselves that reason and logic are supreme. We believe that we allow reason to determine our actions. In fact, the reverse is true. Most people act emotionally or intuitively. One only has to peruse the pages of the popular magazines to see evidence of this. There are regular horoscopes, dream-interpretations, clairvoyants and the like — but rarely or never, biblical exposition.

Like Paul, we need to come to the realisation that it is only when we minister in the power of God and touch people's hearts that lives will be changed (1 Cor 2:1ff).

It is salutary to remember that the first century church had no New Testament. Basically, the young Christians of those pioneer days were dependent on oral recounting of the message of the cross or on their own experience of Christ, through His Spirit.

It is also interesting to reflect that emotion and religious experience played a significant role in the great evangelical awakenings of the eighteenth century. It is only in recent years that evangelicalism has reacted against experience as a validation of the truth.

Edwards tells how as a young man he expressed passionate yearnings for God in what we would probably describe as an emotional way. In fact, the language he uses sounds very much like a description of speaking in tongues — 'Resolved, When I find those "groanings which cannot be uttered," of which the apostle speaks, and those "breathings of the soul for the longing it hath," of which the psalmist speaks, Psalm cxix, 20. that I will promote them to the utmost of my power; and that I will not be weary of earnestly endeavoring to vent my desires, nor of the repetitions of such earnestness.'⁴⁹ Again, as Edwards found, part of the problem may be the difficulty of definition. If by 'experience' we only mean 'emotion' we clearly are treading on dangerous ground. However, if by 'experience' we mean a tangible, experiential encounter with the living God, the situation is different.

When such an experience is consistent with and authenticates the Scripture, and when it is accompanied by godly living, it is a powerful witness to the reality of the faith.

The greatest contribution of the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition may well be a recognition once again of the validity of spiritual experience in Christian life.

Now to get down to specifics. It is not just experience generally, but the experience of the Holy Spirit in particular which is the essence of Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality.

⁴⁸ J.Pullinger, *Chasing the Dragon*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980, pp.77ff. Here, Jackie Pullinger tells of a young man who wanted to become a Christian. She gave him gospels and Christian books to read. He didn't come back. Two years later, he explained, 'I wanted to know Jesus and you gave me a library.' After this, she tells of another young man who was baptised in the Spirit at the moment of conversion and survived.

⁴⁹ July 23, and Aug.10, 1723.' E.Hickman (ed), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume One, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1984, p.xxii.

Here is a simple biblical exposition of the Pentecostal approach to Holy Spirit baptism.⁵⁰

3. THEOLOGY

Firstly, it should be stressed that the term 'baptise in the Spirit' is a metaphor, not a theological definition. It is used interchangeably with other similar metaphors - fill, fall on, gift, seal, receive, pour out and so on (Act 2:4, 17, 38; 10:44ff; 11:15-17; 19:2).

Only the verb is used in the NT — the noun ('baptism') does not occur in this context. Does this imply an emphasis on action rather than event, on experience rather than doctrine?

So Paul seems to use the term in a different way from the Synoptics (1 Cor 12:13; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; Act 1:5).

In the light of all this, it appears that we should avoid making the term a shibboleth. Much harm has been done to the cause of Christ by arguing about definition. The ministry of the Spirit in our lives is a matter for discipleship, not debate!

Second, both the Person and power of the Holy Spirit are potentially ours.

Even a cursory study of Ephesians 1:1ff makes it clear that all the blessings of God have already been made available to us in Christ (1:3 etc). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Him (Col 2:3). There is nothing more that God can do for us. We are complete in Christ (Col 2:9,10). All things are ours in Christ (1 Cor 3:21ff). This includes the Holy Spirit.

Experience shows, however, that many Christians are not enjoying all of these blessings. Either they are not aware of them or they do not claim them.

Michael Green comments, 'It is no use making out an extensive list of the treasures in our inheritance if we do not make use of them.'⁵¹

Is it fair to say that many believers are *potentially* baptised in the Holy Spirit, but not actually so?

Third, a study of Acts suggests that it is possible to believe and not be baptised in the Holy Spirit.

It is sometimes argued that doctrine should not be drawn from Acts, but in the case of the initial reception of the Spirit, there is no other book which offers us specific documentary evidence. And given that the experiences of the Spirit recorded in Acts are of divine initiative, it would seem appropriate to assume that they offer us a safe paradigm.

⁵⁰ The case presented here is the classical Pentecostal position. Not all Charismatics of Third Wavers would take such a clear-cut position on tongues.

⁵¹ M.Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975, p.119. Note, however, that Green does not advocate an experience in the Spirit but rather a gradual growing into Christlikeness.

Chapters 8 and 19, in particular, demonstrate clear-cut cases of people who were plainly converted to Christ and later baptised in the Spirit. Paul's question in Acts 19:2 is particularly pertinent, as it clearly implies the possibility of being a disciple of Christ without having received the Spirit.⁵²

Various interpretations have been placed on these events — that they were related to the establishment of the kingdom in different ethnic groups, or that they were necessary because of the absence of a written Word and so on. I find none of these convincing. The fact is that, however we explain them, they still demonstrate the possibility of being a believer without being baptised in the Spirit.

Next, the Acts passages indicate that it is possible to have the Holy Spirit 'in' us without having Him come 'upon' us.

At first glance, this may seem like a play on words, but the distinction is plain. In many places, the Spirit is said to be 'in' us (Greek: εν). See, for example, Romans 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19, 20; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 2:20; Col 1:27; etc. In other cases, He is said to come 'upon' us (Greek: επι). See Luke 24:49; Act 1:8; 2:17; 8:16; 10:44, 46; 19:6.

It seems clear that there is a way in which the Spirit lives in us which makes us alive — and there is also a way in which the Spirit comes upon us to empower us for greater effectiveness in service.

Taking a clue from the Greek word ενεργημα, which is used in the New Testament in reference to the power of the Spirit (eg 1 Cor 12:10), we can suggest a useful analogy here is that of heat energy. Every one of us needs heat 'within' us to stay alive; but we also apply it 'upon' us for greater comfort, efficiency, and well-being.

Fifth, in both 2 Cor 1:21ff and Eph 1:13, the Holy Spirit is described as a 'seal'. In biblical times, a seal was used to identify ownership and to express authentication and security — as on the tomb of Jesus (Matt 27:66) or the apocalyptic scroll (Rev 5:1).⁵³

In the same way, the Holy Spirit seals, that is, authenticates and secures our salvation. He is a 'guarantee' of our ultimate redemption (2 Cor 1:21f).⁵⁴

A seal is not the same as the matter it seals — nor is it contemporaneous with it. Eph 1:13 makes this clear. The action of believing clearly precedes that of being sealed with the Spirit.⁵⁵

⁵² I am not suggesting here that the group in question were Christian disciples when Paul first met them: clearly, they were not. They became so when they were baptised and after this, they received the Spirit. But this does not alter the significance of Paul's question.

⁵³ See J.Moulton and G.Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985, pp.617ff

⁵⁴ Moulton and Milligan, 1985, p.79

⁵⁵ W.R.Nicholl (ed), *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, p.268

In fact, Paul is probably thinking of the Acts 19:1ff incident at this point, where believing was followed by baptism and then by the reception of the Spirit.⁵⁶

Significantly, in the five records we have in Acts of people being baptised in the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 8:1-25; 9:17; 10:1-48; 19:1-7), there are some indisputable common factors. In every case, the Spirit comes suddenly. There is no New Testament record of any believer receiving the Spirit gradually. (He 'falls' on us; He is 'poured out' - He does not 'seep' into us!) He always comes powerfully. Something happens when the Spirit falls. There is a power encounter. His coming is always distinctive - it is not only marked by more general evidences of joy, love, peace and delight, but by evidences which are undeniably and uniquely signs that it is the Holy Spirit Who has come. He always comes observably. In every case, not only do those who are baptised in the Spirit know it has happened, but other witnesses also know.

Finally, in every case, speaking in tongues is either clearly mentioned or implied as the normal, initial evidence of the reception of the Spirit. The Greek construction of Acts 19:6 implies a causal link between receiving the Spirit and glossolalia.⁵⁷ Indeed, when the Jewish believers with Peter heard Romans praying in tongues, they immediately recognised that the Spirit had come upon them (Act 10:46). As for the reluctant Peter, 'Who was I,' he asks, 'that I could oppose God?'

Glossolalia results in an immediacy of God's presence in the life of the believer. And in that it is observable and recognisable, it falls into a unique category of being both objective and subjective. It can be dispassionately observed by the hearer yet personally experienced by the speaker.

Is it too much to suggest that through tongue-speaking, there is actually a potential meeting point for both pragmatist and pietist, both scholastic and mystic, both static and dynamic, both doctrine and devotion, both mind and heart, both Word and Spirit?

Is it too daring to suggest that glossolalia, which has been such a point of contention between Christian believers, could actually become common ground?

4. CONCLUSION

Charismatic spirituality finds its authentication through baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is not to deny the supreme place of Scripture as the rule of faith. Nor is it to supplant Christ as

⁵⁶ Compare the following quotation from Jonathan Edwards — 'When the Scripture speaks of the seal of the Spirit, it is an expression which properly denotes, not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit that is left as a divine mark upon the soul, to be an evidence by which God's children might be known.' Edwards goes on to interpret this as the presence of love in the believer's life, not as any supernatural gift, but his comment is still interesting in its acknowledgement of the confirming or authenticating nature of the seal of the Spirit. J.Edwards, pp.160ff.

⁵⁷ This is indicated by the use of the enclitic particle *te* (which roughly translated means 'and so') rather than the more common *kai* (= 'and').

Saviour and Lord. On the contrary, through the dynamic experience of the Spirit, the Scriptures come alive and Christ becomes more real.

For this is the role of the Holy Spirit. He comes in order to speak to us of Jesus and to lead us into His truth (John 14:26; 15:26).

And this, ultimately, is true spirituality.

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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