

Church History (70): Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism can be divided into three periods: Classic Pentecostalism (1900-1960); the Charismatic Era (1960-1980); and the Word of Faith Movement (1980-). In this lesson, we will limit our consideration to the first of these, considering its roots, major players, and distinct beliefs.

I. Pentecostalism

1. *Its roots.* Pentecostalism has three major roots: John Wesley (1703-1791), Charles Finney (1792-1876), and the holiness movement (1840-1895). "From Methodism through American revivalism and the person and work of Charles Finney, the line is a straight one that leads through the holiness movement directly into Pentecostalism" (Bruner).¹ While differing on some things, these roots are united in their belief in moral perfectionism (perfect sanctification) as the result of a second blessing of the Spirit. "John Wesley, the determined founder of Methodism, was also the spiritual and intellectual father of the modern holiness and Pentecostal movements, which arose from Methodism in the last century" (Synan).² "The theological foundations of modern Pentecostalism can be traced primarily to Methodism and the thinking of John Wesley" (Storms).³ "It's in Methodism we find the actual historical links and developments that will climax in Pentecostalism" (Dayton).⁴ Wesley believed through a second work of God's Spirit Christians could be perfectly or completely sanctified. This view became widespread during the holiness movement which became the soil from which Classic Pentecostalism was born. Charles Finney took Wesley's teaching further, stressing the two-tier nature of sanctification. The first was received by all Christians at conversion whereas the second only by those who receive a Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

By 1740, Wesley's ideas on theology were well cast in the permanent mold that would shape the Methodist movement. Briefly stated, they involved two separate phases of experience for the believer: the first, conversion, or justification; the second, Christian perfection, or sanctification. In the first experience the penitent was forgiven for actual sins of commission, becoming a Christian but retaining a "residue of sin within." This remaining "inbred sin" was the result of Adam's fall and had to be dealt with by a "second blessing, properly so-called." This experience purified the believer of inward sin and gave a person "perfect love" toward God and humanity. The perfection Wesley taught was a perfection of motives and desires. Total "sinless perfection" would come only after death. In the meantime, the sanctified soul, through careful self-examination, godly discipline, and regular devotion and avoidance of worldly pleasures, could live a life of victory over sin. This perfection, Wesley taught, could be attained instantly as a "second work of grace" although it was usually preceded and followed by a gradual "growth in grace."⁵

There is a great difference between the peace and the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The disciples were Christians before the Day of Pentecost, and, as such, had a measure of the Holy Spirit. They must have had the peace of sins forgiven, and of a justified state, but they did not have the endowment of power necessary to the accomplishment of the work assigned them. They had the peace which Christ had given them, but not the power

¹ F. D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 42

² Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 1

³ Sam Storms, *HISTORY OF THE PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS*, 2

⁴ Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 38

⁵ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 6-7

which He had promised. This may be true of all Christians, and right here is, I think, the great mistake of the Church, and of the ministry. They rest in conversion, and do not seek until they obtain this endowment of power from on high. Hence so many professors have no power with either God or man. They prevail with neither. The apostles and brethren, on the Day of Pentecost, received it. What did they receive? What power did they exercise after that event? They received a powerful baptism of the Holy Ghost, a vast increase of divine illumination. This baptism imparted a great diversity of gifts that were used for the accomplishment of their work. It manifestly included the following things: The power of a holy life. The power of a self-sacrificing life. The power of a cross-bearing life. The power of great meekness, which this baptism enabled them everywhere to exhibit. The power of a loving enthusiasm in proclaiming the gospel. The power of teaching. The power of a loving and living faith. The gift of tongues. An increase of power to work miracles. The gift of inspiration, or the revelation of many truths before unrecognized by them. The power of moral courage to proclaim the gospel and do the bidding of Christ, whatever it cost them. In their circumstances all these endowments were essential to their success; but neither separately nor all together did they constitute that power from on high which Christ promised, and which they manifestly received. That which they manifestly received as the supreme, crowning, and all-important means of success was the power to prevail with both God and man, the power to fasten saving impressions upon the minds of men.⁶

Thus, Pentecostalism grew out of the Methodist camp meetings. These meetings were intended to recover and promote the doctrine of entire sanctification. "In August 1866, J. A. Wood, remarked to a friend that the doctrine of sanctification was suffering an eclipse within Methodism. Opposition to 'the doctrine and distinctive experience of entire sanctification' was often encountered even in some Methodist camp meetings. In an offhand remark, Wood said he believed 'that some camp meetings for the special work of holiness ought to be held'" (Vinson).⁷ Wood encouraged his friend William B. Osborn of the NJ Methodist Conference, to travel to NYC in April 1867 to lay the question before John Inskip, pastor of the Green Street Methodist Church. "With great feeling, Osborn told Inskip, 'I feel God would have us hold a holiness camp meeting.' Osborn's enthusiasm was so contagious that Inskip immediately approved of the idea. Inskip and Osborn immediately set the wheels moving for the first camp meeting. A call, signed by thirteen Methodist ministers of New York, was issued for a larger meeting to be held in Philadelphia on June 13, 1867."⁸

The men present voted to hold a camp meeting at Vineland, New Jersey, July 17 through 26, 1867, appointing committees to prepare accommodations and publicity for the event. Naming themselves "The National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Christian Holiness," the group issued a call written by a well-known Methodist pastor, the Reverend Alfred Cookman, addressed to all, "irrespective of denominational ties." Especially welcome were those "who feel themselves comparatively isolated in their profession of holiness." It was hoped that all would "realize together a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost" and return "with a view to increased usefulness in the churches of which we are members." With the opening of the Vineland, New Jersey, camp meeting on July

⁶ Charles Finney, *Power from On High*, quotations taken from chapters 1 and 2

⁷ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 24

⁸ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 26

17, 1867, the modern holiness crusade began. This may properly be considered the beginning of the modern holiness movement in the United States. Those who attended felt unanimously that this meeting was destined to “exert an influence over all Christendom” as well as “to initiate a new era in Methodism.” Little did these men realize that this meeting would eventually result in the formation of over a hundred denominations around the world and indirectly bring to birth a "Third Force" in Christendom, the Pentecostal movement.⁹

In the years following 1867 "National Camp Meetings" were held in Mannheim, Pennsylvania, Round Lake, New York, and in many other locations. From 1867 to 1883 a total of fifty-two "national camps" were held, mostly on Methodist campgrounds and in connection with Methodist annual conferences. Perhaps the most notable "National Camp Meeting" was the one held in Round Lake in 1874, where seven bishops from the Northern and Southern Methodist Churches attended, along with 20,000 other worshippers. The high point was reached when President U. S. Grant arrived for one day of services.¹⁰

2. *Its major players.* (1) Charles Parham (1873-1929). Parham is widely acknowledged as the primary founder of Pentecostalism. Larry Martin, a devout Pentecostal, after stating "Charles Fox Parham is indisputably the founder of the modern Pentecostal and charismatic movements," then admitted, "he was a very flawed, even disgraced, minister."¹¹ "He espoused radical and unorthodox doctrines and had a particularly peculiar personality. If this was not enough to disqualify him as a spiritual father, Parham was repeatedly accused of the worst of moral transgressions in a movement that placed a hyper-emphasis on sanctification and personal holiness" (Martin).¹² Thus, Parham regularly referred to himself as the "founder of the Apostolic Faith." Even the subtitle of his wife's biography of her husband was "Founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement." "There is no doubt that Parham and his wife identified him as the father of Pentecostalism. It was he who coined the distinctive name that was widely used by early Pentecostals—the Apostolic Faith. It was he who organized the first large gatherings of Pentecostal believers on an interstate level. It was he who first issued ministerial credentials to those who allied themselves with him. It was he who built the first Pentecostal church building. It was he who led the first Pentecostal Bible school and formulated the first Pentecostal curriculum" (Martin).¹³ "Parham opened a Bible school in Topeka Kansas, on October 15, 1900, known as the College of Bethel. Parham charged neither tuition nor room and board. The school was for those who were willing to forsake all and trust God for everything" (Martin).¹⁴ "After a study of the book of Acts, the students entered a time of prayer and waiting on God. On January 1, 1901, Agnes Nevada Ozman, a thirty-year old student, received the Baptism in the Holy Ghost with evidence of speaking in a language she did not know. In the days following, Parham and several other students received the experience and spoke with tongues" (Martin).¹⁵

Scarcely eating or sleeping, the school with one accord waited on God. On the night of the 3rd of January 1901, we were all assembled in an upper room. A most wonderful power pervaded the atmosphere, and twelve students were filled with the Holy Ghost and

⁹ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 26-28

¹⁰ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 26

¹¹ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 13

¹² Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 13

¹³ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 17-18

¹⁴ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 67

¹⁵ Larry Martin, *The Topeka Outpouring of 1901*, 25

began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance; while several in the room saw above their heads, cloven tongues of fire, as in the days of old. Thus was the church militant again permitted to realize the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which has since them been given to not only others in the school but to those in other cities and states.¹⁶

(2) William Seymour (1870-1922). In 1905, Charles Parham moved the ministry to Houston, TX, where he started *The Bible Training School*. "Seymour, a black Holiness evangelist, became one of Parham's early students. Because Parham was a strict segregationist, Seymour was not allowed in the room with the white brethren. Parham, nevertheless, accommodated him by leaving the door open so that he could hear the Apostolic Faith message from the hallway. After seven weeks in Parham's classes, Seymour received a call to pastor in Los Angeles, CA" (Martin).¹⁷ On April 14, 1906, Seymour relocated his group of followers to a small building on Azusa Street. "Hundreds of people fled to Azusa to hear the gospel message and experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. Even the very wealthy came to this lower-class area to hear of God's power" (Liardon).¹⁸

3. *Its distinct beliefs*. Three themes rose to prominence in the newly budding Pentecostal movement: Spirit baptism, perfect sanctification (holiness), and the return of revelatory gifts (tongue speaking, prophecy, special knowledge, etc.). This is seen in several books published from 1855-1920. For example: Phoebe Palmer's *The Promise of the Father* (1859) and *A Guide to Holiness* (1858); Willaim Arthur's *The Tongue of Fire* (1855); Asa Mahaan's *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (1870) and *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (1875); Edward Davies' *Christian Perfectionism* (1874) and *The Gift of the Holy Ghost: The Believer's Privilege* (1874); A. J. Gordon's *The Ministry of the Spirit* (1894) and *The Ministry of Healing* (1877); A.B. Simpson's *The Holy Spirit, or Power from on Higher* (1895) and *The Gospel of Healing* (1885); S. A. Keen's *Gift of the Holy Ghost* (1895). In addition to books several magazines arose that promoted Pentecostal theology: *The Pentecostal Herald*, and *Guide to Holiness and the Pentecostal Life*. Through these books and magazines Pentecostalism developed a specific and unique system.

(1) Spirit baptism. Though not the first to teach a second work of the Spirit, Pentecostals were the first to teach a baptism of the Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues. At first, they believed these tongues were known languages (as Scripture teaches), but eventually they concluded they were unknown "prayer languages." "Many people before Parham had taught, preached, and even experienced a baptism in the Holy Spirit. But Parham's teaching was unique: from a study of Acts, he concluded that a biblical baptism was always evidenced by speaking in an unknown language" (Martin).¹⁹ "Those who wait on God will receive the Baptism of the Spirit, which will be evidenced in speaking in previously unknown languages. Knowing all languages, the Holy Ghost could as easily speak through us one language as another were our tongues and vocal cords fully surrendered to His domination" (Parham).²⁰ For Parham, speaking in foreign languages was proof you've been commissioned by God and thus speak for Him. "In the close of the age, God proposes to send forth men and women preaching in languages they know not a word of, which when interpreted the hearers will know is truly a message from God, spoken through lips of clay by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is truly the Acme of inspiration, prayed for every Sab-

¹⁶ Charles Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 34

¹⁷ Larry Martin, *The Topeka Outpouring of 1901*, 27

¹⁸ William Seymour, *The Great Azusa Street Revival: The Life and Sermons of William Seymour*, 1

¹⁹ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 15

²⁰ Charles Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 27-28

bath and desired by all true ministers of God" (Parham).²¹ Parham maintained this Baptism was a new thing. Men before him such as Wesley "enjoyed a mighty anointing and spoke like the holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, but the power of this Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a different thing entirely."²² But prior to receiving this baptism, you must first be sanctified. These two, Spirit baptism and sanctification, are related yet distinct blessings. "There is a great difference between a sanctified person and one that is baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire. A sanctified person is cleansed and filled with divine love, but the one that is baptized with the Holy Ghost has the power of God on his soul and has power with God and men, power over all the kingdoms of Satan and over all his emissaries" (Seymour).²³ "When we are sanctified through the truth, then we are one in Christ, and we can get into one accord for the gift or power of the Holy Ghost, and God will come in like a rushing mighty wind and fill every heart with the power of the Holy Spirit" (Seymour).²⁴

Parham found biblical grounds in the book of Acts to unite Holy Spirit baptism with speaking in tongues. He was the first to claim a biblical reason to marry the two spiritual experiences. As Parham saw it, everyone in the early church received the Spirit baptism, and all who did spoke in tongues; thus, tongues speaking was the biblical evidence of Spirit baptism. The connection sets Parham's movement apart from all previous awakenings. This theological difference is what makes the Topeka experience, more than just one of several stepping-stones in the origins of the movement. This was the genesis of the movement. And this is what makes Parham the father of Pentecostalism.²⁵

(2) Perfect sanctification. For Parham, not all Christians are sanctified. Sanctification is an act of God that's to be sought by Christians. Thus, only the sanctified are the "Bride" who are distinct from the church. They only will rule with Christ during the millennium. "Adam's bride was a rib taken out of his side; the second Adam Christ's Bride will be a small company, One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand, taken out of His Body (the Church). The Bride is a distinct company from the Church, Christ does not marry his own Body as many teachers would have you believe" (Parham).²⁶ "As one of the principal tenets of the Apostolic Faith, Parham believed in a complete sanctification as a second and last work of God's grace, the first work being salvation. According to the evangelist, conversion gave you probationary membership in the church of the living God, but sanctification made you a full member" (Martin).²⁷ In sanctification which is an act not a process, God removes our inbred desire and longing for sin. "Sanctification operates not upon the sins that you have committed, but upon the sin that was born in you; it deals with the inbred sin. Justification deals with sins committed, but sanctification deals with the inbred sin that causes you to sin, that leads you to sin, and which conversion does not take out. These things are in the flesh man; they are the inherited appetites, passions and lusts that rise in the flesh and are of the flesh. But when God sanctifies you, He will take all of that out. Oh, the sweetness that God will give us, the humility and love. I want to tell that God will help you if you let Him. He will take out, not merely suppress, all that inbred sin which was your natural inheritance" (Parham).²⁸

²¹ Charles Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 31

²² Charles Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 32

²³ William Seymour, *The Great Azusa Street Revival: The Life and Sermons of William Seymour*, 19

²⁴ William Seymour, *The Great Azusa Street Revival: The Life and Sermons of William Seymour*, 19

²⁵ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 16-17

²⁶ Charles Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 92

²⁷ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 185

²⁸ Charles Parham, *Selected Sermons of Charles Parham*, 55-56

Sanctification makes us one with the Lord Jesus. It makes us holy as Jesus is. He says in 1Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is His will for every soul to be saved from all sin, actual and original. We get our actual sins cleansed away through the blood of Jesus Christ at the cross, but our original sin we get cleansed on the cross. It must be a real death to the old man (Rom.6:6-7). So it takes the death of the old man in order that Christ might be sanctified in us. It is not sufficient to have the old man stunned or knocked down, for he will rise again. God is calling His people to true holiness in these days. We thank God for the blessed light that He is giving us. He says in 2Timothy 2:21, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use." He means for us to be purged from uncleanness and all kinds of sin. Then we shall be it vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Sanctification makes us holy and destroys the breed of sin, the love of sin and carnality. It makes us pure and whiter than snow. Any man that is saved and sanctified can feel the fire burning in his heart, when he calls on the name of Jesus. Oh, may God help men and women everywhere to lead a holy life, free from sin, for the Holy Spirit seeks to lead you out of sin into the marvelous light of the Son of God.²⁹

(3) Physical healing. "Perhaps even more characteristic of Pentecostalism than the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit is its celebration of miracles of divine healing as part of God's salvation and as evidence of the presence of divine power in the church" (Dayton).³⁰ "Parham believed that divine healing was available to all believers all the time. He declared that the healing of the sick 'is as much a part of the gospel as telling...of heaven.' He further taught that a fully sanctified person would be sanctified in both spirit and body and would have no 'taint of disease'" (Martin).³¹ "The healing of the sick is as much part of the gospel as telling them of Heaven. Were this gospel fully preached today, the multitudes would hang upon the Word of God: while the heathen would flow into the hill of the Lord. This is the gospel Jesus said must be preached to all nations as a witness before the end should come. You, dear friends, who are neglecting to teach, preach, and give of your substance to the spread of this gospel—attended with signs, wonders, mighty deeds, divers miracles and the gifts of the Holy Ghost—are in danger of standing in utter condemnation before the judgment bar of God" (Parham).³²

²⁹ William Seymour, *The Great Azusa Street Revival: The Life and Sermons of William Seymour*, 18

³⁰ Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 115

³¹ Larry Martin, *Charles Fox Parham: The Unlikely Father of Modern Pentecostalism*, 187

³² Charles Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 41-46