

Pentecostalism:- Mother of Charismaticism

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 15 September 2010 09:26

I usually make a distinction between 'old style' Pentecostalism and charismaticism. This distinction, however, is for the sake of charity, as a 'half-way house' conclusion. There are a number of born-again Believers in Roman Catholicism - but that does not make Roman Catholicism valid, right or acceptable. The same goes for Anglicanism. There are born-again believers in all Protestant denominations, but that does not make the existence of denominations valid, right or acceptable.

The distinction between Pentecostalism and charismaticism should be seen in the same light. That is, not all Pentecostalists are charismatic in the later sense. Nevertheless, this does not make Pentecostalism valid, right or acceptable. Old-style Pentecostalists have much to commend them. Even so, their beginnings, teachers, beliefs and practices, demand close examination.

Charismaticism came directly out of Pentecostalism, not suddenly, but gradually. The modern charismatic movement evolved naturally out of old-style Pentecostalism, because Pentecostalism bore the seeds of today's charismaticism, as a mother bears a child in her womb. Just as a woman cannot justifiably deny that she gave birth to her own child, so Pentecostalism cannot justifiably deny it is the foundation of charismaticism and all the horrors that go with it. A natural mother can certainly deny her own child, but in actual fact she is still the mother, no matter how strenuous the denial. The same goes for Pentecostalism and its relationship to charismaticism. Pentecostalists might think their own child is repulsive, or rogue - but the child is still from their own womb.

Speaking of foundational Pentecostalism, A Seibel says: *"The well-known revivalist Charles Finney... described one special experience of his Christian life as 'Baptism of Power'. His friend and colleague... Asa Mahan, named this experience: 'Baptism of the Spirit'. The evangelist Reuben Torrey took up this concept and systematically dealt with it in his book, 'Baptism of the Spirit'. Torrey suggests that this is a special experience which the Believer can have after conversion, and that it equips him with special power from on high and gifts of the Spirit for Christian service.*

The founders of the Pentecostal movement received Torrey's interpretation and added one further point: The sign of having received the baptism of the Spirit, they claimed, was speaking in tongues. Thus we have the emergence of a doctrine which has been accepted by millions of Christians throughout the world today."

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In this we see how one man's personalised use of words led to another man's formation of a theory, and the final acceptance of them as doctrine equal to scripture! Yet, there is no such teaching in scripture. Until the 1960's Pentecostals were fairly stable, although they held some peculiar and unbiblical beliefs. Then along came hyper-Pentecostalism (which is the norm today), charismaticism, and even more unbiblical beliefs. The Toronto Blessing was simply the natural next step, in which we can see the fruition of seeds of heresy, which have lain dormant in Pentecostalism from its inception.

Everything in modern charismaticism has its root in historic Pentecostalism. Nowhere in scripture do we find the idea of asking God for a second experience leading to a higher plane of spirituality. Yet this was a founding teaching of Pentecostalism, and is a major tenet of faith within charismaticism. Pentecostalist George Mallone says, *"They (tongues) are the biggest Christian friendship and oneness busters of the century."*

Seibel adds,

"This doctrine of the special baptism of the Spirit is practically the basis of the whole Pentecostal movement... The inconsistency of some believers over this point (second blessing) has often astonished me... One gets the impression that a mistake greatly multiplied cannot be a mistake any more."

What is true here of Pentecostalism is also true of its 'wild child', charismaticism.

In 'Weighed and Found Wanting' by Bill Randles (a Pentecostal pastor), chapter three on the 'Progression of Pentecostal Error' tells us that the Pentecostals have undertaken the greatest missionary thrusts ever. This thrust was due to the basic Pentecostal basis of hope that we are all awaiting the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, all that has altered and the basis of hope has shifted - headlong into the dark pit of charismaticism. *"We have shifted from a God-centred heavenly expectation to a man-centred 'We (the church) must conquer for Christ' before Jesus comes back."*

In fact this shift has been even greater, for the *complete*

belief is that Christ CANNOT come back UNLESS we help Him to put the world right first! The shift means that the 'church' is now fighting in its own name and strength. It does this by ignoring plain scriptural teaching of coming mass apostasy and great end-time tribulation, and by replacing it with triumphalism and the subduing of Satan.

Randles says this shift in hope *"began as a trickle in evangelical and Pentecostal circles... (and now) triumphalism... (is)... predominant."*

So today we have Dominion theory, the Reconstruction movement, Kingdom Now, and so on. All came from Pentecostalism.

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Added to this twisting of scripture is the long-held and cherished Pentecostalist fantasy that we shall see a great end-time revival, which shall "*shake the whole world*" and bring whole nations to Jesus. The church won't be a 'whipped, sick, defeated little group huddled in the corner hiding from the antiChrist', but, rather, 'a mighty army, ruling the nations, displaying raw power, emptying hospitals, filling stadiums, (attracting) the awe of the whole world'. (Randles)

(Bill Randles believes that the wondrous healing exploits of Pentecostalists in the 1940's and 1950's were genuine examples of God working amongst His people, just as He brought genuine revival to many places at that time, through evangelicalism. He may, or may not, be right. I cannot tell, for I was not privy to observation - but perhaps I might be allowed a word of caution, that whilst the revivals might have been genuine, it is always possible that the healings, etc., were of Satan. Why? To bring about future expectations of signs and wonders where none really existed.

As Randles says, the healing ministries came into disrepute - and they still are. Of course, they may have been genuinely of God... but the possibility of Satanic intervention, to dazzle and deceive, is neither unknown nor impossible. We only have to look at the grandiose claims made today by gross charismatics to underline this sad fact. Like Randles, I believe wholeheartedly in divine healing, but charismaticism and its claimed healings are a farce. Even men who were once true and faithful can fall and act abusively toward scripture and Christian service. Billy Graham is one such figure, whose evangelism is almost destitute of Biblical truth).

Linked to this emphasis on healing and tongues, etc., is the overwhelming desire for unity at any cost. Even if it means denying scripture and Biblical commands. Restoration is also high on the list of priorities - such that Pentecostalists actually believe that **they** are responsible for restoring the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' (as they see it) to the Church! This developed into restoration of apostles, prophets, etc. But, they were literally 'developed' way beyond scriptural bounds.

Without doubt early Pentecostalism wanted the best of Christian life, but the way it went about obtaining the best was false. As is the wont of falsity, the basic errors were built-upon and are now almost unrecognisable in their outrageousness. Heresy is now normal in charismaticism, as is the ignoring of scripture (for we are now in the post-Biblical extra-Biblical era, according to charismatic leaders).

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We can see a direct line, a natural progression, from early Pentecostalism to present-day charismaticism. The answer? The answer is radical yet simple: to completely remove oneself from Pentecostalism and to get back to scripture-only! Early Pentecostalism looked forward to the eradication of denominations (and yet became one!), and rightly so. But unity at any cost is too high a price to pay. Meanwhile, Pentecostalism cannot deny that its child is wayward and ruinous of spiritual life and hope.

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