

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERN MOVEMENTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Before the New Testament period and the coming of the gifts of the Spirit, there are many historical accounts that affirm the existence of strange manifestations, such as ecstatic tongues, related to different pagan religions. These had nothing to do with faith in the one True God. By the 4th century, Augustine commented that the manifestations of the Spirit that occurred commonly in the first century had ceased to exist. However, by the 14th century, different accounts of strange manifestations began to appear in the historical record. But those individuals and groups were mostly considered heretical sects for their strange ideas. An example of that would be the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons. (Chuck Gianotti, Crossroads Bible Fellowship)

1900 – 1960 (Classical Pentecostalism)

Around the year 1900, a man in Tennessee and a group of students in Kansas announced that they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues. These events began to generate problems when their followers tried to enter traditional Protestant denominations and invite everyone to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. These teachings were rejected by traditional Protestant denominations, which resulted in the formation of new "Pentecostal" denominations.

Some of the new denominations were the following: Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene, Church of God in Christ, Church of God Prophecy, Pentecostal Holiness Church, United Pentecostal Church, and the Holiness Church of the Baptized in Fire. They placed great emphasis on receiving the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and healings. Originally, many of them believed that people are not saved if they have not spoken in tongues.

1960 – 1980 (The Charismatic Movement or Neo-Pentecostalism)

There was an outbreak of "tongues" in an Episcopal church in California in 1960. This "wave" continued advancing in many Episcopal, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches. It reached universities and continued advancing rapidly. In 17 years it had entered almost all Protestant denominations in the United States (Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.), with more than 5 million adherents.

Many Catholics had entered into this movement and were leaving the Catholic Church for Protestant churches. This resulted in the formation of a Catholic charismatic movement. Catholic Charismatic Renewal, or better said, Catholic Pentecostalism,

traces its birth to a retreat in February 1967, at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Although many Catholics had experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit before this, this university retreat marks the moment when the "fire" began moving in Catholic circles. And the beginning of the movement was like fire. It spread rapidly in the United States (there were already National Congresses in 1969) and soon spread to the international Catholic world. Father Tomás Forrest, a member of the Redemptorist (a Catholic clerical religious congregation) working in Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico, was an important instrument in introducing the experience to the Latin world.

In 1975, there was a Congress in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican in the presence of Pope Paul VI, who called Catholic Charismatic Renewal a "chance" (a luck/blessing) for the Church. The movement leadership met with the new Pope John Paul II in 1981, and—mostly by his invitation—the headquarters of the movement moved to Rome in 1984. This Pope greatly blessed the movement, praised the "movements of the Holy Spirit" in his Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, and invited the leadership of the Charismatic Renewal to celebrate Pentecost in Rome with him in the Year of the Holy Spirit. (Taken from "The Charismatic Renewal in the Hispanic Community" by Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia; Spiritual Advisor of Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the U.S.; IX National Convention of Hispanic Priests; September 29, 1998; Mundelein Seminary, Illinois)

The strategy of the charismatic movement was not to start new denominations. They wanted each person to remain in their own church to help everyone in their group receive the Holy Spirit, speak in tongues, and heal the sick. There were also many preachers who spoke of the prosperity gospel... that is, "if you give all your money to the preacher, God will bless you and make you prosper." This current continues in the third wave that we will see later in the Word of Faith movement.

Charismatic groups created divisions in churches because not everyone wanted to participate, and the enthusiasm of charismatic groups did not leave non-charismatics in peace. This resulted in the creation of many independent charismatic churches, which were called "interdenominational"... that is, not part of a traditional Protestant denomination. (There are also interdenominational churches that are not charismatic.)

1980 – Present (The Third Wave — The Signs and Wonders Movement)

Peter Wagner wrote this definition of the present movement: I see that we have now entered a third wave. The first wave of the Holy Spirit began in the early 20th century with Pentecostalism. The second wave was the charismatic movement that began in the 50s among major traditional denominations. Both waves continue currently. I see that the third wave, which started in the 80s, has exposed evangelical Christians to the power of the Holy Spirit that Pentecostals and charismatics already experienced...

but without having to become Pentecostals or charismatics. ("The Third Wave", Pastoral Renewal, July-August 1983, by Peter Wagner)

Three of the main leaders of this movement are Peter Wagner, John Wimber, and Paul Cain. Other names related to this movement are: Morris Cerullo, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, Jack Deere, Kenneth Hagin, Jack Hayford, Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts, Robert Tilton, the Kansas City prophets, and many more. They continue with an emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, although with a slightly different definition. They continue with emphasis on speaking in tongues, although they do not insist that one must speak in tongues to be saved. And they continue to emphasize healings.

One difference from earlier groups is their focus on "power evangelism." This means that evangelism not accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders will not have much success. A movement of the third wave, Word of Faith, continues with the idea of "prosperity." It declares that no Christian should be sick and that every Christian who truly follows God will have economic prosperity. They explain that you simply have to clearly state what you want, and have faith. They imply that the Holy Spirit is almost obligated to follow your instructions. They base themselves on John 14:14.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

The problem with that is that they ignore 1 John 5:14 –

And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

We need to see the Word of God in its context, and not isolate a passage to support our personal ideas.

Conclusion

These three movements have brought positive practices to the church. For example, they emphasize the importance of a personal relationship with God. But they have also brought something that truly threatens the future of the church. We have always understood that the Bible, the Word of God, is the authority for formulating any teaching. The problem with the three-wave movement is that its supporters have formulated teachings that have no basis in the Bible. They claim that such teachings are based on what they have personally experienced, or on what God has personally revealed to them. They assert that their personal experience is as valid as the word of God. Jeremiah observed something similar in his days:

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they lead you astray; they speak visions of their own mind, not from the mouth of the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:16)

When someone begins down that path, there really is no limit to where they may end up. Some examples of this in our times are:

- Those of the Word of Faith movement have repeatedly said that we are gods, just like Jesus Christ.
- Those of the Charismatic Movement and the Third Wave think they can add new teachings that God has supposedly revealed. For example, Benny Hinn has taught that the Holy Trinity is actually 9 instead of 3... because each one has body, spirit, and soul.
- The Kansas City prophets say that 76% of their prophecies turn out true, not 100%... although they always say that all were given by God. This contradicts what the Bible says in Deuteronomy 18:20-22.
- Some in these movements have totally rejected the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Others have opined that this error in their doctrine really doesn't matter, because they have accomplished so much for the kingdom of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions in which you were taught, whether by word or by letter from us.

1 Timothy 4:16

Pay attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in them, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

2 Timothy 4:2-3

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; convince, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; having itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers according to their own passions...

May this reflection help us to be aware of the origin and current influence of the three waves, that we might avoid being influenced by them unwittingly.

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