

PENTECOSTALIZED

A Short Background

Pentecostalized! It sounds strange, even dangerous, and it is both.

Please read the entire essay before you hit the delete key. You might find yourself disagreeing at first but then agreeing, or partially so, as you discover what this little piece really says.

In the first part of the essay I am using the term *pentecostalized* to describe false conversion. In the second part, *pentecostalized* means convinced of and actually engaged in what Jesus has called us to.

Part One

I was baptized with speaking in tongues in 1968. Awakened from a sound sleep, I found myself speaking loudly in what I had to believe was genuine ecstatic tongues. Whether it was an actual language or not, I do not know.

This was not a phenomenon I was expecting or even thought was valid, because at that time I was dead set against anything to do with Pentecostalism. Converted in a Southern Baptist Church at age twenty-one and taught that wild-eyed, fanatical tongues speaking was probably a demonic sign, I wanted nothing to do with that crazy language. But...

It was some time before I let on that I spoke in tongues; however, the word got out. This may sound extreme, but I was denied a ThM degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley,¹ in 1973, because I was a tongues speaker. I was similarly denied missionary support money from the California Southern Baptists. Though I still held a standard Baptist theology, from 1968 to 1978 I was a card-carrying, full-fledged, charismatic Pentecostal.

What Can be Seen and Heard Can be Mimicked

In 1972 I became senior pastor of an independent church in San Rafael, California. It would accurately be described as a charismatic/Pentecostal church, much like many of the churches that emerged out of the Jesus People Movement.²

Regrettably, from my perspective now, I was very good at getting other people to speak in tongues. If a person displayed this “gift,” then ipso facto, he or she must have been

¹ Golden Gate Seminary closed in 2017 and moved to Ontario, California and was renamed Gateway Baptist Theological Seminary.

² Early on, the Jesus People Movement was not charismatic/Pentecostal in orientation. This began to change with the advent of Calvary Chapel with Chuck Smith and the Vineyard churches with John Wimber. This is not 100% accurate, but close to it.

genuinely saved, since speaking in tongues was considered the clear and primary evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. If no tongues, then no conversion—this is what I believed along with most others in the charismatic camp.

Was I in for a surprise! I learned the hard way that whatever can be seen and heard can be mimicked. Tongues speaking was the gateway of acceptance into churches like the one I pastored. It proved to be akin to a wild circus act.

With the current growth of the New Apostolic Reformation (or Apostolic Movement and numerous other appellations), the confusion has only accelerated from that day to this. Now if you get a “word” or a “download,” see a vision, have a dream, speak with an angel, or walk with Jesus in the throne room, to name a few weird delusions, you are not only a real saved Christian but also a specially anointed one at that.

I Was One

Yes, I was one of those. I received words of prophecy for people who came to me for counsel. At our services, the elders and pastors would pray for people who came to the front; we laid on hands, anointed them with oil, and received special communications directly from God. So then, where was the error and how could it go wrong?

It did go wrong, and sometimes terribly so. I will not recount the disasters that our excesses caused. It is embarrassing to recall now some of the life-altering results that arose from my “getting a word from God”—humbling certainly, and even spine chilling.

At minimum, what we were doing was unbiblical, but we thought we had a special anointing, and so we did not need to anchor our actions to the Bible. How crazy was such thinking! But never mind. If anyone called us to account, we accused them of resisting the moving of the Spirit. We—I—had moved into a cultic mindset.³

Cultic?

Yes indeed, cultic, and I realize that over the last four decades I have still been feeling the impact of my years in the “movement.”

Here is how it works: We think we are more spiritual than others. We, after all, are attuned to the Spirit. Our services are wild and wonderful, though even a bit crazy. Our prayer meetings are enough to peel the paint off the walls. We are in direct and personal contact with God. We are under the anointing.

³ Two seminary professors at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary each invited me into their offices and explained to me the faulty concepts I had embraced. With some arrogance I rejected their wise counsel under the false notion that I was moving in the Spirit and they were not.

We see others who are not with us as being against us. They are standing in the way of the Spirit's release, and these naysayers may even be guilty of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. At minimum, they are acting as the enemy's pawns. And see, their churches and their ministries are puny. They are not travelling around the world speaking and ministering to thousands, even millions, as we are. They are not writing bestselling books. And of course, the followers of those without the anointing are not experiencing signs and wonders. Their people are not getting healed. They are not hearing from God at all.

They are losers. They have not been pentecostalized.

Part Two

The Real Pentecostal

After Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to His apostles in a locked room, stood among them and said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21). Then Jesus "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:21). While they had for years been His faithful followers, this was the moment of their new birth.

Then Jesus told these apostles who had received the Holy Spirit not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). Jesus continued, "for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" Acts 1:5). They did stay, and they did receive, or were baptized or immersed with and into the Holy Spirit. The result was mighty preaching that saw 3,000 Jews converted, who were then baptized in water on the first day of this new, powerful witnessing.

There is some controversy about the tongues event in Acts 2. Were the apostles speaking in known or unknown tongues? The hearers were hearing in their own dialects or languages. Was the miracle one of speaking or of hearing? I am in favor of known tongues, but it really does not make that much difference. What was being heard was the message that the Messiah has come, and He is Jesus of Nazareth, who died on the cross and is alive again as Lord of the universe.

Let's Get Back to the Bible

The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to witness powerfully for Christ. We Christians are storytellers, and the promise is that the Holy Spirit works eternal salvation for those who hear the word of life. Then we are commissioned to make them disciples (see Matthew 28:19). Not all who hear are saved, but as Paul stated in Romans 8:30, "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

This is the biblical process: those whom God has predestined are called. It is abundantly clear, as we read in the Book of Acts, that the calling comes by means of witnessing and preaching. The calling leads to justification; that is, due to the fact that Jesus has died for us,

taking our sin upon Himself, we can be made as though we had never sinned at all. All sin is gone, buried forever. Then comes the indwelling of the new Christian by the Holy Spirit, meaning he or she is glorified. Yes, the Spirit of God actually indwells the person—this is glory.

The Great Controversy

There is a controversy here, of course. Some say we are baptized with or in the Holy Spirit upon conversion. Others say this comes later.

Certainly, we are *indwelt* by the Spirit upon conversion, but is there a secondary work of the Holy Spirit, one that empowers the believer to be a witness, more powerfully than would otherwise be the case?

In my case, my baptism with the Holy Spirit followed my conversion by five years; at least that is how I experienced it that night in 1968. Suddenly, that very next day, in my street ministry in the Haight-Ashbury, I saw people coming to saving faith in Jesus on every corner and in every venue, and it was that way for years during the period now identified as the Jesus People Movement, roughly 1967 to 1972.

With that experience being so convincing, for many years we laid hands on and prayed for brothers and sisters in Christ to be baptized with and in the Holy Spirit that they might be bold proclaimers of the Gospel. And very often, they demonstrated the truth of that principle!

Do I Need to Go Back to Those Days?

My conviction, coming upon me now for almost one year, is that I do need to go back to those days. I cannot let what we see way too often these days, which is the weird departure from the true working of the Holy Spirit, prevent me from praying for others to receive the equipping of the Holy Spirit in their ministry to fulfill the command of Jesus to go and make disciples.

Therefore, I am repenting and giving testimony to this right now. I hope to be getting back to praying that others might be emboldened to preach Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to be pentecostalized!