

ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH WAVE OF PENTECOSTALISM

The heart of Pentecostal practice has always been an experience of the Holy Spirit. These experiences are often claimed to have the direct guidance of the Spirit and form the decisions and actions that result in the ongoing of the development of practices and doctrine. It is my contention that the third and fourth *so-called* waves of the Spirit are not truly waves of the Spirit, neither are they new. They are the rebirth, albeit in a new manner, of three disappointing and tragic movements of past Pentecostal history, namely the (New) Latter Rain, the Shepherding Movement, and the Prosperity Movement. I maintain that these two waves do not follow a solid Pentecostal doctrinal stand of an experience in the Holy Spirit of separability and subsequence, neither do they draw their doctrinal stand from the book of Acts, but rather the Synoptic gospels. Unfortunately, even though Pentecostal scholarship is on the rise, the majority of the prolific writers of these last two waves are extremely eisegetical in regards to their dealing with the Word of God. They claim vision and direction from Heaven, as opposed to an exegesis of the canon of Scripture. I maintain that these two, *so called* waves of the Spirit are not Heaven sent but man conceived and thus dangerous heresy to the church.

‘I believe that courage is the most important virtue, the foundation that underlies and gives realty to all other virtues and personal values. Without courage we become conformists. Conformity is not the fibre good and courageous leaders are

made of... Do not be frightened by the aloneness that may come with your holding unpopular positions. It is in aloneness that wisdom will visit you and smile upon you’.

These are not, as a theologian might be entitled to expect, the words of Elijah or Jeremiah. They are quoted from a speech given in 1999 by Mamphela Ramphele, vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town.¹ Her context was the silence that has so often fallen on African societies once liberation has taken place. It is just such silent acquiescence, she insists, that allow former ‘heroes of the struggle’ to become despots and dictators. Her words are challenging to Pentecostal theologians for at least two reasons. The first and more mundane is that Pentecostalism is most vibrant today in precisely those countries, which can be termed ‘postcolonial’. The second, and to my mind the most relevant to the movement, is that Pentecostalism was at its beginning a powerful spiritual force because it inherited an ethos of radical difference and because its proponents were unflinching in refusing to be co-opted into any other agenda than the one for which they knew they had been empowered by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In this sense it was a prophetic religion, a religion similar to that of Elijah and Jeremiah.²

It is my plea then in this presentation that the so-called ‘postcolonial’ countries will not swallow this new error, which has been called the new Pentecostal rhema³ from Heaven, which stems, as do so many new theological trends from the Western world. The new emerging Pentecostal Charismatic churches, particularly of the Third World need to have the courage not to be conformists, for such is not the fiber good and courageous leaders have.

The hermeneutical pneumatology of the Pentecostal tradition has always been questioned. The early Pentecostals did not even bother to develop a theological hermeneutical position of a subsequent experience of the Spirit; they accepted their experience as from God⁴. When

they did begin to develop a Pentecostal theology it was often ridiculed as being primarily experiential, thus in the minds of most, devoid of Biblical theology. Fifty years after the outpouring of the Spirit at Azusa Street many Pentecostal scholars began to re-examine the pneumatology of Luke's writing.⁵ In the latter part of the 20th Century many Pentecostal scholars came into their own, examining and challenging many of the previously accepted conclusions of theologians, in regards to the Classical Pentecostal doctrinal position⁶. Their position was that there was a separable and subsequent experience of the Spirit following salvation, which was accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues. The initial evidence was for a few, and still is for some, questionable evidence. Such a position stood in opposition to those who declared that there was no second experience of the Holy Spirit for any person other than salvation. If those who believed in the 'conversion-initiation, which included the baptism in the Holy Spirit' were indeed correct, then everything that Luke talks about in relation to pneumatology in his two-volume work is totally in relation to salvation. This was the theological pneumatological position prior to Classical Pentecostalism. It did and has resulted in many theological challenges. Scholars who take this position do so on the premise that Pentecost is more of a historical situation for the church. However scholars convinced of the Classical Pentecostal position are refusing to accept this position and have and are continuing to develop an exegetical position for a secondary work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. This is my personal position made vitally real for me since I did not grow up in a Pentecostal church setting, but rather came into the Pentecostal experience in my early 20's.

It is my contention that the theological impact of Christ's ascension prior to the public ascension witnessed in Acts 1 has not been fully examined. Few scholars have dealt with the typological fulfillment firstly, of the work of the High Priest as seen completed in the life of Jesus Christ, or secondly, of His fulfillment of the first four feasts which the Jews were

commanded to keep. Both of these aspects very clearly enhance and form a clear indication that the classical Pentecostal theology was and is correct in speaking of a separable and subsequent work of the Spirit following a clear salvation experience.

I will seek to elucidate this by an examining the historical background of the first two waves of the Spirit, followed by a preview of the work of the Holy Spirit as seen in the canon of Scripture with emphasis on the New Testament. I will follow this by the development of the idea of regeneration in the New Testament. Finally I will examine Lukan writing in regards to the experience known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These chapters will then serve as a base for comparison with the material, which will follow.

In the late 20th and early 21st century the Classical Pentecostal doctrine has been challenged by the last two charismatic waves of the Spirit, both of which have spawned a plethora of writings. It is my contention first; that the traditional Pentecostal understanding of the authority of Scripture has been abandoned in that now experience takes precedence over Scripture. Secondly it is clear that these last two waves do not fall within the same parameters as the first two waves in their understanding of a doctrine of separability and subsequence, since they revert to a pre-Classical Pentecostal theological position of only one experience of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, in a day when Pentecostal scholarship is seeking to become acceptable in their exegesis, the authors of these waves are almost totally eisegetical. The question needs to be asked ‘Have they subtly taken on a title to glean a following?’ It is thus my contention that a survey of these waves shows that they have no common ground with the initial two waves of the Spirit. The indication is that they have deliberately chosen a different Biblical basis and thus disqualify themselves from the Pentecostal Charismatic stream. I will seek to elucidate this by examining the historical background of the last two waves of the Spirit, followed by an examination of the Pentecostal hermeneutic and their lack of hermeneutics, as seen so clearly in their writings. This will be done by pointing out the

comparisons to the latter two waves of the Spirit both in theory and in the voluminous writing, which are largely based on eisegesis. The stated desire to ‘have church without making anyone sick’ has broached and taken the movements far into left field.

Finally, it is my contention that the third and fourth waves of the Spirit are not new at all. They are simply a rebirth of three disappointing and tragic movements in Pentecostal history. Thus I hope to clearly substantiate that the third and fourth wave of the Spirit are not really waves of the Spirit at all. They are not such in terms of their Biblical theological basis, neither are they such exegetically. They are simply the result of those desirous of the moving of the Holy Spirit who have reached back into the past and reintroduced past aspects of renewal, which unfortunately were man centered and resulted later in much havoc among Christians. I will seek to elucidate these facts by an examination of the history and practice of the (New) Latter Rain, which still haunts Saskatchewan, Canada where tragedies still exist, and the Shepherding movement out of Florida, which after a few years was denounced even by the leaders and finally totally disbanded. Then, finally the Prosperity Movement, which rose and fell as an unacceptable, illegitimate deduction of so called truth of the canon.

One hopes and prays that the tragedies in lives will not live to haunt the church if Jesus tarries. We do not want the “heroes of spiritual struggles” to become the despots and dictators of the Pentecostal churches in the Third World.

¹ M. Ramphele, “Our Democracy Is At Risk,” *Readers Digest* (April 2000), 95-97 (97).

² Matthew Clark, “Questioning Every Consensus A Plea For A Return To The Radical Roots Of Pentecostalism”. (*AJPS* 5:1 (2002), 73-86.

Clark make notes that he is using “prophetic” since prophecy is normally a charismatic event Initiated by the Holy Spirit. However, the term has become so established in a broader sense that He uses it throughout his paper.

³ Hamon, Bill. *Apostles, Prophets and the Moves of God*, Shippensburg, USA: Destiny Image Publishers’ Inc., 61-63.

⁴ Wacker, Grant. *Heaven Below – Early Pentecostals and American Culture*. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2001. Chapters 1 & 2

⁵ Bovon, Francois, *Luke The Theologian: Thirty Years of Research (1950-1983)* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1987).

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- ⁶ Stronstad, Roger, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology*, (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995).
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KEY TERMS:

Classical Pentecostalism; Neo Pentecostalism; Third Wave; Fourth Wave; Latter Rain; Shepherding; Prosperity Movement; Holy Spirit Baptism; Separable and Subsequent; Fulfillment of O.T. Feasts; Fulfillment of O.T. High Priest; John 7:37-39; 14:17 & 20:22.

FORWARD

Since I was ordained with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada in 1956, I have been privileged to have been afforded a wide sphere of ministry. I have pastored in Canada and Kenya, East Africa. I have served the foreign missions department of the PAOC in Kenya East Africa, Uganda, Thailand and Hong Kong. During my years in Canada I have served both as the Superintendent of the Province of Saskatchewan, and as the Assistant to the General Superintendent in Western Canada. I have taught in our seminaries in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Singapore. During the years abroad I have been enabled to supervise our work in Asia, thus I traveled extensively, observing our churches and nationals as well as missionaries.

Over the years I have become very aware of the current trends and have been involved in the discussion that have ensued over the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues. In my present position in Singapore and Asia over the last seven-year, I have seen firsthand the development of what has been known as the Third and Fourth Wave of the Spirit. These last two waves have indeed coincided with the years of a phenomenal growth in the church throughout Asia. My background has made me very conscious of the need for a solid Biblical basis for ministry. I am convinced that this will be more of a necessity in the days to come, which may well be fraught with great persecution of the church.

In teaching seminary students Pentecostal doctrine and truth, over the last few years I have read extensively both in texts, journals and magazines in this related area. I have been made even more aware of a number of related issues that today cause great concern, hence my particular interest in whether the Third and Fourth Wave are genuine waves of the Holy Spirit or rather man made.

As I look back over the people God has allowed me to associate with, I now see a preparation for this project. I have been able to draw on a number of primary and secondary sources in that for many years I have known Rev. Robert Argue who was the Principal of Bethel Bible College 1948-56, and who later was elected to General Executive of the PAOC as Director of Home Mission and Bible Colleges. Also, the late Rev Eric Hornby who was Superintendent in Saskatchewan from 1944 – 1948. Both of these men were very involved in the fall out from the Latter Rain movement that was birthed in Saskatchewan in 1948. Rev Robert Argue was invited to become Principal of the Bible College when the new work was started at North Battleford to which the Pentecostal Bible College lost not only two of their key faculty members and a very large number of students. I have listened to these stories and read extensively about these days. Little did I realize that I would need to recall such many years later. Many, if not most, of the articles concerning the Latter Rain Movement and their paper *The Sharon Star* are in the archives in the Western Pentecostal Bible College where again my friend Rev Laurie M. Van Kleek is the Librarian. I have had access to all of these original materials. In addition to this I have had access to the archives of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri, which is the home of my wife. Bill Britton moved to Springfield in August 1962 bringing the Latter Rain Doctrine to the USA. He established a small church and an Overcomers Training Center. Two well-known members of his congregation much to the chagrin of the Assemblies of God were Stanley H. Frodsham (long time editor of the *The Pentecostal Evangel* the voice of the Assemblies of God, after he left the Assemblies of God) and Howard Carter (former chairman of the Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland). Thus I have had the use of all the original material that is there along with much secondary information drawn from those in this connection whom I know personally.

Another minister whom I have known for many years a scholar, seminary teacher and writer Dr. Leslie Holdcroft has written extensively on the Latter Rain, I have not only had access to his writing in the archives of the library of Western Pentecostal Bible College, but to his conversations about this movement.

A second, very primary source was my contact while I was the Superintendent in Saskatchewan with The Church of the Way in Saskatoon. It was a church started by Rev Lorne Reinheimer in 1974. He had been a student at Central Bible College 1970-1973 following which he started a new church. He began the church on the shepherding concept and continued in this manner for a number of years. As the congregation grew the shepherding issue became a very difficult aspect with many of the congregation. As superintendent of the Province I was called in to adjudicate the issue and so I had extensive and numerous meetings with the congregation over these issues. This church later dissolved and became an Evangelical Orthodox church. This first hand knowledge of the actual experiences aided in research for this thesis.

This past year while visiting Canada, I came across the Prosperity Doctrine again, which has surfaced as certain advocates are preaching this in some of our churches. It has given me impetus as oral and written material for this aspect in the thesis.

Finally during the last seven years I have had personal contact with the Third and Fourth Wave in Singapore and many parts of Asia. I have seen the results of these waves and have had extensive contact with those involved in this ministry and teaching. I have listened to some of the key leaders of these ideas and listened to tapes of others. It has given me a broad overview of what is happening.

In conjunction with all this while I have been teaching I have read extensively much of what has and is being written in journals and books. Thus, I have been able to use primary and secondary courses and the extensive writings of a wide variety of authors, as well as being

able to draw on a varied experience in the development of this thesis. It is deep concern of mine that we develop, with the help of God, pastoral leadership, which is founded on the solidness of the Word of God. It is my conviction that only this will permit the development of solid Pentecostal teaching that will continue to develop the Pentecostal heritage in the years to come.

Dedicated to my loving wife of 47 years who has endured my silence
and seclusion again as I have researched and written.

Singapore 2005

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