

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## Evangelicalism, the Charismatic Movement and the Race Back to Rome

John W. Robbins, editor

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the sixteenth-century caused millions to rediscover the Bible's objective message of justification by faith alone. That doctrine invaded and transformed the minds of men with divine power and changed the course of history. The Protestant Reformation was founded upon a restoration of the primacy, supremacy, and all-sufficiency of the Bible and justification by faith.

No one would want to contend that the Protestant Reformation completely recovered the purity of faith and practice that is set forth in the Bible. The Reformers did not always agree among themselves. They were not always consistent in every area. The church did not all at once abandon every error of the Roman State-Church Dark Ages. But in spite of differences and inconsistencies, the Reformers were absolutely united on the importance of Scripture and justification by faith alone—their objective meaning and their absolute centrality in the Christian faith.

There is a tendency in sinful human nature to gravitate from the objective Gospel to religious subjectivism, to shift the central focus from Christ to Christian experience. This is what happened in the great "falling away" in the early Church. And the same evolution has taken place among the heirs of the Protestant movement.

### *The Error of Sects*

Even before the Reformers had passed off the stage, different sects began to grow up within the Protestant movement and to break from the founding churches. The sects said that Luther made a good start in reviving the doctrine of justification by faith, but they had the feeling that Luther stood only halfway and that they must go on, higher and deeper.

But Luther discerned that they erred on the great doctrines of Protestantism—the Bible alone, and justification by faith alone—and, as far as he was concerned, if they were wrong on these, everything was wrong. "Whoever departs from the article of justification does not know God and is an idolater," wrote Luther. "For when this article has been taken away, nothing remains but error, hypocrisy, godlessness, and idolatry, although it may seem to be the height of truth, worship of God, holiness, etc." (*What Luther Says* [Concordia Publishing House, 1959], Vol. II, 702-704).

These sectarian teachers did not deny justification as an initiating step in the Christian life. Their error was the old one of relegating justification to something whereby the believer can make a start and then go on to higher things. With them, justification by faith was no longer the center. Their

focus was away from Christ's work to their own, from the objective to the subjective.

In the time of the Reformers, the Munzerites and radical Anabaptists gave great prominence to the work and gifts of the Spirit. Their cry was, "The Spirit! the Spirit!" but Luther replied, "I will not follow where their spirit leads." They separated the Spirit from the Word, from Scripture. They were the sixteenth-century charismatics.

Then there was Osiander. At first a disciple and colaborer with Luther, he broke from the Reformation teaching on justification by an imputed (outside) righteousness and began to teach that the believer is justified by the indwelling of Christ and his essential righteousness. Both Luther and Calvin recognized that Osiander's teaching was a return, in principle, to the Roman Catholic idea of justification. Some of the sects erred from the Gospel in that they tried to go beyond righteousness by faith to seeking a state of absolute sinlessness in this mortal life on Earth. The Reformers also recognized that this was actually Roman Catholic perfectionism in new garments.

After the time of the Reformers, the Protestant movement went through the period known as Protestant orthodoxy. Heresies were resisted by careful definition and redefinition of the Protestant faith. In Germany, Pietism arose as a reaction against the hypocrisy of the professedly orthodox Lutheran State-Church. But the definite tendency of Pietism was to distort the objective Gospel with an exaggerated emphasis on experience. Much of the German Pietism recaptured the spirit of the great Roman Catholic mystics and resembled it in its sentimental (and even effeminate) Christian devotions.

## *Wesleyanism*

Eighteenth-century England witnessed a remarkable movement that was also a reaction to the formalism of the Church of England. The truth of justification by faith alone had been largely lost from the church. These were the days of the foxhunting parsons who loved their dogs more than the flock. Moreover, there was a growing working class, unchurched and

untouched by an indifferent church. John Wesley was one of the most influential men of the eighteenth century. His effect on the whole national life of England (especially on the working class) was so remarkable that some credit his ministry with saving England from a revolution similar to that which engulfed France.

John Wesley seemed to believe in justification by faith alone. His "long suit," however, was sanctification. He had been deeply influenced by Moravian Pietism and certain of the Roman Catholic mystics. Wesley's emphasis on sanctification was one of the major weaknesses of the Methodist movement. Along with justification by the blood of Christ, Wesley emphasized the renewing power of the Holy Spirit in conforming lives to true obedience to the law of God. Apart from sanctified obedience to the law of God, Wesley declared that no soul would retain the blessing of justification. That implied, of course, justification by works. It also was a return to Rome.

Wesley developed a doctrine of entire sanctification, known also as the "second blessing" or "Methodist perfection." He proposed that after justification and a process of sanctification, the believer could receive by faith a sudden second blessing which would completely purge the soul from inbred sin, enabling the fully sanctified to feel nothing but perfect love. He called this experience "a still higher salvation," "immensely greater than that wrought when he was justified" (*Plain Account*, 7). Wesley and his preacher urged their hearers to seek this second blessing of perfection with all diligence. They did, and gave proof of it in lives of earnest (and sometimes frantic) piety.

With Paul and Luther, justification by faith alone was the whole truth of the Gospel. But in Wesleyanism, the centrality and all-sufficiency of justification was lost by being subordinated to sanctification. Justification itself could be lost by the believer's failure to persevere in good works.

However, although he preached it to others, till his dying day Wesley frankly confessed he had not attained his famous "second blessing." He always sought it but only attained to the hope of it. He was

too humble and candid to confess anything but that he still felt sin strong within him.

Unfortunately, not all of Wesley's followers were as prudent or as humble as the founder. Some of them did profess that they had attained the second blessing of entire sanctification. A few were preachers, and some of these soon fell to the temptation of imagining that they were superior to Wesley. The Methodist revival was therefore plagued and embarrassed by Arminianism and fanaticism. The fanaticism did not come to the surface so long as all the Methodists were seeking perfection. It boiled over when some claimed to have attained it.

### *American Revivalism and the Holiness Movement*

Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American Protestantism became heir of much of Methodism's religious fervor. America developed its own style and brand of revivalism. It suited the national temper and was molded by the frontier spirit.

Frontier life was rude, raw, and exciting. Some of the frontier people saw very little of churches or preachers except once a year at a big tent revival meeting. As the growing calves were rounded up once a year for branding, so the growing youth needed to be gathered in and "saved," while the older people felt their need for a good "clean-up" in the early revival time. As Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan has well said: "Those who attended such camp meetings...generally expected their religious experiences to be as vivid as the frontier life around them. Accustomed to 'braining bears and battling Indians,' they received their religion with great color and excitement" (Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* [Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971], 25). Sometimes the religious fervor was accompanied by great emotional excesses such as "godly hysteria," falling, jerking, "the holy laugh," barking like dogs, and "such wild dances as David performed before the Ark of the Lord."

In the nineteenth century, Charles Finney was such a successful evangelist that, by 1850, revivalism—

Charles Finney style—became almost the national religion of America. Finney's *Systematic Theology* (still one of the most popular manuals on theology in the Pentecostal churches today) is very critical of Luther and Calvin with respect to their teaching of justification by faith through an imputed righteousness. Finney's predominant emphasis is on sanctification and God's work within human experience—an emphasis that is neither Biblical nor Reformational. His preaching led people into a very emotional crisis experience and a seeking after a holiness of experience that would be acceptable to God.

In all these revival influences, the predominant emphasis was to find God in a very dramatic, emotional, empirical, inward experience of the heart. There was very little focus on being declared acceptable to God by faith in a righteousness not our own but wholly outside of us in the person of Christ. American revivalism was far more subjective than objective, far more experience-centered than Gospel-centered.

About the middle of the last century, the Methodist Church (which was then the largest church in the U. S. A.) experienced a remarkable resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the "second blessing." The decade of the 1840s witnessed a flood of perfectionistic teaching in the Methodist Church. Leading pastors, bishops, and theologians led the movement, giving it institutional and intellectual respectability. This development spilled over into other Protestant bodies, and by 1869 it became known as the "holiness movement." Independent "holiness" publications sprang up all over the country. The movement spread to England and found expression in the renowned Keswick Convention.

The emphasis popularized in the holiness movement was the victorious, Spirit-filled life. Its focal point was neither on justification nor even conversion, but on the attainment of an empirical experience of holiness and entire sanctification subsequent to conversion. Boardman, Inskip, A. B. Simpson, R. A. Torrey, and Andrew Murray were some of the best-known writers and leaders of the movement. Hannah W. Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a*

*Happy Life* (still widely circulated today) expressed very well the aspirations of the holiness people. Holiness-type books can generally be detected by titles that major on experience rather than on the Gospel (*The Victorious Life, Keys to Victorious Living, The Spirit-Filled Life*, etc.). The punch line of these books is generally on *Romans 7* and *Romans 8*: "Get out of *Romans 7* into *Romans 8*" (which, incidentally, is decidedly contrary to what the Reformers all taught).

The objective nature and value of justification and forgiveness ceased to be the center of the teaching of the holiness movement. They are undervalued, even demeaned, in the overwhelming preoccupation with religious experience and perfectionism. The holiness movement ran aground on the rocks of subjectivism, and because of this, it is more in harmony with Roman Catholicism than with the teaching of the Bible. In the 1890s the Methodist Church took an administrative stand against the holiness movement. Consequently, between the years 1890 and 1900, twenty-three holiness denominations were founded.

### *The Pentecostal Movement*

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, many within the holiness movement began to speak about and seek for the "baptism of fire." One branch of the holiness movement was called the "Fire-Baptized Holiness Church" (originating in Iowa in 1895 and led by Benjamin Irwin). Those receiving "the fire" would often shout, scream, fall in trances, or speak gibberish. This "baptism of fire" was regarded as a miraculous visitation of the Spirit that followed entire sanctification. The more conservative teachers of the holiness movement rejected this "third" blessing of fire, for they regarded the second blessing and the special baptism of the Spirit as synonymous.

But the radical "fire" advocates continued to make an impact within the movement with fiery preaching and publications like *Live Coals of Fire* (first published in October 1899). This paper spoke of "the blood that cleans up, the Holy Ghost that fills up, the fire that burns up, and the dynamite that blows up." It is not hard to imagine the eccentric

and mind-bending manifestations that accompanied the blowing-up stage of this religious high. The logical outcome of this religious trend was the appearance of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement, which generally traces its beginnings to the ministry of Charles Parham at Topeka, Kansas in 1900.

Dr. Frederick Dale Bruner writes: "Out of the world-wide holiness movements the Pentecostal movement was born. The Pentecostal historian, Charles Conn, notes 'that the Pentecostal movement is an extension of the holiness revival that occurred during the last half of the nineteenth century'" (Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* [Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970], 44). Says noted Roman Catholic author and advocate of church unification, Kilian McDonnell: "John Wesley was father to much of the 19th century American religious fervor; one of his children was the Holiness Movement which gave rise to the Pentecostalism of the 20th century" (Kilian McDonnell, *The Classical Pentecostal Movement*, Vol. I, No. 11 [May 1972], 1). The Pentecostal movement came into being directly on the issue of insisting that the physical sign of speaking in "tongues" was the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. This issue of tongues caused a split between the holiness and Pentecostal movements, yet the basic theology of the two movements remains the same. Pentecostalism is the inevitable outcome of subjective revivalism. The kind of revivals that operate in the United States may not be overtly Pentecostal or charismatic, but they tend in that direction because they are supremely oriented toward religious experientialism.

### *The Trend toward Rome*

For more than 400 years, influences have been at work within the Protestant movement to erode the objective emphasis of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. It has been a drift back to Romanism. A few years ago, noted Roman Catholic author, Louis Bouyer, made these stunning observations:

The Protestant Revival ... recalls the best and most authentic elements of the

Catholic tradition.... We see in every Protestant country, Christians who owed their religion to the movement we have called, in general, Revivalism, attain a more or less complete discovery of Catholicism.... The contemporary revivals most valuable and lasting in their results all present a striking analogy with this process of rediscovery of Catholicism.... the instinctive orientation of the revivals toward the Catholic...would bring in that way a reconciliation between the Protestant Movement and the Church... (Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* [World Publishing Co., 1964], 186, 188, 189, 197).

Bouyer closes with an appeal to his fellow Catholics to prepare for the inevitable return of the "separated brethren" under the influence of contemporary revivals. The fact that many revivalists regard themselves as anti-Catholic makes no difference, for as Bouyer points out, they are simply in the dark about how the heart of their emphasis is in profound harmony with Catholicism. If the reader wants to know what Rome thinks about the most popular U.S. revivalists today, he would be well advised to secure the July 1972 issue of *The Catholic Digest*.

A few years ago, Paul Tillich observed that we have reached "the end of the Protestant era,"

For the kind of Protestantism which has developed in America is not so much an expression of the Reformation, but has more to do with the so-called Evangelical Radicals. There are the Lutheran and Calvinistic groups, and they are strong, but they have adapted themselves to an astonishing degree to the climate of American Protestantism. This climate has not been made by them, but by the sectarian movements. Thus when I came to America twenty years ago [in 1933], the theology of the Reformation was almost unknown in Union Theological Seminary [New York] because of the different traditions, and the reduction of the Protestant tradition nearer to the non-

Reformation traditions. Luther's conflict with the evangelical radicals is especially important for American Protestants because the prevailing type of Christianity in America was not produced by the Reformation directly, but by the indirect effect of the Reformation through the movement of evangelical radicalism (Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* [S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1968], 225-226, 239. From lectures first given in 1953).

The last two decades have more than justified the observations of Bouyer and Tillich. The historical drift toward Rome has become like that place in the Niagara River where the boatsman reaches the point of no return as the water rushes on toward the falls. The drift has accelerated into a race, and evangelicals and charismatics are re-entering Rome at an ever-increasing rate.

### *The Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic Movement*

From 1900 to 1960, the Pentecostal movement continued to grow outside the mainstream of Protestantism. Yet by 1960 it had attained a worldwide membership of about eight million. At that time, men like Henry Van Dusen began to call the movement the "third force" in Christendom.

Then about 1960 a remarkable change took place. Pentecostalism began to jump the denominational boundary lines and to penetrate the mainline Protestant churches. As John Sherrill says in his book, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, "the walls came tumbling down." Soon there were thousands, and then millions, of Episcopalian, Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and other Protestant Pentecostals. This interdenominational phase of the movement became known as the neo-Pentecostal, or charismatic, movement. It was no longer a separate denomination but an experience that transcended all denominational boundary lines. Those sharing the experience in different denominations saw themselves as having more in common with each other than with non-charismatics of the same

church. Many confidently predicted that this was the beginning of the greatest revival the world had ever known.

Toward the end of the 1960s, the neo-Pentecostal movement made two further astounding strides. It entered the new youth culture and became known as the Jesus movement. (It was estimated that ninety percent of the Jesus People, as they were called, had some form of Pentecostal experience.) Many from the drug culture became "high" on Jesus instead of drugs. Then, to crown its success, the neo-Pentecostal movement entered the Roman Catholic Church in 1967. After a modest beginning in its great centers of learning (Duquesne and Notre Dame Universities), it is now spreading rapidly in the Roman Catholic Church, attracting the support of cardinals, bishops, thousands of priests and nuns, and the Pope himself. Since Roman Catholics are now receiving the identical Pentecostal experience as Protestants, the old-line Pentecostals are having to re-evaluate their attitude toward Roman Catholicism. Traditionally anti papal, the classical Pentecostal churches are changing their position since "Pentecost" has come to Rome.

Although Pentecostalism was introduced to the Roman Catholic Church initially by Protestant Pentecostals, it is meeting even less resistance in Catholic circles than in Protestant circles. In fact, as many Catholic authors are pointing out, Pentecostalism is more at home in the Roman State-Church. It is more at home there because the overwhelming Pentecostal emphasis on subjective experience is in essential harmony with the teaching and tradition of the Roman Church. Says Benedictine monk, Edward O'Connor of Notre Dame University:

Although they derive from Protestant backgrounds, the Pentecostal churches are not typically Protestant in their beliefs, attitudes or practices.... it cannot be assumed that the Pentecostal movement represents an incursion of Protestant influence [into the Roman Catholic Church]. ... Catholics who have accepted Pentecostal spirituality have found it to be fully in harmony with their traditional

faith and life. They experience it, not as a borrowing from an alien religion, but as a connatural development of their own. ... the experience of the Pentecostal movement tends to confirm the validity and relevance of our authentic spiritual traditions. Moreover, the doctrine that is developing in the Pentecostal churches today seems to be going through stages very similar to those which occurred in the early Middle Ages when the classical doctrine was taking shape (Edward O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* [Ave Maria Press, 1971], 23, 32,28, 183, 191, 193, 194).

Moreover, neo-Pentecostalism certainly does nothing to unsettle the faith of Roman Catholics in their church and traditions. Says O'Connor:

Similarly, the traditional devotions of the Church have taken on more meaning. Some people have been brought back to a frequent use of the sacrament of Penance through the experience of the baptism of the Spirit. Others have discovered a place for devotion to Mary in their lives, whereas previously they had been indifferent or even antipathetic toward her. One of the most striking effects of the Holy Spirit's action has been to stir up devotion to the Real Presence in the Eucharist (Edward O'Connor, *Pentecost in the Catholic Church* [Dove Publications, 1970], 14, 15).

## *The Charismatic Movement and Rome*

The 1970s brought us to a great ecumenical phase of revivalism and the charismatic movement. On February 1, 1972, *Christianity Today* editorialized:

The force that appears to be making the greatest contribution to the current Christian revival around the globe is Pentecostalism. This movement, which began several decades ago, and which in its early years was very sectarian in

character, is now becoming ecumenical in the deepest sense. A neo-Pentecostalism has lately appeared that includes many thousands of Roman Catholics.... A new era of the Spirit has begun. The charismatic experience moves Christians far beyond glossolalia.... There is light on the horizon. An evangelical renaissance is becoming visible along the Christian highway from the frontiers of the sects to the high places of the Roman Catholic communion. This appears to be one of the most strategic moments in the Church's history.

The May 1972 issue of *New Covenant* (Catholic charismatic publication) features Catholics and Protestants uniting in a great charismatic fellowship. It proclaims that the charismatic movement holds the hope of *healing the wound* of the sixteenth century. Henry Van Dusen of Union Theological Seminary is featured as saying:

The presence of the charismatic (Pentecostal) movement among us is said to make a new era in the development of Christianity. The new Pentecostalism will appear to future historians as a "true reformation" (compared to that of the 16th century) from which will spring a third force in the Christian world (Protestant-Catholic-Pentecostal) (19).

This union is not based on objective truth but on subjective experience. American Christianity is drowning in a sea of religious subjectivism. Charismatic literature (and with it we include all this subjective revivalism) is infesting the land like the frogs of Egypt (see *Revelation* 16:13, 14). Never has such a mass of literature been so devoid of the Gospel of Christ. There is scarcely one extrinsic, objective thought in it. It is all "in and in and in," a return to sentimental, effeminate, medieval mysticism. No wonder one of the points of dialogue between Pentecostal leaders and the Roman Catholic Church is the remarkable similarity between Pentecostalism and Catholic mysticism. The startling fact of the crumbling of Protestant resistance to the charismatic movement illustrates

the decadence of the Protestant churches. Even the word *Protestant* is becoming a dirty word. And to be critical of Romanism is now an obscenity in evangelical circles.

## *A Fulfillment of Prophecy*

Multitudes are exulting that the church is being stirred by the fires of revivalism. This is not a passing fad but a remarkable fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Protestants once generally accepted the fact that the leopard-like beast of *Revelation* 13 was a symbol of the papacy, which had dominated European civilization for about 1,000 years. Armed with the objective truth of justification by faith alone, the Reformation gave the "man of sin" a "deadly wound." In breaking the stranglehold of papal thought, it set the nations free from papal domination (see *Revelation* 13:3). But the prophecy of *Revelation* clearly foretells a restoration of the power of the ancient church to dominate the minds and enslave the consciences of men. The prophet declares:

And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from Heaven to Earth in the sight of men. He deceived them that dwell on the Earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the Earth that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live (*Revelation* 13:13, 14).

"Fire...from Heaven...in the sight of men" is an astoundingly accurate picture of contemporary religion caught up in the fires of false revivalism and the charismatic movement. Fire is the favorite symbol of the charismatic movement—and it is the symbol God uses to describe that movement because it is a counterfeit outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is not really fire from Heaven, but it appears to be fire from Heaven. It is "fire...from Heaven...in the sight of men." But by its influence it will cause "the Earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (*Revelation* 13:12).

The last days are to be marked by great religious deceptions. Working in the guise of "fire...from Heaven" (the baptism of the Holy Spirit), "the spirits of devils" will "go forth unto the kings of the Earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty"(Revelation 16:14; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12).

Already it is considered blasphemy to speak against the supernatural workings within the charismatic movement. A spirit of boastful certainty and arrogant intolerance has often been manifested by those who "have the spirit." The preoccupation with inward experience is leading multitudes back to the religious philosophy of the Dark Ages and the medieval church. The Vatican knows the score. It reads what is to be. Many Protestants seem to be as paralyzed as Melanchthon was when he did not know whether or not to speak out against the spiritualistic fanatics who came to Wittenberg while Luther was hidden in the Wartburg Castle. It was this issue that led the great Reformer to come out of hiding and to risk his life. Cried the "spirit-filled" leaders on being granted an interview with Luther, "The Spirit! The Spirit!" The Reformer was decidedly unimpressed. "I slap your spirit on the snout," he thundered. He saw that the great truth of justification by faith alone was diametrically opposed to these "German prophets," as he styled them.

We have now come to the time when the issues of the sixteenth century have to be fought out again. This time the conflict will be more severe, and it will be final. Roll up the old denominational boundary lines. There is going to be a grouping of the religious world. On the one side there will be a grand union of Roman Catholics, pseudo-Protestants, and Pentecostals in what appears to be a movement for the conversion of the whole world. On the other side there will be a movement to restore the everlasting Gospel in its pristine purity and power. The Gospel will triumph. Though Antichrist may be victorious for a moment, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him.

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