Introduction

A man stands up during a Sunday morning gathering of Christians and calls out ‘Euossa, Euossa use, rela sema cala mala kanah leulla sage nalan. Ligle logle lazle logle. Ene mine mo, sa rah el me sah rah me.’ Someone else in the congregation gives an interpretation of the words: ‘Jesus is mighty to save. Jesus is ready to hear. God is love.’ You have just heard an utterance in ‘tongues’, or glossolalia as it is more technically known. The first speaker has spoken in an unknown language, unknown to himself and to any other member of the congregation, and believes that he has done so under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. The second speaker, feeling himself to be given an interpretation by the Holy Spirit, speaks out in the common language of the hearers. In an English-speaking service interpreters speak in English but if the service is being held in Spanish or French or any other language, then the interpreter would speak in that language. In each case the utterance in tongues will sound fairly similar.

Welcome to a Pentecostal service.

Here we are on a Sunday morning in the United States in the Midwest. You drive up to one of the many small churches in this town and park your car because the noticeboard outside tells you that the service will start at 10.30 am. You get out and walk in to find a small number of people. You are given a hymn book at the door. At about 10.30 a large man walks out from the vestry at the front and announces the first hymn. The congregation shuffles to its feet and sings. The minister then conducts the service by praying aloud, directing the order of service, giving the notices, announcing the previous week’s offering, reading a biblical passage and preaching on it, announcing the closing hymn, shaking your hand as you go out and, presumably, locking the door and driving away. There has been nothing out of the ordinary in the service although some

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1 The words in italics were transcribed during a meeting convened by Charles Fox Parham and reported in the Topeka State Journal, 7 January 1901, p. 4. This is the start of the modern Pentecostal movement. The information comes from J. R. Goff (1988), Fields White Unto Harvest, Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, pp. 80, 202.
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of the music, which seems faintly old-fashioned, speaks vigorously about the Holy Spirit. This also is a Pentecostal service.

You are on the outskirts of Nairobi in Kenya and find yourself in a shanty town composed largely of shacks built of corrugated iron. Amid this huge unplanned area of human habitation is a substantial building and it turns out to be a church. Walking inside on a Sunday morning you notice that the place is packed with people dressed in clean clothes and with their arms raised in the air in worship. There is an amplification system in action and the sound of drums and clapping are almost deafening. There are people dancing in traditional African style near the keyboard. The pastor, dressed in a suit despite the hot weather, is leading the congregation enthusiastically and singing in English but also in an African dialect from time to time. This is a communion service and there will be bread and fruit juice shared around the congregation but, more than this, this is a service about healing and the pastor is going to pray for those who are ill. He preaches for a very long time but the congregation sits in apparently rapt attention. At the end of the service he calls people forward for prayer and his elders accompany him. The first person who stands at the front and asks for prayer is an elderly woman. The pastor lays his hands on her head and begins to pray but after a moment or two she falls on to the floor though, unnoticed, one of the deacons has apparently slipped behind her to make sure that she doesn’t hurt herself as she falls. And so the pastor moves along the line praying for people in direct and loud language asking God through Jesus and by his Spirit to heal those are ill. At the end, the crowd streams out blinking into the sunlight. This also is a Pentecostal service.

Now we are in south India. Again it is Sunday morning and something like a thousand people are crammed into a large low building with ceiling fans but without any other form of air conditioning. On one side of the building sit the women and on the other sit the men. The pastor calls them to pray and everybody begins to speak at once calling on God in a mixture of languages. Some people appear to be speaking in tongues and the pastor brings a prophetic utterance concerning the future of the congregation. Yes, there is blessing ahead. He invites people in the congregation to come up and share news of something that God has done for them and one or two people come to the front and tell stories about how God has helped solve their problems. This man had his bicycle stolen but it has been returned. A woman was ill but the pastor prayed for her and she is now able to move her leg. Afterwards, traditional Wesleyan hymns are sung and the pastor then begins to preach using a biblical text and involving the congregation in the dramatic retelling of a Bible story. After many exhortations to avoid idols and to trust God, the service comes to an end and everybody gathers in the courtyard outside for a large communal lunch. This also is a Pentecostal service.
And now we are in England and attending a ‘Third Wave’ or neo-charismatic church. The large factory-like building is situated on an industrial estate. We come in and see on our left a coffee and doughnuts bar where people grab refreshments and mill around talking to each other. On our right is a bookstore containing all kinds of pamphlets and leaflets about lifestyle and doctrinal issues and introducing the beliefs and practices of the church. Newcomers are clearly expected. The service begins with songs projected onto a screen from a computer-controlled workstation. The words keep pace with the singing and the congregation stands and faces the platform. People raise their hands and began to speak quietly in tongues. There is a smart-casual dress code here. The congregation is predominantly white but there are Asian and African people present too. The pastor on the platform is wearing a shirt and jeans and the woman next to him (his wife?) is in a dress but without any evidence of expensive coiffure. There is evidence of prophetic utterance but this comes to us from people who are clearly known to the leadership team. A young man comes to the front and speaks into the microphone giving a prophetic picture. He sees birds on the ground which take off and rise up and turn into eagles and swoop and soar. The congregation will rise up and begin to have a divine perspective on its situation. Another man speaks and encourages the congregation in liturgical words of confession and then Holy Communion is served and bread is taken round the congregation with little cups of wine. There follows a sermon that is partly illustrated by pictures on the screen; it is a simple teaching message about the importance of water baptism. Later, new attenders are encouraged to attend an Alpha course or find one of the many home groups run by the church. This also is a Pentecostal service.

These different Pentecostal meetings could occur anywhere in the world. What they have in common is a willingness to be open to the Holy Spirit. There is a confidence that God is an interventionist God and that the Holy Spirit can be felt and manifested through human agency in Christian gatherings. There is a belief in charismatic gifts, whether these are gifts of healing or utterances in unknown tongues, as we shall see later.

Definitions

So, how should we define Pentecostalism? It is here that we are confronted by the same difficulties that face anybody who attempts to define a particular religion. We can look at the doctrine, the history, the ritual or some combination of these. There will be an overlap between doctrine and ritual and between doctrine and history because most large religious groups have complicated historical streams and strands that
subdivided them in the past. Most of the subdivisions in most religious groups occurred over doctrine. For this reason it is unsurprising to discover that the different types of Pentecostalism or different Pentecostal denominations may hold slightly different views about the work of the Holy Spirit or other aspects of their faith. This means that it is difficult to find the essence of Pentecostalism and, if we try to do this, or to isolate Pentecostal distinctives, we will end up with scholarly differences predicated on favouring one form of Pentecostalism over another. Yet, if we are going to count how many Pentecostals there are at the present time, we need some sort of working definition.

Walter Hollenweger’s book *Pentecostalism* offers three definitions. The first is his own, which he has now discarded:

All the groups who profess at least two religious crisis experiences – 1 baptism or rebirth, and 2 the baptism in the Spirit – the second being subsequent to and different from the first one and the second usually, but not always, being associated with speaking in tongues.

Kilian McDonnell, the Roman Catholic scholar, suggests:

Those Christians who stressed the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit directed towards the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Finally, there is a definition from Eldin Villafañe quoting Vinson Synan:

All Pentecostals agree on the presence and demonstration of the charismata [spiritual gifts] in the modern church, but beyond this common agreement there is much diversity as in all the other branches of Christianity.

These definitions are progressively less specific. Over 100 years Pentecostalism has been diversifying with the result that definitions must stretch to include every variation. The first definition is specifically doctrinal, though it is doctrinal in the specialist sense that it identifies two distinct religious experiences. Here the presumption is that the Holy Spirit functions to bring about the new birth of the new Christian. This is well-established evangelical theology that equates conversion with the new birth of John 3, and both with the process of justification whereby the sinner is placed in a reconciled relationship with a holy God. The second

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3 Quoted by Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, p. 327.
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experience is altogether more central to most forms of Pentecostalism. It is a baptism in the Holy Spirit. Baptism, for most Pentecostals, speaks of immersion. Consequently ‘baptism in the Spirit’ is an immersion in the Holy Spirit, a sense of the overwhelming closeness of the transcendent God, which is seen as an enduement with power for service along the lines of those discerned in the lives of the apostles in the book of Acts.

The second definition removes what might be seen to be Protestant tendencies so as to emphasize the generalized presence of the Holy Spirit for proclamatory purposes. The third simply speaks about the charismata but without any reference to their origin or purpose. Hollenweger thinks that even the widest definition fails to capture the full extent of global Pentecostalism. He proposes instead that we should think of Pentecostalism as ‘a way of doing theology’ related to experience, open to oral rather than literary forms of transmission, ecumenical by virtue of its plurality and ‘expressing itself in the categories of pneumatology’.5

This last way of looking at Pentecostalism manages to combine both belief and practice. It assumes that practice is theology because Pentecostalism in itself is a lived expression of theology. Who can tell the dancer from the dance? Who can separate the practice from the belief implicit within the practice? So by this understanding Pentecostalism is a form and style of theology. In philosophical language it might be called a ‘habitus’ or a ‘life world’.6 And as Hollenweger has stressed on many occasions, it is the spoken and flexible nature of Pentecostal theology that distinguishes it from the characteristic literary and fixed theology of the West. It is a type of Christianity that doesn’t depend upon liturgies, prayer books, creeds and a highly educated clergy but rather on the testimony of lay people communicating their intense relationship with a personal God. That is one way of looking at Pentecostalism, and a way that makes sense in a non-literary culture, the culture of the non-Western world. Yet, it is only one way because, within the West, Pentecostalism has managed to adapt itself to theological fixity and technological change. So, there is also a form of Pentecostalism that is relatively sophisticated and that self-consciously places itself alongside a whole range of other Christian expressions. We could say that Pentecostalism, like Roman Catholicism, exists both in magisterial and folk forms and is able to adapt to the grassroots of any society where it is situated. Or, again to use Hollenweger, we can refer to Pentecostalisms as well as to Pentecostalism.

In any case, whether we offer narrow or broad definitions of Pentecostalism or whether we try to define Pentecostalism by the processes

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5 Hollenweger, Pentecostalism, p. 329.
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through which it expresses theology, our definitions will be more or less inclusive. Inclusive definitions will be embracing and accept any kind of church that has some of the features of classical Pentecostalism as it was developed in the West. Exclusive definitions will be narrower and based upon stricter criteria allowing fewer church groups to come within its parameters. Exclusive definitions will emphasize distinctive Pentecostal doctrines connected with speaking in tongues or charismatic gifts and will be averse to any syncretistic practice. The point here is that Pentecostalism within the non-Western world will often assimilate features of traditional culture and combine these with Pentecostal distinctives. Such churches, for example, may give a vital role to the work of the Holy Spirit within their everyday practice but, at the same time, accept that ancestral spirits have a function within the life of their people as well. This means that we are left with having to decide whether a church that advances Pentecostal doctrine and experience together with traditionally non-Christian practice counts as a Pentecostal church. Or should we say that only ‘pure’ churches that adhere to the doctrines of the Reformation and add on top of this spiritual gifts are really Pentecostal?

These issues become not only theological but also political since African churches that incorporate an element of traditional African religion within their world view may feel aggrieved if they are excluded from larger Pentecostal affiliations. The AICs or African Independent Churches are included by most writers on the subject as being Pentecostal.7 Walter Hollenweger, drawing on his experience within the World Council of Churches, makes a plea for ‘responsible syncretism’, a term that is difficult to pin down but which, in effect, signals the desire to make room for indigenous and contextual theology without jettisoning the insights of the Reformation.8

We could, therefore, visit another Sunday morning congregation.

We attended a service in March 1992 held on Sunday in a temporary iron structure erected on the property of the minister. The service started with congregational singing, most of the hymns from the Paris Evangelical Mission Southern Sotho hymn book, unwittingly called Difelsa ts’A Sione (Hymns of Zion). Then a psalm was read in which the congregation gave the refrain (‘his mercy endures for ever’), much as they would in an Anglican church service. During the service a few people periodically showed signs of ‘possession by the Spirit’ such as

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7 Allan Anderson (2000), Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa, Pretoria, University of South Africa Press. AIC can stand for African Indigenous Church, African Initiated Church, African Instituted Church. There is no standard formulation but the basic idea is the same.

8 Hollenweger, Pentecostalism, ch. 11.
jerking and jumping and falling to the ground. It is believed they had been ‘carried away’ by the Spirit. When they ‘recovered’ they were given blessed water to drink. There were six male preachers, two ministers and four evangelists, who commented on the same passage from the New Testament that had been read (John 3.1–13). A short hymn or a song interspersed the homilies. After the men had finished, four women stood to add their comments on the passage. Before and after each homily or song, the whole congregation knelt for a short simultaneous prayer. At noon a large brass bell was rung by one of the church leaders. A man was busy preaching at the time. He immediately stopped, and the congregation knelt to pray. At the end of the service, six church leaders in front of the church raised a large white banner with a blue cross and blue stars sewn onto it, and all the people had to pass under it. Ministers, evangelists and women leaders (usually wives of the ministers and evangelists) stood on either side of the banner. We were first given blessed water to drink in a small plastic container, and then the leaders laid hands on us as we passed under the banner. The banner was apparently shown to Archbishop Masango in a vision, and is therefore used in all St John churches. When we asked members what was the meaning of the ritual, they were unable to explain it – it was merely a church custom, they said. At the close of the service people brought plastic containers with water in to be prayed for by the minister. The water came from the municipal supply, but after it had been prayed for it was believed to have curative properties. The minister covered the water with a linen cloth and then encircled it with his gold staff, after which the cloth was removed and the water given back to the people to sprinkle and drink for the healing of their sicknesses. The minister called forward those who are joining the church, and those who were candidates for baptism. They were liberally sprinkled with water on their faces and on their backs, after which the minister laid hands on them. The congregation knelt in prayer to close what had been a four-hour-long service.9

An African variant of Pentecostalism

Here is a church service that has moved further away from the traditional position. How should we think of it?

This church treats Saturday as the Sabbath. The main services take place from Friday night throughout Saturday and Fredrick Modise the leader rejects speaking in tongues and prophecy but still gives

pronounced emphasis to the Holy Spirit. There is polygyny, baptism, a church badge (a six-pointed star) and secret rules. This service was:

held on Wednesday nights in the local community hall. Visitors were ushered into the central seats in the hall, while members sat on either side separated by gender – women in red and white, and men in maroon jackets. All men wear jackets and ties in church services; women and girls wear head coverings and may not wear jewellery. In front of the huge auditorium at the church headquarters at ‘Silo’ [taken from the biblical Shiloh] in Zuuberkom there is a throne-like chair in front of an altar-like table on which there is a round table lamp with seven globes. Modise explained to the visitors at Silo the meaning of the lamp.\(^{10}\) The centre red globe which stands higher than the others represents fire, which in the International Pentecost Church theology is the name for God. From the six smaller lamps surrounding it are the Water, the Blood and the Spirit of Truth, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The lamp is only switched on when Modise is present at the table. Modise sits on the large chair, often dressed in his high priest-like robe. International Pentecost Church ministers at Silo wear red robes, similar to academic gowns. From sunset on Friday until Sunday morning Modise fasts and spends much of the time in the auditorium with the crowds who come to be healed. He sits behind a table with a file in which secretaries have inscribed all the particulars of each seeker before the healing service began. The secretaries give each sick person a number and then the sick proceed to Modise in numerical order. Once they reach him, they are to confess their sins to him to ensure their healing.

There is a large choir and orchestra at Silo, and music forms a very important part of the services. The taking up of various collections of money is also a prominent part of the services – only members partake in the collections. Several collections may take place during a service and members are encouraged to give liberally, even up to an entire wage. Modise himself is well provided for with several expensive cars, including a Rolls-Royce bought for him by his congregation, a Cadillac and several BMWs.\(^ {11}\)

These definitions of Pentecostalism and examples of Pentecostal practice have inevitably changed over the course of time. One of the things that has happened in the West (though also elsewhere), which we examine later, concerns the emergence of *charismatic churches*. These are churches

\(^{10}\) Fredrick Modise, leader of what is one of the closest examples of a messianic church in South Africa.

\(^ {11}\) Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, pp. 150, 151.
that are similar to those in Pentecostal denominations except that they were founded earlier. These churches may be Baptist or Anglican, for instance, and have retained their denominational identity while accepting much Pentecostal belief and practice. The songs they sing may be the same as the songs sung in Pentecostal churches and the pattern and rhythm of church life may be very similar to that found in Pentecostal churches – there may be small home group meetings, prayer for healing, lay leadership in the congregation and attendance at the same kind of conferences that Pentecostals attend. These churches are counted within the statistics for the whole Pentecostal/charismatic movement (sometimes PCM, for short) even though they will also be included separately within denominational statistics as well.

Equally, there may be congregations that were once charismatic and have now moved out from their denominational moorings to become independent, neither formally Pentecostal nor formally denominational but existing in an independent state, perhaps relating to a distant apostolic figure. These neo-Pentecostal or ‘third wave’ churches are also apt to be included within any discussion of Pentecostalism because their beliefs and practices, while being orthodox according to Western standards, incorporate experience of the Holy Spirit and charismatic gifts. In a statistical summary these churches do not necessarily fall within recognizable denominational boundaries nor can they be counted under classical Pentecostal headings.

With this in mind, we can look at the numbers.

Numbers

Before going further we need to make several other clarifications about categories. Following Allan Anderson, this book uses the term ‘majority world’ to describe Christians living in what used to be called the ‘developing world’, ‘third world’ or ‘two-thirds world’. I have sometimes used ‘non-Western’ as an adjective to describe this group although, strictly speaking, this term is itself ambiguous. In one sense ‘non-Western’ could refer to any country that is not in what is usually called the ‘Western hemisphere’, which would comprise Europe and the United States, but in another sense a non-Western country might be a country that had non-Western values wherever it was situated on the globe. Thus a country like Saudi Arabia might be non-Western in some respects even if in terms of its average per capita wealth it was Western. Conversely a country like Singapore, though it is in the East as far as European map-makers are concerned, can be called Western.

There are also times when reference is made to ‘indigenous’ groups. These are groups that occur naturally in a country by growing out of its
own culture and customs. Although this term is generally unambiguous, there are situations when social change is so rapid or waves of immigration so large that what was once seen not to be indigenous becomes indigenous. The large, ballpark figure given for all types of Pentecostals and charismatics at the end of the second millennium AD is usually over 520 million. This amounts to around 27% of organized global Christianity and these are people found in 740 Pentecostal denominations, 6,530 non-Pentecostal, mainline denominations and 18,810 independent, neo-charismatic denominations and networks. These Pentecostals and charismatics are found in 9,000 ethnic and linguistic cultures, speaking 8,000 languages and covering 95% of the world’s population. This information is provided by David Barrett and his co-worker Todd Johnson. Barrett is Professor of Missiometrics at Regent University and Johnson is Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell. Barrett has worked for many years on Christian statistics and was responsible for editing the authoritative World Christian Encyclopedia (published in a second edition by Oxford University Press in 2001). There are no better figures available than these, either from the United Nations or from any other source.

While it is true that Barrett has, over the course of his working life, reorganized the figures and reclassified the various groupings, there are two main tendencies that appear to have driven this process. The first has been the desire to reflect more precisely the actual nature of the different subgroups whose statistics he is compiling. This causes him to split big groups up into their constituent subgroups. The second has been to reflect the major waves of renewal and this has caused him to combine categories into megablocks of a similar kind of Christianity. Moreover, within the first edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia of 1985 Barrett divides his figures up country by country and regionally. He also divides the figures up according to seven ecclesiastical blocks (Anglican, Catholic (Non-Roman), Non-White Indigenous, marginal Protestant, Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic). Pentecostals appear within the Non-White Indigenous block in six subcategories and within the Protestant block in five subcategories. But in the 2001 New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, the figures are reconfigured to keep pace with changes on the ground. Pentecostals/charismatics/neo-Pentecostals are presented in some 60 subgroups.\(^\text{12}\)

Barrett and Johnson begin their presentation by viewing the Pentecostal and charismatic and neo-charismatic renewal in three distinct waves. The first wave gives rise to Pentecostalism or ‘classical’ Pentecostalism,

\(^{12}\) D. B. Barrett and T. Johnson (2002), in S. M. Burgess and E. M. van der Maas, New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (NIDPCM), Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan. Barrett and Johnson are keen to avoid double counting, and by saying there are 60 subgroups I am following their lead.
the second wave gives rise to the charismatic movement or charismatic renewal and this is followed by the third wave of ‘non-Pentecostal, non-charismatic but neo-charismatic renewal’. Nevertheless, they view the entire process as being one basic move of the Holy Spirit of massive worldwide proportions comprising 523 million affiliated church members, of whom 65 million are classical Pentecostals, 175 million are charismatics and 295 million are third-wavers or neo-charismatics. Of this total, 29% of all members worldwide are white and 71% are non-white. The picture is neither stationary nor simple because each wave augments the others, spreading geographically into every continent and into 236 countries.

Like all complex statistical compilations, these figures can be read in several ways. Barrett and Johnson use patterns of Christian growth over and against the predicted growth of the world’s population. They calculate the number of Christian ministers compared to the total number of Christians and see the figures against a background of potential world evangelization. Also, as has already been said, they present the figures in terms of a sequence of waves of renewal. The first wave occurs from 1886 onwards with the forming of the first classical Pentecostal denomination. The second wave is significantly dated after 1950 when non-Pentecostal denominations received experiences of Pentecostal phenomena, though the roots of this charismatic movement go back at least to 1907. The third wave can certainly be dated back to 1945 or even 1900 although its main impetus occurred from the 1980s onwards in the Western world. By defining the third wave in terms of non-denominational or post-denominational neo-charismatics, Barrett and Johnson can view them as predating the charismatic movement.

Other presentations of the figures may be keen to emphasize the size of the charismatic contingent in comparison with the classical Pentecostal contingent and thereby to argue that classical Pentecostalism, which is largely situated in the West, should not be understood as normative. Rather, Pentecostalism in its charismatic and indigenous form in Africa, Asia and Latin America ought to be seen as normative. In this latter form Pentecostalism is less tidy, more politically engaged – often in a left-wing way – and more syncretistic in its tendencies. In Africa it may be influenced in its praxis by traditional African religion and cultural patterns and these may be combined in endlessly changing ways with exportable parts of American culture brought in by global television and travelling preachers who emphasize the ‘prosperity gospel’ or spiritual warfare.

Alternatively, the term ‘classical Pentecostals’ can be applied to all denominational Pentecostals. If this is done then the number of classical Pentecostals grows by claiming some of the charismatics. It rises above

14 This was the group that eventually became the Church of God (Cleveland, TN).
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the 660 traditional, Western-related denominations that identify themselves specifically as Pentecostal and which are now found in 220 countries.\(^\text{15}\) The purpose of such an exercise is not only to make Pentecostal denominations feel better about themselves but also to make their doctrines, which are generally clear cut and well worked out, more likely to be accepted as normative.

Alternatively again, it is possible to emphasize the size of the non-trinitarian component within Pentecostalism since, among narrowly defined classical Pentecostals in the United States, about 25% are ‘Oneness’ in their theology (see Chapter 11). This theology has affinities with modalism in the sense that God is understood to be manifested in three modes (i.e. Father, Son and Spirit) rather than three co-equal and coexistent divine Persons as outlined in the Athanasian creed. Within the global total of 523 million, however, Oneness Pentecostals amount to about 1% unless the number of the charismatic Christians in China (which is largely unknown) and developments among charismatics in the majority world adjust these figures upwards.\(^\text{16}\)

There is a further reading of these figures that interests us, one stemming from Barrett and Johnson’s discussion. They point out that the three separate waves continue to grow annually. It is not that the waves have replaced each other but that they coexist side by side. Pentecostals are increasing at 2.7% per year, charismatics at 2.4% per year and neo-charismatics at 3% per year. Consequently neo-charismatics will become even larger in comparison with the other two groups. Yet, within the pattern of growth, there are historical factors hidden away. Pentecostals are smallest in Europe because the Europeans rejected the first wave and ‘because they were not prepared to leave the great state churches’.\(^\text{17}\) But since 1970 charismatics within those churches have responded enormously, with the result that the ratio between charismatics and Pentecostals in Europe is the highest of all continents. Thus the balance between Pentecostals and charismatics will tend to vary between different continents even if, overall, neo-charismatics dwarf everybody else. Equally, the balance between Pentecostals and charismatics will vary between countries and will affect the dynamic development of each nation’s Christian population.

In a discussion of the global statistics of Pentecostalism, two other considerations are important. First, the Pew Forum conducted an inter-

\(^{15}\) Barrett and Johnson, ‘Global Statistics’, p. 293, section 7.

\(^{16}\) In table 1 of ‘Global Statistics’ (p. 286), Barrett and Johnson give the total number of Oneness Pentecostals as 2.7 million in line 11 and 2.9 million for Black American Oneness Apostolics in line 30. Since the total number of Pentecostals, charismatics and neo-charismatics is over 523 million, the Oneness contingent only reaches 1%.

national survey of the beliefs and practices of Pentecostals (see Chapters 5 and 6). This survey was not intended to find the number of Pentecostals and charismatics in the various countries where the survey was conducted. Nevertheless the findings of this material support rather than contradict the more impressionistic portrait given of Pentecostalism by other studies. Second, the Bertelsmann Stiftung Religious Monitor (used by Stefan Huber of the University of Bochum and applied in 21 nations) is able to demonstrate the centrality of religious beliefs to public practice and indices of economic development. His findings demonstrate, for instance, that both in Brazil and Nigeria religion is politically relevant. This is exactly what we would expect given the numbers of Pentecostals identified by other methods and the anecdotal evidence of their political concerns. In this way the Bertelsmann data help to confirm the information given by Barrett and Johnson.

Historiography

So, having looked at examples of Pentecostalism, definitions of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal numbers, we now must consider how we tell the story of Pentecostalism. Historiography is concerned with the way history is written.

- What sort of information is counted as evidence?
- How do we interpret the evidence?
- In what way does one event cause another?
- Are historians always biased?
- Do human beings determine the course of historical events or are economic and cultural factors decisive?
- Within Pentecostal history, can we detect the hand of God or are we to presume everything can be explained naturally?

These are the kind of questions that we need to wrestle with before we can look at the story.

And, look at the story we must. The one irreducible element in history is time. Historical events occur in a sequence, as do our own lives. This means that, just as our own lives come to us naturally in the form of a narrative (‘I was born in London but my parents moved to Manchester where I went to school before I got my first job as a …’), so historical

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events are most naturally recounted as narratives. We hear that out of the French Revolution came a brilliant young artillery man who later seized control of the army and led the French revolutionary forces in a series of victories that resulted in the control of most of Europe. This is the story of Napoleon.

As we look back on events, we can see how they turned out. We know that eventually Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo and his grand schemes came to almost nothing. But, at the time, participants looked at an uncertain future. We can investigate the story in reverse by moving from Waterloo back to the dispositions of the armies prior to the battle, and back from there to Napoleon’s escape from captivity on Elba, and so on right back to Napoleon’s childhood. Yet when we tell the story, we go forwards. So with the account of Pentecostalism: we know after more than 100 years roughly what happened but, when we tell the story, it is natural to begin from whatever we take to be the beginning. In doing so we will measure whatever is significant in the early stages by reference to the impact it had on the later stages. We will use the benefit of hindsight but tell the story forwards.

Hindsight sees causes

Such story-telling helps us to make sense of a random disaster. It also enables us to apportion blame. Generations of historians have toiled in this way to explain the origins of great calamities like, say, the First World War, constructing elegant narrative chains of causes and effects, heaping opprobrium on this or that statesman.

There is something deeply suspect about this procedure, however. It results in … ‘retrospective distortion’. For these causal chains were quite invisible to contemporaries, to whom the outbreak of war came as a bolt from the blue. The point is that there were umpteen Balkans crises before 1914 that didn’t lead to Armageddon.

Niall Ferguson, Sunday Telegraph, 22 April 2007

What sort of information is counted as evidence?

In the case of Pentecostal history we are going to be looking at documentary accounts of events or beliefs or relationships and trying to assess how important they were in the unfolding story. We aim to interpret this evidence against the light of our knowledge of how events turned out and what we take to be the honesty of the participants. But there will be times when the evidence is inconclusive and points in two directions and,
if this is so, we shall need to dig deeper into our sources. In general, historians divide their sources into those that are primary, which come directly from participants in the historical process, and those that are secondary, which are later interpretations of those events. So the contemporary historian needs to look at primary sources where possible while tentatively accepting the interpretations of previous historians. As we shall see, there are sharp divergences of opinion concerning the origins of Pentecostalism. There may not be an easy or ultimate solution to the problem of divergence since there is more than one way of interpreting events.

The question of evidence is more pressing still because Pentecostals believe, as we have seen, in the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They believe the Holy Spirit spoke to them, strengthened them and revealed truth to them, but from this distance in time it is impossible for us to verify such claims. There is no point in trying to write Pentecostal history that is entirely sceptical about these beliefs since we would find ourselves constantly at variance with the primary evidence in front of us. If the early Pentecostals said that the Holy Spirit acted in their lives, we will have to accept their word for this since one of our tasks is to attempt to recreate the mindset of the participants in the story. We are trying to enter into their life-world and to see life as they saw it even if, at another point, we may step out of that life-world into our own. So we will have to accept – or if not accept, to understand – some of the beliefs of the early Pentecostals in order to help us interpret events from their point of view. Again it has be said that this way of telling the story is complicated because, unlike the participants, we know the end whereas they did not.

In a sense we have a push–pull model of history whereby the ‘pull’ comes from the inner motivations and desires of the participants in the historical process. These participants have their own beliefs about each other, the society in which they live and the future. They have a life-world that we can try to enter by an act of historical imagination or by empathy. At the same time there is a ‘push’ factor brought about by economic circumstances or social conventions. A preacher may travel to a different part of the country because he or she has been offered employment (as was the case with W. J. Seymour when he went to Los Angeles) or because social conventions dictate a particular course of action (as when Aimee Semple McPherson had to return to the United States after the death of her first husband – she would have found it difficult to remain in China as a single woman with a child). Even so, the historian must try to see the bigger picture and to evaluate all the factors that go

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20 Following here the thinking of R. G. Collingwood (1980), *The Idea of History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, first published in 1946, who argues we should seek to ‘re-enact’ and so think the same thought as the historical agent.
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into the decision-making of historical actors. It is not enough to take the statements of actors at face value but nor should they be dismissed out of hand, especially since they comprise genuine primary source material.

To put all this more technically, we are seeking to give an account of Pentecostal history that prioritizes the evidence of participants while accepting that an overall critical or distancing process must occur. We may or may not see this history as being shaped providentially, but we are definitely not trying to reinterpret this history entirely in secular categories. To offer an example: if we were to give an account of the Reformation using Marxist dialectical materialism, we would speak about the rise of the peasants against their exploitative Roman Catholic masters and of the eventual proletarian successes that led to severance from the Pope. We would stress the peasant origins of Luther. Yet, such an account would be deficient. It would ignore the theological heart of the Reformation and the vital role of the doctrine of justification. It would attribute motives to Luther that ignored his own wrestling with a troubled conscience and it would paint him as an agitator rather than as a scholar. Crucially, it would be unacceptable to Luther himself. Thus, if we have a rule, it is that the historian should not in some sort of quasi-omniscient way pat the participants in the story metaphorically upon the head and tell them that he or she knows better.

How do we interpret the evidence?

We interpret it in a way that takes account of the views and values of participants while seeking to find a coherence that was unavailable to them. Attempts to make history a ‘scientific’ discipline made much of the collection of facts.21 The idea was that if we assemble the facts correctly, and assemble enough of them, then we would have a truly objective history that could be completely relied upon in the same way as nineteenth-century heirs of the Enlightenment thought that they could rely upon scientific progress. The trouble with this point of view is that there is not only dispute about the facts but dispute about the interpretation of the facts. We might take the death of John F. Kennedy as an example. We certainly know the fact that he was shot, but do we know exactly how many bullets were used? And when it comes to the interpretation, is there a conspiracy by the Mafia, the CIA, Russian agents, Cubans or who? So it is naive to think that we can collect a mountain of facts and thereby ensure that history is smoothly and uncontroversially written. Even simple facts like statements given out loud in a church meeting are prone to contested interpretations. A statement that everybody hears may be interpreted as a prophecy inspired by the Holy Spirit or

21 The most obvious exponent of this view was Leopold von Ranke.
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as a manipulative attempt by an individual to change the direction of a congregation.

Yet we are helped by the sequence of events in time. We can be sure that events that come first might have an impact on events that come second; but not the other way round. So, if we discover that a particular preacher or writer offered an original idea about the work of the Holy Spirit, we may be correct in assuming that another preacher, coming after the first preacher, may have been influenced by the first preacher. In this way, when we take doctrines that are found within Pentecostalism, it is possible to track back through the nineteenth century to see how these doctrines emerged. This is a detective process and, as we shall see, has been brilliantly carried out by several writers (such as Donald Dayton, Edith Blumhofer and Mel Robeck) who put together stages by which the doctrines of classical Pentecostalism were formulated.22

It is true that we may have an overarching view of history by which we come to give coherence to the story. We may refuse to assume that history is simply a random collection of activities and events without any meaning. We may have a general sense that the path is upward and that there is gradual improvement both in society or the church – such would be a liberal progressive view of history.23 Equally, we may see history as being informed by interpretations of secular society so that, for example, William Menzies’ account of the development of the Assemblies of God, Anointed to Serve, tends to understand the progress of the denomination as a gradual specialization through the formation of separate departments.24 This account of Assemblies of God mirrors that which might be given of a large business organization: it does not imply that the Assemblies of God was predestined to go down this road but simply that the church conforms to a rationalistic pattern that was known to work within other human organizations and that this is the best way to interpret its development. In this way we may interpret events to provide a meaning to the narrative, but the best historians will allow the interpretation to grow out of the events rather than to impose it upon them.

Are historians always biased?

This is a particularly ‘postmodern’ question that somehow implies that everybody is, indeed, biased, because objectivity is in principle impossible


23 A view argued by J. B. Bury, one-time Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge and eloquently assumed by such writers as T. B. Macaulay.

and that any interpretation of events is as good as any other. It can lead to the argument associated with philosophical phenomenology, which claims that clarity can only be achieved by ‘bracketing out’ distorting elements in any perceptive process so as to reach a form of unassailable truth. Bracketing out, a technique advanced by the philosopher Edmund Husserl, appears to depend on a form of mental gymnastics whereby prejudices and biases can be removed by the conscious effort of the prejudiced and biased individual. This idea looks like a form of elaborate nonsense since the prejudiced and biased individual is normally unaware of his or her prejudices. They are prejudices, pre-judgements, that come into play before anything else and function at a pre-conceptual level shaping perceptions and rationalizations. There is no fixed point within consciousness where a neutral balance can be achieved.

In the writing of history, one attempted solution to the issues raised by these difficulties is for the historian to admit to his or her political or social commitments so that the reader can discount these when they become intrusive. Yet, even if we know that Eric Hobsbawm is Marxist or that A. J. P. Taylor was a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, how do we know which pieces of their historical writing are influenced by their non-rational commitments? We don’t.

The subject of bias and prejudice in Pentecostal historiography may well be connected with racial, gender or denominational loyalties. As we shall see, there is evidence that Charles Parham was a white supremacist, but does this make his apparently factual account of events that have nothing to do with race unreliable? This question appears to be impossible to answer in any general way. So, we conclude that historians, simply by virtue of being human, bring to the writing of history biases and prejudices, some of which they are conscious of and most of which they are ignorant of. To complicate matters further, some prejudices belong to a particular age or epoch in the sense that they are so widely shared that it’s impossible to find an example of a human being in that age or epoch who does not hold those views. All we can hope to do is to collect the facts (bearing in mind that facts are clothed with interpretive packing) and put them into a chronological sequence, wrap this sequence in a narrative framework and leave the reader (with all his or her biases and prejudices) to make a judgement.


In what way does one event cause another?

The answer to this question is a philosophical minefield. In one sense we may know how cause and effect operate in the material world but, when we add human beings into the equation, there are bound to be unknowns. One line of thought is that human beings simply learn from one another and that in this way the doctrine that was partly developed in the seventeenth century might be fully or differently developed at the end of the nineteenth century (as we shall see with the notion of a ‘second blessing’ following conversion). So this is a form of causation that is based upon human learning. Such a view of causation might also be found in the ‘historical roots’ view of history, which attempts to trace every idea or theory back to an original seed.

Another line of thought operates using ‘social facts’ or sociological theory and presumes that changes within the social structure have a demonstrable impact upon human beings (see Chapters 14 and 15). For example, if there is chaos in society and human beings feel completely out of control, the suicide rate goes up; and the two things are linked as cause and effect. One analysis of Pentecostalism suggested that in the nineteenth century when the American frontier was expanding and when farmers were facing the challenges of urbanization and industrialization, many of them turned to Pentecostalism as a breath of transcendence in their otherwise rootless lives. So Pentecostalism became the spiritual answer to a material need – a point of view elegantly and cogently, but not necessarily conclusively, expressed by R. M. Anderson.

Do human beings determine the course of historical events or are economic and cultural factors decisive?

The answer to this question is based upon one’s view of the way the whole universe operates. Most Christians have traditionally attributed enormous significance to the human will, to human decisions. This is because they have accepted that human beings can hardly be said to have moral responsibility if they are not able to act freely. If human beings can act freely, then they can change events and influence situations. Common sense would support this view. We only have to try to imagine Methodism without John Wesley to realize that human beings can...

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indeed make an impact on their generation and on the generations that follow. But this does not mean that economic and cultural factors have no importance. It is much more satisfactory to talk about human beings in the context of their own society and to show how, within society, we utilize the resources and opportunities afforded to us to make changes. Thus, after 1950 when commercial air travel became possible, Christian preachers were able to make use of international flights to preach all over the world. Social and economic factors widen rather than determine the range of choices available to human beings. On the other side of the coin, within the repressive USSR before 1989, Christian leaders were restricted in the number of choices they could make. It is much more persuasive to think of there being an interaction between human decisions and social and cultural factors.

Within Pentecostal history, can we detect the hand of God or are we to presume everything can be explained naturally?

If we can see an interaction between human beings and social and cultural factors, we can surely see a similar interaction between human beings and the Holy Spirit. And if we can see the Holy Spirit at work, then we can see God at work in human history. This, of course, is a faith statement but it follows both logically from a belief in the reality of the Holy Spirit and theologically from descriptions of the kind of thing that the Holy Spirit might do. In the past some Christians and Jews have interpreted large-scale historical events from a theological perspective. When Jerusalem fell in 586 BC, the Jewish community interpreted this as the judgement of God. When Jerusalem fell in AD 70 Christian historians tended to see this as the judgement of God and the escape of the church as the providence of God. Secular historians would have none of this. There is no correct answer to this question beyond the answer that is tied up with the existence of God. In other words, to answer this question leads to a completely different kind of debate, going beyond the pages of history on to the meaning of life as a whole.

What we can say is that the participants in early Pentecostalism believed that God had providentially poured out the Spirit to enable missionary work and evangelism to be strengthened. The historian is in a position to tell the story from the point of view of these participants and to show that their horizons and motivations were given by their theological understanding of Providence. The problem, however, of attributing events to Providence is that we can end up without any proper explanation at all. If there is success, this is the blessing of Providence. If there is failure,

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31 As the book of Jeremiah makes clear.
32 Eusebius, The History of the Church (published by Penguin Classics) and written around AD 324. See III.5 and III.7.
this is a providential test of faith. By explaining everything, appeals to Providence are in danger of explaining nothing. One criterion that might be used here concerns the credibility of events at the time to those who held different points of view from the early Pentecostals. We can give an example here from the life of a non-Pentecostal. When Billy Graham came to London in 1954 as a young Southern Baptist preacher, not many people in the media paid attention and those who did were often hostile. Yet, after he had preached continuously for 72 nights, the final crusade meeting was packed with people and among those sitting on the platform were the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Mayor of London. Winston Churchill (who was by no stretch of imagination an evangelical Christian) sent for Billy Graham to come to Downing Street and asked him how he had managed to fill Wembley Stadium. Graham answered, ‘It’s God’s doing.’ Churchill replied, ‘That may be.’ We can argue that, when agnostic or hostile critics accept that providential events have occurred, Pentecostal assertions of Providence become far more credible.

**Questions to think about**

1. Read the text box on page 9. Does this describe a Pentecostal service?
2. What would happen if we defined Pentecostal groups by doctrine alone? Is it sufficient to define Pentecostal groups by practice alone?
3. List all the difficulties in collecting accurate statistical information about church attendance. Is church attendance or church membership a more useful statistic?
4. If the evidence appears to point in two directions at once, think about ways the historian should make up his or her mind about how the story ought to be told.
5. How do primary and secondary sources differ from each other? Can secondary sources ever be ‘better’ than primary sources? Can we ever think of history as being objective?
6. Read the text box on page 16. Is there a way to write history other than to construct ‘causal chains’? Could you do this for Pentecostal history?

**Further reading**


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