

The Protestant Church in the Modern Age – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – The figures, events, and movements of the Protestant Church in the modern age
2. aim – To cause us to understand some of the ways the church moved throughout the 20th C.

b. outline

1. The Theological Movements of the Modern Age
2. The Evangelistic Movements of the Modern Age
3. The Ecclesiastical Movements of the Modern Age

c. overview

1. the *final lesson* in Church History
2. the church in the modern age
 - a. **(before)** the various *theological* movements of the 20th C. (*i.e.* neo-liberalism & neo-orthodoxy)
 - b. **(before)** the various *evangelistic* movements of the 20th C. (*i.e.* Sunday & Graham)
 - c. **(now)** the great *innovators* of the age, in the various *ecclesiastical* movements of the 20th C.
 1. **note:** by “great” innovators, I am *not* referring necessarily to movements that are *good*, but to some of the most important *ecclesiastical* realities to strike evangelicalism into the 20th C.

III. The Ecclesiastical Movements of the Modern Age

Content

a. the Pentecostal movement

1. Pentecostalism is a Protestant Christian movement, originating in the late 19th C., which holds to a direct personal experience with God through *the baptism of the Holy Spirit*
2. it is named from the Pentecost event of **Acts 2** – a *direct* and *personal* movement of the Holy Spirit to empower disciples of Jesus to live a life filled with his presence and power
 - a. **note:** this is why many *leaders* in this movement call themselves “Apostles”, and many will entitle their churches as “Full Gospel” (*i.e.* the “fullness” of the *original* gospel of the primeval church)
3. Pentecostalism finds its roots in Charles Parham, William J. Seymour, and the Azusa Street Revival
 - a. early influences on Pentecostalism were “higher life” movements that arose in the late 19th C.:
 1. **e.g.** Wesleyan-Holiness arising out of Methodism, with its emphasis on a “second” work of grace (*i.e.* a personal experience *subsequent* to regeneration of being cleansed of original sin)
 2. **e.g.** the Keswick movement which held to the *continuation* of all of the various spiritual gifts listed in Scripture, *particularly* the “sign” or “spectacular” gifts (*i.e.* against *cessationism*)
 - b. this *radical* evangelicalism embraced themes of restorationism (*i.e.* returning to the model of the primeval church), premillennialism (*i.e.* the *imminent* return of Christ), and faith healing
 - c. Charles Parham was an independent holiness evangelist in Topeka, KS who strongly believed in faith healing – he founded Bethel Bible School (1900) and taught there that speaking in tongues was evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit
 1. in 1905, he moved to Houston, TX and started a Bible training school – one of his students was William J. Seymour, a one-eyed black preacher
 - d. Seymour’s preaching launched the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in April, 1906, which lasted three (3) years – the meetings were characterized by an absence of any formal order of worship – people simply preached and testified as they were “led” to do so
 1. the revival attracted thousands of visitors, who took the “fire” back to their home churches
 2. Azusa is considered the “genesis” of the Pentecostal movement, that then spread *rapidly*
 3. the Assemblies of God churches are the direct outgrowth of Azusa
4. Pentecostalism is characterized by the teaching and belief that genuine Christians will receive a “baptism of the Holy Spirit” – a “second” baptism in which the Spirit will “come upon” the individual and this will begin a “deeper” life of being led by him *in specific and (even) miraculous ways*
 - a. this empowerment includes **(demands)** the use of a number of *extraordinary* spiritual gifts: the ability to **speak in tongues** is often a *defining mark* of this second birth, the ability to either be **healed supernaturally** or to heal others, and (in some cases) the ability to **prophecy**

- b. *glossolalia* (i.e. the ability to speak in an *unknown [to the speaker] tongue*) is “reimagined” in Pentecostalism to be an ability to simply speak “beyond human language”, including (in some cases) the language of angels – it *implies* that the Spirit resides within the person
 - c. but, although Paul’s teachings on *glossolalia* is clear that such speech must be *interpreted* in order to be valid (**1 Corinthians 14:6-19**), many Pentecostals “ignore” this requirement
 - 5. Pentecostalism focuses on the *Third Person* of the Trinity – an *inordinate* focus on the Holy Spirit’s *ongoing* empowerment in the life of the believer is the *substantial center* of the movement
 - a. **note:** this has led some prominent Pentecostals (e.g. T.D. Jakes) to embrace *modalism*: to preach that God is a *unipersonality* (i.e. of one Person), and simply “manifests” himself in different ages in different persons (i.e. now, after Jesus, a manifestation of the Spirit)
 - 1. i.e. the *non-trinitarian* branches are known as Oneness Pentecostalism
 - b. the assumption is that *true Christians*, filled by the Spirit, will be able to enjoy a life *far greater* in value than unbelievers, and Pentecostals often speak of their “faith” in terms of the *benefits* they receive through the Spirit (e.g. testimonies of healing that give “assurance”)
 - c. which has led to the “[health, wealth, and] prosperity gospel” becoming *prevalent (ubiquitous)* in the movement = the teaching that those who come to Christ are *guaranteed* physical health, material wealth, and overall prosperity of living by the presence of the Spirit
 - 1. sometimes called the “Word of Faith” movement = the ability to “speak” into existence (by faith in the power of the indwelling Spirit) a “blessing” in any given situation or circumstance
 - d. e.g. Joel Osteen: *Your Best Life Now* = the teaching that Christians will experience *in this life* blessings of faith in Christ manifested through success and material blessings
 - 1. **note:** an *ironical title* – that the Christian’s best life is “now,” not in the kingdom to come
 - 6. Pentecostalism does *claim* many of the tenets of orthodox evangelicalism (including the inerrancy of Scripture), and is often perceived as simply another “branch” of evangelicalism
 - a. **note:** most of the *televangelists* of the previous lesson are/were Pentecostals – with its focus on *power* and *prosperity*, Pentecostalism was easily “transformed” into a mass media “faith”
 - b. unfortunately, Pentecostal preachers are *notorious* for either dismissing entire sections of Scripture or doctrine (e.g. sin), or badly twisting contextually the application of various verses (e.g. the *seed* = sow a seed of faith and reap a harvest of blessing)
 - 7. the **charismatic movement** is a trend within historically *mainstream* Christian congregations to adopt the beliefs and practices of Pentecostalism, beginning mainly in the mid-20th C.
 - a. charismatics (from the Greek *charisma* = spiritual gifts) are simply those who, *from within* typically mainstream churches, begin to embrace the *practical (charismatic) ideas* of Pentecostalism:
 - 1. i.e. the acceptance of a “second” birth of the Spirit, the importance and use of the *spectacular* or *sign* gifts of the Spirit, and the focus on “spirit-filled” worship over against traditional liturgies
 - b. however, charismatics *would not* consider themselves Pentecostals – they (often) reject the *need* for glossolalia as a “proof” of conversion, they (often) insist on the presence of the Spirit in regeneration *prior* to conversion, and they (often) see their movement as a *revitalizing* work in the church rather than an *evangelistic* one out to the world
 - c. the charismatic movement came to Anglicanism and Lutheranism in the 1960s, to Roman Catholicism in the 1970s, and to mainline Methodism in the 1980’s
 - d. reformed churches have typically distanced themselves from the charismatic movement, although the Sovereign Grace Churches were established in the 1970s as reformed, neo-charismatic, and restorationist congregations under Larry Tomczak and C.J. Mahaney
 - 8. Pentecostalism is considered (by many) to be the fast-growing “evangelical” denomination in the world, *particularly in the Global South*
 - a. in 2011, the Pew Forum estimated 219 million Pentecostals in the world (12.8% of Christians)
 - 1. the Assemblies of God: 55M members; Apostolic Church: 15M; Church of God: 7M
 - b. in sub-Saharan Africa: 44%; C & S America: 25%; Asia: 16%
 - 1. i.e. the third-world status of these peoples is a *massive* draw to a “theology” that offers wealth and prosperity – e.g. Chespi, in Costa Rica, contends that his *biggest problem* in evangelizing his native people is their embrace of Pentecostalism (even more than Catholicism)
- b. the seeker-sensitive movement**
- 1. the seeker-sensitive movement is the philosophy of gearing the church to the unsaved by making the church attractive, non-threatening, entertaining, and relevant to those “seeking” God
 - a. the presupposition of the movement is that everyone is seeking something spiritual, and that the church must be prepared to “welcome” such seekers into the church through *outward means*
 - b. these *outward means* are to make the church a place where unbelievers will feel the “welcome” in the church and then stay to hear the gospel, all in the hope that they *will be saved*

2. the seeker-sensitive movement can be traced to Bill Hybels, founder of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, IL
 - a. in 1974, at the age of 23, he polled the neighborhood asking the non-churched what it was about the church that kept them away – the answers were “typical”, but he spring-boarded off the results to recraft the way his church “did” things
 - b. he instituted short services, casual dress, and sermons on the “here and now” rather than “heaven and hell” – he got rid of religious symbols and incorporated the use of drama and multi-media
 - c. Willow Creek grew from a handful to over 15,000 attending per week, and Hybels began to teach his method to other churches and pastors who wanted to have the same “success”
3. the premiere *primer* on the seeker-sensitive movement came with the publication of *The Purpose Driven Church*, by Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church of Lake Forest, CA in 1995
 - a. **note:** not to be confused with *The Purpose Driven Life* (2002); a much more popular book
 - b. *Purpose Driven Church* is literally a *how-to* manual on developing a church that caters to the lost
 1. in it, Warren describes *in detail* how every aspect of the church should be structured, to make the greatest impact on “convincing” unbelievers to come *and stay* at the church
 2. and ... one of the *key elements* of this is *marketing*: everything about the worship service must be “attractive,” so that word-of-mouth messaging will go out to others (*i.e.* mood lighting, audio visuals, worship teams with contemporary music, etc.)
 3. **LOW:** everything the church does (and is) should “cater” to the seeker – parking and accessibility, friendliness and greeting, cleanliness of the building, services (like coffee and childcare), seating arrangements, heating and cooling, layout of the “worship center” (even use of the term), song selection and musicality, and preaching style and content must all make the “seeker” feel welcome
 - a. even to the point that preaching must be a *secondary* consideration in the “worship” service
 - b. and, the preaching should be “pitched” to the level of the unbeliever – serious theological and doctrinal content must be removed in favor of simple gospel messages
 - c. *i.e.* Sunday morning worship is to focus on unbelievers; Sunday School and Wednesday is reserved for deeper theological training
 3. many thousands of pastors attended his seminars promoting the ideas in the book
4. the seeker-sensitive movement spawned the *megachurch* = technically, any church boasting more than 2,000 average weekly attendees at its primary worship service
 - a. the W concept of “bigger is better” stood at the *heart* of the seeker-sensitive movement – larger must (by definition) mean *healthier*, since many people coming would be hearing the gospel
 - b. and ... many W pastors bought into this mentality, becoming *megachurch wannabes* – *i.e.* trying to incorporate the processes of the seeker-sensitive movement into their small churches
 - c. unfortunately, the old adage “what you get them with is what you keep them with” only works for a brief time – because people are *fickle*, you will inevitably have to “ratchet up” what got them in the door in the first place
 1. Hybels publicly admitted (2007) that the church had “made a mistake” in implementing a seeker-sensitive philosophy – it had resulted in a horrifying lack of maturity amongst its “converts,” creating churches that were full of goats, not sheep
 - a. yet, his public statement did little to eliminate the seeker-sensitive model
 2. Hybels ultimately left Willow Creek (2018) under a cloud of sexual misconduct accusations, which were (eventually) deemed “credible” through an investigation by the elders