

James LIKOURIS, *The Pentecostalism Controversy*

(<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=6587>)

When the day of Pentecost came round, while they were all gathered together in unity of purpose, all at once a sound came from heaven like that of a strong wind blowing, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then appeared to them what seemed to be tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them; and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in strange languages, as the Spirit gave utterance to each. Among those who were dwelling in Jerusalem at this time were devout Jews from every country under heaven; so when the noise of this went abroad, the crowd which gathered was in bewilderment; because each heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all beside themselves with astonishment; "Are they not all Galileans speaking?" they asked. "How is it that each of us hears them talking his own native tongue? There are Parthians among us, and Medes, and Elamites; our homes are in Mesopotamia, or Judea, or Cappadocia; in Pontus or Asia. Phrygia or Pamphylia, Egypt or the parts of Libya round Cyrene; some of us are visitors from Rome, some of us are Jews and others proselytes; there are Cretans among us too, and Arabians; and each has been hearing them tell of God's wonders in his own language." So they were all beside themselves with perplexity, and asked one another, "What can this mean?" There were others who said, mockingly, "They have had their fill of new wine."

But Peter, with the eleven apostles at his side, stood there and raised his voice to speak to them; "Men of Judea," he said, "and all you who are dwelling in Jerusalem, I must tell you this; listen to what I have to say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only the third hour of the day. This is what was foretold by the prophet Joel: "In the last times," God says, "I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and daughters will be prophets. Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Jl. 2:28); and I will pour out my spirit in those days upon my servants and handmaids, so that they will prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and whirling smoke; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of

the Lord comes, great and glorious. And then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:1-22)

It is clear that the Pentecost experience of the Apostles gave them a supernatural fortitude in the face of dangers and threats, peace in the midst of turmoil, and joy amidst pain and persecution. *They performed miracles, such as healing the sick; they prophesied; they taught with power; they spoke in tongues*¹. (Cf. Acts 3:1-10; 4:30; 5:12-16) All of these abilities of the early Christians, *called charismatic gifts*, existed in abundance in the apostolic Church. After the death of the last Apostle, John, and a short fifty years thereafter, such miraculous powers '**generally**' disappeared. Prophecy and speaking in tongues — with a few exceptions as in the lives of some of the most remarkable saints — were unheard of in the Catholic Church as a mass phenomenon — until five years ago.

Today there are *Catholic Pentecostals* who insist there is a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit with all His charismatic gifts upon the Catholic Church. Interestingly, a similar claim was made 70 years ago by the founders of the modern Pentecostal sects.

The Jesuit scholar, Father John Hardon, has explained the origins of modern Pentecostalism:

"As a species of Protestant Christianity, Pentecostalism may be traced to the ministry of Edward Irving (1792-1834), pastor of a Presbyterian church in London. Irving had witnessed speaking in tongues and some cases of healing in Glasgow, Scotland. He reported back to his congregation in London that if only the people prayed earnestly, they, too, might be filled with the gifts of the Spirit. Soon after, some of his parishioners began to speak in strange tongues and prophesy By 1832 he had started his own congregation²

His disciples, known as the Irvingites, were soon followed by Quakers, Shakers, and Mormons, and yet other sectarians, who similarly preached that external signs are an essential part of integral Christian belief and experience. In the United States sharp doctrinal divisions manifested themselves among the followers of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. The latter, as Father Hardon notes:

"...had never been much concerned with creedal orthodoxy. Experience of conversion and an awareness of the Spirit had always been more prominent in Wesleyan thought."³

When Wesleyan Holiness groups who stressed a "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" united with the disciples of Irving, modern Pentecostalism may be said to have been born.

The Pentecostalist emphasis on the "Baptism of the Spirit" seems to have been derived from Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification. Whereas the Puritans had believed the process of Christian perfection was never consummated in this life, and entire sanctification comes only at or after death, Wesley was to insist on the possibility of the believer's achieving an instantaneous completion of sanctification at any time in this life. Though Wesley never lost sight of a gradual "growth in grace" even among such "perfect" souls, his unfortunate use of the word "sanctification" where he meant "entire sanctification" was to cause much confusion among his followers.⁴

According to the earliest Pentecostalists, Christians who have already had the experience of conversion which is necessary for salvation, should seek a "second blessing." This was another, more profound experience which accomplished the believer's "entire sanctification," and permitted him to lead a life of moral perfection, untroubled by any interior "root of sin."⁵ Some Holiness writers proceeded to describe this specific experience as a "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." While this second blessing might be an intensely emotional experience for the person receiving it, it was nevertheless essentially interior and subjective. In these writers, there was no consciousness of any external sign by which witnesses could be certain the "second blessing" was taking place. Then it was that:

"The most dramatic event in Pentecostal history occurred on New Year's Eve, 1900. Before Charles Fox Parham, a lay Congregational preacher, left on a mission trip, he instructed his students at Bethel Healing Home in Topeka to investigate the subject of baptism in the Holy Spirit. When he returned, they told him that the gift of tongues was conclusively this Spirit baptism. They asked him to impose hands on one of their number, a Miss Oznam. The moment he did so, she was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and began to speak in several languages, besides talking in a strange tongue that not even accomplished linguists could

understand. Before long, most of the students at Bethel became similarly gifted, and went out to preach the new gospel to all who would hear them."⁶

To summarize: Pentecostals believe that the original Pentecostal experience recounted in the Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament was the normal experience of all believers in the primitive Apostolic Church, and that all believers even now are entitled to, and should aspire to, a similar experience of "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." They further believe that, as at Pentecost, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit is manifested by the external sign of **glossolalia**, i.e., the speaking in strange tongues. Though there is some confusion among both Protestant and Catholic Pentecostals as to whether glossolalia as the initial sign of Spirit-baptism should be clearly distinguished from the subsequent, lasting gift of speaking or praying with tongues (which not all receive), it seems that most traditional Pentecostals will not recognize any genuine "Baptism in the Spirit" unless it has indeed been accompanied by the sign of glossolalia⁷. At any rate, it is this classical Pentecostal emphasis which has worked itself into the religious thinking of Catholic Pentecostals — to condition their entire religious experience.

It is interesting to note, moreover, that Pentecostalism is growing at an unprecedented rate throughout the world. Its adherents are estimated to range from fourteen to twenty million people. They pride themselves on the fact that their movement is growing nine times as fast as any other Christian denomination. In the United States, the number of Roman Catholics directly involved in the Pentecostal Movement varies from 15 - 50,000 (even larger numbers are projected at times by some news services and writers).

Perhaps it should be made clear that it is necessary to distinguish between:

1. Pentecostals (divided into about 200 Protestant religious bodies in the U.S. - the most important being the '**Assembly of God**' which comprised a half million adherents in the U.S., and a million followers in other countries; the second largest American body being the '**Church of God**');
2. neo-Pentecostals in the major Protestant churches (it is estimated that almost 1700 pastors of Episcopalian,

- Lutheran and other established churches promote a Pentecostal spirituality among their congregations); and
3. the so-called Catholic Pentecostals who boast of 350 charismatic prayer groups in the U.S. and Canada, and publish their own magazine 'New Covenant' under the auspices of the **National Service Committee for the Catholic Charismatic Movement**.⁸

The Catholic Pentecostal movement began when four Catholic lay faculty members of Duquesne University attended a Pentecostal prayer meeting conducted by Episcopalians and Presbyterians in a Pittsburgh suburb in February, 1967. The four Catholic participants asked to have hands laid on them. A prayer group was then established at Notre Dame University. In January, 1971, a Charismatic Renewal Conference netted 4,000 registered participants, one-fourth of whom were priests and nuns. By February, 1973, 2,000 leaders from Catholic Pentecostal groups in 13 Eastern states, Canada and Puerto Rico attended the Eastern Regional Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. About 22,000 were reported to have attended the national Pentecostal meeting at Notre Dame University in early June, 1973. Various bishops have participated in its functions, and Bishop Arthur J. O'Neil, of Rockford, Illinois has formed an extra-territorial parish for the members of a "Community of the Holy Spirit" who entered into the following "Covenant Agreement":

"We covenant ourselves, by God's invitation to live our lives together, in Christ Our Lord and Saviour, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We agree to become a basic Christian community, to find within this fellowship (*koinania* [sic]) **the essential core of the Life in the Spirit**, in worship and sacraments (*Eucharistia*), spiritual and moral guidance (*kerygma* and *didache*), service and apostolic activity (*diakonia*).

We expect the Lord to establish the inner structure or order of this community with all the ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially with the foundational gifts of the Apostles, pastors, prophets, teachers, and evangelists.

We agree to obey the direction of the Holy Spirit manifested in and through these ministries in full harmony and under the

spiritual harmony with and under the spiritual guidance of the Bishop of Rockford. To this end, we as covenant members, commit ourselves to prayerfully and sincerely seek the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

We recognize in this covenant a unique relationship one to another, individual to the community, and covenant community to all the faithful of the Rockford Diocese.

All of this is simply to take responsibility for those the Lord has given to us: to be a new family, members of the same Body, Brothers and Sisters working in the same mission He is entrusting to us as a People.

We know that we need to support the life of the community with our spiritual, material, and financial resources.

We agree that the scheduled community gatherings, Liturgical, prayer, and fellowship, are among our commitments and to be absent only for serious reasons."⁹

On November 14, 1969, the Committee on Doctrine of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement which may be said to represent episcopal policy on the subject of Catholic Pentecostalism. It was a cautious, but generally favorable statement:

It seems to be too soon to draw definite conclusions regarding the phenomenon and more scholarly research is needed.... It must be admitted that theologically the movement has legitimate reason for existence. It has a strong biblical basis. It would be difficult to inhibit the work of the Spirit which manifested itself so abundantly in the early Church. The participants in the Catholic Pentecostal movement claim that they receive certain charismatic gifts. Admittedly, there have been abuses, but the cure is not a denial of their existence but their proper use. We still need further research on the matter of charismatic gifts. Certainly, the recent Vatican Council presumes that the Spirit is active continuously in the Church.

Perhaps our most prudent way to judge the validity of the claims of the Pentecostal movement is to observe the effects on those who participate in the prayer meetings. There are many indications that this participation leads to a better understanding of the role the Christian plays in the Church. Many have

experienced progress in their spiritual life. They are attracted to the reading of the scriptures and a deeper understanding of their Faith. They seem to grow in their attachment to certain established devotional patterns such as devotion to the Real Presence and the rosary.

It is the conclusion of the Committee on Doctrine that the movement should at this point not be inhibited but allowed to develop. Certain cautions, however, must be expressed. Proper supervision can be effectively exercised only if the bishops keep in mind their pastoral responsibility to oversee and guide this movement in the Church. We must be on guard that they avoid the mistakes of classic Pentecostalism. It must be recognized that in our culture there is a tendency to substitute religious experience for religious doctrine. In practice we recommend that bishops involve prudent priests to be associated with this movement. Such involvement and guidance would be welcomed by the Catholic Pentecostals.¹⁰

This judgment by a committee of bishops is over three and a half years old. But it does not lay claim to be a definitive judgment and does not appear to be shared by other bishops, theologians and many of the laity who, as shall be shown, have good reason not only to be wary of such a movement, but also to expect confirmation of their evaluation of the pretended 'charismatics' operating among them.

Also, Belgium's Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens, a frequent visitor to America and a supporter to many causes had this to say on Sunday, June 3, 1973 to the free-wheeling Pentecostal "spirit" gathering at Notre Dame:

"I see it [Pentecostalism] progressing powerfully, growing very fast everywhere... It's no longer just an American phenomenon, but in all countries. It is a worldwide phenomenon.... It is a new taste of the gospel in its reality and simplicity. It's important that we keep the doors open to this spontaneity. It's an answer to the people's desire to practice faith spontaneously to express it so they feel it."

The AP religion writer, George W. Cornell reported that Cardinal Suenens:

"...[who is] a progressive leader in Roman Catholicism and a key figure in [the] reform initiated by Vatican Council II of 1962-

1965, said the Council opened the way for renewal, but the "fruits of the spirit are providing the essential content for it." (**Globe Democrat**, 6/4/73)

The following remarks are critical of the Pentecostalist phenomena in the Church. This writer wishes to make clear that he does not presume to usurp the judgment of the Church authorities whose proper prerogative it is to determine the authenticity and validity of any supernatural gifts allegedly exhibited among the faithful. Nor does he wish to be misunderstood as engaging in any personal condemnation of the motives of any particular individuals involved in the Catholic Pentecostal movement.

This writer hopes he is conscious of the remark of the wise Russian spiritual writer, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, that "to correct one's neighbor by condemning or reproaching him is not always an act of faith, but of foolish zeal, self-opinion and pride." The work of judging individuals is the responsibility of those charged with the burden and duty of ruling their brethren. However, *these novel "charismatic" happenings in the Church — for whatever they are — affect all Catholics one way or another because the authenticity of pentecostalist phenomena outside the visible communion of the Chair of Peter may be said to call into question the very credibility of the Catholic Church as the one true Church of Jesus Christ.* And if the "charismatic renewal" of Catholic Pentecostals is essentially a spurious and spiritually dangerous development in the post-conciliar Church, then the harm done the Church and persons may prove considerable. For this reason, the laity are obliged to examine this primarily lay movement of Catholic Pentecostalism with great care.

Father John Hardon, S.J., stated in an address to the Annual Conference for the clergy of the Archdiocese of New York:

"There are those who say we should just allow the Pentecostal movement to go on and then see what happens. But that is not in the best tradition of Christian prudence. If, as I personally believe, latter-day Pentecostalism is in the same essential stress with Gnosticism, Montanism, and Illuminism, we do not pass moral judgment on people but prudential judgment on an ideology."

This ideology, Father Hardon maintains, constitutes a spirituality incompatible with Catholic doctrine and traditional Catholic

spirituality. And here perhaps is the heart of the issue. A basic deviation from historic Christianity that was common to various heretical movements of the past — the Gnostics and Montanists of the early Church, and the Illuminists of the Reformation period all of whom are encountered in Father Ronald Knox's classic "**Enthusiasm**" — is at the core of what is called the "Pentecostal experience"; namely, *that the presence of God, previously a matter of faith, is now a matter of every-day experience*. The claims of our contemporary Catholic Pentecostals are lucidly set forth by Father Hardon:

No less than on Pentecost Sunday, so now the descent of the Spirit becomes palpably perceptible. This perceptibility shows itself in three ways:

- a. In a personally felt experience of the Spirit's presence in the one who receives Him. The qualities of this coming are variously described; but they cover one or more of the following internal experiences: deep-felt peace of soul, joyousness of heart, shedding of worry and anxiety, strong conviction of belief, devotion to prayer, tranquility of emotions, sense of spiritual well-being, an ardent piety, and, in general, a feeling of intimacy with the divine which, it is said, had never or only for sporadic moments been experienced before.
- b. Along with the internal phenomena, which themselves partake of the preternatural, are external manifestations that can be witnessed by others. Such are speaking in strange tongues, the gift of prophecy, the power of healing, and, it would seem, all the gamut of charismata enumerated in the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of St. Paul.
- c. Capping the two sets of phenomena, of internal experience and external manifestation, is the inspiration given by the Spirit to communicate these gifts to others. Normally a Spirit-filled person is the channel of this communication; he becomes a messenger of the Spirit to others and his zeal to act in this missionary role is

part of the change that the divine visitation effects in him.¹¹

It may be noted that the "baptism of the Spirit" which is considered as giving one the *experience* of a deeper and more intimate relationship to the Holy Spirit is commonly received through the imposition of hands, and that outside the regular prayer meeting. It is usual, however, that an individual can request the laying on of hands by the prayer group as a preparation for the "baptism of the Spirit."

It is interesting to note that Catholic Pentecostal groups hold their meetings very often on college campuses as well as in church halls and private homes. Such Pentecostal meetings generally exhibit the following sequence of events. Participants at first pray in their own way in silence. Then a member of the assembly will utter a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. Another will read a Biblical text, and then improvise spontaneously a prayer based on the passage read. A hymn or song will then be sung by someone, and everyone may or may not join in the singing. A number of testimonies may be rendered, i.e., members will tell what remarkable things may have happened to them that made them aware of God's forgiveness, mercy, and presence. Oftentimes, it may be a question of amazing "cures" and "healings." A member may suddenly begin to sing softly in a language which is not recognizable. His neighbors may begin praying for an "interpretation," or another member will render the "interpretation." Someone may "prophesy." Musical instruments such as guitars and drums are often in evidence, especially with younger audiences. At the end of the meeting, there may be exchanged the "kiss of peace" involving warm and fond embraces and actual kisses. For the most part the entire atmosphere of the meeting, though it is not as emotionally charged as some Protestant groups, nevertheless, bears the stamp of a revivalist camp meeting.

The central role "Baptism of the Spirit" plays in Pentecostalist spirituality has already been noted. According to Father F. A. Sullivan, S.J.:

...this "Baptism of the Spirit" gives one a new sense of the nearness of God; a new relish in prayer and reading Scripture; a new ability to meet demands of Christian life that previously one had found hard or impossible. The common factor in all these

changes is perhaps best described as a new power which the person knows he did not have before and which he can only explain as the work of the Holy Spirit. In many cases this new power will also manifest itself in some kind of charismatic gift, most frequently in the ability to pray in tongues.¹²

Once again the fundamental problem confronts us: What to think of all this Spirit-baptism, Spirit-glossolalia, Spirit-healing, Spirit-inspiration, and other unusual phenomena ostensibly conveyed through the laying-on of hands by Spirit-filled people at Catholic Pentecostal meetings?

In 1971, Archbishop (now Cardinal) Timothy Manning of Los Angeles saw fit to issue a pastoral letter clearly warning Catholics of "excessive emotionalism, credulity, and sought-after charismatic displays (which) question the genuineness of the activity of the Spirit (in baptism of water) and open the devotion to people of peripheral stability." Recently, in his General Audience, February 28, 1973, our Holy Father Pope Paul VI singled out for criticism those who esteem "the charismatic elements of religion over the so-called institutional ones." He went on to rebuke those who:

engage in the search... for spiritual facts in which there enters an indefinable and extraneous energy which, to a certain extent, persuades the one who experiences it that he is in communication with God, or more generically with the Divine, with the Spirit, indeterminately. What do we say about this? We say that this tendency is very risky, because it advances into a field in which auto-suggestion, or the influence of imponderable physical causes, can lead to spiritual error.

The possibility of spiritual delusion in seeking to make grace sensibly felt is obviously very real. The best spiritual writers and theologians of the Catholic tradition, such as the great Doctors of the Church, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, have continually warned the faithful of spiritual seduction, spiritual deceit, and mutual self-deception in the matter of extraordinary gifts. In other words, the masters of the spiritual life openly contradict the new Pentecostalist spirituality's emphasis on seeking visible signs of God's Presence and action. And it is this precise counsel of the greatest theologians of the spiritual life

which has been declared irrelevant by the leading Pentecostalist apologists such as Father Edward D. O'Connor.¹³

It is very natural that in an age of acute spiritual confusion, doubt and anxiety that souls seeking spiritual satisfaction and security should, in fact, seek experiential verification of Christian dogma in their own lives through "Pentecostal experiences"; but the dangers are many. Curiously, Pentecostal literature admits of errors, misunderstandings, mistakes and disorders accompanying the spiritual flights of their enthusiasts — not the least of which is a pronounced anti-hierarchical and anti-Institutional Church bias which permeates the attitudes of adherents, e.g., pro-Pentecostalist Father Robert Wild is constrained to admit:

... It would be true to say that most of these un-healthy tendencies (fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture, para-clericalism, and a divisive moral rigorism) exist in varying degrees in the charismatic renewal today, just as they existed in various degrees in the 2nd century. Whether any of them will assume unnatural proportions and lead to deeper aberrations — sects and heresies unnamed — only time will tell. The current literature is very much aware of the dangers.¹⁴

Moreover, the effects of ordinary Christian infant baptism are ignored or neglected in favor of a basically up-scriptural "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" which is theologically very confusing. Catholics know (as a matter of faith) that a person who has received the sacrament of Baptism is now living a life of grace which God in His ordinary economy simply does not accompany with extraordinary phenomena. Indeed both the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation are in practice relegated to second class status by the emphasis on a "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" considered as distinct from them. Some of our Catholic Pentecostals do not appear to understand that:

"the initial gift of the Spirit (in Holy Baptism) is none the less real for not being experienced or accompanied by charismatic manifestations; and that experience cannot be taken as the criteria of truly living in the Spirit."¹⁵

Nor can the *gift of tongues* claimed by the Pentecostals bear the theological weight which their practice assigns to it. In Acts 2:1-22, the gift of tongues was most assuredly a miraculous phenomenon. But St. Peter and the other Apostles **spoke an**

intelligible language which was heard by the power of God in the intelligible languages of the many foreigners present. Their gift of tongues **was not the unintelligible gibberish** uttered in Pentecostal meetings. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 14, the reference to strange tongues also admits of intelligible languages. And, as St. Paul relates, the languages spoken by those who had never learned them, were intended by God to be a sign to the unbeliever. How speaking pure gibberish could be a sign of God's work to anyone has never been satisfactorily explained. St. Paul also tells us, moreover, that "talking with a strange tongue" was rather inferior to the "gift of prophecy," and that he would rather speak five words in church with his understanding in order to instruct others, than 10,000 words in a "tongue." It was time for the Corinthians, whom he was rebuking for various disorders in their ecclesial life, to **grow up!**

It should also be noted, particularly in view of what had actually occurred in Catholic Pentecostal meetings, that the following teaching of St. Paul has been ignored:

If there is speaking with strange tongues, do not let more than two speak, or three at the most; let each take his turn, with someone to interpret for him, and if he can find nobody to interpret, let him be silent in the church, conversing with his own spirit and with God.... And women are to be silent in the churches; utterance is not permitted to them; let them keep their rank, as the law tells them: if they have any questions to raise, let them ask their husbands at home. That a woman should make her voice heard in the church is not seemly.¹⁶

A major point that needs stressing is that *absolutely no evidence* has ever been provided that the tongues spoken at [any] Pentecostal gatherings are intelligible foreign languages spoken on this planet. But such intelligibility is an essential requirement of Scriptural teaching!

For many, the main appeal of the Pentecostal is the speaking in tongues described in Acts 2:1-21. The claim is made that this event is being paralleled in widespread Christian experience today. But again, the case for this collapses since the most knowledgeable Scripture scholars maintain that the initial Pentecostal experience was confined to the Apostles (and the Mother of God), and was not in fact shared by the 120 Christians who are mentioned in Acts 1:15.¹⁷

The Pentecost event was pre-eminently a manifestation of the Spirit among the members of the Apostolic hierarchy, and if we are to look at it as a model for latter-day speaking in tongues, then the tongues should rightfully appear among the members of the hierarchy! — and not to every Tom, Dick and Harry, or, as Martin Luther once expressed it:

"No yokel is so rude but when he has dreams and fancies he thinks himself inspired by the Holy Ghost!"¹⁸

As far as the modern revival of the gift of "prophecy" is concerned (and prophecy is considered here in the biblical sense, not so much as *future prediction*, but rather as the courageous proclaiming of the facts of Christ before the people), it is disconcerting to acknowledge that at Catholic Pentecostal meetings (often attended by many Protestants) those doctrines which are uniquely Catholic, e.g., the Papacy, the visible oneness of the Church, devotion to the Virgin Mother of God, the veneration and intercession of the Saints, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, etc., are conspicuously absent. In fact, such doctrines are never alluded to, or suppressed because of an "ecumenical togetherness" where the concept of an invisible Christian Church made up of true believers takes precedence in the consciousness of those Catholics participating, over the visible historical institutional Catholic Church founded by Christ upon Peter: that Church which Vatican II teaches possesses the "very fullness of Christ's grace and truth."¹⁹

It is also disconcerting and a matter for reflection that one of the key founders and writers of the Catholic Pentecostal Movement is Kevin Ranaghan. In 1968 when "**Humanae Vitae**" was issued by the See of Peter, Mr. Ranaghan had the unenviable distinction of being one of the 600 signers of a notorious statement rejecting the doctrinal teaching of the Encyclical! Was Mr. Ranaghan guided by the Holy Spirit when he did this? [**Fortunately, Mr. Ranaghan when ordained as deacon later, recanted his dissent.** — J.L.]

Equally vexing is the fact that Catholic Pentecostals believe it is possible to acquire experience of the Holy Spirit's presence by an "instant mysticism" — push-button fashion, so to speak. But the lives of the saints teach us that extraordinary graces such as the sensible perception of the Holy Spirit may indeed be given; but usually after a severe ascetic preparation; i.e., after much worship,

prayer, fruitful reception of the Sacraments, fasting and other acts of penance.

It is no secret that many members of the "charismatic movement" have clearly emerged from a background of psycho-neurotic and emotional disturbance and/or a background of spiritual aridity. It is understandable that they would tend to interpret anything "new," exciting" or "unusual" as authentic charisms.

Dr. Josephine Ford, one of the leaders of the Catholic Pentecostals at Notre Dame University, for example, has written:

Many people speak about an "anointing" from the Lord. This appears to mean a certain feeling within them. Some people feel burning in their hands or even some sensation between the shoulders... Although these anointings may be quite genuine, they do not seem to be absolutely necessary, and we must be careful they do not arise from a psychological need or from a need of self-identity.¹⁹

This is good advice, and it should be applied to all so-called Pentecostal phenomena. If this were done, most of the alleged extraordinary Pentecostal "gifts" could be susceptible to a quite natural explanation. This is not to deny that certain graces may indeed have been granted to Pentecostals in good faith, and that certain spiritual needs have been satisfied. One need only insist as Father Hardon, S.J., does:

Pentecostalism is not a mere movement; it is, as the ending "ism" indicates, an ideology. And as such it is creating more problems objectively than it solves subjectively. In other words, even when it gives symptomatic relief to some people, it produces a rash of new, and graver, issues touching on the Catholic Faith and its authentic expression by the faithful.²⁰

There can be no doubt that one of these issues is our contemporary charismatics' pretension that they have been spiritually renewed and regenerated when they may well have not!

Unfortunately, some of our charismatics are in no position to really compare their present experiences with the experiences of the Saints of God — those saints whose lives and works they hardly know. Thus they have no way of contrasting their present

state of religious exaltation and enthusiasm with genuine Catholicism.

Often times, they fail to understand that Satan is quite able to produce "signs and wonders" to mislead even the elect (Matt. 24:24) and create the illusion of spiritual good to achieve his evil ends. Spiritual writers such as St. Ignatius of Loyola teach us that this lying spirit can produce pseudo-virtues — "love," "patience," "joy," "hope," and "peace," etc. — for he is the Great Deceiver. The testimony of historical Catholicism is that such so-called virtues are not grounded in faith and obedience to Apostolic doctrine and authority but mask spiritual pride and spiritual greed. The Gospel makes clear that Satan and his fallen angels have the power to twist the truth, to confuse, to caricature, to mimic God's works, and to appear as an "angel of light." (2 Cor. 4:3f.)

The learned English Benedictine Dom Peter Flood, a physician as well as a Doctor of Canon Law, wrote in this vein concerning his "grave concern" over the spread of Pentecostalism among certain English Catholics:

This phenomenon is in most instances little more than "mass hysteria." The so-called "speaking in tongues" in no way parallels the post-Pentecostal speaking out with tongues which was given to the Apostles, so that each of their hearers heard them in their own tongue. Those who have studied it in the U.S.A., have rightly described it as meaningless gibberish. The whole movement has its prototype in the "holy rollers," "shakers," and other such stupidities beloved of the less educated Americans. It easily lends itself to illusion and even to diabolic intervention. I have known priests who got involved in it to have lost their Faith. The dangers of self-deception are obviously very great, and it is to be hoped that the laity will not be misled by enthusiasts and that no member of the Hierarchy will approve of it. It is not thus that the Holy Spirit guides the Church.²¹

Dom Flood alludes to facts that other commentators have made; namely, that Pentecostalism in the Catholic Church constitutes an influx of Protestant notions that have in fact led some Catholics out of the Church or into religious indifferentism. Interestingly, Dr. Josephine M. Ford, a woman lay theologian at Notre Dame University, found herself obliged to confess how she had been "excommunicated" by her fellow Catholic Pentecostals who have banned her from their meetings. Dr. Ford laments the

elitism, spiritual arrogance, and spirit of Protestant sectarianism which has developed among her fellows in the movement she herself did so much to foster and encourage. Her Pentecostalist brethren will no longer give the "eucharistic kiss of peace" to her nor to those not of their "in-group."²²

Yet another informed writer on Catholic Pentecostalism, Father Anselm Walker, wrote the following in an issue of the "**Texas Catholic Herald**" in 1971:

"It is evident to all, and ought to be evident to the Catholic dupes of Pentecostalism, that this is alien fire that now burns upon the altar of Catholic hearts, and that there now awaits the divine judgment and doom for those who so act."

This same priest, whose experience has included much study of the Pentecostalist movement in Protestantism, sharply criticized the action of Catholic Pentecostalists who use the laying-on-of-hands for the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit":

"Having attended hundreds of Pentecostal services as a youngster, I can vouchsafe for the fact that this gesture is something new, fondly imagined and misunderstandingly contrived by our Catholic Pentecostals. At no Pentecostal service either in the Assemblies of God or in the Oneness Pentecostal Churches or in the other sects have I seen anyone lay hands on anyone else for the communication of the Holy Spirit.... Since Pentecostalists in their Catholic variety claim to communicate the Holy Spirit thusly, it is evident that this is an innovation, and since it claims to do what Baptism and Confirmation do or have already done, it is then a parody of a sacrament no matter how well-intentioned it is or what effects the adepts claim to receive from it...."

Any favorable reception to Pentecostalism in the Catholic Church will seriously hamper hopes of reunion with the Eastern Orthodox churches. A Russian Orthodox monk drawing upon the riches of the Eastern monastic tradition bluntly declares the Pentecostalist movement to be attributed to spiritual deception — "**prelest**":

If we look carefully at the writings of the "charismatic revival" we shall find that this movement closely resembles many sectarian movements of the past in basing itself primarily or even entirely on one rather bizarre doctrinal emphasis or religious practice. The only difference is that the emphasis now is placed on a specific point which no sectarians in the past regarded as so

central: speaking in tongues.... Here already one may note an over-emphasis that is certainly not present in the New Testament, where speaking in tongues has a decidedly minor significance, serving as a sign of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and on two other occasions (Acts 10 and 19). After the first or perhaps the second century, there is no record of it in any orthodox source, and it is not recorded even among the great Fathers of the Egyptian Desert, who were so filled with the Spirit of God that they performed numerous astonishing miracles — even raising the dead. The Orthodox attitude to genuine speaking in tongues, then, may be summed up in the words of Blessed Augustine (Homilies on John, VI:10): "*In the earliest times the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believed, and they spoke with tongues which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs adapted to the time. For it was fitting that there be this sign of the Holy Spirit in all tongues to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That was done for a sign, and it passed away.*" And as if to answer contemporary Pentecostals with their strange emphasis on this point, Augustine continues: "*Is it now expected that they upon whom hands are laid, should speak with tongues? Or when we imposed our hand upon these children, did each of you wait to see whether they would speak with tongues? And when he saw that they did not speak with tongues, was any of you so perverse of heart as to say - These have not received the Holy Spirit?*"²³

The same writer takes occasion to remark:

"Modern Pentecostals, to justify their use of tongues, refer most of all to St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (chaps. 12-14). But St. Paul wrote this passage precisely because "tongues" had become a source of disorder in the church of Corinth; and even while he does not forbid them, he decidedly minimizes their significance. This passage, therefore, far from encouraging any modern revival of "tongues," should, on the contrary, discourage it — especially when one discovers (as Pentecostalists themselves admit) that there are other sources of speaking in tongues besides the Holy Spirit!"

Nor does our Russian Orthodox theologian hesitate to declare Pentecostalism to be "in complete contradiction of Orthodox tradition and prophecy":

Can any ... sober Christian possibly confuse these dangerous psychic games with the gifts of the Holy Spirit? There is nothing whatever Christian, nothing whatever spiritual here in the least. This is the realm, rather, of psychic mechanisms which can be set in operation by means of definite psychological or physical techniques, and "speaking in tongues" would seem to occupy a key role as a kind of "trigger" in this realm. In any case, it certainly bears no resemblance whatever to the spiritual gift described in the New Testament and, if anything, it is much closer to shamanistic "speaking in tongues" as practiced in primitive religions, where the shaman or witch doctor has a regular technique for going into a trance and then giving a message to or from a "god" in a tongue he has not learned.... (This) comparison with shamanism will not seem terribly far-fetched, especially if we understand that primitive shamanism is but a particular expression of a "religious" phenomenon which, far from being foreign to the modern West, actually plays a significant role in the lives of some contemporary "Christians": **mediumism**.²⁴

A Byzantine Catholic writer, Helle Georgiadis, editor of the ecumenical review, "**Chrysostom**", reinforces the judgment of the above Russian Orthodox theologian:

"From the standpoint of Eastern spirituality the contemporary Pentecostal movement appears as a positively alien environment for growth in the life of the Spirit. At first sight this may seem paradoxical for a spirituality so closely identified with apophatic theology. Moreover, the East has always taken prophecy and healing and similar manifestations in its stride. But there are two aspects of Pentecostalism which are alien to Eastern tradition. Wordless utterances may manifest themselves in individual cases, even in very holy people, but to seek to cultivate "speaking in tongues" in this sense would seem to deny redeemed man's dignity and destiny as co-heirs with Christ, and the Holy Spirit's mission to enlighten the minds and hearts of men.

The other aspect is the stress laid by Pentecostals on experience which is 'felt'. Here again, though individuals may sense an almost tangible awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence, the search for experience which is apprehended through the senses has always been seen as a dangerous and unwarranted goal for the Christian to pursue."²⁵

Much more could be written concerning the spiritual dangers resulting from involvement in the Catholic Pentecostal Movement — whose "piety" and accompanying physical phenomena are so contrary to traditional Catholic spirituality, both Eastern and Western. Perhaps the best work which reveals the basically unorthodox features of Pentecostalism and similar "enthusiastic" religious movements leading to spiritual shipwreck is Father Ronald Knox's unsurpassed "**Enthusiasm**".²⁶ It remains a 'must reading' for today.

In conclusion, it may be recalled that Archbishop Robert Dwyer of Portland, Oregon, not too long ago in various columns affirmed his belief that the ancient Gnostic heresy had been revived in the spiritual pretensions of Catholic Pentecostals — who hang very loose to the Church as it is and who seem to condemn the spirituality and pious practices of our saints. What is so disturbing to some informed observers of Pentecostalism within the Church is that a continued "laissez-faire" attitude in our country may lead to further spiritual deception and emotional injury among poorly instructed Catholics. Furthermore, if the phenomenon of "tongues" may in some cases be pathological or demonic in character, the spiritual welfare of those involved in Pentecostal activities is gravely endangered.

As stated previously, the statement of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Doctrine is over three and a half years old. Surely, it is time for an urgent re-examination and re-evaluation of Pentecostalism and its conclusions. [**Now thirty years later, the doctrinal and spiritual excesses found in the Charismatic Renewal Movement still appears to warrant the concern of Catholic bishops, priests and laity.** — J.L.]

FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. Acts 3:1-10; 4:30; 5:12-16.
2. John Hardon, S.J., *Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Doubleday and Co., N. Y.; 1971), p. 211.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. John L. Peter's *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Abingdon Press, N. Y., 1956), p. 63.
5. Cf. the article by Father F. A. Sullivan, S.J., "Pentecostal Movement" in *Gregorianum* (Vol. 53 Fasc. 2, 1972), pp. 238-265.
6. John Hardon, S.J., op. cit., p. 211.

7. Cf. Father F. A. Sullivan, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 261.
8. This three-fold division is made by Father F. A. Sullivan, S.J., *idem*, pp. 238-240.
9. Cf. the brochure by William F. McMahon on the Community of the Holy Spirit, Geneva, Illinois, wherein is also stated that "Baptism in the Holy Spirit is normal expectation of members after instruction and prayer." Also, "participating membership is open to those who wish to share in the life of the Community of the Holy Spirit, who are not members of the Catholic Diocese of Rockford; i.e., Catholics of other Dioceses, and other Christians of various Christian Churches. The degree of their participation is subject to the general and particular law of the Church and the Diocese."
10. James Byrne, *Threshold of God's Promise: An Introduction to the Catholic Pentecostal Movement* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana; 1971), p. 78.
11. An address given by Father John Hardon, S.J., to the New York Archdiocesan Clergy, April 20-21, 1971.
12. Sullivan, *op. cit.*
13. Father Edward D. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana; 1971), p. 180.
14. Cf. Father Robert Wild's article "Is the Charismatic Renewal in the Church a New 'Montanism'?" in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (Dec., 1972), pp. 67-72.
15. Cf. Father F. A. Sullivan, S.J., *op. cit.*
16. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:34-36.
17. Cf. the article "Charismatics and Pentecostals" in *Christian Order* (Oct. and Nov., 1972) wherein Father Joseph Crehan, S.J., notes: "modern commentators, e.g., G. W. Lampe and C. S. Williams agree on this way of taking the passage." p. 572.
18. *Werke*, (Erl. ed. 53), p. 342.
19. Dr. Josephine Ford, *The Pentecostal Experience* (Paulist Press, N. Y.; 1970), p. 54.
20. Address, *op. cit.*
21. *London Catholic Herald*, Aug. 11, 1972.
22. *National Catholic Reporter*, July 15, 1972.
23. *The Orthodox Word*, March-April, 1972.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Chrysostom, (Winter, 1972-73), pp. 139-140.

26. Father Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford University Press, N. Y.; 1961), p. 622.

IMPRIMATUR

September 11, 1973

Most Rev. Charles R. Koester

Vicar General of St. Louis