

Theological
distinctive of the
pentecostal
movement theology
religion essay



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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [INTRODUCTION](#) \n \t
2. [SALVATION](#) \n \t
3. [BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT](#) \n \t
4. [DIVINE HEALING](#) \n \t
5. [THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST](#) \n \t
6. [CONCLUSION](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

INTRODUCTION

To exploit the distinctive of Pentecostal theology it is necessary to take as background the main teachings of Pentecostalism into account as derived from the Foursquare Gospel of McPherson as portrayed by Cox (in Dayton, 1987: 21): " Jesus saves us according to John 3: 16. He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2: 4. He heals our bodies according to James 5: 14-15. And Jesus is coming again to receive us onto Himself according to 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17." The themes as expressed are related to the names of the movement as it was previously known; " Pentecostal Movement", " Apostolic Faith" and ' Latter Rain." Interestingly enough it was the doctrine of the Latter Rain that linked the return of Jesus Christ to the other elements of the Four Square Gospel as set out by Dayton, (1987: 97): " This answer was bound up in the doctrine of the latter rain, a teaching that illustrates how the expectation of the imminent return of Christ is linked in Pentecostal thought to the other elements of the four-square gospel." In a second instance, referring to the ' Pentecostal Movement', Dayton (1987: 95) remarks: "<https://assignbuster.com/theological-distinctive-of-the-pentecostal-movement-theology-religion-essay/>

Exploring the first of these titles, the "Pentecostal Movement," reveals how the first two elements of the four-fold gospel, salvation/justification and baptism in the Holy Spirit are linked together." The main distinctive of Pentecostalism is Baptism in the Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues as founded on the Luke-Acts narrative as stated by Menzies and Menzies (Undated: 49) as follows: "From its inception the Pentecostal Movement has emphasised the narrative of Luke-Acts. It is evident that the distinctive feature of Pentecostal Theology - particularly its emphasis on baptism in the Spirit, distinct from conversion - is rooted in Luke-Acts. Without Luke's writings there would be no Pentecostal Theology, for we would not know of the Pentecostal Gift (Acts 1-2)." Dr Richard P Bucher of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is of opinion of the following: "In other words, they teach that every Christian has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ (conversion), but that Christ has not yet baptized every believer into the Spirit (Pentecost). What unites Pentecostals is the common experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit." (Bucher, s. a.). Historically viewed, Pentecostalism was the off-spring of the Holiness Movement, which in turn was the child of Methodism, which had its roots in Pietism. Bucher (s. a) Undated) describes it as: "The family tree of Pentecostalism is, therefore, as follows: Pietism - the Moravians - Wesley - Finney - Holiness Movement - Pentecostalism." Apart from differences regarding doctrinal and theological matters, controversy and extraordinary aggressiveness characterised the early Pentecostal Movement. This certainly had a vast influence and implications on the viewpoints of the Holiness Movements with regards to the fundamental teachings and theological aspects thereof. Tangelder (2006) remarks: "Pentecostalism is a movement of great diversity, complexity and <https://assignbuster.com/theological-distinctive-of-the-pentecostal-movement-theology-religion-essay/>

bewildering variety." For this reason the theology distinctive will be described in terms of the: " four fundamental teachings — salvation, healing, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the second coming of Christ." (Dayton, 1987: 94).

SALVATION

Dr Richard P Bucher, in his article: Pentecostalism, describes the first Pentecostals as follows: " The first Pentecostals were members of the Nineteenth Century Holiness Movement, which began to reassert John Wesley's teaching of Christian perfection, sometimes known as entire sanctification. Wesley's teaching of entire sanctification had in turn been influenced by German pietism (the Moravians). Each of these movements taught that the Christian was to seek and experience a second work of grace (the first work of grace being justification), namely, Christian perfection and entire sanctification. The Holiness Movement was associated with the revivals of evangelist Charles Finney (1792-1875) in the 1820's and 1830's. More than anyone else, Finney was responsible for popularizing the teaching of entire sanctification, which he said was an instantaneous act following conversion, which granted perfect liberation from all sin, including sinful thoughts. He also claimed that this entire sanctification is the normal experience of Christians." (Bucher, s. a.). Dayton (1987: 106) also point towards this, stating: " Finally we come to what probably was the basic theme of Wesley's thought, his doctrine of salvation. Here the emphasis is on the restoration of the image of God through stages of the operation of grace." To illustrate the implications of differences, Gary Fisher of Greenville, Indiana in his article The Pentecostal Church wrote: " As the movement grew,

serious divisions occurred. The first concern was sanctification. The 'Holiness Pentecostals' believed that sanctification was a second work of grace, instantaneously received. Baptism in the Holy Spirit was thus considered the third step in the conversion process. Those converted from a Baptist background, on the other hand, believed that sanctification was a finished work, progressively received." (Fisher, s. a.). Anderson (1979: 167) states the following: " According to Durham, when Jesus said, " It is finished", as he died on the cross of Calvary, he meant that the work of salvation and sanctification was completed. Therefore, the moment a person exercised saving faith in the death of Jesus as a substitutionary atonement for his sins, the work of both salvation and sanctification was also " finished" for him". The " Oneness" Pentecostals argued that salvation, according to Acts 2: 38 consisted of a three-fold plan of faith in Christ, water baptism in the name of Jesus, and being Baptised in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues (Anderson, 1979: 180). Seymour, a Baptist minister who had earlier accepted the notion of sanctification as a ' second blessing' , later had to hear, while attending Parham's, new Bible school, that the holiness movement made the wrong assumption when declaring that sanctification included baptism with the Holy Spirit (Synan, 1979: 103). He describes it as " rather a ' third experience' separate in time and nature from the ' second blessing'". Sanctification cleansed and purified the believer, while the baptism with the Holy Spirit brought great power for service. The only Biblical evidence that one had received the " baptism" was the act of speaking with other tongues as the 120 disciples had done on the day of Pentecost." (Synan, 1979: 102).

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Synan in Fisher (s. a.) describes the Pentecostal movement as follows: " The Pentecostal movement, with beginnings from 1901 to 1906, represented a theological division within the Holiness movement. That division was essentially caused by a controversy over the evidence required to prove that one had been baptized with the Holy Spirit." Synan continues that the precise beginning of the Pentecostal movement is usually traced to Charles Parham, a Kansas preacher, who began in 1901 to preach "'glossolalia' as the only evidence of one's having received the baptism with the Holy Ghost and who taught that it should be a part of `normal' Christian worship."

(Fisher, s. a.). One of Parham's students, a black preacher, W. J. Seymour, went to conduct a prayer meeting in Los Angeles in April, 1906. He soon rented an old Methodist church building at 312 Azusa Street and a massive revival was started. The distinctive feature of this revival was Holy Spirit baptism with evidence of speaking in tongues. " The Azusa Street revival is commonly regarded as the beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement. Although many persons had spoken in tongues in the United States in the years preceding 1906, this meeting brought this belief to the attention of the world and served as the catalyst for the formation of scores of Pentecostal denominations. Directly or indirectly, practically all of the Pentecostal groups in existence can trace their lineage to the Azusa Mission." (Synan, in Fisher, s. a.). Although the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church served as an important link in the chain that later produced the modern Pentecostal Movement, it never became the national church. Its founder Benjamin Hardin Irwin started promoting additional baptisms. The so-called " chemical jargon" which included other baptisms like " dynamite", " lyddite" and " oxidite" were later

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rejected as heresy when Irwin left the church. Dayton (1987: 100) relates about another variation on the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in the late 19th century, under the heading "THE REVIVALEST DOCTRINE OF THE" BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT." Here he explains a shift away from the Methodist's elements in favour of "empowering for service" It was Finney who drifted away from arguments for entire sanctification and in an appendix to the British edition of Mahan's work Baptism of the Holy Ghost, there appeared an essay which Dayton (1987: 101) refers to as: 'The Enduement of Power' which uses 'the usual Pentecostal imagery' to encourage the seeking of the 'indispensable condition of performing the work' Christ set before the church in the Great Commission." In the essay there is no mention made of the Pentecostal experience of "sanctification or "cleansing." In a report of 1877 on Moody's work titled Doctrinal Discourses one report was found entitled 'The Baptism of the Holy Spirit for Service.' Dayton (1987: 103) concludes: "But his teaching of a special "Pentecostal enduement of power for service" seems to have been a relatively constant theme for his preaching." Torrey, a successor of Moody was of the definite opinion that one of the main reasons why God has used Moody was the fact that Moody was empowered by Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Torrey and a Yale fellow-student, M. Hills opposed each other on the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Torrey maintained that the Holy Spirit empowered for service whilst Hills was adamant that the effect of the Holy Spirit was holiness and power. The above examples indicate that degree to which the revivalists, at the turn of the century, were filled with a doctrine of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Another division came about concerning the number of persons in the Godhead. A popular Canadian Pentecostal, Robert McAlister, at a <https://assignbuster.com/theological-distinctive-of-the-pentecostal-movement-theology-religion-essay/>

baptismal service, took the stance that the preferred formula of baptizing according to the Trinitarian formula should be replaced according to Acts 2: 38 where Peter said: " Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ". This resulted in the " Jesus Only" movement, later also referred to as the " Oneness Pentecostals." They claimed that there was only one person in the Godhead, being Jesus. A certain Frank Ewart and Glen A. Cook had themselves re-baptized " in the Name of Jesus." As Anderson (1979: 188) stated: " Within a decade of the initial Pentecostal Revival, the movement, a slide from its fragmentation into innumerable minor factions, had split into three major doctrinal segments: Second Work Trinitarians, Finished Work Trinitarians, and Unitarians (who were all of Finished Work persuasion)." Notwithstanding all the divisions the Pentecostal Movement still grew rapidly.

DIVINE HEALING

Another important distinctive of Pentecostalism is the observance of miracles of divine healing at the heart of God's salvation and as confirmation of the presence of divine power in the church. Grant McClung (in Tangelder, 2006) " Pentecostals believe that the coming of the Spirit brings an ability to do " signs and wonders, " particularly that of healing and miracles. Early twentieth-century Pentecostal newsletters and periodicals abounded with " thousands of testimonies to physical healings, exorcism and deliverances." McClung points out that divine healing is " an evangelistic door-opener" for Pentecostals. But for some, faith in God's power to heal directly through prayer has resulted in a rejection of other methods of healing." (Tangelder, 2006). The most important Divine Healing's Pietist roots can be traced back

to the mid-19th century. Dayton (1987: 120) remarks that: " He argued that fundamentally " sin is the cause of sickness" and therefore that " the forgiveness of sins and healing stand in an inner relationship to one another." Another prominent figure was Charles Cullis a homeopathic doctor and leader of the Holiness movement on the brim of the revival in the mid-19th century. The monuments he left behind were a major publisher of Holiness Literature, The faith training college, institutions for cancer and spinal disorders, a church. In 1876 he published a work on the doctrine of faith healing; Faith Cures. One of his successors was a Presbyterian, W. E. Boardman who spread the Holiness doctrines ahead of Methodism. Where as Cullis based faith healing on James 5: 14-15, Boardman concentrated on Psalm 3: 2-3. Also to mention was Carrie F. Judd, founder of the Faith Rest College and penned the Author of Faith. She married George Montgomery, moved to San Fransisco and later to Oakland where she established the Home of Peace. Her magazine Triumphs of Faith covered faith-healing and Christian Holiness which associated her more with the Methodistic faction of the American Holiness Movement. She was eventually drawn into Pentecostalism on the arising of the Azusa Street Revival. Earlier in 1900, Parham, the key figure of the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, had already led his students through a study of sactification and divine healing. In defence of the doctrine on faith-healing she published some articles by, R. L. Stanton Gospel Parallelisms: Illustrated in the Healing of Body and Soul, in book form. Dayton (1987: 126) writes: " Stanton argued that ' the atonement of Christ lays a foundation equally for deliverance from sin and for deliverance from disease, that complete provision has been made for both." Further teachings developed from this viewpoint by A. B. Simpson and A. J. Gordon. Simpson <https://assignbuster.com/theological-distinctive-of-the-pentecostal-movement-theology-religion-essay/>

focused on the completeness of Christ as the solution to both sanctification and healing. He also argued against the practice of other means like doctors and medicine in favour of divine healing. Gordon, a Baptist pastor, tactfully avoided the Holiness doctrines of annihilation and second blessing but he clearly complemented sanctification and healing as a works of the Holy Spirit. The Holiness roots of the healing doctrine were however more precisely explained by Captain R. Kelso Carter in his book *The Atonement for Sin and Sickness*. Carter agrees with the Wesleyan view on Atonement and that atonement as such became the model for healing as it has provided for the body everything it has provided for the soul. Dayton (1987: 94) stated and is also of opinion that healing depends on the "supreme Will of the Lord." In 1892 William McDonald again, published a book *Modern Faith Healing*. He says that "the special answer to prayer is the proper ground, and not the general provision in the Atonement for all believers." (McDonald quoted in Dayton, 1987: 97). It is clear then that the Holiness Movement was the vehicle that carried the emphasis on divine healing in all its variations. The General Holiness Assembly in Chicago accepted a doctrinal statement on divine healing in 1901 which according to Shaw (quoted in Dayton, 1987: 102) read as follows: "We wish to declare it as our belief that the sick may be healed through the prayer of faith, and that if God's people generally would measure up to the New testament requirement in the matter of holy living, including particularly the matter of consecrating their bodies to the Lord, marvellous instances of divine healing would be far more numerous than they now are, God would be better glorified and the general testimony of the church would be much more effective on the outside world."

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

" Per definition Millennialism in Christian eschatology is the belief that Jesus Christ will literally and physically be on the earth for his millennial reign at his second coming. The doctrine is called premillennialism because it holds that Jesus' physical return to earth will occur prior to the inauguration of the millennium. Premillennialism is based upon what is claimed to be a literal interpretation of Revelation 20: 1-6 in the New Testament which describes Jesus' coming to the earth and subsequent reign at the end of an apocalyptic period of tribulation." (Wikipedia). McClung (in Tangelder, 2006) is of opinion that: " Pentecostalism has been strongly influenced by the premillennial/dispensational view of the second coming of Christ. Reference to the imminence of Christ's return punctuated the revival's rhetoric and fuelled enthusiasm for Evangelism. Early Pentecostals were certain they were living in the end-time restoration of New Testament apostolic power. For example, Seymour declared that the Azusa Street revival is ' the last revival before the coming of the Lord, and that, for them, all earthly history would soon be consummated by the 'Rapture.'" The early Pentecostals reasoned that signs and wonders were powerful indications of Christ's imminent return. Little wonder, then, that they evangelized with such explosive dynamism. Many even departed immediately, without adequate financing or missionary training, to far-flung destinations. This strong conviction of Christ's soon coming again impacted Pentecostal missionary practice. In fact, it is still proceeding from an inherent 'last day mission theology.'" And throughout Pentecostal literature, yet today, one finds references to a ' last-day ministry', or that ' time is growing short' or that the second coming of Christ will ' be very, very soon.' (Tangelder, 2006). Weber <https://assignbuster.com/theological-distinctive-of-the-pentecostal-movement-theology-religion-essay/>

and Sandeen, (quoted in Dayton, 1987: 145) respectively is of opinion that Pentecostal thought on premillennialism branched from the impact of the premillennial movement of the followers of John Nelson Darby. But Dayton (1987: 157) is of opinion that further investigation is necessary to determine whether the Pentecostal Eschatology perhaps emerged from the dynamics within the Holiness movements. The influences of Pietism were based on the hope of so-called "better-times. Bengel, described as Pietism's great biblical scholar was also noted by Dayton (1987: 158) as: "somewhat ambiguous by later standards, expecting better times both to precede and to follow the return of Christ." It was actually John Fletcher's doctrine on dispensations, which put the accent on the role of the Holy Spirit. The so-called third dispensation had a future perspective on the return of Jesus Christ. Dayton (1987: 151) "Fletcher seems to have looked forward to an imminent return of Christ, to occur in the next generation if not in his own." This was again in contrast to the Wesleyan orientation towards a soteriological viewpoint which is as Dayton (1987: 110) reflects: "his focus is on the appropriation of grace in this life and on the restoration of the image of God in preparation for death and eternal life." It was Wesley's thought which set the atmosphere on eschatology but also the terms for entire sanctification for a hundred years. As mentioned earlier his soteriology was a "realized" eschatology. It was these differences which paved the way for Fletcher's dispensational doctrine coming to the forefront. The narratives of the Pentecost in Acts per sé are inclined to link the second coming of Christ with baptism by the Holy Spirit. Another prominent figure, regarding an input to the possibility of a factual millennium and initiating a tradition of a millennium mind-set which

progressed in strength over a century, was Jonathan Edwards. Bellamy
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(quoted in Dayton, 1987: 161) " issued a noted sermon" which served as a formal doctrine of the millennium when Methodism reached America. A further event was the publishing of sequence of essays depicting the millennium, by the editor Henry Cowles of the Oberlin publication, the Evangelist. Cowles (in Dayton, 1987: 162) argued that " an imminent millennium was the obvious answer to their longings and devoted five essays to delineating the social and religious state during the millennium."

Unfortunately this viewpoint was a postmillennial vision which faded as it became un-likely. Premillennialists who became more and more doubtful of this dream convened a series of prophecy conferences promoting premillennialism which continued into the present. The Methodist wing of the National Holiness Association refused to go along with premillennialism and healing. This actually changed when the more radical leaders of the Methodist Holiness movement became supporters/defenders of the new doctrine. Consequently at the turn of the century this faction of the Holiness movement adopted it into their theology. The adherents to the postmillennial viewpoint of a millennium of peace, brought about by the church, preceding the return of Christ, as the times past, resulted in a feeling of despair when it appeared not to materialise. Dayton (1987: 164) " The only way to maintain the millennium hope and its imminence was to put the pieces of the eschatological vision into a new configuration." The eschatological vision was in turn described by Dayton (1987: 163) as derived from Paul Hanson: " Eschatology is the point of continuity when prophecy begins to evolve into apocalyptic as the tension between vision and reality falls apart, when the experience of the world can no longer be related to the religious vision."

CONCLUSION

Experience, such as speaking in tongues, more so, than doctrine, was the main interest of the Pentecostals. This bound them together and doctrine was regarded by many as being disruptive. After the Azusa Street revival between 1906-1908 two major struggles arose, this split the movement from top to bottom. The first issue concerned the doctrine of sanctification - debates whether it was a second act of grace or whether it commenced with conversion caused agitation. The second concerned the water baptismal formula - were the speaking in tongues the only sign thereof? Were the Baptism and New Birth the same? This later on, as the holiness movement fragmented and a large amount of new denominations saw the light, raised question about the Godhead. Surely Jesus is God, but was He the only person in the Godhead? Issues like these caused schism. As Anderson (1979: 47) reflects: " By 1916 the Pentecostal movement was fragmented into three doctrinal segments: Second Works Trinitarians, Finished Work Trinitarians, and Unitarians. Over a longer period in time, each of these segments in turn suffered still another division along racial lines." Power struggles amongst the leader mirrored the tendency that church government became autocratic. The clash of ethnocentrism arising from the diverse social circumstances of race, culture, environment etc., resulted in divisions pertaining to sanctification. The largest Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God, was torn apart specifically by the Unitarian controversy. Synan (1971: 21) brings to mind: " as the holiness movement fragmented from the older denominations throughout the United States, new sects sprang into being in every section of the nations. As has been noted, many of these groups used the term " holiness" in their names, while others

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preferred the word " Pentecostal." However, no other name became as popular as " The Church" Some examples are: ' Church of God', ' The Remnant Church of God, ' The Justified Church of God', and so on. Another holiness church that played a major role in the Pentecostal Movement was the Pentecostal Holiness Church. The founder, Crumpler, was a Methodist minister who separated from the Methodist church because of his preaching on sanctification. The Fire-Baptized Church, the Church of God, the Pentecostal Holiness Church and the Church of God in Christ played leading roles in the Pentecostal movement which began in 1906. On the subject of divine healing the name of Alexander Dowie received the attention of some critics as he brought the divine healing services to Zion, Illinois; however, divine healing doctrines existed before Dowie. As Dayton explained it was actually of more value to examine the biblical collateral of how the prophecies in the Old Testament was remodelled into the apocalyptic world view that often followed. As Dayton (1987: 159) remarked: " Certainly it involved a shift of focus from the prophetic to the apocalyptic Texts of Scripture".