

# The Destructive Consequences of Pentecostalism

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## Introduction

A new surge of belief in modern-day miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit began in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> It has been labeled “Neo-Pentecostalism.” The “old” Pentecostalism<sup>2</sup> was generally given little respect by Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox sects. It was usually associated with shabby buildings (with a public address system on the roof) in poorer sections of our towns and cities. Most of all, it was associated with strange behavior in its assemblies. This behavior included (and still includes) such things as...

- super-emotionalism,
- lifting and fluttering of the hands,
- hand clapping,
- shouting,
- bodily swaying,
- uttering strange and incoherent syllables (falsely called “speaking in tongues”),
- “testifying,”
- “healing” activities and claims,
- preaching by women, and (in some ultra-extreme groups)
- handling of poisonous snakes.

These practices to one degree or another were (are) found in such groups as the Assembly of God, United Pentecostal Church, Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal Holiness Church, Nazarene Church, and others.

However, through such efforts as the “Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship, Inc.,” the Pentecostals began breaking down some of this prejudice in the early 1960s. Pentecostalism (particularly belief in “speaking in tongues”) began to spill across denominational lines, both Protestant and Catholic. Members in these various religious groups adopted the Pentecostal mind-frame to one degree or another, but they stayed in their respective sects and worked within them instead of joining the Nazarene or Assembly of God Church—thus the name, “Neo-Pentecostalism.”

These things affected some in the Lord’s church, also. In about 1967 this writer, with thousands of other horrified saints, watched Pat Boone appear on nationwide Television with Oral Roberts and pronounce his blessing on that old charlatan for all the world to see. (In spite

of this, Reuel Lemmons went out of his way to justify Boone in an infamous editorial in *The Firm Foundation* shortly thereafter. Sadly, this would be but the first of other disastrous endorsements [e.g., Crossroads/Chuck Lucas, Belmont/Don Finto, et al.], signaling that Lemmons was abandoning sound doctrine.)

About the time Boone was “getting the Spirit,” Ben Franklin, a Gospel preacher in California, announced his defection in the same direction. Guy N. Woods debated him on the subject of “tongues” and other alleged gifts of the Spirit. Several others soon cast their lots with Pentecostalism, some of whom likely already “leaned” that way, but were emboldened by the behavior of Boone, Franklin, Lemmons, and others to come out of the “closet.” Since then, many others have embraced these errors. One of the three “founding fathers” of the old “Campus Evangelism” movement (forerunner of the Crossroads/Boston movement), Jim Bevis, began preaching for a Pentecostal Church a few years ago. About that time Don Finto (mentioned above) declared both himself and Bevis to be apostles.

Perhaps more dangerous than the somewhat sensational outright apostasies of a few “high profile” brethren have been the number of brethren (preachers and elders among them) who have moved to a position of tolerance for at least certain Pentecostal tendencies and errors. Some of the tolerators are simply so ignorant of Bible Truth that they do not recognize these errors. (Hopefully, this chapter will be helpful to this kind of sincere reader.) Others, however, cannot claim ignorance. They have simply lost their faith. These (like so many who have adopted liberal views on many subjects in recent years) have no intention of leaving the church, but plan to stay and influence as many as possible toward their new convictions.

Unfortunately, some of these are in places of great influence, especially on young people. A case in point is Carroll D. Osburn, a “distinguished professor” at Abilene Christian University. In his lecture on the 1992 ACU Lectureship he argued that it was Biblical for women to be allowed to preach and lead prayers in our mixed assemblies and that “speaking in tongues” is a proper manifestation of the Holy Spirit today. Doubtless, he was emboldened to make such a public announcement without fear of any administrative reprimand, much less dismissal, because he knew well the hyper-tolerance of strange ideas and practices on that campus over many years. (After all, if the ACU administration and board would defend and exonerate Archie Maness when he taught in his biology course that the Genesis record is merely a myth, what did Osburn have to fear?)

More recently the idea has been propagated by various brethren that, while not providing supernatural abilities, the Holy Spirit directly gives spiritual strength and grants wisdom to the Christian, enabling him to bear spiritual fruit. This enabling ability is in addition to what He does for us through His Word. Some brethren go so far as to claim that they are given special direction to do or say specific things, receive “nudges,” and such like by or from the Holy Spirit. While these ideas admittedly do not actually constitute full-blown “Pentecostalism,” they represent a tendency in that direction.

Some have been heard to say,

Even though I don't believe in 'speaking in tongues' or in other claimed spiritual gifts identified with Pentecostalism, I do not see any harm in believing in these things, as long as one does not try to influence others to follow him. Does it really do any harm to either the individual or to the church to hold such views?

We hope to show that it does great and often irreparable harm.

On this, as well as other errors, many seem to have an attitude similar to Gamaliel's:

Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them . . .” (Acts 5:38-39).<sup>3</sup>

Such an attitude may be appropriate in certain matters of judgment where human wisdom alone must be employed to determine the expediency of an act or acts. However, the question before us does not relate to matters of human expedients or options. This question can be answered conclusively from Scripture, ruling out any *if it is of God* consideration. Moreover, it must be answered conclusively, lest irreparable damage be done to the faith of many the Lord's people. This question is worthy of our study because of the many destructive consequences inherent in embracing the Pentecostal philosophy, a few of which we now set forth.

### **Some Destructive Consequences of Pentecostalism Considered**

*To believe that any of the supernatural spiritual gifts are available for men past the era of the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands is an erroneous concept, which is destructive to the Truth.*

Those gifts were for the infancy of the church (1 Cor. 13:11); they were for a period when access to complete spiritual revelation was not available to every saint (1 Cor. 13:8-9); they were to cease when that perfect (complete) knowledge became available through the Lord's complete revelation in the New Testament (1 Cor. 13:10, 12). This was one of the primary functions the

Holy Spirit was to (and did) perform when the Lord sent Him forth from Heaven upon the apostles (John 16:13).

The same general truths concerning the purpose and duration of the spiritual gifts are recorded in Ephesians 4:11-16. Only the apostles were empowered to transmit these miraculous endowments. No others had these gifts in the beginning days of the church (Acts 1:26; 2:1-4, 6-7,14, 43; 3:1-7; 5:12). Only after the apostles laid their hands on others was the power to exercise these gifts imparted to them (Acts 6:5-6, 8; 8:5-6, 14-19; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6). All the apostles were dead by the end of the first century, and with them died the God-ordained means of imparting the gifts. The last saints to whom the apostles had imparted these gifts died no later than the end (more likely near the middle) of the second century. With the death of the last Christian who possessed these gifts died the exercise of these gifts.

Remember, the gifts were given while the church was in its infancy and until it had the means of reaching maturity. The means of achieving spiritual maturity is through the knowledge and application of the inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When the Word was completed, the gifts had served their purpose, and, as the scaffolding of a building is removed once the building is completed, the gifts were no longer needed and thus ceased. Both the completion of the written Word (making the spiritual gifts no longer necessary) and the death of the last apostle (through whom the gifts were available) occurred at the same time (John died shortly after writing Revelation, the final book of the New Testament [c. A.D. 96]).

The primary distinction of Pentecostalism, namely belief in modern miraculous phenomena, is an erroneous view. An erroneous viewpoint is bad and undesirable in the very nature of the case, even as truth is good and desirable on its own account. If there were no other harm in embracing the Pentecostal philosophy, the fact that it is an erroneous view would be sufficient reason to refuse it and oppose it.

***To accept Pentecostalism, one is not only forced to embrace error, but he must also ignore or reject numerous Scripture Truths, such as those cited above.***

Paul described those who reject the plain Truth in the Word of God as those who “received not the love of the truth” and who “believed not the truth” (2 The. 2:10, 12). Such is a terribly dangerous stance. It prepares the heart for belief of even more lies and errors and for taking pleasure in additional unrighteousness (vv. 11-12). The end of such behavior is to be condemned and to perish eternally (vv. 10, 13).

While it is true that God and His Son allow men to reject their Word, they also remind us that we still must face it at the Judgment. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Note that when one rejects the Word of Christ, He has not merely refused some ink on the pages of an ancient book. One does not have to burn Bibles or shoot Gospel preachers to reject the Son of God. All he needs to do is refuse to receive any portion of the Word of the Lord for to do so is to reject the Lord Himself. In fact, ever since Jesus returned to His glory the only way one has been able to reject Jesus is by rejecting His Word, whether on principles that expose Pentecostalism or any other subject.

*Brethren who believe themselves to be in possession of supernatural abilities tend to become bloated with an attitude of spiritual superiority and pride.*

Such brethren seem to reason that if God has so endowed them (as they mistakenly believe) and He has not endowed others, then God must be expressing His approval of them in this special way. They further reason that those lacking the gifts thereby demonstrate their spiritual inferiority.<sup>4</sup> Adoption of the Pentecostal mind-set by some among us creates an artificial, ungodly ranking in the Lord’s body, reminiscent of the ancient Gnosticism, which held that only a select few could really partake of true knowledge and spirituality.

However, even in the day when spiritual gifts were active, Paul warned that they were all inferior to the exercise of the “most excellent” trait of love (1 Cor. 12:31–13:3). Apparently, many of the Corinthians possessed various gifts (12:4–11), but there is no proof that each Christian was thus endowed. Some had taken an unjustified pride in their ability to speak in tongues (the real thing!) (13:1; 14:1–5). It is possible that some who possessed some of the other gifts felt superior to those who possessed none. However, Paul combats any such ungodly claims of superiority by arguing that every member of the body, regardless of his or her gifts, is important and necessary (12:12–25). Thus, the impartation of gifts of various kinds did not create or imply any sort of ranking among brethren, even when the actual gifts were available.

Note further that the actual possession of miraculous gifts by the first century saints is identified with the spiritual immaturity of the church, rather than with maturity and superiority (1 Cor. 13:11). Therefore, granting momentarily that these gifts are currently available, on what grounds can they be assumed to imply spiritual superiority?

*Pentecostalism has cost many people much money.*

Television has proved itself to be a “tailor-made” vehicle for unprincipled commercial hucksters of every variety, including those in the area of religion. This is so much the case that the word televangelist has practically become a synonym for money-hungry preachers. Most of these greedy fellows are Pentecostals of one strain or another. Men such as Oral Roberts (who once saw a nine hundred-plus foot high Christ), Jim Bakker (convicted and served time for fraud), Jimmy Swaggart (generally discredited due to the exposure of his immorality), and Robert Tilton (whose fame has also plunged drastically due to indictment for fraud and other charges) have built personal empires through the money they have solicited and received from gullible viewers. Such phony-baloney preachers have their modus operandi down pat:

1. Get a large crowd together
2. Work them into an emotional frenzy
3. Give (and allow others to) some personal “testimony”
4. “Heal” a few folks
5. Fleece their audience (in-person and electronic) for money so they can fleece them again tomorrow or next week.

We once saw Robert Tilton’s “show” in which, while seated at his desk and telling of the needs of his “ministry,” he faked a revelation from God. He was soon able to tear himself loose from his “revelation” long enough to report that God told him to tell those who were planning to send \$500.00 to send \$1,000.00 and those planning to send \$1,000.00 to send \$2,000.00! Among other things, Tilton was accused of throwing away thousands of the “prayer requests” that contained no “love offering” (spelled “m-o-n-e-y”) from his viewers (although he promised to pray over them all).

In fact, he goes further than perhaps most of his Pentecostal counterparts. He even writes people who have already died, promising to heal them if they will send him a “love offering”! (At last report he was not successful in fulfilling this claim, however.) Some lawsuits were filed against him relating to these cases.

These fellows shamelessly prey upon the ignorant and the naive, convincing them that their only hope of pleasing God is by sending their money to “Rev. So-And-So.” (Perhaps it was of their first-century counterparts that the Lord said they “devour widows’ houses” [Luke 20:47]). The elderly seem particularly susceptible to their deceptions. Some have been bilked out of their life’s savings and have literally been brought to financial ruin by these clerical con men. And for what? Although not true of all preachers on television, the news media are frequently

filled with reports of the lavish lifestyles of these hucksters (the most expensive cars, luxurious homes in various areas of the country, \$500.00 suits, unquestioned “expense” accounts, etc.).

***Pentecostalism has cost some people their lives.***

Pentecostalism has cost some far more than mere money. It has cost them their lives. One of the claims of Pentecostals in general is the ability to heal the sick miraculously in the same manner as the Lord and His apostles did. The number of cases on record is abundant in which naive, gullible people with serious diseases of one sort or another have placed their faith in the miracle-working power of some self-proclaimed “faith healer,” only to learn too late that he was actually a fake “healer.”

In 1992 alone several multi-million-dollar lawsuits were filed against the aforementioned “televangelist” Robert Tilton of Dallas, Texas on this very ground. Tilton promised on his television programs that he could heal the sick. Some of those who placed confidence in his claim were led to believe they no longer needed medical attention. They ceased to consult their doctors for treatment of their illnesses and/or discontinued their treatments on the strength of Tilton’s claims.

The grieving survivors of some of those who died contended that their loved ones died prematurely for lack of medical treatment that could have prolonged their lives. They sued Tilton (rightly, we believe) for fraud. Of course, this seemed to bother Tilton little, if any. He went right on with his deceptive and fraudulent claims. While the loss of the soul due to Pentecostal error is the worst possible consequence, it is no small consequence to lose one’s life therefrom. This writer suspects that many more than are ever actually discovered or reported have lost their lives due to misplaced trust in such religious fakers and their Pentecostalism.

***Acceptance of Pentecostalism is a commitment to subjective religious “authority” and a rejection of objective religious authority.***

By “subjective” we refer to that which proceeds from within man, involving his feelings, emotions, moods, attitudes, prejudices, desires, and such like. By “objective” we refer to that which is outside of and apart from man and is not at all affected by man’s thoughts or attitudes. Being independent of men, objective principles are not altered in the least by the attitudes of men toward them. The equation,  $2+2=4$ , is an objective principle; it stands secure and remains immutable regardless of what man does, thinks, or says about it, even if all men reject or deny it.

The Word of God ever proclaims itself as the only objective standard of man's behavior because, as the kingdom of Christ, it "is not of this world" (John 18:36). It is therefore not from man. It proceeds from God and is therefore free from the personal prejudices and follies that arise from within the emotions and thoughts of men which human-produced philosophies of ethics and religion inevitably contain. Therefore, the word alone is qualified to be the judge of man's behavior, which is the very basis suggested by Paul for allowing God's Word to be our authority: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16-17, KJV). Man may be "furnished completely unto every good work" only by keeping God's perfect law, not by keeping even the best of man's laws.

This writer once told a woman who was on her way into Pentecostalism that she may as well throw her Bible in the garbage can if she proceeded. The Pentecostal advocate cuts himself loose from God's revealed-for-all-time body of faith—the New Testament—accepting in its stead the ever-fickle, ever-fallacious "rule" of experiential feelings and "testimony." By this "rule" God's acceptance of the worshiper is "proved" by the feelings or experiences of the worshiper, rather than by the revelation from God of what pleases Him. Accordingly, one may claim he has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, simply because he "feels" he has. Another may believe that he (or she) must preach because of a certain physical sensation, a certain noise in one's ear, or because of something that has deeply moved one emotionally. Still another may believe he has received an ability from God to "speak in tongues,"<sup>5</sup> from which he infers that God has smiled upon him in a special way. Such may be heard to say, "I wouldn't trade this feeling in my heart for a stack of Bibles," meaning that his or her opinion is superior to anything the Bible teaches. By this principle, each individual becomes his own authority, and the authority of God's Word falls victim to any clash between the two rationales.

To paraphrase the Lord's accusation of the Pharisees of old, we would say to the Pentecostals of today, "And ye have made void the word of God because of your feelings and emotions" (Mat. 15:6). Any belief that substitutes feelings for faith and romanticism for revelation is utterly destructive, representing a rejection of God Himself.

Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century reformer, missed the Truth on several major points. However, he was deadly in his aim in the following verse:

Feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving.  
My warrant is the Word of God,  
Naught else is worth believing.

***Because of Its subjective approach to religious authority, Pentecostalism obfuscates the New Testament plan of salvation.***

The principle works as follows:

As indicated earlier, one who is convinced he can “speak in tongues” accounts this as evidence of his acceptability before God. To be consistent, he must accept similar subjective “proof” offered by any others as evidence of God’s grace upon them. Thus, the person who claims to have been directly told by God to do this or that, the one who alleges to have seen a vision or to have twice died and gone to Heaven and returned (as a man once told this writer), or the one who insists that he has been saved because he “feels” that he has, or because he has had some sort of “experience,” must all be accepted.

In fact, consistency demands that Pentecostal devotees accept the claims of Mormonism. After all, the young Mormon “elders” who knock on our doors tell us they “know” that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God because of the “burning in their breast” they feel. There is no way a Pentecostal can reject any subjective “testimony” offered by others as evidence of God’s grace upon them and remain consistent in accepting his own subjective “proofs.”

By this means the Gospel plan of salvation so plainly set forth in the New Testament, requiring a confession of faith in the Christ (Rom. 10:9-10, et al.), repentance of sins, and baptism unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, et al.) is set aside. Especially is this observable regarding the Scriptural role of baptism. To such individuals, it matters not whether one has obeyed God’s revealed will concerning when one enters into Christ and therefore into God’s grace (i.e., in baptism and not before [Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27]). If one has received a certain “sign,” undergone a certain “experience,” or has a certain “feeling,” he is accounted “saved” and embraced as a brother, regardless of the Lord’s blood-bought plan of salvation! A good example of this is the way Pat Boone embraced Oral Roberts (and others who have not obeyed the Gospel) when he accepted Pentecostal tenets. Any philosophy that causes such blatant disregard for the Spirit’s Word cannot possibly be the Spirit’s philosophy.

***The subjective rationale of Pentecostalism destroys the identity of the New Testament church.***

As seen above, consistency demands that Pentecostals accept as saved all who can testify convincingly about their “experience,” “vision,” or “miraculous gift,” regardless of the Lord’s plan of salvation. Consistency also requires acceptance of all such claimants as faithful brethren, regardless of church affiliation. Whatever one may teach or practice that conflicts with revealed Truth is beside the point to such individuals. The Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship, Inc., is a case in point. This religious organization, wholly Pentecostal (in its original leadership, at least), extends fellowship to men from every spectrum of thought who claim to believe in

Christ—Catholic and Protestant alike. It is therefore composed of men who differ diametrically on a great variety of doctrinal issues. Yet, all the teaching of the New Testament on the one faith, the one church, the one mind, the unity in sound doctrine, and such like that characterizes true disciples, is utterly ignored. The only thing that matters to the group is one's spiritual "experience" (generally identified with "baptism in the Holy Spirit").

It may well be argued that not all of those in the Lord's church who have become infected with Pentecostalism to some degree have adopted the "fellowship-minus-doctrine" position. However, we reply that if they persist in their "leanings" toward Pentecostalism, they must sooner or later adopt this position or else deny the very fundamental premise of it, namely subjectivism. The pattern of behavior of such brethren as Pat Boone, Ben Franklin, Don Finto, Jim Bevis, and many others proves that our contention just here is far more than a mere hypothesis.

***When a member of the Lord's church embraces Pentecostalism, he invariably causes confusion among the saints.***

The confusion caused by a Christian who becomes enamored with Pentecostalism may take many forms. The infected person must either be dealt with or ignored by the local church. If he is ignored (contrary to New Testament teaching [Gal. 6:1; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 The. 3:6; Tit. 3:10; et al.]), he will make disciples among the babes in Christ, the malcontent, and those who are otherwise doctrinally insecure. Thus, the lump will be leavened with his error (1 Cor. 5:6-7). However, even if he is dealt with according to Truth, chances are good that there will still be some negative effects from his influence, although far less than if the problem is ignored (the Lord's way is always best!). When the church must withdraw from a brother or sister, whether on moral or doctrinal grounds, there are always the inevitable few who respond only with their emotions rather than with their minds (a principal characteristic of Pentecostalism itself) and lend sympathy to the malefactor. In either case, the point is confirmed that confusion among brethren is caused when a member of the Lord's church adopts Pentecostal tenets. (It follows that the best medicine for this disease is preventive: There must be more solid, plain teaching and preaching on this subject in the congregations.)

When a Christian embraces this false way, it often results not only in confusion in the congregation of which he is a member, but in his own family and in that of others. When Pat Boone apostatized, it caused not only confusion among brethren, but a crisis in his own family. Eventually, his father, who was once a deacon in a large church in Nashville, Tennessee,

adopted Pat's new convictions and the church withdrew fellowship from him. However, other members of Pat's family have not followed this course. Thus, the family was divided. We also know of other cases (including some in his own family) in which such Pentecostal defection has caused serious family disruptions.

The case of Pat Boone also illustrates that the greater one's influence, the more confusion he causes. Doubtless, the declarations of "internationally-respected New Testament scholar" and Abilene Christian University Carmichael Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Dr. Carroll D. Osburn, favoring various Pentecostal contentions (including women preachers and modern "tongues-speaking") will have a greater effect than if brother John Doe of Possum Holler, Mississippi, made them. Surely, Osburn is an "authority"! Many a troubled church and not a few persons who have been caused to stumble in this false way stand as strong testimony to the harmful confusion caused by adherents of Pentecostal theology. The warning of our Lord should be carefully heeded: "It must needs be that the occasions [of stumbling] come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh" (Mat. 18:7). Anything that causes such unnecessary confusion among brethren and in families once united in Christ stands self-condemned to the perceptive, even apart from its heretical nature.

*Any attempt to resurrect the New Testament miraculous phenomena after the completion of God's revelation in the New Testament is to urge an anti-climax in God's scheme of development for His church.*

When one urges a return to spiritual "pacifiers" designed only for the church's infancy and immaturity, he urges a reversal of God's process for bringing His revelation (and the church) to a state of completion and maturity, respectively. The Pentecostals are not unlike at least some of the Judaizers of the first century in this respect. They advocated abandoning the better covenant of Christ with its better promises (Heb. 8:6), to return to the inadequate and faulty Old Testament system (vv. 7-13), thus reversing God's process of progressive revelation and redemption. The Pentecostals are not content with God's completed revelation, "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). They want to reinstate the temporary, preparatory (and now unnecessary) spiritual gifts in place of the end of the gifts itself – "that which is perfect" (1 Cor. 13:10), "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jam. 1:25), the "word of God, which liveth and abideth" (1 Pet. 1:23).

Notice Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 13:

1. Miraculous Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge belong to a period of incomplete revelation, but when the revelation is completed, these spiritual gifts would be (and were) "done away" (vv. 8-10).
2. Paul illustrated the appropriateness of those gifts for the church of his time by likening them to the traits of a child. However, when a child grows into adulthood, it ceases to act and think as a child, which behavior would be completely inappropriate (v. 11). Just so, such spiritual gifts are not available or appropriate for Christians now (and have not been since the completion of the New Testament) because God has long since provided us with the all-sufficient means of spiritual maturity in His finished revelation (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; et al.).
3. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, brethren were like men who looked into a dull mirror, perceiving (for lack of the complete revelation) only a vague concept of what God wanted them to be. When God's will would be fully revealed (which it has been since c. A.D. 96 with the completion of the book of Revelation), the image in the "mirror" would be clear. Again, Paul described his time as one of only partial knowledge, but when God's will would be fully revealed ("when that which is perfect is come" [v. 10]), men would "know fully" His will (v. 12).

In attempting to reach back to the "infantile" state of the church, Pentecostalism mocks the very means provided by the God of Heaven for man's spiritual maturity. In effect, it says, "We are smarter than God. We know better what it takes to be spiritually mature and complete than He does. To simply learn, believe, and obey His written Word is not enough for us. We must have more." The Lord emphasized the grave and eternal danger of such a course in the closing words of His Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 7:21-27).

*A statement made in our "Introduction" – "as long as one does not try to influence others to follow him," is an important conditional phrase.*

It is the observation of this writer that those who defect to Pentecostalism become notoriously evangelistic, whether or not they have ever been so before. Even those who claim not to be fully convinced of Pentecostalism, but who are "fellow-travelers" with its devotees, are usually evangelistic in their attempts to elicit tolerance for them in others. Soon after Pat Boone's Pentecostalism became public, we were discussing the tragedy with another preacher in the presence of several others. While professing not to agree with him, he nevertheless insisted, "He is still my brother." He wanted all to know (and partake of) his own tolerance for Boone. (Of course, the issue never was whether Pat Boone was or is a "brother." The issue was (and is) that he made shipwreck of the faith. Further, the issue is whether we shall continue to

extend tolerance and fellowship to this brother and others like him or deliver them unto Satan [1 Tim. 1:19-20]).

There is a natural evangelistic motivation in the phenomenon. When one is on an emotional “high” himself (Pentecostalism is basically religious emotionalism, remember), he wants others to experience it, also. If “speaking in tongues” is a sign of special acceptability before God and if I can exercise this gift, I will automatically desire to see the gift in others if I am concerned for their spiritual welfare. There seems to be hardly any way one can accept the confirmed Pentecostal frame of mind and be quiet about it. Pat Boone illustrates this point, also. While he hid his real convictions for a time (and even deceived some brethren to do so), he reached the point where he could no longer stand to be secretive about them. He got on prime-time television and blurted them out! He thereafter became almost feverishly evangelistic, using books, magazines, personal appearances, movies, and more television appearances, to spread his views as far as possible. Such a person believes he has something “extra” and he is not about to let it go unnoticed! Hence, another danger is revealed.

### **Conclusion**

The inroads of this destructive teaching among brethren, either by attracting open advocates or – at least – sympathizers, are already significant. As a general atmosphere of tolerance for and apathy toward almost any heresy settles over more and more of the saints, we will hear less and less about the dangers of this system of error. It will be increasingly tolerated and accepted. This statement is not an attempt to spread undue alarm, but to call our attention to an observable fact.

If it is argued that relatively few have openly defected, it may also be argued that many others who have not openly expressed them either hold these views or at least “lean” toward them. Of the two, the open advocate is not nearly so great a threat to the church as the latter, we opine. The former is out in the open, his views are known, and he can be clearly labeled for what he is (Rom 16:17). The latter works in secrecy and often with deceptive tactics, careful not to reveal his dark intentions and erroneous convictions until he has craftily gained a sympathetic following. Only when he has done so is he ready to reveal his beliefs with the greatest possible effect.

Peter warned of just such brethren and carefully described their tactics (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 18-20). Such were the very tactics decided upon by Pat and Shirley Boone.<sup>6</sup> We have called attention to the super-tolerant attitude many Christians have toward such troubled and

troublesome brethren. Let it not be forgotten that tolerating and encouraging heretics is tantamount to advocating their heresy (2 John 10–11).

While additional consequences could likely be set forth, our conviction is that any one of the consequences discussed above is sufficient to show the grave harm of Pentecostalism. This being so, the cumulative effect of these is staggering! May the Lord give us the strength and courage to stand for His Truth and against this and every other false way.

### Endnotes

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1. Some of the material in this chapter was first published in *Denominationalism Versus the Bible*, ed. Terry M. Hightower (San Antonio, TX: Shenandoah Church of Christ, 1992), pp. 257–270.
  2. This writer is using *Pentecostalism* in reference to more than merely the denominations or members of same that are customarily identified by this term. By use of this term I am including them, but I also am referring to a philosophy or system of theology that has moved beyond those denominational borders. This phenomenon is also sometimes referred to as the “Charismatic Movement” (from *charis*, the Greek word for “gift”), and it is based upon an unscriptural concept and exaltation of the Holy Spirit and miraculous gifts. While *Pentecostalism*, as we are using it, is much broader than the traditional variety, it holds the same basic convictions and makes the same basic errors as those Pentecostal religious bodies which originated about the beginning of this century.
  3. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
  4. This idea is actually a derivative of Pentecostal doctrine, which generally holds that one is not converted/saved unless he has some gifts to prove it (e.g., “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” “tongues,” etc.).
  5. *Speaking in tongues* is a misnomer as used by Pentecostals and others who claim the ability. This spiritual gift in the New Testament era consisted of the ability to speak in known, intelligible, translatable human languages, which one had never studied or learned, as the earliest New Testament description of this gift clearly shows (Acts 2:4–11). There is never any indication that subsequent Scriptural references to the possession and exercise of this gift were anything different (cf. Acts 10:44–45; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28–29; 13:1; 14:2ff). In exercising this “gift,” present-day claimants of “tongues” make unintelligible, untranslatable sounds of gibberish, sometimes resembling the most elemental sounds of infants. To identify this with the amazing spiritual gift of speaking in tongues described in Scripture is an insult to the God of Heaven. A striking demonstration of the inability of those who claim the ability to “speak in tongues” is that when they go to a foreign country with a different language to preach their doctrine, they must **study to learn the language** just as anyone else does!
  6. James D. Bales, *Pat Boone and the Gift of Tongues* (Searcy, AR: privately published, 1970), pp. 274, 278.

[NOTE: I wrote this MS for the Houston College of the Bible Lectures, hosted by the Spring, TX, Church of Christ, Feb. 28–March 3, 1999. I delivered a digest of it orally and it was published in the lectureship book, *Pentecostalism* (ed., David P. Brown, Spring, TX: Contending for the Faith)].

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