

PENTECOSTALISM. HISTORY, DOCTRINE, MISSION. AN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

– ABSTRACT –

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Pentecostalism, presented today more as a Christian movement based on an eccentric form of spirituality, an obsession centered on the "gifts of the Holy Spirit", miraculous healings, has its roots in the desire and initiative of the Methodist pastor, Charles Fox Parham, and his students at the Bible School in Topeka - Kansas, USA, to "revive" the Christian way of life of the Holy Apostles and early Christians, to restore the spiritual gifts (pneumatika) of the New Testament, especially the glossolalia, as evidence of the "baptism in/with the Holy Spirit".

Beginning with the Topeka Bible School and continuing with the Azusa Street "awakening," Pentecostal ideas began to spread throughout the Christian world in just a few short years. It is not news to us that Pentecostalism today is a global phenomenon both numerically and geographically. According to a 2000 global statistical assessment, published in 2002 in *The New International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Pentecostals, "charismatic" Christians and neo-Pentecostals today account for 27.7% of organized global Christianity, which means that there are around 65 million classical Pentecostals, 175 million belonging to the "Charismatic Movement" or "second wave of spiritual renewal" and 295 million neo-charismatics or neo-Pentecostals belonging to the "third wave of spiritual renewal".

The main purpose of our research is to provide a correct and as clear as possible picture of Pentecostalism, tracing and analyzing from the perspective of Orthodox theology the historical, doctrinal and missionary dimensions that have led to the formation of its global identity and influence.

The objectives will help us to accomplish this goal, and they can be categorized according to the three levels of development and growth of Pentecostalism, respectively the importance of defining this religious "phenomenon" and classifying it in relation to Orthodoxy:

a. In this useful scientific research, it is necessary to know the historical dimension of Pentecostalism, because this is the only way to clarify the question of its origins; to investigate the antecedents; the moments of its beginnings; its global evolution and to find out who were the main leaders and theologians who contributed significantly to the shaping and solidification

of this religious identity. Someone said metaphorically that Pentecostals have always been good storytellers, and storytellers want nothing more than an audience. Therefore, it can be argued that their ability to connect their stories meaningfully to people's lives was essential to the birth of the movement and remains essential to its continued rise . Along the thread of this "story", we will seek to learn and understand their history in such a way that when we come to the end we will be able to ascertain the achievement of the proposed objective, that is, to know the historical process that "birthed", grew and defined the identity of this denomination.

b. On the doctrinal side, our objectives are to investigate the fundamental teachings of Pentecostalism, the doctrinal differences specific to its three branches, to compare and interpret them in the light of orthodox theology, and to explore how doctrinal teachings have influenced and continue to influence religious practice and daily life (how doctrine becomes praxis).

c. The missionary aspect is fundamental to understanding how it has been possible for their "teachings" to "pervade" and become fixed in the different geographical spaces of the world, in the existing cultural and religious diversity. We will look at the updated statistics of the expansion of Pentecostalism, analyze the approaches and strategies used in mission and how this phenomenon has had the ability to integrate and adapt to culturally and religiously different mentalities.