

Historical Theology II

HT 602A

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BOOK REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

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**A Book Review of
THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL
The Significance of Eschatology in The Development of Pentecostal Thought
By D. William Faupel**

Thesis

D. William Faupel “contends that Pentecostalism was propelled into the world stage when early adherents felt commissioned by God to announce that Christ would soon return to establish His kingdom on earth. The gift of tongues would equip them supernaturally to proclaim this message to the nations in the language of the people. Although this expectation was soon disproven, the eschatological hope nevertheless remained the motivating force for Pentecostalism’s rapid growth.”

Early Pentecostal leaders were often birthed out of a crisis moment and instilled with a divine urgency to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. They found themselves part of a movement that had begun many years before but was now taking on new significance because of the work of the Holy Spirit. People were being baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with unknown tongues. This in itself provided not only a new dimension to their experiences but also a divine mandate to do the work of reaching the world for Christ. “The emergence of Pentecostalism at the turn of the twentieth century was at once both the culmination of a message and the beginning of a movement.” (14)

We will examine the content of the book in the same order in which William Faupel presents his material. The division of thought will be in the following categories: conception, womb, gestation, birth pangs, birth, and growth. (18)

Conception: The Pentecostal Message

The message of the early Pentecostal movement has its roots in the 1847-48 revival, which was the “offspring of the Wesleyan Holiness movement and Oberlin Perfectionism.” (19) The eschatological focus centered on the second coming of Christ in as much that they were motivated to proclaim the gospel to the world in order to bring about the soon return of Christ. As Pentecostals, they were convinced that their new endowment with power was what was needed for the hour and task ahead. With this newfound power, they would be able to reach the world with the message of Christ using the nine-fold gifts of the Spirit found in I Corinthians 14.

The “full gospel,” as it was proclaimed, consisted of justification, sanctification, healing of the body, the pre-millennial return of Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (28)

In relation to the movement’s view of history, it was widely held that in one form or another that, “Through a series of dispensations, God acted to bring about humankind’s reconciliation with himself by setting aside a people, both to reveal his intention to the nations, and to accomplish his purposes.” (32-33) Where they fit into the time line was during “the time of the Latter Rain.” (38) The restoration of apostolic

doctrine, power, authority, and practice had been restored and thus constituted the opportunity for the “full gospel” to be proclaimed.

In conclusion of this period, Faupel states that the “depth and scope” of the Pentecostal message can best be understood by examining the dynamic infrastructure of the message. “The four names assigned to the movement fill out the undergirding framework. Latter Rain provided a dispensation understanding of salvation history. Apostolic Faith supplied the model to be emulated as found in the Acts of the Apostles. Pentecostal produced the expectation for the repetition of both a cosmological event and a personal experience. Full Gospel set forth the five-fold work of Christ, which provided a soteriological foundation for the message.

Within this context, glossolalia played a crucial role. To the adherents, its initial occurrence signified that the second Pentecost had come, inaugurating the Latter Rain era. Its practice would provide the means to proclaim ‘The Everlasting Gospel’ to the nations. Its personal application was the seal of the Spirit providing assurance of membership in the Bride of Christ.” (42)

Womb: The Context of Pentecostal Thought

The historical context in which Pentecostals saw themselves had a great deal to do with the formation of America as a new country. In fact, many saw America as the New Israel, at least until the Civil War. Nevertheless, the formation of the new country lent itself to the theological idea that God was in the process of doing something new.

At first the general belief was that America was chosen by God to be a light to all other nations. This would be a part of the mindset of the Perfectionists in the 1857-58

Revival. But even this great revival left out the marginalized groups of American culture.

Wesleyan Perfectionism, however, would not be so sectarian. Wesley believed that there is no holiness without social holiness. (56-57) Wesley thought the basis for much of the holiness movement and out of which many Pentecostals came addressed the whole issue of soteriology in both social and individual detail.

Oberlin Perfectionism would also be influential in setting the stage for the Pentecostal movement that would reach and include a cross-section of American society. Although in harmony and in conflict with Phoebe Palmer's Altar Theology, it did broaden the debate about sanctification.

Overall, the American holiness movement would give birth to Pentecostalism but would not bring about a "new age." In fact, "When this 'Second Pentecost' failed to usher in the new age, the movement was forced to re-examine its identity and mission. The 'Pentecostal' expression of its Holiness theology would be the starting point for articulating its new vision." (75-76)

Gestation: The Formation of Pentecostal Thought

After the Civil War, many aspects of the movement would change. The hope of seeing a new age ushered in primarily by the church was gone. The emphasis in the holiness movement was no longer on salvation. The shift to an emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit became apparent.

For many, entire sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit became inseparable. However, there were problems with the developing thought in this area. Asa Mahan, for instance, contended that "Pentecost, rather than Calvary, is the fulcrum of

history.” Such a radical change in thinking was not ready to be accepted by most—even if they did place a greater importance on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Faupel states concerning the holiness movement, “A breakdown was of unity was inevitable. Three major positions were taken: the Classical, Keswick, and Third Blessing. All emphasized the need for an experience subsequent to regeneration which they understood to be the baptism in the Holy Spirit.” (90)

In addition to the shift toward a greater emphasis on pneumatology, there was a shift “from a post-millennial to a pre-millennial eschatology.” As a result, some like John Fletcher saw and preached a connection or link between Pentecost and the Second Advent.

As Faupel concludes,

The new understanding left the movement filled with the expectation of the imminent return of Christ. Adherents felt compelled to announce the ‘end of the age’ as a warning to the nations and thereby gained a renewed impetus for world mission. As the movement neared the turn of the century, expectations arose that God was about to restore apostolic authority and power to the church to enable it to accomplish his end-time purposes. This expectation would give rise to the Pentecostal movement. (114)

Birth Pangs: The Pentecostal Message Foreshadowed

Around 1900, many within the movement felt that the church was at a critical point in the timeline of God’s eschatological program.

Faupel states that, “Discerning the signs of the times, they perceived that God was calling forth a restored church. Freed from

the impossible and mistaken notion that their task was to convert the world for Christ, they focused on their true mission: to proclaim the gospel to the nations as a witness; and to call a nominal Christendom to put on her bridal garments in preparation for the marriage supper of the Lamb. (115-16)

With a new focus, many such as John Alexander Dowie thought that the church must align itself with God's plan in order to bring about the fulfillment of God's plan. Others like Weston Sandford and Charles Fox Parham contributed alternate theological ideas concerning God's eschatological plan. However, each had in common the belief that they and their followers would be instrumental in igniting a "worldwide revival." (186) Nevertheless, each would be rejected by the movement as a whole, along with their theology, and overshadowed by the emergence of Pentecostalism.

Birth: The Coming of the Latter Rain

The efforts of men like Dowie, Sandford, and Parham had failed, but the "developments within nineteenth-century Perfectionism" (187) had set the stage for Pentecostal theology to emerge.

The Welsh Revival of 1904 caused many to sense an excitement of an impending worldwide revival that had long been awaited. According to Faupel, "As a movement, Pentecostalism was born in the midst of the Welsh revival. Its birth took place in Los Angeles, California." (190) William Joseph Seymour would be instrumental in that birth. Not only did he become a great leader in preaching Spirit baptism, but he also actively sought to break racial barriers. Pentecost was more than an experience to him; it was a "new beginning for the church. Speaking in unknown tongues represented a point when all distinctions, race, class, gender, would enrich rather than divide."

When the great Pentecostal revival of Azusa Street began to grow, it appeared to be the great last day's revival that should occur just prior to the end coming. It was wildly thought that this "outbreak of glossolalia" was evidence that the Latter Rain had come.

Growth: Defining the Parameters of Pentecostal Thought

At this point in the development of the Pentecostal movement, the realities of the movement were becoming evident. They had not been given the gift of speaking other known languages, they were now being rejected by those of the Holiness/Fundamentalist group from which most came, and the return of Christ did not appear as close as previously thought.

In addition, theological, racial, and personality differences had to be contended with more so than ever before. The reality was that the leaders of the movement were going to have to lead an organized church with many questions about its identity still unanswered.

This area of unresolved identity and theological questions would, in itself, be the catalyst for new debate, doctrine, and controversy that would last for several years.

Faupel concludes that, "To maintain its distinctive witness, the formative years of Pentecostalism must be perceived as the heart and not simply the infancy of the movement. That is for Pentecostalism to remain a vital force into the twenty-first century, it must look to its origins as a source for theological and spiritual renewal. (309)

**Critique
Of
The Everlasting Gospel**

The development of Pentecostal thought in relation to eschatology is of great importance to Pentecostals today who are seeking to understand the roots and development of this movement. *The Everlasting Gospel* by D. William Faupel undertakes this extensive subject and does an outstanding job of developing his thoughts. His explanation concerning the influence eschatological thought had on the development of Pentecostal thought in the early years of the movement addresses any conceivable question that I might have had on the subject.

In particular, I found his analysis of the early Pentecostal movement enlightening. His explanation of the influence Perfectionism had on the movement gave a clear and solid foundation for understanding how and why much of the thought and doctrine would develop. It is easy to see the holistic message as it develops. “The Everlasting Gospel”

and the “Gospel of the Kingdom” are themes that now take on new meaning. I particularly like Faupel’s statement, “The Pentecostal message was all-embracing. Once launched, the vision of the new era that was dawning swept millions into the movement. There they would experience within their communal life the reality of the age to come.” (43) At this point it is easy to see the movement as taking on a life of its own.

Faupel’s understanding of the context in which Pentecostal thought developed brought to light several ideas that I have heard expressed before in my Pentecostal experience. For example, the idea that America had been chosen by God to lead the world to Christ, an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and his work at the neglect of soteriology, the imminent return of Christ and the expectation of a world-wide revival were all common themes in the minds of the elderly men and women I knew growing up in the Church of God. Many had been born at or around the turn of the twentieth century and had been in the Pentecostal movement for most or all of their lives. Reading about the history of the Pentecostal movement, the development of its doctrine and the widely held views of people within the movement—even the language—made me wonder how much of what these elderly saints told me were shared out of an understanding influenced by those historical accounts of which I had been reading. I also wonder how much that the people within these pages have influenced me, indirectly.

With my background and what I have learned in the church over the years, it seemed that much of the material came alive to me. I can identify people, sermons, stories that I have been told—all in the historical account of Faupel. In some ways, like looking at an old family scrapbook, it feels like my story. The reading of this book added

meaning to my context, experience and my past in the Church of God and the Pentecostal movement.

Question: "What is the everlasting gospel in Revelation 14:6?". Answer: After John sees a vision of the 144,000 redeemed ones who "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Revelation 14:4), he sees three angels flying in midair. The first one "had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth" to every nation, tribe, language and people" (verse 6). This is the only place in the Bible where the gospel is described as the "everlasting gospel" (KJV) or the "eternal gospel" (NIV). A The Everlasting Gospel. â– What is the everlasting gospel? Itâ€™s the good news, that Jesus has reconciled us with God by His death (Romans 3:24-25). â– Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:9-10; 2 Peter 2:21-24). â– Those who have accepted Jesus are united in one faith and one mission: to proclaim the everlasting gospel. B The Second Coming of Christ. â– We believe that Jesus will come back to Earth as He said (Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:26)