

Spiritual Heritage

One of the most significant developments in Christianity during the past century was the appearance of many Pentecostal fellowships throughout the world. Beginning in the United States and spreading rapidly to most nations of the world, these groups now comprise a major "third force" in Christendom whose phenomenal growth has commanded the attention of the world.

The fundamental faith of Spirit Quest International is that God's power to redeem man and society - internationally - is resident in Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, who sent the Holy Spirit into the world as the Agent of Salvation. It is this faith that God's power is available to everyone to save, cleanse, heal, and empower, that has given rise to Spirit Quest International. It is our quest, our desire, that all may come to experience the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

The heritage of Spirit Quest International flows from many sources. Indeed, we are beholden to many Spirit-filled organizations that have brought us to where we are today. Basically, we look to the Day of Pentecost as the beginning of the early Christian church that ultimately produced the movement. The atmosphere of the Upper Room (Acts 2), with the "sound of a rushing mighty wind," the "cloven tongues as of fire," the speaking forth in "Other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance," and the dynamic public witness that followed, has inspired the church to perpetuate the power of Pentecost in this generation.

In its statement of faith, Spirit Quest International, preserves the three great spiritual reforms of recent Christianity - Lutheran, Wesleyan, and Pentecostal. Each of these revival movements brought to light and reemphasized truths concerning the Christian experience that apparently had been lost since the times of the early church.

The first spiritual reform was the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther's doctrine of the believer's justification by faith alone was the most enduring contribution of the Protestant Reformation to Christian experience. This doctrine became the bedrock of the Reformation and remains the basic doctrinal foundation of all evangelical churches, including Spirit Quest International.

The church regards the "New birth" as the conversion experience that admits the believer into the family of God. The church's belief on this crucial point of doctrine is expressed in her fifth Article of Faith.

We believe, teach, and firmly maintain the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone, Romans 5:1, "THEREFORE BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." Members of Spirit Quest International thus regard themselves as spiritual heirs of the Reformation. Therefore, great importance is given to evangelism. The saving of the lost is seen as the church's primary task.

The Methodist Movement

The Methodist Movement, begun by John Wesley in eighteenth-century England, is seen generally as the second spiritual reformation of the church. From the beginning, Wesley's Methodist Societies emphasized sanctification following conversion, calling for a life of holiness and separation from the world. Wesley also used the terms "heart purity," "perfect love," and "Christian perfection" to describe the work of sanctification and the life of holiness in the believer.

The burden of the Wesleyan revival was that the converted believer need not live out his lifetime as a slave to inborn sin; Christ "suffered without the gate" to "sanctify his people with his own blood."

When the Methodist Church began to reject the Holiness Movement, many members among the Methodist church, and other mainline Protestant churches formed the National Holiness Association in 1867, promoting Holiness teaching and preaching in the U.S.

The Pentecostal Movement

During the last years of the nineteenth century, a conviction arose among many fervent people in the National Holiness Association that a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the church's great need. As the new century was about to dawn, a general attitude of seeking for deeper and further spiritual grace seemed to permeate the movement. This cry for a "new Pentecost" was experienced in both Europe and America.

The modern Pentecostal Movement had its origins in Topeka, Kansas, in a small Bible school conducted by Charles Fox Parham, a Holiness evangelist who began his ministry as a Methodist pastor. In 1901, Agnes Ozman, a student at Parham's school, received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues.

The Pentecostal Movement received worldwide influence in 1906 in Los Angeles, California, in the Azusa Street revival led by the black Holiness evangelist, William Joseph Seymour. From Azusa Street, the Pentecostal experience spread around the world as Holiness people by the thousands received the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Ghost with the apostolic sign of speaking with other tongues.

Not since the days of the early church had any revival movement spread so quickly and so far. On every continent, Holiness people flocked to altars to receive their own personal Pentecost.

Once again, the church experienced the gifts of the Spirit. The atmosphere of the book of Acts became the norm for the thousands of Pentecostal churches and missions that appeared throughout the world. Everywhere, the restoration of the *charismata* was understood as proof positive that the second advent of Christ was near.

Latin American Pentecostal Explosion

As the cry for a "New Pentecost" began to wane in Europe a massive explosion of

Charismata began to sweep Latin America. The process of Pentecostal unity and cooperation in Latin America goes back to the 1960s in Chile when, after the earthquake, some Chilean Pentecostal churches began working with other churches in caring for the victims.

Continuing through the 1970s and 1980s, the number of Pentecostals grew by staggering amounts. In 2010 it was estimated that 30% of the population in Chile professed Pentecostalism, while Guatemala is singled out as having the highest percentage of Pentecostals-60%. Although less dramatic, other Latin American countries have sizeable numbers of adherents - Mexico 13%, El Salvador 34%, Costa Rica 34%.

Why the turning to the Pentecostal doctrine? The answer is many faceted.

Pentecostalism provides a sense of community to Latin American peasants migrating to cities. The poor receive a welcome and sanctuary at Pentecostal churches, while those traveling from the countryside to the city "recover a sense of family." Indeed, Pentecostal churches provide a sense of community to uprooted people who have lost their point of reference.

Pentecostalism also offers transformed lives and socio-economic circumstances for every believer, encouraging the family to commit to a personal social transformation. Families are often renewed, not only because wages are more likely to be converted into food and shelter for the children, but also because sober husbands with purpose are less likely to beat wives and children. The effects of these new spending priorities allow for social upward mobility, a Pentecostal emphasis on education out of a desire to read the Bible, and even the movements success in domesticating Salvadoran youth gang members, both in El Salvador and the U.S., are symptomatic of Pentecostalism's ability to offer the marginalized a tremendous feeling of self-esteem, taking them from earth to heaven.

Pentecostals also create conditions for equality among their own structures, seeing "each member of the congregation as an essential and vital player in the work of the church." Those who were previously powerless are given new opportunities and responsibilities. "The belief that Spirit baptism equips every believer, men and women alike, for ministry, reveals the leveling influence of modern Pentecostalism and the key to its rapid growth."

Despite the power exercised by Pentecostalism's leaders, these same leaders remain close to the people, not least because they are typically drawn from the same socio-economic class.

Pentecostalism empowers Latin American women, emphasizing self-worth and autonomy in a machismo culture. God is also placed above family, freeing Pentecostal women from the fetters of tradition Latin values. Moreover, Pentecostalism is able to resolve marital conflict because it redefines the chattel relationship. Pentecostalism also provides women with skills, power within a church setting, and thus legitimacy.

The explosive growth of Pentecostalism through Latin America has strongly challenged the religious hold of the nominal church. So much so that the Pentecostal movement is regarded as a new Reformation no less profound than the Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe.

Spirit Quest International is mindful of the debt owed to all the pioneers that went before and continue to blaze the trail for the blessings of the Holy Spirit.