

Diakrisis (Australia)

'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry,
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Contents

P.2,3 Editorial

P.4,5 Persecution Watch List

P.6 Christianity in the UK; Australia Since Covid; Shocking Statistics in the West

P.7 Another Bethel Church False Prophet Exposed

P.8 Celebrity 'Conversions'

P.9,10 'Outreach' Deceptions

P.11-17 Pentecostal Founders - Charles Parham

P.18 Why Study Church History?

P.19 Spurgeon's Salvation

P.20 To our Subscribers and Supporters

Editorial

We have written many times that the church is sadly too often conforming to the fashions of the day (Rom.12:2). For decades now we have seen the coming and going of various fads which have arguably brought few results. The statistics in the west clearly show a decrease in percentage of populations as Christian, and an even worse decrease in bible literacy. Yet the various fads keep coming...

We have had sports stars in the form of strong men, weightlifters, footballers, who have attached the name of Jesus to their successes. We have novel t-shirts, holy hardware of trinkets and charms to inspire...books - top sellers with new ideas based ever so loosely on scripture, some heretical - the *Prayer of Jabez*, *Jesus Calling*, *The Purpose Driven Life*, *The Shack*...and top selling books of after death experiences (many proven fraudulent)...books with new formulas for dating and marriage...best sellers with titles that titillate with stories of signs and miracles that will never happen to most people...and TV evangelists, fallen or false prophets...

Has any of the above really taken us closer to our Bible, the sanctified life, to revival? Again, *the statistics speak otherwise*. But what is the common thread in all the new fads and ideas? - they are *aimed at the heart to create an atmosphere* of excitement, to enthuse. But what has been the result, where has it all left the church but with an emotional attachment to things that just don't last?

The promises and reports of revivals come and go. Many things have been tried - mass public baptisms, crusades...Universities have reported 'revivals' with little Gospel preaching and doctrines of moral conversions rather than faith and repentance before a God who must judge and punish sin. The one thing common in most reports is extended 'worship' times, with *music being a great mover*. Have we not learned from the false revivals with the manifestations of the 'Toronto Blessing' (1994), which devastated many churches and produced false prophets?

What many will simply not consider is the epidemic of false conversions to a Jesus who has not made them 'a new creature in Christ and old things are passed away' (Gal.5:17). The statistics alone show an appalling illiteracy in foundational Gospel teaching which should convince any that there is a multitude of professing Christians who simply have not been truly converted (Matt.7:22,23).

The one thing missing in so many of the fads that have come and gone is *the Gospel preached and doctrine expounded*. The latter has been replaced by efforts to *create an atmosphere that excites the heart*. Top of the list as one of the most compelling forces is *music*. The power of music to create a mindset should not be underestimated - whereby a lack of Gospel can be replaced with a counterfeit appeal to the heart. Jesus and the apostles never used music with the Gospel. Take away the music in many churches and you would have empty churches! Take away the music when presenting the Gospel and calling for decisions, and how many would make decisions, let alone be converted? The Holy Spirit and the power thereof has been replaced with atmosphere, motivational appeals, emotion...

Where did all this superficial counterfeit Christianity that appeals to the emotions come from? Some would cite the new Pentecostalism of the early 20th century. Certainly many new extra-biblical teachings and practices were introduced with

that movement. But if one digs deeper there is one era beforehand which introduced new practises which became the foundation for evangelistic practices today.

The two Great Awakenings in America in which whole towns and colleges were converted, make many of the so called 'revivals' of the last century and this century look like non events. The first Awakening was 3-5 years long, the second 25 years. The first reached to the eastern seaboard in the 1740's; the second began in Kentucky Tennessee and by 1800 spread south and west. *Hundreds of thousands of people were converted in churches, colleges and seminaries.*

But towards the end of the Second Great Awakening a new preacher, Charles Finney, came with a different gospel and 'new measures'. He introduced the '*protracted meeting*' and the '*anxious seat*'. At the end of sermons he would say: '*There is the anxious seat; come out, and avow determination to be on the Lord's side*'. These '*new measures*' included '*enquiry rooms*' for after meetings. The '*anxious bench*' led to the modern '*altar call*' of today. Finney's understanding of the salvation process was that a person became a Christian when his own will made a decision. One of Finney's most famous sermons was titled '*Sinners Bound To Change Their Own Hearts*'.

Finney was a self confessed Pelagian. Pelagius taught that man could earn God's grace in salvation by his ability to use his 'free will' to his own merit. His views were condemned as *heresy* in the Council of Carthage in the year 418. Like Pelagius, Finney denied much of the depravity of man (Jer.17:9 Is.64:6,7); he rejected original sin; and denied that fallen man is unable to repent or believe of himself and that the Holy Spirit must draw him first (Rom.8:6,7; 1Cor.2:14) Jn.6:37-44). He told stories of personal miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Finney had people stand to make confessions with sermons such as '*make yourself a new heart*' (1831). His '*new measures*' divided congregations, the Presbyterians splitting into two groups. By 1830 Baptist churches had adopted the new measures and by 1835 new practices such as the 'altar call' were a fixture in many churches. Finney also did not believe in an imputed righteousness (Rom.4) and further taught '*Now as entire sanctification exists in perfect obedience to the law of God, and as the law requires nothing more than the right use of whatever strength we have, a state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life on the ground of natural ability*'. His theology was considered heresy by many leaders of the day.

The results were devastating to some communities. The fall away rates were huge. Churches sent out 'circuit riders' to evaluate the results in what was termed 'burned out districts' after Finney had been there. The evaluations were scathing, describing multitudes of once professing people who were now hardened to the Gospel. *The fads did not produce lasting fruit.*

Reader, ignore the fads! *Be not conformed to the fashions of this age but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Rom.12:2). Bible reading and prayer will not last if supported by an atmosphere appealing to the fleshly heart. Heed the warning of the last days false signs and wonders (Matt.24:24). Stay with orthodoxy, that which is the written 'faith once delivered' (Jude 3). Strive for holiness in the Word and in prayer. Live in the Gospel. Run the race and finish well (Heb.12:1)!

Terry Arnold

Persecution Watch list

The 2026 World Watch List recently released by Open Doors US...found that approximately 388 million Christians around the world face some form of intense persecution or discrimination for following Jesus Christ....More than one in seven Christians were called to suffer for their faith last year, an increase of more than 8 million compared to 2024...

North Korea

North Korea...[is] arguably the most dangerous place on earth to follow Jesus...being marked by...‘post-communist oppression’ and ‘dictatorial paranoia’...North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un and his government demand worship and absolute allegiance, forcing Christians who believe in a power higher than the state to gather in secret, especially after an ‘anti-reactionary thought law’ was introduced in 2020. North Koreans are encouraged to inform on their neighbours even for simple acts such as clasping one’s hands or quietly mumbling a prayer...Those who arouse even the slightest suspicion of paying homage to Jesus Christ instead of the Kim cult potentially condemn both themselves and their families to execution or indefinite imprisonment in one of the country’s brutal labour camps...The nation has an estimated 400,000 Christian believers...Despite these dangers, ‘the underground church in North Korea is alive’ a North Korean Christian said. Believers continue to follow Christ with quiet courage, deep faith and a willingness to give everything for the sake of the Gospel’.

Iraq and Afghanistan

The Taliban’s return to power after the U.S. withdrawal in 2021 has been disastrous for the thousands of Christians remaining in Afghanistan, where Muslims feel obliged to maintain clan and family honour by killing or otherwise persecuting those who leave Islam.

...The Taliban...conduct random searches of phones to search for Christian content...In Iraq, the number of Christians have dwindled from nearly 1 million to about 187,000 over the past decade of political upheaval and war, during which ISIS made particular targets of Christians...

...Reports have circulated that many in the Muslim world are experiencing striking supernatural dreams of Jesus Christ declaring Himself to be the Lord...

Somalia

...Much of the growth of extreme violence against Christians is concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. Sharia Law reigns in Somalia, effectively prohibited conversion from Islam to Christianity...The militant Sunni terrorist group al-Shabaab...seek to eradicate Christianity and openly executes suspected Christian believers...Islam remains the only legal religion...

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Nigeria

Nigeria, a West African country...is the global epicenter of violence against Christians...Of 4,849 Christians killed worldwide for their faith during the reporting period cited by Open Doors, 3,490 were Nigerian, which marks an increase from 3,100 last year. Nearly 15 million people were displaced and forced to flee their homes because of persecution...Violence from Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) has Christians subjected to brutality.

The Rev. Yakubu Muton, a Nigerian pastor, recounted to Global Christian Relief how he hid with his goats as he listened to nine Christians being hacked to death in his rectory. 'We were hearing their noise, hearing their cries before they killed them. And they killed them. They cut them to pieces. They burned them'.

China

...The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)...has sought to close down a number of the unregistered churches, those that were not officially aligned with the Communist Party, and close those churches out...The CCP is also regulating online behaviour by banning Bible apps and any live videos with religious or Christian intent.

...The CCP is especially concerned with...the youth, banning minors under 18 from entering churches or participating in religious activities...Christians are routinely imprisoned and tortured...Chinese are increasingly expected to declare allegiance not just to the CCP, but to Chinese President Xi Jinping himself.

Egypt and North Africa

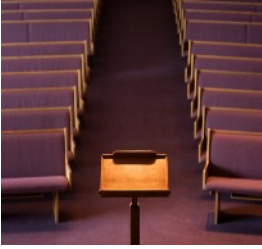
...Egypt remains a dangerous place for its roughly 10 million Christians...Persecution mostly arises against Muslim converts to Christianity ...21 Christian construction workers were famously kidnapped in Libya and beheaded by ISIS militants on a beach near Tripoli in 2015...All of the men were Egyptian Coptic Christians except one from Ghana who converted upon witnessing the faith of the others who refused to renounce Jesus Christ despite weeks of torture.

Russia, Iran, Vietnam and Nicaragua followed China in the number of Christians arrested because of their faith. Mexico led in the number of abductions and assaults against Christians in the world, with 376 verified incidents...The drug cartels target Christian pastors, leaders and youth workers because their efforts at drug prevention...are seen as a threat against cartel control.

The report also highlighted an 'abrupt and unmistakable' shift in tone from the USA under the Trump administration toward global Christian persecution, pinpointing Vice President JD Vance who has raised the alarm...

(Compiled from The Christian Post, 13th & 18th Jan, 2026, citing Watch List Report, Open Doors by CEO Ryan Brown)

Christianity in the UK



The number of Christians in the U.K. has been dwindling...The 2021 census found that less than half of the country's population identifies with Christianity...In 2022 the U.K.'s Office for National Statistics showed only 46.2% (or 27.5 million) of the country's more than 67 million people say they are Christian. In 2011...it was 59.3% of the population, or 33.3 million people...In 2001 more than 70% of Britons identified as Christian.

(Jon Brown, Christian Post, Oct/2025)

Australia Since Covid 19

Approximately 1 million Australians now attend church weekly (less than 3.5% of population), a figure lower than in previous years. Statistics and surveys within Australia also show that since the Covid 19 epidemic, weekly church attendance has recovered to about 89%. In the U.S. - since Covid, similar results show more churches are closing than new ones opening.

Shocking Statistics in the West

'A majority (53%) of self-identified Christians agree that 'a person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, will earn a place in Heaven'. A majority of Catholics (73%) believe that doing 'good things' is enough to secure a place in Heaven. Less than half of Evangelicals (43%), mainline Protestants (43%), theologically identified born-again Christians (42%), Protestants (41%), Pentecostals (41%) and Christians who attend independent and non-denominational churches (35%) said the same.

... 'There remains a shocking degree of misunderstanding among Christians regarding sin, repentance, forgiveness and salvation' said CRC Director of Research, George Barna,... 'Millions of people who regularly attend Christian churches believe that eternal salvation does not depend on the sacrifice of Christ because of our sins...

...The findings of the AWI 2025 report are similar to the American Worldview Inventory 2020 survey...which found that 52% of people who describe themselves as Christian accept a 'works-oriented' means to God's acceptance'.

(Christian Post, Ryan Foley, 8/12/2025)

Editor's comment:

What gospel is being preached in these churches? Increasingly we need to state what the gospel is not (Eph.2:8,9; Tit.3:5).

Another Bethel Church False Prophet Exposed

Bethel Church admits failures following Mike Winger's exposé of a Shawn Bolz's alleged prophetic deception and sexual abuse. Bethel leadership finally acknowledged insufficient action and claims it has implemented 'new accountability measures'.

In the video '*The Skeletons in Bethel's Closet are Now Going to Speak*', Winger details a decade-long pattern of fraudulent prophetic practices and sexually inappropriate behaviour by Bolz, claims of which are backed by interviews with former employees, ministry associates and insiders. Winger accused church leaders of failing to warn congregants and the global Christian community after learning of allegations years earlier.

Bolz's prophetic ministry for years drew large crowds through highly specific 'words of knowledge', including birth dates, addresses, names, personal details, delivered as divine revelation. Former insiders alleged Bolz obtained information particularly through social media, then presented it as supernatural insight. In a 2016 interview Boltz claimed '*I started to get birth dates and anniversary dates of strangers, grounding them in the knowledge that God knows them and cares about what they care about...I began to hear where people went to school and the types of careers they had, almost like it was information on their 'about' tab*'.

Multiple former employees and associates also accused Bolz of sexually inappropriate and abusive behaviour spanning more than a decade. Witnesses described repeated incidents of Bolz's nudity in front of younger men and his self-gratification in front of subordinates. Alleged victims described long-term psychological harm. Witnesses interviewed separately gave accounts corroborating one another.

Bethel Church, a globally influential charismatic congregation in Redding, California, platformed Bolz for years. Bethel Church leadership were aware of sexual allegations since 2019.

(Excerpts from *Christian Post*, Jan 26, 2026)

Editor's Comments:

Bethel church has had *many* false prophecies, false healing claims. They claimed a rising from the dead would occur after a 2 yr old child died (*Diakrisis* 2020 March/April); One of their leaders falsely prophesied Trump would win the 2020 presidency (*Diakrisis* 2020/Dec). Despite their teaching on healing, Pastor Johnson's wife died of cancer after claims of healing (see 2022 Sept/Oct); and meanwhile, Johnson's son on the leadership team is 85-90% deaf in both ears. Claims were made of a woman having her amputated toes grow back *during a service* led by Johnson (2024/July). There have been unproven claims of 'angel feathers' and 'gold dust' falling on their congregations, (*hundreds of times* since 2014 *in several different buildings*).

At the time of printing yet another Bethel 'prophet' (Ben Armstrong) has been stood down. How is it that the 'prophets' supposedly regularly hear from God, yet cannot discern a false prophet among themselves?...

Celebrity ‘Conversions’

Recently it has been fashionable for celebrities to convert to Christianity and be baptised. Sports stars, singers and celebrities profess Christianity or ‘reconvert’...Football stars give glory to God for their wins and achievements.

A bizarre example recently highlighted the lack of understanding of what it is to be a born again, Bible believing Christian. Lily Phillips, a 24 year old porn star and famous for having sex with 1,000 men in 12 hours, recently was baptised for a second time. She has since defended her faith in which she vowed to continue creating pornographic and sexually explicit content, recently receiving an award for Adult videos. She also condones same sex marriage and pro choice for abortion.



She claims her relationship with God is *‘personal and not defined by public opinion’*. Recently she stated: *‘Even though I am Christian, I don’t plan on quitting my job anytime soon...I understand that my faith and my work don’t fit neatly into everyone’s expectations of what a Christian ‘should’ look like. I’ve spent a lot of time reflecting, praying and being honest with myself’*. She said her relationship with God is *‘personal, ongoing, and rooted in grace, not in public approval or moral perfection...Christianity for me...It’s about sincerity, growth, and trusting that God meets people where they are, not where others think they should be...Questioning my faith or worth isn’t something I’m open to’*.

On Instagram Phillips shared a video of her ‘re-baptism’, with a minister submerging her in water. Phillips testified she faced a *‘little bit of a hardship in her personal life, which led her to look to God for help in that...I kind of felt the need to start speaking to God again. I hadn’t really practiced faith for a while. I just wanted to get re-baptized to kind of reinstate my relationship with God’*.

Assessment:

Many might think the author has chosen an extreme example here, but the *same thinking* is indicative of what many celebrities testify. What is noticeable here, and with many celebrities, is the ‘conversion’ often does not mention Jesus Christ, but a belief in God rather than Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Bible conversion has *fruit* - the fruit of holiness, repentance, a changed life - a *‘new creation’* in which *‘all things are passed away’* (2Cor.5:17). That includes repentance from debauchery, not justifying sins. (What exactly is Phillips repenting of?) True conversion is not just lip service, a decision, praying a prayer. It is not a means to elevate ones brand of fame. You cannot continue to live in fornication and expect not to wake up in Hell (Pr.5:3-14; 1Cor.6:9). *‘Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’* (Rom.6:1-2). *‘Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity’* (2Tim.2:19). How many who have had such ‘conversions’ will pass into eternity and hear the words *‘then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity’* (Mat.7:23)?

Terry Arnold

'Outreach' Deceptions

'For six straight years, a church in a mid-sized town hosted one of the best community barbeques you could imagine. The food was incredible. Smokers fired up at dawn, volunteers served mountains of pulled pork and ribs, and the aroma drifted across the neighbourhood like an open invitation. People came from everywhere - families with kids, retirees looking for conversation, even city officials. The average attendance? About 650 every year. Not bad for a church that worshiped around 175 on Sundays.

The church members loved the event. They called it their 'annual outreach'. They worked hard...and sincerely hoped people would come to church...But...after six years, the number of guests who actually showed up for worship was zero...

The members scratched their heads. 'We feed them' one said. 'We're friendly...We give out flyers and put signs everywhere'. They couldn't understand why a crowd of hundreds could enjoy the food, enjoy the people, and never darken the doors of the church building.

This church's story isn't unusual. I've seen it in towns across America. ...Fall festivals, concerts, car shows, you name it - and then wonder why no one returns. It's not that the events are bad...they're often excellent. The problem is deeper - and it's rarely about the barbeque.

Members do not connect with the guests beyond the event.

Most church members assume friendliness and connection are the same thing. They're not. Smiling while handing someone a plate of barbeque is nice - but it's not a relationship. Saying 'Glad you came!' as a family walks away is courteous - but it's not connection. At most big church events, the interaction stops the moment the guests leave the parking lot.

The folks in that barbeque church...even prayed that people would visit the church afterward. When the event ended, they went home, tired but satisfied that they had 'done outreach'. They didn't realize outreach hadn't even begun.

True connection happens when church members step beyond the event itself. It's when a member sits with a guest at a picnic table and asks about their family. It's when someone follows up with a simple text saying, 'It was great to meet you today - let's grab coffee sometime'. It's when members invite guests into their homes, not just to their church.

Most unchurched people...gladly attend something that's fun and free, but until church members learn to move from event-based friendliness to person-based connection, the gap between the crowd at the barbeque and the congregation on Sunday will remain.

Members outsource evangelism.

Somewhere along the way, many church members started believing that evangelism could be delegated - outsourced... 'If we host a big enough event, the pastor or staff can handle the Gospel part'. The event becomes a convenient substitute for personal witness. It feels spiritual without the risk of actually talking about Jesus.

That barbeque church fell right into this trap. The members truly believed the

event was evangelism. After all, it had the word 'outreach' printed on the flyers. They assumed that by cooking, serving, and smiling, they were fulfilling the Great Commission. Meanwhile, no one shared their story of faith. No one prayed with a neighbour. No one extended an invitation beyond 'Glad you came - see you next year'.

It's easy to see why this happens. Talking about faith can feel uncomfortable. ...So, instead of engaging in personal evangelism, many church members hide behind programs. The event becomes...a safe way to 'do evangelism' without ever mentioning Jesus' name...No event...can replace believers who personally share the hope of Christ...The Gospel moves forward through relationships, conversations, and invitations - one person at a time. The barbeque can open the door, but someone still has to walk through it.

The event is not connected to the church's mission.

One of the biggest mistakes churches make is treating big events as stand-alone moments instead of part of an ongoing mission. The barbeque was great...but no one ever explained why the church was doing it in the first place. The guests ...never connected the event to the Gospel or the mission of the church. When events are disconnected from the mission, they become ends in themselves. It becomes 'a great turnout' instead of 'a changed life'. Churches count the number of hot dogs served instead of the number of conversations that lead to Christ...the mission gets lost in the smoke of the grill.

But when an event is clearly tied to the church's purpose - loving people, making disciples, pointing to Jesus - everything changes. Members begin to see the barbeque not as an end, but as a means. They pray for people by name. They follow up intentionally. They talk about why the church exists and who it exists for.

A church on mission never wastes an event. Whether it's a barbeque, a fall festival, or a concert, every gathering becomes a step in the journey of helping people meet Christ. The event ends - but the mission never does.

(Christian Post article, 8/12/2025, originally published at Church Answers by Thom Rainer, 'Why Guests Don't Come To Your Church After a Big Event')

Editor's comment:

This scenario is played out in most towns and churches across our nation - with churches having 'food banks', BBQ's and various 'outreach' events. Many are simply not even Gospel based at all. 'Food banks' have recently become almost a fad for churches to do.

I would have no problems with any such events, so long as it is Gospel based in some way - whether with tracts, evangelists engaging in conversations, or Gospel messages given. But feeding bodies, caring for the needs of the community without a message for their eternal souls is really not the Christian mandate or the Gospel. It may as well be a false gospel. Our mandate, our command, is not to just feed bodies, care for peoples needs, but rather if we do so to attend to the soul and the need to hear and understand the Gospel of Christ crucified for sin, Christ coming to judge the living and the dead.

Pentecostal Founders - Charles Parham

The founding of the Pentecostal movement is attributed to Charles Parham (1873-1929). He was the first to plant Pentecostal churches and from his teaching came the *Assembly of God* affiliation, the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world. He was the founder of the distinctive doctrine of Pentecostalism - '*The Baptism with the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues*'.

Ministry and Life

At age 15 Parham was a lay preacher in the Congregational church before switching to Methodism. By 1893 his theology was considered controversial within Methodist Episcopal circles. He published works denying Hell was eternal, believing it was a '*destruction of the wicked*' ('annihilation'). He was influenced by David Baker, a Quaker, and in 1895 left the Methodist church complaining about their 'hierarchy' and that their preaching was not by 'direct inspiration'.

In 1896 Parham married David Baker's daughter. The Quakers were known for their inward seeking of God's voice through private impressions. In the late 1800's they became involved in the new Methodist *Holiness Movement*. *It was this latter movement that was the seedbed for the new Pentecostal movement to be founded by Parham*. Upon leaving the Methodist church Parham established his own independent itinerant ministry, preaching the ideas of the Holiness Movement.

Topeka

In 1897 Parham and his wife fell ill. When they recovered he attributed the recovery to God healing them. He then refused all medical help and began preaching divine healing. His ministry was now 'by faith', taking no offerings. In 1898 he moved to Topeka, Kansas and established a *Bethel Healing Home* and began a new magazine titled *Apostolic Faith*.

In 1899 he suffered a breakdown and took a sabbatical. He began to investigate offshoot ministries from the Holiness Movement. Much time was spent at 'Shiloh', a ministry run by a Frank Sandford in Maine. From writings it is clear Parham was influenced greatly by Sandford. '*While in Shiloh Parham heard glossalalia for the first time when several students came down out of a 'prayer tower' speaking in tongues after hours of intercessory prayer.*' (1) Sandford, like many Holiness enthusiasts, longed for something *more* and was influenced by the new emphasis on Sanctification states and 'higher life' principles taught in Holiness camps. In 1899 Sandford was operating a '*Bethesda*' healing home. Medicines and doctors were banned. There were claims of a resurrection from the dead. Sandford became a 'chosen prophet'. He imposed fastings upon his people and if a healing did not occur, it was a 'lack of faith'. However, in Shiloh a 14 year old boy, Leander Bartlett, died of Diphtheria during a Small Pox epidemic. Sandford was charged with manslaughter as Leander did not receive medical care. After years of trials Sandford was found not guilty.

Sandford believed the *Shiloh* of the Old Testament was his Shiloh at Durham, Maine, and that it would restore the kingdom of Israel. He claimed personal revelations from God and in 1901 claimed to hear a voice say '*Elijah is here*'. He had a revelation to hire a boat and sail with others around the world and 'claim' countries for Christ. On route to Portland, a port in the North Atlantic, several people died and some had Scurvy. He was charged with the deaths of 6 people and sentenced to 10 years in prison in Atlanta, Georgia. He was released 7 years later. He predicted he would die violently in the streets of Jerusalem as one of the two prophets in Revelation. In 1948 he died in an armchair surrounded by a few friends.

Influenced by Sandford, in 1901, *6 months after Parham had stayed at Shiloh*, Parham was teaching 34 students at his Bethel Bible school at Topeka, where events would occur that would shape the entire Pentecostal movement to come. At the end of December 1900 Parham urged his students to study Acts 2 for evidences to 'receive the Holy Spirit', (this being something more than the Holy Spirit given at salvation). After days of prayer and worship they were gathered together on December 31st and again late the next evening January 1st. A student, Agnus Ozeman, requested prayer to 'receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit'. She began to speak in what they believed was 'tongues'.

At first some assumed Ozeman spoke in a Chinese language. Others left the group and wrote scathing reports of the manifestations of the students. A Samuel Riggins wrote: '*I believe the whole of them are crazy...They were racing about the room talking and gesticulating and using this strange and senseless language which they claim is the word from the most high*'. (2)

Parham exaggerated the spontaneousness of the Topeka event as his later accounts show. Diary accounts show Ozeman had already spoken in unknown tongues before her 'baptism' at Topeka. She was a 30 year old unmarried 'holiness enthusiast' known for going from one holiness camp to another seeking the mystical and sensational.

An important aspect of Parham's character and evident in many modern day Pentecostal accounts is the *amount of exaggeration*. Parham's claims of numbers of students at his mission was exaggerated, often double that later shown by historical accounts. He claimed William Seymour (leader of the later Azusa St. church) attended his school for 3 months when in fact Seymour attended 5 weeks. In Parham's own conversion accounts, there is also arguably a level of exaggeration: '*There flashed Heaven, a light about the brightness of the sun; like a stroke of lightning it penetrated, thrilling every tissue and fibre...*' (3)

However, *Parham did not believe in 'tongues' being anything but a real known human foreign language*. Parham had a linguist ascertain what language Ozeman spoke. It was quickly found to be ecstatic, not a real language. Yet Parham believed a last days revival would be for 'missionary' work with miraculous signs and wonders including 'Zenoglossalia' ('*Zeno*' - foreign / '*glossa*' - known language). However, what occurred at Topeka was *unknown* ecstatic utterances.

Later Agnus Ozeman admitted that after the Topeka experience she entered a 'spiritual darkness' because she '*rested on the tongues and other demonstrations instead of resting alone in God*' and that she had been wrong to believe that all

people would 'speak in tongues' when 'baptized with the Holy Spirit'. (4)

Soon after, Parham's son died (16/03/1901). Then in July they were forced to leave the property when it was sold. This was despite Parham originally predicting the property would be the training centre to send out missionaries with the 'new languages'. (The land later became the property of the Roman Catholic church).

Parham now took his ministry to Chicago as a 'healing ministry' which drew increasing crowds. At one time the Joplin, Missouri, *News Herald* reported claims that 1,000 had been healed and 800 had been converted. Parham continued to spread his 'apostolic faith' and in 1904 the first church built specifically as a Pentecostal assembly was constructed in Keelville, Kansas. Other 'Apostolic Faith Assemblies' were established in Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Several deaths were reported from false healings and during deliverance of demons. On Oct. 23, 1904, a 9 year old girl, Nettie Smith, died after her father refused medical treatment due to belief in Parham's teaching.

Azusa Street

Parham had a black student, William Seymour, who on leaving the Topeka Bible school, was locked out of a Los Angeles Nazarene Holiness church after preaching a sermon considered to be 'heresy'. He then held house meetings and spread his experience of 'tongues' from Topeka. Seymour received a license as a minister of Parham's *Apostolic Faith* movement under Parham's authority. In 1906 he began meetings at 312 Azusa Street. Both men and women preached (Pentecostals were the first to have women pastors and preachers). As time went on visions and manifestations became more extreme. Pastors went to Azusa St. to receive and take their experiences home to other churches.

Pentecostals often cite the Azusa Street 'revival' as the restoration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Many in Azusa St. Los Angeles claimed to receive the 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' with the 'evidence' being the gift of speaking in 'tongues'.

Despite Parham realising the tongues at Topeka were not real languages, at Azusa St. some tried to write the 'languages' down. Copies of these show examples similar to the following transcribed from Topeka: '*Eurossa, Eurossause, rela sema calah mala kanah leulla saga nalan. laigle logle lazle logle. Ene mine mo, sah rah el me sah rah me*'. These sentences were 'translated' as: 'Jesus is mighty to save', 'Jesus is ready to hear', 'God is love'. (5)

Azusa St. had up to 1,000 people in attendance at some services. Seymour was concerned about the '*spiritualistic manifestations, hypnotic forces, fleshly contortions*' and lack of order in the assembly. (6) It was reported that '*spiritualists and mediums from the numerous occult societies of Los Angeles began to attend and to contribute their seances and trances to the services*'. (7) He requested Parham come and assess the situation. When Parham came to Azusa St. the lack of evidence of 'zenoglossalia' (known foreign languages) was an embarrassment. He renounced Azusa St. for their '*babbling*' and their coercing of such sounds. (8) He found '*hypnotic influences, familiar spirit influences, spiritualistic influences, mesmeric influences and all kinds of spells and spasms, falling in trances, etc. All*

of these things are foreign to and unknown [to the Apostolic Faith movement] outside of Los Angeles, except in the places visited by the workers sent out from this city'. (9) Parham was eventually asked to leave. He later denounced the movement as a case of *'awful fits and spasms'*, (10) of *'holy rollers and hypnotists'*, (11) *'a freak imitation of Pentecost. Horrible awful shame!'*. (12)

Parham's accounts are backed by newspaper reports. The *Los Angeles Times* (April 18th.1906) wrote: *'Meetings are held in a tumbled down shack on Azusa St...The devotees of the weird doctrines practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of wild excitement...Coloured people and a sprinkling of whites compose the congregation. And the night is made hideous in the neighbourhood by the howlings of the worshippers who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve-racking attitude of prayer and supplication. They claim to have the gift of tongues and to be able to comprehend the babble.'*

Accounts by visitors reported visions of Jesus and manifestations including complete loss of control, contortions, kissing between sexes and people fainting. A Christian eye-witness account stated: *'Men and women...were talking excitedly 'in tongues'. A man (holding on to a post) seemed to be in possession of...the jerks. He was muttering and mumbling...but would also shriek. About 60 or 70 of the 300 present were 'possessed of the spirit'...There was barking like dogs, hooting like owls...'* (13) One eye witness who wrote in favour of the proceedings stated: *'...A divine 'weight of glory' was upon us, we could only lie on our faces. For a long time we could hardly remain seated..the 'jerks' and 'treeing the devil' [crawling and barking up a tree like a dog] were in evidence in the [Azusa] mission'*. (14)

Respected theologians also gave reports. Dr. Campbell Morgan, a Bible college president, pastor and commentator, described the Azusa St. activities as *'the last vomit of Satan'*. R.A. Torrey, evangelist, pastor and author, declared the new movement as *'emphatically not of God, and founded by a Sodomite'* (Parham was eventually charged with Sodomy). (15) H. A. Ironside concluded the holiness and Pentecostal movements were *'disgusting...delusions...insanities...pandemoniums where exhibitions worthy of a madhouse or a collection of howling dervishes [causing] a heavy toll of lunacy and infidelity'*. (16) Clarence Larkin, a commentator known for avoiding criticism of others wrote: *'The conduct of those possessed, in which they fall to the ground and writhe in contortions, causing disarrangement's of the clothing and disgraceful scenes, is more a characteristic of demon possession, than a work of the Holy Spirit...We see that we are living in 'perilous times' and that all about us are 'seducing spirits' and that they will become more active as the dispensation draws to its close, and that we must exert the greatest care lest we be led astray'*. (17) W.B.Godbey, a Methodist evangelist, said the Azusa St. movement was the result of *'Satan's preachers, jugglers, necromancers, enchanters, magicians, and all sorts of mendicants'*. (18)

Many modern day accounts of the Azusa St. 'revival' have been re-written, exaggerated and ignore the accounts of fleshly or demonic manifestations, as well as the infidelity, immorality and disorder. The church was shut down in 1911. But by then other cities had planted churches modelled after Azusa St. Pentecostal groups such as the *Assemblies of God*, the *Church of God*, the *Pentecostal Holiness*

church, the *Foursquare Gospel*, the *United Pentecostal church*, all trace their roots to the 1906 Azusa St. 'Revival' in Los Angeles, pastored by William Seymour.

From Azusa St. came the first Pentecostal missionaries to be scattered throughout the world. William Durham (1873-1912) after visiting Azusa St., went to Chicago, then took the experience to Italy. In 1907 he explained how he received his 'Pentecost': *'He worked my whole body, one section at a time, first my arms, then my limbs, then my body, then my head, then my face, then my chin, and finally at 1 am Saturday March 2, after being under the power for 3 hours, he finished the work on my vocal organs, and spoke through me in unknown tongues...'* (19) Durham would recite 'tongue messages' and have them interpreted. Many were published in Pentecostal papers - one sample read: *'I, the spirit of liberty and of truth, will speak if you will let me have my way.'* (20)

In 1909 Durham's wife died after childbirth. In 1910 his 6 month old daughter died of pneumonia. He married again in 1912 and that year died at age 39, leaving behind a pregnant 29 year old wife and 2 young children from his first marriage.

From Italy the Azusa experience spread to Brazil. Friends of Durham took the experience to their country, and a few Persian men took it back to their homeland.

Francisco Olazabal, with other Mexicans took the experience to Latin America. Olazabal was later known for his exaggerated and false claims of mass healings.

Pentecostalism in India was founded after embracing teachings from the Holiness Movement, then from 'missionaries' from Azusa St. Amanda Smith and Minnie Adams preached a second 'Baptism with the Spirit'. Tongues came in 1906 after people heard reports about 'tongues' and 'interpretations' in Topeka and Azusa St.

The 'oneness' movement (about 20% of Pentecostal groups in America who deny the orthodox view of the Trinity) - also has its roots from the Azusa St. Church.

Many missionaries went from Azusa St. expecting miraculous languages to be understood. A 1909 report described the results: *'Missionary S. C. Todd, of the Bible Missionary Society has made investigations in three mission fields...People who have gone from this country to Japan, China and to India expecting to preach to the natives of those countries in their own tongue; but in no single instance have been able to do so. They have needed an interpreter...Some of them are in absolute destitution and are dependent on their Christian brethren there for the necessities of life...In some cases they are in danger of losing all faith...'* (21).

Meanwhile, in 1907 Parham was arrested for homosexual acts with a 22 year old man in San Antonio, Texas. (22) The case was not prosecuted for lack of enough evidence. From then unto his death he was considered a fallen prophet by many. In addition there were allegations of financial irregularity in his ministry. He continued his ministry to the end, raising funds for a trip to the Holy Land to search for the Ark of the Covenant. This trip was cancelled when Parham claimed to have been 'mugged' in New York and had his money 'stolen'. (23) In early January 1929, Parham collapsed while presenting pictures of a Holy Land visit. He was brought home to Baxter Springs, Kansas, where he died (Jan.29, 1929). All his minister sons also died young, some in their 30's. His predicted mass end-time revival had failed to materialise. Almost all his students believed that the second coming would occur before 1925, (the Jehovah Witnesses had also set this date).

Doctrine

The late 1800's Holiness Movement made a steady progression away from the orthodox teaching on sanctification - ie. a *continuous* life long inward work of the Spirit *conforming one to the image of Christ* (Rom:8:29) and *continuously filling* the believer upon salvation (Eph.5:18). In seeking holiness and to eradicate sin many sought a *crisis point* of sanctification. This led to *second states or stages* of sanctification, and for some a heretical 'entire sanctification' (sinless perfection). Much of this *laid the foundation for the distinctive Pentecostal doctrine* to come.

Parham was the first to publicly introduce the new doctrine of a 'Baptism with the Spirit' as *subsequent* to receiving the Holy Spirit at salvation, with the '*evidence*' that speaking in tongues was the proof of this baptism. This doctrine was resisted at first by Holiness leaders (the Nazarine church deleted the name 'Pentecostal' from their titles to separate themselves from the new movement).

Seymour, the leader of the Azusa St. movement, '*ultimately repudiated the initial evidence teaching (speaking in tongues)*'. (24) Yet today this is the very foundational doctrine of Pentecostal churches!

The unknown tongues of today are linked to Azusa St. and clearly contradict the three biblical cases of speaking in tongues being *known foreign languages* (Acts chapters 2,10,19 - the Greek words for 'tongues' being '*glosse*' and '*dialektos*', showing a *known* language).

Parham had other extra biblical doctrines. He did not believe in the eternity of Hell, favouring the view of many cults - annihilationism. He stated: '*Orthodoxy would cast this entire company into an eternal burning hell; but our God is a God of love and justice, and the flames will reach those only who are utterly reprobate*'. (25)

Parham rejected a 6 day creation, believing that Adam and Eve were not part of creation, that others existed outside of the garden. He believed God took 2 days to create humans, non whites on the 6th day, whites on the 8th day. Parham was a sympathizer for the Ku Klux Klan and even preached for them. (25) He taught a 'British Israelism' (ie. Anglo Saxons as descendants of 10 lost tribes of Israel). (26) He believed his 'baptism with the Spirit and fire' with tongues '*sealed the bride of Christ for the marriage supper of the lamb*'. The bride of Christ was also the 144,000 taken in the Rapture to escape the Tribulation.

Parham's morality was also severely questioned. He was well known for the sexual overtones in his sermons, (he sometimes asked all females to cross and then uncross their legs, saying, '*now you've just opened the gates of hell*'). (27)

Conclusion

Parham believed, as many Pentecostals do, that the Holy Spirit communicated with him personally and directly apart from the scriptures. From early years he left orthodoxy and sound doctrine. The influence of the Holiness views, Frank Sandford and other fringe or cultic leaders, influenced Parham to seek more than what was in the 'faith once delivered' (Jude 3). His 'healing ministry' overshadowed any true Gospel ministry that may have been there in the beginning.

Most Pentecostals would be shocked if they did an unbiased investigation into the forerunners and ‘heroes’ of the Pentecostal movement. Names such as Charles A.A. Allen, Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee-Semple Mcpherson, Kathryn Kulman, William Branham and Smith Wigglesworth - many of them were documented as false teachers, false prophets who lived immoral lives with tragic deaths. (28)

Pentecostals today would claim miraculous gifts and the ability to discern error. But as one ex-pentecostal writes: ‘...*The same rule which they measure these things, they fail to apply to the roots of Pentecostalism itself, indeed to it’s founder [and] to Azusa St...The Bible says ‘by their fruits you shall know them’...Mr Parham was a faith healer. He taught he could only effect a cure in the person if they had faith to be healed...that God condemned the use of medicine...He believed in British Israelism...He supported the Klu Klux Klan until he died...This was the man who was the founder of Pentecostalism...supposedly chosen by God to bring new revelation, new gifts, a new move of God into the world...He was arrested for Sodomy...There was an enormous amount of scandal and controversy...and is it not the same with the false prophets today? The same measuring rod that is used to measure false prophets today...Pentecostals who stand against these do not apply that same standard of testing to the roots of Pentecostalism’.* (29)

Terry Arnold

Recommended Reading: ‘*Fields White Unto Harvest - Charles Parham & the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism*’ by James Goff (an unbiased, documented historical account by a descendant of a co-worker of Parham). A follow up book is: ‘*Portraits of a Generation*’ by Goff & Wacker.

See also our website taministries.net for more on the founders of Pentecostalism.

(1) *The Holiness Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the 20th Century* Synan, P.90, 2nd Ed (2) *Topeka Daily Capital* 6/1/01 (3) *Parham Voice*, P.15 (4) *When The Latter Rain First Fell: The First One to Speak in Tongues*, Latter Rain Evangel, Jan.1909, P.2 (5) *Topeka State Journal*, 9/1/01 (6) *The Birth of a Lie*, K. Napier www.christiandocctrine.net (7) *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, Vinson Synan 1971 (8) *Life*, Parham P.169 (9) *The Life of Charles Parham* Sarah Parham P.168 (10) *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, Vinson Synan, P.112 (11) *The Life of Charles Parham*, Sarah Parham P.168 (12) *Apostolic Faith* Charles Parham, Baster Springs, Kansas 1912 (13) *A Critical History of Glossalalia* C.W. Shumway, PhD Dissertation Boston Uni 1919 (14) *Another Wave Rolls In* Bartleman. Voice Publications 1962 (15) *Holy Laughter to Holy Fire* by Michael L. Brown P.197,198 (16) *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement* Synan P.144 (17) *Dispensational Truths* Clarence Larkin (18) Parham was eventually charged with sodomy. *Holy Laughter to Holy Fire* by Michael Brown P.197,198 (19) M.W. Moorehead, *Apostolic Faith* 1907, P.8 (20) *Messages Spoken in New Tongues Interpreted*, BM April 15 1908 P.2 (21) A. Seddon *Edward Irving and Unknown Tongues* (22) *Fields White Unto Harvest* James Goff P.106,136 (23) *Ibid* 145,16 (24) *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (25) Blumhofer 1993 P.45 (26) *Apostolic Faith* July 1927 *The Ten Lost Tribes* (27) *Fields White Unto Harvest* Goff, P.228 (28) See *TA Ministries* website (29) Mark Haville *Signs and Wonders-Exposed*

Why Study Church History?

This author has derived inspiration out of studying church history. It started at college but took a deeper dive when I was asked to give some lectures on church history within the first 500 years AD. Fortunately I had many months to prepare as the subject was relatively new to me. It opened my eyes as to how little I then understood of the early church and the ‘church fathers’ in those centuries.

This interest was furthered when reading through the lives of the martyrs during the English Reformation. Their persecutions and sufferings make for soul stirring stories that inspire, but also brings one down to earth as far as our own feeble struggles compare. The lives of the Reformers, and the Puritans who followed, make for compulsive reading - the near death experiences of *John Bunyan*, his 3 imprisonments (two for 6 years each) and his famous ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’; the adventures of *John Newton*, his strange romance with his future wife and his subsequent powerful ministry; the tens of thousands of people who trekked in all weather to hear George Whitefield thunder out the Gospel; the amazing faith and prayer adventures of George Mueller; and Charles Spurgeon, the ‘Prince of Preachers’, his capacity despite illness to manage an orphanage, pastor a mega church and live out his doctrines. So many more could be listed from the Church Fathers to the last of the Puritans and the likes of Martyn Lloyd Jones...

There are those now who speak evil and are vitriolic of some of these great men and find fault in their character and doctrines. One in particular lately seems to be all but hated - John Calvin. He is accused of inventing ‘predestination’, yet he was not as strong on the subject as a host of other divines before him, predestination actually being a small part of his ‘Institutes’ - a work which many scholars believe is one of the greatest expositional studies of the era. He is accused of having people burned when he was the head of the Geneva Council - *neither is true to history*.

In studying history one gets to see how cults, false religions and false teachings developed and how the Christian leaders of the day opposed them. One is made aware of the many new doctrines that began with the 20th century. Huge changes were introduced in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) and a proliferation of new doctrines in a new Pentecostal movement which mid 20th century then morphed into a wider Charismatic movement.

However, imbedded in the historical fabric of the church is an orthodoxy and a ‘*faith once delivered*’ (Jude 3). God is seen to faithfully move his church along and protect it even in the most severe persecutions and trials. The motivation is for us to trust God and to persevere in the faith. We have ‘*a great cloud of witnesses*’ who have gone before us (Heb.12:1).

Studying church history is also to study a missionary movement at the Reformation which formed into our modern missionary movement. The stories of missionaries going to uncharted lands should inspire us to speak the Gospel.

Grab a biography and study the heroes of the faith, and the revivals! (See our website for ‘*Heroes of the Faith*’ in the ‘articles’ section).

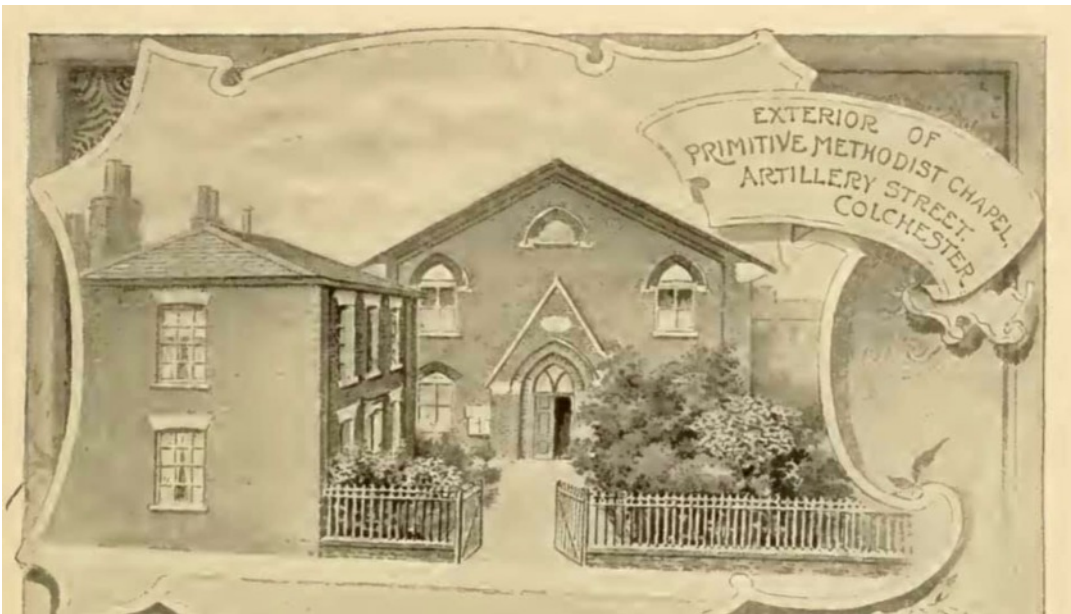
Terry Arnold

Spurgeon's Salvation

Charles Spurgeon remembers the time of his salvation. A Methodist preacher was preaching and as Spurgeon remembers: *'Then, stopping, he pointed to where I was sitting under the gallery, and he said, 'That young man there looks very miserable'...and he shouted, as I think only a Primitive Methodist can, 'Look! Look, young man! Look now!'...Then I had this vision - not a vision to my eyes, but to my heart. I saw what a Savior Christ was...Now I can never tell you how it was, but I no sooner saw whom I was to believe than I also understood what it was to believe, and I did believe in one moment'*.

This single event caused a ripple effect. Charles became a member of a small local church, where he was baptized and became a Sunday school teacher. He then went on to preach sermons, and eventually became the pastor of New Park Street Chapel which grew to be the largest Baptist congregation in London at that time. He was the pastor/preacher at this church for 38 years.

It was during those 38 years at New Park Street Chapel that Spurgeon earned his title as the *Prince of Preachers*. He preached approximately 3,600 sermons and published 49 various columns of commentary. He often gathered crowds, one of them nearing 24,000 people. His sermons were printed and widely distributed. His preaching was straightforward and Biblical. Spurgeon's sermons are known for the 'three Rs' - ruin, redemption and regeneration, with a heavy emphasis on regeneration. It's the emphasis on regeneration that is often credited for his profound impact. (Adapted from *Reftoons* and various sources)



The church where Spurgeon trusted Christ

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