The Church of Monett

"Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord we persuade men."

The Root and the Fruit of the Modern Salvation Message

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Why do the charismatic movements hold the "gifts of the holy spirit" and all of the experiences that go along with it as the central doctrine of their theology?

To find the answer we need simply go back to their founder Wesley. Notice Wesley's perception of faith which he describes as 1) a strange warming in the heart 2) that he trusted in Christ for salvation 3) an assurance that his sins were forgiven.

Wesley relates that he experienced these feelings after hearing about the change God (ie.. the Holy Spirit) makes in the heart by Faith. If we continue to sniff out the trail in all of this theology we find Luther's teaching on Justification by Faith at the end of the trail. In fact it was during the reading of Luther that Wesley had his experience.

When we compare Wesley's "salvation experience" with Luther's, we can understand why Wesley believed and taught what he did. The salvation experience that Wesley had at Aldersgate is similar to Luther's own testimony, in that Wesley *felt* his heart warmed, he *felt* he did trust in Christ, an *assurance* was given that his sin were forgiven.

In the same way Luther *understood* Gods justice, he *saw* that a just man lives by faith, he *understood* that the Gospels are to be taken passively, and *understood* that a man is justified by faith and not by works. When he *comprehended* this he *felt* himself to be born again.

These feelings that Wesley and Luther describe were the affirmation that they were Born Again, and Forgiven. And for Wesley what he described was the evidence that God (ie.. the holy spirit) had worked in his own heart. However unlike Luther, Wesley sought an additional experience which is commonly refereed to as the Sanctification or Spirit Baptism. Although Wesley taught sanctification, he never experienced it himself.

Wesley's ideas about sanctification would later be transported into the Pentecostal doctrine of "initial evidence". Basically this doctrine is the fulfillment of Wesley's never experienced teaching on sanctification. This doctrine sets out to determine whether-or-not an individual has been sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit. (Source:http://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/ Charles_Parham)

How does one know he has been sanctified? Well, like Luther and Wesley *felt* that they were justified, those who are sanctified *really really* feel it. Here is an excerpt form "The Small Sects of America". This book describes the beginnings of the Charismatic movement at one of the Largest American revivals, the Cane River Revival:

> “In this movt. appeared certain phenomena unique among motor automatism's. One of these was the Holy Laugh. Another was the "barks", The votaries would fall upon all fours, form a group lope about and gather at the foot of a tree yelping barking and snapping like dogs. This exercise was called treeing the devil.

> Most extreme and notable for all of the paroxysms was the famous "Jerks". The seizure was experienced by large numbers. The victim shook and jerked at every joint, the body was violently bend double, the head was thrown forward and backward and from side to side with great rapidity. The body would be thrown to the ground where it bounded about on the ground from place to place like a ball, or the feet would be affected and the *victim* would jump around like a frog... p.93”

As a protestant in your theology (you may argue that you aren't, but if you believe in Justification by Faith alone then you are by merit) you really are no different than you Pentecostal brother. Why? Because he is believing in the same feeling oriented salvation theology that you believe in.

In short - the doctrine of initial evidence is the inevitable mutation of Luther's teaching on justification by faith. There are serious errors not *only* with the Pentecostal movts. salvation teachings, but with the entire evangelical and protestant movts salvation teachings as well. Each of these groups trace their roots back to Luther and the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, a teaching in which we are taught to trust in a feeling for our salvation. If our feelings are the basis for our salvation then we better all let the barking begin.

To put it all into a single condensed thought I would simply say that Luther’s teachings on salvation led to the doctrine of initial evidence. Luther knew he was saved because he experienced a moment in which he comprehended, and understood salvation. Wesley knew that God had worked in his heart, because he experienced a moment where he perceived that he trusted in Christ, and felt an assurance was given to him. In like manner the Charismatic movt teaches that the evidence of the holy spirit is an

intense experience of feeling such speaking in tongues or being slain in the spirit.

Before Wesley passed away he recognized that he taught a misleading salvation message, one in which *feelings* rather than works are the basis for salvation. Luther taught that a man is justified by faith w/o works. Nearly three hundred years later when Wesley came onto the scene he saw the "fall-out" of Luther's teaching on Justification by Faith. When Wesley came on the scene he recognized that there was a lack of holiness in the churches, and spent his whole life combating this.

The problem is that Wesley (in order to fix Luther's teachings) simply tried to add an additional experience to Luther's justification by faith. It took Wesley nearly his entire life to recognize that it didn't work - before he died he recognized that the problem wasn't simply a lack of holiness, it was the very gospel he was preaching. Wesley recognized the message of justification by faith was *why* people were not living holy - because they were trusting in a single experience - a single moment as the basis for their salvation.

I think Wesley sums it up as clear as you can make it, and I don't know if I can add anything to what he says in the excerpt mentioned above. Even so, there is one commenht I would like to bring up. Wesley says that "salvation is not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition."

What does he mean by this - not by the merit of works but conditioned upon works? Is this to say that Wesley believed salvation is conditioned upon our works/obedience before it can be received? How else are we to understand him? Doesn't this line up with 1 john 1 5.-7 "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us form all sins." and a hundred other scriptures just like it?

It's amazing, Wesley actually reformed his message before he died; from a message in which he taught people to receive justification (get saved) and then walk in obedience, to a message in which he taught one must obey before he has salvation. Perhaps Wesley recognized that the first message, the message of justification by faith alone deceived people. Think about it... Why should I live a holy life if I've already been saved. If I'm already saved then holiness, and obedience is just an extra-curricular activity. When Wesley saw that this didn't work he must have realized salvation is conditioned upon mans obediant response to God.

Although Wesley didnt come to these conclusions until his old age, it did seem he taught a message of holiness throughout his ministry, and surely this was light to the sincere. However because he taught the holiness message coupled with Luther's message this militated against what he was trying to get across and left a big grey area that someone who were not sincere could exploit and hide in. And isn't this exactly what the Anabaptists were fighting aginst in their day?

The sad thing about all of this, is that by the time Wesley saw his teachings were diong they had already done their damage. And by the time the Great Awakening rolled around his teachings (which he had withdrawn from) rooted themselves into Evangelical theology, and in 1909 they were carried into the Pentecostal movt providig the ground work for the doctrine of initial evidence. And wit this doctrine the most deceptive assertion of salvation is made - that you have to speak in tongues, you must be saved, and It dosen't matter if you're a fornicator, adulterer or drunkard, because if you speak in tongues you must have the holy spirit! What could be more deceptive?

Mutter some jibber jabber in church on sunday and your a Chistian...(Read Acts 5.32)

The Pentecostal teaching of initial evidence is really nothing more than an exaggerated form of what most evangelicals and protestants salvation message, trusting in an experience where you have "faith". What could be more deceptive? (Read John 14). I thank Brother Wesley for making these issues to clear, let us take heed to our doctrine as he has admonished us.

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