

# PRE-PENTECOSTALIST HISTORY

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For those who want to know where pentecostal revivals sprang from, look here:

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## A PROTO-PENTECOSTALIST TIME LINE

The history of the Holy Spirit's dealings with human beings goes back a long, long way -- indeed, to the very beginning of the human race. The history of the Holy Spirit's dealings with the church is about 2000 years long. The Spirit has been there all along, not just when there are '[manifestations](#)' and 'wonders', but when love was made manifest between people, when God's word was spread and God's will was sought, and when ordinary Christians ate the bread and wine, and called forth the wonders of a Godly life. People all along the way have been baptized, inspired, healed, comforted, taught, led, and empowered. This was all made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. (I'll deal with that important history on other pages.)

If you were taught (as many Pentecostalists are) that the Spirit's history in the modern church started at Azusa Street, you were, to be blunt, **taught very wrong**. Pentecostalism had a history before Azusa, just like you had a history in which you spent some time in a womb. And those who have been taught about Azusa are as often as not taught a (literally) whitewashed version of what happened. I believe it is important for people to know where their beliefs

come from, and what path brought them to our era. Here's a time line with thumbnail sketches of some of what set the stage for the birth of today's Pentecostal movements. Keep in mind that these are the documented links, the most important ones in forming the movement. There were other streams of thought and practice, especially in the Black and Anabaptist churches, which also played a role in shaping Pentecostalism, but those streams were either not written down or were passed along in a very doubtful form, and thus are now lost to us.

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around 1400 : The itinerant Dominican preacher **Vincent Ferrer** (1351-1419) preached in the western Mediterranean area. His speaking, and the results of it, bear a strange resemblance to modern Pentecostalism. He sometimes preached about the end times, apparently even claiming that the Antichrist was alive in his time. There are reports of many manifestations, including shaking and possibly glossolalia, and also reports of healings. The downside of Ferrer's work was how he persecuted and tortured Jews, in order to put fear into them and force conversions.

17th and 18th Century : Many pietists started to emphasize a **spiritual experience after conversion**. For instance, some 17th century Puritans, notably Thomas Goodwin and John Owen, held that in this experience the Spirit seals the believer with confidence in being a beloved child of God. They didn't see a connection between the experience and signs or wonders; they saw it mostly as a blessing of enlightenment.

late 18th century : the **Wesleys** led a reform movement within the Church of England, that eventually became Methodism.

1790 : **Manuel De Lacunza** (under the pen name 'Ben-Ezra') wrote *\*The Coming of the Messiah In Glory and Majesty\**. It was a truly weird book which spoke of the events of Daniel and Revelations as actually taking place in history yet to come. It was quite different from today's truly weird end-times materials, but for 1790 the whole idea seemed fresh. The book was 'indexed' (banned) by the Catholic Church by 1824, but Edward Irving (see below) had the book translated and published in England, with a foreword which mostly espoused his own end-times views.

August 1801 : For the year or so, there had been some strange stirrings in Kentucky, where a few dozen people would gather to hear preachers talk in exciting ways not unlike those of Jonathan Edwards in the Great Awakening. Only, it was a bit more folksy and a bit more emotional. **Barton Stone** studied what was happening, and wanted to see if it would work on a larger scale. So, he set up a "sacramental meeting" around his **Cane Ridge** Presbyterian meeting-house, not far from Lexington KY. It was planned to be the largest preaching event the area had yet seen. But no one was prepared for how big it was going to be. The preachers came from many denominations, but they had common threads in their message : they called on everyone to put their sins behind them, commit themselves to Christ, and live a holy life. The crowds reacted with vigor -- fainting, shaking, jerking, and singing. At its peak, there were about 20,000 at the scene; by the time it was done, about 40,000 had been there at some time. Many, perhaps most of them, were not churchgoers. What was to be a weekend's meeting became a week-long event of almost non-stop preaching, even in the early mornings. Cane Ridge set the stage for the "camp meeting" revivalism which swept the US for the rest of the century. The camp meeting revivals were the scene that birthed revivalist Methodist and Baptist churches, and eventually led to Finney-style Congregationalism, the Holiness movement, Pentecostalism, and the modern Evangelical movement.

1825 : **Johann Adam Moehler**, a German Catholic, publishes his book \*Unity In the Church\*. Moehler held that the Church is a living organic community (a Body) put together and given gifts by the Holy Spirit. (This has consequences regarding the role of laity in the church, and thus the gifts given to those laity.) His most lasting contribution was his influence on Catholic thought regarding the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

1825-1830 : There were scattered rumors of strange occurrences in southern Scotland and rural Northumbria : shaking, fainting, and having fits, followed by a period of extreme devotion. These were women, 30+ years old, the wives of low-wage workers, usually rejected out-of-hand by the rest of society. **Margaret MacDonald**, in Scotland, had an especially striking vision which matches very well with some current Pentecostal beliefs about the End Times. She believed that the Church was about to be tried and purged to reveal the real Bride of Christ. She may have spoken in tongues, and was known by Edward Irving.

1831 : **Edward Irving**, a Scotsman and pastor at the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) church at Regent Square, London England, began having parishioners who received signs that we would today call 'charismatic'. (The first one to do so in full public view was Mary Campbell.) For more on Irving, a vibrant preacher and often contradictory man who was constantly on the cutting edge of doctrinal questions, check [this](#) out.

1843 : **Johann Blumhardt** began praying on a dying girl, placed his hands on her, and she was healed. This created a sensation which drew people from all over Western Europe. This was so, even though Blumhardt himself insisted that it was not his hands that healed, but God's response to honest prayer. Blumhardt saw sickness as a way that the Devil's power was brought to bear on our sin-soaked lives. He believed that the way to resist sickness is to confess our sin and change our ways. As years went by, he stressed searching the soul to find 'hidden sins' that could be making us ill. However, he did not believe that one could become perfect or sin-free before God in this lifetime, which to him was why all of us become ill.

1845 : **John Morgan**, of Charles Finney's Oberlin College, wrote in the Oberlin Quarterly (issue 1, p.115) that "the baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, in its Pentecostal fullness, was not to be confined to the Primitive Church, but is the common privilege of all believers". Finney's own view of 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' was not much different from most evangelists of his day. Yet, Morgan and others from Oberlin College (especially **Henry Cowles**) and from the Finney revivals were re-thinking what that baptism meant, in light of the Finney revivals' vigorous manifestations.

1851 : **Dorothea Trudel** healed several colleagues of hers in Mannedorf, Switzerland, by way of prayer and anointment with oil. She went on to found several faith-healing centers ('faith homes'), using the same methods plus close attention to living a Christian way of life. Her main associate was **Samuel Zeller**.

1856 : **William Arthur** publishes \*The Tongue Of Fire\*, a Holiness book which signaled the start of a shift among some Holiness people in a direction which would lead to Pentecostalism. His prayer at the end of the book asks God to send the greatest demonstration of the Spirit's power ever.

1860s : [Phoebe Palmer](#) (1807-1874), a Holiness speaker and publisher, wrote

mission letters (in her popular magazine \*Guide To Holiness\*) that spoke in terms of a new Pentecost and the Spirit at work in her era. Palmer is responsible for much of the theology and language that became the common marks of Holiness and Pentecostal churches, especially about the Holy Spirit's work in sanctification, mission, and prayer. A case in point is when she changed the magazine's name from 'Guide to Christian Perfection' to 'Guide To Holiness'. Another example is in her 1854 book \*Faith and Its Effects\*, where she spoke of our being able to 'claim' health and salvation for ourselves. Her books were widely ridiculed by church leaders and mostly ignored and dismissed by mainstream theologians, but the books had a powerful impact on the next generation of Christian leaders. By the 1880s, after her death but following where she was heading, the magazine was describing revival activities as being 'pentecostal'. She also left her mark through her imagery of Christ as the altar, her activity in support of women's roles in ministry, her magazine's reporting on far-flung revival news, and her Five Points Missions in impoverished city neighborhoods.

1862 : **Charles Cullis** came to a Phoebe Palmer 'Tuesday Meeting' in New York in major personal distress, and came to the faith there. Cullis became determined to take the gospel (and the Holiness message on perfection) to the poor and ill. He founded orphanages, schools, and [health](#) institutions. In 1869, after reading about Dorothea Trudel's work, [faith healing](#) became a full part of his approach. Cullis worked hard to lead Holiness leaders to accept this merging of the two streams. He did this so well that later, when Holiness gave birth to Pentecostalism and Pentecostalism gave birth to the Charismatic Movement, faith healing was seen as a natural part of the new developments. Cullis' gospel events in the rest of the 19th Century created a platform for his combination of Holiness doctrine and faith healing, and the general public and press looked on with wonder and puzzlement.

1867 : **Otto Stockmayer** was healed by Samuel Zeller in the Mannedorf manner. Soon, Stockmayer would be opening his own faith-healing home in Switzerland. Stockmayer was more keen on spreading the word about faith healing than Blumhardt, Trudel or Zeller. He wrote a popular book on it, and spoke at many religious gatherings all over Western Europe, including several of Britain's Keswick Conventions (see below).

1870 : **Asa Mahan**, a leader and teacher at Oberlin, publishes \*Baptism Of the Holy Ghost\*. Mahan was a leading architect of Oberlin's perfectionist

approach to [holiness](#), focusing on Christ's role in it. But he began to shift toward a view in which the Holy Spirit accomplished not only salvation, but holiness or completeness ([sanctification](#)) in the initiating event, termed 'baptism of the Holy Ghost'. His book marked the shift and shaped one of Pentecostalism's key doctrines.

1870s : the **Keswick Conventions**. Keswick became Britain's annual hub for Holiness teachings of a mostly non-Wesleyan kind. At Keswick, they spoke of being given victorious power by the Spirit over inward sin, where a Wesleyan might talk of Christ's gradual 'eradicating' it (removing it, root and all). Keswick viewed baptism as an anointing more than a cleansing. Any later spiritual experience made for perfection (or at least, near-perfection) of what one does and how one lives. US teachers had an influence on Keswick (especially **Robert and Hannah Smith**), and Keswick had influence in the US, especially in R.A. Torrey, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) churches, and at the Moody Institute; also later in Foursquare, Open Bible, and Gospel Lighthouse churches. Keswick's influence is still felt today on the British charismatic scene.

1871 : While Chicago burned, **Dwight Moody** was burning, too, with a very different flame. His successful church was burned in the great fire, but right at that time he underwent a shakedown experience from praying with two of his female parishioners who said that he was lacking the power of the Spirit. He went on to be a major US revivalist preacher. He emphasized many of the same things Holiness and Pentecostal believers did, but in a different way.

1870s : **Elena Guerra** (1835-1914), a Catholic educator of young women, popularized a [discipline](#) practice called 'the New Cenacle' (= 'upper room') throughout Mediterranean Catholicism. In it, the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost are spent in [prayer](#), meditation and devotion, to prepare for the coming of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, just as Christ's followers did in their upper room after He ascended. She had a broad view of what those gifts were, and held that the Spirit had great gifts for the common believers of her day. She even received the attention and support of Pope Leo XIII for her activities. She believed very strongly that the Church was paying far too little attention to the Spirit. Her work made for a greater public awareness of the Holy Spirit, especially among those who were likely to emigrate to the US.

Also somewhere in this time was **William Doughty's** ministry in New

England, which may have included some form of tongues-speaking (most likely in the early 1870s), and certainly shaking, fainting, dancing, and the like. His following would later hook up with what was developing in the South.

A key figure for the Holiness movement among African-Americans at this time was **Amanda Berry Smith** (1837-1915). She preached in the US, England and Africa, spreading a Palmer-flavored Methodism. She also wrote a moving autobiography.

1880s and 1890s : There were scattered rumors of xenoglossia (the speaking of known languages that are unknown to the speaker) at various revival meetings in the Southern US, and one or two incidents which may even have crossed into **glossolalia** (ecstatic speech). It seems as if no one knew what to make of them, and the incidents remained scattered, going no further. And when it happened, it involved some very shady characters, thus discrediting it in the eyes of most believing Christians. Yet, there were several Holiness leaders who had openly expected such speech as a 'sign from God' that full-scale revival was about to sweep the land, wondering aloud why people were not speaking in unhindered tongues as they did in the days of the early church. Also, there was an explosion of books about the Holy Spirit. Most of these books were very poorly thought out and are best forgotten, but nearly all of them talked the kind of talk we would think of today as being Pentecostal.

At about this time, many Holiness congregations had reached a point of crisis with the larger church bodies which bore them. (Or, perhaps, bored them...). Hence the formation of the **Fire-Baptized Holiness Church**, and also what was later known as the **Churches of God (Cleveland TN)**. Some parishes left Black Baptist bodies to form new Holiness churches. The Methodists had the worst of the splits. Methodism was the mother of the Holiness movement. But Holiness' nitpicky emphasis on behavioral rules and its authoritarian leanings were too much for most Methodists, and Methodism's loss of gospel focus and growing acceptance of worldliness were too much for Holiness followers. (There were very many who felt both were right about each other, but of course they had nowhere to go.) Holiness had come to accept the theology of a 'second blessing' separate from salvation and water baptism, and Methodism had come to reject it. In the largest split, tens of thousands left the Methodist Church to form the **Church of the Nazarene**. The most telling name for one of these Holiness splinters from Methodism was that of **Ambrose Crumpler's**

## Pentecostal Holiness Church.

1895 : **Benjamin Irwin**, a former lawyer and Baptist convert to Holiness theology, had an experience of the "Baptism of Fire". He then formed the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church. From that experience, he fashioned a system of spiritual baptisms, each of which he gave names (like, 'lyddite'). He also created the idea of a 'third blessing' after separate blessings of salvation and sanctification. His life spun out of control from that time on, and in 1900 Irwin had to publicly confess his sins and step aside from church leadership.

**Carrie Montgomery** (1848-1946) opened a US healing-house in Buffalo NY, then later mover to Oakland CA and opened one there (the 'Home of Peace'). She became one of the best-known healers of her time. She had close ties with A.B. Simpson of the C&MA, but was later involved in the Assemblies of God from its start.

Somewhere in this time, **Maria Woodworth-Etter** started having her own tent revival meetings in Illinois, claiming that people spoke in known tongues and were healed. It's said that she was not known for being gracious, nor for being considerate of her host churches' values and beliefs.

1899 : The century mark brought considerable speculation about **the end of time**. Secular culture as well as holiness Christians were a-buzz with talk of living in the final era. Holiness preachers most especially linked the reappearance of manifestations (like those we now call 'slain in the Spirit') with Christ's arrival within their lifetimes. This would set the stage for describing the Azusa revival as the start of the '**Latter Rain**', the big burst of gifts, wonders and signs of power that was said would be unleashed onto the believers to prepare the way for Jesus' return.

December 1900 : Traveling Holiness preacher **Charles Parham** is having a year-end series of revival meetings in Topeka Kansas USA, when one of the women there, Methodist **Agnes Ozman**, spoke in existing languages she did not know. The effect on those present was, to understate the case, blazing. From then on, a steady stream of tongues-speaking flowed from Parham's work. Parham and his students began to teach others about this. In Parham's travels, he met many of the hottest, and weirdest, Holiness preachers, such as **Alexander Dowie**, a faith healer from the Chicago area, and Ben Irwin. These hot preachers made him gag; with few exceptions, they did the sins they most

preached against, and did them in a wanton and cynical way.

1902-1906 : The **Welsh Revival**. Its most important figure was **Evan Roberts**, an unlettered former coal miner with complete recall of the Scriptures and a manner of public speaking that struck deep into those who heard it. There was some revival activity in the area long before Roberts : in the 1750s (under Howell Harris and William Williams) and the 1810s (under Christmas Evans and John Elias). Roberts had the personality and drive to push it throughout southern Wales, affecting England, and attracting much notice in North America. Roberts inspired the creation of house prayer groups to pray for the growth of the revival.

1905 : One of Parham's students, **Lucy Farrow**, paved the way for Parham to teach some courses in Houston Texas. One of those she sent to him was one **William Seymour**, a black who was apparently about to become a minister in the Church of God (Anderson IN). According to the segregation law and the landlord, and enforced by Parham, Seymour had to sit in the hallway instead of the classroom because he was black. However, he must've learned his lessons well, since he would soon be pastoring a ministry whose effects are being felt all over the world, and more now than ever. Meanwhile, Farrow was the first key networker and 'prayer warrior' of the Pentecostal movement, giving her help wherever help was needed.

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More relevant history links :

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For a view of the history of Pentecostalism, from an insider who is also a skilled historian, check out [The Origins of the Pentecostal Movement](#) by **Vinson Synan**. He's posted a really good report.

I'd love to hear from you. Please write me at

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