A "First Waver" Looks at the "Third Wave":
A Pentecostal Reflection on Charles Kraft's Power Encounter Terminology

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The origin of the Third Wave movement is often considered to be the controversial course, "MC 510: Signs, Wonders and Church Growth" taught by John Wimber at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1982. Although it is not quite clear whether this course was the starting point of the Third Wave, some key figures of the movement — namely Charles Kraft and Peter Wagner — were dramatically influenced by the course and testimonies of John Wimber.

Peter Wagner in 1983 was probably the first person who coined the designation, "Third Wave"; subsequently, this term has been widely used to refer to various evangelical segments of the church that emphasize supernatural experiences in a believer's life. This designation identifies the movement as the heir of two earlier spiritual renewal movements of the twentieth century: classical Pentecostalism (the "First Wave," from the 1900s) and the charismatic movement (the "Second Wave," from the 1960s). As the designation "Third Wave" implies, the current movement is simply a further evolution of the two earlier movements which emphasized the Holy Spirit and the contemporary manifestations of the Spirit.

The phenomena of the Holy Spirit identified by the Third Wave participants are not uniform, although some common features that characterize the movement have emerged. The Third Wave can be

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classified as a movement associated with a set of spiritual phenomena, or sometimes as a group of congregations, generally depicted by distinct spiritual manifestations attributed to the Holy Spirit. Examples of the Third Wave include churches such as the Vineyard, independent organizations like A.D. 2000 and Beyond, and individual Christians in evangelical churches who experience “the miraculous works of God operating as they have been in other (that is, Pentecostal and Charismatic) movements,” and yet not identified with either of them. Ultimately, there is no organization, coalition, or church that may represent the entire Third Wave movement. In this regard, the Third Wave movement is reminiscent of the Pentecostal movement in the early twentieth century, before it became a set of fragmented denominations. This comparison is not surprising, due to the fact that the Third Wave movement is in its formative stage.

Even among Third Wavers, differences in opinion about various issues make it difficult to identify a commonly held Third Wave theology. Despite this diversity, one of the most characteristic concepts identified with this movement is the “power encounter.” There are two major divisions in the dynamics of power encounter: “lower level” and “higher level” power encounters. The former is summed up as a deliverance ministry for individuals, and the latter as a more “strategic power encounter” aimed at defeating evil cosmic forces. Charles Kraft, Neil Anderson, and a growing number of their students have been involved in the deliverance ministry for individuals, often believers, while people such as Peter Wagner and John Dawson have engaged in strategic cosmic power encounters associated with the ideas of territorial spirits, spiritual mapping, and the prayer walk.

The focus of this article is on the “lower-level” power encounter, particularly as that encounter is formulated by noted missionary anthropologist Charles Kraft of the School of Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. Two articles that are representative of his views on power encounters are “Spiritual Power: Principles and

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