American "classical" Pentecostal teaching emerged in Topeka, Kansas in 1901 and began its extensive growth in Los Angeles in 1906. From there, it spread around the world. American Pentecostalism adapted and accommodated in complex ways as it permeated other settings. Studies of Pentecostalism in other cultures would enable a more precise definition of a broad and diffuse movement. A brief study of its early classical phase in Great Britain suggests some ways in which comparative studies might challenge our perception of the movement.

The roots of British and American Pentecostalism are closely interwoven, but the immediate story of the British movement begins in Norway with a Methodist minister, Thomas Ball Barratt, an Englishman by birth and education. During an unsuccessful fund-raising trip to the United States in 1906, Barratt identified fully with the Pentecostal movement. On his return to Norway, he launched a Pentecostal ministry which soon drew observers from other countries. Among these was Alexander Boddy, since 1886 vicar of All Saints Church, Sunderland in northeastern England. Deeply impressed by what he saw, Boddy invited Barratt to England for meetings in his parish.

Alexander Boddy had been attracted by the teaching associated with the annual Keswick Conventions to a concern for personal holiness and spiritual power. Since 1875, the Keswick movement had united under the general theme "All one in Christ", Anglicans and Non-Conformists who shared the determination to "overcome" sin and experience "enduement with power and the infilling with the Holy Spirit, the believer claiming his share in the Pentecostal gift." Keswick meetings were non-sectarian and orderly in their consideration of the Christian's inner life. Boddy was fortunate that his bishop, the widely-respected scholar, Handley Moule, was also a Keswick supporter and shared his interest in the practical experience of spiritual power.

Boddy had been deeply stirred by the Welsh revival, which he had visited, to anticipate similar awakening in his parish. The Welsh revival played a vital role in shaping the context in which Pentecostalism emerged in many parts of western Europe and the United States. Characterized by spontaneity, emotion and informality, this revival from its beginnings in 1904 claimed explicitly to be the start of the foretold end-times "latter rain."
"Wonderful things have happened in Wales... but these are only a beginning," wrote revival leader Evan Roberts. "The world will be swept by His Spirit as by a rushing, mighty wind... Thousands upon thousands will do more than we have accomplished as God gives them power." Roberts presented the revival as the prelude to a worldwide awakening and as the fulfillment of Joel 2.

The language of the revival would become part of Pentecostal terminology; the revival further popularized terms relating to spiritual power and associated them with specific conceptions of experience. Participants described the revival as having "Pentecostal character". "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" became, one leader reminisced, "a question loudly ringing out to the Church of God through the awakening in Wales." The Welsh revival gave such language renewed force and concrete experiential association just as Pentecostalism, emerged. In the spontaneity and emotional fervor of Pentecostalism, some would readily discern an extension of the Welsh event.

Reports from Wales by respected British evangelicals like F. B. Meyer and G. Campbell Morgan stimulated anticipation of similar renewals around the world. Boddy's visit to the revival stirred him to pray specifically for his parish. The accounts he shared in visits to other congregations strengthened the determination of his contemporaries to experience revival in Sunderland.

With both the teaching of Keswick and the experience of the Welsh revival influencing his response, Boddy accepted the Pentecostal message as the answer to his personal quest for spiritual renewal. During Barratt's visit to Sunderland in the fall of 1907, seekers mingled with curious spectators, and people began to speak in tongues. Sunderland quickly became the most important center of an English Pentecostal movement. There is no evidence that Boddy introduced Pentecostal practices into his regularly scheduled Anglican services. Rather, he added prayer and teaching sessions where the spontaneity and emotional release that characterized Pentecostal worship everywhere were encouraged. From these meetings, the message was carried across Britain.

Boddy remained an Anglican priest throughout his life and did not question the validity of the liturgy or of such conspicuous differences with American Pentecostals as infant baptism or confirmation. In the spirit of Keswick, it seems apparent that he hoped to stress the essential "Christian" character of the experience. His vision was for spiritual power through the Pentecostal experience for Christians in all affiliations, and so he encouraged seekers to remain in their churches. He was soon joined in the leadership of the movement by a fellow Anglican, Cecil