

Encounter: The Pentecostal heartbeat
In Pursuit of the s/Spirit of Pentecostalism

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Dr Keith Warrington

Introduction

Just over 100 years ago, Pentecostalism was born. Since then, it has grown to be one of the biggest and fastest growing components of Christianity.¹ It's big – but it's not what it was. Now, it's...

Multi-denominational

There are so many different Classical Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal and independent Pentecostal churches that it now takes two dictionaries, one of which has been revised, and a regular supply of books and articles to try to do justice to exploring them.²

Multi-cultural

Also, although originally a largely Western movement, it is now increasingly represented by people from the Majority world.³ 66% of Pentecostals now live in the Majority world; 87% live in poorer areas of the world; 71% are non-white.⁴

¹ The journal *Heritage* is dedicated to the history of the AOG (www.AGHeritage.org) in association with the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center; “They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn’t They? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings”, *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Dempster, M.W., Klaus, B.D., Petersen, D., (eds.) (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999) pp. 85-115; Menzies, W.W., “The Movers and Shakers” in Smith, H.B., (ed.) *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, (Wheaton: Victory, 1990) pp. 29-41; Synan, V., “An Equal Opportunity Movement” in Smith, H.B., (ed.) *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, (Wheaton: Victory, 1990) pp. 43 -50; Mason, C.H., *History and Formative Years of the Church of God in Christ with Excerpts from the Life and Works of its Founder: Bishop C. H. Mason* (Memphis: Church of God in Christ Publishing House, 1973); Anderson, *An Introduction...*, 19-165; Clayton, A., “The Significance of William H. Durham for Pentecostal Historiography”, *Pneuma* 1.2 (1970) pp. 27-42; Goff, J.R., *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988); Robeck, “Pentecostal Origins...”, pp. 166-180; Irvin, “Pentecostal...”, pp. 35-50; Jacobsen, *Thinking...*; Bloch-Hoell, N., *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development, and Distinctive Character* (Oslo: Allen and Unwin, 1964); Wilson, E.A., *Strategy of the Spirit: J. Philip Hogan and the Growth of the Assemblies of God Worldwide 1960-1990* (Carlisle: Regnum, 1997); Blumhofer, E.L., *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* (2 Vols.) (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1989); Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

² See www.keithwarrington.co.uk; See especially the various articles in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) pp. 3-282, 382-417, 467-472; 530-544; 640; 715-723; 777-783; 791-794; 797-801; 937-946; 961-974; 1157-1166; *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (ed.) Burgess, S., (London: Routledge, 2006); Jones, C.E., *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostalism* (2 vols., Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1983); “Reed, “Oneness...”, pp. 937-944; Anderson, *An Introduction...*, pp. 39-165.

³ Ma, “Growing...”, pp. 324-342; Larbi, K., “African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities”, *Pneuma* 24.2 (2002) pp. 138-166; Hollenweger, W., *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) pp. 1-74; Tinney, J., “Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement”, *Christianity Today*, 16.1 (Oct. 8, 1971), pp. 4-6; Jones, C.E., *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionistic and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1987); Anderson, *An Introduction...*, pp. 168-170.

⁴ Jenkins, P., *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 67; Anderson, A.A., “The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in South Africa”, *Pneuma* 24.2 (2002) pp. 167-184.

Multi-dimensional

Increasingly, it is more accurate to identify Pentecostalism in the plural form (Pentecostalisms) as there is no longer a set framework into which all Pentecostals easily fit.

In 1999, I edited a book entitled *Pentecostal Perspectives*.⁵ My initial plan was that it should be entitled *Pentecostal Distinctives* but I soon realized that Pentecostalism was less distinctive than it used to be. When one attempts to identify the core aspects of Pentecostal theology, similar difficulties soon arise, resulting in Clarke's observation that Pentecostal theology "is researched at the researcher's peril".⁶ Ma observes that it is 'simply impossible' to clearly identify what is the best definition of a Pentecostal.⁷

The very diversity of Pentecostalism means that it is less identifiable than it once was. Some of its most distinctive beliefs (including the baptism in the Spirit, speaking in tongues and its place as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit) are less distinctive in Pentecostalism than they were; at the same time, some of the foundational elements of Pentecostalism are now also present in the lives of many non-Pentecostal believers. The rise of Renewal Movements and neo-Pentecostalism has blurred the dividing lines. Yong concludes, "It is difficult, if not well nigh impossible, to 'essentialize' Pentecostalism conceptually".⁸ Furthermore, to be Pentecostal varies depending on the continent, tradition or denomination and the experience of the Spirit of the individual concerned.⁹ Even umbrella organisations, such as the Pentecostal World Conference, do not incorporate all (or even many) of the many Pentecostal groups in the world.¹⁰

What best defines a Pentecostal today? *What is the Pentecostal DNA?*

Hollenweger writes, "I do not know anybody who could convincingly define what 'mainstream Pentecostalism' is", compounded by the fact that despite their differences, "most Pentecostal denominations believe themselves to be mainstream".¹¹

Is a Pentecostal someone who believes in Pentecostal theology?

Some have sought to identify Pentecostals on the basis of their beliefs¹² comprising Jesus as Saviour, healer, baptiser and coming king,¹³ sometimes to which is added the

³ Yung, H., "Pentecostalism and the Asian Church" in Anderson, A.H., Tang, E., (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum, 2005) pp. 37-57.

⁴ Logan, J.H.Jr, "Black Pentecostalism", in *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (ed.) Burgess, S., (London: Routledge, 2006) pp. 60-64.

⁵ Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999.

⁶ Eds. M.S. Clark, H.I. Lederle, *What is distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989) 109.

⁷ Ma, 'Asian (Classical)...', p. 73.

⁸ Yong, A., "'Not Knowing Where The Wind Blows...'", On Envisioning a Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Religions", *JPT* 14 (April, 1999), (81-112) p.94.

⁹ Ma, W., "Toward an Asian Pentecostal Theology", *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 1.

¹⁰ Thomas, C.T., "Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century: 1998 Presidential Address to the Society for Pentecostal Studies", *Pneuma* 21 (1998), pp. 3-19.

¹¹ Hollenweger, "Past...", p. 46.

¹² Nichol, J.T., *Pentecostalism* (Plainfield: Logos, 1966) pp. 2-3; Hughes, R.H., *What is Pentecost?* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1963); Hughes, R.H., *Church of God Distinctives* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1968, 1989); Clark, *What is distinctive...?* p. 17; Cotton, R., "What Does it Mean to be Pentecostal? Three Perspectives. The Dynamic behind the Doctrine", *Paraclete* 28.3 (1994) p. 12.

sanctifying role of Jesus¹⁴ or the concept of blessing, the latter being a distinctive contribution of Yonggi Cho.¹⁵ More to the point, most Pentecostal beliefs are accepted by millions of Charismatic believers also.

Attempts to define Pentecostalism by its beliefs

A main distinctive (some would say the main distinctive¹⁶) of Pentecostalism is the baptism in the Spirit. However, the baptism in the Spirit has been variously interpreted by Pentecostal believers.¹⁷ Some anticipate that a consequence of the baptism of the Spirit will be power.¹⁸ However, the revision to the article defining the baptism in the Spirit as outlined in the AoG Statement of Fundamental Truths also identifies this power as resulting in “a more active love for Christ”,¹⁹ while others anticipate that the baptism in the Spirit will result in a greater sense of God’s presence²⁰ or a more consecrated Christian lifestyle,²¹ sometimes resulting in a crisis experience of sanctification. It has often been assumed by Pentecostals that as a result of the baptism in the Spirit, charismatic gifts will be made available to believers; it functions thus as the gateway to the gifts.²² However, it is difficult to defend the “gateway” model exegetically or experientially. Since the Spirit indwells every believer (1 Cor. 12:13) and gives every believer gifts (1 Cor. 12:6-7, 11), it is unclear why the gifts should only be granted after the baptism in the Spirit.

¹³ Dayton, *Theological Roots...*, pp. 21-22; Vondey, W., “Christian Amnesia: Who in the World are Pentecostals?”, *AJPS* 4.1 (2001) pp. 32-34; Wacker G. (“Wild Theories and Mad Excitement”, in Smith, H.B., (ed.) *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, (Wheaton: Victory, 1990) (19-28) p. 21); Macchia, F., “Theology, Pentecostal”, in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) (1120-1141) p. 1124.

¹⁴ Bay, “The Current...”, pp. 255-264; Land, S., *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) p. 18; Thomas, J.C., “Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century: 1998 Presidential Address to the Society for Pentecostal Studies”, *Pneuma* 21 (1998), pp. 3-19; for a critique, see Cross, T., “Can there be a Pentecostal Systematic Theology? An Essay on Theological Method in a Post-modern World” in *Teaching to Make Disciples: Education for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality and Life: The Collected Papers of the 30th Annual Meeting of the SPS* (Tulsa: Oral Roberts University, 2001), pp. 145-166.

¹⁵ Yonggi Cho, D., *Five-fold Gospel and Three-fold Blessing* (Seoul: Young San Publishing, 1983).

¹⁶ J. Bond, “What is distinctive about Pentecostal theology?” in Clark, *What is distinctive...?* 134.

¹⁷ D.W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987) 87-113; I.H. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretations of “Spirit-Baptism” in the Charismatic Renewal Movement*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988); C.D. Narciso, “The Doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: from a Pentecostal Pastor’s uneasy chair”, *AJPS* 2.2 (1999) 233-242; S.S. Schatzmann, “The Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostal Interpretation of Pauline Pneumatology”, in *Pentecostal Perspectives* ed. K. Warrington, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999) 83-85.

¹⁸ See Article 7 of the Fundamental Truths of the AoG which states that with the baptism in the Spirit comes “the endowment of power for life and service”.

¹⁹ C.M.Jr. Robeck, “An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God,” in *The Spirit and Spirituality. Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler*, eds. W. Ma, R.P. Menzies, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004) 239.

²⁰ W.G. MacDonald, “Pentecostal Theology: A Classical Viewpoint”, *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. R.P. Spittler, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 66.

²¹ See Article 8 of the AOG Fundamental Beliefs; Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality...*, 91-93; MacDonald, “Pentecostal...,” 66; D.W. Dayton, “Rejoinder to Laurence Wood”, *Pneuma* 27.2 (2005) 367-375.

²² See Article 7 of the Fundamental Truths of the AoG which states that with the baptism in the Spirit comes “the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry”; D. Gee, *Spiritual Gifts in the Work of the Ministry Today* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1963) 18.

But there are other divisive aspects related to this apparently central belief of Pentecostalism. The subsequent nature of the baptism in the Spirit to conversion has created a great deal of discussion in recent years, resulting in some diversity of opinion. For example while many assume that the baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to conversion,²³ others point to the account in Acts 10:43-44 where there appears to be no chronological subsequence. While many Pentecostals associate the gift of speaking in tongues with the baptism of the Spirit, viewing it as the initial, but not only, evidence of that experience,²⁴ others do not,²⁵ including some Pentecostal denominations.²⁶ Others offer a different perspective²⁷ or suggest that tongues are valid, or even normative, evidence but that they do not always occur.²⁸ The value of prophecy as a (better) sign of the baptism of the Spirit has also been voiced.²⁹

The distinctive practice of many Pentecostals has been speaking in tongues but also here there is division in a number of areas. Should the tongue be assumed as being directed to God (as praise) or to people (as prophecy)? How valid is it as a prayer language that should be received by all or is it to be used only in a public setting? How valid is the corporate speaking/singing in tongues without interpretation (in the light of Paul's guidelines (1 Cor. 14.13-19))? Is it appropriate to have no more than three expressions of tongues (1 Cor. 14:27) or is Paul's suggestion to be viewed as having value only in the Corinthian context where the abuse of the gift was significant? Is the gift of tongues to be identified as the Spirit's praying on behalf of the believer (Rom. 8.26)? Does praying in tongues have greater impact than praying in the vernacular? I could go on.

Is a Pentecostal someone who encounters...the Spirit?

A clue in our quest to locate the core of Pentecostalism may be gleaned from the early Pentecostals who were suspicious of creeds and preferred to concentrate on shared

²³ Article 7 of the AoG tenets of Faith identifies the baptism in the Spirit as "distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth".

²⁴ See Article 8 of the Fundamental Beliefs of the AoG; Article 5 of the constitution of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America; V. Synan, "The Role of Tongues as Initial Evidence," in *Spirit and Renewal. Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. M.W. Wilson, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 67-83; R.P. Menzies, "Evidential Tongues: An Essay on Theological Method," *AJPS* 1.2 (1998) 111-123; F.D. Macchia, "Groans Too Deep For Words," *AJPS* 1.2 (1998) 153-172; M.S. Clark, "Initial Evidence: A Southern African Perspective," *AJPS* 1.2 (1998) 209-217; D. Lim, "A Reflection on the 'Initial Evidence' Discussion from a Pentecostal Pastor's Perspective", *AJPS* 2.2 (1999) 223-232.

²⁵ George Jeffreys, T.B. Barratt and Jonathan Paul were 3 major early European Pentecostal leaders who did not believe that tongues was the sign of the baptism in the Spirit as does the Chilean Pentecostal Church (Sepúlveda, "Indigenous...", p. 133); D.N. Hudson, "Strange Words and Their Impact on Early Pentecostals – A Historical Perspective," in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. M.J. Cartledge, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2006) 57-80 for a historical overview of the debate among early European Pentecostals.

²⁶ The Elim Pentecostal Church (Its 1923 Fundamentals stated that the baptism in the Spirit was "accompanied by speaking in other tongues", though this was excluded in a revision in 1934 which read that the baptism in the Spirit was accompanied by "signs following", a position affirmed in the 1993 revision), Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.

²⁷ W. Ma, "If it is a Sign?: An Old Testament Reflection on the Initial Evidence Discussion," *AJPS* 2.2 (1999) 163-175; J-D. Pluess, "Initial Evidence or Evident Initials?: A European Point of View on a Pentecostal Distinctive," *AJPS* 2.2 (1999) 213-222

²⁸ G. Canty, *The Practice of Pentecost* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1987) 119-121; T.M. Ling, "A Response to Frank Macchia," *AJPS* 1.2 (1998) 180ff.

²⁹ S. Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 43.

experiences. Traditionally, they refused to adopt creeds and statements of faith because there was a fear that they may crush the quest for experience. Indeed, Anderson deduces, 'In its beginnings, Pentecostalism in the western world was an ecumenical movement of people claiming a common experience rather than a common doctrine'.³⁰ Similarly, Hollenweger concludes, 'What unites the Pentecostal churches is not a doctrine but a religious experience'.³¹ That which is fundamental to Pentecostalism is a personal, experiential encounter of the Spirit of God.³² It is this that best identifies the Pentecostal heartbeat.³³

Albrecht identifies the fundamental goal of Pentecostals as "experiencing or encountering God"³⁴ while de Matviuk deduces Latin American Pentecostalism as being characterised by "a religious experience with the divine".³⁵ Similarly, Urrabazo concludes, "For Latinos, God is not so much a concept, as an experience".³⁶ Christenson describes Pentecostalism as "Christianity standing on tiptoe, expecting something to happen".³⁷ Similarly, McClung defines Pentecostals as understanding God to be the "One who is there-now".³⁸ Pentecostals are less defined by their doctrines and more by their perception that God lives with them in the here and now.

Pentecostals aim to know God experientially, whether it is via an intellectual recognition of his being or an emotional appreciation of his character. It is this that often makes them functionally different as a Christian tradition. Pentecostals look for expressions of life and vitality in their faith. The sense of the immediate, the God of the now not the distant past, are characteristics that underlie how they do theology. Pentecostal theology is a theology of the dynamic, seen through the lens of experience. It is a functional theology

³⁰ Anderson, *An Introduction...*, p. 60.

³¹ Hollenweger, 'From Azusa Street...', p. 7.

³² V-M. Kärkkäinen, "'The Re-Turn of Religion in the Third Millennium': Pentecostalism and Postmodernities", (EPCRA conference paper, University of Uppsala, 2007) p. 1-14 (5); H. Zegwaart, 'Christian Experience in Community', *CPCR* 11 (Feb. 2002); D.E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit. A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 10; D. Gee, *The Pentecostal Movement* (London: Elim, 1949), p. 30; D.J. du Plessis, 'Golden Jubilee of Twentieth Century Pentecostal Movements', *IRM* 47 (April, 1958), pp. 193-201 (194); Nichol, *Pentecostalism*, p. 55; G.L. Anderson, 'Pentecostals believe in more than tongues', in Smith (ed.), *Pentecostals...*, pp. 53-64 (55-6); J.K. Asamoah-Gyadu, 'An African Pentecostal on Mission in Eastern Europe: The Church of the "Embassy of God" in the Ukraine', *Pneuma* 27.2 (2005), pp. 297-321 (314); Cross, 'A Proposal...', pp. 49-58. For a non-Pentecostal Roman Catholic enquiry of the relationship between power, experience and the Spirit, see B. Cooke, *Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an Experience-Based Pneumatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). In it, he describes himself as someone who is in search of an experience-based pneumatology.

³³ Anderson, *An Introduction...*, p. 256; A. Semple McPherson, *This is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons, and Writings* (Los Angeles: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, 1923) p. 713; R.P. Spittler, 'Spirituality, Pentecostal and Charismatic', in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *NIDPCM*, pp. 1096-102 (1096-097).

³⁴ D.E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit. A ritual approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 39, 149, 238.

³⁵ M.A.C.de Matviuk, "Latin American Pentecostal Growth: Culture, Orality and the Power of Testimonies," *AJPS* 5.2 (2002) 208.

³⁶ R. Urrabazo, "Therapeutic Sensitivity to the Latino Spiritual Soul," in *Family Therapy with Hispanics*, eds. M. Flores, G. Carey, (Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 2000) 213.

³⁷ L. Christenson, "Pentecostalism's Forgotten Forerunner" in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* ed. V. Synan (South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing, 1975) 27.

³⁸ L.G.Jr. McClung, "Truth on Fire: Pentecostals and an Urgent Missiology," in *Azusa Street and Beyond* ed. L.G.Jr. McClung, (South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing House, 1986) 48.

that exists to operate in life; to incorporate an experiential dimension. Pentecostals embrace a spirituality that expects to touch God and to be touched by him. For Pentecostals, to know God is to experience him.

Hollenweger deduces that Pentecostalism is best expressed as providing an opportunity for believers to engage in “an adventure in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and each other”.³⁹ The believer functions as an observer of the remarkable God working remarkably. The Spirit offers the possibility of a journey of discovery, a quest for a destiny, an exploration of the inexplicable that will touch and transform our lives...remarkable. However...

Pentecostals are losing their expectation of such encounters with the Spirit

I have been a Pentecostal for all my life. I know all about the Spirit, so I thought. I have since learnt that I have been in danger of getting to heaven and having to be introduced to the Spirit because I actually know him so poorly. Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity. However, the Spirit is in danger of being marginalised and his ability to change the lives of believers is being overlooked.

...because we don't expect to encounter the Spirit...very often

In what ways do Pentecostals expect to **experience** and **encounter** the Spirit? This has traditionally been best exemplified in the baptism in the Spirit and by speaking in tongues or rare experiences of being touched by the Spirit. However, there has been a decrease in the numbers of people who claim to have experienced the baptism in the Spirit, especially in the West and this is coupled by concerns that the experience is only encouraged to a limited extent by Pentecostal leaders.

Although the number of converts has increased in AOG churches in the USA, the numbers of those who experienced the baptism in the Spirit has plateaued for the past 25 years; currently, for every 5 converts, there is 1 Spirit-baptism. Similarly, the percentage of Pentecostals who speak in tongues is at an all time low. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a hugely significant research organization, undertook a 10 country survey concerning Pentecostal practice and belief. This related to the US, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, India, Philippines, South Korea. Its findings make for very interesting reading. In particular, in 6 of these countries, more than 4 in 10 say they never speak in tongues.

The figure for Pentecostals who never speak in tongues in the US is 49%. Poloma writes, “In some Classical Pentecostal circles, glossolalia is in danger of becoming a doctrine devoid of experience with an estimated 50% or more of followers reporting that they do not speak in tongues”.⁴⁰ If the baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues are the clearest evidences of the working of the Spirit for contemporary Pentecostals, we have a problem - because both of them are dying out. If these encounters are believed to be the most likely ways whereby a Pentecostal experiences the Spirit and they are reducing, we have a major challenge.

³⁹ Hollenweger, “Past...”, pp. 43-45.

⁴⁰ Poloma, “Glossolalia...”, p. 151.

...because we don't know what the Spirit has to offer

- The Spirit is a comprehensive resource for the believer but too many are not aware of this. The bestowal of the Spirit on believers was much more comprehensive after Pentecost than before. Do Pentecostals know this?
- The Spirit is committed to pro-actively transforming believers. Do Pentecostals know this?
- The Spirit provides comprehensive, limitless resources for the believer with regard to their salvation. Do Pentecostals know what these are?
- The Spirit provides resources and gifts for all believers and expects them to be used and to be used sensitively. Do Pentecostals know how to access these?

...because we are confused about the Spirit

- He has often been valued more for his gifts than for who he is. He is so associated with the baptism in the Spirit and spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues, that many assume he has little else to offer.
- Some are unsure as to whether he should be worshipped. Uncertainty reigns as to whether he should be prayed to. Too often, he is viewed as simply 'the third person of the Godhead', generally mentioned after the Father and Jesus, unhelpfully suggesting a divine hierarchy. However, the Spirit is not subservient to the Father or Jesus. He is not their divine servant nor is he less deserving of our worship, service and honour.
- How should we address him? He is often confused with the Father or simply becomes a synonym for 'God'. He is referred to as the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:11), the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6), the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30) and the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7)) but there is only one Spirit.
- In the OT, he is largely absent.
- His description as the 'Holy Ghost' has been another hindrance to his being better appreciated as a personal mentor to believers.
- He has no name and no body and so we struggle to identify with him. However, although he cannot smile, we can know his joy; he may not be able to cry, but he feels sadness; he may have no ears, but he hears our softest cry; he may have no eyes, but he sees us even in a crowd and also sees how we feel when nobody else does; he may have no personal name, but he is not anonymous. He may be a force but he is also our friend.
- We misunderstand his relationship to us. We think he is involved in our lives mainly to use us and to catch us when we sin.
- We assume that he rarely speaks and that if he did, he would speak to others and through others

Very often, believers assume that Jesus walks with them and the Father guides them but the Spirit has little practical relevance. However, the Spirit is more important, more central, more immanently involved in his Creation, the Church, and individual believers, more often and more regularly, more intentionally and strategically than most believers realise. We just don't know what we're missing.

Encounter as the Pentecostal heartbeat

How can Pentecostals encounter the Spirit?

How can they experience the Spirit as their mentor?

Fundamentally, we need to revisit what the Bible says about the Spirit and be prepared to be surprised about what we will discover.

- ***He wants to encounter us***

Do you know why he is referred to as the **holy** (*hagios*) Spirit? He's different. The Spirit is one-of-a-kind; he's different and I am learning to appreciate his unbelievable commitment to me. Pentecostals are in danger of existing in a spiritual desert – devoid of the Spirit, except for the rare occasions when the Spirit breaks through into their lives or they break into his. For many, there exists an assumption that this is normal. For too long, they have believed the myth that the Spirit only rarely encounters believers. Pentecostal praxis also indicates that such encounters are often narrowly focussed and infrequent.

Too often they think of him as Cinderella who comes to the Ball late, leaves early and deposits something small – precious, but small – in their lives. Thereafter, like Cinderella, he must be searched for - in the hope that he may give more in the future – but too often that is only for the princely few. A challenge to Pentecostal leaders is to ensure that they enable believers to view the Spirit as desiring to be their personal mentor, encourage them to recognise that he is committed to pro-actively transforming them, providing limitless resources for them with regard to their salvation and their spirituality, including gifts for all to be used sensitively for the benefit of others and in partnership with him.

- **He's on our side**

He works for us much more than he wants to work thro us.

He's on our side (Eph. 1:14) ... He's with us (Eph. 2:18)

His expectation is that the readers will realize that they are constantly in the presence of God and learn to experientially enjoy it. It is the Spirit who makes this possible. Paul uses the term, "access" (2:18) to describe that which the Spirit creates. The term has a varied history of literary usage. Because we are in the Spirit, we are also in the presence of God, given the opportunity to serve him, privileged to be received by him and enabled to enjoy a relationship with him.

He helps us, feels for us, prays for us (Rom. 8:26)

The Spirit helps believers, groans with believers and prays for believers

In the context of the weakness of believers, the Spirit is presented as operating on their behalf (Rom. 8:26). Paul uses a rare verb for “help” in the Bible and prefaces it with another word (*huper*) that emphasizes the intensity of the help offered, not just when life is at its lowest but throughout all our days; when nightmares control our next steps; through the storms when all we can taste is our tears; in the hurricane when we hunt for a haven; but also when we can see a golden horizon, when dreams come true and life is too wonderful for words. God isn't there just when we need him; he's also there when we don't. Do I really know how much he wants to help me?

Paul refers to the fact that the Spirit identifies with believers with groans that are too deep for words (Rom. 8:26). The term translated “too deep for words” is of

significance. It may be translated “without words” or “unable to be expressed”. It’s difficult to know what this means. But whatever it means, it indicates that the Spirit feels not just for us but also that which we feel. Does the fact that the Spirit feels my pain as if it was his make me feel better?

Paul refers to the fact that the Spirit prays for believers in their weakness. This is a metaphor which must be carefully unwrapped. He is declaring a truth that is precious but it’s also a mystery and may not be completely understood. Paul is saying that the Spirit is so intimately related to us that it is as if he is closer to us than he is to God; thus, he prays for us. I need to realise more and more just how personally entwined in my life the Spirit is.

He helps us to be different (Gal. 5:16)

Really...? I thought that was my responsibility. Well, it is – in part. Speaking to the Christians living in the region of Galatia, Paul states that the Spirit is to be their guide in life and that they should take advantage of his influence (v. 16). It is possible that Paul is presenting two imperatives, “Walk by the Spirit” and “Do not gratify the desires of the flesh” (v. 16). However, it is more likely that he is presenting an imperative, followed by a promise, “Walk by the Spirit” and “You will not gratify the desires of the flesh”.

Paul confirms the authority of the Spirit by including a double negative, “you will *definitely not* gratify the desires of the flesh”. If they continuously walk with the Spirit, they will naturally develop a lifestyle that is not dominated by sinful activities because the Spirit will enable them to live the Christian life. Whereas the Bible points the person in the right direction, the Spirit enables the believer to reach the destination. The Spirit heralds a new era, enabling believers to enter it and empowering them to be improved.

In Galatians 5: 22-24, Paul explores the fact that the Spirit develops his fruit in our lives. The Spirit produces fruit naturally in the believer; it is not only dependent on human effort. Of course, believers have to exert effort in ethical development. But Paul is insistent that they recognize that the Spirit is on their side, changing us into the likeness of Jesus. The concept of natural growth would have been familiar to a people whose lives were dominated by agriculture.

The few major cities and villages of the province were set in vast areas of countryside that were largely dedicated to the production of grain and the grazing of sheep. The production of wool, grain and wine were staple characteristics of the economy of the region. Thus, Paul uses the concept of natural growth which is easily identifiable to them when he explores the way that the Spirit’s life and character is naturally developed in them. So, the Spirit is an enthusiastic, personal, committed, empowering guide who willingly enters our lives and walks with us in our exploration of God.

He helps us explore God (Eph. 1:17) Why? It’s what he wants to do.

Nasa has just discovered a new galaxy with its Hubble telescope. They have called it “The eye of God”. God sees everything but who can see into God? The Spirit can because he is God. In Ephesians 1:17, Paul describes the role of the Spirit as enabling

believers to be able to accurately and experientially know certain aspects of truth concerning God, particularly relating to their salvation.

Although the Spirit is granted to give power for Christian service, a fundamental aspect of the Spirit is also to enable the believer to explore God, intellectually and experientially. It is an absorption with an examination of God that gives the Christian life dynamism. That has been Paul's experience and his desire is that his readers will also realize that the Spirit has been given to enable them to enjoy that journey into God.

- **He's more than a force – he's our friend**

There has been such an emphasis on receiving from the Spirit that he has not always been the focus of attention. Thus, there has been a tendency to seek the baptism in the Spirit in order to speak in tongues rather than to be influenced by the Spirit in one's life and behaviour. Instead of being valued as the most important element, he has been often been viewed simply as the source of those aspects most desired by believers.

To many, he has become a powerful source of energy rather than a personal guide, a miraculous force rather than a mentoring friend.⁴¹ He has been largely viewed functionally as the one who can facilitate the believer to be a useful disciple of Jesus. The intermittent reminder to Pentecostals (often by Pentecostals) has been that they do not so concentrate on the gifts of the Spirit that they forget the Giver of the gifts, the Spirit.

- **He's more than a crisis experience**

However, a growing awareness of the diverse ministry of the Spirit to and on behalf of believers has occurred, particularly as a result of increased appreciation of the writings of Paul concerning the Spirit. The more Paul's contribution concerning the Spirit has been explored, the more the Spirit has been understood as having a varied and encompassing role in the development of the lives of believers.

Consequently, the association of the Spirit with conversion, his commitment to spiritual development, his affirmation of the believer's position in Christ and his guiding and transforming influence are enabling Pentecostals to relate to the Spirit of power as well as the power of the Spirit.⁴² Such a quest enables believers to experience the Spirit on multiple occasions through their Christian lives, resulting in a multi-layered bestowal of the Spirit depending on their given need or his sovereign manifestation.

- **He's more than the baptism in the Spirit**

Although Pentecostal theologians stress that the baptism in the Spirit, as understood by Pentecostals, does not indicate that believers are devoid of the Spirit until they experience it, this message has not always been disseminated throughout the movement. Traditionally, Pentecostals have separated the Spirit from the act of

⁴¹ McLean, 'The Holy...', pp. 375-95; Cross, 'A Proposal...', pp. 71-2.

⁴² Fee, *Gospel and Spirit...*, 74-161; Warrington, *Discovering the Holy Spirit...*, passim; Wenk, 'The Fullness...', pp. 40-4.

salvation to such an extent that it has been difficult to deduce his role in salvation; indeed, the implicit understanding for many has been that his influence in the life of the believer is limited or even non-existent until the occurrence of the baptism in the Spirit. This has led many of those who did not receive the baptism in the Spirit to be disappointed and even marginalised as those who were somehow lacking in the best that God had to offer, whose Christianity was second class, despite the quality of their spirituality or even the effectiveness of their witness. In this regard, an inappropriate presentation of the baptism in the Spirit can result in it appearing to be dangerously elitist.⁴³

While not denigrating the baptism in the Spirit, or any other Spirit-inspired experience, it is crucial to enable believers to experientially and intellectually realise the Spirit-inspired event of conversion and his involvement in their lives thereafter. Furthermore, to suggest that all believers are indwelt by the Spirit but that only those who have received the baptism in the Spirit are empowered by him undermines the richness of the resources of the Spirit made available to all believers at salvation.

- **He's a person - not a liquid**

We don't drink him in or breathe him in – or smell him. To many, he has become a powerful source of energy rather than a personal guide, a miraculous force rather than a mentoring friend.

- **He's more than power**

In concentrating on power, Pentecostals are in danger of viewing their Christian experience as best defined by concepts of strength, victory and charismatically enabled progress (*theologia gloriae*) whilst forgetting that the latter also occur in times of weakness (Rom. 8.17-8, 23, 35-7; 2 Cor. 4.7-11; 6.4-10; 12.7-10), eclipse and even apparent defeat (*theologia crucis*).

Experiences of the Spirit should result in triumph but not triumphalism, freedom and release but not licence, love not selfishness, the presence of God though not necessarily the absence of pain and suffering. Ling warns, 'The overemphasis on the Spirit and power within contemporary Pentecostalism is an index of the inadequacy of its 'traditioning' practice'.⁴⁴

- **He's more creative than we are**

Pentecostals need to be careful that they do not (unintentionally) create a framework outside of which it may be assumed that the Spirit does (or should) not function. Thus, in their desire to embrace a schema comprising conversion followed by a baptism in the Spirit (with its varied potential consequences of tongues, power, prophecy or sanctification), they may have made it theoretically inappropriate for the creative and free Spirit to minister as he wishes and to impress his particular agenda on those he inspires.

⁴³ Thus, W.D. Collins ('An Assemblies of God Perspective on Demonology. Part 2', *Paraclete* 28.1 (1994), pp. 18-22 (22)) writes, 'When a believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, he is anointed...so he can move against the works of the devil as Christ did' as if this only relates to those who have been baptised in the Spirit.

⁴⁴ Ling, *Pentecostal...*, p. 101.

It is in this regard that Pentecostals may learn to widen their expectation of the work of the Spirit by considering how the Spirit has led others into new dimensions of spirituality (whose denominational or spiritual traditions may not be Pentecostal). In this regard, other believers may have much to teach (and learn from) Pentecostals, especially where it refers to the expectation of a plurality of renewals of the Spirit.⁴⁵ Some Pentecostals (unwittingly) assume that the Spirit did little until the Pentecostal revivals at the start of the twentieth century. The tendency to elitism is a constant threat to any who espouse a particular spiritual experience and Pentecostals are not immune to this.⁴⁶

He wants to encounter us in the Bible

- ***...through the Bible***

The way that Pentecostals read the Bible has been, and still is, to a degree, unique in that they anticipate that its main values are to help them develop their experience of God, to be more available to the ministry of the Spirit and to be drawn closer to Jesus. These are more important to Pentecostals than its value as a resource for the identification and elaboration of various doctrines. Although they would state that they hold to an orthodox theology, few would see the establishment of that as the main purpose of the Bible.

It is rather identified as a friendly partner, reflecting their joys and sorrows, their achievements and challenges, their present and future lives and functioning as a guide to a better relationship with God. The Bible is viewed primarily as a place of encounter; an encounter with the divine author. It is recognised as a collection of stories intended to lead a person to God and to be transformed as a result rather than to be a database of dogma to be discussed. Pentecostals expect to encounter God personally as they read it.⁴⁷

The Bible is less to be studied and more to be seen as the altar of sacrifice to which they bring their lives for renewal. Conscious attempts are made to locate “a word from the Lord” in all parts of the text. This is not motivated by a perversity to identify obtuse interpretations; rather, it is based on a belief that God desires to reveal his word which is by nature, dynamic and life-giving. Hocken describes one of his clearest impressions of Pentecostalism as being “a directness of relationship to God with corresponding expectations of divine revelation”.⁴⁸

To miss out on such revelations is viewed as regretful and harmful to ones progress as a believer. The Bible is anticipated as being for the purpose of touching the readers emotionally, not so much to teach them intellectually; to result in an experience, not merely better exegesis; to result in an exposure of God not only an exposition of truth.

⁴⁵ K. Stendahl, ‘The New Pentecostalism: Reflections of an Ecumenical Observer’, in Spittler (ed.), *Perspectives...*, pp. 194-207; Ford, ‘The New...’, 208-29; T-M. Cheung, ‘Understanding of Spirit-Baptism’, *JPT* 8 (1996), pp. 121-24.

⁴⁶ Macchia, *Baptized...*, pp. 27, 32, 210-13.

⁴⁷ V. Synan, “Pentecostalism: Varieties and Contributions,” *Pneuma*, 9.1 (Spring 1987) 39.

⁴⁸ P. Hocken, “A Charismatic View on the Distinctiveness of Pentecostalism,” in *Pentecostalism in Context. Essays in Honour of William W. Menzies*, eds. W. Ma, R.P. Menzies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 98.

How do we listen to the Spirit in the text?

- Ask questions of the text – why are you saying this Matthew? Why did you say this John when Matthew, Mark and Luke left it out? Why, Paul, do you refer to being baptized in the Spirit in different ways to Luke?
- Be aware that the Spirit may speak additionally to the message that he supervised thousands of years ago. Be prepared to be wowed by that which you discover. This is a dynamic text; it's to be engaged with, explored, discovered not treated like a text book, a dogmatic treatise of facts. It's Spirit-filled not static or stagnant.
- Treat sermons as opportunities to share that which you have discovered as a result of the adventure that you have taken with the Spirit. Remember that preaching/teaching is a triologue – you, the audience and the Spirit. In preaching, include others in the process; risk thinking through the text with a colleague; include the congregation in the process. Let's demonstrate that.

Don't lock the Spirit out of it or assume that praying that he'll speak through you is enough or assume that what he said in the study is all that he will have to say. He may want to inspire you as you speak. Partner him in the process. That means you may have to speak and listen at the same time; you may have to speak and watch your audience in order to see what the Spirit is doing in them; you may have to pause to attune your thoughts to the Spirit's agenda. Explore with others how the Spirit encounters you in the text and vice versa.

- ***...outside the Bible***

Although the Bible is a fundamentally important source of guidance, it does not exist to provide answers to every question that may be posed. It was fundamentally written for readers who existed in ancient cultures and eras that are inevitable different to those living in later generations. Therefore, to view it as the basis for all decision-making for all times, even with reference to the life and practices of believers, is not always appropriate.

When the Bible is not and cannot be an influential guide, the Spirit is. Paul encourages his readers to 'live by the Spirit' (Gal. 5.25), 'walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5.16, 25), and 'be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5.18), as a result of which they will develop godly lifestyles.

The Spirit may choose to speak through the language of the Bible but he may as easily speak in other ways (Jn 15.7-12; Acts 15.28).⁴⁹ Land argues that the Spirit 'speaks scripturally but also has more to say than Scripture'.⁵⁰ That is not to suggest that the Spirit is superior to the Word or the Word to the Spirit. The Spirit and the Word function together, on occasion the former through the latter but also sometimes spontaneously and without specific reference to the written Word.⁵¹

⁴⁹ J.W. Wyckoff, 'The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture', in J.K. Bridges (ed.), *The Bible, the Word of God* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2003), pp. 17-52 (24).

⁵⁰ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality...*, p. 100; K. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century. Spirit, Scripture and Community* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 147.

⁵¹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality...*, pp. 100, 118; Archer, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics...', p. 80; J. Ruthven, 'A Place for Prophecy', *Paraclete*, 6.2 (1972), pp. 8-14; W.A. Grudem, 'Can All Believers Prophecy?', *Paraclete*, 15.4 (1981), pp. 11-4.

The Spirit thus provides a canon outside the canon in a relentless river of revelation that includes the vitally important biblical text.

However, where the Spirit functions outside the written Word, caveats must be carefully instituted in order to check for errors in the listening process.⁵² Thus, the Spirit will never correct or contradict the Word and extra-biblical revelation must be assessed in the context of the Christian community which has itself been developed by the Spirit and the Word (1 Cor. 12.3; 14.29; 1 Jn. 4.1-3).

The Bible without the Spirit can result in barren exegesis but to emphasise a quest for the Spirit without the balance of the Word can degenerate into effervescent emptiness. The Spirit and the Word functioning in the Christian community is the ideal framework to counteract imbalance and to recognize the intrinsic value of any revelation.⁵³ An example of the Spirit-community model in identifying the will of God is reflected in Acts 15.22, 28.

Thomas and Shelton explore the Jerusalem council and note the role of the community in arriving at the conclusion to welcome Gentiles into the Church.⁵⁴ Where there was uncertainty and limited scriptural guidance, the believers looked to the Spirit to facilitate the correct conclusion. Shelton concludes, 'It is not the text of Scripture that is our normative authority but the Holy Spirit-filled church living in the now in connection with the apostolic tradition...with the latter being the Holy Spirit speaking through the Church to the Church'.⁵⁵

People don't hear the Spirit because they are not expecting him to speak or they only expect him to speak to certain people or on special occasions or when we're in need or on a spiritual high. What happens is that the Spirit speaks but we are not trained to listen. So...

- expect the Spirit to speak - to you - everyday
 - make time to listen and review what he has revealed...5 times in a day when God has spoken
 - when praying for people (the sick), take time to listen for the Spirit's guidance – and let the people know that you are listening
- ***...in the Christian community***
Guidance is best determined in the context of a community of believers and the wider Church, past and present and different to our own.⁵⁶ It provides the

⁵² See Kärkkäinen, *Toward...*, p. 14; Cargal, 'Beyond...', pp. 173-74.

⁵³ M.D. McLean, 'Toward a Pentecostal hermeneutic', *Pneuma* 6 (1984), pp. 35-56 (50).

⁵⁴ J.C. Thomas, 'Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics', *JPT* 5 (1994), pp. 44-50; J.B. Shelton, 'Epistemology and Authority in the Acts of the Apostles: An Analysis and Test Case Study of Acts 15:1-29', *Spirit and Church* 2.2 (2000), pp. 231-47.

⁵⁵ Shelton, 'Epistemology...', pp. 246-47.

⁵⁶ Archer, K.J., *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century*, (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004) see also Coulter, D., "What Meaneth This? Pentecostals and Theological Enquiry", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 10.1 (October 2001) pp. 62-63; McClung, L.G., "Explosion, Motivation, and Consolidation: The Historical Anatomy of a Missionary Movement", in McClung, L.G. Jr., (ed.) *Azusa Street and Beyond* (South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing House, 1986) pp. 6-7; Pinnock, C., "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics" *JPT* 2 (1993) pp. 16-17; Ellington, "Pentecostalism...", p. 29; Israel, R.D., Albrecht, D.E., McNally, R.G., "Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals and Community", *Pneuma* 15.2 (1993) pp.

opportunity for balance and accountability while protecting from subjective tendencies.⁵⁷

- Learning from our (Pentecostal) traditions – the past
When I was much younger, though I didn't realize it, I lived according to a Pentecostal creed that was outside the Bible. I was ready to naively castigate the Catholic Church for its traditions but I had my own and they were very important to me. They guided me as to my behaviour – what I should do and should not do. They are still valuable today but they are being eroded. A few years ago, a student asked me if engaged Christians should have sex. I was surprised to be asked the question – the answer was obvious – to me. Where does the Bible provide our guidance for this? It doesn't completely provide the answer – but my Pentecostal tradition does. Our traditions have value; don't attempt to dismantle them too quickly.
- Learning from the Pentecostal academic community
Scholars can help us when we read the text they remind us of the original contexts before we contextualise it for ourselves. If we do both exercises, it will help us make sense of it.
- Learning from other Christian communities, different to our own.
- Learning from different cultures. Pentecostals need to take advantage of that which the Spirit is saying to others also in different cultures to our own.
- *...in partnership with him*
 - Teach believers that gifts are given for the benefit of others **and** that they are intended to enable us to partner the Spirit
 - Help believers identify their Spirit given gifts and ministries
 - Remind them of their diversity
 - Remind them that God has already gifted them
 - Facilitate opportunities for them to be used

Conclusion

Although it can be overstated, Pentecostals do not come to a church service so much as to a meeting...with each other and with God and their expectation is that God will come and meet with them.⁵⁸ Although experience is important in Pentecostal spirituality and worship, it is important to acknowledge that it is not experience per se but that which is associated with God, often related to the Spirit but centralized in Jesus.

154-161; Chan, S.K.H., *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) p. 44.

⁵⁷ Chan, *Pentecostal...*, p. 45.

⁵⁸ P. Hocken ("A Charismatic View on the Distinctiveness of Pentecostalism," in Ma, *Pentecostalism in Context...*, 98) identifies the "genuinely participatory pattern of worship" as one of the clearest identifying marks of Pentecostalism.