

Spiritual Gifts and Pentecostal Mission

A recent study by Australian missiologist Robert Gallagher reviewed the theme of the Holy Spirit and mission in Protestant missiological writings over a span of 50 years from 1945-1995. His surprising conclusion was that the writings of the 70 most influential Protestant missiologists, over the 50 years span, largely neglect the relationship between mission and the work of the Holy Spirit. Gallagher calls the Holy Spirit a forgotten factor in mission. While the themes of spiritual gifts, signs and wonders and spiritual warfare are certainly present in the literature, their relationship to mission activity is scarce.¹ Thus the focus of the essay is not a topic that is frequently addressed and will certainly not be exhaustively investigated in this effort. Yet, if the core of Pentecostal identity includes participation in the redemptive and transforming mission of Jesus Christ, then the study of spiritual gifting, for this redemptive mission of eschatological significance, is a worthwhile effort.

Historical Observations

Robert Gallagher's chronicling of the lack of discussion of the Holy Spirit and mission in Protestant missiological writing during the later half of the 20th century, reinforces the sporadic appearance of this theme in Christian history. Review of this crucial theme provides a scattered and varied perspective on spiritual gifts, usually as part of larger discussion on the Holy Spirit.²

¹ Robert Gallagher, "The Forgotten Factor: The Holy Spirit and Mission in Protestant Missiological Writings from 1945-1995" in Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission, Charles Van Engen, Nancy Thomas, and Robert Gallagher, eds. (Monrovia: MARC Publications, 1999), 199-200.

² Cecil M. Rubeck, Jr. Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetia, Tertullian and Cyprian (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press), 1993. See Stanley Burgess, The Holy Spirit: Ancient Christian Traditions (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984). A concise essay with broad implications from the Iguassu Dialogue is Ajith Fernando, "The Holy Spirit: The Divine Implementer of Mission" in Global Missiology in the 21st Century, William Taylor, ed. (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2000), 223-238. See Cecil M. Rubeck, Jr. Charismatic Experiences in History (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985).

While not all spiritual renewals throughout history have focused on the Holy Spirit, they have inevitably integrated varying works of the Holy Spirit in them.³

Most pertinent to the development of Pentecostals is the seedbed of spiritual dynamics from which it emerges in the late 19th century. The shape of Pentecostals must acknowledge spiritual “DNA” from several spiritual emphases prevalent in the 19th century. Several streams of influence would include the following:

The Wesleyan Holiness influence roots itself in a Christian perfection emphasis. In this particular stream of influence in the Pentecostal movement, the power of the Holy Spirit *takes control of a person’s life to bring about entire sanctification.*

The Keswick influence, with a root in J. N. Darby’s emphasis on the second coming of Christ, provides a significant link between Spirit Baptism and urgent evangelistic effort. This “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” is a crisis experience not to sanctify, but *to empower people for service so that all may hear the Gospel before Christ’s return.*

The Millennial influence yielded a stream of emphasis that focused on the imminent return of Christ as the only solution to the world’s dilemmas. It was the socially marginalized people of the day who understood clearly the call *for a people radically committed to the cause of Christ, where the eternal purposes of God have already defeated the powers of this world.*

Restorationist influences anticipated the emergence of a New Testament church—the true Church restored. Expectancy was the watchword of a people who felt their destiny was to serve *the “restored” church during the final thrust into the harvest field before Christ’s return.*⁴

³ Gary McGee, “Power on High: A Historical Perspective on the Radical Strategy in Missions” in Pentecostalism in Context, Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, eds. (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 317-319.

⁴ D. William Faupel, The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought, (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1906). See Donald Dayton, Theological Roots of Pentecostalism, (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 25-28. I also summarize these characteristics in my paper, “The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective: A Pentecostal Viewpoint” presented to the Pentecostal/World Alliance of Reformed Churches Dialogue, Kappel-am-Albis, Switzerland, May, 1998.

Summary—Christian history is filled with the ebb and flow of emphasis on the Holy Spirit. A clear picture of Pentecostal identity is most obvious when we consider the streams of spiritual renewal that influence the incipient stages of the Pentecostal movement’s emergence. Most significant to considerations of Pentecostal mission is the contribution that each of these streams of influence to a Pentecostal “pathos” of urgency and emphasis on supernatural empowerment for world evangelization. The common thread in these streams of influence is anticipation that the sovereign “gift” of the power of God is ushering in a significant new chapter in the saga of redemptive history. A sense of participation in a story of eschatological significance, supported by supernatural Spirit empowerment(s), creates a strong sense of destiny in the Pentecostal identity. Only the divine intrusion of the Spirit of God is the adequate eternal resource for the end-time harvest (Zechariah 4:6).

A Penchant for the Eschatological

While various streams of influences impact incipient Pentecostalism, William Faupel suggests that the overriding theme influencing all of early Pentecostalism is that of the eschatological.⁵ The nexus between the Baptism of the Spirit as empowerment for service (Acts 1:8), a keen hope in the soon return of Christ (I Thes. 4:16), and Christ’s directive to take the Gospel to all nations (Mt. 28:19-20) is palpable. It is thus reasonable to see how the reading of texts such as Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28), the Luke-Acts narrative and biblical texts on Christ’s return would create an urgency that emerged from grass-roots participants influenced by what these ancient texts referred to. It is understandable that headlines like “Bible days are here again” and reference to the latter rain (James 5:7-8) would be so plentiful.

⁵ Faupel, 114.

The dynamic of Azusa Street and other locations of spiritual renewal worldwide carried early Pentecostals to see the “story” and “destiny” in the Book of Acts being played out on a grass-roots level. The Spirit’s empowerment signaled a call and renewal to be part of the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ by the Spirit, moving across all cultural and geographic boundaries. This aggressive invitation to follow a Biblical and apostolic posture would logically be accompanied by the miraculous gifts necessary to effectively carry out worldwide evangelistic efforts (Mk. 16:9-20).

An early Pentecostal leader in the U.S., J. R. Flower, spoke of this nexus between Spirit Baptism for empowerment, the soon return of Christ and aggressive worldwide evangelism when he said,

“The baptism in the Holy Ghost does not consist in simply speaking in tongues. No, it has much more grand and deeper meaning than that. It fills our souls with the love of God for lost humanity. When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, the missionary spirit comes in with it: they are inseparable. ...Carrying the gospel to hungry souls in this and other lands is but a natural result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.”⁶

Flower also expressed the excitement present in a people with a sense of personal connection to eternal destiny when he says,

“Looking for the Lord’s personal return always gives people a great view of Jesus...They have a splendid Christology who are looking for their Lord. They do not merely believe in the Christ of history.... We believe in the Christ of glory. When a man is possessed of this doctrine he does not mumble. You can hear when he says, he has got good news to tell. When a man tells you good news he does not mumble it. He shouts it out!”⁷

The nexus being referred to in this section continues to be present in obvious form among North American Pentecostals throughout the 20th century. Stanley Frodsham reports in the mid 1940’s that “The time is short, the coming of the Lord is near, the present opportunities of

⁶ J. Roswell Flower, The Pentecost (August, 1908).

⁷ The Weekly Evangel, (March 1918).

evangelism will not last long, the Lord longs to work in a new, glorious and mighty way to show forth his glory and to save souls.”⁸

A history of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada produced in the 1950’s revealed a deeply eschatological motivation in Pentecostal missions efforts from Canada. It said,

“The morning cometh, how glorious is the prospect of the personal return of Christ for His church. It was the prospect of the return of Christ which cheered the hearts of the first Pentecostal believers of this century. It is the hope of Christ’s coming which steadies believers bearing the cross on mission fields. It was to announce the soon return of Christ that the Pentecostal revival was given.”⁹

The 1966, World Congress on Evangelicals, held in Berlin and sponsored by Billy Graham, saw Pentecostal organization executive Thomas F. Zimmerman state,

“Our generation must be confronted with the fact that God’s judgment stands over the wicked world to be meted out when Christ returns to take vengeance on the unevangelized and the Gospel rejecters both living and dead. . . . Because Christ commissioned the church to evangelize the world, we must faithfully and concertedly carry out His Word, if we are to receive Him with joy when He returns.”¹⁰

In 1992, George Wood spoke to the World Pentecostal Assemblies of God Fellowship, convened in Oslo, Norway. His plenary address was entitled, “Our Blessed Hope and Help, Fulfilling the Great Commission in the Light of His Return.” Wood delivers his address around five pertinent themes that demonstrate affirmation of the Pentecostal nexus. These themes included: 1) The hope of our Lord’s imminent return provides powerful incentive for a righteousness in our lives; 2) galvanizes us to risk greatly for the King and kingdom; 3) steadies our resolve to endure to the end; 4) fills us with the anticipation of reward; 5) and makes us long for reunion with Him, whom we serve and love.¹¹

⁸ McClung, “Truth on Fire: Pentecostals and an Urgent Missiology,” in Azusa Street and Beyond, L. Grant McClung, ed. (South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing, 1986), 51.

⁹ McClung, Azusa Street, 52.

¹⁰ Thomas F. Zimmerman, “Evangelism and Eschatological Imperatives,” in One Race, One Gospel, One Task, Carl F. H. Henry and Stanley Mooneyham, eds. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967) Vol. II, 65-67.

¹¹ George O. Wood, “Our Blessed Hope and Help: Fulfilling the Great Commission in Light of His Return,” a presentation to the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, September 14, 1992, Oslo, Norway.

Reflecting on the Pentecostal nexus we have just observed, the classic work of Roger Stronstad is a notable source. Stronstad posits that the Pentecostal narrative is really the story of the transfer of the charismatic Spirit of Jesus to the disciples. In other words, if Jesus is the exclusive bearer of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, Jesus becomes the giver of the Spirit at Pentecost. Because of the transfer of the Spirit, the disciples become subsequent participants in the earthly charismatic ministry of Jesus because Jesus has poured out the charismatic Spirit upon them. The “transfer of the Spirit” theme highlights the essential nature eschatological nature of the mission of the church. The transfer of the Spirit at Pentecost means the transference of call and empowerment to continue Jesus’ mission and ministry.¹²

An additional framework used by Pentecostal scholars to uphold this Pentecostal nexus is offered by Frank Macchia and his development of the Pentecost/Kingdom framework.¹³ The significance of this conceptual framework is the focus on an eschatological continuity between the already present and the not yet consummated Kingdom which Jesus explicitly identifies as a prophetic destiny moment in Luke 4:18ff. In this construct, the mission of the church is to witness to the reality of what life looks like when people respond to God’s eschatological reign. Gordon Fee’s tireless efforts over decades have trumpeted the key role of the Spirit’s empowerment for mission in eschatological perspective. The current “in-between time” is a period characterized by the power of the Spirit to participate in Christ’s ongoing reconciliatory mission.¹⁴

¹² Roger Stronstad, The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 1984), 49.

¹³ The Pentecost/Kingdom concept emerges in Frank Macchia’s doctoral dissertation, Spirituality and Social Liberation: The Message of the Blumhardts in the Light of Wuerttemberg Pietism with implications of Pentecostal Theology, (D. Theol. Dissertation: University of Basel, 1989).

¹⁴ Gordon Fee, “The Kingdom of God and the Church’s Global Mission,” in Called and Empowered, Murray Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, Douglas Petersen, eds. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 7-18.

The reason for the short synthesis of biblical, theological and historical understanding of the eschatological theme is simply because it is helpful to describe those forces shaping the mindset of early Pentecostals toward reliance on supernatural interventions through miraculous giftings. The 19th century, during which the modern missions efforts flourished, is commonly known as the Great Century. The 19th century is also an era where colonial powers are at their apex worldwide. It is therefore understandable that mission strategy during this period relied heavily on “civilizing” efforts with “the heathen” as part of their evangelizing efforts. Institutional structures, such as schools and helping structures, such as hospitals, became standard in 19th century mission efforts.¹⁵

In stark contrast to these accepted 19th century mission strategies, the ethos reflected by the Pentecostal nexus presents an alternative model. In October 1914, the General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA), demonstrated a clear missionary emphasis when they said, “We commit ourselves and the movement for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen.” In 1920, J. R. Flower reiterated this commitment when he said in the Pentecostal Evangel, that “the Pentecostal commission is to witness, witness, WITNESS.... it is so easy to be turned aside to do work which is very good in itself, but which is short of the Pentecostal standard.” The clear emphasis is on proclamation, not structure building. The Pentecostal standard is clearly the preaching of God’s word evangelistically, for the planting of local churches. The proclamation of the Word would be accompanied by signs and wonders (miraculous gifts) for the establishment of local church communities.¹⁶

¹⁵ R. Pierce Beaver, “The History of Mission Strategy” in Perspectives on The World Christian Movement, Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne, eds. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983), 198-203.

¹⁶ Gary McGee, “Assemblies of God Missiology by the 1990’s: A Pilgrimage of Change and Continuity Since 1914,” presented at the 21st annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Southeastern College, Lakeland, Florida, October 1991, 2.

Most poignant in her description of Pentecostal expectation in missionary efforts was Alice Luce, a British missionary who immigrated to the U.S., called to work with Spanish speaking immigrants. She summarizes the integration of proclamation with signs and wonders by saying, “When we go forth to preach the Full Gospel, are we going to expect an experience like that of denominational missionaries or shall we look for signs to follow?” Clearly Luce was personifying the Pentecostal *zeitgeist*.¹⁷ While this *zeitgeist* was not the original formulation of Pentecostals, it does become their banner. It is clear that a “radiant strategy” for missions has emerged with discontinuity from 19th century mission strategy. This radical new strategy is focused on an eschatological scenario of divine intervention in signs and wonders so that all nations can hear the Gospel before the end of history.

Summary

A crucial nexus exists for Pentecostals between Spirit Baptism as empowerment for service, a sense of urgency as it relates to the return of Christ, and the obedience to Christ’s command to take the Gospel to all nations. This particular nexus (at least for North America) has been present throughout the 20th century. Pentecostal biblical scholars and theologians have continued to affirm this nexus with emphasis on Lukan narrative studies and the kingdom of God as a theological theme central to Jesus’ earthly preaching ministry. The emergence of the Pentecostal movement includes a discontinuity with the 19th century mission strategy. Pentecostals adopt a “radical strategy” of proclamation, the planting of churches and miraculous gifting to carry out this task. The “penchant toward the eschatological” is really the perceptual reality with which Pentecostals enter mission effort. Because the time is short—proclamation is

¹⁷ Everett Wilson and Ruth Marshall Wilson, “Alice E. Luce: A Visionary Victorian” in Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders, James R. Goff, Jr. and Grant Wacker, eds. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 159-176.

the mission method of choice. Because “civilizing” is rejected as an acceptable and complementary strategy to evangelization, miraculous gifts are relied upon for the completion of Pentecostal mission.¹⁸

A Radical Strategy

Gary McGee’s work on the history of Pentecostal missions has posited the discontinuity between standard 19th century mission strategy and the “radical strategy” represented in Pentecostal mission effort. The 19th century world was an era where the fullest impact of the Enlightenment and imperialism were clearly evident in mission strategy. For example, the renowned Scottish missionary to India, Alexander Duff, stated clearly in 1839 the “missionary of the Church of Scotland have been sent forth...in the absence of miracles.” The secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society from England declared in 1860, “Divest the apostles of miraculous power...and you have the modern missionary, a true successor of the apostles.”¹⁹

Spiritual gifting and miraculous power were now replaced with the blessing of “higher civilization.” The optimism of the post-millennials in the later part of the 19th century nurtured the hope that conversion and civilizing worked in tandem to lead the heathen out of darkness. Such a progressive movement would be culminated by the return of Christ.²⁰

But the 19th century also has a parallel “minority voice.” This minority voice champions the simplicity of New Testament evangelism, supported by apostolic methods. For example, Edward Irving suggested that the less than speedy rate of conversion overseas necessitated

¹⁸ Paul Pommerville, The Third Force in Missions (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers: 1985), 62.

¹⁹ Gary McGee, “The Radical Strategy in Modern Missions: The Linage of Paranormal Phenomena with Evangelism” in The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics, C. Douglas McConnell, ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997), 69-95. Also see Gary McGee, “Miracles and Mission Revisited” in International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October 2001), 146-149.

²⁰ McGee, “Radical Strategy,” 70.

missionaries' dependence on the Sprit of God for sustenance, patronage, and reward and for a role of procedure.²¹

In the mid 19th century, appearances of spiritual giftings and signs and wonders were recorded in India and Indonesia. Noted missions leader and writer, Johannes Warneck observed the Indonesian appearance of Pentecostal phenomena. While he affirmed their legitimacy, he also posited these manifestations were temporary, as in apostolic times. However, German theologian Theodore Christlieb responded that “in the last epoch of the consummation of the Church she will again require for her decisive struggle with the powers of darkness, the miraculous interference of her risen Lord and have the Scriptures lead us to expect miracles once more from this period.”²²

The champion of miracles and their connection to mission activity as the end of the 19th century approached was the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, A.B. Simpson. He believed that God could heal the sick and that the Spirit might anoint missionaries with the capability to preach in previously un-learned languages to proclaim the Gospel. Simpson clearly presents his position when he says, “The plan of the Lord is to pour out His Spirit not only in the ordinary, but also extraordinary gifts and operations of His power as His people press forward to claim the evangelization of the entire world.”²³

Another proponent of the miraculous accompanying missionary efforts was A. J. Gordon, who served as chairman of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Gordon affirmed that the

²¹ “Edward Irving” in The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (Revised and expanded) Stanley Burgess and Eduard M. van de Maas, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2002).

²² McGee, “Radical Strategy,” 71-72. 71-72.

²³ Gary McGee, Power on High, 324. See also Charles Nienkirchen, A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992).

gifts of tongues and prophecy and miracles were not confined to the apostolic age. Gordon also contended that miracles belong to the efforts of planting of Christianity and in any age.²⁴

Early Pentecostal leader Charles Parham championed the confluence of several streams of thought contemporary with his time when he became convinced that the gift of tongues represented crucial evidence of Spirit Baptism and offered the key to unlocking ministry in signs and wonders. This found further focus on missionary efforts as Parham championed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and its subsequent gift of tongues as the answer to a missionary problem, i.e. language acquisition. While this understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was tempered by experiences of failure in linguistic efforts, it does point to the Pentecostal penchant toward connecting the empowerment of the Baptism of the Spirit with missionary effort. Case studies like that of A.G. Garr in India are important to see the theological reflection of early Pentecostals as they transitioned in their understanding of the significance of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. A transition from 1906-1908 sees tongues signifying human languages for mission purposes moving toward a perspective of tongues as *glossolalia* and the doorway to the recovery of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this transition, there is maintained, for missionary purposes, a focus on the supernatural giftings.²⁵

Summary

The Great Century of Missionary effort (19th century) is the context of varying perspectives in missionary strategy. On the one hand, some mission strategists saw the modern

²⁴ McGee, "Radical Strategy", 76-77. See also James Goff, Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles Parham and the Missions Origins of Pentecostalism (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988).

²⁵ Gary McGee, "The Calcutta Revival of 1907 and the Reformation of Charles F. Parham's "Bible Evidence" Doctrine" Presented at the Bible-Theology Lectures at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO, September 26, 2002. Accessible at http://www.agts.edu/academics/bible_lectures.html Forthcoming Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies. See also Harry Boer, Pentecost and Missions, (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdman's Publishing, 1961) Chapter Five of Boer's volume entitled, "The Meaning of Pentecost" is particularly helpful here.

missionary of the 19th century as equal to the apostles of the New Testament, without the use of miracles. On the other hand, voices arose concerned over the slow pace of mission advances that now required a renewal of apostolic methods supported by dependence on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Toward the end of the 19th century, leaders such as A.B. Simpson and A. J. Gordon championed the alliance of spiritual empowerment and world evangelization. Early Pentecostals align the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of “missionary tongues” as an example of their affirmation of the “empowerment for missionary service” dimension of the Holy Spirit Baptism and tongues. While this particular alliance is short-lived, it does testify to the mindset of Pentecostals and their penchant toward the Pentecostal nexus of Spirit Baptism, empowerment for mission service and the impending return of Jesus Christ.

Biblical Reflections

The uniqueness of the Day of Pentecost is that it serves as a guarantee that the mission of Jesus continues intact to this very day by the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit. The empowerment provided at Pentecost was not merely a story of individuals chosen and anointed with extraordinary capabilities for the purposes of Christian mission. What was created at Pentecost was a community that is described in its most incipient form in Acts 2:42-47. Even this earliest of pictures presents a glimpse of the Church that focuses on the interdependence between people who were followers of Christ. The existence of this newly created “eschatological community” centered in the reliance on the Spirit’s empowerment to bear witness, in word, deed, and power that the reality of Kingdom of God was visible among them. Gordon Fee describes this Holy Spirit dynamic through Pauline eyes as the “experienced, empowering return of God’s

own personal presence in and among us, who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation.”²⁶

The western tendency toward individualist spirituality and the effect of consumerism wrought by globalization stands in stark contrast to the biblical imperatives described by both Luke and Paul (and Peter). The New Testament’s description of a community of power bearing witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom must also focus on the seedbed in which that power is nurtured over the long-term. For example, Peter’s description of the followers of Jesus uses corporate descriptors with historic linkage to the Old Testament.²⁷ In I Peter 2:9-12 the vivid imagery of *chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation* and a *people belonging to God* comes with the admonition to live as a distinct and noticeable community in the world. In so doing, the very internal (yet observable) life of the community itself may bring *non-believers* to acknowledge the transforming nature of the Kingdom of God.

When the “community” dimension of the Church is relegated to mere programmatic expressions, the seedbed in which the continuing redemptive mission of Christ is to be nurtured can be short-circuited. The early church saw itself as a community initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit: as a “charismatic community.” Howard Snyder describes the church as a community where the pure light of God’s “manifold grace” (I Peter 4:10) is refracted as it shines through the Church much as light through a prism. What is subsequently produced is the varied and multi-colored “charismata”. The intense yet invisible light of God’s glorious grace is made visible in the diversity of spiritual gifts in the Christian community.²⁸

²⁶ Gordon Fee, Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), xv.

²⁷ Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Exodus 19:5

²⁸ Howard Snyder, The Community of the King. (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), 81. For a most insightful focus on the nature of spiritual gifts, particularly their “naturalness” or “supernaturalness” see David Lim, Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look. (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1991), 19-50.

Roger Stronstad has contributed significantly to a biblical self-understanding for Pentecostals focused on Luke's "charismatic theology." Stronstad's work emphasizes the eschatological nature of the community that has been created by the Holy Spirit for mission. This is a community of destiny that operates with the same empowerment that Jesus had and is focused on the continuation of Jesus' redemptive mission to be participated in by "all" who have now been empowered and gifted by the Holy Spirit.²⁹ The participation in the continuation of Jesus' redemptive mission is not to be carried out by individuals with exclusive giftedness nor by an elite few. To participate you must be a part of this "missionary community" and your enablement to participate is initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit only as you are part of that community.³⁰

Paul's understanding of the necessity and purpose of this community is exemplified in Romans 12. Paul is surfacing his understanding of what has replaced the significance of the Jewish temple. God now lives in His people rather than an edifice constructed from stones cut from a quarry. These followers of Christ now become the sacrifices that are alive and active. Their function is as temple servants and ministers. Because the whole person is the dwelling place of God, giftedness and ministry are not ethereal or mystical things. God is living among the people He has redeemed by His grace. Paul is clearly describing the fact that the gifts of the Spirit should more appropriately be thought of as ministry that flows out of one's being part of the temple of God. Those gifts/ministries are part of the fabric of the community, not individual desires or abilities nor personality driven strategies for ministry that put the spotlight on individuals rather than the eternal redemptive mission of God most clearly seen in Jesus Christ.³¹

²⁹ Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*. (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 116.

³⁰ John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology*. (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 122-125.

³¹ Ben Aker, "Charismata: Gifts, Enablements, or Ministries" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 11.1 (October, 2002), 53-69. See also Anthony Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Logion Press, 2001), 191-194.

Any attempt to discuss spiritual gifts and Pentecostal mission must also acknowledge that the operation of spiritual giftedness has at times been divisive. The general directive of Paul in I Corinthians 14:1 to seek the best gifts is preceded by chapter 13 which clearly frames Paul's command with guidelines for what *best* may be described as: i.e. those gifts that build up the church in love.³² While the plethora of God's gifts are His to sovereignly bestow (I Cor. 12:11) Pentecostals and their historical commitment to world evangelization must seek more than a cursory understanding of the role of spiritual giftedness and mission.

Summary

Spiritual giftedness for Pentecostal mission must not seek an understanding of itself focused on individuals chosen and anointed with extraordinary capabilities to do God's work. Spiritual giftedness must be understood in the light of the Pauline descriptions of the Holy Spirit as "the experienced, empowering return of God's eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation." This corporate/community theme for understanding the New Testament church and its mission requires any discussion of giftedness to carry a "corporate texture." These gifts of the Spirit should more appropriately be thought of as ministry that flows out of one's being part of a Christian community. These gifts/ministries are part of the fabric of the community; not individual desires nor personality driven strategies for ministry.

The Placement of Emphasis

Thus far in this essay we have used several descriptive terms by which to understand spiritual gifts and their part in Pentecostal mission. Recent history (particularly the late 19th and early 20th century) has been a context that provided streams of influences, which yield a pattern of urgency and emphasis on supernatural empowerment for world evangelization. A crucial nexus was formed between Spirit Baptism as empowerment for service (and a doorway to the

³² Craig Keener, Gift Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 135-136.

operation of spiritual gifts), a sense of urgency as it relates to the return of Christ, and the obedience to Christ's command to take the Gospel to all nations. This nexus has yielded a "radical" mission strategy demonstrating discontinuity with 19th century strategies of civilizing as evangelizing. This radical strategy has stressed the need for divine spiritual power by which to advance the kingdom. While these descriptors of Pentecostalism and mission are obvious to any researcher, there is still left a need for further explanation from a more affective dimension. Why do Pentecostals lean toward spiritual gifts that are connected to advancing the influence of the Kingdom evangelistically and the vocal gifts that are so part of Pentecostal congregational life?³³

Harvey Cox's observation is that Pentecostals have constructed a reality that has restored primal spirituality for masses of people. Cox notes that Pentecostals represent a restoration of significance and purpose in the largely unprocessed fabric of humanity where an unending struggle for a sense of destiny and significance rages.³⁴ This restoration results in a primal hope that is contained in a community where the image of the future rule of the King is reinforced by a primal piety that participates in spiritual encounter and freely verbalizes a primal speech that is the language of the heart that cannot be constrained by the particular context of tragedy or despair one may live through.³⁵

Margaret Poloma's work on the construction of reality within Pentecostals uses the Assemblies of God as an example. Her observation is that the secular-sacred dichotomy typical of modernism has been rejected and replaced with a perspective which sees the immediate

³³ For a most focused response to this question, see William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2000). Of particular interest would be chapter 14, "Baptism in the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts."

³⁴ Harvey Cox, Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century, (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishers, 1995), 102.

³⁵ Ibid, 82-122.

availability of God's power and presence. This is a world where God is near at hand and gives abundant evidence of His powerful presence in the Church.³⁶

Both Cox and Poloma provide a glimpse into the further motivation of Pentecostals, their reason for being and the resources to fulfill their destiny. Simply put, Pentecostals live with a heightened sense of present tense of God's reality. The affective domain is viewed as the context for the shaping of reality. Pentecostals see themselves as players in an eschatological saga. They are "soldiers in the Lord's army" that are "marching to Zion." Is it any wonder that they would rely on the supernatural intrusion of spiritual giftedness to see God's divine plan accomplished? If the redemptive agenda of Jesus' mission is being continued intact by the power of the Spirit given at Pentecost, is it not logical that proclamation with reliance on signs and wonders to compel people to believe would be the strategy of choice? With these kinds of internal assumptions that shaped the epistemological realities, the church is seen as a movement of the Spirit and thus views the church as missionary in its very character.³⁷

Summary

It must be acknowledged that while Pentecostals have historically participated in "life of the Spirit" they have focused their practice on selected gifts and not surprisingly have done little extensive biblical or theological reflection on spiritual gifts. The historical streams of influence and confluence of these streams have created a Pentecostal worldview where "affective action" shapes reality and eschatological fervor has defined the DNA of Pentecostal life. It is understandable that the placement of emphasis for Pentecostals would be on these spiritual gifts

³⁶ Margaret Poloma, The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 5. Poloma's uses the work of Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine extensively in her sociological study of the Assemblies of God, including People, Power, Change Movements in Social Transformation, (New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1970) also Luther Gerlach's work "Pentecostalism: Revolution as Counter Revolution," in Religious Movements in Contemporary America, ed. Irving Zretsky and Mark P. Leone, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

³⁷ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Truth on Fire: Pentecostal Theology of Mission and the Challenges of a New Millennium," in Asian Journal of Pentecost Studies 3/1 2000, 43.

that under gird evangelistic efforts and reinforce and strengthen the eschatological fervor of Pentecostal communities.³⁸

Challenges Yet To Be Addressed

There are certain limitations to my presentation in this essay. As a North American, I understand Pentecostal identity largely framed in the fabric I have described. While the global expansion of Pentecostals is no longer a hidden matter to even the casual observer, a unique transition is already in full swing. Westerners (Northerners) no longer are the majority populace among Christianity, in its broadest description, let alone the dominant group among Pentecostals. While established Pentecostals may be willing to acknowledge the emerging Pentecostal force, the transition from viewing this emerging group as subject/partner rather than object of mission efforts is a huge adjustment.

The 20th “Pentecostal Century” now gives way to a whole new reality described by Philip Jenkins as The Next Christianity. Just as the fountainheads of Pentecostalism that found root in the Northern hemisphere sought to re-vision the Church along “restorationist” motifs, the same initiative marks non-westerns/Southerners, as their restorationist Christianity gains strength. The thing Pentecostal churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America are deeply involved in creating is their own version of New Testament Christianity. The effectiveness of these 21st century Pentecostals seems to be in direct relation to the vigor with which they participate in the dynamic of spiritual “power ministry.”³⁹

³⁸ See Scottish Pentecostal leader Donald Gee and his affirmation of the “full appreciation of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit as they apply to this supreme task of preaching and teaching the Word of God.” Donald Gee, “Spiritual Gifts and World Evangelization,” in Azusa Street and Beyond, Grant McClung, ed. (South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing, 1986), 64-65.

³⁹ Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

The 21st century may be that time in which Pentecostals prove afresh that it is a “religion made to travel.” It may also be an era in which Pentecostals may have to acknowledge it has always been a mixture of “Pentecostalisms.”⁴⁰ The Southern influence on Pentecostal identity minimally must acknowledge it is shaped in a new world. The post colonial-post Cold War world has created murkiness about the place of Christianity among world religion. Increased nationalistic integration with growing aggressiveness among world religions and the resurgence of traditional religion, all contribute to a world vastly different than the world of Topeka and Azusa Street. It is in this complex and globalized world that Pentecostals are thriving. In the least stable societies where the tragedy of poverty and injustice reigns, the Holy Spirit is empowering Christians to rely on divine power: there is little else to rely on!

Several crucial issues must be addressed as Pentecostals continue to affirm their reliance upon divine empowerment through spiritual giftedness. First, as I indicated earlier in this article, we must heavily critique our individualist tendencies to view spiritual giftedness through the eyes of personal spirituality alone. Emerging Pentecostals are among cultures where the group/corporate understanding of social structures is much more pronounced. Biblical interpretation that flows from Pentecostals socialized in these kinds of social structure offer the possibilities of much broader understanding of spiritual giftedness. The context of injustice and poverty yields a challenge to Pentecostal leaders to teach the fuller sense of spiritual gifting and empowerment. When poverty rules and hunger prevails, the grace that comes from the risen Lord may be refracted into *charisms* (gifts) that have not been most fully described in biblical texts, but obviously are present to “show forth” the fullness of Christ and mature the Body of

⁴⁰Ronald N. Bueno of El Salvador provides challenging insights on the propriety of a unified view of Pentecostalism in “Listening to the Margins: Re-historicizing Pentecostal Experiences and Identities” in [The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made To Travel](#) Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen, eds. (Irvine, CA: Regnum Books International, 1999), 268-288.

Christ in particular need. Puerto Rican Eldin Villafane describes this energizing reality when he says,

“The baptism of the Spirit in Pentecostalism is rightfully seen as empowerment for service impacting the believer deeply by giving him/her a tremendous boldness, a heightened sense of personal holiness and a new sense of self worth and personal power. Yet, the narrow individualistic focus and purpose implies the dissipation... of so much energy and spiritual power that can and should be “tapped” for the broader missional objective of the church. The Pentecostal church has the spiritual resources to face the spiritual power encounters of our social struggles. If the new object of the baptism of the Spirit is the ongoing mission of the Messiah...then the challenge which remains for Pentecostals is to catch the vision of the broader prophetic and vocational role of the baptism of the Spirit.”⁴¹

Secondly, while I have suggested that eschatological motivation has fueled missionary efforts from the West (North) will Pentecostals framed in the South in the 21st century have the same fabric? Korean missiologist and theologian, Won Suk Ma has noted that the eschatological expectations present in West (Northern) Pentecostals are not quite as evident in Asian Pentecostal churches. He notes that a “this worldly” message is more obvious than an earlier “other worldly” message.⁴² As the economics of the world surge and falter, could it be that Pentecostals in countries where economics are thriving will succumb to the individualism that global consumerism inevitably fosters? Will the natural corporate/group social structure of the Southern hemisphere succumb to the impact of “redemption and lift” thus neutralizing a broadening awareness of how spiritual gifts can be an empowerment for Kingdom ministry?

Lastly, the increased obviousness of a pluralistic world creates new challenges and opportunities for relying on the work of the Holy Spirit. As Christianity encounters traditional

⁴¹ Eldin Villafane, “The Contours of a Pentecostal Social Ethic: A North American Hispanic Perspective,” in Transformation, Vol., 11 No. 1 (January/March 1994), 9.

⁴² Won Suk Ma, “A First Waver Looks at the Third Wave: A Pentecostal Reflection on Charles Kraft’s Power Encounter Terminology” in PNUEMA Vol. 19, No. 2, (Fall, 1997), 187-206.

religions and renewed world religions in a post-colonial world, new realities will shape that encounter. The stability offered by a colonial history, which has been the context of most of modern mission efforts, now gives way to a marketplace where Christianity has a status much as it did in the first century. It is in the new marketplace of religious dynamics that Pentecostals could be at distinct advantage. Believing that all ministry of eternal value will ultimately be done by Holy Spirit empowerment there can be a confidence in the middle of uncertainty.

Malaysian Pentecostal Amos Yong is charting new territory as he posits the work of the Holy Spirit outside “the church.” He says,

“As a Christian theologian, I proceed with some optimism that pneumatology, concerned as it is with explicating divine presence and agency in the world, provides the broadest framework for reflection, discussion, and debate about theological matters. The kind of universality I envision is therefore a posteriori in nature, building on the empirical finding of our engagement with the world and the convergences that emerge out of the ongoing theological dialogue. It is ultimately eschatological in realization, but such an orientation is not alien to the Pentecostal/charismatic orientation.”⁴³

As we enter a second century of Pentecostal history we must realize that the effectiveness of our tradition finds its root in the Spirit that “bloweth where it listeth.” With confidence we can sing with that Reformer Martin Luther “the Spirit and the Gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth.”

⁴³ Amos Yong, Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 81.