

A critical evaluation of theological distinctives of Pentecostal theology

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Abstract

What is it about churches with a Pentecostal background that justifies their existence apart from churches from the Catholic, Reformed or Eastern traditions? Is it possible to define a Pentecostal hermeneutic distinctive from the other theological traditions existing within the Christian church? And how would such a distinctive determine the practice of the daily lives of Pentecostals? The question about the possibility of a Pentecostal distinctive is answered in the affirmative and described in terms of the Pentecostal hermeneutic. The distinctive is described in terms of the movement's emphasis on conversion, sanctification, Spirit baptism, healing and other spiritual gifts, and eschatological expectation, and these elements are then illustrated with references to the practice in Pentecostal churches. In this way it is shown how Pentecostals exist theologically and practically along their kindred in other Christian traditions.

Introduction

"Every religion has a belief component or a series of doctrinal essentials" (Kellstedt et al 1998:175).¹ The question may be asked: What is distinctive about Pentecostal theology that distinguishes it from other theological traditions, like the Catholic, Eastern, or Reformed traditions?² In what way

¹ Kellstedt et al (1998:176) describe Evangelicalism's distinctives as salvation only through faith in Jesus (mechanism of the gospel); an experience of personal conversion (mechanics of the gospel); the importance of missions (sharing the gospel); and the truth and inerrancy of Scriptures (source of the gospel).

² For a discussion of a Catholic distinctive, cp. Swetnam & Wicks (2001:28ff). For a Reformed distinctive, cp. Enns (1989:471-487) and Sproul (1997:117-201). Stuebaker (2012:48-9) allows that it might not be possible to talk, eg, about "Lutheran theology" due to the various forms of Lutheranism but it is still possible to appeal to Lutheran confessions and a unique understanding of grace inspired by Luther's doctrine of justification, allowing theologians to appropriately pursue "Lutheran theology." Certain distinctive characteristics,

does it differ and justify its existence apart from the rest of the Christian church?

For most informed non-Pentecostal people the distinctive would probably be the strange phenomenon of people speaking in tongues in imitation of occurrences mentioned in the letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12-14) and the book of Acts (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 8, 11; 10:46; 19:6; cp. Mark 16:18 in the longer ending). Sometimes the Pentecostal movement is referred to in rather derogatory terms as "the tongues movement" (Ward 1975:118).³ Brumback (1946) follows this way of thinking by presenting his classical *apologia* for the Pentecostal movement by defending the practice of glossolalia. And McDonnell's (1976) defence of the charismatic movement within the Roman Catholic tradition consists of a survey of psychological and sociological research on glossolalia.

However, glossolalia fails to define the Pentecostal movement adequately in distinction from other theological traditions. There are religious movements where glossolalia had occurred before the advent of the Pentecostal movement, such as the Shakers and Mormons (Williams & Waldvogel 1975:81-89). The practice of glossolalia is a common religious phenomenon (Bunn 1973:46).⁴ Such movements are, however, not related historically or doctrinally to the Pentecostal movement. The conclusion is that glossolalia as such cannot serve to define Pentecostalism or to distinguish it fully from other Christian and religious movements (Dayton 1987:16).

When one identifies the Pentecostal movement with glossolalia the implication is that Pentecostalism originated *de novo* at the beginning of the twentieth century, either at a small Bible college in Topeka, Kansas under the leadership of a Holiness preacher, Charles F Parham, in 1900, or in 1906 at

in the same sense, define Pentecostals throughout the world, allowing one to speak of a Pentecostal distinctive (Studebaker, 2012:49).

³ Synan (1975:99-122) discusses such references in more detail. Cp., for one instance, Stolee (1936) in his critique of Pentecostalism when he equates the Pentecostal movement with glossolalia. His work was reissued unaltered in 1963 as *Speaking in Tongues*. Stolee was a Lutheran theologian.

⁴ Wansbrough (1985:1801) remarks in terms of Acts 2 that analogous happenings in the ancient contemporary world show that bursts of praise were frequently accompanied by words of foreign languages, as Acts also records of the apostles. Burger (1987:45-64) refers to Pietism, John Wesley and the First Evangelical Awakening, the Second Evangelical Awakening, the Holiness movement in its diverse forms, the Keswick Conferences, the revival accompanying the Reverend Andrew Murray from the Dutch Reformed Church, the Zionist movement under the leadership of John Alexander Dowie, and the Welsh revival of 1904 as antecedents of the Pentecostal movement and explains how in some instances these revivals were characterized by glossolalia. Cp. Möller's (1975:10-25) discussion of the occurrences of the charismata through the ages in the Western and Eastern churches, as well as in the Reformed tradition.

the Black mission in Azusa Street, Los Angeles under the leadership of William J Seymour (Burger 1987:66-82).⁵

The attention that the Pentecostal movement received, gave rise to both a defence of and an attack on glossolalia in the respective attempts to either discount or establish a historical line of the occurrence of the charismata through the ages within the Christian tradition, leading to a neglect of a careful theological basis and analysis for the movement. Advocates for or against the Pentecostal movement jumped to earlier antecedent movements such as the Irvingites and Shakers (cp. Taylor 1907:91-92; Nichol 1966:18-24; Bruner 1970:35-55; and especially Waldvogel 1977) and discussed the tongues movement, ignoring the important notions of holiness and healing that connect the Pentecostal movement to its historical antecedents.

In the early days of the Pentecostal movement, critics sometimes understood glossolalia as an abnormal response to some form of deprivation, whether sociological or psychological.⁶ After the 1960s, with the emergence of the charismatic movement within traditional denominations and the 1980s with the so-called Third Wave (Lederle 1988:37-48), psychological and sociological theories about the origins of glossolalia changed. Still, a solid theological analysis of the Pentecostal movement suffers from the emphasis on glossolalia as the only or most important distinctive of the Pentecostal movement. Even in cases where a theological analysis was offered the concentration on glossolalia handicapped the validity of the discussion because it restricted the types of question that were considered with the result that a typical theological analysis of Pentecostalism almost always centred on questions related to pneumatology, which in turn led to an almost exclusive discussion of the baptism in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit (cp., eg, Bruner 1970 and Dunn 1970). In this reductionist way, injustice is done to the complicated theological phenomenon of Pentecostalism in distinction to

⁵ Whether one chooses the former or latter as the origins of the Pentecostal movement has to do with whether one is black or white, argues Lovett (1979:123-141) because most black people emphasise that the Topeka Bible School revival led the movement while white people choose to refer to Azusa Street. However, Lovett's remark does not make sense since the Topeka Bible School had a white leader and the Azusa Street revival was led by a black preacher. The relation between Topeka and Azusa Street should also be remembered. The first persons who led the Pentecostal revival at Azusa Street had their Pentecostal experience at Topeka under the leadership of Parham. A few thousand people experienced glossolalia through Parham's ministry but his influence was not as widespread as the Azusa Street's Apostolic Faith mission. Parham was opposed to establishing a church in any form while Azusa Street eventually grew into a church and led to a world-wide establishment of churches. At least 26 churches can connect their origins to Azusa Street (Burger, 1987:79). The Azusa Street church never grew to a great institution; by the 1960s it consisted of 42 assemblies with 4764 members (Nichol, 1966:35).

⁶ McDonnell (1976) and Archer (2009:33-36) discuss the deprivation theories of the emergence of Pentecostalism in detail.

other theological traditions and it prevents a full understanding of the movement as well as a critical evaluation of its distinctive (Lee 1986:31).⁷

Historical survey of Pentecostal hermeneutics

Faupel (1996:19-43) demonstrates that the Latter Rain motif provides the primary organisational structure for the Pentecostal tradition. The Latter Rain motif is derived from Deuteronomy 11:10-15; Job 19:29; Proverbs 16:15; Jeremiah 3:3; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1; and James 5:7, allowing Pentecostal people to relate to and interpret the Old and New Testament according to a promise-fulfilment strategy and allowing them to extend the promise into their present community, thus enabling the modern Pentecostal community to continue participation in the past promises (Archer 2009:137).⁸ Scriptures alluding to the early and latter rain are used as types of the Holy Spirit and the showers of rain in the land of Canaan become a type of the operations of grace (Taylor 1907:90).⁹ The motif of the Latter Rain was interpreted by the Pentecostal people as a stable conceptual framework of God's involvement with human history and provided the framework in which they constructed their world-view (Faupel 1996:32-36).

Magisterial Protestantism tends to read the Bible through the lens of Pauline theology while Pentecostalism reads the rest of the New Testament through Lukan eyes, especially with the lenses provided by the book of Acts.¹⁰ "The Pentecostals and their predecessors based their views almost exclusively on the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles" (Hollenweger 1988:336).

⁷ "Pentecostal scholars are so intent on defending Spirit-Baptism that significant lacunae have developed" in their theological presentations (Mittelstadt, 2004:3).

⁸ "The early rain came at Pentecost, and immediately the seed which Jesus and His disciples had sown sprung up. This early rain continued for more than a hundred years, during which time the church was kept inundated with mighty floods of salvation. But when the church became popular and was formed into a great hierarchy, the long drought began, interspersed with a local shower of gracious revival now and then through the middle ages" (Taylor, 1907:90-91). "... the latter rain has been withheld until now. It seems to have had its starting point in the year 1906" (Taylor, 1907:92).

⁹ Taylor (1907:90) explains that God fashioned Palestine to be the model land of all lands, to contain the products of all zones and climates, "to be a miniature world in itself," and He arranged the coming and going of its rain clouds on a spiritual pattern, to "adumbrate the movements of the Holy Spirit." Canaan receives early rain in the spring, before the seed is planted, followed by a dry spell of several weeks and allowing bright weather for the cultivation of the crops, and then the latter rain follows, to ensure a good harvest. The rainy season in an average year extends from October to April, with the former rain occurring in October and November and the latter rain falling during March and April (Comfort & Elwell, 2001:984).

¹⁰ "The Lukan perspective of the Holy Spirit continues to be a crucial focus for Pentecostal scholars" (Mittelstadt, 2004:2).

The turn from Paul to Luke, however, represents a shift in *genres*, from didactic to narrative literature.¹¹ Narrative texts are much more difficult to interpret theologically than didactic texts. Pentecostals read the accounts in Acts in terms of their concept of the Latter Rain and interpret it as the general pattern of the early church's reception of the Spirit that needs to be replicated in the life of each individual believer (Archer 2009:140-1560.¹² This "subjectivising hermeneutic" already characterised Pietism with its insistence that the drama of salvation history is to be re-enacted in each believer's life (Olson 1999:491). Christ is to be birthed in all believers, he is to die in them, and his resurrection becomes the triumph of their faith (Welch 1972:28). The exodus experience, wilderness wanderings, and crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land become stages in the normative pattern of the pilgrimage from conversion via the "second blessing" into Beulah Land (Dayton 1987:24).¹³ And the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is not only the birthday of the church but an experience available to each modern believer, as the experience of enduement with power evidenced by the accompanying sign of "speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance" (Menzie's 1971:9).¹⁴ "The early rain began on the day of Pentecost, and the first manifestation was speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, and then followed the healing of the sick, casting out devils, etc.

¹¹ Stott (1976:15) correctly identifies this shift as a major component of Pentecostal exegesis and hermeneutics, although he describes it also as the major flaw, that it starts with narrative rather than didactic texts in the Scriptures to define Pentecostals' theology and praxis.

¹² Pentecostals' vivid description of the Spirit can be summarised in the words of Taylor (1907:14), that the Spirit does not refer to a vapor or influence as many suppose, but a real Person going forth from the Father and Son, and serving in their behalf. He is God Himself imparted to work in His children the pleasure of His will, making His grace available to them, helping them in their infirmities, witnessing to their salvation, and carrying into effect all the divine administrations of the kingdom of grace.

¹³ Pentecostals purposefully do theology as a reflection on their living experience which the church as a community of faith has. This is concerned with the action of God in the world in Jesus and by His Spirit. The fundamental purpose is to experience and give account to the evangelisation of the world and its reconciliation to God, and the resultant creation of a new society in the dynamic of the advance of the kingdom of God in history. This experienced, non-systematic tradition (Muntzer, Kierkegaard and Unamuno amongst others articulated it) stands in contrast to a systematising tradition (as in, eg, Aquinas, Calvin and Barth as exponents) (Campos, 1989:1, 4-5).

¹⁴ The difference between the original experience depicted in Acts 2, where "devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven" ... "was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language" (Acts 2:5-6 and the modern-day believer's experience of speaking in tongues that requires an interpretation to be understood and that probably coincides with that of the believers in Corinth (according to 1 Cor. 14:13) is acknowledged by Pentecostals but a good explanation for the discrepancy is still outstanding.

So it would only be natural to expect that in the latter rain Pentecost should be repeated and followed by the same manifestation" (Taylor 1907:91).¹⁵

Pentecostals read the New Testament in a distinctive way that leads readers to conclude that the modern believer becomes a disciple of Christ and then, in a separate experience as explicated in the book of Acts, receives the fullness of the Spirit in a baptism of fire and power.¹⁶ If the experience of Pentecost is available to modern believers it raises the question of the validity of experiences reported in the New Testament. Are the gifts of the Spirit meant to be applied to every generation? And does that apply to divine healing as well? Pentecostals believe that the modern church should expect to experience the same miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles because they are part of the post-Pentecost experience of the early church as reported by Acts. Parham (1944:44-45, published first in 1902) writes that the miracles of healing are part of the salvation announced by the gospel and serve as a sign of reassurance to the believer and witness to the unbeliever. Christ provided his children with mighty power for the relief of suffering humanity, to heal the sick, cast out devils, speak with new tongues, and confirm the word by these outward signs.¹⁷

Classical Protestantism argues that the charismata ceased with the close of the apostolic era, as Warfield (1918:5-6) demonstrates. The baptism in the Spirit and the exercise of the spiritual gifts were the characterising peculiarity of specifically the apostolic church, "part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them distinctively to the Apostolic Church, and they necessarily passed away with it" (Warfield 1918:6). Pentecostals' restorationist view is based on their vision of the unchangeable character of God and they argue that this unchangeable character of God guarantees that the nature of the apostolic church is normative for all time.¹⁸ The movement claims that it restores the supernatural elements of the apostolic era, hence its predilection for the term "Apostolic Faith". Lawrence (1916:11-12) writes that Pentecostal people make the New Testament their rule of faith, leading to their cry

¹⁵ Taylor was the Principal of Falcon Holiness School and a prominent leader in the Holiness and early Pentecostal movement, and an office-bearer in the International Pentecostal Holiness Church.

¹⁶ The emphasis on a personal experience accounts for the anti-creedal attitude of Pentecostals as well, "believing that 'knowing' comes from a right relationship with God rather than through reason or even through the five senses" (Poloma, 2005: 51).

¹⁷ Andrew Murray (1900:26) also emphasises that power is one of the significant characteristics of believers of all ages. Wherever the Spirit acts with power, divine healing will follow. And if divine healing is not experienced in the modern church it is because the Spirit is not allowed by the church to act with power, he contends.

¹⁸ This motif is a consistent theme in Pentecostal writings and sermons. It is already found in the first issue of the Azusa Street paper, dated September 1906, *The Apostolic Faith* (cp. McClung & Wagner, 1986:23-24 for a reprint).

to return to Pentecost after the church neglected it for many centuries. "This work of God is immediately connected with the work of God in New Testament days. Built by the same hand, upon the same foundation of the apostles and prophets, after the same pattern, according to the same covenant ... they do not recognise a doctrine or custom as authoritative unless it can be traced to that primal source of church instruction, the Lord and his apostles" (Lawrence 1916:12).

Theological pattern in Pentecostalism

The Pentecostal movement consists of a bewildering variety of Pentecostal churches, as is the case with the churches that originated from the fifteenth century's Reformation. Is it possible to find a theological pattern that fits all the "Pentecostals" that the market offers (Hollenweger 1988:37)?¹⁹

Much of the variety within Pentecostalism can be ascribed to cultural factors, such as divisions along racial lines or by allegiance to a charismatic founder who endowed their church with their idiosyncratic practices and convictions (Dayton 1987:17). In a theological analysis, these factors may safely be ignored. Pentecostal denominations and groups define viewpoints on issues such as foot washing, fasting, participation in secret societies and labour unions, and usefulness of conferences and camp meetings in different ways. In most cases these statements do not reflect the distinctive, the *gestalt* of the Pentecostal movement.

It is possible to divide Pentecostal churches and movements into three groups, as Faupel (1972) demonstrates: churches emphasising a doctrine of sanctification in the Wesleyan Holiness tradition with its three "works of grace" consisting of conversion, "entire sanctification" as a distinct and subsequent experience, and a baptism with the Spirit empowering the believer for service and witness and evidenced by speaking in tongues;²⁰ churches proclaiming two works of grace by collapsing the first two into one "finished work" supplemented by a process of gradual sanctification; and those holding a "Oneness" or "Jesus Only" view of the Godhead, proclaiming a Unitarianism of the Second Person of the Godhead, and supporting the notion of two works of grace.²¹

¹⁹ Hollenweger does not think so and he emphasises the wide diversity within the movement. However, he writes as a historian rather than as a theologian.

²⁰ Berkhof (1964:90) refers to the neglected "third element" beyond the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification, namely, empowerment for witness in the world, as featured in Acts 2. Pentecostals make a sharp distinction between conversion to Christ and the post-conversion experience of Spirit baptism (Mittelstadt, 2004:1).

²¹ The Oneness movement is the product of a literalistic effort to harmonise the Trinitarian baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 with the pattern more common within the book of Acts (especially 2:38) of baptism in the Name of the "Lord Jesus." It then argues from Colossians

The challenge is to develop a theological analysis of Pentecostalism that includes both major types of the movement, namely the type that indicates three works of grace and the type supporting two works. A clue to such a theological analysis that is inclusive can be found in the preference within the movement for the expression "full gospel," a term that draws attention to the aspects of salvation for the soul, healing for the body, holiness, the baptism in the Spirit, and the premillennial return of Christ (Land 1993:6).²² "We believe that the full gospel includes holiness of heart and life, healing for the body and baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance" ("Statement of Truth" of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, 1948; full statement in Nichol 1966:4-5).

The "Statement of Faith" also explains that God used Martin Luther during the Reformation to restore the doctrine of justification by faith; later on he used the Wesley brothers and others to restore the doctrine of sanctification by faith; then he used various individuals to restore the doctrine of divine healing by faith; and the truth of Jesus' second coming. Now he is using many witnesses in the Pentecostal movement to restore the doctrine of the baptism with the Spirit and fire, with signs following as indicated in Mark 16:17-18; Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6; and 28:31.

The five strands or themes of the "full" gospel as explicated in the statement are: conversion, sanctification, baptism in the Spirit with the evidence of tongues, divine healing, and Jesus' second coming. This constellation of themes recurs throughout the whole Pentecostal movement, and throughout the world (Dayton 1987:20).

Parham (1930:51-52) already reported of the examination of students at his Bible School in December 1900 "upon the subject of repentance, conversion, consecration, sanctification, healing, and the soon coming of the Lord," reflecting the same themes. He continues, "We had reached in our studies a problem. What about the second chapter of Acts? ... I set the students at work studying out diligently what was the Bible evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost." A few days later this assignment led to one of the students, Agnes N Ozman, "receiving the Holy Spirit" and purportedly speaking in the Chinese language.

The same is true for the pattern of doctrinal themes in the Apostolic Faith Mission (in America) (Apostolic Faith Mission Headquarters, 1965:20-21) that traces its origin directly to the Azusa Street revival that launched Pentecostalism into a worldwide phenomenon. It emphasised the need for having three definite, separate, spiritual experiences, of justification, sancti-

2:9 that Jesus is the full manifestation of the Godhead in this era. The Jesus Only movement shares with the second group the idea of two works of grace.

²² The term "full gospel" is also used by several Pentecostal denominations as a designation.

fication, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, together with the teachings of divine healing and the imminent second coming of the Lord with its premillennialist interpretation, as the solid "scriptural foundation in which the church stands." The Assemblies of God acknowledges four fundamental teachings, salvation, healing, the baptism in the Spirit, and the second coming of Christ, as the teachings that should receive special emphasis (Horton 1955:13), a pattern of four doctrines found also in the writings of the (controversial) founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Aimee Semple McPherson (Cox 1969:9; Ranaghan 1974).²³

Four-fold pattern of distinctives

The elements of the four-fold pattern occur separately or in combination in the other Christian traditions, and the four-fold pattern is anticipated to a large degree by prominent authors such as Andrew Murray, RA Torrey, AJ Gordon, and AB Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance that influenced the Christian world at the end of the nineteenth century. Simpson (1925), for example, describes Jesus as "Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King." The theme of the baptism with the Spirit and the evidence of tongues is, however, missing. The emergence of the four-fold pattern can thus be described as the last step in a long and complex historical process of development that culminated in Pentecostalism and provides a valid way to analyse the movement because it concentrates on what is characteristic and basic to Pentecostalism. The pattern can be demonstrated by quoting many theological and popular writings and by providing historical proofs from the roots of Pentecostal theology²⁴ and the pattern allows for Pentecostal theological thought to be explicated.²⁵

The four themes coalesce in such a way as to reinforce one another, as demonstrated by the three early names given to the movement: the "Pentecostal" movement, the "Apostolic Faith," and the "Latter Rain," three terms utilised by Charles F Parham (reprint in 1930) in his first report about the new phenomenon, *The latter rain: the story of the origin of the original*

²³ The pattern of four themes does not indicate that sanctification is neglected by these churches. They teach that the indwelling of the *Holy Spirit* necessarily leads to a process of sanctification in the life of the believer.

²⁴ Dayton (1987) and Nel (1992:43-96) discusses these roots – Methodist, the American revival of Christian perfection, and the rise of the divine healing movement – to demonstrate how it links and leads to the doctrine of Pentecostal Spirit baptism, and the rise of premillennialism.

²⁵ "The faith, worldview, experience and practice of Pentecostals was (sic) thoroughly eschatological. They lived both in the tension of the already but not yet consummated Kingdom ... Time and space were fused and transcended in the Spirit, and at the heart of testimony, expectation and worship was Jesus, the Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Baptizer with the Spirit, and Coming King" (Land, 1993:55-6).

Apostolic or Pentecostal Movements. Woodworth-Etter (1916:189-190) describes her calling to the ministry in a vision as a mission to give the last call to sinners, and “to get those who have been called to be established, to be faithful and true, that they may be anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and sealed with proper knowledge of His coming.” She (Woodworth-Etter 1916:535) also explains why the gifts and miracles reappeared after “a long drought,” as a sign of Jesus’ imminent second coming. The drought period between the post-apostolic times and the end of the nineteenth century is interpreted in dispensational terms, as part of God’s plan for the ages. In this way the movement made what seems to be its most important illegitimate burden, its discontinuity with classical forms of the Christian traditions, its greatest legitimation and major apologetic asset.

In this way the inner logic between the elements of the four-fold pattern can be demonstrated and explicated to depict the distinctive *gestalt* of Pentecostalism. By tracing the development and interplay of these themes it becomes possible to understand the historical and theological origins and distinctives of the Pentecostal movement.

Distinctives of worship

Pentecostals’ most distinctive characteristic is not their theological deliberations but their worship services (Cartledge 2010:29-30). The Catholic service has the altar where the Mass is offered dominating the centre of the church and the Reformed service has the pulpit in the centre with its strong emphasis on the preaching of the Word based on a thorough theological basis, while the worship service of Pentecostals is determined and dominated by the experiential,²⁶ a product of the Pentecostal hermeneutic.²⁷ Pentecostals believe that the experience of people living in Biblical times should be replicated in the modern worship context. Tomberlin (2010:34) defines the context of Pentecostal spirituality as a Christo-Pneumatic ecclesiology where the values pursued are to encounter Christ and the Spirit in the course of the

²⁶ Early Pentecostal halls used as churches did not have a pulpit but used a table on a platform where ample room was created for the orchestra, indicating the importance of worship and experience for Pentecostals. Early Pentecostals purposefully did not employ church buildings because it was imperative for them not to be a church but a movement.

²⁷ Olson (2004:88-9) remarks that mainstream Evangelicalism has affected Pentecostalism to such an extent that its distinctive practice of speaking in tongues and its “manifestations” of the Spirit in healings, prophecy, and other supernatural events are becoming less prominent as features of Pentecostal worship. Many Pentecostal members have never spoken in tongues and their Pentecostal churches are “evolving into generic evangelical churches in which the classical Pentecostal distinctives are verbally affirmed but nonfunctional” (Olson, 2004:88). Macchia (2007:17) also refers to the decline of interest in Spirit baptism among a large number of Pentecostal theologians and describes it as the result of the diversity within the movement.

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worship service. The “full gospel” is that God sent his only begotten Son as well as the Spirit to redeem those in bondage to sin and these truths need to be experienced.²⁸

In order to replicate what Pentecostals perceive as the Biblical precedent, it is necessary for each member of the church to be able to testify of conviction of sin as a function of the Spirit leading to a personal meeting with God, and the experience that one’s sins have been forgiven. The heart-broken sinner often expresses the suffering of conviction through tears and mourning. Repentant sinners must “pray through” to receive the victory. Conversion is more than intellectual assent, or the recitation of a simple sinner’s prayer (Tomberlin 2010:37) and it leads to the opportunity to witness of salvation. This “witnessing” still plays an important role in the Pentecostal worship service with people telling about their experiences with the Spirit.

The second element of Pentecostal theological distinctive has to do with Jesus as Sanctifier of believers and Pentecostals are encouraged in a life of prayer, seeking daily after the Spirit that sanctifies them. Once the penitent person has been saved, the new believer must learn to pray through to sanctification. In the words of Peretti (1995:ix), sin is “the monster we love to deny ... the perfect monster, a man-eater that blinds and numbs its victims, convincing them that nothing is wrong and there is no need to flee, and then consumes them at its leisure.”

Some Pentecostals believe that salvific grace is received in a singular crisis experience and after this experience of sanctification the believer is made perfect. Perfection is then defined, not as sinlessness but as victory over sin and the believer’s experience of the Spirit’s assistance in triumphing over sin. The perfected believer remains subject to temptation but is empowered to choose against sin. Most Pentecostals, however, see sanctification as a growth in grace through the spiritual disciplines and a series of crisis experiences in which the believer is strengthened by the Spirit in the struggle against sin. In both cases, the struggle with and victory over sin is the primary issue in sanctification (Tomberlin 2010:43). Pentecostal worship services are often characterised by spontaneous prayers of believers for sanctification.

Sanctification is seen as preparation for Spirit baptism; the purpose and goal of sanctification is to be filled with the Spirit. One of the earliest copies of the magazine published by the Azusa Street Mission, *The Apostolic Faith* (December 1906:1; McClung & Wagner 1986:23-24), states that for the person cleansed at the cross of Christ and sanctified, old things have passed away, Christ is enthroned in the heart and crowned within, and now the person is “just ready to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire.”

²⁸ Irenaeus (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 1:487) in the second century CE calls the Son and the Spirit the two hands of God the Father at work in creation and redemption.

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The Spirit baptism is interpreted as the transformation and empowerment of a fearful and uncertain group of disciples into a missionary fellowship that boldly carry the gospel throughout the world, but the Spirit is also the agent through whom believers receive Christ, and Christ is the agent through whom believers receive the Spirit. Spirit baptism anticipates the believer's glorification (Tomberlin 2010:45-6).²⁹

Most Pentecostals affirm that speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the Spirit baptism is normative. Because the Christians of the first church and first century spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, twenty-first century Christians should expect to encounter the Spirit in the same way and receive the same spiritual gifts (*χαρισμάτων*).

Speaking in tongues is interpreted as signifying the healing of the universal human community. Genesis 11 relates how God confused the tongues of humanity as an act of judgment against human rebellion; the confusion of tongues in the different nations is an on-going sign of the judgment at Babel. At Pentecost in Jerusalem, and subsequent Pentecost experiences through the ages, Pentecostals see the redeemed human community unified with God and praising God in all the different languages (Acts 2:8-11).

The gift of tongues is the language of the Spirit which transcends the brokenness of human community and the alienation of humans from communion with the Holy Trinity. Through inspiration of the Spirit, the gift of tongues becomes the language of worship by which humans offer praise and prayer to God (Tomberlin 2010:46).

1 Peter 2:24 states that, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." Pentecostals associate salvation with healing; healing is provided in the atonement. Isaiah 53:3-5 is used extensively to show that the Servant of YHWH, interpreted as the Messiah, Jesus, has borne humans' infirmities and carried their diseases. He was wounded for their transgressions and crushed for their iniquities. Upon him was the punishment that made them whole and by his bruises they are healed (NRSV translation).

Healings and miracles were associated with the first-century apostolic church; Pentecostals insist they must be associated with the modern Spirit-filled church. The church is interpreted as the continuation of the ministry of Christ through the Spirit and testimonies of healings, exorcisms and other

²⁹ Zahl (1988:163) calls the Pentecostal experience's life-altering effects (the "transformation of life") the most fundamental of the key distinctives and the most persuasive of the Pentecostal movement.

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miracles are seen as proof that the modern church succeeds as Christ's body on earth.

The last distinctive proposed for the Pentecostal movement is its eschatological expectation.³⁰ Pentecostals interpret the outpouring of the Spirit as an eschatological event, as sign of the imminence of the Day of YHWH (Joel 2:28-32, and applied by Peter in Acts 2:16-21). In the same way the latter rain is interpreted:

After the latter rain there was a dry spell, during which the grain matured and mellowed, and then came the harvest, and then the winter. After this great outpouring of Pentecost, there will come another dry spell, in which severe trials will mellow the saints and mature them for the harvest, and then will set in the wintry storms of the Great Tribulation, to be ended only by the millennial spring morning, when Christ and his glorified saints shall 'return from the wedding to take charge of the world' (Taylor 1907:96).

Early Pentecostals were preoccupied with the return of Christ and believed that they were on the threshold of the greatest event in the history of the world, the imminent appearance of Christ in the clouds. This belief forced them to preach the gospel in the whole world (Matt. 24:14); Christ cannot come back until the gospel has been spread successfully throughout the whole world (Downey 1914:2). "Despite the apparent concern for the souls of humanity, the early adherents did not understand their task to be converting the world to Christ. Their *real* concern was to engage in activity which would hasten the return of Christ" (Faupel 1996:21). Spirit baptism with the evidence of speaking in tongues was interpreted as empowerment for eschatological mission.³¹

Pentecostals excel in eschatological expectation with countless events happening in the world history interpreted as signs of the times indicating the imminent end. Fundamentalist dispensationalism deteriorated into eschatological expectations that caused many Pentecostals to lose interest in the

³⁰ Macchia (2006:112) calls the eschatological element as decisive because Pentecostalism is mainly about the "latter rain" of the Spirit to restore the gifts and power of Pentecost to the church in order to empower global mission before Christ's imminent return.

³¹ Evidence exists that early Pentecostals interpret their experience of different tongues as proof that they were sent to the different nations represented by the tongues they received. They interpreted their experience in terms of the Pentecost experience described in Acts 2. There was not enough time before the end of the world to study the different languages of the world; therefore the Spirit gives the gift of languages of the world to the church. They believed they had received the Chinese tongue, or Vietnamese tongue and went to the different nations, with the resulting experience of disappointment that no one understood them (Sexton, 1907:1).

important subject of the second coming of Christ.³² The speculations and dubious conclusions of this type of eschatology contain the danger that it affects the way Pentecostals view the authority of the Bible. The effect is that a large part of the movement ignores any eschatological reflection at the cost of its missional consciousness (cp. Lord's 2012:9, 193-211 discussion). The Pentecostal movement needs an eschatology that is not held captive to speculations that must be reinterpreted all the time because it did not realise. It needs eschatological hope based on Biblical data that will give it the sense of being an eschatological people with a mission.³³ Pentecostals need to hear that the imminence of the second coming does not imply its immediacy but rather the suddenness of the return of Christ.³⁴ They need to experience the Spirit groaning in anticipation of the revelation of God's reign in the new world (Rom. 8:22-23). Redemption can be completed only at the end of the age; what the believer enjoys in Christ in this life is only a foretaste of the glory to be revealed (Rom. 8:18-19).

Some Pentecostals reacted to the disappointed eschatological expectations by expecting the kingdom in this world, with an emphasis on a success-

³² Cp. Hal Lindsey's bestsellers, *The Late Great Planet Earth* of 1970; *There's a New World Coming* of 1973; *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* of 1980; and others. Lindsey's books represent the eschatology embraced by the majority of Pentecostals.

³³ Anderson (1990:18) speaks about the contemporary moral crisis facing Pentecostalism and argues that it relates to an existential approach and resultant poor exegetical methods in the interpretation of Scripture and the construction of doctrine. He defines "inappropriate exegetical methods" as "allegorizing the text and creating typologies which the Bible never intended." To refer to one such typology, cp. Taylor's equating of Palestine's rain with the working of the Spirit (footnote 9). Anderson's implicit assertion is that a uniformly correct standard of principles of exegesis, the historical-grammatical method in particular, would resolve all the theological problems (Anderson, 1994:13-22). Most doctrinal and ethical issues and concerns cannot, however, be resolved by exegetical method alone, as Johnson (1983, in chapter 6) argues. Interpretation of Scripture is also dependent upon spiritual discernment, what Yong (2000:95) calls a "discerning charismology," by which to differentiate the presence and activity of the Spirit from that of other spirits within the framework of the Pentecostal-charismatic experience. A Christian community cannot rely only upon exegetical method alone to validate its interpretation. A Pentecostal hermeneutic cannot be reduced to a static exegetical methodology but must include the important elements of the inspiration of the Spirit who inspired Scriptures in the first place, as well as the social location of the readers and their narrative tradition. Hermeneutics is concerned with the historical horizon of Scripture and the horizon of the reader in community. For this reason, different communities often derive different and even contradictory doctrinal positions, even when they utilise the same exegetical principles (cp. Thiselton, 1992:33-36, 44-46; Archer, 2009:179-80).

³⁴ The same problem of imminence is found throughout biblical prophecy and apocalyptic. Prophets repeatedly foretell God's acts of salvation and judgment in a way which suggests that the great day of fulfilment is imminent. In a literal sense, such prophecies remain unfulfilled but they are affirming that each crisis and blessing is a partial realisation of the ultimate victory of God. The shadow of Christ's eschatological presence began to fall in the period inaugurated by his ministry, death and resurrection (Travis, 1980:90).

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ful life filled with riches, health, prosperity and blessing (cp. Horn 1989:85-112). They are at home in this world, forgetting that death is the end of this era and that the Christians who have hoped in Christ in this world alone are of all people most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19).

Synthesis

An attempt was made to describe the theological distinctive of the Pentecostal movement. To do so, it was necessary to analyse the Pentecostal hermeneutic that determines the way the movement reasons about God and itself. The distinctives were described in terms of the historical developments that led to the movement and analysed as an emphasis on conversion, sanctification, the baptism of the Spirit, divine or faith healing, and an eschatological expectation of an imminent second coming. The distinctives were illustrated by referring to the daily practice and worship service of Pentecostals, demonstrating that it determines the way the Pentecostal ethos formed and exists today.

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