THE JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Gordon D. Fee
Why Pentecostals Read Their Bibles Poorly
— and Some Suggested Cures 4

Rickie D. Moore
The Prophetic Calling:
An Old Testament Profile and its Relevance for Today 16

Matthias Becker
A Tenet Under Examination:
Reflections on the Pentecostal Hermeneutical Approach 30

Paul van der Laan
What is Left Behind? A Pentecostal Response
to Eschatological Fiction 49

William K. Kay
Pentecostals and the Bible 71

Anne E. Dyer
Missionary Candidates to the British Assemblies
of God Overseas Missions 1945-54 84

Timothy Walsh
“A Sane People, Free From Fads, Fancies and Extravagances”:
Rhetoric and Reality of Collective Worship
During the First Decade of the Pentecostal Movement in Britain 101

BOOK REVIEWS 120
Foreword

This edition of JEPTA contains a number of papers that were presented at the 25th anniversary conference of the European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA) held at Regents Theological College, England. The theme of the conference was “Pentecostals and the Bible”. It is to be hoped that in the ongoing dialogue relating to this topic, the following contributions will help in the dialogical interaction and development for all concerned. Some of the contributors, including Gordon Fee and Paul van der Laan presented papers at the EPTA Conference. Other articles were included that also address the issue; written by Rickie Moore, Matthias Becker and William Kay. In order to retain our objective of presenting a variety of topics, two articles by Anne Dyer and Timothy Walsh have also been included. They explore historical issues, both analysing elements of British Pentecostalism in recent times.

The EPTA Conference for 2005 is to be held at Schloss Beuggen, Germany from March 29-April 2. On this occasion, it will be hosted also by EPCRA (The European Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Association). More information is to be gained from Jean-Daniel Pluess (www.epcra.ch). The theme of the Conference is Pentecostals, Power and Empowerment.

In the 2003 edition of JEPTA, the article entitled, *Born in difficult times: The founding of the Volksmission and the work of Karl Fix* was incorrectly ascribed to William K Kay when in reality, it was the combined work of Bernhard Röckle and William K Kay. Our apologies go to Bernhard for this misunderstanding.

Keith Warrington
Editor

ISSN 1812-4461
Why Pentecostals Read Their Bibles Poorly
—and Some Suggested Cures

Gordon D. Fee

I begin this lecture with an apology for offering something a bit more popular in this session. But I do not apologize for its content. Here I address a deep concern that has grown on me over many years; indeed, in some ways it sums up one of the passions of my life, and that is to help the people in the pew to become more literate biblically than has tended to be the case since the burgeoning of the technological age in the latter half of the twentieth century.

I begin with an anecdote. A few years ago, a popular columnist in the Vancouver Sun wrote a piece bemoaning the fact that her teenage son had to ask her the meaning of a simple biblical allusion. The allusion was to the River Jordan in a current popular song. Her complaint was that in giving up the Christian faith, as she and most of her acquaintances had, they had also lost something dear regarding their Canadian heritage: a language full of allusions to biblical people and events. A huge part of Western culture was in the process of simply disappearing, she bemoaned.

But this complaint could also be echoed in the church as well. In the language of the prophet, there is a dearth of knowledge in the land, especially knowledge of Scripture. And while there are a lot of interrelated causes for this dearth, I will focus on just a few of them in this lecture. First, and briefly, I want to examine some of the reasons why Christians of all kinds read their Bibles poorly; second, I will point out some of the results of this reality, and third, point toward some remedies.

I. Some Reasons for Poor Reading

1. The first reason why most Christians read their Bibles poorly is endemic to our present culture. The fact is that even though the computer has increased the abundance of books by many-fold, we are in danger as a culture of losing altogether the fine art of sustained reading.

We live in a time when our senses are being bombarded with constant noise and entertainment. The stimulation from such an overload of our senses, especially sight and sound, is having the dual effect of creating a generation who are practically incapable of quiet in any form and who therefore feel the need for constant external stimulation. Reading is now accompanied by the blare of music, and the television has become something of the monster that many predicted for it years ago: where more sights and sounds bombard the senses in two minutes of commercials than would have happened in a full half hour just a few decades ago.

Such over-stimulation of the senses is already having its impact on the ability of people to engage in sustained reading even of a good novel — how much more so of these ancient religious texts, whose culture is so foreign to ours and whose narrative art was initially intended not for the reader at all, but for the hearer, who in hearing these texts read over and over again not only knew their content, but could repeat them often verbatim with all the nuances and catchwords intact.

2. But our problems also stem from our varied forms of Christian religious culture. On the one hand, those who were born and raised in more liturgical contexts have very often never been taught that they should actually read the Bible for themselves. So what they know comes from the reading of the Biblical lections Sunday after Sunday. The result often is that the Bible has a sense of “oldness” — like the stained glass windows and often the architecture and liturgy itself — so that the idea of reading, and understanding, such ancient texts in the contexts of one’s own culturally modern home would never even occur to them.

Related to this is the very “ancient” feel there is to the way the Bible comes to us. When people are told they should read their Bibles, their instincts, correctly, are to begin with Genesis. But one does not get very far into the narrative, chapter 4 to be exact, when the reader is confronted by the very strange story about Cain and Abel. With absolutely no explanation we are told that God looked approvingly on Abel’s sacrifice and not Cain’s, and so Cain murdered him; and then, as if that were not enough, the episode concludes with another strange thing — a genealogy that focuses on the arrogance of an otherwise unknown man named

---

1 Gordon Fee is Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada. This lecture was given at the 25th annual meeting of the European Pentecostal Theological Association held at Nantwich, England, July 26-29, 2004.
2 The substance of this lecture (with “Evangelicals” in the title) was first offered at Regent College in March, 2002, in conjunction with the appearing of How to Read the Bible Book by Book. As it turned out, it was also a plea for the kind of concerns that went into How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth. The lecture was reworked considerably for presentation at the EPTA conference, whose theme was “The Use of the Bible among Pentecostals.” I have deliberately kept the basically oral format of the lecture, and thus have chosen to avoid too many footnotes.
Take, for example, the Book of Exodus. I will not ask how many of you
have sat down and read Exodus all the way through; but this absolutely
marvelous book has a way of turning off the modern reader, who is used to
something considerably different in a story line. One can usually get
reading, in the sense of normal, everyday stuff; and in many such cases
some help is needed for the modern person to navigate their way through
this tricky terrain.

Take, for example, the Book of Exodus. I will not ask how many of you
have sat down and read Exodus all the way through; but this absolutely
marvelous book has a way of turning off the modern reader, who is used to
something considerably different in a story line. One can usually get
through the first nineteen chapters easily enough, and then the Ten
Commandments; but after that you encounter the first considerable
collection of laws — and these especially have an ancient ring to them,
even more so when they are followed by seven chapters of detailed
instruction on constructing a tent for worship and sacrifice, which after a
brief respite of narrative (chs. 32-34), is followed by six final chapters in
which the whole thing is gone over once more in detail as they create the
tent and its furnishings. I am prepared to argue with any Christian that this
is absolutely must stuff, which the Christian must know like the back of
his/her hand — but not for the reasons that are sometimes given, but
precisely because of how crucial this book is to the story of the Bible as a
whole. And with a little help one can learn how to read it well.

3. But the ancient feel of these texts is an obstacle for only some
Christians. On the other side is the more non-liturgical evangelical culture,
represented by such diverse groups as Pentecostals, Baptists, Holiness
groups, and endless non-aligned Independents, all of whom actually put a
great deal of emphasis on personal Bible reading. But this, too,
commendable as it is, often unwittingly promotes a kind of reading that is
absolutely foreign to the way people read almost anything else except the
newspaper, and is mostly foreign to the way the Bible itself is given to us.

Two practices, wonderful and commendable practices, tend to militate
against a truly knowledgeable reading of Scripture, so that most
evangelical Christians, including especially Pentecostals, the very people
who tend to read their Bibles the most, tend also to read them poorly. And
by that I mean, that even though they read them often, at the same time
Scripture is seldom read on its own terms, from the perspective of the
divinely inspired authors themselves.

Unfortunately, most of our poor reading stems from what is also the
Pentecostal’s great strength — the conviction that Scripture is God’s very
word, a word for the church for all times and climes, inspired by the Holy
Spirit for the church’s growth and life in the world. But our very habits
based on this conviction often militate against our reading the Bible with
minds renewed by the Holy Spirit so that we have a better sense of what
the Bible is, how it “works,” as it were, and how it should inform
everything about us: our theology, our worship, and our lives in their
totality — at home, in the world, at work and at leisure. Our habits,
therefore, which again I emphasize are commendable and should not
necessarily be abandoned by a more informed reading of Scripture, have
led us to two kinds of reading that tend to work against our reading with
understanding.

a. The first of these, what I call the non-contextual individualization of
verses — is exemplified for me by a phenomenon that I grew up with
known as the “promise box” — a collection of individual texts printed on
small cards that dutifully found its way on our kitchen tables. The point of
the “promise box” was for us each to hear God speak a word to us for the
day, as a kind of constant reminder through the day of God’s constant
presence by his “promises.” This “promise box” view of the Bible was
greatly aided by the accidents of history, when a sixteenth century bishop
decided to divide the text into chapters and verses for easy and ready
access, and then in English the King James Version was actually published
so that every verse became a paragraph on its own! It is hard to imagine
anything more totally destructive to informed reading of Scripture than the
beloved KJV, which by the very way it was printed helped us to memorize
“verses” — as though God had given us the Bible that way — but at the
same time caused us to have little or no feeling for the actual sense units
with the biblical text itself.

Indeed, I remember well the difficulty I had even as a lad with picking out
Joshua 1:9, which (not surprisingly) did not start at the beginning, “Have
I not commanded thee?” but with what came next: “Be strong and of good
courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is
with thee whithersoever thou goest.” I remember when I later encountered
that text in its context in Joshua how strange it seemed that these words to
Israel’s military commander on the eve of the conquest of the Promised
Land should be applied personally and individually to my own life as a
boy at school. True, I needed all the courage I could muster as a
Pentecostal preacher’s kid in a secular school; but how, I wondered, did
these words in a very case specific point in history miraculously become a
word for me as I trundled off to school.
Now don’t get me wrong; it is not that I don’t believe that God can take these words out of their original context and by the Holy Spirit cause us in our circumstances to hear them as words for us. I do. Indeed, I believe that that happens constantly for those who look to God’s Word to hear directly from Him. But this practice, as much good as it may have engendered, also fostered a view of Bible “reading,” which was not true reading. That is, because we were reading the Bible for personal devotion, we read it in a very fragmented way — a paragraph or chapter at a time, often without connectedness, and therefore without trying to understand what is going on, because we were basically looking for our “verse for the day.”

Thus our first problem was the failure to read the Bible wholistically, as the grand narrative of God’s dealings with humankind, in order to recreate human beings back into the divine image that was so besmirched by the Fall.

b. And this leads to my second basic reason as to why, by and large, Pentecostals — and most evangelicals — read their Bibles poorly, which comes directly out of this first one. Because we tended to be looking for a “word for the day,” we unwittingly did two things to the sacred text that stand rather directly in opposition to the way God chose to give us his word.

On the one hand, we fragmented it and atomized it, with hardly any sense at all of its wholistic grandeur as God’s Story in which by grace he is including us. At the same time, on the other hand, we thus also tended to flatten everything. Because all Scripture is inspired of God, and because Scripture came to us not the way it came to God’s people originally, as organic wholes, but rather in small doses called “verses,” we tended to read it all the same way: narrative, prophecy, epistle, gospel, the Law, psalm, proverb, other poetry all functioned in basically the same way. And only a good dose of common sense ever saved us from making the whole Bible look foolish.

To put it bluntly, how odd of God to give us the Bible the way he did, when he could much more conveniently — for our way of reading it — have given it to us in the form of some 7000 propositions to be believed and 700 imperatives to be obeyed, with a few anecdotes brought in at the end so as to illustrate some of the propositions and imperatives. Why did he not do it this way, if our way of reading it was the way the texts themselves were intended to be read?

Why not simply shorten the process and be done forever with all those genealogies, or sometimes puzzling stories, or prophetic oracles that are so hard to read under any circumstances? Why not give us the Bible the way we would prefer it, so that we can get on with reading it our way, and do so much more conveniently? Fortunately, our view of Scripture as sacred and divinely inspired kept us for the most part from actually repackaging it to suit our own habits and preferences — with one outstanding negative exception.

Unfortunately, several generations of Pentecostals grew up with one scheme that tried to help them read the Bible wholistically, but which in the end was an unmitigated disaster, namely Dispensationalism. The problem in this case was with the scheme itself, which was driven by an outside agenda that is not explicitly taught anywhere in the Bible itself. Indeed, it is fair to say that without the scheme in hand, not one reader in three million could ever possibly come to Dispensationalist conclusions.

The driving agenda, of course, was a (commendable) concern for the Jewish people. The scheme was to divide biblical revelation into seven dispensations — itself an unbiblical formula that no reader of the Bible could ever have seen for oneself! The focus was ultimately eschatological — that is, that God would do at the end of time what failed to happen within history. The invention had two parts to it. First, Darby discounted New Testament revelation that made it clear that the promise to Abraham was now being fulfilled,1 as Paul vehemently argues in Romans and Galatians, that Jew and Gentile together form the one eschatological people of God.2

That led, second, to the theory that God had two separate programs: one for the Jew and the other for the church. And one was taught “the gap theory,” that is, to read “gaps” into texts that clearly suggested otherwise.

---

1. All one has to do is to read the literature and see how much of it is devoted to “getting around” the plain meaning of NT texts that play the lie to the whole Dispensational scheme.

2. In fact the whole of Romans is not primarily about “justification by faith,” but about how Jew and Gentile together form the one eschatological people of God — and justification by faith is way God chose to make this happen. After all, the whole argument of Romans concludes in 15:5-13, where the promise that Gentiles would be brought into the people of God has been fulfilled and thus with “one voice” Jew and Gentile glorify God together.
because only by this strategem could the theory be maintained. And this in turn led to the invention of a “secret rapture” of the church, so that God could return to his first program of gathering national Israel. And since none of this is explicitly taught in Scripture itself, how could a reader come by it without the outside grid?

But the damage had been done; and now the only “wholistic” reading of the Bible that most Pentecostals ever did was on the basis of a scheme that is not found in the texts themselves; and in the end it was not truly wholistic, since the texts were still read atomistically — taking texts out of contexts to prove the pretext.

II. The (Negative) Results
That leads me, then, to say a few brief words about the negative results of these non-wholistic kinds of “reading” of the Bible, since I have already, and will do so again, affirmed the positive side of things. But the negative results are serious, so serious in fact that I have spent almost all my adult life trying to help Christians read and study their Bibles in a way that is much more in keeping with the way God gave these inspired texts in the first place.

a. The first, and most obvious, result of reading the Bible poorly is our tendency to have a terribly fragmented understanding of what it is all about. We know some texts very well, and even where some of our favorite passages can be found: Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 13, for example. Moreover, if we have been in church much of our lives we also have a generally good sense that there are two parts, the first dealing with God’s ancient people, Israel, and the second dealing with Christ and the church. And we also have a good sense that these two parts are connected in some very important way(s).

But if we were asked to tell how the basic story works out, or how any given book — Hosea or Philippians, say — fits into the whole, we might feel just a bit more intimidated. “Hosea? Let’s see, that’s a part of the Old Testament isn’t it? Yeah, he’s one of the prophets. But I tried reading it once, and I simply couldn’t follow the story line! When I finished I didn’t have a clue where I had been or how I got there. So why read it that way, since it simply turns out to be a waste of time?” And “Philippians? Oh that’s all about ‘joy,’ and Paul’s saying ‘for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.’” But “fit into the whole? What possibly do you mean by that?”

The result is that most Christians have some fairly good idea of the New Testament, but except for the Psalms, a few scattered proverbs, and some of the more memorable stories, the Old Testament remains a singular mystery.

b. And this leads to the second unfortunate result: that we miss a great deal of the New Testament itself because we are so poorly informed about the Old. And the point to make here is that the first readers of these New Testament documents, those whose heirs we have become, had a much greater awareness of what was going on not simply because they were written to them, in their language and culture, but because they were biblically literate in ways that most contemporary Christians are not. The result is that not only do we often not hear God’s word in the way they did, but we miss very many significant aspects of the New Testament as a result.

Most Christians have some sense that the New is related to the Old. How could one not see that, given how often the Old is cited in the New, and often in the language of “fulfillment.” But the New Testament writers do far more than that. Just note the following realities:

(i). Most of the New Testament was written not to Jews who had followed Jesus, but to Gentile converts, in a culture that was basically illiterate, in the sense that only about seventeen or eighteen per cent of the people could read or write.

(2). The only Bible these early Christians had was the Old Testament, which of course was never called that, because they didn’t have a New Testament. So what we have come to call the Old Testament was simply referred to as “the Scriptures.”

(3). I remind you again that the culture did not have the same form of media and literary blitzing that has become so common in the Western world.

(4). The net result of these realities is that these people knew their Bibles infinitely better than most of us do. Because most of them didn’t read, they were read to; and also because they couldn’t read but were read to, they had far better, sharper retention than we tend to have. And that also means that they heard not only the Old Testament texts when they were cited, but also when they were referred to more indirectly, and sometimes when only the language was echoed.
And it is precisely at this point where all the reasons for and the results of our poor reading of the Bible merge to make us far less knowledgeable about the Bible than these earliest Gentile Christians were. At this point, let me borrow an illustration from my former student and now Regent colleague and friend, Rikk Watts. When he was a student at Gordon-Conwell seminary, he was listening to a lecture in which the phrase “fourscore and seven years ago” was used. Since Rikk was from Australia, he had no clue as to either the what or the why of that “ancient English” in a modern lecture in America. So he asked some classmates afterward, “What happened 87 years ago?” to which they all drew blanks, because they had not heard anything about 87 years ago. So when Rikk reminded them of the lecturer’s actual language, “four score and seven years ago,” the light dawned. “Oh,” they said, “those are the opening words in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address; and the lecturer was not talking about something that happened 87 years ago, but was alluding to Lincoln’s address and its significance for the point he wanted to make.”

My point is that there is hardly an American of my generation who would not recognize those words and their source, and instinctively be able to fill in all kinds of blanks both as to the historical setting and many of the stirring words of the rest of that great speech as well; and one could do the same in England with some of the (many) memorable words from Winston Churchill’s wartime speeches; and even though, just as with Scripture, such phrases can often have a life of their own, the fact remains that people “schooled” on such great oratory will both recognize the language and remember its original setting. And that, friends, is precisely how the early Christians heard the Old Testament as it was alluded to and echoed in hundreds of ways throughout the New Testament writings. So if we are going to be better readers of the New Testament, we simply must become better readers of the Old — and all of this because we believe that the Biblical story is the single most important reality in our modern world.

III. Some Illustrations Toward Remedy
So let me conclude this lecture with some illustrations of this latter concern, which hopefully will inspire even you who teach Bible and theology in Pentecostal Bible colleges to set your own minds to the need to become still better readers of Scripture — and to have a passion to teach a newer generation, which tends to read both little and poorly, to *read* Scripture as the matter of first importance, and as the proper entry point to good study of Scripture and good preaching and teaching.

The first is taken from the well-known account in John 10, where Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees (a point often unfortunately missed because of a disastrous chapter break at this point), refers to himself as the good shepherd. Evidence that he is the true shepherd is found in three ways: that his sheep know him and listen to his voice; that he lays down his life for his sheep; and that he has other sheep to bring into the fold.

But this is not simply an illustration drawn from a pastoral analogy of a shepherd with his sheep. With these words Jesus is offering himself to Israel as the fulfillment of the promised great Davidic shepherd that is found in Ezekiel 34. So first let’s take a brief look at Ezekiel, since this prophetic book is so poorly known by Christians.

Ezekiel belonged to a priestly family who were among the first large wave of exiles taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 598, some ten years before the final siege in 588 that led to the total destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Among that first wave were most of Jerusalem’s prominent people, including King Jehoiachin and Ezekiel’s family. Five years later and seven years before the actual fall of Jerusalem, when Ezekiel turned thirty, the year that he would have entered the priesthood in Jerusalem, Yahweh appears to him among the exiles in Babylon and commands him to prophesy words of warning and hope to the exiles regarding the future of Jerusalem and the greater future of God’s people. And this prophetic activity continued for a twenty-two year period both before and after the fall of Jerusalem.

His book stands in sharp contrast to Isaiah and Jeremiah, in two significant ways: (1) his oracles are all dated and all but one of them are in chronological order; (2) his oracles are full of images of a most unusual kind, that serve as the forerunner for later Jewish apocalyptic visions. The collection is thus presented in three clear parts. Part 1 (chs. 1-24) is a collection of the oracles that announce the coming destruction of Jerusalem, a word that the exiles would not believe because they had come to believe that Jerusalem was inviolable. Part 2 (chs. 25-32) presupposes the fall of Jerusalem, and announces God’s judgments on the surrounding nations as well, as a word of comfort to Israel that their God is the sovereign God over the nations — despite the Fall of Jerusalem and the present exile. Part 3 is where our text fits in. After an oracle in chapter 33 about Ezekiel’s own role in things, he receives a series of oracles which in turn promise the restoration of all that had come to an end with the fall of Jerusalem: the Davidic kingship (ch. 34), the land (35:1-36:15), Yahweh’s honor by way of a new covenant (36:16-38), his people (ch. 37), his sovereignty over the nations (chs. 38-39), and his renewed presence among the people through a restored temple (chs. 40-48) — note especially how the book ends, regarding Jerusalem, “The Lord is there!”
This final series thus begins with our text (ch. 34), which promises the restoration of the Davidic kingship under the figure of the king as shepherd (for good reason, given who David himself was). So Yahweh promises that he will again shepherd his people through another David, who will stand in stark contrast to the former kings who caused the sheep to be scattered. “I will save my flock,” say Yahweh, “and they will no longer be plundered. . . . I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.” It is not possible that when Jesus spoke the words of John 10 to the Pharisees in Jerusalem that they could have missed what he was saying. In direct contrast to the “false shepherds” of 9:41, whom Jesus accuses of being blind, who by claiming to see when they do not are thus guilty of sin, Jesus announces that the true shepherd is not like them, a thief or robber, but is the one whose voice the true sheep know. And so he goes on to claim to be the messianic shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep and gathers other sheep (thus fulfilling the promise to include the Gentiles). So clear is this to the Pharisees and others that it leads to a head-on encounter some time later at the Feast of Dedication.

And so it goes everywhere in the New Testament. Thus an informed reading of the Bible will cause people to begin to look for the many ways the whole is held together, that it is One Story, God’s Story, and that one can make perfectly good sense of the whole in its present canonical arrangement.

1. The story begins with a pious, barren women, Elizabeth, whose story is told with echoes of the barren Hannah at the beginning of the story of David, who gives birth to Samuel who will eventually anoint David; just as the barren Elizabeth’s son John will anoint by baptism Mary’s greater David, Jesus. Note especially how the story of John’s birth ends with these words, “And the child grew and became strong in spirit,” and how these words echo what is said of the young Samuel (1 Sam 2:26), that “the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people,” which is then echoed again of the boy Jesus in Luke 2:52.

And then as the story proceeds to Mary, she is told by the angel, that her child “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” Here you can scarcely miss the echoes of the Davidic covenant from 2 Samuel 7:14 and

1 In the question time that followed, I was asked — legitimately so — whether what I am suggesting would really have been true of early Gentile believers. My “of course” answer to the question has to do with how I read Acts, where it is quite clear that, apart from Athens, Paul’s strategy in the Gentile mission was to go the Jewish synagogues and proclaim Christ as the fulfillment of prophetic hopes. Luke makes a considerable point that two kinds of “less desirables” as far as Jewish culture was concerned — Gentiles and women — simply flocked to the good news of Christ and the Spirit. Hence, the original converts would all have come from a very biblically literate culture.
The Prophetic Calling: 
An Old Testament Profile and its Relevance for Today*

Rickie D. Moore

The place of the prophet in the body of Christ is a burning issue today in many quarters of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. This is the obvious context in which, and in response to which, I have taken up this topic. It surely stands behind the specific occasion that instigated the writing of this article, namely the gracious invitation to deliver the keynote address to the 2003 EPTA Conference, which convened under the theme, “Prophecy Then and Now.”

As an Old Testament professor, I have assumed that my contribution to this theme would be expected to fall on the “Prophecy Then” side of things. Accordingly, I have sought here to lay out a picture of the Old Testament prophetic calling—one that is concerned not so much with the cutting edge of scholarship as with the center and heart of the Old Testament prophets as I have come to see them over the course of twenty years of teaching. Yet I want to be “up front” that what I sketch here about “prophecy now” could be and should be impinged upon by “prophecy then”. In one sense, this could not be otherwise; for, as we all know, any view of “then” is inevitably colored by the “now” of the viewer. Yet in a more deliberate sense, as now indicated in my paper title above, I have deliberately taken up the study of the Old Testament prophets from the vantage point of being concerned about how “prophecy now” could be and should be impinged upon by “prophecy then”. I suppose my Pentecostal faith especially conditions me to look for “prophecy now” to be and should be impinged upon by “prophecy then”. I suggest my Pentecostal faith especially conditions me to look for this “now” relates to that “then”, for “prophecy now” relates to “that” as deep for me, and for most Pentecostals I suspect, as Peter’s words in Acts 2, “this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, ‘in the last

days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy’” (Acts 2:16-17; cf. Joel 2:28). I also want to admit up front that my sense of “prophecy now” is very much a North American Pentecostal “now”. How relevant this can be for contemporary contexts other than my own I must leave to others to help me see.

My starting point, quite naturally, is the Hebrew word for prophet, navi. Rooted in the verb, “to call”, scholars have debated whether the active or passive sense of the verb was determinative in the coining of the term, that is, whether navi originally pointed to “one who calls” (i.e. “speaks forth a message”) or to “one who has been called” (i.e. “summoned or commissioned”). The primary verbal activity of prophets in the Old Testament could support the former possibility—indeed prophets were speakers—yet the prominence of the so-called “call narrative” in the Old Testament presentation of the prophets (Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1-3) would just as strongly support the latter. I am thus inclined to suggest seeing a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” the Old Testament navi was indeed “one who had been called out by God to call out”.

This simple definition, drawn from the Hebrew term for prophet, directly points to what I find to be the most prominent facet of the profile of the Old Testament prophet. The prophet above all is a messenger. This identity is in play every time one hears what is surely the most common phrase in OT prophetic literature, “Thus says the LORD”, for, as OT form critics have long noted, the phrase, “Thus says X”, is none other than the “messenger formula” used widely in ancient Near Eastern statecraft and diplomacy when a message was introduced by a royal messenger. Moreover, the book of Isaiah, which begins the Latter Prophets, presents the call of Isaiah in a way (no doubt paradigmatic for all the prophets) that clearly depicts the commissioning of a court messenger. The scene in Isaiah 6 is plainly one of a royal court complete with regal entourage and sovereign deliberations about the sending of a messenger: “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Then after the answer, “Here I am; send me”, comes the commissioning proper: “Go and speak to this people: ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’” Then after the answer, “Here I am; send me”, comes the commissioning proper: “Go and speak to this people” (Is. 6:8-9). This is a depiction of the divine council on the model of the throne rooms of ancient Near Eastern monarchies. And the prophet is clearly cast in the role of the ancient Near Eastern political messenger. This model, prominently and programmatically displayed in Isaiah 6, is widely

*The original draft of this article was presented as the keynote address of the EPTA Conference at the International Apostolic Bible College in Kolding, Denmark on April 24, 2003 under the title, “A Profile of the Prophetic Calling in Old Testament Perspective” by the author who is a lecturer at the Church of God Theological Seminary, 900 Walker Street NE, Cleveland, TN 37311, USA. email: nickiedmoore@yahoo.com. A later version of the paper was presented at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, USA on March 12, 2004 under the title, “The Prophetic Vocation: An Old Testament Profile and Contemporary Points of Relevance.”

1 For a recent and similar effort that I found after completing the present study—one with which my own effort has many points of resonance—see John Goldingay, “Old Testament Prophecy Today,” Spirit & Church 3:1 (May 2001), pp. 27-46.

2 Translations of biblical passages are the author’s own, unless otherwise noted.

3 Note how Ex. 7:1-2, the second occurrence of the term navi in Scripture, seems intent to define navi in terms of speaking on behalf of another.

4 This is attested in many non-biblical as well as biblical texts, e.g. Is. 36:4, 14 and 37:3, 5, 21).
represented and referenced throughout the rest of the OT prophets as well - in Jer. 23 (see v. 18); Ez. 3; Hag. 2; Mal. 3; and 1 Kgs. 22 (the Micaiah story).

If the prophet is a messenger, what then constitutes the message? The primary answer, in Old Testament terminology, would be: “the word of the LORD”, that is, the “davar of YHWH”. As Jeremiah 18:18 reveals, davar was as quintessentially the subject matter for the prophet as torah was for the priest and “counsel” was for the sage. Accordingly, the second most common phrase in OT prophetic literature is, “the davar of YHWH came to so and so”. More exactly the Hebrew phrase uses the verb “to be (hyh)”, so it could more precisely be rendered, “the davar of YHWH was to so and so” or “occurred to so and so”.

Since the expression, “the davar of YHWH occurred to so and so”, is so prominent, it is crucial to recognize its import. As I have expressed it elsewhere, “this is a common phrase that points to an uncommon experience. It is no mere transmission of information, insofar as God’s word, his davar, is no mere datum of information. It is more like a quantum of transformation, an event that happens, indeed occurs (hyh) to the prophet”. Thus, the term davar here entails a range of meaning that goes beyond our term “word”. A davar can be more than a word that is spoken, heard, written, or read. It can be an event that is encountered, experienced, or seen.

The book of Hosea provides a particularly vivid demonstration of this point. After the first verse of Hosea announces that “the davar of YHWH” came to Hosea, the rest of this chapter proceeds to describe the life-engulfing experience that this entailed. It is an experience that stretched over a considerable span of time, enough time to marry and have and name three children (Hos. 1:2-8). The second verse of the book even draws attention to how God’s word through the prophet begins with these events that God prescribes to the prophet. Specifically, Hosea 1:2 reads, “when YHWH began to speak through Hosea, YHWH said to Hosea”. Obviously, the occurrence of the davar of YHWH to Hosea is much more than a momentary relay of communication. It is a lengthy, lived-out ordeal.

This helps to explain why davar in prophetic literature can be presented as something that is seen, as well as heard or spoken. Thus, Amos 1:1 introduces “the words (plural of davar) of Amos . . . which he saw (the verb khazah)”. With the verb khazah (“to see”) we come to the related noun khazon (“vision”), which is another important term alongside davar in OT prophetic vocabulary. The prophets were not only messengers of words but also messengers of visions, in other words, visionaries or seers (cf. 1 Sam. 9:9; Hos. 12:10; and Is. 29:10) who bore witness to things they were shown (e.g. Jer. 1; Amos 7-8; Hab. 2).2

The vision or khazon of the OT prophet, in line with the common use of the term “vision”, can refer to a momentary appearance or visualization of something by supernatural means, like having a dream while being awake. Yet if we limit prophetic vision only to this, we have not said enough about the OT conception of vision. The book of Isaiah uses the term vision, khazon, in its first verse as a singular, inclusive term that encompasses all the prophetic words and experiences that constitute the entire book. This suggests that all of the discrete revelations that came to the prophet, in the form of both verbal or visionary experiences, come together to generate, to comprise, and to reflect an overarching perspective, a kind of God-induced view of reality or worldview, along the lines of what Walter Brueggemann has called “an alternative consciousness”.

The visionary element of OT prophecy was, thus, about more than receiving any number of distinct revelations from God. It entailed being radically changed, in the light of such revelation, to see all things differently.

1 In similar fashion, Israel’s first prophet, Moses, identifies the revelations of YHWH as “words (again, plural of davar) that your eyes have seen” (Deut. 4.9).
2 Habakkuk 2:1-2 brings prophetic vision together with the activity of a “watchman”, a vision-related role, which is another prominent and oft-emphasized dimension of the OT prophetic calling (see, e.g., Jer. 6:17; Ez. 3; Hos 9:8), and consequently, it could very well be developed as another facet of the OT prophetic profile.
3 See, for example, Joel 2.28, where the term “visions” is paired with the term “dreams”.
4 See Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), ch. 1, esp. p. 13, where the programmatic definition of this term is given: “a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us” (Brueggemann’s italics). A similar view on what the prophets see is explicated by Christopher Dube, “From Ecstasy to Ecstasy: A Reflection on Prophetic and Pentecostal Ecstasy in the Light of John the Baptist”, JPT 11.1 (2002), pp. 41-52 (esp. pp. 42-43).
This heavier, more substantial definition of prophetic word (davar) and vision (khazon) correlates with one additional term that is prominently used to refer to the message of the OT prophet—the term massa. Normally translated either “burden” or “oracle”, the Hebrew term massa fuses together both of these conceptions. As I have put it elsewhere, massa “denotes a heaviness that is carried before (and sometimes after) it becomes a message that is delivered. The ordeal of pregnancy, labor, and delivery makes a particularly fitting metaphor”,1 and it is one “that the prophets themselves can be found appropriating repeatedly.”2 For example, Isaiah 21:1-3 introduces a massa of the prophet that is explicitly elaborated in terms of the experience of the pangs of a mother in childbirth. In Isaiah 42:14 the experience of a mother’s travail that punctuates Isaiah’s message is ascribed to God himself. Jeremiah who foresees (or forehears) the travail of his people in 4:31, feels the birth pains himself in 6:24.

Thus I maintain that “in the full scope of this ordeal of prophetic revelation, one can see God doing more than just communicating his message; God is inculcating his passions.”3 Surely this is the obvious import of the ordeal of the prophet in Hosea 1-3.4 Accordingly, “the prophet represents more than the mouth of God; the prophet mediates the heart of God. The divine words come forth, but in conjunction with the divine passions that are evoked and formed in the prophet through the entire experience of the davar of God”.5

The acknowledgement that the Hebrew prophets were about experiencing and expressing the passions of God brings me to the point of identifying a second major facet of the profile of the OT prophet. The prophet was a poet or minstrel.1 My assertion here points to the fact that poetry was the primary medium of prophetic communication in the OT.2 This is where the OT prophet departed from the conventions of the messenger role. The ancient Near Eastern messenger appears typically to have spoken in a more precise and pragmatic prose of politics, but the Hebrew prophet’s characteristic idiom was the emotive and highly symbolic language of poetry, the language of the heart.

The artistic rhetoric and, on occasion, theatrical actions of the OT prophets moved at a level deeper than rational discourse. It was generated from and directed toward more than merely the goal of instructing or informing the mind. It was more about the moving, the provoking, and the transforming of the imagination. Like the parables of Jesus, the poems of the Hebrew prophets functioned to challenge and upend settled fields of conception and frames of reference. The force of God breaking in and shattering the prophets’ own frames of reference no doubt drove them to find in poetic language their only available means even to hope to make reference to something so indescribable. Poetic symbolism and figurative language are well suited, if not humanly necessary, when it comes to giving utterance to a reality beyond the confines of the presently experienced and explained world. And the prophets, here again, were extensively and intensely occupied with envisioning a reality that moved outside the boundaries of conventional perception or what Brueggemann calls the “royal consciousness”,3 so called because it is a view of the way things are that is perpetrated, programmed, promoted, protected, and presided over by those in charge, because it regularly serves the interests of those in charge.

Against the power of the royal clamp on present perception, the OT prophets unleash poetry that both rekindles revolutionary memories of a long-buried past and sparks never-before-conceived glimpses of a breathtaking future4—like when Isaiah or Hosea re-appropriates the radical

---

1 See the introductory section of my “Joel”, forthcoming. For discussion of another important metaphor that registers the heaviness of the prophetic experience, see J.J.M. Roberts, “The Hand of Yahweh,” Vetus Testamentum 21 (1971), pp. 244-51 and see also the following biblical references: 1 Kgs 18:46; Is. 8:11; Jer. 15:17; Ez. 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1.
2 Again, see my “Joel”, forthcoming.
3 Ibid.
5 Ibid. Perhaps Jonah is the exception that proves the rule. He carries the word of God (ch. 3), but then he is found to lack the passion of God (ch. 4), so it becomes easier to see why God revokes the word. See my article, “And Also Much Cattle?: Prophetic Passions and the End of Jonah”, JPT 11 (October 1997), pp. 35-48. No one has discerned and discussed this crucial role of passion in the ancient Hebrew prophets better than Abraham Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). See also Brueggemann, Prophetic Imagination, chap. 3.

---

1 I choose the term “minstrel” for its alliterative, mnemonic effect alongside “messenger” and the other facets I develop hereafter in my prophetic profile. My utilization of “minstrel” here follows an early usage that denotes a synonym of “poet”, not one that necessarily involves the term’s more popular associations with music. Yet the latter associations are not entirely alien to the practice of OT prophecy, as can be seen from such prophetic texts as 2 Kgs 3:15-16; Is. 5:1-7; and Ez. 33:30-33.
2 Brueggemann, Prophetic Imagination, pp. 44-61, has offered the most informative discussion on this point, and my own discussion here reflects, at a number of points, what I have learned from Brueggemann in this important book and in his other writings on the prophets; see, e.g. his The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 51-54.
3 Brueggemann, Prophetic Imagination, chs. 2-3.
4 Brueggemann, Prophetic Imagination, chs. 3-4.
memory of the Exodus (Is. 43; Hos. 11) or when Joel, Micah or Ezekiel catches a fresh vision of God's international aims for Zion (Joel 2; Mic. 4; Ez. 47). In all of this the prophets expose and challenge the underlying presumption that the royal "now" is the only arrangement of life that is thinkable, that ever was or that ever could be. Kings are inclined to think "no news is good news", because significant change is scarcely welcomed by those on top. However, the prophets know better. They recall that once upon a time the world was otherwise, and they come to the stunning and seizing conviction that it will be otherwise again. The recalling of the old reality and the heralding of a new world coming can be seen to cut both ways: They spell judgment for those invested in the status quo but hope for those who are already aching for an altered quo. Yet, either way there is real news, and it is ultimately good news, because it is God's news, indeed late-breaking news of the truly final edition. This is regime change of the ultimate kind.

So, while the poetry of the prophets is markedly distinct from political discourse, it nonetheless has the capacity to produce powerful political effects. Poets often do, which is why totalitarian regimes so soon see the need to get rid of them, especially when the poetry is not confined to some quaint and sequestered literary circle or fine arts guild but rather is set loose in the public square, as is characteristically the case for the OT prophets.

Yet the prophets' poetry, true to the very nature of poetry, typically does not pursue a pragmatic strategy that takes on power in direct ways. Instead it is subtle, prodding, puzzling, and probing. What, after all, can mere words do? Not much, it seems, at least in the immediate in the face of "real" political power. Yet, on the other hand, poetic images, rhetorical flourishes, and symbolic actions can be hard for conventional forces to combat. They can slip beneath the radar of public resistance and sow seeds of alternative thinking deep in the psyche of a person or a people.

They might take a long time to germinate, longer even than a prophet's life, but poetic visions spoken with conviction have been known to outlive and finally overtake many a regime.

Still, we should make no mistake about it. In the context of public power the prophet as minstrel occupies a position of weakness. With poetic craft as their primary tool, the prophets at best seem to be at the mercy of the facileness and fickleness of public opinion that is usually disinclined to take them seriously. The prophet Ezekiel explicitly testifies to how he was made aware of this very situation by God himself:

As for you, son of man, your people—come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say...but, lo, you are to them like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it (Ez. 33:30-32, RSV).

This striking testimony of the prophet as minstrel can help us see the point that the poetic medium, by its very nature, possesses an elusiveness that easily results in its meaning, logic, and practical applicability being lost on the listener and at times even on the prophet's own consciousness. While poetry does a good job of offering a glimpse, a hint, a clue, a lure, enough to provoke a question, it is usually not enough to produce the full grasp of an answer. This keeps prophets speaking in a language not altogether known—indeed an unknown tongue that can render the prophet an alien even in the prophet's own culture. As Isaiah was told,

Go and say to this people, 'Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed (Is. 6:9-10, RSV).

1. Ibid. Brueggemann's terms for these two dimensions are "prophetic criticizing" (ch. 3) and "prophetic energizing" (ch. 4), respectively.

2. Thus, the davar of YHWH can be seen constituting an "event" both as it comes to and is experienced by the prophet, as discussed earlier, and also as it goes forth from and evokes effects beyond the prophet. Classic examples of prophetic texts that voice this perception include Is. 55:10-11; Jer. 1:9-10; and 23:29. See the suggestive analysis of Gerald T. Sheppard, "Prophecy: From Ancient Israel to Pentecostals at the End of the Modern Age," Spirit & Church 3:1 (May 2001), pp. 47-70, who focuses on prophecy in terms of its power to effect communal survival and societal change, from its ancient Israelite to its modern Pentecostal expressions.


1. This theme of the prophet's alienness is tied, quite naturally, to one of the most prominent focal points of OT prophecy: to announce the coming Exile of the Hebrew people. The marginalizing and rejecting of this message and the prophetic messengers who carried it, meant that these prophets entered the experience of exile beforehand. They were forerunners of the exiled, insofar as they suffered an alienation from their own people that prefigured the alienation their people would meet at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. As I tell my students, the prophets were the first to enter the judgment they prophesied.
This last point brings me to a third facet of my OT prophetic profile. The prophet is a madman. One prophetic text states this quite flatly. In Hosea 9:7 we find the assertion, “the prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit (ruach) is mad (meshuga, from the verb shaga: ‘to be mad’).” In this text Hosea seems to be representing not his own view but rather the negative consensus view of the prophets held by the Israelite public during his day and time. Yet a survey of OT prophetic literature reveals that this association between the prophets and madness runs throughout the history of OT prophecy. For example, when Jeremiah writes a letter from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon, the Jewish officials there write back with directives to the Jerusalem priest to arrest “every madman (meshuga) who prophesies” (Jer. 29:26). When Elisha sends one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel, Jehu’s military colleagues refer to this prophetic figure pejoratively and dismissively as a “madman” (meshuga) in what appears to be, here again, a popular class slur of the time (2 Kgs 9:11). Similarly there is a popular saying that arises about King Saul and his association with the prophets that would not appear to be unrelated to his mental instability, which crops up more than once in the Samuel narratives. It takes the form of the sarcastic question, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam. 10:11,12; 19:23).

In these Samuel texts as well as the text of Hosea 9:7 the presence of ruach, the Spirit from Yahweh, plays a prominent role in the associations with madness. Perhaps it is easy to see why, since ruach is wind, the untamed and untamable energy and dynamic controlled only by God—indeed, “the wind blows where it wills” (John 3:8). It is a force that can come upon persons, seize them, and cause them to get beside themselves in prophetic ecstasy, like we see in the case of Saul and his men who come upon a company of prophets in 1 Samuel 19:20-24. Such turbulence of spirit can seem rather wild, unnatural, abnormal, and even crazy to civilized society—something to be kept out of bounds.

There is even a tradition of modern OT scholarship, led by Scandinavian scholar, Sigmund Mowinckel, that has tried to see ecstatic prophecy or ruach prophecy as something to be marginalized in the OT as an early, primitive, foreign-based phase of prophecy (a “prophecy of the spirit”) that was displaced by the distinctly Israelite tradition of “prophecy of the word.” Yet this evolutionary denigration of spirit as giving way to word seems to reflect more of what is to be found in modern interpretation than in the biblical text, for there are references widely distributed throughout the OT prophets of all time periods that, when not arbitrarily dismissed as editorial glosses or otherwise explained away, show that the Hebrew prophets were not at all averse to association with the untamed ruach of YHWH (e.g. Mic. 3:9 [cf. 1:8-9]; Is. 32:15) as modern scholars like Mowinckel appear to be. Clearly the OT prophets were prophets of Spirit as well as word, and the argument for a distinction between a rational type of prophecy (associated with word) and a more non-rational or irrational type (associated with spirit) evidences a disturbing, artificial imposition of modern biases, categories, and methods on the evidence.

Jeremiah, granted, does not use the term ruach, but he still can testify to his encounter with YHWH’s word in terms of an experience of raw force, in line with our earlier consideration of davar: “like a burning fire shut up in my bones (that) I could not hold back” (Jer. 29:9; cf. also 23:29). Not only is Jeremiah thought by others to exhibit an extreme and altered state of mind (Jer. 20:10; 29:26), he forthrightly confesses to it himself, saying in 23:9, “My mind within me is shattered; all my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of YHWH, and...”

---

2 Micaiah, in an effort to contrast himself with popular prophets who please the people with a message of false peace (Mic. 3:5), says, "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit (ruach) of the LORD, and of justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:9). Micaiah shows already in an earlier verse how intensely he is affected by this experience of God’s revelation, when he says, "I will wail and howl. I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches, for her wounds are incurable" (Mic. 1:8-9). We see Isaiah speaking hopefully in the first half of the book of a time when “the Spirit is poured upon us from on high” (Is. 32:15), and in the last part of the book we hear his words, “the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor” (Is. 61:1). Then, in addition to the classic references of Zechariah, “by my Spirit I save the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 4:6), and Joel, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28), there are Ezekiel’s many references to being encountered by God’s ruach. It would not appear incidental that Ezekiel, whose association with God’s Spirit is more prominent than that of any other OT prophet, is also the prophet most known for erratic and bizarre behaviors.

---

1 I use the male reference “madman” here, being conscious of its shortcomings in relation to gender inclusiveness—a problem that attends the use of the term “prophet” as well, insofar as there are widely distributed (even if numerically few) references in the Old Testament to women who are called “prophetess” (naviah): Ex. 15:20; Jud. 4:4; 2 Kgs. 22:14; and Neh. 6:14. Thus, I would acknowledge the female inclusiveness of my entire profile, despite the shortcomings of my terms.
2 See Heschel’s extended and discerning discussion on this point in Prophets, vol. 2, pp. 171-89. He even goes so far as to note one etymological theory that proposes a root connection between the term navah and madness (p. 175).
3 See e.g. 1 Sam. 16.14-23; 18.10; 19.9. Note particularly how Saul’s prophesying and madness come together in 1 Sam. 18.10.
because of his holy words”. As we Pentecostals well know, this is not the last time that an experience of prophetic revelation would provoke a comparison with drunkenness (cf. Acts 2:13-15).

This last quote from Jeremiah helps to establish the point that the prophets at times experienced a kind of madness that was not merely ascribed from without by others but also experienced from within by encounter with God’s word (davar) and Spirit (ruach). The prophets were not mad or drunk as some would suppose; rather they were staggered by the radical effects of being lifted up, as I like to put it, into the sanity of God—a sanity that all of a sudden made them realize how crazy the “normal” world had actually become, like Isaiah when he cried, “Woe is me, for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (6:5; cf. also Hab. 3:16).

This is a jolting reversal where normal is revealed to be woefully abnormal and where sane now appears crazy. The reversal is so stark that even to begin to represent it will inevitably mean to appear crazy in the eyes of most people (indeed seeing, they will “not see” [Is. 6:9]). Yet even more, the reversal can at times be so overwhelming and arresting to the prophets that they know themselves to be going, in some sense, out of their own minds, carried away by the zeal of the LORD. Indeed, YHWH’s zeal (qana in the Hebrew) is another term that comes to be associated with this theme of prophetic madness. Zeal, even the zeal of the LORD, is an extreme and volatile passion that is not without its potential dangers, as the stories of Elijah’s suicidal self-inflation (1 Kgs. 19:9-18) and later Jehu’s bloodthirsty zealotry (2 Kgs. 9-10) help to show. Yet the zeal of the Lord fully experienced is a passion that sets the prophet not only over against people but ultimately for people, for this and nothing less than this is the end of God’s passions. Short of this, prophetic zeal can become either suicide or terrorism, but carried to its proper and divine end, the zeal of the LORD consumes the prophet (cf. John 2:16-22) and such madness is fulfilled in martyrdom.

This brings me to a final (at least for this paper) facet of the profile of the OT prophet (and what could be more final?): the prophet is a martyr. Although it is not a Hebrew word, martyr seems to me a particularly apt term for drawing together and identifying the summarizing trajectory and convergence of the other facets of the OT prophetic vocation as previously delineated. Given the shattering weight of the prophetic message, the passion-provoking poetic form it took, and the “alien” mentality it effected in its bearers, prophets characteristically lost their lives. So it is quite fitting to connect the OT prophets to this term drawn from the Greek, for martyrdom can be seen as the bottom line of their job description (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:10 and Neh. 9:26), as several NT summations on the OT prophets would bear out (Mtt. 5:12; Mtt. 23:29-37; Lu. 11:47-49; Lu. 13:33-34; Acts 7:52). Moreover, true to the more juridical NT sense of μαρτυρία, they were indeed witnesses unto death; they died because of their witness (marturía) for God. Yet I would want to stress that even more fundamentally, they died because they witnessed God. One is reminded of the persistent OT conviction that to see God meant death (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:20; Deut. 4:33; 5:23-26; Jud. 6:22-23; 13:22). And the OT prophets regularly testified to experiences of seeing God that entailed the recognition that their lives were over—“over” not merely in the sense of being destined for some future persecution and physical execution, but rather “over” already, in every sense that mattered, in the primal, defining moment when they first saw God. Thus, we read Isaiah’s words, “Woe is me, for I am undone (doomed, wasted)! …for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Is. 6:5). What Isaiah saw had already sawn him asunder. We can read similar testimonies from other OT prophets (Ez. 1-4; Mic. 1:3-8; Hab. 3, esp. v. 16). Martyrdom was not merely the culminating climax of the OT prophetic vocation but its initiating crisis. The prophets’ readiness to face death in the literal sense finds its generative source, I would suggest, in the radical theophanic encounter that had, in the deepest sense, already claimed their lives.

My conclusion, given the confines of the present study, will be brief. I have sketched a profile of the OT prophet in terms of four facets: messenger, minstrel, madman, and martyr. I have done so with a sense that these facets and the composite profile they yield are relevant for informing prophetic vocation in the body of Christ today and within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles in particular. There is much teaching about prophecy circulating in these circles of late and much controversy surrounding, and I do not claim to be “on top” of this entire burgeoning arena of discussion and publication. Neither do I pretend to have it all figured out as far as the full scope and shape of the prophetic vocation for our current context. Yet, from what I have seen, not just from those who are skeptically resisting the push for a more expanded role for the contemporary prophet but also from those who are enthusiastically pushing for it, there is frequent appeal, in either case, to some proposed normative pattern for the prophetic vocation in the contemporary church that appears

---

1 See the recent survey of Charismatic ministries that have been most influential in the practice and teaching on the prophet by Michael R. Cooper, “Inspiration and Institutions: A Place for Prophets,” D.Min. thesis, Regent University, 2004.
superficial—superficial, I believe, because it has been cut off, in varying degrees, from its biblical roots and its biblical end.

Of course, this disconnection with prophecy’s OT roots, such as I have explicated them above, is usually supported and justified with the doctrine that OT prophecy has now been displaced by “NT prophecy” (so called) as a pattern for the church.1 Yet in response to this dispensational demarcation and displacement, I am always prompted to ask, what about the book of Revelation? Can we not see in John’s Apocalypse a manifestation of prophecy that has more in common with the radically concentrated, spiritually overwhelming, poetically mind-boggling, and culture-confronting form reflected in the OT profile sketched above than in the prophecy of the dispensationally delimited and downsized variety that is now so commonly circumscribed and prescribed under the name “NT prophecy” (which is itself not a NT term, as far as I can tell)?

My essential point in this paper is that the biblical roots of the prophetic vocation intrinsically come together with its biblical end—I mean “biblical end” here both in the sense of prophecy’s theological and experiential consummation in martyrdom, as traced above, and also in the sense of its canonical culmination in the (NT!) book of Revelation, where the Holy Spirit, faithful prophetic witness, and martyrdom come together in the most explicit and decisive way of all, all the way to the final summation

1 Perhaps the most influential effort to draw such a sharp line of discontinuity between prophecy in the Old Testament and “New Testament prophecy” is Wayne Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy: In the New Testament and Today, revised ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), who limits his definition of NT prophecy to “speaking merely human words to report something God brings to mind” (p. 51).
2 Grudem, of course, relegates and restricts any elements associated with OT prophecy that he finds in the book of Revelation (or elsewhere in the NT, for that matter) either to an apostolic age and agency he dogmatically presumes to have ceased (Gift of Prophecy, pp. 43-45) or, in the case of the prophets in Rev. 11, to “special...figures” of the “end-time”, who cannot, therefore (according to Grudem’s dispensational presuppositions), be relevant as examples of prophecy for our time (p. 364, fn. 5).
Throughout his study Grudem narrowly delimits “NT prophecy” in order to protect Scripture’s sole authority to speak directly for God in our day, and he does this, ironically, by following a dispensational paradigm (indeed, a church tradition) of interpretation that is not explicitly to be found in Scripture. For a more historically disciplined study of prophecy in the NT that acknowledges its many aspects of continuity with prophecy in the OT, particularly in the prophecy represented in the book of Revelation, see David Hill, New Testament Prophecy (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), esp. pp. 70-93.
3 While I am out of my depth when it comes to critical NT scholarship, I would appeal here to the recent dissertation of my colleague, Robert Christopher Waddell, “The Faithful Witness of a Pneumatic Church: The Role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse of Revelation 19:10: “For the witness (the marturian, the martyrdom) of Jesus, is the Spirit of prophecy”. Has not the time come in our contemporary church for a teaching and mentoring of the prophetic vocation that, like Jesus’ teaching of the disciples, envisions, prepares for, and leads God’s people unto this end?

1 I wish to acknowledge Peter Prothero’s extremely helpful elaboration of this verse in his presentation on prophecy in the church that similarly argues for the consummating convergence of prophecy and martyrdom, “The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy”, delivered at the EPTA Conference in Kolding, Denmark on April 24, 2003. In translating pneuma in Rev. 19:10 as a reference to the (Holy) Spirit and not just (human) spirit, I follow Waddell, “Faithful Witness,” pp. 190-191, who gives grounding for this reading in the literary and thematic continuities of the entire Apocalypse.
3 I wish to express my gratitude to the officers and members of EPTA, whose kind invitation to the 2003 EPTA Conference provided the initial impetus for this article. I also thank them for their engaging and stimulating dialogue there that was responsible for further development of the paper, though not at all responsible for its remaining shortcomings. I am also grateful for those who listened and responded to a later version of the paper at the Society for Pentecostal Studies meeting in March 2004 at Marquette University, especially Janet Everts Powers, who has urged me to advance my project at least one step further, specifically to address the prophet as mentor. I gratefully acknowledge her suggestive and insightful promptings.
A Tenet Under Examination: Reflections on the Pentecostal Hermeneutical Approach

Matthias Becker

As a religion of the book, Christianity has – like Judaism – placed great emphasis on the Scriptures as the primary source of a common faith. Through the course of time, when Christians had to defend the authority of their Holy Scriptures, apologetic zeal was generated to create confessions of faith and doctrines about the nature of the Bible. Roots of this endeavor can be traced back to the New Testament itself: living in a time when heretical influences threatened the early Christians' beliefs, the Apostle Paul made a statement about the nature of Scripture which was to become a key element for later discussions on the authority of the Bible. The key term Paul introduced to biblical literature in general and to Christian literature in particular was “God-breathed” or “divinely inspired”, as we can render the Greek word theopneustos found in 2 Timothy 3:16, and is translated by the Vulgate as divinitus inspiratus.

Even though this term appears only once in the New Testament it has become central in many of Christianity’s notions about the nature of Scripture. “The Bible is a divinely inspired book”: this unspecific but common tenet about biblical inspiration is especially important to the free churches, and it is therefore central in the minds of many Pentecostals, Charismatics and Evangelicals. Among believers of these movements it has taken the shape of an insurmountable rock of belief, upon which the validity and truthfulness of one’s own faith rests. By proclaiming divine inspiration or believing it subconsciously, a certain trust in the Bible is established and upheld.

Since Scripture itself does not unfold a doctrine about its inspiration as a book, the personal attitude of Christians towards the Bible is of great importance. Hence, concepts of its inspiration must be placed in the realm of belief and should not be primarily seen as a doctrine that must or can be proved or disproved. The purpose of this article therefore is twofold. On the one hand, the Pentecostal approach in the field of hermeneutics will be reflected upon by interpreting a specific key tenet of many believers, namely that “The Bible is verbally inspired.” In doing that I will not always elaborate on the specific Pentecostal hermeneutical stand because there are many other sources which deal with that topic. On the other hand, this interpretation is meant to provide stimuli for thinking more exactly about some aspects of Pentecostal hermeneutics that often linger unquestioned in the hearts and minds of the believers.

In the first part of this study, an overview of important Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches shall serve as a general introduction in order to see in how far our tenet under examination is embedded in Pentecostal biblical interpretation as a whole. In the second part, the key tenet itself shall have our attention.

PART I: An Overview of the Nature of Pentecostal Hermeneutics

Within the last two decades, the hermeneutical issue has been variously discussed in many of the Pentecostal journals, especially in Pneuma, the Journal of Pentecostal Theology (JPT) and the Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series. The following summary of some important references is not an exhaustive one, but is intended to give an impression of the state of the current discussion.

emphases in Pentecostal Hermeneutics presents a roughly sketched overview of our topic and functions as a compilation of background information for later discussion:

Rick D. Moore lists four aspects of the Pentecostal hermeneutical approach. Firstly: since the Holy Spirit communicates with us in ways that surpass human reason, the Bible is not just the object of our interpretation, but it is a living word that interprets us and through which the Spirit works in ways that cannot be predicted or determined. Secondly, Moore puts emphasis on the relational aspect of knowing God, which is typical of Pentecostalism. This leads to the belief that knowledge about God that can be found in the Scriptures should be combined with practical experiences of God, e.g. in the worship service. Therefore, studying the Bible, according to Moore, is supposed to cause a change of character and of the will of an individual so that dealing with the Bible does not become a synonym for gathering information about it. The third aspect of the nature of the Pentecostal hermeneutical approach is the priesthood and prophethood of all believers in dealing with the Bible: since every believer is supposed to bear testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ every one has to have free access to the word. Finally, Moore points out the significance of the community of faith which is to deal with the Scriptures as a congregation under the support of the Spirit. That way, the church having corrective influence, spiritual solo efforts are rendered ineffective, especially concerning “new” theological or spiritual insights.1

John Christopher Thomas advocates a holistic Pentecostal hermeneutic made up of three components: the community of faith, the activity of the Holy Spirit and Scripture. Holistic in this respect means that the three components have to be brought into a mutual dialogue with each other. Pointing to the early Christian interpretation of the Old Testament at the occasion of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), Thomas stresses that the process of interpretation by a given community of faith should originate within the context of the life of that respective community. The hermeneutical process then happens through the work of the Holy Spirit who draws attention to the relevance of biblical passages for the life context of a given church.1

Roger Stronstad presents three core elements of Pentecostal Hermeneutics. First of all, the Pentecostal hermeneutic is experiential, concerning both the presuppositions of Bible study and the verification of its results. Secondly, Pentecostal biblical interpretation can be called rational since it makes use of historical-grammatical principles of exegesis. And finally it is pneumatic, because both the inspiration of Scripture as well as its interpretation for the present day is ascribed to the working of the Holy Spirit.2

That Pentecostal hermeneutics take place on various levels is a thought also expressed by Arden C. Autry. For him the goal of any attempt to study the Bible is to know God and not only to gather information about Him. In order to reach this goal, Autry distinguishes between a “correct reading” and a “creative reading” of the Bible. The correct reading, which is meant to bring about more knowledge of God, can be described as the quest for the original intention of the biblical author by means of exegesis. The answer to the question of what the text meant back then will support the creative reading, which explains how a given passage can be put into practice today.3

By preferring a postmodern approach in which the role of the reader becomes even more important, Timothy Cargal goes a step further. Since Pentecostal hermeneutics have to remain relevant in a postmodern age and because Pentecostal approaches to textual interpretation are somewhat similar to postmodern approaches, Cargal suggests that Pentecostalism profit from these “affinities”. This could happen by acknowledging the significant role of the Bible reader when dealing with Scripture, by realizing that there are many different levels of meaning in a text, by allowing various equally accepted interpretations for one passage and by accepting that readers dialogue with the text in different ways based on their personal experience. Taking our postmodern Sitz im Leben seriously is Cargal’s intention: “As a postmodern paradigm increasingly dominates the thinking of our culture in general, any hermeneutic which cannot

account for its loci of meanings within that postmodern paradigm will become nonsensical and irrelevant.”

Jackie D. Johns argues, however, that Pentecostal hermeneutics should not happen within the frame of just any weltanschauung, but it should originate in a Pentecostal worldview itself. For him, the core of a Pentecostal understanding of truth lies in the encounter with God which exerts a changing influence upon humans and which enables readers to see all of reality – even in their process of reading. So Johns calls upon Pentecostal theologians not to neglect their own Pentecostal identity, since Scripture is viewed as a fixed reference point for the encounter with God and because the Pentecostal understanding of truth cannot be made compatible with today’s postmodern pluralism.

Kenneth J. Archer argues on the same line but also sees special possibilities for Pentecostals in a postmodern world: “Pentecostalism’s contribution to hermeneutics is in the area of community participation and experiential understanding. There exists a promising Pentecostal hermeneutic rooted in the classical spiritual ethos of Pentecostalism. This hermeneutic will speak with a liberating voice accented by postmodernity.”

Even this small mosaic of contributions to the issue of Pentecostal hermeneutics shows that we cannot speak of one fixed nature of Pentecostal biblical interpretation. There are rather different aspects which are underlined especially within the academic world: historical-grammatical exegesis, the significance of the community of faith, the importance of the Holy Spirit with respect to inspiring, enlightening and illuminating authors and readers, elements of new hermeneutical approaches and the emphasis upon the increasingly important role of the reader in the process of interpretation.

3 Kenneth J. Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect”, p. 81.
4 To each of these emphasis similar publications by Evangelical theologians can be found (Gerhard Maier; Heinzpeter Hempelmann; Thomas Schirmacher; M. Mayordomo; Hellmut Frey, Gordon Fee). Some of the German theologians will appear in my own translation.

### PART II: A Key Tenet Under Examination

Leaving this short summary behind us, we want to focus in the second and main part of this article on a key tenet of Pentecostalism, namely that “The Bible is verbally inspired.” Although it is almost presumptuous to ask a Pentecostal if he thinks that the Bible is God’s Word, the particular phrasing of that tenet shows that any view on the nature of Scripture is somehow linked with that of inspiration. The preeminence of that specific statement about verbal inspiration has been emphasized ever since the year of foundation of the Pentecostal movement in 1906. An example of the importance ascribed to it is that the Church of God lists it as the first tenet in its creed. The creed itself is rooted in the old teachings of the Church of God and dates back to the year 1910. In the following I want to explain how we can understand that statement in today’s world by shedding light on the three parts of that statement of faith.

#### 1. “The Bible...”

When a creed opens with a central statement about the Bible it might sound strange to outsiders, even to Christians. If we take a look at other Christian creeds, like the Apostles’ Creed whose roots go back to the second century, we realize that statements about the Bible usually do not occur. First of all God is proclaimed as the object or rather as the direction of the Christian faith. Since this does not hold true for the creed of the Church of God and other Evangelical or Pentecostal movements, a few explanations have to be given.

The fact that the Bible, and specifically its “verbal inspiration”, form the beginning of the creed should not lead to the belief that Scripture itself is an object of faith. Even in the Pentecostal movement where the Bible is held in high regard it must be said that fatal consequences could follow if the Bible is made an object of faith. The danger brought up in this case is

---

2 The roots of such a fundamentalist belief are not a historically new factor within the history of Christianity. The early church as well as the Christians of the Middle Ages had similar views. Characteristic of the phrasing and content of the statement above is, however, an approach that was developed not long before the Pentecostal movement began: the Niagara Creed, created by the Niagara Bible Conference in 1878. Cf. Hans Küng, Das Christentum, 2nd paperback edition (München: Piper Verlag, 2003), p. 726-27. See also E.R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism. British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930 (Chicago, 1970).
that Scripture becomes an obstacle that steps between God and humans, that it becomes more important as a book than the living God of whom it speaks. In this context, Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938) made some important observations. He said that the Bible itself was no object of faith; rather it pointed to the only possible Christian object of faith, namely the God of the Bible who revealed Himself in Christ. So, a belief in the Bible has to be judged by the relationship Christians have with God: "You can hold up the book, because you desire nothing else from God but the book and because you do not want to find Him as a living power to which our whole life becomes submitted. So we would have said Yes to the Bible and at the same time No to God."2

The preeminence of the inspiration of the Bible in the creed therefore professes the prime importance of Scripture as the source of doctrine. A 'Yes' to the God of the Bible who revealed Himself in Christ goes together with a 'Yes' to the book which testifies to Him. And so right from the beginning of the creed it is made clear that the following tenets will be deduced from Scripture and not primarily from experience, reason or tradition as other possible sources of Christian theology. It must be remembered, however, that notions about inspiration are a profession of faith rather than doctrines that can be defended.

In this sense Pentecostalism has placed emphasis on the authority of Scripture ever since the movement began. The Bible as a whole is viewed to be the word of God, a book in which and through which God still speaks today. In harmony with the sola scriptura of the reformation, Pentecostals acknowledge the uniqueness of the Bible as the source and corrective of all Christian doctrine and religious experience.3

If all of Scripture is considered God's word, every book of the Bible must have full canonical authority. That means that there should not be any more or less important parts in Scripture, and even though Pentecostals prefer a Lukan approach to matters of New Testament theology and pneumatology the justification of a biblical theology must not be neglected. Concerning the so-called external limit of the biblical canon some observations from Gerhard Maier are helpful, who presently serves as the bishop of the German Landeskirche in Württemberg: "So we have to conclude that the canon came into being through a lot of struggle on the side of the believers, sometimes confusion of hominum (while humans were confused), providentia dei (through divine guidance). Thus we view the forming of the canon, including its scope, to be the work of the revealing Spirit..."1 This also means in consequence that it is theologically unwise to prefer the New Testament to the Old Testament; we must remember that the New Testament contains only one third of the truth.

In this context the significance of the community of faith has to be pointed out, both referring to the forming of the canon as well as to biblical interpretation. It is true that the Bible addresses every human being, for its message calls every human into a relationship to his or her creator through faith in Jesus Christ. But its full reality can only be explained and experienced in that setting in which the Bible was written and its canon formed: that setting is the community of faith, which is of great interest to Pentecostal theology as we have seen above. Ellington, says quite clearly: "Although the historical, social, political, cultural, and economic contexts of each community of faith are unique, I argue that the biblical text can only be entered into and re-experienced in the same setting in which it was originally formed, that is, in the community of faith. The text cannot be fully understood simply by analyzing it in a detached and objective way."2

But unfortunately we know from history that whole communities of faith can be mistaken and misled. And so it remains the responsibility of postmodern Christians not to sacrifice their intellect, but to interpret the Bible as mature and Spirit-filled believers. It is clear in this context that Pentecostals do not view Scripture as a list of doctrines but rather, in Karl Barth's words, as "a story book: the book of God's great deeds, in which God becomes recognizable to us." In that way the Bible even becomes a description of encountering the living God. Ellington puts it this way:

---

1 Adolf Schlatter, "Der Glaube an die Bibel" in: Die Bibel verstehen: Aufsätze zur biblischen Hermeneutik, edited by Werner Neuer (Gießen, 2002), p. 64: "The kind of faith the Bible wants to plant in us is not an undetermined movement of our soul which could try to seize different objects and goals; rather our faith is given one determined and very clear object: God. (...) So not every veneration that we give to the Bible and not every Yes that we say to its content is allowed to be called faith; the kind of faith that Scripture demands of us is rather that we say yes to God in it. It all revolves around the question what we are seeking with our faith that is focused on the Bible."
2 Adolf Schlatter, ibid., p. 66.

---

3 Karl Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1998), p. 43.
4 Scott A. Ellington, "Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture", p. 17.
It matters very much whether we see the Scripture as simply a series of good teachings or ideas and concepts or even as a sacred history, or whether we understand it to be a relational world of encounter with God and the historical community of faith into which we enter, with our intellect, but also with our emotions, intuitions and feelings. I submit that any reading of the Scripture which is devoid of experiences of encounter with God and which occurs in isolation from the community of faith is an inadequate reading which fails to comprehend Scripture's origin, function and, ultimately, what Scripture is.1

This access to getting to know God through the Bible can happen in two ways. The first one can be called the Hebrew-biblical way, which also is partly voiced in Ellington's statement, the other one can be called the Greek-scientific approach. The approach taken to deal with the Bible will determine if through reading and studying the Bible only a knowledge about God is gathered or whether the Bible becomes also a place to meet and experience God. A pure knowledge about God, however, sounds strange to the Bible, and to Pentecostal theologians as we have seen above – the Bible rather appeals to enter a relationship with God and to put into practice what is learned by studying it.

First of all we want to look at Greek epistemology as it is summarized in the verb oida. Here we are dealing with the question how, according to the Greeks, a human being can get to know or know an object. Oida means "to know, to understand". Etymologically it is linked with eidō which basically means "to see". Knowledge therefore has something to do with seeing. "I have seen and now I am one who knows" – observation of the respective object is a key element in Greek epistemology.2

Cheryl Bridges Johns goes further to describe that this type of seeing or observing is one that is linked with standing aloof from the object in order to remain objective.3 Ellington, dealing with Johns' book, picks up this theme and points out that "There is (...) an impenetrable barrier between the knower and the thing known in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy is essentially dualistic, setting up a distinct and absolute barrier of separation between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge: that which is known."4

Such an approach of rationalistic distance-taking is however not in harmony with the biblical way of knowing, which we can see communicated in the Hebrew verb yada.5 "The Old Testament is, unlike the Greeks, not concerned with a diagnosing, distance-taking way of knowing and with a kind of observation whose primary interest is to classify that which is known..."6 – here lies the significant difference. The words yada means "to conceive, to know, to experience, to get to know, to have knowledge". But in contrast to oida it does not only refer to a mental grasping of a fact or to a mental way of knowing an opposite person or object. Even though yada includes that cognitive aspect it must be added, "that yada does not just describe a theoretical behavior, a pure mental action; rather knowledge, as yada expresses it, is realized in the practical dealing with the objects that are to be known."7 Furthermore yada is used as a term for sexual intercourse8 and thus it can be understood as a relational term which articulates great intimacy between two persons. Knowledge in the Old Testament, whether it is referred to humans by humans, to God by humans or to humans by God, "comes into being and comes into being over again through the continuous intimate dealing with the one who is opposite."9

With that way of knowing there is no distance between the object of knowledge and the curious subject: experiencing the opposite person or object in a certain relationship leads to knowledge. This is somewhat reminiscent of some of Martin Buber's thoughts and it provides us with important clues as to how we can deal with the Bible: "In the beginning there is the relationship."10 For Buber, "all real life" is rooted in the "encounter"11 because humans are involved in a structure of various relationships. Basically, the nature of those relationships can be twofold:

a) I-It-relationship. The I-It-relationship refers to the subject-object-relationship in which an active human being deals with a passive object, thereby setting up an absolute barrier of separation between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge: that which is known.12

1 See also Cheryl Bridges Johns, ibid., p. 35-37, where biblical epistemology is explained further.
4 See e.g. Gen. 4:1; 19:8; 1 Sam. 1:19.
5 Coenen, Beyreuther, Bietenhard (eds.), Theologisches Begrifflexikon zum Neuen Testament, p. 246.
7 Martin Buber, ibid., p. 12.
8 Scott A. Ellington, ibid., p. 31.
e.g. with nature or a remote control. For our topic of hermeneutics this means, such a “relationship” with the Bible is expressed by oida – when dealing with the Bible God remains somehow external, the interpreter takes distance.

b) I-Thou-relationship. The I-Thou-relationship refers to the subject-subject-relationship of two beings who are actively involved in the process of getting known and getting to know. For our topic of hermeneutics this means, such a “relationship” with the Bible is expressed by yada – God is included into dealing with Scripture so that it is no longer a dead object.

The consequence of such an approach is that people should begin to develop a willingness to get involved with the Bible, to deal with it, even critically and with a possibly questioning attitude, but not with the pure intention of arriving at a mere cognitive knowledge about God. We are not talking here about a relationship with a book, which would be absurd, but what is important is to build up a relationship with God and let it become more intimate by means of Scripture – a book in which God revealed Himself and through which He continues to reveal Himself. This demands that a relationship of faith exists with the ultimate revelation and word of God Jesus Christ, enabling Spirit-given access to the presence of God.

Two possible mistakes have to be avoided in this respect. Firstly, one must be aware of focusing so much on a book that one loses contact with the living God. As we have mentioned before, there is the danger of making the Bible a golden calf. Secondly, one must be aware of neglecting the Bible as the corrective to all religious experience. This can lead to a lack of balance in the personal life of faith and to the formation of heresies. Personal experience is not to be made the criterion of truth even though the truth of the Bible must be experienced.

If we call the biblical texts a corrective, we also have to ask how far this corrective is inerrant. Although Pentecostalism proclaims that the Bible as a whole is the word of God and not only parts of it, it seems important to me to emphasize that the Bible itself neither develops a doctrine about its inerrancy nor does it try to defend itself in this way. And so, it is neither possible nor worth the endeavor to make biblical infallibility a matter of doctrine. How should fallible humans manage to describe the assumed inerrancy of a writing? God’s word is trustworthy because God is reliable.

This trustworthiness does not shelter the Bible from critical examination, from research that can lead to results which challenge our beliefs. But if we have the willingness to trust and cling to God, the reliability of Scripture can be experienced and affirmed. There is the danger of suffering shipwreck when our trust in the Bible is disappointed, when what we expected to happen does not happen. The question which then arises is how we react to such a “breach of trust”. We must make a decision. The personal decision to remain in relationship with God, even in the face of situations when the Bible seems to have lost its trustworthiness through disappointment or doubt, reminds me of that boy who was excited to be confirmed. As the son of a Lutheran pastor he had grown up in a Christian home and even decided to study classical languages and theology later on. But something changed within himself which only he knew exactly about. The results of his change, his hatred, his anger, and his disappointment, we can read in many of his writings. His name? Friedrich Nietzsche.

Together with Heinzpeter Hempelmann, rector of the Theological Seminary Liebenzell, Germany, we have to let our minds be renewed by the biblical approach to truth. Such an approach is an integral element of what Hempelmann calls a Hermeneutik der Demut: “The doctrine of inerrancy, which is characteristic of a fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture, brings a concept of truth to the Bible which is not its own, which rather is due to pagan-rationalistic thinking and in that way not faithful to the Bible.” Because of that the Hebrew concept of truth has to replace the notion that the Bible has to be infallibly, rationalistically true without any contradictions. Truth, as the Hebrew word emet reveals, rather refers to God’s faithfulness und reliability with which he stands behind His word even today and through which His word comes still true. The way God stands behind His word, however, is not always in accordance with what we expect. That is why trust towards God is the only heartbeat that can keep us alive in such a postmodern time as this.

---

1 Heinzpeter Hempelmann, “Plädoyer für eine Hermeneutik der Demut”, in: Theologische Beiträge (02.4, August 2002), eds. Klaus Haaker, Heinzpeter Hempelmann and Gerhard Hennig (Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus), p. 185. By the German word “Demut”, which could be rendered as humble submission, Hempelmann means that the interpreter of the Bible should not stand above Scripture but beneath it in order to learn from the book itself how to approach it. Prayer is an important element here, but also the realization that interpreting Scripture can only be done in dependence upon God and His grace. The interpreter therefore has to be humble enough to let the Bible speak for itself instead of putting it into the box of a creed or approaching it in ways that are not based on biblical evidence.

2 Heinzpeter Hempelmann, ibid., p. 185.
2. "...is verbally..."
After having dealt with some general ideas about the Bible I want to focus on the most important word of our five-word-statement. The particular wording of our tenet—"The Bible is verbally inspired"—holds the potential to evoke a misleading idea of inspiration: namely that the Bible was dictated letter by letter by God, as though every word of the Bible was chiseled into stone and therefore is infallible. Such an idea is characteristic of Fundamentalism and of its early expression in the Niagara Creed from 1878 and is still of great importance to Evangelicals, as expressed in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy from 1977. According to Hans Küng, "A Fundamentalist is someone who (...) professes the verbal inspiration and therefore the unconditional inerrancy of the Bible."

Unfortunately this is an idea regularly conveyed in many Pentecostal sermons or other spiritual meetings. I say "unfortunately" because this is a belief that will not change the reality of the Bible's state as an ancient book that contains mistakes in its textual tradition. Referring to perfectly inspired autographs, as is often done when supporting such a view, is equally inaccurate, since biblical autographs do not exist and therefore cannot be examined. A belief about inspiration should not just be a belief, for we could believe anything, but it has to be rooted in the textual reality presented by the collection of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek writings that we call "Bible"—with all their mistakes and variants. When talking about inspiration we have to work with the book that we have today.

Under the word "verbally", which specifies the notion that the Bible is just inspired, we rather should understand a kind of verbal inspiration that has dealt with Heinzpeter Hempelmann's ideas about a Hermeneutik der Demut. The key word "verbally" then must be interpreted to refer to the incarnation of the verbum dei, the word of God:

The term "verbal inspiration" continues to remain an oddity in the course of the history of theology and of the church. If one works out the doctrine of Scripture in analogy to Christology, it loses this character and becomes even necessary within the frame of a doctrine of the word of God that is structured according to the trinity. Verbal inspiration then means not more and not less than: The divine word of the Bible does not only possess human characteristics, but it is wholly and completely the word of man. On the other hand, this word of man is wholly and completely and in every letter the word of God.

The term verbal inspiration therefore must refer to an inspiration of incarnation in the christological sense. The Bible came into being through a working of the Holy Spirit which is the reason of Scripture's authority and its divine dimension, but this working leaves a lot of room to human imperfection. It is this lowly shape ("Knechtsgestalt") of the Bible and its human-imperfect genesis that have to be acknowledged also among Pentecostals. There is a simple reason for this: the textual reality created by the handing down of the biblical text with all its mistakes and contradictions as far as the content is concerned, cannot be changed. Although it should not be the goal of honest believers to focus too much on all the copying mistakes, gaps and variants in the biblical texts it should be humbly accepted that these facts hold true to the Bible. We have to accept soberly what Ernst Würthwein said about the Old Testament, but what is also true for the whole Bible: "Many generations of copyists and translators were involved in handing down the text of the Old Testament. That is why it contains many mistakes that occurred while copying, like every handwritten passing on of texts contains them because of wrongly read texts, mishearing and wrongly copied texts, a poor state of the original that was copied. But one also has to reck on other intentional or unintentional (...) changes in the textual tradition."

This lowly shape is an important element of the inspiration through incarnation. The Bible was not written by super humans, but by men who could also make mistakes. The Spirit of God did not produce a certain genius within them to make them inerrant, but He breathed His word into them which they wrote down in their own words, their own style, their own cultural setting, their personal state of education. Thus, the Bible is the word of God and the word of man, breathed by the Spirit of God and approved by Him in the shape that we have today. The Bible is not the pure word of God, neither is it the pure word of man, but it became something new: it became an incarnated word. "The oneness of God's word and man's word in the Bible is inseparable and cannot be dissolved—like a loaf of bread that you cannot divide regarding its flour, water, eggs

1 Heinzpeter Hempelmann, "Plädoyer für eine Hermeneutik der Demut", p. 183.
2 Ernst Würthwein, Der Text des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1988), p. 133.
3 Besides some other contradictions in the Bible (like 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chr. 21:1) the Gospels can here function as an example, because at many occasions their report of what happened or of what was said is contradictory within the text of the four Gospels.
4 Ernst Würthwein, Der Text des Alten Testaments, p. 116.
and yeast; its ingredients cannot be isolated from one another."1 As Jesus Christ was divine as well as human and because His actions could not be categorized according to a divine and a human nature – because He embodied one new incarnated God-Man-nature – so it is not wise to split the Bible in two natures: in a human and a divine one. The Bible remains human and divine at the same time. Consequently, it is not justified to focus on the “divine” in the sanctuary and on the “human” in the classroom, since there is no reason to separate the two.

Gerhard Maier, who also mentions an inspiration of incarnation in the christological sense, warns us not to take that unique nature of the Bible apart, because the Bible in its completeness is the revelation of God: “We cannot evade the mystery that God’s word and man’s word are interwoven.” It was the grave mistake of the historical-critical method to have tried to unravel that mystery because the Bible was no longer a unity from that endeavor on.2 Like a corpse, it was dissected and then buried in the classroom. In a similar way we do harm to the Bible if we want to make it perfect and inert in our sanctuaries.

3. “...inspired”
After having looked at the specific nature or way of inspiration some observations on inspiration in general are to follow. Against the background of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:19-21, I would like to stress that God does not dictate words by putting them into the author’s mind or heart, but that He gives life through His Spirit.3 When the Scriptures were breathed, God’s Spirit gave life, namely to His own word which found its way onto the scroll through human heads, human hearts and human hands. With inspiration we should therefore understand a giving of divine life into letters which would normally remain just ink on paper. Such a breathing into of life and Spirit is not to be confused with an act of dictating; we are rather talking about the creation of divine life within humans and therefore of an encounter with God by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God used the culture, social status and the historical existence of the author to speak God’s word for people back then. God guided the genesis of the Bible but nevertheless this genesis remains completely human, as we can see from Luke1 who describes how his Gospel came into being: even though God sometimes gives the command to write,2 He works inconspicuously by using usual human procedures (human literary language, historical research, arrangement of material, selecting sources and so on) when bringing to paper what He wants to say. Thomas Schirmacher3 points out that, while God took a lot of initiative, the Bible was not written down by force, but humans in a holistic way were involved in the genesis of Scripture under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He accentuates that the Bible’s “own pure human genesis” is very important and characteristic of the Scriptures. “The Bible was not written mechanically by marionettes, but on the contrary by genuine personalities, whose distinctiveness is expressed especially in their writings. Divine inspiration does not exclude human personality, but it leads it to its full development.”4

Since God’s word is never detached from culture and concrete circumstances of life, being rooted in the whole reality of human life, we need exegesis and hermeneutics to give relevance to the Bible in today’s world. Karl Barth points out: “The word of the Bible is a document and a monument at the same time. We have to consider that it is a monument of a piece of pious history, a piece of ancient culture.”5 While taking this fact of historical distance seriously we are not to neglect that the Bible is still up to date, “because the testimony in Scripture is not limited to a certain time period, but it is given to the church in the present, that is to say to people who are called by the word of God and who are to be called over and over again.”6 So the act of breathing into is not limited to the biblical authors, but it continues according to God’s will in the ones who hand down, read and proclaim the Scriptures until the present day.

---

2 Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode*, p. 69.
3 The role of the Spirit as life-giver is well attested in the Bible, see Ps. 104:29-30; Ezek. 37:1-14; Jn. 6:63; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 3:6.
4 See Exod. 17:14; Deut. 31:19; Jer. 36:2, 28.
6 Thomas Schirmacher regards this guidance by the Spirit as a personality development while the biblical writings came into being: “If the spirit of God works at and through humans, he makes them real personalities” ibid., p. 108.
7 Karl Barth, Homiletik (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1966), p. 86.
8 Karl Barth, ibid., p. 91. See also the introduction to Barth’s controversial commentary on Romans from the year 1919: “Paul spoke to his contemporaries as a child of his time. But much more important than this truth is the other one, namely that he speaks to all men of all times as a prophet and apostle of the kingdom of God.”, Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1999), p. XI.
Here we have reached an important aspect of the Pentecostal view on inspiration, because inspiration is seen to be twofold: "When we stress past and ignore contemporary inspiration, we risk dead orthodoxy. When we stress contemporary and ignore past inspiration, we risk heresy." Of course we should not be so naive as to think that such pneumatic illumination will automatically be inerrant and authoritative, knowing that even human beings who have a relationship with God are able to make mistakes. Therefore it is paramount not to neglect the original biblical languages because what the Bible means is not determined only by God's Spirit but also by historical context and the rules and laws of linguistics.

French Arrington mentions four ways in which the interpreter is dependent upon the Holy Spirit:

1. Submission of the mind to God so that the critical and analytical abilities are exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
2. A genuine openness to the witness of the Spirit as the text is examined;
3. The personal experience of faith as part of the entire interpretative process; and,

Submitting the mind to God does not mean that the interpreter commits intellectual suicide. Unfortunately, in many Evangelical or Pentecostal seminaries and churches, critical thinking, questioning and even doubting are subliminally or publicly frowned upon due to a "strong anti-intellectualism" inherent to Pentecostalism. At times, being in contact with God while reading or studying the Bible can, however, also mean that the interpreter becomes like the psalmist who gives vent to his inner mess by screaming at God. We do not need to be afraid of reason, we need to fear dishonesty, and sometimes dishonesty begins by suppressing doubtevoking questions because of focusing on the tenet of a creed. "Pentecostals must accept that while rationalism cannot tell us everything about the Bible and its meanings, it can tell us a number of important things -- especially about the historical and cultural distance that does in fact separate us from the biblical texts." Submitting the mind to God means that the interpreter submits to the one who speaks in and through the Bible. It is beneficial to know that reason alone cannot fully comprehend and interpret a passage, but neither does it help to suppress the abilities of the mind. So reason should be used in the right way in order to avoid falling into an extreme form of rationalism. Reason and common sense were given by God and are not replaceable when dealing with the texts of Scripture.

When reason is used in the right way, the interpreter is secondly able to be open to the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit can use the word to testify of Himself. Such an opening to the Spirit's influence should not be confused with a specific emotional or ecstatic state in which reason has ceased to be important.

The third point of Arrington's list can be understood in such a way that the interpreters should not read the Bible as any other book, although the Bible has its place in the history of literature and of the world. They should not look at it as so-called objective observers, because they know that they are partakers of what the Bible describes. Personal experiences of faith should not be negated, but they should be a part of dealing with the text.

The fourth point places emphasis on responding to the Bible's content. This simply means that studying the Bible should neither be nor become an end in itself. The interpreter should be a doer of what the Bible says based on the results of his/her own study and explanations.

In my opinion Arrington's model summarizes an individual approach to biblical interpretation that is not uniquely Pentecostal in nature, since other Evangelicals have similar emphases. I think the difference to other approaches is a matter of quantity rather than quality. What is, however, specifically Pentecostal is the belief that the interpreter is inspired by God and therefore able to connect with the divine life which is conserved by the biblical text. Hence, there is some point of reference with regard to other denominations and their approaches which should be used to learn from one another.

Having come to the end of this article we can say that a tenet about inspiration alone is not decisive; what is more important is the aspect of the Bible's application and influence on the individual. Since there are no autographs that could support an idea of verbal inspiration in the fundamentalist sense, an inspiration of incarnation can stand strong in today's world. Firstly, the nature of the Bible becomes part of the Gospel-message itself, because its genesis is viewed in accordance with Christology. Secondly, this written word is to become flesh within the
believers until this day: “The word of God demonstrates its authoritative power and usefulness in giving birth to the man of God.”¹

An inspiration of incarnation will be a renewing experience within Christian, and especially Pentecostal and Evangelical, circles because it enables the Bible to be the book that it is and the word of God to become flesh in the hearers and readers – be they normal church people, gardeners, street workers, butchers, pastors or academics. If we can accept that the word of God became human and does not hover over us as a perfect book with seven seals, the Bible can penetrate us by the Spirit and use the individuality of the believer to cause a wind of change within the church that is not to be confused with ecstasy or fundamentalism.

¹ Hans Bürgi, Wuppertaler Studienbibel Der zweite Brief des Paulus an Timotheus, die Briefe an Titus und an Philemon (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1987), p. 104.

“What is Left Behind? A Pentecostal Response to Eschatological Fiction.”

Paul van der Laan¹

Introduction

When the EPTA executive committee invited me to present a paper on the topic Bible and Fiction “in the light of all the books and films that describe end time scenarios,”² I had ‘to jump over my own shadow’ to do this in-depth research in the obscure biblical-fictional world of this new phenomenon. Although several books³ and movies apply to this category, like the novels The End of the Age of Pat Robertson⁴ or The Third Millennium of Paul Meier’s⁵ or the movies Apocalypse (1998)⁶ or The Omega Code (1999),⁷ I decided to focus on the so-called ‘Left Behind’ series written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins for three reasons:

1. This extensive series seems by far the most successful and influential.
2. The eschatology they present is adhered to by the vast majority of Pentecostals.
3. Their books are filled with biblical quotations, which give them an aura of divine revelation.

Since the day one of my colleagues looked at me with disdain while I was reading the first volume of the series of twelve and said: “I cannot believe you are reading that stuff”, I continued to investigate this vast material

¹ Paul van der Laan, Ph.D., Professor Southeastern College, Lakeland, Florida, USA. This paper was presented to the annual gathering of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, at Regents Theological College, Nantwich, England: 26-30 July 2004.
² Connie Karsten on behalf of the EPTA, letter of invitation 14th February 2004.
⁷ The Omega Code, produced by Trinity Broadcasting Network in 1999, lists Hal Lindsey as a “biblical prophecy consultant” in their credits.
Paul van der Laan: “What is Left Behind? A Pentecostal Response to Eschatological Fiction.”

secretly, as if it was forbidden literature. Although I will not qualify it as spiritual pornography, I do think we should read it with caution and discernment. On the other hand we have to realize that the “Left Behind” series has shaped the eschatological and ethical frame of mind of hundreds of thousands if not millions of our own rank and file, including my own daughter Natasja. As a genuine child of postmodernism she has always been much more fascinated by fiction than by the propositional literature that has marked our modernistic generation. Natasja has eagerly read all twelve volumes. When she had finished one, she could hardly wait for the next edition. Over and over again she asked me: “Is that really in the Bible?” Many times I responded by “Is that really in that book?” After almost ten torturous years of great tribulation the series seem to have come to an end with the latest edition of “The Glorious Appearing”. Thank God! Free at last. Before you get too excited over this, there are rumours that the authors are working on a sequel and prequel.1 I have to admit however that my wife and I bought most of these books as a present for our daughter ourselves. It is divine justice that I now had to investigate what kind of brainwashing I opened her up for. Before we dig into this painful part I need to make some preliminary remarks about Bible and Fiction and Pentecostal and Eschatology.

Fact or Fiction?
I think it is fair to say that there is a long tradition of communicating the Biblical truth in fictional stories. Jesus himself used many parables to teach us a number of essential divine principles and give us a profound insight, particularly about the essence of the Kingdom of God. Many scholars have even suggested that some books, like Job and Jonah, are fictional stories derived from popular folktales. Unlike, for instance, Greek mythology the Bible presents itself as actual history, focusing on the interaction between God and humanity. Paul emphasizes that the actual historical and physical resurrection of Christ is essential for our faith and salvation (1 Corinthians 15:17). John explicitly states that he proclaims what he has heard, seen and interpreted” of the Bible. They see no need to demythologize the Bible as we present it as actual history, focusing on the interaction between God and humanity. Paul emphasizes that the actual historical and physical resurrection of Christ is essential for our faith and salvation (1 Corinthians 15:17). Historically, Pentecostals have adhered to a “literal interpretation” of the Bible. The see no need to demythologize the Bible in order to make it relevant for modern people. On the contrary, they have built their characteristic doctrine of Spirit-baptism, with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues, on the premise that the historical facts in the Bible are still relevant today.1

On the other hand, I do agree with Jean Daniel Plüss that in the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement speaking in tongues was first and foremost an experience whose form was described in biblical language.2 Only later was it elevated to the status of a doctrine. In their testimonies and preaching Pentecostals like to blend their experiences with scriptures. Because of this feature they have contributed to the development of a narrative theology, which integrates historical and propositional scriptures with real life. Since the 1980’s they have added all kinds of art forms, in particular drama and dance, as a tool of conveying the gospel. Frank E. Peretti was one of the first Pentecostals who successfully used fiction as a way to communicate our perception of spiritual warfare. For those who have never read his books, let me quote the final battle that is described in his novel “This Present Darkness”. The protagonist is Tal, an angel-captain, the antagonist, a superior demon, Ba-al Rafar, Prince of Babylon. Edith, Andy, Bobby and the Remnant are praying Christians involved in the spiritual warfare:

Edith started to weep. “There is still an evil spirit out there,” she cried. He’s doing great mischief. His name is ... Raphael ... Raving...”. Bobby Corsi spoke up. “Rafar”. Edith looked up at him with wide eyes. “Yes! Yes! That’s the name the Lord’s impressing upon me!” “Rafar!” Bobby said again. “He is the big wheel!”

Tal could only back away from the fearsome onslaught of the demon prince, his good hand still holding his sword up for defence. Rafar kept swinging and slashing, the sparks flying from the blades as they met. Tal’s arm sank lower with each blow.

“The Lord ... rebuke you!” Tal found the breath to say again. Edith Duster was on her feet and ready to shout it to the heavens. “Rafar, you wicked prince of evil, in the name of Jesus we rebuke you!” Rafar’s blade zinged over Tal’s head. It missed.

“We bind you!” shouted the Remnant. The big yellow eyes winced. “We cast you out!” Andy said. There was a puff of sulfur and Rafar bent over. Tal leaped to his feet. “We rebuke you Rafar!” Edith shouted again. Rafar screamed. Tal’s blade had torn him open.

---


The big red blade came down with a clang against Tal’s, but that angelic sword was swinging with a new resonance. It cut through the air in fierce arc. With his one good hand, Tal kept swinging, slashing, cutting, pushing Rafar’s back ... The big beast swayed forward. He let out one last hissing sigh, and rumbled to the floor in a cloud of red. And it was quiet.

Tal could not breathe. He could not move. All he could see was red vapor spreading along the floor like thin fog and darkness all around that huge body. But ... yes. Somewhere the saints were praying. He could feel it. He was healing.1

If you have grown up in a Pentecostal church you will recognize many familiar themes: We have authority over demons and can rebuke them, bind them and cast them out in Jesus’ name. Prayer is an essential tool in the spiritual warfare. On the other hand, we do teach that angels and demons are spirits and it is hard to imagine how they can fight one another with actual swords. It is also peculiar that the prayers of Christians can heal an angel! Of more theological importance are the rhetorical questions: Are angels depending on our prayers or on the authority of God? Does the life of Christians center on spiritual warfare? This Pentecostal ‘Star Wars’ scenario seems rather amusing, but we must not underestimate how this kind of literature can blur a sound angelology. Robert Guelich has clearly exposed the unscriptural tenants in Peretti’s literature,2 but I am afraid that his voice is only heard by Pentecostal scholars who have never read any of his books.

Throughout the ages fiction has proven to be an effective way to convey Christian truths and ethics. John Bunyan’s “A Pilgrim’s Progress” of the 17th century is the book that has been sold and read most next to the Bible. C.S. Lewis has been very successful in this genre in the midst of the 20th century. Many of his novels are still being sold today. Contemporary authors like Adrian Plass and Randy Alcorn are very popular today. Partly due to the success of Peretti’s books, this kind of literature seems to be very appealing for many Pentecostals. For that reason it seems important to evaluate in what way it influences their theology and worldview.

Before I expand on the Left Behind series of LaHaye and Jenkins I need to make some preliminary remarks on Pentecostal eschatology. D.J. Wilson has stated in his opening remark in the section ‘Eschatology’ in the New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements:

For most Christians the present determines the future: they believe they will reap what they sow. But for most Pentecostals the future determines the present: their view of eschatology governs their view of current events. Their interpretation of prophecy has had a very significant effect on their perception of world historical events and on their political and social response to those events.3

One can hardly overstate the importance of eschatology in the early years of Pentecostalism. Combining James 5:7 with Joel 2:23-31 they interpreted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the “Latter Rain”, which would prepare true believers for the coming of the Lord. For decades it was preached that speaking in tongues was a necessary experience to go up in the Rapture.4 Stanley Horton recalls that in those days his grandfather Elmer K. Fisher, pastor of the Upper Room Mission in Los Angeles, refused to let his mother go to high school, when she finished the eighth grade. He felt it would be a waste of time since the Lord was coming so soon5. Vinson Synan stated that “early Pentecostalism was less a tongues movement and more a Jesus-is-coming movement”.6 A view that is supported by Robert Anderson in his Vision of the Disinherited7 and by Bill Faupel in his “The Everlasting Gospel”8. Charles Fox Parham believed tongues were known earthly languages any missionary could instantly use to reap the final harvest of souls before the imminent, 


1 Frank E. Peretti, This Present Darkness, Wechester, Illinois; Crossway Books, 1986, p. 370-372. In Piercing the Darkness (1989), Peretti continues to describe vivid angelic encounters. In his following novels he still integrates his Pentecostal perception of the world at large, but does not include the battle of actual angels or demons anymore.
premillennial rapture of the church. William Seymour wrote in his Apostolic Faith paper in January 1907, "All the testimonies of His coming that have been going on for months are a witness that He is coming soon. But when the trumpet sounds, it will be too late to prepare. Those that are not ready at the rapture will be left to go through the awful tribulation that is coming upon the earth..." Ten months later E.A. Sexton re-affirmed Parham's view on xenolalia:

If Jesus tarries until we have to learn all the languages of the world in colleges, He will not come soon, for not one hundredth part of the languages of the world is known or taught in our high schools and colleges. It is daring mockery to say this world will be evangelised through the channel of education.

Early European Pentecostals also recognized the outpouring of the Spirit as a sign of the imminent return of Christ, as is expressed by G.R. Polman in an article in Confidence in 1911:

As I have believed from the beginning, I believe today, that the Pentecostal Baptism has its Pentecostal evidence, namely the speaking in tongues. We believe that God is moving on to the end quickly, that we are living in the last days, and that we are living even in the last hour. God works in cycles, and as was being the beginning of the last dispensation, so will be the end. At the end of the present cycle we are touching the beginning. James speaks of the husbandman who is patiently waiting for the early and the latter rain in view of the Coming of the Lord Jesus. So we say while the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the early rain, we are having now at the end of the outpouring this 'Latter Rain'. At the early rain there was speaking in tongues. How are we to know that we are now receiving the Latter Rain? Because we see the same manifestation – speaking in tongues.

1 Vinson Synan, "The Second Comers", p. 38
3 E.A. Sexton, College versus Gifts of the Spirit, The Bridegroom Messenger 1, October 1, 1907, p.1.

Gerald Shepperd has tried to prove that Pentecostals originally were not dispensational fundamentalists. I do agree with him that such is certainly true with regards to Pentecostal ecclesiology; on the other hand I think that it is fair to say that the eschatological frame of mind of the early Pentecostals was shaped predominantly by a mild form of premillennial dispensationalism. The Scofield Reference Bible, which is called by many "the most effective tool for the dissemination of dispensationalism in America" was aggressively promoted by the Assemblies of God publishing operation. Students at the A/G schools of Central Bible Institute (CBI) and Glad Tidings Bible Institute were required to take classes in dispensational truths and typology. By the mid 1920's, CBI included in its correspondence program a class on prophecy which followed the dispensational outline very closely.

It is peculiar to note that futurist premillennialism appears to have its origin in the Catholic Counter-Reformation, who used the doctrine to prove to the Protestant Reformers that the present pope could not possibly be the Anti-Christ. The French Revolution emerged a new revival of prophetic concern. The decade of the 1790's constituted an experience in apocalypticism for many Christians. Napoleon was identified with Apollyon, the Greek name of the Antichrist in Revelation 9:11. Particularly in Great Britain, a new interest in the books of Daniel and Revelation emerged. In 1829 the so-called Albury conferences, hosted by Henry Dummond agreed on the following six points:
Paul van der Laan: “What is Left Behind? A Pentecostal Response to Eschatological Fiction.”

1. This “dispensation” or “age” will not end “insensibly” but cataclysmically in judgment and destruction of the church in the same manner in which the Jewish dispensation ended.
2. The Jews will be restored to Palestine during the time of judgement.
3. The judgement to come will fall principally upon Christendom.
4. When the judgment is past, the millennium will begin.
5. The Second Advent of Christ will occur before the millennium.
6. The 1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of (pope) Justinian to the French Revolution. The vials of wrath (Revelation 16) are now being poured out and the Second Advent is imminent.1

One of the participants of this conference was the Scottish preacher Edward Irving. Like many millenarians, he felt that the Scriptures predicted a restitution of Pentecostal charisma in the last days. When Scotland experienced an outbreak of the gift of tongues and healings in the early 1830’s, he believed that the expected outpouring of the Holy Spirit had begun.2 Mark Patterson and Andrew Walker make a convincing case that the key tenets of premillennial dispensationalism are rooted rather in the teachings of Irving than in John Nelson Darby.3 Nevertheless, Darby (1800-1882), the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, needs to be recognized as the one who developed the premillennial dispensational eschatology that has been adopted by the majority of Pentecostals, although we also have mid- and post- oriented tribulationists. Darby contended that there would be a rapture of the church prior to a seven-year tribulation period during which the Antichrist would be revealed. At the end of the years, Christ would return with his saints and, in the great battle of Armageddon, defeat the satanic force. In the second half of the 19th century this dispensational theology became very popular among evangelicals in the United States.4 In 1909 Cyrus Scofield (1843-1921) enshrined Daby’s dispensationalism in his popular Reference Bible. In the 1970’s it was popularized by Hal Lindsey’s “The Late Great Planet Earth”.1 In the 1990’s it was promoted by a twelve volume novel series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. The first volume entitled “Left Behind” was published in 1995; the last entitled “Glorious Appearing” in March 2004.

Left Behind
The Left Behind series has become the most successful Christian fiction series in history. The twelve titles in the series - Left Behind, Tribulation Force, Nicolae, Soul Harvest, Apollyon, Assassins, The Indwelling, The Mark, Desecration, The Remnant, Armageddon and The Glorious Appearing have already sold more than 60 million copies in 34 languages.2 These Biblical techno-thrillers about the end of the world are currently outselling Stephen King, John Grisham and every other pop novelist in America. The “core buyer” is described as a born-again Christian woman aged between 25-54, married with kids, who is college graduate and living in the South of the USA.3 There is also a Left Behind Kids Series (40 volumes and six audio sets), a Left Behind Series Graphic Novels (5 volumes), a Military Series (3 volumes), a Political Series (3 volumes, a Bible Study Series (4 volumes), two movies available on VHS and DVD (“Left Behind” and “The Tribulation Force”) and a popular Web site (www.leftbehind.com) that generates more than 50,000 hits a day.4 The authors have earned $10 million each out of the royalties for this series.5 Dan Barlow, marketing director of Tyndale House Publishers states: “We are not engineering all of this success. It’s God really using it in a mighty way”. They receive many letters from many readers who state that the books led them to re-evaluate their lives and prepare for the return of Christ.6 The authors claim that these books have brought some 3,000 people to Christ.7

1 Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1970. A record-breaking total of 19 million (some estimates mention 35 million) copies were sold of this non-fiction book presenting a popular dispensational eschatology. A film based on that book and narrated by Orson Welles was produced in the late 1970s.2 Karen S. Schneider & Kristin Harmel, “Glorious End”, People, April 26, 2004, Vol. 61 Issue 16, p 81
4 Steve Rabey, “Apocalyptic sales out of this world”, Christianity Today, March 1, 1999, Vol., 43.3
6 Ibid.
Paul van der Laan: “What is Left Behind? A Pentecostal Response to Eschatological Fiction.”

The idea for this series originated in 1986 while Tim LaHaye was on an aeroplane flight. On the aeroplane he noticed a pilot, wearing a wedding ring, flirting with a flight attendant. He wondered what the implications would be if this were the moment that God had picked to rapture the faithful, leaving behind only their clothes and a lot of bewildered unbelievers. This became the plot for his first novel. He initially tried to write this fiction novel about the rapture himself. His publisher was not really satisfied with this attempt and suggested that he co-operate with Jerry Jenkins, who had published novels for the evangelical market, including a series of Christian mysteries and Billy Graham’s memoir “Just as I Am.” Jenkins, a sportswriter while he attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, had written more than 50 works of fiction when LaHaye’s agent introduced the two in 1991.

The main protagonists in the series are airline pilot Rayford (“Ray”) Steele, his daughter Chloe Steele Williams, journalist Cameron (“Buck”) Williams and Bruce Barnes, visitation pastor of the New Hope Village Church of Mount Prospect, Illinois. All of them were left behind at the rapture and subsequently found Christ. The four of them start a tribulation, eventually to fight against the antichrist. As the series develops two Jews become very prominent: Dr. Chaim Rosenzeig, Israeli botanist and statesman, who kills the Antichrist with a piece of glass and Tsion Ben-Judah, a former rabbinical scholar and Israeli statesman, who revealed a belief in Jesus as the Messiah on international TV. The main antagonists are Nicolae Jetty Carpathia, the Antichrist, former president of Romania, who becomes secretary-general of the United Nations shortly after the Rapture, appoints himself as the potentate of the Global Community, is assassinated in Jerusalem and resurrected at the Global Community palace complex New Babylon in Iraq by Leon Fortunato, the false prophet, Carpathia’s right hand and Supreme Commander of the Global Community. There is also a sinister role of Peter Matthews, former archbishop of Cincinnati, who becomes pope after the rapture of the former pope and the amalgamator of all religions except Judaism and Christianity.

The rapture described in Left Behind portrays this event as a sudden dramatic crisis, where all born-again Christians and all children, even embryos in the mother’s womb, spontaneously disappear at the same moment all over the earth. Planes and cars crash as their pilots and drivers are suddenly taken away. From this point onwards the series develops into a catastrophic unfolding of an endtime scenario, as the authors mix the tenets of premillennial dispensationalism with their own political presuppositions and imagination. Time and again the protagonists quote scriptures and add their sometimes peculiar and speculative interpretations. Many times it is hard to separate fiction from a literal biblical interpretation. On the one hand the authors seem to go out of their way to stay as close to the literal biblical text as possible with sometimes hilarious images like Carpathia and Fortunate exhaling three slimy froglike beings into robots as fulfillment of Revelation 16:13 “Then I saw three evil spirits, that looked like frogs, they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet”. The Mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16-17), for instance, is portrayed as a miniature bio-chip, which contains one’s Zipcode or names of the Antichrist. Everyone who conscientiously has received this mark cannot be saved anymore if one desperately desires to become a Christian later. The 144,000, all Messianic Jews, have a Seal of God on their foreheads, which protects them against evil manipulation. In the end, believers during the great tribulation receive a mark, a three-dimensional cross on the forehead, which only fellow-believers can perceive. There is no mention of speaking of tongues, but a few times a hearing miracle is recorded.


3 For instance Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins, Left Behind, p. 209-215 where the raptured pastor Vernon Billings addresses those who are left behind on a video-tape. This “tape” can be ordered on the Web-site of Left Behind, see also an explanation of Revelation p. 308-314.
6 Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins, Armageddon, p. 278.
8 Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins, Armageddon, p. 246.
two witnesses at the Wailing Wall, Moishe and Eli, speak ancient Hebrew, but everybody can understand them in their own language. The 144,000 do not need an interpreter when a believer is addressing them, but cannot understand a word when unbelievers are talking to them. After the return of Christ everyone understands the other even though all are speaking their native language. Refuge places in Jewish and Christian history such as Masada and Petra reappear to give shelter to the new believers. The French Guillotine is re-instated to behead those who refuse to carry the mark of the beast. In the end, the words of Jesus, quoting scriptures in King James language, defeat the enemies of the antichrist. The continuous mix of fiction, scriptural references and fragments of history leaves the uncritical reader the impression that the presented stories are biblically sound and historically reliable. Let me illustrate this by quoting a section out of the latest book "Glorious Appearing" where Chaim Rosenzweig explains to Rayford Steele and others that there is an interval between the Second Coming of Christ on Earth and the beginning of the Millennium:

"Excellent!" Chaim said. "That is indeed where I was going and what we will discuss this evening. From the Glorious Appearing to the actual beginning of the millennial kingdom, there is a seventy-five-day interval. If it took God just six days to create the heavens and the earth and the earth and man himself, imagine how much work Jesus must have if He has been allotted seventy-five days in which to do it."

"Where do you get that out of the Bible?" Rayford said. "I mean, I'm no great student or anything, but I've tried to read a lot."

"Good question, The answer is found partly in Daniel 12:11-12. Listen to the first of those verses: 'And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.' Rayford, you remember when Antichrist defiled the temple?" "Do I?"

"That was the abomination of desolation. And that was one thousand two hundred and sixty days before the Glorious Appearing. So we are already talking about thirty days more. And the next verse says, 'Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.' That's another forty-five days, giving us a total of seventy-five more days."

How should we react to this kind of eschatological fiction? From an academic point of view the Left Behind series have been treated with indifference for many years. I agree with Tom Sine however that academics often don't recognise how influential authors like LaHaye are with their rank-and-file. The series has received some resistance, but only a few scholars have written a serious theological response. Just recently two books have been published with a critical analysis. Ben Witherington III of Asbury Theological Seminary, labelled it as "Beam me up theology."

Looking at this literature from an aesthetic point of view, Joanne M. Swenson characterised it as "iridescent urgency." From the denominational platform in the United Sates there have been at least two official rejections: The 2001 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church overwhelmingly passed a resolution that the theology of the series is "not in accord with our Reformed understanding of the New Testament Book of Revelation."

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod also published that

---

1 Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins, Glorious Appearing, p. 347-348
2 Tom Sine, Who is Tim LaHaye? Sojourners Magazine, September/October 2001, p. 20, see also N.T. Wright, "Farewell to the rapture: little did Paul know how his colourful metaphors for Jesus' second coming would be misunderstood two millennia later", Bible Review Vol. 17 no. 4, August 2001, p. 8, 52.
3 Amy Johnson Frykholm, Rapture Culture: "Left Behind" in Evangelical America, Oxford University, 2004. 240 pages
4 Ben Witherington, "What the Left behind series left out", Bible Review 18 no. 4, August 2002, p. 10, 52. see also N.T. Wright, "Farewell to the rapture: little did Paul know how his colourful metaphors for Jesus' second coming would be misunderstood two millennia later", Bible Review Vol. 17 no. 4, August 2001, p. 8, 52.
“such views conflict with the Lutheran position”. In Pentecostal literature I have found hardly any critical remarks. The Assemblies of God (USA) website carries a friendly interview with LaHaye, which is an excerpt of the cover-article of the Pentecostal Evangel of May 2000. In a review of the 11th publication, Armageddon, the A/G site for their national youth ministries, Teri Modisette commented: It’s worth every second of your reading time. The only drawback is waiting for book twelve!

It is important to realise that the reader of the Left Behind Series is buying into the theology and the worldview of the authors, in particular that of Tim LaHaye since he is the one who outlines what will happen in each book, according to his literal interpretation of the Bible. In Jenkins’ own words: “I defer to him on theology; he defers to me on fiction”. On his personal web-site, which opens with the visual and audible ministries, Teri Modisette commented:

“Dr. Tim LaHaye is a noted author, minister, and nationally recognised speaker on Bible prophecy. LaHaye is the founder and president of Tim LaHaye Ministries and the co-founder of the Pre-Trib Research Centre...For 25 years, LaHaye pastored one of the nation’s outstanding churches in San Diego, California, which grew to three locations...LaHaye has written more than 50 non-fiction books on a wide range of subjects such as: family life, temperaments, sexual adjustment, Bible prophecy, the will of God, Jesus Christ, and secular humanism with over 13 million in print, some of which have been translated into thirty-two foreign languages...LaHaye holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Western Theological Seminary and the Doctor of Literature degree from Liberty University.

David Gates reveals how Tim LaHaye received his particular interest in eschatology:

“He was 8 years old when he accepted Christ, 10 when his father died. "At his graveside, I was in despair," he recalls. "And the minister—I remember it as if it was yesterday—looked up at the sky and he said, This is not the end of Frank LaHaye. The day is going to come when Jesus will show himself and the dead in Christ will rise. And we who are alive in the Name will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." And one of my driving passions has been to help lay-people understand that the word of God means what it says and says what it means.”

Tim LaHaye met his wife Beverly at the Bob Jones University, which is known as the citadel of biblical Christianity, in the late 1940s. In those days he was so poor that “he did not have two nickels to rub together.” While he served as pastor of the Scott Memorial Baptist Church in San Diego in the 1960s and '70s he became a notable player in the world of the Religious Right. In 1976, he and his wife wrote a best-selling “Christian” sex manual entitled “The Act of Marriage”. In 1979, they founded the organisation Concerned Women for America, to counter feminism. In 1980, LaHaye was present at the birth of the Moral Majority and agreed to serve on the organisation’s first board of directors. In 1981, LaHaye was co-founder of the Council for National Policy, an umbrella-organisation which promoted a theocratic agenda. In 1982, he joined the steering committee of Council on Revival, a far-right group that wanted to impose biblical law on America. In 1983, he opened the American Coalition for Traditional Values. This group tried to mobilise Christian voters to elect conservative candidates to public office. In the 1980’s, LaHaye’s image was damaged because he was accused of accepting a substantial gift from the cult-leader Sun Myung Moon from the Unification Church. Although...
he stated that he did not support Moon’s doctrine, LaHaye took a low-profile position for some years after this incident.1

LaHaye’s political beliefs are perhaps best summed up in his “Battle for the Mind” of 19802 and “Mind Siege” of 2000, which he co-wrote with David Noebel.3 In their book, LaHaye and Noebel claim that the secular humanist ideology dominates the major institutions of American life and the United Nations and “undermine the moral fabric of America”. The five tenets of secular humanism they attack are: atheism, evolution, amorality, autonomous man and globalism. They fear a dangerous humanist conspiracy that plans to take over the world and urge Christians to take a stand against them. We find the same kind of worldview in the Left Behind series. In the novel “Left Behind” Dirk Button reveals the same kind of conspiracy theory to Buck Williams and was subsequently killed because he knew too much.4 Christian ethicist David Gushee points out that the Left Behind series capitalises on “the most passionately held fears and suspicions of a certain strain of American evangelical Christianity.” It is a worldview, warns Gushee that is built on “anti-internationalism, anti-United Nations, anti-pacifism, anti-multilateralism, anti-ecumenism, anti-Catholicism, and conspiracy theory thinking.”5

The eschatology of Tim LaHaye is classical premillennial dispensationalism, as is displayed in his voluminous fiction and non-fictional books on this topic. Although he is cautious not to mention a date of Christ’s return, he seems convinced that we are living in the end-times. In his book Are We Living in the End Times? LaHaye lays out twenty reasons for believing that the Rapture and Tribulation could occur during our generation, including arguments like the recognition of the state of Israel, the technology for the mark of the beast, a trend toward a one-world government and satellite links.1 His books are based on a theology of fear rather than hope.

LaHaye does not hesitate to use that fear as an incentive to promote his conservative political ideas. In an article written before the presidential elections in 2000, which is still available on his own web-site, he warns: “This country cannot survive another unaccountable administration that betrays our national security by giving our missile secrets to communist China and our other mortal enemies, so that when Russia goes down after Israel just before the Tribulation, the U.S. is no longer equipped to make more than a diplomatic objection.” He urges Christians to use their vote to stop the Liberal Socialist politicians turning the control of the United States over to the United Nations and ends with the stunning statement: “I am convinced that the church is the only body in America that will determine if we will go into a socialist dominated government before or after the Rapture. We know it will be after the Rapture. Whether we become just another socialist state before the Rapture depends on our nation’s pastor-shepherds.”3

Conclusion
Some have suggested that this end-time literature says more about popular American Christianity than about the end times,4 but I think that we, as European Pentecostals, have to admit that this eschatology sounds very familiar. We also have to realise that this goes beyond mere futuristic speculation; our eschatology has significant consequences for many aspects of life, like our social concern, ethics, aesthetics, political choice and our care for the environment. In 1981, for instance, James Watt, Secretary of the Interior under Ronald Reagan, told Congress that there was little point in protecting the environment, since the Second Coming...
Paul van der Laan: “What is Left Behind? A Pentecostal Response to Eschatological Fiction.”

could be just around the corner.¹ As Europeans, we should be concerned that the theory of the Restored Roman Empire in the end times, makes us very suspicious in the eyes of the rest of the Christian world and does create a sceptical attitude towards any kind of unification, globalism or ecumenism in our own rank and file.²

The eschatological fiction of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins proves that we must be careful not to mix our personal worldview with a so-called literal interpretation of the Bible. The book of Revelation itself warns us not to add to the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:18). The few scriptures about the rapture for instance (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, Matthew 24:40-41) do indicate an abrupt change in the physical condition of those who are in Christ, but they do not say anything about a global catastrophe as a direct consequence of this event. Maybe God will send angels to land planes or stop cars supernaturally. If we do speculate, we must make sure that we indicate that this is only one of the possible scenarios of how the future will unfold. These scriptures also do not indicate all children including embryos will take part in the rapture. It all depends whether you believe that we are all saved up and to the years that we are accountable for our own choices. Others will argue that every baby is born in sin and every infant has a wicked nature (Rom. 5:12; Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Psalm 58:3).³ The point is that we should not break scriptures open and fill these with our own theological and ethical presuppositions. The context of the rapture scriptures indicates that it is an appeal for Christians to be ready for the coming of Christ; it is not an appeal for the non-Christians to repent in order to escape the wrath of God.

As a Pentecostal, I also miss any reference to the Holy Spirit in these end-time fantasies. Will the Holy Spirit also be raptured as some have suggested?⁴ That seems incompatible with the fact that millions of people are getting saved even during the Great Tribulation. What really concerns me is that the image of God is marred. The more I read this kind of literature, the more I am convinced that they do not portray the God I know personally and through His word. I seem to be in good company

⁴ Usually those who adhere to this theory point to 2 Thessalonians 2:6. According to them the Holy Spirit holds the Antichrist back. After the Holy Spirit is raptured the Antichrist is free to fully demonstrate his wicked nature.

because even co-author Jenkins admits that he is sometimes troubled by the apparently vengeful elements in their books.¹

Fiction can and should be used as a powerful tool to communicate the gospel in the form of a parable or modern myth. It appeals to the more visionary and experientially oriented post-modern generation. Pentecostals can effectively mix it with biographical or testimonial material. When we constantly integrate it with quotations of scriptures however, as is done in the Left Behind series, the reader is tempted to think it is as inspired and inerrant as the Bible itself. However, we must give Tim LaHaye credit that he has managed to communicate his worldview and interpretation of the Bible in a very effective and influential way. It should appeal to us to create an effective bridge between our biblical research and the reading diet of the average Christian. Tom Sine in Sojourners, worded this as follows:

“Christian communicators and educators have much to learn from Tim LaHaye about communicating in accessible and convincing ways. We need to find better ways to communicate compellingly a biblical vision of hope and transformation to those at grass roots, to provide the alternative to the eschatology of escape and the politics of fear.”²

The Left Behind series should also motivate us to re-think our dispensational heritage and develop an eschatology which is appealing, biblical and relevant and is compatible with our Pentecostal identity. That identity does include a literal interpretation of scripture, but excludes a negative and fatalistic ecclesiology and a rigid application of Old Testament prophecies for the next dispensation only. Sheppard convincingly showed that the optimistic flavour of early Pentecostalism is in conflict with the dark prospect of impending destruction of the dispensationalists.³ In spite of the popularity of the Schofield Bible among early Pentecostals, fundamentalists used the same book to prove that

practices like glossolalia and divine healing ceased with the apostles of the New Testament.¹

Since the 1980's some Pentecostal scholars tried to expose the uneasy relationship between Dispensationalism and Pentecostalism,² but so far nobody seems to have been able to deliver a biblical and broadly acceptable alternative. In the New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements published in 2002, Frank Macchia notes that "a number of Pentecostals are calling for a revisioning of eschatological passion that preserves a legitimate desire for the coming of the Kingdom of God in righteousness and justice, but without the triumphalist and escapist tendencies of earlier convictions."³ He adds that a positive apocalyptic eschatology will create a strong moral and ethical consciousness and enhance Pentecostal social action.⁴ Recently an interesting dialogue has been published between Jürgen Moltmann and a number of prominent Pentecostal scholars.⁵ Lemmer Du Plessis from South Africa has recently written a Pentecostal eschatology in Afrikaans⁶ and is presently working on an English edition. He must be commended for his attempt to write an eschatology in the context of Christology, the Kingdom of God and Ecclesiology, but his description of the fulfillment of the end times is an uncritical copy of premillennial dispensationalism.⁷

May I suggest, in closing, that a Pentecostal eschatology should include the following elements:

1. Receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit as we develop our eschatology, but do not abuse this by claiming absolute authority.

2. Interpret the prophetic sections in the Bible as literally as possible, but leave room for symbolism, especially when futuristic elements or heavenly visitations are described. We must bear in mind that the ancient authors may have seen visions of elements they were not familiar with and had to describe in their own words. Just imagine the apostle John describing the terrorist attack on 9/11. Of course, heaven is a different dimension all together. We would have difficulty to describe this ourselves.

3. Do a thorough research of the context of the time and circumstances under which these prophecies have been written. One does not become a preterist by doing this basic hermeneutical groundwork.

4. Integrate the work of the Holy Spirit in this and the future end-time generation and develop an eschatology in which He has a prominent role.

5. Concentrate on our responsibility in the now rather than speculate over detailed end-time charts. The imminent return of Christ should urge us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:6-8), but also to be active in social help (Matthew 25:34-46). The Biblical call to be prepared for the coming of Christ has proven to be an effective tool to stress the urgency and priority of world-evangelism.

6. Relate the powers of the coming age, including the charismata, to the revelation of the Kingdom of God in the present in order to make the message of the gospel relevant in our generation (Matthew 10:5-9, Luke 10:8-9, Mark 16:17-18, Hebrews 6:5). The incarnation of Christ implied a transition from the old into the new covenant. In a similar way the Pentecostals have seen the outpouring of the Spirit as a transition into the coming age, rather than the abrupt end of this dispensation.

7. Present the Book of Revelation as a message of hope for the persecuted church.

8. Be careful not to be too specific or dogmatic as we pre-fulfil scriptures that could be meant for future generations. Who could have envisioned the fulfillment of the many scriptures about Jesus Christ. However, once these were fulfilled His disciples recognised how specific God had predicted these events. Let me read Matthew 27:5-10 as an example:

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into
the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."¹

Who could have predicted this? We may be in for some surprises in the future as well. Our immediate challenge now is to develop a relevant eschatology that will appeal to our rank and file and challenge them to manifest the powers of the coming age into our generation.

¹ Matthew 27:10 See Zech. 11:12,13; Jer. 19:1-13; 32:6-9

---

**Pentecostals and the Bible**

William K Kay

**Introduction**

This paper examines the views of classical Pentecostal ministers through an original data set. It places this examination within an historical and theological context by surveying key features relevant to the relationship between Pentecostalism and the Bible. It contrasts ministers who hold an inerrant and those who hold an infallibilist view of the Bible.

Pentecostalism emerged out of the matrix of holiness and revivalist culture within the United States. In Britain its emergence was related to the evangelical edge of the church, whether this was established (Anglican) or nonconformist (for instance, the Salvation Army), though there were also elements of Keswick holiness adding to the acceptability of an experience-rich religious movement.

In relation to later Pentecostal attitudes to the Bible, we can identify three other theological and social factors. First, the 19th century textual battles over the validity of both the Old and New Testaments came at a time when evolutionary biology was also beginning to make its mark. The Graf-Wellhausen hypotheses regarding the composition of the Pentateuch was followed by deconstructions of the Life of Christ (Renan and then Strauss) which, in England at any rate, were kept at bay by the scholarship of the Cambridge trio of Hort, Wescott and Lightfoot.¹ Nevertheless the *Lux Mundi* essays of 1889 contributed to a questioning of the main outlines of Christology and therefore of traditional Christian doctrine.

These textual battles, which had a nationalistic dimension to them, helped to divide the Christian world. Liberal scholarship in Europe emanated from the industry of highly competent German scholars. Because British universities simply did not have as many Chairs of Theology as were in existence in Germany, the sheer volume of German scholarship overwhelmed the more conservative British output. In the United States, where the education system was being built up and regulated at the end of the 19th century, scholars began to establish their own tradition, particularly within an education system that was much more the product of

the denominational and philanthropic giving than was the case in Britain or Germany. We might simplify this analysis by saying that liberal scholarship came from Germany and that conservative scholarship came from the United States and that both forms of scholarship were to be found in Britain.

Debate over the validity and veracity of Scripture – even if it took place a long way away and within academic circles - impinged on Pentecostal consciousness. George Jeffreys referred to the ‘higher’ critics, meaning those who operated from a complex methodology within a university setting, and the ‘lower’ critics, meaning those who took a hostile dispensationalist position. So the second factor concerned the lower critics or dispensationalists who should have been the natural allies of Pentecostals because both shared respect for the authority of Scripture itself. The dispensationalists, in a movement that itself has complex origins dating back to the Albury Circle (from 1826) and to the work of J. N Darby (1800-92), managed to cut salvation history, and therefore the Bible itself, into various discrete stretches of time in which God’s dealings with the human race were conducted on different covenantal bases. Although the dispensationalists or lower critics took a variety of positions, many were averse to any suggestion that miracles might be found in the modern era. The beneficent work of Benjamin Warfield provided an argument that miracles had ceased once the canon of Scripture was closed. Consequently, any claims for modern prophecy, tongues or healings must be spurious and, indeed, were probably indicative of the coming of the anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:9).

Connected with this debate and symptomatic of it was the publication of The Fundamentals between 1910 and 1913. These books, funded by wealthy layman, established five points as ‘essential and necessary’ doctrines of the church: (1) the original autograph of Scripture is inspired and without error, (2) the virgin birth, (3) the ‘satisfaction’ theory of atonement, (4) the physical resurrection and (5) the miracles of Jesus. The Fundamentals were circulated just before the outbreak of World War I and an estimated 3 million copies were printed. The style of argument, the content of argument and the presumptions behind the argument could not but feed into Pentecostal thinking since, only a year later, in 1914, the American Assemblies of God constituted itself.

Third, mass primary education in both the United States and in Britain was firmly established by the end of the 19th century. Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation generated a need for an educated workforce. Basic literacy and numeracy could be taught within primary schools. This had the effect of producing conditions under which mass circulation texts like newspapers could flourish even though it also produced an attitude to training that appears to us today to be mechanical. Primary education relied upon rote learning, memorisation enforced by corporal punishment and authoritarian interpretations of history and literature. Early Pentecostals, many of whom had only received primary education, were therefore naturally prone to accept similarly authoritarian interpretations of the Bible. This was part of the mindset of the age and not a reflection on the intelligence of those who established the classical Pentecostal denominations.

Origins and debates within the UK
The best record of the concerns of the Pentecostals within the United Kingdom is to be found in the pages of Confidence. Here the discussions of the Sunderland Convention were recorded in detail. The attendees were concerned about spiritual gifts in congregations, eschatology, the ministry of women, the basis of healing although the Pentecostal movement. But they did not have any real discussion about the authority or the validity of the Scripture itself.

When, eventually, Pentecostal denominations emerged as they did in quick succession after 1907 (Apostolics 1910, Elim 1915, Assemblies of God 1924), the bases of unity were to be found in tenets or fundamental truths. They did not follow the Anglicans whose basis of unity resided largely in the bishop who is traditionally the source of, and defender of, orthodox doctrine. Rather, it was the text of the Bible itself and an established interpretation of the text that provided the foundation for cooperation and fellowship. Moreover, once this interpretation had been reached, it became logical and necessary to set up training institutions where Pentecostal ministers might be taught what they needed to believe. All the classical Pentecostals followed this pattern and bent their energies to ensure that fundamental truths and Pentecostal distinctive were vigorously and systematically taught to their own aspiring ministers and missionaries.

---


---

As the period between the two world wars elapsed, debates about Scripture in Britain were far less complicated and ferocious than they were in the United States. Gradually, however, liberalism broke into British universities. Within Pentecostal circles, there appear to have been no real discussions about inerrancy or the difference between inerrancy, which must presume word-for-word accuracy, and infallibility, which implies that there are no mistakes in Scripture but without actually focusing upon the individual words themselves. Although some of the more educated Pentecostals like C. L. Parker drew a distinction between the inerrancy of the original autographs of Scripture and the human mistakes that might creep into the process of historical transmission and translation, these considerations appear to have been aired only rarely.

Oliver Barclay⁠¹ paints a picture of the weakness that had infected evangelicalism by the 1930s.

"The theological establishment was so self-confident and aggressive that theological students who did not conform were frequently subjected to ridicule by fellow students and often by their tutors... the result was that most of those who started their courses as apparently solidly evangelical finished up having lost their ability to preach the plain teaching of the Bible as the Word of God."

Such an erosion of faith was particularly damaging to young men training for the ministry within a university setting. These young men were largely Anglican. There were few, if any, Pentecostal ministers with theology degrees at that time. In university contexts, the best measure of evangelical influence can be found by looking at the size of the Inter Varsity Fellowship. It only comprised 1.7% of its age group in the 1930s, a figure that may be compared with the altogether more healthy level of 32% it had reached by the 1990s.² But at the time, evangelicals seemed due to become extinct, and their scholarship was almost non-existent. The weakness of evangelical scholarship had an effect that can be discerned with hindsight: the result was that most of those who started their courses as apparently solidly evangelical finished up having lost their ability to preach the plain teaching of the Bible as the Word of God."

Another factor relevant to Pentecostal understanding of Scripture stemmed from the practice of New Testament prophecy. The Apostolic Church in Bournemouth began, through its publication Riches of Grace, to publish the actual words of prophecies given at its meetings.¹ These prophecies were presumed to have the same status as canonical Scripture. All other Pentecostal groups quickly shrank from such an outrageous position. Yet the very fact that some Pentecostals thought that the Sunday morning utterances of Pentecostal prophets might be on a par with those of an Isaiah or Paul raised awareness about the importance of the written text of the Bible as a source of theological judgement. Pentecostal groups had already affirmed their belief in the authority of Scripture within their fundamental truths: the issue of contemporary prophecy simply increased appreciation of this authority.

Post 1945

The post-war era was marked in Britain by the desire to rebuild society. 'Secondary education for all' was a government slogan following the 1944 Education Act and when it became government policy this had a knock-on effect on all forms of post-school training, including that offered by the churches. The old style of Bible training that simply built on simple primary education had to be replaced. Secondary education was less authoritarian, more rational and more flexible and ministerial training had to reflect this change.

The end of the war coincided with the arrival of commercial air travel on a large-scale. The mission field opened up again and this, together with the desire to renew congregational life, gave impetus to the training of Pentecostal ministers. Donald Gee became the Principal of Kenley in 1951 and inaugurated a new era that began to modernise the curriculum.

Within Europe as a whole, the training of Pentecostal ministers continued to take place outside the degree-awarding system. Degrees could only be awarded by universities and, in Britain, universities required a royal charter. Up until the late 1950s, only about 6% of the population received any kind of BA degree, and masters' degrees and doctoral degrees were proportionately rarer. Within older British universities, particularly Oxford, Cambridge and Durham, an Anglican ethos persisted. In Germany, theological departments might require the approval of a local bishop before being allowed to appoint staff. Similarly, Lutheran scholarship was entrenched in Scandinavian universities. The result of this was that the

⁠² Ibid, 20

training of Pentecostal ministers occurred outside the sphere of academic scholarship but within the Pentecostal sphere of training colleges that, increasingly, began to make use of evangelical commentaries and thinking.

In the 1960s, the Charismatic Movement burst into life. In Britain, many of its early adherents were Baptists, Anglicans or Methodists who would have been better educated than the early Pentecostals. Some had received degree-level training and, by osmosis, their influence encouraged an increasing openness to scholarship within Pentecostalism.

This openness was encouraged within Britain by the founding of new universities after the 1960s and an increase in the numbers of people passing on to higher education. In the 1990s, British secular universities began to accredit courses offered at Pentecostal and Evangelical colleges. Once this began, large numbers of Evangelical and Pentecostal young people saw less purpose in attending a secular university to receive theological training. At the same time, and partly because they were deprived of Evangelical students, theological departments began to close within universities and where new departments were established, these often followed a religious studies format that avoided theology. Thus, by the end of the 1990s, much of the numerical strength of theological training began to pass to denominational contexts, including Pentecostal contexts.

The accredited new courses offered by Pentecostal colleges benefited from the climate of religious pluralism that accepted the equal validity of all religious positions. Pentecostal history, revival, theology and other distinctives could be taught without restriction. At the same time and as part of this expansion, faculty members within Pentecostal colleges began to seek higher education for themselves and many took degrees at Masters and Doctoral levels with the result that their staff became as well qualified as those within secular universities.

The study reported on here makes use of a postal survey by questionnaire of Assemblies of God, Elim, Apostolic and Church of God clergy. All these denominations publish an annual yearbook listing their ordained clergy. Distinctions are made between ministers who work in the UK and missionaries who work overseas. For the purposes of this study, overseas workers were excluded. All other workers, active, retired, itinerant and pastoral were included.

Although the denominations use different governmental structures, there are broad similarities between their operations. In each instance, support for the current study was obtained from the appropriate Executive Councils or General Superintendents. Each questionnaire was completed anonymously, but was identifiable by means of a numerical code. This allowed follow-up letters and phone calls to be directed to ministers who failed to respond. Altogether, 1631 ministers were within the scope of the target population and each one received at least one questionnaire. In total, 930 usable replies were received, a response rate of 57%.

The total sample comprised 930 ministers divided between 907 (97.5%) males and 23 (2.5%) females. There were 242 (26%) respondents aged under 39, 586 (63%) aged between 40 and 64, 86 (9%) over 65 years, and 16 of undeclared age. The sample was predominantly male and middle aged. About 16.7% of the total sample have obtained bachelor degrees but only about 3% have postgraduate degrees.

The questionnaire was made up of a great variety of questions including a set containing statements of belief to which ministers had to respond ‘agree strongly’, ‘agree’, ‘not certain’, ‘disagree’ and ‘disagree strongly’. For the purposes of analysis, ‘agree strongly’ and ‘agree’ were conflated and it is this percentage that is recorded in table 1.

Results
Table 1 gives the results of the survey showing the percentage of ministers in each denomination who accepted each statement. Table 2 compares inerrantists and infallibilists. T-tests were computed to contrast mean scores on selected items. In each case the differences between mean scores reported here are statistically significant.

Discussion
Table 1 shows that nearly all the ministers believe that the Bible is the ‘infallible Word of God’ but that a much lower percentage takes an inerrant position. In each denomination between 30% and 37% of ministers do not agree with the inerrant position. The two items together indicate that ministers draw a distinction between infallibility and inerrancy. Although there may be little real difference between the meaning of the two words, the ministers make a distinction and they probably do so on the basis of their familiarity with the fundamental truths of the denomination. Whereas denominational truths traditionally make
use of the word 'infallible', this is not the case in relation to inerrancy. For example, British Assemblies of God sees the Bible as 'the infallible, all sufficient rule for faith and practice'. It concentrates on an outline of the Godhead, the Person of Christ, the way of salvation and the role of the Holy Spirit but it does not pile up a sequence of phrases and texts to underline the verbal accuracy of the Bible. The reasons for this must surely be historical. When the Pentecostal denominations were formed, the issue of the accuracy of the biblical text was not at the forefront of their minds. Biblical authority was axiomatic. It was enough to say, as was said by the British Assemblies of God fundamentals, that the Bible was the 'inspired Word of God'. What mattered to them was the defence of the contested doctrine of the baptism of Holy Spirit following the new birth.

As subsequent debate and dispute took place in the 1920s and 1930s between liberals and modernist within the United States, the question of inerrancy became paramount among conservatives. By the end of the century, a large minority of British Pentecostal ministers, whatever their instincts, clearly retreated from an inerrant position even while they were happy to accept the infallibilist position taken by their founding fathers.

The preference for different versions of the Bible is almost certainly reflective of the accommodation between the various Pentecostal groups and contemporary culture and this, in itself, is linked with the average age of ministers. So, while the Apostolics and the Church of God give strong support to the Authorised Version, Elim and Assemblies of God have moved much more confidently to the New International Version.

The creationist position is widely accepted among Pentecostals but, again, a large minority rejects it. Nearly half of Elim ministers do not find it accords with their own beliefs. The responses to this item imply that these ministers are generally conservative in their interpretation of Scripture even though none of the sets of fundamental truths endorses creationism as a necessary belief. We may suggest that the majority acceptance of creationism follows from the generally conservative mind-set of Pentecostal ministers while noting the less literalist position of the large minority.

The item relating to the order of end-time events is indicative of the willingness of these ministers to be agnostic about eschatology. Whatever the precise fundamental truths of their own denomination, a majority percentage of Elim and Assemblies of God is unwilling to agree that a definite conclusion is found in Scripture; beliefs in this doctrinal area must be in a state of flux. Oddly, this admission may have other implications. If,

in some doctrinal areas, Pentecostals are prepared to adduce certainty from biblical texts but, in others they are willing to admit that this is impossible, is certainty as important as it seems?

Table 2 demonstrates consistent differences between inerrantists and infallibilists. In each case inerrantists evaluate speaking in tongues more highly. In each case, inerrantists show themselves to be more opposed to the ministry of women. They are less likely to endorse equal opportunities of ministry to women, to agree that women should preside over Communion services, to baptise and are more likely to endorse the view that women should obey their husbands.

Similarly, inerrantists are more authoritarian in relation to church activities. They are more insistent on Sunday evening attendance, tithing, abstention from alcohol, Sabbatarianism and avoidance of gambling. They are more likely to have firm eschatological views and to disagree with the proposition that the Bible is unclear about the order of end-time events. Finally, inerrantists are more likely to believe that medicine is a God-given blessing and that physical healing is provided within the atonement.

The consistency of differences on separate items between inerrantists and infallibilists points to deep-seated differences between these two groups, even though they coexist in each of the four classical Pentecostal denominations. We may put this another way by saying that inerrantism is part of a worldview in which authority and the supernatural are cardinal points of reference.

Conclusion

Arising out of the historical reflections and the empirical data, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a reasonable connection between social change, particularly social change that involves major alterations to the basic educational system within any society, and the kind of training for ministers that is likely to be offered. When training was built upon a primary education, it was likely to reflect the pedagogical style of that sector of education. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence that what surprised the students who were taught by C. L. Parker in the Hampstead Bible School in the 1920s and 1930s was that he conducted a type of Socratic discussion with students.¹ This was very different from the unimaginative

lecturing that characterised the style of other lecturers. But Parker was one of a few graduates within Assemblies of God at the time. Subsequently, once secondary education became universal in Britain, ministerial training was bound to alter again.

In the same way that ministerial training reflected the education system on which it was built, the fundamental truths of the various Pentecostal denominations that were formed in the first part of the 20th century reflected the concerns of the people who came together to found the new groups. Although the fundamental truths cover many of the main points of evangelical doctrine, they also ignore many others and their emphases arises from the particular temptations and trends of the founding era.

Secondly, there is a difference between the inerrantist and the infallibilist position on the Bible. This difference is evidenced not only by the quite different pattern of figures given in table 1 but also by the significantly different mean scores on numerous items given in table 2. Although we might argue that the infallibilist position is more liberal, these ministers still score highly on the different items concerning miracles and eschatology - it is just that the inerrant group score even more highly. The cluster of the differences between the two positions might be used to argue that we are dealing with a particular worldview among the inerrantist group, a worldview that is strong in its belief in male authority and church authority and, of course, biblical authority.

Third, the strong inerrantist position may be understood sociologically and psychologically as well as theologically. If any individual or group is going to stand against the consensus within society, it must have a strong rationale for doing so. The authority of Scripture, especially as supported by the authority of the church, provides this leverage. The ability to withstand cultural pressure enables inerrantist Christians to be true non-conformists. On the other hand, it must also be true that this ability to withstand social pressure may lead to dogmatism, rigidity and an unwillingness to accept any change at all, even when this change is for the better.

Table 1: Percentage of ministers agreeing with selected items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Apostolic</th>
<th>Assemblies of God</th>
<th>Church of God</th>
<th>Elim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the Bible contains no verbal errors</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Authorised Version of the Bible is best</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New International Version of the Bible is best</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that God made the world in six 24 hour days</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible does not make the order of end-time events clear</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories 'agree' and 'agree strongly' have been conflated in this table.
Table 2: Inerrantists and infallibilists compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Inerrantist</th>
<th>Infallibilist</th>
<th>Cramer's V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To speak with tongues is a calming experience</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To speak with tongues is a holy experience</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To speak with tongues is an exciting experience</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with tongues in meetings should be encouraged</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To speak with tongues is an encouraging experience</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with tongues brings life to the church</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a Christian experience called baptism in the Spirit</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should have equal opportunities for ministry</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should not preside at holy communion</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should not baptise</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should obey their husbands</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Christians should attend Sunday evening meetings</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All church members should tithe</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians should not drink alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians should not buy or sell on Sundays</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians should not gamble</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services with the congregation should be structured</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tithe belongs to the local church</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that God made the world in six 24 hour days</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that Jesus really walked on water</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that Jesus really turned water into wine</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus will return to the earth again in the future</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that there will be a millennium</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church will be taken from earth before the millennium</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible does not make the order of endtime events clear</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Missionary Candidates to the British Assemblies of God Overseas Missions 1945-54
Anne E Dyer

Introduction
The purpose of this paper is to investigate the trends within applications for missionary work within British Assemblies of God in the ten year period immediately after 1945. One reason for investigating this is to find out whether or not there are more candidates after major world events like the Second World War. It is also of interest to discover what sort of people were applying for missions with what reasons, why they were accepted and why they were rejected.

This investigation also seeks to establish how this particular Christian 'fellowship' (as they called themselves) of churches – the Assemblies of God, a major stream of the Pentecostal movement in Britain (AoG) - carried out the re-launching of their overseas missions programme in the post-war period. Questions are asked as to what care of the applicants was shown and attention to the details and spiritual discernment there was. Since Pentecostals believe very strongly in the 'leading of the Spirit', one might expect to discover their 'Pentecostal Distinctives' as spiritual factors at the forefront of the decision-making process. This investigation will attempt to discover whether this was indeed the case. Further investigation of a comparative nature would be needed for confirmation for other major events in history subsequent to 1945. Not only could British missions be compared but continental ones too which would have been affected differently by the war.

The methodology employed for this investigation was to assemble all the available paper evidence in terms of the Mission agency's minutes, extant application forms and letters. This was then tabulated in database format so as to assemble what statistical evidence there is and to determine how usable it was. Ex post facto surveys are notorious for not having all the evidence to hand; that is the problem with the study of history in any age. Books concerning the background for the times were also studied, both secular histories and autobiographical sources of missionaries and church leaders associated with this fellowship.

Introduction
The purpose of this paper is to investigate the trends within applications for missionary work within British Assemblies of God in the ten year period immediately after 1945. One reason for investigating this is to find out whether or not there are more candidates after major world events like the Second World War. It is also of interest to discover what sort of people were applying for missions with what reasons, why they were accepted and why they were rejected.

This investigation also seeks to establish how this particular Christian 'fellowship' (as they called themselves) of churches – the Assemblies of God, a major stream of the Pentecostal movement in Britain (AoG) - carried out the re-launching of their overseas missions programme in the post-war period. Questions are asked as to what care of the applicants was shown and attention to the details and spiritual discernment there was. Since Pentecostals believe very strongly in the 'leading of the Spirit', one might expect to discover their 'Pentecostal Distinctives' as spiritual factors at the forefront of the decision-making process. This investigation will attempt to discover whether this was indeed the case. Further investigation of a comparative nature would be needed for confirmation for other major events in history subsequent to 1945. Not only could British missions be compared but continental ones too which would have been affected differently by the war.

The methodology employed for this investigation was to assemble all the available paper evidence in terms of the Mission agency's minutes, extant application forms and letters. This was then tabulated in database format so as to assemble what statistical evidence there is and to determine how usable it was. Ex post facto surveys are notorious for not having all the evidence to hand; that is the problem with the study of history in any age. Books concerning the background for the times were also studied, both secular histories and autobiographical sources of missionaries and church leaders associated with this fellowship.

The Climate of the day in 1945
By the end of the Second World War, missions in general were at a new stage in their existence. The world order was changing. Imperialistic Victorianism was leaving the scene. Leaders still in that mode held their agencies back because of fear of lack of resources and a lack of understanding of the nations. Traditional denominations saw an ecumenical view of the world and its faiths; no longer was 'proselytising' on their agenda so much as aid in education or humanitarianism. Evangelical 'faith mission' agencies still saw a great need for evangelism and swung into action in new mission agencies as well as old.

Emphases included eschatological themes of the End Times, times of the Latter Rain and healing. Pentecostal magazines sported headline designs with four titles of Jesus, one of which was 'Coming King'. They thought they 'discerned the times' as the End Times when gifts flourished, a 'great harvest of souls' would come into the church world wide preceding the 'King's Coming'. Missionaries were expected to facilitate this (Matt. 24:14) and new applicants could therefore join in this exciting task.

Attitudes to the world were changing. Globalisation was barely embryonic but world travel was at least easier if still by ship for long-term missionaries. Many service men and women had travelled and seen the world. There was an upgrading of social classes; prosperity was increasing even in the UK once rationing was over (1951). The Evangelical churches had highlighted mission into the entire world for a century, epitomised often by faith missions. Leaders like Billy Graham and the healing ministries of men like T. L. Osborne were taking this to a new level of mass campaigns across the world. By 1955, the leader of the large Toronto church Oswald Smith said, "Everyone must go or send a substitute" or promise "$15 per month to have their own Native substitute on the foreign field".

The British Assemblies of God had commenced in 1924 and almost immediately gained a missionary remit as the Pentecostal Missionary Union formed as early as 1909 amongst those with a 'pentecostal

---

2 Missions like Missionary Aviation Fellowship and New Tribes Missions commenced at this period. New ventures in flying were made on behalf of missions by these two in particular. Older missions like CIM, WEC, BMMF continued.
experience' was embraced by the new fellowship. They had therefore gained immediate responsibility for supporting certain missionaries who happened to serve in Yunnan Province in China, India and the Congo. By 1945, some also served in Southern India, Japan, Sierra Leone, Argentina and France. Inter-mission activities and international co-operation were referred to in the Overseas Mission Council’s minutes but most groups kept to themselves and to comity arrangements in the receiving countries. Originally, some Dutch missionaries also used the PMU and Home Reference Mission Council. There is some evidence of this post-1945 when British missionaries requested permission to marry missionaries who were training in the French language in other European countries. They then had to meet the British council’s requirements or be missionaries in some other way. Cooperation with continental missions is seen in the Congo but not until the 1960s. Therefore, this paper has had to concentrate on the British Pentecostal missionaries from the Assemblies of God for 1945-54.

A Home Reference Missionary Council had been formed from members elected at the annual General Conference in 1925 for serving the needs of these missionaries and processing new missionary applicants; in 1945, this became known as the Overseas Missionary Council (OMC). By 1947, it was made up of 7 people, chaired often by Donald Gee, a major leader of the movement since the 1920s, along with colleagues John and Howard Carter, F. R. Barnes, J. H. Phillips (Wales), Jimmy Salter of the Congo Evangelistic Mission and the Secretary, a business like Leslie F. W. Woodford.

Evidence for how missions dealt with their candidates does not seem to be available from any books or articles, at least for British missions. A detailed search of the minutes taken by each agency would be needed for a thorough comparison. For information from AOG sources, there are the OMC Minutes, and some extant letters, their magazines - Redemption Tidings (published fortnightly, then weekly) and Overseas Tidings, specifically concerning missionaries (published quarterly). Woodford maintained detailed minutes at each meeting which were held roughly bi-monthly. Accuracy and bare essentials were his apparent motto. It is possible to read between the lines only when the testimony of others in interviews or letters warrants it. It is in these minutes that, for the period 1945-54, there are 268 references to applications from volunteers to become missionaries (some names being duplicated as their papers return many times for discussion). There are 97 references to rejections; there were 32 rejections out of 83 references to candidates in 1945-6 alone.

Some 65 letters and application papers are extant for the years 1945-65 but are not complete sets for each name. They are mainly from those who were rejected. Most names are mentioned in the OMC minutes but those not mentioned yet whose letter[s] survive[s] may not have been regarded as formal applications. Some ‘sets’ contain reference letters from pastors or employers; some have a letter of enquiry only and reply and nothing further is heard. The only acceptance letters in the collection discovered so far are those who had already been accepted by the Congo Evangelistic Mission; they made applications for recognised AOG ‘missionary status’ and were easily accepted by the OMC. Perhaps they were left in the collection with those rejected because they were not the direct responsibility of OMC. The tenor of letters from Leslie Woodford, OMC Secretary, to those rejected is always courteous, encouraging that although there may not be an opening in the fields OMC covered, there may be alternatives, at home, to serve God. Some candidates actually withdrew of their own volition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Single ladies</th>
<th>Single men</th>
<th>Couples</th>
<th>Total units</th>
<th>Total no. of people</th>
<th>Total initial applications (units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Unless there are more elsewhere, not found in the Donald Gee Centre, Mattersey Hall
2 This table does not include Congo Evangelistic Mission applications even though OMC gave accreditation to their accepted missionaries very easily and assemblies were sponsoring them as well as the AOG’s own fields.

---

1 Those who had received an experience of God’s Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in other tongues, which was equated to empowerment to serve God.
2 The Swedish Free Mission had a school in Lemera, Burundi and OMC loaned a teacher to them.
3 The Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM), founded in 1915 by Willie Burton and Jimmy Salter, also resourced itself from Pentecostal churches and others beyond but specifically for one field only - the central area of Congo, whereas the AOG supported missionaries in the Kalembe field, near Lake Tanganyika, Congo’s Eastern borders from the early 1920s-1963.
As seen in table 1, in 1945, the number of candidates was high. In the 1945 minutes of the OMC, out of 64 references to candidates, for 44 units (applications), there were 26 single people and 19 couples who applied. The number of accepted candidates was seven units or twelve people.

Two other couples and three singles were refused. Some had attempted to reapply several times even during the war years. In subsequent years, the numbers dropped off and this decade is actually not too far different from the subsequent one when 27 units were accepted (36 people). Very few single ladies were accepted for those turbulent times in China or India (nor the Congo) in the late 1940s, until the early 1950s. However, although initially it appears that married couples (9) were more acceptable than singles, there were few couples selected after 1949 (4). That may be accounted for by the need to use all available funds to evacuate the team in China as the Communists made it too difficult to stay. Lack of obvious funding for new candidates meant they were turned down and maybe deferred. In 1949, three applied for uncertain destinations, two for Sierra Leone, four for India and three for the India/Tibet border but Tibet was closed due to financial constraint by 1951 anyway and only one couple for India was actually delayed.

The extant applications show a variety of backgrounds among the candidates, from nurses and teachers to mechanics and clerks and domestic servants. Some have very few qualifications in any sense of them being academic or professional, let alone theological; yet they may have had a spiritual zeal. Most often these were turned down. Towards the later years, more qualifications are evident, and Field Councils were requesting Bible College training, which was not a pre-requisite until the later 1950s.

The reason for so many candidates

Missionary 'contagion'

Alfred Missen considered that good progress had been made from 1931 to 1945. Since many missionaries were at home, evangelising with Home Missions, itinerating and holding conferences during the war (Preston 1943, 1944, 1945 and Derby 1945), their enthusiasm became contagious.

Indeed, recollections of massive valedictory meetings with several thousand in attendance were related to me from both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal sources for the decade and beyond.  

Enthusiasm for a new world order

At the end of the war a new energy was evident in the country, despite the following years being hard, and hope was restored. A new global understanding had grown up with the war involvement of so many of the Commonwealth as well as America and European nations. Many had seen what other ‘non-Christian’ nations were like. Compassion had a large part to play in motivating missionaries whether for physical or spiritual needs seen in the people of whom they were informed. At the same time, there was hope for a return to life as it was: family life, employment, pleasures of the beach, music and films, all of which could have been a hindrance to zealfulness.

Eschatological Motivations?

Pentecostals, on the other hand, turned their energies towards evangelism since the world was in such a desperate need as a result of its forgetting God. What was more, the King (Jesus) was due to come at any time since their experience of the return of spiritual gifts to them meant that the End Times were near. A-bomb scares led men, even like Donald Gee, to write in 1963 (notably when the Cuban crisis hit the news) concerning that ‘catastrophic day in August 1945, when the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima...Almost at once the far-reaching implications were grasped...Was it the beginning of the end?...an ultimate judgement day when “the elements shall melt with fervent heat”...If God still permitted a breathing space then it must be marked by a new consecration and zeal in the gospel’. Their understanding of the ‘lost’ in the world meant that “the love of God constrained them” (2 Cor. 5:14) to go and proclaim the Good News so that many may “not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). There is however little or no evidence of this eschatological motivation in candidate application papers.

1 Miss Mason was engaged to Mr T. C. Cross who was accepted the previous year.
3 Gee was Chairman of the Missions agency for this decade and on it since 1925, as well as a recognised world Pentecostal leader.
4 Pentecost, (1963), 2
What was expected of a Candidate?
The candidates simply filled in two sets of 'schedules' and had a medical, provided their ministers' references, were assessed and called to interview if there was any likelihood of success. By 1955, the OMC must have accepted certain candidates on the basis of their Full Schedules without interviews and remonstrations among the Field Councils were noted in the minutes for 1955/6. The acceptance of certain missionaries had proved to be the wrong decision.

In 1948, David Newington (then with only one year's experience in Congo) wrote in Study Hour about the choice a pastor should make regarding candidates. He outlined the basic needs in a missionary for an all round spiritual experience and maturity, for a definitive sense of call from God, willingness for a sacrificial lifestyle and a love for 'the heathen' and 'worth of a soul'. A noteworthy aspect is that he does not emphasise the Pentecostal distinctive of baptism in the Spirit and gifts accompanying, though it is possible that he assumed it. W. F. P. Burton had already written on this in an article for Overseas Tidings concerning the qualifications; "a real experience of Salvation, ...an enduement with Power of the Holy Spirit, ...an ability to preach, ...tenacity of purpose, victorious personal life in sexual matters, ...a reasonable education, ...keen intellect, sound body". A Special Committee was set up to debate this issue. All candidates were expected to hold these pre-requisites before application, "Field contact, training in handicrafts and building... Spiritual preparation through their Local Assembly, Bible School and they should gain support first" (OMC Special Committee, Jan., 1947).

Between 1945-54, there were 256 references to applicants, 124 units applying, 33 being accepted plus 13 for CEM (one of which had been accepted by the AOG for China/Tibet went to Congo CEM instead). Thus, 71 more people were expected to be supported from the home base plus several children. There were also some transfers from China to other fields like India and South Africa.

Table 2: Destinations for Accepted Candidates 1945-54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nations for which people were accepted from 1945-54</th>
<th>Single Men</th>
<th>Single Women</th>
<th>Married couples</th>
<th>Total accepted applicants</th>
<th>Total applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>8-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Tibetan border</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo AOG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>9-1</td>
<td>12-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanganyika</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern India</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America [Brazil]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals without CEM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18-2</td>
<td>32-2</td>
<td>52-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo CEM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2+1</td>
<td>18+ 1</td>
<td>22+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals with CEM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50-1</td>
<td>70-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The surprising rise in numbers of candidate acceptances in 1945 was not matched in subsequent years. Reasons for this may be found simply in the inability to send many during the war years and thus the real reason for the rise in statistical evidence for candidates in 1945/6 is that it is really equivalent to five years' worth of candidates although some were accepted in 1944.

For the era 1945-54, there are 18 extant application papers and all are rejections. Presumably the accepted candidates' papers were stored...
elsewhere, with their then current files. The rejected candidates even included people who, now in hindsight, have contributed greatly to the AOG, at least from the home side ministry perspective. They also included people who, though they never gained high waged careers, fulfilled a vital role in the churches if only in lay capacities. No doubt there were those chosen who did not match up to expectations. Grounds for acceptance can be gleaned from the opposite of those reasons for which people were rejected.

**Destination**

Those who were accepted were sent to OMC’s fields. By 1951, these only included Japan, India’s two areas and the Congo.

**Age, Medical, Family**

These qualities all matched requirements: thus most were within their 20’s, had no history of ill-health and were in family situations which fitted in with probable field conditions.

**Spiritual Qualifications**

For candidates to a Pentecostal mission, a Pentecostal experience was a necessity, personally and in terms of church experience. Doctrinal statements were also requested though it is recognised that these are easy to write in ways that conform to expected statements. Pastoral references were also required and sometimes pastors remonstrated with the OMC for rejecting their candidates. The interviews were really the only method of confirming impressions made by the written ‘schedules’ and references. In later times, the then Mission Secretary Walter Hawkins said that he already knew a majority of candidates from his various trips around the country when he was pastoring or when deputising himself as a missionary.

**Education**

This did not seem to have caused any specific problems; having or not having a good education at this stage was not an issue except for ‘those of unexceptional qualities’.

---

1. Congo Kalembe field new missionaries were appointed to be field leaders immediately because they were men but by the end of 1950, they were not reappointed (OMC Minutes, 8 Dec., 1950). Names not given to protect confidentiality.

2. Unless previous experience overrode this as with Muriel Asbery, who was in her mid thirties and died two years after being appointed, after a minor operation in India, due to asthma complications.

3. Letters in Donald Gee Centre: Parr queried the OMC on behalf of his candidates (14 Sept., 1951; 14 March, 1952).


---

**Was Bible School training necessary?**

The PMU had established a training college at Hampstead that became the AOG Bible College later based in Kenley. However, training does not seem to have been a normal requirement for mission candidates until the later 1950’s. Only some were asked for their records from Hampstead Bible School (OMC, 11 Jan., 1945) and the Halls were advised to take some Bible courses (8 March, 1946). This was a normal request from Field Councils only by the 1950s. Some took the initiative to take a course at the Missionary School of Medicine and the OMC had to decide whether or not to pay for such a course. When two couples finally arrived in India, Lawrence Livesey, a veteran pioneer in Coimbatore congratulated the OMC on such fine choices.

**Was a trained secular career Professional required as a Missionary?**

Growth in the need for professionally trained mission nurses and teachers meant sifting out those who were not academically so able. The Congo AOG field requested certificated teachers (OMC, 9 May, 1952; 13 Mar. 1953; 11 Mar. 1955). There were some educated Pentecostals available to apply; one such teacher set up a teacher training school and built a school building, with two classes ready for April 1955 (OMC, 11 Mar. 1955). Drooger considers that Pentecostals improve their socio-economic status with time, writing, “Using Weber’s thesis in a selective manner, it can be argued that in the case of Pentecostals their faith, their personal (Missionary) initiatives, their desires to make full use of their talents, their labour ethos, all contribute to making them strong candidates for upward social mobility in modern society” but this is not in an 1950s context. Those who had been training teachers, for instance, in the Congo without full qualifications found it difficult when new inexperienced missionaries came with diplomas (as then required by the Belgian government for Congo).

**How long did they last on the field?**

To find the answer to their length of term, each missionary would need following though the Minutes until they were removed from the Accredited Certificated list. For this ten year span it is impossible to tell. When further research has been done on the subsequent twenty or more years then an answer may be forthcoming. If easily accepted missionaries proved to be those who lasted longest on the field then the OMC would be

---

1. E.g. one for Brazil (OMC, Mar. 1945), one for India and one for China (OMC, 12 Dec. 1945)

Anne E Dyer: Missionary Candidates to the British Assemblies of God Overseas Missions 1945-54

vindicated in their choices; however the vicissitudes of life vary for all and even the best missionaries have had to leave the field for unforeseen situations not only on the Field (as in China’s evacuation) but at home for family necessities. Thus there is no regulated way of testing the choice of the OMC on its candidates.

Many candidates must have been puzzled by the rejections (36 in 1945 alone). The reasons were manifold: they were too old, too young, China was still closed (though others were being sent) while Brazil had already endorsed candidates without visa access so no others were acceptable. At least 17 were rejected with no reason cited. Often they reported that Candidate X had ‘no exceptional characteristics’. There were no psychometric tests. The pastoral references, interviews and ‘full schedules’ had to suffice for the OMC members to discern whether or not the applicants were suitable. Only on interviewing members of this mission fraternity was the writer able to learn how prayerful these men of OMC were concerning the applicants. This is a subjective matter and respect is given to these men of almost legendary character, pioneers of the movement since the early 1920s. Trust in their decisions had to be implicit. Noting the relatively few applicants who, though once turned down, tried again even several years later, one assumes that there was almost 100% agreement with them. Those in disagreement, if determined to follow their calling to fields other than those designated, made application elsewhere. Others simply gave up and stayed home, which was probably the right thing to do for them.

Table 3: Reasons for Applicants who were rejected between 1945-54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unknown reason / no exceptional characteristics</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Destination</td>
<td>27 + 4 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Age</td>
<td>14 + 1 family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Finance</td>
<td>1 + 6 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Health</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Family needs</td>
<td>3 + 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spiritual Experience</td>
<td>2 + 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Educational lack</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Other (Not British, not AOG, no visa)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Self-withdrawal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data as seen in Table 3 deduced from the OMC Minutes is discussed below.

Unknown Reasons:
Almost half of the rejected candidates were not give any specific reason for not being accepted as missionaries. Many were simply labelled as having ‘unexceptional qualities’.

Destinations:
Candidates were judged not just on their character but also on the destination to which they aspired. By 1951, the General Conference ruled that the OMC should reduce the official fields to India, Japan and the Congo. If candidates did not fit the main British AOG fields, they were not accepted. These would have to pursue their call through other agencies and their churches’ finances were directed there and not through the OMC. The OMC however, felt somewhat threatened by churches contributing funds elsewhere than their account. This was a major reason for rejecting certain candidates. So, by 1958, a wider geographic policy was re-established.

Age:
This was a strong factor; over 30’s were not considered able to learn the local language and culture, especially if small children encumbered them. Eleven were rejected on age grounds; two sets because they were too young.

1 The General Conference, held annually for ministers, is the central decision-making body of the AOG which provides an opportunity for ministers to vote on issues pertaining to them as a movement. They are able to instruct the Overseas Missionary Council on some matters that had general effect on all churches. This restriction of fields was meant to assist economically as well as to give a focus for team work as the CEM had in their field.

2 Missen, The Sound..., 60.

3 E.g. one for Sierra Leone (OMC, 8 July, 1949) one for Port of Spain, Trinidad (OMC, 14 Sept. 1951) one for Brazil (OMC, 12 Nov. 1954)
**Finance:**
One major factor was the lack of money to send many, especially if they were deemed to be not so exceptional candidates. One couple had no means of support and so were automatically rejected (14 Feb. 1947) as were 3 other candidates. This would appear an insufficient basis to warrant the argument that the OMC was driven by financial motivations.

**Health:**
Medical reports failed a number of candidates and sensibly delayed some existing missionaries' return.

**Family:**
Three sets of candidates were advised not to continue on family grounds; one single man on the grounds that he had elderly parents and two families on the grounds that they had children who would not find it easy to acclimatise to tropical surroundings.

**Spiritual Qualifications:**
None were turned down on theological grounds, despite some application papers not having detailed theological statements; they were all ‘evangelical’. Some who did not have a ‘Pentecostal’ experience were advised to get one first, a logical distinctive necessary for applying to a Pentecostal mission. One man intending to go to India (13 July, 1945, OMC minutes), a lady (Oct. 1946, OMC) and a man intending to go to Japan (14 Sept. 1951, OMC) were rejected because of the lack of a Pentecostal experience though the latter was also rejected on account of his age. However, one man was accepted for Congo’s Kalembe field despite his limited ‘Pentecostal’ experience (OMC, 12 Oct. 1945); it is unclear whether this contributed to his failure to lead the team or whether it resulted in OMC’s subsequent instruction to him to return to the UK (OMC, 7 June, 1950), though poor financial judgements and a mental breakdown may have also been contributory factors.

**Education and Experience:**
A lady aged twenty with ‘only domestic service’ experience was rejected out of hand, and not even advised to receive Bible training (OMC, 10 May, 1946). Just one couple, desiring to go to China, were turned down on the grounds of lack of training or even reading up on China (OMC, 12 July, 1946). Other reasons included the unavailability of a visa for a single lady to India despite her previous experience there with another agency, not being British, and not belonging to an AOG (but Elim) church.

**Numbers:**
There were still regular applications throughout the 1950’s but not as many as during the post-war years until an appeal for the Congo in 1955. The OMC may have simply awaited the end of the Second World War before accepting any more candidates, though some had been accepted beforehand. It is possible that candidates were not available for mission service until after de-mobilisation. Even then there were limits on how many accepted, Nelson Parr wondering why OMC advertised, gained response and then turned good candidates down. Indeed, some became well known pastors and Bible college lecturers.

**The OMC’s management:**
The men on the OMC are remembered with affection, respect and little criticism. The applicants who did not make it to their hoped-for destination still remember these men in this way. The subsequent leaders of the OMC (1960’s onward) remembered that prayer was a key element in the decision making process, although the minutes do not reveal it as more than a perfunctory way to open and close meetings. The Minutes do not reveal how these Pentecostal leaders received their guidance from God; no Pentecostal distinctives of using charismatic gifts was noted. Very little evidence, even in letters that ‘assure’ candidates of the OMC’s prayers, seem to show any definite or noted spiritual direction was received or given by the OMC.

**The Candidates:**
Many rejected candidates must have felt puzzled at the lack of enthusiasm for their supposed calling and also puzzled at a lack of direction or advice from the OMC on how to prepare to meet such a calling. They themselves had had sometimes gradual or sometimes sudden ‘leadings’ from God on encountering people, or hearing sermons from their pastors. Only a few received any advice. Garfield Vale, once on the HRM Council and previous with CEM, suggested greater frankness with candidates when they were rejected (OMC, 9 Aug 1946).
Pentecostal Distinctives:
There is no reference made to ‘prophetic words’, ‘discernment’ or ‘words of knowledge and wisdom’. Considering these are leaders of a Pentecostal mission, indeed, with regard to Donald Gee - of the Pentecostal movement worldwide, there seems an altogether pragmatic, non-spiritual approach to choosing candidates.

The Evidence:
Is this lack of Pentecostal distinctive due to the way the minutes and even letters were prepared with a business-like efficiency and brevity? Leslie Woodford, the Mission Secretary who did most of the administration, was also known for his efficient office manner. The extant evidence, however, suggests that there is a large amount of records missing – particularly pertaining to the accepted candidates.

Pragmatism:
What seemed to dictate far more clearly than 'spiritual gifts' or even scripture verses, was finance. Pragmatism is a characteristic mark of Donald Gee’s leadership in Britain as ‘the apostle of balance’. Highly regarded overseas more than at home, he led the world Pentecostal movement from his editorials in. The spiritual charismata for him had logical and practical rather than mystical qualities and the OMC minutes reveal this pragmatic side to Pentecostal life.

The Mission would maintain its average of around 100 certificated missionaries needing support per year if the candidates had continued to average out at 30 accepted units per decade despite world or national crises; fall-out would appear to match that. However, the average is not often associated with reality. Most fall-out in the first decade under view was mostly due to significant national crises like China’s evacuation due to the Communist uprising.

It is only logical that such major world crises like the end of the war in 1945 should influence an upsurge of applicants. It is worthy of consideration whether the 1974’s oil crisis or the 1981’s UK war with Argentina or the 1989’s fall of the Iron Curtain or the 2001’s 9/11 tragedy followed by the Iraq war create new surges of interest in mission. The few senior mission leaders1 that I have asked would suggest that this is the case. There is however no evidence for this from AOG sources.2 In 2003, 95 people had accreditation with the British AOG, including 15 with Central Africa Missions (once CEM). There is no evidence yet available to show that the end of the Iron Curtain in 1989 or the Gulf War in 1991 produced more applicants than other years.

Investigations into other missions’ historic patterns would be ideal as comparisons but again the evidence is hard to find.3 Missions could learn when to tap into times when people are more likely to become candidates. Although the swing towards all generations being able to contribute to both long and short term missions has given the Evangelical world a whole new outlook on strategizing mission policies, there may still be some principles to consider when considering new recruitment tactics.

Overall in this study, the lack of evidence of any obvious Pentecostal distinctives has been disappointing. Only when one interviews people involved at the time do any such distinctives come to light. Issues regarding agencies and/or churches that send people on mission continue to need further discussion as to who has what role in the choice, sending and care of missionaries on and off their field of service. However the present policies of the British AOG have almost done a U-turn compared to the 1940s. Individual call, individually found resources and home-grown support bases are stressed now. In the 1940’s, the agency was expected to supervise all missionaries and hoped to incorporate the home churches’ support. One factor that remains similar is that not all churches are mission-minded. In fact, older people remember the ‘good old days’ of the 1940’s and 50’s as having far more missionary emphasis than today’s churches. Instead of sending individual families, ‘hands-on-mission’ by any willing in the churches is now stressed on a short-term basis; this may yet produce career missionaries but the latter is not emphasised as much. The needs are different. Globalisation has changed attitudes. Better or worse is not the issue; things are simply different.

---

1 Paul Alexander, Principal of Mattersey Hall; W. B. Hawkins, long term Mission Secretary AOG Missions UK; John Perry, OMF Personnel Officer.
3 Even a well-established mission like Overseas Missionary Fellowship has lost many of its records in moving offices over the years, according to their present personnel officer.

---

Gee’s definition of the gift of wisdom or knowledge remained in the natural comprehension of ‘knowledge’ unlike H. Horton’s view that God gave specially imparted and otherwise unknown information to provide insight.
Selected Bibliography:

Articles:
Gee, D., (ed.) *Pentecost, 1947 - 54* (quarterly)

"A Sane People, Free From Fads, Fancies and Extravagances":
Rhetoric and Reality of Collective Worship During the First Decade of the Pentecostal Movement in Britain

Timothy Walsh

Gordon Rupp, one of the twentieth centuries’ pre- eminent practitioners of the art of religious history, warned those gathered to mark the jubilee of the Baptist Historical Society in 1958 against the tendency toward what he termed, “Church history penny plain.” This approach was not characterised by subtlety or honesty, but was regrettably “all black and white, white-washing our own side, denigrating the other.” The Christian historian, according to his prognosis, should rather endeavour to exercise “an imaginative charity” and a “love of truth” which, among other things, would make itself apparent in an appreciation of “shades and twilights and fading colours, and changing perspective.” More recently, in an historical treatment of aspects of the Christian spiritual tradition, Rowan Williams acknowledged the “intractable strangeness” that has accompanied the ground of much belief. The presence of “oddity and ambivalence” is apparent across a variety of historical situations, and at times it was such that most effectively challenged the “fixed assumptions of religiosity.”

Occurrences in All Saints’ parish, Monkwearmouth, Sunderland, during the autumn of 1907 were both unusual in character and controversial in outcome. Much of what occurred under the ministrations of Thomas Ball Barratt and the Rev. Alexander A. Boddy could be described as possessing an ‘intractable strangeness,’ a fact which was attested, not least, by the range and scope of attention generated in the primary medium of the day, local and national press. Barratt himself commented on the “sweet epithets” to which both he, and the phenomena that occurred under his

---

4Thomas Ball Barratt, *When the Fire Fell and, An Outline of My Life* (Oslo: Alfons,
Nonconformists in their heyday, c. 1850-1950


6 "Ine Hansen,

3 Horton Davies,

4 John Ervine,

Hansen & Sonner, 1927), 155.


On this, see Kenneth Young, Chapel: The Joyous Days and Prayerful Nights of the Nonconformists in their heyday, c. 1850-1950 (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 18, 51-53; W. K. Lowther Clarke, “Preface” to Lowther Clarke, ed., Facing the Facts, or An

influence, were subjected. Unusual manifestations and expressions of religious exuberance continued beyond this initial mission, and its principal protagonists did not seek to deny or minimise these elements which were not unprecedented or unique to this fledgling movement. Rather they sought to regulate where possible, differentiate between genuine and spurious when necessary, and ultimately to inculcate the ideal of “a sane people, free from fads, fancies and extravagances.” It is toward an appreciation of salient aspects of this process in the period up to the First World War that this paper is directed.

‘Colourful’ Christianity in Britain

It has been observed of British Pentecostalism’s trans-Atlantic counterpart, that “the Holy Ghost revival epitomized the uninhibited expression of raw religious emotion.” Yet Wacker goes on to make the point that early Pentecostals held no monopoly in matters of spiritual intensity. T. H. Huxley had derided the Salvation Army’s charismatic emphases as “corybantic Christianity.” A more sympathetic categorisation described them as sounding “the Elizabethan note in religion.” What was, according to Davies, the most successful form of religious primitivism in nineteenth-century Britain, was described as having broken through “the cords of reserve and decorum in a riot of joyous righteousness.” Central to this outpouring of religious exuberance was the conviction that “the damned could only be drawn from hot sin by hot religion.” This tendency was by no means limited, however, to what McLeod has described as “the most colourful of the many new religious denominations produced by nineteenth-century Britain,” as Victorian Nonconformist religion was generally a more ‘colourful’ affair than is popularly supposed. Charles

Booth, in his magisterial survey of patterns of worship at the turn of the twentieth-century, observed, “The general movement of taste and habit in religion, as well as in life generally, has been in the direction of greater brightness.”

Contributors to the Daily Telegraph religious survey of 1904 had complained of “flitting scenes of spiritual phantasmagoria,” and what were described as “the outbursts of Mr. Evan Roberts and the Welsh revivals” came to prominent notoriety. This latter phenomenon, characteristically “visionary and ecstatic” was described by one commentator as having “deteriorated into an orgy of singing and praying, like a pagan feast.” Even a more reverential observer allowed that “extravagances of excitement” had “spasmodically broken out,” and acknowledged that “distressing features” had come to prominence during the Revival. Alexander Boddy, by virtue of his involvement in what Bebbington has termed, the Holiness “separatist fringe,” was wholly in sympathy with an avowed aim of the Pentecostal League of Prayer: “revival in the churches.” This found him therefore inhabiting, in the first


2 From CREDENTI NIHIL DIFFICILE, Do We Believe?: A Record of a Great Correspondence in 'The Daily Telegraph,' October, November, December 1904 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), 146.

3 From Louis Hervey D’Egville, of 19 Baker Street, London, Do We Believe?, 259.


6 David Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1790s to the 1980s (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1992), 178.

7 Mary Howard Hooker, Adventures of an Agnostic: Life and Letters of Richard Reader Harris (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1959), 111. The Vicarage of All Saints, Monkwearmouth, was publicised in the organisation’s monthly periodical as hosting a local ‘Centre’ meeting of the Pentecostal League on the last Thursday of each month from early 1901; “Pentecostal League Centre Meetings,” Tongues of Fire, February 1901, 11. An estimation of the level of Boddy’s involvement, as well as the esteem in which he was held, is seen in that he was invited to address the League’s annual conference which was held at Speke Hall, Battersea on 3 May, 1905; “The Annual Meetings,” Tongues of Fire, June 1905, 3.
years of the century, a religious nexus which heralded the intensification of “fervour,” and “spiritual hunger and thirst,” as vivid and welcome indication of the fact that Britain was “on the threshold of a religious revolution.” Barratt had himself written to Evan Roberts at the beginning of 1904 claiming “I have often experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in my work as a minister, and now as leader of the Christiania City Mission...I want a Fuller Baptism of fire.” It was the apparent fulfilment of this desire that caused Boddy to later write in 1907:

My four days in Christiania cannot be forgotten. I stood with Evan Roberts at the Tønypandy meetings, but never have I witnessed such scenes as in Norway, and soon I believe they will be witnessed in England.

‘Scenes’ were indeed witnessed from the moment Barratt arrived at his first ‘waiting-meeting’ at All Saints’ on 31 August, 1907. The following night three individuals “entered right in and went through into Pentecost with the signs following.” To this Boddy added that “to encourage others God allowed them to be dealt with very tenderly.” Yet it would transpire that not all of the spiritual transactions conducted in Sunderland would prove as apparently innocuous and inoffensive as these initial instances. Individual initiations, personal encounters and corporate expressions of Pentecostal ‘worship’ would involve intensity and exuberance that would prove perturbing as well as exhilarating even to some of those most involved.

Emotional Outbursts and Pentecostal Paroxysms in Sunderland
It is the case that it is from external sources that some of the most detailed and descriptive accounts of these initial Pentecostal meetings in Sunderland are to be obtained. The numerous reports of local and national press offer revealing insights into the tone and tenor of the first sizeable Pentecostal gatherings to be held on British soil. It was, for instance, one such report that provided the only account of the manner in which Boddy and Barratt, from the platform of All Saints’ parish hall, acknowledged and addressed Reader Harris’ denunciation of what was occurring. The reporter from the Sunderland Echo dealt in a relatively objective, if bemused fashion, with apparently contradictory understandings relating to

the nature of authentic ‘Pentecostal’ Christianity. Other publications provided details of, and insights into the proceedings at All Saints’ which would in time prove formative in the emergence of the ‘orthopraxy’ and ‘orthopathy’ of British Pentecostalism.

One of the earliest reports announced that “strange scenes are witnessed daily and nightly now at religious revival services being held at Monkwearmouth, Sunderland.” It was also noted that “those who attend the meetings are mostly women, and the singing of revival hymns is a great feature of the gatherings.” It was further remarked that the singing was interspersed with “fervid prayers and brief appealing addresses.” On the following day it was announced by the Morning Leader that a “certain happy portion” of the population of Monkwearmouth was to be found “in the throes of a joyful and inspired excitement, for strange things in the name of religion are happening in its midst.”

The Daily Chronicle pronounced it “not an ordinary revival,” but remarked that it was being accompanied “by some of the more commonplace phases of - dare I say! - hysteria which made such a strange figure of Evan Roberts in Wales.” The reporter was, in this instance, succinct in his account: “To reduce some of the phenomena with which I am about to deal to their lowest common denominator: there have been groanings and grovellings, visions and tears, laughter and visions.” In the estimation of the Morning Dispatch, an “orgy of prayer” was the only term adequate to encompass the “extraordinary scenes” that were witnessed in the meeting that was conducted after the regular evening service. According to this descriptive dispatch:

Women sobbed convulsively, or cried aloud till their hysterical weepings mingled with the agonised moanings of the men...The eeriness was soon forthcoming. Above all the sobs, sighs, groans and table-thumping arose the silvery notes of a weird chant which resembled nothing so much as the mourning chants with which old-fashioned Irish people still lament their dead. Upon the people the

---

1"Speaking in Tongues - Rival Pentecostals," Sunderland Echo, 2 October 1907.
4"Northern Revival Fervour,” Morning Leader, 3 October 1907.
effect was electrical. It seemed to drive them into every kind of extreme.1

It is interesting to note that in emerging Pentecostal parlance, the ‘weird chant’ transmogrified into the eminently more reverential ‘Heavenly Anthem.’ What would become a feature of Pentecostal gatherings was presented, somewhat differently, as characterised by “wonderful tones, prolonged cadences,” and the “sweet bell-like tones” of those “adoring the Lamb” in their newly acquired heavenly language.2 It would appear that on this occasion the general exuberance was surpassed by a university student from Wales “who had been more than usually noisy.” His spiritual perturbations were recounted with a realism that would not have been found in any Pentecostal publication:

The Welshman shrieked. He yelled out ‘Glory’ in long protracted yells, until the neighbours must have turned in their beds and wondered what kind of wrack could be extracting such agony. He writhed like an animal in pain, but nothing came of his ravings.3

Lloyd’s Weekly expressed surprise that revival services held in a building consecrated by the Bishop of Durham were “being marked by extraordinary scenes” during which “the worshippers, especially the women, throw themselves to the floor in hysterical convulsions, and give way alternately to laughter and cheers.” It was observed that the language spoken “is certainly not English, and in some cases it sounds more like farmyard imitations than anything human.” The correspondent seemed further astonished by the fact that the vicar’s wife “interprets passages from it as messages from God,” and furthermore that the clergyman hosting these unusual proceedings was a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society.4

Another reporter attested to having heard “short hysterical laughs” while men groaned aloud amid a “rush of prayer.” This erupted into a general outburst of “that awful laughter that makes one’s very soul tremble.” He confessed himself relieved when “the pastor relieved the tension by giving

1Revival Scenes: Weird Chants and Frenzied Appeals,” The Morning Dispatch, 7 October 1907.
2Boddy, “Tongues in Sunderland.”
3Revival Scenes: Weird Chants and Frenzied Appeals,” The Morning Dispatch, 7 October 1907.
4Revival Scenes: Incoherent Ravings Interpreted as Heavenly Messages,” Lloyd’s Weekly, 6 October 1907.

out a hymn,” although when taken up this gradually became “a kind of extraordinary laughing hymn.” He observed Barratt to groan “as if wrestling with some well-nigh overpowering force,” while Boddy buried his face in a large handkerchief. He appears to have been somewhat reassured when Boddy took over on the platform:

Mr. Boddy was more composed; he admonished the people against doubt and unbelief in a few quiet, unemotional words. He warned them that these Pentecostal manifestations foreboded the end of the present order - the dawn of the Second Coming.1

“Good Under the Rubbish”: Uses and Utilisation of Such Reports

It must be pointed out that neither Boddy nor Barratt were entirely averse to the attention which these initial Pentecostal meetings attracted. Barratt recorded in his diary on 10 October that “the papers are alive with the Movement all over England.” He claimed to have received a letter from a proprietor of a ‘Palace of Amusements’ who had been converted while reading these accounts in the daily newspapers.2 According to Gee, Boddy had on his return from Norway, sought to utilise the press as a means for the dissemination of the Pentecostal message.3 It was certainly attested that he welcomed correspondents and reporters “in the friendliest way”4 while he sought to offer a rationale for the phenomena they were witnessing during the mission then underway. He himself later recounted that while these reports were “often grotesque,” they undoubtedly “raised deep interest.” It was on their account that many “travelled long distances to meet God and to be helped by His servants,” before returning home “to spread the Flame.”5

It would not be accurate to suggest, however, that such vivid and widespread reportage was not without its problematic aspects. Boddy does not appear to have entertained fundamental objections to the publicised accounts themselves, even if unflattering on occasion, but his concerns lay rather in the unwelcome attentions they attracted. In addition to genuine ‘seekers,’ the prospect of religious euphoria also appealed to “cranks and mischief-makers” who would cause him “much pain and anxiety.” He stated afterwards that in addition to those who came “to oppose and cause

1“An Israelite’s Passion,” Daily Chronicle, 7 October 1907.
2Barratt, When the Fire Fell, 152.
3Donald Gee, The Pentecostal Movement: A Short History and an Interpretation for British Readers (London: Victory Press, 1941), 22.
4Northern Revival Fervour,” Morning Leader, 3 October 1907.
It is certainly the case that when he came to publicise the first Sunderland Convention some six months later in the first issue of Confidence magazine, considerable thought had been given to the restriction of the potential for ‘trials of faith’ whether emanating from those who would deliberately oppose or the unsettling influence of ‘strange spirits.’ It would appear that Boddie was keen to not only avoid what had been denounced by his former associates as “extravagant proceedings and deplorable exhibitions,” but to promote and foster a sense of propriety and decorum at what would be Britain’s largest Pentecostal gathering to date. In addition to delegates being required to accede to an undertaking to “accept the ruling of the Chairman,” the pragmatic and prescriptive guidelines advanced are worthy of consideration:

It is suggested that everyone make a point of being very punctual, and, if possible, to have a quiet for prayer before the meeting, and that there be as little talking as possible in the room before the meetings...At to choruses, etc., it is suggested that, as far as possible, they should be left to the Leader to commence or control, and friends are asked to pray (silently) that he may be led aright. Confusion is not always edifying, though sometimes the Holy Spirit works so mightily that there is a divine flood which rises above the barriers.

To this it was added that the Chairman’s ruling was to be “promptly and willingly obeyed in cases of difficulty.” He hoped that should such moments occur there would be “much earnest prayer (in silence) that God may guide aright and get glory through all.” It would appear that as Chairman, Boddie intended to avoid the aforementioned ‘orgies of prayer,’ “wild scenes,” and unseemly intrusions into, and interruptions of, the sermon or address from the platform. He too shared a distaste and distrust of “unwarranted extremes,” “extravagant proceedings,” and “extravagances and worse,” but unlike Harris, he never doubted that there was “good under the rubbish.”

Knox, in his landmark study of religious enthusiasm, identified ‘ecstasy’ as one of its concomitants. This he regarded as encompassing a “mass of abnormal phenomena” which he termed “the by-products...of ‘convincement.’” He observed that John Wesley had “set an enormous value on those sensible consolations in which it seems his followers abounded.” Contemplating the Methodist paroxysms of the “energumens” who lay on the floor begging for mercy, Wesley rejoiced to have been dealt a-political weapon, “a stick to beat the Deists with.” Such ‘sensible consolations’ also served to confirm the faith of his own followers, constituting a “spectacle of spiritual conflict and spiritual victory externalized, translated into terms of flesh and blood.” In defence of empirical expressions of religious fervour in the context of the nineteenth-century North American camp meeting, it was elsewhere stated:

Something of an extraordinary nature was necessary to arrest the attention of a wicked and sceptical people, who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a dream...(it) brought numbers beyond calculation under the influence of experimental religion and practical piety.

In similar vein, Boddie attested that the ‘strange things’ that were being witnessed were, in their truer manifestations, the embodiment of a very direct and inescapable divine challenge. McLeod has observed that what he terms “the ultra-Evangelical view of average human nature,” seeks to promote a clearly marked hiatus in the lives of individuals under divine influence. Authentic visible attestations of the fact that, as Boddie informed a newspaper reporter, “the Spirit comes in strange ways,” were perceived to constitute vivid evidence of genuine encounter and transformation in the lives of participants. It was Boddie’s estimation that

1 Harris, “The Gift of Tongues,” Tongues of Fire, November 1907, 1-2.
3 Knox, Enthusiasm, 537, 588.
4 G. W. Henry, Shouting: Genuine and Spurious (Chicago: Metropolitan Church Association, 1903), 287.
5 McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 71.
6 "Northern Revival Fervour: Extraordinary Scenes at the Meetings," The Morning Leader, 3 October 1907.
such occurrences would provoke fundamental questions: “Am I a true child of God? Am I all my Heavenly Father wishes me to be, and all He can and will make me if I yield to Him? Have I really received the Holy Spirit?”

Control Exercised in the form of the ‘Visible Leader’

It was requisite if such an outcome were to be achieved to enforce an avoidance, and if necessary, outright suppression of the wayward, the indulgent, and the unnecessarily bizarre. To this end Boddy reported after the event that although “the Lord was our Leader” at the first Whitsun tide Convention, “there was in all gatherings also a visible leader.” Referring, in the third person, to the role he had played, he stated that although “he sought not to be in evidence, he was just ready if needed.” By way of explication he added that “the Lord has always had overseers, whom He uses to guide under His control, that all things may be done becomingly and in order.” He held that there were liable to be “restive spirits in every large gathering,” as well as those “only content if they dominate,” but it would appear that the warnings and injunctions issued in advance had proven effective. In a comment which indicated perceived progress in this matter, the ‘Leader’ of the event concluded: “We are learning...to detect the flesh in some extravagances, in some messages, in some manifestations, but to go forward fearlessly and to exalt Jesus far above all.”

A Continental visitor to the Sunderland Convention remarked that the times of prayer had “proved very powerful,” not “stiff in any way,” nor “merely mechanical.” Such were the contrary tendencies, potentially even more unpalatable to Pentecostal sensibilities, to which collective worship could succumb. An insight is afforded into the directive approach adopted by Boddy as he sought to regulate, without excessively constraining, the spontaneity held to accompanying genuine inspiration. A notice was placed at the front of the platform which sought to restrict, without offending or devaluing “the long-praying folk” who were “nearly always at such meetings.” It read: “Friends who are praying at a considerable length will not, we trust, take it unkindly if we sing quietly some helpful chorus. This may apply also to prayers which cannot be heard and joined in by the audience.” The German commentator concluded that this “a very good example” which was “worthy of imitation.”

Whatever difficulties attended the organisation and conduct of the Sunderland Convention appear to have been dwarfed, certainly in the perceptions of key protagonists, to the challenge of staging such a similar gathering in Wales. In a ‘Special Supplement’ to Confidence which appeared in the spring of 1909, T. M. Jeffreys stated: “We expected the Welsh Conference to be a difficult one. Our expectations have been fully realized.” In an interesting reflection on the perceived legacy of the Revival of 1904-5, it was regretted that although “hundreds” had been “going on in the divine life...they have had no shepherds.” While “mighty baptisms in the Holy Spirit” had been experienced in “little cottage gatherings,” the paucity of effective leadership had had a deleterious effect: “Deluding spirits have crept in; the gifts and manifestations have been exalted...and sad havoc has ‘the wolf’ wrought among the little bands.”

These concerns mirror those expressed by the Yorkshire Baptist Association a quarter of a century previously. They had lamented the fact that too many “the young and un instructed” were to be found indulging in “religious excitement, or excitement under the name of religion” when they ought rather to have been “trained in our churches and nurtured by church life.” Jeffreys’ critique ventured beyond the structural and highlighted an undue exaltation of ‘gifts and manifestations’ among the Welsh ‘bands.’ Appreciations in advance of the Conference were also attributed to the assessment that “the Welsh character lacks restraint.” Without making explicit reference to specific works of psychology of religion, Britain’s first generation of Pentecostal leaders intimated an awareness of, and sympathy with, contemporary thinking in this field of academic endeavour. In his celebrated Gifford Lectures delivered in Edinburgh in 1901-2, William James had remarked on “how native the sense of God’s presence must be to certain minds.” Jeffreys identified the Welsh character as exhibiting a particular “sensitiveness to all psychic influence.” In his estimation it was not immediately apparent to this Celtic race that “the wonderful emotions liberated in the soul by the Spirit of God, must needs also be controlled by the same Spirit, and not indulged in

---

Jeffreys, “The Cardiff Conference,” 1. An application of the concept of ‘The Crowd,’ then current in the field of social psychology, had been made to the study of religious revival. The Celtic ‘crowd’ had been identified as particularly prone to “sympathetic then current in the field of social psychology, had been made to the study of religious revival. The Celtic ‘crowd’ had been identified as particularly prone to “sympathetic revivals.”

The positive aspects of this disposition resulted in the observation that when “150 souls” met in the Long Room of the Park Hotel, Cardiff, during the spring of 1909, “surely never did hostelry ring with such glad and sanctified song as filled the building.” Yet such propensities also necessitated Jeffreys, “right at the very commencement, to lovingly but firmly denounce the ecstasies of the flesh which some were indulging in, and also to silence one or two brothers, who were giving vent to vehement ejaculations of Tongues, manifestly not of God.” It was reported that after a sharp and protracted advocacy of ‘decency and order’ according to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verses 27-28, peace prevailed and “a season of solemn warnings...against all extravagance, strange teaching and insidious sins.” Wigglesworth’s appearance on the platform “fresh from victories won at Bradford,” was the occasion of a general degeneration of the tenor of proceedings. Jeffreys regarded this part of the event as having ended in “quite an unnecessary outburst of riotous emotion and extravagance, such as, if encouraged, must surely hinder the pure and blessed workings of the Holy Spirit.” In a statement which affords insights into not only the tone of the Cardiff Conference, but also the acceptable norms of ‘worship’ which the leaders of the movement were seeking to engender, Jeffreys concluded:

Welshmen do not need any inciting to shout, they are only too ready to do this. Praise should be free and unstinted. Hallelujahs must not be quenched, but there is no necessity to work up a shouting competition to an extent that the cries become screams and yells. This may seem hard, but God must not be dishonoured...and while under the power of the Holy Ghost, it is to be expected that newly liberated emotions will find free vent, yet praise should always be...rendered as if in the very presence of a Holy, Holy God.

Jeffreys was in no sense a merely “wistful evangelical” or “chronicler of the supernatural” besotted with the phenomenon that had been the Welsh Revival. He, on the contrary, concurred with progressive opinion which held that “intense emotion” could indeed be destructive of “the higher life,” and that this was “particularly true of the feelings aroused by a highly vivid and unrestrained religious imagination.” For the religious enthusiast “the very outrageousness of his conduct is, in a sense, the guarantee of its supernatural inspiration.” Britain’s first Pentecostals, as early twentieth century incarnations of a “fugal melody that runs through the centuries,” were keen to promote a genuine, as opposed to a spurious,
'outrageousness.' Factors such as "human influence," "Satanic counterfeit," "excesses" of "fleshy" or "unbiblical" indulgence would only serve to despoil the "intractable strangeness" of recrudescent Pentecost of its capacity to challenge the "fixed assumptions of religiosity."[2]

Further Correctives Employed in the Pursuit of 'Sanity' and "Deportment"

It is evident that during the formative years of Pentecostal expression in Britain, a primary concern of its leaders was the inculcation of a sense of spiritual sobriety while sustaining what Poloma has described as "the irradiation of a movement constantly in need of the refreshing waters of religious experience."[3] In addition to restraint and order the emollient repeatedly applied was the 'Word of God': it was by means of "the instrumentality of His Word" that the "life of Christ" was "injected" or "engrafted" into the individual.[4] Cecil Polhill, in his editorial capacity, reprinted a salutary article from the American periodical The Way of Faith, for the benefit of the predominantly British readership of Flames of Fire. According to Frank Bartleman, it was a departure from the "all sufficiency of the Word of God" that resulted in the fanaticism, extremism, and "pretended inspiration of the false prophets" associated with the radical elements of the European Reformation.[5] In the aftermath of a visit to several 'Centres' during 1910, British Pentecostals were, in contrast, observed to "love their Bibles," a trait which Bartleman wished was more widely exhibited. If in the estimation of this "Azusa pioneer,"[6] those he had encountered tended "a little to the conservative extreme," this was deemed to have had a stabilizing effect, "the work" being "kept very steadily here on the whole." If in the estimation of this "Azusa pioneer,"[6] those he had encountered tended "a little to the conservative extreme," this was deemed to have furnished a somewhat delighted contrast to some of the experiences elsewhere. The New Testament 'Centres' were, in contrast, observed to "love their Bibles," a trait which Bartleman wished was more widely exhibited.

While Boddy made the observation in 1910 that "extravagance and excrescences are dying down, leaving the British Pentecostal people standing steadfast and immovable,"[6] Polhill was eager to report that the gifts of the Spirit had been "beautifully in evidence" at the London Conference held early in 1912. These had included messages in tongues and interpretations, and were delivered "without a trace of disorder or trembling dangers." In his estimation "the newly baptised one" should not scorn "old, methodical, well-learned habits of quiet prayer and diligent Bible study." Otherwise there remained the potent danger that those elated by "wonders" and "new revelations" could find themselves enticed by the subtle allurements of "an unbalanced and fanatical live."[6] The biblical injunction: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," (Is. 30:15) was held to be nothing less than the enunciation of "a vital law." Truly "devout saints" should neither "harass themselves nor God by importunate cries to Him." Simple obedience to the plain injunctions of Scripture would furnish the attainment of inner spiritual unification and enable the individual to "walk unfalteringly in God's appointed way."[7]

Reflecting a longstanding and cherished disposition within the evangelical tradition, Polhill himself stated that "men cannot do despite to the written Word of God with impunity." For those who embarked on such a course, "a dangerous and slippery path is entered upon, fraught with subtle and terrible dangers." In his estimation "the newly baptised one" should not scorn "old, methodical, well-learned habits of quiet prayer and diligent Bible study." Otherwise there remained the potent danger that those elated by "wonders" and "new revelations" could find themselves enticed by the subtle allurements of "an unbalanced and fanatical live."[6] The biblical injunction: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," (Is. 30:15) was held to be nothing less than the enunciation of "a vital law." Truly "devout saints" should neither "harass themselves nor God by importunate cries to Him." Simple obedience to the plain injunctions of Scripture would furnish the attainment of inner spiritual unification and enable the individual to "walk unfalteringly in God's appointed way."[7]
was liberty for the blessed Holy Spirit.¹

It would appear that the custodians of the early years of Pentecostal experience in Britain perceived themselves to have attained to a degree of success in the management of contradictory impulses. A movement whose ‘worship’ was among those characterised by a demand for “first-hand experience,” a passion for “simplicity and sincerity of expression,” and an over-arching “vigor od spiritual realism,”² was attaining an amalgam described by Polhill as “a quietness combined with power.”³ This would never become a form of Quietism such as is associated with Madame Guyon for whom the very advent of religion consisted in an adherence to God by naked faith, not only disregarding ‘consolations’ but even welcoming an absence of them.⁴ Yet participants were being “brought face-to-face with the inwardness of Pentecost” and were thereby realising that it was “something more than ‘Tongues’ and delightful sensations for the soul.”⁵ The notion that ‘Pentecost’ consisted of “ecstasy first and ecstasy last with ecstasy in between” had been repeatedly challenged, and in its place an alternative paradigm for collective expression was asserted: “Praise and joy in the Holy Ghost from the beginning to the end, but wholesome strong meet of the Word generously sandwiched between.”⁶

Concerted efforts were made that conventions would not be “theatres” for the exhibition of “man’s acts or powers,” but rather “true and veritable workshops of the power and might and effectiveness of the glorious abiding Spirit of the living God.”⁷ Mr. E. Titterington, who became “Hon. Principal” of the Men’s Missionary Training Home in 1915,⁸ warned against the “common mistake” that the gifts of the Spirit were necessarily of an “ecstatic or emotional nature,” or were to be exercised “in some abnormal way.” If the “soul” were to “gain the ascendency,” the mind could then “inject itself into the manifestation,” an eventuality which was arose “purely from the uncrucified self life.”¹¹

Titterington exercised his didactic capacity beyond the confines of the Missionary Training Home, and brought before the Pentecostal readership a series of expository articles based on a chapter, “Oral Preaching of the Apostles” from Westcott’s Introduction to the Study of the Gospels. His central aim was to emphasise “the need and value” of “continuous vocal preaching.”¹² It was by means of such “feeding with meat” that the essentials of Christian faith and living “would become indelibly impressed upon mind and conscience,” and a “gathering out” of Pentecostal believers could be affected “forming them into ever expanding and increasingly propagative churches.”¹³

Among Britain’s Pentecostals who came under the influence of Sunderland, and what might be deemed the Boddy/Polhill axis, none were to be under the illusion that because they had had a Pentecostal experience, all their ‘inspirations’ were necessarily divine in origin. They were rather to function “soberly” and to strive to be “a sane people, free from fads, fancies and extravagances.”¹⁴ Indeed the opinion of leaders remained sober, it being adjudged that “the rankest fanaticism runs closely along the line of the deepest spirituality.” Their disposition could be said to have embodied the abiding plea: “Oh, for a baptism of revival wisdom as well as revival fire.”¹⁵

Conclusion
In his survey of a century of Pentecostal worship, Hudson has observed that “if the Welsh Revival and its aftermath would mark future Pentecostalism in its tendency to emotionalism, the Sunderland Conventions would bring an order and sense of purpose to Pentecostalism that the denominations would bear right up to the present day.”¹⁶ Prominent Edwardian Pentecostals would have concurred emphatically with the sentiment that “the fruits of religion,” are “like all human


116
products, liable to corruption by excess.” Considerable and protracted efforts were made in by the first cadre of leaders to preserve the spiritual expression over which they exerted influence, from degeneration into excessive emotionalism or wayward indulgence. They sought, in their own terms, to enforce the dictum that while “certain revival phenomena” may be the “concomitants” of genuine religious experience, they “ought never to be mistaken for it.” On the contrary, there is abundant evidence that they remained animated by the persuasion that such phenomena deserve to be “thoroughly sifted by criticism.”

Kierkegaard’s description of glossolalia as “the very peak of insanity” is elucidated in the more recent observation that the phenomenon can be understood as embodying a “counter-cultural protest against the rationalistic and materialistic language of late Western Christendom.” Not merely the gift of ‘tongues’ but the whole apparatus of emerging Pentecostal spirituality tended toward both a renunciation of the values and standards of a fallen cosmos, and an indictment of what was perceived to be the feeble, and at times wanton, condition of an ineffectual Church. Barratt observed that Christendom may have possessed “grandeur, worldly influence, temporal power, fine culture, great educational facilities,” but the ineluctable question remained: “Where is the power that made the preaching of the Cross of Jesus in the days of the apostles shake the world?” Pentecostal adherents were exhorted to be “wisely mad,” the embodiment of a salutary spiritual scandal in the face of “a dearth and a want of spiritual power” that was deemed “simply astounding.”

Boddy and other prominent leaders during this first decade of the movement sought neither to avoid “uncritical exuberance,” or to diminish or deny the “eccentricities and aberrations of many of the radicals.” To attempt an idealised or sanitised historical treatment would not be true to

1 James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, 339.
2 Davenport, Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, 244.
6 This injunction was issued by a Rev. William Reid at the annual convention held at Bradford’s Bowland Street Mission. See S. Wigglesworth, “The Bradford Convention,” Confidence, April-June 1918, 22.
7 Barratt, In the Days of the Latter Rain, 153.
Book Reviews


This book takes as its subject matter something of a ‘minor’ theological industry that has taken place for more than a decade within Pentecostal scholastic circles. Its author sets out to both summarize and assess these developments while venturing possibilities for further progress within this sphere of endeavour. The result is a work which will be of value, not merely to those interested in eschatology and its related concerns, but to any keen to keep abreast of some of the most creative and forward-looking aspects of contemporary Pentecostal theology.

At the outset, Althouse, employing what he describes as a “descriptive-critical methodology,” undertakes an historical survey of Pentecostal eschatology. This traces the emergence and development of the ‘Latter Rain,’ a distinctively Pentecostal concept, which in a curious admixture of literal and metaphorical interpretations, related the resurgence of charismatic gifts to meteorological patterns identifiable in Palestine. As the ‘latter rains’ replenished the earth after a season of drought and facilitated the harvesting of arable crops, Pentecostals regarded themselves as the beneficiaries, even the embodiment, of a spiritual deluge that would empower the Christian Church to reap one last harvest before the Parousia. The day of Pentecost had again “fully come” (Acts 2:1), and as it had inaugurated the apostolic age, it would in like manner usher in the culmination of the present dispensation. While such impending imminence undoubtedly conveyed a heightened sense of impetus to adherents, as well as according the emerging movement a unique role in providential dealings, such a disposition could not be sustained throughout succeeding decades. Althouse traces the vicissitudes undergone by the ‘Latter Rain,’ highlighting the contributions of significant teachers and expositors, and summarizes eschatological conceptions at the end of a century of foment.

It is in the second section that Althouse begins the construction of what he describes as a “transformational eschatology,” and a “Pentecostal ethic more open to history and creation.” This consists of what he terms a “revisioning” of received eschatology, and to this end the works of four prominent theologians, who operate in varying ways within a Pentecostal purview, are brought to bear. Steven J. Land’s writings on Pentecostal spirituality, Eldin Villafane’s on social ethics, Miroslav Volf’s ‘theology of work and embrace,’ and Frank Macchia’s ‘eschatological inbreaking of the Spirit,’ are presented in their essential points. However this is not merely done in isolation, but in anticipation of an exchange or ‘dialogue’ between their respective emphases and those of Tubingen’s Jurgen Moltmann, whose prolific output has drawn eschatology toward the forefront of theological discourse in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Althouse became aware of Moltmann’s writings while engaged in graduate studies, and found them conducive to his concerns for social justice. He is not alone in this conviction, and by no means the first to employ these writings to this end (see for instance Jurgen Moltmann, “A Response to My Dialogue Partners” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 4 (April 1994): 59-70). The third section begins by establishing the centrality of eschatology to Moltmann’s work, before outlining its ‘transformationist’ nature. Central to this is the advocacy of a proleptic participation in the future kingdom by means of social and political action in the present domain. Inherent in this approach is the rejection of what Moltmann terms “escapades into religious dream worlds,” and amongst those he has identified the doctrine of the ‘Rapture’ as embodying the tendency toward spiritual flight from the world.

The final chapter seeks to bind the strands of these various concerns into an intelligible and constructive whole, and undertake the stated task of ‘revisioning.’ It must be stated that within the boundaries he has set himself, Althouse succeeds in achieving this to a considerable degree. What is in this final section unveiled in terms of, among other things, the cosmic and transformative aspects of eschatology, as well as its political significance, starkly illustrates the distance which has been travelled by the guardians of Pentecostal orthodoxy in the course of a century. Yet it must be born in mind that Althouse’s deliberate act of ‘revisioning’ at times involves a degree of creative and/or speculative thinking, and the practicalities of the enterprise remain uncertain from a number of perspectives.

For instance, he acknowledges that Land “does not articulate a political theology as such,” but ventures that his utilisation of Moltmann’s eschatology “suggests that he could easily construct one.” Land’s reaction to this “revisionist and dialogical” approach remains in the realm of conjecture, but it is by no means certain from his writings that his abiding preoccupations would inspire the construction of such a theology. Furthermore, a formidable challenge receives a sole mention in the acknowledgement that though Moltmann’s ideas may appeal to a small coterie of academic theologians, it is “questionable” that they “would find
resonance with the general Pentecostal constituency.” While a select band of forward-thinkers may be keen to release Pentecostalism from its fundamentalist moorings, as Althouse himself repeatedly depicts the task he envisages, he admits that the very suggestion is likely to provoke horror in the mind of what he terms, “the Pentecostal-in-the pew.” Nothing by way of solution or resolution is offered to the already uneasy relationship which has been observed between popular Pentecostalism, and what Hollenweger terms, its ‘critical’ scholarly tradition.

This notwithstanding, Althouse’s appropriation of aspects of the works of these figures represents a commendable attempt at a comprehensive collation of the ‘dialogue’ that had been conducted in recent years by some of Pentecostalism’s most progressive thinkers. The effect of this ambitious and persuasively argued work is to forcibly confront the reader with significant aspects of the trajectory travelled by this singular religious movement since its inception. Spirit of the Last Days exudes an array of qualities - concern for spiritual heritage, recognition of the imperative of social engagement, an aptitude for theological rigour of undeniable calibre, and an essentially catholic disposition - qualities which the movement itself could only profitably appropriate and seek to embody as its journey takes it into a new century.

Timothy Walsh


As the title indicates, the book is concerned with practical theology, especially with issues that arise within a Charismatic/Pentecostal environment and approaches its topic by applying empirical research methods. This makes it unique. The book is divided into two sections: in part one, the methodology is explained and in part two, it is applied to several issues related to a “charismatic church life”.

Part One:
In his first chapter, Cartledge discusses the relation between practical theology, social science, and Charismatic spirituality as well as the two major action-reflection models offered today. However, he opts for a move from action-reflection to dialectics, dialectics in the Spirit in particular. The guiding questions of such a dialectic are:
1. What is the Holy Spirit doing in this context?
2. How does this activity relate to the work of the Spirit revealed in Scripture?
3. What is the Spirit saying to the church?

In his next chapter, Cartledge discusses truth and epistemology by first introducing the reader to the various theories of truth and the various theories regarding a Pentecostal epistemology. Here he draws mainly on Cheryl Johns’ model of “Yada”, Joel Shuman’s cultural-linguistic approach and Amos Yong’s “carry-over of value” approach. Cartledge concludes that the testimony to the truth is the integrating centre of a Charismatic/Pentecostal epistemology since the testimony integrates all aspects of knowing (perception, memory, consciousness, reason) and underlines that we do not know God in isolation but rather as part of a worshipping community (p. 53).

Having laid the more theoretical foundations for his work, Cartledge outlines the empirical research method. Here he presents the various qualitative (participant observation, interviews, focus group interviews, life history, oral history, documentary analysis) and quantitative (surveys, experiments, data mining, structured observation and interviews) techniques. This chapter is especially helpful to understand the process and methodology chosen in the second part of the book. And in addition he introduces the Church that served as a case study. Thus, from pp. 87 – 102 we are introduced to the particular worshipping community that provides, so to speak, the concrete reality for his study.

Part Two:
This section is in one sense difficult to be reviewed since each chapter would deserve our full appreciation and discussion.

1. Worship as a performance of Spirituality: The method chosen was participant observation. Cartledge analyses the performed spirituality (symbols and narrative) and the role of the preacher in order to make some suggestions for a renewed theological praxis. The value of this study is more in its potential to enable any pastor/church to apply the method to her/his own setting rather than in the specific recommendations for this particular church in regard to a renewed theological praxis.
2. Glossolalia and Postmodernity: The starting point for this chapter is Cox’s theory that Pentecostals “have moved from interpreting tongues as the supernatural ability to speak foreign languages or the infallible sign of the baptism in the Spirit. Now it is seen as a means of deliverance from the ‘iron cage of grammar’” (p. 134). Cartledge then
tries to verify this thesis in the context of the church chosen as a case study by an interview with one of its leaders. He summarises, “I consciously wanted to engage with his [Cox’s] theoretical proposals because of the significance of his work to postmodernity. That is why I started with a theoretical stance. Having done this, I began to re-analyse the qualitative data from the case study material. I did this by means of content searches and analysis. This was followed by a further engagement with the theoretical literature in a broader sense although focused around the primary concerns of Cox. This enabled me to both affirm and yet qualify the theoretical perspective of Cox...” (p. 151). The strength of this chapter is in its verification of a theoretical claim in a specific and particular situation. At the same time this might be its weaknesses. What if the interview partner would have been a different person with a different background?

3. Charismatic women and prophetic activity: In this chapter, Cartledge again tests one of Cox’s ideas, namely that “for women the Pentecostal message provided the best way they could see to effect a genuine change in their family relations.” (p. 160). This time, Cartledge applies the method of a survey and comes to the conclusion that “the social factors that Cox claims as being significant in the attraction of women to Pentecostalism cannot be sustained by the data.” (p. 166). However, the survey indicates that there may be a certain tension for women who feel called for prophetic and/or institutional ministry that does not exist for men. This leads Cartledge to pursue the issue by using the method of the historical lens, applied to the life and work of Aimee Semple McPherson. Here, he concludes that “marriage provides a consistent factor in establishing the ministry of charismatic women. Prophetic activity is a means of gaining authority alongside their husband’s more institutional authority.” (p. 169). An excellent example of how a theoretical claim can be verified in a specific context and lead to a new conclusion: “Let your [single ] daughters prophesy!” (p. 170). However, one must admit that Cox’s claim arose in the context of Latin American Pentecostals from San José, Costa Rica, and not within a British, white environment, although representing the various social strands of society.

4. Interpreting charismatic experience: The underlying question is: is a charismatic experience a form of an altered state of consciousness? The method chosen is a questionnaire and the result is: “charismatic experiences and the language of control are not incompatible.” (p. 189)

5. Faith and healing: Quite a challenging chapter! In short, the data of the questionnaire indicates that the 24.6% of the people who believe that healing will always occur if a person’s faith is great enough a) tend to represent the less-educated people from the lower social class; b) are the younger and more immature Christians; c) believe in daily conflict with demons; d) tend to be anti-intellectual, preferring intuition and personal senses as way of knowing. So much for the empirical data which may be interpreted differently by various people, perhaps by 24.6%?

6. Glossolalia and socialization: “In summary, these data suggest that Samarín [his hypothesis is introduced at the beginning of the chapter] overestimates the role that friends and family play with regard to learning to speak in tongues ... The study highlights the important socializing role of personal Bible study and the influence of church leadership.” (pp. 226 + 228).

In short, I found the book, both parts, most stimulating and helpful for my own ministry.

Matthias Wenk


Yong’s book is not simply concerned with a biblical hermeneutic. His interest is in the larger question of a theological hermeneutic and his basic thesis is that a robust theological hermeneutic is the result of an interplay between Spirit, Word and Community. The thesis is straightforward and clear while the book is demanding and challenging. In the first part, Yong develops a foundational Pneumatology. Here, he discusses biblical motifs, summarised in the terms relationality, rationality and dynamism of life. These aspects of the Spirit become key characteristics for Yong, and in some way or another, he pursues them throughout the book.

Next to these biblical motifs, Yong builds his work mainly on Irenaeus’ metaphor of the Spirit and the Word as the “two hands of the Father” and Augustine’s thesis of the Spirit as the mutual love between the Father and the Son. The first one allows Yong to avoid any subordination of the Spirit to the Word and thus to affirm the Spirit’s presence and activity in creation. The second one obviously is related to his concern of Community.

In part two, Yong puts forward several arguments, all under the rubric “Pneumatological Imagination: Epistemology in Triadic Perspective.” I guess that this is the most complicated part of the book and unless the reader is highly capable in following a rather abstract thought line, one is
Book Reviews


easily endangered of losing the thread. The third part is again more straightforward, though not always. Yong discusses a) the activity of interpretation and the role of the Spirit in it: the Spirit is both subject and object of our theological inquiry; b) the object of interpretation: the word and with it, the role of ecclesial traditions; and c) the context of interpretation: the community as shaped by its cultural, political, social, and economic environment. His conclusion: “theological interpretation is a communal enterprise to discern the Spirit, to understand the Word, and to be transformed by the Spirit and the Word” (p. 316).

While Yong has picked up a theme that lies at the core of Pentecostalism: the interplay between Spirit, Word and Community, his way of theologising is definitely not typically Pentecostal. Rather than engaging the reader with a narrative approach to the topic, one is challenged to follow a fairly high level of abstract reasoning. Further, he is picking up several discussions and themes along the road that may not be of primary interest for the average reader and distract at times from the main argument. This may cause some people not to look too closely at what Yong has to say. Surely, Yong’s book is no “easy reading” but definitely challenging, stimulating and broadening our horizon. And perhaps more than a “book simply to read”, it will become a reference tool to be looked up over and over again.

Matthias Wenk


Philip Jenkins, distinguished Professor of Historical and Religious Studies at Penn State University, sets a counterpoint to the many voices arguing that Christianity is losing its impact due to secularisation and that classical missionary endeavours are like “cultural leprosy”, something one does not like to talk about and therefore likes to suppress. On the contrary, Jenkins is forcefully arguing that Christianity is growing and vibrant, especially in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Religious studies scholars may be aware of the basic facts and developments Philip Jenkins is talking about, but the sheer ignorance of most church people (especially in Europe), sociologists, anthropologists and politicians of what is happening in the “South” makes this book essential reading. Jenkins must first be commended for starting his argument for the “next Christendom” by presenting a solid historical overview of the development of Christianity as well as addressing a common misconception of Christianity as being a “Western” phenomenon. The reading is interesting and to the point. After 50 pages, one has a feel about the developmental history of Christianity and is eagerly awaiting Jenkins’ main contributions.

Based on current observations and demographic extrapolations the author argues that future Christianity will be deeply influenced by the South, that is from the fast growing churches in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Those churches are basically conservative in their theology, charismatic in their spirituality and at home among the poor in the fast growing megacities. Jenkins repeatedly relativizes his own findings. After all, who can tell how Christianity will look like in 2025 or 2050? Nevertheless, he comes up with several thought provoking ideas; five of which I would like to mention.

First of all, Jenkins strongly emphasizes the fact that most Christian churches in the South are Pentecostal or charismatic in nature. His assessment of these churches is of great interest to missiologists, teachers and church leaders, especially to those who up until now have focussed on ideas that originated in the West.

Second, some readers may well argue that Jenkins should have written about Christianity rather than Christendom. However, the author makes forceful arguments that we are not just talking about faith, but about Christianity as a whole which is affecting the culture, life style and politics of nations - especially among developing countries. In a sense the next Christendom is like the classical one we know from the Middle Ages, it is all encompassing.

Third, Philip Jenkins points to a parallel development namely the remarkable rise of Islam. In many places, Pentecostal/charismatic Christians and Muslims will be recruiting followers from among the same constituency. Will a peaceful co-existence between the Cross and the Crescent be possible, as for instance was the case in 13th century Spain or up to recent times in Egypt and Syria? Or will there be conflict and confrontation - a crusade versus a jihad? Uprisings in Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Indonesia, to mention just a few, do not bode well.

Fourth, the role of the Roman Catholic Church should, according to Jenkins, not be underestimated, for in a generation or two it might be the only truly global church. If the author is correct, churches of the Reformed tradition like the Anglicans and Lutherans as well as the Eastern Orthodox communion will loose its impact in the First and Second World. It may
Book Reviews


Within Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, there is a strong desire to see a ‘revival sent from God’. For many believers, revival is the only answer for the Western world as it slides ever deeper into sin and ungodliness. Ortlund’s desire for revival is never in question from the first page to the final parenthesis. He writes as both pastor and academic revealing a fervent desire for God to act stating, “My ultimate aim is to persuade you that revival is a valid Biblical expectation, so that you join me in praying that God would rend the heavens and come down in our generation.”

He defines revival as “a season in the life of the church when God causes the normal ministry of the gospel to surge forward with extraordinary spiritual power.” Some may want to quibble with this definition, others will react to Ortlund’s moderate Reformed approach revealed in his statement, “we cannot trigger revival”. On the other hand, most readers will want to commend him for seeking to establish “what the Bible teaches for the Church today”. It is important that any revival theology is ultimately grounded in Scripture and not experience alone.

However, beyond all of these issues, I was ultimately disappointed with this offering on revival because Ortlund’s work is centred almost entirely in the Old Testament and he offers no hermeneutical framework by which to move from words addressed to Old Testament Israel to the New Testament or contemporary Church. After the briefest of introductions, the reader is confronted with Isaiah 63 and 64. Now there is no doubt that these verses have been used by historical commentators when writing on revival. But Ortlund fails to justify his use of this and numerous other Old Testament passages. This error is compounded by his tendency to refer to Old Testament Israel in one breath and in the next to directly apply this teaching to the church today. I offer two examples of many: “Isaiah is teaching us how to pray for the church in our generation.” (p. 27); “Psalm 85 is another prayer for revival.” (p. 38). Unfortunately, I do not think it is as simple as Ortlund makes out. It is not self-evident that the Old Testament writers had the understanding of revival that we have today. There were, without doubt, times of covenant renewal in Old Testament Israel, but it is simplistic to interpret these as we might the Great Awakening or Welsh Revival. In view of this fundamental failure to offer a valid hermeneutical framework I found the work to be of marginal interest only, one more book on revival to add to the ever-growing body of literature on this subject.

Malcolm Dyer


Over the past century, churches in the Pentecostal and Charismatic tradition have been at the forefront of experimental ecclesiology in an attempt to renew the existing church by providing the ‘new wineskins’ for God’s Spirit to invade. This has often led to both exciting innovation and tragic division. David Moore’s book is an excellent overview and analysis of one such experiment. It centred around a ‘dream team’ of five international charismatic teachers: Don Basham, Ern Baxter, Derek Prince, Charles Simpson, and Bob Mumford. Collectively they were known as the Fort Lauderdale Five. Between 1970-1986, they were hailed by some as bringing a return to the apostolic vision of the New Testament, at the same time as being designated as the authors of ‘far and away the most disturbing controversy to hit the Charismatic Renewal’ (Michel Harper, quoted on p.3).

The central teaching of the group revolved around a desire to introduce a renewed sense of radical discipleship amongst charismatic groups, which were deemed to be drifting into complacency and self-indulgence. The reason this teaching became so controversial lay in the central factor of each believer being required to submit to a ‘personal pastor’ who would enable them to develop spiritually. This, together with the emphasis on trans-local leadership, was suspected of being potentially, or in some cases actually, spiritually abusive which, instead of liberating people into their
Christian inheritance, brought them into legalistic bondage. As with all controversies, the luxury of elapsed time relativises much of the intensity of feeling, but at the time, this teaching was hugely controversial and Charismatic Christians found it difficult to be neutral about it all.

Moore’s book is one of the few objective, scholarly works dealing with the major issues and history of the movement. The book deals with the context that this teaching emerged in, the coming together of the main teachers, their particular emphases and the subsequent dissolution of their relationship and their influence.

The book is significant for a number of reasons. It presents clearly the basic account of the development of the teaching and attempt to incorporate discipleship issues into church structures. Along the way, it also highlights what can happen when the stakes are raised too high. The five teachers had come together in a covenant agreement and this became one of their central motifs. Therefore, when tensions became evident, their response had to be all or nothing. Disagreements and division are hard to accept when everyone is supposed to be ‘one in heart and mind’.

The book also illustrates that what one generation believes to be a discovery of radical truth, the next takes for granted. The Shepherding Movement emphasised accountable relationships which was a shock to a generation of Charismatics who had become used to individualised concepts of spiritual development and experience. Whilst their teaching was deemed unacceptable by many, they did illustrate a need that many felt for spiritual accountability. Equally, it encouraged non-professional leadership and non-traditional leadership training. They believed that leadership was more a matter of gifting than mere academic preparation. Many of their principles were adapted, softened and accepted into the wider mix of Pentecostal-Charismatic circles.

So what can be learnt by examining this 16 year period? Uncritical proponents of Wagner’s New Apostolic Church Leaders or the hierarchical G12 forms of church would benefit from looking over their shoulders to see the leaders and controversies of an older generation. Their experiences can be, and should be, our teacher, if only we will allow them to be so. Moore’s book is to be commended, then, both as a historical resource, but also as a primer for those embarking on the difficult manoeuvres of church renewal.

Neil Hudson