

The Holy Spirit in Pentecostal Theology with special reference to Elim

Presentation for Churches Together in England

James Glass
7/9/2014

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As one who grew up in the Elim Pentecostal Church and whose great grandmother was associated with it in its earliest years and who now finds himself pastoring one of its churches, I am able to address the topic in question, if not with complete academic authority, at least with the benefit of first-hand experience.

Elim grew out of that movement known as the Pentecostal movement, born at the beginning of the twentieth century. Elim's own origins can be traced to 1915 in a provincial town in Ireland. Almost one hundred years later it has grown to over five hundred and fifty churches in the UK and is involved in missionary work throughout the world.

Elim's theology reflects that of evangelicalism in general and the beliefs of what has come to be known as classical Pentecostalism in particular.

Objectives of this paper

In this paper, I will work from the general of the Pentecostal movement, to the particular of Elim.

Firstly, I will seek to provide an overview of what I think are the distinctive emphases of a Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit.

Secondly, I will attempt to explain how those distinctives shape Pentecostal practice.

And finally, I will comment on how belief and practice is worked out within Elim.

By way of disclaimer, I should point out that I offer my thoughts and observations as the pastor of a local church rather than as an academic theologian.

Introduction

Gordon Fee, renowned Pentecostal theologian, in the introduction to his work on the Holy Spirit in Paul's letters, comments "For Paul the Spirit, as an experienced and living reality, was the absolutely crucial matter for Christian life from beginning to end."¹

Fee's description of the Spirit is one that would find a ready acceptance throughout the Christian Church, both today and throughout the church's long history. The Holy Spirit is central to her creeds and is crucial to her understanding of the God she worships.

Keith Warrington, in what is effectively a Pentecostal systematic theology, has listed eleven different aspects of the Spirit's person and work that are important to Pentecostals:

The Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead;

The Spirit is set apart by the term "Holy", indicating uniqueness as much as sinlessness;

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is vitally significant, marking a new era and a more intense activity of the Spirit;

The Spirit inspires belief in Jesus and the worship of Jesus;

¹ G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (Hendrickson, 1994), p.1

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The Spirit guides us personally. He is always with us ;

The Spirit is dynamically and integrally involved in the process of salvation;

The Spirit is an unlimited resource for believers;

The Spirit gives gifts to believers that are to be used to build up the church;

The Spirit enables and expects believers to improve their lifestyles;

The Spirit who brings together the church as the body of Christ, is concerned for the unity of the body and seeks the co-operation of believers in maintaining that unity;

The Spirit is eternal and omniscient and helps believers enjoy the salvation that God has given to them.²

Warrington notes that most of these tenets are no different to what evangelicals generally believe.³ In fact, any of the communions of the church would find little difficulty in affirming most or all of the propositions set out above.

One might ask at this point, therefore, why Pentecostalism is a distinct branch of the Christian church and why, in its own self-understanding, and in the understanding of others, its beliefs about the Holy Spirit are considered its foremost distinguishing feature.

The answer to that question is probably to be found along the lines of how those beliefs influence the shape of its ministry and the expectations of its adherents.

What perhaps differentiates Pentecostal belief from that of others, is the practical impact that its beliefs about the Holy Spirit have upon its practice; a major characteristic – if not the major - characteristic of Pentecostal thinking about the Spirit, is its emphasis on *experience*.

The Core of Pentecostal Experience

Any attempt to treat a subject as wide ranging as that of a Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit, begs the question, where does one begin?

The answer, usually offered, is “Begin at the beginning”.

No more fitting advice could be offered to one tackling this particular subject. Pentecostal theology and church life was born out of desire to experience the Spirit in the way the disciples did *at the beginning*. The words *at the beginning* have a biblical resonance. Peter explained the results of his preaching at Cornelius’ house in such terms:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning (Acts 11.15, KJV).

² K. Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology* (T&T Clark, 2008), pp.46-48; For a fuller treatment of the person and work of the Spirit see K. Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit* (IVP, 2009)

³ *Ibid.* p.46

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That beginning, of course, was the day of Pentecost. One does not have to read too far in either academic or populist Pentecostal works to find a reference to Acts 2, and in particular to Acts 2.4.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2.4, NIV).

This verse has been axiomatic for the Pentecostal movement since its inception. Understanding how Pentecostals handle this verse is key to understanding classical Pentecostal theology. It is the basis for a number of givens within the Pentecostal community.

Firstly, Pentecostals believe that the experience that the disciples had on the birthday of the Christian church is open to all Christians today. Christians today can be filled with the Holy Spirit, every bit as much as Peter, James and John, et al. Moreover, the Spirit can give them the ability to speak in tongues, as was the case on the day of Pentecost.

Secondly, this experience of the Spirit is given to those who were already followers of Jesus to enable them to be witnesses throughout the world. Acts 1.8 is another oft quoted scripture in the Pentecostal tradition:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1.8, NIV).

The purpose of experiencing the Spirit’s empowering is to enable one to evangelise. The evangelistic zeal found among Pentecostals is underpinned both by an experience of the Spirit and a belief that experiencing the Spirit’s power is intended enable effective witness.

Thirdly, Acts 2.4 is one of, if not the foundational text, upon which the Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is based.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Although the term *baptism in the Holy Spirit* is not one coined by Pentecostals, the way it is used by Pentecostals is different to how it has been used by churches in other traditions.

Holiness movements, with their roots in Methodism, tended to see baptism in the Holy Spirit as a “second blessing” and a means of “entire sanctification” or “sinless perfection”. Those ideas gained very little traction within Pentecostalism. This is partly because Pentecostalism drew followers from across the evangelical spectrum, not just those who had a background in holiness circles. It is also partly because, from its earliest days, the *baptism in the Holy Spirit* was connected with mission, in the Pentecostal movement.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is based on a number of passages in Acts of the Apostles. Acts 2 has been mentioned above. Acts 8, 10 and 19 are all seen to reflect a paradigm of Christian initiation. Repentance and faith, followed by baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit, complete initiation into the Christian faith.

Early Pentecostals, and possibly most contemporary Pentecostals, did not and might not use the term “initiation”. However, that is effectively what these four elements make up. That is not to say

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that someone who is not or does not claim to have been baptised in the Holy Spirit is not a Christian. It simply indicates that they can, even need to, experience the Spirit's power at work in their lives.⁴

The Spirit is sometimes given through the laying on of hands (as in Acts 8 and Acts 19), sometimes He falls in response to prayer or faith. His coming is accompanied by some sort of supernatural phenomena - tongues and prophecy are among the most sensational, and, the most usual.⁵

A connection between baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues is perhaps where Pentecostalism stands out most obviously from other Christian traditions. Some Pentecostal denominations insist on speaking in tongues as the *initial evidence* of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. In its earliest days, Pentecostalism attracted much criticism, even to the point of denunciation, not only for its emphasis on speaking in tongues, but because of the practice itself.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit as a description of the initial empowering of the Spirit in the life of the believer has come under fire both from outside of Pentecostalism and from within its own ranks. It is pointed out that although being *baptised* in the Holy Spirit is New Testament terminology, *baptism* in the Holy Spirit is not found in the New Testament.

It might well be that the reluctance of Pentecostals to let go of the term *baptism in the Holy Spirit* for a less controversial one, such as *being filled with the Spirit* or *experiencing the Spirit* – the latter terminology also being alien to the New Testament – is as much to do with christology as it is to do with Pentecostal tradition.⁶

Jesus, both in New Testament theology and in Pentecostal theology and tradition, is the *baptiser in the Holy Spirit* (Luke 3.16; John 1.33). He promised His disciples, just before His ascension that within a few days of His departure they would be *baptised in the Holy Spirit* (Acts 1.5).

Furthermore, some Pentecostals would see Jesus' own experience of the Spirit as exemplary for His disciples. Even though He was without sin, He came seeking John's baptism. At His baptism the sinless Son of God was "baptised" in the Spirit. In a similar way, it is argued, Christians need to be baptised with the Spirit to be empowered for mission today.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as it is emphasised as an empowering experience that is granted by Jesus Himself and, to an extent, modelled on the experience of Jesus, reveals the distinction in Pentecostal thought between the work of the Spirit in or at conversion and the Spirit's subsequent work enabling believers to faithfully and effectively serve Christ.

The issue of "subsequence" is one that has caused disagreement among Pentecostals and between Pentecostals and those outside the Pentecostal community. Indeed, some Pentecostal theologians,

⁴ Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit dwells in *all* Christians. The baptism in the Spirit is an *empowering* work of the Spirit.

⁵ Acts 2.4, 10.46, 19.6

⁶ See David Pett's list of terms interchangeable with *baptism in the Holy Spirit* in Petts, D., *The Holy Spirit: An Introduction*, (Mattersey Hall, 1998), p.65

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for example, Gordon Fee, reject any doctrine of baptism in the Spirit articulated in terms of subsequence, whilst not wishing to deny the underlying reality of the experience.⁷

Indeed, Fee, and those Pentecostals who have adopted his approach, do not want to lessen the emphasis on experiencing the Spirit. Far from it. They actively encourage Christians to experience the Spirit.⁸

Ironically some of the greatest tensions have been between Pentecostals and Evangelicals, who in most other aspects of theology, spirituality and ministry practice are closest to Pentecostals. This tension is not just to do with “subsequence”, but has historically also been rooted in the traditional evangelical idea of cessationism, the belief that supernatural gifts such as tongues and healing were withdrawn from the church as the apostolic age faded and the canon of scripture was completed.

This aspect of the Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit also goes some way to explaining some of the tensions between Pentecostal denominations and the more established churches. The Pentecostal belief that regeneration and the experience of being born again, as the core of conversion, *precedes* baptism in the Spirit creates, or at least can create, strains in relationship with those who approach salvation from a more sacramental perspective.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, therefore, is an experience open to all Christians. It is given to empower for mission, just as the Spirit’s presence and power did for the early church and, indeed for Jesus Himself. Not only does it empower for mission, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is also associated very closely, if not exclusively, with speaking in tongues.⁹ It, therefore, not only equips Christians for effective witness, it also introduces them into a life of spiritual power and the prospect of supernatural gifts that can be used in mission and or in the life of the church.

A consideration of baptism in the Holy Spirit, therefore, naturally leads us in two different, but complimentary directions: mission and ecclesiology. No treatment of Pentecostal belief and practice, however brief, would be complete without attempting to assess how Pentecostal thinking about the Spirit has shaped its approach to mission and its ecclesiology.

In its understanding of baptism in the Holy Spirit, Elim’s statement of faith and its ministry practice reflects the kind of Pentecostal thinking outlined above.

With respect to baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Elim statement of faith reads:

⁷ For example Fee, *op. cit.* pp.406-07 and n. 137

⁸ See Warrington’s comments, *op. cit.* p.197

⁹ Tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit is a point of debate. For example, G. Canty, *The Hallmarks of Pentecost*, (Marshall Pickering, 1989) p.183 writes: “Speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, is the one thing that names us as Pentecostal.” Even as nuanced a treatment of the subject as Warrington, *op.cit.* p.120, states “This of course, does not mean that the gift of tongues is an invalid sign of the baptism in the Spirit. Indeed, Menzies provides a conclusion with which most Pentecostals would agree, writing, “tongues as initial evidence”, although not explicitly found in the New Testament , is an appropriate inference drawn from the text, especially when it is appreciated that for Luke, inspired speech (in particular tongues and prophecy) is integral to people receiving the Spirit in Acts” p.120

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*...the believer is also promised an enduement of power as the gift of Christ through the baptism in the Holy Spirit with signs following.*¹⁰

What is worth noticing, and what differentiates Elim from some other Pentecostal denominations is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is said to come *with signs following*. It is not tongues exclusively that is considered to be the sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, simply *signs*. This position was reaffirmed in 1993.¹¹

Having said that, many within Elim, due to the frequent connection of tongues and baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts, still hold speaking in tongues as the main evidence, if not the only evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹²

Elim has never prescribed a particular method for receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Individuals are encouraged to seek this experience for themselves – to be thirsty for the Spirit and believe that He will fill them. The practise of laying on of hands to receive the Spirit is not uncommon within Elim, but it is not seen as requisite for receiving the baptism in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and Pentecostal Mission

Pentecostalism is perhaps best known for its evangelistic zeal. Across the world, there are many Pentecostal evangelists and churches reaching out to hurt and broken people, some of them in some of the poorest locations on earth.

One does not have to read too many accounts of the history of the Pentecostal movement to discover that the large meeting in a public venue, big tents, town halls or a football stadium, for example, have figured prominently in Pentecostal mission and evangelism. In Britain, the Jeffreys brothers, along with other high profile evangelists such as Smith Wigglesworth, were trailblazers among Pentecostals when it came to this kind of evangelistic outreach. The Royal Albert Hall and the Crystal Palace were among the larger venues used by Pentecostals for their public meetings.¹³

The meetings themselves were characterised by what might be considered a contemporary style of music, preaching that focused on Jesus and a call to repentance. At the close of the service, prayer for the sick was offered. Stories of conversion and healing were numerous, and on occasion, even made the national press.

¹⁰ The article on the Holy Spirit in Elim's statement of faith reads:

We believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son and the necessity of His work in conviction of sin, repentance, regeneration and sanctification, and that the believer is also promised an enduement of power as the gift of Christ through the baptism in the Holy Spirit with signs following. Through this enduement the believer is empowered for fuller participation in the ministry of the Church, its worship, evangelism and service.

http://www.elim.org.uk/Groups/112249/What_we_believe.aspx#sthash.hHYiiAIZ.dpuf

¹¹ For the historical development, see Warrington, *op. cit.* p. 121, n.451.

¹² For example, T.W. Walker in ed. Brewster, P.S., *Pentecostal Doctrine* (Grenehurst Press, 1976) p.34; Canty (see footnote 6); and see Warrington *op.cit.* p.123, for the view that tongues might function as a "community sign", even if not evidenced by everyone within that community.

¹³ Canty, G., *op. cit.* p.103.

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Pentecostal evangelism today is still characterised by passionate preaching, a call to repentance and an expectation that God will heal the sick. It is not unusual to hear reports from the developing world of the dead being raised.

Satan is regarded as real. Demons are likewise considered to be real entities who can affect and even control people's lives. Exorcism, in the tradition of Jesus and the apostles, is a real possibility.

It would be mistaken to claim that healing and exorcism are the sole provenance of Pentecostals. Healing and exorcism are not unknown in the Catholic and Orthodox communions. The Anglican communion also has a tradition of healing and exorcist ministries. In Pentecostalism, those expressions of ministry are perhaps seen as more integral to mission than in the aforementioned. Whilst the Pentecostals share the convictions of conservative evangelicals about biblically based preaching, there is a disconnect when it comes to healing and exorcism.

Words of knowledge, gifts of healing and faith are perhaps the gifts most associated with Pentecostal mission and evangelism. The laying on of hands is not unusual, most often in the context of prayer for the sick.

The biblical models of mission that Pentecostals seek to imitate are found in Jesus' outreach to Israel, as recorded in the gospels and the accounts of the apostles' missionary work in Acts of the Apostles.

However unconventional or unusual Pentecostal outreach might seem, especially to those from very different ecclesiastical traditions, it is fair to say that Pentecostals consciously set out to model their mission practice on biblical examples of mission practice. In fact, it is easily argued that the biblical text, especially that of the gospels and Acts, is the inspiration for Pentecostal practice in mission and evangelism.

For example, the main elements of Philip's missionary activity in Samaria (Acts 8) resonate with aspects of Pentecostal praxis:

- (i) Philip went to a city and proclaimed Christ (v.5)
- (ii) He gathered crowds (v.6)
- (iii) He performed signs and wonders (vv.6, 13)
- (iv) He cast out demons (v.7)
- (v) He healed the sick (v.7)
- (vi) People responded positively (v.8)
- (vii) He baptised new converts (v.12)
- (viii) The apostles come from Jerusalem and lay hands on the new believers and they are filled with the Holy Spirit (vv.14-17)

All of the above figure prominently in Pentecostal mission philosophy and practice.

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The extent to which Acts can or should be used as a model for church ministry practice today is a moot point. Acts has to a greater or lesser degree provided a template for Pentecostal mission since the birth of the Pentecostal movement over one hundred years ago.

Pentecostal mission is not only predicated on the experience of Jesus and the apostles in the book of Acts, it is also, perhaps at a less obvious level, shaped by the nature of the Holy Spirit and His role within the Godhead and within the world. Jesus' statements in John 14-16 about the Holy Spirit are of crucial importance to an understanding of Pentecostal mission.

The Spirit is another comforter / helper, a kind of *alter ego* of Jesus. The disciples, therefore, are not left to their own devices to complete the mission that Jesus has given to them. The Spirit reveals Christ to the disciples. The Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

With the same aim of glorifying Jesus in this world, the mission of the church and that of the Spirit are one. For this reason, the early church sought to work in harmony with the Holy Spirit. For the same reasons Pentecostals emphasise the need for the church to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as it seeks to fulfil the mission given to it by Jesus.

We, therefore, arrive back where we began our study, namely, at the day of Pentecost with the nascent church waiting on the empowering from heaven in order that it might fulfil the mission entrusted to it by the risen Christ. Likewise, it is this keen awareness on the one hand of the mission of the church and, on the other, the church's inability to fulfil that mission in its own strength that drives the Pentecostal to seek not only an initial baptism in the Spirit, but also a continuous filling of the Spirit.

Elim not only took its cue from the broader Pentecostal movement when it came to evangelism in its early years, but was somewhat of a forerunner when it came to evangelistic mission. Indeed, Elim was born as the result of the kind of outreach activity described above. For George Jeffreys, the founder of Elim, large meetings in large public arenas, were the favoured method of evangelistic outreach.

Although Elim churches today have found other methods of mission, such as *Alpha* courses and some of the fresh expressions types approaches, the classic Pentecostal evangelistic outreach still retains a place in the thought and practice of Elim.

One can also see in Elim's statement of faith the vital connection that exists between mission and baptism in the Holy Spirit:

Through this enduement [the baptism in the Holy Spirit] the believer is empowered for fuller participation in the ministry of the Church, its worship, evangelism and service.

The Holy Spirit and Pentecostal Ecclesiology

The link between the Spirit and ecclesiology is very clearly presented in the sentence quoted above from Elim's statement of faith.

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Given that the Spirit is deemed to be so crucial to the church's existence and mission, what sort of church should we expect the Spirit to produce?

No doubt the themes and points of discussion that exercise the hearts and minds of thinkers and leaders within the global church can be found within the Pentecostal church as well. An emphasis on the Spirit has not removed the need for structure, debate and government, save for those on the very fringes of the movement. However, Pentecostalism has, I believe, made its own unique contribution to contemporary thinking about ecclesiology.

One might be led to expect that a movement which stresses not only the corporate empowering of the Spirit for mission, but also the personal empowering of the Spirit, would seek to fashion its ecclesiastical structures in such a way that the Spirit is given room to shape the way in which the church expresses its ministry. Although the main hallmarks of ministry are evident in Pentecostal churches, for example preaching, the administration of the sacraments (*ordinances*, as Pentecostals term them), the Pentecostal understanding of spiritual gifts as set out in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 is, at least theoretically, considered to be a kind of thumbnail sketch as to the kinds of things that should happen when the church gathers.¹⁴

Traditional Pentecostalism expounded Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 along the lines of nine spiritual gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12.7-10, KJV).

The nine gifts were sometimes subdivided into three further categories: gifts of illumination, action and communication.¹⁵

Warrington outlines six specific attributes of the charismatic gifts 1 Corinthians 12:¹⁶

- Gifts are for the purposes of service and working for the benefit of others (12.5-6)
- The Trinity is involved in the granting of gifts to the church (12.4-6)
- God gives the gifts to believers as and when He wants. All believers have gifts (12.6-7,11)
- The gifts are manifested according to the will of the Spirit (12.7,11)
- The gifts are diverse (12.4-6, 8-10)
- The gifts are given for the benefit of everyone in the group (12.7)

All the different gifts were considered necessary, as Paul employs the metaphor of the body to highlight the importance of each gift.

A traditional Pentecostal exposition of 1 Corinthians 12 tended to think of the nine gifts as mentioned in verses 8-10 as being a definitive list of the gifts of the Spirit¹⁷ whereas more

¹⁴ It is worth noting here that a Pentecostal understanding of spiritual gifts is not only resourced by its emphasis on the empowerment of believers by the Spirit, but also by the reformation idea of the priesthood of all believers. Amongst the early influences on the Pentecostal movement was that of Brethrenism, which was possibly the most laity empowering movement of its time..

¹⁵ See W.R. Jones in Ed. Brewster, P.S., *op. cit.*, p.50.

¹⁶ Warrington, *Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, p.101

¹⁷ E.g. Jones, *op. cit.* .p.50; Canty

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contemporary Pentecostal scholarship sees the gift lists in various scriptural passages as exemplary rather than exhaustive¹⁸

On the basis of 1 Corinthians 14.1, Pentecostals believe that believers should seek spiritual gifts. Paul refers to *greater gifts* and says that believers should seek the *greater gifts*. The *greater gifts* are understood as gifts that *build up the church*. The greatness of a gift lies in its ability to edify the body of believers. Its greatness is also determined by how appropriate it is to a need that is presented. For example, a gift of healing might be considered of greater value when ministering to the sick than, say, the gift of tongues.¹⁹

In this context it should also be noted that the nine gifts mentioned above are supplemented at the end of chapter twelve of 1 Corinthians with a list of some additional gifts. Apostleship, prophethood and teaching are ranked first. The way the list is set out indicates that these three gifts are of primary importance. That importance probably derives from the foundational role²⁰ that such gifts had in establishing the universal church and the local churches which sprang up all over the Roman empire through the witness and oversight of the apostles.²¹

Classical Pentecostal denominations have tended to shy away from using the terms apostle and prophet as titles in their governmental and authority structures. There is recognition that some do possess apostolic gifting / calling and some have a prophetic calling, in those denominations, however, such people are almost always referred to as “pastor” if addressed by a title at all. Evangelistic and teaching gifts are recognised and for most of the time, neither “evangelist” nor “teacher” is used as a form of address.²²

Any study of spiritual gifts from a Pentecostal perspective would be incomplete without at least some attempt at defining what those gifts are. I use the word “attempt” deliberately, since Paul does not explain exactly the content of each of the gifts. I have restricted the survey to those listed in 1 Corinthians 12.8-10, as these are the gifts most associated with Pentecostalism.

The message of wisdom is most like supernaturally revealed insight for a particular situation. Given the context it is probably not a reference to natural wisdom.

The *word of knowledge* is knowledge supernaturally revealed that was unknown or could not have been made known to the recipient.

Faith appears to be a supernatural ability to believe God in a given situation, a faith that is above and beyond the general exercise of faith of the Christian.

¹⁸ E.g. Fee, *op. cit.* p.160 ; Warrington, K, *The Message of the Holy Spirit* (IVP:2009) p.182; and Warrington, *Discovering the Holy Spirit* pp. 102-03

¹⁹ Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit*, p.191: “The value of a manifestation of the Spirit is directly related to the need that has warranted the gift being exercised”.

²⁰ See Warrington, *ibid.* p.190 n.17

²¹ See Acts 13.1-3; Ephesians 2.20, 4.11-12.

²² “Pastor” or “Rev” is sometimes used as a form of address in Pentecostal circles. That was certainly the case historically. In contemporary Pentecostalism it is not unusual for the pastor simply to be addressed by his Christian name or as “pastor” followed by his Christian name.

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Gifts of healings could refer either to the healing received by the sick person made well, or to a person whom God uses in healing the sick. The plural might refer to different aspects of healing.

Miraculous powers are often associated with healing or faith.

Prophecy is a message that should bring strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Corinthians 14.3). It is more to do with “forth-telling” God’s word than foretelling the future.

Distinguishing between spirits is the ability to identify the presence or activity of an evil spirit.

Speaking in tongues is the ability to speak in languages unlearned, whether those of men or angels. Speaking in tongues, when accompanied by interpretation of tongues, can build up the church (1 Corinthians 14.5). Speaking in tongues can also be used as a gift for personal devotion (1 Corinthians 14.13-17).

Interpretation of tongues used in conjunction with the gift of tongues in order to make what has been spoken intelligible to the listeners (1 Corinthians 14.5, 27-28).

The picture of a church meeting in 1 Corinthians 14.26, with numerous charismatic gifts in operation, and every member involved, provides an incentive for Pentecostals in their quest for a church which makes room for all that the Spirit wants to do and how He wants to do it.

The Spirit and Pentecostal Eschatology

Understanding the evangelistic zeal of Pentecostals, especially of those who first bore that name, is helped by an appreciation of the close connection of the outpouring of the Spirit and Pentecostal beliefs about the last days.

The pouring out of the Spirit is one of the hallmarks of the last days, if not *the* great hallmark of the last days. Peter, quoting Joel’s prophecy, explains the strange phenomena that emanated from the disciples on the morning of Pentecost, as a fulfilment of the prophecy that God would pour out His Spirit in the last days:

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy (Acts 2.17-18).

These texts have helped fashion both pneumatology and eschatology amongst Pentecostals, and both have fuelled and fashioned each other. The pronouncement that the outpouring of the Spirit is a feature of the last days, has led Pentecostals to expect the return of Christ as an event that is imminent. Whilst the belief that the return of Christ is imminent has led Pentecostals to expect greater waves and moves of the Spirit.²³

²³ See H.W. Greenway in ed. Brewster, *op.cit.* pp.293-304

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Conclusion

Just as it was fitting to begin at the beginning, it seems appropriate that we come to an end by acknowledging that Pentecostals believe we are in the last days and that the eschatological import of that term gives us reason to believe for greater works of the Spirit.

And in some ways it brings us back to the beginning. I said at the outset in quoting Warrington²⁴ that much of what Pentecostals believe about the Spirit is what the church in her various expressions believes. There are many other aspects of the ministry of the Spirit that I have not mentioned. For example, the fruit of the Spirit and the transforming work of the Spirit beings but two. I have but briefly touched on the work of the Spirit in salvation. Even so there are many Christians who are not part of the Pentecostal world who would be sympathetic to what I have written.

The Elim Pentecostal Church, throughout its history, has sought to uphold and maintain those beliefs that are commonly believed by Christians throughout the church throughout the world. At the same time, it has sought to be faithful to the insights and experiences that gave it birth. It has sought to share with the world around it that there is a God who is immanent as well as transcendent. That Christ lives with us and loves us as much today through His Spirit as He did when bodily present on earth. And that anyone regardless of background can know God in a real and powerful way.

²⁴ See n.3

The Holy Spirit in Pentecostal Theology with special reference to Elim

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