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Item Type	Article
Authors	Davidson, V.J.D.
Publisher	Asia Pacific Theological Seminary
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-07-14 13:48:07
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/236555

INTIMACY WITH GOD AS AN INVITING ASPECT OF PENTECOSTALISM'S WORD, DEED, AND POWER EXPRESSION OF THE GOOD NEWS GOSPEL

V.J.D-Davidson

Introduction

In the past few decades Pentecostal theology has seen such a rise in academic endeavour that differing trends of thought are emerging with the conflict that is inevitable in any field of study. However, the deepening debates among members of the Pentecostal body appear to have turned Pentecostal thought into something of a 'closed shop' which is dismissed as somewhat irrelevant by the wider evangelical body. This dismissal continues despite the world-wide impact being made by outward-looking socially-relevant Pentecostals exemplified in Philip Jenkins' epoch-making book that church growth challenge of Christianity in the Global South cannot be ignored.¹ In *Next Christendom*, Jenkins announced that much of this growing church body showed Pentecostal characteristics.² Yet perhaps the Pentecostal distinctives that he points to have become the barrier that restricts wider evangelical input into the discussion.

Jenkins suggests that much of the Global South's lifestyle has more in common with that of the Old Testament than the New Testament and that this then leads to, particularly in the African context, the immediate relevance of concepts such as covenant, sacrifice, ritual and everyday involvement with spirits. As a result, what emerges is something of a fundamentalist faith deeply influenced by superstition in which removal of evil spirits through exorcism is considered a normal part of Christianity. Little wonder that the wider

¹Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), n.p.

²Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), n.p.

and Western part of the evangelical body is liable to find such an approach to the Bible and focused attention to the availability and work of the Holy Spirit somewhat unpalatable. Since Jenkins links such an approach to Christianity with Pentecostalism, the wider evangelical body finds itself all the more out of its depth and, not surprisingly, unwilling to engage in dialogue.

But is this dialogue between Evangelicals and Pentecostals truly lost? At this point, we must turn to David Bosch, who, in his influential work, *Transforming Mission*, suggested that the way forward for mission in the 21st century was through ecumenism. Certainly ecumenism's major body, the World Council of Churches (WCC), seemed to have long lost its original evangelical influence through the liberal majority voice after the Second World War, but with the 2005 Athens gathering a change was seen. The title of the gathering was "Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile: Called in Christ to be Healing and Reconciling Communities." For the first time Pentecostal scholars were given a voice in the ecumenical arena. At a time when the Evangelical voice is getting louder in ecumenism, and Pentecostals are now joining them in order to reach the world's lost together, how much more urging does the Pentecostal academic voice need to make the message and promise of Pentecostalism more relevant to the wider evangelical body?

With an eye to wider relevancy, this paper explores the underrated dynamic of intimacy with respect to Pentecostalism's Spirit-infilling and in relation to its expression of the Gospel in word, deed and power. The particular and widely held theological perception of Pentecostalism's Holy Spirit in-filling as an empowerment for witness³ may have put an unhelpful emphasis on doing that has eclipsed the aspect of being in relationship with God. Furthermore, this paper certainly does not advocate that Pentecostalism's Baptism in the Holy Spirit is either a mark of spiritual maturity or a badge of holiness. Rather, its purpose is to examine the Pentecostal experience, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and appeal to the wider evangelical body to consider the resulting greater intimacy with God that motivates Christians in both a more vibrant witness to Him as well as socially-concerned service.

³For contemporary recognition see for instance Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2010), 9.

Although this inviting, but somewhat underrated aspect of Pentecostal spirituality has not been well attended to in the academic arena, it certainly appears in the literature as will be seen.

The 'Purpose' Debate

James Dunn's, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*,⁴ was a benchmark work in the early seventies which applied rigorous scholarship to suggest that the Pentecostal terminology refers merely to a conversion-initiation experience. Questioning the historical Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism as a secondary experience, Dunn's respected thesis long held sway until his interpretation was challenged with the thesis that the purpose of Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an empowering for witness.

In the context of the Spirit in the Old Testament, McQueen, among others, sees that "to have the Spirit of Yahweh is to be empowered."⁵ In the context of Joel 2:28-32, the promise of the Spirit appears to highlight an empowerment for prophecy.

The 'purpose' debate becomes finer tuned in reference to Lukan pneumatology. The step, which saw the gospel writer accepted as a theologian in his own right, also opened the way for suggestions that his pneumatology reflects Pentecostal interests throughout. Menzies, for instance, proposes that Lukan pneumatology is of the 'prophetic' as opposed to the soteriological.⁶ However, the wider evangelical academic body dismissed this as less than convincing. More widely, Wonsuk Ma sees 'the primary role of the Spirit in the believer's life as empowering them for service.'⁷ However, Pentecostal scholars disagree among themselves on crucial points of this argument. Turner prefers that "For Luke, the Spirit is the charismatic dimension of *all* Christian life and mission, not merely of the one or of the other"

⁴James Dunn, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), page number missing.

⁵Larry McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit – The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 41.

⁶Robert Menzies, *Empowered for Witness* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 257.

⁷Wonsuk Ma, "Pentecostal Worship in Asia: Its Theological Implications and Contributions." Siga Arles, Lily Lim, Tan-Chow Mayling and Brian Wintle eds. *The Pastor and Theological Education: Essays in Memory of Rev. Derek Tan*. (Bangalore: Trinity Christian Centre, Singapore; Asia Theological Association, 2007), 133.

(Italics mine).⁸ Roger Stronstad differentiates meaning associated with Lukan phrases which refer to the Spirit so that “the term ‘full of the Holy Spirit’ describes the enabling of the Spirit for ministry, whereas the term ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ describes the prophetic office and inspiration.”⁹ Regardless of the polarizing effect provoked by Stronstad, both the terms suggest a moving forwards in relationship with God as one steps into a role of greater responsibilities requiring heightened co-operation with the Holy Spirit.

Regarding this potential for heightened relationship, Turner suggests that “the [Lukan] ‘Spirit of prophecy’ . . . becomes the sole means (after Jesus’ ascension) by which the disciple is made aware of the presence and direction of the Father and the Son. . . . and by becoming their revealer-teacher and guide simultaneously becomes the Spirit-Advocate through them to the world.”¹⁰ Thus, Turner points to the true and deep relationship brought by the Spirit who unites the disciples with God and, from this unity, touches the unbelieving world through expressing the Gospel in word, deed and power.

An over-emphasis on the role of the Spirit as empowering for service, however, may result in a spirituality that ignores, or worse, denies, the inevitability of times and seasons requiring rest, reflection, and renewal of ‘being’. Living with such spirituality can easily lend itself to a subtle but unhealthy works-oriented outlook and/or ministerial burnout. This is not a helpful witness for less spiritually mature Pentecostals let alone the wider evangelical body. For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to highlight the potential for enhanced intimacy with God through Pentecostalism’s Spirit-infilling rather than emphasize empowerment for service as its result. In addition, the intimacy wrought by Spiritual unity is an underrated vehicle for confidence and faith in the believer who then reaches out to the world in word, deed, and power. These word and deed expressions of the Gospel, then, are an inevitable result of God’s mysteries revealed through His Spirit to those open to such leading (1 Cor 2:9,10). This intimacy with God that enables one to think His thoughts after Him and/or speak out prophetically as a result of this relationship and keeps one open to the myriad and powerful possibilities of service to others

⁸Max Turner, *Power From on High* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 455.

⁹Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 1995), 95.

¹⁰Turner, *Power From On High*, 438.

for Him when living ‘under the sway of the Spirit’.¹¹ As a result, enhanced intimacy with God inevitably results in a life that overflows with His love in willing service rather than serves out of perceived obligation based on lesser motives.

By highlighting the role of the potential for enhanced intimacy with God and resulting life-changing service, Pentecostal outreach with its renewed eye for social concern makes itself a more viable and attractive option for those of the wider evangelical circle.

An in-depth discussion of Spirit baptism (or Spirit-infilling) and the manifestation of tongues - Pentecostalism’s major distinctives among Christian denominations - is beyond the scope of this paper. The key aspects presented provide only the context for the discussion of the underrated issue of intimacy.

The question of the manifestation of other tongues as the ‘initial evidence’ of receiving Baptism in the Holy Spirit is as hotly debated these days as in earlier times. But, much of this debate is now merely between Pentecostal scholars since Charismatic believers and the wider evangelical body no longer appear to acknowledge the need for such discussion. However, since the Pentecostal outpouring was intended for all God’s people, it is necessary for Pentecostals to speak to those beyond the boundaries of their denominations.

Two aspects of the continuing debate that will be seen to find their common ground in the concept of intimacy are as follows: First, on the question of whether there actually needs to be ‘initial evidence,’ Turner asks:

Why would systematic theology suspect there should necessarily be – or even be – ‘initial evidence at all? It may theologically be predictable that God would confirm his gift of the Spirit in some demonstrable way *where otherwise the church* (or parts of it) *may have doubts* (e.g. in the admission of Samaritans or Gentiles to the people of God). But it is not clear why he should be expected to do so in regular circumstances. One does not receive the impression that the God of the bible looks particularly favourably on the human search for ‘proofs’ of such a kind, and if anything it is ‘subsequent’ and ‘ongoing’ evidence – does the life and service of the believer demonstrate the presence and power of

¹¹Earnest S. Jones, *The Christ of Every Road: A Study in Pentecost* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 91.

the Spirit? – That is the real issue, not the phenomenological character of some initial ‘moment.’¹²

From Turner’s analysis, evidence of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit may be extracted from the change in a believer’s life and service. It may be that the ‘evidence’ or ‘proofs’ that Turner prefers are those marked by an increase in intimacy and fellowship with God – an intimacy which cannot help but result in attractiveness of being and vibrancy of doing through words and deeds that are marked by non-earthly power. Second, on the question of ‘ongoing’ or ‘alternative’ as opposed to ‘initial’ evidence, Tan May Ling notes that “our exegetical support comes solely from the Acts narrative. Two out of five accounts of Spirit-baptism did not explicitly mention tongues. May we not infer from this ambiguity that there are other non-audio/visual ‘evidences’ of Spirit-baptism?”¹³

In the same journal Macchia writes, “tongues hold potential for renewing our sense of awe and wonder in the presence of God that is so vital to a vibrant worship and personal piety”¹⁴ from which can be clearly seen the link with heightened intimacy of relationship with God. However, Macchia continues by saying “Spirit baptism is not just about tongues. We cannot lock Spirit baptism into a glossolalia straight-jacket so that the former becomes inconceivable apart from the latter. But viewed in the wider context of our discussion, Spirit baptism is fundamentally and integrally about what tongues symbolises.”¹⁵ Macchia refers to Jean-Daniel Pluss in his discussion of this symbolism: “Pluss finds value in tongues as symbolic of an in-depth experience with God and he finds power in the testimonies about such experiences, because they serve as metaphors that continue to encourage these experiences.”¹⁶ Again, a link can be seen between Spirit-baptism’s tongues and experience of an increased intimacy with God.

Often overlooked is the fact that tongues as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism was “not in the first pentecostal [sic] declaration of faith,” but was a doctrine associated with North

¹²Max Turner, “Tongues: An Experience for All?,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 249-251.

¹³May Ling Tan, “Response to Macchia,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 179.

¹⁴Frank Macchia, “Groans Too Deep for Words,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 164.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 153.

American Assemblies of God which hermeneutically informed Pentecostal scholars eventually had to concede was hard to defend.¹⁷

Macchia is also reluctant to line up with the tongues as initial evidence doctrine and argues:

There are many who feel that the Pentecostals have elevated tongues far beyond the teaching of scripture in granting them such doctrinal and confessional status. Some would even conclude that we have thereby elevated our own sense of self-importance as among the only bearers of the Spirit's fullness, since we are among the only ones who speak in tongues. The criticism follows that we have neglected the exclusive place of love and holiness as the only really vital marks of life in the Spirit.¹⁸

In a similar vein, Haughey writes "Before sending the Spirit, Jesus left [the disciples] with the commandment to love one another as he had loved them. With the sending of the Spirit, love was to be not a commandment to be observed but a description of the way they lived with one another. The key test of the presence of the Spirit is love."¹⁹ As has previously been offered, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the Pentecostal baptism marks one out as having achieved some particular level of spiritual maturity or, indeed, that receiving the baptism automatically accords some spiritual status or measure of spirituality. With love as the benchmark, however, the presence of God is unquestionably manifest. Love that builds up, protects, hopes and perseveres is tangible fruit of the intimacy shared with the heavenly Father who gives good gifts to all who ask.

Moving from evidence through manifestation of tongues to evidence through manifestations of love might seem to be an over-exaggerated response with an inevitable polarising effect. It is clear that Pentecostal scholarship has competing views on the issue of 'tongues as evidence (or not)' but this paper suggests that the uniting factor underlying these competing views lies in the issue of potential for heightened relationship with God. Moreover, the non-earthly Holy Spirit power that fuels purely unselfish words and deeds provides an attractive witness to a relationship with the God of unconditional love

¹⁷Walter Hollenweger, "Rethinking Spirit Baptism," *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, JPT Sup. 15. (1999), 166.

¹⁸Macchia, 151.

¹⁹John Haughey, *The Conspiracy of God* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1995), 56.

who is the source of that power. Furthermore, the expression of Holy Spirit power through Pentecostals need not be loud, raucous and therefore offensive to some but may also be quiet, gentle and unobtrusive²⁰ as through words and deeds of self-denial and intentional acts of grace and graciousness.

Further to the ‘initial’ versus ‘ongoing’ evidence debate, Matthew Clark suggests that tongues are “certainly not the *only* evidence of baptism in the Spirit.”²¹ The classic response to the ‘tongues as evidence debate’ surely belongs to Fee who, on the basis of historical precedent, suggested as long ago as 1976: “If the Pentecostals may not say one must speak in tongues, he [sic] may surely say, why *not* speak in tongues?” (Italics mine)²²

Rather than over-emphasize proclamation or ‘doing,’ Christians can be encouraged to welcome an increasing intimacy with God through Spirit-infilling which in turn leads to ‘doing’ their service and witness as the outflow of their ‘being.’

The issue of intimacy with God also impacts one possible reason why not all who seek the baptism in the Spirit immediately speak in tongues. This reason is perhaps grounded in the approach to receiving. It is not uncommon when believers are encouraged to seek the Pentecostal Holy Spirit in-filling, that the focus is, rather unwisely, on acquisition of the filling and manifestation of tongues rather than on Christ as the one who held out the challenge to receive such an infilling. More appropriately, believers can be encouraged to cry out for a deeper intimacy with Jesus their Lord so that, in seeking and asking for more of Him, the Holy Spirit may fall upon them or rise up through them in their praises of joy rather than cries of desperation - an outflowing of praise which provides an inviting platform for the manifestation of tongues and the potential for even greater heightening of intimacy.

A summary of the above shows that the concept of intimacy can be seen, either directly or through implication, as common ground for the differing opinions of the purpose of the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit and, similarly, for the ‘initial evidence’ debate. In

²⁰Cf. Groeschel cited after M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1993), 99.

²¹Matthew Clark, “Initial Evidence: A South African Perspective,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 213.

²²Gordon Fee, “Hermeneutics and Historical Precedent,” in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. R. Spittler (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 132.

addition, Turner suggests that “Luke regards the Spirit as playing an important role in the shaping of [a] new awareness of God.”²³ Ma also urges that “what stands out in the Pentecostal tradition is more than cognitive awareness of God’s being. It is rather a tangible encounter with the great God, and such experience affects the whole human being including one’s feelings and will power.”²⁴ Both of these quotes illustrate the concept of Pentecostalism’s link with the potential for a heightened relationship with God. Ma’s “tangible encounter with the great God” through the Holy Spirit infilling has the potential to take one beyond the “ought to” of service in Jesus’ name to the “love to” outlook which serves the wider community in a socially relevant way, in step with the heart of God through the leading of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Haughey notes the experiential example of the disciple Peter in that, “when the Spirit came, the power of Peter’s faith as also the faith of the other followers of Jesus, would be dramatically deepened.”²⁵ Deepened faith implies a relationship with God marked by increased trust – and in Peter’s case a heightened relationship with resulting evidence. This is clearly seen in the New Testament account of the day of Pentecost when the intimate encounter with God in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Spirit baptism worked in Peter a new confidence and boldness to step out and testify of his personal Lord Jesus Christ. Transformed faith came, perhaps, not from a revelation of knowledge that enabled convincing explanation of the Pentecost event, but rather from the joy and awe of a new and deeper intimacy with God which resulted in Peter being able to freely speak the scripture-rich truth on his heart.

Biblical Evidence for the Dynamic of Intimacy Inherent in Pentecostal Experience.

As previously mentioned, on the day of Pentecost, having been filled with the Spirit, “Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who are in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you: listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel’” (Acts 2:14–16 NIV). Peter’s understanding of Pentecost as the fulfilment of the prophecy of

²³Turner, *Power from on High*, 436.

²⁴Ma (2007), 137

²⁵Haughey, 55.

Joel gave scriptural backing for the event which was as equally amazing to some as it was offensive to others.

McQueen suggests that Peter drew on verses from the slightly wider context of Joel 2:27 – 3:3 (NIV) i.e.:

Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be ashamed. And afterwards, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens. . . In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel. . .

In these verses McQueen sees Yahweh “assure his people of his presence among them” and further that with respect to the promises of outpouring of the Spirit, and fruitfulness within the loci of salvation blessing: “The goal of these promises of salvation is that his people may know Yahweh” (*italics mine*)...[so that] the promise of the spirit of Yahweh functions here as the guarantee of the fulfilment of his promises, especially the promise of the knowledge of Yahweh.”²⁶ James Crenshaw sees that the ‘recognition formula’ encompassed by the promise that Yahweh’s people will know him, “demonstrates Yahweh’s presence and uniqueness within the covenant relationship.”²⁷ However uncertain and unsure they might be, their doubts regarding the character and purposes of God would be defused through a heightened relationship with Him.

This analysis highlights the place of intimacy in a new depth of blessed awareness and knowledge of the God of the covenant. Such relationship-founded knowledge does a great deal more than challenge intellectually; rather, it cannot help but stir the heart and breathe fire into the soul in a way that influences the will to step out in word and deed.

McQueen also sees that with respect the promise of the Spirit, “Joel is not introducing a new promise here, [rather] Joel 3:1-2 continues the tradition of Isaiah... [as seen, for instance in Isaiah 32:15 and 44:3] as well as Ezekiel [as seen in Ezekiel 39:29]”.²⁸

²⁶McQueen, 40.

²⁷James Crenshaw, *Joel*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 159.

²⁸McQueen, 40.

Building on the concept of the outpouring of the Spirit in terms of a promise within the loci of wider blessing for Yahweh's people, McQueen also notes that: "the result of the pouring out of the spirit [sic] of Yahweh will be that everyone will stand in a relationship of immediacy with God."²⁹

McQueen's 'relationship of immediacy' can't help but imply something of the experience of intimacy. This is not to say that such intimacy is never abused, and abuse certainly occurs when Holy Spirit leading is taken advantage of for unsound purposes. But without spiritual intimacy the 'works of the Father' are liable to remain hidden. The New Testament paints a picture of Jesus' intimate relationship with his Heavenly Father marked by His willing and sacrificial performance of the deeds and words of the Father on earth.

That Jesus' ministry went hand in hand with that of the Spirit is very clear. Jesus went so far as to promise the disciples in the context of His teaching on the Holy Spirit as counselor and Spirit of truth, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" John 14: 12 (NIV). It is clear that such a promise is based on the concept of relationship – relationship which is committed, consistent, vibrant and demonstrated by the loving obedience of Jesus to his Heavenly Father. The relationship is one of intimacy and this intimacy may be seen in terms of both the Old and New Testament witness to the promise and coming of the Spirit.

On the Place of Intimacy

Of Jesus and his ministry with respect to the presence of the Holy Spirit, Haughey suggests that:

The spirit gradually made him privy to the secrets of the Kingdom...any statement that Jesus makes about God or any work he does in God's name is a sign of the presence and power of the Spirit at work in Jesus. The Spirit makes Jesus conscious of God as Father, His love and providence. The Spirit inspires in Jesus a desire for union with God in his prayer, in his works, in his will. The Spirit does not develop a Spirit-consciousness as such in Jesus, but an unbroken awareness of union with the Father.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., 41-42.

³⁰Haughey, 13.

For Jesus, then, the Spirit and Jesus' doing of the works of his Father as ministry are inseparable. Further, the depth of relationship that was marked by a desire for and awareness of union demonstrated obedience and service which was a delight rather than a duty, a revelling in relationship rather than a show of spiritual authority or power underwritten by pride. The Pentecostal gift which launched the witnesses of the early church, undoubtedly testified to effectiveness in the ministry of that church in terms of life-transforming power. Without God's power there are only empty words, and without God's presence there is merely the mechanic of action without the dynamic of compassion, sacrifice and love that are of His character and communicated through intimacy with Him.

Of this latter observation, another key issue is expressed – that of the vital place of love in any expression of ministry through the Holy Spirit. Paul's recommendations to the Corinthian Christians clearly underscored the essential place of love, without which any ministry for the kingdom is an anathema. Intimacy speaks of closeness that has a care towards the other party's interests and needs. Jesus' teaching suggests that without the indwelling Holy Spirit bearing witness to His person and teaching, the disciples would be extremely limited in their knowledge and expression of God's love for the world.

The mission left to the disciples by Jesus was more than a technical exercise. It required the power He promised them and it anticipated growth in numbers of followers as well as in the knowledge and understanding of Him. Little wonder that one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. Little wonder that as they witnessed to the risen Christ, Spirit baptized believers spoke with a new confidence on the day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was more than a technical accomplishment. The Holy Spirit appears to have drawn them intimately to the very heart of God so that they could prophesy according to His leading with a love-inspired delight, fearless against opposition. Intimacy, confidence and power worked together when "the outpouring of the Spirit was rightly understood as God coming near."³¹ Again, and through the concept of "God coming near," we perceive a heightened relationship with God.

³¹McQueen, 105.

On Relationship and Unity

“Pentecost affected the whole position of the disciples. In the moment when the Holy Spirit fell upon them, they. . . were changed from being merely followers of the Messiah into members of the risen Lord. . . By the Holy Spirit, Jesus is henceforth to be Lord, while loyal subjects to His dominion are, by the indwelling of the Spirit, to pass into the realization of the will of God.”³² A true commitment to Christ’s Lordship inevitably brings with it an increasing desire to grow in Him and know Him better. This not only works itself individually, but even more so in the context of the body of Christ on earth, the church. The heightened intimacy that comes with Spirit in-filling brings with it greater sensitivity to God’s will and obedience that loves to serve.

Jesus prayed that “they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent...[and further asks:] May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:3,23 NIV). Undoubtedly the church lives and grows in the unity of the bond of the Spirit and this very unity witnesses Christ to the world at large. A desire for greater intimacy with God inevitably overflows into the believer’s relationship with those inside and outside the church. How much more then should the Pentecostal gift’s enabling confidence in witness increase unity in the corporate witness of the church? The intimacy that encourages Christians in boldness and confidence equally sows inter-relational sensitivity that prefers the will of God to selfish desires. Indeed, the account of the early church in Acts chapter four, among other New Testament indications, reveals a body marked by a caring spirit for the needs of others and a practical outlook that saw attention to action as paramount. This aspect of ‘doing’ under the common Lordship of Christ can quite reasonably be linked with the fruit of the ‘being’ which came from a new unity recently begun at the Pentecostal outpouring, and which worked out in a holism of spiritual and social concern.

Conclusion

Having presented various aspects of the ongoing debates within the Pentecostal movement itself, this paper has attempted to show that the common ground of differing, even competing, viewpoints

³²G. Campbell Morgan and Charles Spurgeon, *Understanding the Holy Spirit* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 87.

in the ‘purpose’ and ‘initial evidence’ debates lies in the cornerstone of intimacy in man’s relationship with God. It has also been shown that the Old Testament source for the New Testament Pentecostal outpouring, with its promise of knowledge of God, also calls upon the phenomena of increased intimacy in relationship as foundational to its resulting fruit.

Intimacy lies at the very heart of God’s desire in relationship with man, a relationship in which His transcendence calls forth awe, yet the reality of his immanent and unfathomable love in Jesus makes intimacy in relationship with Him possible. That the Pentecostal outpouring fine-tuned the disciples’ spiritual awareness along the lines of God’s priorities is beyond doubt. The Pentecostal gift was promised long ago and has been received by many whose life and witness have been intimately transformed. Where the wider evangelical body also seeks intimacy with the giver of the gift, that is all the more reason to reassign greater emphasis on the ‘being’ aspect of Pentecostalism as the vehicle for the prompting and expressed power of witness’ ‘doing’.

Opportunities have now emerged for a Pentecostal voice among the wider evangelical and ecumenical body. There is a new potential for unity in service together that can touch the world with a relevant, vital, and attractive message of deliverance and salvation.

Perhaps Pentecostals should not invite Christians of other denominations to become like us, but rather to become more like Christ. This we can do by modelling the place and role of the Holy Spirit in transforming us and others through us, as we gain boldness in witnessing to the One we know and love. This boldness and deeper trust is enabled by Pentecost’s Spirit-infilling and provides the potential for an increasing depth of intimacy with God. This intimacy then empowers us to invite others into that same intimacy as fruit of Pentecostalism’s Word, Deed and Power expression of the Gospel.

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