

PENTECOSTAL MISSION PRAXIS. A REVIEW OF CORE PENTECOSTAL DOCTRINES THAT DRIVE AND SHAPE PENTECOSTAL MODELS OF MISSION

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Introduction

The impact of Pentecostalism on world mission cannot be underestimated in contemporary mission work and missional praxis. This article seeks to look into the mission praxis of Pentecostalism, its rapid growth and core doctrines that undergird Pentecostal models of mission. The paper highlights the factors that have made the Pentecostal movement a force to be reckoned with in contemporary missional praxis. It concludes with vital recommendations for further discussion or re-evaluation. The intention is to make Pentecostal missional praxis relevant in this century and beyond.

An Overview of Pentecostalism

Unlike the main-line churches that have been in the forefront of mission work for centuries, Pentecostals have made an impact in world mission more recently, since the twentieth century. For example, classical Pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission have just attained one hundred years of ministry, and have a positive and far-reaching impact on world mission. According to Moreau and others, the quest for a supernatural phenomenon that would enable the church to expedite its mandate for mission became very earnest in the nineteenth century among “radical evangelicals” (2004:147) and that later became the key issue that Pentecostalism sought to respond to. Many scholars have tried to define Pentecostalism, but I think Professor Kwabena Asamoah-Gyedu’s definition will aid our understanding in this section. According to Asamoah-Gyedu, Pentecostalism is a:

stream of Christianity that emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit; and in which such pneumatic phenomena as “speaking in tongues”, prophecies, visions, healing, miracles, and signs and wonders in general, are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members as evidence of the active presence of God’s Spirit (Gyimah 2013:x).

This definition gives us a vivid picture of Pentecostalism yet scholars debate the origin and nature of the Pentecostal movement. For example, Donald Dayton is of the view that Pentecostalism can be traced to “Wesleyanism and American revival movements in the nineteenth century” while Alister McGrath argues that there is no vast difference between Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism, except for the emphasis of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit Baptism by Pentecostals (Kim 2006:5). Along the same line of argument, Cecil M. Robeck Jr. defines Pentecostalism “as a revivalist movement of denominations, independent congregations, and Para-church organisations borne out of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement at the beginning of the 20th Century” (Gyimah 2013:12).

In Gyimah’s view, Robeck admits to the fact that the ministry of Charles Fox Parham and the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in the early part of the twentieth-century made Pentecostalism a global phenomenon. The Pew Center Forum, based in Washington DC, USA, (2011) also states that the Pentecostal movement can be traced to the nineteenth century Holiness Movement, whose members were very passionate for personal piety. Notwithstanding these viewpoints, the Pew Center Forum agrees with several scholars that Pentecostalism began with the Azusa Street Revival.

As global missionary activities of the main-line churches seem to be declining, the influence of the Pentecostal movement has reinvigorated world evangelisation and that gives impetus to the expansion of Christianity in this century. According to the Pew Research Centre, (2011:13), the estimated Christian population in the global south stood at 1.3 billion Christians, representing sixty-one per cent of the entire world’s Christian population. Many scholars admit that the growth of Pentecostal mission in barely one hundred

years as at the end of the twentieth-century has contributed to this development. The Pew Research Centre states that there “are about 279 million Pentecostal Christians and 305 million charismatic Christians worldwide,” and that most are found in the global south. Anderson’s (2003:1) perspective supports this claim:

The ‘southward swing of the Christian center of gravity’ is possibly more evident in Pentecostalism than in other forms of Christianity. Most of the dramatic church growth in the twentieth-century has taken place in Pentecostal and independent Pentecostal-like churches.

K.,rkk.,inen (2000:33) writes that the Pentecostal mission has grown from “zero to 400 missions” within a period of ninety years and that “is unprecedented in the whole of church history.” McGee also made this frank admission when he wrote that Pentecostal missionaries have done a great work to change the entire landscape of Christian activities in the twentieth-century (Moreau 2000:739).

Pentecostal Doctrines that Shape Pentecostal Models of Mission

The impact of Pentecostalism on world mission is undisputed. This section seeks to examine some of the undergirding doctrines which may have shaped Pentecostal mission practice. Nine aspects of Pentecostal doctrines and praxes will be reviewed and the way that each has shaped mission activity will be explored. It ought to be noted that these core Pentecostal doctrines discussed in this section are not treated as doctrine models of Christian mission, but rather they exemplify ways that Pentecostal mission models have been shaped.

Pneumatocentric Mission

We shall first consider an astute observation that Allan Anderson has made, in which he states that Pentecostal missionaries depend on the Holy Spirit for their calling into the mission work. According to Anderson, Pentecostal missionaries believe that their call to mission is totally dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than on the “formal structures” that exist in formal Christian denominations. Often they are called to serve in the mission field “through some spiritual revelation like a prophecy, a dream or a vision, and even through an audible voice perceived to be that of God” (2003:2).

As a Pentecostal myself and a missionary, I believe strongly that Anderson's assertion is peculiar to the missiological worldview of Pentecostals, including my own position. Throughout all my missionary career in both Ukraine and Madagascar as well as short mission trips to various countries, I was highly convinced that it is a call from the Lord and therefore subjected myself fully to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Anderson (2003:2) calls this model of mission "pneumatocentric mission" and that understanding inspires Pentecostal missionaries to offer themselves to the mission work without laying a premium on material resources. They do not wait to be fully resourced financially and logistically before embarking on mission. Neither do they spend long periods in seminaries for training before moving into the mission field.

For Pentecostals, God's call upon their lives for the work of mission is sufficient to make them succeed. Most often, they are not adequately prepared in terms of human resource, personnel development, financial resources, logistics, and building infrastructure, as compared to their Roman Catholic and Protestant counterparts. It is implicit in McGee's statement that even some of them travelled without salaries and adequate knowledge of cross-cultural communication of the gospel (Moreau 2000:738).

For example, until 1972, The Church of Pentecost in Ghana, did not have an organised theological institution after the closure of a Bible School (1953 - 1957) started by missionaries of the Latter Rain movement (from North America). The school was re-introduced in 1972 by David Mills and closed down again in 1975. It was re-opened in 1981 (Onyinah 2002:176), but in all these years, The Church of Pentecost was involved in mission work. This example is similar to many of the early Pentecostal missionary activities, where they did not focus much on establishing theological institutions to train their ministers or missionaries before sending them to the field.

Notwithstanding these limitations, their dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit in mission in terms of speaking in tongues, signs and wonders, personal sacrifices for God's kingdom and vigorous evangelistic activities have been factors that have contributed greatly to the success of their missionary activities across the world.

Their way of worship, is usually similar to indigenous worship; their emphasis on indigenous songs and dancing during worship; offerings; and fervent prayer activities have changed the entire landscape of Christian ministry as well as mission work today. During his missionary activities in Ghana, Rev. James McKeown's (an Irish missionary and the founder of The Church of Pentecost in Ghana) missiological perspective can give us a deeper insight into this discussion. McKeown testified that his message in Ghana, as a missionary, centred on three important factors: "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"; "the Baptism of the Holy Spirit"; and "the power of God to change lives and bring about holiness in the Church" (The Church of Pentecost 2005:54).

Anderson (2003:1, 2) puts it well when he states that right from the inception of the missionary activities of the Pentecostal movement, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit has been the priority and that is one of the factors that has contributed to the success of their mission. Citing Hollenweger (1972:298), Walker (2010:89) premises his assertion on a Pentecostal belief that Spirit baptism arms a person with "power for missionary service" and that belief has been existing even among the Holiness movement (a precursor of the Pentecostal movement) way back in 1870 as taught by Asa Mahan.

Pfister (2000:6) appears to add currency to this discussion. He intimates that "Talking about Pentecostal mission is talking about a missionary enterprise that works." He observes that for someone to qualify for full-time ministry in a Pentecostal church, the person's aptitude in evangelism and church planting would have to be examined. Pentecostals and Charismatics believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person should be able to drive him into evangelism leading to planting of churches and discipling the converts for Christ. Roswell Flower affirms this fact: "When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, the missionary spirit comes in with it; they are inseparable. . Carrying the gospel to hungry souls in this and other lands is but a natural result" (Anderson 2003:3).

For Pentecostals and Charismatics, the necessity of the Holy Spirit baptism is indispensable from their mission work (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:8, cf. Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:18; 1 Jn. 1:33) as they believe that Jesus Himself

is the baptiser with the Holy Spirit (Grant, McClung, Jr in Woodberry, Engen, and Elliston 1997:58). By virtue of their understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the work of mission and ministry in general, Pentecostal and Charismatic missionaries seek to use any person who is faithful to the gospel and is readily committed to the cause of the advancement of God's kingdom for mission activity rather than spending long years in training people at theological seminaries. This strategy has resulted in raising a lot of indigenous leaders for God's kingdom. Pentecostal missionaries believe that even if indigenous leaders have little training, the Holy Spirit will continue to equip them into full maturity. Their emphasis is for the people to remain faithful and dedicated to the Holy Spirit.

Following the biblical precedent of how Jesus and the early apostles ministered in signs and wonders, Pentecostal and Charismatic missionaries seek to confront the power of darkness in their propagation of the gospel (Eph. 6:10-12). They minister in the light of Jesus' statement that signs shall follow those who believe the gospel (Mk. 16:17, 18). In most cases, they conduct deliverance and healing prayer meetings under the power of the Holy Spirit and the people themselves see what the Lord can do in their lives. This phenomenon has not only helped in the rapid spread of the gospel, but had also reinvigorated the missional practices of the early apostles where signs and wonders characterised their ministry (Ac. 3:6-11; 5:22; 19:11).

The impact of this kind of ministry is that indigenous communities with superstitious beliefs come to the realisation that the power of the gospel is superior to their traditional beliefs and thus the gospel is the only way for their deliverance and salvation. Others, too, desire for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them so that they can confront demonic activities themselves. As this practice has helped the work, Pentecostal missionaries have continued to focus on biblical passages highlighting speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 13; 14:2), miracles (Mk. 16:20; Jn. 2:11; 4:48; Ac. 4:10; 19:11), gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7-11), and preaching about the imminent parousia (1 Thess. 4:17; Phil. 4:5; 1 Cor. 7:29).

The Impact of Parousia

Parousia is a Greek word for “appearance” and it is used to denote the Second Coming (appearance) of Jesus Christ. Pentecostal and Charismatic ministers preach the gospel as if Christ were coming on the very hour that the message is being delivered; and this understanding deepens the faith of people and their dependence on God as they seek to be sanctified. Many of their converts often live with high expectation of the second coming of Christ. This mindset increases their commitment level as they are prepared to sacrifice their worldly possessions to the building of God’s kingdom. For example, in my Church, even before announcements are made, we often hear the announcer saying, “If Christ tarries, we shall do this and that in the coming week or month.” According to the Church’s historical records, we inherited that saying from the first European missionary who founded the Church (Onyinah in James McKeown Memorial Lectures, 2004:79). The imminence of the second coming of Christ and the belief in life after death, with the belief that sinners will not inherit God’s kingdom, are central to Pentecostal theology.

As a result, the development of the Church in terms of building infrastructure and logistics does not necessarily depend on sponsorship or donations from abroad. The indigenous believers, living by this notion of the imminent parousia and a future reward from Christ, have always been prepared to sacrifice their material resources to purchase land, musical instruments, and build their own church buildings. The impact of imminent parousia among Pentecostals affects all dimensions of Pentecostal mission as it is often considered as the motivation behind missionary activities among Pentecostals. It is one of the paramount doctrines from which Pentecostalism dwells.

Furthermore, Russell Spittler (1988), a renowned North American Pentecostal theologian, has mentioned five characteristics that are peculiar to the Pentecostal movement. They are personal experience with God, oral expression or testimony, spontaneous expression of faith, the quest for otherworldliness, and the authority of the Bible. Although some of these things mentioned by Spittler have been highlighted already in our discussion, the way he articulates his points is equally crucial for our discussion at this stage.

A Personal Experience with God

The practice of having a personal experience of one's encounter with God is a backbone in Pentecostal missiology. Spittler (1988:412, 413) states that Pentecostals put a premium on their personal experience of their encounter with God. They believe that the piety of the believer must be characterised by a passionate and personal encounter with the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ during worship and in everyday Christian living. In other words, the piety of the Christian must be experiential and affective and not just mental assent or an intellectual state of mind.

With this understanding, Spittler observes that at times Pentecostal worshippers shed tears, speak in tongues, and express themselves with physical gestures during worship. They like expressing their experience with God in terms of prophetic utterances and songs, healings, and the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit in every facet of their worship. This "model" of personal experience with God is carried into their evangelistic activities where they minister the gospel with vigor and with passion. As they go to the mission field, they believe that no strategy on the field must supersede the inner testimony that they have about the Holy Spirit and His readiness to impact the lives of those who believe the gospel. For Pentecostals, their major strategy is based on the testimonium, where the believer demonstrates "the inner witness of the Spirit in the form of a positive but yet pragmatic concept, thinking it through, implementing it, and evaluating it in the light of experience and results" (Pfister 2000:7).

Oral Expression or Testimony

Spittler (1988:412.) also refers to Pentecostals' stress on the oral expression (testimony) of their encounter with God. Time is usually allotted during fellowship meetings for believers to share testimonies of their experience with God. Worshippers have the liberty to express themselves through songs, testimonies, poetry or reading of Scripture, both individually and collectively. As they pray aggressively during their gatherings as well as their individual devotional lives, individuals experience spectacular events from God which in turn gives them a cause to testify to God.

The missional implication for the testimony model is that they serve as evangelistic tools in the mission field where those who listen to such testimonies turn to Christ in view of having the same encounter with God. Prayer and vigorous evangelistic activities as an expression of one's faith are done on a congregational basis where everyone can develop his gift without restriction. This practice has contributed to the growth of Pentecostalism in the communities that are open and communal rather than in those that are individualistic.

Spontaneous Expression of Faith

Emphasis on spontaneous worship is peculiar to Pentecostal missional praxes. Their experience with God sometimes takes a spontaneous dimension and breaks the order of formalities and traditions pertaining to worship (Spittler 1988:413, 414) as the case may be with the main-line churches. Pentecostals do not limit themselves to formalities and customs relating to occasions. According to Spittler, Pentecostal worship is characterised by spontaneous actions. In most cases, their actions come from the perspective of the following scriptures:

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you will abide in Him” (1 Jn. 2:27, NKJV).

“If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged” (1 Cor. 14:30, 31, ESV).

Allan Tippett agrees with Roland Allen that when the Holy Spirit indwells a person, He transforms the person's life and gives him the ability to witness in the context of what Roland Allen called “spontaneous expansion” (Gallagher 2014:4). Anyone familiar with Pentecostal and Charismatic churches will attest to the claims of Spittler in terms of the spontaneous expression of one's faith in Pentecostal worship. It is true to say that Pentecostals tend to depend predominantly on the Holy Spirit for direction in all their activities. In some Pentecostal worship, it is common to see that someone may interrupt the preacher with a song that he feels has been dropped into his heart by the Holy Spirit to complement the message preached.

As they believe in the spontaneous acts of the Holy Spirit, there is no special time allocated for speaking in tongues, prophecy, sacrifice, praying, singing and dancing, or kneeling down to express their experience of their encounter with the Holy Spirit. Even if that time does exist, the congregants are aware that they are not strictly limited to the liturgy of the church at any given moment. For them, the will of the Holy Spirit and the direction that He may want the service to go in a particular circumstance supersedes the status quo making every person at a particular church service to be ready for any direction to which the Holy Spirit may lead the church.

Spittler has noted that Pentecostal worship is practiced in the context of the biblical statement that, “The wind blows wherever it pleases.. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (Jn. 3:8). As a result, anyone sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit must prepare to offer Him a place during every Pentecostal activity. While the Western type of Christian worship is characterised by formalities and liturgies, traditional worship of people in the global south appears to differ. Thus, it can be inferred that this model of spontaneous worship resonates very well with most societies in the two-third world and that might inform the reason for spontaneous growth of Pentecostalism in those parts of the world.

The Quest for Otherworldliness

Some highlights have been thrown on this point when we discussed reliance on the imminence Parousia in Pentecostal mission. However, Spittler’s (1988:416, 417) fourth point is what he calls otherworldliness (heaven) and that tends to centre on eternity, particularly heaven as an eternal abode for the righteous. Pentecostal Christians think about eternity in the context of the following passages:

“we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18, NKJV).

“For the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31, NKJV).

“Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:2, NASB).

Indeed, dreaming about heaven and the need for preparation for eternity in heaven is central to the faith of Pentecostals. Most of their messages highlight the reality of heaven and hell where they strongly agree with Scripture that the righteous in Christ will go to heaven (Matt. 25:46; 2 Pet. 3:13) while the wicked or the ungodly will suffer in hell (Ps. 9:17; Matt. 13:49, 50; 25:41-46).

The propagation of this message by Pentecostals on the mission field may impact people to such an extent that they turn their lives to Christ everywhere that Pentecostals operate. They expose all the implications about eternity as espoused in Scripture to their members and the world and that makes people understand that they are in transit in this world and the best way to live in eternal comfort in heaven is to repent of their sins, denounce ungodliness, accept Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour, and live by the precepts of Scripture. With this model as a major praxis in Pentecostal mission, their mission fronts tend to expand rapidly as many people repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord personal Saviour to avoid eternal damnation in hell.

The Authority of the Bible

Spittler's (1988:418, 419) final point is very important and obvious in Pentecostal missiology. Emphasis on biblical authority is crucial for Pentecostals and it has always been a major doctrine in their discourses and worship. They have absolute respect for the Word of God as they ensure that it is declared authoritatively for every person to submit to it. Spittler states that, of all the four characteristics of Pentecostals that have been mentioned, the emphasis on biblical authority supersedes them all. According to him, Pentecostals commit themselves to the "supreme and the final authority of the Bible" as they ensure that every statement made is backed by Scripture and must be followed to the letter.

Reliance on the authority of Scripture deeply influences all aspects of Pentecostal missiology and practice because for Pentecostals, the Bible is the final authority in every approach, praxis, and strategy of the church. It is against this backdrop that the biblical themes about the Holy Spirit and His activities, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and eternity in Scripture are projected as their key models in their missiology and missional practices.

Other factors such as their “approach towards aggressive evangelism” and “emphasis on holiness and discipline” (Koduah in James McKeown Memorial Lectures, 2004:127) as well as fervent prayers form part of the practices of Pentecostalism. These factors also pose a challenge to Pentecostal missionary activities in this century where the post-modern worldview of subjectivity is rife in the world.

The Ecclesiological Perspective of Pentecostal Mission

Furthermore, Pfister (2000) has observed that one of the heartbeats of Pentecostal mission is the exclusive attention given to the building of local congregations. My own experience within, The Church of Pentecost concurs with Pfister and also explains further that equipping and nurturing the local congregations to be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governance is a vital element in Pentecostal mission. The local congregations serve as the bases for theological education, missionary training, mission promotion activities, and the place of raising financial resources and logistics for the advancement of God’s kingdom.

Since many Pentecostal churches do not receive external assistance for their missionary activities, they tend to empower the local congregation in terms of their theological understanding of the mission mandate given to the church by God, the role of individual Christians in fulfilling that mandate, and the general responsibility of the larger church to redeem the creation of God from perishing. These are some of the cardinal principles of Pentecostal ecclesiology making local congregations very effective and passionate about mission work. For example, members of the local congregations of my Church (The Church of Pentecost) are so passionate about mission work that their willingness to contribute towards the expansion of mission is always very high. They give cheerfully towards mission as the Bible admonishes Christians in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

Emphasis on Spiritual Warfare

Coming from the background of Western philosophy with its Enlightenment ideologies, most of the early Western missionaries in Africa and Asia rejected the reality of indigenous supernatural worldviews. According to Professor Kingsley Larbi, their argument

was that the belief in witchcraft and supernatural powers was just “psychological delusion” (James McKeown Memorial Lectures, 2004:138). In contrast, Pentecostal missionaries saw the need to confront those powers with the power of the Holy Spirit. Larbi posits that Pentecostal missionaries recognised the existence of evil forces as they tended to “place Jesus at the centre of the cosmic warfare as the supreme and conquering Saviour whose power surpasses all” (p. 138). This means that while the missionaries of the main-line churches did not really grasp the deeper spiritual thirst of the indigenous people, the Pentecostal missionaries understood that reality. Referring to a testimony by Peter Anim, who left the Presbyterian Church to form a movement (the Faith Tabernacle Church) that later led to the formation of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Larbi writes:

I was faced with the necessity of contending for a deeper faith and greater spiritual power than what my primary religious experience was able to afford, and I began to seek with such trepidation to know more about the Holy Ghost (James McKeown Memorial Lectures, 2004:139).

According to Larbi, this “internal discontent” and thirst for the power of the Holy Spirit caused a major exodus of believers from the main-line churches to the newly established Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. This reason was one of the major factors that contributed to the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal and the Charismatic movements and the trend continues since people still have spiritual needs to be met.

There is one final point to be made in this section. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the missionary activities undertaken by Pentecostal churches were financed from the resources of indigenous Christians. For example, The Church of Pentecost, which began in Ghana less than a century ago by an Irish missionary, is currently involved in mission work in many countries across every continent in the world, but all their missionary activities are sponsored through the sacrifices of the indigenous Christians. The Church, which is described by Professor Kingsley Larbi (a renowned Pentecostal theologian in Ghana) as “the largest Protestant Church in Ghana” (James McKeown Memorial Lectures, 2004:106) has also been involved in very successful missionary activities. The Church in Ghana has been able

to buy places of worship in Europe, Latin America, Asia and other parts of Africa. This attests to the fact that the impact of the gospel, as propagated by Pentecostal missionaries, on the lives of the indigenous Christian communities is enormous.

It is also worth noting that Pentecostalism, with its steady development, also has some unique approaches that have influenced main-line churches. Anderson's (2010:2) statement captures it well:

Pentecostal churches show a wide variety of forms, from back-room churches with a dozen members directed by one pastor, to mega-churches with millions of members, run as a religious enterprise by CEO-style leaders. This organizational diversity is part of Pentecostals' capacity to adapt to local demands. It also reflects their able use of market strategies and entrepreneurial tools.

A reflection on Professor Larbi's statement will suffice in helping us to understand why Anderson claims that Pentecostalism has greatly influenced the landscape of Christianity:

Major contributions of the Pentecostal movement to Christianity in Africa include liturgical renewal, financial stewardship, and revival of evangelistic fervor.

The evangelical Pentecostals and their forerunners, the Spiritual Churches, are the pacesetters in indigenising Christianity on the continent. Their emergence has sent a clear message that Christianity should not be 'wrapped in foreign clothing,' and that it should be rooted in Christ but related to the culture of the people (James McKeown Memorial Lectures, 2004:141).

In line with this argument, Anderson (2010:3) admits that Pentecostalism has influenced the main-line churches, causing various kinds of reforms such as the establishment of the Charismatic renewal movements that are in the Protestant churches and which were then followed by the Catholic Church. For example, their use of the mass media in sharing the gospel has become a general phenomenon among many main-line churches today.

The Pew Research Center also attests to this claim when it writes that the beliefs and practices of Pentecostals are changing the way

many Brazilian Catholics practice their faith today (2011:45). This phenomenon was identified in the 2006 Pew Forum survey where the research revealed that over half of Brazilian Catholics identify themselves with the Charismatic movement, and participate in practices such as divine healing, and speaking in tongues. These are indications that the missional approach of Pentecostals and even their theological perspective, to say the least, can be a great force to reckon with in this century. However, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements still have much to do in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century because not all their approaches are applicable in this and ensuing generations.

Pentecostal Mission in the Twenty-First Century

Despite the achievements of Pentecostals and Charismatics in the previous century and the beginning of this century, some issues still have to be addressed: How can they sustain their achievements in mission in this century and beyond, if Christ tarries? What will be the general outlook and the growth of their mission work in the years ahead? What are some of the challenges that are already confronting them today which need to be dealt with in order to sustain their growth in the years ahead? The answers to these questions are vital for the sustenance and expansion of Pentecostal mission in this century. In the light of this, some scholars, including Kärkkäinen, (2000), are calling for Pentecostals and Charismatics to evaluate their missiological approaches.

First, Kärkkäinen (2000:34) warns against glorifying themselves in the light of their huge achievements within a short period. The temptation of being complacent leading to the attitude of triumphalism may be high and that can affect their churches. This caveat is necessary because Pentecostals can draw some lessons from the rise and subsequent apparent decline of the main-line churches in some areas of the world. Citing Russell Spittler, Grant McClung Jr. warns against what he calls the “twin perils of triumphalism and elitism” within the Pentecostal and Charismatic circles (Woodberry, Engen, and Elliston 1997:63). One of the major causes of these perils that McClung Jr. talks about may be growing numbers of people within Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. As their numbers continue

to rise, the tendency of being complacent with their growth may be high and that can be very dangerous for the subsequent development of Christian mission.

Another area that Pentecostals ought to consider is to seek ecumenical relationship with the main-line churches because of its importance in global mission. Considering the fact that the main-line churches have been in Christian mission for many centuries before the inception of Pentecostal mission, there is much that the latter can learn from the former for mission and ministry work in general. The twenty-first century Pentecostal mission should not ignore the biblical emphasis on seeing the church as the body of Christ and the significance of uniting to advance the kingdom of God. At times, the solutions to the challenges confronting Christian mission in this century may need an ecumenical approach, particularly where Pentecostals and the main-line churches can meet to learn relevant missional praxes from one another and develop a missiological approach for the way forward.

Second, the world is at a stage of change. From the socio-political systems to religion, everything is vulnerable to the test of time. The socio-political and religious environments in the twentieth-century have shifted greatly and the trend continues. Legal systems, worldviews, and political systems keep on changing and become more complex. Missional practices and mission scenes keep changing and becoming extremely complex. There is no sign to assure the church that these trends will one day reverse or normalise. K.,rkk.,inen (2000:34) has made an astute observation about this development. I think his assertion should be a wake-up call to Pentecostals and Charismatics: “The contexts where Pentecostal mission work started in the first decades of this century have been - and are being - replaced by new complex circumstances.”

While there are opportunities in some of these changes, Pentecostals ought to admit that there are equally obvious threats to their way of mission. When one carefully examines the characteristics of Pentecostal worship and their approach towards evangelism, one would realise that there will be challenges in this century, the prospects notwithstanding. For example, their way of worship (mostly with excessive noise making) may require regulation in some areas of the world in contemporary times.

There must also be a relevant missiological framework to guide the administration of some of the factors that contributed to their aforementioned growth. The crux of the matter is that Pentecostal mission praxis and its doctrines should be fashioned in such a way that they can be missiological viable in twenty-first century mission work.

The issue of doing mission work without adequate preparation in terms of human and financial resources comes to the fore here. If this worked well in the twentieth-century, can it be a viable approach in this century? Today's Pentecostal mission has to answer this question, if it desires to make another landmark in mission in this century. As people become more materialistic and entrenched in post-modern ideologies, even sacrifices towards the advancement of God's kingdom tend to become a challenge.

This calls for the re-evaluation of our application of God's Word to the situation of other people, method of offerings, and the way we handle revelations in the church; all of these are to be theologically examined in the light of the dynamics of society. While we admit that with God all things are possible, it is prudent to seek the wisdom of God to deal with the dynamics of society in which we minister.

A lack of passion for mission is already telling on the activities of some of the main-line churches currently. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, with their great achievements, ought to maintain their passion for mission. As Paul told Timothy "to fan into flame the gift of God" which was in him (2 Tim. 1:6, NIV), so also we can say Pentecostals and Charismatics to fan into flame their passion for mission that has given them a wide swath of territories within a period of one hundred years.

Conclusion

It has been realised from this presentation that Pentecostalism is a force to reckon with in contemporary mission work. The core doctrines and practices of Pentecostalism has shaped Pentecostal mission in ways that have been relevant and contextualised addressing the social and spiritual needs of humanity. The overview of Pentecostalism and its mission praxis discussed in this article present Pentecostal missiology as the basis for filling in some important gaps that had been existing in Christian mission since the early days of modern mission.

Over the years, contextualizing worship in the mission field by the main-line mission churches had been a challenge. Another gap left in Christian mission that was not also thoroughly considered was the emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit in a real sense in the mission field.

However, from a Pentecostal perspective their models of mission are shaped by Pentecostal doctrine and it has been identified that Pentecostal ecclesiology is originally focused on propagating the gospel to win souls for Christ. The local congregation is vital for the equipping of the body of Christ and act as the principal “evangelist” not only towards the propagation of the gospel, but also a mission-training centre from where people could be equipped for missionary work. This model of Pentecostal missiology has been one of the reasons for the significant impact they are able to make on the mission field.

Another core doctrine in Pentecostalism that has been discussed in this presentation is their emphasis on spiritual warfare. With this understanding cutting across Pentecostal missiology, all of human needs, whether infirmities, sickness, and economic setbacks, are confronted as part of the church’s spiritual exercise. We have noticed that with this notion in mind, Pentecostals spend much time praying, seeking for divine power, and reading Scripture to gain insight and also use it as a weapon during spiritual warfare.

In all these understandings and expressions of Christian faith Pentecostal mission as been able to emerge as a significant player in modern mission.

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