

**DISCREPANCIES IN TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION  
WITHIN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY -  
HERMENEUTIC CONSIDERATIONS**

by

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***“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen”*** (1 Tm 1:17).

# **DISCREPANCIES IN TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION WITHIN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY - HERMENEUTIC CONSIDERATIONS**

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## **SUMMARY**

This thesis is an investigation into the discrepancies that exist in textual interpretations within Pentecostalism, in view of the ongoing search for a viable hermeneutic model unique to Pentecostalism.

Since its birth, the modern Pentecostal movement has been influenced by many other theological traditions, especially Covenant theology and Dispensationalism. Nevertheless, from this research it becomes clear that Pentecostals themselves have contributed to the discrepancies by failing to distinguish between biblical passages related to national Israel and those related to the church.

It is factual that cultural differences and theological backgrounds influence the interpretations ascribed to Scripture. Yet, this research found that scriptural interpretive discrepancies exist amongst Pentecostals belonging to the same cultural group and same denomination.

This study presents a new perspective on biblical interpretation for Pentecostalism, namely the Mediatorial View, which when consistently applied to all textual interpretations, most certainly will reduce the number of discrepancies that exist.

**Key Terms:** Pentecostal, Pentecostalism, discrepancies, interpretation, hermeneutic, mediatorial, Israel, covenant, church, Gentiles, pre-tribulation, rapture.

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The theme . . . . .	1
1.1.1 An explanation of terms . . . . .	1
1.1.1(a) Pentecostalism . . . . .	1
1.1.1(b) Classical Pentecostalism. . . . .	2
1.2 Hermeneutics. . . . .	4
1.3 The problem . . . . .	6
1.3.1 Biblical interpretation and discrepancies . . . . .	6
1.3.2 The problem and its cause . . . . .	8
1.3.3 Three schools of interpretation . . . . .	9
1.3.4 Factors contributing to three schools of interpretation . . . . .	10
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>THE INITIAL FORMATION OF THE MODERN PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT . . . . .</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Universal Pentecostalism . . . . .	12
2.2 Pentecostalism in South Africa. . . . .	18

2.3	Pentecostalism's history a contribution to the problem.	21
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>DISPENSATIONALISM</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1	Dispensationalism – A brief description	25
3.2	Dispensationalism and Pentecostalism	26
3.2.1	The origins of Dispensationalism	26
3.2.2	Basic tenets of Dispensationalism	29
3.2.3	Dispensationalist influence on Pentecostalism.	31
3.3	Progressive revelation.	35
3.4	An example – The preaching of John the Baptist and that of Jesus	37
3.5	Summary.	38
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE AND ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM.</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1	A motivational factor for a hermeneutical model	40
4.2	The role of experience and anti-intellectualism in Pentecostalism	41
4.3	The role of emotion in Pentecostalism	47
4.4	The role of emotionalism in Pentecostalism	50
4.5	Illumination of the Word	51

4.6	Summary . . . . .	53
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>THE VIABILITY OF A PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC . . . . .</b>	<b>55</b>
5.1	Towards a Pentecostal hermeneutic . . . . .	55
5.2	Is a Pentecostal hermeneutic viable? . . . . .	56
5.2.1	The influence of postmodernism . . . . .	57
5.2.1.1	Pre-modernism . . . . .	58
5.2.1.2	Modernism . . . . .	58
5.2.1.3	Postmodernism . . . . .	60
5.2.2	The influence of meta-theoretical aspects . . . . .	64
5.3	A response to Newman's questions . . . . .	65
5.3.1	Question 1 – Can there be a unique hermeneutic, which can be especially termed Pentecostal?	66
5.3.2	Question 2 – Does the uniqueness of the Pentecostal Movement demand a particular Hermeneutic to maintain that uniqueness? . . . . .	67
5.3.3	Question 3 – Is the Pentecostal Movement and Pentecostal theology in particular such a special part of the Christian church that it must develop a hermeneutic exclusively its own? . . . . .	69

5.3.4	Question 4 – Does the Pentecostal Movement have an identity and a task apart from the identity and task that belongs to the church universal?	72
5.4	Summary	73
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>THE ACTUAL RESEARCH</b>	<b>75</b>
6.1	The method applied	75
6.1.1	The persons interviewed	76
6.1.2	The set questions	77
6.2	The answers	78
6.3	Confusion more confounded	88
6.4	A holistic approach	90
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>A PROPOSED HERMENEUTIC FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>92</b>
7.1	Introductory remarks	92
7.2	The distinction between Israel and the church - a concise explanation	92
7.3	A bird's eye-view of God's plan for humanity - a narrative	96
7.4	The framework	101

7.4.1	The framework and Christology	101
7.4.2	The framework and soteriology	104
7.4.3	The framework and ecclesiology	107
7.4.3.1	The constitution of the church	108
7.4.3.2	The church a mystery	109
7.4.4	The framework and pneumatology	110
7.4.4.1	The Holy Spirit's work in Christ	111
7.4.4.2	The Holy Spirit at Pentecost	113
7.4.4.3	The Holy Spirit and the believer	116
7.4.5	The framework and eschatology	119
7.4.5.1	The nature and purpose of Christ's second coming	121
7.4.5.1(a)	The nature of His coming	121
7.4.5.1(b)	The purpose of His coming	123
7.5	Summary	125

## **Chapter 8**

### **HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITHIN THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK**

8.1	The illustrative goal	127
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8.2	Systematic review of questions 1 – 4 . . . . .	127
8.3	Systematic review of questions 9 – 24 . . . . .	133
8.4	Summary . . . . .	160
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLE . . . . .</b>	<b>162</b>
9.1	Who reads the Bible? . . . . .	162
9.2	A mediatorial Pentecostal perspective . . . . .	166
9.3	The purpose of creation . . . . .	168
9.4	The Bible and the two covenants . . . . .	171
9.4.1	The Old Covenant . . . . .	174
9.4.2	The incarnation of the Messiah . . . . .	176
9.4.3	The termination of the Old Covenant . . . . .	178
9.4.4	The point in time of termination of the Old and confirmation of the New . . . . .	180
9.5	The implications of the New Covenant . . . . .	181
9.5.1	The New Covenant and Israel . . . . .	182
9.5.2	The New Covenant and the church . . . . .	184
9.6	God’s purpose for Israel . . . . .	185
9.7	God’s purpose for the church . . . . .	188

9.7.1	The church and Israel not equal	193
9.8	Summary and concluding remarks	196
	Bibliography	198
	List of audiotapes	204
	Abbreviations of Bible books	204

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THEME

It is logical that any discussion based on a theological theme can be very extensive and wide ranging. Consequently, in order to avoid this and to concentrate the focus to the purpose of this dissertation, it is essential that the meaning of certain terms discussed herein, namely Pentecostalism, Classical Pentecostalism and Hermeneutics be clearly described at the outset. Accordingly an explanation of each relative term is presented below.

#### 1.1.1 AN EXPLANATION OF TERMS

##### 1.1.1(a) PENTECOSTALISM

Pentecostalism is one stream within evangelicalism with distinctive emphasis on a second experience after conversion, namely the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an endowment of power signified by speaking in tongues (glossalalia) and upon the gifts of the Spirit as listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. This group believes that a person who has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, will manifest one or more of the nine spiritual gifts described in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

**Menzies<sup>1</sup> (1971:67)**, describes the Pentecostal Movement as,

That group of sects within the Christian Church that is characterised by the belief that the occurrence mentioned in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, not only signalled the birth of the church, but also described an experience available to believers in all ages. The experience of an endowment with power, called the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', is believed to be evidenced by the accompanying sign of 'speaking with other tongues' as the Spirit gives utterance.

**Dayton (1987:21-22)** explains that since its beginning, the Pentecostal movement was characterised by an emphasis on evangelistic outreach and Pentecostal mission strategy placed evangelism as its highest priority. Evangelism implied reaching the 'lost' for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Early Pentecostals preached the 'full gospel' or the 'foursquare

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<sup>1</sup> An Assemblies of God historian.

gospel' by which Jesus Christ was declared to be Saviour, Healer, Baptiser in the Spirit and Soon Coming King.<sup>2</sup>

Pentecostalism is arguably the most important mass religious movement of the twentieth century. Today, this movement is the second largest sub-group of global Christianity. **Barret (1996:25)**, a well-known statistician estimates that 6% of the world's Christian population were Pentecostal/Charismatic in 1970 – which implies a figure of 74 million people. This figure increased to 474 million within the next 27 years according to **Barret (1997:24-25)**, and by 1997 he estimated that 27% of the Christian population was Pentecostal/Charismatic.

It is noteworthy that Pentecostalism, unlike other movements, does not owe its existence to dogmatic reasons such as for example, the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Rather, its existence is due to a common experience shared by individuals across the globe, namely the infilling with the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues.

#### **1.1.1(b) CLASSICAL PENTECOSTALISM**

It is important to distinguish between Classical Pentecostalism, Neo Pentecostalism and/or Charismatics in order to eliminate any confusion. The discrepancies in Pentecostal textual interpretation as referred to by the title of this dissertation, will only concern those relative to classical Pentecostalism. However, the statistics presented above by David Barret include a variety of Pentecostal/charismatic movements from all over the world. Although the term 'Pentecostalism' was discussed above, it is important to take cognisance of the following so as to emphasise the importance of distinguishing between classic Pentecostalism and other groups that are viewed as Pentecostal. In reference to defining the term 'Pentecostal', **Anderson (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:19-20)** makes the following statement:

It is not easy to define what is meant by 'Pentecostal', as the term refers to a wide variety of movements scattered throughout the world, ranging from the fundamentalist and white middle class 'mega-churches' to indigenous movements in the Third World that have adapted to their cultural and religious contexts to such an extent that many western Pentecostals would probably doubt their qualifications as 'Christian' movements... some North American classical Pentecostals do not approve of this broad delineation.

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<sup>2</sup> The foursquare gospel is discussed on page 46.

I agree with the North American Pentecostals that this delineation is definitely too broad. A reading of Hollenweger's essay, "*Crucial issues for Pentecostals*",<sup>3</sup> wherein the norms and practices of 'Pentecostals' all over the world is discussed, will more than likely force most classical Pentecostals to a total disapproval of such a broad demarcation. In arguing that the ethical standards are changing according to the context (which I believe is true), Hollenweger refers to current behaviour and standards, which were previously condemned by classical Pentecostals but now seem to be acceptable for them. He refers here to amongst others, cohabitation, polygamy and homosexuality, arguing that the acceptance of this as biblical proves that ethics is culturally conditioned. Nevertheless, within classical Pentecostal belief, God and his Word can never change, nor should He and his laws ever be conditioned by culture. Yet, since some Pentecostals have allowed their ethical standards to be conditioned by culture, Pentecostalism is saturated with pluralism from whence many of the discrepancies in their textual interpretation stem.

**Burgess (1989:219-220)** explains classical Pentecostalism as follows:

The classical Pentecostal Churches, which had their origins in the US at the beginning of the century, have since grown to be the largest family of Protestant Christians in the world. Known at first simply as "Pentecostal" churches, they were given the added designation "classical" about 1970 to distinguish them from Neo-Pentecostals in the mainline churches and the "charismatic" Pentecostals in the Roman Catholic Church.

Classical Pentecostals generally believe that the Bible is the sole basis for authority, are Trinitarian, believe in Divine healing and the majority of them believe in a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. They lean towards a dependency of the teaching of the Word of God for their basis of authority, continually attempting to balance their experiences with the Word of God and rejecting practices that are outside the boundaries of the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. In contrast to this, charismatics seem to lean heavily on "new revelations" and experience as a channel towards the formation of their theological thought.

**Wiles (2001)**, in answering a question put to him regarding the difference between Pentecostals and Charismatics, explains that the further one moves away from Classical Pentecostalism, the more emphasis there is upon subjective "experiences" as a basis of authority and formation of theology. Experience and "new revelation" becomes the guide. The newer groups read and interpret Scripture from the basis of experience. The Classical Pentecostals sought an experience based on what they found in the Scripture

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<sup>3</sup> In Anderson & Hollenweger (1999:176).

**Burgess (1989:130)** explains that the Charismatic Movement, which started in the late 1950's, is understood to refer to what Donald Gee called the new Pentecost because of distinctive Pentecostal blessings and phenomena, such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit outside a confessional or denominational Pentecostal framework

**Möller (1998:181)** views the Charismatics as a number of ministers and members of non-traditional Pentecostal Churches that had the experience of being baptised in the Spirit with the accompanying spiritual gifts. As some mainline churches have revealed a more open and accommodative attitude than before towards the Pentecostal experience, many of these people have remained in their churches.

Besides these Charismatic communities, a number of independent Charismatic churches have been established that are not part of the classical Pentecostal fellowship, nor are they part of the mainline non-Pentecostal churches. These include associations such as the International Federation of Christian Churches (IFCC) and the Church of the Nations (COTN), both strongly represented in South Africa.

In view of the distinctions between Classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement, it is essential that a definite Pentecostal hermeneutic be formulated wherein the classical Pentecostalist belief and understanding of Scripture is presented in such a way so as to enable the reader to identify these distinctions, thereby avoiding any confusion of the two movements.

## 1.2 HERMENEUTICS

The word *hermeneutics* means the art or science of the interpretation of literature. **Ervin (1981, 3:11-25)** states,

The English noun hermeneutics is derived from the Greek *hermeneia*, meaning 'interpretation'. The Greek noun *hermeneia* embraces the whole scope of interpretation, from 'speech' that brings the obscure into the clarity of linguistic expression, to 'translation' from an obscure, foreign language into the clarity of one's own language, and to 'commentary' that explicates the meaning of obscure language by means of clearer language.

Hermeneutics may be defined briefly as the theory of interpretation. Traditionally and until very recently, it has been taken to mean the study of rules and principles for the interpretation of particular texts. But this definition is obviously too narrow. Firstly, hermeneutics concerns not only the interpretation of texts, but the interpretation and understanding of any act of communication whether written or oral, verbal or non-verbal.

Biblical hermeneutics is a specific area that concerns the interpretation, understanding and appropriation of biblical texts. Theorists are no longer content to speak of rules for the interpretation of texts, as if to imply that understanding can be generated merely by the mechanical duplication of purely scientific principles. Hermeneutics raises prior and more fundamental questions about the very nature of language, meaning, communication and understanding. This includes the philosophy of language, theories of meaning, literary theory and semiotics (theory of signs), as well as in biblical hermeneutics, those that also arise in biblical studies and in Christian theology.

In this study, Biblical literature is what we are concerned with. Almost everyone understands that words consist of sounds that one uses in conversation to put ones thoughts (message) across to the listener. These words are conveyed to the listener either as direct speech or in written form. In order for the listener to receive the intended message correctly, the speaker will order his words in a certain way (sentences) so as to make them understandable. Thus sentences are formed in such a way so as to convey the thoughts of the speaker.

**Deist (1986:23)** maintains that the words used in sentences, are not only ordered in a certain way but the sentence as a whole has a function within the given situation. As an example of this function, he uses the sentence "The door is wide open", applying different situations to it. In one given situation the words, "The door is wide open", could mean that the wooden frame that is normally used to cover an opening in a wall is not in its place. In another situation, the same words could imply something totally different. If someone were enquiring about career opportunities in a certain field and the words, "The door is wide open", were used in a sentence as an answer to the enquiry, it would mean that there are many opportunities available in that field.

It is clear from this illustration that the situation or context at any given moment is important in the interpretation of spoken words and literature. Without background knowledge of the context wherein words were uttered or written, one would not know what the true meaning of the conveyed message was. In addition to this, literature makes use of metaphors, proverbs,

poetry and many other styles of communication in the process of conveying thoughts. Literature is therefore subject to set rules of interpretation and these rules also apply to biblical interpretation, commonly known as biblical hermeneutics.

Thus stated in simpler terms, hermeneutics is a way of describing a set of rules that we use for interpreting Scripture. These rules constitute a hermeneutic model, the framework within which we understand the Bible. **Faupel (1980:51)** describes the functions of models as follows:

When a student of medicine seeks to learn about the human anatomy, he studies not only the individual organs of the body, but also the ways those organs are fit together to function as an organic whole. When the linguist begins to learn a new language, she studies the individual components such as phenomena, morphemes, etc., but she also seeks to discover the overarching structure into which these components are built. So too, I believe, that the budding historian in seeking to understand and interpret a movement, should also attempt to grasp the framework into which those units are built.

In this dissertation the terms '*hermeneutic*' and '*hermeneutic model*' will in most instances refer to a specific hermeneutic model, for example a Pentecostal hermeneutic model, a Feminist hermeneutic model or Protestant hermeneutic model. The theological connotation will be added as and where required.

### **1.3 THE PROBLEM**

#### **1.3.1 BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND DISCREPANCIES.**

During informal discussions of the Bible and the beliefs to which it gives rise, people are often heard to say that, "Everyone interprets the Bible in their own way". On the one hand this statement does contain an element of truth. People from different cultures and traditions have a different understanding of the Bible. Yet, on the other hand the statement may be misleading as it implies that there is no common ground for understanding the Bible, no way of evaluating an applied method of interpretation and that one person's 'interpretation' of a given passage, is as sound as another's.

Of greater concern is the fact that Christian ministers and Bible students who study the Bible academically, also apply their own interpretation to a given text and more than this, they work on the assumption that some interpretations are 'better' than others. Obviously, where there is more than one interpretation and meaning ascribed to the same text, differences and discrepancies will be normality. This is more than likely the reason that led to the birth of countless and various Christian denominations within Christendom. These denominations, although 'unified' by their relation to the Biblical text and their belief in the fundamental doctrines thereof, do, however, experience diversity.

As freedom implies laws and rules without which the concept of freedom is absurd, so too does unity imply diversity. If there is no diversity, it makes the concept of unity absurd. Put another way, freedom can only be experienced in the cadre of rules and regulations. Likewise, unity can only be experienced in the cadre of diversity. Our misapprehension of the term "unity" has often resulted in a misapprehension of the concept "the unity of the church". The general perception is that "unity" is synonymous to "uniformity". This perception, however, does not make provision for diversity. It must be remembered that unity does not necessarily imply uniformity.

**Evans (1994:174)** states that,

The universality of the church involves, on the one hand, a most solid unity, and on the other, a plurality and diversification, which do not obstruct unity, but rather confer upon it the character of communion.

Nevertheless, although diversity is found within the church universal, a doctrine of legitimate diversity in one church does seem paradoxical. In theory a church such as for example the Full Gospel Church, which adheres to the same confession nationally, should reveal uniformity to this confession in practice and in the interpretation of the Biblical text. However, this is not always the case. Admittedly there are elements that play a decisive role in diversity within one church (e.g. culture; belonging to a socio-cultural order; tradition; etc.), but here we must bear in mind the fact that 'culture does not build the Church; only the Word of God can build the Church, or put another way, the church is not built on culture, but on the Word of God.

**Heyns (1977:15)** maintains that,

The Church is alive which is continually engaged with its confession; maintaining it, defending it, preaching and teaching it, *testing it against Scripture...*<sup>4</sup> When this is not done it more than often leads to differences and discrepancies amongst adherents of the same denomination.

According to **Sykes (1980:295)**, the word discrepancy means differing and/or inconsistent. The research in this study, has been done in view of the fact that differences and inconsistencies exist within the interpretations or meanings ascribed to certain biblical texts by Pentecostals and in the application of such texts. Admittedly after twenty centuries of theological debate, it is evident that there will never be total agreement on the interpretations applied to biblical texts by theologians/Bible students. Nevertheless, one would expect - and most certainly the people filling the pews would expect - that the interpretations and meanings applied to certain passages of Scripture by students partisan to the same theological school of thought, should at least be in agreement with regards to content and application. Unfortunately this is not the case within Pentecostalism and more than likely, not the case in any other theological group.

### **1.3.2 THE PROBLEM AND ITS CAUSE**

The research of this study is limited to the discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism. Although amongst others, it is the people in the pew that are asking for clarity and one-mindedness from the pulpit, especially in the view of the fact that the persons in the pulpit are appealing to the same Bible for truth, the issue will be presented here at an academic level. Once consensus on the matter is arrived at, a presentation may be compiled for the people in the pew. Although identifying a useful Pentecostal hermeneutic will not in itself ensure a solution to all the discrepancies, it may serve as a helpful guide through which to sift the Biblical data.

My personal interest in the problem and my quest for a solution thereof, stems firstly from the fact that within the FGC<sup>5</sup>, church members transferred from one assembly to another arrive there with such differing views on certain biblical teachings, that one wonders whether they did indeed belong to a FGC assembly previously. Secondly, I have heard many sermons and teachings on equivalent texts delivered by FGC and other Pentecostal ministers and the discrepancies are phenomenal.

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<sup>4</sup> Italics inserted for emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa.

Not only are these discrepancies in textual interpretations noticed as one moves from pastor to pastor, but even in the delivery of a single sermon inconsistencies are perceptible. Besides this, the liturgical style and methods of worship differ from congregation to congregation. Whereas some of the congregations tend to adopt a liturgy and style of worship based on the traditional reformed liturgical method, others make use of a liturgy and worship style that may include something from Jewish customs, such as the blowing of the ram's horn and the celebrating of the Old Testament feasts, to the modern day tendency of the waving of flags and the rhythmic 'up-beat' modern day 'gospel-rock' music, often resembling a non-Christian disco. It may be true that culture does play a major role in liturgy and worship styles, but the disturbing fact is that even within the same cultural groups these discrepancies are present.

In view of the above it would be impossible for any contemporary researcher contemplating hermeneutics to disregard the many exegetical eccentricities that are heard from Pentecostal pulpits, resulting as these so often do, in confusion and indistinctness. This forces one's thoughts back to a statement made by Menzies<sup>6</sup> and referred to in a later chapter, namely *"Will Pentecostals be able to hand on to the next generation a solid rationale for their belief and practice?"* I believe that the answer to this question is dependant on whether or not Pentecostals can produce a hermeneutic of their own, a set of rules and principles that they will employ in their biblical interpretation and whereby ongoing discrepancies within textual interpretation may be minimised if not completely eliminated.

Unfortunately the limitation placed on this dissertation will not allow a detailed explanation on every point of controversy, therefore this study will be limited to the most apparent factors of inconsistency as identified by the author, factors mainly relevant to Pentecostal ecclesiology and eschatology and the relationship that exists between these two disciplines. It is here, I believe, that the problem for many of the discrepancies within Pentecostalist interpretation is to be found.

### **1.3.3 THREE SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION**

As was mentioned in the introductory remarks to this study, it is my opinion that a major discrepancy contributing to the problem stems from the fact that on the one hand, most Pentecostals differentiate between Israel and the church, yet fail to maintain this distinction

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<sup>6</sup> See the full statement by Menzies on page 40.

in their interpretation or exegeses of certain biblical texts. These Pentecostalists maintain that the church in contrast to Israel, which is an Old Testament entity, was only constituted after the resurrection of Christ and that almost all biblical text before this constitution dealt primarily with Israel. In other words, these Pentecostals maintain that the church was a mystery (hidden, unseen) before the resurrection of Christ. Yet, at times they interpret various texts relevant to the period prior to the unveiling of the mystery (church) as if relevant to the church.

On the other hand, there is a second group of Pentecostalists that makes no distinction between Israel and the church, but rather, to a certain extent - whether consciously or unconsciously - adhere to a form of Reformed theology in which the church is equated with Israel. Obviously this lack of distinction is perceived in all their dealings with Scripture. Besides the two 'schools' mentioned above, there is a third group of Pentecostalists that makes a definite distinction between Israel and the church and consistently apply this distinction throughout their teachings and ministries.

Any theologian or keen student of the Bible will realise that these varying interpretations found in Pentecostalism will most certainly produce discrepancies in textual interpretation and in the application thereof. This is why, to my mind, one of the main contributing factors to all the discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism, is the fact that there are (at least) these three different views within Pentecostalism with regards to the relationship between the church and Israel.

#### **1.3.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THREE SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION.**

This brings us to the question as to the cause of the existence of these three schools. Why are there different views within Pentecostalism with regards to the relationship between Israel and the church and what factors have contributed to the situation? Although numerous factors may be listed as being instrumental to the formation of the current situation, I am convinced that three are well worth mentioning, namely (a) the initial formation of the modern Pentecostal movement; (b) the role of Dispensationalism; (c) the role of experience and anti-intellectualism.

In the following chapters, these three identified factors are discussed in detail. Chapter two briefly, yet informatively, focuses on the history of the initial formation of the modern Pentecostal movement, explaining why the author believes that it is precisely this history that more than likely is a major contributing factor to the existing problem. Chapter three focuses on the role of dispensationalism in relation to the problem. Chapter four entails a discussion of the contribution to the problem caused by experience and anti-intellectualism. In chapter five the focus is on a brief enquiry as to the viability of a Pentecostal hermeneutical model.

To illustrate the fact that there are discrepancies within Pentecostal ranks with regards to certain Biblical texts, the procedural research of this study included a certain amount of pragmatic research. This consisted of a questionnaire containing twenty-four questions, mostly relating to Pentecostal ecclesiology and eschatology, which was asked to various Pentecostal leaders during personal interviews arranged with them. The questions asked and the answers received during these interviews, which were recorded on audiotape, are fully presented in chapter six while a proposed hermeneutic is presented in chapter seven. Chapter eight consists of a review of the illustrative research and finally, chapter nine proposes a new perspective on the Bible. The term “illustrative research” is used to indicate that the supposition on which this thesis is based, does not depend on the research, but rather that the research illustrates the truth of the supposition.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE INITIAL FORMATION OF THE MODERN PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

#### 2.1 UNIVERSAL PENTECOSTALISM

In this chapter, I briefly present a historical overview of the modern Pentecostal movement, the roots of which in a certain sense extend back to the Day of Pentecost, the influence it had on other theological groups and most important, the way in which the movement was influenced by other Christian traditions. This discussion is essential for determining the causes of the discrepancies found within the textual interpretations of Pentecostalism, the research problem of this study.

The Pentecostal experience, namely of being baptised in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of 'glossalalia' (speaking in tongues), owes its origin to the happenings on the Day of Pentecost as described by Luke in Acts 2. There appears to be an 'apparent silence' between the Pentecostal experience as recorded in the book of Acts and the modern Pentecostal movement which more than likely owes its origin to the Azusa Street experience in the early 1900's. Yet there is some witnesses of a continuation of the Pentecostal experience during this interim period.

**Gromacki (1971:12)** refers to Irenaeus (115-202 AD), who was a student of Polycarp of Smyrna, and states,

After some missionary service, he became Bishop of Lyons in France. His refutation of Gnosticism, *'Against Heresies'*, is regarded as his most important work. In his book he wrote the following comment upon First Corinthians 2:6. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God.

**Du Plessis (1984:3)** quotes Walker's reference to Montanus, a priest that operated in Phrygia during 156 AD:

It was this thought of the special dispensation of the Holy Spirit, combined with a fresh outburst of the early prophetic enthusiasm, and a belief that the end of the World-age was close at hand, that were represented in Montanism.

**Latourette (s.a.128)** has the following to say about Montanus:

At his baptism Montanus spoke with tongues and began prophesying, declaring that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, promised in the Gospel according to John, was finding utterance through him.

In reference to the post-Reformation period, **Nicholl (1966:21)** made the following statement:

The history of the Christian church since the reformation thus contained some evidences of a revival of interest in and practice of Pentecostal gifts. Ira Martin suggests that since the Reformation brought the Bible to the common man and preached the need to recover and reproduce the character of first century faith and practice, the reappearance of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit was inevitable.

**Möller (1975:10)** is of the opinion that although church history testifies of sporadic and limited occurrences of charismatic outbursts in certain religious circles (Montanism, Anabaptists, certain Huguenots, Irvingites, etc), these do not stand in direct relationship to the modern Pentecostal movement. There may well be similarities between the earlier and modern Pentecostal religions, but there is not much indication of a causal relationship between them. The historical roots of the Pentecostal movement are found mainly in the experiences of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The above opinion of Möller must not be misunderstood as if to mean that there is various causes for the Pentecostal experience, as recorded in Acts and experienced throughout the ages since. There is only one 'cause' for the Pentecostal experience and that is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by God on the Day of Pentecost. The 'cause' of the modern Pentecostal movement, however, stems from a spiritual revival of the Pentecostal experience that occurred in Topeka, Kansas.

According to **Packer (1988:502)**, the origin of modern Pentecostalism is often dated to 1 January 1901, when Miss Agnes Ozman, a student at Bethel Bible College, Topeka, Kansas, spoke in tongues after the principal, Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929), laid hands on her and prayed for her to receive the power of the Spirit. Henceforth, for Pentecostals the supreme sign of being baptised in the Spirit would be speaking in tongues. This is considered to be the gateway to a vivid experience of God, lively worship, the gifts of the Spirit, especially divine healing and power for Christian witness and service.

**Burgess (1989:660)** records that J R Goff (Jr) writes the following of Parham:

Born amidst a panorama of religious ideas and persuasions he connected the basic tenets that later defined the movement: evangelic style conversion, sanctification,

divine healing, pre-millennialism, and the eschatological return of the Holy Spirit power evidenced by glossalalia.

In an Internet article<sup>7</sup> titled "*The origins of the Pentecostal movement*", **Vincent Synan** gives the following information, which although rather lengthy, is worthy of and relevant for inclusion in this study.

Although the Pentecostal movement had its beginnings in the United States, it owed much of its basic theology to earlier British perfectionist and charismatic movements. At least three of these, the Methodist/Holiness movement, the Catholic Apostolic movement of Edward Irving, and the British Keswick "Higher Life" movement prepared the way for what appeared to be a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit in America.

Perhaps the most important immediate precursor to Pentecostalism was the Holiness movement that issued from the heart of Methodism at the end of the Nineteenth Century. From John Wesley, the Pentecostals inherited the idea of a subsequent crisis experience variously called "entire sanctification," "perfect love," "Christian perfection", or "heart purity". It was John Wesley who posited such a possibility in his influential tract, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766). It was from Wesley that the Holiness Movement developed the theology of a "second blessing." It was Wesley's colleague, John Fletcher, however, who first called this second blessing a "baptism in the Holy Spirit," an experience which brought spiritual power to the recipient as well as inner cleansing. This was explained in his major work, *Checks to Antinomianism* (1771). During the Nineteenth Century, thousands of Methodists claimed to receive this experience, although no one at the time saw any connection with this spirituality and speaking in tongues or any of the other charisms.

In the following century, Edward Irving and his friends in London suggested the possibility of a restoration of the charisms in the modern church. A popular Presbyterian pastor in London, Irving led the first attempt at "charismatic renewal" in his Regents Square Presbyterian Church in 1831. Although tongues and prophecies were experienced in his church, Irving was not successful in his quest for a restoration of New Testament Christianity. In the end, the "Catholic Apostolic Church" which was founded by his followers, attempted to restore the "five-fold ministries" (of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) in addition to the charisms. While his movement failed in England, Irving did succeed in pointing to glossolalia as the "standing sign" of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, a major facet in the future theology of the Pentecostals.

Another predecessor to Pentecostalism was the Keswick "Higher Life" movement which flourished in England after 1875. Led at first by American holiness teachers such as Hannah Whitall Smith and William E. Boardman, the Keswick teachers soon changed the goal and content of the "second blessing" from the Wesleyan emphasis on "heart purity" to that of an "endowment of spiritual power for service." Thus, by the time of the Pentecostal outbreak in America in 1901,

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<sup>7</sup> [www.faith-movement.com](http://www.faith-movement.com)

there had been at least a century of movements emphasizing a second blessing called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" with various interpretations concerning the content and results of the experience. In America, such Keswick teachers as A.B. Simpson and A.J. Gordon also added to the movement at large an emphasis on divine healing "as in the atonement" and the premillennial rapture of the church.

Since Pentecostalism began primarily among American holiness people, it would be difficult to understand the movement without some basic knowledge of the milieu in which it was born. Indeed, for the first decade practically all Pentecostals, both in America and around the world, had been active in holiness churches or camp meetings. Most of them were either Methodists, former Methodists, or people from kindred movements that had adopted the Methodist view of the second blessing. They were overwhelmingly Armenian in their basic theology and were strongly perfectionistic in their spirituality and lifestyle.

In the years immediately preceding 1900, American Methodism experienced a major holiness revival in a crusade that originated in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania following the Civil War. Begun in Vineland, N.J in 1867 as the "National Holiness Camp Meeting Association," the holiness movement drew large crowds to its camp meetings, with some services attracting over 20,000 persons. Thousands claimed to receive the second blessing of sanctification in these meetings. Leaders in this movement were Methodists such as Phoebe Palmer, (also a leading advocate of women's right to minister), John Inskip, a pastor from New York City, and Alfred Cookman a pastor from New Jersey.

From 1867 to 1880, the holiness movement gained increasing force within the Methodist churches as well as in other denominations. During this period, many holiness advocates felt that this movement might revive the churches and bring new life to Christianity worldwide. After 1875, the American holiness movement, influenced by the Keswick emphasis began to stress the Pentecostal aspects of the second blessings, some calling the experience "Pentecostal sanctification." An entire hymnody was produced which focused on the upper room and a revolutionary "old-time Pentecostal power" for those who tarried at the altars. Holiness writers, celebrating the second blessing as both a cleansing and an endowment of power, produced practically all the hymns of the early Pentecostal movement.

The holiness movement enjoyed the support of the churches until about 1880 when developments disturbing to ecclesiastical leaders began to emerge. Among these was a "come-outer" movement led by radicals who abandoned any prospects of renewing the existing churches. Led by such men as John B. Brooks, author of *The Divine Church*, and Daniel Warner, founder of the "Evening Light" Church of God in Anderson, Indiana, this movement spelled the beginning of the end of the dream of remaking the churches in a holiness image. At the same time, other radicals began promoting such new teachings as "sinless perfection," a strict dress code of outward holiness, "marital purity," and a "third blessing" baptism of fire after the experience of sanctification.

The first Pentecostal churches in the world were produced by the holiness movement prior to 1901 and, after becoming Pentecostal, retained most of their perfectionistic teachings. These included the predominantly African-American Church of God in Christ (1897), the Pentecostal Holiness Church (1898), the

Church of God with headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee (1906), and other smaller groups. These churches, which had been formed as "second blessing" holiness denominations, simply added the baptism in the Holy Spirit with glossolalia as "initial evidence" of a "third blessing."

Pentecostal pioneers who had been Methodists included Charles Fox Parham, the formulator of the "initial evidence" theology; William J. Seymour, the pastor of the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles who spread the movement to the nations of the world; J.H. King of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, who led his denomination into the Pentecostal movement in 1907-08; and Thomas Ball Barratt, the father of European Pentecostalism. All of these men retained most of the Wesleyan teaching on entire sanctification as a part of their theological systems. In essence, their position was that a sanctified "clean heart" was a necessary prerequisite to the baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Other early Pentecostal pioneers from non-Methodist backgrounds accepted the premise of second blessing holiness prior to becoming Pentecostals. For the most part, they were as much immersed in holiness experience and theology as their Methodist brothers. These included C. H. Mason (Baptist), of the Church of God in Christ, A.J Tomlinson (Quaker), of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), B.H Irwin (Baptist) of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, and N.J. Holmes (Presbyterian) of the Tabernacle Pentecostal Church. In the light of the foregoing information, it would not be an overstatement to say that Pentecostalism, at least in America, was born in a holiness cradle.

From this lengthy but informative statement presented by Synan, it is clear to see that the roots of the modern Pentecostal movement can be traced to a number of various Christian denominations or groups. Despite the fact that the persons affiliated to the new movement more than likely all experienced the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" with the evidence of speaking in tongues, they each had a theological 'background' or paradigm to which they adhered. This implies that the modern Pentecostal movement consisted of people with differing theological views and hermeneutical methods, a fact that even to this day has had an enormous influence on the Pentecostal movement, the consequences of which are still present within Pentecostalism today.

Nevertheless, **Conn (1977:75)**, a church historian of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), agrees with Synan, namely that the origin of this church was due to the Holiness movement and was established in 1886. However, it was only in 1896 that the newly established church experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Conn writes,

The people earnestly sought God and the interest increased until unexpectedly like a cloud from a clear sky, the Holy Ghost began to fall on the honest, humble, sincere seekers after God. While the meetings were in progress one after another fell under the power of God, and soon quite a number were speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. It should be noted that this happened in

1896 – ten years before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in California in 1906, which is popularly regarded as the beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement.

Nonetheless, **Möller (1998:180)** is of the opinion that it was only with the so-called “Azusa Street Mission” in Los Angeles, California, that the Pentecostal movement experienced its first upsurge. The name “Azusa Street Mission” is derived from the experiences that occurred between 1906 and 1909 in an old building, which was previously a Methodist Church, located at 312 Azusa Street. Under the ministry of a holiness preacher from Texas, William J. Seymour, special manifestations of the Spirit occurred. Many persons were saved and healed, and numbers were baptised in Spirit and experienced the accompanying tongues, including Seymour himself.

It is clear as was mentioned previously, that amongst others, Pentecostalism grew out of the Holiness revival during the second half of the nineteenth century. This revival, according to **Dieter (1996:199)**, was an expression of both social and theological discontent among some of America’s lower and middle-class groups. Holiness advocates disapproved of the impiety in mainline denominations and were alienated by the growing wealth and elaborateness of their churches. Not content to remain in mainline churches, they formed new religious communities committed to the theological doctrine of perfectionism.

**Burgess (1989:221)** adds that it was the poor and disinherited people from the mainline churches that initially experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, primarily those from the Methodist and Holiness movements that flourished in the late nineteenth century. The first avowedly Pentecostal Churches were the Pentecostal Holiness Church led by Joseph King, the Church of God (C.G. Cleveland, Ten) led by A S Tomlinson, and the Church of God in Christ led by C H Mason. These churches were formed as Holiness denominations before the advent of the Pentecostal Movement.

By 1906 the Pentecostal Movement had extended beyond the borders of the Holiness Movement and Pentecostal churches could be found all over America and in many other countries of the world. Pentecostal churches were formed that had no connection to the Holiness Movement. Of these **Burgess (ibid:221)** states,

In time Pentecostal converts without roots in the Holiness Movement formed newer churches. Led by E N Bell, the Assemblies of God was formed in 1914 to serve those from a baptistic background. Other churches of this type were the Pentecostal Church of God, founded in 1919 by John Sinclair, the International

Church of the Foursquare Gospel founded by Aimee Sempel McPherson in 1927, and the Open Bible Standard Churches formed by an amalgamation of two smaller organisations in 1935.

From its beginning, the Pentecostal movement was characterised by an emphasis on evangelistic outreach. As was mentioned earlier,<sup>8</sup> Pentecostal strategy placed evangelism as its highest priority. Evangelism was seen as reaching the 'lost' for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. According to **Hollenweger (1972:34)**, the beginning of North American Pentecostalism in 1906, in the Azusa Street revival of Los Angeles, resulted in a category of ordinary but 'called' people - called 'missionaries' - fanning out to every corner of the globe within a remarkably short space of time. 'Mission' was mainly understood as 'foreign mission' (mostly from 'white' to 'other' peoples), and these 'missionaries' were mostly untrained and inexperienced. Their only qualification was the baptism in the Spirit and a divine call. Their motivation and task was to evangelise the world before the imminent coming of Christ, therefore evangelism was more important than education or 'civilisation'.

## 2.2 PENTECOSTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The way for Pentecostalism in South Africa was paved by the revivals in the Cape linked to the ministry of Dr Andrew Murray (**cf Saayman 1991:47-52, 147**). P L le Roux, ex-Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) missionary, who had been trained in Andrew Murray's Mission Institute in Wellington, experienced several revivals, both among his Black missionary charges and among their White masters. Healing played a major part in Le Roux's ministry and because of this, he soon came into conflict with the DRC. He resigned from the DRC in 1903 and started an independent faith ministry. He had contact with two Zionists,<sup>9</sup> Buchler and Bryant. The latter baptised Le Roux, his wife and 141 followers by immersion in July 1904. Le Roux then became a member of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion.

According to **Synan (2001)**, African Pentecostalism owed its origins to the work of John Graham Lake (1870-1935) who began his ministry as a Methodist preacher, but who later prospered in the business world as an insurance executive. In 1898 his wife was miraculously healed of tuberculosis under the ministry of divine healer Alexander Dowie, founder of a

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<sup>8</sup> See discussion on page 1.

<sup>9</sup> Christian Zionism (not to be confused with Jewish Zionism) originated with a healing movement linked to John Alexander Dowie, a Scottish Congregational minister who broke away from his church and founded the Christian Catholic Church in Zion City (near Chicago, USA) in 1896 (**De Wet 1989:25**).

religious community called "Zion City" near Chicago, Illinois. Joining with Dowie, Lake became an Elder in the "Zion Catholic Apostolic Church". At one point, Lake testified to an instant experience of entire sanctification in the home of Fred Bosworth, an early leader in the Assemblies of God. In 1907 he received the Pentecostal experience and spoke in tongues under the ministry of Charles Parham, who visited Zion while the aging Dowie was losing control of his ministry. Out of Zion also came a host of almost 500 preachers who entered the ranks of the Pentecostal movement, chief of whom was John G. Lake.

After his Pentecostal experience, Lake abandoned the insurance business in order to answer a long-standing call to minister in South Africa. In April 1908, he led a large missionary party to Johannesburg where he began to spread the Pentecostal message throughout the nation. Coming with him was his wife and seven children, as well as Holiness evangelists, Thomas Hezmalhalch and J.C. Lehman. Only Lehman had been to Africa before 1908, having served for five years as a missionary to the Zulus. Hezmalhalch, lovingly known as "Brother Tom," was born in England and was sixty years of age when he arrived in South Africa.

Before the end of his first year in South Africa, Lake's wife died, some believed through malnutrition. Lake nevertheless succeeded in founding two large and influential Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa. The white branch took the name "Apostolic Faith Mission" (AFM) in 1908, borrowed from the name of the famous mission on Azusa Street. This is the church that eventually gave David du Plessis to the world as "Mr. Pentecost". The Black branch eventually developed into the "Zion Christian Church" (ZCC), which by 1993 claimed no less than 6,000,000 members and despite some doctrinal and cultural variations, was recognized as the largest Christian church in the nation. In its annual Easter conference at Polokwane, this church gathers upwards of 2,000,000 worshippers, the largest annual gathering of Christians on earth

According to **Du Plessis (1984:39)**, by 1910 two mainline Pentecostal Churches had been formed in South Africa, namely the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), which Le Roux joined in 1908, and the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa (FGC). The AFM, which was formed in 1908, was followed two years later by the formation of the FGC.

**Clark<sup>10</sup>** confirms that the first Pentecostal preachers arrived in South Africa in 1908. They were John G. Lake, a Canadian-born American who began to emphasise divine healing in his

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<sup>10</sup> Internet article by **Mathew Clark** – [www.apt.edu.com](http://www.apt.edu.com)

ministry, and Tom Hezmalhalch. After a visit to Azusa Street, Lake and Hezmalhalch were led by God to preach together in South Africa.

Lake's powerful preaching of the Full Gospel found massive acceptance in the fluid social situation. His ministry attracted Afrikaners and Blacks, the Blacks in particular being noticeably impressed by the emphasis on healing. Le Roux and other Zionist preachers and believers were soon drawn to Lake and the Zionist groups provided the infrastructure for the furtherance of the movement. After a hugely successful ministry in Johannesburg, in which the Zion church building became the central tabernacle of the movement, the Pentecostal witness was spread throughout the land by lay preachers.

**Du Plessis (1984:33)** dates the constitution of the FGC as April 1910. This constitution was due to the ministry of a Scottish born American preacher, namely George Bowie. He came to South Africa in 1909 and started a missionary society called the Bethel Pentecostal Mission (BPM). In August 1910 Bowie was introduced to Eleazer and Elizabeth-Anne Jenkins, a Welsh couple that had arrived in South Africa on 20 July 1910. They were both converts of the great Welsh revival of 1904. Initially they settled in Mayfair, Johannesburg, but later relocated to Vrededorp. It was here that Elaeazar Jenkins started conducting open-air meetings. Bowie was so impressed with the work that Jenkins had done that he invited him to join forces with the BPM.

In 1910 Archibald Cooper, previously a member of the AFM, joined Bowie and Jenkins. Later Cooper split from the BPM and formed a group called the Church of God.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after this, however, reconciliation between the two groups took place and a new movement called the FGC was formed.

The AFM and the FGC are at present the two largest Pentecostal churches in South Africa, the AFM being the larger of the two. The only articulated doctrinal difference between the two churches, is the mode of water baptism. The AFM practise a threefold immersion probably inherited from Zionism, while the FGC immerse only once. In recent years there have, however, been unsubstantiated rumours that the AFM no longer teach belief in the Rapture of the church in their theological seminary. In contrast to this, the FGC proclaim and teach a pre-tribulation Rapture of the church.

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<sup>11</sup> See note 10 on page 19.

Other Pentecostal churches in South Africa include the Assemblies of God (AOG), initially started as a missionary movement, which is predominantly an English Pentecostal church; the Pentecostal Protestant Church (PPC) which came into being due to a schism in the AFM in the 1950's; the Latter Rain Church which was founded by a certain Mrs Frazer, a previous member of the AFM. According to Clark,<sup>12</sup> she claimed that "the AFM was spiritually moribund and that God had chosen her to revive it". In 1928 she led a group of woman into conflict with the local congregational authorities and subsequently with the general church administration. Eventually a group under her leadership broke away from the AFM and formed the Latter Rain Church. Their blue dresses and hats identify the women in this church, the men wear khaki shirts and trousers. The dress of the women has led the group being popularly identified as '*blourokkies*' (Blue Dresses)."

### **2.3 PENTECOSTALISM'S HISTORY A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM**

Since the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts, there have been references to individuals who shared the same or similar experience. Yet it is to the second half of the nineteenth century that the roots of the modern Pentecostal movement can be traced. As was mentioned above, people from various groups such as the Methodists, the Holiness movement, the Presbyterians and the Keswick movements, experienced the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and the subsequent glossolalia.

The obvious consequence of the fact that the Pentecostal movement owed its origin to an occurrence that was experienced by individuals and groups of people from a variety of denominational backgrounds, is without doubt a major contributing factor to the discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism. Suddenly there was a group of people who adhered to an existing theology such as Methodism or Presbyterianism, who had now received a new experience that was in most cases not 'catered for' in the theology that they adhered to.

This implies that the religious world now had Methodist theology plus glossolalia; Catholic theology plus glossolalia; Keswick theology plus glossolalia; etc. In South Africa it was more than likely Covenant theology plus glossolalia. Unfortunately these movements each had a theology of their own, not one of which seems to have fully 'provided for' or accommodated

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<sup>12</sup> See note 10 on page 19.

the Azusa Street experience, namely the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Sadly, since the happenings of Azusa street, it seems that no definite Pentecostal theology or hermeneutical method has been formulated – an urgent need of the Pentecostal movement – although it has been a debateable issue amongst both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals for the past number of years. This meant that the people who experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit – the Pentecostal experience of Acts 2 – had to justify their experience within a non-Pentecostal theological framework. The impossibility of such a task, can only be understood when one bears in mind that for most Pentecostals the specific issue is the belief or teaching that glossolalia is the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism – a baptism to which non-Pentecostal theology ascribes a totally different meaning. **Clark (1997:53)** states that,

The fact that since the Pentecostal movement did not commence on the basis of a formulated confession distinct from other groups in Christianity, its earlier teachers and scholars have often presented their arguments in the mould of non-Pentecostal theologies.

**Lederle (1983:86)** refers to two statements made by Pentecostal leaders that clearly show how the modern Pentecostal movement was influenced by their initial history. Firstly, he quotes Hart:

As regards salvation by justification, we are Lutheran. In baptismal formula we are Baptists. As regards sanctification we are Methodists. In aggressive evangelism we are as the Salvation Army. But as regards the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we are Pentecostal...

Secondly, he quotes international Pentecostal leader David J. du Plessis, known as ‘Mr Pentecost,’ as saying of the Pentecostals:

They have the Anglicans’ creed and sense of God’s greatness; the Congregationalists’ belief that Christianity is a layman’s religion; the Quakers’ practice of waiting for the Holy Spirit; the Bretherens’ emphasis on the word of God; their own unequalled zeal for evangelism plus the power of the Apostles received at Pentecost.

**Horak (1990:2)**, in reflecting on the origin of the modern Pentecostal movement, refers to Jonker who mentions that Methodism is undoubtedly the mother of Pentecostalism and that close ties were found with the Wesleyan-Holiness movement.<sup>13</sup>

The Wesleyan-Holiness churches and the non-Wesleyan (or Reformed) Baptist group are most likely the two main doctrinal streams that influenced Pentecostal doctrine. The

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<sup>13</sup> Translation my own.

Wesleyan-Holiness group, in contrast to the Methodist tradition that accepted sanctification as an ongoing process, maintains that sanctification is a “step” or crisis experience. The non-Pentecostal Holiness churches teach a two-step model for the Christian life, namely first conversion and secondly sanctification as a “second blessing” at a certain moment in time, thereby doing away with indwelling sin.

The Pentecostal churches within the Holiness group - often labelled as the “perfectionists” - maintain a three-stage approach. To the first two steps described above, they add a third, namely baptism with the Holy Spirit. In a certain sense this third step seems to relate to the Keswick doctrine. The Keswick group taught a baptism with the Holy Spirit after rebirth, but denied the second step of the eradicating indwelling sin.

**Lederle (1983:88)** states that:

The interesting thing about this three-stage approach is its lack of originality. The first two stages come directly from the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, the third from the Keswick-Holiness tradition.

On the one hand, the above statement highlights the fact that the Christian traditions instrumental to the origin of modern Pentecostalism, has had a major influence on theological Pentecostal thought. Yet on the other hand the accusation made by Lederle, namely that there is a lack of originality within the three-step approach, is perhaps a little insensitive if one bears in mind that the Pentecostal experience was a “new experience”, experienced by non-Pentecostals adhering to a non-Pentecostal theology. Therefore this new experience had to be logically explained and incorporated into a non-Pentecostal theological tradition.

Pentecostal churches that adhere to the Wesleyan-Holiness teaching on sanctification, include the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), the Church of God in Christ (Memphis, Tennessee), and the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

The non-Wesleyan Pentecostal churches are associated with the approach of W H Durham, who according to Hollenweger (see Lederle *ibid*:88), may be considered the only original theologian of the American Pentecostal movement. He maintained that Christ’s work on Calvary was a finished work and thus could not accept the Wesleyan-Holiness doctrine of two stages of sanctification. He viewed sanctification as a life long process that begins at conversion. Yet he reserved “Baptism” with the Holy Spirit as the second stage, implying by this the empowerment by the Spirit with the glossolalia as initial evidence.

In America, The Assemblies of God are the main denomination in this group, while in South Africa the AFM and the FGC may be considered a fair continuation of the non-Wesleyan Holiness tradition. Although the FGC amalgamated with the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), they do not maintain the same view in regard to sanctification. The FGC view sanctification as a process while the Church of God views it as a crisis experience.

From the above discussion, it is obvious that modern Pentecostalism is strongly influenced by the theologies and theologians that were in existence at the birth of the movement. Although the last part of the discussion focused only on the doctrine of sanctification, it is obvious, however, that discrepancies are present. These discrepancies are evident in numerous other Pentecostal teachings (e.g. the relationship between Israel and the church) and are still a modern day problem within Pentecostalism as is proved by the empirical research done, which is discussed in chapter six. Nevertheless, as was mentioned at the end of chapter one, dispensationalism has also played a major role in contributing to the problem and in the following chapter this influence is fully discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISPENSATIONALISM

#### 3.1 DISPENSATIONALISM – A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Dispensationalism is a theological method that is based on the view that God's dealings with humanity has proceeded through well-specified time-periods, which are referred to as dispensations. In each of these periods or dispensations God reveals a particular purpose to be accomplished in that period, to which humanity responds in faith or unbelief. This has led to dispensationalists being accused of teaching that there is more than one way of salvation, an accusation that is denied by dispensationalists, admitting only that the content of faith varies according to the revelation given in each dispensation.

Scriptural support for this view is based on passages that distinguish between ages past (e.g. Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:26;), the present age (e.g. Rm 12:2; Gl. 1:26;) and the age to come (Eph. 2:7; Heb 6:5;). Dispensationalists do, however, differ in the identification of the dispensations, although these are most commonly identified as the dispensation of innocence (Adam before the fall), of conscience (Adam to Noah), of promise (Abraham to Moses), of the Mosaic Law (Moses to Christ), of grace (Pentecost to the rapture) and finally of the millennium.

The basic hermeneutical principle of dispensationalism is literal interpretation, which does not rule out symbols, figures of speech and typology, but does insist that throughout scriptural interpretation the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved is determinative. This is sometimes also known as the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. However, this hermeneutical principle does not imply that literal interpretation is the exclusive property of dispensationalism. It is a principle used by dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists, the difference being the measure of consistency to the principle. **Ryrie (1965:89)** has the following to say in this regard:

What, then, is the difference between the dispensationalists' use of this hermeneutical principle and the non-dispensationalists'? The difference is that the dispensationalist claims to use the normal (*literal*)<sup>14</sup> principle of interpretation consistently in all his study of the Bible. He further claims that the non-

<sup>14</sup> The word in brackets is added for clarification. Ryrie previously refers to literal interpretation as normal interpretation.

dispensationalist does not use the principle everywhere. He admits that the non-dispensationalist is a literalist in much of his interpretation of Scriptures, but charges him with allegorising or spiritualising when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy. The dispensationalist claims to be consistent in his use of this principle, and he accuses the non-dispensationalist of being inconsistent in his use of it.

According to **Ryrie (*ibid:97*)**, literal interpretation implies that the Scriptures are accepted at face value, which in turn leads to the recognition of distinctions therein, such as that in the New Testament Israel does not mean the church and vice versa. Of course the distinction made between Israel and the church is a crucial fact in dispensationalism and also plays a major role in Pentecostalism. In fact, this distinction between Israel and the church, or the neglect thereof, is the purpose of this study and it is my opinion that this seems to be a major contributing factor leading to discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism.

### **3.2 DISPENSATIONALISM AND PENTECOSTALISM**

In view of the above, it is imperative to this study that more be said of the relationship between Pentecostalism and Dispensationalism. To do this in a meaningful way, necessitates firstly that the origins of dispensationalism be briefly explained. Once this is done, a better understanding of the relationship between Pentecostalism and Dispensationalism will be possible and also the measure to which Pentecostalist thought has been influenced by Dispensationalism.

#### **3.2.1 THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM**

In a chapter on the origins of dispensationalism, **Ryrie (*ibid:68-70*)** mentions historical references dating back to the writings of the apologists, which were eventually systemised into dispensationalism. Amongst those that he mentions, is Justin Martyr's (110-165) "*Dialogue with Typho*", wherein he said:

For if one wish to ask you why, since Enoch, Noah with his sons, and all others in similar circumstances, who neither were circumcised nor kept the Sabbath, pleased God, God demanded by other leaders and by giving the law after the lapse of so many generations, that those who lived between the time of Abraham and of Moses be justified by circumcision and the other ordinances – to wit, the Sabbath, and sacrifices, and libations, and offerings..."

Furthermore, Ryrie also refers to the writings of Irenaeus (130-200), Clement of Alexandria (150-220), who distinguished three patriarchal dispensations, and Augustine (354-430), who too reflects on these early dispensational concepts in his writings, which include the following statement:

The divine institution of sacrifice was suitable in the former dispensation, but is not suitable now. For the change suitable to the present age has been enjoined by God, who know infinitely better than man what is fitting for every age, and who is, whether He give or add, abolish or curtail, increase or diminish, the unchangeable Creator of mutable things, ordering all things in His providence until the beauty of the completed course of time, the component parts of which are the dispensations adapted to each successive age, shall be finished, like the grand melody of some ineffably wise master of song, and those pass into the immediate eternal contemplation of God who here, though it is a time of faith, not of sight, are acceptably worshiping Him.... There is no variableness with God, though in the former period of the world's history He enjoined one kind of offerings, and in the latter period another, therein ordering the symbolical actions pertaining to the blessed doctrine of true religion in harmony with the changes of successive epochs without any change in Himself. .... If it is now established that that which was for one age rightly ordained may be in another age rightly changed, - the alteration indicating a change in the work, not in the plan, of Him who makes the change, the plan being framed by His reasoning faculty, to which, unconditioned by succession in time, those things are simultaneously present which cannot be actually done at the same time because the ages succeed each other.

**Ryrie (*ibid*:70)** maintains that in referring to these early Church Fathers, he is not implying that they were dispensationalists in the modern sense of the word, however, the fact of the matter is that some of them enunciated principles that later developed into dispensationalism and furthermore, that they held to primitive or early dispensational concepts.

**Showers (1991:28)** maintains that the first person to develop a dispensational system for the interpretation of Scripture, was the French philosopher Pierre Poiret (1646-1719). In 1687 his work entitled "*Divine economy: or an universal system of the works and purposes of God towards men demonstrated*", was published in Holland. In this work, Poiret developed a scheme of seven dispensations covering the scope of Scriptures and history.

**Ryrie (1965:72,73)** explains that two volumes entitled "*A complete history or survey of all the dispensations*", totalling about 790 pages and written by John Edwards (1639-1716), was published in 1699. His purpose in these books was "to display all the transactions of Divine providence relating to methods of religion, from the creation to the end of the world, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation". Isaac

Watts (1674-1748), the famous hymn writer and theologian, presented an essay entitled "*The harmony of all the religions which God ever prescribed to men and all His dispensations towards them*", which contained a systemisation of six dispensations.

Nonetheless, it was during the nineteenth century that John Nelson Darby (1800-1892), a member and key leader of the Plymouth Brethren, played a major role in developing, systemising and spreading modern Dispensationalism. The origin of the Plymouth Brethren seems to be somewhat obscure, since it was the result of an amalgamation of a number of independent church groups. According to **Bass (1981:64)**, early leaders were amongst others, A N Groves, B W Newton, W H Dorman, E Cronin, J G Bellet and S P Tragelless. It appears as though Groves, who had been involved in mission work, initiated the movement after he had met a group of Christians in Dublin "... *who desired to see more devotedness to Christ and the union among all people of God*". He convinced them to partake of the Lord's Table together and thus the first step toward Brethrenism was taken.

In 1827, Darby, who had been a member of the Church of England, was seemingly persuaded by Bellet to join the group. Soon another group under the leadership of Cronin, a former Catholic, followed them. Thus, originally the Brethren seem to be an ecumenical group of which the only prerequisite for membership is faith in Christ and sanctification as defined by the group itself. Darby, who became a leader of the Plymouth Brethren, published his first article of Dispensational nature in 1836, entitled "Apostasy of successive dispensations". These articles were later to be collected into thirty-two volumes, namely "*The collective works of J N Darby*".

**Cox (1974:77)** maintains that Darby was generally accepted as the father of modern dispensationalism. He and his group claimed that they had received *rediscovered truths*, which were proclaimed by the apostles and that were even unknown to the Reformers. There was a great interest in the end-times within the group and Darby's systematic dispensational scheme contributed to a more reasonable understanding of the eschatological events.

Since the early twentieth century, according to **Showers (1991:28)**, dispensationalism has been developed and promoted further through amongst others, the work of Cyrus Ingerson Schofield (1843-1921), who published a reference Bible in 1909, supporting

the system of Darby. Schofield was a Congregationalist pastor who had previously been a student of a Presbyterian pastor, Dr James H. Brookes, who taught Schofield the Scriptures and Dispensationalism.

**Ryrie (1965:76)** maintains that Schofield did not follow Darby's teachings, but rather if any, that of Watt's. He argues that the "glib statement" that dispensationalism originated with Darby, whose 'system was taken over and popularised by Schofield, is not historically accurate'. He makes this statement on the grounds that Dispensational concepts were taught by men who lived long before Darby, adding that although the systemisation of dispensationalism is charged to be recent by its opponents, it is so closely related to eschatology that it would be expected not to be systemised until recent times, simply because eschatology was not under discussion until then.

**Herholdt (1987:23)** maintains that the increasing interest in eschatology of Darby's day can mainly be ascribed to the two world wars and the high expectation of the Second Advent, which apparently was a motivational factor towards holiness within groups such as the Plymouth Brethren.

Another influential dispensationalist was Clarence Larkin, who in 1918 published the book, "Dispensational Truth". It contained a large number of graphical charts depicting the view of Larkin and promoting the dispensational method of interpretation. Besides this book, Larkin published a number of other books of similar nature amongst which were expositions of Daniel and of Revelation. Later dispensationalists such as L S Chafer, Dwight Pentecost and John F Walvoord, published more literature promoting the dispensationalist teachings. Currently dispensational books and writings are published on a regular basis and because of all the published works, the theological world has most certainly noted that dispensationalism is a stream within recent hermeneutical systems and methods that cannot be ignored.

### **3.2.2 BASIC TENETS OF DISPENSATIONALISM**

Among the basic tenets of dispensationalism are the following, which I have briefly summarised:

(a) The Bible must be interpreted literally whenever this does not result in a ludicrous situation. A slogan common to most dispensationalists is: When the plain sense makes

good sense, seek no other sense. This is particularly the case when interpreting Biblical references to Israel. The term *Israel* must always refer to the actual nation of Israel, ethnic Israel, the Israel that traces its physical descent back to Jacob, (or as God came to call him, Israel). It never refers to spiritual Israel. All prophetic Scripture is to be treated similarly.

(b) The second tenet of dispensationalism is a sharp and definite distinction between Israel and the church. This is regarded as basic to any correct understanding of Scripture. The implication is that the term *Israel* is always understood in the most literal fashion possible - namely as ethnic, national and political Israel - and never in a spiritualised sense - namely the church. This implies that God's promises to Abraham and his seed must be literally fulfilled in the actual people of Israel and since some of these promises have not been fulfilled as yet, they must be fulfilled at some future point in time. Thus, God must yet have a time of special dealing with his covenant nation. The church is totally unforeseen in the Old Testament. This is partly because it is an entity distinctive to this present age and partly because of its basis or manner of origin.

Three proofs are presented to substantiate this: (i) *The mysteriousness of the church*. Paul described it as a mystery "hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to the saints" (Col. 1:26). (ii) *The beginning of the church*. Paul taught that there is a necessary relationship between the church and Christ's resurrection and ascension. The church is built upon His resurrection, for the Lord is made the Head of the church after *God raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places* (Eph. 1:20; cf. 22-23). (iii) *The Baptising work of the Holy Spirit*. The church did not begin until Pentecost. At his ascension the Lord spoke of this baptism as yet future and unlike anything that his disciples had yet experienced (Ac 1:5). Acts 11:15-16 teaches that Pentecost fulfilled this Promise of the Lord. Paul explained that this baptism places people in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Since the church is the body of Christ, it could not have begun until Pentecost.

(c) Dispensationalism distinguishes between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. According to **Schofield (1909:996)**, the kingdom of heaven is Jewish, messianic and Davidic. It has been promised to David and this promise entered the New Testament period absolutely unchanged. It was at hand from the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry, until the rejection of the King, at which point it was postponed. It

will be realised in the millennium. The kingdom of God, in contrast to that of heaven, is universal. It includes all moral intelligences willingly subject to the will of God, whether the church, past or future saints from all dispensations and angels. This implies that all dispensations of human history may be termed dispensations of the kingdom of God (:1226).

(d) For dispensationalists, the Millennium is a literal thousand-year period when Christ shall reign on earth. It is part of God's plan to restore national Israel to its favoured place in God's economy. It is during the millennium that God will fulfil his promises to Israel. The millennium therefore has a very Jewish tone. In dispensationalism, the millennium is an integral part of one's theology and of one's understanding of the Bible and the purpose thereof becomes clear, whereas in other forms of premillennialism the purpose of the millennium seems to be unclear.

### 3.2.3 DISPENSATIONALIST INFLUENCE ON PENTECOSTALISM

Certain factors within dispensationalism (such as, amongst others, its distinction between the Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church, and the method of interpretation employed, namely literal interpretation) were analogous to that of the Pentecostal movement. Yet, it is important to state that at its origin the modern Pentecostal movement was not dispensationalist. The movement, distinct to other religious groups, was born due to a spiritual revival and not because of a formulated doctrine. People from various denominations experienced the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and thus the "new" Pentecostal movement was composed of people with various doctrinal backgrounds. The only common factor was apparently the 'gifts of the Spirit', while the only confession that seems to have been adopted by the majority of them, was the basic christological confession known as the Foursquare Gospel.<sup>15</sup> It seems that there was a definite attempt to avoid doctrinal issues that may lead to schisms. **Bartelman (1962:95)** makes the following statement, which reflects the mind-set of the early Pentecostal movement:

Doctrine after all, is but the skeleton of the structure. We need flesh on the bones, the Spirit within, to give life. What the people need is the living Christ, not a dogmatic, doctrinal contention.

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<sup>15</sup> A description of the foursquare gospel is given on page 46.

Thus, it is reasonable to accept that the early Pentecostal movement was saturated with differing theological viewpoints due to the influx of believers from the various traditions. Yet, since modern Pentecostalism was hesitant in entering the theological arena and therefore did not have a well-formulated theology of their own, it seems that they resorted to dispensationalism in order to logically and methodically explain their beliefs.

This hesitancy of the modern Pentecostal movement towards the field of theology must, however, be understood in view of the nature of their origin. The movement was constituted in a milieu of revivalism wherein subjective experience, evangelical preaching, a call to holy-living, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, glossolalia and the emphasis on 'end-time' happenings, enjoyed prominence. It seems that there was no occasion for theological discussion and most probably no capability thereto, as early Pentecostals more than likely were not interested in theological academics. This could be ascribed to the fact that at its origin, the purpose of Pentecostalism was not to stand apart from existent churches, but only to strive for the restoration of the work of the Holy Spirit within these churches. However, since this was not acceptable to the relevant churches, the Pentecostals were forced to establish their own religious groups.

To be a witness for Christ though, implied that knowledge of the Biblical text was essential. Dispensationalism provided a system of Biblical interpretation that was simple and easily explicable and thus appealed to Pentecostalism. This could be the reason why early Pentecostal pastors adopted the works of writers such as Larkin and Schofield, as they offered Pentecostalism a system whereby they could understand Bible prophecies concerning the 'last-days', which featured so prominently at the time.

In a chapter discussing the influence that Fundamentalism had on the Pentecostal movement, and in referring to the Bible conferences of the Fundamentals, **Menzies (2000:20)** states that:

It is particularly significant that the Bible study method most readily adopted in the conferences and as a basis for curriculum in the Bible institutes was Schofieldian dispensationalism..... Schofield's dispensational system provided for lay people an easily understood method of Bible study and by this means made the message of the Bible available to the average person, a message easy to share with neighbours and friends.

The modern Pentecostal movement borrowed heavily from the Fundamentals, who were a Christian group dissatisfied with the secular influence of modernism on the church and society. Fundamentalists adhere to the literal method of scriptural interpretation, a major characteristic of dispensationalism. Since the rise of dispensationalism roughly paralleled that of the fundamentalist movement, it virtually became the official theology of fundamentalism. These characteristics contributed to the fact of Pentecostalism being highly influenced by dispensationalism.

**Lederle (1986:85)**, in discussing Evangelicals and Fundamentalists, believes that Pentecostals are more akin to Fundamentalism. He lists the following “more specific marks” of Fundamentalism and adds that these traits are also represented in Pentecostal theology:

- (a) an insistence on the inerrancy rather than just the infallibility of Scripture. This view derives from the reformed rationalism of early Princeton theology and its protagonists decline to use historical-critical methods of exegesis;
- (b) a dispensational eschatology, derived from Darby, which includes a premillennialist approach;
- (c) a cultural alienation and legalistic moralism inherited from American revivalism and the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition of the late nineteenth century.

However, while being so deeply influenced by dispensationalism, Pentecostals have had to face conflicting ideas. Dispensationalism teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy and glossolalia are not for the latter church age, but was discontinued after the apostolic age. These, in stark contrast, are the distinctive characteristics of the Pentecostal movement, who obviously maintain that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially prophecy and tongues, did not cease after Pentecost.

**Blumhofer (1989:153)** states:

While they unquestionably embraced most of Darby’s view of history, early Pentecostals rejected his insistence that the ‘gifts’ had been withdrawn. They introduced into his system their own dispensational setting where the gifts could again operate in the church. The device through which they legitimated those gifts was their teaching on the latter rain.

The metaphor “Latter Rain” is taken from Deuteronomy 11:10-15 and interpreted as an Old Testament type for the church by some Pentecostals. If the church would serve him with all their heart and soul, he would give to them a spiritual ‘latter rain’ or revival. Since these Pentecostals interpreted the book of Acts as recording the ‘early rain’ of the

Holy Spirit on the church, the ‘latter rain’ would logically be the revival of the gifts and phenomena of the book of Acts. This teaching of the ‘latter rain’ and its implications is more than likely the reason why Pentecostals are separated from Fundamentalists.

**Blumhofer (*ibid*:193)** goes on to say:

Dispensationalism, as articulated by Schofield, understood the gifts of the Spirit to have been withdrawn from the church. Rejecting the latter rain views by which Pentecostals legitimated their place in God’s plan, dispensationalists effectively eliminated the biblical basis for Pentecostal theology; and although Pentecostals embraced most of Schofield’s ideas (and enthusiastically promoted the Schofield Reference Bible in their periodicals), they remained irrevocably distanced from Fundamentalists by their teaching on the place of spiritual gifts in the contemporary church.

**Lederle (1983:122)** maintains that despite the dispensationalist influence on Pentecostalism, strange though it may seem, it is the classical dispensationalists who are most strongly opposed to Pentecostalism. It seems that this opposition stems from the fact that the theory of dispensations implies that the charisms became extinct at the end of the apostolic era, when the canon of Scripture had been concluded and the apostles had all died.

Although dispensationalism is not generally accepted as a formal doctrine, yet in Pentecostal preaching dispensational premises are often functional. This is especially true in relevance to ecclesiology and eschatology where it emerges as dispensational premillennialism. In fact, dispensational hermeneutics are so deeply rooted in Pentecostalism that one cannot meaningfully discuss Pentecostal theology apart from dispensationalism.

No trace of dispensationalism is found in the creed of the AFM, since it is an adaptation of the Dutch Reformed confession of faith, originally compiled by Guido de Bres in 1561. Even so, dispensationalism *does* function in the eschatology of AFM pastors, as will be clearly seen later in this study from the empirical search results, and may be seen in the publications of the late Pastor Bennie Kleynhans.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to this, the FGC doctrine is unmistakably founded on dispensationalism. The dispensational distinction between Israel and the church; the exclusive limitation of the church to the New Testament; the rapture of the church at the end of the church dispensation and the literal futuristic millennium all serve as proof hereof and are so recorded in the FGC

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<sup>16</sup> A number of publications on eschatology have been written by Bennie Kleynhans, who tragically died in a motor accident at the time of writing this thesis.

constitution.<sup>17</sup> In addition to this, Dispensationalism is presented as prescribed subject for ministerial candidates by the FGC theological colleges.

It is important, however, to emphatically state that although Pentecostalism has adopted the dispensational system of interpretation in order to logically explain their understanding and interpretation of Scripture, in the true sense of the word Pentecostals cannot totally be equated with dispensationalists, as the dispensationalists maintain that the activities of the Holy Spirit as manifested through the gifts and distinctive to Pentecostalism were terminated after the apostolic era.<sup>18</sup> In view of the above and the fact that Reformed theologians agree with the dispensational teaching that the gifts were discontinued after the apostolic age, consequently thereby separating or drawing a definite line between the events of Pentecost and those thereafter, one may rather allocate the title of dispensationalists to the Reformers.

### 3.3 PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

That Pentecostalism has been influenced by dispensationalism, may also be ascribed to the fact that both schools teach the 'progressive revelation' of God's eternal purpose for humanity. In his foreword to Ryrie's book (Ryrie 1965:8), Frank Gaebelin maintains that *"dispensationalism is not a theology but rather a method of interpretation helpful in grasping the progress of revelation in the Bible..."*

Progressive revelation is the understanding that God's message and eternal plan for humanity was not given in one single act, but that it has unfolded in various successive acts wherein God has operated via the minds and hands of people from various cultures and backgrounds. Hebrews 1:1 and many similar passages of Scripture confirm this. In fact, the Bible as a whole confirms that God has gradually revealed more and more of himself to humanity as the ages have progressed. An example of this is the relationship between Abraham and Moses. The Law of God was given to Moses at Mount Sinai, a law that Abraham was not subjected to. Jesus Christ's incarnation and earthly ministry is another of the many examples that can serve as proof of God's progressive Revelation. Before this great event humanity, could not know what God was like. God had not revealed himself to us as he did at and after the

<sup>17</sup> Art. 2.22; 2.23 pages 37-38 of the draft constitution of the Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa, 1997, Irene: Pretoria.

<sup>18</sup> Herholdt (1990:10) remarks that Pentecostalism had to modify Dispensationalism with regards to pneumatology, a fact that proves the inadaptability of the two schools. (Translation my own).

incarnation. Surely we must all agree that we know more of God's character now than people did before Christ's first advent. Put another way we may ask: "If Christ was not incarnated, would the world not have been less informed as to the character and mind of God?"

To my mind there is, however, a distinction between the dispensational and the Pentecostal understanding of progressive revelation. This distinction can clearly be seen in the pneumatological aspect. Dispensationalism is not *per se* charismatic. As was previously stated, dispensationalists maintain that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased after the completion of the canon of Scripture, i.e. after the apostolic age. This implies that within dispensationalism, there is a definite "line-of-division" between the apostolic age and the current church age. Pentecostals differ from this view in that they believe that the gifts never ceased after the apostolic age, but rather that the dispensation of grace (or of the church) was ushered in by the gifts, and seeing that we are still in the church dispensation these gifts are still manifested and available to all believers of this age as a continuation of the Spirit's work.

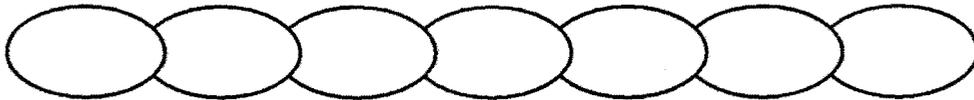
With regards to the above, **Lederle (1983:122,123)** makes this meaningful remark:

The amazing thing to me as an a-millennialist is that so many Charismatics should favour dispensationalism. It is the classic dispensationalists for instance... who are most strongly opposed to both Pentecostal and charismatic theology. The theory of dispensations usually implies that that the charisms became extinct at the end of the apostolic era, when the canon of Scripture was concluded and the apostles had all died.

While dispensationalists and Pentecostals both maintain that God has revealed himself through progressive revelation, the Pentecostals have adapted the dispensational idea so as to accommodate the unique Pentecostal understanding of progressive revelation. In contrast to the dispensationalists who draw a "definite dividing line" between the dispensations (such as a hot knife dividing butter), Pentecostals tend to adhere to what I would call "transitional progressive revelation". By this term it is meant that whereas dispensationalists see the progressive revelation of God in definite demarcated dispensations, most Pentecostals would see an "overlapping" occurring between dispensations. Sketch 1 and sketch 2 (below) illustrate this difference.

**Sketch 1**

*Progressive revelation as seen by dispensationalists – each dispensation clearly distinguished.*

**Sketch 2**

*Transitional progressive revelation as seen by Pentecostals – each dispensation “overlapping” the next.*

Transitional progressive revelation can be seen in the progression of every dispensation as it develops into the dispensation following it. Although it will not be possible to fully explain this principle as it relates to each dispensation in this study, an example of transitional progressive revelation is presented below as it is understood by some Pentecostals with regard to the progression from law to grace (or from Jew to Gentile), as described in the gospel of Matthew.

### **3.4 AN EXAMPLE - THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THAT OF JESUS**

According to Mt. 3:1-2 and 4:17 both John and Jesus have the same message – “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. This, of course, has a very Jewish flavour to it, as it was the kingdom that they were anticipating. In Mt. 10:5-7 Jesus sends forth the twelve with the distinct command that they should go only to the ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’ and proclaim that the “kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Here it is clearer than ever that the message is meant for the Jews.

In Mt. 9:35 we are told that Jesus travelled between the cities and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people. At this time the Baptist was in prison, but recalling the prophecy of Isaiah 35:3-5 as to the distinguishing

characteristics of the coming kingdom, he sent his disciples to Jesus to enquire whether he was the expected Messiah or should they expect another (Mt.11:2-3). The prophecy of Isaiah was made to the Jews and the sign that the Messiah had come, was to be amongst others that the sick, blind and lame would be healed. Christ's reply to the Baptist was a confirmation that he was the one that the Jews were expecting (Mt 11:4-5). Yet, because of their unbelief and their failure to accept Jesus as their Messiah, Jesus changes the procedure of his dealings with the Jews as can be seen from Matthew 11. Verses 16-19 describe this failure and in versus 20-24, Jesus issues his woes against the Jews because of their unbelief. From hereon a transition in Christ's ministry is notable. In Matthew 12 he transgresses the law regarding the Sabbath and thereby reveals that he is moving toward a position of disassociation from the Jews and association with the Gentiles. In Mt. 12:18-21 a favourable reference illustrating the transition from the Jew toward the Gentiles, is seen.

Starting at Matthew 13, Jesus presents the parables that clearly show this transition from the Jew to the Gentile. Likewise, we have the story of the Canaanite woman in 15:21-28, who was not Jewish, yet she received healing for her daughter. In 16:21 Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem to be crucified at the hands of the Jews. This is followed in 21:33 by the parable of the vineyard, which Jesus concludes by telling the Jews that the kingdom shall be taken away from them and given to another people. The transitional progressive revelation from Jew to Gentile is unmistakably evident in these passages. After his crucifixion, Jesus changes the command given to his disciples previously, namely to proclaim the kingdom of heaven to the house of Israel only, by now commanding them to go to all nations, teaching and baptising them. This same system of transitional progressive revelation is evident in the Pentecostal understanding of Pneumatology and the continuation of the charisms throughout the church age.

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

It is most certain that dispensationalism has presented Pentecostalism with the basics needed to theologically explain their understanding and interpretation of Scripture in a systematic and logical way. Yet, it will definitely be a contradiction of terms to speak of a "dispensationalist-Pentecostalist", as classical Pentecostals most certainly make a distinction between Old and New Testament pneumatology. Pentecostals adapt dispensationalism in such a way so that the dividing principle whereby dispensations are

identified, clearly emphasises the uniqueness of the New Testament ministry of the Holy Spirit. This implies that the Holy Spirit must be understood in terms of dispensationalism. The revelation that was given when the dispensation was set in motion, is relevant throughout the dispensation. This presents us with a Pentecostalism that has an adapted model of dispensationalism.

Although Pentecostalism could accommodate dispensationalism due to certain similarities that could be of assistance for Pentecostal hermeneutics, dispensationalism nevertheless inherently differs with relation to the essence of Pentecostalism. According to **Herholdt (1990:9)**, dispensationalists are apocalyptically, visionary and objectively inclined, while Pentecostals are more charismatic and subjectively inclined.

**Sheppard (1983:5)** refers to the relationship between Pentecostalism and dispensationalism as 'an uneasy relationship', maintaining that Pentecostals were not originally dispensationalist-fundamentalists and that attempts to embrace such views have raised new problems for the identity of Pentecostals, hermeneutically, sociologically and politically.

Pentecostals will however only be able to solve these identity related problems once they have formulated a pneumatological orientated hermeneutical model. **Herholdt (1990:9)** adds that despite this, a major objection against dispensationalism from a Pentecostal perspective is that it is a rigid "borrowed theology" that has vetoed Pentecostalism from formulating a systemised theology of its own, based on a pneumatological reading of the Bible. This fact together with all the other influential factors mentioned up to now in this study, is more than likely the cause for many of the discrepancies found in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXPERIENCE AND ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM

#### 4.1 A MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR FOR A HERMENEUTIC MODEL

Since its introduction, the modern Pentecostal movement has grown from a small number in the early 1900's to a significant force within Christendom. However, despite its rapid growth both here in South Africa and throughout the rest of the world, Pentecostalism still lacks a well-formulated theology of its own. While it is true that Pentecostals have impacted many other Christian traditions, it is also true as discussed above, that they have, in like manner, been influenced by other traditions.

With regards to Pentecostalism, **Menzies (2000:9)** states that,

... In spite of its vitality and growth, the future of the movement is uncertain. This is largely due to the fact that theology gives direction to our experience and praxis, and the theological legacy of Pentecostalism is ambiguous. Pentecostals have been known for their spiritual vitality, not their theological prowess or intellectual rigor. But history tells us that without a strong theological base, enthusiastic movements dissipate or evolve in other directions. Thus, the future of the Pentecostal movement remains uncertain. As the movement heads into the twenty-first century, it faces a genuine challenge: Will Pentecostals be able to hand on to the next generation a solid rationale for their belief and practice?

This statement is a motivational factor that emphasises the urgency for the formation and articulation of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, which can furnish Pentecostalism with the necessary principles of interpretation. It is these principles that must then guide and govern Pentecostals towards the formulation of a system of theology. Hermeneutic principles should be determined before the systemisation of theology, but unfortunately in practice the reverse is usually true. Most Pentecostals know something about the doctrines they believe and confess, but know very little about the hermeneutics on which they have been based. This is due to the fact that in their relationship with the Word, some Pentecostals employ a pragmatic method of application. By this is meant that reason<sup>19</sup> is subordinate to the Pentecostal experience, for instead of working from doctrine to experience, these Pentecostalists work from the experience to doctrine.

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<sup>19</sup> Here taken to refer to a logical well-articulated systematic theology.

## 4.2 THE ROLE OF EXPERIENCE AND ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM IN PENTECOSTALISM

In this sense, experience refers to a person's encounter with God, whereby one is to have experienced the power of God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. This experience could be amongst others an inner transformation termed as "being born again" (Jn. 3:3); it could be the endowment with power from on high termed "Spirit Baptism" (Ac 1:5); it could be a miraculous healing (Jn 16:18b). Whatever the case may be, it is a principle of Pentecostalism that there is a transcendent God who is "not out there somewhere" and inaccessible, but rather God who is in the "here and now" and is involved in the lives of humans, is active and wants to act dynamically in the lives of all people. Pentecostalism is therefore an experience due to an encounter with God as revealed by Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, since Pentecostalism lacks a well-articulated hermeneutic model, some Pentecostals violate the Bible by elevating the experience above biblical logic and teaching. This is especially true in 'experiences' *other* than the fundamental or normative experiences mentioned above - the consequences of an encounter with God – that cannot be harmonised with Scripture or theologically explained. An example of such experiences is the recent phenomenon of the "Toronto Blessing",<sup>20</sup> experiences such as receiving 'gold fillings' in teeth and the provision of plastic buckets into which 'patients' can vomit demons. 'Preachers,' many of whom do not call themselves Pentecostal but rather "Third Wavers", propagated this phenomenon and although the propagators thereof may not have thought themselves to be Pentecostal, their 'teachings' did infiltrate Pentecostal churches and influenced a great number of Pentecostals.

**Hollenweger (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:180)**, in his critique of these so-called "Third Wavers", maintains that they see the world as a cosmic and moral duality with no room for the natural. Everything is either divine or demonic. They reject historical critical research in favour of their own experience and, believing that they are successful, they see no need to ask the truth questions, which is of course a syncretism that is no longer theologically acceptable. **Gordan Fee (1976:122)** believes that in a sense the Pentecostal tends to exegete experience rather than the Bible.

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<sup>20</sup> See a detailed discussion on page 48.

**Dr Mathew Clark (1997:2)**, a lecturer at the AFM Theological College in Johannesburg, South Africa, since 1984, states that,

I have long been aware that the Pentecostal movement has never formally spelled out its approach to the Scriptures, and that Pentecostal hermeneutics has become a 'burning issue' during the last decade and a half of Pentecostal studies.

It is my opinion that in their interpretations of Biblical texts, many Pentecostals have not clearly demarcated or grasped the framework of which these texts are a part. The reason for this deficiency, could be ascribed to the fact that for Pentecostals in general, experience has indeed preceded their hermeneutics as mentioned by Gordon Fee above. It must be remembered that Pentecostal theology is consciously a theology of experience. At its origination, the Pentecostal movement was strongly and understandably anti-intellectual. This was due to the fact that the greatest criticism and persecution of Pentecostalism came from the erudite traditional church leaders. However, as time progressed erudition became more highly rated.

**Herholdt (1998:428)** states that,

Traditionally, the Pentecostal reading of the Bible has been a loose type of reading rather like looking for gems on the surface – all texts are seen to be level (of equal importance). Some texts are nevertheless of more relevance to Pentecostals than others due to the support that they render to distinct Pentecostal doctrine like the charismatic gifts, ..the amazing thing is that Pentecostal scholars are often inclined to follow contemporary academic hermeneutical streams without considering whether they are in line with Pentecostal tradition and presuppositions.

Although Pentecostalism would theoretically assert that unless it can support its position biblically, it should not continue to exist - in practice its doctrine tends to be based more upon experience than upon careful study of the Bible. To my mind this inclination toward an empirical focus combined with Pentecostalism's suspicion of the merely formal academic enterprise, may be the reason why uncritical explanations of the Bible have simply been accepted only to be proven erroneous later, and why a properly documented hermeneutic is still lacking in Pentecostalism.

**Horak (1990:3)** identifies two contributing factors in this regard that had a great influence on the formulation of the Pentecostal view. Firstly, that most of the earlier preachers, evangelists and missionaries were in many respects uneducated persons, and secondly, that there were no Bible Schools (seminaries) which could offer these people formal training.

It seems that since Pentecostals place such a great emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the resultant emphasis on the experiential, the involvement in systematic theology has been overlooked by Pentecostals. It is a fact that in the early years of the Pentecostal movement, the idea was harboured that the work of the Holy Spirit was hindered by academics and consequently academic sophistication was queried. If one bears in mind that the Pentecostal movement originated with believers that came from the middle-class and the less educated labourers, it becomes clear why they lack a well-formulated theology. Perhaps these factors are contributory to the method applied by some Pentecostals in their use of Scripture. Their method of subjective interpretation may be better understood against this background, as at times they use the Bible as an encyclopaedia as though their daily experiences are explained in it in so many words.

The point of the matter is that although this is only a tendency with some Pentecostals, the general practice in Pentecostalism as regards the relationship that exists between experience and doctrine is; ‘experience-doctrine’ rather than ‘doctrine-experience’. Thus, it is often difficult for non-Pentecostals to make sense of Pentecostal theology due to the emphasis placed on experience. Pentecostals maintain that “a Pentecostal experience with God is better experienced than explained”, be it verbal or in print. **McDonnell (in Clark and Lederle 1989:38)** points out that an injustice is done to Pentecostals when their printed works judge them, because he argues that what the classical Pentecostal does and says, is often far better than what he writes. There is no way one can reduce to the printed page the atmospheric dimension of Pentecostal communications.

In response to Bruner’s critique of Pentecostalism, **Lederle (1983:95)** responds by saying:

Given their non-intellectual background, it is also not fair to pursue statements made by Pentecostal leaders to their extreme logical conclusions. In this analytical process one does not do justice to the intention of the speaker or writer and a researcher should always be sensitive to this.

In a chapter entitled “The search for a Pentecostal hermeneutic” (Clark & Lederle 1989), the writer states,

One of the real problems which has faced the Pentecostal has been the anomaly between his love for Scripture as a prime witness to the person of Jesus and his work of salvation and his (the Pentecostal’s) apparent lack of ability to

comprehend Scripture in terms of those categories which appear to predominate in non-Pentecostal circles, whether conservative or liberal.<sup>21</sup>

**Williams (1974:181)** makes the following meaningful statement with regards to Pentecostals and formal theology:

It is not that they are fundamentally anti-theological but that they fear the elevating of theology or doctrine to the first place. With the traditional definition of theology as 'faith seeking understanding' the Pentecostals would largely agree; however, they would want to be sure that the faith was not merely formal or intellectual (surely not merely a *depositum fidei* to be accepted), and that it be profoundly experiential. Pentecostals are basically people who have had a certain experience; so they find little use for theology or doctrine that does not recognise and, even more, participate in it.

**Horak (1999:197)** mentions that confusion exists within Pentecostal churches as a whole - even among the members and pastors of the same denominations. With reference to Pentecostal doctrines, he maintains that the confusion can amongst others be ascribed to the 'element of experience' within Pentecostal circles, which results in the presence of a strong pragmatic approach among some Pentecostals. This, he holds is the reason that a measure of discord still exists, even though it is in a lesser degree, between the persons that are academically inclined and the so-called "spiritual" persons. Accordingly, he argues that the latter group is more inclined towards an approach based on Biblicism.

From these statements it may be deduced that, (sadly) within Pentecostal ranks the strongest unifying factor is not their conformity to a Biblical foundation of accepted doctrine and confession, but rather to common experience and history. If, as Horak states, Pentecostals are confused with regard to their understanding of Pentecostal doctrines, then the logical result will be the existence of discrepancies within their interpretation of Scripture, as the formulation of doctrine follows the interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, resistance and hostility to theological education and academic training is still experienced in some Pentecostal circles and at times unfriendliness toward educated theologians may be observed. It often happens that one will hear a Pentecostal, so-called 'spiritual person' say, "*Ek was nie by Stellenbosch nie, maar by die brandende bos.*"<sup>22</sup> This is usually said to hint that the speaker does not have a formal education or training, but that he/she does have the power of

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hollenweger's dedication to *The Pentecostals*: "To my friends and teachers in the Pentecostal movement who taught me to love the Bible and to my teachers and friends in the Presbyterian Church who taught me to understand it."

<sup>22</sup> In this statement, 'Stellenbosch' refers to a university (symbolising education), and the 'brandende bos' to the burning bush (symbolising Holy Spirit fire).

the Holy Spirit within. These Pentecostals may oppose or resist any attempt toward the formulation of Pentecostal hermeneutic, maintaining that the Holy Spirit has been their guide in all truth and will always be their guide.

Donald Gee (see **Lederle 1983:134**), a prominent British Pentecostal leader, warned against anti-intellectualism in an interesting article entitled “To our new Pentecostal Friends”, in which he states:

Some of us in our early folly set a premium upon ignorance. Nothing could be a greater mistake when it comes to leadership.... May we put it this way – an educated ministry is good; an inspired ministry is better; but an inspired educated ministry is best of all.

Fortunately in recent years the tide seems to have turned and more and more Pentecostals are turning to academic institutions for formal training. Most current Pentecostal churches have their own theological colleges where ministerial students are trained and educated in the relevant theological disciplines. Certain awareness to the importance of accumulated theological data has come to the attention of Pentecostals, leaving them with the problem of formulating a theological paradigm wherein this data can be set by which they may be able to understand and give account of themselves.

**Hollenweger (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:33)** says:

Pentecostalism has come to a crossroad. From its own ranks there comes the challenge first for a critical historiography... Secondly, there is a challenge for a social and political analysis. ... Then thirdly, there is a challenge for the a more differentiated treatment of the work of the Spirit and for a spirituality that does not blank out critical thinking – it is now possible to speak in tongues and to be a critical thinker at a university at the same time – this was not possible in the past.

**Clark (1989:41)** adds to this by saying:

There is developing a Pentecostal attitude to intellectual pursuits that is at one and the same time appreciative and kerygmatic – a thankfulness that there are those that are qualified to provide so much hard-earned data, and a distinctive interpretation of the data which they hope will challenge their teachers to deeper insight into the things of God. However, there will always be an element that rejects totally all academic input on the grounds that either that it is “worldly knowledge”, or that the Holy Spirit is the only source of knowledge.

Yet, no matter whether a Pentecostal is pro- or anti-academic, they most likely will be in agreement that in Pentecostalism, experience is important bearing in mind that it is not experience *per se*, but experience by the Holy Spirit. Christ is the nucleus of the Pentecostal

experience, but it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that he becomes “known”. The pro-academics within Pentecostalism manifest a tendency to qualify and communicate the experience doctrinally, while the anti-academic group will resort to statements such as, “the Holy Spirit led me”; “the Lord told me” or to Biblicism, citing texts out of context in order to justify their experience.

In contrast to the thinking of non-Pentecostals, the Pentecostal experience does not only refer to the “Baptism with the Holy Spirit” and the subsequent glossolalia and prophecy. The now famous and previously referred to<sup>23</sup> foursquare Pentecostal formula, confirms this. The following points briefly explain what the ‘Foursquare Gospel’ implies:

- (a) Personal experience of acceptance of Jesus Christ as *Saviour* is essential for salvation. Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals refer to this as spiritual re-birth, or to be born again (Jn.3:3). For Pentecostals, however, in contrast to many other groups, this is a crisis experience. They have a point in time, i.e. a day, a place and an hour to which they refer as the actual ‘when and where’ of their salvation. Salvation is therefore only in Christ and whoever wants to attain eternal life, must accept him as their personal *Saviour*.
- (b) Physical healing can be miraculously or gradually received from Christ the *healer*. It is actually termed ‘divine healing’, so as to indicate the source of the healing. Pentecostals place great emphasis on passages such as Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 2:24, which declare that by Christ’s stripes we are healed. This healing can be received by the laying on of hands (Mk 16:18), the anointing of the sick person with oil combined with the fervent prayer of the elders (Jas. 5:14-15) and the ministry of the gift of healing (1 Cor. 12:9). It must be stated though, that healing is a part of salvation in as much as salvation includes healing. When Christ regenerates a person, he also heals the inner being of that person. Luke 4:18 teaches that Christ heals the broken-hearted. Nevertheless, divine healing, no matter how it was received, is possible for Pentecostals as Christ is the *healer*.
- (c) The baptism with/in the Holy Spirit is an experience based on Acts 2 where Christ as the *baptiser* fulfils his promise made to the disciples in Acts 1:5 and in fulfilment of

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<sup>23</sup> See pages 1 and 31.

John the Baptist's prophecy, as recorded for us in Mathew 3:11. Pentecostals believe that the Baptism with the Holy Ghost follows the personal decision of commitment to Christ, as was the pattern throughout the book of Acts. Yet, although it is 'subsequent' to salvation, it is not a second stage in salvation, but rather the endowment with Holy Spirit power for service. Salvation is complete the moment one accepts Christ as one's personal saviour. Therefore Holy Spirit baptism is not essential to salvation, but is essential in effectively proclaiming the Gospel message to all that are without Christ.

- (d) The great hope of Pentecostals is the return of Jesus Christ as *King*. Herein lies a dual theme. Firstly, the return of Christ and secondly, the setting up of his kingdom. Although Pentecostals have differing views on the 'how' and 'when' of Christ's second advent, they all believe that he will return to earth. This will usher in the end of trials and strife and the setting up of his rule as *King* for a period accepted by most Pentecostals as a literal thousand years, while the others would settle for it to mean a relatively long period of time. The important factor for Pentecostals is not the second coming *per se*, but the fact that it is Jesus, the King of kings (Rev 19:16), that is coming. An important point to remember, is that Jesus will not be *King* only when he returns to earth, but that he is already *King*. It was written above his head on Calvary's cross, and Paul worships him as such (1Tim. 1:17).

Besides the Pentecostal experiences briefly described above, which are biblically and exegetically answerable, there are other experiences within Pentecostalism as was mentioned earlier, for which accountability does not seem so simple and which are 'emotion laden'.

### 4.3 THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN PENTECOSTALISM

Emotion is an element that plays a major role in Pentecostal church services, at times misunderstood by critics of Pentecostalism and referred to as 'ecstatic'. Due to this misunderstanding, critics tend to equate Pentecostals with Christian-cults and non-Christian religions that are in no way anything that Pentecostalism claims to be. **Clark and Lederle (1989:48)** have the following to say in this regard:

The notion of frenzy, or uninhibited emotion mongering, of virtually orgiastic practices, which this categorisation implies is in fact far from the Pentecostal reality. It may be granted in mitigation that at times the atmosphere in a

Pentecostal meeting may be so emotion laden as to give rise to such notions – however, the vast majority of Pentecostal testimonies make it clear that there is rarely any loss of awareness or control when one experiences the working of the Spirit (with obvious exceptions in the case of dreams and visions, which, by virtue of the fact that they occur mainly in a private context, preclude categorisation as the products of frenzy, mass hysteria, etc). The current pre-occupation with being “slain in the Spirit” and the cautious reception granted it in many Pentecostal circles underlies the basic suspicion of the “ecstatic” in the Pentecostal way of thinking..... However, their own perception of the sovereignty of God’s Spirit does not deny the possibility of the ecstatic, but demands nevertheless that it be clearly and obviously the working of God’s Spirit and not of any other.

A recent phenomenon to infiltrate the Christian world and Pentecostalism and which is described by many (even some Pentecostals) as ‘ecstatic’, is that of the “Toronto Blessing”, which ironically, did not originate in Toronto. **Dave Roberts (1994:15)** maintains that this phenomenon was initially ‘started’ by Benny Hinn, a leader within the Faith Movement. He claims to have the anointing of this phenomenon and passes it on to others by the laying on of hands. Amongst those who received this ‘anointing’, were Claudio Freidzon and Rodney Howard-Brown who later spread it throughout America, England and also brought it to South Africa.

**Verster (1995:4-5)** maintains that during November 1993, Pastor John Arnott of the Vineyard Church in Toronto, Canada, visited Argentina where Freidzon passed the ‘blessing’ on to him. Arnott’s colleague in the Vineyard church, Randy Clarke, received the ‘blessing’ from Howard-Browne in 1994 after which he returned to Toronto where he and Arnott gave prominence to the ‘blessing’. This so-called blessing was accompanied by uncontrollable laughter inter-mingled with strange sounds, such as are made by dogs, chickens and other animals. **Verster (ibid:9)** goes on to say that:

The Toronto Blessing together with its uncontrollable laughter and all else that goes with it, is abnormal, disorderly and is an emotional hysteria that definitely falls short of biblical criteria. As such, we must reject the Toronto Blessing, a coarse erroneous fallacy and cultic.<sup>24</sup>

That the “Toronto Blessing” caused a major stir in many South African Pentecostal churches, is a substantial fact. Noteworthy was the bipolar tension in which Pentecostalism found itself. Some Pentecostal pastors accepted and allowed the ‘blessing’ to permeate their churches, claiming that it was a “God sent revival”, while others (of which the author is one) totally rejected it as demonic and not ‘the work or manifestation of the Holy Spirit’. This led to

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<sup>24</sup> Translation my own.

confusion amongst leaders and church members, so much so that enmity and antagonism was clearly discernible between pastors of the same denominations. Of interest was the method of biblical judgement engaged in by both those ‘for’ and those ‘against’ the ‘blessing’. On the one hand, those in favour of it employed a pragmatic and biblicistical judgement, working from the experience to the Bible and using the Bible as means to support their view, rather than a means to test it by – elevating experience above reason. On the other hand, those who rejected the phenomenon, opted for a judgement based on hermeneutical models and interpretations.

Sadly though, despite the demoralizing consequences that followed, the “Executive Council”<sup>25</sup> of the FGC did not at any stage officially take their stand for or against the Toronto Blessing. The confusion and disheartening consequences of this phenomenon most definitely could have been avoided had the FGC been in possession of a well-formulated and articulated hermeneutical model that could serve as criteria in the judgement of the experience.

Fortunately though, the above crisis experience that Pentecostalism underwent, was a “once-of” experience and had a passing nature. The phenomenon experienced is not part of the normative experience within Pentecostalism as was briefly described earlier. Many critics of the Toronto Blessing have since delivered sermons and published articles posing questions such as; “Three years since Toronto – where’s the revival?” and “After Toronto – what now?”<sup>26</sup>

Yet, what is important, is to realise that because a Pentecostal meeting is more than “just another church service” – it is an event - emotion does play an important part. In contrast to non-Pentecostals and dispensationalists who maintain that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased after the apostolic age, Pentecostals believe that Jesus Christ is present now through the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit has come to continue the work of Christ in the here and now. Thus, in the Pentecostal ‘event’, one may have a dynamic encounter with God through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit – an encounter that most certainly will not leave one emotionless. However, it is important to state that this does not imply that the Pentecostal experience is only an emotional experience. In contrast, it is rather an experience wherein emotion is present and that has a life-changing effect on the subjects.

<sup>25</sup> The Executive council is the second highest governing body within the FGC and is chaired by the Moderator

<sup>26</sup> Assessed on internet on 16 January 2002. <http://www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/sva-tb01.html>

**Clark and Lederle (1989:49)** make the following meaningful statement in this regard:

However, it must be stressed that the experience which is essential to Pentecostal is not *merely* an emotional experience, cannot be reduced to a mere product of an emotional moment, and cannot be induced by stirring up emotional fervour (emotionalism).

A factor that we often neglect, is that emotion is the natural reaction to any experience. The more intense the experience, the more intense the emotion will be. A religious experience that impacts the inner life so dynamically as does the Pentecostal experience, must logically rouse emotions. Scripture presents us with numerous examples of such emotional experiences, especially in the Psalms. In Acts 13:52 the emotional sense of joy is linked to the infilling of the Holy Spirit: *“And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”* Even some non-Pentecostals would agree that an encounter with God would result in an emotional experience. Here we may quote Professor **J C G Kotze (1936:79)**, a non-Pentecostalist who asks:

Is it possible to have new life flow through a dead soul without any awareness of affection? Unless we violate and deny the total emotional life of humanity, we can answer in no other than to say it is impossible.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.4 THE ROLE OF EMOTIONALISM IN PENTECOSTALISM

On the other hand, we must also be aware of emotionalism and the implications thereof. **Möller (1975:156)** presents us with an interesting explanation of emotionalism and that which psychology teaches us:

By this (emotionalism) we mean the emotional excitement during which a person experiences strong emotional elements (such as joy, sadness, hate, fear, etc.) while there is not sufficient rational explanation thereto, or where it is totally exaggerated in comparison to the intensity of the outer stimulus that gave cause thereto. It usually occurs when feelings run high during mass situations, where people are carried away, overwhelmed and subjected to a “group-spirit” created by various mass suggestions. During such an experience, sober thoughts and the sense of responsibility is, to a great extent, eliminated, and one will easily say and do things in a way contrary to the way its done in normal situations. Such a conditioned lasts for a little while only after which it returns back to normal.<sup>28</sup>

It must be admitted that emotionalism is present within Pentecostalism. This is understandable if one considers the liturgical method employed by some Pentecostal

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<sup>27</sup> Translation my own.

<sup>28</sup> Translation my own.

ministers. To a certain extent the criterion for the service is that ‘something must happen’, and often the minister tries to fulfil this criterion by ‘making it appear to happen’ by increasing the emotional component – such as the manipulation of music, praise and worship, during the meeting. This emotion-arousing manipulation has in many instances been a means of drawing large crowds, but unfortunately it has also led to the neglect of the genuine Pentecostal experience and the door for the counterfeit has been opened.

#### 4.5 ILLUMINATION OF THE WORD

Another motivational factor as to why Pentecostalism is in desperate need of a well-formulated hermeneutical model for biblical interpretation, may be ascribed to the emphasis that Pentecostals place on the illumination of the Word by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals believe that God reveals himself (*makes himself and his will known*) to them through the written Word. It is believed that through the Spirit, God grants Pentecostals a transcending understanding of the Word which would be impossible with the natural mind. This implies that the natural person cannot simply open the Bible, read a passage and understand what God is saying. “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...*” (1 Cor. 2:14). Owing to this, some Pentecostals believe and maintain that formal training is unnecessary for Scriptural interpretation. The Holy Spirit will illuminate and reveal to the reader what the meaning of a particular passage is. After all, the Bible was originally inspired by the Spirit, therefore the Spirit will disclose the meaning to all ‘truth seeking’ readers.

On the one hand, it is true that the transcending work of the Holy Spirit is to lead us in all truth (Jn. 16:13). God’s Word is the truth (Joh 17:17). Most Pentecostals will have no problem in agreeing with this, as it is not on their personal intellectual competency or on their education that they depend to illuminate God’s Word. They will acknowledge their dependence on the Holy Spirit to fulfil that need by illumination. Unfortunately though, these Pentecostals will violate the true meaning of ‘illumination’ by interpreting it as ‘new knowledge revealed’ to them and even maintain that it is the cause of their actions – actions that sometimes cannot be verified by Scripture.

There is unquestionably an illumination of the mind of every believer by the Holy Spirit, but this illumination does not reveal new truth, but only a vivid apprehension of the truth already

revealed. **Strong (1907:206)** makes the following statement to explain the distinction between revelation and illumination:

The Scriptures clearly distinguish between revelation or the communication of new truth, and illumination, or the quickening of man's cognitive powers to perceive truth already revealed. No increase in the power of the eye or the telescope will do more than to bring into clear view what is already in its range. Illumination will not lift the veil that hides what is beyond. Revelation, on the other hand, is an 'unveiling' – the raising of a curtain, or the bringing within our range of what was hidden before.

The misapprehension of illumination has caused leaders of the modern day "Faith movement" to interpret it as "revelatory knowledge", thereby totally violating the Bible and its intended meaning. **Hanegraaff (1993:172,173)** presents us with a good example of such a violation when he explains that the Faith teachers call on a 'second wave' of artillery when they recognise that their Scripture-twisting alone will not convince people. This second wave artillery is called 'revelation knowledge', which supposedly bypasses the mind and goes directly into the spirit. Hanegraaff maintains that Kenneth Copeland called upon such revelation knowledge when he said:

The Spirit of God spoke to me and He said, "Son, realise this. Now follow me in this and don't let your tradition trip you up." He said, "Think this way – a twice-born man whipped Satan in his own domain." And I threw my Bible down .... like that. I said, "What?" He said, "A born-again man defeated Satan, the firstborn of many brethren defeated him." He said, "You are the very image, the very copy of that one." I said, "Goodness, gracious sakes alive!" And I began to see what had gone on in there, and I said, "Well now you don't mean, you couldn't dare mean, that I could have done the same thing?" He said, "Oh yeah, if you had the knowledge of the Word of God that He did, you could've done the same thing, 'cause you're a born again man too."

From this example, one can clearly see the devastating consequences of 'revelatory knowledge', which in this case implies that, not only was Jesus born again, but that Copeland himself could have done what Christ did if he had known the Word as Jesus did. Although the example above is relevant to an experience within the ranks of the Faith movement, the same tendency to misapprehend the meaning of 'illumination' is apparent among some Pentecostals who will often be heard to say, "I received a new revelation from God".

Sound hermeneutics, however, requires methodical exegesis, something many Pentecostals have not fervently engaged in. The failure to properly exegete a passage of Scripture, has on numerous occasions been the cause for countless misinterpretations within Pentecostal circles. The Spirit of God employs our intelligence when illuminating Scripture, not our ignorance.

Sadly, it seems that ‘anti-intellectual’ Pentecostals, who at times will even question the need to study the original languages of the biblical text, do not realise that it is due to the formal training of students in these disciplines (Hebrew, Greek etc.) that Pentecostals and other believers are privileged to possess a Bible printed in their native language.

#### 4.6 SUMMARY

In summarising, it can be said that due to (amongst others) hostility toward academics and formal training within Pentecostalism, there is a tendency among some Pentecostals to violate the Bible and to subject it to their experiences, some of which are not always biblically answerable and are more than often accompanied by emotionalism. If these people are confronted on such issues or experiences, they will more than likely respond by using statements such as “God told me” or “the Spirit came upon me” or “It doesn’t matter what you say, I experienced it”, etc. Such statements, in a certain sense, places the inquirer in a check-mate situation, for how can he/she determine that it was *not* God or the Spirit that *spoke* or led the person to that experience? An anti-intellectual Pentecostal will consider one non-spiritual if any antagonism is shown to that which God or the Spirit has revealed to him or her. Yet I am convinced that most, if not all Pentecostal academics will always be more than willing to evaluate experiences according to the criterion of the Bible.

This is why I believe that the only method of eliminating this type of behaviour, is by the articulation of a hermeneutical model – leading on to a Pentecostal theology and the formal training of those who adhere to that Pentecostal theology. However, the current lack of such a hermeneutic model has resulted in the many “experiences”, meanings and interpretations that are applied to Scripture with the natural result that discrepancies are present. Among these are their differing views on the relationship between Israel and the church, which in turn has led to some Judaist ‘experiences’ being imported into the church – experiences that have no bearing on the church whatsoever.

In chapter six I will present the method and results of the empirical research wherein it will become plain to the reader that Pentecostalism’s lack of an authoritative hermeneutic model has not served it well. This can be deduced from a question posed by **Hollenweger (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:185)**, “Hermeneutics: Who interprets Scripture correctly?” He goes on to say:

Most Pentecostal believers would answer the above question by stating that every believer decides the correct interpretation, because Scripture is clear in itself. This also was the understanding of the Reformers. But this leaves an important question open as to why Pentecostals (together with other Christians) come to very many different interpretations of scripture if Scripture is very clear?

On almost every issue in the Bible there are differing views - in Pentecostalism and other Christian movements - from an understanding of the church to the understanding of Spirit baptism; from regeneration through to glossolalia; from water baptism through to the Second Advent. Noteworthy is the fact that the Bible is read selectively by most believers. This implies that they would emphasise one idea or experience and disregard another, thereby giving birth to different forms of scriptural practises and applications. Yet if Pentecostalism has a 'proper' hermeneutical model, many of the discrepancies will be eliminated. The ensuing problem, however, is the question of the viability of such a hermeneutic model. This problem is discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE VIABILITY OF A PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC

#### 5.1 TOWARDS A PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC

Pentecostals have wrestled with this need for a long time now and have done so for many different reasons. Although these reasons and their origins are not all included in this thesis – nor are they a key part of the ‘research-problem’ – suffice it to say that it is imperative in the formulation of a Pentecostal hermeneutic that we do not set aside the research and labours of those who have preceded us throughout church history. A particularly viable Pentecostal hermeneutic must be one that emerges out of the decades of hermeneutical struggles of the Pentecostals and is faithful to the tradition and the revelation of God through Jesus Christ and the accepted authoritative canon. **McLean (1984:49)** maintains that:

In our quest for a Pentecostal hermeneutic we cannot totally reject the hermeneutic tools, which are part of our evangelical heritage, but rather must sharpen these tools for our ongoing experience of the activity of God in our lives.

I regard the modern Pentecostal movement as something unique that God set in motion in the church. The Pentecostal movement is an intrinsic part of the historical church and therefore part of the unity of the body of Christ, and as such it can consider itself as unique in the sense that God began something different with the outpouring of the Spirit in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. God has enabled the church to rediscover the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent gifts. If the Pentecostal movement was not something unique, one may wonder why it exists at all? Why do its adherents not subscribe to another theology or hermeneutic? Is it not because *‘the body is not made up of one part but of many?’* (1 Cor. 12:14). In recent decades, contemporary religious leaders and theologians have taken the movement seriously, principally as a result of its remarkable growth. The infiltration of the movement into the historical churches via the neo-Pentecostal and charismatic renewals, has compelled non-Pentecostal theologians to reconsider their understanding of the movement.

**Newman (1991:6-7)** states,

What God has accomplished through the Pentecostal movement is the restoration of an awareness of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit to the larger church. It was the Pentecostal movement's witness to the contemporaneity of the acts of the Holy Spirit and his immanence in the lives of present day believers which evoked the birth of the Charismatic movement, a movement which has pervaded every

part of the Christian church in this century, both Protestant and Catholic around the world. For this we should rejoice. Yet, in rejoicing, we must acknowledge that we are but a part of that great stream of salvific history.

Although I agree with Newman that Pentecostals may have reason to rejoice because of the birth of the Charismatic movement, this birth does however pass on negative aspects for Pentecostalism as the uninformed frequently fail to distinguish between the beliefs of classical Pentecostalism and those of the Charismatic movements. Except for several similarities as found within most theologies, there are major theological differences between classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movements, especially in their understanding of Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Eschatology. An in depth study of these differences will reveal that these two movements are theologically so far removed from one another, that they are practically irreconcilable. While classical Pentecostalism is more inclined to fundamentalism and conservatism, Charismatics tend to maintain the approach referred to as “revelatory knowledge” as was explained earlier.<sup>29</sup> This approach supports the view that there are new ‘God-given’ revelations above and beyond the Bible.

The negation of the rapture and the criticism of the doctrine of initial evidence are other aspects common to Charismatics that are in contrast to that of Pentecostalism. Some of these charismatic aspects have infiltrated Pentecostalism to such an extent that they are uncritically practiced in Pentecostal meetings, a consequence that can be attributed to the fact that Pentecostalism is without a well articulated hermeneutic model.

## **5.2 IS A PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC VIABLE?**

A noteworthy recent work that focused on the viability of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, was that of Mathew S Clarke, a South African Pentecostalist.<sup>30</sup> To my mind, Clarke has made an enormous contribution towards the formulation of a Pentecostal hermeneutic. It is however, a pity that many South African Pentecostalist leaders and teachers will more than likely never set eyes on this great work, not because it is not available to them, but rather because of their antagonistic attitude toward academics as was discussed in chapter 4. Nevertheless, Clarke has approached the subject from various angles and presented us with a thorough explanation of Pentecostalism, from its antecedents through to examples of its exegetical method of

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<sup>29</sup> See page 51-52.

<sup>30</sup> An investigation into the nature of a viable Pentecostal hermeneutic (see bibliography for further details).

certain passages of Scripture. Consequently, I do not wish to duplicate Clarke's work, but rather in this chapter, I want to focus on some additional factors that I believe are important as far as the viability of a Pentecostal hermeneutic is concerned.

Obviously, before a Pentecostal hermeneutic can be formulated or even defined, it must firstly be determined: a) whether such a hermeneutic is viable; b) if it is indeed viable, it must be determined which hermeneutic model should be applied. In addition to this, it may be asked, "Why is a Pentecostal hermeneutic necessary?" Newman (1991:3) asks the following questions in this regard: -

Can there be a unique hermeneutic... which can be especially termed Pentecostal? Does the uniqueness of the Pentecostal movement demand a particular hermeneutic to maintain that uniqueness? Is the Pentecostal movement and Pentecostal theology in particular such a special part of the Christian church that it must develop a hermeneutic exclusively its own?" To this we may add the question, "Does the Pentecostal movement have an identity and a task apart from the identity and task that belongs to the church universal?"

Prior to embarking on any attempt to answer the above questions, it would be significant to consider two other important factors with regards to the viability of a possible Pentecostal hermeneutic, namely

- a). The influence of Postmodernism.
- b). The influence of meta-theoretical aspects.

These factors are discussed below and thereafter follow a response to the questions set by Newman above.

### **5.2.1. THE INFLUENCE OF POSTMODERNISM**

A detailed discussion of postmodernism will not be presented here, as it is not the subject of this study. Thus, only a brief description thereof is given and the possible influence that postmodernist thought may have on a Pentecostal hermeneutic. In order to understand what is meant by postmodernism though, it will be best to discuss it in relation to pre-modernism and modernism.

### 5.2.1.1 PRE-MODERNISM

Pre-modernism refers to the period from creation to modernism. According to **Du Toit (2000:15)**, the people in this age understood the world to be flat. Above the earth was a dome studded with various sized lights (sun, moon and stars). The dome also had windows from where the elements, rain, hail and wind was poured out upon the earth. God dwelt above the dome, people on the earth, and beneath the earth was the abode of the evil powers. This worldview determined the life view of the people. Life was determined by the inter-relationship of two powers within creation. On the one hand there was God, the creative and good power that rewarded those who live in obedience to his will. On the other hand there were the evil powers that were focused on destroying people and subduing them to their power.

**Du Toit (ibid:14)** maintains that almost all religions originated during this pre-modern era and that many religions still function within pre-modern societies, such as those found in Africa, the East and South America. He goes on to say that the Jewish, Christian and Islam religions all originated in this period, as is evident by the fact that the original writings on which these religions are based (Old and New Testaments and the Koran) date back to the pre-modern era. Thus, it is logical that the authors of these writings never had the knowledge that later became available to the modernists.

### 5.2.1.2 MODERNISM

The 16<sup>th</sup> century ushered in the end of pre-modernism and the beginning of modernism. Up to that stage, broadly viewed and besides the final schism between the Eastern and Western churches in 1045 (whereafter the main seat of the Eastern Orthodox church was established at Constantinople), there was only one Christian church in the Western world, with the city of Rome as headquarters. In 1517 Martin Luther presented his 95 articles of faith and thereby put an end to the authoritative grip of the Roman Catholic Church. This was followed by John Calvin's 'Institutes of the Christian Church' in 1536 and the declaration by Copernicus that the earth was not flat but round.

Up to this point, the absolute authority of the pope and the church over all matters was accepted unchallenged. Obviously this authority was based on the literal understanding of the

Bible, which was only available in Latin. Part of this authoritative hold upon human thinking was lost due to the protests of Luther and Calvin. This was followed by the telescopic observations of Galileo Galilei in 1609, which cast doubt on the Ptolemaic geocentric theory of the universe that was, according to Roman Catholic interpretation, confirmed by Scripture.

Other influential thinkers such as Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant appeared on the scene at this time. Descartes, with his famous phrase – *cogito ergo sum* (because I think, therefore I am), made a great impression on human thinking. He doubted everything except his own mind. This led to the ideology that only that which can be proved experimentally, can be accepted as true and believed.

The critical idealism of Kant opened a way for a critical rationality. Kant was mainly interested in the theory of knowledge, or epistemology as it is also called. Epistemology is concerned with the question: “How do we know what we know?” This laid a foundation for the enterprise of the natural sciences.

In 1859 Charles Darwin published his “The origins of the species” and with his theory of evolution, challenged the biblical description of the creation of man. It was also in this period that Louis Pasteur developed the first antibacterial medicine and Alexander Flemming discovered penicillin. These medicines proved that there were other causes to sickness than the suffering caused by evil powers. Other influential personalities at that stage were people such as Einstein, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Freud and Hubble with his “Big Bang” theory, which placed the creation of the universe within the field of natural science.

**Du Toit (*ibid*: 34)** states that

These challenges of scientific developments and also the breaking of the authoritative grip held on the church by the Protestant movement, undermined the faith that church members had in the biblical doctrines, as well as the acceptance of the authority that the church held in just about every area of life: the world view of pre-modernism was radically and irrevocably changed. The worldview in terms of the explanation of tragedies, sickness and death, as well as the progress of history, was radically challenged by the new discoveries.<sup>31</sup>

This led to the understanding that apart from the view that life was controlled from the spiritual world (God and the anti-God powers), there was now the possibility of a logical explanation for certain experiences and conditions. Events could now be explained

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<sup>31</sup> Translation my own

scientifically. This had far reaching effects on the church. On the one hand there were those who uncritically supported the scientific view and interpreted their faith according to modernistic rules. Among these were the mainline churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed). On the other hand there were those who accepted the literal interpretation of the Bible as the only solution to the scientific era. These were the fundamentalists, which included the Pentecostal and the charismatically orientated churches.

Although we may rightfully speak of the pre-modern era as pre-modernism and the modern era as that of modernism, adding the suffix 'ism' to both terms (due to them being philosophical ideologies), I am not so sure whether we should speak of the postmodern era as postmodernism, as it seems to me that the postmodern era may only be an extension of modernism. By this I mean that the postmodern era's scientific knowledge is based on the knowledge gained since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the postmodern world in which the present day church has to function, has greatly impacted the church as will be seen in the following paragraph.

### 5.2.1.3 POSTMODERNISM

The postmodern era is not so easily definable as it did not come into being as drastically as did modernism. According to **Herholdt (1998:215)**,

Postmodernism is a global trend that may very well influence the way we think in a very profound way. The term 'postmodernism' suggests a distinct period after 'modernism', yet postmodernism is more than a time period. It indicates possible progress, a new way of doing science. Probably this movement warrants the term 'postmodern' because, in many ways, it follows an opposite approach to that which is distinctly categorised as modernist.

Whereas modernism placed a high premium on the certainty about reality which was brought about by the natural sciences, postmodernism views the empirical scientific method as the cause for an undesirable split between subject and object. This results in an external world distanced from the subject. Heroldt (216) describes this as the hermeneutic problem in theology. It implies that the subject has to approach reality (the object) from a critical position of doubt and in so doing, it alienates itself from the world (reality).

In postmodernist thought, truth is not something bound to the object alone (naïve positivism), nor is it formed solely by human consciousness (subjectivism, instrumentalism). Truth is

relational in the sense that it is both objective and subjective (critical realism). Truth is critical insofar as it is different from reality; it is realist insofar as there is reference to objective reality (Heroldt: 217). From this point of view, it is understood that for postmodernism there is no absolutes of truth available that need to be communicated from generation to generation. Each generation must not only discover, but also create the truths for themselves. Heroldt (225) maintains that this means that a believer is not called upon to master abstract truth, rather he or she is challenged to make sense of the world by participating in the creation of a new world in terms of which the self can be redefined. Faith is therefore my own experience and theology the story or account of my life. This of course, can only be accomplished by making use of language in a creative way – that of imaging or imagining God. This implies that the epistemic construction of God is local and not universal. Every person imagines God personally and differently, although this does not exclude the religious feeling that my God is also your God. After all, we use the same metaphors borrowed largely from Scripture.

From the above it is clear to see that postmodernist thinking (relativism) may on the one hand, have a negative effect on a Pentecostal hermeneutic, while on the other hand it may contribute in a positive way in the formulation of a Pentecostal hermeneutical model. The negative effect can be ascribed to the fact that in contrast to postmodernism, that does not accommodate absolutes – Pentecostalism, in most instances, subscribes to the fundamentalist view. This comprises the literal translation and understanding of the Bible by Pentecostals, which includes all aspects pertaining to Christ, from his literal historical incarnation all the way through to his literal futuristic second advent. These happenings are absolute truths in classical Pentecostal thinking and need to - in contrast to postmodernist thought - be passed on from generation to generation as such. The viability of a Pentecostal hermeneutic may therefore seem to be illogical in postmodern thinking, due to the ‘*open endedness*’ and lack of absolutes within postmodernist thought. In contrast to the idea of relativism, Pentecostals adhere to the idea of the existence of absolute truth especially in relation to biblical interpretation and exegesis.

Yet, on the other hand, postmodernism may positively contribute to the formulation of a Pentecostal hermeneutic in the sense that despite the fundamentalist approach of Pentecostalism, their pneumatological-Christology may be complimented by the holistic approach of postmodernism. The primary task of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Christ and to make him present in the here and now, that is in this postmodern world. The pneumatological-Christology of Pentecostalism leads to a personal relationship with Christ, that is to say a vital

and living experience with the risen Lord in the here and now. In view of this, Pentecostalism can play a major role in the development, not only of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, but also in the formulation of a more acceptable ecumenical hermeneutic. This is deduced from the fact that despite the influence of postmodernism, the “Pentecostal experience” has broken through the boundaries of the classical Pentecostal movement and permeated most of the historical churches – churches that have been negatively influenced by postmodernist thinking. **Johns (1995:74)** makes the following noteworthy statement:

Some have observed characteristics of Pentecostalism, which they conclude make it the probable dominant expression of Christianity in the postmodern age. At least one outside observer sees the movement as a prototype of the coming era and seems to be calling on it to provide more leadership in solving the problems of the world.

The outside observer referred to above, is none other than **Harvey Cox (1993:6-8, 47-49)**, who maintains that Pentecostals are ‘leading the way’ in this current worldwide religious renaissance that simply refused to let God die. He views Pentecostalism as the potential bridge into the postmodern era – provided it is properly decoded. He further presents us with the following statement in answer to his own question, namely “Do the Pentecostal movement and the global religious stirring of which it is undoubtedly a part, signal something larger and more significant that is underway?”

My own answer to this question is at least a qualified ‘yes’. Having pondered the Pentecostal movement for several years and in many different countries I have a strong hunch that it provides us with an invaluable set of clues, not just about the wider religious upsurge, but about a even more comprehensive set of changes. Further, I believe these changes are not just religious ones, but they add to a basic cultural shift for which the overtly spiritual dimension is not just the tip of the iceberg, but also the stream in which the iceberg is floating. I do not see this change as the beginning of the Last Days, as some Pentecostals do. I do see it however as a major reconfiguration of our most fundamental attitudes and patterns of perception, one that will ultimately alter not just the way some people pray, but the ways we all think, feel, work and govern.

In a certain sense Cox is right. I believe that Pentecostalism can supply Christianity with the clues and the answers needed to remain relevant in this postmodern age. Pentecostalism can most certainly bridge the gap between modernism and postmodernism. Yet, on the other hand, Cox seems to erroneously view Pentecostalism as the impulsion of postmodernism, while failing to recall that Pentecostalism is not the product of a scientific paradigm, but rather a movement born out of many peoples across the globe that rediscovered the meaning

of the Pentecost experience as recorded in Acts 2. It was not a movement born due to theorists presenting a plausible response to the failure of other systems. Thus, at its core it is not a theoretical response to an existing paradigm. Nevertheless, this does not imply that it is not in itself paradigmatic or systematic. In actual fact, it is this specific paradigmatic frame of reference that necessitates the formulation of a specific Pentecostal hermeneutic.

It is a given fact in theology that in most instances the theology of our day is a reaction to the theology of yesterday. So too, postmodernism is a reaction to modernism, which in turn was a reaction to pre-modernism. It is my conviction that in this sense, postmodernism is contradicting itself. Whilst on the one hand it propagates a holistic (all inclusive) philosophy, on the other hand, it excludes absolutes (positivism) such as modernism. Thus, the ideal will be to formulate a hermeneutic that will not exclude absolutes, but at the same time will include not relativism, but rather relevance.

It is important to note the difference between the terms ‘relativism’ and ‘relevance’, as each of these terms are symptomatic of the premise of Postmodernism and Pentecostalism. **Fowler and Fowler (1980:945, 946)** present us with the following definitions of the two terms:

Relativism – Doctrine that knowledge is relative, not absolute.

Relevance - Bearing on or pertinent to the matter in hand.

In postmodern thinking the point of departure is relativism, which implies that circumstances dictate what is believed in a given situation. In Pentecostalism the point of departure is relevance, which implies that the Scripture is interpreted so as to give meaning and guidance to a given situation. Put another way - and in view of the above definitions - it may be said that although postmodernism and Pentecostalism both seem to operate from the situation to the Scripture, postmodernism’s involvement of Scripture *excludes* absolutes, while Pentecostalism’s involvement of Scripture *includes* absolutes (the fundamentals). This does not mean that Pentecostals exercise a pragmatic theology *where the word of God is subject to the believers’ experience*, but rather as was stated above, the word of God is interpreted so as to give meaning and guidance to a given situation. This can clearly be seen by the fact that Pentecostals seek after the experience in the light of biblical teaching. Therefore, the statement that is occasionally made in the theological arena, namely that Pentecostals are very subjective in their approach, is deprived of all truth. It is strange that on the one hand Pentecostals are labelled to be subjective in their approach, elevating experiencing above the

Word, but on the other hand they are labelled as fundamentalist and Biblicist. What a contradiction!

This brings us to the third factor that may influence a Pentecostal hermeneutic, namely the presuppositions that we have when approaching the Bible, also known as the meta-theoretical aspects.

### 5.2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF META-THEORETICAL ASPECTS

In his essay on biblical hermeneutics, Smit (1998:302-303) makes mention of the fact that the presuppositions of the readers (or listeners) are important. This implies that *'who we are'* determines the way people read, interpret, understand and appropriate the same texts, resulting in numerous different views, because they are different people. These presuppositions of the readers (or listeners) are often referred to as meta-theories. This term refers to the framework from which we operate – i.e. how do we view the world? What is our understanding of human beings? What do we consider God to be? The answers that we provide to such questions constitute our meta-theoretical perspective. In other words, the broad theoretical spectrum in which we operate. Obviously our meta-theoretical perspectives will often be associated with cultures. The problem is therefore that *'who we are'*, will make a difference to *'how we read'*. Where we come from, how we think, what we believe, what we want to know, what we want to do with the Bible – all of this will cause major differences, sometimes even conflicts between our respective interpretations, sometimes even of the same biblical text. It is because of this problem and the fact that people base their theology on their *life situation* – a situation that is influenced by social, cultural and even political factors – that the theological world is submersed in different methods of doing theology.

It is clear from Smit's essay that we learn how to read the Bible within a certain "culture": the culture of our specific church or the culture of the university classroom or whatever. This culture is at times "official": there is an official canon of interpretation and everybody knows that and must adhere to that. Authorities protect these rules for correct interpretation. This implies that if we do not read the Bible in this way people say it is wrong and they censure us.

Sometimes, however, this culture is "unofficial". Then people are not consciously aware that they need to follow rules or prescriptions. They think that is simply the only proper way to

read the Bible. They are not aware that they have been told and taught to read like that in their particular social location, community or tradition. Instead, they believe that their way of reading comes naturally and they think that all other people who use and read the Bible in different ways and come to different conclusions, are wrong, uninformed and stubborn.

Consequently, it is understandable that differences of interpretation will be normality among different classes of peoples and cultures due to the meta-theoretical factor, which obviously results in pluralism. Yet in a certain sense one would expect that people supporting the same theological line of thought and teaching, people who have received their theological training from the same seminary or Bible college, would read and interpret the Bible in a relatively harmonious way. However, in Pentecostal circles this is not the case as can be clearly seen in their interpretation of one of their major doctrines, namely the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**Archer (1996:70)** makes the following statement in this regard:

Pentecostals have a distinct way of reading the Scriptures. They read them ‘through Lukan eyes especially with the lenses provide by the book of Acts’. This Luke-Acts perspective has led Pentecostals to the conclusion of that the believer should have not only a salvation-regeneration experience, but also a second subsequent Spirit baptism experience. This is understood to be of considerable importance because with it comes an endowment of power for evangelism.

Even though Pentecostals adhere to the view of a ‘second subsequent Spirit baptism experience’ as stated above by Archer, they nevertheless differ with regards to the ‘doctrine of initial evidence’ of Spirit baptism – proving that despite a similar meta-theoretical premise discrepancies in interpretation still exist. It is the author’s opinion that if Pentecostalism was in possession of a well-formulated hermeneutical model, these and other discrepancies would at least be minimised, although logically they would more than likely never be totally eliminated. This, however, will not dissuade the ardent theologian to continuously search for interpretive harmony. To add more meaning to this last statement, it is imperative that Newman’s questions as previously mentioned be answered.

### **5.3 A RESPONSE TO NEWMAN’S QUESTIONS.**

Earlier reference was made to a statement by Newman<sup>32</sup>, which included the following questions:

- 1) Can there be a unique hermeneutic which can be especially termed Pentecostal?

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<sup>32</sup> See page 57.

- 2) Does the uniqueness of the Pentecostal movement demand a particular hermeneutic to maintain that uniqueness?
- 3) Is the Pentecostal movement and Pentecostal theology in particular such a special part of the Christian church that it must develop a hermeneutic exclusively its own?
- 4) Does the Pentecostal movement have an identity and a task apart from the identity and task that belongs to the church universal?

These questions can more than likely be grouped together under one question, namely “Why a Pentecostal hermeneutic?” Nevertheless, systematic answers to the questions posited by Newman will in turn present us with a more detailed answer to the latter question.

### **5.3.1 QUESTION 1. CAN THERE BE AN UNIQUE HERMENEUTIC WHICH CAN BE ESPECIALLY TERMED PENTECOSTAL?**

I believe that there can be a unique hermeneutic, especially termed Pentecostal. This conviction is based amongst others on an earlier statement, namely that “*Pentecostalism was not a movement born due to theorists presenting a plausible response to the failure of other systems. Thus, at its core it is not a theoretical response to an existing paradigm.*”<sup>33</sup> To a certain extent Pentecostalism is better described as the particular consequence of a divine intervention by God, which brought about a new awareness of the elongated negligence of the power of the Holy Spirit within the church whose history, as **du Toit (2000:161)** rightly states, began on the Day of Pentecost when it (the church) was empowered with the Holy Spirit.

The fact that so many theologians believe, as does Du Toit, that the church originated on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, implies that the modern day Pentecostal experience is not a new phenomenon, but in actual fact it is God’s stimulation of the church with the same Holy Spirit power that was given at Pentecost, which sadly was seriously neglected throughout the centuries. In other words, the Azusa Street event and other similar happenings where people from all walks of life and of different countries received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, was not the birth of a some ‘new’ heavenly revelation, nor of a new earthly movement, but rather a fresh discovery and

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<sup>33</sup> See page 62-63.

appreciation of the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit and his gifts, from whence the Pentecostal Movement was born. Even Peter said, “But *this is that* which was spoken by the prophet Joel...” (Ac 2:16), referring back to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which God had promised through his prophet.

Theologians view the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century’s sporadic “baptisms in the Holy Spirit” as the beginning of the Pentecostal movement. This is in accord with historical sources that present us with many records of the origination of the Pentecostal movement. Nevertheless, one must keep in mind that although the outpouring of Holy Spirit power on the Day of Pentecost was a “one time” event, the consequences thereof has never ceased. People are still being baptized with the power of the Holy Spirit.

A parallel can be drawn from the crucifixion of Christ. This too was a “one time” event, yet today people are still enjoying the consequences thereof, namely that of being born again because of their belief in the atoning work of Christ. There is no need for Christ to be crucified all over again each time that someone believes on him unto salvation. So too, there is no need for the Holy Spirit to be poured out anew each time someone is baptized with Holy Spirit power. Jesus said that he would send another comforter (the Holy Spirit) after his ascension (Jn 14:16). Thus, the Holy Spirit is now continuing with the work that Jesus set in progress. Therefore, if the Holy Spirit is already here, we do not require another outpouring of the Spirit, but rather we must by faith personally appropriate the gifts that He has “already given”.

### **5.3.2 QUESTION 2. DOES THE UNIQUENESS OF THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT DEMAND A PARTICULAR HERMENEUTIC TO MAINTAIN THAT UNIQUENESS?**

As far as the second question is concerned, I reply as follows: Yes, most certainly it does. My positive reply is based on the fact that all codes of belief stem from a hermeneutic and therefore hermeneutics can never be divorced from dogma. By hermeneutics, I refer to the methods of the application of biblical texts – theologically and practically – to the life of the church and the individual. Due to the fact that at its origin the church was a Holy Spirit empowered church and furthermore, due to the fact that all hermeneutics are done within some frame of reference (e.g. a Reformed view, a Catholic view, Methodist view, etc.), there

is all the more reason for a hermeneutic model that is formulated within a Pentecostal frame of reference. Unfortunately Pentecostals left much to be desired hermeneutically, due to their failure of articulating a well formulated hermeneutic wherein, amongst others, their experience and understanding of the Holy Spirit could be clearly explained. In the preface of his book, **Fee (1991:x)** makes the following comment:

On the one hand we adopted a hermeneutical stance that seemed perfectly evident to us – and therefore should be to others; hence, one can find very little in the early literature of this movement that either articulates or defends its particular kind of “restorationist” hermeneutics.

It is true that in a sense Pentecostals do adopt a stance that is perfectly logical and acceptable to them, whilst believing that others would “understand”. This could be ascribed to the fact that experiences, which can be seen and heard, is present in most Pentecostal church services. Yet, the term ‘restorationist’ is a term that is more applicable to the Charismatic movement than to Pentecostalism. The reason being that since 1963, the Charismatic movement, which is a composition of various traditions, has rediscovered the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Restoration thus has reference to the charismatic movement’s desire to model the church according to the pattern of the early church found in the book of Acts.

The crucial issue for Pentecostals as far as hermeneutics is concerned, has to do with that which distinguishes them from non-Pentecostals, namely the doctrine of subsequence (baptism with Holy Spirit power subsequent to the experience of salvation) and the doctrine of initial evidence (the speaking in tongues). An example of the formulation of these distinctives may be found in Article 2 of the doctrines of the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa (FGC):

Article 2. Section 16 – We believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Spirit coming upon the believer after regeneration. It is the endowment of power from on high promised to all believers who obey Him: Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5-8; 2:38; 5:32. It is the privilege of every believer to receive this supernatural experience, as in the early church: Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-19; 10:44-47; 19:1-7. This wonderful experience is distinct from, in addition to, and subsequent to the experience of the new birth. At the time of the new birth the believer is baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, as referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 6:3. This baptism into the body of Christ has to do with the placing of the believer into a position as a child of God, whereas the baptism in the Holy Spirit referred to in Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-19; 10:44-47 and 19:1-7; has to do with the placing of the believer into the element or control of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of Divine direction and the endowment of spiritual power for service.

Article 2. Section 17 – The initial Scriptural evidence of believers receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gives them utterance: Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6; in confirmation of the promise of Jesus in Mark 16:17. The speaking with tongues in these initial instances is the same manifestation as the gift or “spiritual” (pneumatikos), of tongues 1 Corinthians 12:4-10,28.

It is noteworthy that the biblical support for these teachings consist mainly of passages that are found in Acts. It must be borne in mind though that Acts focuses on the activity of the Holy Spirit in the early church. It has often been said that the title to the book of Acts should read “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”, rather than the Acts of the Apostles.

It must be clearly stated though, that Pentecostalism despite its consistent emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, cannot be separated from the exultation of Christ. Therefore, due to this ministry of the Holy Spirit, the emphasis in Pentecostal ‘theology’ is mainly Christological with particular reference to the believers’ relation with Christ. From this it can be concluded that a Pentecostal hermeneutic must accommodate a Pneuma-Christological character.

### **5.3.3 QUESTION 3. IS THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT AND PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY IN PARTICULAR SUCH A SPECIAL PART OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH THAT IT MUST DEVELOP A HERMENEUTIC EXCLUSIVELY ITS OWN?**

Immediately I must answer, yes. As was stated in 5.3.1 above, the modern day Pentecostal movement originated due to the divine intervention of God in bringing about a new awareness of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Consequently, it is deduced from this that God has a purpose for the Pentecostalists, namely that they will emphasise once more the importance of the Pentecostal experience within the church for effective witness. Logically therefore, the Pentecostal church does have a special part in the Christian church – a fact that cannot be denied if one bears in mind that the Pentecostal movement is most probably the fastest growing Christian church movement in the world<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> See statistics on page 2.

In addition to the above, the Pentecostal movement's 'coming of age' calls for a hermeneutic of its own. With regards to this coming of age, **Hollenweger (1992:7-9)** states:

Pentecostalism has come of age. It is now possible to be filled with the Spirit, to enjoy the specific Pentecostal charismata and Pentecostal spirituality, to believe in Pentecostal mission, and at the same time to use one's critical faculties to develop them and to use them – as any other charisma for the Kingdom of God.

The above statement was made by Hollenweger to illustrate that despite earlier antagonism towards academic training within Pentecostalism, today "one finds scores of first class Pentecostal scholars that need to be taken seriously". The mere fact that reference is frequently made to Pentecostalism and/or Pentecostal 'theology', is in itself an indication of definite premises and nuances of certain theological perceptions that function within Pentecostalism. Just as every theological trend or theologian has certain key factors, so too does Pentecostalism have a certain key factor. For Reformed theology the key factor is 'covenant theology', for Calvin it is 'predestination', for Moltmann it is 'hope', while for Pentecostalism it is 'Pentecost'.

This may seem to imply that within Pentecostalism the entire Bible message is understood from the premise of Pentecost. Conversely, this is not the case. The Pentecostal experience is only one subdivision of Pentecostal 'theology', yet, because the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the attending gifts of the Spirit are so prominent in Pentecostalism, it is often exemplified as such. However, in Pentecostalism the soteriological, pneumatological and eschatological aspects meet up in Jesus Christ, whose presence is not just cognitive, but existential, diminishing the limitation between heaven and earth and making the transcendental God present in the here and now.

Amongst others, the fact of Pentecostalism's 'coming of age' can also be clearly seen in the recent social and cultural concern of the Pentecostal churches. In its early years of existence, Pentecostalism primarily focused on the eschatological expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ, resulting in single-mindedness for evangelising the world, while at the same time lacking a concern for social matters. This led to a social quietism within Pentecostalism. **Wilson (1988:267)** briefly describes the impact of the doctrine of the imminent premillennial return of Jesus Christ on Pentecostal attitudes toward social action as follows:

Since the end is near, Pentecostals are indifferent to social change and have rejected the reformist methods of the optimistic postmillennialists and have concentrated on "snatching brands from the fire" and letting social reforms result from humankind being born again.

Pentecostalism has often been criticized as above, for its lack of social concern. At its beginning, this critique against Pentecostalism may have had some justifiable grounds of support. However, the tide has turned since then and like most other Christian denominations, Pentecostalism has accepted its responsibility toward social reform. Dempster (1993:52-53) explains the initial and recent social concern within Pentecostalism as follows:

From the beginning of the movement, a sprinkling of ministers involved the church in social work. Some church leaders on the home front established orphanages and hospices. A few missionaries overseas built rescue homes and lepersariums out of compassionate concern for the homeless and those who were viewed as outcasts. In more recent times, however, social programs born out of concern for the disadvantaged and marginalized of society seem to have multiplied among Pentecostals.

It can categorically be stated that in recent years Pentecostal churches have, in contrast to the exclusive vertical focus that they previously upheld, become more aware of their cultural and social responsibilities and instead of only a vertical focus, now also have a horizontal focus. In this regard, the recent socio-political changes in South Africa come to mind whereby the church was compelled to review and broaden its borders and structures.

The FGC was previously divided into four cultural departments, namely the White, Black, Colored and Indian departments. The White department with its head office at Irene, Pretoria, governed these various departments. However, the socio-political situation in South Africa required that change of structure be initiated. The issue of Church unity was often part of the business agendas which later led to the four departments being incorporated into two departments, namely the Irene Association, which consisted of mainly white members, and the United Association, which consisted of members from the other three departments.

These two departments functioned independently of one another for four years, whilst at the same time working toward a united FGC. The premise for a united church was based on twenty principles of unification, which pitifully, were primarily focused on the structural and administrative aspects, more than likely due to the lack of a well-formulated hermeneutical model. After much debate and negotiation between the two associations, the church was eventually united in October 1997. Horak (1999:74) makes the following remarks about this unification:

It was noteworthy that the Moderator issued a press statement entitled "Emotions run high at FGC unification", (Beeld, October 1997). The argument to justify this statement may be that the church is "spiritually" one. On the one hand this may be true, yet on the other hand it appears as if the full implications of this

“unification” was not fully realized. The premise of the unification was not based on a well-formulated ecclesiological model on which the involved parties had reached consensus. During the various debates, it could often be noted that the “spectacles” through which the ecclesiology was viewed, was one of political and personal interpretation... The fact that the FGC think that church unity has been achieved because consensus was reached on the structural quarter and that unification celebrations were held, can be viewed as nothing more than an illusion.<sup>35</sup>

From this statement by Horak, it is evident that the FGC, like all other Pentecostal churches, need to rethink its basic theological premise, namely the Foursquare Gospel and in the light thereof must earnestly covet and work towards a well-formulated hermeneutic model that will amongst others reflect the Pentecostal understanding of the Scriptures in the light of the socio-political situation and the church’s involvement therein.

#### **5.3.4 QUESTION 4. DOES THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT HAVE AN IDENTITY AND A TASK APART FROM THE IDENTITY AND TASK THAT BELONGS TO THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL?**

As far as the task is concerned, the answer is a definite no. The Pentecostal movement must acknowledge that it is part of the Church universal, and as such shares in the same calling and mission given by Jesus Christ (Mt 28:19). Therefore, as far as the task is concerned, the Pentecostal movement cannot consider itself unique in any sense. Yet, as far as identity is concerned, the modern Pentecostal movement is something unique. All denominations within the Christian church are part of the church universal, yet each denomination has its unique distinguishing features. Throughout the ages different lines of theological thought have originated in Christianity - each with a character of its own, each with a biblical interpretation of its own. To expound on these here, would be impossible due to the vastness of the subject. Brief outlines of the major lines of thought will, however, provide the reader with a better understanding of the similarities and dissimilarities found therein. **Potgieter (in Snyman 1998:2)**<sup>36</sup> presents the following description of these major lines of thought:

Roman Catholicism views the church as the continual incarnation of Christ and associate the gifts of God with the seven sacraments, wherewith the church literally accompanies the church member from the cradle to the grave.

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<sup>35</sup> Translation my own.

<sup>36</sup> Translation my own.

Eastern Orthodox thought features distinct mystical elements in its worship: an internal unity with Christ that is presented in the liturgy, while icons play an important mediating role.

Within Protestantism, important distinctions can be noted: the reformed tradition which is strongly based on Calvin's four solisms: *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *solus Christus*: the Scriptures only, only by grace, only by faith, only by Christ.

Lutheranism, which is characterised by its strong Christ-centric line of thought and a dual order doctrine; the spiritual order of the Gospel wherein God by the power of his Word, renews people; the world order wherein God governs through intermediators (such as the government).

Pentecostalism, which lays great emphasis on the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit from apostolic times, which must still be the sign of a true Spirit-infilling.

From the above it is clear that each denomination, although the church in itself, is at the same time a unique part of the church universal. In this sense Pentecostalism too is unique, however, always bearing in mind that it is but a part of the great stream of salvific history. This implies that Pentecostalism has no uniqueness because of a "special privilege" or "special favour" bestowed upon them by God. The uniqueness lies within their responsibility to faithfully bear witness of the immanency of the Holy Spirit and his gifts in the life of the contemporary church. To be faithful to its responsibility will, however, require that Pentecostalism be in possession of a hermeneutic model that will clearly reflect its understanding and interpretation of God's word as recorded for us in the Bible.

#### 5.4 SUMMARY

The development of a Pentecostal hermeneutic has been a long and slow process. The reason amongst others being that Pentecostal 'theology' is based on biblical truths (theories), some of which are experienced in practice. These experiences, being a genuine component of 'classical Pentecostal experiences', have in a sense been discredited by the so called experiences found or present in the charismatic churches – e.g. the denial of the doctrine of initial evidence - and in a sense this has contributed to the delayed formation of a Pentecostal hermeneutic. Since Pentecostalism is without a hermeneutic of its own, it is in the pitiful position that it is unable to legitimately defend its beliefs based on pre-defined methodological scriptural interpretations. It must be clearly understood that all Pentecostal experiences are scriptural reckonable, but when there is no formulated standard based on Scripture, this task becomes a case of 'personal preference' or exegesis.

Notwithstanding the above and the fact that there are definitely many more aspects that could be considered with regards to the practicality of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, it is evident from the discussion that the formulation of a hermeneutic for Pentecostalism, although long overdue, is viable. There are many factors that will impinge on a Pentecostal hermeneutic, such as postmodernism with its rejection of absolutes. Nevertheless, this has brought to our awareness the fact that we live in a time and age totally opposite to that of Jesus' day. Not only does this affect Pentecostalism, but also actually forces all Christian churches to respond in order to defend the faith and/or to make sense of biblical interpretation in the light of the bipolar tension between faith and reason, church and science. For Pentecostals though, the formulation of a Pentecostal hermeneutic will prevent both the haphazard interpretation of the biblical text and the tendency to be antagonistic toward academic thought. This in turn will also lead to a more cohesive interpretation of the biblical text whereby many of the current discrepancies, some of which are addressed in the following chapter, may be resolved and eliminated.

## CHAPTER 6

### AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH-SUPPORTIVE ILLUSTRATION

#### 6.1 THE METHOD APPLIED

As was mentioned in the introductory remarks of this study, the research problem hereof stems from the fact that Pentecostals, even those belonging to the same denomination, are divided into at least three different schools as far as their understanding and biblical interpretation of the relationship between national Israel and the church of the New Testament is concerned. Some differentiate between Israel and the church, yet fail to maintain this distinction in their interpretation or exegeses of certain biblical texts. Others seem to adhere to a reformed theology that equates the church with Israel, while another group distinguishes Israel from the church and consistently maintain this distinction throughout all their interpretations of Scripture.

In order to illustrate this fact, as well as the author's supposition, namely that due to the lack of a well-formulated hermeneutical model discrepancies exist in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism, personal interviews were arranged with prominent church leaders and academics from some of the Pentecostal denominations in South Africa, and it was required of them to verbally answer twenty-four set questions, their answers being recorded on audiotape. The questions centred mainly on factors closely related to ecclesiology and eschatology, as the illustrative value of the actual research is merely to highlight the fact that in the Pentecostals' understanding of the biblical text, there are interpretive discrepancies in relation to Israel and the church.

Nevertheless, as was stated previously, this does not imply that these are the only discrepancies found within Pentecostalism. Many others are present, such as those in relation to the Holy Spirit and the gifts that he bestows on humanity. It is logical that it would be impossible to fully discuss all the discrepancies within Pentecostalism - or any other religious movement for that matter - in a study of this nature. Yet, my anticipation is that on the one hand this study may in some way inspire Pentecostals to realise the urgent need of a well-formulated and articulated hermeneutical model, while on the other hand it may contribute to the origin of such a model. I am obviously aware of the fact that due to different views and exegetical interpretations applied to Scripture, it would be unrealistic to expect that all

Pentecostals will adhere to a single model. However, as far as my knowledge is concerned, Pentecostalism to date does not possess a single well-formulated hermeneutical model and hopefully this study could include some initial steps towards such a model.

### 6.1.1 THE PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Since the nature of the actual research did not necessarily reveal the denominational viewpoint to which each interviewee was related, but rather their personal understanding of the relative biblical texts, their identities are not to be revealed in this document, so as not to distinguish or embarrass any person. An alphabetical letter represents each individual person and an indication of the office or position held is given. Hence, the following list of persons interviewed together with their church affiliation and position held:

<u>REPRESENTATIVE LETTER</u>	<u>DENOMINATION</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
A	FGC	An emeritus pastor and former lecturer at Berea Theological College, Irene. <sup>37</sup>
B	FGC	A principal of Irene Theological College. <sup>38</sup>
C	AFM	A pastor of an AFM assembly.
D	AFM	A president of the AFM Church.
E	AFM	A lecturer - AFM Theological College.
F	AFM	A lecturer – AFM Theological College.
G	FGC	A moderator – FGC Church.
H	AOG	A principal – AOG Bible School.

<sup>37</sup> The Bible College of the Full Gospel Church of God in SA.

<sup>38</sup> A distance study Bible College of the Full Gospel Church.

Details of the relevant audiotapes are alphabetically listed at the end of the Bibliography of this thesis.

### 6.1.2 THE SET QUESTIONS

The persons interviewed were not informed of the intention or theme of this study prior to the individual interviews. Therefore it can be stated with all certainty that the purpose hereof did not in any way influence the answers received. Below is a list of the twenty-four questions asked:

1. When was the church constituted?
2. What is the difference between the Holy Ghost that the disciples received when Jesus breathed on them (Joh 20:22) and the Holy Ghost that they received on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:4)?
3. Did the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 operate before the Day of Pentecost?
4. What is the initial evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit?
5. How important is water baptism for salvation?
6. Why did Paul re-baptise the disciples of Ephesus although they were baptised unto John's baptism?
7. Why was Jesus baptised?
8. How can we employ Christ's water baptism as a motivational factor to persuade people to be baptised?
9. According to 2 Th. 2:6, something or someone is withholding the revelation of "*that man of sin*". Who or what is that man of sin and who or what is referred to as withholding?
10. The common view among Pentecostals is that the church is to be raptured. Do you support this view?
11. Where do you place the rapture in the eschatological sequence?

12. According to Mt 24:40-41 “Two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken and the other left.” What meaning do you ascribe to this?
13. Pentecostals often refer to the parable of the ten virgins in their preaching. How would you interpret this parable?
14. What does the oil in this parable typify?
15. Pentecostals that believe in the rapture of the church also believe and teach that the rapture can occur at any moment. Yet, according to Mt 24:14 the gospel is to be preached to all nations then shall the end come. It is a known fact however, that all people have not as yet heard the gospel. How would you explain this?
16. How do you understand Mt 24:13, “But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved?”
17. In Mk 16:16 Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.” How do you reconcile this with Mt 24:13?
18. Would you agree that the New Testament church is an extension of the Old Testament Israel?
19. Who or what does the white horse and rider of Rev 6 symbolise?
20. Who or what does the raptured man-child of Rev 12:5 represent?
21. How would you interpret the book of Revelation? Historically or as futuristic?
22. Would this include the letters to the seven churches?
23. Do you differentiate between the rapture and the second coming of Christ?
24. Is this distinction discernible in the book of Revelation?

## **6.2 THE ANSWERS**

As most of the answers received from the persons interviewed were rather lengthy and time consuming, it will be impossible to represent them in a word for word format within this study. In view hereof, the replies are schematically presented on pages 80-83 below and are very briefly summarised. The summaries will, however, although brief and only of illustrative

value, enable the reader to immediately notice that discrepancies are present within Pentecostal textual interpretation. In chapter 8 the questions and answers received are reviewed in relation to the proposed hermeneutical framework and logically discussed in more detail. In order to simplify the format of the schematic representation, the question numbers as listed above appear on the vertical axis of the table while the representative alphabetical letter of each person interviewed as listed in 6.1.1, appears across the horizontal axis.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Day of Pentecost.	Jesus breathed on disciples.	After Ascension.	Day of Pentecost.	Day of Pentecost.	Day of Pentecost.	Day of Pentecost.	When disciples called.	At or after crucifixion.
2	1. Empowered disciples. 2. Empowered Church.	1. Constituted as living organism.  2. Power	1. Rebirth  2. Power	1. Symbol of that which would happen in Acts 2.  2. Power	1. Rebirth  2. Power	1. Undertaking of what was to come in Acts.  2. Power	1. Recreation Process.  2. Power	1. Rebirth  2. Power	1. God coming to dwell on earth by H/S.  2. Power
3	*	Yes. All except Tongues and Interpretation.	Yes. All except Tongues and Interpretation.	Yes. All except Tongues and Interpretation.	Yes. Disciples had authority before Pentecost.	Yes. All except Tongues and Interpretation.	Yes. All except Tongues and Interpretation.	Yes. All except Tongues and Interpretation.	Yes. Tongues not exclusive to N T.
4	*	Tongues	Tongues and/or Prophecy	Tongues	Tongues	Tongues, but nowhere in Bible stated as proof of Spirit baptism. The fruit of Spirit is proof.	Tongues	Tongues, but if one does not speak in tongues it does not mean one is not baptized in Spirit.	Not tongues; indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables one to speak in tongues.
5	Obedience	No importance, but is a shadow of an inner happening.	No importance.	Obedience	Not essential.	Not essential, but sign of obedience.	Obedience. Not essential for salvation	It does not save, but is important	Very important. Part of salvation.
6	John preached repentance. Jesus preached gospel which John did not yet understand.	John's baptism was relevant for acceptance of the kingdom. Paul's baptism was christological.	John's baptism was an O.T. baptism. The church did not exist	John's baptism was not the same as Jesus' baptism as Jesus was not yet crucified.	John's baptism was a baptism unto repentance. Christ's was a testimony to discipleship.	John's baptism was not a Christian baptism. This was only instituted after Christ's resurrection.	John's baptism was a kingdom baptism. Christ's was a Christian baptism.	Water baptism is part of the process of initiation into Christ. John's baptism not a Christian baptism.	John's baptism is a proselyte baptism completely different to Jesus' baptism.
7	An example for the church. The Essenes expected a baptism.	The acceptance of the kingdom.	To signify His threefold office.	An example for His future disciples.	As a sign of obedience to His Father.	As a sign of obedience to His Father and His willingness to go to Calvary.	It was the kingdom baptism.	He ordered John to do it.	As a token of His solidarity with the Jews.

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>8</b>	That we may fulfil all righteousness.	No motivation.	No motivation.	That we may fulfil all righteousness.	By following Jesus' example.	It can't be done, as Acts 19 will always be problematic.	Partly in that we must do what he has commanded.	Everything that happened to Jesus must happen to us.	Only as being obedient.
<b>9</b>	1. The antichrist. 2. The church.	1. The antichrist 2. The church.	1. The antichrist. 2. The church.	1. The antichrist. 2. The church.	1. The antichrist. 2. I don't know.	1. The antichrist. 2. The witness of the church due to immense trials.	1. The antichrist. 2. The church.	1. The antichrist. 2. The church or the Holy Spirit.	1. The antichrist. 2. The church.
<b>10</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes but not a secret Rapture. The Rapture and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Advent is same event.	Yes	Not a secret Rapture. I prefer the term resurrection. The whole church will be resurrected.	Yes
<b>11</b>	Pre-tribulation	Pre-tribulation	Pre-tribulation	Pre-tribulation	Rapture and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Advent are one event followed by Millennium.	Rapture and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Advent one event.	Pre-tribulation	No eschatological sequence. What happens is more important than when it happens.	Pre-tribulation
<b>12</b>	Refers to one taken, the other one left at Rapture.	Tribulation. One taken (killed) by antichrist. The other left.	Watchfulness of Israel.	Refers to one taken, the other one left at Rapture	Refers to Jerusalem in AD 70.	Some will be saved. Others lost at last judgment. Nothing to do with the Rapture	Refers to church. Not all will be Raptured.	Readiness of church for Christ's return.	Jewish connotation in Tribulation.
<b>13</b>	For the church to be ready.	To call the Jews to watchfulness in Tribulation.	We could apply it to the watchfulness of the church.	Nominal church; 5 born again; 5 not born again.	Readiness at Christ's coming.	The message is to be ready.	Not all expecting Jesus will be Raptured.	Readiness of church for Christ's return.	Relevant to the election of the Jews.
<b>14</b>	The Holy Spirit (person & baptism).	Watchfulness, not the Holy Spirit.	Watchfulness, not the Holy Spirit.	Rebirth	No significance.	No significance.	Type of Holy Spirit.	No significance.	The Holy Spirit in believers' lives.

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
15	The gospel has already been preached to all nations.	This is the gospel of the Kingdom that will be preached to the Jews in Tribulation and all nations in Millennium.	The gospel has already been preached to all the world.	It is one of the last signs prior to Christ's return. Few people groups not reached yet.	All peoples may not already have heard but all nations certainly have.	Because Pentecostals believe in a secret rapture this Scripture is misinterpreted. The gospel will be preached to all the nations not every individual before 2nd Advent. Church has to go through Great Tribulation.	With modern technology most people have heard the gospel and rapture can occur at any moment.	It's not wrong to say that Jesus may return at any moment. Nor to say the gospel has to be preached to all people.	The "end" may refer to the last judgment or White Throne judgment.
16	The Christian who believes to end of his life span shall be saved.	This is endurance of Jews through Great Tribulation.	Refers to the church and personal endurance.	The Christian must endure to the end or be lost.	Christian perseverance will lead to salvation.	Salvation is a crisis experience. To endure is to remain in a constant loving relationship with Christ.	Not he/she who starts the race but them who finish it will be saved.	We can backslide, so we need to endure in our commitment to Christ.	Has reference only on Israel in Great Tribulation period.
17		Mt 24 refers to Jews. Mk 16 Baptism follows salvation - is obedience.	Baptism accentuates salvation.	Obedience	Mt. 24 = Eventual Salvation. Mk.16 = Entrance into salvation.	Mt. 24 =life style Mk.16 has to do with the moment of salvation.	Mt. 24 has to do with the perseverance and Mk. 16 with initial salvation.	Mt. 24 is the end of one's faith. Mk.16 is the beginning of one's faith.	Mt 24 refers to Jews. Baptism follows grace-is obedience.
18		No. The church is a new creation out of all nations.	No	Yes, in the sense the shadow of cross falls in OT & N T.	Yes	No	No. It's not an extension but a new body.	No. The church does not replace Israel.	Yes, as people of God. No, not as body of Christ.
19	Word of God.	Antichrist as false Christ.	Antichrist	Not Christ. Part of happenings during Great Tribulation.	I don't know.	Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ	I'm not sure.	Antichrist

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>20</b>	The Jewish Church.	144,000 Jews	144,000 Jews	Christ or the Church.	I don't know.	Jesus Christ, but I am open for other views.	144,000 Jews	Christ & the Church.	144,000 Jews
<b>21</b>	Futuristic	Futuristic	Futuristic but not exclusively.	Futuristic but not exclusively	Futuristic. Non-dispensational.	It covers the period from Acts 2 to the end, therefore it is historical and futuristic.	Futuristic	Past & present. The point of the book is the victory of Jesus- the hope of every generation	Futuristic
<b>22</b>	Yes	No	No	No	No	No. The 7 do not represent different church periods.	No	Past, present & future.	No
<b>23</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No. It's one event Pentecostals have placed too high a value on Rev. 20 - and the millennium.	Yes	No	Yes
<b>24</b>		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes. Rev. 4:1.	No	No

*\*NB These questions were not put to person A.*

The answers received and presented above, are expressive of the fact that the hypothesis to this study (namely that there are major discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostal ranks that have a major influence on the preaching and teaching within Pentecostalism and that leads to an identity crisis, confusion amongst both church members and non-members and discredits the image of Pentecostalism) is proved correct. Needless to say, these discrepancies are not regarded as the only ones present. Obviously there are many more, but it would be impossible to include them all in a limited study of this nature.

A brief summary of the answers received will help the reader in identifying the distinguished discrepancies and noting the dilemma of working towards a more cohesive Pentecostal hermeneutic. As was mentioned earlier, a detailed discussion of the questions and answers is presented in chapter 8.

The first question, relating to the point in time that the church was constituted, was met with at least four different answers, namely - at the calling of the disciples; at Christ's resurrection; when Jesus breathed on his disciples saying, "receive the Holy Ghost" and on the Day of Pentecost. How pitiful it is that while all believers are members of the church, there is uncertainty as to when the organism (the church is not an organisation), of which they are a part, was constituted. We may ask, "If one does not understand one's origin and history, how will one understand one's destiny?" From the answers given it can be clearly understood that if the time of constitution of the church is not agreed on, how can we ever hope to agree on eschatological events that are still futuristic? Thus the enormity of the task becomes evident.

The discrepancies found in the answers to the first question, logically imply that the next question - relating to the explanation of the difference between the Holy Ghost received when Jesus breathed on the disciples and the Holy Ghost that came upon them on the Day of Pentecost- will also be riddled with discrepancies. Here the theological principle, namely that one's point of departure determines one's destination, can be clearly seen. Although all agreed that on the Day of Pentecost Holy Ghost power was bestowed on those present in the upper room, there were differing views on the purpose of Christ' breathing on the disciples. These views included, the disciples being empowered for their service (others being empowered on the Day of Pentecost); the rebirth of the disciples; a foretaste of what was to happen on the Day of Pentecost; the constitution of the church and a recreation process of the church. I do not intend to analyse the answers here as they are only illustrative of the problem,

but in order to emphasize the enormity of the problem, I will briefly comment on one of the answers received to the second question.

The answer was given that when Jesus breathed on his disciples, he empowered them for their service and at Pentecost he empowered the rest of the people that were together in the upper room. If this is true, it implies that Jesus' command instructing the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endowed with power was superfluous. This would then mean that the Day of Pentecost was just a duplication of what happened in the upper room. If this then is true, one can only begin to imagine what devastating and far reaching effects it would have not only on Pentecostal churches, but also on the church universal.

The same theological principle, namely of departure determining one's destination, is evident in the answers to questions three and four. All the interviewees agreed that every gift of the Spirit, except the gift of tongues and that of the interpretation of tongues, operated in the Old Testament. This implies that they all believe that the gift of tongues and the gift of the interpretation of tongues are both gifts relevant to the New Testament. Despite this harmony, they are not agreed on whether or not these New Testament gifts are the initial evidence that a person has been baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Questions five, six, seven and eight all have bearing on water baptism, but although they were asked and the answers briefly listed above, I will not elaborate on them. These were only included in order to help disguise the purpose of this study to the interviewees, so as not to allow the theme hereof to influence their answers. Yet, once again one can see from the answers given that even in this area discrepancies are present.

There is a reasonable agreement on the answer to question nine, namely that the "man of sin" is the Antichrist and that it is the church that must be taken out of the way before he can be revealed. Yet, one of the interviewees believes that it could be the Holy Spirit, while another expressed the belief that it was the witness of the church that will cease due to great oppression.

Question ten required that they state whether they believe that the church would be raptured. Most of them did believe this, but some did not support belief in a secret rapture. By secret rapture is meant the snatching away (*harpazo*) of the church to heaven. Others believe that the rapture would be a snatching away, but not secret. The church will be snatched away to meet Christ in the clouds at his second advent and immediately return to earth with him. One of the interviewees stated that he prefers the word resurrection to rapture, as the whole church would be resurrected but not raptured.

The time of the rapture in each one's eschatological sequence was the theme of question eleven. Once again there were discrepancies. Some believed it to be after the church period and before the Great Tribulation. Another belief was that the rapture and the second advent were one and the same event, while another stated that he did not have an eschatological sequence for future events, maintaining that "what" happens is more important than "when" it happens.

The response to question twelve was very significant. Some believe that the "one taken and the other left" referred to the rapture of the church. Another believes that it has to do with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. That it referred to the saved and the lost at the last judgement, was another reply. Another believes that it has to do with the resurrection. The one taken was to be the one resurrected and the one left would not be resurrected. Another said that this verse had a Jewish connotation and is relevant to the Jews during the Great Tribulation. Then there was also the belief that the one taken, was the Jews that would be taken to war at Armageddon and killed by the Antichrist. The one left will not need to go to war.

The question on the parable of the ten virgins and its meaning, also produced astounding answers that included the church's readiness at Christ's second advent; the church's readiness for the rapture; not all expecting Jesus will be raptured; it has to do with the election of the Jews; to call the church to watchfulness during the Great Tribulation; an address to the nominal church of which fifty percent were reborn and fifty percent were not.

As far as question fourteen was concerned, which required an explanation of the typology (if any) of the oil in the lamps of the ten virgins, the answers varied from no typology to the Holy Spirit, watchfulness and rebirth.

The relationship between the imminent rapture of the church, as proclaimed by some Pentecostals, and the fact that the gospel has not yet been preached to all nations - after which the end will come - was the content of question fifteen. Some believe that the gospel has been preached to all nations but perhaps not to every individual, thus the rapture can occur at any moment. Another believes that there is no secret rapture and that the church must go through the Great tribulation, therefore the gospel will be preached to every nation before the Second Advent. One viewpoint was that the end might refer to the White Throne judgement. A further explanation was that this was the gospel of the kingdom that was to be preached to the Jews during the Great Tribulation. That this was one of the last signs before the rapture, was another viewpoint.

The sixteenth question required an explanation of the meaning of Christ's words, "But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." According to the answers, some explained that Jesus implied that Christians must persevere to the end of their life span or be lost; others said Christian perseverance will lead to salvation; it is not the one that starts the race but the one that finishes it that is saved; we can backslide, so we need to endure in our commitment to Christ; it means that the Jews must endure to the end of the Great Tribulation.

Question seventeen produced a mixed response depending on the person's answer to the previous question. Those who had answered question sixteen by stating that the endurance of Mathew 24 referred to the Jews during the Great Tribulation, were of the opinion that the act of baptism as prescribed in Mark 16 is a step of obedience following salvation. The others held that Mark 16 was relative to one's entrance into salvation and Matthew 24 had to do with one's eventual salvation or one's Christian walk after salvation.

Question eighteen related to whether the New Testament church is or is not an extension of the Old Testament Israel. Here there was basically a 50/50 situation wherein fifty percent said no and fifty percent said yes. Those who said yes, did, however, have certain reservations, amongst others that the church is God's people, but the Body of Christ is not equal to the Old Testament Israel. One person believed that because the cross stands between the Old and the New Testaments, its shadow falls both ways thus Israel and the church can be equated.

The answers to question nineteen regarding the symbolism of the white horse rider in Revelation 6, varied from “I don’t know” to “the word of God”, “Jesus Christ” and “the Antichrist”.

In question twenty, the man-child of Revelation 12 was described as the Jewish church, the 144,000 Jews, the Church of Jesus, and as Jesus himself.

The answers to question twenty-one clearly revealed that the Book of Revelation was either interpreted in all the tenses - past, present and future, or futuristically, except for the seven Churches in chapters 1-3.

There was a fifty percent yes and fifty percent no response to question twenty-two as to whether or not the seven churches of Revelation represented seven periods in Church history.

As far as differentiating between the rapture and the Second Advent was concerned as asked in question twenty-three, two said they do not differentiate as it is one and the same event, while the rest said that it was two phases of one event.

As far as the last question was concerned, namely whether the distinction between the rapture and the second advent was discernable in the Book of Revelation, most replied with a “no”, while the others said “yes”, quoting Revelation 4:1.

### **6.3 CONFUSION MORE CONFOUNDED**

In view of the results of the illustrative research as schematically presented above, there is no doubt in my mind that many theologians would not only agree with me that discrepancies are factual in textual interpretation within Pentecostal theology, but that they would also agree that the confusion is all the more confounded after an exercise such as this. One immediately becomes aware of the fact that the Pentecostal churches believe that the church will be raptured; yet not raptured. They equate Israel with the church, but the church is not Israel. They maintain that the church is to be raptured after which the Great Tribulation will begin, but also teach that the church will go through the tribulation; that the rider of the white horse of Revelation 6 is Christ, yet also the Antichrist; that the man-child of Revelation 12 represents the 144,000 Jews, the church, as well as Christ. So it continues to be contradiction

upon contradiction. The tragedy of the matter is that these and many other such contradicting facts are not limited to the differences found between Pentecostal denominations of various cultures or traditions as such, but are also found amongst theologians and leaders associated to a specific Pentecostal denomination.

In view of the above, the ideal would be to pursue and create unbiased guidelines from this study, whereby greater consensus on the interpretation of the biblical text can be attained. Unbiased, in this context, suggests being impartial and tolerant with regards to differing views. The problem is that unbiased guidelines imply reverting back to an *either/or* situation that in turn will result in the *status quo* remaining. It must be remembered that the discrepancies as described in the previous paragraph are the product of, amongst others, the fact that everybody approaches the Bible with his or her own meta-theory<sup>39</sup> or pre-conceived suppositions. This in turn implies that it would be absurd to expect all Pentecostals to sanction a given hermeneutic model. Nonetheless, this statement must not be seen as defeating the object of this study. As a matter of fact, I am convinced that a well-formulated hermeneutic model will lead to the attainment of improved consensus on many of the current conflicting issues.

Consequently, I am pursuing a responsible hermeneutical syncretism among Pentecostals, while at the same time taking cognisance of the abundance of research into hermeneutical issues already done by Pentecostals - too many to be listed here. According to **Hollenweger (1997:312)**, Gordon D Fee was "one of the first to put hermeneutics on the Pentecostal agenda". This seems to have been during the 1972-second annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies when Fee stated that:

Two observations should be made about hermeneutics within the traditional Pentecostal movement. First their attitude towards Scripture regularly has included a general disregard of scientific exegeses and carefully thought out hermeneutics. In fact hermeneutics has simply not been a Pentecostal thing... Secondly, it is probably fair and important to note that in general the Pentecostals experience has preceded their hermeneutics.

Since Fee's statement, an abundance of research has been done in the field of hermeneutics. **Archer (1996:70)**, in reflecting on the Euro-American Pentecostal discussion of hermeneutics, remarks that:

This topic has generated a lively debate amongst Pentecostal scholars. This can be attested to by examining the current contents of two prominent Pentecostal

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<sup>39</sup> See point 5.2.2 on page 64 for a discussion of meta-theories.

journals, namely *Pneuma* and the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. Scholars are responding to a general call to develop a hermeneutic with which to construct a theology worthy of the name Pentecostal.

This debate has resulted in the presentation of many aspects and dimensions, which contribute to our understanding of the Bible and therefore none is without value. The scholars referred to by Archer above, have approached the subject from a variety of theological angles and conceivably the time has come for a holistic approach that will produce a hermeneutic framework wherein Pentecostals could develop the product of their research, thereby eliminating many of the current interpretive problems.

#### **6.4 A HOLISTIC APPROACH**

Holistic, in this sense, represents a Pentecostal hermeneutical framework:

- a) Wherein all things relate to God and God relates to all things. This implies that the transcendent God is at work in, with, above and beyond all events.
- b) That includes a systematic progressive unfolding of God's revelation and the interrelation of the ages whereby all events – past, present and future - are related to a master plan of God that will be consummated at the second coming of Christ.
- c) Wherein the Bible is understood in its entirety as the oracle of God whereby God reveals himself and also his salvific plan for humanity to us.
- d) Wherein the diversity of human authors does not imply a fragmentation of the canon, but rather many authors writing about a common subject e.g. Salvation.
- e) That views the church as a continuity of the New Testament church and a witness of the foursquare gospel of Jesus Christ who may be encountered today just as in the early church.
- f) That does not equate the New Testament church with the Old Testament Israel, but rather views it as the “body of Christ” – a New Testament entity.
- g) Wherein the Holy Spirit is the one that convicts, leads, bears witness and demonstrates his power.
- h) Whereby the interpretation is done within the context of a Pentecostal community, so that the text is constantly approached in a Pentecostal context.

- i) That includes all the subdivisions of Theology, e.g. Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Eschatology, etc., which implies an approach from most theological angles.

The reason for this holistic approach is the anticipation that Pentecostals may establish a hermeneutic from this framework that will act as the principles, methods and rules that are needed to unfold the logic of Scripture whereby they can measure all the relevant aspects and dimensions.

Furthermore, the anticipation is that this framework could possibly serve toward the formulation of a worthy Pentecostal theology. It must be clearly understood that to arrive at this point of presenting a hermeneutical framework, necessitates the consideration of many aspects and dimensions relative to the subject. However, instead of encumbering the reader with these, I will present a Pentecostal hermeneutical framework in the next chapter, and in order to illustrate how theological aspects and dimensions could relate to it, I will (in chapter 8) take another look at the twenty-four set questions that were put to the Pentecostal church leaders and theologians, thereby illustrating how discrepancies could be avoided by accommodating the questions (and answers) within the proposed framework. I am convinced that this will motivate the reader of this study that a hermeneutical model is essential for better consensus.

## CHAPTER 7

### A PROPOSED PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC FRAMEWORK

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

In view of the three schools of interpretation as discussed in chapter 1,<sup>40</sup> it must be clearly stated that the hermeneutic framework proposed below, is based on the view of the school that makes a distinction between the Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church, and that consistently applies this distinction to all scriptural interpretations. In the light hereof, it is unconditionally stated that it supports the theory of progressive revelation<sup>41</sup> whereby is meant that God progressively reveals more of his salvific plan to humanity with the passing of time and of generations. Within this hermeneutic framework, the distinction between Israel and the church is of vital importance as the whole framework is based on this initial point of departure.

I am aware of the fact that theologians from other theological traditions may/will not agree with this distinction between Israel and the church, however, the purpose of this dissertation is to aid theologians within the Pentecostal tradition to articulate a hermeneutic of their own, or at least to guide them to better consensus with regards to their interpretation of the biblical text. Nevertheless, in order to provide theologians from the ranks of the other traditions with a meaningful, yet brief account, as to why Pentecostalism makes this distinction between the Israel and the church, a concise<sup>42</sup> explanation follows in the next paragraph.

#### 7.2 THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH – A CONCISE EXPLANATION

A careful reading of Matthew 13:11 & 35 lightens up the fact that there was a certain mystery

<sup>40</sup> See point 1.2.3 on page 9.

<sup>41</sup> See discussion on page 35.

<sup>42</sup> “Concise” is used here; bearing in mind that the theme discussed here, “Israel/church”, engrosses a vast field consisting of a great deal more than can be contained in this thesis. Explanatory themes such as the Abrahamic, Palestinian and Davidic covenants are not discussed here, but obviously play a major role in the distinction that Pentecostalists make between Israel and the church. See *Pentecost* (1965:128) for further discussion on these themes. Israel and the church are contrasted in chapter 9, point 9.7.1 on page 193.

hidden in the Old Testament. In answering the disciples' question as to why he spoke to them in parables, Jesus referred to the "*mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*" and to "*things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world*". The question requiring an answer is therefore, what the mystery or secret things were. A number of scriptural passages need to be analysed before we can obtain a significant answer.

**(a) DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS - CHAPTER 9:24-27.**

In this chapter, reference is made to 70 weeks that are determined upon or marked off from all other years and concern only Daniel's people (Jews) and his holy city (Jerusalem) for the purpose of "*finishing the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the prophecy and to anoint the most Holy*". These 70 weeks are interpreted as 70 weeks of years or 490 years.<sup>43</sup> A question that needs to be answered here, is what happens during the 490-year period and after or at the end of it? Naturally, Gabriel gives the answer in the purpose stated above, namely that Israel's (Jews) transgressions will be finished and an end will be made to their sin, due to the Messiah having made reconciliation for their iniquity, which in turn will result in everlasting righteousness. In this passage, everlasting righteousness refers to the Messianic kingdom, in which vision and prophecy will no longer be required and they will consequently be sealed up. Last, but certainly not least, the most Holy will be anointed - referring to the cleansing of the holy of holies, the temple and the city of Jerusalem from the abomination of desolation and the sacrilege of the Gentiles and to the establishment and anointing of the millennial temple (Ezk 40-43).

From the above it is clear that the Messianic kingdom immediately follows Daniel's 70th week. Logically, the 70<sup>th</sup> week should follow immediately after the 69<sup>th</sup> week in which, according to Daniel's prophecy, an Anointed one (Christ) would be cut off (Dn 9:25-26). However, biblical and world history confirms that this was not the case. If it did happen as prophesied by Daniel,<sup>44</sup> the tribulation period of seven years (70<sup>th</sup> week) would have taken place immediately after Christ's death (69<sup>th</sup> week), which in turn would imply that seven years after the crucifixion, the millennium (1000 years of peace) would have begun (Rv 20:1-3). What actually is clarified here (by biblical and world history), is that there is an unfixed

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<sup>43</sup> This, amongst other reasons, is deduced from the fact that the last week is divided into two parts of three and a half years each (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:5, 14; 13:5). The happenings during this period are described later – see point 7.3 on page 96.

<sup>44</sup> The phrase, "If it did happen as prophesied by Daniel" does not imply that Daniel's prophecy was erroneous. Please read on for further explanation.

space of time between Daniel's 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks. This period is the parenthesis or mystery period that was not 'seen' by Daniel and is only revealed in the New Testament church era.

**(b) CHRIST'S BIRTH AND THE THRONE OF DAVID - ISAIAH CHAPTER 9:6-7**

Most if not all theologians are in agreement that this text refers to the birth of Christ. Yet, it is noteworthy that in the time space of two texts, the prophet refers to Christ's birth and to Christ as seated on the throne of David (obviously in the millennium), which should imply that the 1000 years peace was to follow immediately after Christ's birth. We definitely know, however, that this was not the case, as between Christ's incarnation and the future millennium we have the present church age.

**(c) THE BIRTH OF CHRIST AND THE MILLENIUM - ISAIAH CHAPTER 11:1-9**

Once again (as above) the first verse refers to the birth of Christ, and the prophet again fails to see the intermediate church period, but rather describes the 1000-year peace period (verses 6-9) and its peaceful consequences.

**(d) CHRIST AS ANOINTED AND THE DAY OF VENGEANCE OF OUR GOD - LUKE CHAPTER 4:18-21**

Jesus entered the temple and read from the book of Isaiah (61:1-3), but after reading the words "*To preach the acceptable year of the Lord*", he closed the book and said to them, "*This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears*". Firstly, we must determine what fulfilment is Jesus referring to here. Obviously none other than that he was anointed "*to preach the acceptable year of the Lord*" (to the Jews). Secondly, we must determine why he stopped reading at this point and did not continue reading Isaiah's prophecy as recorded in 61:1-3, namely "*and the day of vengeance of our God?*" Obviously it is because the *day of vengeance of our God* was not fulfilled on that day, but rather has reference to the Tribulation period.

I am of the opinion that Jesus was aware of the fact that these were two separate prophetic periods of time and purposely separated them here. This implies that between "the acceptable time of the year" (preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the Jews) and "the day of vengeance" (Tribulation period), there is a prophetic parenthesis that was not seen (hidden) by the Old Testament prophets. The New Testament sheds light on this matter (2 Th 2:6-8), teaching that "something" withholdeth the revelation of the Antichrist and the beginning of the Tribulation period. If this is the case, then this "something" is more than likely that which

is hidden in the prophetic mystery, and can only refer to one thing, namely the present church period, as the church is to be raptured (1 Th 4:16-17) prior to the tribulation period.<sup>45</sup>

The passages analysed above are but a few of the many that reveal to us that during the period between Christ's earthly ministry and the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (Tribulation), there was a period of time that was hidden (or a mystery) to the prophets. This is clearly distinguishable in Christ's words to his disciples as recorded in Matthew 13:11,17. While Christ refers to the mystery here, it is only revealed after his resurrection and with the beginning of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15-17). Logically, the next question requiring an answer is, "What is the mystery?" With reference to Colossians 1:24-27, **Verster (1980b:8)** explains it as follows:

In this Scripture portion we have a revealing reference to the Church as the Old Testament mystery. The apostle Paul puts it to us here that he must "fulfil the word of God" or must fully preach that the body "which is the Church" is the "mystery which has been hid from the ages and from generations", in accordance with the ministry or "dispensation of God which is given to me for you"

He then continues to explain Romans 16:25-26 and says,

The gospel of Paul has at its heart "the preaching of Jesus Christ", not according to the Old Testament as the Jewish Messiah, but "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets" and "made known to all nations". The preaching of the apostle to all nations thus contains the concept of the mystery. It is only logical that we should ask what the preaching of Jesus to the Gentiles implies? ... We find the answer in Ephesians 2:11-15: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh.... That at that time ye were without Christ.... But now in Jesus Christ ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ... to make in Himself of twain (Jew and Gentile) one new man (the church)." Without hesitation we can say therefore that the Old Testament mystery is the New Testament Church.

At this stage, the above explanation should be adequate for explanatory purposes of why the distinction is made between Israel and the church by Pentecostals. In the following chapter, all that has been discussed above in view of the relationship between Israel and the church is brought together in a simple, yet understandable way.

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<sup>45</sup> This hermeneutical framework supports the pre-tribulation theory of the Rapture of the church.

### 7.3 A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF GOD'S PLAN FOR HUMANITY – A NARRATIVE

For purposes of clarity I will firstly - in the form of a simple narrative based on the biblical text - present the reader with a bird's eye view of God's purpose for humanity according to my interpretation of the relevant text. Although we live in an age wherein narratives may not be fully acceptable to academics, it must be remembered that the Bible contains many narratives – a method of communication applied by the various writers of the books of the Bible. **Burden (1986:64)** agrees with this and states,

All stories, including biblical stories, contain two essential elements, namely the narrative and the descriptive.

In this connection **Deist (1986:77)** makes the following significant statement,

Although a literary world may look very much like the real world, a critical distance will always need to be kept, since every literary world reflects an attempt to interpret the real world – to give meaning to the real world. This is why history too, even though it is supposed to be 'factual', is in essence simply a way of using 'facts' as the raw material for telling a story. So, however close the relationship between story and reality may be, the story is always a meaning-constituting and meaning-imparting 'representation' of the reality.

In view of the above, namely that the Bible contains various narratives, the author's view in narrative form as presented below is nothing more than a bringing together of a number of such biblical narratives (e.g. Daniel 9; Ac 15) into one, for the sole purpose of attempting to give interpretive meaning to the content. In actual fact, the narrative method applied should be acceptable to the postmodern age, as postmodernism adheres to a holistic approach and to relativism in which there are no absolutes.<sup>46</sup> With this in mind, the narrative is presented below.

Since the beginning, God has had an eternal purpose<sup>47</sup> for humanity and his desire is to be continuously involved with humanity until the fulfilment of his purpose. In order to accomplish his purpose, God designated Abraham and his progeny (Israel) to be the chosen people of God (Gn 12:1-3). They were to be the light bearers of God to the nations and

<sup>46</sup> See discussion on postmodernism, point 5.2.1.3 on page 60.

<sup>47</sup> The writer is fully aware of the unresolved tension between God's sovereignty and humanity's freedom, which incorporates the problem of whether God has determined all things and humanity has no choice but to follow suit, in contrast to living according to their own free will and God reacting thereto. This problem is not addressed here, as it is a study demanding more than a dissertation such as this could include. Nevertheless, the writer is of the opinion that the omniscient God, who knows the end from the beginning, has an eternal purpose for humanity.

through them God would execute his eternal purpose. Yet, because of their continued disobedience to God's ordinances, they ended up in captivity in Babylon (2 Ki 25). It was while they were in captivity that Daniel prayed for the forgiveness of his people and for the restoration of Jerusalem (Dn 9:1-19). God answered Daniel's prayer and via Gabriel informed him as to what the future of the Jews would be.

Gabriel told Daniel (Dn. 9:20ff.) that seventy sevens (or 490 years) were determined upon the Jews and Jerusalem "*to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy*". However, from the issuing of the decree to restore and build up Jerusalem until the coming of the Anointed One (Christ) will be sixty-nine sevens (483 years). Then the Anointed One (Christ) would be cut off (put to death) from the living. In other words, after sixty-nine sevens the Jews will crucify the Anointed One (Calvary). This happened just as God had said it would. A decree was issued allowing the Jews to return to and restore Jerusalem. 483 Years later at Calvary's cross, Gabriel's words are partially fulfilled when the Jews crucify Christ. At this point, God sets aside his activity with the Jews (Rm 11) and he now turns his focus to the Gentiles (non-Jews)<sup>48</sup> from whence he will call unto himself a "new people", namely the *ecclesia* (church) made up of people from all nations who will be the bearers of the Gospel message to the world (Mt. 28:19). After God has completed his purpose with the church he will take it away (rapture), forevermore to be with Him where he is (heaven) (1 Th 4:13-18). After the rapture of the church, there will thus be one seven (7 years) related to the Jews still to be fulfilled.

It is at this point in time that God will once again turn his focus toward the Jews and the period of Daniel's remaining seven (7 years) will begin<sup>49</sup> (Ac 15:14-16). During this period another ruler (Antichrist) will come and he will confirm a covenant with many (Jews) for one seven (7 years). In the middle of that seven (after 3½ years) he will break that covenant and put an end to the freedom that the Jews enjoyed up to that point, namely to bring their sacrifices and offerings to the temple for God. The Jews will then be persecuted to the highest degree and have tribulations as never before for the rest of the seven (3½ years) (Mt 24:21). They will then flee to a place that God has prepared for them (Rv 12:14). By this time the Antichrist will have gathered many nations with him to destroy Israel. It is then that Christ will come from heaven with his hosts and he will destroy the Antichrist and all those that side

<sup>48</sup> See the discussion on progressive revelation on pages 35-38 with relation to the change of focus from the Jews to the gentiles.

<sup>49</sup> This period is known as the Tribulation period, which according to Daniel 9:27 will last one week (7 years).

with him, at the battle of Armageddon (Rv 16:16). Satan will be bound for a thousand years and the millennial reign of Christ on earth will begin (Rv 20:1-6). After the thousand years, Satan will be loosed for a short period to once again mislead the nations. Then fire from heaven will destroy them and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (Rv 20:7-10). Thereafter the dead that were not previously resurrected at the rapture, will be resurrected and the white throne judgement will take place (Rv 20:11-15).

From this ‘nutshell’ description of God’s eternal purpose, it is clear to see that when God is dealing with Israel, he is not dealing with the church and vice versa. Within this framework it is believed that before Calvary (the cross) the church did not exist; it was a mystery that was only revealed after the resurrection of Christ.<sup>50</sup> From the narrative, we also see that before the cross, God deals primarily with the Jews, while at the cross he postpones these dealings with them and turns his focus to the Gentiles. From amongst the Gentiles, those who accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour become part of his body (the church). It must be stated here that a Jew/ess may also become part of the church by accepting Christ as his/her saviour. After the completion of the church and the rapture thereof, God will once again resume his dealings with Israel.

There are some very important factors that must be noted here that play an important role in understanding this hermeneutical framework. Firstly, it must be noted that the interpretation belongs to the “futuristic school”, meaning that the consummation of God’s eschatological dealings with both Israel and the church are still futuristic. Secondly, it must be noted that Israel and the church are never equated with one another, but are two separate entities. Thirdly, a clear distinction is made between the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation. Accordingly, the Old Testament is seen as primarily related to Israel (Jews) and continues right up to the death of Christ. It is only after his death that the New Testament (church) dispensation follows. This is clear from Hebrews 9:15-17, which clearly teaches that a testament only becomes effective after the death of the testator, in this case Christ. This implies that all biblical passages right up to the crucifixion of Christ resort under the Old Testament dispensation, while from the cross onward the New Testament is in force wherein God primarily deals with the Gentiles and the church.

The book of Revelation, which is an apocalyptic book, must also (as is the case with all the other books of the New Testament) fit into this hermeneutical framework. We find the key to

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<sup>50</sup> See point 7.4.3 on page 107.

the book of Revelation in chapter 1:19, where John is told : “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” According to this command, the book is divided as follows:

- A) The things which thou hast seen.** This is Christ in the midst of the seven candlesticks - symbolising the seven churches; he has seven stars in his hand - symbolising the angels of the seven churches.
- B) The things which are.** These are the seven churches that existed at that time in Asia Minor, but in a sense are also representative of the different church ages up to the end of the church age.
- C) The things which shall be hereafter.** These are the things that are futuristic and were revealed to John when the seven-sealed book was opened in chapter 6.

This method of interpretation implies a chronological order for the book of Revelation, wherein the church age ends at 3:22. A “type” of the rapture may be seen in chapter 4:1 where John sees an open door in heaven and a voice that commanded him to “come up hither”. Hereafter no further reference is made of the church as on earth again. Thereafter John is “in heaven”, where he sees the twenty-four elders around the throne of God. In God’s hand (chapter 5) was a book sealed with seven seals that is then given to the “Lion of Judah”, the “Root of David”, the “Lamb that was slain” (Christ). Christ then opens the book by breaking each seal and as he does so, some catastrophic event takes place on earth (chapters 6-19). These are all symbolic of chronological events that will take place during the last seven of Daniels seventy sevens, i.e. the Great Tribulation period. In chapter 20 Satan is bound for the thousand-year period and the millennial reign of Christ begins. Thereafter Satan is loosed as was described previously, followed by the destruction of the Gog and Magog, the white throne judgement and finally in chapters 21-22, we see the revelation of the new heaven and new earth.

The narrative presented above and the brief explanation of the book of Revelation, forms the basis upon which the proposed framework is built. Although there will always be differences of opinion in relation to the finer detail, I do believe that this framework should serve as a point of departure for Pentecostals in working towards a hermeneutical model of their own. Unfortunately, as was obvious from the schematic presentation in the previous chapter depicting the answers to the twenty-four questions, there are Pentecostals that in a certain sense support the Reformed methodology of interpretation, which belongs to the historical

viewpoint that in no way can be accommodated in the proposed framework. The reason for this Reformed slant, may be due to the influence of the historical traditions out of which Pentecostalism originated.<sup>51</sup> There are also those whose biblical interpretations to a certain degree seem to hook up to the proposed framework, but due to a lack of a formulated hermeneutical model do not consistently differentiate between Israel and the Church, which results in them not being able to explain all the facts in a meaningful and sensible way. This to a certain extent can be ascribed to their resentment towards academic training.<sup>52</sup>

The Reformed slant supported by some Pentecostalists, however, seems to come to pieces at the seams, especially when certain aspects relative to eschatology are under discussion. The main reason for this is specifically because Reformed theologians tend to interpret passages of Scripture relevant to future events as historical events. This can often be seen in their interpretation of the book of Revelation. An example hereof is König's (1985:172-173) explanation of Revelation 20:3, wherein he maintains that Satan is presently bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations and that we are currently in the millennium. According to him, the 1000 years does not refer to a period of time, but to the absolute victory of Christ.

If this is true, one may ask, "Who or what is the cause of and responsible for the current world situation and the fact that many nations today do not even acknowledge Christ as the world's redeemer? How does König explain Christ's *absolute victory* amid a divided world?" In the same chapter (169 cf.), König argues that the book of Revelation was written to serve as a comfort for the churches of Asia Minor in 90 AD and that the reader must view it in that light. From that point of departure the reader can then establish whether or not John had a message for us in the twentieth century. This interpretation is unacceptable, for if the churches of 90 AD needed comfort while Satan was bound, what trials would await them when he is loosened for a short while? Could this be an encouragement to them?

This implies that - whether John's message was for the church of 90 AD or for us - it most certainly contains no comfort, as Satan, who amid trials and tribulations is bound, is soon to be set free to deceive the nations, which can only mean multiplied trials and tribulations. Furthermore, if the message was for the 90 AD church, it would imply that Satan must have been set free for a short period during their existence in order to ring true to the message. König would then have to explain how (according to his interpretation) Satan is now bound,

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<sup>51</sup> See point 2.3 on page 21.

<sup>52</sup> See discussion on page 44.

who bound him and when was he bound, for the Bible teaches that after Satan is loosed for a short period, he will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented forever (Rv 20:10).

Nevertheless, to appropriately expound the futuristic method of interpretation, the following paragraphs will be focused on the presentation of a proposed hermeneutical framework pertaining to the narrative above. The use of the term “framework” in this study, is preferred to the term “model”, as what is proposed here is not an all-inclusive hermeneutical model, but rather a “skeleton” or “scaffolding” whereon hopefully others can further expand.

#### **7.4 THE FRAMEWORK**

In order to simplify the matter, I will discuss the framework in relation to Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, pneumatology and eschatology. Obviously there are many other Bible doctrines to be included in the framework, but as each is a study on its own, the above-mentioned five will suffice for the purpose of this study. This, however, does not mean that other subdivisions such as anthropology, bibliology, etc., do not figure in this framework. In actual fact, the proposed framework entails all branches of theology and evidently a great deal more can be said on these than can be included in this study.

##### **7.4.1 THE FRAMEWORK AND CHRISTOLOGY**

In chapter 5 reference was made to the fact that despite Pentecostalism’s emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it cannot be separated from the exaltation of Christ.<sup>53</sup> It is for this purpose that the Holy Spirit was sent to us (Jn 16:13-14). This implies that due to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the emphasis in Pentecostal theology is mainly Christological and therefore accommodates a Pneuma-Christological character. By this term it is understood that after the ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ’s deity, character, atoning work, etc., but essentially acclaims Christ as the centre of God’s salvific purpose and accordingly, exalts him as such. This nullifies some commonly made accusations toward Pentecostalists that they tend to lay emphasis only on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, while neglecting the Father and the Son.

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<sup>53</sup> See discussion on page 69.

Within this framework, Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The first chapter of John declares the “Word” as being in the beginning with the Father, a clear statement of the eternal co-existence of the Son with the Father. It also declares, “the Word was God” (1:1), that implies deity. Jesus himself acknowledged his deity, (Jn 14:9) and received worship from people (Mt 2:2,11; 14:33; 28:9) and exercised divine authority forgiving sins (Mk 2:1-12). In the Upper Room encounter with Jesus, Thomas was convinced of his deity (Jn 20:28).

The use of the term “Word” (Gk. *Logos*) in John’s prologue is significant, since Jesus is the chief agency of the Godhead for expressing the divine will. Besides being the mediator between God and mankind (1 Tm 2:5), he was also the mediator in creation. It was through Christ (the Living Word) that God spoke the universe into existence and “apart from him, nothing was made (created) that has been made” (Jn1:3). The Bible declares that Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and he is the one who has fully revealed the Father to us by becoming flesh (the incarnation) and making his dwelling among us (Jn 1:14).

Thus, not only is Jesus Christ fully God, he is also fully human. Scripture attests this. Numerous passages clearly teach that Jesus had a truly human body and a rational soul, characteristics common to unfallen humanity (Adam and Eve). He was a baby subject to natural laws of growth (Lk 2:40,52); he became hungry, thirsty and tired (Jn 4:6); suffered anxiety and disappointment (Mk 9:19) and succumbed to death (Mk 15:33-38). Thus, in Jesus Christ we have one person indwelt by a fully divine nature and a fully human nature. He is not part man and part God, but rather 100% God and 100% man. The *one* Lord Jesus Christ, consequently has two natures – unconfused, unchanging and undivided residing in him. The distinction between these two natures is not defunct by their unity, but each retains its own character.

It is important to note, however, that although he was 100% man, he was not born through natural procreation. He was born of a virgin, his conception being miraculous – the work of the Holy Spirit by the power of the Most High ( Lk 1:34-35). Since he had no earthly father, he was free from sin, protected by the Holy Spirit from the devastating effect of the fall. Three offices are attributed to him in Scripture. He is God’s anointed *Prophet, Priest* and *King*. Jesus fulfilled these three offices in the highest sense.

The Bible portrays the prophet as one who speaks for God or a god (there is record of prophets of the false god, Baal – 1 Kgs 18:9). As *prophet* Jesus said, “*These words you hear are not my own they belong to the Father who sent me*” (Jn 14:24).

As *Priest* he represented God to the people and the people to God. The Book of Hebrews (chap. 9-10) elaborates this theme in a wonderful way, teaching that Christ, the Great High Priest, a perfect representative from among the people, who because he was sinless did not need to cleanse himself as ordinary priests did, nor did he need to offer sacrifice for himself. He offered himself to God as the perfect and pure sacrifice without sin. This sacrifice of himself to God was the atonement sufficient to blot out and forgive the sins of the whole world.

As *King*, Jesus is the one who conquered death, hell and the grave and he will reign in all majesty for eternity (2 Sm 7:16; Isa 9:6-7). In the Book of Revelation, Christ is pictured as King of kings (Rv 5:6-13; 11:15).

In explaining the title “Lord Jesus Christ”, **Menzies & Horton (1993:64)** state that,

The personal name “Jesus” comes from the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning “the Lord [Yahweh] is salvation”. It is the given name of God’s Son, given before his birth by divine direction (see Mt 1:12; Lk 1:31). This name is a great reminder of the great purpose God has in the incarnation – to bring salvation and deliverance from the bondage of sin. It is important to note that the Bible is careful to designate one particular person at a particular time in history as the embodiment of God’s salvation. It is not just any person, but the One whom people called “Jesus of Nazareth”, “the carpenter”, “Mary’s son”. A unique feature of Christianity is that it is bound up in a historical personage, not relegated to the philosophical systems that are but products of human reasoning and imagination. Christianity is anchored in historic events and a historic Person.

In contrast to the postmodern debate about the historic Jesus,<sup>54</sup> the hermeneutical viewpoint within this framework proclaims Jesus Christ (the historic Person) as alive, active and involved in humanity through the witness of the Holy Spirit within the believer (1 Cor 3:16) and the pages of Holy writ, just as he was 2000 years ago. He (Jesus) is the one that reveals God to humanity. Since Jesus “makes” God present in the world, our approach to God is

<sup>54</sup> The debate centres on the claims made by a group of theologians, namely that there is a vast difference between the historic Jesus and the “preached” Christ. A recent book, in opposition to the theme of the debate, entitled “Op soek na die ware Jesus” [an English translation of the title would be “In search of the real Jesus”] written by Murray Janson, a South African theologian (who sadly passed away in 2002), was published in 2001.

challenged. God is not to be found far away beyond or behind our reality, rather in time and place in our world and history (Rm 10:8).

The focal point of Christ's incarnation is found in his atoning death as stated in 1 Corinthians 15:3, namely that "*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*". The central point of all history, is the cross of Jesus Christ. It is significant that Christianity is not founded on its founder's life and teachings, important as they are, but rather on his death. By his death, redemption was wrought for all that would believe in him. This Jesus, who died on the cross, was also resurrected from the dead (Rm 8:11) for our justification (Rm 4:25). Therefore, it is maintained within the framework that there is no redemption or justification without or apart from Christ. This is confirmed by Christ himself in John 14:6, namely "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" This implies that the salvation of humanity is therefore dependent on a vital, personal and living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the detail of which are discussed in the next paragraph dealing with soteriology.

#### **7.4.2 THE FRAMEWORK AND SOTERIOLOGY**

Salvation is the great all-inclusive word in redemption. It includes the thought of deliverance, safety, preservation, soundness, restoration and healing. In God's redemptive plan salvation begins with the saving of the human soul (Mk16:16) and finds its completeness in the transfer of the saved to glory – "*Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" (1 Pt 1:5). Its spiritual benefits include forgiveness, regeneration, justification and sanctification. These benefits are ours because of the atoning work of Christ initiated by God's love (Jn 3:16). This implies that salvation is a free gift of God, by grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rm 5:16).

In calling men to salvation, there is a need of the presentation of the gospel, for "*How shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Rm 10:14). It was this need that caused Jesus to give the church the great commission, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mk 16:15). This leads us to the question: "What is the gospel?" Paul gives us an excellent explanation in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "*Moreover, brethren I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye hath received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have*

*believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."*

Accordingly, for humanity to partake of salvation, it was necessary that Christ (the Lamb of God) should die in our stead, and rise again as conqueror over death and hell. Once this had been accomplished, there was a Gospel message (good news) to be preached to all nations. This preaching was to be done by Christ's followers, who constitute the church. It must be remembered though, that it is not the preacher (or witness) that activates the sinner's inner conviction or brings about salvation. The preacher is only the messenger that delivers a message that has the potential of becoming the sinner's basis of a decision.

Obviously, before regeneration can take place, the Spirit must convict of guilt toward sin, righteousness and judgement (Jn 16:8). The Holy Spirit is more often than not the first of Deity to contact humanity, rather than the Father or the Son. Without the work of the Spirit, no one can come to Christ since at the fall, humans chose total depravity and as a result they are "*dead in their transgressions and sins*" (Eph 2:1). God, however, takes the initiative and by the Spirit convicts humans of their guilt toward sin and of their sinful standing before God. He accentuates their vital need of Christ as the only remedy for their inherited sinful nature and, at the same time, brings awareness to the sinner of the possibility of imputed righteousness divinely provided through Christ's atoning work at Calvary. In addition to this, the Spirit also convicts of guilt in regard to judgement. **Holdcroft ([1962] 1999:54)** describes this whole convicting process as follows:

As it were, (the Spirit) has subpoenaed the sinner in convicting of sin, he has convened a trial in convicting of righteousness, and in convicting of guilt in regard to judgement he furnishes proof of the destiny of the impenitent. The person who is made to see himself as he truly is, and who still rejects the provisions of Jesus Christ, cannot honestly enter a "not guilty" plead before God. The reality of the situation demands that person to expect inevitable judgement. A proof of the certainty of such a destiny is the fact that one so eminent as "the prince of this world now stands condemned" (Jn 16:11).

From the above we can deduce that the role of the Holy Spirit in the unregenerate is to provide the light necessary for revealing the sinner's lost condition and the possibility of salvation through the atoning work of Christ. The Spirit will cause the light of God to shine in the hearts of the lost, so as that they "*may come to the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*" (2 Cor 4:6).

Viewing it from another angle, we may say that it is due to Christ's death and resurrection that we (the church) have a Gospel message, and also that we are "church" – the body of Christ - of whom he is the head (Eph 5:23). Thus, salvation is through faith in the atoning work of Christ. The atoned become part of his body (the church) (1 Cor 12:13). This implies that the church could not exist until Christ had made atonement for sin and had been resurrected from the dead. Furthermore, it implies that salvation is essential to becoming part of the body of Christ. It demands that only those who have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour, can be part (a member) of the church (Jn 1:12). Thus, being a member of the church is not based on heritage, ritual (such as baptism) or human will; it is reserved for them that have a personal encounter with God through Jesus Christ and consequently are born again (Jn 3:3).

In his letter to Titus, Paul writes "*He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*" (Tit 3:5b). Peter, however, declares that "*...you have been born again... through the living and enduring word of God*" (1 Pt 1:23). The term "washing" used by Paul does not, as is apparently thought by some Pentecostals, refer to water baptism. According to **Vine (1940:200)**, the term "washing" is from the Greek word *loutron*, meaning a bath or a laver and is used metaphorically of the word of God as the instrument of spiritual cleansing. Therefore Paul and Peter are both referring to the word of God that is active in regeneration.

From this it is clear and must emphatically be stated that a person is not born again by water baptism, which is solely a token of obedience to the great commission and one's public witness of rebirth. It is only after rebirth and prior to water baptism that one becomes a member of Christ's body (church). Many Pentecostal churches, including the FGC, however, still require that one be baptised by immersion before he/she can become a member of that specific denomination. Nonetheless, the proposed framework maintains the biblical teaching, namely that regeneration is the only prerequisite for becoming part of Christ's universal church. This does not, however, imply that water baptism is not important. Its importance is significant in relation to witness and obedience as was mentioned above.

From the above discussion regarding soteriology, it logically implies that soteriology and ecclesiology are closely related. It may be said that one cannot partake of salvation, yet not become part of the church. Or stated otherwise, one cannot be part of the church unless one has partaken of salvation. In view of this, the next paragraph will focus on ecclesiology as is understood in the proposed framework.

### 7.4.3 THE FRAMEWORK AND ECCLESIOLOGY

The church has its origin in the mind of God “*before the foundation of the world*” (Eph 1:3-5), but remains a mystery until the resurrection of Christ. The term ‘church’ is only used twice before the resurrection and that is in Matthew 16:18: “*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church...*”; and Matthew 18:17: “*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church...*” **Vine ([1940] 1985:83)** explains that the Greek word *ekklesia* is derived from *ek* - meaning out of - and *klèsis* - meaning a calling (*kaleò*, to call). He adds:

It was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens gathered to discuss the affairs of the State, (Ac 19:39). In the Septuagint it is used to designate the gathering of Israel, summoned for any definite purpose, or a gathering regarded as representative of the whole nation... It has two applications to companies of Christians, (a) to the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, “I will build my church”.... (b) in the singular number (e.g. Mt 18:17 ... “congregation”), to a company consisting of professed believers.

From this expounding of the word “church”, it is clear that Christ referred to a future body in Matthew 16:18, while referring to a present assembly of believers in Matthew 18:17 that were to act as judicators. This is also **Chafer’s (1988:203)** understanding of the word ‘church’ which he also explains is taken from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning ‘assembly’. He goes on to say that:

In the history of Greece the assembly of citizens to consider legislation in a Greek town was called *ekklesia*, meaning an assembly of people gathered in one place. It is used in this sense of the assembly of the Jews in the desert. In the New Testament it is also used of congregations of Christians in a given locality and is used in this sense at least a hundred times. In some instances, however, it is used of the church or the body of believers regardless of geographic location.

In addition to the above, **Chafer (ibid:203)** explains that due to the Septuagint’s use of *ekklesia* for assemblies in the Old Testament, some have argued from this that the church is also in the Old Testament. He maintains that a study of the Hebrew words translated *ekklesia* demonstrates that “the word is never used in the Old Testament in a religious sense and is used only of a geographic assembly of people whether it has a religious connotation or not.” A careful reading of the New Testament, however, reveals that *ekklesia*, which refers to assemblies that were churches, is used in a purely religious sense of *all* those who were united by faith in Christ since his resurrection.

### 7.4.3.1 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

John records Christ's appearance to the disciples after his resurrection (20:22) and writes, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In contrast to the more common conviction held by many theologians, namely that Christ constituted the church on the Day of Pentecost, I am of the opinion that it was at this point – when he breathed on them – that he constituted it, and on the Day of Pentecost this newly formed church was empowered by the Holy Spirit to enable them to be his witnesses. Thus, the *ekklesia* – consisting of those whom he had chosen prior to his death and resurrection – were constituted into a living organism (the church) the day Christ breathed on them. A parallel may be drawn here with God's breathing into man in Gn 2:7 and man becoming a living soul.

**Holdcroft ([1962] 1999:51)** describes the breathing of Christ upon his disciples as the "insufflation" and states,

What the disciples actually received at this time is not described, but there appears to have been a specific transaction, for as Stanley Horton<sup>55</sup> points out, "the language used in John 20:21-23 does not fit the idea that nothing happened." The consequence of the divine breath – the capacity to declare the remission of sins (cf. v.23) – suggests the imparting of a significant new spiritual and lethal status.

In expounding on this status, **Holdcroft (*ibid*:51-52)** maintains that the insufflation conveyed spiritual and moral authority, and the Holy Spirit was to be to each one the universal principle of divine life. This life would enable them to function together as a single organism through the Church of Jesus Christ. The church is "launched" and the prerogative belongs to the church to establish rulings and standards by which human behaviour can be evaluated. By this event, Jesus gave recognition to the disciples' authority (as members of his body) to declare the forgiveness of sins to those converts who fulfilled God's terms by repenting of their sin and accepting Christ as their saviour. By virtue of this newly bestowed authority, Peter could proclaim on the Day of Pentecost, "*Repent and be baptised ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*" (Ac 2:38).

**Holdcroft (*ibid*:53)** continues by stating:

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<sup>55</sup> Stanley M Horton. *What the bible says about the Holy Spirit*, Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1976. page 128.

Jesus preceded his act of breathing by declaring, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). The Father sent Jesus by giving him the Holy Spirit at the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus was now demonstrating to his disciples that in the same way the Father would empower them for their ministry... Pentecostalism is reinforced by interpretations that see all the elements of the church – a company of born again believers comprising the visible and invisible church – prior to the Day of Pentecost.

In the proposed framework, this event prior to Pentecost is interpreted as the moment in time that Christ constituted his church and it became a living organism with legal status and authority before God.

#### **7.4.3.2 THE CHURCH A MYSTERY**

As far as the ‘mystery’ aspect of the church is concerned, Paul wrote, *“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3: 1-6).*

The Old Testament clearly teaches that the Gentiles are to be saved, thus the element of mystery does not pertain to their salvation as such, but rather to the fact that Jew and Gentile would be part “*of the same body*”, namely the church. In this unity, the earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappeared (Eph 2: 14-15; Col 3:10-11). The condition of entry into the church, however, is the same for Jew and Gentile, namely spiritual rebirth. This implies becoming a new creation in Christ. (2 Cor 5:17). This unity of Jew and Gentile in the church does not, however, combine the church and national Israel. Each of these remains a separate entity. The church, however, may include Jews that have accepted Christ as their personal saviour. It is important to distinguish between the origination of the Jews and the origination of the church. The Jew had his origin in his patriarch, Abraham, and became an independent nation with the exodus. The church, however, originated with the resurrection of Christ from the dead as the head of the body (church). From this we deduce that Israel is an “earthly” people “after the flesh”, while the church is a “heavenly” people “after the Spirit” (Gl 4:29).

That Israel and the church are two separate entities, is also clear from Christ's commands before and after his resurrection.<sup>56</sup> Before his crucifixion Christ said, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of Israel" (Mt 15:24). This is the reason why he instructed the Twelve not to go to the Gentiles or to the cities of the Samaritans, but only to the lost sheep of Israel. (Mt 10:5-7). The Jews however rejected Christ and his message, consequently John writes: "He came unto his own (Jews) but his own received him not" (Jn 1:11). It is no wonder that Jesus told the Jews that the kingdom would be taken away from them and given to another nation (the church consisting of Gentiles and Jews - then still a mystery Mt 21:43). After his resurrection, however, Christ's command *to go* was altered. Instead of being limited to the lost sheep of Israel, it now included all nations. Paul's words in Acts 13:46 agree with Christ's statement, namely: "*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you. But seeing you put it from you, ... lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*" From this we can clearly see that when Christ deals with the Jews, he does not deal with the church simultaneously as an autonomous body and vice versa.

In summing up this chapter, I must emphasise the importance of the fact that in the proposed framework the church and Israel are never equated. They are two totally separate entities. This is the heart of the framework and persons who adhere to it, must consistently interpret the scriptures with this in mind. There must constantly be awareness to the fact that up to the crucifixion of Christ, God primarily dealt with the Jews and only after his resurrection did he reveal the mystery of the church. Failing to do this, may cause many contradictions as will be seen later when the questions are reviewed.

#### **7.4.4 THE FRAMEWORK AND PNEUMATOLOGY**

The Holy Spirit plays a major role in Pentecostal hermeneutics. This is not only as some have thought because of the emphasis that Pentecostals place on experience related to the gifts of the Spirit, but also due to the fact that in Pentecostal thought the Holy Spirit is that person of the holy trinity whose office touches upon both the believer and the non-believer. He is God revealing and communicating himself to the world and apart from him, no one can truly experience a living relationship with God. Furthermore, it must be noted that Pentecostals, in contrast to what is often thought, lay more emphasis on the importance of evangelism and missionary outreach in both Christian and non-Christian societies than they do on the

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<sup>56</sup> See point 3.4 on page 37.

manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Needless to say though, in these evangelical and mission outreaches, the gifts of the Spirit definitely play a major role although the manifestations of the gifts are not the single purpose of a Pentecostal event, but rather the communication of the gospel to all of humanity.

Numerous references to the Holy Spirit are found in the Old Testament, where he is referred to as *Spirit of God*, *Spirit of the Lord* and *Holy Spirit*. Thus the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is adequately represented in the Old Testament where we find many basic insights, seed thoughts and events related to him. However, the Holy Spirit's greater ministry in Old Testament times was with the prophets. Though priest and kings were anointed, they seem to have done less with their anointing. In contrast to this, the true Old Testament prophet, ministered by the Spirit's anointing.

A review of the prophets' lives inevitably leads to the Holy Spirit, who not only inspired them as to what to say, but also empowered them to be able to say it. Notwithstanding the Old Testament references, however, most of Pentecostalism's insights concerning the Spirit derive from the New Testament. It is chiefly from here that Pentecostals build their pneumatological understanding and it is here that we have record of amongst others, the Holy Spirit's work in Christ, the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and his role in the believer. These three different aspects of the Holy Spirit are briefly discussed below.

#### **7.4.4.1 THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN CHRIST**

As for the Spirit's work in Christ, it is observably traced back to the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah undoubtedly related the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the promised Messiah when he wrote, "*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*" (Is 11:1-2). In Isaiah 42:1 we have the following declaration: "*Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him...*" In 61:1, Isaiah prophesied, "*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach...*" According to Luke 4:18-21, Jesus claimed that this prophecy of Isaiah's was fulfilled on the day that he (Jesus) ministered in the synagogue at Nazareth.

It is the same Spirit that inspired Old Testament prophecies with reference to Christ's conception and birth, that was active in the fulfilment thereof. In reply to Mary's question as to the possibility of her conceiving a Son while she had not known a man, the angel replied, "*The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*" (Lk 1:35). In describing the birth of Christ, Matthew states, "*(Mary) ... was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit*" (1:18). Since Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, thereby having no earthly father, the incarnate Christ was sinless. The Holy Spirit's role assured the sanctity of Christ's humanity. This, however, does not imply that the Holy Spirit is Christ's father. God the Father did the preparatory work (Heb 10:5); God the Son willingly submitted himself hereto (Heb 2:14) and the Holy Spirit was active in the execution thereof. Thus, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is not the father of Christ's humanity but rather the agent.

At Christ's baptism "*the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove*" (Lk 3:32). This signified his baptism (or infilling) and anointing with the Holy Spirit, equipping him for his earthly ministry. The difference between the infilling and the anointing with the Spirit is that the anointing separates one for a special purpose (Ex 29:7-9), while infilling is the equipping with the necessary power to fulfil that purpose (Ac 1:8). It was also a confirmation of his deity and of his relationship of Son to the Father. By the action of the Holy Spirit he now becomes the Messiah - the Christ (anointed One). Jesus confirms this about himself in John 6:27 when he says, "*... the Son of Man ... on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval*".

After his baptism, Luke records that, "*Jesus full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil*" (Lk 4:1). **Holdcroft ([1962] 1999:49)**, in explaining the temptation of Christ as described by Mark, states,

Mark's language is forceful: "At once the Spirit sent him out (*ekballo*) into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan", (Mk 1:12-13). Translations of *ekballo*, (ek-BAHL-oh) include: drive out, expel, throw out forcibly, pluck out, thrust out, and sent forth. This verb does not necessarily denote the use of force, but it emphatically established that Jesus' temptation was under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

From this explanation Holdcroft maintains that the Holy Spirit "programmed" the temptation so that Christ could attain an astounding victory over Satan (a hostile power) on the threshold of his earthly ministry, specifically because the Holy Spirit had empowered him thereto.

Christ's return to Galilee after the temptation was also in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Lk 4:14). It was during his first sermon in Galilee that Jesus proclaimed, *"That the Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me..."* (Lk 4:18). The witness of Jesus Christ to the Spirit being upon him, was an affirmation that the Messianic age had now begun. This is evident from Jesus' reply to the disciples of John the Baptist, who enquired whether Jesus was the expected Messiah or were they to expect another (Mt 11:3). Christ's reply, namely that *"The blind see, the lame walk..."* (v4-5), was a fulfilment of Isaiah's messianic prophecy (Is 35:5).

In Christ's passion and thereafter, the Spirit was continuously active. It was by the sustaining strength of the Spirit that Christ offered himself unblemished to God: *"Christ... through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God"* (Heb 9:14). In Christ's resurrection, the Holy Spirit was active: *"(Christ)... was put to death in the body, but made alive by the Spirit"* (1 Pt 3:18). Paul confirms this when he declares, *"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you..."* (Rm 8:11).

Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus promised his disciples that he would not leave them as orphans (Jn 14:18), but that he would send another Comforter (Jn 14:16, 26). After his ascension, Christ fulfilled his promise to send the Holy Spirit to his waiting disciples, and Peter explained this event on the Day of Pentecost by declaring: *"Exalted to the right hand of God, (Christ) has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear"* (Ac 2:33).

#### **7.4.4.2 THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST**

The reception of power referred to by Christ in Acts 1:8, is directly connected to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost refers to the feast that the Jews celebrated in thankful acknowledgement of the finished harvest. This feast is celebrated fifty days, or seven weeks after Easter (the Greek word *pentekoste* means fifty – Lv 23:15-22) and it is the second important annual feast of the Israelites. On the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out on the 120 disciples with the accompaniment of the sound of a rushing mighty wind, the appearance of cloven tongues like fire, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Ac 2:1-4). This was the fulfilment of that which John the Baptist had referred to

when he stated that he baptised with water, but that one was to come that was more powerful than him and he would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt 3:11). From this we deduce that John baptised people in water, but Christ would baptise people in the Holy Spirit.

**Möller (1997:2)** explains the baptism in the Holy Spirit as follows:

Just as John the Baptist baptised people in water, so Christ will baptise believers in the Holy Spirit and with fire. The Greek preposition *en* usually means *in* and is used as a *dative of place*, for instance when one is baptised *in* water. This preposition can sometimes mean *with* and is used as a *dative of instrument*, expressed as “to baptise with water”. We prefer the translation “in water” because it links up with the symbolism of the water-baptism (Rm 6:4; Col 2:12). Therefore we prefer to speak of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The expression *equipped*, used in Luke 24:49 in connection with the Pentecostal experience, is the translation of the Greek word *enduo* which means to clothe, or to put on.

From the above, Möller maintains that as one is dressed or wrapped in clothes, so one can also be baptised in the field of force of the Holy Spirit in order to be completely controlled by him and as a result thereof, one is equipped with spiritual power to live a life wherein one can be a greater witness for Christ.

It is important though, that we understand that prior to the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit *was* active in the Old Testament and also in the life of Christ, from his conception through to his resurrection as was mentioned earlier and is evident from many Old Testament passages (Jdg 6:34; 1 Sm 10:10; 2 Chr 24:20). Nonetheless, according to John 7:38-39, Jesus said: “*Whosoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.*” John ends verse 39 by adding, “*Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not been glorified.*” This last sentence, namely “*up to that time the Spirit had not been given*”, may seem to imply that up to that particular point in time the Spirit had not yet come. If this was the case, it would lead to profound implications.

It must be clearly understood though, that in our interpretation of Scripture it is important to constantly distinguish between the *person* of the Holy Spirit and the *power* of the Holy Spirit. A detailed discussion of this subject will prove too lengthy to be included here, but suffice it to say that, the *person* of the Holy Spirit (God the Holy Spirit) is omnipresent. It is the *person* of the Holy Spirit that indwells the believer at rebirth (1 Cor 3:16; Rm 5:5). Thus, the *person* of the omnipresent Holy Spirit could not be poured out on the Day of Pentecost, as he was already present. Therefore John was referring to the *power* of the Holy Spirit – which up to that time had not been given - that would equip the disciples for their ministry. On the Day of

Pentecost the disciples, who already had the *person* of the Holy Spirit indwelling them, received Holy Spirit *power* for their ministry (Ac 1:8; 2:38,39). Thus, on the Day of Pentecost, the church - which Jesus constituted when he breathed on the disciples - was empowered for its service.

In his discussion on John 7:38-39, Verster ([1974] 1975:41) maintains that these texts do not emphasize the coming of the person of the Holy Spirit, but rather the Spirit's ministry as Comforter. He explains his view as follows:

The term "Comforter" is derived from the Greek word *parakletos*, which is also interpreted "advocate" in 1 John 2:1. The literal meaning of the word is: "*called to one's side*". *Para* = beside; *kaleo* = to call. This implies "*one that is called to the side of another*", with the emphasis on helping and assisting as an advocate would do in a court. As Comforter, he has now taken Jesus' position in order to eradicate the loneliness of the disciples so that in their situation, that which Christ had done for them could be realised. Christ regained the honour and glory for us all, which we had lost in the first Adam and the Spirit is now progressively working in us, thereby enabling us to continually grow in the likeness of Christ, the last Adam - an example of the perfect person that God initially intended us to be - so that ultimately we will become that which Christ is now (Rm 8:29; Phlp 3:20-21; 1 Jn 3:2). In other words, after Christ's departure the indwelling Spirit has taken to his position and ministry so as to exert in us with power, that which Christ has done on the cross<sup>57</sup>.

Besides the above, Verster adds that a comparison of Joel's prophecy in 2:23-31 and Peter's words on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:16-20, demonstrate that it was not the *person* of the Holy Spirit that came at Pentecost, but rather his *power*. From the copula "*afterward*" at the beginning of Joel 2:28, concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, which links it to the context of verses 18-27, it is deduced that Joel's prophecy (2:28-32) will be fulfilled after- (*ward*) something else has happened. This "something else" is the restoration of Israel to their land. This did not happen at Pentecost, as Israel was not restored to their land at that time.

Thus, the prophecy of Joel was only partially fulfilled at Pentecost. Peter (Ac 2:17), confirms this when on the Day of Pentecost he quoted Joel, but rephrased the words by saying, "*In the last days, God says, I will pour out of my Spirit...*", while Joel actually declared, "*I will pour out my Spirit*" (all of it). From this Verster argues that Peter's inclusion of the word "*of*" cannot refer to the person of the Holy Spirit, as there can never be a segmentation of the person of the Spirit. Rather, this of is related to the power of the Spirit. All the power was not

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<sup>57</sup> Translation my own.

poured out on the Day of Pentecost, but will be poured out after Israel is restored to her land, which will be during the Great Tribulation. Joel unites the totality of the outpouring of the Spirit (all of it) with the time that the sun will be darkened and the moon turned to blood (30-31), which inevitably - according to the eschatology within this framework<sup>58</sup> - points toward the tribulation period.

That the Holy Spirit will be active in the tribulation period, is apparent from several scriptures. Amongst others, Zechariah (4:1-6, 11-14), which refers to the two witnesses of Revelation 11 who will preach for three and a half years during this period. Zechariah writes that their preaching will be in the power of the Spirit. This interpretation is in line with the hermeneutics of the proposed framework, as will become clear in chapter eight where the questions are reviewed. In the following paragraph, however, the relationship of the Holy Spirit with the believer is discussed.

#### 7.4.4.3 THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

For any person to become a believer, the Holy Spirit must be active. No one is saved except by the work of the Holy Spirit whose function is to take the things of Christ and reveal them unto us (Jn 16:15). Of these things, that which is of first importance, is to make known in us what Christ has wrought for us. By the law was the knowledge of sin (Rm 3:20); by the Spirit is the knowledge of salvation (Rm 8:16). Scripture describes the human spiritual status prior to the new birth as that of being dead in transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1). This implies total depravity – a helpless situation wherein the unregenerate person cannot help (save) him/herself. Consequently, something or someone is required to quicken the human mortal body.

Paul states that the Holy Spirit fulfils this requirement (Rm 8:11).<sup>59</sup> Jesus taught that when the Spirit has come, he would convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgement (Jn 16:9). The Holy Spirit ministers the beginning of all spiritual life, which Jesus referred to as a second birth (Jn 3:3). The Spirit's impartation of new life by God's grace, provides a radical new dimension for the regenerate, namely a living hope (1 Pt 1:30). **Holdcroft ([1962] 1999:60)** explains that the Holy Spirit conveys the new birth as an instantaneous act of sovereign grace. The process is a complete regeneration and not the fanning into flame a

<sup>58</sup> See point 7.4.5 page 119.

<sup>59</sup> I will not debate the *ordo salutis* here, as it is a vast study of its own.

divine spark; it is not a matter of developing a higher nature, but creating a new nature (2 Cor 5:17).

It must be clearly stated here that the new nature does not eradicate the old nature, nor does it split one's personality. Nature in this context must be seen as a capacity. Whereas the unregenerate person only had the capacity to serve sin (Rm 6:20), the regenerate person now has a new capacity to serve righteousness (Rm 6:18). The Holy Spirit consequently does not make the believer perfect, but equips him/her with the capacity to do that, which pleases God and enables him/her to grow in the image of Christ as a result of the new birth and the further ministries of the Spirit in his/her life. Paul teaches that after regeneration the Spirit indwells the believer (1 Cor 3:16). Thereby, the Spirit fulfils his ministry to make the persons of the Father and the Son real to the believer. The indwelling Spirit is the channel of God's love (Rm 5:5) and the Spirit within confirms the believer's sonship (Rm 8:16; Gl 4:6). Christ is present in the believer's heart and life through the person of the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:16-18), as it is the Holy Spirit that brings to remembrance – *“Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you in all truth”* (Jn 16:13). Christ is the “truth” and the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth”, that reveals Christ to us and in us – *“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you. He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”* (Jn 16:13,14).

It is important to note that in Pentecostal pneumatology, great emphasis is placed on the guidance the believer receives from the Holy Spirit, as taught in John 16:13. This guidance is not dependent on some peculiar and mysterious manifestation of the Spirit that must be obeyed, whether in harmony with the Bible or not. It is the guidance of the “Spirit in all truth”. This guidance will be relative to the illumination of the Word of God by the Spirit. This, however, does not imply that where the Word of God, is there will be no other manifestations of God; it means that such manifestations will be guided in harmony with the Word.

We are told by Paul to be filled with the Spirit, *“speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Eph 5:18-19). The Spirit guides the believer to enriched and glorious worship, and where there is such worship, there will be profitable teaching and admonishing (Col 3:16). The Spirit's guidance provides the believer with both an authentic faith and also with an authentic lifestyle. As the Spirit leads and guides, he provides the spiritual perceptions, understandings and motivations

that are necessary for a successful Christian life. In this regard, **Holdcroft ([1962] 1999:66)** makes the following meaningful statement:

Prior to the Day of Pentecost ... the disciples seemed unresponsive to Jesus' teaching. They repeatedly misunderstood his mission and destiny. On the Day of Pentecost when he had been filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter was transformed. At that time and thereafter, he was able to expound and interpret Scripture with outstanding insight and understanding.

In addition to guiding the believer, the Holy Spirit is also the great emancipator, condemning sin in the flesh (Rm 8:3) and providing righteousness in its place. Consequently the Spirit gives power over the flesh and it is the work of the believer to co-operate by faith with the Spirit. Paul, writing to the Galatians, indicates two possibilities of life, namely life in the flesh or a life in the Spirit (Gl 5:16-25). The Spirit has come to guide the believer into a holy life (Rm 8:14) and it is the work of the Spirit to bring forth the fruits of righteousness in the believer (Gl 5:22). All Christian virtues in the believer are the work of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is not "fruits" of the Spirit, but fruit and may be likened to a cluster of grapes all on one stem. The flesh can never bear this fruit, neither can it be produced by self-effort. Christian virtues come from yielding to God and faith, which looks to the indwelling Spirit to take full control and bear his own fruit.

Many more aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the believer could be referred to here, but perhaps one of the more important aspects in Pentecostal pneumatology is the Baptism with the Holy Spirit with the ensuing evidence of speaking in tongues. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not primarily for the development of holiness in the individual (although this should be improved by it), but rather for empowering for service (Lk 24:49; Ac 1:8). **Bullinger (1953 26-27)** explains the power and gifts as follows:

The means and power for service come through the gifts of the Spirit. But the gifts of the Spirit need to be distinguished from the gift of the Spirit. The baptism in the Spirit was necessary before the first disciples were to leave Jerusalem or even begin to fulfil the great commission. They needed power and the very name Holy Spirit is connected with power. He came as the gift and as the power.

From the above, together with many other relevant biblical references, it is deduced that the Spirit is the source of the love and zeal that equips us to serve the Lord with spiritual fervour (Rm 12:1), a fervour that is aglow with the power of the Holy Spirit sent by Christ on the Day of Pentecost.

Many Pentecostals maintain that the subsequent gift of speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of Baptism with the Holy Spirit. This view that is supported in the proposed framework, is generally accepted, firstly on the basis that the same experience is evident in other passages within the Book of Acts (10:46; 19:6). Secondly, it is accepted as it, together with the gift of interpretation of tongues, are the only gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 that were not active before Pentecost. The purpose of speaking in tongues is primarily for the edification of the believer (1 Cor 14:4) and not as some have supposed, for delivering messages – as if from God – in a strange tongue and by the manifestation of the gift of interpretation, interpreting it into the common language of persons in the relevant group. The Bible clearly teaches that the person who *“speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit”* (1 Cor 14:2). Paul says that we do not know what to pray but the Spirit *“intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express”* (Rm 8:26). Both these biblical references imply that the interpretation of “speaking in tongues” must be directed to God, which eliminates the possibility of a so-called “message in tongues” as if from God.

Much more may be said of the Spirit’s relationship to the believer, but suffice it to say that for the purpose of this study the above will be sufficient. Consequently, in the next paragraph I will discuss Eschatology in relation to the proposed hermeneutical framework.

#### **7.4.5 THE FRAMEWORK AND ESCHATOLOGY**

Eschatology is also termed the doctrine of last things or the doctrine concerning the events of the last days. This doctrine can be divided into two broad areas, namely personal eschatology and general eschatology. Personal eschatology relates to the individual from the time of physical death until the time that the resurrection body is received. General eschatology covers all biblical events relating to the last days whether fulfilled or futuristic. This chapter will primarily focus on the aspect of general eschatology with the possibility of an occasional reference to personal eschatology.

Special divine revelation led the Hebrews to see history as moving towards a future goal whereby God would banish evil and establish a permanent age of salvation, peace and righteousness. With the incarnation of Christ, these last days had dawned and the kingdom of God had drawn near (Mk 1:15). His possession of the Spirit, his miracles and his exorcisms

were evidence of this (Mt 11:2-6; 12:28). Yet, the kingdom had not fully come, for despite the immediate experience of the blessings of God, evil, death and the ambiguities of life remained. Consequently, within this framework the kingdom of God has an *already* and a *not yet* aspect, namely that “*part*” of eschatology that has *already* been fulfilled *in Christ* and that “*part*” that is futuristic and is *not yet* fulfilled *in Christ*.

It must be clearly understood that Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Rv 1:8). He made all things and nothing existed or came into being without him (Jn 1:3). Therefore Christ was active in creation. This has certain implications that call for a brief explanation. If, according to Scripture, Christ is the beginning of all things, he must necessarily also be the end of all things, which implies that he is the centre of all eschatological aspects. In Christ, all “*things*” pertaining to eschatology are fulfilled. Therefore, we cannot divorce eschatology from Christ (or Christology).

The writer of Hebrews states, “*God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...*” (1:1-2). The words “*last days*” imply that the last days began with Christ. However, as was seen above, Christ is the beginning of creation. Therefore, in a sense it may be said that the last days began in Christ at the beginning, for it is said of him that he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rv 13:8). Hence, in God’s mind and in his eternal purpose, Christ was slain before the foundation of the world was laid, but it was only to be realised after his incarnation. Similarly, the doctrine of the last things, which in a sense may be said to begin with Christ before the foundation of the world, are actually realised and eventually reach a climax in the period covering Christ’s incarnation, death, resurrection and in his Second Advent. **König (1980:56)** explains this by saying that if Jesus is the last (*eschatos*), then the end is already achieved in him; the end is already present in him; the end will eventually be realised in him, because he has come, is presently with us (by the Holy Spirit) and still is to come.<sup>60</sup>

Although much can be said in relation to Christ’s entire “*existence*” from creation through to his Second Advent regarding the “*last days*”, this study will be limited to the period starting with Christ’s incarnation and ending with the new heaven and new earth (the main focus being on his Second Advent and events thereafter). Many expressions within the biblical text support the fact that the “*last days*” refer to this period. Even Old Testament texts such as

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<sup>60</sup> Translation my own.

Jacob's words to his sons (Gn 49:1), refer to this period. (See also Is 2:2; Mi 4:1). In order to understand the relationship between the biblical references to the last days within this proposed hermeneutic framework, it is imperative that I briefly explain certain eschatological aspects so as to put the reader in the picture with regards thereto.

#### **7.4.5.1 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

This model supports the viewpoint of a pre-tribulation rapture of the church and the pre-millennial return of Christ to earth. According to the Bible, the primary purpose of Christ's incarnation was for the salvation of humanity (Lk 19:10) through his substitutionary death on the cross. Before his death however, Christ promised that he was going to prepare a place for his disciples in his Father's house after which he will return to take them with him to this prepared place (Jn 14:1ff). This introduces us to his second coming, the nature and purpose of which will be discussed here. I must however, mention the fact that there is, logically as with all biblical doctrine, many other interpretations regarding Christ's second coming. These will not be discussed here, except for an occasional reference thereto for explanatory reasons. However, the following discussion is limited to the viewpoint supported within this hermeneutic framework.

##### **7.4.5.1 (A) THE NATURE OF HIS COMING**

Firstly, the nature of his coming needs to be explained. There are many Bible references to the nature of Christ's coming. Jesus, in referring to his coming, said that he would return personally (Jn 14:3), unexpectedly (Mt 24:32ff; 25:1ff; Mk 13:33ff), suddenly (Mt 24: 26-28), with his angels (Mt 16:27) and victoriously (Lk 19:11-27). At his ascension, the men in white raiment testified that he would return the same way as he was seen leaving (Ac 1:10), which implies personally and visibly. Besides these references, there are numerous others regarding Christ's second coming, testified to by the apostles. Only two will be mentioned here. Peter testifies that he will come personally and unexpectedly (Ac 3:19-21; 2 Pt 3:3ff). Paul teaches that he will come personally (Phlp 3:20ff), suddenly (1 Cor 15:5ff) and in glory, accompanied by his angels (2 Th 1:7-10; Titus 2:13).

The many references to the second coming may seem to be a little confusing at first. This is because we read of Christ coming for his own, coming visibly to the whole world, coming as a thief in the night, an out-resurrection of saved ones, a marriage supper, a conflict with the Antichrist, a binding of Satan, a kingdom that is to be set up, a judgement of all at the white throne and a judgement of believers for their works at the “judgement seat of Christ”. The confusion is eliminated once one understands that although the references are all to the second coming, the actual event of the coming takes place in two distinct stages. These two stages are referred to firstly as his coming in the air, a time when certain things will take place in the air and secondly, as his coming to earth when certain events will take place on earth.

### **His coming in the air**

His coming in the air is explained by the apostle Paul as follows: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”* (1Thess 4:16ff). In 2 Thessalonians 2:1, Paul speaks of our gathering together unto him (Christ). John 14:3 also relates to this gathering of his own. In this coming, Christ does not come all the way to the earth, but gathers his *own* to himself in the air. The dead in Christ are raised and those living are changed from mortality to immortality (1 Cor 15:51-54). This coming is distinguished from his coming to earth.

### **His coming to earth**

The prophet Zechariah (14:4) said that at his coming, the Messiah’s feet would stand on the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem. The men in white at the ascension said that Jesus, who had ascended visibly, would return in the same way “as they had watched him go to heaven”. He left the Mount of Olives visibly and he will return to the Mount of Olives visibly. Matthew 24:29-31 and 25:31-46 imply his coming down to earth. The house of David, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all the families that remain, shall mourn when they see him whom they had pierced (Zch 12:10-14). John writes, *“Behold he is coming with the clouds and every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him; and the tribes of the earth will mourn over him”* (Rv 1:7).

#### 7.4.5.1 (B) THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING

Due to the impossibility of including the many aspects related to the Second Advent in this study, I will only briefly explain my understanding thereof in relation to the proposed framework. Once again a distinction will be made between Christ's coming in the air and his coming to the earth.

##### *His coming in the air*

The purpose of his coming in the air is, on the one hand, to receive his own unto himself (Jn 14:3). "His own" in this context refers to believers either *living* or *asleep in the Lord* at the time of his coming. Living believers still in the earthly body, are *absent from the Lord* (2 Cor 5:6), while believers that fall asleep in the Lord are *absent from the body*, but *at home with the Lord* (2 Cor 5:8). Neither of these, however, is the ideal condition as the one state is absent from the Lord, while the other is absent from the body. The ultimate goal of redemption is that both body and soul may be present with the Lord (Rm 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30).

To achieve this goal and for Christ to receive his own unto himself, two things must happen. The bodies of them that are *asleep* in Christ must be raised from the dead (1 Th 4:16) and those that are alive must be changed from mortality to immortality (1 Cor 15:53), in as much as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). This will all happen "in a moment in the twinkling of an eye" at the Rapture of the church (1 Cor 15:52). Christ will bring the souls of them that are asleep in him with him (1Thess 4:14) and they will be reunited to their resurrection bodies. Thereafter the bodies of the believers who were alive at this point, will be transformed from corruptible to incorruptible (1 Th 4:14- 17; 1 Cor 15:52) and together they shall be caught-up to meet Christ in the clouds and so forever to be with him.

On the other hand, the purpose of this coming is to Judge the believers for their works. This judgement will take place after that Christ has assembled the believers before his judgement seat (2 Cor 5:10). Here the believer is not judged with regard to his sins, for he was judged for them in the person and cross of Christ (Is 53:5ff). At this judgement, the believer is judged for the use made of the talents and opportunities that were entrusted to him/her and rewarded accordingly (1 Cor 15:3-11).

In addition to the above, it is worthy of mention that this phase of Christ's coming is also to remove the restrainer (2 Th 2:3-7). Although there are numerous differing theological views as to who or what the restrainer is, within the context of this framework it is understood to be the church. Once the church has been raptured, the Antichrist will appear on the scene and Daniel's seventieth seven will be fulfilled, introducing the seven years of tribulation.

### *His coming to earth*

The fact that the purpose of Christ's coming to earth differs from the purpose of his coming in the air, is in itself a proof that there are two phases to his coming and these must consistently be distinguished. In contrast to the purpose of his coming in the air, the following paragraphs explain the purpose of his coming to earth.

At the outset, it may be said that Christ will return to earth to reveal himself and his own. Twenty centuries have passed since men gazed upon Christ. Once he was among men and was seen and even touched by them (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1-4). At his ascension though, he was taken up in glory to be with the Father. Nevertheless, it was promised by the Lord himself and many other witnesses that he would return to earth. **Thiessen ([1949] 1990:355)** describes this return as follows:

And that he will come again (Heb 9:24-28) attended by a heavenly retinue of angels and by the hosts of redeemed men (Jl 3:11; Zch 14:5; 1 Th 3:13; Jude 14). "Every eye will see him even those who pierced him" (Rv 1:7; cf Zch 12:10). Scripture declares that all the tribes of the earth "will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30). His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives (Zch 14:4). The angels told the disciples, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you in heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven" (Ac 1:11). Christ's own will also be manifest at that time (Col 3:4). It will be a glorious revelation of Christ with his people.

Besides his self-revelation as described by Thiessen above, Christ's coming will put an end to the Great Tribulation period. It is at this point that the nations will be gathered together by the Antichrist to capture Jerusalem and the Jews (Zch 12:1-9; 13:8-14:2). But Christ will descend from heaven with his hosts (Rv 19:11-16) and destroy the Antichrist and his armies – the battle of Armageddon (Rv 19:21). It is at Christ's coming to earth that Israel is to be saved (Is 66:8; Jr 31:31; Zch 12:10-13:1; Heb 8:8-12). In Romans 11:1 Paul declared that God had not rejected his people and James (Ac 15:14-16) declares that God would return after he had taken from the Gentiles a people for himself (the church), to rebuild David's (Jews) fallen tent. When Christ returns to earth, he will fulfil this promise and thus firstly deliver Israel from its earthly enemies. After this deliverance has been attained, Israel will repent and turn

to the Lord (Zch 12:10-13:1). Satan will be bound for a thousand years (Rv 20:1-3) and the period known as the millennium will follow. It is during the millennium that Christ will set up his kingdom on earth and rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem. At the completion of the millennium, Satan will be loosened for a short period (Rv 20:7) to deceive the nations (Gog and Magog) again. God will send fire from heaven to devour them and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. Hereafter, Christ will judge the dead at the *great white throne* judgment (Rv 20:11-14).

## 7.5 SUMMARY

The above discussion should present the reader with a basic idea of how soteriology, ecclesiology, pneumatology and eschatology relate to the proposed framework. In summary it can be said that the purpose of this chapter is not to explain every facet of theology as related to the framework in the finest detail, but only to illustrate that the framework adheres to the pre-millennial and pre-tribulation interpretive methodology and is based on certain biblical truths, namely

**(a)** A total period of 490 years is determined for Israel and Jerusalem (Dn 9:24ff). This period is interpreted as follows: since the issuing of the decree to restore Jerusalem to the crucifixion of Christ 483 years have elapsed. At this point God stopped the clock (that is ticking off the 490-year period), set Israel aside and turned his focus to the Gentiles. This brought about the birth of the church - the mystery spoken of by Paul (Eph 3:1-11) and referred to by Peter (1 Pt 1:9-12), which reveals to us that the church was unknown to the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. That the Gentiles were to be saved, was no mystery (Rm 9:24-30). The mystery was that God was going to form an entirely “new thing”, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, to be called the church. Membership of the church is subject to rebirth, by accepting Christ as one’s personal saviour based on faith in his atoning work on the cross and resurrection.

**(b)** The church, which was constituted after Christ’s resurrection when he breathed on the disciples (Jn 20:21), was empowered for its task on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1ff) and is to be raptured before the tribulation period, the period that will fulfil the remaining 7 years of Daniel’s original 490 years. Thus, after the rapture, God once again sets the clock in motion and resumes his purpose with Israel by

means of the Great Tribulation, the purpose being that Israel should repent and be saved. After the tribulation, Christ will return to the Mount of Olives, the battle of Armageddon will take place, Satan will be bound for a thousand year period and Christ's millennial reign will begin. Hereafter, Satan is to be set free for a short period to deceive the nations, after which he will be cast into the lake of fire. The deceived nations will be devoured by fire from heaven, followed by the resurrection of the dead to be judged before the great white throne. Thereafter the *new heaven and new earth* will appear.

(c) Insomuch as the church's origination was only realised after the resurrection of Christ, the biblical text before the crucifixion and resurrection are related to the Old Testament period (primarily Jewish), while those thereafter are related to the New Testament period (primarily Gentiles or the church). Thus, Israel and the church are never equated in this proposed hermeneutical framework.

In the following chapter, while keeping the abovementioned framework in mind, I will review the questions and answers that were discussed and schematically illustrated in chapter 6. This should enable the reader not only to identify the discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism, but also to understand the implications involved when the distinction between Israel and the Church is not consistently applied.

**CHAPTER 8**  
**HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE QUESTIONS AND**  
**ANSWERS WITHIN THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK**

### **8.1 THE ILLUSTRATIVE GOAL**

The intention of this chapter is to systematically review the answers received to the questions that were put to the various Pentecostal church leaders and theologians, in order to illustrate the resultant implications created by the discrepancies that exist in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism. Once this has been illustrated, the attentive reader will most likely concur with the author that Pentecostalism is in urgent need of a hermeneutical model that will be instrumental in achieving an improved consensus. Obviously, the framework proposed in this study is not presented as an absolute to which all Pentecostals must adhere – a dream that borders on the impossible - but rather, the goal is to present a concept for a hermeneutical model that, hopefully, will be used in the future by other theologians as a point of departure in working toward the structure of a well formulated and articulated model.

To assist such future attempts, the following paragraphs incorporate the systematic review mentioned above. However, it is imperative at this point that the reader is aware of and accepts the fact that it would be an impossible task to enter into a full theological debate on every question and answer within this study. Therefore, the main purpose within the following discussions is to illuminate the discrepancies and to advocate an acceptable interpretation relative to the proposed framework.

### **8.2 SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF QUESTIONS 1 – 4**

In order to present the reviewed questions and answers systematically, each question is printed below followed by a brief description of the *answers received*. Thereafter the *acceptable answer* within the proposed framework is given, followed by a brief *argument* as to why the specific answer is considered to be more acceptable. The acceptable answer will then be stated as a *hermeneutical guideline* within the proposed framework with the anticipation that it will be of assistance to Pentecostals working toward the development of

a well-formulated hermeneutical model. It must be emphasised though, that each question could encompass a complete study in itself, but for the purpose of this dissertation each will only be discussed briefly. The answers received will be combined where the interviewees offered similar answers.

### **Q1. When was the church constituted?**

This obviously does not refer to the origin of the church in God's mind at the beginning, but rather to the "birth" of the church as an entity with its own identity on earth. According to Sykes (1980:217), the word "constitute" means *to give legal form to* or *to establish* (an assembly etc).

**The answers received:** (a) On the Day of Pentecost. (b) After the resurrection and ascension of Christ. (c) When the disciples were called. (d) When Jesus breathed on the disciples.

**Acceptable answer:** (d) When Christ breathed on the disciples.

**Arguments for:** The called disciples were to become the 'foundation' whereon Christ would build the church, he himself being the cornerstone (Eph 2:19-22). Paul teaches that God has appointed in the church first *of all apostles* (1 Cor 12:28). The appointment of the twelve who were to become the foundation of the church, was most certainly done before Pentecost (Ac 1:15-26). Yet, they were still functioning on an individual basis and not as a body. The body, of which Christ was to be the head, could only come about after Christ's resurrection (Eph 1:20-23). When he breathed on them (not individually but as a group), these Apostles (as a group) that were already indwelt by the Holy Spirit (being already converted), became a living organism<sup>61</sup> (the church) and on the Day of Pentecost, this living organism received power to fulfil its great mission. Verster (1980a:92) agrees with this view, saying the following:

The phrase, "breathed on them", is the Greek word *emphusao*, meaning "Breath in" and only appears here in the New Testament. However, the same word appears in the LXX in Genesis 2:7. Here God breathes life in(to) the nostrils of the 'clay body' and it became a living soul or a functional body. Similarly, Christ breathed power of life in(to) the group - not as individuals - and as a group they became a functional body. Here the disciples as a body received life (*zōe*) and on the Day of Pentecost they individually received power (*dunamis*).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See point 7.4.3.1 on page 108.

<sup>62</sup> Interpretation my own.

If the church was constituted on the Day of Pentecost, it implies that the called disciples who already had the indwelling Holy Spirit received the Holy Spirit a second time when Jesus breathed on them and a third time on the Day of Pentecost, which then seems to be superfluous.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The church was constituted and became a living organism the moment Christ breathed on the disciples and said: "*Receive the Holy Ghost*".

**Q2. What is the difference<sup>63</sup> between the Holy Ghost that the disciples received when Jesus breathed on them (Jn 20:22) and the Holy Ghost that they received on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:4)?**

**Answers received:** (a) The first (Jn 20) empowered the disciples for their service while the second (Ac 2) empowered the church. (b) The first constituted the church as a living organism while the second empowered the church. (c) The first was the rebirth of the disciples; the second empowered the church. (d) The first was a symbol of that that would happen on the Day of Pentecost, namely the empowering of the church. (e) The first was the indwelling or dwelling of God among his people through the Holy Spirit while the second empowered the church.

**Acceptable answer:** (b) The first constituted the church as a living organism while the second empowered the church for service as is clear from the discussion of Q1.

**Arguments for:** Besides the arguments presented above in relation to Q1 which support the acceptable answer, I may add that if (a) is correct then, as was stated previously,<sup>64</sup> Christ's command instructing the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power, was superfluous. It was precisely for this reason that they had to tarry until Pentecost so as to be endowed with power. If (c) is correct, it implies that the disciples of Jesus were only born again after Christ's resurrection. This in turn would mean, amongst others, that Jesus sent unconverted men to the "lost sheep of Israel" to preach that the kingdom of heaven was near (Mt 10:6-7). This would be a case of the blind leading the blind, which is an unacceptable thought. These men were saved, born again and their names were written in heaven (Lk 10:20).

<sup>63</sup> The term "difference" here does not imply that there is or was two separate "*Holy Ghosts*", but rather is asked in relation to difference of the purpose and result of the activity of the Holy Ghost at these two separate events.

<sup>64</sup> See discussion on page 85.

To maintain that (d) Christ's breathing on the disciples was the moment that God, through the Holy Spirit, came to dwell among his people to be their covenant God, invalidates the purpose of the incarnation through which God, in Christ, became Emmanuel (Mt 1:23), as Christ was still "*with us*" at this point in time. Furthermore, it nullifies Christ's promise that after his ascension and return to the Father, he would send another Comforter (the Holy Spirit) [Jn 14:16; 14:26; 15:26] who would then be "*God with us*" continuing the work begun by Jesus. Jesus also said, "*But I tell you the truth, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you*" (Jn 16:7). Jesus had not "*gone away*" yet when he breathed on the disciples. Furthermore, it would imply that, firstly, God has come to his people in Christ, secondly, that God has come to his people through the breathing of Christ on the disciples and thirdly, that God has come to his people on the Day of Pentecost.

If, however, answer (d) had stated that it was on the Day of Pentecost that God came to dwell among his people, it would have been more acceptable within this hermeneutical framework as it was at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was "*given*" to continue God's work among his people and that the Holy Spirit was manifested in a "*new way*". What is notable within the answers, is the fact that all the interviewees agree that on the Day of Pentecost the church was empowered for its mission. This in itself may suggest that the church existed before the Day of Pentecost<sup>65</sup>, the day on which about 3000 souls were added thereto (Ac 2:41).

**Hermeneutical guideline:** In John 20:22 the Church was constituted when Christ breathed on the disciples and on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:4), the constituted church was empowered for service, thereby fulfilling Christ's promise of Acts 1:8.

### **Q3. Did the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 operate before the Day of Pentecost?**

The gifts referred to here are the nine gifts described by Paul in verses 7-11.

**Answers received:** (a) Yes, all except the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues. (b) Yes. The disciples were given authority to administer these gifts before Pentecost, but only to Israel. At Pentecost the gifts were given to the whole church. (c) Yes. It would be difficult to say that Tongues is exclusively limited to the New Testament.

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<sup>65</sup> See discussion of Q1 on page 128.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) All the gifts of 1 Cor 12 operated in the Old Testament, except the gift of speaking in different kinds of tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues.

**Arguments for:** All the gifts of the Spirit, except the gifts of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, were manifested in the Old Testament before Pentecost. Consequently, these gifts cannot be the result of the events on the Day of Pentecost or of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In contrast hereto, tongues and the interpretation of tongues were manifested on the Day of Pentecost and therefore is exclusively a New Testament experience. **Dake (1987:323)** remarks as follows:

The only gifts that were not manifest in the Old Testament days were the gifts of tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues, and these were reserved to be given to men in this age.

**Verster (1974:108)** agrees with Dake, adding that tongues and the interpretation of tongues is exclusive to the New Testament experience.

In contrast to answer (b), namely that the disciples were given authority to administer these gifts before Pentecost but only to Israel, it may be said that long before the disciples appeared on the scene, spiritual gifts were operative, such as wisdom (Ex 28:3), knowledge (Ex 35:31), etc. There are no scriptural grounds or references to support the second part of answer (c) namely, “It would be difficult to say that tongues is exclusively limited to the New Testament”.

**Hermeneutic guideline:** All the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 operated before Pentecost, except the gift of speaking in different tongues and the gift of the interpretation of tongues.

#### **Q4. What is the initial evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit?**

**Answers received:** (a) Speaking in different tongues. (b) Tongues, although it is not explicitly stated in the Bible. Rather, one’s conduct and the fruit of the Spirit are proof thereof. (c) Tongues, although it is not necessary to speak in tongues when one is baptised with the Holy Spirit – it is a voluntary thing. (d) Tongues are not the evidence. Any person that is indwelt by the Spirit, can speak in tongues if he/she permits the power of the Spirit to manifest.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) Speaking in different tongues.

**Arguments for:** The speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost formed the pattern for every subsequent similar baptism with the Holy Spirit. Peter evidently concurred with this view, for he described the reception of the Spirit by Cornelius and his household (Ac 10) in these words, *“The Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning”* (Ac 11:15). At Pentecost he said, *“This, which you now see and hear...”* (Ac 2:33). In three of the five accounts of Spirit Baptism recorded in Acts, the believers all spoke in Spirit given languages upon receiving, while the other two instances encourage inferring the presence of tongues. At Samaria, *“When Simon saw that on the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying give me also this power that on whosoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost”* (Ac 8:18-19). The fact that Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given, together with his eagerness to buy the gift, indicates that a visible sign confirmed Spirit baptism. By applying a consistent adherence to the formed scriptural pattern, it is deduced that the visible sign could be nothing else but the speaking in tongues.

**Burger [s.a.:21]** states that

We may indeed regard speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the infilling with the Holy Ghost, but it should not be the only sign that one has received the fullness of the Holy Ghost. Soon afterwards there should be other evidences in my life whereby co-believers can see that I have been baptised in the Spirit.<sup>66</sup>

The other baptism with the Holy Spirit where speaking in tongues is not mentioned, is the Baptism of Saul of Tarsus (Ac 9:17). It is reasonable, however, to infer that he also spoke in other tongues upon receiving the baptism with the Spirit since his testimony is, *“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you”* (1 Cor 14:18). From this it is deduced that the initial evidence of Spirit Baptism is the speaking in different languages as the Spirit gives utterance. It must be emphasised though, that speaking in tongues is not the baptism, but only the sign or evidence that a person has been baptised with the Spirit.

The first part of answer (b), namely *“tongues, although it is not explicitly stated in the Bible”* is correct, as the Bible does not wittingly state that tongues are the initial evidence. It is inferred from the formed pattern as described above. The second part of answer (b), namely *“rather, one’s conduct and the fruit of the Spirit are proof thereof”* is unacceptable, as there are many born again Christians that manifest an excellent conduct in life through which the

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<sup>66</sup> Translation my own.

fruit of the Spirit is notably perceivable, yet have not been baptised with the Holy Spirit. A biblical example hereof is the disciples that Paul found in Ephesus, that did not even know about the Holy Spirit (Ac 19:1-6). The fruit of the Spirit is the product of the Holy Spirit (person) indwelling the believer, while tongues is the product of the Holy Spirit (power) which is received through baptism with the Spirit.

Answer (c), namely “tongues, although it is not necessary to speak in tongues when one is baptised with the Holy Spirit – it is a voluntary thing”, stands in direct contrast to the Pentecostal event. On Biblical grounds, tongues are a necessary and essential evidence of the baptism in the Spirit. Tongues were not an occasional option, but a recurring definitive pattern. God promised that the biblical pattern was the standard for the future: “*This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call*” (Ac 2:39). What was true on the Day of Pentecost and on subsequent occasions in Scripture, must continue to be true throughout the age.

If answer (d), namely “tongues are not the evidence - any person that is indwelt by the Spirit can speak in tongues if he/she permits the power of the Spirit to manifest” is correct, then one may ask why the disciples who were indwelt by the Spirit long before Pentecost, never spoke in tongues before the Day of Pentecost. This problem annuls answer (d).

**Hermeneutical guideline:** Speaking in tongues is the uniform, initial, outward or physical evidence of having received the baptism with/in the Holy Spirit.

### 8.3 SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF QUESTIONS 9 – 24

As was mentioned earlier, questions 5-8 are not discussed in this study<sup>67</sup>. The following questions, namely 9 – 24, are related to eschatology and in a lesser sense to ecclesiology, two subdivisions of theology that feature significantly within the proposed framework. At this point, it is important for the reader to bear in mind the fact that an important feature of this model is the distinction that is maintained between Israel and the Church, as well as the view that before Christ’s death and resurrection, the church is a mystery and that all God’s dealings with humanity before this point are primarily<sup>68</sup> related to the Jews of the Old Testament

<sup>67</sup> See discussion on page 85.

<sup>68</sup> I use the term ‘primarily’ here, bearing in mind that although the church was a mystery in the Old Testament dispensation (i.e. up to the crucifixion), Jesus did on two occasions prior to his resurrection, indirectly refer to the Rapture, namely in John 14:2-3 and in Luke 21:36. See the discussion of pretribulationism on page 138.

dispensation. After the resurrection, God deals primarily with the New Testament church (Gentiles) up until the rapture of the church. Thereafter God once again turns his focus on Israel. Failure to consistently adhere to this distinction of Israel and the church subsequently leads to the many discrepancies present within Pentecostalism.

**Q9. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:6 something or someone is withholding the revelation of “that man of sin”. Who or what is that man of sin and who or what is referred to as withholding?**

**Answers received:** (a) The antichrist is “that man of sin” and the church is referred to as withholding. (b) The Antichrist is “that man of sin” and the witness of the church is that which is withholding. (c) The antichrist is “that man of sin” and the church or the Holy Spirit is referred to as withholding.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) namely, the antichrist is “that man of sin” and the church is referred to as withholding.

**Arguments for:** There is no need to discuss the identity of “*that man of sin*” as all the interviewees agree that he is the Antichrist that is to be revealed. Problematic though, is the identity of “*that which withholds*” his revelation. In the proposed framework, it is believed that it is the church of Jesus Christ that stands between the Antichrist and his revelation. Once the church has been raptured, he will be revealed. **Pentecost (1968:205)** agrees with this view and accordingly states,

It is only when the church, the temple, is removed that this restraining ministry ceases and lawlessness can produce the lawless one. It should be noted that the Holy Spirit does not cease His ministries with the removal of the church, nor does He cease to be omnipresent, with her removal but the restraining ministry does cease.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians about the man of lawlessness, said, “*And now you know what is holding him back so that he may be revealed at the proper time ... but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so until he is taken out of the way and then the lawless one will be revealed...*” (2 Th 2:6). The only thing that is preventing the powers of darkness from having full sway and thus preventing the revelation of Antichrist, is the church and the Holy Spirit.

Governments may, to a certain extent, be included here, but unfortunately it cannot be said of all governments. Restraint of sin cannot be assigned to government in view of the fact that in the end time there will be an absolute government that will be completely wicked. In other words, government will not restrain sin in the end time. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent and will not be withdrawn from the world, but actually will still be active after the rapture and during the tribulation period (Jl 2:28; Ac 2:17-21; Zch 12:10; Jn 14:16; Rv 7:9-16). Revelation 7:9-16 declares that multitudes will be saved during the tribulation period and according to the Bible, nobody can be saved but by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5; 16:8; Rm 8:9; Eph 2:18; 1 Cor 6:11). If the Holy Spirit is that which withholds, it implies that when that which withholdeth (Holy Spirit) is taken out of the way, the church universal and individually will be without the Holy Spirit. This is unacceptable, as never can the church be without the Holy Spirit, which was given to it for the purpose of empowering it.

If therefore, neither the government nor the Holy Spirit is to be taken out of the world, it follows by logical elimination that it is only the church that can be referred to by Paul as holding back the Antichrist. The ultimate restraint of sin must be from God himself. The Holy Spirit indwelling the church is God's present method of restraining sin in the world. This can be changed only by the rapture of the church. Thus, the church (hindrance) is to be taken out of the way (raptured) and then the Antichrist will be revealed.

The interviewee that put forward answer (c), stated that, "the witness of the church is that which is withholding". He based this on his belief that the church is to pass through a period of persecution (the tribulation) and due to the ensuing great oppression of the church during this time, its "voice" would be dormant and no longer will its witness be heard. Within this proposed model, however, as is seen from the interpretation of the book of Revelation,<sup>69</sup> the church is raptured before the tribulation, an event that is foreshadowed by the bodily ascension of John to heaven (Rv 4:1), and the twenty-four elders representative of the raptured church in heaven. Therefore the church is not affected by the tribulation, nor will its witness ever become dormant on earth until the rapture thereof.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The Antichrist is that "man of sin" or the lawless one. The church is the one that withholds his revelation.

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<sup>69</sup> See the discussion of the Book of Revelation on page 97.

**Q10. The common view among Pentecostals is that the church is to be raptured. Do you support this view?**

**Answers received:** (a) Yes. (b) Yes, but not a secret rapture. The rapture and the 2nd Advent are the same event. (c) Not a secret rapture. I prefer the term resurrected. The whole church will be resurrected.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) Yes.

**Arguments for:** The rapture of the church refers to the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, namely *“For the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”* By the rapture of the church is meant the catching up of all true believers in Christ to meet the Lord in the air, as is predicted in the quoted verse. An unbiased reading of this passage together with others (1 Cor 15:23, 51-58; Phlp 3:20-21; Col 3:4), will substantiate the fact that there is to be such an event as the Lord descending from heaven, to take out of the world, in a moment of time, in the twinkling of an eye, all the dead and living in Christ. **Williams (1981:192)** has the following to say about the Rapture:

The rapture of the church is Christ’s coming for the church to take her to be with him during the time between His coming for His own and the time when He comes to manifest himself to the world.... We will be with Him not only between the time of His coming for the saints until His revelation: we will be with Him forever. Thus the *parousia* is a very full term, signifying His coming and His presence.

Opponents of this view often state that the term “rapture” is not mentioned in the Bible. In response to this, it may be stated that neither is the term “trinity” mentioned in the Bible, yet belief in a triune God is confessed. Why? Obviously because it is inferred from various passages of Scripture. The same principle is true as regards the rapture. According to **Verster (1980a:94)**, the term “caught up” is derived from the Greek word *harpazō* which means to catch, force, pluck or snatch. From these meanings it is deduced that Christ will snatch away (*harpazō*) his church in a forceful manner.

In response to answers (b) and (c) namely, “yes, but not a secret rapture”, I must clearly state that the rapture may not be a “secret” rapture, but it will most certainly be a sudden (twinkling

of an eye) event (1 Cor 15:52). In this sense, it may be regarded as secret. Furthermore, answer (c) preferred the term resurrection in place of rapture with the added statement that the whole church is to be resurrected. The fact that the whole church is to be resurrected is not problematic and is in harmony with Bible doctrine and with the interpretation within this proposed framework. It must be born in mind though, that the term “rapture” refers to the actual event of Christ catching his church away, while the term “resurrection” refers to the consequence of the rapture.

Answer (b) also stated that the rapture and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent are one and the same event and occurs at the same point in time. In explaining this view, the interviewee maintained that with the rapture, the church is caught away to meet Christ in the clouds and then immediately returns back to earth with him. This implies that the church will pass through the Great Tribulation period, an interpretation that is unacceptable within this framework as it nullifies the fact that the church is the one that withholds Antichrist’s revelation, and it makes no sense of 2 Thessalonians 2. If this view is correct, it will mean that the church that is raptured (in the twinkling of an eye) will immediately return after meeting Christ in the clouds – which in turn implies that the Antichrist will only be revealed for a period perhaps a little longer than the twinkling of an eye. On the other hand, if this view maintains that the church is currently passing through the Great Tribulation period, then we may ask, “But when will the Antichrist be revealed and what is it that is withholding him?”

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The church of Jesus Christ consisting of all born again believers is to be raptured in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

**Q11. Where do you place the rapture in the eschatological sequence?**

**Answers received:** (a) Pre-tribulation. (b) Rapture and 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is the same event, thus before the millennium (c) No eschatological sequence.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) Pre-tribulation.

**Arguments for:** The question as to when the rapture will occur with reference to the eschatological sequence, is a matter of dispute among Pentecostals (and evangelicals). Basically there are four views, namely posttribulationism, midtribulationism, partial rapturism and pretribulationism.

*Posttribulationism* is the view held by all a-millenarians and all post-millenarians. According to this point of view, the church will be raptured to meet Christ in the air and then will immediately return to the earth with him. It is termed posttribulationism, because it holds that the rapture will occur after the Great Tribulation at the time of the second coming of Christ.

*Midtribulationism* holds that the rapture will take place in the middle of the last seven years (Daniel's seventieth week) before the second coming of Christ. These people believe that the seven years will be a time of general tribulation, but that the Great Tribulation will cover only the second half of this period, followed by Christ's second coming.

*Partial* rapturism is the theory that only those specially qualified, will be raptured before the seven years of tribulation. There will, however, be subsequent raptures thereafter as others qualify.

*Pretribulationism* is the view that holds that the rapture will occur at least seven years before the second coming of Christ and is termed *pretribulationism* because it is believed that it will occur before the end-time trouble and the revelation of the Antichrist. It is this view that is adhered to in the proposed framework. Many, if not most Pentecostals, adhere to this view. Even though this view distinguishes between the Old and New Testament dispensations – Israel and church – it does acknowledge that Christ did refer to the rapture of the church on two occasions before his death and resurrection, although the disciples may not have understood the meaning of his words at the time.<sup>70</sup> The two references are found in John 14:2-3 and Luke 21:36.<sup>71</sup> In the first reference, Jesus comforts his troubled disciples (verse 1) by informing them that he was going to prepare a place for them in his Father's house, after which he would return to take them away to be with him in that prepared place (2-3).

To the disciples this was a strange prophecy, as they did not know or understand that there was a first *and* second phase to the second coming of Christ. How could they distinguish the rapture from the second coming? Just a few days prior to this, Jesus had predicted his coming to earth (Mt 24), indicating his triumph over his enemies. At the same time, however, he had warned them of a long period of time leading up to it, which was to be a period of much opposition and even martyrdom.

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<sup>70</sup> See footnote 68 on page 134.

<sup>71</sup> See footnote 68 on page 134.

The disciples did not understand Christ's statement in John 14:2-4, as is proved by Thomas' words, "*Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?*" (Jn 14:5). For the first time it was revealed to them that prior to his second coming, those that believe in Christ will be removed from the earth (raptured) and taken to the Father's house, an obvious reference to heaven, as there is no known place on earth that Jesus could have referred to as his "Fathers house". This clearly illustrates on the one hand the purpose of the rapture, namely to remove the born again believers from the earth and on the other hand, its importance for understanding the difference of purpose between the rapture and the second coming. At the rapture, Christ comes to take the redeemed out of the world, while at the second coming; he comes to judge and to reign over the earth. The only common factor between the two events is that they are both referred to as a "coming". Posttribulationists are hard pressed to meaningfully and sensibly explain this passage.

In the second reference (Lk 21), Jesus had told his disciples of the terrible things that were to happen on earth, explaining that these were the events that would take place prior to his second coming. Then in verse 36 he says: "*Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*" Here we have a promise that "*some will be accounted worthy to escape all these things* (pictured in Lk 21 and Mt 24) *that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*" Who can those considered to be worthy be, other than the born again saints that are alive and on earth just prior to these things coming to pass? How can they escape all these things but by being raptured? **Menzies & Horton (1983:226)**, in referring to the church "escaping" the future tribulation, refer to Luke 21:36 and comment as follows:

Even though God the Father is working out his plan from our point of view the Rapture of the church could occur at anytime. God wants us to live in a state of readiness. Important to this view that the Rapture will take place before the tribulation is the assurance that God characteristically delivers his people from tribulation.

The statement by Christ "*...to stand before the Son of man*" refers to the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) where believers will be judged for their works both good and bad (worthy and worthless), which will take place in heaven while the seven-year tribulation takes place on earth. If the church is to go through the tribulation period and undergo the judgements of the seventieth week, then Christ has given us a false hope; then there is no method of escape; then Romans 8:1 does not present us with any consolation. These and many other arguments may be presented to illustrate that posttribulationism is not acceptable within this

framework, as it only causes a misrepresentation of Christ's teaching regarding his second coming that results in utter confusion. The fact that the Antichrist is to confirm a covenant with many (Jews) for a period of seven years (Dn 9:27), implies that he will be revealed at the beginning of the seven-year period. If, as was stated above, it is the church that withholds his revelation, it is logical that the church must be taken out of the way before the commencement of the seven-year period.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The rapture of the church is to occur before the Great Tribulation – i.e. a Pre-tribulational rapture.

**Q12. According to Mt 24:40-41 “Two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken and the other left.” What meaning do you ascribe to this?**

**Answers received:** (a) It refers to the time of the rapture of the church, when one will be taken and the other left. (b) It refers to the Tribulation period when one will be killed by Antichrist and other left alive. (c) It refers to the watchfulness of Israel during the tribulation. (d) It refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. (e) It has nothing to do with the rapture, but refers to the last judgment where some will be saved and others lost. (f) It has a Jewish connotation and refers to the Tribulation period.

**Accepted answer:** (b) (c) & (f)<sup>72</sup> It is said in reference to the Jews during the Tribulation period calling them to watchfulness, as it is during this period that the Antichrist will persecute the Jews and some of them will be engaged in the war to withstand Antichrist's onslaught and may even be killed in the battle of Armageddon, while others are not.

**Arguments for:** Questions such as these most clearly illustrate that the failure of Pentecostals to consistently distinguish between Israel and the church – the Old and the New Testament dispensations - is a major contributing factor for the existence of the many discrepancies within their textual interpretation. As was mentioned earlier, the church is a mystery prior to Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, Christ is actually primarily dealing with Israel within the context of this passage and he is informing them of events to take place prior to and at his second coming. At this point in time (Mt 24) the Jews had no

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<sup>72</sup> These three answers have been combined in the description of the accepted answer.

idea that there was to be a church, let alone a rapture of the church. The disciples had shown him the beautiful temple building (Mt 24:1) upon which Jesus remarked that not one stone would be left on another (v2). The disciples then asked him three questions (v3), namely (i) “When shall these things be?” (ii) “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” and (iii) “... the end of this age?” Therefore, the rest of this discourse is focused on the answers to the three questions.

The first question, namely - *when shall these things be?* - refers to Christ’s statement that not one stone was to be left on another, which has bearing on the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. **Dake (1987:853)** maintains that,

At the time of this prophecy no event was more improbable. The world was at peace. The Jewish nation was subject to the Romans and under its protection. Yet, within forty years the prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. After a three-years’ siege by Vespasian and his son Titus, Jerusalem was taken and the temple destroyed in August 70 A.D.

The second question - *what shall be the sign of thy coming?* - does not concern the rapture of the church to meet Christ in the air (1 Th 4:13-17), but the second coming of Christ to the earth with the saints after the rapture to set up a kingdom in the world. The sign of his coming includes false messiahs’, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, etc., (Mt 24:4-31).

The third question, namely - *and the end of this age* - is actually part of the second question, although it refers more precisely to the manner of his coming to earth (Mt 24:27) and what will take place when he comes (Mt 24:28-46). These events include (amongst others) the eagles gathered to the battle of Armageddon (v28), the sun darkened, the moon shall not reflect light and the stars will fall from heaven (v29). Then shall Christ appear (v30), he will gather his elect from the four corners of the earth (v31), the ungodly and disobedient will be destroyed (32-51) and the nations judged (31-46).

According to Luke’s account of Mathew 24: 40-41 (see Lk:17), the disciples asked Jesus, “*Where Lord?*” (v37a). This question was put to Jesus after he had said that “*one would be taken and the other left.*” It is obvious that the question did not have any reference to the one left, as the disciples clearly understood that the one left was either “*in the bed*” or “*grinding grain*”. Rather, they wanted to know *whereto* “one will be taken”. Jesus answered the question as follows: “*Where there is a dead body the vultures will gather*” (v37b). If we

consistently allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, then it will be noted that in Revelation 19:17 the angel called the “*fowls of the air*” to come to the supper of the “*Great God*” that they may eat the flesh of “*kings and captains and mighty men and horses...*” This text refers to the happenings on the day of the battle of Armageddon.<sup>73</sup> In view of this, the proposed model holds that the “*one taken*” is not raptured, but rather taken to Armageddon. At this battle many will be slain and the earth will be strewn with dead bodies “*...and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh*” (Rv 19:21). Obviously, at the time of the rapture there most certainly will be cases where one will be taken and the other not (due to the one being a born again Christian and the other not). Nevertheless, it is unacceptable within the proposed framework to teach that Matthew 24 (or Luke 17) has any direct reference to the rapture of the church. **Pentecost (1964:162)** comments briefly as follows on Mt 24:41:

This passage is in the discourse in which the Lord outlines his program for Israel... the one taken is taken to judgment and the one left is left for the millennial blessing. Such is not the prospect for the church.

Answer (d), namely that it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, is correct in a certain sense, as it only refers to the first question<sup>74</sup> put to Jesus by the disciples. The whole of Matthew 24, however, is not only concerned with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as is logical from the fact that the sun was not darkened, nor did the stars fall from heaven at the time, but rather has significance for the totality of events prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ.

Answer (e), namely that it has nothing to do with the rapture, but refers to the *last judgment* where some will be saved and others lost, can only be evaluated if the meaning of the words “last judgment” is clearly defined. Unfortunately, the interviewee that presented this answer did not explain what was implied by the words and therefore it is impossible to debate this answer meaningfully. It may, however, be said that if the term “*last judgment*” as used here refers to the white throne judgment of God (Rv 20:11), which is viewed as the last judgment within the proposed framework, the answer would be unacceptable. This statement is based on the fact that within this framework those that appear before God at this judgment would all be people that have previously partaken of physical death (Rv 20:12-13). However, if the interviewee implied that the “last judgment” referred to the judgment of the nations at Armageddon, the answer will be acceptable.

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<sup>73</sup>According to **Dake (1987:267)**, the term Armageddon occurs only once in Scripture. It is the name of the place where the battle will be fought (Rev 16:13-16). The word “Armageddon” is from two Hebrew words, **Har**, meaning “a mountain or range of hills, hill country,” and **Megiddo**, meaning, “rendezvous”. The two words together (Har-Megiddo) refer to the Hill of Megiddo or Esdraelon (2 Chr 35:22; Zech 12:11), southeast of Mt Carmel.

<sup>74</sup> See discussion on page 141.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** It refers to the tribulation period and the battle of Armageddon, when one will be taken to the battle and the other left.

**Q13. Pentecostals often refer to the parable of the ten virgins in their preaching. How would you interpret this parable?**

**Answers received:** (a) Watchfulness of the church. (b) Watchfulness of the Jews during the tribulation period. (c) Nominal church: five are born again and five are not. (d) Readiness at Christ's coming. (e) Refers to the church - not everybody expecting Christ will be raptured. (f) Jewish connotation and refers to the Jews during the tribulation.

**Accepted answer:** (b) & (f). Watchfulness of the Jews during the tribulation period. Jewish connotation and refers to the Jews during the tribulation.

**Arguments for:** As the church does not exist in the proposed framework until after the resurrection of Christ, it is unacceptable to relate this parable to the watchfulness of the church as is done in answer (a). At that moment in time, the church was non-existent. Christ was speaking to Jews who had no inkling of a church. He was in actual fact teaching them the importance of watchfulness in relation to his future return to the Mount of Olives. **Pentecost (1964: 227)** refers to the parable of the ten virgins and comments as follows:

In this connection it seems necessary to distinguish between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper. The marriage of the Lamb is an event that has particular reference to the church and takes place in heaven. The marriage supper is an event that involves Israel and takes place on the earth. In Mt 22:1-14 and Lk 14:16-24 and Mt 25:1-13 where Israel is awaiting the return of the bridegroom and the bride, the wedding feast or supper is located on the earth and has particular reference to Israel.

The interviewee that presented answer (d), namely that it referred to readiness at Christ's coming, linked the term "readiness" to the church, thus the remarks applicable to (a) are also true for (d).

Answer (c) is unacceptable as it would imply that one could calculate that 50% of the church is to be raptured and 50% not. Furthermore, it would also imply that 50% of the church is not

born again. In reference to the church universal, this could not be the case.<sup>75</sup> In view of this argument answer (e) is also eliminated.

**Hermeneutical Guideline:** The parable of the ten virgins refers to the Jews during the tribulation period, exhorting them to watchfulness in relation to Christ's return to the Mount of Olives.

**Q14. What does the oil in this parable typify?**

**Answers received:** (a) The Holy Spirit. (b) Watchfulness. Not the Holy Spirit. (c) Rebirth (d) No significance.

**Acceptable answer:** (b) Watchfulness. Not the Holy Spirit.

**Arguments for:** Answer (a) is rejected, as it would have devastating implications. According to Matthew 25:7, the foolish virgins asked the wise for more oil as their lamps "(are) were going out". In answer to their request, the wise virgins advised them to go to the sellers and to buy oil from them. If the oil typified the Holy Spirit, it would firstly imply, that the Holy Spirit could be exhausted - an impossibility. Secondly, it would imply that the Holy Spirit could be bought, which is an absurd thought.

Answer (c) is rejected on similar grounds to those presented above. If the oil typified rebirth, it would similarly mean that rebirth could be exhausted and that it could be purchased.

The interviewee who presented answer (d) could find no significance with regards to the oil typifying anything.

Answer (b) is accepted on the grounds that the context of the whole parable is related to the watchfulness and the readiness of the Jews at the Messiah's return.

**Hermeneutical Guideline:** The oil does not typify anything specifically, however it is associated with the importance of watchfulness for the Jews during the tribulation period.

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<sup>75</sup> See the discussion on page 103 relative to church membership.

**Q15. Pentecostals that believe in the rapture of the church also believe and teach that the rapture can occur at any moment. Yet, according to Mt 24:14, the gospel is to be preached to all nations then shall the end come. It is a known fact however, that all people have not as yet heard the gospel. How would you explain this?**

**Answers received:** (a) The gospel has already been preached to all nations. (b) This is the gospel of the kingdom that will be preached to the Jews during the tribulation and all nations during the millennium. (c) It is one of the last signs prior to Christ's return – few people groups not reached yet. (d) Because Pentecostals believe in a secret rapture, this Scripture is misinterpreted. The gospel will be preached to all the nations, but not to every individual before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. The church will pass through the Great Tribulation. (e) By means of the modern technology, most people have heard the gospel and the rapture can occur at any moment. (f) The “end” may refer to the White Throne judgement; therefore all individuals would have heard the gospel.

**Acceptable answer:** (b) This is the gospel of the kingdom that will be preached to the Jews during the tribulation.

**Arguments for:** According to the biblical text, Matthew 24 is an event that chronologically occurred before the death of Christ, which implies that it is part of the Old Testament dispensation. Therefore, Jesus is addressing Jews before the mystery of the church was revealed, which is clear from his actual words in that he is referring to the gospel of the kingdom (the kingdom that the Jews were expecting),<sup>76</sup> and not the gospel of salvation (*grace*) (Eph 2:8).

**Verster (1980b:22)** explains the gospel of the kingdom as follows:

John the Baptist's prime task was to prepare the nation for the coming and ministry of the Messiah (Mt 3:1-3, Jn 1:22-23)... This gospel is unique because there is absolutely no correlation with the gospel of the cross of Christ. It is exclusively a gospel of the kingdom (Mt 3:2; 4:23), the expected Jewish kingdom as revealed to us in the Old Testament (Jr 23:5; Dn 2:34-35, 44; 7:13-14; Zch 14:9). It could not have been the gospel of salvation through the expiatory death of Christ as preached by the Church of Christ today, because the church with her message of the crucified Christ was a mystery at that time, which was only revealed after Christ's resurrection from the dead (Gl 1:11-12; Eph 2:14-15; 3:1-9). “These twelve Jesus sent forth, and Commanded them, saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather

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<sup>76</sup> Acts 1:6.

to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 10:5-7). In contrast to this, the gospel of the cross and of salvation is for the whole world (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15).

From the above it may be deduced that Christ’s words, namely *‘this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come’*, can only refer to the preaching thereof after the rapture. As Israel is included in the phrase “all nations”, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to national Israel as well as all other nations. It will be preached to Israel during the latter half of the tribulation period, by Christ’s two witnesses<sup>77</sup> (Rv 11), when God’s focus will once again be turned on Israel. The good news that the King is about to return will be preached (Mt 24:14) so that Israel may turn to their deliverer. As John the Baptist preached the gospel of the kingdom to prepare Israel for the first coming of Christ, so the two witnesses (Elijah & Enoch) will preach to prepare Israel for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent (Mt 4:5-6). With Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent at the end of the tribulation period, national Israel will repent and during the millennium they will once again be the light bearers of the gospel of the kingdom, proclaiming it to all nations. **Pentecost (1964:238)** makes the following notable remark:

It is also God’s purpose to populate the millennium with a multitude of saved Gentiles, who are redeemed through the preaching of the believing remnant. This is accomplished in the multitude from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, (Rv 7:9) and in the sheep (Mt 25:31), that enter the millennial age. God’s purpose, then, is to populate the millennial kingdom by bringing a host from among Israel and the Gentile nations to himself.

In view of the above, answer (a) is rejected, as firstly and primarily the reference is to the gospel of the kingdom and not to the gospel of salvation. Secondly, it is accepted (consider the 10-40 window in Africa wherein there are many who have not heard the gospel) that all the nations of the world have not yet heard the gospel message.

Answer (c), namely that “It is one of the last signs prior to Christ’s return – few people groups not reached yet”, is rejected as the gospel of the kingdom will only be preached after Christ’s return for his church, as was explained above. Furthermore, Jesus did *not* say that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached to all nations then he (Jesus) will return, but rather *then the end will come*. After Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, there will be a literal period of at least 1000 years before the end comes.

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<sup>77</sup> To debate whom these two witnesses are here would be too lengthy, suffice it to say that within this framework they are believed to be Elijah and Enoch. Many theologians agree with this view, including **Dake [1957] (1987:104)**, who presents a detailed discussion on the subject.

Answer (d), namely “Because Pentecostals believe in a secret rapture, this Scripture is misinterpreted. The gospel will be preached to all the nations, but not to every individual before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent and the church will pass through the Great Tribulation”, is a view that to a certain extent is equated with Reformed theology<sup>78</sup>, which discards the idea of the rapture of the church. To say that Pentecostals believe in a *secret* rapture is a generalisation, as not all Pentecostals do believe this. The text that is mostly quoted by Pentecostals when referring to the rapture, namely 1 Thessalonians 4:17, is indicative to the fact that it cannot be a *secret* rapture, as it is preceded by “a loud command”, “the voice of an archangel” and a “trumpet call” (NIV). As a rule, most Pentecostals support the belief in the rapture of the church, it being a *sudden event*, “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor 15:52), but not *secret*. It cannot be secret, as besides all the proclamations and “sounds” that precede it, it is also taught in Scripture, which was written 2000 years ago. Obviously, the view of the interviewee’s ideology of a “no rapture theory” necessitates his theory that the church has to pass through the tribulation period. Concerning the statement that the gospel will be preached to all nations before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, but not to all individuals, it implies that individuals who have never heard the gospel message will be judged by God and punished for their unbelief. This thought is unacceptable.

Answer (e) namely, “by means of the modern technology, most people have heard the gospel and the rapture can occur at any moment”, is proof that the interviewee does not differentiate between Israel and the church, and applies passages of Scripture applicable to Israel (before the church existed) to the church. The quoted words are part of the text wherein Christ is unfolding the signs prior to the “end”, which is during and after the tribulation (the millennium), then will the end come, and not the rapture.

The last answer (f), namely “the end may refer to the White Throne judgement; therefore all individuals would have heard the gospel,” is acceptable to the extent that the White Throne judgement will be the last judgement, therefore all people would have heard the gospel. It is important to note though, that this interviewee (like most of the others) does not make a distinction between Israel and the church, nor between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of salvation.

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<sup>78</sup> I say “to a certain extent” as Reformed theologians do not support the Rapture theory, but they do differ as to the time, form and extent of the tribulation and its relation to the church.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The gospel of the kingdom has a Jewish connotation and is the gospel that was preached by John the Baptist and Jesus prior to the revelation of the mystery of the church. It is not equated with the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ, which is preached in the church period. Once the church has been raptured, the gospel of the kingdom will again be preached *to* Israel during the tribulation period and *by* Israel to all nations during the millennium.

**Q16. How do you understand Mt 24:13, “But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved?”**

**Answers received:** (a) The Christian needs to endure or believe to the end in order to be saved, as perseverance will lead to salvation. (b) Not the person who starts the race but those that finish it, will be saved. (c) We can backslide, so we need to endure in our commitment to Christ. (e) This refers to the endurance of the Jews during the Great Tribulation.

**Acceptable answer:** (e) This refers to the endurance of the Jews during the Great Tribulation.

**Arguments for:** As has been the case all along, here too it is clear that the words spoken by Jesus were spoken to Jews before the mystery of the church was revealed. Logically, it could therefore have no bearing on the Christians within the church era to endure or persevere to the end. The reference is to the trials and tribulations that the Jews will have to endure during the tribulation period, and Jesus is telling them that if they would endure these throughout this period, they will be saved, for at the end thereof the Messiah will appear to set up his millennial kingdom. **Walvoord (1991:257)** makes the following significant statement in support of the above:

Jesus declared, “He who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Mt 24:13). This has confused many because it implies that salvation is not a work of God but something that is attained at the end of life. The answer, however, is found in the fact that this is not referring to spiritual salvation but to deliverance from persecution such as will characterise the end of the age. Many in the Great Tribulation will live until the end of the age but others will die because of their faith and therefore will not be on earth when Christ returns. The passage is referring to the godly remnant who will last through the Great Tribulation in spite of everything and who will be awaiting Jesus when he returns.

This fact immediately eliminates answer (a), which is totally unacceptable for more than one reason. Firstly, amongst others, it is rejected on the grounds of the fact that the church did not exist at this point in time. Secondly, it is rejected because salvation is only obtained through

one's faith in Jesus Christ (Jn 6:47) and not through perseverance. This is an unacceptable thought that invalidates Christ's atoning work, implying it to be a superfluous event.

Answer (b), namely that it is not the person who starts the race but those that finish it that will be saved, is just as unacceptable, for nobody can finish a race unless they partake in the start thereof. However, this is not the sole reason for rejecting this answer. Here again, as was the case with answer (a) discussed in the previous paragraph, salvation is not based on the initial act of faith in Jesus Christ, but rather on the completion of the race. This theory is theologically problematic as it not only nullifies the purpose of Christ's death and resurrection, but it also implies that salvation is dependant on an individual's deeds, works and endurance, instead of on Christ's saving power.

In contrast to this, Peter, in speaking of the Christian's preservation unto final salvation, writes, "*Who are kept by the power of God (not human endurance) through faith unto salvation ...*" (1 Pt 1:5). Paul writing to the Philippians says, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phlp 1:6). In writing to Timothy, Paul reiterates his faith and belief in God's saving power by saying, "*...for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*" (2 Tm 1:12). From these texts we may confidently state that the Christian's endurance is the result of salvation and not the cause thereof.

The term *backslide* in the final answer (c) to question 16, namely that we can *backslide* (therefore we need to endure in our commitment to Christ), is a point of contention that has been debated for many years within Christianity. Referred to as the "perseverance of the saints", "eternal security" or "once saved always saved" – this has understandably also been a major point of contention within Pentecostalism. At the centre of the debate is the issue of "Can or cannot a saved person loose his/her salvation?" As was explained in the previous paragraph, salvation is not by endurance, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, for the same reasons, the answer is not acceptable within this framework. Obviously, the interviewee that put forward this answer is of the opinion that saved persons can lose their salvation if they do not endure to the end. Nevertheless, this theme is not the purpose of this study; suffice it to say that in answer (c) we once again see proof of a scriptural passage related to Israel being interpreted as if it was addressed to the church.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** As the church was still a mystery at this point in time (when Jesus uttered the words), it can have no bearing on the church. It is to the Jews that these words were spoken, informing them of the sufferings that they would experience during the tribulation, but at the same time encouraging them by stating that those who endure until the end – i.e. until Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent and the beginning of the millennium - will be saved.

**Q17. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved". How do you reconcile this with Matthew 24:13?**

**Answers received:** (a) Mark has to do with initial salvation or the beginning of one's faith walk, while Matthew has to do with one's perseverance or one's life style. (b) Matthew refers to the endurance of the Jews; Mark refers to water baptism following salvation as a step of obedience.

**Acceptable answer:** (b) Matthew refers to the endurance of the Jews; Mark refers to water baptism following salvation as a step of obedience.

**Arguments for:** As was clearly explained in the discussion on question 16, the passage in Matthew refers to the endurance of the Jews during the tribulation period, therefore this part of the question needs no further elaboration. Concerning Mark 16:16, it must be remembered that these words are uttered after the death and resurrection of Christ and therefore refer to the church age and concerns those that accept him as their personal Saviour. Such people, in obedience to his command, must be baptised. Although this is the initial event of salvation, it must be clearly understood that water baptism as such does not - nor ever can - impart salvation. It is solely an act of obedience and a part of one's public confession of being a follower of Jesus Christ. The saving act within Christ's words in Mark 16:16 is "He that believes". This implies that without faith or belief in Christ, there is no salvation (1 Jn 5:12). Furthermore, it implies that unless one has believed in Christ one may not be baptised, as faith in - and confession of Christ before baptism is a biblical norm. However, the point here is not to discuss baptism as such, but rather to stress the fact that faith in Christ according to Mark 16:16, is the basis of salvation in the church age, while the perseverance of Matthew 24:13 refers to the ultimate salvation of the Jews during the tribulation and at the end thereof.

In view of the above and the discussion within “arguments for” on question 16,<sup>79</sup> answer (a), namely that Mark has to do with initial salvation or the beginning of one’s faith walk, while Matthew has to do with one’s perseverance or one’s life style, is rejected as this would imply that perseverance is the basis of salvation, nullifying the promise of Mark 16:16 together with God’s ability to ‘keep’ us (1 Pt 1:5).

**Hermeneutical guideline:** Matthew refers to the endurance of the Jews during the Great Tribulation. Mark refers to water baptism following salvation as a step of obedience.

**Q18. Would you agree that the New Testament church is an extension of the Old Testament Israel?**

**Answers received:** (a) No. The church is a new creation as the body of Christ. It does not replace Israel. It is not an extension of Israel, but a new body. (b) Yes, in the sense that the shadow of the cross falls in both the Old and the New Testaments. (c) Yes, as people of God, but no, not as body of Christ.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) No. The church is a new creation as the body of Christ. It does not replace Israel. It is not an extension of Israel, but a new body. (b) Yes, in the sense that the shadow of the cross falls in both the Old and the New Testaments, and (c) Yes, as people of God, but no, not as body of Christ.

**Arguments for:** Before discussing the relevant answers, I must make mention of the fact that not one of the interviewed persons asked for an explanation of the term “extension” in relation to the context of the question. A better understanding of the term within this context may or may not have influenced their answers to a certain extent. The intended meaning of “extension” when posing the question was similar to the term ‘equate’. In other words the question could have read as follows: “Do you agree that the church is equated with Israel?” I am almost certain that such a question would have more than likely received an undisputed ‘no’ vote. Nevertheless, concerning the acceptable answers, I must explain that in a broader sense<sup>80</sup> all three the answers would be acceptable. Even though, at this stage this may seem to be contradictory, as they responded with ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers in their qualifying remarks,

<sup>79</sup> See question 16 on page 148.

<sup>80</sup> This broader sense is fully explained in chapter 9.

the interviewees clearly do not equate Israel and the church, although they do see the similarity between various models of the church as for example “the church as the people of God” and “Israel as the people of God”.

In view of the above, it is stated that all the answers are acceptable to a certain extent<sup>81</sup> - but as for equating Israel with the church – the acceptable answer would be (a). The discussion within the introductory remarks to chapter 7<sup>82</sup> has already explained the reasons for this viewpoint.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The church is a new creation as the body of Christ and it was never intended by God that the church should be equated with Israel or, within this context, be an extension of Israel. The church is a unique entity born after the resurrection of Jesus Christ – a body of which Christ is the head (Col 1:18).

**Q19. Who or what does the white horse and rider of Revelation 6 symbolise?**

**Answers received:** (a) The Word of God. (b) Antichrist. (c) Not Christ, but part of the events that will take place during the tribulation period. (d) Jesus Christ. (e) I don't know. (f) I'm not sure.

**Acceptable answer:** (b) Antichrist

**Arguments for:** The white horse of Revelation 6:1-2, must not be confused with the white horse of Revelation 19:11, for the first is symbolical, while the latter is literal. The fact that they are “white” in both passages, does not prove that they are symbolical of Christ or of righteousness any more than do the horses in Zechariah 6:1-7, where we are told of white, black red and bay horses that symbolise “the spirits of the heavens” (6:5).

In the context of Revelation 6, Christ is symbolised as a Lamb standing before the throne, opening the seven-sealed book and consequently cannot simultaneously be the rider on the white horse. There is no Scripture corroborating the fact that Christ will go forth at the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week “conquering and to conquer”. The white horse rider of Rev 6 symbolises an individual, for “*he*” has a bow and is given a crown and he goes forth

<sup>81</sup> See discussion of the broader picture in chapter 9.

<sup>82</sup> See point 7.2 on page 92.

“conquering and to conquer”. This event is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (Dn 7:8, 24-25; 8:8-10, 20-25; 11:35-45) as to the rise of the Antichrist among the ten kings of the revised Roman Empire. The giver of the crown is not mentioned here, but it merely symbolises the rise of the Antichrist to power as king among the ten kings, through the operation of satanic powers (2 Th 2:8-12; Rv 13:1-4; Dn 8:25; 11:36-39).

Antichrist is the only one prophesied to go forth “conquering and to conquer” at the beginning of the “week”. The fact that he is symbolised as riding on a white horse, portrays that he is to come as the false Messiah of Israel (Mt 24:4-5; Jn 5:43 Dn 9:27). He is “the prince who is to come” of Daniel’s vision of the seventy weeks and the one who will confirm the covenant for “one week” with Daniel’s people (Jews). His “conquering” is followed not by peace and salvation, as one would expect from the true Messiah, but rather by the wars, famines, pestilences and death, symbolised by the second, third and fourth horses (Rv 6:3-8). **De Haan ([1946] 1998:122)**, referring to the breaking of the first seal of Revelation 6, describes his view as follows,

The white horse is the symbol of peace and victory. The rider upon the horse is the Antichrist, the false messiah. He is not to be confused with the white horse and its rider of which we read in Revelation 19:11, who is none other than the Lord Jesus himself... Chapter 6 speaks of the false Christ, the Antichrist, who seeks to imitate the true Christ and therefore comes on a white horse.

Answer (a), namely that the white horse symbolises the Word of God, is problematic as the term “Word of God” could refer to Christ himself as described by John 1:1-2, or it may refer to the Bible, as such (the gospel message). Nevertheless, irrespective of what is implied by the “Word of God” in the context of the answer, whether Christ or the Bible, it is unacceptable. Firstly, the Bible has been with us for more than 1900 years and therefore it is unacceptable to imply that it is “launched” or sent forth at the beginning of the Tribulation period. . Secondly, as was seen above, Christ is symbolised as a Lamb before the throne in the process of opening the seven seals of the book, while at the same time the white horse (and the other three horses of Rv 6:3-8) go forth, which logically means that a personage other than Christ is symbolised. In contrast to his symbolic and epigrammatic description of this white horse, John gives us a lengthy and obvious description of the white horse Rider of Rev 19, referring to him as the “Word of God” (19:13) and “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16), which implies that it is Christ himself, who may never be confused with the white horse of Rev 6:1-2.

The argument posited above, logically will also be applicable to answer (d), namely “Jesus Christ”. Therefore it is rejected on the same grounds.

Answer (c), namely that “it is not Christ, but part of the events that will take place during the tribulation period”, is acceptable in the sense that the white horse *does not* symbolise or represent Christ. Unfortunately, the interviewee was not clear on what he believed it did symbolise – except that mention was made that it has bearing on the events to take place during the tribulation – thus the answer is unacceptable.

Answers (e), “I don’t know” and (f) “I’m not sure”, illustrate not only an honest confession of uncertainty, but also an honest confession that in the past there was a lack of academic and theological training<sup>83</sup>, an important necessity for the elimination of discrepancies in textual interpretation within Pentecostalism. Paul was in favour of study, as is apparent from his words to Timothy, namely “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15). Answers (e) and (f) are proof that some Pentecostalists have not obeyed Paul’s advice.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The White Horse symbolises the rise of the Antichrist at the beginning of the Tribulation period (Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week). This obviously is in line with belief in a Pre-tribulation rapture.<sup>84</sup>

**Q20. Who or what does the raptured man-child of Rev 12:5 represent?**

**Answers received:** (a) The Jewish church. (b) 144,000 Jews. (c) Christ and/or the church. (d) Christ, but I am open to other views. (e) I don’t know.

**Acceptable answer:** (b) 144,000 Jews.

**Arguments for:** The first question that needs to be asked is, “Who or what gave birth to the man-child?” From the passage we see that it was “a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rv 12:1). The sun, moon and twelve stars are similar to those of Joseph’s dream (Gn 37:9-10) wherein the sun represented his father, the moon his mother and the eleven stars his brothers (he himself being the 12<sup>th</sup> star). Jacob, his wife and their progeny are the beginning of Israel and the tribes

<sup>83</sup> See discussion in chapter 4 page 40.

<sup>84</sup> See discussion of question 11 on page 137.

thereof. From this it can be deduced that the woman of Revelation 12:1 represents Israel. **Walvoord (1964:287, 288, 290)** agrees with this identification of the woman and comments as follows thereon,

The whole context in which this passage is set reveals that John is dealing with the nation Israel.... Frequently in the Old Testament the sun, moon, and stars are used in reference to Israel. They are so employed in Genesis 37:9, where the sons of Jacob are clearly understood. .... The woman can be none other than Israel.

Therefore, the child that Israel brings forth must be Jewish. If the woman represents a group or nation and not an individual, it implies that her child must also represent a group and not an individual. Thus the man-child represents a group of Jews, which eliminates the theory that it is Christ.

According to Revelation 12:5, the man-child, which is to rule the nations with a rod of Iron, was caught up to God after its birth. The only group of Jews that are caught up to God, is the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4-8 who are seen as on earth in this passage, but are described as redeemed from the earth and in heaven before the throne in Revelation 14:1-5. The question is, how did they get to heaven? The only possible explanation is that they are the man-child that is caught up to God (Rv 12:5). From this it is understood that in the middle of the tribulation period, a group of Jews (144,000) will be caught away to God. **Dake (1987:133)** agrees with this interpretation that the man-child represents 144,000 Jews, and in this regard says,

They will be sealed to go through the first six trumpet judgements, and will be caught up under the seventh trumpet as the man-child. They are seen in heaven throughout the last three and one-half years so they must be raptured in the middle of the week.

Answer (a), namely that it is the Jewish Church, is unacceptable. Before the institution of the church, the Jews were a covenant people. At the institution of the church, the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down (Eph 2:14). Thus the church is not, nor ever has been, ordained for one nation only. It is for "who-so-ever-will". Thus, there is no "Jewish Church" found throughout Scripture. Even arguments that maintain that before Paul was sent to the Gentiles the church was Jewish, are nullified by the fact that before his ascension, Jesus' great commission was that the gospel is to be preached to all nations (Mt 28:19). Although many Jews have accepted Christ as their saviour after hearing the gospel message, most have rejected him as the Messiah. It is because of this rejection that God has set them aside for a while (Rm 11) and is now dealing with the church and will do so until the

beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, when he will once again turn his attention to the Jews as a nation.

In response to answer (c), namely that it is Christ and/or the church, it is clearly stated that it cannot be Christ as he was born 2000 years ago and was not caught up to God after his birth, but ascended to heaven after his resurrection from the dead, an event that John saw with his own eyes. Why would Christ reveal it to John again approximately 60 years later? It is not the church either, as that would imply that the church will pass through the first half of the tribulation and it would also imply that the Antichrist would only be revealed in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. This is the view held by midtribulationism<sup>85</sup>, which deviates from pretribulationism, the view that is upheld within this study and by the author. Questions 10 and 11 incorporated the rapture of the church and the eschatological thereof.<sup>86</sup>

Answer (d) is eliminated by the above discussion, while answer (e) is responded to in the same manner, as was the case with answers (e) and (f) of Q19<sup>87</sup>.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The man-child represents the 144,000 Jews (Rv 7:4-8: 14:1-5) who will be caught away to God during the middle of the Tribulation period. The church is raptured prior to the revelation of the Antichrist, who is to be revealed at the beginning of the Tribulation (70<sup>th</sup> week).

**Q21. How would you interpret the book of Revelation? Historically or as futuristic?<sup>88</sup>**

**Answers received:** (a) Futuristic. (b) It covers the period from Acts 2 to the end; therefore it is both historical and futuristic. (c) Historical and Futuristic. The purpose of the book is the victory of Jesus, the hope of every generation.

**Acceptable answer:** The correct answer would be (a), namely futuristic, though it needs to be qualified. Even though this model supports the futuristic view of interpretation, it needs to be clearly stated that the first three chapters of the book of Revelation are representative of

<sup>85</sup> See discussion of *midtribulationism* on page 138.

<sup>86</sup> See question 10 on page 136 and question 11 on page 137.

<sup>87</sup> See question 19 on page 152.

<sup>88</sup> Question 22, namely “Would this include the letters to the seven churches?”, is incorporated in the answers of question 21. Only one of the interviewees believed that the churches (Rev 1-3) should be interpreted exclusively as futuristic. This belief is not acceptable to the author and it is his conviction that the interviewee misunderstood the question. In view hereof, no discussion thereof is made.

churches that existed at the time that John received revelation, which implies historic circumstances. Therefore (b) and (c) are also acceptable.

**Arguments for:** Without the book of Revelation, the canon of Scripture would be incomplete. We would not be able to know what God has purposed for the Jews, the Gentiles or the church. The eschatological events would be unknown as will facts related to Daniel's 70 Weeks, the rapture of the church, the rise of Antichrist, the tribulation, the new heaven and new earth, the final doom of Satan, the final resurrection and the white throne judgement. However, despite the Book's presentation of so much insight into things to come, we still find that there are different schools of interpretation; the main ones are listed below followed by a brief description of each as described by **Dake (1987:11)**.

1. **The Preterist School** claims that the Revelation was fulfilled in the struggles of the Jews and early Christians and in the conquests of Greece and Rome.
2. **The Historical School** insists that the prophecies herein are being progressively fulfilled and that the greater part has been fulfilled since Christ.
3. **The Spiritual School** believes that the Revelation depicts the spiritual conflict between Christ and Satan, between good and evil.
4. **The Futurist School** believes that the Revelation is yet future; that is, that the first three chapters describe the present church age and that the remainder of the prophecy will be fulfilled after the rapture of the church. This is the most logical and scriptural method of interpretation of the book, as it holds to the literal meaning of the language of Scripture with due consideration to grammatical construction.

A detailed discussion of each School will not be possible in this study, though it must be said that in contrast to Dake, who states that the first three chapters of Revelation describe the present church age, the proposed model propagates the theory that these churches were historical churches that existed at the time of the writing of Revelation. Nevertheless, we do find elements in these churches that are descriptive of the church throughout the ages, up to the present church. Besides these three chapters, the proposed model views the book of Revelation to be futuristic, thus all the events from Revelation 4:1 to the end of the Book have yet to be fulfilled. According to biblical prophecy as interpreted by the Futurist School, the next eschatological event in the calendar of God is the rapture of the church, which is typified in Revelation 4:1.

In view of the above paragraph, answers (b) and (c) are also acceptable. The book of Revelation is historical and futuristic and covers the period from Acts 2, which introduces us to the early church, through to the end - that is up to the new heaven and new earth. It is also the descriptive of Christ's ultimate victory over Satan and evil and the final condemnation of all the wicked.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** The book of Revelation is viewed as historical from 1:1 to 3:22. The churches within these three chapters are churches that existed at the time of John's reception of the Revelation. Accordingly, he was instructed to write a separate letter to each church. Within these churches we do, however, find characteristics that were not limited to them only, but are also visible characteristics in the church today. The book is viewed futuristically from chapter 4:1 to its end. The events described in this part of the Book are events that still need to be fulfilled. The keen reader will notice how this guideline makes sense of the author's earlier division of the book of Revelation.<sup>89</sup>

**Q23. Do you differentiate between the rapture and the second coming of Christ?**

**Answers received:** (a) Yes. (b) No.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) Yes.

**Arguments for:** It is obvious from the answers received that here we have to do with *Posttribulationism* and *Pretribulationism*.<sup>90</sup> The proposed model, however, supports the Pretribulationist interpretation, as it seems to be the only theory that does not come apart at the seams when eschatological events are considered. According to this view, the second coming of Christ has "two stages". Firstly, Jesus will come *for* his church (the rapture) and secondly he will come *with* his church, to set up the earthly kingdom, establish his rule and initiate the millennium. The purpose of the rapture is to remove the church from the scene of world history for the seven-year tribulation period. This will be in fulfilment of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, namely that the church, which is withholding the revelation of Antichrist, be taken out of the way. This eschatological event marks the point of transition wherein God once again<sup>91</sup> turns his focus toward Israel as confirmed by James and testified of by Simeon (Ac 15:13-16). **Erickson (1977:126)** comments as follows on this transition:

<sup>89</sup> See the discussion on the Book of Revelation on page 99.

<sup>90</sup> For a definition of these terms see page 138.

<sup>91</sup> The first transition was discussed on page 37 where it was pointed out that in the preaching of Jesus one could clearly discern a transition from the Jews to the Gentiles.

This Great Tribulation has a definite, twofold purpose: (1) to “conclude the times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24), and (2) to prepare for the restoration and regathering of Israel in the millennial reign of Christ following the Second Advent. The tribulation thus serves as a transition period in the plan of God.

The rapture as such, is the “blessed hope” (Tit 2:13) of the believer and implies deliverance from the Great Tribulation.<sup>92</sup>

**Hermeneutical Guideline:** The rapture of the church is distinguished from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent in that at the rapture, which takes place seven years prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, Christ will “snatch away” his church, removing them from the earth (1 Th 4:17) and taking them to a place that he has prepared for them, namely in his Father’s house (Jn 14:1-3). In contrast to the rapture the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent is the coming of Christ to the earth; when he will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zch 14:4), inaugurate the battle of Armageddon (Rv 16:16), defeat the Antichrist and his armies (Rv 19:20), bind Satan for a literal thousand-year period (Rv 20:2) and set up his millennial kingdom.

#### **Q24. Is this distinction discernible in the book of Revelation?**

**Answers received:** (a) Yes. (b) No.

**Acceptable answer:** (a) Yes.

**Arguments for:** The distinction here referred to is that between the Rapture and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent as discussed in the previous question. In favour of the “Yes” answer, it is stated that the church described in Revelation 1-3, are churches that existed on earth at the time of John’s reception of the revelation. After these passages in the Book, we never again read of the church as being on earth. Rather, we see the church represented by the elders (4:4) in heaven before the throne of God. “Elder” in the biblical context, is a term or position related to the church only. Thus elders are representative of the church in heaven. The question is when or how did the church get from earth (Rv 1-3) to heaven (Rv 4:4). The logical answer would be by/at the rapture, which is portrayed in 4:1, namely “*After this I looked and behold a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice, which I had heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.*” The term “hereafter” signifies *after the church age*, which ends at 3:22, while the words “come up hither” signify a *displacing from earth to heaven*. Furthermore, the “first

<sup>92</sup> For more arguments supporting Pretribulationism and in opposition to Posttribulationism, see question 10 on page 136.

voice” (Christ – Rv 1:10), which sounded like a trumpet is compatible to the description of the voice and sound described in 1 Th 4:16, which accompany the return of Christ *for* his church. **De Haan ([1946] 1998:15)** briefly outlines the book of Revelation and says that chapter 4:1 speaks of the Rapture of the church.

In contrast to this, Revelation 19:11-22 describes the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent and the Lord coming to earth to set up his millennial kingdom. This substantiates the fact that a distinction between the rapture and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent is more than a just a likelihood within the pages of Revelation. Of this coming **De Haan (*ibid*: 240)** says,

This coming of Jesus is not to be confused with his coming for the church. Here he comes in awful Judgement upon his enemies. There are two phases of the second coming of Christ. First he will come for his church to take all believers out *before* the Tribulation. Then he will come again (about seven years later, corresponding to Daniel’s seventieth week) at the end of the Tribulation with his church to set up his kingdom upon the earth. The first event, called the Rapture is described in Revelation 4:1-3; we read in this passage, Revelation 19:11, of the second event.

**Hermeneutical guideline:** Within the book of Revelation, one can distinguish between the Rapture of the church and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. The rapture of the church is typified in 4:1, after which we see the church - represented by the twenty-four elders - as in heaven. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent is described in Revelation 19:11-22, where Christ returns to earth with his hordes to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

#### 8.4 SUMMARY

The above discussion of the questions and answers most certainly disclose the fact that discrepancies are present within Pentecostalism. Any attempt to completely eradicate these discrepancies will result in total failure, as within Pentecostalism there are various schools of interpretation that are traditionally focused on a mindset of their own, such as the postmillennialists and premillennialists. Yet, I am of the opinion that many of these discrepancies are not the consequence of different schools of interpretation, but rather due to the fact that Pentecostalists within both these schools of interpretation do not consistently differentiate between Israel and the church.

Examples hereof are clearly discernable, amongst others, when one considers that most if not all of the interviewees, view the church as a mystery before the resurrection of Christ, yet: -

They are of the opinion that the church is told to “*endure to the end*” by Jesus before his resurrection (Mt 24:13), in order to be saved.

They employ the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1) to illustrate the watchfulness of the church.

They apply the “*one taken – one left*” teaching of Jesus (Mt 24:40-41) to the church, especially relating it to the rapture.

The above are but a couple of examples to illustrate the failure of some Pentecostals to consistently differentiate between Israel and the church. This failure has many more far reaching implications. Among them is the modern day celebrations of some of the Jewish feasts (e.g. the feast of tabernacles) - that has no connection with the church and are often accompanied by other Jewish rituals, such as the blowing of a ram’s horn (Jos 6:5) – in Pentecostal worship services. This practice is often said to typify an expression of victory or something similar. The problem of applying typology in this way, is that we are then compelled to view it as a sacrament and to equate it with water baptism and the Holy Communion, the only two sacraments instituted by Christ. The New Testament church must be careful that the practice of Old Testament rites and ceremonies within the church do not place us back under the law, thereby implying that Christ has “*profited us nothing*” (Gl 5:2).<sup>93</sup>

In order to guard against this and the application of things unique to Israel upon the church, and in order to strive towards a Pentecostal hermeneutic wherein discrepancies are reduced, it is essential that Pentecostals take a “*new look*” at God’s methods of dealing with humanity and the general purpose thereof, as recorded in the Bible. In chapter 9, which will be the closing chapter of this thesis, the angle of the “*new look*” will be explained so as to substantiate all that has been concluded from the formulated review of the questions and answers above. The whole thesis will finally be summarised with the sole intention and trust that the contents hereof will be instrumental in the realisation of a hermeneutic unique to Pentecostalism.

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<sup>93</sup> The importance of distinguishing between the Old and New covenants is discussed in chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 9

### A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLE

#### 9.1 WHO READS THE BIBLE?<sup>94</sup>

Within the postmodern world in which we find ourselves, the question, namely “*Who reads the Bible?*” could at first glance seem to be an ambiguous question. On the one hand it may be a question asked in all honesty to establish which people do actually read the Bible, while on the other hand it could have a sarcastic slant, mockingly asking whether in this postmodern world, anybody could be found that indeed does still read the Bible. Yet, no matter how one understands the question, the truth of the matter is that there are still many thousands of people, including theologians from different Christian denominations, that are devoted to reading and studying the Word on a daily basis. Of these, those that interest us the most, are the theologians. They are the “scribes” of our day who are expected to expound and teach the content of the Scripture to the general public.

These theologians all belong to the one or other “*branch*” of Christianity, each adhering to an ideology of their own based on their denominational relationships, theologies, dogmas and hermeneutical models. Logically, these theologians are not all in agreement with regards to the interpretation of Scripture, which is understandable considering the number of various denominational groups that embrace Christianity. As was mentioned earlier in this thesis,<sup>95</sup> at its origin, different theological models influenced Pentecostalism - an influence that is still clearly discernable today. Of these the two that have had the most impact on Pentecostalism, are Reformed Theology<sup>96</sup> and Dispensationalism.<sup>97</sup> The first, using as their hermeneutical

<sup>94</sup> This phrase implies an author, a text and a reader – the basic elements required for all hermeneutical studies. **Bosman (1986:15)** states that the text relates to the writer of the text, to the text itself and to the reader of the text. This obviously is a theme for separate debate involving the methodology of textual criticism, interpretation and understanding. Although this theme is not discussed within this study, the author is aware of the fact that in the reading of the Bible there are specific factors or “gaps” that need to be overcome. **Koivisto (1993:165)** identifies three such “gaps”, namely the historical gap, the language gap and the cultural gap. **Du Rand (1997:42)** distinguishes between the real reader, implied readers and the narrative reader or narratee. Significant to the opening statement of this chapter, is Du Rand’s statement that the real readers are not only the historical readers at the end of the first century after Christ, but also we who are still reading the Gospel according to John.

<sup>95</sup> See point 2.3 on page 21.

<sup>96</sup> **Beardslee (1965:20)** remarks that since the reformation, the covenants feature central within Reformed theology. This influence is so strong that Reformed theology is more than often termed Covenant theology.

<sup>97</sup> See point 3.2.3 on page 31.

point of departure the covenants that God made with humanity,<sup>98</sup> while the second base their hermeneutical method on various periods of time or dispensations in which God deals with humanity in different ways.<sup>99</sup> **Pentecost (1968:65)** refers to a summary of the covenants of Covenant theology as defined by Chafer, namely “*the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace*”, then includes Chafer’s critique of this method, which reads as follows:

The theological terms, *Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace*, do not occur in the Sacred Text. If they are to be sustained it must be wholly apart from biblical authority... Upon this human invention of two covenants Reformed theology has largely been constructed. It sees the empirical truth that God can forgive sinners only by the freedom which is secured by the sacrifice of His Son – anticipated in the old order and realized in the new – but that theology utterly fails to discern the purposes of the ages; the varying relationships to God of the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church, with the distinctive, consistent human obligations which arise directly and unavoidably from the nature of each specific relationship to God. A theology which penetrates no further into Scripture than to discover that in all ages God is immutable in his grace toward penitent sinners, and constructs the idea of a universal church, continuing through the ages, on the one truth of immutable grace, is not only disregarding vast spheres of revelation but is reaping the unavoidable confusion and misdirection which part-truth engenders.

The *unavoidable confusion and misdirection* mentioned above has been a contributing cause for the discrepancies found in Pentecostalism, especially Covenant theology’s failure to recognise and distinguish God’s different relationships to Israel, the church and the Gentiles, resulting in their equating the church with Israel or viewing it as a continuation of Israel.<sup>100</sup>

In contrast to Covenant theologians, Dispensationalists have overemphasised time periods and relationships between God and humanity (not limiting their “dispensations” to only two, namely the Old Testament – primarily relative to national Israel on the one hand, and the New Testament - primarily relative to church and Gentiles on the other) - by the inclusion of seven such periods. **Showers (1991:33-49)** lists these seven periods as follows:

1. **Dispensation of Innocency** - from creation of man to the fall of man (Gn1:26-3:24).
2. **Dispensation of conscience** – from the fall to the Noahic flood (Gn 4:1 – 8:19).

<sup>98</sup> Covenant theologians are not in agreement on all aspects concerning these covenants or as to the number of covenants (**Showers 1991:8**).

<sup>99</sup> Refer to chapter 3 page 25 for an explanation of Dispensationalism and its influence on Pentecostalism.

<sup>100</sup> According to **Verhoef (1967:15ff)**, there are Reformed theologians that support the Chiliastic view and do not equate Israel with the church.

3. **Dispensation of human government** – From the Noachic flood to the call of Abraham (Gn 8:20 – 11:32).
4. **Dispensation of promise** – from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai (Gn 12 – Exodus 18).
5. **Dispensation of the Mosaic Law** – from the giving of the Mosaic Law to the death of Christ at Mount Calvary (Ex 19:1 – Mt 25:56, Mk 15:41, Lk 23:49 and Jn 20:30).
6. **Dispensation of grace**<sup>101</sup> – from the death of Christ to his second coming.<sup>102</sup>
7. **Dispensation of the millennium** – from the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ to the release of Satan from the abyss and his final revolt (Rv 20:1-6).

Although many Pentecostals agree with this “division” of God’s dealings with humanity, it is the author’s opinion that Dispensationalism *per se* with all its divisions as listed above, has not only led to discrepancies in Pentecostal interpretation, but also to unresolved problems.<sup>103</sup> An excellent example hereof is the distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, which is difficult to maintain throughout Scripture. **Verster (1980b:17)** - the principal of a Pentecostal bible college that adheres to Dispensationalism<sup>104</sup> - in discussing the two concepts *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven*, states that they do not express the same idea. He maintains that a person in the Jewish *kingdom of heaven* is not necessarily in the kingdom of God. For a Jew in the *kingdom of heaven* to get into the kingdom of God, he must be reborn. In contrast to this, Matthew uses the term *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God* interchangeably. The passages in Mark and Luke that are parallel to Matthew 13, use the expression *kingdom of God* instead of *kingdom of heaven*. It is difficult to believe that these two expressions designate two different entities in otherwise parallel passages. **Erickson (1977:124)** explains Matthew’s use of this expression as follows:

<sup>101</sup> **Showers (1991:43)** does not limit grace to this period, but explains its relation to the whole Bible. Here it is described as functioning in some new way as a result of the ministry of Christ.

<sup>102</sup> No scriptural reference is made here, as there are too many to list. **Showers (1991:44)** maintains that this will be the period of time of the 6<sup>th</sup> dispensation, although some dispensationalists view the tribulation as a separate dispensation.

<sup>103</sup> In his PhD thesis, **Holm (1995)** states, “the difficulty for Pentecostals to adapt Dispensationalism lay in finding a solution to circumvent the structures of Dispensationalism when they appear to violate the Pentecostal message. For example, how could Pentecostals legitimately use the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 as a proof text and still maintain a cardinal law of Dispensationalism which taught that the function (for the church) of Old Testament prophecy ceased with John the Baptist? Dispensationalists invariably pointed out that such a text is in the Old Testament and, therefore, ultimately concerns the nation of Israel – not the church. Pentecostals reacted either by pragmatically ignoring these conflicts when necessary or by pragmatically tampering with the rules to allow their inclusion”. For an excellent example hereof, see the discussion of Verster’s comparison of Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2:16-20 on pages 114-115.

<sup>104</sup> See point (c) on page 30.

Matthew was writing primarily to Jews, who regarded the name of Jehovah as so sacred that it should not even be pronounced. A common substitute for it was “heaven” or “the heavens”. On this basis, “kingdom of heaven “ was simply a non-profane substitute for “kingdom of God” for people who had convictions against using the word. This explanation of the two phrases seems better than that of dispensationalists. To build one’s whole view of the nature of the kingdom and it’s recipients upon this distinction in terminology is to build on a shaky foundation.

The negative influence that Covenant theology and Dispensationalism have had on Pentecostalism, as is briefly mentioned above, necessitates Pentecostals to take a *new look* at their method of interpreting the Bible. Instead of using the *covenants* as point of departure, as covenant theologians do, or *dispensations* as Dispensationalists do, Pentecostals need to stand back and view the Bible in its entirety – and work towards producing a hermeneutic from that angle. Christianity is in such a privileged position to have in its possession the complete canon of Scripture. In modern terms, we may say that we have the “latest issue” of God’s word, which includes God’s total plan for humanity – something that both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles did not have. We do not look at God’s plan as one looking at a building being erected, seeing firstly the architect’s plan, then the foundation being laid, then the builders at work etc., wondering what the final building is to look like. Instead, we look at the “completed building” (God’s plan as portrayed in the Bible) and then in retrospect we come to understand how God, step by step, fulfils his purpose.<sup>105</sup>

The distinction between Pentecostalism and other religious groups, necessitates that Pentecostals have their own method of interpreting the Scriptures. The fact that Pentecostalism was not born due to a formulated doctrine, as were most other groups, but rather due to a God-sent experience based on a New Testament event, demands that they establish an *own way* of hermeneutic interpretation.

**Johns (1995:85)** makes the following significant statement concerning Pentecostalism:

(Pentecostalism)... is not the product of a scientific paradigm. Pentecostalism emerged simultaneously among a variety of peoples around the world. There were no theorists who constructed Pentecostalism as a plausible response to the failure

<sup>105</sup> It must always be borne in mind though that we are finite beings dealing with an infinite God, thus we will never totally comprehend his purposes and methods. Möller (1998, 1:82) agrees with this, stating: “Whatever man may say regarding the understanding and interpretation of the Bible, he can never arrive at complete and final comprehension of it. ... In order to understand the Bible properly we must always realise that it contains more than that we can achieve by systemising, analysing, deducing and formulating. That is because the Bible bears witness to a wisdom and power which man can never completely grasp and control in his thinking. It simply shatters all efforts, which aim to grasp, explain and present it with finality like a scientifically processed product. No exegesis, no scientific hermeneutic rules and methods, no analysis or synopsis can bring us to the point where we can master the Bible.”

of other systems. Indeed, Pentecostalism took the world, especially the academic world, by surprise. Indications are that it took its early participants by surprise as well.... It is not at its core a theoretical response to an established paradigm. But this is not to say that it is not in itself paradigmatic or systematic.

In view hereof, namely that Pentecostalism is or should at least be systematic, I propose to motivate a basis or *New Perspective* from which Pentecostals may work toward a hermeneutic model in which the accepted answers to the set questions<sup>106</sup> can be substantiated.

## 9.2 A MEDIATORIAL PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE.

The term “Mediatorial Pentecostal Perspective” is used here to denote a fresh review and consideration of the canon of Scripture, for the purpose of interpreting God’s relationship with humanity in a method that concurs with Pentecostalism. It requires that Pentecostals take off the “theological spectacles” inherited from other theological traditions, which has for so many years marred their view of God’s purpose for humanity, causing discrepancies within their own ranks, as was proved in this study.<sup>107</sup> The *mediatorial perspective* therefore excludes any other theological orientation, although in the final formulation of the fundamental beliefs there may be similarities. In actual fact, it is a *mediatorial perspective* in the sense that on the one hand, analogous to Covenant theology, it does not divide the Bible into different dispensations as the dispensationalists do - a division that is forced and artificial - but rather seeks therein a unity of God’s purpose for humanity. On the other hand, akin to Dispensationalism - it does not equate the church with Israel as covenant theologians do - an equating that does not seem to harmonise with Scripture.<sup>108</sup>

In order to simplify reading, the terms *mediatorial perspective*, *mediatorial position*, *mediatorial method*, *mediatorial view*, etc., will be used whenever reference is made to the proposed method of biblical interpretation.

<sup>106</sup> See chapter 8.

<sup>107</sup> Sheppard (1984:5) maintains that “Pentecostals were not originally dispensationalist-fundamentalist and that the efforts secondarily to embrace such views have raised new problems for the identity of Pentecostals - hermeneutically”.

<sup>108</sup> Herholdt (1990:88) states that Pentecostals adopted the dispensational hermeneutic without giving serious theological consideration to their own relative points of departure. The resulting problem is that because Pentecostals have accepted Dispensationalism as pure Pentecostal doctrine, any criticism of Dispensationalism is considered to be criticism against Pentecostalism. This criticism, however, does not imply that the whole dispensational method should be excluded from Pentecostalism, as that would imply throwing the baby out with the bath water. There are most certainly positive elements within dispensationalism that need to be kept. So too, within covenant theology, there are elements that can enrich Pentecostalism and could also be applied. (Translation my own).

The *mediatorial position* begins and ends with the Bible. As a privileged people that have the entire revelation of God (his Word) in our possession, we - the children of our heavenly Father - can now “sit back” and view it in its entirety. Perhaps this is what the pioneers of Pentecostalism should have done soon after the Azusa Street experience.<sup>109</sup> They, just like us, had the entire canon of Scripture at their disposal, yet seemingly failed to study it theologically after the experience, preferring to remain within their current religious groups.

Nevertheless, it is the very Bible that we are attempting to interpret that reveals to us that God has an eternal plan for humanity.<sup>110</sup> Scripture repeats this time and time again, and from its pages it is clear to see God’s foreordained plan of salvation - **recorded for the first time in Genesis 3:15**, “*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel*”; **announced by the apostles**, “*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*” (Ac 2:23); **based upon the foreknowledge of God**, “*For whom he did foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*” (Rm 8:29); **according to the wisdom of God**, “*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our Glory*” (1 Cor 2:7); that remains unchanged, “*... but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*” (2 Tm 1:9); **that is antecedent to creation**, “*In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began*” (Tit 1:2); **centred in the death of Christ since the beginning**, “*... whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rv 13:8).

From the above it is inferred that before the creation of the world, God - *in his mind* – had a goal to attain. Luke writes, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Ac 15:18). To arrive at this goal, God created the universe and humanity. The question that needs to be answered is: “What is the goal and the motivational factor behind creation?”

<sup>109</sup> See an explanation of the Azusa Street event on page 12.

<sup>110</sup> Möller (1998, 4:41) refers to “God’s eternal plan” in his discussion of Christ’s atoning work and states, “only through Christ’s work of reconciliation could God’s eternal plan and purpose with man be realised”. See footnote 48 on page 97.

### 9.3 THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

Among academics, especially those involved in the study of theology, it is often said that one's point of departure determines one's destination. However, because we are in the privileged position of having the total canon of Scripture in our hands, we can surmise from its pages what the *destination* of all things are (Eph 1:10). Among these, the following are briefly stated: Satan cast into the lake of fire (Rv 20:10); the destruction of death and hell (Rv 20:14); the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth (Rv 21:1); humankind abiding with God forevermore, having obtained eternal life (Rv 21:3). With this knowledge at our disposal we may now, from this *destination*, look back to the point of departure in order to map out the route that leads to this ultimate destination.

This point of departure is found in the purpose of creation.<sup>111</sup> In contrast to some covenant theologians, such as **König (1982:127)** who maintains that the covenant between God and humanity was the purpose of creation,<sup>112</sup> the *mediatorial view* accepts the purpose as clearly declared in Scripture: "*Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created*" (Rv 4:11). The primary purpose of creation is therefore for the pleasure of God. He created because he willed to create *for his pleasure*. Secondly, the creative act was the revelation of the glory and the power and the deity of God (Ps 8:1; Is 40:5; 2 Cor 4:6; Rm 1:20). It must immediately be remembered that the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – *is* glory and *is* power and *is* deity, therefore has no need of creation to reveal (display) these characteristics, as in himself God has as much as is necessary.

In his creative act, God also created spiritual beings (angels) (Ps 148:2-5; Col 1:16; Heb 1:14; 1 Pt 3:32). God alone is uncreated and eternal as is implied by the words, "*...who only hath immortality*" (Tit 6:16). From Scripture it is deduced that these angels - in contrast to humans with their twofold nature, material as well as immaterial - are incorporeal beings (Heb 1:14), created before the creation of humanity. **Strong (1907:446)** makes the following significant statement in this regard,

Angels are an order of intelligent beings older than man. The fathers made the creation of angels simultaneous with the original calling into being of the elements, perhaps basing their opinions on the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus 18:1 – "he that liveth eternally created all things together." In Job 38:7, the Hebrew

<sup>111</sup> This theme can lead to a lengthy debate, however, it is only briefly included here to illustrate the perspective from which the *mediatorial model* views the purpose of creation.

<sup>112</sup> The mediatorial view holds that the covenant was a *means to fulfil the purpose* of creation, but certainly not *the purpose* of creation.

parallelism makes “morning stars” == “sons of God,” so that angels are spoken of as present at certain stages of God’s creative work. The mention of “the serpent” in Genesis 3:1 implies the fall of Satan before the fall of man. We may infer that the creation of angels took place before the creation of man... man was the crowning work of creation, created after angels were created.

That these angels were created holy and fell from this holy state may be inferred from Jude 6, “...angels that kept not their first estate” (cf. Mk 8:38). **Sauer ([1958] 1998:17)** agrees that evil existed before the fall of man, in fact he refers to it as ‘a kingdom of evil that is in some way interested in the earth and man’. From this he argues:

Therefore also the command given in Paradise itself that the man should not only cultivate the garden but also “guard” it (Gn 2:15). Therefore also, and very soon thereafter, the entrance of the tempter (Gn 3), who must have been the enemy of God before the temptation and fall of man.

This presupposes that before the creation of humanity, a crisis situation (disorder) came about caused by the rebellion of Satan, who was cast down to earth (Is 14:12).<sup>113</sup> This revolt by Satan surely did not add to the pleasure of God in creating (Rv 4:11), but rather “postpones” the ultimate pleasure<sup>114</sup> until the restoration of all things to their intended form (Eph 1:9-10). This rebellion brought about a second crisis situation, namely sin. It must be remembered that Satan is not sin, nor is sin Satan. Sin is an abstract concept that leads to death (Rm 6:23). In order to address and restore the situation, God therefore had to deal with Satan on the one hand and sin/death on the other. To do this, God met Satan on his territory (the world), he being the “*the god of this world*” (2 Cor 4:4). Jesus himself designates Satan as the “prince of this world” (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In addition to this, God - by becoming flesh - met Satan as a “created being”<sup>115</sup> (Phlp 2:6-8). However, for God to become human - the seed of a woman (Gn 3:15) - he created a human being (the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam) who would be the father of an ancestry whereby God could become flesh (Lk 3:23-38; Jn 1:14). Thus, the purpose of creation of humanity can be understood to be so that the creative Word may become flesh.

**Möller (1997, 5:35)** maintains that,

After the Fall of man, God immediately made provision for man’s redemption. We see this in the mother-promise in Genesis 3:15 (cf also Rm 16:20 and Heb 2:14-15). In this promise, judgement is pronounced upon the snake (the devil)<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> **Feeenstra (1975:112)** supports the view that the angels fell from their original state and Satan fell with them.

<sup>114</sup> As God is timeless and knows the end from the beginning, he currently enjoys the ultimate pleasure, although our finite minds cannot comprehend it.

<sup>115</sup> See point 9.4.2 on page 176. The Bible declares that he was *made* of a woman – thus “created as human”.

<sup>116</sup> Although the snake is equated with the devil here, it is the author’s conviction that the snake (or serpent) of Genesis 3:1 was not the devil, nor was the devil the serpent. However, the snake was the agent whereby Satan manifested himself. **Thiessen ([1949] 1990:180)** supports this view maintaining that, “...the serpent is neither a figurative designation of Satan, nor is it Satan in the form of a serpent. The real serpent was the agent in Satan’s

and mention is made of the One who would be born of a woman in order to save mankind from futility and judgement.

Most certainly God did make provision for humanity's redemption, but certainly not as Möller states after the Fall, but rather before the Fall. Möller's statement seems to imply that God is a "*reactive God*" in that when something happens, he reacts to it in some special way. This is not the *mediatorial view* of God, which maintains that God foreordained the redemption of humanity long before the Fall of humanity (Eph 1:4-5) and not thereafter.<sup>117</sup> By the first Adam's fall, sin entered the human race (Rm 5:17), but through Christ (the last Adam), God reconciles humanity to himself (Rm 5:10, 17; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 5:18).

To deal with sin/death, it was necessary that he (Christ) *be made sin* (2 Cor 5:21; Philp 2:7-11) and that he *suffer death* in order that he may conquer both sin and death (Rm 6:9-10). The Fall implies restoration and redemption (foreordained before the Fall), which is only possible through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice (Is 53:5). From the foregoing, it seems that the purpose of the creation of humanity was so that God through Jesus could come to earth born in human form, so as to redeem humanity from the evil one and to restore them to the original intention of creation – namely the glory and pleasure of God. The Bible confirms this and states that:

- 1. Christ appeared for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil (1 Jn 3:8).**
- 2. To seek and to save that which was lost (Lk 19:10).**
- 3. To set up the spiritual kingdom of God (Eph 1:10).**

The implementation thereof is given to us within the pages of Scripture, revealed to us by progressive revelation as was explained under point 3.3.<sup>118</sup> An excellent example hereof is the Bible's progressive revelation of the representation related to the lamb as illustrated below:

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hand. This is evident from the description of this reptile in Gn 3:1 and the curse pronounced upon it in 3:14". Saunders (1975:42) suggests that just as the speaking of Balaam's ass was a divine miracle, so the speaking of the serpent was a diabolical miracle.

<sup>117</sup> The author is aware of the tension between God's providence of salvation and the origin of sin. Yet, no matter from what angle it is viewed, God (the omnipotent) should never be reduced to a *reactive God*. Heyns (1988:152) argues that, "God did not simply allow sin, nor did he positively cause it to exist. These views do not do justice to God's government. God does not govern as a 'permitting' or 'allowing' God in relation to sin, which would imply that God allows humanity freedom to choose to serve him, thereafter to discover that humanity has abused this freedom and chosen rather not to serve him. This would imply that in his act of allowing, God would become a spectator of a humanly initiated dramatic event, whereby God's act is reduced to a reaction instead of being endorsed as a leading function". (My own translation.)

<sup>118</sup> See point 3.3 on page 35.

- In Gn 4:3-7 the lamb represents the necessity of an offering;
- In Gn 22:6-8 the lamb represents the necessity of a substitute;
- In Ex 12:3 the lamb represents the protection offered;
- In Lv 16:21-22 the lamb represents acquittal (cf. Is 53:6-9);
- In Jn 1:29 the Lamb is identified as the one that takes away sin;
- In Acts 8:32-35 the Lamb is identified as the one that brings salvation;
- In Rev 21 & 22 the Lamb is declared the King of kings.

#### 9.4 THE BIBLE AND THE TWO COVENANTS

The Bible - that contains this plan of redemption - is divided into two parts, namely the Old Testament and the New Testament. Within the pages of these two Testaments, we encounter God, the creator of the universe who is revealed to us by his acts in creation (Ps 19:1), his incarnate Son (Jn 1:14) and of course the written Word (Jn 20:31; 1 Jn 5:13). **Menzies & Horton (1993:19-20)** have the following to say of God's self-revelation:

God has spoken. His fullest and final declaration, as Hebrews 1:1-2 indicates, is in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. We call this manner of speaking the incarnation, the clothing of the divine with human flesh. It is the fullest measure by which God can communicate with us, for it is person-to-person communication. Jesus Christ, as the first chapter of John's gospel reminds us, is 'the Word' and the messenger and the message of God. Now, just as Christ is the Living word, so the Bible is the written Word... If one grants that God does speak, is the Bible the only medium of his speaking? God also makes himself known to an extent to all people (1) through creation and (2) through conscience.

God's one desire and the purpose of his self-revelation, is that none of humanity (all of who are under the curse imposed upon them by God, by virtue of the sin of Adam) shall perish, but that all should repent and inherit eternal life (2 Pt 3:9). To fulfil his purpose, God, as revealed within the pages of the Bible, deals primarily with three groups of people, namely the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church,<sup>119</sup> that together form a unifying factor of God's plan. It is by means of the church that the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is broken down. This does not mean that the future of *national* Israel is simply an incorporation of the Jews into the church, equating Israel with the church.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>119</sup> **König (1980:196)** maintains that the fact that the church is still on earth - despite trials and temptations and imperfections - and the fact that Christ has not returned yet, is closely related to the desire of God that none should perish (2 Pt 3:9).

<sup>120</sup> For an explanation of the relationship between Israel and the church, see point 7.2 on page 92.

Nevertheless, although the *mediatorial method* does not equate Israel with the church as was stated earlier, it does not remove the one so far from the other that there may never be any form of unity. Rather, this position sees the church and Israel as one – the people of God - in the new earth, having no distinction whatsoever.<sup>121</sup> Paul confirms this in stating, “*That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him*” (Eph 1:10). The distinctive factor, however, is that just as numerous rivers flow through the earth to finally all flow into the sea, so Israel and the church need to follow different routes to arrive at that one final destination. This does not imply that there is more than one source of salvation, but rather that God deals with national Israel in a different way than he does with the church. In order to explain the routes that Israel and the church need to follow, and to exemplify the biblical view of the *mediatorial method*, I have included an illustrative chart below.

It will be noted that the chart divides the Bible into the Old and New Testaments (or Covenants).<sup>122</sup> In the area of the Old Testament we find two squares, numbered 1 & 2. The first indicates God’s dealing with humanity before the calling of Abraham. The second square represents Abraham and his descendants through to Christ’s death at Calvary. The apparent distinction between these two groups is not based on the identification of one or other dispensation as taught by Dispensationalists, but rather is to indicate the point at which God made a covenant with Abraham which included various blessings.

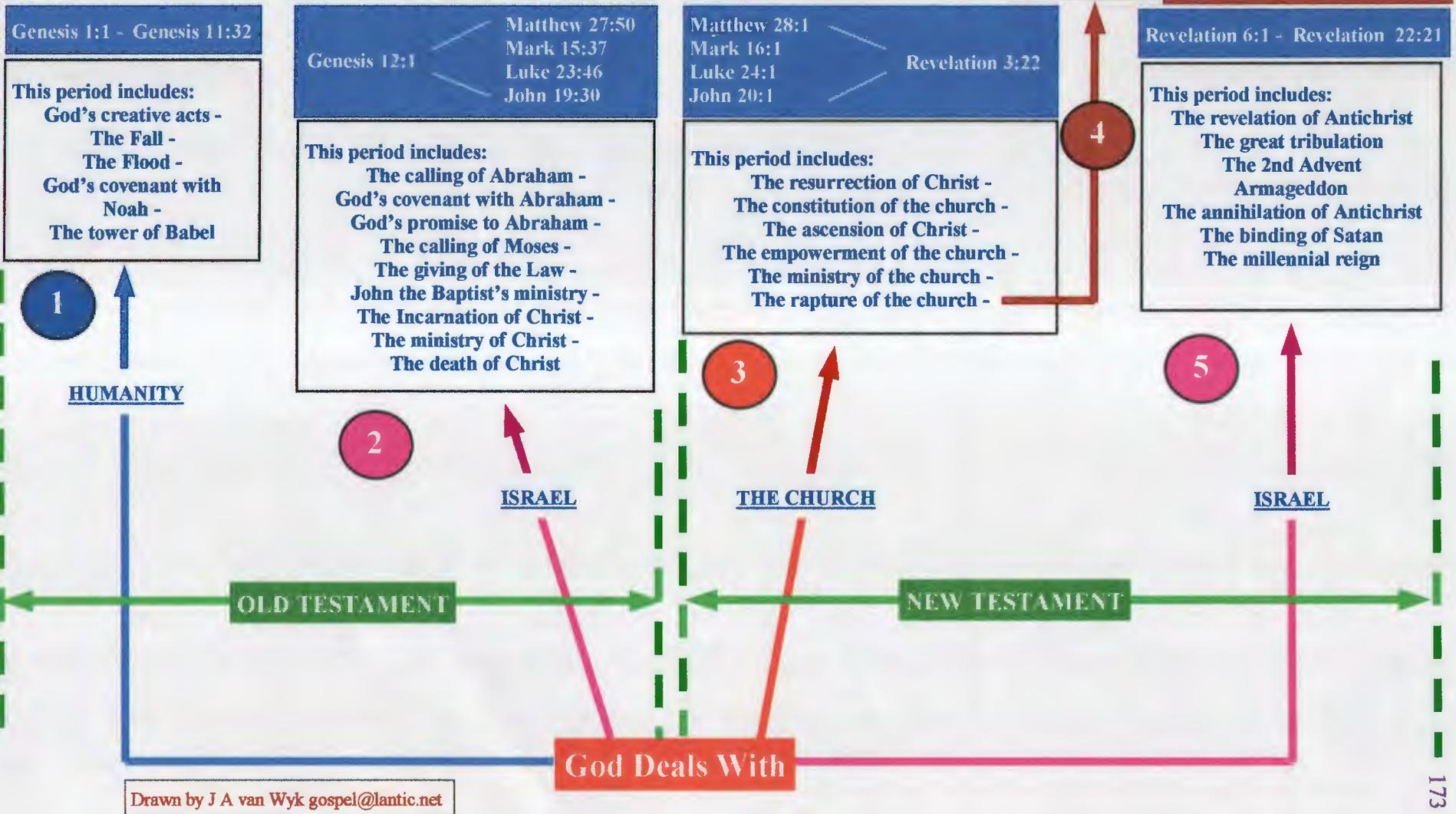
In the area of the New Testament we have three squares, numbered 3, 4 & 5. The first (no. 3) depicts the period from the resurrection of Christ, the constitution and ministry of the church through to the Rapture thereof indicated by the brown arrow (no. 4), after which the church is seen in heaven. The last square (no. 5) represents the revelation of Antichrist, the tribulation period, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ, the battle of Armageddon and the millennial kingdom. The events that chronologically progress after the millennium include the final destruction of Satan, the white throne judgement and the revelation of the New Heaven and the New Earth. These events are not included in the chart as they occur after God’s final dealing with national Israel, when all of creation will be united under one head, namely Jesus Christ (Eph 1:10).

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<sup>121</sup> See point 9.3 on page 168.

<sup>122</sup> The author is aware that there is a similarity and a difference between the terms “Testament” and “Covenant”. Yet, for illustrative purposes these terms (whether referring to the Old or the New Testament) will be used interchangeably.

# A MEDIATORIAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLE



The *mediatorial method* of hermeneutics adheres to the traditional<sup>123</sup> division of the Bible into two separate time periods, namely the period of the Old Covenant and the period of the New Covenant. However, within the *mediatorial perspective*, the “point” at which this division takes place differs from that of the traditional division, i.e. between the end of the book of Malachi and the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew. It must be stated, however, that the “traditional division” is but a textual division and not a theological division. Historically the Gospel of Mark precedes that of Matthew.

Nevertheless, the beginning and end of the Old Covenant is an important factor within this model, as evidently the beginning of any covenant determines the purpose of such a covenant, while the termination thereof implies the beginning of a new covenant. In view of this, the point of separation between the Old and the New Testaments<sup>124</sup> within the *mediatorial method* of interpretation is found at Christ’s death. At this point in time, the Old is terminated and the New comes into effect (Heb 9:17). This is indicated on the chart by the green dotted line.

#### 9.4.1 THE OLD COVENANT

We read of various covenants that God made with humanity - such as the Noahic, Abrahamic, Palestinian and Davidic covenants - within the pages of the Bible. These are all incorporated into the Old Testament. Notwithstanding, the *mediatorial perspective* considers the entire Old Testament as God’s basis for attaining his ultimate purpose. By “*entire Old Testament*” is meant all the Scriptural passages from Genesis 1:1 through to the crucifixion of Christ, which is described by the four evangelists, namely Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46 and John 19:30.<sup>125</sup> From this it is noted that according to the hermeneutics of the *mediatorial perspective*, God’s ultimate purpose of restoration starts in the Old Testament.<sup>126</sup>

According to **Saucy (1993:40)**, this is “evident from the fact that immediately after the Fall, the future victory over evil is promised in the proto-evangelium (Gn 3:15). The ‘seed’ of the

<sup>123</sup> By traditional here, is meant the acceptance of the fact that the Bible *per se* by divine fortitude is divided into two Testaments – namely the Old and the New. Therefore this statement excludes the thought of any humanly fabricated division, although the traditional point of division in this context is considered to be humanly devised.

<sup>124</sup> See point 9.4.3 on page 178.

<sup>125</sup> See chart on page 173 and point 9.5 on page 181.

<sup>126</sup> **Möller (1998, 1:73)** agrees that the Old Testament is the beginning of God’s salvific acts and states that, “Precisely because Christ is the key to understanding the Holy Scripture, it calls for the Old Testament to be read and understood in the light of the gospel as we find it in the New Testament”.

woman (Christ) would triumph over evil, represented by the seed of the serpent". From this point onward, God progressively reveals more and more of his plan of salvation. The initial chapters of Genesis illustrate the development of the battle between good and evil and how God intervenes in history through the flood (Gn 6) and the tower of Babel (Gn11) in order to save mankind from total corruption. Included in the execution of this plan was the calling of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3), with whom God made a covenant that included personal, national and spiritual blessings.<sup>127</sup> These included the promise that he would become the primogenitor of a great nation (Israel). He would be blessed, his name would be great and he would also be a blessing to others. The ultimate purpose was to bless all the people of the earth. This is implied by the words, "...and you shall be a blessing" (v2). This ultimate blessing and the means to attain it, are confirmed in the later statements to Abraham that were repeated to Isaac (Gn 26:3-5, 24) and Jacob (Gn 28:13-15; 35:9-12).<sup>128</sup>

**Saucy (*ibid*:44)** adds that:

Both the promise of descendants from his own body and the term *nation* confirm that the promised seed involved people physically related to Abraham. In addition, the references to an innumerable seed anticipated including others in the promise beyond the physical relationship. We should note also that the term seed carried with it a certain 'doctrinal intention' that linked it with the original promise of a victorious "seed" for all mankind (Gn 3:15)

The 'seed' (for all mankind) referred to above, is the fulfilment of the promise of the coming 'seed', namely Christ (Gl 3:16). Abraham and his seed were to be both heirs and mediators of the promise (Gn 18:18; 22:18). Paul teaches that the Jewish race was raised up to be the writers, preservers and transmitters of the Holy Scriptures (Rm 3:2). Through Abraham, God thus establishes a people for his name forever and promises them a land (Canaan) as an everlasting possession (Gn 12:7; 17:7-8; 13:15; 2 Sm 7:24). By the calling of Abraham, God provides an ancestry through which the Messiah would come.<sup>129</sup> Throughout the Old Testament the prophets repeatedly testified of the coming Messiah and the coming kingdom (Dt 18:15; Is 9:7; 11:1; Zch 9:9).

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<sup>127</sup> Möller (1998, 1:42) states that: "the Abrahamic covenant is made up of the law and circumcision. It concerns the origin and development, as well as the spiritual and cultural accompaniment of the people of Israel. Israel's purpose as chosen people was to be the generation in which the fullness of time would develop with a view to the appearance of Christ in the flesh. It was from the lineage of Abraham that Christ would be born in the flesh. It was with a view to this that the history of salvation unfolded itself in the ranks of this nation. The Old covenant therefore existed with a view to the preparation for the coming of Christ to this earth".

<sup>128</sup> According to König (1980:69), Calvin viewed all the covenants of the Old Testament as one and the same except that there was a difference in the "administration" thereof.

<sup>129</sup> See point 9.4.2 on page 176.

**Deist & Du Plessis (1981:109)** maintain that the idea of a kingdom and a Messiah was present with the earlier prophets. They viewed the day of the Lord as a day of judgement and punishment, wherein the Lord will punish Israel's enemies and will set up the kingdom in which Israel will rule over the nations. Notwithstanding, Deist & Du Plessis go on to explain that as early as Amos 5:18 it becomes apparent that *the* day is not to be a day of victory, but rather a day of punishment for Israel because of their failure to show compassion toward the poor.<sup>130</sup>

The Jewish expectation was thus that the Messiah - the prophet that Moses spoke about - would come and deliver them from Roman bondage and set up a kingdom where they would be the rulers.

#### 9.4.2 THE INCARNATION OF THE MESSIAH<sup>131</sup>

Paul declares that, "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman*<sup>132</sup>, *made under the law*"<sup>133</sup> (Gl 4:4). The words "made of a woman" denote that he became flesh. **Heyns (1988:232)** couples Galatians 4:4 with Romans 8:3 in order to explain that God sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh. **Schaeffer (1982, 2:338)** makes the following significant statement in this regard:

The Bible also teaches that Jesus is truly man. In our day most heresies deny the true deity of Christ, but in the early church the common heresy was the denial of the true humanity of Christ. We should remember that from God's viewpoint, it is far more wonderful that the second Person of the trinity became a man than that he is God. He had been God for eternity – he became a man when he was born.

This event was the fulfilment of various prophecies – including those relating to Christ's time of birth (Dn 9:25; Lk 2:1-2), place of birth (Mi 5:2; Mt 2:1) and to the nature of his birth (Is 7:14; Mt 1:18). The Baptist's preaching centred around the coming Messiah and the kingdom of God that was at hand (Jn 3:1-2). With the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled, namely "*... behold thy king cometh unto thee ... riding on an ass...*" The Jews treated Christ like a conquering king, shouting Hosannas and calling him king (Mk 11:9).

<sup>130</sup> Within the mediatorial model, this has reference to the tribulation period.

<sup>131</sup> It will be impossible to include all of Israel's history from the covenant made with Abraham up to the Messiah's appearance within this study. Obviously, this interim history has relevance to the fulfilment of the covenant – a fact of which the author is aware.

<sup>132</sup> See footnote 115 on page 169.

<sup>133</sup> Christ was born under the Old covenant - the law, which was still in force at the time of his birth. See point 9.4.3 on page 178, the termination of the OT.

However, he did not immediately set up the kingdom,<sup>134</sup> but rather allowed himself to be arrested, tried and crucified (Jn 10:18). The Jews no longer believed that he was the promised prophet and they rejected their Messiah (Jn 1:11),<sup>135</sup> because in their eyes he had failed to do what they expected their Messiah to do, namely to destroy evil and all their enemies - in this case the Romans - and establish an eternal kingdom with Israel as the pre-eminent nation. Therefore the promised kingdom was "postponed".<sup>136</sup> Christ's words regarding John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11, illustrate that the kingdom was not established at this point in time. Jesus said that "... among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." By this Christ implied that John most certainly was not in the kingdom, as it had not yet been set up. The question that the disciples asked Jesus after his resurrection, also attests to this, namely "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Ac 1:6) Thus even after the resurrection of Christ the disciples were not aware of any kingdom.

Nevertheless, God is a covenant keeping God and the promises made to Abraham relative to national Israel, including the "land" promise,<sup>137</sup> is still in force and will most certainly be fulfilled in the future. God has declared that he has set Israel aside for a moment (Is 54:7-8), but that his promises will not depart from him, but will most certainly be fulfilled and if not, "then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before (him) me" (Jr 31:36). Daniel foretold the postponement of the kingdom and the rejection of the king (9:26). The postponement was due to the Jews hardness of heart and their continued unbelief. Scripture clearly teaches that the kingdom is postponed until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ (Mt 21:33-46; 22:1-10; Ac 1:6-7; 3:19-26).

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<sup>134</sup> The author is aware of the tension between the political and theocratic kingdom.

<sup>135</sup> **Herholdt (1990:93)** maintains that any statement that generalises the Jews' rejection of Jesus is contentious, as there were many Jews besides his known followers that accepted him. Paul mentions five hundred (1 Cor 15:6). He agrees with the fact though, that the Jews did reject Christ because he failed to set up a *political* kingdom.

<sup>136</sup> There are different views as to whether the kingdom was postponed or whether it was part of God's 'plan' not to set up the kingdom at this point in time. Some theologians may even prefer to support a view that holds that Christ set up the kingdom at this point. The decisive factor, however, will be one's understanding of the term "kingdom" within this context. **Herholdt (1990:93)** is of the opinion that the offered kingdom was not the theocratic kingdom, and therefore the kingdom was not postponed. On the one hand he argues that if God's plan included the theocratic kingdom, it would be unacceptable to think that Israel frustrated this plan of God's. On the other hand, he argues that if God foreknew that the Jews would not accept the Messiah, it makes the thought of the 'kingdom offered' absurd. From this he concludes that it is more logical to accept that God brought about exactly what he planned. Nevertheless, he admits that in view of the dispensational challenge, an explanation is required for some unexplained Scriptures such as Mt 15:24 & 16:28.

<sup>137</sup> **Feenstra (1967:26)** maintains that Berkhof does not only anticipate a spiritual restoration of Israel, but also a national restoration with regards to which he lays emphasis on the meaning of the *land*.

For thousands of years Israel had been the one nation that looked to God, while the Gentile nations generally rejected the light and chose to live in spiritual darkness. Israel and her inspired prophets revealed monotheism - one God who was personally interested in mankind's destiny and presented to them the possibility of a kingdom relationship with him. Yet Israel rejected her prophesied Messiah, and the promises of the kingdom were postponed. A veil of spiritual blindness fell upon the eyes of the Jews who previously were the most spiritually discerning people ( Rm 11:6). As Paul explained, this hardening in part of Israel led to the blessing of the Gentiles who would believe in Jesus and accept him as Lord and Saviour (Rm 11:25). Nevertheless, throughout this whole period – from Genesis 1:1 through to the death of Christ, God was dealing primarily with the Jews who had no idea that included in God's eternal purpose was the church,<sup>138</sup> the body of Jesus Christ, whereby God would evangelise the Gentile world.

### 9.4.3 THE TERMINATION OF THE OLD COVENANT

The termination of the Old Covenant is most certainly a theme found within the pages of the Bible.<sup>139</sup> An objection to this statement may be based on the words of Jesus, namely *“Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil”* (Mt 5:17). An example hereof comes from a Reformed theologian, namely **Du Rand (2001: 171)**, who maintains that,

According to the introductory words of the communion, Jesus understands his death as a voluntary blood offering that instates the New Covenant. It is not a replacement of the Old Covenant, but rather the fulfilment thereof, implying that Jesus makes sense of the full meaning and application of God's plan.<sup>140</sup>

However, exegesis of the text reveals that Jesus uttered these words while he himself was still “under the law” (Gl 4:4) of the Old Covenant. The words, *“to fulfil”* refer to his substitutionary death as propitiation in order to satisfy the demands of the law. Once he had *“fulfilled”* the law, however, he introduced the New Covenant making the Old of no effect. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians confirms this: *“Wherefore the law was our*

<sup>138</sup> See point 7.4.3.2 on page 109 and point 7.3 on page 96.

<sup>139</sup> **Heyns (1988:200)** does not support this view, but rather believes that the Bible contains not various covenants – as is thought by some theologians – but only one covenant of love that dates from creation through to the end. God's dealings with different people in different manners are not the termination of covenants and the beginning of new covenants, but the same original covenant that is reconfirmed and renewed.

<sup>140</sup> Translation my own.

*schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gl 3:24-25).*

In Romans 7:2 Paul contrasts the law to a marriage, illustrating that a married woman is subjected to the law of her husband, but at the death of her husband she is free of his law and able to remarry. Paul declares, *“So my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you may belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God”.*

In reference to the two covenants, the author of Hebrews states: *“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another... By calling this covenant ‘new’, he has made the first one obsolete; and what is ageing and obsolete will soon disappear”* (Heb 8:7, 13). It may be added for clarity though, that the Abrahamic covenant<sup>141</sup> has certain blessings linked to it, such as the promise of being a blessing to other nations and the inheritance of land. These blessings are considered not to be the covenant in itself, but rather ‘a clause’ of the initial covenant, ‘a clause’ that is still in force. That many will be blessed through the “seed” of Abraham, is seen within the church age – both Jews and Gentiles being regenerated and added to the body of Christ, and it will be seen after Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent when he sets up his kingdom in Jerusalem. At this time, the “land clause” will also come into effect. Israel have never had this prophecy fulfilled in their past history. **Pentecost (1958:93)** explains the future fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant as follows:

The Abrahamic covenant, which contained individual promises to Abraham, promises of the preservation of a nation, and a possession of a land by that nation, was given to a specific covenant people. Since it was unconditional and eternal, and has never yet been fulfilled, it must await a future fulfilment, Israel must be preserved as a nation, must inherit her land, and be blessed with spiritual blessings to make this inheritance possible.

Reformed theologians, however, do not support this view. **König (1980:70)** maintains that the Abrahamic covenant is a universal covenant, although God selects only one man, namely Abraham, whereby he purposes to fulfil the covenant through his progeny, specifically literal Israel. When Israel fails in this purpose, the role is taken over and fulfilled by Christ, and this confirms the universality of Abrahamic covenant. In contrast to this, the mediatorial view maintains that the Abrahamic covenant was a national covenant relative to Israel only, but that it did incorporate a promise that through Abraham’s seed all nations will be blessed.

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<sup>141</sup> Due to the fixed limitation on this study, only one or two comments are made here on this theme.

**König (ibid:71)** goes on to say that Christ died so that the Gentiles could partake of the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. This part of König's statement is acceptable according to Galatians 3:17, however he fails to distinguish between the national covenant and the universal (or spiritual) blessings of the Abrahamic covenant as was explained earlier.<sup>142</sup> Israel is promised an earthly inheritance that is not promised to the Gentiles. In contrast, the Gentiles (or church made up of born again Jews and born again Gentiles) are promised a heavenly inheritance (Heb 12:18-22). The national part of the Abrahamic covenant is still to be fulfilled futuristically at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. The universal promise that includes the salvation of all who believe in Christ (Jews and Gentiles), is fulfilled in the church age. The death of Christ was not only that the Gentiles could partake of the Abrahamic covenant, but that even the Jews could, by receiving Christ as their saviour, be redeemed from sin's curse.

#### **9.4.4 THE POINT IN TIME OF TERMINATION OF THE OLD AND CONFIRMATION OF THE NEW**

The logical question is: At what point in time was the Old Covenant terminated and the New Covenant confirmed? The logical place to seek the answer to this question is in the Bible itself. Hebrews 9:16-18 states, *"In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood"*. From this it is clear that the point in time at which the New Testament came into effect, was at Christ's death. Matthew tells us that hours before his death, Christ instituted the Holy Communion as a sacrament in remembrance of his death with the words, *"Take eat, this is my body... and he took the cup, and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for remission of sins"* (Mt 26:26-28).

Logically, Christ could not institute the supper after his death, for the testator needs to put a testament in place before death. Furthermore, it is impossible for any person to have two effective *wills* at the same time. The most recent *will* always terminates any previous *will*. This, as we have seen above, is also applicable to the Old and the New Testaments within the Bible, which implies that at Christ's death (or the last supper for that matter) he cancelled any

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<sup>142</sup> See page 180 ff.

previous covenant and made it of non-effect. Thus the New covenant came into operation at that point.<sup>143</sup>

**Van Eijk (1984:86)** seems to agree with the view that the *New Will* replaces the *Old Will*, stating that,

... the covenant of the New Testament is not a continuation of the Old Testament, but rather a replacement thereof as basis to salvation.<sup>144</sup>

I am aware of the fact that Reformed theologians such as **König (1980:71)** believe that the New Covenant replaced the Law only. This belief is related to their failure in distinguishing between the Abrahamic *covenant* (the fact that God would be their God, Gn 17:8) and the Abrahamic *promise* (namely that in his seed all the nations will be blessed, Gn 22:18).<sup>145</sup>

## 9.5 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW COVENANT

It must be stated at the outset that the New Covenant or New Testament naturally is founded on Jesus Christ. The heart of the covenant is that Jesus Christ suffered and died at Calvary for every human being (Jn 3:16) and that God desires that through him all people may inherit eternal life (1 Tm 2:4; 2 Pt 3:9). God the father has put all things under his (Christ's) feet and given him to be the head over all things to the church (Eph 1:22).

As far as the *mediatorial perspective* is concerned, the fact that the New Covenant becomes efficacious at Christ's death implies that in our interpretation of Scripture, all the gospel passages that are documented before the crucifixion actually belong to the Old Testament. In effect this means that Mt 1–27:50; Mk 1–15:37; Lk 1–23:46 and John 1–19:30 still resort under the Old Covenant. Although Christ started his ministry three years before his death, up to this point he had not shed his blood, therefore there could be no thought of a New Covenant.

Exegetically the implications are revealing. An excellent example of the implications hereof may be found in the Lord's prayer as recorded in Mt 6:10. The disciples are being taught how to pray by Jesus and are told to pray in this manner: - "*Thy kingdom come...*" The logical question is: "What does 'kingdom' mean in this context as used by Jesus?" The general

<sup>143</sup> See chart on page 173.

<sup>144</sup> Translation my own.

<sup>145</sup> More is said hereof in point 9.6 and point 9.7 on pages 185 & 188.

explanation would be that Jesus is referring to the spiritual kingdom that “comes” to those who believe in Christ. This is problematic, however, as at that point in time - when Jesus was teaching his disciples this prayer - there was no such a *spiritual kingdom*. In actual fact, the spiritual kingdom (the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) was only realized after Christ’s resurrection and ascension when, through the Holy Spirit, he came to abide in the hearts of his followers (Eph 3:17).

At the time of the event described in Mt 6:10, the church was still a mystery and did not exist (Eph 3:1-7; Col 1:24-27),<sup>146</sup> God was still in the process of dealing with Israel. His audience consisted of Jews only that were expecting the earthly kingdom of David in which Christ, as the Messiah, would be seated on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Is 9:5-6). This is what his disciples would have understood by the words “*thy kingdom come*” and that is the meaning Christ would have ascribed to it.

From the above example it becomes obvious what contributes to the existence of so many discrepancies within the textual interpretations of Pentecostals. Although many of them may distinguish between the church and Israel, they fail to identify the scriptural moment of separation – the moment of termination - of the Old Covenant and the institution of the New Covenant. This is precisely the reason why texts such as those referred to within the illustrative research questions<sup>147</sup> produced such differing and often unacceptable answers. The failure of ascertaining whether the context of a text is within the parameters of the Old or New Testament and whether God is dealing with the Jews, the Gentiles, or the church, leads to utter confusion.

### 9.5.1 THE NEW COVENANT AND ISRAEL

The Old Testament is clear on the fact that the parties involved in the New Covenant are God and the nation of Israel. **Heyns (1988:213)** maintains that,

The covenant with Abraham and circumcision as a sign thereof (Gen 17:10) limit the benefits of the covenant to a specific people and to a specific nation. Not the Egyptians, nor the Philistines, but the Israelites become the covenant people.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>146</sup> See point 7.4.3.2 on page 109.

<sup>147</sup> See point 6.1.2 on page 77 and the schematic representation of the answers received on pages 80-83.

<sup>148</sup> Translation my own.

From the above, Heyns deduces that the covenant in the Old Testament is a particular covenant that continues until the appearance of Christ, when it becomes a universal covenant. The promise of a New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31:31, "*Behold, the days will come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah*" (cf. Is 59:0-21; Jr 50:4-5, Ez 34:25-30; 37:21-28).

**Walvoord (1991:181)** maintains that,

The covenant is made specifically with the nation Israel, and the detailed provisions of this covenant do not relate to anyone who is not a descendant of Jacob.

From the Old Testament (Jr 31:32) it is also clear that God would establish the New Covenant with those people with whom he established the Mosaic Law. Since God gave the Mosaic Law to the house of Israel only (Lv 26:46) and not to the Gentiles (Rm 2:14), it implies that the New Covenant is established only with national Israel, the descendants of Jacob. In addition to this, the Old Testament teaches that the establishment of the New Covenant is associated to the endless existence of national Israel and with the rebuilding and permanency of Jerusalem (Jr 31:31-40).

**Showers (1991:100)** maintains that among the things promised to the nation of Israel under the New Covenant as described in Jeremiah 31, were regeneration (involving a new heart), forgiveness of sin, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a universal knowledge of Jehovah among the Israelites and many national spiritual and material blessings. Israel would be completely unified (Ez 37:21-22) and would live in their own land forever (Ez 37:26-28). That this covenant was unconditional, is ascribed to the fact that God said, "*I will*", thereby implying that the fulfilment thereof would be totally dependant on God's faithfulness to his Word. God emphasised this fact in Ezekiel 36:36, promising: "*I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it*".

Concerning the time of fulfilment of the New Covenant, **Pentecost (1991:120)** says the following:

It was always viewed as future when reference is made to it in the Old Testament prophecies. Hosea (2:18-20), Isaiah (55:3), Ezekiel (16:60, 62; 20:37; 34:25-26) all spoke of it as future. It must be viewed as yet future, for this covenant cannot be realized by Israel until God has effected her salvation and restoration to the land.... This covenant *must* follow the return of Christ at the Second Advent. The blessings anticipated in the covenant will not be realized until Israel's salvation, and this salvation follows the return of the Deliverer.

From this significant statement and all else said above, it is concluded that the New Covenant that God made with the nation of Israel can only be realized in the millennial age, which will be fulfilled with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ.

## 9.5.2 THE NEW COVENANT AND THE CHURCH

Although the Old Testament teaches the truth that God would establish a New Covenant with the nation of Israel (the literal physical descendants of Jacob), it does not say anything about the relationship of the church to the New Covenant. This, however, should not be interpreted as if the church has no relationship to the New Covenant. It must be remembered that the church was non-existent in the Old Testament (a mystery), an unknown factor to the Old Testament prophets.<sup>149</sup> It was only revealed to the apostles after the resurrection of Christ (Eph 3:2-9). Yet, despite this apparent silence of the Old Testament with regards to the relationship of the church to the New Covenant, the New Testament is symptomatic to the fact that the church has a relationship with the New Covenant.

**Showers (1991:103)** identifies at least three lines of this evidence, namely

First, the church partakes of the communion service, which Jesus instituted on the night before he went to the cross (1 Cor 10:21; 11:23-30). When Jesus instituted the communion service, he stated the following concerning the cup of that service: "this cup is the new covenant of my blood" (1 Cor 11:25; Luke 22:20) [literal translation] ... since prior to Jesus' statement God had promised only one Covenant (the one promise to Israel in Jr 31), it seems evident that Jesus was referring to that new Covenant... the New Covenant, which God had promised to literal Israel in Jr 31.

The second line of evidence for concluding that the church is related to the New Covenant is that the believers who make up the church partake of the spiritual blessings, which God promised as part of the New Covenant in the Old Testament. Church believers have been regenerated (Tit 3:5), received forgiveness of sin (Eph 1:7; 4:32; Col 1:14; 1 Jn 2:12), been indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), and received the new nature (a new favourable disposition toward God consisting of the law of God written in the heart) [Rm 7:22; 2 Cor 3:3; 2 Pt 1:4].

The third line of evidence for the church's relationship to the New Covenant is the apostle Paul's indication that the apostles of the church functioned as ministers of a New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6).

<sup>149</sup> In his criticism of distinguishing between the church and Israel, **König (1999:42)** maintains that this view cuts the Old Testament off as with a knife, and something completely new develops in the New Testament. This is problematic for him as it implies the Old Testament prophecies will only be fulfilled in the Millennium, a concept that is not futuristically interpreted in his theology.

From the above it is seen that both the literal nation of Israel and the church have a relationship to the New Covenant. This relationship stems from the death of Christ, which provides that God can extend favour to those who do not deserve it, commonly described as God's grace (Rm 3:24).<sup>150</sup> **Walvoord (1991:189)** refers to the New Covenant as the "one" covenant of grace that has a wide application. He describes it as follows:

This one covenant of grace, however, has a wide application. The death of Christ constitutes the ground of salvation for everyone from Adam to the last person that is saved. This grace extends to Israel and to the church and to any others who may partake of the grace of God. Accordingly, the concept of one covenant of grace with many applications serves to provide an intelligent understanding of the various provisions of the covenant in both the Old and the New Testaments and preserves the distinction that should be observed between God's purpose and plan for Israel and God's purpose and plan for the church.

In the above, Walvoord mentions the fact that the concept of *one covenant of grace* "preserves the distinction" that should be observed between God's purpose and plan for Israel and God's purpose and plan for the church. This is in harmony with the *mediatorial view* of interpretation, wherein this distinction is strictly upheld as was explained earlier<sup>151</sup> and needs no further discussion here. However, the purpose and plan of God for Israel and for the church need to be explained briefly.

## 9.6 GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL

The purpose of God with Israel has always been that they would be his people and that he would be their God (Lv 26:12; Gn 17:7). We have seen and know that God (in Genesis 12:1-3 and 13:14-17) gave the promises of the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham. The covenant, however, was not formerly established with him until Genesis 15:7-21. It is specifically stated that, "*In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram*" (v.18). The promises included three major undertakings; in the first place there were *personal promises to Abraham*. God promised to bless Abraham and to make him a blessing to others (Gn 12:2); to make his name great (12:2); to give him many physical descendants (13:16; 15:4-5; 17:6); to make him the father of a multitude of nations (17: 4-5); to give him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (13:14-15, 17; 15:7; 17:8) and to bless those who blessed him and to curse those who cursed him (12:3).

<sup>150</sup> **König (1980:65,73)** maintains that God's creative act is an act of grace, and from this he argues that because the purpose of creation was the covenant, the Abrahamic covenant *per se* includes also Adam. He goes on to say that this covenant was reconfirmed through Christ, and sent out to the Gentiles via the world mission. In this we see covenant theology's failure to distinguish between national Israel and the church.

<sup>151</sup> See point 7.2 on page 92.

Secondly, God gave *national promises* to Abraham that concerned Israel. It was promised that Abraham's physical descendants would become a great nation (12:2); that theirs would be the land Canaan from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, forever (12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21; 17:8) and that the Abrahamic covenant would be given to Abraham's physical descendants forever for an everlasting covenant (17:7, 19). The promise of both the land Canaan as an inheritance forever, and the fact that the Abrahamic covenant was for an everlasting covenant for Abraham's physical descendants, demands that Israel never perish as a people, as this would nullify the "forever" included in the covenant with Abraham.<sup>152</sup>

Thirdly, God gave *universal promises* to Abraham that would affect all peoples of the world. Through Abraham's physical line of descent, God vowed that all families of the earth would be blessed (12:3; 22:18; 28:14). This promise is fulfilled in the great spiritual blessing that is made available through the Jews and Jesus Christ. Most of these promises have been fulfilled literally according to the literal method of interpretation, the method adopted by the *mediatorial view*.

*Personally*, God did bless Abraham and made him a blessing to others (Gn 14). God made his name great - besides Judaism and Christianity, even Islam has also respected his name for centuries. A multitude of nations have descended from him (both Israel and the Arab nations).

*Nationally*, God did make his descendants a great nation (Israel) that has never since perished despite many attempts to annihilate them.

*Universally*, great blessings have been made available to all families through Abraham's physical line of descent – redemption and other blessings are provided through the Jews in Jesus Christ.

Despite the above, it must be noted though, that all of the covenant promises have not as yet been fulfilled and will only be fulfilled in the future. Among these, the most important is the "land" promise given to Abraham and obviously the later Davidic covenant<sup>153</sup> (2 Sm 7:8-16)

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<sup>152</sup> In this regard, according to **Verhoef (1967:22)**, Miskotte maintains that the futuristic restoration of Israel has a dualistic guarantee: the continued existence of the nation (a viewpoint supported by **K Barth** cf. "The Jewish problem and the Christian answer" in the collected works, *Against the stream*, 1954:195-201) and by the repentance of individuals.

<sup>153</sup> The Davidic covenant is seen as a divine development from the Abrahamic covenant and is thus not discussed in detail within this thesis.

that included the promise of the everlasting kingdom. As mentioned earlier, the other covenant promises have been fulfilled literally, so these will also be fulfilled literally in the future. It was the establishing of the literal kingdom that the Jews expected when Jesus entered Jerusalem (Jn 12:14), and to this day the Jews still have this same expectation awaiting the coming of Messiah to set up the earthly kingdom. The fact that the covenant was established with Abraham and his physical descendants, imply that the literal fulfilment thereof will also be accomplished with the Jews.<sup>154</sup>

Since the Jews rejected the Messiah (by crucifying him) and the kingdom offered them at the time of Christ's earthly ministry, the kingdom has been postponed<sup>155</sup> and God has turned his focus toward the Gentiles – the church (Rm 7-11)<sup>156</sup>. After he has completed his purpose for the church,<sup>157</sup> God will once again turn his focus on Israel (Ac 15:16).<sup>158</sup>

It is at this time that the Antichrist will be revealed (2 Th 2:3; Rv 6:1) and Israel subjected to tribulation as never before (Mt 24:21) - the period spoken of by Jeremiah and Daniel as the time of Jacob's trouble (Jr 30:4-7; Dn 12:1). The primary purpose of the tribulation is so that Israel will repent and be converted to God (Ez 36 24-27; Zch 12:10). At the end of this period of tribulation, Christ will return (Zch 14:4) and will establish his millennial kingdom and restore Israel in the land. **Walvoord (1991:390)** explains this as follows:

In keeping with the announced purpose of God to put a man on David's throne who could rule forever, Jesus Christ will come back to assume this throne. At the present time he is in heaven awaiting this time of triumph over his enemies (Ps 110:1-2)... His reign over the house of Israel will be from Jerusalem (Is 2:1-4), and from the same location he will also reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over the entire earth (Ps 72:8-11). The throne of David is an earthly throne, not a heavenly throne, and is not to be identified with the throne of God. The reign of Christ over Israel is a part of his kingdom reign over the entire earth.

This millennial kingdom will be the occasion of the final literal restoration of national Israel (both geographically and spiritually), and Christ's reign will be the literal fulfilment of all that God has promised Abraham (and David).<sup>159</sup> As was mentioned earlier by Showers,<sup>160</sup> this will

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<sup>154</sup> Covenant theologians do not agree with this view of God's purpose for Israel. **König (1980:217)** maintains that the future of Israel is not a point of discussion as Jesus Christ attained the eschaton (purpose) of God for all people (salvation-historical-universal), first the Jew and then the Greek (Gentile). In this is understood that the wall of partition is broken down and God has formed *one new man out of two*, thus Israel and the church becomes synonymous (Eph 2:14,15).

<sup>155</sup> See discussion on page 177.

<sup>156</sup> See no.3 on the chart on page 173.

<sup>157</sup> See point 9.7 on page 188.

<sup>158</sup> See no.5 on the chart on page 173.

<sup>159</sup> This is problematic for many reformed theologians as they believe that Old Testament prophecies need to be fulfilled in the church age and do not support the idea of a literal (1000 year) millennium (see **König 1999:63**).

be the time of spiritual blessing in which, according to Isaiah, *“The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”* (11:9). Jeremiah states, concerning the new covenant that is literally fulfilled in the millennium, *“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people...and will remember their sins no more”* (Jr 31:33-34). This widespread knowledge of scriptural truth as well as truth about the person and work of Christ, will be the foundation for all spiritual life and blessings as promised by God to Israel.<sup>161</sup>

## 9.7 GOD’S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH

After the resurrection of Christ, he constituted the church<sup>162</sup> (Jn 20:2), which had been a mystery<sup>163</sup> up to this point, and on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1-3) endowed it with Holy Spirit power from on high. This church, which is a living organism – the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-14) - comprising of many members, has been given a great commission, namely to go into all the world and to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, baptising them and teaching them whatsoever Christ had taught his disciples (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15). What can be said of the physical body is equally true of the spiritual body, namely the church. As the physical body exists to reveal the character and personality of the person (head) of that specific body, so too, the spiritual body (Col 1:18) exists to reveal the character and personality of Christ to the world (Gl 2:20).

As was stated earlier in this thesis, the mystery element of the church was not that salvation was provided for the Jews, or that Gentiles were to be blessed in salvation. The mystery is the fact that God was to form Jews and Gentiles alike into one body, namely the church - a mystery never revealed in the Old Testament (Eph 3:1-7; Rm 16:25-27; Col 1:26-29). It was only after Christ had been rejected by Israel that this whole mystery program was revealed.

**Walvoord (1991:201)** describes the church as follows:

The church is manifestly an interruption of God’s program for Israel, which was not brought about into being until Israel’s rejection of the offer of the kingdom. It

<sup>160</sup> See page 183.

<sup>161</sup> **Thiessen (1979:366-367)** says, “The term “kingdom” is often used of the spiritual reign of God in men’s hearts, yet we find many references that speak of a future and earthly kingdom. Jesus taught that the former, “is not coming with signs to be observed” (Lk 17:20); but the latter will. In Daniel 2:44 we are told “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.” Both Judah and Israel are to be restored (Jer 23:6f.) for God “will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them” (Ez 37:22; cf 24-28).

<sup>162</sup> See point 7.4.3.1 on page 108.

<sup>163</sup> See point 7.4.3.2 on page 109.

must logically follow that this mystery program must itself be brought to conclusion before God can resume his dealing with the nation Israel... the mystery program that was so distinct in its inception, will certainly be separate at its conclusion. This program must be concluded before God resumes and culminates his program for Israel.

In view of the above, it becomes clear that when God is dealing with national Israel, he does not deal with the Church or the Gentiles or vice versa. Furthermore, this implies that God must complete his program with the church or set the church aside for a while if he needs to resume his dealings with national Israel, as he did when he set Israel aside at the inception of the church (Rm 11:1-7). However, the Bible teaches that God will complete his program with the church before he resumes his dealing with national Israel (Ac 15:14-16). The culmination of the church program will be followed immediately by the rapture,<sup>164</sup> as is clear from various scriptural passages (1 Cor 15:51; 1 Th 4: 14-17; Jn 14:1-3),<sup>165</sup> and this in turn is followed by the revelation of the Antichrist (2 Th 2:8) and the tribulation period, otherwise known as Daniel's 70th week.

It is worth mentioning here that the Rapture of the church is a doctrine generally not supported by covenant theologians, an example of which is illustrated in the arguments of **König (1980:265)**. He refers to Matthew 24:40 and argues that if the Rapture is to occur before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, then:

The thought of a rapture is problematic as ten verses prior to Matthew 24:40 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ is described.<sup>166</sup>

Here König falls into the same trap, as do many Pentecostals, namely that they apply Scriptures relevant to Israel to the church, thereby attempting to make "two comings" of one and the same coming. Within the *mediatorial method*, Matthew 24 has bearing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent and not to the rapture.<sup>167</sup> The church is still a mystery at this point in time.

**Du Plessis (1996:73)** in referring to the Rapture of the church states that:

In order to understand the Rapture of the church, it is necessary to remember that the Old Testament bears no knowledge of the ascension of Jesus or of the existence of the New Testament church as the spiritual body of Christ. The Old Testament is simply not aware of the fact that after his death on the cross, the Master would ascend to heaven and be seated at the right hand of God as intercessor for his spiritual people. Further, there is no thought in the Old

<sup>164</sup> See no.4 on the chart on page 173.

<sup>165</sup> The reader is reminded that the mediatorial method of interpretation adheres to the pre-tribulation view of the Rapture of the church. See the brief explanation of other views on the Rapture on page 139.

<sup>166</sup> Translation my own.

<sup>167</sup> See the explanation of question 10 on page 136 and question 12 on page 140.

Testament, of God taking people to heaven. In actual fact, within the Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah comes to earth to reign as king on the throne of David. Therefore, we have to do with a totally new revelation here that is introduced by Jesus. Think about it: the Lord is coming to fetch his children to be with him in heaven (Jn 14:3).<sup>168</sup>

Du Plessis is confirming the fact that the Church was a mystery in the Old Testament as has been argued throughout this study.

There are various theological reasons relevant to the mediatorial method of interpretation as to why the church is to be raptured at the end of the church age and before the Great Tribulation. Firstly, it must be clearly understood that one of the reasons for the rapture is the fulfilment of Acts 15:14-16, in which it is said that after God has visited the Gentiles (non-Jews) and taken out of them a people for his name, he will return and will build again the fallen tabernacle of David. The words “*visited the Gentiles and taken out of them a people for his name*” can have no other reference than to the New Testament Church (Rm 10:19).

From this it can be deduced that after the church (consisting of regenerated Gentiles and Jews) is raptured, Christ will return (cf. v 16 “*after this I will return*”) to “*build again*” the fallen tabernacle of David – which naturally has a Jewish connotation and refers to the restoration of the Jews at the time of 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent.<sup>169</sup> The question that requires an answer, is: “From where will he return?” The one meaningful answer seems to be “from his Father’s house” (Jn 14:1-3) whereto he had taken the church (see 1 Th 4:14-17) at the time of the Rapture thereof.

Secondly, the church needs to be raptured, as it is the restrainer (“*that which withholdeth*”) of the revelation of the Antichrist (2 Th 2:6). As was explained earlier, the church is the mystery that interrupts God’s program with national Israel and only when it is removed, can Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week<sup>170</sup> begin (Dn 9:24-27).<sup>171</sup> This implies that the rise of the Antichrist and the restoration of Israel are postponed until the church is raptured.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Translation my own.

<sup>169</sup> **Heyns (1988:359)** argues that the words “people from the Gentiles” in Acts 15:14, refers to “one” people that do not originate in a natural or biological way, namely the church, which he then equates with national Israel of the OT. He does not, however, exegetically explain the rest of the text that speaks of “the fallen tabernacle of David”. As is explained above, the mediatorial view believes that this is none other than the Jews. In contrast to this, **König (1980:248)** maintains that all unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy relating to Israel is fulfilled in the church age. From this he argues that Acts 15:14ff is the fulfilment of Amos 9:11-12, yet not in the literal sense. This is problematic for the mediatorial view as neither in a spiritual or a literal sense has the tabernacle of David been restored. If God is literally gathering from the Gentiles a people for his name, he will most certainly, literally rebuild the tabernacle of David – as the Bible teaches – in the Millennium.

<sup>170</sup> See point 7.2 on page 92.

Thirdly, it is appointed by God that the members of the church must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ. (2 Cor 5:10), which is not the same judgement as the white throne judgement that appears at the end of the millennium (Rv 20:11).<sup>173</sup>

The benefits of the Rapture of the church are clearly explained in Scripture. The coming of Christ for his church is the “*blessed hope*” of the church (Tt 3:13). It is this hope that has a purifying influence on the life of the believer (1 Jn 3:3). It must be remembered that the Rapture is part of the mystery of the church. Paul refers to this when he states “*behold I show you a mystery*”, in reference to the resurrection and the translation of the saints in a “*twinkling of an eye*” (1 Cor 15:51). The resurrection is inseparably linked to the rapture of the church (1 Th 4:14-17) and as such provides the believer not only with the hope of a future blissfulness in God’s presence, but also provides a solace and a hope for those that mourn (1 Th 4:13). Paul pointed out the practical value of the Rapture in that those expecting the Lord’s return do not grieve like others who have no hope.

Paul teaches that to be “*absent from the body is to be present with the Lord*” (2 Cor 5:6-9). According to his teaching “to depart” from this life, means to be present with Christ (Phlp 1:23). This is a great benefit for the believer, as at the time of the rapture Christ will bring the souls of the saints that are absent from the body with him (2 Th 4:14-18), as they are now present with him, and they shall be united with their resurrection bodies (v 16) after which we, who are still living, shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air and we shall be with him forevermore (v17). **Du Plessis (1996:84)** explains the resurrection from the dead as follows:

On the day of Christ’s return to earth, he will bring all those that died in Christ with him. Hebrews 12:22-24 teaches that the deceased believers are currently in the heavenly Jerusalem. When Jesus returns, he will bring them with him, as they need to be united to their earthly bodies here on earth.<sup>174</sup>

This teaching of the Rapture and its relation to the resurrection, gives meaning to the Christian life. As such it is a motivational factor and an incentive for evangelism. Paul

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<sup>171</sup> **Du Plessis (1996:78)** explains that Romans 11:26 is indicative of God’s resumed dealings with Israel after the Rapture of the church.

<sup>172</sup> For **König (1999:52ff)** this teaching of the rapture as the first phase of the second coming is unacceptable. He maintains that the Bible teaches that when Christ returns, he will send his angels to gather his elect from the four corners of the earth (Mt 24:31). Once again König is attempting to interpret Scripture relative to Israel on the church. It must be remembered that the church did not exist at Matthew 24.

<sup>173</sup> The judgements are a theme too broad for explanation here.

<sup>174</sup> Translation my own.

concludes his discourse on the Rapture with the words, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words...” (v18).

The Christian views death not as a loss, but rather as a gain. This is plainly seen by Paul’s declaration that for “*him to live is Christ and to die is gain*” (Philp 1:21). The doctrinal truth of the Rapture is emphasised in 1 Thessalonians 4: 14 by Paul when he states: “*If we believe that Jesus died and rose again...*” Paul is asserting that if one believes in the resurrection of Christ, then one should most certainly believe in life after death.

**König (1999:73)**, in referring to the above text, contradicts himself when on the one hand he maintains that the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul is not taught in the Bible, but on the other hand he says that we share in Christ’s victory over death. How does König arrive at the latter if the soul’s immortality is not taught in the Bible? Can there be victory over death without immortality, or is he using a source other than the Bible to support his belief in immortality?

According to Paul, not only do Christians have the glorious hope of ultimate resurrection and renewal of fellowship with believers that have preceded them in death, but they also have the wonderful prospect of an imminent return of Christ, which will cut short their separation from their loved ones (1 Th 4:14).

Besides the above, the rapture is also beneficial in that it paves the way for the church to break away from the wrath of God to come upon the earth during the tribulation period. Many passages of Scripture related to Israel and Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, foretell the nature of the tribulation period (Rv 6-19; 1 Th 1:9-10)<sup>175</sup>. When they are all considered together, it can be described as a period of divine wrath. Earlier it was mentioned that Jesus referred to the rapture twice before his death during his earthly ministry.<sup>176</sup> One of these passages is found in Luke 21:36 wherein Jesus, after explaining to his disciples the wrath to come, warns them to “*watch and pray always that they may be accounted worthy to escape these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man*”. The only way that one can escape the wrath to come would be via the Rapture. This is also seen from the words “*and to stand before the Son of man*”, which has reference to 2 Corinthians 5:10, namely that “*we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ,*” which speaks of reward and not wrath.

<sup>175</sup> Only two are mentioned here although the Bible is saturated with references to the tribulation period.

<sup>176</sup> See page 138.

**Harrison (1941:239)** has the following to say in relation to the wrath of God and the Rapture of the church:

We know that our blessed Lord bore for us the wrath of God and his judgement; therefore we who are in him “shall not come into judgement.” The antithesis of 1 Th. 5:9 is conclusive evidence: “For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.” Wrath for others, but salvation for us at the Rapture, “whether we wake or sleep.” (vs10).

Since, as seen above the church will not partake of the wrath of God as will Israel, it brings this discussion to the crucial issue of why within the hermeneutics of the *mediatorial view*, the church and Israel can never be equated, but are always kept distinct from one another.

### 9.7.1 THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL NOT EQUAL

As has been mentioned numerous times throughout this study, reformed theology equates the church with Israel or sees it as a continuation of Israel. Despite this, **Verhoef (1967:61)** refers to reformed theologians such as: Bultema, who stated that God does not only have one people, but rather two: an earthly and a heavenly - Israel is the earthly with an earthly calling and the church his heavenly people with a heavenly calling; Johannes de Heer, who is quoted as saying that the church is not a continuation of Israel - as a people Israel maintains its personality and is distinct from the church.

In contrast to this, **König (2001:30)** emphatically explains that God does not have two separate groups of people. God initiated one grace covenant with Abraham, so that his progeny would become the covenant people. Because of this, König maintains that the church of the New Testament<sup>177</sup> is not anything new that has no relation to the true Israel of the Old Testament.

This view is problematic within the *mediatorial perspective*. Firstly, it is important to note that the church could not exist until after the death of Christ. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, mentioned the fact of Gentiles who used to be afar off but have now been brought near “*by the blood of Christ*” (2:13). In v14 Jesus is presented as the one that brings peace and has made the Jew and the Gentile one by destroying the wall between them, abolishing the enmity

<sup>177</sup> To speak of the “church of the New Testament” as König does, is (to a certain degree) a pleonasm within the mediatorial view as there can be no church besides the New Testament.

“*in his flesh*” and has made one “*new man*” of Jew and Gentile, reconciling both to God in one body “*by the cross*” (vv14-16).

From this we note that without the shedding of Christ’s blood, the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in one body to form one new man as equals, was impossible. Furthermore, a comparison of Paul’s words here (Eph 2:14-16) with those found in Ephesians 3:6 - namely “*that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*” and also those in Colossians 1:18, “*And he (Christ) is the head of the church*” - makes it obvious that the “*one body*” of Ephesians 2:16 is the church.

From the passage quoted above, it is clear that Paul was emphasising the position of the Gentiles prior to Christ’s death in contrast to their position after his death (vv11-12). He concludes that before the death of Christ they were alienated from the Jews, but thereafter they were united with the Jews through Christ, in one body. This is sufficient proof that the church could not and did not exist before the death of Christ. Christ himself attests to this when he says that he will build his church (Mt 16:18). **Showers (1991:180)** explains that the verb which is translated *will build*, is future tense and in the indicative mood in the text, and “the future indicative expresses anticipation of an event in future time”. This implies that the church was not in existence when Jesus said this. The church would be something new that he would build in the future. Thus the church was something new, totally distinct from the Old Testament Israel.

In contrast to this, **Heyns (1988:226)** argues that each reflection on the church without the covenant degrades the church to a meaningless historical form. Heyns reaches this conclusion by his failure to distinguish between national Israel and church. Scripture most certainly teaches that the church is founded on Jesus Christ and not on the covenant (Eph 2:20).

There are various lines of evidence in Scripture that emphasise that the New Testament Church could never be equated with the Old Testament Israel, all of which cannot be mentioned here due to the limitation set on this thesis. At the outset though, it can be said that the Old Testament Israel was a nation while the New Testament church is a body of nations. This is seen in that Israel had a distinct language unique to their nation, while the church is comprised of people with many different languages. Israel was an earthly, political state with an earthly capital city, government and political rulers. In contrast, the church does not have

an earthly capital city, government and political rulers. Rather it has as its head, Jesus Christ (Col 1:18).

Israel, despite the fact that it was related to God through the Mosaic Covenant, rejected his gift to them, namely Jesus Christ as foretold by God (Is 53; Jn 1:11), while in contrast the church received Christ as its redeemer and saviour. As was seen above, Gentiles were excluded from membership of the Old Testament Israel as long as they remained Gentiles (Eph 2:1-12). In order to become a member of Israel, a Gentile needed to be circumcised and placed under the Mosaic Law. In contrast to this, a Gentile can become an equal member of the church without having to become an Israelite at all (Eph 2:13-16; 3:1-6).

As far as the Mosaic Law is concerned, all Israelites (whether believers or not) were included in the covenant relationship, as it was a covenant made with the whole nation of Israel. No regeneration was required for those at Mount Sinai for acceptance into the Mosaic Covenant relationship with God. Future Israelites entered into the covenant relationship by virtue of their physical descent or birth to Israelite parents. In contrast to this, the church consists of members that have been regenerated by the Spirit (Jn 3:3-7). This implies that the New Testament Church has only saved or born again believers in its membership.

**Walvoord (1991:67)**, in contrasting Israel with the church, states that:

In the New Testament as in the Old there are numerous messages addressed to Israel and this continues after the institution of the church in Acts 2 (cf. Ac 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21; et al). In these references it is obvious that only those that are racially Israelites are included. The same is true of Paul's prayer for Israel's salvation (Ro 10:1), which he bases on the fact that he also is an Israelite.

The use of the term Jew beginning in the Old Testament in the book of Esther and continuing in the New Testament, clearly describes those who are Israelites and not Gentiles. This is made obvious in the distinction of 1 Corinthians 10:32 where the threefold division of the human race into (1) Gentiles, (2) Jews, (3) and the church of God makes clear that these three separate divisions continue in the present age.

In conclusion of this chapter, it is important to make mention of the fact that if the New Testament Church and the Old Testament Israel are equated, it would imply that the Abrahamic covenant and promises related thereto will never be fulfilled, as the church is destined for the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 11:22), while Israel is destined for the earthly Jerusalem to inherit the literal land (Canaan) that God has promised to the nation Israel as an everlasting possession (Gn 17:8). Nevertheless, no matter what the destiny is, if the church and Israel are equated, it would imply that either Israel joins the church on its heaven bound

route, missing the earthly inheritance, or the church joins Israel on its Canaan bound route, depriving Israel of its sole national inheritance.

## 9.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research has argued and substantiated clearly that Pentecostals - even those belonging to the same denomination – apply different meanings to identical passages of Scripture, despite the recent inclination toward academic training. From this it deduced that since the Azusa Street event, Pentecostalism has been influenced by various traditional theological viewpoints. Of these it seems the most prominent are Covenant theology and Dispensationalism. This influence, together with a lack of initial formal academic training during the formative years, and the infiltration of the Charismatic movement into Pentecostalism, have contributed to the many discrepancies that exist within textual interpretation within Pentecostalism.

From the illustrative research, which was conducted with the leaders and theologians from various Pentecostal churches, it has become clear that most discrepancies within Pentecostal ranks exist because of the failure among many Pentecostals to consistently distinguish between Israel, the church and the Gentiles – a trend of covenant theology and of the Charismatic movement. It is because of this failure that Pentecostals apply texts relative to Israel to the church, failing to keep in mind that the church did not exist until the resurrection of Christ and that the church and Israel are two separate entities.

The *mediatorial perspective* within this study has presented Pentecostals with a method of interpretation that does not adhere to either Covenant theology or Dispensationalism, but rather initiates a new perspective of Biblical interpretation – a method that hopefully will lead to greater consensus amongst Pentecostals in relation to their hermeneutics.

In the light hereof, the researcher recommends that Pentecostals firstly gain clarity on the point of separation between the Old and the New Testaments, the central principle of the *mediatorial perspective* as presented in this study. If this principle is not adhered to, the attempt to eliminate some of the many discrepancies will prove to be fruitless.

Secondly, it is recommended that Pentecostals articulate the interpretive meanings of those passages of Scripture that relate to Israel, and those that relate to the church and the Gentiles, while bearing in mind that the point of separation is at Calvary's cross. Consensus is

certainly possible on many issues if this principle is adhered to. Once this has been done, the remaining discrepancies can be addressed and the possibility of a solution and/or consensus will be so much greater. The researcher trusts that the proposed *mediatorial method* can fulfil an important role in this regard.

Thirdly, in view of this study, the researcher anticipates that Pentecostals may consider and apply the proposed method of this study, in working toward the formulation and articulation of a hermeneutical model that will eliminate as many discrepancies as possible within their textual interpretation. In this regard it is trusted that the point of separation between the Old and the New Covenants, namely the death of the testator, the Lord Jesus Christ, will serve as a basis for such a future hermeneutic endeavour. The researcher is of the opinion that this point of separation between the Old and the New Testaments is the heart of this proposed hermeneutical method and any failure to adhere hereto, will consistently result in creating discrepancies.

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## LIST OF AUDIO TAPES

### Person Interviewed and date of interview<sup>178</sup>

#### Audiotape

A on 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Tape WF-A
B on 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape AV-A
C on 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape IDP-A
D on 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape IB-A
E on 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape MC-A
F on 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape FM-A
G on 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape AVD-A
H on 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape PW-B
I on 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Tape MH-A

## ABBREVIATIONS OF BIBLE BOOKS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis . . . . .	Gn	Exodus . . . . .	Ex
Leviticus . . . . .	Lv	Numbers . . . . .	Nm
Deuteronomy . . . . .	Dt	Joshua . . . . .	Jos
Judges . . . . .	Jdg	Ruth . . . . .	Ruth
1 Samuel . . . . .	1 Sm	2 Samuel . . . . .	2 Sm
1 Kings . . . . .	1 Ki	2 Kings . . . . .	2 Ki
1 Chronicles . . . . .	1 Chr	2 Chronicles . . . . .	2 Chr
Ezra . . . . .	Ezr	Nehemiah . . . . .	Neh
Esther . . . . .	Es	Job . . . . .	Job
Psalms . . . . .	Ps	Proverbs . . . . .	Pr
Ecclesiastes . . . . .	Ec	Song of Solomon . . . . .	Can
Isaiah . . . . .	Is	Jeremiah . . . . .	Jr
Lamentations . . . . .	Lm	Ezekiel . . . . .	Ezk
Daniel . . . . .	Dn	Hosea . . . . .	Hs
Joel . . . . .	Jl	Obadiah . . . . .	Ob
Jona . . . . .	Jnh	Micah . . . . .	Mi

<sup>178</sup> NB As was mentioned on page 76, a letter of the alphabet represents each individual.

Nahum . . . . .	Nah	Habakkuk . . . . .	Hab
Zephaniah . . . . .	Zph	Haggai . . . . .	Hg
Zechariah . . . . .	Zch	Malachi . . . . .	Ml

#### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew . . . . .	Mt	Mark . . . . .	Mk
Luke . . . . .	Lk	John . . . . .	Jn
Acts . . . . .	Ac	Romans . . . . .	Rm
1 Corinthians . . . . .	1 Cor	2 Corinthians . . . . .	2 Cor
Galatians . . . . .	Gl	Ephesians . . . . .	Eph
Philippians . . . . .	Phlp	Colossians . . . . .	Col
1 Thessalonians . . . . .	1 Th	2 Thessalonians . . . . .	2 Th
1 Timothy . . . . .	1 Tm	2 Timothy . . . . .	2 Tm
Titus . . . . .	Tt	Philemon . . . . .	Phlm
Hebrews . . . . .	Heb	James . . . . .	Ja
1 Peter . . . . .	1 Pt	2 Peter . . . . .	2 Pt
1 John . . . . .	1 Jn	2 John . . . . .	2 Jn
3 John . . . . .	3 Jn	Jude . . . . .	Jude
Revelation . . . . .	Rv		